

CAIRO

by Night



anelly 2001

A city sourcebook for **vampire: the masquerade**



CAIRO
by Night



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VAMPIRE® CREATED BY MARK REIN • HAGEN



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AUTHOR'S DEDICATION

This book is dedicated with love and gratitude to my parents: To my father, for the letter and the law. To my mother, for the wonder and the word.

Dedication on this book must also go out to the many who fought and died in the Middle East during its writing: With love, and the enduring hope that your sacrifices may at least help pave the way for lasting peace.

SPECIAL THANKS

I would be remiss if I did not give credit here where it is certainly due. First and foremost, very special thanks to my friend and mentor, Harry Heckel, who has given me more than he'll ever know — most of which lies outside the scope of this project. And the most sincere of thanks to my two patron saints, Justin Achilli and James Estes Looking Eagle, without whose patience and support I never would have rounded the bend on this labor of love. To all the rest of you who have helped me along the way: You are not forgotten here, you are simply too many in number to mention by name.

But I thank you.



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How shall I go in peace and without sorrow? Nay, not without a wound in the spirit shall I leave this city; long were the days of pain I have spent within its walls, and long were the nights of aloneness, and who can depart from his pain and his aloneness without regret?

—Kahlil Gibran, "The Prophet"

Older than time itself, Cairo sits as a gleaming gem amid the Egyptian sands. But is its glitter a beacon of hope or the harbinger of something more terrible?





INTRODUCTION: THE PULSE OF MILLENNIA

Mistress of broad provinces and fruitful lands, boundless in profusion of buildings, peerless in beauty and splendor, she shelters all you will of the learned and ignorant, the grave and the gay, the prudent and the foolish, the noble and the base... like the waves of the sea she surges with her throngs of folk... her youth is ever new despite the length of days. Her reigning star never shifts from the mansion of fortune

—Ibn Batuta, *Rihla (The Journey)*

THE CITY TRIUMPHANT

The dazzling city of Cairo has worn numerous faces and names throughout her long and often glorious history. From her younger days as the Biblical city of On, known as Heliopolis to the Greek astronomers and philosophers who traveled perilous leagues to study the mysteries of her stars and sands, to the Roman fortress of Babylon-in-Egypt which, in turn, grew surrounded by the expanding Arab cities of Al-Fustat, Al-Askar, Al-Qatai and, finally, Al-Qahira. It is the City Triumphant. Dubbed thus originally for the curious circumstances surrounding her Fatimid foundation, the name has proven consistently accurate nonetheless. The prize of conquerors the world over, men have waged campaign upon bloody campaign against one another for the right to her charms. From the caliphs of Baghdad, Damascus and Tunis to the Turkish sultan and Napoleon himself, her list of would-be suitors reads

like a who's who of military history. Several times the center of a vast empire that has stretched from the tip of Africa to the Asiatic Sea, she has spent violent millennia earning the grandest of her names.

Then come the many colorful sobriquets that she has earned by virtue of her splendor and grace. Great Cairo, City of Cities, Jewel of the Orient, Shining Star of Islam, Mother of the World. From the chronicles of the renowned Muslim traveler Ibn Batuta to the fanciful tales of Sir Richard Burton's *Arabian Nights*, the city of Cairo has been a source of infinite wonder and inspiration for centuries. Throughout her impressive existence, it seems that she has left no visitor untouched by her splendor, no scholar unrewarded by her constancy, nor any traveler anything but awed by her magnificence.

It can be truly said that Cairo was founded on the paradox of change as a means of ensuring stability. Since the area's first settlement, the city has undergone a process of continuous (and often chaotic) reinvention. Originally situated on the eastern bank of the Nile

where the river fans out into rich, arable farmland, all subsequent building on the site has had to follow the progress of the delta, which has been creeping steadily north due to Africa's desiccation. Tonight, the site has outrun the growth of its eternal companion, and the delta currently sits several miles to the north of where it lay during the age of the Pharaohs.

The city has been built and rebuilt countless times since the Arab conquest of Egypt nearly 1400 years ago, with each successive construction adding more and more in its relentless pursuit of the delta. What had once been the city centers became the outlying areas of a much larger whole, and the result is a modern metropolis of immense size and scope, covering a total area of over 200 square miles. In response to (or as a direct result of) this growth, the people of Cairo have made the city the whole of their world. To her teeming millions (and, indeed, to many outsiders), Cairo is the source and the hub of all Egyptian life.

Yet for all her richness of culture and history, Cairo is a city grown weary under the weight of her own years. The passing of ages has given her the time to witness her own rise and fall repeatedly, granting her the sad opportunity to see all her radiance tarnished at the hands of her own children. Her fragile sense of a singular identity, and the constant threat of the complete destruction thereof, has been a plague more persistent than those that swept through during the Dark Ages, bringing death to her populace apace thereafter. The fact that Egypt did not have an Egyptian ruler between the reign of Nectanebo II and that of Gamal Abdel Nasser — an unthinkable span of almost 24 centuries — has played an undeniable role in the formation of the Cairene mindset, and the city's inhabitants struggle nightly with this legacy.

But through all her many nights of blood and change, she has remained the brightest of beacons in a dark and shifting sand, a constant star in a sea of endless night. She may look a little older in the light, and her children may see more of chaos and hardship in these times, but they know that she yet remains the mother of their world. And to them, regardless of her guise or appellation, the City Triumphant she has always been — and, by the grace of God, shall remain evermore.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book represents something of a deviation from the norm, to those familiar with other *Vampire* "by Night" supplements. The distinction between *Cairo by Night* and its predecessors lies in its versatility. This city sets the scene for a Storyteller to take her players, be

they players of Camarilla, Sabbat, an arch, independent or even elder characters, into the hearts and intrigues of the largest city in all of Africa and the Middle East. In addition to finally examining an area long neglected in previous products, this book intends to give Storytellers a means by which they can push their characters full throttle into the Final Nights.

Chapter by chapter, *Cairo by Night* is broken up into the following sections:

Sins of the Fathers: A History of Cairo is a personal narrative of the city's mortal and Kindred histories, beginning in ancient times, winding through the formative Islamic Age and into the modern nights. When pieced together, these histories provide a unique and comprehensive perspective of this most magnificent of cities.

Blood and Sand: Geography and the Undead is an overview of the sites that make Cairo the wonder that she is tonight. Through Central, Islamic and Coptic Cairo, to the numerous and ever-present mosques around the city, life and faith are inextricably intertwined here, often leaving Cairo's vampiric denizens caught in the middle.

Brothers in Arms: Pyramids of Power takes a look at the various factions at work in the city. Some vie for power, others move in their own circles for their own inscrutable purposes. Cult activity, on a vampiric as well as mortal level, is so prevalent here that wise Kindred often end up choosing an allegiance of one sort or another before it chooses them.

Dead Among the Dead: The Damned of Cairo details many of the major undead figures in the city. The histories, ambitions and, more often than not, the vendettas that abound in Cairo's kindred are examined here, setting the stage for any sort of Egyptian chronicle to play itself out.

Umm el-Dunya: Storytelling Cairo gives a brief guide to Storytellers on how to run a chronicle in the City Triumphant. Narrative elements and cultural backdrops are further examined here as well, rounding out the whole of the city's long and sordid story.

Shadows in Dust: The Hidden Host is an appendix — a night gallery of those behind the scenes in Cairo. From the stoic Inconnu Monitor to a mummy at the core of the city's history, they are all detailed here.

Among these pages, you will find all that you need to create a chronicle in one of the largest and oldest cities in the civilized world. Through the arching gate of Bab Zuwayla, past Salah al-Din's Citadel and around the Cities of the Dead, through the bustling lanes of the Khan al-Khalili, to the silted shores of the Nile itself — all of Cairo's ageless mystery and grandeur laid bare for you here, in *Cairo by Night*. You have only to turn the page.

THEME AND MOOD

THEME

Two primary themes are at work in *Cairo by Night*. The first, the fulfillment of prophecy, figures prominently as the Kindred of Cairo find themselves at the epicenter of the unfolding saga that is the Final Nights. Cairo is a city of secrets and lies, of mysteries and things foretold in sand and stone. Figures and events, both past and present, have established the city as a focal point in the Jihad, and those who know their history understand how important this time is for her multitudes of Kindred. In a time of awakenings and revelations, history ceases to be about the past, pulling itself into the present with all the fury of a waking god. But with revelation comes temptation, and, as the Kindred often know too well, with temptation comes eternal damnation — or the dim hope for salvation.

As the world rolls into a new millennium, Cairo dances on the brink of her own destiny. Here and now, she will either rise to surpass her former glory, or she will continue to fall behind, forever lost in the rumbling tide of progress. Whatever her destiny is, most believe that the Final Nights hold some inscrutable design for this, the Mother of the World. And, while many of them stand with their beloved city — trusting in whatever fate may be in store for them — there are those who yet rage against the inevitable future, knowing that it can bring only darkness in the end.

The second theme that is central to this book, one that is often intrinsically linked with the first, is the complicated and vital concept of identity. Many Cairenes struggle to define what it truly means to be an Egyptian in a land that has seen so much interference in its affairs through the ages. Having spent generations battling oppression, some find themselves bewildered at the prospect of making their way in a land that they can truly call their own. Others, having fallen to the glittering promises of swindlers past, are wary of the current state of affairs, believing the truth to be far bleaker than it appears.

Complex and often conflicting notions, such as those of faith and filial piety — the debt of respect owed to one's ancestors — play themselves out nightly within the Cairene struggle for identity. This latter idea in particular, prevalent throughout the Arab world, is no less so here in Egypt where dynasties of vampires struggle against one another under the heavy shadows of their sires and grandsires. This is one aspect that the Kindred of the Middle East share with their Western brethren: In a real and direct sense, one's lineage marks and bestows in him a host of innate traditions and responsibilities. Drawn out through centuries, however, the purity of cause often becomes lost in bitterness for its own sake, and bitterness

ferments in turn into unreasoning hatred, threatening to consume those who follow blindly the mistakes of ages past. The harsh lesson that history is doomed to repeat itself is one that Cairo's undead so often learn firsthand.

MOOD

Cairo is a city of unresolved conflict and subtle, unspoken tension. Throughout the city, a feeling of temporal significance grows nightly — a sense of millennialism, if you will — as if present struggles will undeniably determine the fate of the city for centuries to come. Indeed, Cairo has reached a turning point. When conflict erupts within the city, the combatants struggle for their survival with an almost apocalyptic fervor, and even the most powerful among Cairo's Kindred suffer this pervasive state of mind. Elders scrutinize the smallest events, obsessing over every enigma with the hope of unraveling this inexplicable dread. For many, an underlying sense of awakening lingers at the edge of their perceptions, as if the ancient gods of Egypt will rise, demanding an accounting for crimes long forgotten. For all, a heightened awareness broods — a sense that these nights have a meaning and importance beyond ordinary comprehension. The city of Cairo stokes the fires of ambition in the willful and sends the irresolute cowering to their heavens.

This mood is both subtle and ubiquitous, and it should not paralyze ancient vampires with stupidity or give neonates the power to exploit city residents with abandon. It also does not mean that all Kindred fear that some ancient power is rising to devour them. Instead, it acts as a faint (if constant) reminder that things are not as they seem at first glance, even to the undead. Although most keep their unease well hidden (when they are consciously aware of it at all), the tone of the city touches every heart with anxiety and fear, staining every thought and hope and dream.

THE DAMNED

To a large extent, Cairo herself is a symbol of the agonizing paradox that is Kindred undeath. The old axiom about being careful what you wish for is nowhere any truer than it is in Cairo, where time itself has become both the weapon and the wound. Many of Cairo's vampires trace their lineage back to their "dynasty" founders — those vampires originally claiming their right to domain while the city was spreading her wings during formative periods of mortal expansion. Many of these founders have since fallen by the wayside, eventual (and some would say inevitable) casualties in the War of the Ages, leaving their descendants squabbling over issues of ideology, territory and revenge.

One of Cairo's most obvious claims to fame is her staggering number of undead. Even by the Camarilla

guideline, which is rarely followed to the letter in the Middle East, the sheer size of the area alone allows for the acknowledged presence of some 200 vampires. Add to this the status of Cairo as both open to Kindred regardless of ideology and as a safe haven for the downtrodden clanless, and the result is one enormous and potentially dangerous melting pot of bodies and ideas. Some of the vampires in the city, however, have made it a nightly order of business to keep a tally of who comes, who goes and, most importantly, who stays in Cairo. Over the centuries, the prince has been careful to make quick and efficient use of these findings. This information, coupled with his long-standing edict that all are welcome to enjoy his hospitality and protection as long as they present themselves properly upon entering his domain, leaves him reasonably informed as to the current status of the city's many undead at any given time.

POWER STRUCTURES

The city of Cairo is nominally a Camarilla domain, but this classification exists more as a matter of principle than of truth, due to the fact that it is not openly infested by the Sabbat or any other single group. The recognized prince that the city has had for the last 600 years adds to this overall impression. However, because of complex notions of heritage and domain, as well as the significant entrenchment of clans such as the Assamites, the Lasombra and the ever-present Followers of Set, European Camarilla interests can hardly be considered dominant in the region.

One of the myths surrounding Cairo involves the impression that vampires of every sect, clan and hedonistic inclination walk the streets freely, unchecked by any significant law or order. To outsiders, the "blame" for this situation is typically laid on Prince Mukhtar Bey, an ancient soldier-slave who calls himself a Mameluke and has claimed domain in Cairo since before the Convention of Thorns. Although his tenure as prince has indeed been something of an "open-door policy" to all Kindred, the truth is far more complicated.

While the prince does allow all manner of undead within his domain, he does so due to several important factors. First, the city's cosmopolitan nature and immense size allow for the presence of all kinds in the city, and it certainly does take all kinds — especially in Cairo. Second, a complicated system of khittas — territories based on heritage and an ancestral claim — makes up the actual layout of the city as far as the Kindred are concerned. Therefore, any vampire who comes to the city with proof of lineage within any of these "families" has the right to be granted immediate acknowledgement by the actual prince, as long as the family upholds the limits of the Masquerade internally. (Doing so is rarely a problem in a city with so much blood to go around.) Thus, the prince acts as a governor over several smaller domains within his own,

A WORD ON CALENDARS

For ease of reference and reader understanding, the "standard" Western timeline and its attendant terms are used in this book. The fact that Cairo is a Muslim city at the heart of the Arab world is neither disputed nor intentionally disrespected.

rather than a supreme ruler over all the Kindred within his city. And lastly, it is understood among the elders that the prince is but a fledgling compared to some who have made the city their home since long before his arrival, and that his claim of domain is more or less at their allowance. Prince Mukhtar Bey, although he is powerful and well respected, is truly more of a convenient figurehead than a draconian tyrant to the undead of Cairo.

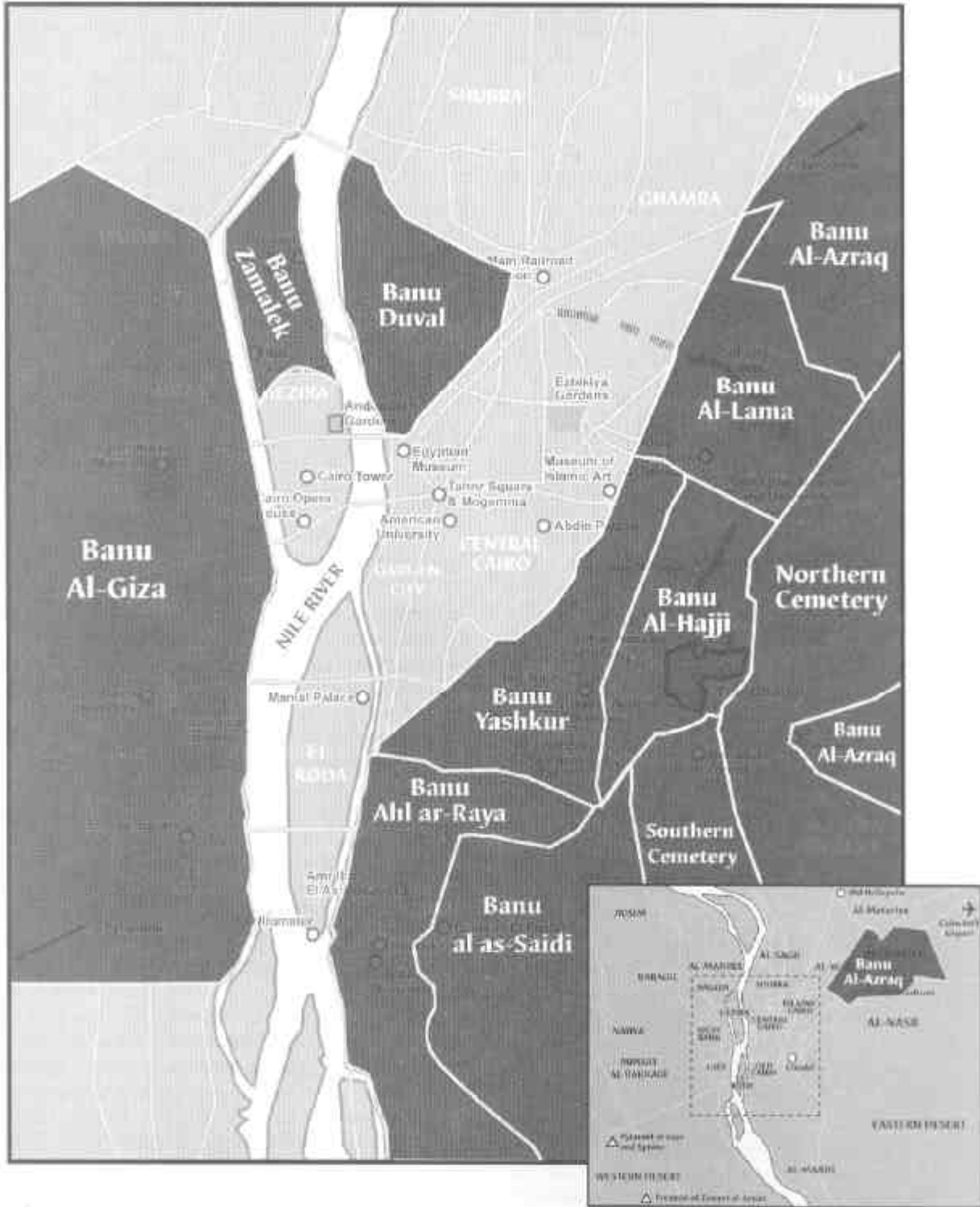
"Beneath" the prince is his assembly of advisors and representatives, called the Consultative Council. Until the 1920s, the concept of a primogen was unheard of in Cairo. The entire idea, distinctively European in its flavor and origin, was disdained by the prince during the early centuries of his domain. But when the winds of change began to blow not only through his own land but through all of the Middle East, he took careful notice. When the Saudi royals adopted a Consultative Council to support their regime in Arabia, he acted, instituting a vampiric one of his own (ideally to pursue similar ends).

This arrangement, however, is merely the tip of the pyramid — the face most often glimpsed by those who cannot (or will not) perceive the whole truth. The War of Ages plays itself out quite literally here, as power players take decades (and often centuries) planning their maneuvers against one another. They are as patient as gladiators circling a timeless arena, eyeing one another's strengths and weaknesses. But whereas generations of shadow play once dominated, when bluffs and feints were the order of the night, the time for action has finally come. The coming of the Final Nights signals a call to arms for Cairo's undead, many of whom believe that unless they do something, the end that they have been so patiently and fervently plotting against will finally be upon them.

MOTHER OF THE WORLD

Few cities can trace their history and heritage as far back as can Cairo. Although the foundation of the city under its common name didn't arrive until the Fatimids conquered the region for the upstart Shiite Caliphate in AD 969, there has been life and community on the site for millennia. The ancient Egyptians believed that Creation itself first began here, and modern Cairo is a

Cairo Khittas



testimony to that belief. The Mother of the World teems with life, inviting and inciting activity of every essence and intent.

Of the nation's 70 million inhabitants, nearly a third make the capitol and the surrounding districts their home. (As a group, Cairenes outnumber Austrians, Belgians and Greeks.) This comes as no surprise, as the standard of living is far better in the capitol than anywhere else in the country. Income is 25 percent higher, there are 30 percent fewer poor, and only a third as many children die from disease or malnutrition within Cairo itself. In addition, the capitol city is the hub of nearly all important activity in Egypt. Half the country's cars and industry are here, and no Egyptian newspapers are printed outside of Cairo. In point of fact, activity elsewhere in the country rarely makes the front page, no matter how newsworthy. It is no wonder, then, that the name for Egypt in Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi, Persian, Turkish and Urdu is *Masr* — the name for Cairo in the tongue of her own citizenry. From the dawn of time, all has spread forth from this place, and it is to Cairo that all inevitably returns.

Like so many others around the world, Cairo is a river city, initially built to take advantage of the critical nexus where rambling Nile met fertile delta. Unlike other river cities, however, Cairo is unique in that the sprawl of the metropolis itself spans the river, with no fewer than 10 major bridges spanning the 1500 feet of water between its east and west banks. Covering over 200 square miles, Cairo stretches for 25 miles north to south along the river, with most of the city lying on the east bank. In older nights, the city's lateral spread was limited by the Muqattam Hills and the Libyan Desert — to the east and west respectively — but recent years have seen such an eruption of expansion on both banks that the city itself is in a topographical uproar.

In the 1990's, Egypt's Ministry of Housing began to implement its plan to move nearly two million people out of the city proper by establishing satellite cities in the desert, including an entire impromptu town on the other side of the hills called Muqattam City. This recent rash of unchecked and often ill-planned growth leaves many concerned about the status of further development in the new millennium. Even the Giza plateau (considered sacrosanct for thousands of years) now boasts a teeming horde of residential districts and tourist shops, and it is a separately governed district in its own right.

A living contradiction unlike any other, modern Cairo sings a vibrant anthem in praise of paradox. From the honking cars that speed through crowded streets alongside ambling donkey carts to a profusion of skyscrapers erected mere yards from ancient stone monuments, it is a city of wondrous and often stark contrasts. In what other city can a visitor tour a 4700 year-old monument,

dine on authentic French cuisine along the banks of the world's longest river and be entertained in one of many establishments earning it the appellation "belly-dancing capitol of the world," all in a single night?

The contradictions abound in thought as well as sight, as the world's largest Arab-speaking city grinds through the present night under the oppressive and omnipresent influence of its Western past. Between Napoleon's conquest in 1798, and the subsequent "Egyptomania" sweeping through Europe, to the British occupation under Lord Cromer, Cairo's Arab natives have seen a brutal and steady stream of foreign faces, finances and ideas for the last 200 years. The deposing of the royals and Nasser's ensuing nationalist efforts have gone a long way toward establishing a land with an identity of its own, but with the rose come the thorns, and Egypt's largest and most wondrous bloom is undoubtedly the one with the furthest still to go.

MORTAL SOCIETY

Modern Cairo is a swirling and chaotic blend, brewed of equal parts elation and confusion. In its early post-royal years, Egypt was somewhat overwhelmed by its newfound freedom, and the existing state bears the scars of the rather considerable growing pains that it has endured. Several armed conflicts, as well as yet another (albeit brief) foreign occupation during this formative time, have kept the young republic weak and unsettled overall, leaving it a wild card in the global hand of the third millennium.

One of the few constants of the city, however, lies in its visitors. As might be expected, one of the primary sources of income for the city is tourism. Over one million visitors come each year to witness the vastness of Cairo's living history, and their equally vast expenditures account for no small percentage of the city's annual revenue. An entire sub-economy has sprung up around the industry, and Cairo's streets bustle with the rank and file of its administration. Over 150,000 mobile salesmen set up squatting shops on busy sidewalks, while any number of the city's 13,000 privately owned mini-buses rumble by. Cairenes know that a great deal of money is to be made off the interest of the West, and they are out in force night and day in every worthy location to be a part of it.

Despite this lively atmosphere, the majority of the city still falls in with the rest of the Third World. On the average, its citizens enjoy less health care, education and prosperity than those of almost every Western nation. In the World of Darkness, Cairo's real-world status as the most densely populated urban area in the world comes to the fore. The city's carnival feel takes on a sinister, almost claustrophobic quality as teeming throngs of bodies scuttle like beetles through cramped and dirty streets. Once the sun has set, crime rates soar

and careless travelers, as well as those Cairenes foolish enough to walk the night alone, tend to disappear with an alarming regularity. The presence of true evil walking the city's darkened alleyways adds to an already overwhelming and ingrained superstition in the locals, making the night a time of fevered whispers and huddled prayers for Cairo's working class....

Which leads to the single most important aspect of Cairene society: faith. The vast majority of the citizenry is deeply religious, with the preponderance of that number being Muslims, and the evidence of their religion's impact on the city throughout its long history can be seen at every turn. Cairo is often called the "City of a Thousand Minarets" and for very good reason, as one cannot throw a stone in Cairo without hitting one of its myriad beautiful mosques. Five times every day, the *muezzins* call the faithful to prayer from these shrines, and the sound has come to be synonymous with the city herself. Music and community converge under the aegis of faith, forming a powerful force that bonds Cairenes to one another. This communal faith is often the only substitute for other things of need as well. A surprising number of the city's poor and homeless think of themselves as blessed, believing they have been touched by God, and that the power of His love is more than enough to carry them through their days and nights in poverty. Many a visitor to this wondrous city has marveled at how happy these people can be while they seem to have so very little.

CITY OF DELIGHT

Cairo certainly loves a festival, and the city plays host to several annually, including the world-renowned International Film Festival in December, the 10-day-long Arab Music Festival in November and the Cairo Book Fair, held every January at the Exhibition Grounds. In recent years, several anarchists have tried to make their own mark on the city's revelry, resulting on one occasion in a peculiar oddity known as the Pharaohs' Rally. Every October, competitors come from all over the globe to engage in a rowdy 4-wheel-drive race through the desert, beginning and ending at the pyramids. Much to the irritation of the academic community (as well as the Gangrel who dwell there), attempts to discontinue the rally have been thus far thwarted consistently, and the event has garnered no small measure of popularity among extreme-sports enthusiasts worldwide. Some European Kindred, taking a page from the Cairene anarchists, have begun to go so far as to use these and other events as excuses for their excursions to an otherwise insular, unpredictable and often dangerously exciting city.

TRAVELING TO CAIRO

Cairo is readily and deceptively accessible by air, land and water. The majority of incoming air travel is taken by

Cairo International Airport, which lies about 15 miles to the northeast of downtown Cairo in the suburb of Heliopolis. The newer of its two terminals was built to take over the servicing of most of Egypt's international airlines, leaving the first terminal to be used primarily for Egypt-Air and its many domestic and international flights.

The most popular method of transport to those entering and leaving the city is bus travel, and service runs every day except Saturday out of Central Cairo. The most popular bus routes travel between Cairo and Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or Taba in Sinai. Egypt's one intercity railroad, the Egyptian State Railway, connects Alexandria to Aswan by way of Cairo. It runs out of Ramses Station in Midan Ramses and, although it isn't a means of getting to Cairo proper if arriving internationally, it is a fairly stable form of transport in the country. River travel, although it is generally lengthy and often unreliable, is not heavily regulated, and enterprising Kindred can use the Nile to gain clandestine admittance to the city, should they feel required to resort to such measures.

GETTING AROUND CAIRO

Located on, atop and across the river Nile, Cairo is a sprawling testament to its own history and the relentless growth of its surging multitudes. Once any foreign Kindred have arrived in Cairo, one of the first things that they'll need to learn (and fast) is a brief layout of this unique city and how to navigate it. While most city residents have learned the various "tricks of the trade" regarding such issues, newcomers to the city, lost in the bustling and often unfamiliar tide of Cairene ways and means, may find themselves at a loss to do anything other than play it by ear. Several options, however, soon make themselves readily apparent.

Although the city boasts a staggering registry of more than a million cars, overcrowded buses and minibuses are the dominant form of conveyance in and around downtown for the majority of Cairenes. However, travelling amid the exhaust created by these crowded and often ill-maintained vehicles imparts the equivalent of smoking 30 cigarettes a day. No longer needing to breathe, the city's Kindred can make use of these services, but most sane mortals prefer taking one of the thousands of taxis that are available at a moment's notice. Other options in the city include the partially underground metro system (which is currently undergoing massive and costly development) and its outdated predecessor, the tram. A final option that is singular to this wondrous city, is the river bus terminal at Maspero, which ferries people every 15 minutes between the east and west banks at a landing just north of the University Bridge. Every second boat continues on to stops at

Manial, Giza, Masr al-Qadima (Old Cairo) and the Nile island of Rhoda.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

One of the first things that one notices when visiting Cairo is the necessity to understand the rhythms of her speech. Even those with a basic grasp of Arabic soon find that the Cairene dialect — slangy and somewhat hip (all things considered) — requires that they pay a bit of attention in order to get the most mileage out of what they already know. The following is a list of terms that visitors will find common in the Middle East in general, and in Cairo especially. Storytellers are encouraged to incorporate as much of this language as they reasonably can into any chronicles set in the Middle East, in order to keep things as authentic and flavorful as possible. Be careful of bogging things down, but use these terms to add an exotic flavor to your descriptions.

abeyya: the women's version of the *galabiyya* robe (q.v.)

abu: father or saint

ahl al-kitab: "people of the book," the Muslim term for Christians and Jews

ahwa: a coffeehouse

Ashirra: old-form term generically used to indicate Kindred of Islamic persuasion

bab: a gate or door

baksheesh: a local and grossly over-expected tipping custom

baladi: "local" or "in country," as opposed to foreign (for example, *ibn al-balad:* "son of the country")

bawab: a doorman or porter

Benben: the stone or mound where Egyptians believe Creation began

bey: the Ottoman title just below pasha

birket: a lake

caliph: literally "successor," referring to the supreme ruler of Muslims; also spelled *khalif*

dahabiyya: a houseboat

dinar: an Islamic coin, typically made of gold

Deir: a monastery or convent

effendi: from the Turkish, a title usually applied to educated professionals

Eid: a feast of celebration

emir: a governor, military commander, or Islamic ruler

fatwa: an Islamic religious ruling on a matter

fellah: an Egyptian peasant (pl. *fellaheen*)

galabiyya: long, traditional robe worn by Egyptian men

hajj: the pilgrimage to Mecca, required of all Muslims at least once during their lifetimes

Hajj: those who have completed the pilgrimage to Mecca; also the Muslim Nosferatu of the Middle East

hamman: a bathhouse

hara: a lane or alley; any one of a number of neighborhoods in the traditional quarters

hatta: the traditional scarf worn over the head by Egyptian men

ibn: "son of"

Imam: a prayer leader or mosque head; also the leader of the Shiite sect

iqal: the woven rings worn around the head, over the *hatta*

khawaga: a term of ironic respect for a Western foreigner (pl. *khawagat*)

khitta: one of a group of tribal domains, claimed by powerful families during the city's foundation

lotus: white water lily that was sacred to the ancient Egyptians

ma'allim: literally "teacher," but usually referring to a foreman or supervisor

madrasa: a school; formerly a college of Islamic law

mashrafiyya: wooden latticework commonly used in Cairene houses; often spelled *mashrabiyya*

Masr (MUH-ser): the common term for Egypt as well as Cairo; also spelled *Misr*

mastaba: literally "bench," a mud-brick structure above tombs from which pyramids developed

midan: a town or city square

milaya: black shawl usually worn over the head by Egyptian working-class women

mosque: the English corruption of "*masjid*," or "a place of prostration"

muezzin: a mosque official who calls the faithful to prayer

natron: hydrated sodium carbonate occurring in saline deposits; used in mummification rituals

qarafa: a cemetery (the "q" is silent)

Qur'an: "the recitation," the Muslim holy text

radh: good-natured, rhyming abuse; Cairene rap, of a sort

Ramadan: the ninth month of the Islamic calendar when all Muslims must fast

sa'idi: an Upper Egyptian

scarab: beetle regarded as sacred to the ancient Egyptians; often representing the sun god, Ra

Sha'b: the people or the masses

sharia: a road or street

Shari'a: Islamic law

Sharif: Descendant of the Prophet

sharm: a bay

souq: a market

Sufi: a Disciple of Sufism, a form of Islamic mysticism

Cairo:

Underground Metro Network



Sunna: the exemplary actions of the Prophet, from which Sunni Islam is derived

tarboosh: a hat, elsewhere known as a *fez*

'Ulema: scholars of Islamic religion, tradition, and law

umm: "mother of"

wadi: a desert watercourse, usually dry

wahah: an oasis

waqf: a form of Islamic endowment trust

zaghreet: a style of dynamic vocal ululation

RESOURCES

LITERATURE

A great many works exist on Egypt and its vast cultural and historical heritage. In fact, so much has been written on the region, that the task of finding material on point becomes the real challenge. A good suggestion is to narrow your focus of interest when studying things Egyptian, and tailor your research tools accordingly.

The following list includes only those works that were found either most useful or most inspirational during the writing of this supplement, and it is by no means comprehensive, even in this context.

Naguib Mahfouz — No collection of literature on Cairo would be complete without Mahfouz. A Nobel Laureate in Literature (1988), he is most known for his *Cairo Trilogy* (1956-1957): *Palace Walk*, *Palace of Desire* and *Sugar Street*, which offer a great look at life in Cairo. Other popular titles include *Midaq Alley*, *Children of Gebelawi*, *The Harafish* and *Arabian Nights and Days*.

Arabian Nights (in Arabic, "*Alf Layla wa Layla*" or "The Thousand and One Nights") — Although Sheherezade and her famous stories have their roots in pre-Islamic Persia, successive versions down through the ages paint a vivid picture of Mameluke Cairo, often in specific detail. Either way, these tales are not to be missed. They're also a great source for literary allusion or legendary symbolism in any Cairo chronicle.

AUTHENTICITY DISCLAIMER

The material presented in *Cairo by Night*, while fully and accurately researched, was compiled with the intent to serve a particular story. Certain historical and geographical elements have been overlooked, while others have been altered outright in the interests of storytelling, and this should be kept in mind. This book is a supplement about a Gothic-Punk vision of Cairo for **Vampire: The Masquerade**, not a doctoral thesis. To all those who intend to use this book as the sole bibliographic reference for their term papers on Egypt or who would complain about inconsistencies between this and the real world: *You have been warned.*

Abu Lughod, *Cairo* (1971) — An out-of-date study of 1,001 years of the city's history. What there is, however, is extremely detailed, replete with maps, charts and graphs covering a wide range of subjects.

Andrew Humphreys, *Lonely Planet: Cairo* (1998) — Don't scoff. This little "travel guide" was invaluable during this project, and most Storytellers will find it so as well.

Wladyslaw B. Kubiak, *Al-Fustat Its Foundation and Early Urban Development* (1987) — A thorough and somewhat dry treatise on the development of the tribal khitta during the Arab conquest.

Neil D. MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo* (1992) — Extremely focused, but terrific if you're looking for topographical information dating from the period.

Max Rodenbeck, *Cairo: The City Victorians* (1998) — A recent addition to the trove, this lively and chaotic tale weaves past and present into an eminently readable and literate whole which firmly stands as the best overall work many have read on the city.

Dorothea Russell, *Medieval Cairo* (1963) — An attractive, rambling would-be tour with many detailed descriptions of the city's important sites. A bit stuffy, but well worth the read.

Hasan El-Shamy, *Folktales of Egypt* — An excellent and engaging work that delves deeply into the rich trove of Egyptian folklore. The result is at once very entertaining and very edifying.

Desmond Stewart, *Great Cairo Mother of the World* (1996) — A respectful and well-written little overview with a handful of obscurely colorful anecdotes.

Helen Watson, *Women in the Cities of the Dead* (1992) — This small tome is an absolute find for those looking for authentic cultural flavor from one of the most interesting districts of Cairo. Written by a Fellow in Anthropology with St. John's, Cambridge, it is a fascinating look at the cultural storytelling tradition among Egyptian women.

MUSIC

Cairenes, possibly more than citizens of any other single city, are consummate lovers of revelry and song. Whether to beat back the tide of despair that grips her destitute populace or simply out of a reverence for and love of life, music has become an inherent part of the day-to-day existence of Cairenes. Its insistent rhythms fill their homes, cars, nightclubs and even marketplaces in such an unending stream that the whole of it all is often referred to as the "the song of *Masr*, the song of the city." Despite the ever-present undead who plot and seethe beneath her surface, the voice of Cairo is dynamic, vociferous and very full of life.

This reverence is seen in every aspect of the way Cairenes absorb themselves in their music. Take their most famous songbird, Umm Kulsum. Known as the Nightingale of the Nile, the Lady of Arabic Song or, more casually, as simply *al-Sir* ("the Lady"), she ruled the

airwaves and hearts of Cairo for over 37 years before her retirement. Her funeral in 1975 brought over two million mourners to the streets of Cairo, where they kidnapped the singer's body, parading it for three full miles until they reached the Mosque of al-Husayn. Only the pleas of the imam prevented her from being interred next to the head of the Prophet's grandson — such was the measure of their devotion to their beloved songstress and her music. And it is this universal musical spirit that provides the most useful inspiration to those interested in the city, rather than any specific genres, artists or recordings.

That being said, there are a few types of music that are either native to or singularly enjoyed by Cairenes. One such musical style is a form of Egyptian "pop of the people" called *al-jeel* ("the generation"). It is characterized by raucous hand-clapping, overlaid with synthesized rhythms and catchy vocal melodies. There is also a style called *shaabi* ("popular"), which is considered the music of the working class. Musically, it is cruder than *al-jeel* and its lyrics are often satirical or politically provocative. Anyone who can experience either or both of these musical styles firsthand is in for a rare (if somewhat unusual) treat.

FILM

Like the rest of the world, Hollywood has long been fascinated by the mystery and stunning visual contrasts of modern Egypt. The following are those Western films in which she figures prominently, either as a backdrop or a character in and of herself.

Charlie Chan in Egypt (1935) — A great series overall, this offering features both an appropriately eerie mood as well as a particularly fine performance by Warner Oland.

Cairo (1963) — This potent film is the finest of the many remakes of *The Asphalt Jungle*, containing some nice shots of downtown Cairo, including the Egyptian Museum and Tutankhamun's tomb.

The English Patient (1997) — Actually shot in Tunisia, this Oscar-sweeper tells the true-life account of Laszlo Almásy, a Hungarian who sneaks a German spy into Cairo during WWII. Far from dying under the tearful gaze of Juliette Binoche, the real-life "English patient" survives the war and dies in Salzburg.

Five Graves to Cairo (1943) — Brilliant World War II film. One of Billy Wilder's best, with a great depiction of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel during his relentless drive toward Egypt's capitol.

The Man From Cairo (1953) — Disjointed thriller about a search for gold in northern Africa.

Purple Rose of Cairo (1985) — Although not particularly "Egyptian-esque," it is a good film overall, and does go a long way to emphasize the romance with which the West tends to view "the Orient."

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) — Again, it isn't actually Egypt, but come on... it's Indy.

EGYPTIAN CINEMA

The Egyptian film industry saw a boom in the 1940's, having produced over 300 quality films by the end of a decade in which the rest of the Arab world had produced only 10, in its entirety. The industry has continued to grow since, boasting an impressive yearly output — three times more than all other Arab nations combined — and its own International Film Festival, held annually in Cairo. These native films (some 2,000 in toto by 1998) form a collective, vibrant vision of the city through Arab eyes, and are just as telling about Cairenes as Hollywood films are about Westerners. Subtitles can often be found for many of the industry's more noteworthy productions, including the following:

Bab el-Hadid (1958) — Unnoticed when it was released, this powerful drama about lives in transition centered around Cairo Station has grown in popularity since. It is now considered a classic.

Dead Amongst the Living (1960) — Starring the inimitable Omar Sharif, it is considered the finest adaptation of Naguib Mahfouz's *The Beginning and the End* ever filmed.

God is With Us (1956) — Ahmed Badrakhan's important film about the dramatic events leading up to the second Arab-Israeli War.

al-Mohager (1994) — This film tells the epic biblical tale of "the Emigrant" Joseph from a refreshing Egyptian perspective.

El-Naser Salah el-Dine (1963) — Also known as "Saladin the Victorious," this Yussef Chahine classic, starring Ahmed Mazher in the title role, offers a very humane look at religious war, preaching tolerance and honest diplomacy, while indicting the arrogant pursuit of glory at the expense of human life.

Ruby Cairo (1993) — A faltering drama about a woman searching for her dead husband's fortune.

Sadat (1983) — Originally a made-for-TV movie, this otherwise superficial telling of the life of the Nobel Prize-winner features a terrific, if subdued, performance by Louis Gossett, Jr. in the title role.

The Spy Who Loved Me (1977) — Ahh, Bond. Watch for the classic scene in which our hero launches a bad guy off the roof of the Gayer-Anderson House.

Stargate (1994) — Forget the plot, just look at the bevy of pretty costumes, locations and set designs.

Superseven Chama Cairo (1966) — Never mind. Just never mind.





CHAPTER ONE: SINS OF THE FATHERS A HISTORY OF CAIRO

They spoke to me again of you, reminded me, reminded me... they took me back to the past, with its ease, with its joys and its sweetness... And I remembered how happy I was with you and, O my soul, I remember why it is we came apart

—Umm Kulsoum, "Fakkaruni"

Time.

Long before my seminal mortal work, the *Kitab al-Ibar*, I was fascinated by its very concept — where it comes from, what it signifies and, most importantly, what it (and its shortage) drives men to accomplish or ignore. When my sire first brought me into this world of eternal night, some six centuries ago now, my presumptions about time and "immortality" were, understandably, those that only a mortal could presume. Only now, having come this far through the long fog of history, do I even begin to see...

Time and the land of Egypt are, with little measure of overstatement, *linked* — as brother and sister, as husband and wife. I pen this historical record as a living testament to them; to their scope, their ravages, their patience and deceit and, above all, the awesome power that is theirs to share. If it is a comprehensive history of either that you seek, be it mundane or otherwise, seek it elsewhere. I make no excuses about my designs for this brief account.

A strange mirror-tale to my work on humanity, it is equally as much the story of my kind as I have come to understand it. Cairo has borne the heavy load of the Damned for so long, and I believe that to learn from that suffering is a debt that is owed. Kindred find that many lessons can be learned in time....

I have heard it said that history is written by the victors. Alas, among the undead this is a curious fallacy: To the Children of Caine, history is truly written by those who have shaped its course — and they are not always the victors.

May Allah bring ever-lasting peace and prosperity upon you.

Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, Walid Al-Muntathir.

CITY OF THE GODS

Despite the early Egyptian belief that Creation began here in the form of a mound called *benben*, birthed by the gods-cons ago from the void of nothingness, a more pragmatic (and less spectacular) view is more likely the case. Long ago, the land that was to become Egypt was, ironically, buried under an endless sea. Water, modern Egypt's most scant resource, was everything and everywhere. In time, the area gradually became a tropical forest, teeming with an abundance of flora and fauna. Life of all shapes and varieties, including many tribes of early humans, flocked to this budding paradise.

The first mortal inhabitants of the land they came to call Khem soon found that the price they would pay for Heaven on Earth was to live as obedient subjects to a host of deathless masters. In their wisdom, the gods had chosen to make the most beautiful land in Creation their home on the living plane. And it is in this place that their city arose, dotted with dazzling palaces and monuments of flawlessly worked stone. Here the gods rested long, hot days in private luxury, rising after nightfall to walk freely among their living worshippers.

Although the kine lived to serve (and, indeed, often served with their lives), the gratitude bestowed upon them for faithful service were wondrous indeed. From the gods themselves the mortals were taught new and more efficient ways to make their living community thrive. Their sovereign lords instructed them, fittingly, on the arts of domestication and husbandry. These techniques were applied to everything possible, and these ancient Egyptians had soon domesticated wheat, barley, sheep, goats and cattle. Donkeys were put to use for transport, and pigs were kept in farms outside the city. One god in particular taught his subjects a deep reverence for all animals, and it is believed that from him that they learned to keep them as sacred aspects of the cycle of life. Some animals, such as the greyhound and the cat, were then given to the faithful as companions of their own — to be taken in to live with them in their homes.

From the other gods, the mortals learned of community, love, early science and design. One gave unto them the secret of flax, which was grown, spun into thread and woven into linen for the city's clothing. Another, presumably the designer of their own spectacular palaces, taught the people ways to live more securely, and soon their homes took on an even, rectangular shape, constructed of a much better brick. Another god poured his metalworking genius into their tools, which soon included harpoons, hoes, spindles, looms and drills for hollowing out stone vases. The people's use of flint for blades became more refined, and he assisted them in securing copper and other rare metals of the day. Yet another, one of the most favored among the kine by all accounts, took an active interest in their sense of community and pride. She encouraged recreation time to balance the heavy workload placed upon them, and was the most vocal proponent of leniency whenever transgression occurred. One of her greatest gifts to them was a powerful oral tradition — a method by which their songs and stories could live on through the ages — and the many incarnations of this gift remain to this night.

As is also fitting, the gods gave unto their people a deep pantheon of beliefs centered upon a strong religion. The dead, they were taught, were seen as holy — to be treasured and revered by the living. They were taught to sacrifice of themselves to those who passed on, and they supplied food and other items to the dead in their graves.

A word on the term "Jihad."

Although many of my countrymen take some measure of offense at its use, I often wonder if they would still feel the way, should they learn of the term's true origins. By all accounts, the usage of the modern word to describe the silent war being waged among the clan founders actually descends from a sect of Islamic Kindred called the Ashirra. During the nights of the Arab conquest, visionary undead embraced these new "Muslims" for their character and strength of purpose. It is reported that, following this initial period, several of these Ashirra Kindred banded together to discuss the spiritual ramifications of their newfound existence. A few within this philosophical circle, after learning the truth about the War of Ages, began to refer to their progenitors' struggle as "the Great Jihad." Centuries later, after having fallen into the hands of countless (and careless) European Kindred, the term became known as simply "the Jihad." For better or for worse, the practice of its use as such continues to this night.

They chanted dirges to their fallen loved ones and observed holy days and nights in their names. Reverence for the lords of eternity and the afterlife that awaited them became paramount, and it is from this greatest of traditions that the greatest of struggles would arise. This struggle — the clash of the eldest among the undead — would come to be known as the Jihad.

THE FLOOD AND THE FALL

Whether due to the inscrutable workings of fate or to a terrible hubris of its residents, the great city of the gods was doomed. Part of the reason for this invariably lies in the fact that not even the gods dwelt among one another as equals. By all accounts, 13 stood above the rest. The Thirteen were the creators of the others, though the sum total of their progeny at the time remains unknown. One among this Thirteen, an exile named Ser, came to the city long after the others and their broods had been dwelling there for centuries. He was an outsider, and seemed loath to even attempt to fit in with those of his kind.

With his arrival, however, the circle was complete. All the direct progeny of the Three were at last brought together in a single city — the city of the gods. It is unknown why the Thirteen so strongly desired to attend one another here, but it is presumed to have something to

THE FATHER OF LIES

Although much is known about the legacy of degeneracy he left behind, what is truly known about Set himself? Legends vary wildly about his character, even in his breathing days. Some say that he was a brave warrior during this time, possessed of the stoutest of hearts, who lived only to serve his lord and liege, Ra. Others say that his soul was borne of darkness and that he toiled in service to the mythical serpent Apophis who wages an eternal crusade to swallow the sun and bathe the land in night everlasting. Whatever the case, it is suspected that he was ultimately banished from the kingdom of Egypt, to be Embraced in exile some time thereafter. It is also assumed that following his Embrace he continued to travel and was, after Haqim, the last to be brought to dwell in the city of the gods.

The fact that Set was away during the fall is largely unquestioned. The reasons for his absence, however, are hotly disputed. Some say he was merely gripped once more with the wanderlust for which he had always been known. Others, however, are quick to ascribe an ulterior motive. His followers themselves paint a picture of their god as an avenger — a prodigal son who returns to find his sire murderously betrayed. They claim that he carries on his struggle in this Jihad in the name of his beloved sire and the others among the Three. Given this, and the fact that it was shortly after Set's departure that the chaos resulting in the fall finally erupted, it can be seen as a matter of simply putting the pieces together. The seeds of the corruption for which Set is so well known could easily have been sown in the minds of his brethren before he ever took leave of the city. There is some credence to this idea, as the move would have left his hands "clean" of the war itself, while paving the way for a vengeful crusade that would last for millennia to come.

Although little is known for sure about the hazy events of those nights, Set is still referred to by many as the Father of Lies, and it is wisest not to summarily discount any theory surrounding him or his terrible legacy.

do with Caine's warnings to his own progeny before he departed them. The Thirteen, it seemed, felt competent to learn from their sire's mistakes without repeating them. Whatever the case, it is likely that when the misanthropic Set finally did appear, he did so bearing a distinct, personal agenda (the ramifications of which are, quite obviously, far-reaching).

As had been foretold by Caine himself, the fathers were to suffer the knives of their own sons, the price, some would say, for the arrogance in their design. The progenitors, by ancient law, had forbidden their childer from creating progeny of their own. Their rule had been so staunch, their

governance so unforgiving, that they hunted down and ritually executed any and all would-be offenders — sire and childer. When the time for revolt arrived, as it unquestionably would, each of the Thirteen was to be present for it... except for the one called Set. After only a brief stay in the city of the gods, he had departed once more for the lands of Assyria (again, for reasons unknown). Shortly thereafter, the collective broods of the Thirteen rose up in a patricidal rage that shook the very heavens.

It is usually at this point that the various accounts begin to differ. Some tell of a carefully planned conspiracy, brought to dire fruition after an age in the making; others of a swift and brutal revolution, sparked by some single event or declaration. The saddest of these accounts, however, is the paean that laments of the inevitable end of a golden era, brought about by the petty but equally inevitable infighting of the Thirteen themselves. What-

Bahr de Nil

Egyptian mythology and folklore are full of anecdotal tales about the so-called origins of various otherwise perfectly "explainable" phenomena, such as the cause of certain bodily ailments or the motions of heavenly bodies. A learned Kurdish scholar of Egyptian heritage once told me of a curious creation myth he had come across surrounding the origin of the river Nile.

The fable tells that during the time of the fall of the city of the gods, the forces that shook it apart were so powerful that heaven and earth met for the briefest of instants, cracking the surface of the latter down the length of its entirety (to the ancients, Egypt was the whole of the world). The crack then filled with the tears of the gods, becoming thence the river Nile — the source and the fulcrum of life and death to the Egyptian people forever after. The story further explains that this is also the reason why the Nile runs south to north, unlike every other river — because of the unique origin of its creation.

Although fanciful and fully in keeping with similar creation myths of the time, I must say that I find the allegory a bit fantastic. I do, however, support the notion of the river's importance and fully believe, as you will see, in its powerful and often inexplicable relations with the land itself.

ever the truth is, the city of the gods was destined to fall, and fall it did.

Many tales have been passed down through the ages surrounding that fateful event. Some speak of a battle so fearsome it tore the sky asunder in fissures of lightning, pouring the wrath of God onto the city below. Some whisper of an almost palpable pall of silence spreading through the carnage like a plague, while others insist that the earth's first sandstorm rose up against the gods and their city, burying it forever. Whatever the truth, when the dust settled upon what the raging childer had wrought, many of the Third Brood as well as one of the Thirteen were no more — and with them died the beautiful dream that was their city.

AFTERMATH

The kine who had served the Thirteen suffered as their gods had suffered, and little endured of their numbers in Khem after the destruction of the city. No peasants remained to till the fields, tend the herds or mind the religious rites. The exodus that ensued resulted not only in the scattering of the few remaining tribes that had survived the fall, but in the Antediluvians themselves. Whether out of despair or a strange desire to emulate their first and only remaining ancestor, they each departed the land that had been their home for so long. According to

Arabi Saharanymon

The desertification of Egypt was no anomaly — no ecological fluke, as some have postulated. It is the firm belief of this chronicler that the vanities of the eldest among the undead were its true cause. In their arrogance, they awoke the life not only from the mortals who lived to serve them, but from the very land itself with the sheer might of their discord. Of all the myths surrounding the city's fall, I believe its cause to be a terrible sandstorm, the first of many ushering in the damn of Egypt as a God-forsaken wasteland. Although I would scarcely dare repeat the notion to some of my "fellow" scholars, I believe with all my heart that this desert — once the land surrounding the greatest of cities — owes the Antediluvians nothing less than its existence.

The thought is a sad one. Who knows how the face of Egypt might appear tonight, were it not for their terrible pride so very long ago?

one story, all but one felt the need to abandon the continent entirely — at least for a time. This single exception left Khem as well, but was said to have moved further inland, there to make the deepest parts of the "dark continent" his own domain.

During this time, the land began to desiccate, shifting first to savanna and prairie and then, finally, to desert. The only immutable constant of this process — the one power great enough to withstand all depredations, no matter the source — was the mighty river Nile. The land's peoples naturally began to move closer to the river until, by the sixth millennium BC, they congregated either within a few miles of its banks or within a few miles of its delta, which had spread out along its rambling path to the Mediterranean Sea. In contrast to the surrounding desert, which would grow to account for 96 percent of the land of

THE ISIS FRAGMENTS

The only extant firsthand record of the story of Set and Osiris is this ancient papyrus, said to be penned by Isis — sister-wife of Osiris and mother of Horus the Light-Bringer. It purportedly describes in some detail the events leading up to the death and rebirth of both Osiris and Horus. These fragments, however, seem to be strangely silent on the topic of Osiris' lineage — a question which has long puzzled Kindred chroniclers.

Who was Osiris' sire? Which among the Thirteen had prescience enough to see not only Set's return, but the powerful rivalry that would stem from it — a rivalry that continues on even to this night? In her account Isis recalls a pale figure called Typhon who visits her husband over successive nights, departing after having finally bestowed upon him the Embrace. The record details neither (his) clan nor appearance and, as there are no other recorded references to any among the Thirteen going by such a name since, we must deduce our answer by other means.

Various accounts describe the abilities for which Osiris developed immediate aptitude — the vigor of a dozen bulls, the sudden irresistible power in his speech, movement as the desert winds. But even these do not fully help us to realize his lineage, as he soon developed other abilities, each to an almost frustratingly equal proficiency. Perhaps it was the eventual development of his own unique gift, the tenets of which were brought back from the underworld after his second death, that will lead us to the answer. It is rumored that those of no lineage, the clanless (often times called, rather rudely, "the Abandoned"), seem to have a propensity for the development of their own peculiar skills. Perhaps this was the secret that Osiris kept from posterity for so long: Could it be that he was the first among these Caitiff — the Camite progenitor of a clan of clanless?

Egypt, this strip of land was still fertile, and its powerful ecosystem supplied the people with all the tools and foods that they would need to survive.

The Lord of Khem at this time was a native son and survivor of the fall named Asar — also called Wen-Nefer the Beautiful One, or Osiris, to the many who have followed his epic story in ages since. He had been a royal among the kine, the mortal heir to the throne of Egypt, and was brother to none other than Set himself. One among the Thirteen, perhaps knowing what was to come, Embraced Asar during his brother's curious absence and entrusted to him the protection of the land of the dead and its secrets. As a god of the dead in a land of the dead, he held tremendous power, ruling openly from his court in what would come to be the land around modern Cairo.

Osiris' brother did return, as had been foretold. But with him came an army of darkness, composed of servile mortals, *ghûls* and those of his own black blood. Set, it seems, had returned prepared for terrible war.

Of the Thirteen, he alone claimed Egypt as his homeland and, in the tradition of our kind, had come to declare domain over what was finally his own. If his family had banished him, decreeing that he would not rule Khem as a mortal, then he would return — to rule Khem as a god.

As he had reportedly been instructed by his mysterious sire, Osiris had spent the interim years building a cadre of elite soldiers from his own blood. These warriors, the Children of Osiris, were his sole line of defense in the Jyhad. Thus, a terrible battle was fought among the reeds of the river Nile between the forces of Osiris and those of his brother, the Antediluvian. As Osiris was only a handful of years undead and his brother was one of the most powerful Kindred in existence, the outcome was inevitable. Osiris was slain, his body angrily rent into 13 pieces which were then scattered across Khem in an attempt to forever remove his stain from the seat of its rulership.

RESURRECTION

In his arrogance, Set had overlooked Osiris' sister-wife, Isis. She was, by all accounts, a powerful sorceress who soon set about retrieving the gristle and marrow of her husband's corpse. She was largely successful in this endeavor, retrieving the entirety of the dismembered Osiris save his phallus, which had apparently (and bizarrely) been eaten by a crab. In an involved ritual, she bound her husband's body together in rawhide and invoked a powerful spell. Her potent magics, along with a considerable blood sacrifice from both oxen and his remaining followers, drew the spirit of Osiris back from the underworld — and back to unlife.

Osiris had been to the land of the dead and back, and the experience had forever changed him. He returned not only with newfound wisdom, but with the tenets of a faith that would later grow into a powerful ability enabling him a degree of control over the raging Beast within all our



kind. This power would remain the grandest legacy to his followers for millennia to come.

Possibly the most important gift bestowed upon Osiris during his time in the underworld, however, was the secret to a rite which would enable him to save his son, Horus. In cruel punishment for the pride of his father, Set had removed Horus' eye following the great battle, and the frightful wound was now slowly killing the boy. Upon Osiris' return, Isis took from him this secret and began work on her mightiest spell yet — one which would cure their son by turning him into an undying soldier of virtue.

Nevertheless, Set's agents had discovered Osiris' return, and soon the armies of Apophis were once again darkening their door. Another great battle ensued and, once again, Osiris fell under the might of his Antediluvian brother. According to the Isis Fragments, however, her son Horus, known thenceforth as Her-Nedj-Tef-Ef — the "Avenger of His Father" — rose from his funerary wrappings in a warlike fervor and rushed to his mother's aide. With Horus' help, the tide of the battle soon turned, and Set was forced into exile once again.

THE FIRST DYNASTY

This was an eternal struggle born, forever pitting Set and his minions against the followers of Osiris and Horus and their allies. In the centuries that followed, these forces slowly gravitated in their warring toward mutual bases of operations, with Osiris' line more or less holding dominion over the north — called Lower Egypt — and Set waging his unholy war from his place of exile, further south along the Nile in Upper Egypt. As the land's mortal populations grew, with more and more settlements founded under the aegis of the opposing groups, the country itself soon split into two separate kingdoms — the lower Delta in the north, heralded by a red crown, and the kingdom of Upper Egypt under Set's command, symbolized by a white crown.

Circa 3100 BC, this paradigm changed drastically for the first time since Osiris' Final Death. The followers of Osiris and Horus were to capitalize on a bizarre event that devastated both the mortal and Kindred populations of

the time. If the stories are to be believed, a period of days referred to as the Week of Midnight Sun descended upon Egypt, bringing with it pestilence and burning destruction. Although the vampiric remnants of Osiris' line suffered as well, it was the Followers of Set, who are far more sensitive to the light, who were hit the hardest. The sun spent merciless nights ferreting out Set's childer, and, when the days of light unrelenting had passed, several of

THE WEEK OF MIDNIGHT SUN

A little-known fable among the ancient Egyptians concerns an "avenger goddess" called Sakhmet. The citizens of pre-Dynastic Egypt would soon come to know her as the agent of their own divine destruction — a lesson shared by those who dared oppose the light and follow the dark god, Set. Those who witnessed her terrible rampage called her "the Eye of Ra" though, in her own right, she was known as the "Lady of Pestilence." A terrible maiden who brought and held command over plague, it is in this aspect that the Kindred will find the most to learn.

As the story goes, the sun god sent his avenging eye against the people of Khem for plotting to usurp his power over the land. In truth, the growing dominion of the Lord of Darkness began to worry the celestial power, and he struck out in the two ways that would hurt Set and his childer the most. The first way was to bring the full power of the sun to bear during a time when the undead were strongest. A crimson sun shined over all of Khem for almost a full week, through day and night, incinerating numerous Setites as they awoke "after dark" to find the light still shining in the sky. The second method was the more insidious by far. Ra invoked the twin aspects of the goddess Sakhmet who, descending from the heavens, brought the full measure of his righteous wrath to bear over the second target — humanity itself. Sakhmet tore through Upper Egypt's villages, decimating the residents and leaving pestilence her only gift to those who survived her initial rages. What few Setites remained were unable to safely feed for some time thereafter and, it is reported, were reduced to feeding from carrion and other unsavory sources until the plague had run its course.

According to the story, Ra restored Sakhmet to a more benign aspect after her work was through (reportedly by tricking her into drinking vast quantities of brew that had been colored to look like blood). Nonetheless, it was an episode that humbled the servants of the dark god and subsequently enabled the followers of Osiris and Horus to prevail — at least for a time.

(Note: For more information on Sakhmet and the Week of Midnight Sun, see *Rage Across Egypt*).

On the "legend" of Sakhmet... Although clearly a significant (and nearly catastrophic) event in the history of our kind in Egypt, I have found only a single record of the Week of Midnight Sun in all my research. This reference was received directly from a follower of Set who specializes in the history of his clan. He passed it along only because the tale's validity was so highly questionable that it had become something of a legend among his colleagues — or so he claimed.

Set's line were left as ash in its wake. One of these victims included Set's most powerful general in the war against the north — a child of his own known only as the Scorpion King. A merciless mortal tyrant before being brought into undeath by his Antediluvian sire, the Scorpion King spearheaded the Setite resistance to Sakhmet's (q.v.) rampage and, like so many others under his command, he fell beneath his clan's crippling weakness during those sunlit nights.

In the north, the followers of Horus (who had emerged largely unscathed) took advantage of the fact that much of Upper Egypt's power as a kingdom had been laid to waste. Lower Egypt's king, a devout man from Abydos named

ON BEING PHARAOH

As legend tells it, a true Pharaoh was alleged to possess three individual qualities. These were authority, perception and justice, and each was purported to both signify and sanctify Pharaoh's divine right to rule. The way Pharaoh carried himself was often the characteristic most often seen by his followers, and it is this first divine quality that could be falsified with the greatest ease. Most commoners, afraid of the power inherent in their ruler, already presumed a certain degree of majesty in the office, and Pharaoh was often might poise, oratory and crowd control while in his youth.

Perceptiveness was often seen as Pharaoh's most divinely inspired quality and, ironically, was often the hardest one to discern either way. A good cadre of advisors, as well as some slick (albeit ancient) spin-doctoring, could often make Pharaoh come out seeming omniscient in the eyes of his subjects. Some Pharaohs, much to the wonder of their courts, were often possessed of a legitimate insight so keen as to make those around them true believers in his divinity.

Pharaoh's sense of justice was often times the most telling legacy he could leave behind, so the issue was often afforded much attention at court. Not only was he concerned about how he would be viewed by posterity but, to the ancient Egyptians, a truly just ruler was guaranteed a most agreeable afterlife. Although enlightened self-interest kept many Pharaohs from losing perspective entirely, the issue of what "just" really is has always been up to wide interpretation. Whether these qualities were truly indicative of a great leader is largely irrelevant. The truth remains that ancient Egypt grew into the most powerful and advanced civilization the world had yet known. The authoritarian system under Pharaoh led to a stable society that provided for the needs of the people, promoted education, permitted free worship of God, and allowed the people to learn from their experiences in this life while being able to look forward to one after death.

Narmer, was spurred to conquer the south and unite Egypt under one banner — the falcon of Horus. He did so with great success, establishing a central capital in the city of Sakkara, later to be dubbed Memphis. Narmer has since been identified with Menes, and is generally credited with being the first in a long line of dynastic rulers called Pharaohs.

But Set would soon slither from the darkness. During the reign of the fourth king, Peribsen, Setites managed to infiltrate the court, convincing Pharaoh (against the advice of his Osirian advisors) to mount campaigns into the northeast delta. During these operations, while away from those who could prevent any such undue influence, the young ruler turned away from the worship of Horus. He returned a staunch supporter of Set, introducing the cult into mainstream worship throughout Egypt. He also changed all royal seals to bear a strange animal figure — referred to since as the Typhonian Beast — and this remains the first official record of such. This unique animal and its distinctive shape would come to be synonymous with Set forever after.

The Osirian League, as they purportedly came to be called, did not wait long to return Egypt to their hands and, after the death of Peribsen, put a plan into effect that would keep the cult of Set weak for centuries to come. Their chosen, a warrior named Khasekhem, soon took the throne of Egypt under their guidance. Once Pharaoh, Khasekhem — a loyal worshipper of Horus — mounted brutal assaults against the cult of Set throughout his domain. His extant stele put the number of slain Libyans (Set's mercenaries of choice) during his conquests at 47,209 — a massacre of epic proportions, given the time period. After the years of conquest, the king changed his name to Khasekhemui Nebuihotpimef, meaning "the two powers are at peace in him," to reflect and emphasize Osirian dominance over all of Egypt once more.

AN AGE OF KINGS

Under the careful aegis of the Osirian League, Egyptian culture blossomed. Although ever alert in awaiting Set's return, they took the opportunity that the relative quiet afforded them to tend the flock and see that it prospered. The ancient Egyptians soon developed wondrous new inventions, such as paper made from papyrus, and began making bold advances in the areas of astronomy, geometry, numerology, surgery and architecture. It is in this last field, particularly in that of mortuary architecture, that the ancient peoples of Egypt would come to astound the world.

In the 27th century BC, Netjerikhet Djoser, the most prominent king of the Third Dynasty, ordered for his tomb the first pyramid built of stone. The architectural genius behind this development, Imhotep, was renowned for his knowledge and had previously counseled Djoser when the land was suffering from a terrible famine. Using local limestone, Imhotep constructed the famous step-pyramid of Sakkara, a large structure with stepped-back recesses.

THE PROPHECY OF NEFER-RA-HAU

The end of this golden era would be hemided by an oracle in Sneferu's court. The Seeress Nefer-Ra-Hau foretold of how, after an age of strife and civil war, a hidden savior would come to unify Egypt once again. Pharaoh, who sat incredulous but entrapt, had her prophecy carefully recorded thus:

The Asiatics will move in with strong arms, disturb the harvest and take away cattle at plowing. The land completely perishes; not even so much dirt as is found under a black fingernail will survive. The sun will be covered and will not shine. The rivers run dry, and winds will oppose each other. A foreign bird will be born in the marshes, and people will let it approach because of their need. Fish ponds will be damaged and the land will be prostrate because of it. The Asiatic enemies who arose in the east will descend into Egypt. No protector will listen, and the wild beasts will drink at the rivers of Egypt.

The land will be in disorder, upside-down. Men will take up the weapons of war in confusion. People will beg for the bread of blood and will laugh sick laughter. Death will become so common that people no longer weep nor fast in mourning. People will turn their backs while one man kills another. Sons and brothers will be as enemies, and a man will kill his own father. Everyone will speak of love, but everything good will have disappeared. Property shall be taken from them and given to outsiders. Citizens shall be treated as hateful in order to silence the people. If someone answers a statement, an arm will go out with a stick and men shall say, "Kill him."

As the land becomes poorer, its administrators will increase, and taxes will become heavy. The world shall turn in reverse: the weak will have arms and men will salute the one who before saluted. The undermost will now be on top. People shall come to live in the city of the dead. The poor man shall be wealthy and paupers shall eat the sacred bread. The Heliopolitan nome, birthplace of all the gods, will exist no longer.

Only when all seems lost to despair shall a king emerge from the south. Amonit the Triumphant, who will wear the white and red crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, shall rise and ride forth to claim his destiny. The evil and rebellious will subdue themselves out of fear and respect of him. The Asiatics will fall to his sword, the Libyans to his flame. The serpents shall be cast out of the land of green prosperity, as will all wrongdoers.

Justice will come.

Although later deified by the ancient Egyptians for his genius, posterity gives no evidence to suggest that Imhotep was anything other than what he appeared to be — an ordinary, if brilliant mortal man.

It was indeed a time for powerful mortals, and the great builders of the Fourth Dynasty were the very embodiment of

On prophecy and papyrus

I came upon this piece quite recently (you will, no doubt, understand if I can not divulge the source) and was stunned not only by the story it has to tell, but my ignorance in not having seen it previously. Its discovery was one of the main reasons for my decision to begin the work you now read, and my subsequent illumination demands that I reprint it here.

I leave the discovery and interpretation of its many individual truths (the foreign bird, the land of green prosperity, etc.) to each individual, and would not use this as a forum for their discussion in any event. I hope that posterity will see the papyrus for what it undoubtedly represents.

the idea. Extant writings from the time indicate that the kings had gained an unprecedented power and authority over the people, who had come to worship their king as a god. They demonstrate not only great loyalty to their god-king, but also the advancing skill of their architects, engineers, artisans and builders. In 2613 BC the new Pharaoh Sneferu inaugurated the Fourth Dynasty and oversaw the building of two more, larger pyramids. And though it was he who was responsible for the world's first true geometric pyramid, the Red Pyramid at Dashur, Sneferu was to be outdone only a single generation later — by his successor and son, Khufu.

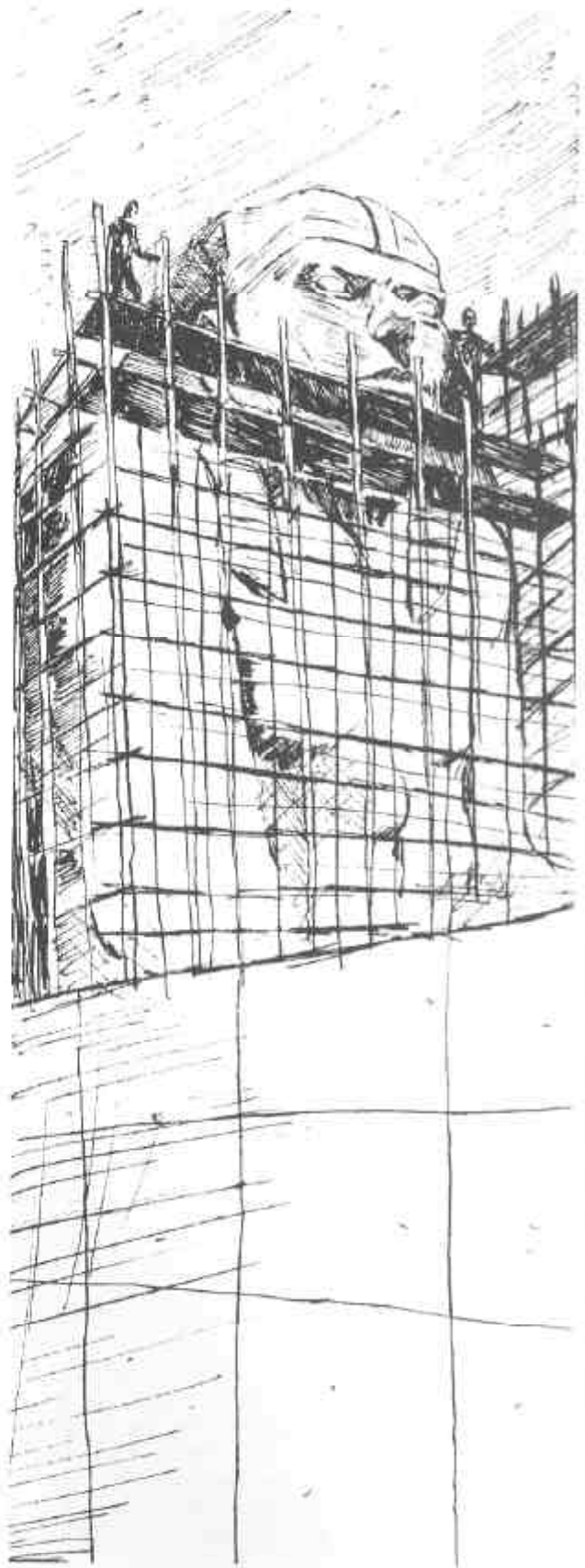
Khufu was less liked, but he commanded obedience from his subjects by promising fine tombs for royal families and high officials in a cemetery next to his pyramid at Giza. He is remembered for being a slave driver of sorts, due to the immense manpower the Great Pyramid's construction invariably must have taken. Compared to the large and commodious houses of the rich, the crowded mud-brick and thatched barracks of the pyramid workers lend some credence to this claim and, at the bare minimum, confirm the disparity between the social castes during Khufu's reign. He was succeeded by his son, Khafre, who built another pyramid almost as large immediately next to that of his father. In his own right, Khafre is most well-known for commissioning the construction of the famous sphinx, to be carved out of the nearby rock, and according to legend, bearing the face of Pharaoh himself. Due to the unparalleled building accomplished in their successive reigns, is not surprising that both Khufu and Khafre were remembered in tradition as having been extremely difficult rulers.

The Riddle of the Sphinx

Of all of this land's secrets, the sphinx is at once the most obvious and the most hidden. Some colleagues of mine have often pointed out that the sphinx faces entirely the wrong direction to be fulfilling the purpose for which it was supposedly intended, and many believe that the face it wears tonight is not the one it originally bore. Although theories abound, ranging from the most sedate academia has to offer to the wild assertions of men claiming that the statue's right paw is the cockpit of some extraterrestrial vessel, little is known for sure about the guardian of the pyramids at Giza. After all this time, the enigma of the statue itself — the sphinx's ultimate riddle — remains one of Egypt's most mysterious.

Menkaure, who followed Khafre, is credited by Herodotus with liberating the people from the excessive labor of the great pyramid builders. As Pharaoh, he reopened the temples and returned to ritual sacrifices, which had been ignored in favor of more scholarly pursuits during the reigns of his predecessors. The death of Pharaoh's only daughter, however, would signal a change in both his rule and the days to come. What may have been the subtlest move to date on the part of Set's followers — the engineering of her demise — opened the door to Egypt once more. King Menkaure withdrew in deep mourning over his daughter (as they knew he would), and the many affairs of state suffered. Although his people cried out in desperation, Pharaoh could hear none of it; he lived only to mourn his lost love, lavishing grand attention on her mausoleum while ignoring his subjects' needs and the security of his own domain. His advisors scrambled, the priesthood quarreled, and the kingdom of Egypt splintered beneath the weight of sudden and widespread chaos.

During the confusion, a powerful family headed by a Setite named Acthoes arose in the Faiyum. This family came to rule the central portion of Egypt as the Ninth and Tenth Dynasties, turning Heracleopolis into another stronghold of Setite power. Acthoes, by all accounts some kind of Setite apostate, was known for his open rulership over and limitless cruelty to his mortal subjects. According to legend, he perpetrated so much evil upon the Egyptian people that he soon went mad from his own depredations, being finally carried off by a crocodile. Although himself gone, Acthoes left a legacy of rulers from his family in Heracleopolis, each continuing the tradition he began — that of a distinct separation from and authority over the other city-states.



Concerning the Sand-Snakes.

It may have been this battle between Acthoes and his Theban rivals that first established the standard by which Egypt seems to exist tonight — that of parochial “dynasties” of Setites heading clan affairs in any given city, each as insular as the next. Although I have not been to Alexandria or Aswan in many years, the rumors that float in concerning the Setites of both cities seem to bear this theory out; neither camp thinks too fondly of the Cairene Setites, by all accounts, and the feeling appears to be more than mutual.

Thebes was not only the most powerful city-state of those under Heracleopolis’ so-called sovereignty, but the most enraged by the separatist Acthoes and his descendants’ claims of supremacy. Although the two apparently attempted co-existence for a time — most likely the influence of the older and wiser Setites of both camps — the separate peace was not to last. The conflict between the two came to a head in a terrible battle between the Thebans and the armies of King Neferkare — the first recorded large-scale dispute between opposing Setite forces. Although triumphant that night, Neferkare’s victory was short-lived. The Ninth Dynasty came to an end after the Theban revolution of 2133 BC, establishing Theban independence under Mentuhotep I and returning the two city-states to their previous, warring condition. But with the death of King Merikare in 2040 BC, and the sudden damage it subsequently caused the Heracleopolitan government, Thebes seized its chance. Mentuhotep invaded Heracleopolis in a final, bloody siege, returning full control over all of Egypt to the Setites of the Thebes once again — thus ending the legacy of Acthoes. Ironically, Mentuhotep is credited as being the second unifier of the north and south in Egyptian history, as well as the inaugurator of the Middle Kingdom — his rewards for loyal service to his ambitious Setite masters.

Mentuhotep II undertook extensive building of mortuary temples in Upper Egypt and sent off expeditions to Nubia, Libya, Syria and Sinai for materials and men. He boasted of dominating the “nine peoples of the bow” — Egypt’s traditional enemies — by clubbing the eastern lands, striking down the hill-countries, trampling the deserts and enslaving the Nubians and the Libyans. In establishing order throughout Egypt, the process of recentralization had begun, and the Setites of Thebes now dominated the administration. Succeeding his father in 2009 BC, Mentuhotep III organized an expedition of 3,000 men to travel east from Koptos to re-establish trade

A word on the “god” Amun.

The most probable origin of the sudden rise to prominence of the worship of Amun lies in the Ovirian League. Actively spreading the worship of Osiris or Horus would have been detrimental to their revolutionary efforts at that time. Instituting a substitute god, however, a new god whose worship would undermine that of Set, would accomplish the same result. The fact that he was “the hidden” merely indicates his status as a god of the dispossessed — those who wished to strike back at the establishment that had kept them powerless for so long.

with Punt via the Red Sea. After 12 years, he was succeeded by the brief reign of Mentuhotep IV, whose vizier ordered and personally led another massive expedition to the Red Sea, purportedly following a nighttime vision he had received from the gods. There, the advisor miraculously found the stone for a sarcophagus where a gazelle had dropped her young. In returning with both the stone and the tale, he forever changed the course of history. This vizier — a man by the name of Amunemhet — established himself as the next king, ending the era of the war-torn chaos that had become Egypt.

Although it is true that Amunemhet fell to his assassins that fateful night, there is a myth surrounding the event that merits relating.

According to the story, Amunemhet rose to face his killers as they entered, drawing the sword that he had so often carried to battle in his younger days. At the very moment when his skillful sword-arm took the head of the first assailant, he was seized by a vicious heart attack — lolling him instantly and painlessly. Although the enraged assassins proceeded to mangle the condition, making a mangled ruin of the body in the process, the fact remains that they had been nonetheless denied the satisfaction of their enterprise. Some versions of the tale go on to relate how the savior’s spirit remained for long enough to assure the assassins’ subsequent capture and execution before departing, finally and deservedly, for the paradise lands of Duat.

THE HIDDEN SAVIOR

The accession of Amunemhet I was justified as fulfilling the prophecy of Nefer-Ra-Hau. As his name indicates, he promoted the worship of the god Amun — the “hidden.” This secretive god eventually attained widespread popularity in Egypt, and his name is probably the origin of the word that is still used for the ending of prayers. After seizing power, Amunemhet’s true intentions (and loyalties) became apparent, and he acted quickly, moving the capital north to Memphis once again. The chiefs of the local nomes were restored to their powers and privileges, and their districts became clearly defined along the Nile. In reality, these and other key systems were implemented by the Osirian League to prepare the populace for impending war against Setite forces in Upper Egypt.

During his 30-year reign (20 as sole Pharaoh, and 10 with his son as co-regent) Amunemhet knew no peace. Set and his chosen assailed this so-called messiah constantly, both with guile and with sword, and Amunemhet struggled nightly to keep his kingdom united. As he aged, his son Sesostris began to take on more and more duty and when it came time to take the fight to the foe again (this time in Libya), Sesostris went in his stead — the proud leader of his father’s armies. And it was during this time, while Sesostris was away at war, that Setite agents struck an artful blow.

The Libyan threat had been a smoke screen, intending to divide power within Amunemhet’s court. While his son was away, the savior Pharaoh, left with little to safeguard him at court, would be silenced once and for all. Late one night, a cadre of conspiring eunuchs (to a man, *ghils* of the same ambitious Setite) sneaked into the royal chambers, setting upon Amunemhet while he lay in bed. Although found unsurprised, he was no longer the warrior he once was, and the Pharaoh fell before the company of empowered betrayers. In a curious twist of fate, the assassination ultimately accomplished nothing. The aged Amunemhet had already committed to resigning all temporal power over Egypt to his son who, much to the chagrin of the presumptuous Setite conspirators, soon returned from Libya victorious... and very much alive.

In 1878 BC, Sesostris III became king and somehow managed to centralize power over the regions of Lower, Middle and Upper Egypt by administrating a unit of three officers under command of the vizier. Under this system, the decreasing power of the nobles allowed for the development of a larger middle class, and Egypt’s social stratification grew less severe. Concerned about the growing Setite forces in “wretched Kush,” Pharaoh had a channel excavated through the first cataract to allow passage for his warships. He attacked, devastating the luntiu of Nubia by wiping out their settlements, carrying off their women, fouling their wells and burning their grain fields. Although increasing numbers of Asiatics immigrated to Egypt to work as servants, the entrance of Nehesyu (Negroes, whom Pharaoh had been advised to

view as Setite pawns) was limited to trading and official business following the war.

During the 45-year reign of Amunemhet III, development continued of the mining and the irrigation systems of Lake Moeris at Faiyum. This long period of prosperity attracted even more immigrants, who began to grow into a necessary niche of the Egyptian social infrastructure. His successor, Amunemhet IV, ruled quietly and for only nine short years. His was rule was followed by that of his sister Sebekneferu, a woman of whim and appetite who took for her court advisors a cadre of slick-skinned river people. Sebekneferu, like the woman who had ruled before her, was the last of a dynasty; with the demise of the Middle Kingdom in 1786 BC came the demise of the Osirian League once more. The petty line of rulers that followed was easily manipulated into using even more increasing numbers of Asiatic immigrants, and it was this utility that was to prove their downfall.

THE SHEPHERD KINGS

In the eastern delta, the number of Asiatic nomads and shepherds had been increasing steadily. Set’s plan was to use this veritable army of idle peasants as the instrument of his reclamation of Egypt. Under his guidance, this pastoral people took up arms, consumed with a newly cultivated appetite for conquest. They overwhelmed the city of Avaris in short order, establishing it as the capital for what became the Fifteenth Dynasty of the Hyksos: the Shepherd Kings. There they adopted Set as their god, meeting strangely little resistance from the most powerful priesthood in Avaris at the time — that of the god Baal.

In 1674 BC, the leader of the Hyksos, a disciple of Set’s calling himself Apophis, drove his army further into Lower Egypt. Guided by brilliant Setite strategy, the shepherd army sieged, encountering little opposition from the now-beleaguered city of Memphis. With the fall of the Osirian League’s capital, their remnants scattered like dust across cracked limestone. Apophis immediately instituted the worship of Set in the city, ordering his men to butcher anyone who was found to be still loyal to Horus.

Under Hyksos rule, Egypt became a war zone. Even those who felt no loyalty to the Osirian League resented the foreign occupation, and they chafed under it. Osirian dissidents encouraged this revolutionary behavior, some fleeing to the north and south to sponsor would-be rulers of smaller city-states throughout Egypt. One such success was found in a man named Seqenenre, who took control of Thebes and ruled there as its Seventeenth-Dynasty king. He became such a thorn in Apophis’ side that a shadow war erupted, resulting in the assassination of Seqenenre. Although successful, the victory proved a Pyrrhic one for Set — the seeds of rebellion had already been planted.

The expulsion of the Hyksos was finally accomplished by a warrior-patriot named Ahmose, the younger brother of the great Egyptian warrior Kamose. After no small measure



Stranger than fiction.

While it is true that Amunhotep's reign was borne of bitterness and retaliation on the part of his Setite masters, history allows for a curious view of his time as Pharaoh. Were it not for his ironic efforts to destroy that which the Osirian League had brought to the fore, we might not have the archaeological beauty that is the burial site for New Empire rulers in the Valley of the Kings.

of planning, as well as an early fund-raising effort, the conscripts of Ahmose were able to march on Avaris, sacking it in due course. For this victory, Ahmose is honored as the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty and the New Kingdom. His soldiers were rewarded with gold, land and former Setite thralls as personal slaves. When viewed from a historical perspective, all the measures implemented by the war hero Ahmose turned ancient Egypt into the world's first military aristocracy. His Osirian advisors, riding the frenzied wave of the Hyksos' expulsion, spurred Ahmose to follow up his victory by driving further into Upper Egypt. Set's minions still held considerable sway in the lower kingdom (regardless



of Ahmose) due to the decision, during the expedition, to march through Upper Egypt and into the Kush, which soon fell to his armies as well.

Concerning the significance of Queen Hatshepsut.

Although his rule was equally as foul as that of his predecessors, the age of an Egypt dominated by Set seems to have ended with the accession of Thutmose III. There is little vampiric evidence either way to account for this — the Osirian League had no more recovered from its losses than it had during the reign of Thutmose's father. Setite may simply "fill off" around this time and would continue to abate over the next nine centuries, culminating in the Persian conquest. It was almost as if all parties involved had mutually agreed to "put the war on hold" for a period of time following the reign of Queen Hatshepsut...

THE SERPENT COILS

Following the humbling defeat of the Hyksos, Set seems to have decided to strike at the heart of the problem. The women in the family of Ahmose had held considerable influence at court, including Pharaoh's sister Nefertiri whom he had made his wife. Nefertiri was brought under the influence of agents of Set for her brother's efforts in destroying the dream of an Egypt unified under Set's banner. They maneuvered the court of Ahmose into creating the religious office of "God's wife of Amun" which, in turn, marked the beginning of the worshipping of queens as divine as well as kings. In so doing, Set hoped to bring the very office that had plagued his rule for centuries under his sway — the office of Pharaoh. He found no small measure of success in this effort, leading to the rule of Amunhotep I, an Egyptian iconoclast who abandoned the building of pyramids and was the first to separate the temples from the tombs.

The Setite plan worked (though probably not for the reasons they believed), and Lower Egypt began to fall under their sway once again. A series of warmongering generals spearheaded an age of Setite supremacy, and their dominion reached its zenith under its greatest general, Thutmose I. Thutmose, who had acceded the throne by marrying the royal heiress, expanded the empire further than his predecessors, in time reaching as far as the

Euphrates River. He brought vicious campaigns against the Mitanni and the Nubians, all the while ferreting out Osirian dissidents. On his return to Thebes, he captured a Nubian chief loyal to Osiris and had his body hung head-down from the prow of his barge for several months while a cataract channel was repaired. Thutmose was brutal and merciless, and "lessons" such as this became commonplace among his subjects. Although the fighting spirit of its people remained, all of Lower Egypt groaned under the weight of Thutmose's barbarous reign.

His successor, Thutmose II, proved equally vile, but he died mysteriously in 1504 BC, after having ruled for only eight years. His wife and half-sister Hatshepsut acceded his throne, ruling alongside Thutmose III — his son by another woman. As he was only a child when his father died, the boy had to share power for 22 years with his stepmother and aunt, Queen Hatshepsut. Although Hatshepsut was (obviously) female, the oracle of Amun surprised the populace by declaring her Pharaoh — no other woman could ever claim such — and she was seen as Egypt's true ruler for the remainder of her long and prosperous reign. She was a beloved queen who expanded Egyptian interests abroad, overseeing several prosperous expeditions in her time. When Hatshepsut died, Thutmose III acceded the throne and, just as the Pharaohs before him had done, immediately began campaigns to extend the powers and borders of Egypt. Unlike his predecessors,

PATRON OF THE SUN

Cairo's "first" and most enigmatic Cainite remains a mystery, even to those of his own line. Historical accounts agree that he hailed from one of the coastal cities along the Mediterranean, but they differ as to whether it was Argos or Halicarnassus; either is possible, though the latter is more likely. The most widely accepted theory claims that when the Dorian conglomerate of cities known as the Hexapolis expelled Halicarnassus for breaches of temple etiquette (thus becoming the Pentapolis), Agonistes departed, seeking fortune and insight in the lands across the sea.

As a mortal, Agonistes had been fascinated by the intertwining concepts of death and afterlife, and was rumored to have actually sought out the Embrace some time around the 13th century BC. His thirst for knowledge was matched only by a boundless capacity for understanding that which was learned, and the commensurate drive to achieve that understanding. Agonistes' sire, an unknown Cainite of Babylonian extraction (if the legends are true), saw in him both this thirst and this drive, and graciously courted Agonistes into night unending.

Soon after, Agonistes was compelled to travel to the City of the Sun — a place that most of the native undead knew to avoid. The Damned, his sire instructed, were no longer meant to stand in the light of

God. Agonistes refused to accept this, however, and the two soon parted company. Agonistes' sire returned to Babylon, leaving his errant child to discover the painful truths of Cainite existence on his own.

As a Kindred, Agonistes was the closest thing that Heliopolis had ever had to a "savior." He donated heavily of himself in both time and effort to its people, and the modest area surrounding the Temple of Ra soon grew to become a vibrant city under his sponsorship. Agonistes also encouraged independent thought among the priesthood, though never to the exclusion of their own religious beliefs. Much like St. Thomas Aquinas and other latter-day religio-scientists, Agonistes believed in the advancement of scholarship under the aegis of religion. A deep and profound faith was required to exhort mortal man to greater heights of scientific achievement, and he encouraged the concurrent development of both among Heliopolis' priests. Indeed, his own existence as one of the Damned could only have further confirmed this fundamental belief.

For over a thousand years, the presence of Agonistes ensured that the light of Heliopolis — the light of wisdom and of truth — would outshine that of all others. But in the end, as Agonistes himself most assuredly knew, time itself would come to claim its due, extinguishing at last the brilliance of the City of the Sun.

A Snake in the Grass

Some decades ago, I had occasion to happen upon an anecdote concerning Pharaoh Psammetichus. According to the source, his so-called incompetence had been just the thing that the Setites — who gleefully welcomed the Persian invasion — had been waiting for. Although it is highly unlikely (for various reasons) that the Setites managed to bring Psammetichus under their vile influence while he held office, it is whispered that he was repaid for his ineptitude with the Curse of Caine after his deposition by the Persian emperor, Cambyses.

While I initially found the notion a tad unlikely — why would a Setite admit to having such indiscriminate Embracing practices? — as well as somewhat embarrassing to my self-respecting Caine, I did happen upon an individual some years later (a non-Setite, even) who claimed to know Psammetichus intimately. He even confirmed his age and the circumstances of his Embrace as they were related to me, though he could not confirm the clan of the Psammetichus he knew. If they are truly one and the same, and the Psammetichus of old still walks the night undead, I cannot help but wonder how such a Caine could ever have lasted so long.

however, he seems to have concentrated solely on issues of economics and foreign policy (such as the acquisition of Gaza and other territories), and he seems to have made little headway on Set's behalf in the ancient war against the Osirian League.

CITY OF THE SUN

In the sixth century BC, the oldest place of worship as well as scholarly thought in all the land of Egypt was destroyed. As a religious center, Heliopolis ("City of the Sun") had seen no equal. It had been the site of the sacred benben stone, as well as the home of the ancient temple of Ra, where it is said that writing was first developed. It was the On of the Bible, where Joseph married the daughter of the temple's high priest, Potiphar, and where the infant Jesus first uttered sound within its ruins, while his mother washed his clothes in a hieroglyphic trough.

Heliopolis was also peerless as a center of learning. It had been the world's nexus of mathematics and astronomy, being responsible for both the first 365-day calendar and 24-hour clock. It was to Egypt that the finest minds of Greece had come to study. According to legend, the philosophers and priests of Heliopolis were attended by a single child of Caine up until the night of their city's destruction. Although his original name remains a point of some contention, posterity has come to call the undead scholar of Heliopolis Agonistes.

After his Embrace (see "Patron of the Sun" sidebar), Agonistes had traveled far to join the monastic existence of those who studied at the City of the Sun. In so doing, he became one of the first Kindred to make a lasting mark on what was to become modern Cairo. It is unknown exactly how long Agonistes was in residence at Heliopolis, but it is known that he was present for its destruction at the hands of the Persian emperor.

PERSIAN CONQUEST

Under Cyrus the Great and his son, Cambyses, the Persian empire had spread far and wide, taking control of Babylon and other essential eastern territories. Cambyses had been planning an invasion of his wealthy neighbor to the west for over three years, and he had covered all the strategic bases, even accounting for the Egyptian army itself. One of Pharaoh's most prominent generals was a Greek mercenary from Halicarnassus named Phanes. Using tactics he had learned from his father, Cambyses successfully bribed the honorless Greek into defecting with his men to Persia.

The wily Persian emperor then nullified the Egyptian navy as a threat by playing to the one facet of the Egyptian mindset that he could count on: religion. The leader of the navy, a man named Udjahorresne, also happened to be a high priest of the god Neith. Cambyses had cleverly pledged his devotion to Neith shortly before, offering significant tribute to the god's primary temple in exchange for the admiral's inactivity during the impending invasion. Udjahorresne agreed, and it became a simple matter of waiting for the right moment to strike.

When the widely popular Pharaoh Amasis died, leaving Egypt in the hands of his incompetent son Psammetichus, Cambyses knew that the moment had arrived. Unlike his father, Psammetichus was weak and largely without the respect of his own priesthood, and in 525 BC, the Persian army swept into Egypt practically uncontested. With a former Egyptian general spearheading the assault and the Egyptian navy sitting idle in the Red Sea, the entire brilliant campaign was over in a matter of weeks.

Despite Psammetichus' military incompetence, however, the people of Egypt continued to resist the new occupation by the latest outsiders. Uprisings flared all around Egypt as the peasantry assembled to succeed where Pharaoh's ill-trained army had failed. Cambyses retaliated, bringing the

capitol of Memphis to its knees and sacking several other Nileside cities to cement control. He slaughtered the sacred Apis bull that was kept at the Temple of Ptah, establishing Memphis as the provincial capitol of the Persian empire. When these measures were found wanting, he contrived to strike a blow straight to the Egyptian heart — a lesson to those who would continue to resist that which *must* be.

Although the priests and scholars of Heliopolis had little to do with the peasant revolts, their city itself was a symbol of Egyptian greatness — a symbol which must be torn down as an example. Cambyses' men tore through the city until they reached the eternal Temple of the Sun, whereupon they were given the order to destroy the ancient site to its foundations. Agonistes, the mighty mentor of the Heliopolitan nome, watched unmoved as his people scrambled and his buildings burned. When the fires had cooled and little remained of what had been the oldest and finest institution of learning in the world, Agonistes had moved on... leaving those who remained in what was left of Heliopolis to start all over again.

BABYLON-IN-EGYPT

The first settlement in the area that remains to this night is an ancient fortress on the east bank heights of Al-Rasad, a spur of the Moqattam Hills. Some time around 600 BC, prisoners had been brought from the recently conquered Babylon to assist in the building of this riverside fortress. These Babylonian workers became the area's first permanent inhabitants, along with the detachment of soldiers for whom the fortress had been constructed. The site was chosen wisely, as the east bank just south of Heliopolis had once been used as a Pharaonic river crossing, using the island of Rhoda as a midway point. The Egyptian name of this Nileside encampment was Perhapi-On, meaning "river house of On" — or, the port of Heliopolis — but it soon came to be known elsewhere as Babylon-in-Egypt.

When Cambyses arrived, he brought with him a host of workmen from Babylon on the Euphrates. The primary purpose for this immigration was to complete the eastern canal to the Red Sea that Pharaoh Necho had begun some 90 years earlier. Cambyses understood the importance of the encampment that had grown around the fortress of Babylon. From here, one could control access to the Upper Nile, especially if a functioning canal existed. Such a canal would link Babylon to an east that had grown richer and more developed since Memphis' glory days. In addition, Babylon's proximity to Rhoda allowed for the easiest travel between banks to be found anywhere along the Nile. For Babylon-in-Egypt, east and west were never far away.

Although Babylon was geographically pivotal as a river crossing, the relatively new fortress and its inhabitants had little to offer the handful of Assamites who rode with Cambyses into Egypt. As such, their attentions were drawn elsewhere — further to the south, where the re-

One of the most interesting things about Alexander's conquest is the story of his journey to the Oracle of the Siwa Oasis. Egypt's new emperor made the trek through the Western Desert in search of truth, believing the Siwa Oracle could provide the answers to the questions burning within Alexander about his own destiny.

According to legend, the young general implored the Oracle to speak to him of monsters and of his place in all things. Although Alexander was purportedly the son of Philip, the son of Siwa imparted the truth to him that he was in fact a demigod — the son of Amun, "the Hidden One" — sent to deliver his ancestral home from the grip of foreign dominion. Upon learning of this, Alexander is said to have dismissed his guards, that he might privately inquire of the Oracle one final question. What transpired thereafter remains unknown to this night, as Alexander was never heard to speak of it again.

The visit was a turning point that would come to play a major part in the vampire development of Alexander's name-sake city to the north. But that, as they say, is another tale.

maining Setite strongholds lay. Babylon was perfect for the designs of Agonistes, however, and it was to this budding portside fortress that he was drawn following the destruction of the City of the Sun.

Some believe that Agonistes was enamored of Babylon-in-Egypt simply because of its name, in what might have been a subconscious desire to reconnect with his long-gone sire. Others believe Agonistes envisioned a new City of Light in the growing fortress-city, a place where learning and faith could once again be encouraged to grow alongside one another. Detractors of this theory ascribe a more pragmatic intent to Agonistes' decision: Memphis was home to several Kindred with whom he wished no intercourse, and none of the other smaller cities along the Nile could provide both the sustenance and isolation that the quiet scholar required.

Although possessed of a philosopher spirit, his blood was still that of Cain, and Agonistes bore a simmering distaste for the Persian barbarians who had so thoughtlessly destroyed centuries of erudition. Therefore, when a

Persian Cainite named Nabonidus came to dwell within his domain, Agonistes' first thoughts were of cool revenge.

Strangely, such designs were soon quieted by Nabonidus himself. He confessed to Agonistes that he had come to Babylon-in-Egypt specifically to seek out the distinguished scholar of Heliopolis, in the hopes of studying under him — not to infringe upon his domain, nor to assist in the territorial squabbles between the Followers of Set and the invading Children of Haqim.

According to legend, the two quietly convened in Agonistes' modest quarters inside the fortress, speaking in hushed tones long into the warm Egyptian night. At dawn, having talked of many things, Nabonidus offered to leave Babylon should his gracious host wish it. Agonistes declined, instead offering extended hospitality to his unlikely Persian guest, and in so doing, embarking on a partnership that would grow into something neither of them had ever dreamed.

ALEXANDER

In 332 BC, after almost 200 years as a province of the Persian empire, Egypt became the ambition of the greatest general the world had ever known. A former pupil of Aristotle, the Macedonian warrior Alexander from the Greek fringe came to deliver the land of Egypt from the yoke of Persian rule. Unlike the land's previous conquerors, Alexander arrived with an open mind and heart, ready and willing to embrace native custom and culture.

As such, Alexander's entrance was ultimately welcomed by nearly all the Cainite inhabitants of Egypt. The Toreador, who had taken up residence along the Mediterranean coast during the heyday of the Greeks, had suffered numerous indignities under the barbaric Persians. Only their remote location — sequestered at the northern tip of the empire — allowed them to dwell in relative peace. The Egyptian Gangrel of the Western wastes found the Persian interlopers boorish and intrusive. The Children of Osiris — believing they had things well in hand before then — saw the machinations of the Setites behind Cambyses' sudden conquest. Both fought to return control of Egypt to her Egyptian children. As for the Setites themselves... needless to say, they had their hands full with the Assamites who had come to seize both mortal followers and ancient holdings. Indeed, looking back it seems that Persian rule was appreciated only by the invading Children of Haqim and those few Cainites to whom they had promised favors in the time before their arrival.

In addition to his refreshing expulsion of the Persians (who had done their best to extinguish numerous cherished aspects of ancient Egyptian culture), Alexander established a new capitol further north, the port city of Alexandria, which served to draw unwanted mortal attention away from the crowded cities to the south. The undead of Memphis had grown fat off of the miseries of the kine, and their security meant more than the relatively minor issue of where Egypt's mortal government was to be

administered. As long as the Cainites were left to tend their flock in the manner to which they had become accustomed, Macedonian rule would be welcomed with open arms. Meanwhile, the kine of Egypt (who had greeted Alexander as a great liberator) began to genuinely prosper for the first time in nearly two centuries.

When Alexander himself died away on campaign, his body was brought back to Egypt for burial in Alexandria — the city he had built but never seen. Upon his death, he bequeathed Egypt to his most favored general, a man by the name of Ptolemy. This general became the first of a Macedonian dynasty that would rule Egypt from the city of Alexandria for nearly 300 years.

Under the Ptolemies, Egypt prospered. The Greek influence that had made Heliopolis strong now empowered all of Egypt, and its capital soon became the preeminent city of the Hellenistic Age. The nexus of Europe, Asia and Africa, Egypt encompassed all the magnificent qualities of the union that brought it into colonial rule... but only in the north. Although several Toreador and Lasombra did emigrate to the new capitol city, seeking bold and interesting horizons in Macedonian Egypt, the area south of the delta was left largely to its own devices. Babylon-in-Egypt and the now-forgotten Memphis were left behind, content to be seen as backwater municipalities of the empire. The few respectable scholars among the Greek Toreador who had known of Agonistes also knew of his solitary nature, and they proved equally respectable in letting him be. For this, Agonistes and Nabonidus were eternally grateful — their work was not for the prying eyes of the Athenian court-schemers of the night.

THE RISE OF ROME

Although the preeminence of Alexandria brought dignity and erudition back to Egypt, it also brought unwanted attention from those of a mind for conquest. During Ptolemaic rule, Rome had begun to expand beyond its borders, promoting trade and maritime commerce with all the lands across the Mediterranean. By the first century BC, Roman roads were bringing Egyptian grains into the Eternal City on a daily basis. The Romans knew that Egypt was producing an agricultural surplus, and their eyes grew large at the prospects.

The 14th ruler of Ptolemy's line — the notorious Queen Cleopatra — had been made a Setite *ghul* in the interim, if the rumors are correct. Cleopatra certainly acted the part, using all her womanly wiles to woo Emperor Julius Caesar and thereby stem the tide of the expanding Roman appetite. The affair worked for a time, staving off the Roman conquest of Egypt until her lover's infamous murder in 44 BC. Her only remaining hope was to gamble on yet another love affair, this time with Roman general Marc Antony, but when her rebellious paramour fell during the naval Battle of Actium, Cleopatra knew that all hope for an independent Egypt was lost. Antony's nemesis, Octavian, who would later become Emperor Augustus

Caesar, proudly marched on to Alexandria to claim Egypt as his personal possession.

Rather than submit to Octavian, Cleopatra decided to take matters into her own hands. In 30 BC, Cleopatra VII Philopater, the last of Ptolemy's line, locked herself in a room at the top of her tower in Alexandria and submitted herself to the bite of an Egyptian Cobra, thereby ending Ptolemaic rule and signaling the dawn of Egypt as a Roman granary. If the rumors of Cleopatra's being thrall to an elder Setite were indeed true, her inscrutable regnant had long since abandoned her by this time, perhaps in favor of blood better spent elsewhere.

THE FALL OF ANTINOUS

I believe the tale goes something like this....

Antinous was born in the town of Bithynion-Claudiopolis, in the Greek province of Bithynia on the northwest coast of Asia Minor. Although his parentage and exact date of birth remain unknown, extant records describe him as *merkakion* — a word indicating a young man of no more than 20 — at the time of his death in AD 130. Although the lack of information on Antonius' early days is frustrating in the extreme, his mortal origins are ultimately of little consequence in the greater scheme of things.

What is of great importance, however, is the fact that Antinous somehow came to be taken with (and by) the Roman Emperor Hadrian, who had assumed the throne following the death of his cousin Trajan in 117. The most

A QUESTION OF LINEAGE

However shrouded in mystery the Boy-King's sire may have been, one may make an educated guess as to his origins. What is known for sure is that shortly after his Embrace, the young Ventrue changed the common pronunciation of his name from "Antinous" to "Antonius." The most popular story surrounding this decision comes from the theory that his sire was none other than Antonius the Gaul, the Ventrue Merhuseleh who was to assist in the founding of the golden city of Constantinople some 200 years later.

It is a known fact that the Gaul spent considerable time away from the Eternal City during the last few centuries before the dawn of New Rome, and it is not entirely preposterous to presume that he "happened upon" the scene of the sacrifice during one of several excursions into North Africa during this time. Given the Boy-King's penchant for idolatry, it would further follow that upon being released to his own devices, the boy had taken the name of the patron who had saved him from death and blessed him with life-everlasting. Credence for this stance is further supported by the Boy-King's relatively sudden shift in mood following the disappearance of the Gaul in far off Constantinople, some time in the late eighth century.

Having found no satisfying evidence to support a contrary argument either way, I leave the issue as it stands and relegate the matter to the annals of Cainite history.

likely explanation for this is that Hadrian took Antinous from Claudopolis during one of the former's tours of the provinces in 123; the boy would have been around 11 or 12 years of age at this time. Whether Antinous was taken from his family by force or not is not only open to speculation, but largely irrelevant as well. What matters is that upon Hadrian's return to Rome, the boy had become the emperor's favorite.

The story of Hadrian and Antinous is seen by many as a literal enactment of the Greek fable of Zeus and Ganymede — a mythic tale of both great romance and great tragedy. Antinous was the perfect *eromenos* (the boy in a Greek man-boy relationship) for Hadrian's *erastes* (the man). He was accounted beautiful by all that beheld him, and was said to have been possessed of a keen mind and the quickest of tongues. Hadrian himself was regarded in every sense as a true Roman aesthete — a man who undoubtedly took much pleasure in art — and would surely have been taken in by the soft but virile physique of the young Greek. The numerous statues erected by Hadrian in Antinopolis — the town erected in the name of his dearly departed favorite — certainly bear this hypothesis out.

Of interesting historical note...

...is the ruined obelisk that supposedly sat on the island of Rhoda for over a thousand years before its mysterious disappearance during the latter years of Mamchula's rule. According to the few *Al-Mamouri* (Rubings) that have survived to date, the wording etched upon the original obelisk stated quite clearly how Antinous was "raised again to life" and brought by his sire to the Nile island of Rhoda. According to the rubings, the obelisk was erected by the sire himself — a parting gift to a beloved child — and it bore a living record of the legend of the Boy-King's Embrace, as though the event had been something truly divine.

Most interesting of all were the sire's final words to his child: Two lines of text engraved around the base of the original obelisk, one starting from the anterior face and winding around the side of the pillar, and the other doing likewise from the rear. The anterior face read, "From this island, surrounded by the waters that took you from the world, you will rule." The posterior face "On my name, the name of the father who returned you to the world, you will rule."



Precisely what events led to Antinous' death in 130 is unknown. In simplest terms, he drowned while sailing down the river Nile during Hadrian's visit to Egypt that same year. Most historians subscribe to a theory of self-sacrifice in this — a conjecture equally shared by this historian.

The primary reasoning behind our position lies in Hadrian's (and thus Antinous') admiration of traditional Egyptian mysticism. The Egyptians had a sacred tradition of drowning sacrifices in the river as a way of influencing the river gods to send better floods in upcoming years. When Hadrian arrived in Egypt, the two previous floods had been found wanting and the country was weathering the beginnings of a terrible lean time. There was undoubtedly much talk of returning to customary sacrifices at the time, for a third drought would have brought full-fledged famine across all Egypt.

The fact that individuals who drowned in the Nile tended to be deified upon death may well have appealed to the love-struck *eromenos*. By sacrificing himself in this way, and thereby saving his beloved's most prized possession — Egypt — in the process, Antinous would be granting himself a sort of mythic immortality. Instead of falling out of favor with his *erastes* (which the passage of time would have inevitably facilitated), he could die at his happiest and in his prime, only to be worshipped in death for his godlike devotion and piety. The notion would have been eerily attractive to any young man in such a position.

Regardless of where Antinous' true motivations lay, the result is the same. On a warm evening in late October of 130, as the Roman emperor's barge sailed lazily down the river, Antinous threw himself overboard and into the currents of the Nile.

THE RISE OF ANTONIUS

If his fall into the Nile marked the end of his life as a mortal, his Embrace on its shores would mark the beginning of his unlife as a god. Whether or not the Curse of Cain was what the young Greek had in mind, Antinous' final act in life — the bold and final display of his terrible desire for immortality — ultimately attracted the attention of one who would grant his dying wish. Despite the fact that this would-be sire's identity has been lost to history, the fact remains that a powerful Cainite was watching as Antinous gave himself to the river in the name of his beloved lord and liege. This Cainite, who clearly and deeply understood the significance of the boy's act, chose instead to rescue the boy from certain death at the bottom of the river.

Although it is unknown exactly when Antinous' sire cursed him with the Embrace, it is known that Antinous received an intense education from his sire in the time after his mortal death. As is appropriate, sire schooled childe extensively on Cainite matters in particular, including the sorrowful legacy of the Third Mortal and the ways of the blood. Antinous learned of the burgeoning War of the Ages and of his clan's place in the dark new world into which he had been brought. Whatever else can

he said of this Cainite, Antinous' sire did much to prepare the boy for the mantle of vampiric rulership before finally taking leave of his newest childe. Much, indeed, but perhaps not enough, as you will see.

When Antinous was ready, his sire brought him to what would be his new home in Egypt: the Nile island of Rhoda. Both sire and childe were well aware of the growing significance of this nautical weigh-station, and the island now boasted its own permanent inhabitants — a sister fortress to the growing city of Babylon on the mainland, complete with resident bureaucratic administrators and an entire garrison of Roman army regulars.

The island's new residents were soon visited by the determined pair of Ventrue. Together, sire and childe made *ghûls* of those who adapted well, and quick work of those who resisted them in the slightest. For all intents and purposes, the Nile-side area surrounding the fortress of Babylon — as well as the river it depended upon so heavily — now belonged to the Ventrue. Once Rhoda and all-important inbound trade routes were firmly under Antinous' sway, sire finally released childe, and, according to legend, made his way east — out of Africa for good.

THE BOY-KING

It is rumored that his enigmatic sire did not actually depart Egypt after leaving Antonius to his own devices, but instead remained in-country for a time, assisting his childe from afar whenever possible. According to one source, it was he who subtly influenced the gradual deification of Antonius across Egypt and in other provinces, leading to the widespread worship of Antonius as a lesser god — an aspect of Osiris in Egypt, an aspect of Dionysus in Greece. Antonius' sire was rumored to have taken up residence in the Nile-side city Hadrian founded at the site of his beloved's death, assisting in the immigration of skilled Greeks from the Upper Nile city of Ptolemais in order to ensure Antinopolis' as well as Antonius' continued prosperity.

Until becoming a province of the Eastern (or Byzantine) Empire in the mid-fourth century, Egypt served as a steady supplier of wheat and grains to Rome herself. In this regard, Antonius served his heritage well, ensuring that the flow of goods into, out of and across Babylon was never disrupted for very long. Although his power over mortal affairs grew into something formidable over the next 200 years, Antonius was largely ignored by his Cainite neighbors, as their concerns were of a less pragmatic nature than his own.

The first serious disagreement between Antonius and the Patron of Babylon came, quite logically, as a result of the problems inherent in administrating the separation of church and state. In theory, the Greeks were brothers in Christianity with the Copts — those natives who had converted after St. Mark first introduced the new religion into Egypt in the first century AD. In practice, the Greeks gathered the taxes and ran the bureaucracies, while the

Copts were the ones taxed as they produced the goods that kept the system afloat. The Egyptians did not mind living in a homeland that had become little more than an occupying foreigners' imperial granary, as long as they were afforded some basic human dignity.

With the accession of the Roman emperor Diocletian in 284, though, these tensions reached a fever pitch. Under Diocletian, the Copts were branded as heretics, and a murderous pogrom ensued upon all those who followed any variant branch of Christianity other than the one officially sanctioned by Rome. Thousands of Copts died as a result, and many fled inland from Alexandria (where the worst of these persecutions were taking place) to the relative safety of Babylon. Such individuals had heard, and rightly so, that the Copts of Babylon were blessed with a patron saint of their own. Indeed they were, in the form of the Cainite elder Agonistes, who had long-since pledged

BLACK DEATH

One of the worst calamities to befall Cairo throughout the last two millennia has been plague. Although much is made of how crippling the plagues of the 14th and 17th centuries were to cities like Florence and London, Egypt has suffered more devastating losses than any European country at the hands of its plagues. To those in the know, Cairo is a city often associated with pestilence itself — and for good reason.

The first instance of Egypt's dance with the black death, though little record yet exists of it, occurred in 542 while Cairo was still under Byzantine rule (and still called Babylon-in-Egypt). A terrible plague burst forth from Egypt, spreading quickly into Syria, and from there, into Europe at large. Unlike its 14th-century successor, which would burn itself out in just over five years, this epidemic raged for well over 50 years. Its swath of destruction was not considered "over" until the year 594.

Other epidemics followed in the time after Egypt fell to Islam, but they always struck Cairo the worst. There were at least 55 recorded outbreaks in Cairo between the years 1347 and 1517, and over 20 of these were full-scale epidemics. A noted Arab historian once wrote of Cairo that during the summer of 1347, over 1,000 Cairenes were falling to the plague *every day*. By the time the Black Death had run its course, nearly half the city lay dead or dying.

Even after this trying time, Egypt's population began to decline, while the populations of European cities steadily grew. By the year 1800, there were two-thirds fewer Egyptians than there were at the time of the Arab conquest — over a millennium before. Throughout its history, Cairo's unique size and location were typically blamed for the frequency and strength of its many bouts with pestilence, but there have always been those who suspected there might have been something else involved...

himself to safeguarding the spiritual freedoms of the kine within his domain.

Little changed after the split of Rome into Eastern and Western empires in AD 330. Despite New Rome's claim of being a "baptized" version of its parent culture, it turned out to be just as corrupt and fraudulent as Rome had ever been. Constantine's vision of grace for his new empire ultimately served only to further widen the rift between the Copts and their Greek masters in Babylon. Antonius naturally took the Greek "side" in this conflict, offering the Greeks his assistance in whatever means were at his disposal — even to the extent of publicly revealing himself in order to exert the full force of his presence upon the masses. It was during this time that the mysterious lord of Rhoda became known, to both Cainite and kine, as the Boy-King.

In retaliation, the Copts expressed their displeasure by exaggerating the metaphysical differences of Greek Christianity, eventually leading to an all-out schism between the two communions. The Monophysite Coptic Church, as it came to be known, recognized its own patriarch in Alexandria, while the Malikite Christians continued to follow the Byzantine patriarch in Constantinople. The Egyptian Christians grew to despise Byzantium and all that it stood for. Even as it preached its doctrine of unity and grace, the empire gave to the Egyptians only inequality and persecution.

Before this time, Agonistes had acted to subdue any ideas of revolution among the Copts. He had endorsed patience and wisdom, guiding them to reach a certain level of peaceful acceptance in their situation. But now, after Diocletian, the levee was broken, and Agonistes watched as the Copts of Babylon revolted in long-suppressed anger.

Although Antonius believed in his own divine right to rule, he also respected the power that his neighbor across the river held over the Coptic Christians. He was less concerned about why — in this case, because Agonistes actually cared for "his" kine — than the bottom line, which was that Agonistes was powerful and that his many followers revered and obeyed him.

His solution was to divorce the two Cainite overlords from one another — to mutually allow that each held interests in differing mortal spheres — and he sent word of such a proposition to Agonistes one night in the mid-fourth century. Without ever meeting face to face, the two agreed: Antonius would claim domain over the Nile Islands, as well as the administration of the mortal bureaucracy, and Agonistes would continue to guide the spirituality of the kine within his own domain — the fortress-city of Babylon. From then on, both avowed that neither Cainite would or could claim domain (in the traditional sense) over the other.

Even though hostilities would continue to erupt between the Copts and their religious oppressors, the Cainites had largely removed themselves from the situation.

On the siege of Babylon...

According to accounts both personal and historical, the capture of Babylon was eventually accomplished by a single discussion. Having settled in after seven months of patient waiting, the Arab army was camped outside the fortress' 50-foot high walls when a message tied to an arrow was fired into the ground near the Muslim barricade. It requested a negotiator "of wisdom and purpose" to engage in discourse with an Egyptian representative, in the hopes that a peaceful and swift resolution could be achieved.

Fearing an assassination plot, Amr summoned his two greatest lieutenants — one a master warrior and field strategist, the other a learned man of good counsel and faith — to take his place in a collective Arab mission. After nightfall, a lone figure emerged from the fortress, though none of the Arab soldiers could swear from whence the man had appeared. The gates had never opened.

He met the two Arab generals at a campfire near the Muslim camp, and together they quietly discussed the status of both the conflict and the two sides who were party to it. According to the Arab lookouts who had been given the task of observing the negotiators' progress, the meeting was over in a matter of seconds... the three men rose, shook hands and made their way toward the fortress together. The gates of Babylon opened for them, beckoning them inside, and would remain open until the following sunrise, when the remainder of the Arab army followed suit.

Not long after, the Patron of Babylon departed his Egypt home forever. He had moved on once again, leaving his ancient domain in the hands of his true new father — the Arab soldiers with whom he had negotiated the capitulation of Babylon.

Antonius took no part in these persecutions, and indeed, he even acted to turn mortal attentions toward more practical and constructive ends. Meanwhile, Agonistes continued to assist the Copts where he could, but offered

no direct aid in their periodic revolts. His own studies kept him more than occupied.

In AD 450, Agonistes' eternal companion in study, Nabonidus, left Babylon to return to his own homeland for the first time in nearly a thousand years. Things were simmering down in Egypt, and Nabonidus had urgent business to attend to back east. Left to his own devices, Agonistes drew ever more inward. Without companionship, he had only his own thoughts to occupy him... and the time to allow them full occupation. His people were the province of the Byzantine lords of far-off Constantinople, and he could do little for them anymore. By the time the Eastern empire began its decline, the Patron of Babylon was little more than a shadow in the dust.

AL-FUSTAT

In the year 640, a force came out of Arabia that would forever alter the face of Egypt. A man named Amr ibn al-As — the military representative of the caliph in Medina — arrived at the gates of Babylon at the head of 5,000 men. Much of Byzantium had fallen to the tide of Islam already, and Egypt was an important conquest in the Muslim campaign. Although the Copts were more than ready to be "rescued" from their Byzantine oppressors, the Roman garrison inside the fortress was not inclined to give up so easily. After a lengthy siege, Babylon opened its gates to the Arabs, with untold repercussions for the land of Egypt.

Amr initially planned to keep the capitol at Alexandria, which he successfully sieged from its patriarch, Cyrus, after setting up his tent outside of Babylon. When he sent word of his plans, however, the response from the caliph was simple and to the point: "Will there be water between myself and the Muslim army?" Amr had to admit that there would be. Rather than allow this, the caliph instructed his general to found a new capitol in the vicinity of Memphis, but on the east bank of the Nile — closer to Araby and divided only by sand.

When Amr returned from Alexandria, he was greeted by a peculiar sight: There, in a fold in the goat-hair draperies of his tent (in Arabic, "fustat"), a single dove had made her nest. Amr declared the site sacred and commanded that the dove and her brood be left unmolested. When the young doves grew to adulthood, vacating the nest soon after, Amr built upon the site the first mosque in the land of Egypt. It would grow to become the center of Amr's new capitol, Al-Fustat — the city of the tent. With Amr's subsequent reopening of the Red Sea Canal, the city would become the pivotal linking bridge to east and west.

In laying down the design for his new city, Amr established a series of tribal domains called khittas. This new city was to be of considerable size, as the Muslim army needed enough space to provide separate and distinct regions for the various Arabian tribes that were represented in his army. Preventing rival families who had

feuded in Arabia from continuing those feuds in Egypt was of paramount concern to the Arab general.

This plan, while logical for the new mortal residents of the area, resulted in a serious conflict between the Cainites at the time. Several mortal khittas were established in the land around the new Arab city — territory (and kine) which Antonius and his brood had planned to share equally with Agonistes' childer in Babylon. Unknown to them, however, this territory already held Cainite inhabitants of its own; Cainites who now stepped forward into the light for the first time to lay claim to the influx of mortals into their domain. These Cainites were the Followers of Set. By their own arrangement, however, tradition forbade either Antonius or Agonistes' brood from summarily evicting the previous Cainites. Therefore, they soon agreed to acknowledge the Setite right to domain in the area around Al-Fustat, so long as their own traditional rights were so respected.

This peace would last until 661, when a vicious power struggle over Islamic caliphate occurred. At that time, the wisest course of action for the governor of Egypt was to side with Umayyads from Damascus. Their rivals, the Abbasids — a violent tribe claiming descent from the Prophet's uncle, Abbas — had surfaced in Baghdad and were laying claim to all that Amr (among others) had won for Umar, the second caliph. Although the Abbasids were initially repelled, Egypt was destined to fall to their hands and would do so less than a century later.

ASSAMITE EGYPT

The Abbasids, using the sympathies of the Shi'a movement as well as the latent Persian resentment at Arabian supremacy, soon undermined Umayyad control enough to spark a revolt. The last Umayyad caliph, Marwan, fled to Egypt in the hopes that he could rule from an outlying province while rebuilding the Umayyad juggernaut. When the Abbasids, led by a brutal general named Saleh, arrived in Fustat in 750, Marwan set fire to Al-Fustat and escaped to Rhoda across a boat bridge, which he then burned as well.

The Followers of Set cried foul at the destruction of their domain, insisting that Antonius give up the culprit at once. The Ventrue had had little to do with Marwan's desperate move, and in the interests of maintaining peace between the Cainites of the area, Antonius did just that. To further placate the Setites, Caliph Marwan's head was paraded around the remains of Al-Fustat before being shipped backed to Baghdad.

Soon after, the remaining members of the Umayyad family were invited to a wholesale slaughter after being promised an amnesty by the new Abbasid caliph. Only a single relative escaped, fleeing to Muslim Spain in the hopes of raising support for an independent dynasty there. Once Abbasid control over the Muslim empire was thus cemented, the Abbasid caliph, Al-Saffah ("The Slaughterer"), sent a governor to Egypt with instructions

to build a new capitol city adjacent to the charred ruins of Al-Fustat. This new city, called Al-Askar ("the Cantonments"), was to lay to the north of the first Arab city in Egypt, along the river Nile.

Although several Assamites used the Abbasid takeover to establish a clan presence in Egypt, one in particular — the most clever and enterprising — stood apart from the rest. This Assamite, the renowned warrior-poet Antara, used the construction of the Abbasid capitol to establish a new khitta where from the clan could grow strong in Egypt. In addition, Antara had come from pre-Islamic Bedouin stock and was not perceived as a Persian Cainite by either Antonius or those of Agonistes' line. Therefore, while other Assamites often met with resentment and stony defiance from area residents, Antara was greeted as a Cainite of some refinement — or at least the lesser of evils — rather than as an invading barbarian.

Antara used this perception of sophistication, as well as his considerable reputation as a mythic hero, to subtly brush aside those of his clan who would challenge his authority in Al-Askar. When faced with treatment such as this from both within and without, the remainder of the Children of Haqim who had accompanied the Abbasids into Egypt soon evacuated the area. Some moved to other parts of the country — the majority of those to Alexandria — but most simply returned to Alamut, leaving Antara in sole possession of the new domain that encompassed Egypt's capitol city.

IBN TULUN

Although Antara was both honorable and fair in his dealings, the area's mortal masters — the Abbasids — were neither. The administration in Egypt began to disintegrate. Taxes on the province grew intolerable, inflation skyrocketed and personal freedoms became nearly nonexistent. The Abbasids, careless with the delicacy of the Muslim-Copt situation, had resorted to periodic massacres to impose order. Needless to say, their so-called solutions solved nothing, and the weak succession of Abbasid caliphs eventually turned Islam into a feudal empire of parceled-out fiefdoms in order to pay their own outrageous expenses. The land of Egypt became one such property.

In 868, Egypt was offered to a Turkish officer named Bayik Bey who, in turn, dispatched his son-in-law Ahmad to take control of the situation. Ahmed was the son of a Turkish slave from Bokhara named Tulun who had been given as a present to Caliph Mamoun in 815. Tulun's son was educated in the highest traditions of the period, and he had earned considerable respect for his brave and loyal service to the caliph.

Once in Egypt, Ibn Tulun moved to consolidate the government and steady the economy. Moreover, he reinstated desperately needed personal freedoms while imposing an equally necessary orderliness upon the domain. Noticing that he could maintain trade with the East on his own, Ibn Tulun soon formulated better uses for Egypt's growing treasury at home. After raising a powerful army of loyal

followers, Egypt's governor began to send less and less of the province's tax revenues to Baghdad. Egypt, he had decided, was destined to stand on its own.

In 870, only two years after his arrival, Ahmed Ibn Tulun declared Egypt an independent entity under the religious authority of the Abbasid caliph, making him the first independent ruler of Egypt since Cleopatra. To confirm his new order, Ibn Tulun soon founded a new capitol just north of old one, which he called Al-Qatai ("the Wards"). He built many palaces and pleasure gardens there, as well as an impressive mosque in his name at the center of it all. After all this time, Ibn Tulun's mosque still stands as largest place of worship in Cairo, as well as the only remaining building of his original military city. When Ibn Tulun died, he left Egypt to his son, Khamaraweh, who had to resort to marrying the Abbasid caliph's daughter in order to maintain control. Sensing Khamaraweh's inherent weakness, the Cainites of the area looked ahead....

Although Ibn Tulun's dreams of an independent Egypt had been entirely his own, an enterprising Setite capitalized on the impending collapse of the Tulunid dynasty, convincing all his clanmates to direct their energies toward reinstating the now-rebuilt Al-Fustat — their tribal domain — as the preeminent khitta of the area. And in 905, with the death of Ibn Tulun's grandson Haroun, the Abbasid army invaded, leveling Al-Qatai in the process. Rather than reinstate the former capitol of Al-Askar, however, the Abbasids instead moved the capitol back to Al-Fustat! Against all odds, the Followers of Set had triumphed.

The other Cainites of the area were aghast. After such careful negotiations on Antara's part, how could the Setites accomplish such a difficult task? Antara lost much respect in the eyes of his fellow Cainites, who had long tolerated his position as the head of the "ruling" domain simply because it ensured that the Followers of Set would remain weak. When Antara realized what had happened, he became enraged. Through the Abbasid caliph of Baghdad, the Old Man had spoken. Antara's isolationism had apparently so rankled clan elders at Alamut, that they willingly allowed the Setite plan to follow through — a lesson to those who would forget that, with the Children of Haqim, *loyalty comes first*. Egypt was not nearly as important to them as it was to Antara, and they trusted that the "message" they sent would ultimately have the desired effect.

Antara would not be humbled, however. His response was to incite the other Cainites, as well as the kine, against the Followers of Set and their mortal agents and allies in the area. He was frighteningly successful in this endeavor, resulting in a 30-year period of sheer anarchy as the kine spiraled out of control. Revolts became commonplace and blood filled the streets of every tribal khitta.

Someone finally acted to put an end to this chaos by the appointment of a new governor named Mohammed Ibn Toughj, another Turkish officer and former slave. Unknown to the Cainites at the time, the one responsible

was Antonius himself, who had planted Ibn Toughj (a long-time *ghil* of his) within the Abbasid elite in order to achieve his own ambitious ends.

Al-Ikshid, as Ibn Toughj came to be known, settled the disputes among the kine by gathering together all the disparate towns, and thus the khittas, together as one city. In one swift stroke, Antonius had finally gained the upper hand. In what has come to be known as the Rhoda Proclamation, Antonius announced his sovereignty over all other Caines in the area, while acknowledging their continued rights to domain and limited self-governance. With the exception of the Followers of Ser, the majority of Caine's childer — desperate for an end to the turmoil of the previous 30 years and, if truth be told, starved for true guidance of any kind — accepted graciously. It was not long before Antonius came to be known as sultan of the Children of Caine.

CITY OF TRIUMPH

Although the 10th century saw the city ruled by the descendants of Ibn Toughj, the Ikshidite dynasty was weak overall, and the Abbasid caliphate was soon challenged by a Shi'a caliph from North Africa — Al-Muizz Ledin Allah ("Glorifier of the Will of Allah") — claiming to be descended from the Prophet's daughter, Fatima.

On August 5th, 969, the Fatimid general, Gawhar the Sicilian, arrived in Cairo at the head of an enormous army. The Shi'a caliph had put over 100,000 men at his general's disposal, and the general had made good use of them. They occupied Alexandria some months before, and had now advanced upon the capitol with ease. Not only were the natives sorely outnumbered, but Egypt had recently suffered at the hands of a terrible plague, and the capitol city could not put up much of a fight.

Arriving with the Fatimid army was a North African Lasombra king named Sharif al-Lam'a. He had left his home in Tunis with only a minimal consort and a fervent dream of Islamic unity. Under King Sharif's guidance, the conquering Fatimid general soon laid out a plan for a new, enclosed capitol city in the name of the Shi'a caliph.

Gawhar's city would be an exclusive enclave of walled palaces, parade grounds and private gardens. (This notion would be copied some years later by the Chinese in their construction of the Forbidden City at Beijing). King Sharif's aim was to turn Cairo into the center of Islamic learning, if not the center of the entire faith, where the devout could come to learn, pray and study in peace, free from the chaos of the outside world. Construction soon began on the city interior, including the construction of the world's first university, Al-Azhar, as well as many other palaces, mosques and bathhouses.

Four years later, when the walled city and all its wonders were completed, the caliph himself traveled to take up residence, leaving a viceroy behind in North Africa. When the caliph arrived, he renamed the city Al-Qahira ("the Triumphant") and Cairo was born.

King Sharif could finally extend his open invitation to the Ashirra to come and partake of the greatest city in Islam. He welcomed all those who would pray inside the walls of Al-Qahira, and evicted those who would taint his vision of faith. He especially deplored the Followers of Ser, who befouled everything in Cairo with their selfish desires. King Sharif's dream soon became a reality, as Suleiman ibn Abdullah himself — the mullah of the Ashirra — personally accepted Sharif's invitation, gladly making Cairo his new home as an honored guest of the Patriarch of Banu al-Lam'a.

SALAH AL-DIN

Exactly 200 years after the arrival of the Fatimids, rulership over Cairo fell to one of the most famous figures of medieval history. Salah al-Din ibn Ayyub ("Salah the Righteous") — known to the West as Saladin — was a Kurdish warrior who had risen swiftly in the ranks of the Syrian army in Damascus. In 1164, Salah al-Din was sent, along with his uncle Shirkoah, to assist the floundering Fatimids in repelling the Frankish invaders. The Fatimids were already paying a yearly tribute to the Franks, and another Crusade might well spell ruin for Egypt.

Although initially successful, the Frankish king was bent on being the first to successfully take Egypt. In 1168, he decided to invade in earnest. In a desperate attempt to prevent the Frankish army from occupying Al-Fustat and using it as a base camp from which to assault Cairo, the last Fatimid caliph ordered the southern city burned to the ground. Over the course of 54 days and nights, the Setite khitta was slowly incinerated. Its remaining residents moved north into Cairo proper, there to be tolerated by the Lasombra as part of their domain.

It was a masterstroke on the part of Antara and his brother-in-faith, King Sharif. The arrangement reached between the two was simple: In exchange for Antara's support in achieving the destruction of the Setite domain, the Lasombra king would agree to open the walled city of Cairo to the general public. In addition, the two agreed to firm future support of one another in all matters as fellow Ashirra.

Unfortunately for them, they didn't count on Salah al-Din's ambition. After the death of the Fatimid caliph in 1171, he assumed power and immediately began instituting massive changes throughout Egypt. He restored the name of the Sunni caliph in daily worship and replaced the Fatimid's elaborate bureaucracy with a unique feudal system that gave his officers control over all agricultural land. He then brought Frankish prisoners captured during the Crusades back to Cairo to assist in the construction of a new governmental housing complex on a spur of the Muqattam Hills, a massive enclosed fortress called the Citadel. This act rankled Antonius more than anything else due to the fact that Cairo's rulers had traditionally ruled from royal palaces within his own domain, on the Nile island of Rhoda. The emergence of the Citadel would thus spell an end to any possible influence he may have had over Cairo's ruling class. The sultan's new advisor, however — a Kindred named Jubal who had come to Cairo

following Salah al-Din's conquest of Nubia — counseled him against resisting the move to the Citadel, and the sultan wisely listened.

More importantly, however, the erection of the Citadel signaled the dawn of a new khitta in Cairo. So many people moved into this new territory on the eastern edge of the city, that Cairo's Caimites soon became concerned as to whose province all these new mortals would be. This question was answered in 1193, following the death of Salah al-Din in Damascus. The area around the Citadel, east of the Assamite khitta and south of the Lasombra domain, was soon claimed by the Hajj — the Muslim Nosferatu of the Middle East — who had steadily been growing in numbers during Cairo's rise to prominence under the Fatimids. Following the death of Salah al-Din, they finally came forward with one voice. Under the guidance their new leader, Ibn Ja'far the Golden, a descendant of Tarique — the founder of the Hajj — their domain would grow to become one of the most populous and influential in all of Cairo.

DAWN OF THE MAMELUKE

After the death of the great Salah al-Din, his descendants — the Ayyubids — would rule in his name for only three generations, in keeping with traditional cycles of succession in the Levant. The last Ayyubid sultan, Malik al-Salih al-Din Ayyub, had imprisoned his brother in the Citadel and then gone off to fight the Crusaders in Syria. To strengthen his power base, the sultan had acquired a large number of Kipchak soldiers from the Turkish-speaking area between the Urals and the Caspian Sea. These mercenary soldiers were known as Mamelukes, meaning "white slaves."

By 1247, the Mamelukes had become a proud military caste — an ingrained part of Egyptian life — and the sultan required increasing numbers of them to maintain his hold over the empire. By the time Egypt was finally challenged at home by Louis IX of France during the Seventh Crusade, Sultan Ayyub was on his deathbed with tuberculosis and surrounded only by the Mameluke guard. His eldest son, Turan Shah, was at war in Iraq and his youngest son by his second wife was still an infant.

This second wife, a woman named Shagaret al-Durr ("tree of pearls"), had been a Turkish slave girl herself. When the sultan died, she took surprising initiative, whisking her husband's corpse from the battlefield to the Mameluke barracks on Rhoda. She did this to buy time, convincing the city that her husband was ill (rather than dead) and insisting on tending to him personally. She announced to the public that it was the sultan's wish that all power be delegated to a *generalissimo* — one of the Mamelukes — who would act as viceroy until her son returned.

When the *generalissimo* of choice was slain in battle, a Mameluke named Beybars launched a counterattack, soundly defeating the French and imprisoning their king in a house in Mansoura. This gave Turan Shah the time he needed to return to Cairo and, upon entering, was conceded the throne. When the Mameluke Beybars returned

Night of the Long Knives...

Little is known about the night Sultan Antonius died, but a semi-complete picture can be pieced together thus:

Shortly before midnight on a warm night in 1193, a Lupine near party quietly entered the sultan's estate on the island of Rhoda. Soon after, a massive explosion roared outward from the main complex, shooting fire into the sky and sending blackened handfuls of debris into the Nile. Three of Antonius' children, as well as every ghul on the island, rushed to the aid of their lord and liege. A vicious battle ensued among the burning wreckage of the sultan's manor house, pitting the remaining Lupines against the sultan's enraged guard. Although many of the sultan's mortal soldiers did not survive the night, they fought bravely and to great effect. Several of the assaulting Lupines were put down by fire and sword, others still overcome by the smoke that enveloped the combatants throughout the night. According to legend, only a single one escaped alive.

While none can speak to the issue of who laid the killing blow, the fact remains. When all the smoke and rage had cleared, the Sultan of Cairo was dead.

victorious, however, he had the sultan murdered and instituted Shagaret al-Durr as sultana.

The caliph in Baghdad objected to a female ruler, however, and she gracefully stepped aside, allowing her lover, Aibek, to assume the throne. Discovering his plot to remarry, she then had Aibek murdered, and his Mameluke guards had her imprisoned within the Citadel. For the next sultan, the Mamelukes chose one of Aibek's sons from another wife, who then gave Shagaret al-Durr as a "gift" to his mother. The new sultan's mother had the former queen beaten with sauna clogs and then tossed naked over the Citadel walls into the moat. The terrible death of Shagaret al-Durr, together with the Mongol destruction of Baghdad only a year later, would mark the dawn of a 260-year period of independent Mameluke rule in Egypt.

PRINCE OF SLAVES

The Caimites of Cairo prospered under Mameluke rule. Although its rulers were ruthless and petty (only 10 died in office of natural causes), Mameluke Egypt is credited with

being a time of great sophistication and prosperity, especially for Cairo. Each of the 53 Mameluke sultans who ruled between 1258 and 1517 tried to make a lasting mark on the city, be it in the form of a mosque, *madrassa* or other significant accomplishment. The result was a golden era for the city that was matched only by the grace of early Fatimid Egypt.

In around 1365, a visitor came to Rhoda to present himself before Sultan Antonius at his island estate. He introduced himself as Mukhtar Bey, claiming neither lineage nor family line. When the sultan's guards attempted to evict the Caitiff for his temerity, he made short work of them and repeated his request for acceptance into the City Triumphant. The sultan, seeing something appealing in the Mameluke warrior who stood before him, granted the Caitiff permission to reside inside his personal khitta on the Nile islands. At first, the new Caitiff was given the task of assuming the responsibilities of the very guards he had dispatched, putting himself at the sultan's right hand. But over the next 40 years, Mukhtar Bey would grow into something much more precious to the Boy-King....

Until 1382, Egypt was ruled from the island of Rhoda by a succession of Mamelukes called the Bahari. After the accession of Sultan Barquq, however, governance shifted to the Circassian Mamelukes ("Tower Slaves") who opted to reign from the Citadel. The induction of Sultan Barquq was a carefully contrived maneuver on the part of Sultan Antonius, who had long since withdrawn more and more into his own concerns. He rarely received visitors now, preferring only the company of his new Caitiff aide, and had even begun ignoring the counsel of his long-time vizier, Jubal. Although the Setites still held no official domain in Cairo, the sultan's inactivity amounted to a green-light for all their various and sundry depredations, and they now thrived in Cairo like never before.

In the early centuries of his reign, Antonius had done much to assist in the effort of keeping the Lupines of the area at bay, even promising special rewards to those who could bring him proof of their victories. But by the dawn of the 15th century, the Lupine population of the area was experiencing something of a resurgence. The sultan no longer provided his earlier incentives, and had long since ceased taking any actions himself in this regard. Sensing that the vampiric overlords of Cairo had grown weak, the Lupines grew bold. They slowly tested the boundaries of Cainite tolerance in Cairo until finally, in 1406, they made their move. In a nighttime assault on the Nile island of Rhoda, they slaughtered Sultan Antonius, devastating his island haven completely.

With the death of the sultan, Cairo was thrown into disarray. Many had grown so used to the Boy-King's presence as sultan, they could not even conceive of his not being there. Sensing this confusion, several of Cairo's more pragmatic Cainites — including Antonius' few remaining childer — came before Mukhtar Bey with a collective plea for leadership. Although he was a Caitiff, none knew more about the administration of Antonius' domain than he, and they begged him to stake his claim. The Setites were on the move, eager to take advantage of

the situation, and the Ashirra greatly preferred a fellow Muslim in power in Cairo, even if he was a Caitiff.

When faced with this, Mukhtar Bey stepped forward as the new Sultan of Cairo, inheriting the Nile islands from his former liege and rebuilding the glorious island haven that the Lupines had destroyed. To honor his fallen liege, he granted the former sultan's descendants the rights to an "indefinite" khitta made up by the outer rim of the city. Thus, Mukhtar Bey ensured that, while Cairo expanded, so too would Antonius' memory.

Immediately, the new sultan was buried in difficulties. In addition to the many mortal matters of state within his domain, Mukhtar Bey was immediately forced to contend with one of the most earth-shaking periods in Cainite history. Not long after his accession to power in Cairo, rebellious childer from Europe began to run in blood-thirsty packs, slaughtering and diablertizing their sires in a wave of patricidal rage. And when this wave finally hit Egypt, it did so with disastrous results for the Lasombra.

Although the majority of Middle-Eastern Cainites had the notion of filial piety — reverence of one's ancestors — even more thoroughly ingrained in them than their Western cousins did, the Lasombra were something of an exception to this norm. As in all things, the clan of shadows followed its own rules regarding sire-child relations, and it was not long before the Patriarch of Banu al-Lam'a — King Sharif himself — was brought down in the bloody tide of the Anarch Revolt.

Led by one of Sharif's own line — a vicious Lasombra named Munther al-Aswad — a pack of ravening neonates broke through the gates to his palace in the old walled city. Although he fought boldly, removing every attacker's head save that of his own childe (whom he could not destroy), the Lasombra lord eventually fell.

The death of King Sharif marked the end of an era in Cairo for the Muslim Children of Cain. Sharif's old ally Suleiman ibn Abdullah, the mullah of the Ashirra, quietly left the city not long thereafter. Lamenting in a final speech to the collected Ashirra, Suleiman remarked, "The glory of Cairo has well and truly gone."

TURKISH CAIRO

Although the establishment of the Camarilla helped to stabilize the Cainite situation in Cairo, other forces were conspiring against Egypt as a whole. The Ottoman star was on the rise in the east, and the Turks had already captured Constantinople in 1453, renaming it Istanbul. In addition, Egypt's economy had suffered following the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, and the Mamelukes had lost several pivotal trade routes to the rampaging Turks as well. So, although the Convention of Thorns (which marked the end of the Anarch Revolt in 1496) was beneficial to the Cainites, it also marked the beginning of the end for the Mamelukes.

Twenty years later, in 1516, the Mamelukes rode out to Syria to face the Turks once and for all. Although their cause was bold, the Sultan al-Ghuri was a plump man of 78 years, and his retinue was filled with *muezzins*, scribes,

poets — everything but war-hardened soldiers. In addition, the Egyptians had been betrayed by the Mameluke Governor of Aleppo, Khair Bey, who had struck a deal with the Ottoman sultan, Selim the Grim. The Egyptians were annihilated, and the head of Sultan al-Ghouri was shipped off to Istanbul as a trophy.

Selim the Grim offered the last Mameluke sultan, Tuman Bey, the chance to become a viceroy of the Ottoman empire; to ship yearly tribute to Istanbul much as his predecessors had to Baghdad. Tuman Bey's offer to come to terms was rejected by Selim: Become an Ottoman vassal or Selim would invade and behead every last Circassian in Cairo. The last Mameluke ruler

Dance Macabre...

One year in the late 19th century, an eerie spectacle unfolded across the Nile at the old ruins of Memphis. Witnesses swear to have beheld the bodies of the dead emerge from the ground, slowly move for a time in a grotesque mockery of the living, and then disappear back into the sands. Those present for the scene were horrified, spreading the news of what they had seen all around the city upon their return. Septimian was high (even in the land of the dead); and the witnesses found none to believe them at first... that is, until the following year, when it all happened again on the exact same date.

Soon, the event began to draw tourist attention from both local and international visitors, who began arriving around the appointed date to bear witness. For several years the cycle repeated itself, each time more intense than the last. Even the newspapers in attendance could find no logical explanation. The entire phenomenon unsettled even the Cairenes of Cairo, many of whom had assumed one of their own to be responsible. When it became clear that no Cairo resident was to blame, they grew even more concerned. When the bizarre annual occurrences finally stopped — suddenly — at the close of the 19th century, none were more relieved than the Children of Cairo. Many believe these events to be the primary reason for the proclamation that the prince issued at the time, prohibiting all Cairenes under his authority from feeding or settling west of the Nile.

was, ironically, perhaps its most honorable, and he refused to capitulate. He fought the Turks with his last breath, and had even made his way to Selim's war tent outside the city before Cairo finally fell in 1517.

Under the Turks, Cairo withered. In one swift stroke, Egypt had lost both its sultan and its caliph — its independence and its religion — and the spirit of its people had been broken. To a large extent, the common impression was that no sooner had the nation acclimated to the rule

The Desert Fox...

The question of what might have been is one that often plagues the citizens of Cairo. In the summer of 1942, a German patriot by the name of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel gave them yet another reason to ponder this question.

Assigned to head Hitler's Africa Korps, Rommel had driven the British fleet to retreat, pushing to within 100 miles of Egypt's capital by the beginning of July and sending its citizens into a panic. The British themselves began frantically unearthing archives at their headquarters in Garden City. As the smoke of charred secrets floated over the city, Lawrence flooded the railway station fighting for space on departing trains to Palestine. All of Egypt was certain that the British had lost the Middle East.

General Auchinleck — Rommel's British adversary — decided to take a chance on the state of his enemy, advancing to Alamain for a final, glorious confrontation. It was to prove the turning point in the war. There, on July 17, Auchinleck won both the day and the Middle East for the Allies. Hitler, busy incidentally assaulting Stalingrad, had ceased supporting his finest general, and Rommel was forced to retreat to Tunisia. Within six months, the Germans and Italians had been driven out of Africa altogether.

Although Rommel remains a mere footnote in the voluminous annals of Egyptian history, the citizens of Cairo often pause to wonder just how close they truly came...



of one outside force, than yet another invading force arrived to conquer it yet again.

Unlike his contemporaries among the Ashirra, Mukhtar Bey used the Ottoman occupation to his advantage. He spread his power beyond Egypt's borders, cultivating numerous contacts among other Cainites who were likewise unwittingly thrust under the Turkish banner. As a direct result of these international associations, Sultan Mukhtar Bey gradually became known during this time as the Prince of Cairo — a calculated move intended to please the Cairo lord's new European allies.

THE LION OF THE LEVANT

Although the presence of Napoleon in Egypt was a brief one (he came and went inside of three years, from 1798-1801), it was pivotally important for three reasons. First, Napoleon's researchers were responsible for the *Description de l'Egypte* — the first comprehensive encyclopedia of Egypt since Volney's account — which would serve as the basis for the ensuing "Egyptomania" that swept through Europe. Second, French presence would ultimately establish a new Toredor khitta around the Nile-side port of Bulaq. Third, Napoleon's exit set the stage for the arrival of one of Egypt's most notorious figures — Muhammad Ali, the Lion of the Levant.

Muhammad Ali was a Macedonian officer who spoke no Arabic. Originally sent to Egypt in 1798 as second-in-command of a regiment of volunteers, he soon rose to become the Ottoman-appointed pasha in 1801. The Turks were eager to reaffirm their control, now that the British had forced Napoleon out of Egypt, and their appointment of Muhammad Ali was a major step along that path... or so they thought.

Between 1801 and 1811, Muhammad Ali gathered both allies and power in his bid to bring all of Egypt under his sole command. Ali understood that if he were to consolidate power, he must put an end to the Mameluke myth once and for all. In 1805, he took his first step. He set a trap for many of the dissident beys who disputed his authority as pasha, tricking them into parading down a street where Ali had posted a hundred rooftop snipers. His final step, the *coup de grace* in his plan, took place on March 1, 1811. He invited 500 Mamelukes to a gathering at the Citadel, whereupon his soldiers massacred them all to a man. In a single afternoon, Muhammad Ali had destroyed Mameluke influence in Egypt.

Many Cainites perceived the massacre of the Mamelukes to be a direct shot to the power base of the prince, who had been careful to maintain strong ties to the mortal Mameluke caste. Some suspected the Followers of Set in this, as Prince Mukhtar Bey had long denied them a voice in his domain. In either case, Ali's aggressive and cowardly act made Egypt his personal fief, in truth if not in name. He remained a vassal of the Ottoman sultan in theory, but in reality, Muhammad Ali ruled Egypt alone. And he didn't stop there....

Within a few short years, Muhammad Ali's plans became apparent to Istanbul, as he had overstepped his

authority in reaching beyond Egypt to capture territories as far east as Syria and Crete. In supporting his bid for consolidation over the Mamelukes, the Turks had created a monster who was now slipping from their control. Although the Ottomans eventually allied with the British to stop the lion's rampage, the best they could hope for was a compromise in the form of a guaranteed khedivate — or, right to familial succession — for Ali's line over Egypt.

BRITISH OCCUPATION

When Muhammad Ali died in 1849, his successors had their work cut out for them. The Ottoman sultan had granted the British the right to unrestricted trade in 1838, and this had the ultimate effect of killing the burgeoning industrial system in Egypt. With England capable of underselling all products of Egyptian industry, Egypt was forced to close down many of its factories and return to primary production.

Although Ali's first two successors, Khedives Abbas and Said, were responsible for bringing Egypt back into the global community, it was the reign of Ismail Pasha (1863-1879) that would have the most effect on the nation. Ismail oversaw the construction of the critical Suez Canal, which finally opened in 1869, and he commissioned Giuseppe Verdi to compose the magnificent opera *Aida*. Although it is rumored that the Toreador and Ventrue had some influence in this issue, it is highly unlikely, since the prince had declared that any who interfered in the composition of the great work were to suffer the Lextalionis on the spot. Ismail also built extensively in Central Cairo, making good use of new riverside land created by the westward movement of the Nile. Over the course of his reign, Ismail had constructed everything from lighthouses to post offices to girls' schools to European hotels.

Unfortunately for Egypt, such grand designs cost money, and Ismail had fallen into horrible debt by 1879. Burdened by commitments he could not honor, Ismail Pasha abdicated, leaving his precarious nation in the hands of his successor, Tawfiq. A weak and gullible man, Tawfiq listened to his West-friendly advisors and, in so doing, allowed far too much foreign influence into state affairs. In 1881, after an uprising in the Egyptian army, Tawfiq appointed a man named Ahmed Orabi as the Minister of War, only to turn around and ask the British for help in defeating him. Thus, in 1882 British forces landed in Alexandria, putting an end to Orabi's revolt and starting a British occupation that would persist in one form or another for the next 70 years.

From 1883 to 1907, Egypt was governed for all intents and purposes by the British Consul, Lord Cromer, and his successors did little to assuage the growing Egyptian resentment. In the 1920s, Prince Mukhtar Bey surprised his city by instituting a panel of Cainite advisors, which he called the Consultative Council. Many believe that he had grown weary of attempting to negotiate the situation all his own, and had decided that the expulsion of the British could only be accomplished by a collective effort from all the Cainites of Cairo. Others believe that he simply wanted to keep tabs on the various sub-domains of

his city, whose vampiric memberships had swelled in recent years. Cairo had seen a population explosion since the turn of the century, which, in turn, had provided for increasing numbers of undead.

BLACK SATURDAY

The struggle for Egyptian independence finally came to a head on Saturday, January 26, 1952. The day before, Britain's commanding general had sent troops to a police barracks in Ismailia with orders to disarm the officers there. When they resisted, the British blasted the barracks with tank fire, killing 50 Egyptian policemen. The following morning, as news of the massacre hit home, Cairo burst into flames.

Although mortals remember Black Saturday as the dawn of the Egyptian republic — the time when Gamal Abdel Nasser and his Free Officers finally wrested control of their homeland from the British once and for all — the Cainites remember it as a grisly fate narrowly escaped. The Lupines, who were quietly returning to Egypt, had been using the Free Officers movement as a cover for their activities in Cairo.

As the fires of revolution raged across Cairo, several Lupine war parties made their way through the city in search of carefully reconnoitered targets. They struck during the day, incinerating suspected havens and burning Cainite businesses to the ground. Even more surprising was the fact that their assaults continued on not only through the night, but through the two nights following as well. The Lupines were serious about declaring war on the Cainites of Cairo.

Only through the timely counsel of a Malkavian elder named Nazrudin was the greater calamity avoided. Shortly before the attack, Nazrudin had received a vision warning him of the impending assault. Prince Mukhtar Bey had just enough time to make some last-minute preparations, including the assembly of a Cainite response team, before the Lupines struck. Although the city did indeed suffer some serious losses over the course of those three bloody nights — including the deaths of at least five known Cainite residents — the prince managed to avert the worst of many possible outcomes with strategic use of both Nazrudin's information and the Cainite warriors he had placed at his own disposal. With the assistance of the Gangrel of Banu al-Giza, the invading Lupines were soon routed from the city, and their war with Cairo was over by the morning of the fourth day.

RECONSTRUCTION

In the time following Black Saturday, it seemed that every Cainite in Cairo had a "worthy" cause. It was ironic, as the greatest cause to the Egyptian people had already been won with the expulsion of the British. Nonetheless, the prince was soon besieged by requests of all kinds, ranging from the relatively reasonable to the absolutely outrageous. Although he understood the underlying reason behind it all — Cairo was growing at an unheard of

rate, and there were no systems in place to deal with such vast expansion — it did not make his task any less difficult.

A smooth-talking Follower of Set — an attorney — attempted to convince the prince that his clan still possessed a “legal” right to a domain in Cairo, even if there were no mortals living in said domain at the moment. The Caitiff of Cairo, led by a blind and charismatic Cainite named Waulkeen, were now loudly demanding reparations for the losses they had incurred during the war with the Lupines. The Sabbat-loyal Lasombra of Baru al-Lam'a had increasingly lobbied for intercession on behalf of their Camarilla detractors.

The prince's solution was simplicity itself: He simply acquiesced to every (reasonable) demand that came before him. Mukhtar Bey seemed to have grown tired of conflict and, knowing that Cairo's bustling expansion could only spell more conflict in the near future, he opted to reduce the amount of unnecessary chaos in his city. Therefore, the Setite domain was indeed reinstated, the Caitiff were “given” the residential island district of Zamalek, and the entire city was once again reminded that the Lasombra of King Sharif's line had a traditionally respected right to exist in the city, regardless of their individual political beliefs.

Final Words on Final Nights...

Although these measures seemed to initially satisfy the Cainites of the city, the last few years have seen the conflicts between our kind worsen. Across the city, it feels as though a pall of discontent is spreading, through every unbreathing heart and home. Senseless scuffles erupt nightly and even longtime friends are tearing at one another's throats. While prosperity is never far away for the Cainites of Cairo, it always seems to be eternally just out-of-reach as well.

I know neither what it all signifies nor what the future holds, but I pray that Allah will see us through it all in peace. And I pray in my heart, as I have done for the last six centuries, that the light of God never dims on this, the Mother of the World.





CHAPTER TWO: BLOOD AND SAND

GEOGRAPHY AND THE UNDEAD

*And that, till then, the snakes of Hell had need of human souls
Three hundred furnaces soon blazed through the wide city
Where, with speed, men brought their infidel kindred to appease
God's wrath, and while they burned, knelt round on quivering knees*
—Percy Shelley, *Revolt of Islam*

To the average Westerner, the mere mention of Egypt conjures images of stony edifices amid endless seas of sand; of forgotten tombs and temples lost to memory and time. Narrow the focus to Cairo, and an equally strong (if simple) panoply of scenes presents itself to the mind's eye — a glimpse of bustling, sun-scorched thoroughfares, the flash of a dusty, minaret-dotted skyline. Passing references to Cairo almost always engender an imaginative reaction of some kind, no matter how hackneyed that initial reaction may be.

But even largely prosaic views of the land and its people have led to an enduring fascination. The West has come to identify Egypt with mystery, wonder and the wisdom of the ancients, and it often seeks to evoke these associations whenever possible. In the United States alone, where the spirit of early settlers moved them to remember places that inspire, there are no fewer than five cities named Cairo, in addition to a modern metropolis

designed to honor the glory of the ancient Egyptians — an American state capital, Memphis.

To the naked and candid eye, however, the layout of Egypt's capital is quite simple. Cairo resembles a large, opened fan not unlike one that a lady of means might carry to cool herself on a blistering Levantine day. Bisected rather unevenly by the river, the "handle" of the fan points southward toward Luxor, leaving its northern sprawl opening east to west as it travels down the Nile. To a large extent, the view from above finds the city mirroring the geographical occurrence of which it was founded to take advantage — the Nile Delta.

Cairo is not a gentle city. This venerable matriarch of the Middle East may be many things — vibrant, striking, open-faced and hard; triumphant to be sure — but she is most certainly not gentle. She doesn't present the smiling glamour of more prettified places along the Fertile Crescent like Casablanca, Tunis and Jerusalem, whose cobbled streets

and picturesque buildings paint an inviting picture to the tourist community. Cairo simply doesn't have the resources to spare on glitter — nor does she need to. Her drama goes deeper and is more sincere.

Her citizens are too busy struggling to provide for families in an economy that serves only to widen the nation's already startling rich-poor divide. Modern Egypt is heavily dependent upon foreign aid, and former President Sadat's open-door policies did little to turn the economic tide in its favor. In an ironic twist, the city's only hope may lie in turning international aid into capitol investment, fostering domestic enterprise through the Cairo Stock Exchange. Therefore, if the beloved matron possessed of such a glorious past is to have any kind of future at all, she may well have to open her arms to the west once again.

To the Kindred of Cairo, the city is broken up into social rather than topographic zones. These districts, called *khittas*, make up much of the city's total area and are self-governed — to a point. There are currently nine separate *khittas* in Cairo: Banu Ahl ar-Raya, Banu Yashkur, Banu al-Lam'a, Banu al-Hajji, Banu al-Azraq, Banu Duval, Banu Zamalek, Banu al as-Sai'di and Banu al-Giza. Each of these sub-domains is housed within one of five broader city districts: Central Cairo, Islamic Cairo, Mast al-Qadima (Old Cairo), the Nile Islands or the Periphery.

CENTRAL CAIRO

The central plan of the city's interior involves a series of squares and gardens interspersed in an irregular pattern of smaller streets which, in turn, are crossed at intervals by wider thoroughfares. The social and economic hub of this pattern is a loosely defined district commonly referred to as Central Cairo. It encompasses all areas in the critical downtown triangle made by Midan Tahrir, Midan Ramses and Bur Said — the road that marked the edge of the Nile and, therefore, the city in earlier nights. Central Cairo also includes all area west of Midan Tahrir to the river, as well as north to Shubra and south to the bottom edge of Garden City.

Although two of Cairo's vampiric sub-domains fall within Central Cairo, only one is an actual *khitta*, per se.

ON HOUSE AND HOME

In Cairo, each tribal domain is preceded by the word *banu*, meaning "house of" (in the familial sense) in Arabic. Much as the Assamites refer to themselves as the familial issue of their founder — Banu Haqim ("house of Haqim") — so, too, follow the vampiric "families" of Cairo. Therefore, the residents of Banu Yashkur, for example, are Assamites of the "house of Yashkur."

The other is simply the agglomeration of all territory claimed in any of the other sub-domains, and is under the complete dominion of the prince. This non-*khitta* is often called "Free Cairo" by many of the city's younger Kindred inhabitants — a title and image that the prince himself wishes to foster about the area. Other not-so-young Kindred refer to this remaining district sardonically as "Banu al-Mukhtar" — though never while the prince is around, of course.

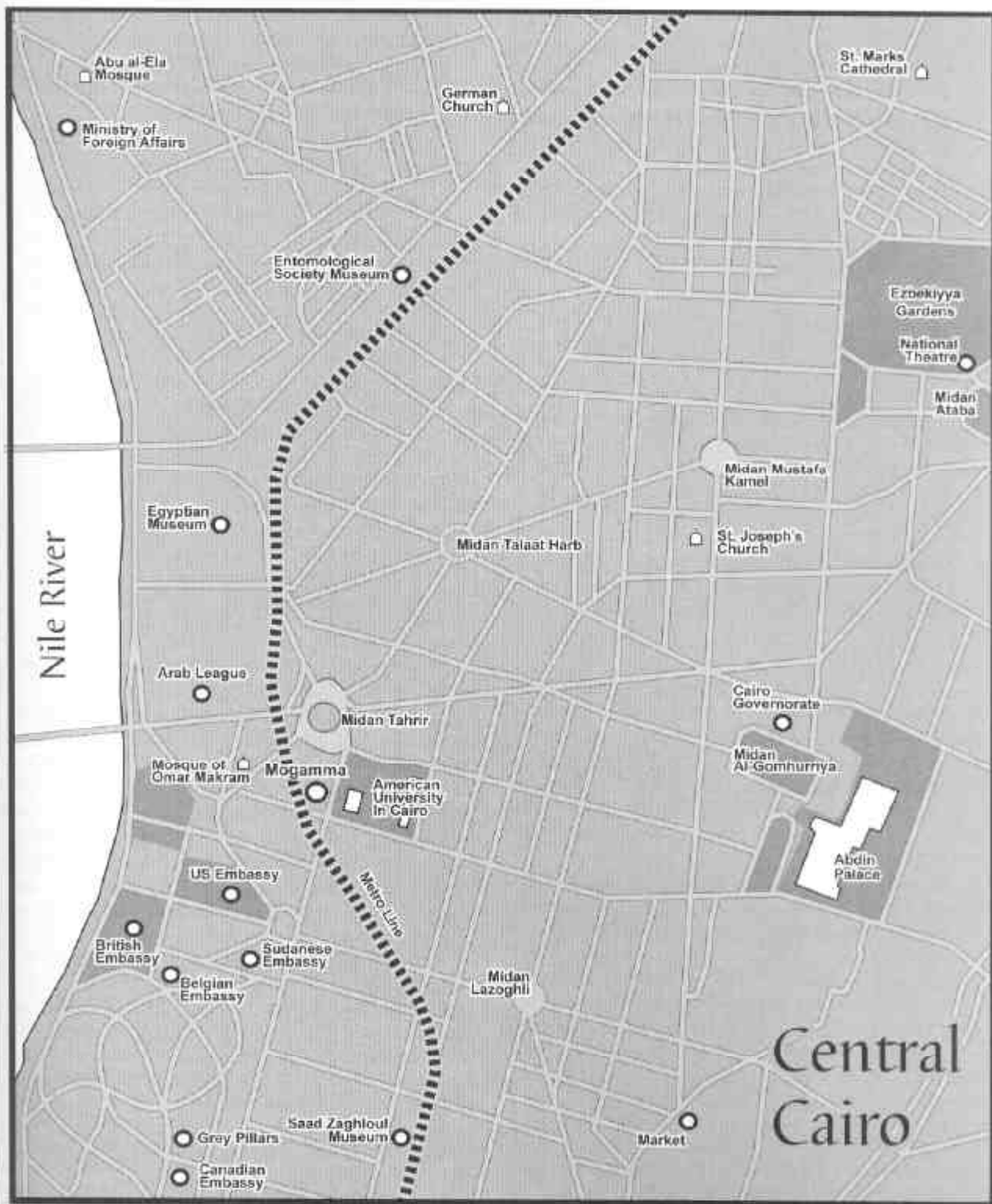
FREE CAIRO

The only area in the city not within a *khitta* is the busy downtown core, often called Free Cairo. The majority of Cairo's immigrant vampires dwell here, as the prince typically doesn't require the residents of the *khittas* to accept strangers into their domains. Although often viewed as "the prince's *khitta*," many Kindred respect his handling of the complex situation thus far, and most find his interpretation of the traditions tolerant and forgiving — particularly those who dwell in Free Cairo. It is said that the prince has a soft spot for outcasts and, in a city composed of so many families, those who have no family to turn to are often the most quietly cast out. As a result of his tolerant policies, however, even this densely populated district is beginning to show the stress of having to support so many Kindred's *vitae* requirements. As the Masquerade remains the prince's highest priority, he may well have to start looking into other options. Most of the Malkavians who come to dwell in Cairo are granted permission to feed in this area. They have no domain of their own, and none of the existing *khittas* have jumped at the chance to sponsor the Lunatics' needs.

This district is the newest of the city's domains in a literal sense, as the majority of its area was uninhabitable, and largely under the river, until the last century. The Nile has been moving steadily west over time, creating new areas of land on the edge of the east bank through silting. The prince fostered the development of these areas as soon as they became inhabitable, leading to the congested city center that exists tonight. The nexus of this downtown core, and indeed of Cairo itself, is the Egyptian equivalent of Times Square — Midan Tahrir.

PLACES OF NOTE

Midan Tahrir: Located in the vibrant heart of downtown Cairo, this bustling circle — also known as Liberation Square — is the meeting place of three of the city's busiest thoroughfares: Sharia Tahrir, Sharia Talaat Harb and Sharia Mohammad Mahmoud. Built after the Black Saturday riots on the site of the former British barracks, it is the city's main public transport terminus, and many Cairo sights can be reached from the square's Sadat Metro Station. The cafes that dot the popular block between Sharias Mohammad Mahmoud and Tahrir have long been a feature of Liberation Square. One was bombed by Islamic militants in 1993, and another, the Ali Babà



THE KHITTA

In a demographic breakdown of the city's numerous undead, the chief organizational tool — the first "tier" in any such examination — is a loosely defined city sector called a khitta. This term denotes any one of a group of districts within the city where a particular community of Kindred retains a legitimate and often long-standing claim to domain. The "ruling family" of Kindred within each community is typically made up of all those descending from the first vampire to lay claim to that domain, and they maintain their ongoing rights to the area through the legacy of their founder.

Eight of these nine sub-domains exist under the prince's larger claim of domain, and only a portion of the total available area in the city is khitta-held. The remainder, the recently developed area encompassing Central Cairo in the modern nights, acts like more traditional Camarilla domain and remains the prince's to dispense as he pleases. The vast majority of vampiric immigrants to the city, having no claim to territory in older parts of the city, must request permission from the prince to stay in his city, and they are typically given permission to feed — discreetly — in this remaining area. This practice has resulted in a recent spike in the vampiric population density of the downtown core — an area already stiflingly overcrowded with mortals.

Cafeteria, was the regular morning waterhole for Nobel Prize-winning author Naguib Mahfouz until the knife attack that nearly took his life. Aside from the hurried comings and goings, however, few stop to pay any mind to the square itself. Not only is Midan Tahrir hot, noisy and entirely without a distinct character, but its profusion of thick exhaust fumes is one of the reasons why downtown Cairo easily out-pollutes Los Angeles every day of the week.

American University in Cairo: The AUC is one of the foremost centers of learning in the Middle East, and many of its full-time faculty members are accredited in the United States. It offers bachelor's and master's degrees in a variety of different subjects, ranging from Anthropology to Islamic Art and Architecture. The university also offers the Cairene Tremere their only consolation in being denied access to the Cairo University across the river in Banu al-Giza. The prince has thrown them the bone of unrestricted access to the American University's libraries, galleries and archives, in the hopes that it will pacify their requests to move into territory unwelcoming to them. He watches their movements very closely, and he has lately acquired evidence that they are cultivating some dangerously direct influence over the AUC

On rare occasion, the prince will reach an understanding with one of the other khittas, whereby they agree to "sponsor" the new vampire, thus providing him with feeding grounds inside their domain. Although typically beneficial for all parties involved, such arrangements have occurred infrequently at best.

The ninth khitta, called Banu al-Giza (but often referred to simply as the "Western Domain"), is considered off-limits to those in the prince's domain, and feeding from the mortals who reside there is expressly forbidden. Although the situation has always been this way during his principdom, Mukhtar Bey officially publicized the decree just before the turn of the 20th century in what has come to be known as the Giza Proclamation. With the continuing development on the west bank of the Nile, however, it is an edict he has become forced to defend on a regular basis. Pressure mounts from all sides of the issue as his expanding city pushes itself into the third millennium, and many feel that the prince is finally on the verge of repealing the Giza Proclamation. To nudge matters along, various "special interest" groups in the city (such as the Tremere) have attempted to sweeten the pot for the prince, promising all manner of gratitude should he see his way to accommodating them in this small matter.

faculty. However, his findings do not, as yet, reveal a means, motive or desired result in these actions.

The Mogamma: The enormous 14-story building that dominates Midan Tahrir is called the Mogamma, a dreary off-white structure housing Cairo's Central Government Complex. Representatives from 14 ministries and 65 other governmental departments arrive in force each morning to do their part to keep the massive Egyptian bureaucracy — 2.5 million workers strong — moving at a steady (snail's) pace. All in all, over 18,000 people come here to work every day, with another 50,000 arriving as visitors, tourists or both. Aside from the Masquerade, the prince's most stringent rule pertains to the Mogamma, as no vampire under his authority is permitted to meddle with state or local governments and their officers, including the police. These mortals and the agencies they represent are the purview of the prince alone. As if to seal the decree, he declared the Mogamma an Elysium soon after its construction was complete. As he knew it would be, the contrivance became a largely administrative one. No Kindred gathering has ever occurred in this stiflingly drab monument to mortal inefficiency.

The Egyptian Museum: The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, known to the locals as simply *Al-Mathaf* ("the museum"), is a world-famous institution that has sat off

Midan Tahrir for almost a hundred years. Many know that it houses over 150,000 antiquities from every period of Egyptian history; many also know that Tutankhamun's mummy is located here, as well as a host of 1,700 other funerary treasures dating from his brief reign. What many don't know is that the museum, as well as the Egyptian Antiquities Service itself, has been in the hands of the Tremere since the 19th century.

The museum was initially located in the old offices of the River Company on the new silt-formed district of Bulaq. But with the advent of the French khitta in the same area, the prince decided that it was best to move the museum (and thus the Tremere) away from the Toreador, and he relocated the museum to its present building in early 1902. Although it has been difficult at times for the Tremere of Cairo (among other demeaning tasks, they often have to import stores of vitae), the exchange has proven well worth it to the clan. With their patronage, amazing discoveries have taken place in Egypt, including the many finds excavated by Howard Carter in the '20s and '30s.

GARDEN CITY

Under the reign of Ismail, a Cairene plot of agricultural land between Qasr al-Ainy and Qasr al-Dubara was essentially "given" to the British, acting as the headquarters for the British Army in Egypt for some time. In the early part of the last century, it was further developed in the style of the old, dolled-up English suburbs, earning it the title of Garden City. While it remains a tranquil, tree-lined suburb amid the chaotic, urban sprawl that is the rest of Central Cairo, many of its refined, turn-of-the-century villas have been ploughed up by developers, and the area retains only a shadow of its former elegance. Located here are the Dok Dok Felucca landing, as well as several bridges to Manial on the island of Rhoda. Proximity to the Nile island ensures that only those whom the prince wishes to keep close by for one reason or another are granted feeding rights in Garden City, and crime rates are lower here than almost anywhere else in Cairo.

The Ventruie who used to call the area home have moved on to greener pastures, where they envision a new Garden City in the tasteful Cairo suburb of Heliopolis. The area's most distinguished remaining Kindred resident is the Malkavian elder, Nazrudin, who was given a Nileside estate by the prince following the events of Black Saturday.

EZBEKIYA

Originally a small lake outside the Fatimid walls, this district takes its name from the Mameluke Emir, Ezbek al-Yusufi, who built a palace on its peaceful shores in the late 15th century. It soon grew to become a place of both popular entertainment and contemplation,

ELYSIUM

One of the only ways in which the prince can maintain some degree of direct authority over the numerous, and often unruly Kindred of Cairo is by use of the tradition of Elysium. Most Kindred in the city relate to the desire to preserve the heritage and history of the city's most treasured sites, and more often than not, they give their full support to any declarations made by the prince. Due to the nature of Elysium, the vast majority of sites are located in Central and Islamic Cairo and the prince has not, as yet, declared any site west of the Nile to be Elysium. Doing so would be an overt declaration of dominion over Banu al-Giza, and it would most likely bring consequences he is unwilling to deal with at this time.

Although declaring a site Elysium marks it as free from violence and vulgar displays of Kindred power, the theory often operates poorly in practice, and skirmishes sometimes freely erupt all across the city — regardless of location. As the Kindred of Cairo enter the Final Nights, the frequency of these conflicts increases, and many have lately begun to fear that nothing and nowhere is safe.

The following is a list of sites that have been declared Elysium around the City Triumphant.

- Abdin Palace
- Andalusian Gardens
- Cairo Opera House
- Cairo Tower
- The Citadel
- Cities of the Dead
- Coptic Museum
- Greater Cairo Library
- Manial Palace
- Mogamma
- Museum of Islamic Art
- Museum of Modern Art
- Khan al-Khalili
- Qasaba Radwan Bey (The Tentmakers' Bazaar)
- Ramses Station
- All Hammams and Mosques in the city (whether protected by Ambient Faith [see Chapter Five] or not)

and, for centuries, it was the site of a classy neighborhood favored by Cairo's wealthy and elite. Yet, everything changed when Napoleon arrived. Artillery leveled many of the palaces, while Napoleon himself,

finding the lake unsightly, had it filled in by his men after commandeering the finest of its homes for himself. Later, during the reign of Muhammad Ali, Ezbekkiya was the center of Cairo's social life, and the streets that bordered its beautiful gardens became the site of choice for hotel-builders. Many of Europe's wealthiest and finest soon had buildings here, including the infamous English hotel, Shepheard's, which proudly went up on the site of Napoleon's former palace.

After Shepheard's was burnt to the ground during Black Saturday, Ezbekkiya began to deteriorate. The gardens were bisected by the extension of Sharia 26th of July, and much of the remaining green-space became taken over by new construction projects. In order to preserve what little grass remained, fencing went up to keep people out, creating a substantial area away from view that has drawn both crime and the undead. As none live here anymore, the district is not the feeding ground of any particular vampire or group of vampires, and it has been the site of numerous vampiric squabbles over the mortals who occasionally pass through. Although it was once a wondrous garden spot, modern Ezbekkiya is a hollow place of shadows and fear.

BANU DUVAL

The area that is now the north-Cairo district of Bulaq used to be under water. After the sinking of a ship called Al-Fil ("the Elephant") in the 14th century, an area of sandbanks arose as the Nile began to turn westward. The Mamelukes used the area for archery practice until Sultan an-Nasir dug his canal, whereupon he drained the area and issued a proclamation inviting people to build and settle in the new Nile-side district. For centuries, it was Cairo's busiest port, replacing the previous port of Al-Maqs, and it fell out of use only after Egypt's first railway was built in 1851, linking Cairo to Alexandria.

When Napoleon arrived in 1798, he was fully intent on staying in Cairo. He made alterations to the city (alterations that remain to this night), and he took up residence in a sumptuous palace in Ezbekkiya. Up until that time, the area's only vampiric inhabitant was Muhandis — the Damascene Toreador and architect responsible for the design and construction of several area mosques. When Napoleon and his troops finally withdrew in 1801, the prince observed it with the secret understanding that a khitta would be granted in the "new" port district of Bulaq, under a Toreador named Jean-Baptiste Duval. The area has been Toreador domain since, and, with the exodus of Muhandis during the development of the west bank, is now populated primarily by French descendants of Duval's line. Being Christians themselves, many of the Duvali Toreador promulgate the worship of Christ, and they secretly

support the small but active Coptic population in Cairo. As a result, one of the highest Christian populations in Egypt can be found in Bulaq.

PLACES OF NOTE

The Abu al-Ela Mosque: Nearer the river, in the oldest section of Bulaq, sits a small but elegant mosque. Located just north of the modern Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was built in 1485 by the Toreador architect Muhandis, and it was the center of worship for many who came through Cairo when Bulaq was the busiest port on the Nile. Nowadays, a 26th of July fly-over passes the door of the mosque, and the site isn't nearly as picturesque as it once was. The surrounding alleys are filled with a used car parts market that quickly becomes a wholesale cloth and clothing bazaar. Since the departure of Muhandis, the Duvali Toreador have made a killing off of not only these merchants, but the many who come to visit the area as well.

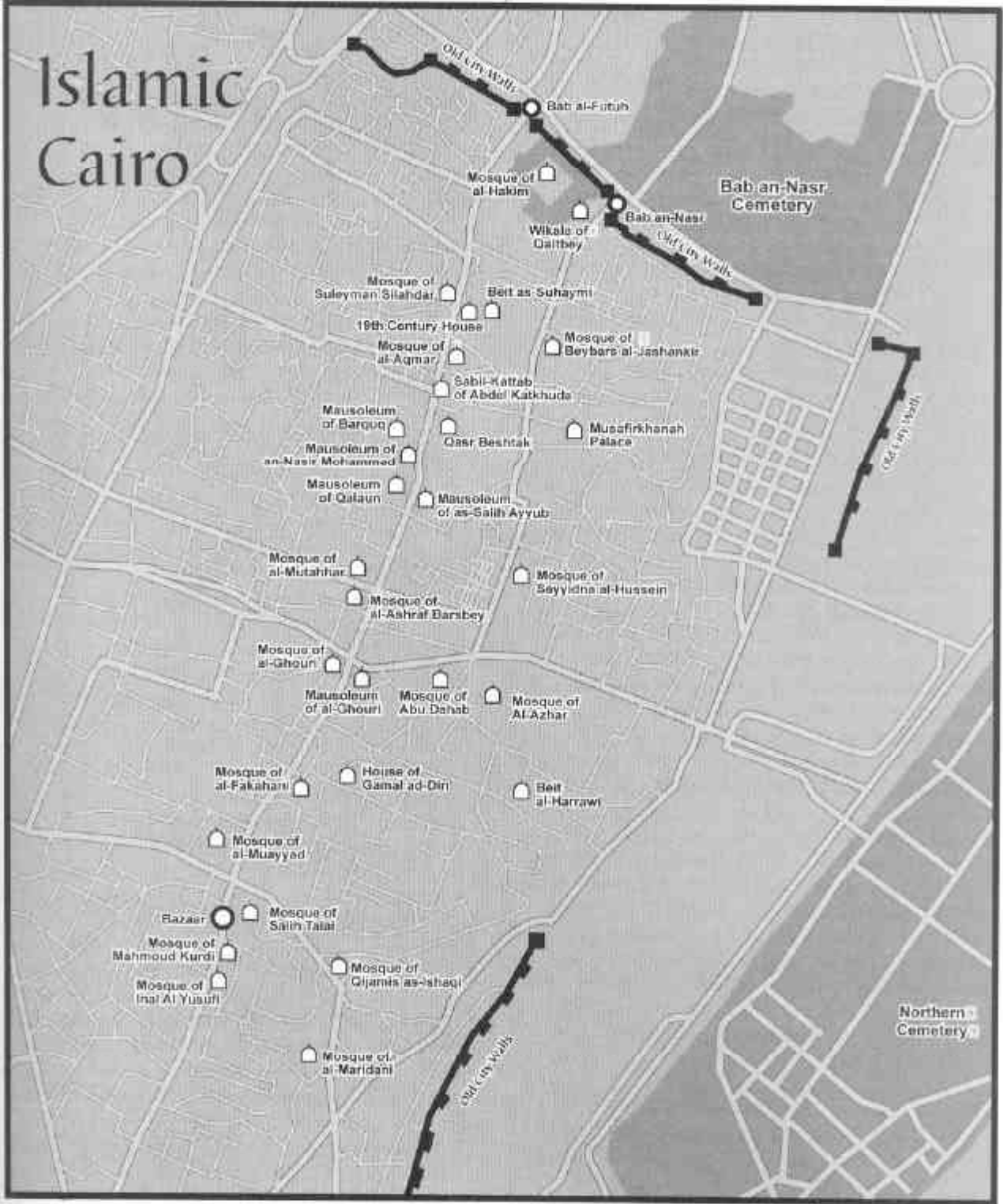
World Trade Center: When the Toreador of Bulaq aren't sucking the life from the Egyptian locals, they're making the most of the area's largest edifice — the World Trade Center. Several international corporations take office space here, as well as high finance merchants and the Australian Embassy. The lavish penthouse of the building is owned by Andres LeCompte, the current Councilor of Banu Duval, who runs his many business affairs from the offices within. The lower levels are an array of retail stores, offering exclusive shopping to the center's many visitors and tenants.

ISLAMIC CAIRO

The area that lies to the east of Central Cairo is a cultural and religious center, nestled within a perfectly preserved medieval city. Stepping into Islamic Cairo strips the casual westerner of all that is familiar, replacing it with the ubiquitous sight of elegant minarets and domes, and the variegated scent of livestock, turmeric and cumin. The sensory assaults come fast and hard, cramped into a labyrinthine complex of alleyways so narrow their adjacent buildings seem to meet overhead. Western visitors often find themselves losing not only all sense of direction in this bubble of living history, but all sense of time as well. In broad strokes, Islamic Cairo stretches north to Sharia Ramses from its western border of Bur Said, south to the old ruined aqueduct and Salah Salem, and east as far as the northern cemetery of the Cities of the Dead.

Three of the city's oldest khittas are in Islamic Cairo, and even the "youngest" of these, Banu al-Hajji, has existed here for over 800 years. The other two, Banu Yashkur and Banu al-Lam'a, have held domain in Islamic Cairo for even longer.

Islamic Cairo



BANU YASHKUR

Although it was the second khitta established in the area that would become modern Cairo, it can be said that Banu Yashkur is the oldest surviving domain, as its founder remains in the city to this night. Originally established in the early nights of Abbasid Cairo, Banu Yashkur was founded by the pre-Islamic Assamite Antara and named after the rocky hill where he and his followers came to dwell. Antara embraced Islam when it was still young, lending his full support to the movement and encouraging others of his blood to follow the vibrant, new religion. In these early years, Banu Yashkur continued much as it had before the rise of Islam: as a united front against those who opposed the Assamites and their continued presence in Egypt.

When the situation changed, however, and serious differences began to tear clan unity apart from the inside, their conflict began to take shape within the khitta itself. Due to their strict observance of Haqim's Laws, the Assamites of Cairo are among the most respectful clans to the mortals within their domain. Their domain itself, however, has suffered through the infighting in recent years, and the residential districts that make up the majority of Banu Yashkur territory have fallen into poverty, hardship and disrepair. What were once prosperous and vibrant districts have become recessed and overpopulated, and it is many of these neighborhoods that give the city of Cairo its reputation for Third-World squalor. While some among the Children of Haqim have noticed this degradation, and actively seek to promote the welfare of the kine in the domain that they all must share, most are too embroiled in their own concerns to care overmuch.

The khitta itself occupies much the same area as it has for centuries. It shares the border of Islamic Cairo to the west and south, while stretching north to Sharia Ahmed Mazer and the Islamic Museum, and east as far as Sharia al-Muizz — the western border of Banu al-Hajji. Within Banu Yashkur are several once-important residential districts, including Bab al-Khalq, Hilmiyya and Zein al-Abdin. Unfortunately for the prosperity of the district, many of the wealthier residents who could have made a difference here have given up and moved on (out of the terrible living conditions), leaving the future of the domain somewhat bleak indeed.

PLACES OF NOTE

The Gayer-Anderson House: Located adjacent to the Mosque of Ibn Tulun, this museum, often called *Bay't al-Kretliya* ("House of the Cretan Woman"), is actually two conjoined 16th-century houses. When former British mayor John Gayer-Anderson came to Cairo, he fell in love with the site, restoring and refurbishing the houses at length during the years between 1935 and 1942. With its marble fountains,



mushrafiyya galleries and carpet-covered alcoves, the Gayer-Anderson House is an Orientalist's dream.

Unknown to most, however, it is also a waking nightmare. The original site was built around a strange well that seemed to call out to the locals to come and build around it. The well is actually the mouth of a tunnel that leads to the underground complex of the Dream Court, and, for many years, it acted as an open conduit for the maddening thoughts of the dreaming Maiden of Plagues. From its place of sleep deep beneath the city, the Methuselah breathed its contagion topside

upon the citizens of Cairo, unchecked by any force for years. When the *khitta's* Assamite founder, Antara, discovered what was occurring inside his own domain, he acted to close the conduit — forever sealing the creature below in its own filth. Although its usefulness as a mouthpiece for chaos has been silenced, the well itself — called the Well of Sorrows by those who know their history — remains beneath an arch in the courtyard behind the house. The Antaran Assamites keep watch over the site to ensure that the magical seals continue to hold.

THE MOSQUES OF ISLAMIC CAIRO

Of the many mosques that have earned Cairo the sobriquet "City of a Thousand Minarets," there are a few whose distinctiveness of history and design outshine all others. Many of these mosques of note are located in Islamic Cairo, and the following is a list of the more celebrated among them.

Al-Azhar: Perhaps the most famous of Cairo's mosques, Al-Azhar bears the added distinction of being the world's oldest surviving university. Established by the Fatimids in 970, it has since grown to dominate Muslim life in Cairo, as the Sheik of Al-Azhar remains Egypt's ultimate religious authority. Over the centuries, university classes have grown sparser and sparser, and most are now held in one of nine Al-Azhar campuses around the country. Al-Azhar is located on Sharia Al-Azhar, just south of the Khan al-Khalili in Banu al-Lam'a.

Blue Mosque: So named because of the blue-gray marble that coats its exterior and the blue tiling inside, the more correct name for the mosque is the Mosque of Aqsunqur. While the mosque itself dates from 1347, Ibrahim Agha, the Turkish governor of the time, installed the tiles in 1652. The Blue Mosque sees little use by mortals these days. It is the primary aboveground place of worship for the Hajj of Cairo, and they are led in regular prayer here by their councilor, Ibn Ja'far the Golden. The Blue Mosque is located just inside the walls of Salah al-Din in Banu al-Hajji.

Mosque of Al-Hakim: Erected by Cairo's notorious "Mad Caliph" Al-Hakim in 1010, it has seen relatively little use in the purpose for which it was intended. It has, at various times during the past millennium, been used as a prison for captured Crusaders, a horse stables, a warehouse, a school for boys and, perhaps most appropriately, as an insane asylum. The mosque was given to an Indian sect of Ismaili Shi'ia called the Bohras in 1980. Al-Hakim's mosque is located in Banu al-Lam'a, just south of Bab an-Nasr cemetery.

Mosque of Ibn Tulun: Considered by many to be the most magnificent mosque in the city, this structure has stood largely unchanged since it was first erected by the Abbasid governor Ibn Tulun in the 870's, making it the oldest functioning Islamic monument in Cairo. It continues to draw pilgrims the world over who come to pray in its ancient and hallowed halls, and the strength of the site's Ambient Faith remains unequalled among other mosques in the city. Ibn Tulun's mosque sits adjacent to the Gayer-Anderson House in Banu Yashkur.

Mosque of Al-Muayyad: Completed in 1422, this triumph of Mameluke religious architecture also contains a mausoleum where Al-Muayyad and his son are buried. The mosque's twin minarets lie atop Bab Zuwayla, rather than on the mosque itself — a fact that has long puzzled locals as well as visitors, as the two constructions were centuries apart. In truth, the master masons who undertook the gate-top erection knew that they had their numbers and dimensions correct. They had help in the form of Muhandis, the Toreador architect who was also responsible for the mosque's great bronze doorway, which he ordered the workers to remove from the mosque of Sultan Hassan. This mosque is located next to Bab Zuwayla at the entrance to Banu al-Lam'a.

Mosque-Madrassa of Sultan Hassan: Construction of this enormous edifice, begun in 1356 and only completed after seven years of constant toil, was paid for by the estates of those who died from the plague that decimated Cairo in the sultan's inaugural year. The mosque's current Ambient Faith seems to be in a state of supernatural flux: Some Kindred have been known to burst into flames after merely passing by the site, while others have reported crossing the actual threshold without even the slightest discomfort. Although separated by only a narrow alleyway, the neighboring Mosque of al-Rifai — the place where the bodies of the royals are buried — seems to be strangely free of any such spiritual discord. The Mosque of Sultan Hassan sits on Midan Salah al-Din inside Banu al-Hajji.

BANU AL-HAJJI

Although inhabited solely by Nosferatu, this domain remains one of the most populous in Cairo, serving as haven to no fewer than 20 of the city's Kindred. And this does not include those Nosferatu of other faiths, who, while suffered gracefully by the domain's Islamic majority, are suffered nonetheless. In addition, this number is likely an underestimation, publicized primarily to placate the prince's sense of proportion.

Of all the khittas in Cairo, Banu al-Hajji is given the widest berth to govern its own affairs. The prince recognizes not only the Nosferatu's established precedence in the city, but their critical importance to Cairo's vast Muslim population as well, whom the Hajj are eternally sworn to protect. Although some have voiced criticism of this practice, it is typically understood that it is simply "how things are" in Cairo and, if the residents of Banu al-Hajji have anything to say about it, the way things will continue to be.

The khitta itself has existed in Cairo since Salah al-Din's time. It was established at the close of the 12th century by Ibn Ja'far the Golden, a descendant of Tarique — Arabian Nosferatu elder and founder of the Hajj. The Nosferatu of Banu al-Hajji immediately took to their charge, and much of Islamic Cairo's surviving culture can be traced to the undead who have guided its course. Indeed, the Hajj have encouraged such a staunch adherence to custom over the centuries, that the community under their care still thrives much the same as it did during medieval times — thus giving the neighborhood its traditional feel.

A great deal of mortal life in the domain is centered around Midan Salah al-Din, where all the district's main thoroughfares converge. The square is home to several important mosques, as well as the city's busiest *souqs* outside of the Khan al-Khalili. Banu al-Hajji is bordered by Banu Yashkur to the west, extending east as far as the northern cemetery, and north as far as Bab Zuwayla and Banu al-Lam'a.

THE CITADEL

Salah al-Din began construction on this massive compound in 1176 in order to fortify the city against the crusading Franj. The Citadel, locally dubbed Al-Qala'a, was home to those who governed Egypt for nearly 700 years. Those of Salah al-Din's line held it briefly, followed by the Mamelukes when they took control of Egypt in the 13th century, adding additional palaces and extending the walls south to include polo fields and a cattle stockade. When Ottoman rule entered Egypt, it was further expanded — this time to the west — as new fortress walls were again added, as well as a new main gate called Bab al-Azab. Although Napoleon did very

little to the Citadel itself during his stay, his "successor," Muhammad Ali, set about demolishing many of the Islamic monuments following his massacre of the Mamelukes in 1811. The only Mameluke building allowed to remain was a single mosque, and this was spared out of no sense of piety. (Muhammad Ali had the building used as a horse stable.) When Ismail took power, he relocated the royal family, beginning the era of the Citadel as a barracks for the military. The site housed the British Army during World War II, and, following the events of Black Saturday, it has quartered Egyptian soldiers exclusively.

The Citadel is divided into three main sub-divisions: the Lower, Northern and Southern Enclosures. The Lower Enclosure is the site of the massacre of the Mamelukes, and it has been closed off to the public permanently. This administrative decree has echoed throughout the undead community as well, and none but the most daring or foolish prowl this area late at night. As if to prove the point, a kind of folk tale has circled throughout the city, telling of a lone Nosferatu who vanished here some time around the turn of the century. Purportedly following noises he believed were coming from the site, he ventured up the hill and around the gully-like road to the Lower Enclosure itself — never to be seen or heard from again.

The Northern Enclosure contains a number of museums, including the National Military Museum, which was Muhammad Ali's sometime Harem Palace. Also located here are two of Salah al-Din's towers — the Burg al-Haddad ("Blacksmith's Tower") and the Burg ar-Ramla ("Sand Tower") — as well as the Mosque of Suleiman Pasha and its assembly of exquisite domes.

The Southern Enclosure is the most visible of the three, dominated by the Mosque of Muhammad Ali, which took over 18 years to complete. Of slightly more interesting note is the Gawhara Palace and Museum, located just south of the mosque, which was home to Muhammad Ali during his reign. The palace currently serves as a house of wax intended to evoke 19th-century court life.

Due to its status as one of the most widely visited attractions in Cairo, the prince has declared the entire Citadel an Elysium, leaving the Nosferatu to adjudicate its dispensation. The site also remains the barracks of some Egyptian military personnel, and these few good men, being officers of the government, are "hands-off" to all Kindred except the prince. Rather than the complicated territorial dispute that might have arisen, the prince's solution has proven an amicable one thus far, as the Hajj rarely find need to enter the grounds of the Citadel in the modern nights. Many around the city see the situation for what it is, as well as the irony inherent in it. Cairo's ancient

undead powers have been pushed aside by a modern force more frightful than they — tourists.

BANU AL-LAM'A

Established in the 10th century when the Shiite Fatimids descended into Egypt, this khitta is named after its founder, Sharif al-Lam'a — the North African Lasombra king. After he staked his claim, the walled city that grew up around him became his private domain, and all those pre-existing Kindred who desired entrance into the royal city were required to gain the Lasombra's permission. For decades, Sharif al-Lam'a and his paramour, Fatimah, were as king and queen to the undead of Al-Qahira, effectively snubbing the rule of Sultan Antonius. In modern nights, the domain is the political battleground of King Sharif's descendants. Some have joined the cause of the Sabbat, while the rest — including the domain's councilor, Fatimah al-Lam'a — are more interested in attending to matters according to their founder's legacy than in engaging in petty ideological squabbles with those of their own lineage.

Banu al-Lam'a holds domain over the northern portion of Islamic Cairo. Unlike its southern neighbors, however, this khitta spans the entirety of Islamic Cairo from east to west, making it a slightly larger domain than either of those with whom it shares Islamic Cairo. In addition to Banu Yashkur and Banu al-Hajji to the south, Banu al-Lam'a is bordered to the north by Banu al-Azraq at Abbasiyya.

PLACES OF NOTE

Bab Zuwayla: Of the several gates built by the Fatimids to mark the southern entrance to their walled city of Al-Qahira, this is the only one that remains to this night. During the Mameluke age, it became one of the city's main sites of public gathering and, as such, likewise became the location for all public executions of note. Indeed, the gate was widely known as the forum for public and often graphic displays of power and dominion. Mameluke rule ended violently at the site when Tuman Bey was hanged three times from the gate's vaulted ceiling (the rope snapped the first two times), and the heads of 500 slain Mamelukes were exhibited here on spikes following Muhammad Ali's dreadful massacre. Up until the close of the 19th century, Bab Zuwayla was still being stubbornly barred shut every evening. Currently, the site primarily serves to mark the entrance to Banu al-Lam'a, and the echoes of its grisly past are a chilling reminder to those who would forget their place inside the domain of the unforgiving Lasombra.

The Khan al-Khalili: The largest of Cairo's many open-air markets, this massive maze of shops was built on the site of a medieval caravansary in 1382 by Garkas al-Khalili, the then-sultan's Master of Horses. During

the day, the bazaar comes alive, teeming with mortals of every age and ethnicity who operate and patronize the hundreds of shops that can be found within. Everything from brasswork to books to beads can be found here (at a price), and the multitude of merchants who daily ply their trade at the Khan are among the greatest salesmen in the world.

Once night falls, the Khan al-Khalili becomes a playground for the undead, though there is little trouble — and thus fun — that the city's Kindred can get into here. As the story goes, the intrusions on Lasombra domain were becoming too frequent, as well as the accompanying disappearances. (Regardless of clan or domain, the undead of Cairo just couldn't keep away from the Khan al-Khalili and its labyrinth of darkened alleyways.) Therefore, in order to establish peace, the matron of Banu al-Lam'a simply opened her arms to the city, permitting the prince to establish the bazaar as Elysium. As it stands, all are welcome at the Khan al-Khalili, provided they respect its rules, as well as the domain of the Lasombra while elsewhere in Islamic Cairo.

This arrangement has resulted in a happy medium, and many have come to appreciate the Cainites of Banu al-Lam'a (or at least the councilor) for the concession regarding the bazaar. While occasional missteps do occur, they do so infrequently as those who vandalize the wares or any of the bazaar's awning-covered alleyways themselves are dealt with harshly, by both the prince and the Lasombra claimants to the domain. Instead, nocturnal visitors are encouraged to while away the nights in Fishawi's coffeehouse, as it is one of the few places in Cairo that keeps agreeable hours. In fact, this legendary *ahua* of the Khan has been open 24 hours a day for a staggering 200 years — thanks in part to the Cainites whose continued presence has helped it prosper.

MASRAL-QADIMA

The area known as "Old Cairo" has well earned the title, as it is the area surrounding the earliest mortal settlements in the city. In theory, it includes all area south of Garden City and Sayyida Zeinab, across the smoking ruins of Al-Fustat, and down to the bottom of Coptic Cairo, the nexus of Egypt's Christian community. The neighborhood seems to take its role as the Cairo's oldest district quite seriously, and the pace of life is more deliberate here than in other places around the city. This quiet district even imparts a certain visual appeal that is different from the rest of Cairo. With its high stone walls, soft colors and cobblestone alleys, it is more reminiscent of Jerusalem's Old City than of any local neighborhood, and many visitors often feel as though they have stepped back in time upon entering Old Cairo.

CITIES OF THE DEAD

*O ye who stand beside my grave, show not surprise at my condition
Yesterday I was as you... tomorrow you shall be as me*
—cenotaph inscription on the tomb of Shagaret al-Durr

Outside the old city walls lies a vast, sprawling necropolis turned metropolis, where the living have come by the hundreds of thousands to dwell among the buried dead. This massive graveyard city is divided into Northern and Southern Cemeteries, separated by the rocky outcrop upon which Salah al-Din's Citadel was built. Together, these two cemeteries — called simply Al-Qarafa ("the cemetery," *par excellence*) by the Cairenes — are more sensationally known as the Cities of the Dead.

The Northern Cemetery, located east of Banu al-Lam'a in Islamic Cairo, is the home of a pack of rancid Lupines who, having just weathered the gruesome devastation of Jackal Fever, have recently developed a taste for the flesh of sentient creatures. Although fiercely protective of the Cairene relatives who dwell alongside them in squalor, everyone not included in this protected group is, as they say, fair game. Their repulsive feeding habits, and the disappearances among the mortals that they invariably cause, are subsequently and easily blamed on the city's numerous undead. This only further fans the flame of animosity between Egypt's resurgent werewolf population and the Kindred of Cairo, and full-scale war between the two — the likes of which hasn't been seen since Antonius' time — could well be right around the corner.

The Southern Cemetery, the older of the two, is a different story entirely. It is distinctly less developed than its northeastern neighbor, possessing less in the way of plumbing, electricity and other necessities. In addition, teams of mortals who are sent in to work in the dilapidated graveyard often come back, their work unfinished and with little memory of their time inside the cemetery. On a recent occasion, one such unit returned similarly foggy-brained and two members short. When questioned, the team could provide no satisfactory explanation as to the disappearance of its coworkers. In truth, the two missing laborers were clandestine agents for the prince, and it was they in particular who did not return alive. Something eerily discerning is dwelling among the

cramped residents of the Southern Cemetery, and it seems not to like the undead very much at all.

Mukhtar Bey's solution to this curious situation has fallen in line with his past stratagems — he has declared the Cities of the Dead, in their entirety, to be Elysium. He claims that the proliferation of the kind in the cemeteries, as well as their cramped cohabitation with places of worship, is an inherent threat to the Masquerade. More to the point, he understands that if he were to start granting feeding grounds in either cemetery, the Ventrue would immediately claim domain, as per the terms of their existing agreement with him (see page XX). Indeed, the area would *technically* fall under the provisions of that arrangement, but he'll be twice damned if he's going to allow them to play that game with him. Therefore, in order to deny the Ventrue, he has had to deny everybody — something he has been more than willing to do, given the area's many considerable dangers. He has not, however, prohibited the Kindred under his governance from feeding from the cemeteries' residents themselves, should they find cause to venture into one of the city's proper domains. In other words, he has advised the vampires of Cairo to let the Cities of the Dead come to them, rather than the other way around.

Although the matter is far from being permanently settled, the vast majority of Cairo's undead follow the prince's edict for the time being (if grudgingly) and stay clear of the cemeteries. Feeding grounds have not become so scarce yet that they feel the need to panic. The exceptions to this rule can be found in several younger members of the Sabbat, who come to the cemeteries to buck the prince's will. In particular, a nomadic pack of Panders and Gangrel *antitribu* called Harm's Way have recently taken to hunting in the Northern Cemetery, and have already come to blows with the firmly entrenched Lupine population on more than one occasion. Although the Sabbat bishop in Cairo claims to be reining these renegades in, they are, in truth, just as resentful of the arrogant Lasombra and his heavy-handed ways, and they are quickly becoming just as big a nuisance to him as they have become to the prince.

At one time, over 20 churches clustered in this small, traditional neighborhood. Although that number has since been reduced to only five, they remain some of the most important religious sites in Egypt. The Hanging Church (El-Muallaqa), so named because it sits atop the bastions of the Water Gate leading into the old Roman fortress of Babylon, became the center of the Coptic world when the patriarchy moved here from Alexandria in the 11th century. A beautiful and world-famous place of worship, it was dedicated to the Virgin and, therefore, is more officially known as Sitt Mariam (St. Mary). Nearby, atop one of the old Roman towers, sits the circular church of Mari Girgis (St. George), whose adjoining monastery is the seat of the Greek patriarch. Its interior has been gutted repeatedly by past fires, but with its curious design and vibrantly colored stained-glass windows, it remains one of the most dazzling churches in Egypt. Placed alongside the nearby temples of Sitt Barbara, Abu Serga and the Church of the Virgin, Coptic Cairo is a community of quiet and eternal faith.

BANU AHL AR-RAYA

As one would expect, the oldest of the city's vampiric domains can be found in the oldest of Cairo's mortal neighborhoods. In the modern nights, this khitta consists mainly of Coptic Cairo and the area around the old Roman fortress of Babylon, having conceded the largely uninhabited remains of Al-Fustat to the Followers of Set. Of the city's many districts, the walled enclave of Coptic Cairo is truly the one that has been most affected by the presence of the undead who have come to call it home. Since the first nights when Islam entered Egypt, the warrior-scholars of Banu Ahl ar-Raya have claimed this area as their own, infusing their timeless essences into the very community that grew to surround them. Throughout the centuries, whenever the rest of Cairo burned, bled or raged, they persisted, lending that persistence to the mortal community under their charge. Therefore, while the rest of the City Triumphant has moved on, embracing the sweeping changes the last two centuries in particular have brought, Banu Ahl ar-Raya has remained much the same — a capsule of traditional ascetic life, forever frozen in time.

PLACES OF NOTE

Abu Serga: The oldest Christian church in Egypt, Abu Serga (Church of St. Sergius) was built on the site where, according to tradition, the Holy Family found refuge after fleeing from King Herod. Every year in June, a mass gathering occurs here as Coptic Christians the world over go on pilgrimage to commemorate the event. The church itself is dedicated to St. Sergius and St. Bacchus, who were martyred in Syria in the fourth century by Maximilian. Although simple, it is a beauti-

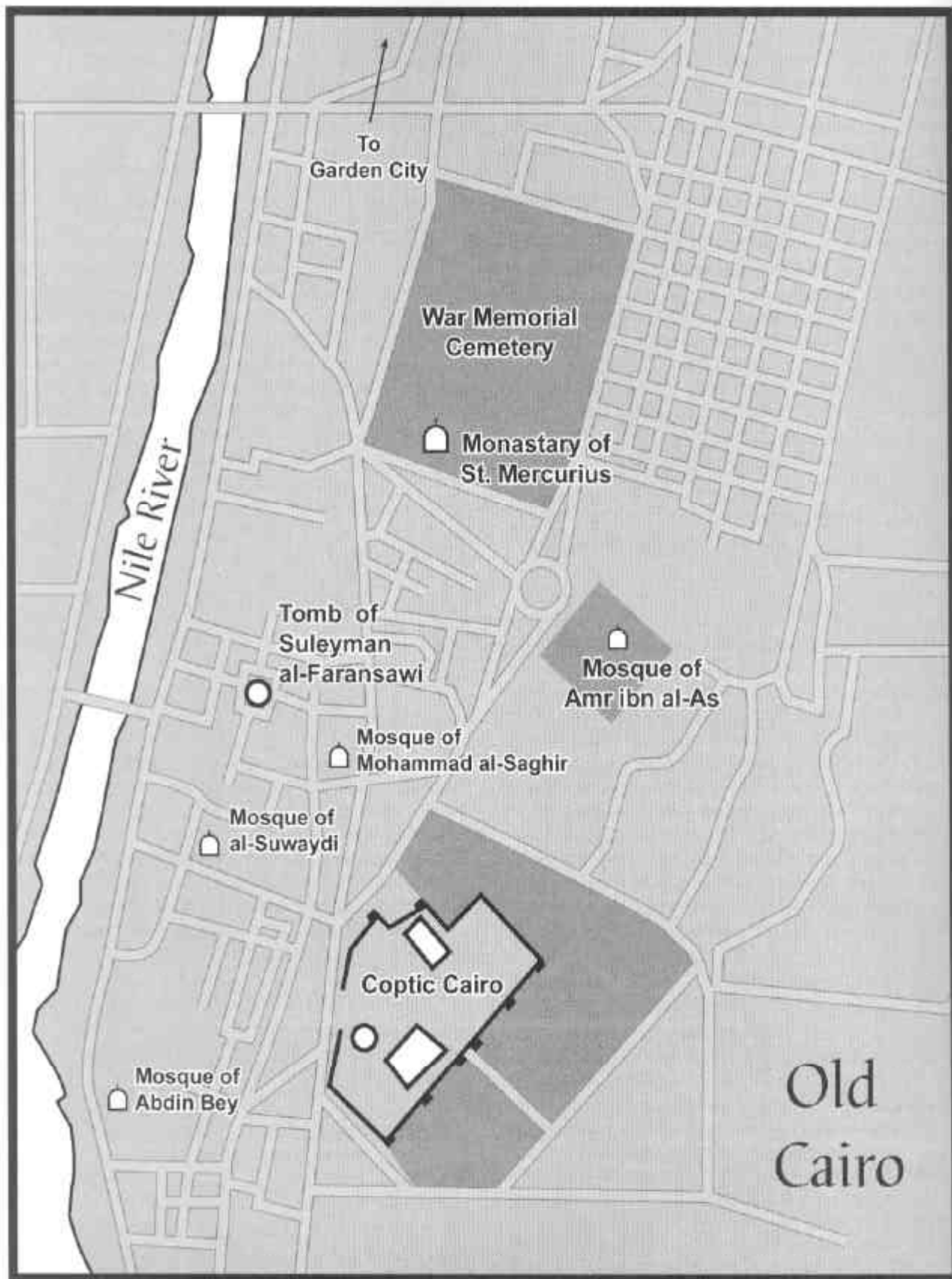
ful structure, formed of a basilica with aisles separated from the nave by rows of columns beneath of high timber roof. Eleven of the columns are marble (one is granite), and each bears the face of one of the Apostles. Abu Serga has always been a site of somber sanctity and worship, even among the undead. The pious Coptic Nosferatu, Petra, can often be found either inside the church itself or in the crypt-caves beneath, which have been closed to the public for some time.

BANU AL AS-SA'IDI

When Al-Fustat was destroyed in 1168 to prevent the King of Jerusalem from taking it for the Christians, so too fell the first and only legitimate domain ever held by the Followers of Set in Cairo. After that, they continued much as they always had, but without the benefit of an ancestral home and its attendant feeding rights. This situation finally changed with the arrival of the Setite attorney, David Mooreland, who, following a little clever legalizing with the prince, soon had the ancient khitta reinstated in the only area the Setites ever had a legitimate claim to — the area around Al-Fustat. The old Arab city's ruins, which had been largely uninhabited for over 600 years, possessed few mortal inhabitants at the time of the domain's reestablishment, after the events of Black Saturday. Still, a sparsely populated domain was better than none at all, and the Setites have since been about the business of building a khitta worth having.

The vast majority of the current Setite khitta is taken up by what appears to be a vast, smoldering moonscape, as if the site had been the recent target of a thermonuclear warhead. Although the area seems at first like something out of a post-apocalyptic science-fiction epic, it is actually a thriving community of manufacturers and craftsmen who ply their trade in hundreds of subterranean workshops. These underground artisans are responsible for providing much of the city's piping and earthenware needs, and are among the finest processors and fashioners of clay and clay products in the country. The smoke that is always seen drifting into the sky above the area comes from the many beehive kilns the locals have dug into the ground, and the ruins of Al-Fustat radiate with their heat. The Setites take surprising care (for Setites) of the kine within their domain, and the mortals who live and work in the underground potters' village are among the most content and secure of Cairo's underprivileged. It remains one of Cairo's most unmistakable ironies: Of all the khittas, the Followers of Set are the ones currently doing the most to revitalize the neighborhood in which they dwell.

Banu al as-Sa'idi territory is small, relative to the size of other khittas in Cairo, and even smaller relative



to their mortal populations. It encompasses only the area around Al-Fustat, and it is hemmed in by Banu Ahl ar-Raya and the Southern Cemetery, to the west and east respectively. To those not of Mooreland's mind, the "new" domain remains a largely political contrivance. Most are quite content to reside in what they believe to be the true Setite domain lying beneath the city — the Dream Court.

PLACES OF NOTE

The Mosque of Amr Ibn al-As: The first mosque ever built on Egyptian soil still stands at its original site just north of Coptic Cairo, although it has undergone extensive remodeling and expansion since its foundation in 642. Once the epicenter of Egypt's conversion to Islam, it sees less and less use for worship in the modern nights with the Setites having been granted what remains of Al-Fustat. This treasured piece of Egyptian history has become little more than a depraved rendezvous for Set's childer, who are slowly but surely disintegrating the site's Ambient Faith through a combination of blood sacrifices and eldritch sorceries.

THE NILE ISLANDS

Over the centuries, the movement of and along the river has resulted in the formation of several islands in between the east and west banks of the Nile. Since the nights of Antonius' reign, these islands have been the home of whomever claimed domain over the vampires of Cairo. When he died, his successor continued on that tradition, and he continues to rule from the Nile island of Rhoda — as Antonius did before him. An unofficial khitta in and of itself, it has provided shelter, security and a sense of separation from the "masses," which continues to signify their place as the home of the one who would stand apart from all others. This has become especially appropriate, given the fact that the prince of Cairo is the lord of one domain and the prince of many.

Two of the Nile islands are an inclusive part of the city of Cairo: Rhoda and Gezira. Although others exist, such as Qursaba and Dahab farther south along the river, they are technically outside the city limits, as well as being undeveloped and largely agricultural.

RHODA

The oldest of Cairo's Nile islands, Rhoda has been around since Pharaonic times, when it acted as a province of the ancient city of Heliopolis. Unlike its alluvial cousin to the north, Rhoda is composed of solid bedrock, and it has supported extensive construction over the centuries. The "prince's island," as it is often called by the Kindred of Cairo, stretches approximately three kilometers down the Nile, and it is bisected along the

way by two major bridges — University Bridge to the north, and the Giza Bridge to the south.

Rhoda, which means "garden" in Arabic, has long been the site and source of Cairo's ruling class. A Roman fortress once stood here, built across from its twin in Masr al-Qadima, and Sultan as-Salih Ayyub housed himself and his Mameluke guard here amid dozens of palaces and lavish gardens. Little has changed in the ages since, as the island is still the home of the aristocracy. The prince of the undead, Mukhtar Bey, has made the island his home for over 600 years. After "inheriting" the domain from his former prince and liege, he came to an agreement with Antonius' descendants, whereby the Ventrue would receive rights to the territories on the outskirts of the city as compensation for being "ousted" from the Nile islands — their former ancestral home.

PLACES OF NOTE

Manial: This middle-class residential district, located at the northern tip of the island, is separated from Garden City by a thin stretch of water called the Sayyalit al-Rhoda. Sitting just to the south of this suburb is Manial Palace, originally built to be the residence of King Farouk's uncle. Tonight, the palace is one of the few luxuries of direct involvement that Mukhtar Bey has allowed himself — all buildings in the Manial Palace complex constitute his personal haven. Of important note is that Muhammad Ali's vast and valuable collection of manuscripts, silver and other medieval objects is located here in the opulent Residence Palace, so it effectively belongs to the prince. He understands the collection's importance, however, so he makes no attempt to keep it from those who wish to view it. In addition, he has made an elegant and popular Elysium of one of the nicer buildings in all of Cairo — the compound's Reception Palace. He delights in using it regularly and sumptuously to fete both Kindred and kine alike.

The Mosque of Salah al-Din: This small and unassuming structure was commissioned secretly by the prince, that he may have a legitimate place for nightly worship without being forced to leave his island haven. The mosque itself, like several others around the city, was erected under the guidance of the Toreador architect, Muhandis, and it bears the quiet distinction of being the last such mosque as well. It is the only remaining mosque on the Nile islands, and the prince takes some measure of curious pride in this fact.

The Nilometer and Munasterli Palace: Originally built in the ninth century, this measuring device (a graduated column below water level) could predict the annual rise and fall of the river and, thus, the condition of the subsequent harvest. In ages past, the "magic

number" was 16 cubits. If the Nile rose to this level, it was a good sign for the crops, and the people would rejoice. In recent nights, the site has seen use not only as a tourist attraction, but as place of contemplation. Prince Mukhtar Bey often comes here to reflect on the state of his city and its clouded future. Some whisper that it is not the antiquated Nilometer that he seeks, but the river itself. They say it counsels him in times of dire need, and that some of his toughest decisions have been made following wisdom imparted to him through the timeless flow of the Nile.

Located near the Nilometer is Munasterli Palace, first erected in 1851. Although portions of the complex have been dedicated to a new Cultural Arts Center, the remainder acts as the prince's second, south-island haven. Part of his standard security routine involves randomly and periodically moving between the two palaces and a secret third haven elsewhere in the city... just in case.

GEZIRA

Rhoda's river twin, whose name means "the island" (*par excellence*), remained entirely uninhabited until the mid-19th century, when Ismail built a grand palace (now the Cairo Marriott) on its banks. He also landscaped the rest of the alluvial island to pave the way for his vision of a royal garden. As the 20th century wore on, Cairo experienced a land development boom that targeted Gezira, among other places, and the island is now more developed and highly populated than its neighbor to the south.

These nights, Gezira is divided into the largely green southern half and the residential district of Zamalek to the north. In between, as a line of demarcation of sorts, lies the Gezira Sporting Club, where many of the island's resident dignitaries come to socialize.

PLACES OF NOTE

Cairo Tower: Also located on Gezira is Cairo's most distinctive landmark, after the pyramids. Located across Ahly Stadium from the Cairo Opera House, the tower appears as a giant, wire tube with a steel needle protruding from the apex of its 614-foot rise. The "needle" is actually an antenna that sits atop a rotating gourmet restaurant that spins slowly around the building, allowing for dazzling views of the city below. The Cairo Tower is probably Cairo's most popular Elysium, and the prince often closes it off during more important meetings of the assembled Kindred.

The Alhambra: One of the most popular night-clubs in the city, the Alhambra features the sinfully popular exotic dancer, Morocco. Her late-night performances (in which she dances with a giant bull python) are the talk of Cairo's nightlife, and her unattainable



allure and undisputed mastery of the dance have entraptured all who come to pay the E150 per titillating performance. Even the Caitiff of nearby Zamalek are too enthralled to realize that she is a Setite. And it isn't even the only such place on the island. The Setites have either financial interests, moral agents or both invested in homes and businesses across Gezira. Indeed, the prince is slowly losing the entire lower half of his forgotten island to the Followers of Set, who have been moving in sedulously under his very nose.

BANU ZAMALEK

The northern residential district of Zamalek is the site of the recently established khitta claimed by the city's disenfranchised undead, the Caitiff, following the events of Black Saturday. After years of campaigning on behalf of his clanless brethren, the blind vampire Waulkeen succeeded in securing a domain where his kind could dwell and feed, free from the slings and arrows of the so-called "Kindred of parentage." This concession was considered especially generous, given the fact that a good portion of Cairo's more liberal nightlife, and therefore its kine, can be found in Zamalek. Although some Kindred voiced lukewarm opposition in the early nights of its foundation, the existence of Banu Zamalek has grown on the Kindred of Cairo, and it has even found grudging acceptance among more traditional undead in the city.

The domain, such as it is, encompasses only the territory north of the Gezira Sporting Club, a stretch of about a mile and a quarter to the northern tip of the island. While the Caitiff of Zamalek are certainly free to go into other parts of Gezira, as well as into the city itself, their exclusive feeding and haven rights apply only to this single island district. Located within their domain are several fine restaurants, the Akhenaton Centre of Arts, and some of the ritziest hotels and nightclubs in all Cairo. For now, the Caitiff aren't complaining much anymore.

THE PERIPHERY

All area on the outskirts of the city can be divided loosely into eastern and western sectors. Because of a 600-year-old agreement reached between Mukhtar Bey and the descendents of former Sultan Antonius, the Ventrue claim domain over what is geographically the largest khitta in Cairo, a domain made up of all developing territories along the eastern edge of the city. The western periphery, which includes all territory up to and including the celebrated Giza plateau, is long-standing province of the Gangrel of Banu al-Giza.

BANU AL-AZRAQ

The Nile islands had long been the seat of vampiric authority in Cairo. Sultan Antonius maintained his domain there, and, upon his death, his Mameluke successor did likewise, taking over not only the sultan's palace, but the islands as well. As recompense, he granted the descendants of his former liege the "first rights" to feeding in any developing areas away from the Nile, along the eastern outskirts of the city. As such, the Ventrue have the capacity to reach unheard-of numbers in Cairo, as the potential growth of their khitta is nearly limitless. The issue has become something of a political hot potato, and many among the Cairene Kindred actively resent the prince's outdated arrangement with the Ventrue.

In a city that suffocates under the well-earned title of "the world's most crowded urban area," space has become a viable commodity in and of itself. And, although the agreement is becoming less and less sensible with the passage of time, the prince continues to uphold its terms. He is indebted to the Ventrue for their efforts in assisting him during Napoleon's conquest, and, were it not for them, he may well have lost authority over his domain entirely. Above and beyond all of this, however, the prince is a Cainite of his word. He refuses to back out on his promises, regardless of the pressures of public opinion. His only consolation in the complicated matter is the fact that, given enough time and expansion, the furthest of these outlying areas will eventually come to fall under another city's limits — making those particular vampires and their feeding concerns no longer his problem.

For the moment, the three largest newly developed areas falling within Banu al-Azraq are the residential suburbs of Abbasiya, Heliopolis and Muqattam City, a hastily erected housing community on the far side of the Muqattam Hills. The Ventrue have already begun tapping both the labor and financial resources of these newer areas, and they plan to develop further as the crowded city expands.

HELIOPOLIS

The development of this pretty suburb was an exercise in the flexing of European muscle. With contributions by the Ventrue of Banu al-Azraq, its construction was financed by a Belgian company and spearheaded by one Baron Edouard Empain. Construction on the neighborhood began in 1906, in a desert site northeast of downtown Cairo. By the mid 1950s, the suburb of Heliopolis (known to the Egyptians as Masr al-Gedida, or "New Cairo") had grown into a fully developed community, and all desert land in between it and the city had been filled in with

middle-income high-rises. With the advent of nearby airport facilities and a host of attractive homes and avenues, it has grown into an official, albeit European-flavored, suburb of Cairo.

In the modern nights, the district's biggest claim to fame is the fact that it remains the housing site of choice for important government officials. The president has a residence here, as do the majority of his ministers. The Ventrue have been quick to make use of this arrangement, and they have become some of the most informed Kindred regarding the various mortal political situations in and around Egypt's capital.

The House of Lords: During the suburb's early years, the Ventrue of Banu al-Azraq devised to construct a luxurious palace of their own as a monument to themselves and their new domain. It was erected on a plot of high ground on Sharia al-Ahram in the heart of downtown Heliopolis, across the street from a new basilica modeled after the renowned Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. It is a towering achievement, designed with a mix of architectural designs intended to evoke a nebulous cultural style. It was originally used as a vampiric gentlemen's club, more than anything, but after the death of the khitta's former councilor in the 1920s, the Ventrue elected to run various and sundry business affairs out of the palace's four elegant floors. The current councilor sees the House of Lords as the home office for the Ventrue Gerousia in Egypt, naturally seeing himself as its praetor.

Palestinian Heritage House: Located on Sharia Damascus, this building was originally established in 1984 as a place where exiled Palestinian refugees could ply and sell their traditional arts and crafts. In recent years, it has become a small museum cum art gallery, where the history and proud culture of the Palestinian people comes alive in the various showcases on display. Aside from the Basilica downtown, it is also the only site in Heliopolis that radiates significant Ambient Faith. For this reason, the Ventrue of Banu al-Azraq avoid the Heritage House even more than they would otherwise.

BANUAL-GIZA

Although it is a separate governorate, the area west of the Nile still falls under the domain of the city of Cairo, and, as such, it has always been nominally considered part of the prince's domain. The home of the Disciples of Anubis since before the foundation of the city, strained relations and a surge in the mortals populating the area have resulted in new attitudes toward the khitta in recent years. Oddly enough, when the region began drawing residents and developers in the early years of the 20th century, thus becoming a real concern to the prince for the first time, it suddenly became a district of Cairo no longer.

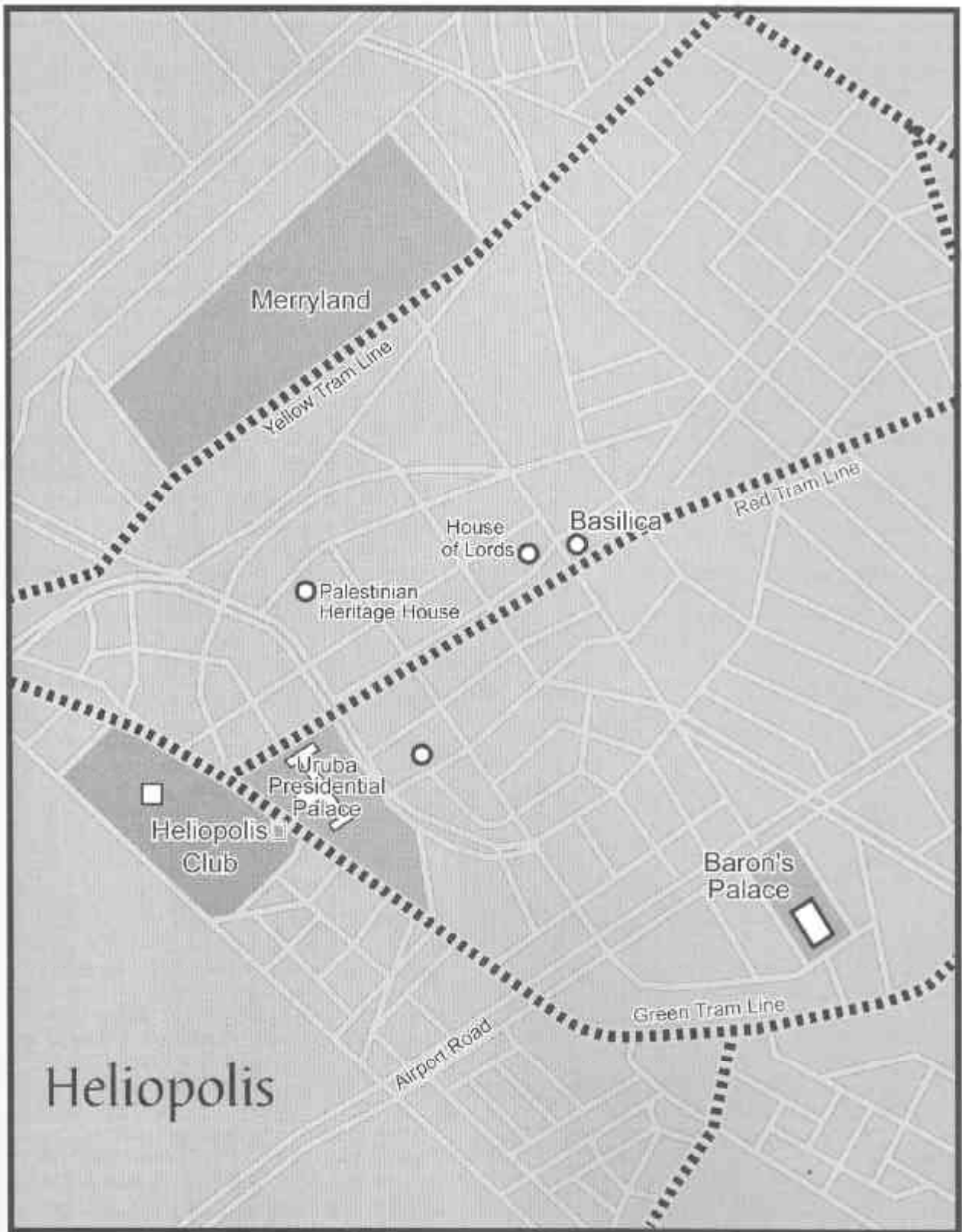
The government declared the area west of the Nile a separate governorate from that of the city proper, sparking the opportunity that many among the undead had been waiting for. Those who had long wished to gain access to the west bank and its resources claimed that the government's decision effectively removed all official claim or power the prince might have had over the area. While the region is now, indeed, outside the vampiric domain of Cairo, Mukhtar Bey has developed a carefully cultivated reputation for both power and fairness among the Kindred and, for now, they continue to abide by the terms of the Giza Proclamation. The prince has also pointed out that several of Cairo's suburbs are *technically* outside the city limits as well, including his prospering "gift" to the Ventrue, Heliopolis. When challenged to rebuke this argument, even the proclamation's biggest detractors fall silent.

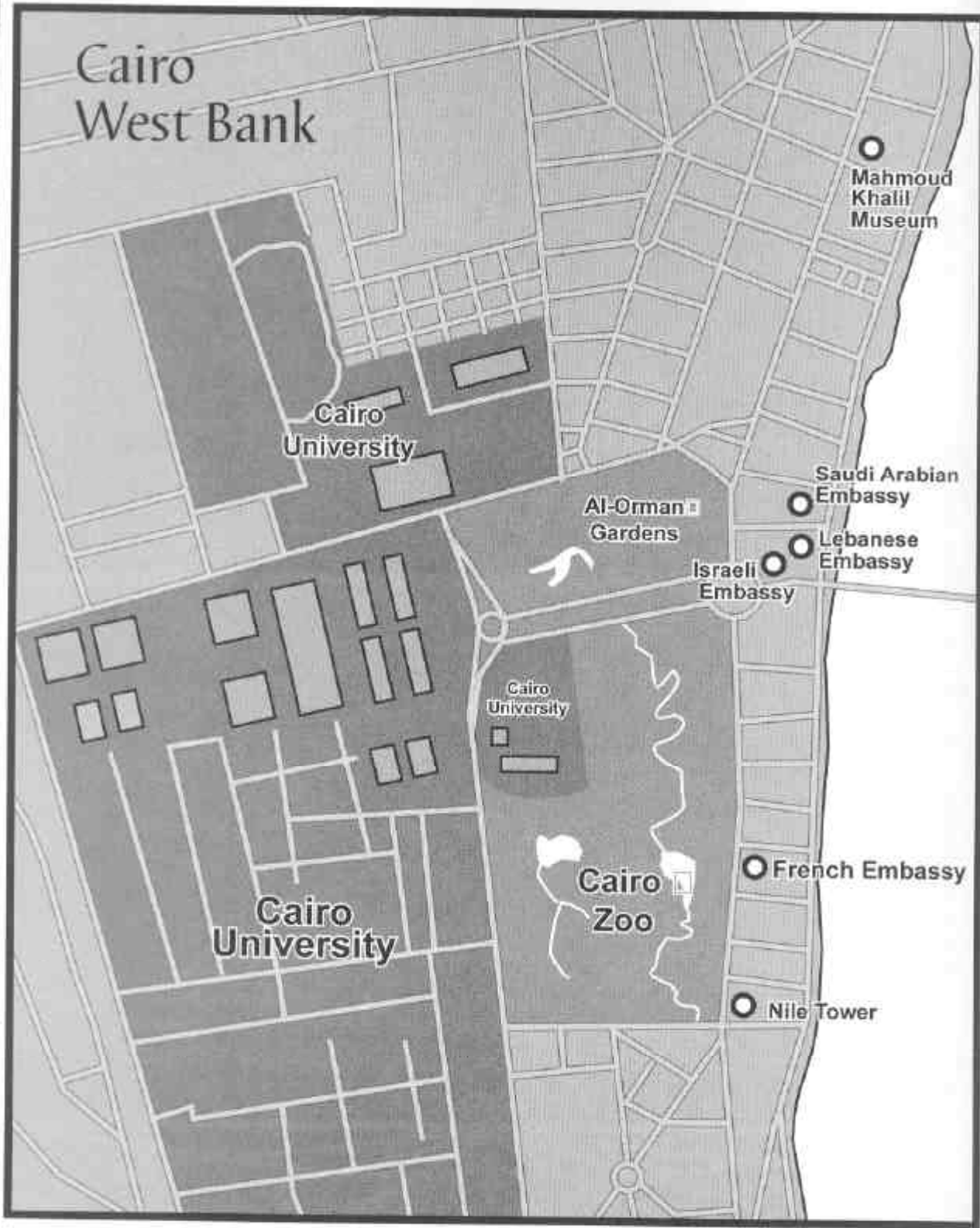
The khitta itself is the most loosely defined of the city's domains. Even with the area's recent development — only begun in the middle portion of the 20th century (current events to the vampires of Egypt) — the khitta remains essentially as it always has been: "all territory and kine west of the Nile" in Cairo. The vagueness of this definition is partly what has many other Kindred up in arms of late. Geographically, Banu al-Giza stretches from the more developed west-bank areas of Agouza, Muhandiseen and Doqqi, out to the world-famous Giza plateau and then, conceivably, into the western desert beyond. As only a few Gangrel and inscrutable Setites elect to venture into the western wastes voluntarily, the issue of "rights" to the desert outside of Cairo has always been a moot one in the past. It will likely remain a moot one in years to come, as well.

AGOUZA, DOQQI AND MUHANDISEEN

Originally created in the 1960s and '70s to house Cairo's professional working classes, these three largely residential districts are home to many of those who profited from Sadat's open-door policies, and they remain middle-class across the board. Agouza, which means "old hag" in Arabic, is known mostly for the many houseboats that float anchored just north of the 15th of May bridge, at Sharia el-Nil. Doqqi is the most vibrant of the three, housing embassies, universities, hotels and even a zoo. Doqqi is also a source of continuing grief from Cairo's Tremere, who have proven the most vocal proponents of the campaign to convince the prince to restructure the western khitta. Muhandiseen, set back behind Midari Sphinx — further inland than its two Nileside neighbors — is the least oppressive of the three. It remains the private domain of the Toreador elder, Muhandis, who has withdrawn quietly to the pleasant residential district that has come to bear his name.

Cairo University: This university was founded in 1908, encompassing several other existing institutions





Cairo
West Bank

Mahmoud
Khalil
Museum

Cairo
University

Saudi Arabian
Embassy

Al-Orman
Gardens

Lebanese
Embassy

Israeli
Embassy

Cairo
University

Cairo
University

Cairo
Zoo

French Embassy

Nile Tower

of learning. It was called Fuad I University from 1937 to 1953 in honor of the king who had made notable contributions to both higher education and the academic community in general. Faculties are quite broad, including agriculture, archaeology, arts, commerce, economics, engineering, law, medicine, science and the Institute of Research and Statistical Studies.

The university has become a point of contention with the city's Tremere of late, as they have been forbidden from accessing its various stores of knowledge since its inception, due to the terms of the Giza Proclamation. They claim that they only wish to gain access to vital information and ideas and that they have no intention of infringing upon the domain of Banu al-Giza. Since any such permission would be akin to opening the floodgates, the prince has rebuked their requests thus far, remaining uniformly steadfast in all matters pertaining the western domain. Of additional concern is the fact that only a portion of the university's facilities are on the west bank. The rest of them are clustered together on the northern tip of Rhoda. The Tremere know better than to make any requests pertaining to the Nile Islands, but the prince has noticed the connection nonetheless, and he is beginning to wonder as to the real motives behind their petition regarding the university.

Midan al-Gamaa: This area, Cairo's "Embassy Row," is home to many of Egypt's visiting foreign dignitaries. Located at the terminus of University Bridge in Doqqi, this Nile-side square houses several key embassies, including those of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Israel, all within a single city block of one another. During politically tense periods, the site is also (naturally) home to many demonstrations and, on more than one occasion, outbreaks of violence. The presence of Midan al-Gamaa ensures that the local police station, located just two blocks away, keeps itself busy indeed.

THE GIZA PLATEAU

The road leading to the Giza plateau, stretching a short and dusty nine kilometers from the city proper, is called the Sharia al-Ahram ("Road of the Pyramids"). Originally an unpaved path through *fellaheen* fields, a broad and viable route was finally built in the 1860s for the Empress Eugenie, so that she might tour the plateau in the comfort of her royal carriage. The road winds through the residential districts west of the Nile, thinning out as it pushes farther from the city. Twisting through apartment complexes and medical facilities that give way to an irrepressible horde of local camel owners and "guides," the Sharia al-Ahram soon deposits travelers at the door of the Mena House Hotel, before curving sharply leftward in its journey on to the pyramids.

The source of nearly five millennia of mystery and wonder, people from all over the globe have come to

witness the marvels of ancient religious achievement that are the Pyramids of Giza. One of the most famous of these visitors was the Emperor Napoleon who, upon reaching the plateau to find his men shaming themselves on these structures, famously remarked that to be here in their shadow was to have "40 centuries of history looking down upon us." Indeed, even the undead have long been fascinated by them, and many otherwise "homebody" Kindred continue to make the arduous trek to Giza for the chance stand in the shadow of their timeless majesty. Some come simply to remind themselves of the relativity of time itself, as these frozen fragments of history can often make their long unlives seem mercifully brief by comparison.

One among the undead, a pious Bedouin Gangrel named Abd al-Jileel, found occasion to use the area as neutral ground when meeting with his contacts among a dispossessed family of Lupines. Since happening upon a strange convocation of hooded figures in the cemeteries beyond the causeway late one night, however, he has taken a renewed and worriedly keen interest in the area, and he can often be found roaming the desert around the pyramids. Those who have seen him swear that he appears to be watching for something. Watching... or perhaps waiting.

The Great Pyramid: Built by Sneferu's son, Khufu, the Great Pyramid of Giza is the largest pyramid ever constructed, made up of a staggering 2,300,000 blocks, each averaging over two and a half tons in weight. At 481 feet it is not the tallest building, but it remains the most massive structure ever built, composed of enough raw material to build 35 Empire State Buildings with a few tons of stone left over. Herodotus calculated that it

THE MENA HOUSE

Originally built by Khedive Ismail in the 1860s as a hunting lodge, this manor was bought by an English couple and turned into the most magnificent hotel on the Giza plateau. It attracted international attention in 1943, when world leaders Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt met here to discuss the downfall of the Axis Powers. The Egyptian government took control of the Mena House during Nasser's nationalist campaigns, and it has owned the place since, leasing the hotel's operating contract to private enterprise. What many are unaware of is that the company that currently runs the Mena House belongs to Prince Mukhtar Bey. One of the hotel managers is a loyal *ghâl* who keeps him informed regarding the activities of the Giza Kindred, as well as the various mortals who pass through the area daily.

must have taken over 100,000 workers, and he castigated Khufu as a cruel tyrant for the suffering he must have caused his subjects throughout the pyramid's construction. Archaeologists have since argued that so many men could not possibly have worked effectively in the same place at the same time, and that fewer numbers of workers must have employed some form of leveraging conveyance. To date, the most widely accepted theory involves the annual rise of the Nile, which would have allowed laborers to bring rock quarried from the Muqattam Hills to the site with relative ease during the river's overflow.

The Great Pyramid is also one of the most architecturally precise edifices ever built. Developed with an uncanny awareness of both ground levels and geometric and spatial relations, the result is a pyramid whose southeast corner is a mere half-inch higher than its northwest corner over a thousand feet away. Indeed, the precision of Khufu's pyramid — the last remaining Wonder of the Ancient World — continues to astound scientists the world over. Even with the assistance of the marvels of modern architecture, to this day no team of archaeologists has been able to successfully reproduce the remarkable achievement of a Pharaoh and a people who lived nearly 3,000 years before the birth of Christ.

Khafre's Mortuary Complex: The pyramid of Khufu's successor and son, Khafre, often seems the largest of the three at first glance. This is due to the fact that it stands on somewhat higher ground than its neighboring cousins, while still retaining much of the casing toward its peak. This optical illusion notwithstanding, Khafre's pyramid was an enormous construction, towering over 470 feet

above the surrounding desert sand. Originally built of over two-and-a-half million blocks of limestone cut from the Muqattam Hills, it has been stripped by a steady stream of hurried builders in ages since, and it has lost an estimated 200,000 of its original stones over the centuries.

Khafre's funerary temple and the illustrious Sphinx are adjacent to the pyramid. Built on the site of an old quarry, Abu al-Hol (the "father of terror"), as he is known, was supposedly carved from the massive block of limestone that remained following the completion of the pyramid. According to legend, Pharaoh ordered his men to shape the body of the statue into that of a recumbent lion — a popular image of strength and wisdom among the ancient Egyptians — and then to carve his own likeness into the obdurate creature's face. The resultant monument has fascinated both locals and visitors ever since, and many claim to have been spoken to by the enigmatic sentinel over the centuries.

The Pyramid of Menkaure: The construction of this pyramid effectively signaled the end of the age of the great pyramid builders. The Pharaoh who succeeded Menkaure built his tomb away from Giza, at Saqqara, and the rulers of the following dynasty all constructed smaller, less impressive temples that were located away from the plateau as well.

Although the smallest of the three, Menkaure's pyramid is still so large that a 13th century sultan's attempt to dismantle it resulted in only minor discontinuity on a single side. It possesses only one-tenth the volume of Khufu's pyramid, but at still over 260,000 cubic meters, it remains an awesome structure indeed. In addition, some of the largest single blocks ever used for construction were used in building this royal tomb — the most colossal weighing over 320 tons.

THE FACE OF TRUTH

WHILE THE MYTH THAT THE SPHINX'S CURRENT FACE IS NOT THE ONE IT ORIGINALLY BORE IS SURELY ONLY SUPERSTITIOUS SPECULATION, CONSIDER THE MATTER OF SAYIM AL-DADR. IN 1378, A SUFI SHEIK KNOWN AS THE PERPETUAL FASTER ATTACKED THE EARS, NOSE AND FACE OF THE SPHINX IN A FIT OF IKONOCLASTIC RAGE. ACCORDING TO MYTH, HE DID SO BECAUSE THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS DID NOT BELIEVE IN BUILDING TEMPLES TO THEIR KINGS \bar{z} ONLY TO THE GODS.

A LESSER-KNOWN THEORY POSTULATES THAT SAYIM HAD A DIFFERENT MOTIVE FOR HIS ASSAULT ON THE ANCIENT MONUMENT. IT IS SAID THAT THE SUFI WAS NOT TRYING SIMPLY TO DEFACE THE STATUE, BUT RATHER TO UNMASK IT \bar{z} HE BELIEVED THAT THE ORIGINAL FACE STILL LAY UNDERNEATH SOMEHOW, HAVING RECEIVED A NIGHTMARISH VISION OF ITS TRUE IDENTITY, THE SHEIK WENT MAD, BECOMING OBSESSED WITH UNCOVERING THE TRUTH BEHIND THE SPHINX.

WHETHER HE WAS LEGITIMATELY GIFTED WITH ENLIGHTENMENT OR SIMPLY A DELUDED MADMAN, SAYIM'S TALE ENDS JUST AS ABRUPTLY EITHER WAY. AFTER CHIPPING SOME OF THE NOSE AWAY FROM THE STATUE, A STRANGE FORCE ROSE UP AROUND THE SPHINX, BLOWING A SANDSTORM OVER THE VILLAGE THAT LAY AT ITS FEET. THE SUFI TOOK IT AS A SIGN THAT HE WAS GETTING CLOSE TO THE TRUTH, AND THAT THE IDOL ITSELF WAS TRYING TO STOP HIM FROM PROCEEDING. OF COURSE, THE VILLAGE'S PEASANTRY THOUGHT LIKEWISE, AND THEY PROMPTLY LYNCHED THE MAD SHEIK BEFORE HE COULD CAUSE ANY FURTHER OFFENSE.





CHAPTER THREE: BROTHERS IN ARMS

PYRAMIDS OF POWER

*The words are so familiar, all the same greets
The same mistakes, it doesn't have to be like this;
If you don't make a friend now, one might make you
So learn the gentle art of making enemies*

—Faith No More, "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies"

Cairo is a city of communities. The city's residents, both mortal and Kindred, often band together to accomplish individual and common goals, and the vampire who walks the streets of Cairo alone may well find herself at a distinct disadvantage. Within these assemblies lie various subjects, heresies and fringe groups, and, when inspected in depth, their relations with one another can seem somewhat convoluted. To outsiders and those encountering them for the first time, their ancient and often traditional dealings with one another can appear peculiar, insular or unfamiliar.

THE DAMNED

What follows is a brief overview of the various important vampiric cults, factions and religious orders that operate independently of whatever domain their members might call home. Some keep to their own purposes, while others exist solely to interact with (and often rail against) the others. Further details on these groups and their activities appear in Chapter Five.

THE ASHIRRA

Due to its broad charter as a sect encompassing all Islamic vampires, the Ashirra is undoubtedly the largest single group in Cairo. Although the city is indeed a cosmopolitan nexus, the vast majority of its citizenry—vampiric as well as mortal—is Muslim. At any given point, the Cairo Ashirra can claim

anywhere between 80 and 100 vampires as members, although this number is essentially meaningless given the loose structure of the organization and the city's steady stream of visiting Kindred.

In earlier nights, the Ashirra of Cairo existed as something of a counterpoint to the regime of their sultan, the Ventrué Antonius. Indeed, for a period of time after the Arab conquest but before the arrival of the Turks, nearly every vampire outside the sultan's court could include himself among the Ashirra's number. The resulting tension was almost palpable. This dichotomy eased itself somewhat after the arrival of Mukhtar Bey, as the new prince was a devout Muslim himself. At the time of his accession, it was noted that one of the prince's first public acts involved showing up at a meeting of the assembled Ashirra, wherein he knelt down and prayed alongside them—an equal before God among the "lesser" Kindred of his new domain.

Tonight, the Ashirra is led by both ambition and tradition in the form of Ibn Ja'fir the Golden, a Nosferatu who has made Cairo his home for nearly eight centuries. He has guided the city's Islamic vampires through many, many nights of strife and change, and he remains one of the most influential and respected Kindred in the city. Still, he remains an aloof and baffling figure to most, and his devotion is typically the only thing about him left unquestioned. Proof of this can be seen in Cairo nightly, as Kindred travel to stand in awe while he makes his way through the city's various holy sites completely

unharméd. In addition to Prince Mukhtar Bey and Ibn Ja'far the Golden, some of the more notable Ashirra include two of the prince's advisors — the Lasombra elder Fatimah al-Lam'a and Ibn Khaldun, the Kindred chronicler and statesman.

THE HAJJ

One of the city's strongest and most numerous groups, the Hajj has existed as an organized unit in Cairo since the death of Salah al-Din in 1193, when its leader-to-be first rose to prominence. That leader, Ibn Ja'far the Golden, has led the Muslim Nosferatu of the city for the weighty span of almost eight centuries. Throughout his long unlife, he has taken careful steps to draw a distinction among the Islamic vampires of the city. While he is honored to represent all of Cairo's Muslim undead (indeed, he can often be a visiting Kindred's best choice for a new contact), he has made it very clear that the Hajj is the "first circle" of the Ashirra — the keepers of Islam in Cairo. Some have challenged this practice, saying that it belies the traditional Islamic belief that all men are equal before God, but none would question the devotion that the Hajj brings to its sacred task.

Since its inception, the Hajj has been charged with the protection of both the holy sites and the mortal followers of Islam. When a Mameluke Ashirra named Mukhtar Bey rose to power in the early 15th century, the Hajj expected to find relatively smooth sailing in Cairo from that point onward. While the Muslim Nosferatu have indeed known considerable freedom under Prince Bey, the Hajj has butted heads with the Mameluke prince on more than one occasion. While it professes an understanding and grudging acceptance of the Traditions, welcoming the domain of one as favorable as Mukhtar Bey, the Hajj practices a custom that lies at odds with the most vital Camarilla rule: the Masquerade. The Hajj is taught that its collective disfigurement is the wrath of the *mala'ika* (angels) and, thus, of God himself. To conceal the judgment imposed upon them is to subvert the will of Allah, therefore, the Nosferatu are encouraged to expose their terrifying visages to the Muslim kine they are sworn to protect. As this practice is, by its very nature, a breach of the most important of traditions, the prince has had to step in on several occasions to "clean up" potential disasters caused by the religious practices of his city's Islamic Nosferatu. The current mode of thinking, arrived at following the tumultuous events of Black Saturday, allows the Hajj to do as it pleases while among its own kind, inside the borders of its *khitta* in the section of the city known as Islamic Cairo. Should the Nosferatu venture out into other, more cosmopolitan areas of the city, they must make every attempt to conceal their true natures. Both sides seem to find this arrangement agreeable, and little friction has occurred between the two (at least regarding this issue) since the compromise was reached.

Unlike their Arabian counterparts, the vast majority of Cairo's Hajj members are of Sunni (that is, traditional orthodox) denomination. This is due primarily to the fact that Ibn Ja'far and those closest to him are devout Sunni Muslims, and those whom he inducts typically follow their modes of thinking regarding basic schools of thought. This standard is only a general one, however, and even the more respected members include among their number several men who were learned

Shi'a scholars in life. The issue that only male Kindred of sufficient age and wisdom are inducted is one that remains a hot one, and several of the city's younger female Ashirra have recently pressured the status quo to rethink its practices. They look to Ibn Ja'far to modernize the ancient sect in the new millennium, much as the religion that it follows has begun to do in areas all over the globe. Aside from Ibn Ja'far, prominent Hajj include his eldest child, Shahid, and the Nosferatu poet Mohammed Rihani, whose stirring, free-form Arabic verse can be seen and heard all around the City Triumphant.

THE ALNILAM

With the power of unity that faith brings, there is always the flip side to its glorious story — one that speaks of rejection and derision. This sect, a direct result of that exclusion, is a loose conglomeration of individual Nosferatu united by the only other characteristic they share: they are all *non-Muslim* Nosferatu and, as such, are considered outsiders by the Hajj of Cairo. Their leader, the messiah calling herself the Tree of Pearls, began the circle (in theory) to protect them from the slings and arrows of their Muslim brethren. Although she was once a devout Muslim herself, she has witnessed the hardship that being cast out from the only family that one knows can bring, and she has vowed to take all Nosferatu under her wing, regardless of race, religion or spiritual creed. The vast majority of her "pearls" are *mutasharidin* — Nosferatu outcasts pressed from their home in the lands of Arabia by the regime of Tarique, the founder of the Hajj. Upon fleeing to Cairo, the unwavering support that many of them received from Shagaret has spurred them to respond in kind, and they are among her most fervent followers.

But not every member of the cult is a refugee — at least not directly. Shagaret has used every method at her disposal to bring others into her debt, and the group has recently opened its ranks to members of other cultures as well as faiths. She sees Cairo's cosmopolitan nature as a blessing, and she intends to use it to bring many others into the fold. Although many suspect that there is more to Shagaret than meets the eye, the number of "her" outcasts increases at a steady and somewhat alarming pace. As the cult of worship surrounding her grows, she has begun trying with the idea of inducting refugees from other clans into the group as well, in order to further her schemes. Foremost among the Alnilam are Petra (her child), a Coptic Christian who dwells in a church in Coptic Cairo and Yehuda — one of the few Jewish Nosferatu remaining in Egypt.

THE AKHIYA FUTUWA

This politically active group operates more like a fraternal order of vampires than a simple collective. The Akhiya Futuwa (which basically means "brotherhood of the young") is a large coterie of Cairo's most popular undead immigrants — the clanless. Since the establishment of a Caitiff prince some six centuries ago, the city has drawn these vampiric outcasts like moths to a open flame. Here, they know they will be treated in a way that they typically have never known before: as part of a real family, and as equals among the undead. If the band of outcasts can be said to have a leader, that individual would be a Caitiff named Waulkeen, a visionary



figure who has reached nearly messianic status among his followers in recent years. It was he who lobbied the prince on their behalf for a domain of their own, and when the Cairiff were rewarded with feeding rights to the Nile island of Gezira — particularly the residential district of Zamalek, where the majority of the island's kine reside — his popularity among them skyrocketed. Although Zamalek is not an official khitta, the Cairiff of Zamalek are taken seriously at the prince's urging, and this status has recently resulted in their earning a seat on his Consultative Council — a seat naturally occupied by their ambassador, Waulkeen.

Although he is trapped in the body of a child, Waulkeen is a most intense figure, and the clanless have never seen such unity and enfranchisement as they have under his leadership. Of late, the brotherhood has even become a powerful political tool, and the elders of the city have begun to attempt to work them as a foil against their opposition. Nevertheless, Waulkeen is as shrewd as he is passionate, and all attempts to date at using the group to these ends have met with embarrassing failure. Even their leader's crippling handicap serves only to bolster his status as the true voice of his people. (Waulkeen is totally blind, and has been ever since the night of his Embrace.) In addition to their leader, key members of the Akhiya Futawa include the beautiful Palestinian woman named Najat — Waulkeen's "eyes," love and eternal inspiration — and a feisty individualist and recent addition to the brotherhood called Sparrow.

ALLAH WALID

Of all of Cairo's vampiric orders, the one known as Allah Walid is the most secretive. More a cabal of conspirators than an openly active group, they unify under the single common purpose that drives them: the removal of Prince Mukhtar Bey by any means necessary. The group's motives, much like its existence, remain largely inscrutable to Cairo's undead at large. While it is known to many that a group with designs on the prince's domain exists in the city, little is known about its origins or its means. For some time, word around the city held that this group of Kindred had been preparing for something since its inception, but the word has changed recently. After decades of idle talk in coffeehouses and scattered rumors on the street, it is now believed that the secret members of Allah Walid are working toward putting a plan into effect — something very big, and something very soon. Most Cairene Kindred chalk the rumors up to gossip, as talk of this sort has surrounded the prince since he first stepped up to claim the domain in 1406. The lack of any concrete data on the group of conspirators only adds to this impression, and the majority of Cairo's Kindred are too busy with their own pursuits to worry overmuch. Indeed, the cult's membership seems to remain its most closely guarded secret. It is even whispered that only their mysterious leader, whoever it may be, knows the true identities of all the other members.

THE CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

Having been the penultimate political power in Cairo for over 500 years, many of the city's residents were shocked when, in the 1920s, the prince instituted a circle of Kindred advisors to assist him in the administration of his domain. Some saw it as a sign of weakness or a desperate attempt at

consolidating support for a tumbling regime. Others insisted that the act was simply a sign of the times and considered Bey a clever prince with his finger on the pulse of the kine — one who understood the growing needs of a growing city intuitively. After the initial shock had subsided, the establishment soon became both efficient and popular, with the individual residents of most khittas growing to appreciate the newfound sense of independence they felt under the system of councilors. Relationships between the prince's advisors have always varied from strained-but-polite to outright (and often vocal) resentment, but the prince struggles to keep not only good relations between his advisors, but a measure of traditional decorum as well.

The makeup of the prince's assembly is similar in form to the primogen of many Camarilla cities, but not in function. Each member, called a councilor, acts as a representative from the khitta where he makes his haven. The councilor brings all matters of an official nature before the prince, while acting as the ambassador between the various sub-domains as well. In disputes between members of different khittas, the councilor is the one brought in to handle the matter, and the councilors of the two domains in question are expected to use their "good working relationship" with one another to resolve the matter quickly and respectfully. On the rare occasions when this "relationship" is insufficient, either because those within the domain do not stand behind their representative's actions or because the circumstances are simply too involved, the matter is brought before the prince for a final resolution. Each khitta is responsible for deciding who will be its representative, but this privilege is checked by the prince's right to deny that individual admittance to all council meetings — thus limiting any effectiveness he might bring to his own khitta. While it is not a formal veto, this policy ensures that only those whom the prince wishes to deal with on a regular basis are allowed in his assembly.

Of the seven vampires who sat on the prince's original council, four remain. These four serve their khittas to the best of their ability, and they have developed a good understanding of both the system and the foibles of their fellow councilors. At present, eight seats exist on the Council, although this number is subject to change, depending upon what transpires involving city development in the near future. The membership of the Consultative Council of Cairo is currently as follows: Ibn Khaldun, Imanna, Fatimah al-Lam'a, Sheridan Foster, Ibn Ja'far, Andres LeCompte, Izzat al-Khunzir and Waulkeen of Zamalek.

THE DISCIPLES OF ANUBIS

Unquestionably the oldest of Cairo's vampiric societies, this order of purists has existed in one form or another in the land around Cairo since before the laying of its first stone. Although it is ancient indeed, the sect is extremely insular, and it remains largely unknown, even to this night. The majority of those who have heard of the Disciples of Anubis are typically Followers of Set, whose schemes the Disciples work nightly to thwart. In one form or another, the Disciples have been the constant thorn netting the side of the Dream Court since Pharaonic times. Even when their colleagues, the Children of Osiris, became marginalized by

Setite schemes and their own personal inhibitions, the Disciples fought on, taking the fight to the foe whenever the opportunity presented itself. The remainder of those few who are aware of the Disciples' existence typically come from one of two camps. They are either mortal followers of the Cult of Isis, with whom the Disciples have worked closely since their inception, or their "allies" among a nomadic tribe of Egyptian Lupines, with whom they have an ancient (if somewhat frayed) understanding. Even in the event of the occasional scholar learning of their existence, rarely is the connection drawn between the Disciples and the Gangrel of Giza. Most simply believe that the sect operates out of "somewhere in Egypt," although it is usually unknown why or where, and few care to meddle in the affairs of the desert Gangrel of Egypt in any event.

If the Disciples can be said to have a base of operations, that base would be west of the city proper, in and around the Giza plateau. Long considered Cairo's "outland," it wasn't even until this century that development west of the Nile began to grow in earnest. The Gangrel who had been dwelling there for centuries — members of this ancient cult since the reign of Queen Hatshepsut — had been wisely given a wide berth by the city's more urbanized vampires. With the area's recent development, however, new issues arose, putting the Disciples at odds with their vampiric "sovereign" for the first time since his ascension.

For centuries, the prince's decree that no Kindred may be granted feeding rights west of the Nile allowed the Disciples to move with relative ease. Those few who dared venture into that territory were rarely looking to challenge their control of the domain, and those who did were typically dealt with harshly. Such interlopers were excluded from the protection of the prince, by his own decree. With the development of the plateau, and its establishment as a separate governorate, a significant number of mortals now reside on the west bank of the Nile, and the area is becoming more and more attractive to the undead. For now, the prince stands by his edict (and his extant arrangement with the Methuselah Angelique), diplomatically deflecting all attempts to change his position on the matter. With the newfound vigor of the Cairene Setites, however, the situation cannot remain static for long. When the levee does break, pitting the Disciples face to face against their ancient enemies, Cairo may well erupt into all-out war once again.

THE INCONNU

Although it is not an actual group of Kindred operating in Cairo, this insular collection of elders undoubtedly has a keen interest in the city. Their representative, an enigmatic Methuselah named Abdallah, has made Cairo his home for centuries, and he currently acts as the eyes and ears of his august assembly in the region. While the existence of a Monitor in Cairo is hardly common knowledge, many suspect the presence of all sorts of interests, and the Inconnu are certainly included among them.

Those who do know of the Monitor understand that his primary desire is to be left alone, and, given the rumors that swirl about concerning his age and power, most Kindred wisely accommodate him. Over the years, others have tried

to capitalize on the opportunity that his existence undeniably represents — the chance to feast on the potent blood of a solitary elder. Such forays, always met with unspeakable wrath, have typically been perpetrated by ambitious young Sabbat who opted to ignore the pleading counsel of their comrades, much to their grave disappointment. Whispers of a possible connection between the prince and this elusive figure are typically met with emphatic suggestions to cease and desist such gossiping, and nosy Kindred have been known to disappear (regardless of sect affiliation) after asking one too many questions along these lines.

THE SABBAT

To many in the international undead community, Cairo seems a lawless and permissive city, allowing vagrants like the Sabbat to roam its dusty, crowded streets freely and openly. While such is certainly not the case, it is not entirely inaccurate either. Due to the presence of the Lasombra-held khitta, Banu al-Lam'a, there is indeed a Sabbat presence in Cairo, and it is welcomed openly by both the prince and the Kindred at large. While the Sabbat as a sect is certainly not welcome, those who descend from the great Lasombra King Sharif al-Lam'a (and all those whom his descendants' "sponsor") have a traditionally protected right to exist in Cairo, and all Cairene Kindred know to respect that right.

Many within the city recognize the wisdom of the situation, seeing it for what it is in practice as well as theory. It has often been likened to the prospect of a government opting to legalize illicit substances: When one makes an illegal thing legal, one creates the right to regulate it. This perspective, above all, gives the prince the Camarilla support he needs for his traditionalist policies. The Camarilla Kindred of Cairo know that as long as the Banu al-Lam'a Sabbat are accepted as equals within the prince's domain, they are bound by the policies of the Camarilla. Many see it simply as an opportunity to make social contract-abiding (if not loyal) Camarilla members out of the Sabbat, and they welcome it. It's better that than full-fledged guerilla warfare between the two sects which, given the size and topography of the city, would not only be protracted and ugly, but would also favor the Sabbat.

The nominal leader of the Sabbat in Cairo is Munther al-Aswad, an urbane and articulate Lasombra who maintains a tight reign on those of his sect, so as to avoid losing any political clout among his other Cairene peers. Even among themselves, however, the Sabbat are divided. Despite the bishop's claims of autocracy, rogues often arise within the sect to strain against the stern leash of his command. A nomadic pack with pretensions to autarchy called Harm's Way has taken up residence within the northern cemetery in the Cities of the Dead, and it chafes at the bit with his every decree. Across town, under the sponsorship of the matriarch of the Banu al-Lam'a, there resides another Sabbat coven called Reconquista, which is led by the dashing figure of a former privateer named Christobal. Together, the aims and methods of these two packs threaten to tear the unity of the Sabbat vision apart from the inside. Other key sect members include the bishop's favored child, Mesmera, and an Assamite *antitribu* from the United States named Spenser.

MORTAL SOCIETIES

With its abundance of activity and history, the city of Cairo continues to draw mortals of all paths and persuasions to its borders. Some come to uncover her secrets, powerless before the irresistible pull of forbidden lore. Others come to involve themselves in the supernatural struggles that rage nightly beneath the city's clamorous surface life. This section takes a look at the various mortal organizations and religious orders that figure prominently in the foundation of Cairo's pyramids of undead.

THE ARCANUM

A few short years after the society's founding in 1885, a prominent Egyptologist and journeyman in the Arcanum named Winthrop Murray purchased a townhouse on the Nile, intending it as a base of operations from which he could continue his studies more closely. Although he established it for private use, his Cairo house — which was soon dubbed the Watchtower — began to draw excited Arcanists from all over the world who were eager to explore Egypt's mysteries. As he scrambled to meet the various demands of the house's new "guests," much of Murray's time became accounted for, and he was often asked to provide notes and findings that he felt unprepared to share. After several years of catering to the needs of his associates, Murray was said to have "drawn a line in the sand" as it were. He officially cut himself off from his parent organization. With the exception of the few colleagues whom he considered personal friends, his fellow Arcanists were no longer welcome at the Watchtower.

Although they were outwardly respectful of the decree, many within the Arcanum resented Murray's decision, feeling that their access to the Watchtower and its libraries should be considered part of his "membership dues" to the society. Not long thereafter, Winthrop Murray died mysteriously while away on excursion in the Faiyum, the cause of his death to remain undetermined. When the executors of his estate opened his last will and testament, they found a surprising change of heart within — Winthrop Murray had left the deed to the Watchtower and all its contents to the Arcanum. Although there was some whisper of a contention to the will at the time, it was soon resolved, and Murray's "last wishes" for the property were seen to their rightful conclusion.

At least that's how the story goes. The current members residing in the Watchtower, now a full-fledged Chapter House, remain noticeably silent on the subject.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST. NICODEMUS THE BLIND

Originally founded by a circle of Christian theologians who were driven to self-mutilation by their fervent desire for understanding, the brotherhood has since become more secular as a whole, casting off the religious trappings of old in its relentless pursuit of pure thought. Although it is considerably less rigid in outlook than it once was, the brotherhood still practices the harsh initiation rite that has become the core of its spiritual beliefs. In order to be accepted into the

society, a prospective member is forced to drive himself blind by his own hand through a somber ritual unknown outside the ranks of the brotherhood. In so doing, the new brother starts down the path to ultimate enlightenment — the path to seeing that which can not be seen.

Although it is based out of Sinai since its foundation, this mysterious cabal of truth-seekers has recently taken a renewed interest in Cairo and her undead residents. This renewal is due primarily to the meteoric rise to political independence of the Akhiya Futawa. An ancient prophecy called the Word of Nicodemus, maintained and revered by the group since its foundation, foretells of a time when a prophet will emerge from outside the order's ranks to guide the brotherhood into the Final Nights. The brotherhood believes the Caitiff suffragist Waulkeen to be the figure of which the Word of Nicodemus speaks, and the brothers are currently engaged in a flurry of activity in an attempt to gather information on the blind vampire whom they believe will lead them into the light. They have established a base of operations in a houseboat on the Nile at Agouza, and they make regular forays onto the island of Gezira to study the movements of the Cairiff of Zamalek.

THE CULT OF ISIS

The oldest of Cairo's mortal societies, the Cult of Isis has existed in Egypt since Pharaonic times. It is named after its founder, Isis, the mortal sorceress and paramour of Osiris the Beautiful One. It was she who first developed the spell that saved Osiris after his first death, when she gathered the pieces of his dismembered form and knitted his body whole again. It was also Isis who, upon learning of Osiris' wisdom from the Underworld, was spurred to create a powerful ritual enabling a chosen subject to live eternally. This ritual, known as the Spell of Life, was responsible for the 43 members of the Shemsu-Heru — the undying followers of Horus.

For centuries, the Cult was central to the Osirian League, supporting the vampiric, mortal and undying enemies of the Lord of Darkness. But when a former acolyte betrayed his brethren, delivering the Spell of Life into Set's hands, the Cult was nearly destroyed. It has survived in the millennia since through concealment and quiet inactivity. Although it still pursues truth and knowledge, the Cult never again regained the power and poise of its Pharaonic days, and it has existed largely to serve the occasional needs of the Reborn in modern nights.

The Cult's previously modest numbers have recently been swelled by the fleeing remnants of the Children of Osiris. Following their bloodline's swift destruction, the confused and suddenly mortal followers of Osiris turned to the Cult for guidance and shelter. The resulting situation is a tricky one, as what remains of the Children — freed from the Curse by Osiris himself — possess intimate knowledge of the undead, while remaining free of all vampiric restriction. No longer under the authority (or protection) of the prince, they present a significant albeit theoretical threat to the Masquerade, and the Cult of Isis is currently engaged in a hasty effort to hide their existence from those closest to the prince. Even the Cult's allies among the Disciples of Anubis, themselves curious as to the fate of their Osirian confederates, are kept ignorant of the arrangement for the time being.

Few outside the Cult fully understand what has become of the Children of Osiris. Those who knew of their ancient Cairo temple, the Dar es-Salaam, know that it burned to the ground in a ruthless conflagration during that terrible week in 1999. Despite the valiant efforts to the contrary, it is now only a matter of time before the most shrewd among Cairo's undead — a dangerously numerous lot — put the pieces together and begin the hunt for the fallen remains of this once-proud bloodline.

THE IKHWAN AL-SAFA

This cabal of Muslim witch-hunters bears a strange and secret history, one that is unknown outside the ranks of its members. (The group prefers to keep it this way, often going to great lengths to ensure the integrity of its secrets.) Originally a small family of like-minded tribesmen, they have grown over the centuries into an organized and driven outfit armed with the cold steel of hatred and the roaring fire of their faith.

In the early days of Islam, there arose a folktale about a people known as the Sayyadin. These religious mortals, typically peasants, shepherds or other simple folk, became the earliest witch-hunters in the region. Although the Arabian slayer of old, known as a *sayyad al-ghul*, typically acted alone, he was actually part of a greater group of individuals, whether he was aware of it at the time or not. This group was driven by an all-consuming need for vengeance on the undead monsters that had touched, and thus defiled, their lives in some way. Slowly, these individuals learned of one another, and they had soon congregated in the tribal tradition. Over many successive generations, they would grow to become one large family united by tragedy — a family collectively called the Ikhwan al-Safa.

Tonight, these witch-hunters operate throughout the lands of Egypt and Arabia, and, with the emigration of family members to countries outside the Arabian Gulf, they have even begun spreading their operation into cities across the United States. Their oldest active lodge remains in Cairo, and it houses some of the brotherhood's most veteran and faithful slayers. The Cairo lodge, dubbed the Dar el-Adil ("House of Justice"), dates back to the Fatimid foundation when a powerful group of Sayyadin moved to the new capital of Al-Qahirah alongside the familial retinue of the Shiite caliph, Al-Muizz. The brotherhood claims, when it has occasion to do so, that potent fields of faith (as well as a brilliant security network) keep the lodge itself away from the eyes of prying vampires. Some remain skeptical, however, pointing out the disparate regularity with which Western vampires in particular tend to disappear in Egypt. If some sort of "arrangement" does indeed exist between the brotherhood and the Ashira of Cairo, none have ever survived to confirm the accusation.

THE LILIM

Little is known formally about this circle of enigmatic warrior-priestesses. On the rare occasions when they are seen, their lithe forms gliding through the darkened byways of Cairo, they spark any number of bizarre theories as to their origins. Some believe that they are an order of religious witch-hunters, fanatically pursuing the Kindred of Cairo at night and on their own terms. Others wonder if they are flesh at all, believing them to be the spirits of beloved Muslim women sent back to watch over the families they have left behind. The

unfortunate one who has witnessed the skill of their blades and the terrible strength of their conviction firsthand typically assumes the Lilim to be a pack of unaligned Kindred, roaming the streets of the city for their own inscrutable purposes.

These theories, while certainly within the realms of believability, are nonetheless wrong. The Lilim are, in fact, *ghûls*. They are the last remnants of a once-powerful bloodline in Egypt, and they are, to a woman, each bound to and provided for by the ancient monarch of Saqqara, Angelique. According to the story, the sect's enigmatic patron had a trusted *ghûl*—a high priestess in her cult named Lilith—who had grown as powerful as many vampires on the blood of her ancient regnant. When this patron was slain (reportedly by Augustus Giovanni during the Renaissance), Lilith fled to Egypt, where her regnant's erstwhile paramour, Lazarus, was rumored to dwell. There she encountered Angelique and, having found her new home, bound herself to the ancient Kindred's service. Angelique has allowed Lilith to create new circles of priestesses, much like the ones she once led in service of Lamia herself, and these skilled women act as her eyes and ears outside of Saqqara. Two major coteries of Lilim are currently operating in Egypt: the Cairo Circle, operating under the wise instruction of their High Priestess, Lilith, and the Alexandria Circle, led by Lilith's most distinguished protégé, Seneca, who report as to the goings on in the ancient port city to the north.

THE SOCIETY OF LEOPOLD

Unlike their "colleagues" in the Arcanum, who do their best to stay out of the way of Cairo's undead throng, the members of this religious order righteously act to the contrary. Indeed, it would seem that its members thoroughly enjoy the idea of being the Christian right—even when they find themselves penned in with the lions. Here in Cairo, they are surrounded not only by vast numbers of undead—numbers unheard of in almost any other city—but by vast numbers of Muslims as well. (The two are often one and the same, given the predominance of the Ashirra in Cairo.) This fact makes an already shunned sect even more unpopular, and the members of the Society of Leopold must tread carefully wherever they go in Cairo, lest they uncover more than they bargain for.

The toehold that the Society has managed to maintain thus far takes the form of its Cairo Cenaculum, which has kept itself stubbornly functional over the years, despite repeated (and often violent) attempts to shut it down. Much of the credit for the Society's "success" in the region can be given to a cabal of Orthodox Christian witch-hunters called the Akritai. These fellow slayers, based out of St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, move in much wider circles than the Society, and their members often blend in much better when operating in and around Cairo. More than one overzealous

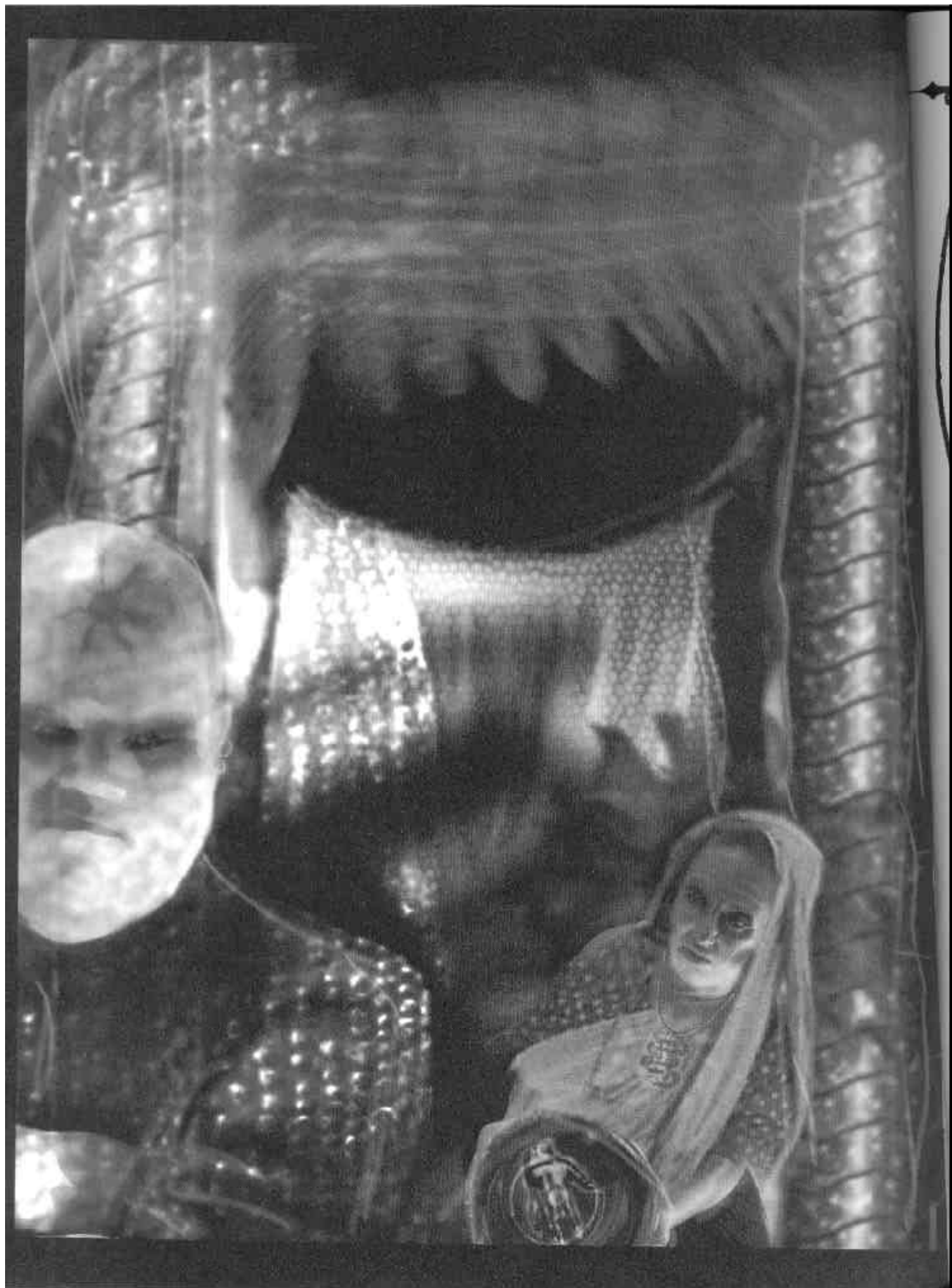
hunter has been saved at the last moment by one of the Akritai who, knowing where the bumbling zealot's overtures would soon take him, decided to take pity and step in on his behalf. Although their relationship can hardly be considered strong—most among the Akritai just wish the Society would give up and leave the fight for Cairo to them—the Akritai do feel some measure of responsibility to aid their brothers in arms. Cairo's other prominent witch-hunters, the Ikhwan al-Safa, loathe the Society of Leopold almost as much as they do the undead that they are sworn to destroy.

SERVITORS OF THE SLEEPING GOD

More a collection of cults than a single entity, the Servitors exist to unwittingly further the greater glory of their undead master—a Setite Methuselah who sleeps beneath the streets of Cairo. Since the night their ancient lord entered torpor within the deepest bowels of the city's sewer systems, the Setites of Cairo's Dream Court have engaged in a nightly struggle for dominance in the waking world above. Among the Sleeper's children, it is understood that, although it is in torpor, their Temple Head is fully aware of all that occurs around it. Therefore, each competitor seeks to appease the ancient one more than his fellow Setites, so that he may be among its most favored when the Sleeper reawakens. While their methods differ as wildly as their personalities, all of Cairo's Setites see the wisdom in enslaving as many of the mortals around them as possible. This flavor of dominion pleases the slumbering Methuselah most of all.

The Servitors themselves are the mortal cults of worship that have grown around the squabbling Setites of the Dream Court. Initially, these cults were kept to those "standard" ones employed by Followers of Set the world over—those of the blood, drugs and (on brave occasion) religion. As the city grew, however, enterprising Setites branched out, often applying inventive mortal tactics used in business and politics to create new cults of worship of their own. Tonight, cults of every different style and origin can be found across the city, each tailored to the personality of the Setite who fosters it.

Servitor Cults of Cairo include the following: the spirited cult of personality following the widely popular exotic dancer, Morocco; the circle of toadies and yes-men surrounding the business mogul David Mooreland (each enslaved to the crafty Setite by that individual's own greed); the pervasive and sinfully loyal clientele of Umm Nadji (Cairo's premier lady of the night and sometime purveyor of forbidden pleasures); the quiet but widespread network of contacts maintained by Sadiq al-Farigh (the "friend to every man in need" who barter only in "favours"); and the nighttime stylings of Cairo's most popular turn-tablist, DJ Too-Tone (who keeps an entire generation of ecstatic party enthusiasts enthralled each evening in the bowels of his hugely successful dance club, The Violet Hour).





CHAPTER FOUR:
DEAD AMONG THE DEAD
THE DAMNED OF CAIRO

*God appears and God is light
To those poor souls who dwell in night
But does a human form display
To those who dwell in realms of day
—William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence"*

As one might expect from a city like Cairo, its Kindred residents are a many and varied lot. While the city may hold as many as 200 Kindred without jeopardizing the Masquerade unduly (and more than that with either discretion or apathy on the part of the undead in question), we present here only a small cross-section. Of

the Kindred assembled here, you will find movers and shakers of all stripes, elders and fledglings, Sabbat and Camarilla, foreigner and native. Enterprising Storytellers are encouraged to create more characters to round out Cairo's ranks, using these as a foundation upon which to draw.

FREE CAIRO

NAZRUDIN THE ENLIGHTENED

Background: The vampire known to the Kindred of Cairo as Nazrudin the Wise is, in point of fact, neither "Nazrudin" nor particularly insightful. He doesn't remember his given name, the circumstances of his Embrace or any of his life before becoming a vampire other than in the vaguest of recollections. Nazrudin knows that he was religious in life, but no more so than any other Egyptian commoner. Like many among the *fellaheen*, he had simply gone through his life accepting it for what it was, without trouble or fuss. Before he knew it, that life was at an end.

Nazrudin suspects that he was once an outsider to Egypt, as most of his knowledge about the city has developed post-Embrace. He remembers telling tall tales to whomever he could find to listen, often making himself out to be more important than he truly was. Now, since his Embrace, he has taken the epithet "Nazrudin the Enlightened," and he feels that things have changed for him at last. No longer does he need to fabricate stories about himself, as all the things he used to say are insignificant compared to the glorious truth of his current existence. What Nazrudin does not realize is that everything he knows about himself is a lie.

While he sleeps, Nazrudin receives visions from the Messenger of Allah — the Archangel Gabriel. The Archangel gives Nazrudin information, advice and instructions that the Malkavian uses to increase his standing and image among the Kindred of Cairo. Through this intercourse with "Gabriel," Nazrudin has even come to believe that he is the *de facto* fourth prophet of God after Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Sadly, nothing could be further from the truth.

Al-Ussa, the ancient Malkavian Methuselah who was worshipped as a pagan goddess in the lands of Arabia before the rise of Islam, has decided to make Nazrudin her pawn. She wishes to undermine the upstart religion that so thoroughly destroyed her worship, and she now uses Nazrudin's belief to manipulate others. Eventually, she intends for Nazrudin to set events in motion that will weaken Islam enough to free her from her tortured sleep beneath the holy city of Mecca.

Al-Ussa's guidance has brought Nazrudin to a position of importance in Cairo. During the events of Black Saturday, Nazrudin warned the city of the coming Lupine incursion. The wisdom he graciously imparted also helped Cairo's Kindred drive off the attackers — a fact of which he makes liberal mention. The prince heeded Nazrudin's warnings, resulting in what appeared



to be a resounding victory for the undead at the time, and Mukhtar Bey has showered praise upon the "ancient" Malkavian since then. Most of the city residents have come to see Nazrudin as not only the unspoken head of the city's Malkavians, but the unofficial "councilor" of Free Cairo as well.

Image: Nazrudin knows that he lived a long mortal life, because when he is not altering his appearance into something more pleasing to the eye, he appears as an aged and leather-skinned icon of the Egyptian *fellaheen*. When entertaining at his mansion in Garden City, he often smokes a thickly scented water pipe — a lifelong habit of his that even death could not break.

Roleplaying Hints: Although you never knew any higher education to speak of, you still act with authority and sagaciousness, as though the weight of your testimony itself were enough for any would-be listener. Make others realize the wisdom of your counsel through your deliberate tone and careful word choice. Although you tell no one of your relationship with the Archangel, you do strive to make people understand that your mind and spirit have been touched by God, so that they may treat you with the respect you finally deserve.

Secrets: With each visitation from the Archangel Gabriel, Nazrudin becomes more and more convinced that he truly is the font of the Lord's knowledge, and he has lately begun to "hold court." Most every night, Kindred from across the city come to Nazrudin seeking the advice he is more than happy to give. He has even come to believe in his own lies, as the Archangel has informed him that the things he speaks of will eventually come to pass. Most of Cairo's Kindred believe that

Nazrudin the Wise is the sanest of Egypt's Malkavians, and many have sadly come to rely on his skewed advice — a fact that plays right into Al-Ussa's plans.

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Unknown

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Pedagogue

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1873

Apparent Age: late 60s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 3, Etiquette 4, Melee 2, Performance 4, Professional Skill (agriculture) 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 5, Bureaucracy 3, History 4, Investigation 3, Law 2, Linguistics 4, Occult 3, Politics 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 4, Dementation 4, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 5, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Herd 3, Influence 3, Retainers (*ghûls*) 2, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 5

AZIZ, PRINCE OF RIDDLES

Background: Although many of the city's Kindred residents are familiar with Aziz and often exchange pleasantries with him nightly, few have ever really stopped to notice him. To them, he is merely the perennial and irreverent tale-spinner of Cairo who, if provided with a kind word or small donation, will gladly thrill attentive ears with artful recitations of his latest riddles. In truth, Aziz is much more than most of them will ever know.

To hear him tell it, Aziz was saved *twice* by his Embrace at the close of the 18th century. First, his entire existence would have ended then, were it not for the timely appearance of his sire-to-be. At that time, Aziz was a mentally disturbed patient in the care of Christian missionaries who had established an impromptu hospital in a downtown caravansary following Napoleon's conquest of Egypt. The French soldiers, bored by their standing orders in Cairo, had somehow arrived at the idea of using the hopelessly insane for target practice, and they soon had Aziz lined up against

the wall. According to the tales, the boy's body was so badly mutilated when his sire found him that the Embrace very nearly failed altogether.

In addition to saving him from certain death, the Embrace was also the thing that finally returned Aziz to himself. Through his sire's vitae, a small portion of the essence of an ancient and mighty *djinn* had filtered into him, focusing his thoughts as never before and illuminating for Aziz the path he must forever walk. With constant contemplation of his own duality, Aziz hoped to achieve that which Marid himself had sought so fervently — the elusive answers to the Eternal Riddle.

Since then, Aziz has become a fixture of downtown Cairo. The many Kindred who walk her darkened streets often find him on the corner under the lamplight or relaxing in one of several neighborhood coffeehouses smiling his knowing smile and engaging all those who will listen in his personal brand of ingenuous non-dialogue. With the passing of a new millennium, even the kine now know Aziz by name, and veritable legions of destitute Cairenes gather around him every evening to sit and listen to him spin his wondrous tales. For many of them, Aziz is the very face of hope — a reminder in these dark times of what can be achieved if the spirit remains strong.

Although it suffices many of Cairo's Kindred to simply greet Aziz and be about their business, one among the Hajj — a devout Nosferatu named Shahid — legitimately enjoyed his company for much of the 20th century. During that time, the two spent many long evenings discoursing on the nature of humanity, divinity and faith, often reaching similar conclusions from differing angles. Shahid's recent withdrawal into



affairs both personal and religious saddens Aziz, and he longs for the night when he can show his old friend all that he has learned since last they spoke.

Image: Although he was Embraced in his late teens, Aziz has a childlike quality about him that muddies his appearance as far as age is concerned. His bearing is at once roguish and sly, and he often smirks, winks and smiles at the most unexpected moments. No matter which of the eight languages he uses at a given time, Aziz speaks only in a unique style of rhyming verse called *radh* — a sort of beggars' cant among lower-class Cairenes.

Roleplaying Hints: Watch and listen, always. Disarm others with your casual banter and winning smile in order to draw their attention away from the fact that you are actually watching them. People rarely realize how much they truly give away when they think no one is watching.

Secrets: Unlike his clan "elder," Narrudin, the Prince of Riddles truly is the font of knowledge. In every one of his seemingly obtuse riddles, Aziz speaks a simple and often invaluable truth. Indeed, if one were to concentrate long enough and hard enough on his innocuous mutterings, much of what really goes on in the City Triumphant would come slowly to light.

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Al-Basnyr Abyad

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Trickster

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1799

Apparent Age: late teens

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Etiquette 4, Melee 2, Performance 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Cairo) 5, Bureaucracy 3, Enigmas 3, Investigation 3, Law 2, Linguistics 4, Occult 3, Politics 2

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 7, Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 5, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 5 (homeless and beggars), Contacts 3, Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 5, Self-Control 5, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 10

Willpower: 7

Note: No Kindred has been able to explain why Aziz has been able to master the Discipline of Auspex so thoroughly, while his generation should limit him to much less ability with it. To Aziz, the answer is simple: It is the blood of the *djim* that grants him such estimable prowess. In truth, Aziz has achieved the exalted state of Golconda. Storytellers who do not want Aziz to have any enigmatic qualities outside his personality, or who eschew Golconda in their stories, should reduce his Auspex Trait to 5.

ASSAD SALHOUM, THE SENTINEL

Background: Assad Salhoum grew up among Cairo's destitute in a large and unstable family. His father suffered a crippling injury in the prime of his life, reducing his ability to provide, and many of his brothers and sisters subsequently fell in with various criminal elements within the city. Assad longed for escape, finding it only in dreams, where he imagined himself an agent of the government, driving Egypt's enemies from her borders and restoring his beloved homeland to its glories of ages past.

Sadly, Assad's dreams came true. After his parents were killed in the fires that raged across Cairo during Black Saturday, an Islamic charity group took him in and gave him the education he needed to become an operative for the new republic. Assad's superiors in the group praised his powers of investigation and observation, eventually bestowing upon him the chance at a top assignment. The Egyptian government had come into evidence that a cadre of European collectors were smuggling artifacts out of the country, and all previous agents assigned to investigate the matter had thus far vanished without a trace. Assad saw the assignment as his greatest challenge, and he prepared for it with zeal, eager to defend Egypt from the boorish outsiders who would plunder her national treasures.

Assad fared better than his predecessors had in this endeavor — all the way to a gathering of Malkavian elders who had been pulling information about the city from the artifacts they had been exporting from the city. Impressed with his tenacity and will (and recognizing the potential tool inherent in a Cairo native), the head of the Malkavian cabal Embraced him. For Assad, the Embrace was a religious experience, fulfilling all the prophecies that had been instilled in him during his Islamic upbringing. His mind perceived the Malkavian cabal as a group of angels who had taken the artifacts to protect them from the wicked forces that threatened Egypt from within. In turn, the Malkavians saw Assad as the perfect tool to protect Camarilla interests in the insular Middle East.



Assad monitors the activities of the Kindred in Cairo, watching them for signs of treachery from the Sabbat, while keeping tabs on how they feed and treat the Egyptian people. He keeps a relatively low profile, preferring that others marginalize and underestimate him, thereby allowing him to move about more freely. Although he has managed to keep out from under the scrutinizing eye of his clan elder, Nazrudin, Assad has drawn unwanted attention from Councilor Izzat al-Khunzir, who has taken a keen interest in his considerable patriotism. The Setite elder is quietly assisting Assad's efforts, while slowly bringing him into Cairo's social limelight. He sees in the Malkavian the political tool that can finally bring his own nationalist dreams to fruition.

Image: Constantly projecting his consciousness into the darkest parts of the city has taken its toll on Assad. Whenever others encounter him, he typically appears worn out and somewhat displaced, as though he is unsure of his surroundings. Engaging in actual dialogue with Assad has a tendency to catch him jarringly off-guard. Otherwise, he is a young, attractive, olive-skinned Egyptian, whose eyes dart from place to place as though he were surrounded, or perhaps taking some sort of mental stock of the situation.

Roleplaying Hints: Always act with caution and forethought. Rarely do you take direct action or do anything that might potentially jeopardize your "cover." You believe that the angels give you the strength of mind to protect you from insanity. As long as you do not fail them in your divine mission, you will be safe from the judgment that they have leveled in God's name

upon those of your clan: the curse of madness. You fake any number of derangements to convince others that you are a Lunatic, so that they may quietly leave you to your own affairs.

Secrets: Assad updates his Camarilla superiors by feeding information about the city to an archon in the Sinai — an individual whom he refers to as the Malak el-Lail ("Angel of Night"). Although Assad is careful, he always acts in accordance with the instructions of the "angels" that speak to him in order to best protect the Egyptian people. Much to the frustration of the European Camarilla, Assad is forever interpreting his instructions through the Rosetta Stone of Islamic thought, and some within the august group have already begun looking for another to take his place.

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Geneva

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Loner

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1957

Apparent Age: 20

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Drive 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Performance 2, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Area Knowledge (Cairo) 4, Bureaucracy 4, Computer 2, History 3, Investigation 5, Law 1, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Politics 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Dementation 3, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Resources 2

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Path: Humanity 7

Willpower: 6

SYLVIA KILVER, THE EYE OF THE SERPENT

Background: Sylvia was born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1896, the only child of Marshall and Winnona Kilver. Her father lectured as a professor of Egyptology at Yale, and Sylvia developed a keen interest in his work after she entered adolescence. At the age of 16, Sylvia thrilled as her father was invited to join a new archeological dig being conducted in the Valley of the Kings, and she all but demanded to accompany him.

When they finally returned to America, however, they found that things had taken a turn for the worse.



The United States had just entered World War I, and reservists such as her father were being sent to the trenches to be gassed. After hearing of her father's death, Sylvia remained at home for several years to care for her grieving mother. During this time, the only source of noteworthy income Sylvia could find was in selling her father's personal collection of Egyptian trinkets and artifacts on the black market.

It was during one such transaction that Sylvia met Ophelia, head of the Hartford chantry. She impressed the elder Tremere with her knack for things Egyptian, as well as her undeniable drive to prevail in even the harshest circumstances, and she was soon deemed a worthy candidate for apprenticeship as a ghoul. No one was more surprised than Sylvia herself when word came back from Vienna that she was to be Embraced.

After a relatively short apprenticeship under the Hartford regent, Sylvia was introduced to what had been the true purpose behind her Embrace. Her sire was one of a secret order whose membership worshipped the serpent for its magical significance and perfection of form. With Vienna's recent success in negotiating the rights to the Egyptian Museum and Antiquities Service, this secret society was racing to find someone who could represent their interests in what was sure to become a gold mine for the Tremere.

Sylvia welcomed the opportunity, and she was soon shipped off to attend the local regent, Kasper von Aupfholme, at the new museum chantry in Cairo. Immediately, Sylvia found him to be an impossible man who seemed infinitely more interested in his own affairs

than in anything Sylvia might have to say. Rather than continue on as von Aupfholme's whipping girl, Sylvia decided to pull back from clan affairs and make her own name in Cairo. It was in this capacity that she fell into association with the Setite sorceress, Kahina.

Sylvia believes that her relationship with the sorceress has been a profitable one, exchanging mummified bodies and other cheap antiquities for the secrets to ancient Setite magic known as Akhu. The more she learned from the Setites, however, the more her superiors in the Eye of the Serpent urged her on. Soon she was trading slightly more expensive artifacts, favors, clan secrets — anything to continue her precious studies into long-forbidden areas of Egyptian magic. And finally, to advance into the upper echelon of her order, Sylvia was commanded to ingest whole a living Egyptian asp — a creature the Setite sorceress herself was more than willing to provide, of course.

Although the Setites have begun to demand even more of Sylvia as of late, she believes it all to be well worth the price she has paid. Thanks to her relationship with the sorceress, Sylvia has finally developed a new Thaumaturgical path that she hopes will make her the envy of her colleagues, skyrocketing her to the apex of the greatest pyramid of all.

Image: It is clear that Sylvia was once an attractive young New England lady, but the depredations of the Setites have taken their toll. Her eyes seem to have sunken into her face, which has an unhealthy and slightly jaundiced pallor, and both ashen cheeks pull taught against her skull. Sylvia's eyes — once a beautiful cobalt blue — have yellowed over time, giving them a murky greenish tinge.

Roleplaying Hints: Size people up when first meeting them, as though silently debating their inherent strengths and weaknesses. Give the impression that they are faced with a woman of considerable power and should not, under *any* circumstances, underestimate you. When dealing with Followers of Set, however, you are genuinely humble, and you can even be oddly affectionate.

Secrets: Kahina has informed Sylvia that the former Tremere regent will not be returning from his latest and final archeological dig, and this news sees Sylvia preparing excitedly for her inevitable transfer of power into his seat at the head of the chantry. For now, she is only acting regent, but Sylvia desperately looks forward to the night when she will at last be able to treat her "fellow colleagues" at the museum (especially von Aupfholme's pet, Hyapatia) as what they truly are: her underlings.

Clan: Tremere
Sire: Ophelia
Nature: Competitor
Demeanor: Gallant
Generation: 9th
Embrace: 1923
Apparent Age: late 30s
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Subterfuge 4
Skills: Animal Ken 3, Etiquette 2, Melee 2, Performance 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3
Knowledges: Academics (archaeology) 4, Area Knowledge 3, Bureaucracy 4, Clan Knowledge (Followers of Set) 3, Investigation 4, Law 2, Linguistics 4, Occult 5, Science 3
Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 1, Fortitude 2, Serpents 2, Thaumaturgy 5
Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 5, Lure of Flames 4, Movement of the Mind 3, Soul of the Serpent 5
Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Influence 3, Resources 4, Retainers (*ghûl* snakes) 2, Status 2
Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 3, Courage 4
Path: Humanity 4
Willpower: 8

HYPATIA, CURATRIX OF SECRETS

Background: When Kasper von Aufpholme took over as regent of the new Tremere chantry in Cairo, he honestly had no idea of just how much work it would be. After his former assistant, Sylvia, withdrew from her role at his side in favor of private Thaumaturgical study, the work load piled up. As he had not yet taken a childe, von Aufpholme sent word to Vienna requesting permission to Embrace a local archeology student named Hyapatia. In addition to her impressive credentials and vigorous work ethic, this potential candidate was an Egyptian by birth, and she could do wonders to help the Tremere "image machine" in Cairo.

Hyapatia adjusted quickly to her role in the clan, relishing the opportunity to broaden the scope of her research. Her sire made her the chantry's "curative assistant," educating her on the many secrets he had coaxed from the museum during his tenure as regent. The first true test of her own mettle, however, came with the recent discovery of a forgotten temple in the Western Desert. Her sire left immediately with an archeological team to investigate, sending word shortly

thereafter that he would be shipping the contents of the temple back to Cairo for more in-depth study.

Tucked inside the first of these shipments, Hyapatia found an unusual Egyptian artifact that she labeled Lot 14. It was a standard canopic jar of the sort used for preserving the internal organs of one who has been buried, but it was crafted of a peculiar stone, and it bore a host of unfamiliar hieroglyphs etched around the upper rim. She initially found that no matter how hard she tried (she even resorted to calling upon the Blood), the lid of the jar would not come off. Sensing something supernatural at work, Hyapatia set about transliterating the hieroglyphic script around the upper rim.

After deciphering the first two symbols, she found that the lid seemed to give a little bit more than it had before. Hyapatia grew instantly obsessed with the jar, sequestering herself in the lower levels of the museum, taking her rest there and emerging only for museum emergencies.

When the last of the hieroglyphs was finally deciphered, Hyapatia tried the lid once more and it easily popped free. Inside, the Tremere saw nothing but a mist of swirling colors, but she could distinctly hear a low, soft purr coming from within... or perhaps from inside her own mind. The "voice" belonged to one of a race that was more ancient than man or beast — a *djinn* from the Realm of Smokeless Fire, it had said — and it promised that Hyapatia would be well rewarded for releasing it from its eternal bondage within the damnable jar.

The museum lost contact with Regent von Aufpholme shortly thereafter, leaving Hyapatia prepar-



SOUL OF THE SERPENT

Thanks in part to the living asp residing in her stomach, the acting Tremere regent in Cairo has developed a Thaumaturgical path of her own over several decades of intense study and experimentation — a discovery she firmly believes to be her own. The path exemplifies and embodies the perfection of the serpent's form, and it is functionally the same as any other Thaumaturgical path.

• SERPENTINE SENSE

The most basic level allows the Thaumaturge to access the considerable olfactory prowess of the serpent, granting acute sensitivity to all smells for the duration of the scene. The possible effects are varied, from allowing the Thaumaturge to identify poisons and poisoned foods by smell, to effectively letting her "see" in the dark.

System: Although supernatural darkness (such as Obtenebration) still affects the character, it does so to a much lesser extent, simply imposing upon her a mere one-die penalty to all actions taken within the area of effect. Note that use of this power causes the ophidian character's hearing to suffer commensurately, imposing a +2 difficulty on all related challenges until the Serpentine Sense is no longer employed.

•• SCALESKIN

When this application of the path is invoked, the user's outer layers of skin become smooth and scaly like those of an anaconda or other river snake, allowing for greater flexibility on land as well as considerable freedom of movement through water.

System: The character's effective Dexterity increases by one dot (potentially exceeding normal attribute maximums), and she gains the ability to pass through any opening large enough for her head. In addition, swimming in this form is exceptionally efficient, allowing the user to travel through water at normal land speed. While use of this power is obvious (to say the least) it does allow for some nick-of-time escapes from handcuffs and other difficult situations.

••• VENOM CURSE

The Tremere can transform her own vitae into a deadly poison capable of blinding the eyes of nearby opponents, like that of a spitting cobra.

System: The character coughs a point of vitae into her mouth, where it transforms mystically into a deadly blood-venom. The vampire then spits the venom at any one opponent within range (equal to three feet per dot of Strength + Potence). The player rolls Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 7) to target the eyes, and the opponent may attempt to dodge. If the attack roll succeeds, the target must immediately engage in a resisted Stamina + Occult roll (difficulty 6) with the Warlock. If the target accumulates more successes, he overcomes the venom's effects and retains his eyesight. If not, he remains blind until the venom has run its course.

The blindness lasts for one hour per net success on the resisted Stamina + Occult roll (that is, the Tremere's

successes minus the target's successes). Supernatural targets can conceivably shorten this time. Vampires may spend blood points to reduce the duration on a one-for-one basis. Lupines will regenerate the blindness in short order, reducing the duration to accumulations of minutes rather than hours. The blood-venom is extremely toxic to mortals, however, who are blinded for life unless they receive immediate medical attention (within an hour). Thankfully, this supernatural venom is quite thin, and its potency cannot be maintained outside of the Thaumaturge's body.

•••• TOUCH OF TYPHON

The blood wizard can now metamorphose her entire forearm and hand into a deadly asp, complete with a writhing, venomous snake head.

System: Effective range is only five feet, but the bite of the serpent "arm" is deadly, doing Strength +1 dice of aggravated damage to anyone struck in combat (on a standard Brawl attack, although successes beyond the first do not add to the damage dice pool). Mortals bitten thus must immediately succeed in a Stamina roll (difficulty 7) or die within (Stamina + 5) minutes from the snake head's virulent toxin.

If a mortal is killed in this way, the venom begins to seep out of the corpse's wounds shortly thereafter, carrying the unfortunate mortal's essence along with it. The blood-venom then pools nearby, slowly coagulating to form a small supernatural asp under the control of the Warlock. From that point forward, that mortal's soul knows no peace until such time as its new "body" is killed, thus freeing the tortured spirit within.

••••• FORM OF THE HYDRA

This powerful incantation — the ultimate plateau of achievement for one studying this path — allows the Warlock to transform instantly into a writhing mass of vipers, her body erupting in a spectacular shower of black, red, green and gold.

System: The player must spend two blood points to effect the change, which takes three turns to complete. During this time, the character may take no other action, and no transition of any kind is apparent in her form. At the end of the turn, her body simply bursts into a number of vipers equal to the maximum number of blood points the character can hold. (For example, an 8th generation Tremere using this power would explode into 15 separate snakes.) Alternatively, the player may opt to transform instantaneously, but she does so at a cost of five blood points rather than two.

Individuals assuming the Form of the Hydra are nearly impossible to destroy. Every last viper must first be located, as the Thaumaturge may reform later if even a single serpent remains. This transformation lasts until the Warlock wills herself to assume normal form once again, which takes another three turns.

ing for a brutal struggle over the chantry between herself and the acting regent, Sylvia Kilver. If her sire is indeed gone for good, then the museum (and the chantry) would be much better off in Hyapatia's hands, and she plans to use Lot 14 as a means to achieve this end. With the cosmic power of an ageless *djinn* behind her, not even her fellow clanmates could stand against her now.

Image: When dealing with others, Hyapatia favors crisp business suits that highlight her commanding deportment, prevailing upon the viewer to look past the homeliness of her face. When hard at work in the sub-levels of the museum, however, she is found dressed more for comfort, clad in slacks, sweats or even — on rare occasion — a pair of dirt-encrusted overalls.

Roleplaying Hints: A picture is worth a thousand words, and one look can often tell the whole story. Make extensive use of this fact, showing others the unshakeable solidarity of the Tremere clan with a single, telling glance. Behind closed doors, however, tear into your colleagues with an exacting efficiency. After all, mistakes are for mortals, not the eternal masters of the night.

Secrets: Although Hyapatia is slowly being suborned by the entity she unwittingly released from Lot 14, her salvation may rest in her tireless attention to detail. Since the initial discovery, Hyapatia has kept extensive notes of her interactions with the "Shenouda Djinn." In the hands of an impartial reader (theoretically, anyone other than Hyapatia), these records provide clues as to the *true* nature of the entombed creature, as well as any possible weaknesses it might have.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Kasper von Aupfholme

Nature: Competitor

Demeanor: Perfectionist

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1955

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Etiquette 4, Melee 2, Performance 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics (archeology) 4, Area Knowledge 2, Bureaucracy 3, Expert Knowledge (Egyptology) 3, Investigation 4, Law 1, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Science 3

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 2, Presence 2, Thaumaturgy 3

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 3, Focused Mind 3, Hearth Path 3, Alchemy 2, Movement of the Mind 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Influence 2, Mentor 3, Retainers (corpse minions) 3

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 5

KASPER VON AUPFHOLME, REGENT OF ANTIQUITIES

8th Generation Tremere, Child of Mooreau

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Director

Embrace: 1782

Apparent Age: mid-40s

An antiquities scholar of Austrian descent, von Aupfholme was Embraced in the late 18th century by Councilor Mooreau, the Tremere elder responsible for the clan's efforts in Africa at the time. Mooreau was the second Tremere to be assigned to the Dark Continent (the first disappeared under mysterious circumstances some years before), and he needed someone he trusted to negotiate Cairo on his behalf. As von Aupfholme was more than eager to explore Egypt's mysteries, he made an apt pupil who proved to be more than up to the task. In short order, the Egyptian Museum and Antiquities Service were forever ceded to the Tremere, and both prospered under von Aupfholme's meticulous guidance. Shortly thereafter, however, Mooreau was "reassigned," leaving von Aupfholme mystified and alone in Cairo.

He reported dutifully to Councilor Mooreau's replacement, a French noblewoman named Elaine de Calnot, up until the latter's recent disappearance from her chantry in Algiers. Convinced that the incidents are all related, he began to look for an opportunity to present itself that would allow him to commit serious clan resources toward the missing councilors' discovery. When an ancient temple recently appeared in the Western Desert outside of Wadi Natrun, he seized his chance, leaving immediately with a team of local archeologists. Initially, von Aupfholme maintained regular correspondence, sending back status and inventory reports with each shipment of relics from the temple — a collection known as the Shenouda Cache. However, such reports have ceased recently, and the chantry has not heard from him now for several weeks. Although they are usually preoccupied with their own agendas, the Tremere of Cairo are beginning to legitimately fear what might have become of their regent.

MUKHTAR BEY, PRINCE OF CAIRO

Background: When Mukhtar Bey came to the court of Sultan Antonius in the 14th century, no one expected him to last a single night, never mind endure to become prince of the undead. Many in Cairo believe that the Boy-King was so impressed with how the Mameluke warrior had dispatched the royal guard that he insisted on making Mukhtar Bey a sheriff in his retinue. Better to curry the powerful Caitiff's favor than to disparage him into becoming a bitter enemy (and one who could easily incite revolt against the rule of the sultan). Others took the Boy-King's beneficence as a purely political move — an attempt to show how merciful a Byzantine Ventrue could be, under the right circumstances.

In truth, the Boy-King desperately wanted Mukhtar Bey for his own. Even though centuries had passed since the departure of his sire, the Boy-King still longed for the companionship of a powerful "older" male, as he was forever an *eromenos* at heart. Antonius saw a spark of his sire as well as the Roman emperor Hadrian in the powerful Mameluke, and he longed to make a new *erastes* of the powerful Caitiff in the hopes that he might know that precious bond once again.

Unfortunately for Mukhtar Bey, however, the very strength that put him at the side of his beloved Antonius would fail him when it was needed most. During the Night of the Long Knives, when the Lupines penetrated the sultan's private chambers, Mukhtar Bey found himself suddenly consumed with a terrible, overwhelming fear for his unlife. He froze, unable to act or even think. Then, in a moment of sheer panic, he fled the fortress



entirely, the death screams of his patron ringing relentlessly in his ears.

Sickened by his own cowardice, Mukhtar Bey raged at his thin and clanless blood; his utter lack of vampire identity had cost him that which was most dear to him. The only thing that the fallen warrior wanted now was to fade quietly into the mists of history. Yet when the other Kindred cried out to him for leadership, he woe-fully accepted, convinced that they would see the error in their (and his) ways in time.

For five centuries, the Prince of Cairo played his role well, though, laying down laws where he could and meting out justice when necessary. But in the end, he was the same lowly coward who had failed his liege that fateful night in 1406. It was the one truth he could neither accept nor change. By the latter half of the 20th century, Cairo was expanding to amazing proportions, and Mukhtar Bey's responsibilities grew with it. His mind, fragile enough during the best of times, began to buckle under the strain.

With the return of Al-Muntaqim, however, came Mukhtar Bey's salvation. The Avenger confided in him that he had procured a means by which all of Cairo's clanless — save Mukhtar Bey himself — could be done away with as an appeasement to the Antediluvians on the night of Gehenna. Such a loyal and humble gesture would most assuredly guarantee that those responsible would be spared their terrible hunger.

The plan required that all of the clanless be gathered together and specially prepared, as with any other offering. Only with the assistance of Mukhtar Bey, the Caitiff among the Caitiff, could this sacrifice be achieved without the Caitiff catching wind of the plot and putting it to a violent end. Soon after, Mukhtar Bey extended his open invitation to the clanless to come and partake of his beneficence in Cairo. He established a *khitta* for them on the island of Gezira, granting them a powerful political voice through their seat on his Consultative Council. Although he has tried to remain subtle in his efforts, turning a blind eye to the Sabbat in order to keep tensions high and minds distracted, the prince's reputation has nonetheless grown among the Caitiff worldwide. Many of them even believe that they "have it made" in Cairo. They remain blissfully ignorant of that fact that their beloved prince plans to sacrifice them all in order to save himself from the wrath of the awakening Antediluvians.

Image: The Prince of Cairo is a tall, broad-shouldered man with a full black beard and rough-hewn features. He dresses only in fine, exquisitely tailored suits — he prefers dark colors — and walks with a pace so deliberate that it seems almost contrived. Although

he is still an imposing figure, his regal bearing has lost much of the luster it held in his younger nights.

Roleplaying Hints: You know that the Final Nights are upon you, and, to put it simply, you are *terrified* at the thought. Your only hope is to see your frightful plan to its fruition, ensuring that when the Thirteen return to take their places at Caine's table, there will be a seat reserved for you. You have endured for far too long to end your existence as the first course of the Antediluvians' meal.

Secrets: The prince suspects that his brother-in-shame, Waulkeen, knows more than he lets on, and he is currently attempting to find out just how much more. In addition, he is tracking the movements of all the Caitiff of Zamalek, as per his confederate's instructions.

Clan: Mameluke (Caitiff)

Sire: Wife of the Tiger and the Snake

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1354

Apparent Age: early 40s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Empathy 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 6, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Animal Ken (falconry) 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms 4, Melee 6, Performance 4, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 1, Area Knowledge 4, Bureaucracy 3, Camarilla Lore 4, Clan Knowledge (Brujah) 3, Clan Knowledge (Assamite) 3, Clan Knowledge (Followers of Set) 3, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 4, Occult 2, Politics 5, Sabbat Lore 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 3, Dominate 4, Fortitude 5, Obfuscate 4, Potence 4, Presence 5, Quietus 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Influence 4, Resources 5, Retainers (*ghâl* mastiffs) 4, Status 5

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 9

Merits/Flaws: Iron Will

BANU DUVAL

ANDRES LeCOMPTÉ, COUNCILOR AND LORD

Background: Banu Duval was first established by Jean-Baptiste Duval, a Christian Toreador Embraced during the reign of Louis XIV, the Sun King. In 1700,



one of Louis' descendants was proclaimed King of Spain by right of succession, and war broke out in Europe shortly thereafter. Duval fled Paris to the safety of the South of the France, where he first met Andres LeCompte, a minor land-owning nobleman. Duval was immediately taken with the young aristocrat, and the two soon became lovers.

When revolution broke out in France in 1789, Duval fled the country entirely with his young paramour in tow. Together they wandered the lands around the Mediterranean Sea for several years, seeking a less congested place to make a new home. In all that time, Duval never once offered his consort even a single drop of vitae, and the thought made Andres ashamed. He felt as though his deathless lover thought him dirty or somehow unworthy.

When Napoleon marched into Cairo in 1798, the two Frenchmen tagged along in his wake, hoping to take advantage of the opportunity that the conquest clearly represented. By 1801, a new khitta had been arranged for the Toreador in the Nile-side port of Bulaq, and Napoleon's troops withdrew from Egypt soon after. As he was now nearing his 30s, Andres begged for the Embrace that he may remain eternally beautiful alongside Jean-Baptiste. He even made a show of converting to Christianity in the hopes that it would please his undead love.

This last gesture must have had some impact, as Andres awoke one evening to find himself one of the Damned. Although Duval had apparently acquiesced to his pleas, LeCompte soon grew to resent his sire. Duval began to spend his hours with the other French

Toreador who had emigrated to Cairo, and he seemed to have less and less time for Andres. Worse yet, Duval claimed to be doing it all for love, expanding his holdings in Cairo so that his paramour could enjoy the very lap of luxury. After Duval accepted a seat on the Consultative Council in the 1920s, Andres had had enough, and, in a fit of jealous rage, he contrived to rid himself of his faithless lover.

During the events of Black Saturday, LeCompte took advantage of the widespread chaos to make his move. He awoke late in the afternoon, as a carpet of black soot obscured the last remaining rays of the sun, and he swiftly made his way to his sire's haven in Bulaq. He crept in, and upon seeing Duval alone and unguarded, set upon him with wild abandon. When all was said and done, the deed was surprisingly easy — as was his smooth transition into power over Banu Duval.

Since then, however, LeCompte has begun to... lose track of himself. He struggles to maintain control, as though he is at odds with the vitae coursing through his veins. In addition, his dreams have grown fluid and frightening, filled with thoughts that are not his own and images that he cannot place. He often awakens to find that he is in a different room than the one in which he fell asleep.

Lately, Andres has even begun to "lose time" from waking periods of activity. On one such occasion, he awoke from his fugue to find himself rifling through a stack of his "sire's" old papers. His fingers paused at one in particular, a hand-scrawled memo concerning a group calling itself the Ennead. He had just enough time to realize that his sire had been a part of this group before he found himself throwing the pages into the fireplace, along with the rest of Duval's private documents.

LeCompte had always believed that Duval called in serious favors in order to acquire the rights to a new khitta in Cairo, but he is not so sure anymore. With the events of late, he has begun to suspect that it was Duval himself who had not only negotiated the Toreador position, but contributed to Napoleon's withdrawal from Egypt as well. And the prospect that Duval was both not his real sire *and* vastly more powerful than he could ever have believed fills Andres with an undying fear that he cannot easily suppress.

Image: Andres LeCompte is a man who dresses for respect, rather than success. He wears only the latest, most expensive fashions (he loves Yves-Saint Laurent), and he has a recently developed a taste for snakeskin shoes. His features are angular and fine, his hair an immaculate dirty blond.

Roleplaying Hints: Be cordial and gracious, revealing in the simplest terms how and why the people of Cairo *need* the Toreador of Banu Duval. You speak in soft tones, highlighting the strength of your breeding with the keenness of your wit. Underneath your poised exterior, however, your mind shudders with doubt and apprehension, and with it trembles your sanity.

Secrets: Councilor LeCompte knows that his fellow Toreador, Muhandis, has a peculiar grudge against the Setites. He has also recently somehow come to the conclusion that there lies a greater power within Muhandis than he himself even realizes, and LeCompte feels a powerful urge to put an end to the old Toreador before this power awakens fully.

Clan: Toreador

Sire: Unknown

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Noble

Generation: 8th (raised from 12th through diablerie)

Embrace: 1801

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 4,

Empathy 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 5, Melee 2, Performance 4, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Vamp 4

Knowledges: Academics 3, Bureaucracy 4, Finance 4, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Medicine 3, Politics 4

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 3, Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 2, Potence 1, Presence 5

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Influence 4, Resources 4, Retainers 5

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

Morality: Humanity 3

Willpower: 6

FAHD AL-ZAWBA'Ä, THE WHIRLWIND

Background: Fahd is unique among the Toreador of Banu Duval in that he is actually a native Cairene. Born in the early years of Anwar Sadat's presidency, Fahd grew up amid the chaos of a nation thrust suddenly into free-market economy. Although he had an aunt who was around to cook his meals and wash his clothes (and yell at him on occasion), there was never any feminine influence upon Fahd's upbringing — not in any real sense. His mother had died giving birth to him, a victim of sub-standard Cairene health care, leaving



Fahd in the care of his father. While rarely around (having an entire family to support on his own), his father made sure to be there every night before Fahd went to sleep, as he treasured reading bedtime stories to his son. He delighted in filling Fahd's head with dreams of adventure, that he may grow up to be the man his father always hoped for him to be.

As a youth, he was drawn to playing make-believe with the other children, often living out the lives of the dashing swordsmen he heard about so often growing up. When Fahd finally entered adolescence, he began to take a serious interest in the *tahteeb* — the Egyptian sword dance. As his studies grew, his natural proclivity for both grace and martialry shone through, and he soon became the local neighborhood prodigy. His mastery of the dance was his life, and he was never seen without the sleek wooden sword that had become the symbol of his honor. The glow of his father's pride seemed to make the dirty streets of his south-Cairo *hara* just the slightest bit brighter.

After practice one night, Fahd found himself walking alone near Erbekiyya, where he heard a muffled cry coming from within. He jumped the garden wall to find five men dressed in black assaulting a young, attractive foreigner. One held her head still, two did likewise for her arms, and one was busy preventing her feet from kicking. The fifth stood above her, a sharpened stick in his hand. Without thinking, Fahd jumped into action, beating the cowards away from the lone woman in a flurry of blows. His weapon was hardly lethal, but the woman's assailants were taken completely by surprise, and they quickly escaped back into the night.

The foreigner was immediately taken with her young Egyptian savior. He was everything the mythic Middle-Eastern man was supposed to be: handsome, dashing, courageous and quintessentially romantic. In her excitement, the woman — an American Toreador visiting Egypt — Embraced him then and there beneath the shadowed walls of Erbekiyya. Realizing that she had just repaid his gift with the curse of death everlasting, she panicked and fled, leaving the fledgling vampire to discover the truths of his new existence on his own.

Fahd adjusted to his newfound condition poorly, to say the least. Fahd had only claimed to know two things at the time of his Embrace: the dance and the difference between right and wrong. Therefore, he soon grew torn between the love of his family (with whom he could no longer interact) and the atrocities that his new state compelled him to commit. His reaction was to withdraw into the romantic archetypes he had envisioned as a youth, becoming in essence the dashing swordsman he has always wished himself to be. For Fahd, undeath was indeed the role of a lifetime.

In the handful of years since, Fahd has acted as the savior of many among the *harafish*, patrolling the streets of his old neighborhoods and calling himself *al-Zawba'a* — the Whirlwind. He delights in protecting innocent women from the dastardly deeds of those who would do them harm, and he has done so on numerous occasions since his Embrace. From sternly lecturing those he catches to leaving his victims alive so that they may "learn from their mistakes," Fahd plays the role of hero to the hilt (he even covers his face with the side of his *hata* in order to protect his identity). However, he doesn't realize that, in so doing, he unwittingly endangers the Masquerade and, thus, the unlives of his fellow Kindred.

While he may be well-intentioned, Fahd doesn't seem to have fully grasped the magnitude and meaning of his "new life." He feeds on the very women he is drawn to protect (often to excess), and he is often left confused when they don't appear grateful. Night after night, Fahd's *humanitas* slowly ebbs away, leaving him a hollow and lifeless stereotype of his own dreaming. He has fallen into a cycle of repression and denial, revisiting the sites of those places where he has been allowed to play the romantic savior — places where he has fed before — and reliving those adventurous experiences in his mind. These brazen activities can lead only to ruin, and, sooner or later, he will seriously endanger the Masquerade, forcing the prince to contend with him most harshly. Somewhere deep in the back of his mind, Fahd believes that his lost sire will return for him one night, and that she will raise him from this fog of ignorance and guide him into the light.

Fahd was grudgingly accepted into Banu Duval (as a Toreador and resident), but he spends little time in his own khitta, as he is most often "haunting" the sites of his former exploits. Fahd also claims membership in the Ashirra, so he receives frequent invitations from other Muslim Kindred who wish to pick his brain about the activities of his Duvali fellows. Although he professes to pay little attention, Fahd actually knows a great deal about the patriarch of his domain, Andres LeCompte. He has seen proof that there is more to this Frenchman than meets the eye, and he somehow smells the stink of the Amaranth on the LeCompte's breath when the councilor speaks.

Image: A bold and dashing Kindred, the Whirlwind strikes terror into the hearts of the kine. Unfortunately for Fahd, this includes those whom he desires to rescue, as well as their assailants. Although he cuts a most romantic figure, his dress remains simple and functional. Fahd is never wealthy, and he is above both robbery and financial compensation for his heroic acts.

Roleplaying Hints: The warrior-poets of old are an example to be upheld and followed. You try to act with courage and grace at all times, but you have grown weary in recent nights. For all your gallantry, people never seem to fully understand or appreciate the gift you bring to them every night, and most have taken to running from you on sight. This is not how it was supposed to be. . . .

Secrets: Unfortunately for Fahd, Councilor LeCompte suspects that he may know more than he lets on, and he is currently looking into ways of ridding himself of the meddlesome Egyptian. And unfortunately for LeCompte, Fahd knows of the activities and goals of an Assamite known as the Vulture — an individual whom Fahd is ready to provide with what he seeks, should the need arise.

Clan: Toreador

Sire: Juliette

Nature: Gallant

Demeanor: Caregiver

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1991

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 4,

Empathy 2, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 4, Expression 3, Melee (*tahteeb*) 5, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Vamp 2

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 2, Law 1, Medicine 1, Occult 2

Disciplines: Celerity 3, Fortitude 1, Presence 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 1, Herd 3

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 4

BANU YASHKUR

ANTARA, THE SHEPHERD OF WOLVES

Background: Antar ibn Shaddad ibn Amr — less formally known as Antara — is one of the only Assamites to ever be Embraced as a matter of universal clan pride. As the story goes, the one constant through Antara's life was his undying love for his wife, Abla. When Antara first tried to claim Abla's hand in marriage, her family objected, pointing out that he was the son of a slave, therefore lacking full rights. When the fortunes of war came to their tribe, however, Antara was called into battle to fight alongside his father. He accepted the call, and he soon grew to become the most celebrated warrior of the tribe. In so doing, he legitimized his claim to Abla's hand, as tribal law also forbade true slaves from defending the tribe in battle, which Antara had done. Therefore, by definition, Antara must be a free man with full rights and privileges.

From his humble beginnings as the son of a Bedouin slave girl, he rose to become one of the most romantic figures of the pre-Islamic Middle East. Antara traveled extensively to prove his worth, winning hearts and minds wherever he went with his heroic deeds and stirring poetic verse, becoming one of the most powerful Bedouin chiefs of his day. The tales of his glorious exploits eventually even earned him a place in the Muallaqat — the collection of epic poems hung from the walls of the Khaba in Mecca — which, in turn, drew him the inevitable attention of the Damned.

Although many Cainites came to court Antara, circling him like a flock of vultures, it was Nabonidus, Agonistes' confederate and founding member of the Tal'mahe'Ra, who would finally bring him into the night. Although Antara's Embrace would only bolster his prowess and heroism in battle, it would forever isolate him from his eternal love, Abla. Knowing as much, Antara begged his sire for permission to Embrace her as well, that they may spend eternity together, and Nabonidus agreed on the condition that Antara act as his "successor" in Egypt. A terrible civil war had split the Tal'mahe'Ra into two different branches, and Agonistes himself had just departed, leaving Egypt wide open for reclamation by the Followers of Set. Although he had left two children behind, they were mere neonates at the



time and were principally concerned with the fortress of Babylon and their duties to its inhabitants.

Shortly after staking his claim in Al-Askar, Antara was once again called upon to do battle — this time, by clan elders at Alamut who were putting together a strike force to lay waste to several strongholds of wicked Kindred in what had been the land of Persia. Antara left Abla in charge of Banu Yashkur and departed Egypt to make war against the unholy idolaters.

The enterprising Setites of the Dream Court took advantage of the opportunity to plant seeds of doubt in Abla's mind, and they slowly convinced her that Antara was gone for good. This cooperative effort culminated in a forged Assamite missive confirming Antara's death at the hands of the Persian demon-worshippers. In her anguish, Abla chose to greet the rising of the sun one morning while Antara was away.

Upon discovering what had happened, Antara was consumed with grief. Just as he prepared to join his beloved in the afterlife, Antara received a message that his sire had written upon the sky in the language of the stars. Nabonidus claimed that Abla was on the other side (where he was now), and that she wished Antara to remain as he always had — a warrior of uncompromising honor. They would be together again one night, when God saw to it that the judgment of man was at hand. Until then, Antara would battle the Followers of Set with his every waking moment, as he would all those who would defy God's law.

Over the following centuries, Antara built up a considerable network of contacts among the various Cainites of the Middle East. He strove to remove the stigma from the name of his clan in an attempt to gain

outside support for his own personal goals, and his efforts proved greatly successful. He found many who were eager to go through him in order to establish some kind of presence in Egypt. Soon enough, even European Cainites were dealing extensively with Antara.

Antara "sided" with the elders during the Anarch Revolt, as he was one himself by then. In addition, many of his Cainite associates were elders, and they looked to him to put an end to the uprising of the neonates in North Africa. When the time came for all-out war against his clan, Antara stepped forward to negotiate terms with the Camarilla at the infamous conclave held in the city of Tyre in 1496. Many of them knew him by then (if not personally, then by name), and they knew that his was a voice of reason. In addition, unlike many in his clan, Antara knew of the Setites' involvement in the revolt, and he knew that the Serpents had seen to it that the deck was now stacked heavily against the Children of Haqim. Seeing no other option on the table, Antara recognized that the best thing he could do for Alamut was to submit to the mystical blood curse proposed by the Tremere. Although humiliated, most of his clan somberly concurred with Antara at the time, and the infamous Treaty of Tyre was signed, dooming the clan to 500 years of humiliation and disgrace.

Since Ur-Shulgi's breaking of the Tremere curse, however, Antara has become the subject of some derision among his younger clanmates. He struggles with this treatment nightly, as it was never his intent to ostracize himself. Quite the opposite, in fact, as everything Antara did, he did for the Children of Haqim. Nonetheless, the damage was done, leaving many Assamites blaming Antara for the 500 years of indignity that the clan suffered at the Camarilla's hands.

As a result, Antara's biggest rival in Cairo, a charismatic warrior named Tel'at el-Ali, has stepped up the pace of his political efforts, and he is currently embroiled in a frenzied campaign for support against the elder and his atavistic ways. Although Antara graciously stepped down from his position as councilor of Banu Yashkur in order to make way for a younger clanmate (in this case, his child Imanna) the gesture was largely seen as weakness rather than political consideration, and Antara now finds himself losing ground in the Final Nights.

Antara desperately seeks the support of the ancient Damascene Ashirra, Muhandis, whom he believes can help him save the city from itself. Unfortunately, Muhandis has refused Antara's entreaties thus far, believing him to be the unwitting agent of the treacherous

powers at work in Cairo. The paranoid old Toreador has no idea that, in doing so, he does more harm than good.

In addition, Antara no longer even has the benefit of his beloved sire's enduring wisdom and aid. Nabonidus, being the founder of an order within the Tal'mahe'Ra called the Rawis (the keepers of the lore), had been in Enoch at the time of its destruction. Antara felt something precious inside him die that night. Only now does he understand just how alone he truly is.

Image: When people speak of the archetypal warrior-poet, they are speaking of Antara. He is the consummate noble warrior, displaying the depth of his tribal pride with every utterance and gesture. As a Cainite, Antara is so old that his jet-black skin glistens like onyx in the moonlight.

Roleplaying Hints: You are diplomatic when it comes to interacting with the other vampires of Cairo, whom you tend to view as wayward and unruly animals. The exceptions to this patronage lie in the Baali and the Followers of Set, whom you afford neither respect nor mercy. Speaking in cultured tones, you show the proper courtesy to all others in your attendance — even those who are scarcely worth the honor. Only by encouraging cooperation and respectful discourse can reason hope to prevail in the coming Final Nights.

Secrets: Being one of Cairo's original vampiric founders, Antara knows a great deal about the city and its shadow history. Although he is loyal to his clan and to Haqim above all, Antara is beginning to believe that he can never "go home again." He has come to realize that he has made his eternal bed in Egypt. Now he must be prepared to lie in it, regardless of the consequences.

Clan: Assamite (Warrior caste)

Sire: Nabonidus

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 482

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 7, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 7

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 5, Brawl 6, Dodge 4, Empathy 5, Expression 6, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Drive 2, Etiquette 5, Firearms 3, Melee 7, Performance 5, Ride 6, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics (theology) 6, Area Knowledge 6, Bureaucracy 4, Finance 3, History 5, Investigation 5, Law 4, Linguistics 5, Occult 7, Politics 4

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Assamite Sorcery 5, Auspex 5, Celerity 6, Dominate 3, Fortitude 6, Obfuscate 4, Potence 5, Presence 6, Protean 4, Quietus 7

Sorcerous Paths: Awakening of the Steel 5, Echo of Nirvana 5, Hunter's Winds 5, Warding 5, Whispers of the Heavens 5

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Herd 5, Resources 4, Retainers 5, Status 5

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 5, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 9

IMANNA, VOICE OF THE NIGHT

Background: After the creation of the Consultative Council in the 1920s, Antara's unlife became even more complicated. For a score of years, he struggled under the efforts of his political rival, Tel'aar, who had objected to Antara's assumption of the Assamite seat on the council. Ever since his return from Alamut, Tel'aar had been a vocal opponent of the founder of Banu Yashkur, and he seemed intent on gaining support within the clan while belittling the efforts of one of Cairo's most prominent elders.

Distraught, Antara took to various meditative techniques that his sire had taught him in order to gain balance and clarity. He would sit in the den of his simple house in Abdin, smoking his *khalifa* and clearing his mind of all unnecessary thoughts. When radio began to popularize in Cairo, he took to scanning the channels while he meditated. One night during the mid-1940s, he happened upon the most exquisite voice he had ever heard — a Cairene woman broadcasting simple songs of love over the radio waves. Antara listened for her every night thereafter, and he soon grew obsessed with uncovering the woman's identity, eager to put a face to the voice that so thoroughly enchanted him.

The woman who is now known as Imanna had been an only child, brought up by a single working mother in a lower-class Cairo apartment. All her life, she had been brought up to believe that nothing was out of reach as long as she put her mind to it. When she tried to make her own way in Cairo, however, she found the reality to be a camel of a drastically different color. All the legitimate employment opportunities seemed to be reserved for men, and everywhere Imanna turned, somebody was telling her what was and was not her place to do. Some men (and women, too) went so far as to tell her that her only real option lay in finding a suitable husband.

Determined to beat the system, Imanna began to dress, act and *think* like a man. She cut her hair, used her naturally versatile voice to lower her vocal pitch, and she obtained falsified identification papers. Soon she

obtained work at the Mogamma — Egypt's downtown central government complex — in a lowly administrative position. Imanna had broken through (sort of), but only by waking up every morning and denying who she was all day.

To compensate, Imanna began to release her feminine side in song. She had been a natural-born singer since she was young, and the passionate intensity of release that she found in music helped her to justify the life that she had built for herself. When a local-access radio station started looking for new talent, she signed up and was soon given her own evening program. Once a week, Imanna would take her *oud* down to the station and simply "let it all out" for an hour.

After a few weeks, Imanna — as she became known to her fans — received a mysterious visitor. Unlike her other admirers, this one seemed to have a genuine interest in Imanna and her life. He took her back to his house, and, over the course of a long evening, he explained to her some incredible things about the city of her birth — indeed, about the entire world. Then the stranger did a curious thing: He asked Imanna for her help.

This man, who called himself Antara, wanted to step down from his position as the tribal representative of his vampiric clan, but he could name no other candidate whom he trusted to take his place. Imanna, he confessed, filled him with a sense of peace and balance that he had not felt in centuries, and he begged her to allow him to inflict upon her the Embrace, that she may assist him in his efforts among the undead. When faced with such a bizarre and overwhelming pitch, Imanna felt that she could do little but agree.



Although many consider Imanna a pretender, she has done her best to step up to the role that she's been given. In her brief decades among the undead, Imanna has learned much about Cainite society, and she has become a remarkably competent ambassador for Baru Yashkur in such a short time. She has already earned the respect of most of her fellow councilors, and she feels that she may yet earn the respect of her fellow clanmates... before it's too late.

Image: Although Imanna possesses an undeniable allure, it is also an oddly androgynous one. Given the right make-up and masculine attire, it's easy to see how she could have fooled people for so long into thinking that she was man. When she dresses to accentuate her femininity, however, Imanna is utterly breathtaking.

Roleplaying Hints: You have finally found the place where you belong. Ironically, you have seen only slightly less discrimination on this side of death, but that is not what is important. What is important is that the woman you have always been finally has the opportunity to do some good, and you would not trade that for anything in the world.

Secrets: As councilor for one of Cairo's most influential domains, Imanna constantly has her finger on the pulse of the city — especially as it pertains to Baru Yashkur. She sees it as her duty to tend to the political machine while her sire desperately moves to keep the city from tearing itself apart in the coming Final Nights.

Clan: Assamite (Warrior caste)

Sire: Antara the Shepherd

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Trickster

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1947

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Etiquette 1, Firearms 2, Music 4, Performance 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Area Knowledge 4, Finance 2, History 2, Investigation 3, Law 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Politics 4, Science 3

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Dominate 1, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 3, Presence 1, Quietus 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Herd 3, Influence 3, Retainers (*ghāls*) 2, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 5

TEL'AAT EL-ALI, THE RISING FLAME

Background: Tel'aat el-Ali was a promising warrior in the elite Mameluke guard during the violent reign of Sultan Barquq. Although he was a Mameluke in station, he had come from a long line of Muhammadian knights stretching back through time, and he was genetically distinct from the other Turkish and Kipchak soldier-slaves of the day. As a young man, Tel'aat found himself an outsider, regardless of where he went in Cairo. To the city at large, he was part of a vulgar and militaristic warrior caste at best, and a piece of human chattel at worst. To the other Mamelukes, he was the irony of their lives made flesh — a man of so-called "noble blood" who was nonetheless bought and sold along with the rest of them — and they often took their bitterness out on him in kind.

When the Mongols swept into the Egyptian empire from the east, Tel'aat was part of a Mameluke army sent to repel them. Under Tamerlane, the Mongols crushed all resistance, sacking Aleppo in 1400 before moving on to Damascus and Baghdad. Although the Mamelukes had lost their struggle to maintain their eastern territories, Tel'aat survived the battles with Tamerlane, and he was backhandedly rewarded for his martial prowess and particular sense of duty in the form of the Embrace.

He returned to Egypt to find a growing movement among the youngest of his kind. Childer were striking back at their oppressive sires, giving the Assamites untold opportunities for judgment upon their fellow Kindred. He forged a pact with a young Lasombra named Munther al-Aswad, who was part of a larger pack of similarly discontented neonates. Together, they executed Munther's plan to destroy his own sire, King Sharif al-Lam'a. Although many believe that the only survivor of the attack was Munther himself, it was actually Tel'aat who laid the telling blow, thereby setting the stage for the terrible power struggle that exists in Banu al-Lam'a tonight.

When the fires of revolt had cooled, Tel'aat was left with a choice: return to Alamut and to the clan, or join the nascent Sabbat as one of the *antiribu*. Ever dedicated to his clan, Tel'aat decided to return to the fold, leaving his Lasombra companion to his own devices in Banu al-Lam'a. They exchanged vows of honor and brotherhood, sealing them forever with a pact of secrecy.



These nights, Tel'aat is concerned about a great many things, not the least of which is the appearance of his *antiribu* clanmate — an American Sabbat named Jim Spenser. Spenser has been nosing around Banu Yashkur, apparently looking for someone or something, and his inquiries have proven subtle enough thus far to avoid outright suspicion. The Lasombra have provided Tel'aat with little information on this new visitor, and he is beginning to finally suspect his old accomplice of some inevitable treachery.

Above and beyond all this, however, is Tel'aat's deep and abiding resentment toward the founder of Banu Yashkur. He blames Antara for much of the clan's suffering, and he would see all cowards such as he stripped of the precious blood that courses through their veins — the blood of Haqim. He fully understands Antara's power as a symbol to and of the clan. To Tel'aat, tearing down that symbol is all the more necessary.

Throughout the reign of Mukhtar Bey, Tel'aat has attempted to use his shared cultural heritage with the Mameluke prince for his own political benefit. The two even became confidants after a time, making Antara's mission in Cairo that much more difficult. Furthermore, since the breaking of the Tremere curse, Tel'aat has stepped up his efforts, delivering numerous fiery speeches to the other members of his clan in the name of tradition and stability. Tel'aat feels that the time has finally come for the new order — that is, the *original* order — to take root in Egypt once again, and he believes himself to be the unliving agent of that transformation.

Image: Tel'aat always strives to embody the best in the usual Assamite archetypes. In earlier nights, he

dressed in simple robes or in the attire most common to the *fellaheen*. These nights, he dresses in slick, dark suits that highlight his powerful physique. Furthermore, Tel'at never goes out without the customary *hatta* and *iqal* covering his head.

Roleplaying Hints: You are the vanguard for the Children of Haqim in Cairo. They have spent useless centuries suffering under the so-called wisdom of cowardly elders, and you seek to return them to their former glory. There was a time when the name "Assamite" struck fear and awe into the hearts of all Kindred. That time will come again.

Secrets: Although he openly claims to be a fervent follower of the teachings of Haqim, Tel'at was forever tainted by his association with the Lasombra. As a result, has divested himself of his former beliefs. He has embraced his true spiritual calling — the Path of Power and the Inner Voice — since the violent nights of the Anarch Revolt, and it is this more than anything that drives the Assassin so relentlessly in his endeavors.

Clan: Assamite (Warrior caste)

Sire: Emile Tobruk

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1401

Apparent Age: late 30s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 4, Melee 5, Performance 4, Stealth 5, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 2, Area Knowledge 5, Bureaucracy 3, Camarilla Lore 3, Clan Knowledge (Lasombra) 4, Clan Knowledge (Followers of Set) 3, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 4, Occult 5, Politics 5, Sabbat Lore 4

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 2, Celerity 5, Dominate 2, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 5, Obtenebration 3, Potence 2, Quietus 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Influence 3, Retainers 3, Status 4

Virtues: Conviction 5, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Path of Power and the Inner Voice 6

Willpower: 7

BEOMEDIAN THE TURK

Background: Born in Sicily in 1858 to a large middle-class Turkish family, Beomedian Khulud had little to worry about as a child, thanks to his father's profitable shipping business. Beomedian had few problems in school, easily forging strong friendships along the way. However, his behavior became more withdrawn at age 14, and he grew prone to sudden and violent outbursts. Although his parents said that they believed that it was some sort of sickness, Beomedian realized almost immediately that he was most definitely being poisoned. He argued for several weeks with the robed men who would slither nightly into his room, but after taking precautions to conceal his thoughts, the truth eventually became clear to him: His parents were slowly poisoning him in order to consume him and his precious ideas.

Confused by the sudden realization of who was behind this attempt on his life, Beomedian nonetheless knew that he had to strike quickly and preemptively. His attempt to reverse the fate that they had planned for him failed, however (there hadn't been enough arsenic in the house), and after a short stay in the local hospital, his parents were released with a clean bill of health. Too proud to see their son thrown into a jail cell, the Khulud family had him admitted to the asylum in Charenton, France.

The asylum was a place of cruel torture for Beomedian, what with all those endless questions and the constant presence of the hopelessly insane. It was enough to bring him to the brink of madness, himself. He had to wait over seventeen years, but Beomedian finally escaped the place during a massive electrical storm that caused several fires in the main building.



Two months later, he was in Tunis, having stowed away on a cruise ship departing from Nice. Although he had spent the majority of his life in the asylum, Beomedian had become quite skilled at negotiating services and favors from the greedier guards and more lucid inmates. In Tunis, he quickly put these skills to use in the city's large black market, which had been a permanent fixture since the days of the Barbary pirates. Through liberal use of blackmail, extortion and bribery, he quickly assembled a group of vicious thugs and smugglers to further protect him from the hostile forces that routinely aligned against him.

It was during this time that Hibah first approached Beomedian. Despite her failures during the Tripolitan War, Hibah had been charged by Alamut to keep the meddling Europeans out of North Africa. Beomedian was intrigued by the powerful woman, even warming to the arrangement that she proposed. Helping her disrupt the many French "auction" houses in Tunis would mean a larger share for his organization, but he didn't fully trust her. For all he knew, she was an assassin sent by his parents, finally come to finish the job. The negotiation quickly turned into an argument of accusations, the result of which was the Assamite's blade firmly implanted in Beomedian's gut and his life draining from his torn-out throat.

After regaining control of herself, Hibah quickly embraced the dying mortal in hopes of proceeding with her original plan to destabilize the expanding Ventrue power base in the city. She believed that the mortal that she had not intended to embrace was her best chance of success in this matter, due to the speed with which he had assembled such an organized underworld following.

Despite her best efforts, Hibah and her reluctant progeny were called to the mountain five years later. Yet again, her plans were less than successful, as the European vampires continued to prosper on Tunisian soil. Once at Alamut, Beomedian completed the last two years of his training as required by tradition, and he was then sent to Cairo to support his brethren there. Although he was told that his sire would soon follow, he has not seen her since the night he left for Egypt.

Beomedian's arrival in Cairo in 1899 was an event of no regard to the vampiric inhabitants of the city, and few thought twice about his quick inroads into the mortal crime syndicates and street urchins. The startling lack of influence in the mortal underworld in Cairo gave Beomedian pause at first. He was certain that the Setites who invariably infested such things were simply toying with him. Over the course of many years, however, he found that the lack of such a presence was not a subtle trick at all, but the surest sign of

the Assamite elder Antara's power over such things. Beomedian quickly exerted his influence over local street gangs, smugglers, fences, blackmailers, extortionists and informants, carefully cultivating a web of mortal pawns to shelter him from those who were invariably looking for him.

Soon after solidifying his power base in Cairo, Beomedian struck a quiet bargain with Councilor Foster through Foster's lackey, Hussein al-Husseini. The Ventrue operations in Cairo were overextended, and few Ventrue had the time or the inclination to personally see to their well-being. In exchange for keeping an eye out for Ventrue interests, Beomedian's business operations would need fear no reprisal. Beomedian has taken this event as a sign that the Ventrue have become worried that his loose faction could theoretically supplant their poorly organized influences. When Beomedian finally has the right people on his side, such a theory may well prove accurate.

Recently, Beomedian has started an odd relationship with the French Toreador, Andres LeCompte, through various social salons and by helping him acquire certain "luxury" items with a minimum of fuss. They have become quite comfortable around each other, and rumors of an entente of some sort have begun to spread. In truth, Beomedian has attempted (unsuccessfully) to steal the Toreador's blood on two different occasions, so as to try to determine his viability as a diablerie victim. He has also been attempting to have LeCompte's retainers and servants watched, in order to ascertain the exact location and weaknesses of his havens. Beomedian intends to stalk the French Toreador until he knows his every move and hiding spot. So far, he has been moderately successful in this task, but he refuses to strike until all the odds have been stacked heavily in his favor.

Image: A short and stocky man, Beomedian's sharp features have been weathered and etched by his strenuous mortal days, although he is swarthy, his skin has yet to fully darken due to the age of his Assamite blood. He usually wears his jet-black hair short, but has been known to follow the latest European style for such things.

Roleplaying Hints: It is only through sheer force of will that you have been able to avert the worst symptoms of your insanity, although the strange noises and sudden fits of unfounded paranoia do get the best of you sometimes. You are constantly aware of how much control you have over yourself, and you delight in probing others subtly so as to discern how much control they truly have. You have found that joviality and witticism are the perfect weapons to disarm a possible

foe, and you try your best to use them on those you suspect of treachery.

Secrets: Beomedian suspects that Tel'aat may make a hostile move against Antara, to take over his position and holdings in Cairo. Beomedian believes that such a move would very quickly put him at odds with Tel'aat, and that the way of unlife he currently enjoys would be greatly disrupted if not ended in such an event. While he doubts that he could prevent such a plot from ever coming to fruition, he does believe that he could go to the Ventrue for support, so as to remove Tel'aat once he is in power. In the unlikely event that the Ventrue prove unwilling (or incompetent), Beomedian has already begun training his *ghûls* in the ways of the daylight raid, the stake and the bomb. Beomedian is also the Kindred known in certain circles as the Vulture.

Clan: Assamite (Vizier caste)

Sire: Hibah

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Trickster

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1892

Apparent Age: 30s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Demolitions 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Melee 4, Performance 3, Pilot (boat) 2, Security 3, Stealth 4, Survival 1

Knowledges: Academics 1, Camarilla Lore 1, Clan Knowledge (Ventrue) 2, Finance 4, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 1, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 3, Quietus 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Herd 2, Influence 4, Resources 3, Retainers (*ghûl* thugs) 4

Virtues: Conviction 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Path of Blood 4

Willpower: 7

BANUAL-HAJJI

IBN JA'FAR, THE GOLDEN SON OF CAIRO

Background: It is said that at the time of Salah al-Din's death, his entire fortune consisted of 47 dinars and a single, golden, holy coin. Rumor has it that this coin was passed down through the caliphs — having been

originally owned by the Prophet himself and eventually falling to Salah al-Din. Although many claim to have possessed this coin in the centuries since his death, in reality, there is only one true owner of the Prophet's Holy Coin.

On his death bed in Damascus in 1193, Salah al-Din was visited by a representative of Tarique, the founder of the Hajj in Arabia. Tarique sent a childe of his own to witness the passing of the great Ayyubid sultan and, if possible, Embrace him into the clan. While in his prime, Salah al-Din had been considered "hands off" to the damned Childer of Caine, but now that he was dying, this could be his last chance at eternal unlife. Ja'far, Tarique's childe and representative, was bestowed with the authority to make this weighty decision on his own, based upon what he saw while he was in Damascus.

Every night on his way to the sultan's chambers, Ja'far passed a lowly street urchin who had taken up residence outside the sultan's palace. Although he was a leper, the boy seemed largely unaffected by his condition, and his genuine love of God shone like an inner light that gave the Nosferatu pause as he passed by. On the second night of his vigil, Ja'far stopped to make a donation to the boy, but he was refused. When he asked the boy why, there came the simple reply, "Because God has seen to my needs." Scoffing, the Nosferatu went along his way, though not before realizing that the discomfort he had felt in the boy's presence was the telltale sign of divine favor.

On the third night, when Salah al-Din bade his servant to fetch the devout leper boy from the street



outside, none was more surprised than Ja'far, who had been watching the dying sultan from the shadows. Upon his death bed, Salah al-Din bestowed upon the beggar boy the holy golden coin of Muhammad, saying that no one in either his family nor his own courtly retinue was deserving of the precious artifact. Only the pious leper-child — one who did not forsake Allah even after being stricken with such blight — was deemed truly worthy by the dying sultan.

Rather than Embrace the frail old sultan, the Hajj decided that the boy's inheritance was a sign from God, and he decided to bring him into the fold instead. Upon his Embrace, the boy's skin took on the luster of the very coin itself, and the event was seen as a revelation to all within the sect. Tarique himself rejoiced from his ancestral home in Mecca, instructing Ja'far to take his new childe to Cairo, the city of Salah al-Din's greatest triumph, where the Hajj had grown numerous but languid. Once in Cairo, the neonate, thereafter known as Ibn Ja'far, soon surpassed his sire in his devotion to the Hajj. Upon his sire's return to Arabia, Ibn Ja'far founded a new khitta for the Hajj in the territory developed during Salah al-Din's reign.

For centuries, Ibn Ja'far was the very model of religious authority — beneficent, capable and kind. In the last century, however, he has fallen from his duties to some extent, and the more perceptive among the Hajj have noticed a sagging quality in his efforts. His speeches, once fiery and bold, have lost all urgency, and he is rarely seen bearing his distinctive smile anymore. Even his illustrious skin seems to have lost its once-brilliant gleam.

The truth, sad as it may seem, is that Ibn Ja'far has lost his holy golden coin — and with it, his faith. The boy is plagued by self-doubt and confusion, and he wracks his brain nightly for the answers to his self-imposed questions. He has confided only in his childe, Shahid. His childe currently tries to convince Ibn Ja'far that his faith is separate and distinct from his legacy, and that he can once again become the paragon of the Hajj with or without the coin. Although Ibn Ja'far would like to believe this, he has tried many times to atone for his loss, but nothing has returned him his faith. He is convinced that his devotion to God — indeed, his entire existence — is linked to the divine relic that earned him his damnation, and he fears that both may be lost to him forever.

Image: Although he looks inhuman to be sure, Ibn Ja'far's form possesses an oddly appealing quality. The boy's dark skin shines like sooty gold, giving his body a slight radiance wherever he goes. Ibn Ja'far claims that he is incapable of altering this aspect of his visage even if he

desired to do so, and he typically holds to his own domain in order to preserve the Masquerade (and continued good relations with the prince). It is this peculiar characteristic as much as his nearly Messianic status among the Hajj that first earned him his dramatic title.

Roleplaying Hints: You may be trapped in the body of a shimmering, leprous boy-child, but you feel as though you have seen forever. Although you believe that it is your curse and thus your duty to Allah to stay in this form until Judgment Day, you have grown weary. So many relying on you for so much for so long... without your faith, it all just seems like a great big lie.

Secrets: Ibn Ja'far knows much of what occurs in Cairo, both as a councilor and as the leader of the Hajj. Unfortunately for those who would make use of his great knowledge, Ibn Ja'far's current spiritual crisis of conscience is consuming him body and soul, and he seems to have little time or inclination for anything else.

Clan: Hajj (Nosferatu)

Sire: Ja'far al-Medinat

Nature: Penitent

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1193

Apparent Age: a child, no older than 12

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Etiquette 3, Melee 5, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics (theology) 4, Area Knowledge (Cairo) 5, Area Knowledge (Damascus) 3, Bureaucracy 1, Investigation 4, Law 5, Linguistics 4, Medicine 2, Occult 5, Politics 4, Science 3,

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 4, Potence 5, Presence 1, Dur-An-Ki (Mesopotamian Blood Magic) 5

Sorcerous Paths: Life's Water 5, Covenant of Nergal 4, Suleiman's Laws 2

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Influence 3, Retainers 4, Status 5

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 5

Path: Humanity 7

Willpower: 6

True Faith: 0 (formerly 5)

Note: Dur-An-Ki sorcery is covered in the book *Blood Sacrifice*. Storytellers who don't wish to use this re-

source should give Ibn Ja'far Thaumaturgy, with the Path of Blood at level five and the Path of Spirit Manipulation at level two instead.

SHAHID, KEEPER OF THE WORD

Background: Shahid was Embraced during one of the darkest times in Cairo's history. A long period of famine followed one of the city's many great plagues, and food was so scarce during this lean time that cannibalism became a way of life. The paradoxical laws against cannibalism that subsequently arose further perpetuated the crime, as all convicted cannibals had their flesh torn apart and distributed to the people. It even became common practice for starving households to send for deliveries and then attack and devour the delivery boys.

Shahid was one such delivery boy who suffered one of these gruesome attacks. In his hunger, the man who beat him for his flesh failed to actually kill the boy, and Shahid managed to escape after being only partially eaten. When the man left to acquire his daily bread, Shahid limped away with part of his right arm and calf missing, and he finally collapsed in a side street. Knowing that he would die, he prayed to Allah and gave thanks for the life that he had been given. Shahid would have been powerless to stop his assailant from finishing the job, had he even been aware that the enraged cannibal was even now following the trail of blood to where the poor boy lay.

Ibn Ja'far, who had been trying to keep the city's rampant cannibalism from defiling Banu al-Hajji, came across the dying boy while out on one of his patrols. The leader of the Hajj expected to find the boy cursing Allah for his fate, but when he heard Shahid giving thanks and praise to Allah with his final breaths, Ibn Ja'far was moved. Even after such a hideous fate, here lay someone with a faith unshaken — a rare thing in those dark and godless times. Shahid's attacker found the boy, but he failed to notice Ibn Ja'far who had concealed himself from the attacker's eye. As the attacker grabbed Shahid's half-eaten leg, Ibn Ja'far acted with righteous fury, smiting the sinner into a barely recognizable mass of pulped flesh. Then he turned to Shahid and, upon hearing the boy's prayer to Allah for salvation, Embraced him.

Since that time, Shahid has served the Hajj and Ibn Ja'far humbly. He understands that he must atone for his sins as a Nosferatu, but he does not curse his fate at becoming one of the Damned. Instead, he gives thanks to Allah for the second chance that he has been given. Ibn Ja'far finds Shahid's faith and humility inspiring, and the sire has come to envy the childe's acts of sincere



and simple worship. For his part, Shahid admires Ja'far, seeing in him a genuine (if somewhat fallen) servant of Allah. He knows that Ibn Ja'far currently struggles with a crisis of faith, but he believes that his sire will overcome this doubt and grow even closer to God.

Shahid is his sire's closest confidant, listening quietly night after night as Ibn Ja'far pours his distraught soul out to him in prayer. Shahid understands that Ibn Ja'far himself doesn't even realize how much he gives away when the two pray together, and he has come to view his talks with his mentor as a sacred duty. He has sworn himself to eternal secrecy regarding his sire's thoughts and insecurities, and he hopes only that he will have the opportunity one night to save his sire as his sire once did for him.

Although it pains him to do so, Shahid has a secret that he keeps even from Ibn Ja'far. Shahid has encountered Petra, a faithful Coptic Christian Nosferatu whose clan disfigurements appear as divine stigmata. She is the childe of Ibn Ja'far's greatest rival, Shagaret al-Durr, but Shahid felt irresistibly drawn to her nevertheless. They have met many times to discuss the nature of faith in the clan, and although they disagree on certain dogmatic matters, both have come to admire and respect one another. Indeed, beyond even that, they have fallen in love.

Despite Petra's Christianity, Shahid feels that he has never met someone so close to the divine — whatever it may be called — as Petra. Shahid wants to confide in Ibn Ja'far about his feelings for her, but he believes that even if his sire could understand his attraction to a Nosferatu outside the Hajj — if he could understand a Muslim and a Christian sharing a love that

is pure and true — that it would only add to Ibn Ja'far's current crisis of faith. From what Petra tells Shahid of her own sire, he believes that Shagaret would find the couple abhorrent as well. Nevertheless, Shahid believes that Allah meant for the two of them to find one another, and their love endures. The secret relationship gives even more strength to Shahid's already potent faith, and he will fight to defend his love, should anyone discover the truth.

Image: Thanks to his powers of concealment, Shahid keeps his true form mercifully hidden from view. Even for those who can see through his Obfuscate, however, Shahid always wears a full-body *galabiyya*, concealing the terrible abomination beneath. His naked form is a latticework of gray-green musculature — ragged and torn in some places, missing entirely in others. When he walks, he does so with a severe limp, as the majority of his right leg was removed and consumed before his Embrace, and what is left of his right arm appears much the same. Despite all of this monstrosity, however, his gentle eyes remain remarkably humane.

Roleplaying Hints: Although you would never tell anyone what has become of your sire's once powerful faith, you understand that the brunt of the responsibility for the continuation of Allah's work falls upon you as long as your sire struggles with his uncertainty. You were chosen for your devotion, and now you must continue that devotion — not only to Allah, but to your sire and your eternal love as well.

Secrets: In addition to his secret love affair with Petra, Shahid knows more than many about Cairo's numerous Kindred — particularly regarding matters of motivation and faith, of which he has an intuitive understanding. Over the years, he has engaged in theological discourse with many of those with whom he shares eternity, including Aziz, the Malkavian who has discovered a spiritual "shortcut" to vampiric enlightenment. Unknown to Shahid, the Malkavian owes much of his spiritual success to all that he learned by watching Shahid's humble example — a debt that Aziz intends to repay with the gift of Golconda itself, if at all possible.

Clan: Hajj (Nosferatu)

Sire: Ibn Ja'far

Nature: Masochist

Demeanor: Penitent

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1737

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 5, Expression 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 3, Etiquette 1, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 1, Area Knowledge 5, Expert Knowledge (theology) 3, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 3, Occult 4

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 4, Potence 4, Protean 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 3, Mentor 4

Virtues: Conscience 5, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 6

SHAGARET AL-DURR, THE TREE OF PEARLS

Background: Shagaret al-Durr — the Tree of Pearls — is the first, last and only female sultana that Egypt has ever known. Like many rulers of the day, the former sultan had taken a Turkish slave girl for his wife, bringing her to Cairo to revel in the splendor of the greatest city in Islam. When he died, she cleverly disguised the fact in order to make time for the sultan's son to return from war and claim the throne. Her aim was to prevent the Mamelukes, who had risen to a position of considerable power in Egypt, from summarily taking the country while the only remaining heir of age was off fighting in the Crusades.

Although it was a bold one, Shagaret's gambit ultimately failed. Her own jealousy resulted in the death of her husband, Aibek, and she was given over to a former rival for bloody disposal. The rival's female retinue beat Shagaret nearly to death with sauna clogs and tossed her body over the Citadel walls into the moat below.

Although she was believed to have been devoured by hungry dogs, Shagaret was actually rescued and Embraced by a Nosferatu who had made a home of the muddy waters outside the Citadel. Although Shagaret was left to her own devices after her Embrace, she managed a single, decent look at her sire's battered face. It was like a twisted reflection of the way Shagaret herself looked just before she died, and she suddenly understood what it was that she was meant to do.

In the centuries after her "return" to Cairo, the Tree of Pearls chafed at two of the most prominent powers in Cairo — the Mameluke prince and the Hajj. She became a vocal opponent of the treatment that non-Muslim Nosferatu received in Cairo, and she soon built a haven for them all inside her own private domain in Banu al-Hajji. Although she was (or had been) Muslim herself, she railed against the discrimination that they endured, and, with each fiery sermon, she brought more believers under her belt of pearls — the Alnilam. In the



last century or so, the Alnilam have grown especially strong, and they now boast members from all walks of non-Muslim unlife. Once ignored as a ridiculous fringe cult, the Alnilam are now stepping up with one very loud voice in Cairo.

Although many believe the Tree of Pearls to be the secret leader of the Gehenna cult known as Allah Walid, she is not. She can, however, be considered a founding member of the cult, and she would give anything to see the arrogant Mameluke prince brought down from his position of power. Shagaret has even recently heard that shapeshifters — the prince's sworn enemies — have entered Cairo and that they admire her as some kind of kindred spirit. She is currently debating how best to use this information.

Image: Shagaret typically appears as she did in life — an elegant Turkish woman of rarified breeding and poise. She favors bright colors, offsetting the grimness of her disposition while drawing a subconscious connection to the people of “her” city. Her true form, on the other hand, is a grisly display of twisted meat and bone set at painful angles. The right side of her head is smashed both in and forward, giving her face the close-set appearance of a traditional hieroglyphic portrait.

Roleplaying Hints: You never stopped being sultana — death was merely an inconvenient pause in your plans for Cairo. Speak to others as though you have done them some great service in the past and they are now coming to ask for your help yet again. Be polite to other elders, but never pander to inconsequential interests and never ever bow to anyone.

Secrets: The Tree of Pearls is gearing up for a full-scale takeover bid on the principedom of Cairo. She

believes that she has spread enough paranoia about the prince through her association with Allah Walid to ensure others' support of her when all is said and done.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Umm al-Mawt

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Caregiver

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1257

Apparent Age: indeterminate

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 2, Etiquette 4, Melee 3, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 4, Area Knowledge 1, History 4, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 3, Medicine 1, Occult 4, Politics 4

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 3, Dominate 4, Presence 5, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 4, Potence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 4, Influence 2, Resources 3, Retainers (*ghûls*) 3, Status 3

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 7

BANUAL-LAM'A

FATIMAH AL-LAM'A, MONARCH OF THE LIGHT

Background: Fatimah was Embraced in 970, shortly after King Sharif arrived in Cairo with the Shi'a caliph. Sharif had fallen in love with Fatimah some years before in Tunis, while she was still a young woman. Her Lasombra benefactor watched her from the shadows as she grew to adulthood, admiring her quiet dignity and poise as one would admire the elegance of a beautiful gown. When the time came for him to move south into Egypt, King Sharif took Fatimah with him as his lover and consort. The Lasombra had a dream that was to be medieval Cairo, and he wanted to share every moment of that dream with his eternal love.

When King Sharif finally granted Fatimah the power to take a childe of her own, she made her choice carefully, courting her potential childe over many years as her sire had done. Fatimah's mistake, however, had been in playing the Embracing game too wisely and too well. Her midnight assignations with her would-be

progeny resulted in the one variable she could not have accounted for: Whether mortal or not, the young Egyptian had truly fallen in love with her.

Although Fatimah assumed that her new child — a man named Munther al-Aswad — would grow accustomed to the reality of his situation, he did not. Instead, Munther grew ever more jealous of his grandsire, King Sharif. Finally, using the Anarch Revolt as the oil of his convictions, Munther put an end to the great Lasombra king and took up the cause of the Sabbat in Cairo.

Rather than lie down, however, Fatimah remained true to her sire's legacy of faith, and she continued to claim domain in Banu al-Lam'a as Sharif's descendant. She actively opposed the Sabbat and set about cementing her influence among both the Camarilla and Ashirra of Egypt. When the prince instituted his Consultative Council, Fatimah graciously stepped into the role on behalf of her domain. She has been one of the most respected of the city's councilors ever since.

Fatimah is a devout Shi'a Muslim, and she continues to lead the non-Sunni Ashirra of Cairo in prayer, while actively encouraging them to maintain good relations with all other Ashirra. Although the spiritual divide between Sunni and Shi'a is deep among mortals, the Cainites of Islam tend to take the larger view and are somewhat less disrupted by sectarian differences of opinion. Even Ibn Ja'far himself — arguably the most devout Sunni in Cairo — counts Fatimah among his closest allies within the sect.

Even though she is technically *antitribu*, the Camarilla councilor of Banu al-Lam'a is more powerful than many Sabbat clan members. Fatimah has sat on several Courts of Blood — clan tribunals for the Lasombra

— and she is a ranking member in the Friends of the Night. She has numerous allies within the elders of that august group, including Zarathustra, the Lasombra Methuselah and secret Prince of Antioch. Fatimah made a regular houseguest of the *antitribu* mercenary Lucita up until the latter's recent defection to the Sabbat, and with the death of Lucita's sire, the religio-mastermind Cardinal Monçada, Fatimah's influence in the clan has grown considerably. As a result, no Lasombra is permitted to take any aggressive action against Fatimah al-Lam'a without a proper ruling from the Courts — a highly unlikely occurrence.

In public, Fatimah is attended at all times by her eternal handmaiden, Asima. Shortly after her Embrace, Fatimah made a *ghul* of her favorite mortal servant, and the two have been inseparable ever since. Asima is at once the councilor's personal assistant, trusted confidant and highly capable bodyguard. Of particular import is Asima's unsettling immunity to any application of the vampiric Discipline *Obfuscate*, an ability she has put at her domitor's disposal on more than one occasion.

Image: The councilor of Banu al-Lam'a is a woman of elegant bearing and stately majesty. On the rare occasions in which she goes out in public, Fatimah's dark and sinuous form is unmistakable, even at a distance. The elusive Lasombra has even achieved something of a celebrity status, and "Fatimah-watching" has grown into a popular sport among the city's more starry-eyed neonates.

Roleplaying Hints: Although you are something of a recluse, you are one of the most high-profile *antitribu* in the world — a distinction you handle with a wary regard. Although it does make you a target to younger clan members within the Sabbat, you have become an icon for the vampiric individualist, and you receive periodic correspondence from secret well-wishers the world over who support your independent stance. You are proud of what you have achieved by simply remaining true to your beliefs, and dignity and pride radiate from you like twin suns.

Secrets: Very little goes on in either the halls of Elysium or in Banu al-Lam'a without Fatimah's knowledge, and she is extremely adept at disseminating all the data that she acquires. She knows of her child's long-term plans for Sabbat conquest, and she watches him interestedly from her own shadows. Deep down, she knows that Munther could never truly harm her, and she dreams of the night when all Lasombra of King Sharif's line will unite to form a single, powerful family.

Clan: Lasombra *antitribu*

Sire: Sharif al-Lam'a



Nature: Architect
Demeanor: Traditionalist
Generation: 7th
Embrace: 970
Apparent Age: early 30s
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 4
Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 5
Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 4, Melee 3, Performance 4, Stealth 3, Survival 5
Knowledges: Academics (Shi'a theology) 4, Area Knowledge 5, Bureaucracy 4, Camatilla Lore 3, Clan Knowledge (Assamite) 3, Finance 4, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 4, Occult 5, Politics 5, Sabbat Lore 4
Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Dominate 4, Fortitude 5, Obfuscate 3, Obtenebration 6, Potence 5, Presence 4
Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Clan Prestige 3, Influence 4, Resources 5, Retainers 1, Status 5
Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 5
Morality: Humanity 6
Willpower: 7

BISHOP MUNTHER AL-ASWAD

Background: Munther al-Aswad was Embraced as a gift to his grandsire, King Sharif, following the death of Sultan Antonius. Sharif had long since granted his paramour the right to create progeny of her own, and she had merely been waiting for the right opportunity to arise. Fatimah courted her would-be child in a traditional Lasombra style, flitting about the shadowy perimeter of his life for several years before approaching Munther about the Embrace.

What Fatimah had not counted on, however, was the bona fide passion she would arouse in the love-struck Egyptian. What had been merely a routinely involved prelude to the Lasombra Embrace became a life-altering experience for the mortal Munther. And when Fatimah finally deigned to tell him the whole truth, Munther grew furious. It had been insulting enough for Fatimah to lead him as on she had, but when she turned around and gave Munther as a gift to her own sire — and lover — King Sharif, it was more than Munther could bear. His boundless love for Fatimah became equaled only by his seething hatred for her paramour, and Munther soon began to devise a means by which he could finally claim his sire as his own.



When the Anarch Revolt crept into Africa from Europe, Munther seized his chance. He rallied a pack of disillusioned neonates, and, together with the assistance of a Mameluke Assamite named Tel'aat, they overwhelmed King Sharif at his manor in the old walled city. The deed done, Tel'aat — the only other survivor of the assault on King Sharif — made his way back to Alamut, and Munther retired to his tribal domain in Al-Qahira.

Since then, Munther has done much to support the cause of the Sabbat in Egypt, but never so much that his own interests are put at risk. Munther believes that, how the individual vampire conducts his affairs is the single most critical aspect of a Lasombra, regardless of sectarian propaganda. And although many within the sect have balked at how little ground the Bishop of Cairo has gained in so much time, the Lasombra seem to take the wider, more long-term — more Lasombra — view of his operations in the city, and they have openly supported him on numerous occasions. In addition, Munther knows that if he were to further disgrace the memory of his legendary grandsire, King Sharif, he might lose any and all remaining support he may have from influential Lasombra within the Ashirra, including the mullah himself, Suleiman ibn Abdullah.

Munther's political philosophy — indeed, the only practical approach for the Sabbat in Cairo — is to give his enemies enough rope with which to hang themselves. Midnight raids and the like might work for Western Cainites, but not for the Sabbat of the Middle East, and rarely to any great effect. Such vulgar measures typically result in nominal victories for the sect (which are usually overturned in short order), and the bishop has been using the current trend of Sabbat

victory-cum-loss in the United States as a lesson in what not to do, thereby legitimizing his own conservative stance. All Lasombra recognize the value of patient planning — especially in Cairo, where the only true legacies of triumph are the ones that last.

Image: No matter how much he tries to put those around him at ease, the bishop's demeanor remains sober, even chilling. A nimbus of blackness seems to envelop him as he walks, and his voice is low, grating as though caught on something in his throat. Although his dark brown eyes are soft and ingratiating (through years of practice), there can be no doubt that not even the merest hint of warmth exists in them.

Roleplaying Hints: You are the consummate host. You see yourself as the Lasombra inheritor (not assassin) in Cairo, and you take your duties to your khitta and your sect very seriously. The furtherance of Sabbat goals in Egypt requires both patience and guile, and the thought of brash neonates sweeping in to thoughtlessly ruin all that you carefully laid down makes you seethe. As such, you have a reputation for meting out punishments sometimes thought to be excessive upon younger sect members.

Secrets: The bishop is the only remaining member of Tel'at's original "pack," and he guards this secret well. It is an intense bargaining chip when dealing with the Assamites, and he knows that should Tel'at rise to power over Banu Yashkur, the ultimate rise of the Sabbat in Cairo cannot be far behind.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Fatimah al-Lam'ra

Nature: Curmudgeon

Demeanor: Director

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1436

Apparent Age: mid 30s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Drive 1, Crafts 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms 4, Melee 3, Performance 4, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 3, Area Knowledge 4, Bureaucracy 3, Camarilla Lore 2, Investigation 4, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Politics 4, Sabbat Lore 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 4, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 2, Obtenebration 4, Potence 4, Presence 4, Quietus 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Influence 4, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Rituals 2, Sabbat Status 3

Virtues: Conviction 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Path of Power and the Inner Voice 6
Willpower: 8

CHRISTOBAL THE PRIVATEER

Background: A young Valencian seafarer in life, Christobal was an outsider when he arrived in Egypt in 1823, looking to earn fortunes and glories for himself and his crew. Christobal was quickly noticed for his skill with a rapier, his charming accent and the fearless way in which he and his men dealt with their new surroundings. These characteristics brought him to the attention of the Sabbat bishop, Munther al-Aswad, who had long desired a child from among those outside the city — particularly one who demonstrated both reckless abandon and a complete lack of respect for tradition. After a brief "courting" period, the bishop Embraced Christobal, allowing him to then Embrace those of his men whom he deemed worthy, thus creating a pack that could act as his tools against the bishop's enemies.

Unfortunately, the bishop underestimated Christobal. He failed to notice that the Valencian had not availed himself of the city's women. He failed to notice that every man Christobal slew died as a result of a fair fight. He failed to notice that Christobal corrected anyone who referred to him as a pirate and not a privateer. The Lasombra never even considered that Christobal could be a man with dreams — dreams that would not fully die even after breath left his body. The bishop saw only someone with contacts among the river folk, someone with resources that could connect him to Europe: an outsider who could not possibly have any real sense of honor or tradition.

Christobal, however, *did* have honor, as well as dreams of his own. He had named his ship, the *Joana's Grace*, for a woman whom he had loved as a mortal — the Lady Joana, whom he had worshipped from afar in Valencia. Christobal hoped that his life as a privateer would somehow make it possible for him to win her love, if not her hand. Now he was a creature of the night, and the Lady Joana, the angel of his inspiration, was forever lost to him.

He had led his crew to an untimely doom, yet he refused to yield to despair. He decided instead to embrace duty and serve the bishop as well as he could. His pack (the Reconquista) and his crew served him with as fierce a loyalty in death as ever they had in life. He determined to learn all that he could about his new homeland and his new family, while continuing to maintain the dashing and reckless outward appearance that had kept others misjudging him in life.

Christobal soon learned of the bishop's past, including the destruction of King Sharif during the violent



Anarch Revolt. He also learned of Fatimah, the Bishop's sire and his own grandsire. Although she was seen as *antitribu*, Christobal determined to meet his grandsire and learn more of her. When they met, she impressed the privateer with her kindness and beneficence, and they shared stories of the loves that they each had won and lost. A bond was forged between them that was stronger than Christobal's loyalty to the bishop.

Christobal confronted his sire with the things that he had learned from Fatimah, including the murder of King Sharif and the ancient traditions of the city. He pleaded for understanding about what had happened, so that he could better serve the Sabbat as a true and honorable warrior. It was then that the bishop finally noticed the true man who stood before him. He did his best to educate his wayward childe but, although he could tell that Christobal's loyalty to the Sabbat was strong, he knew that his childe's sympathies belonged to Fatimah. Still, Christobal and his pack had proved themselves time and again against the enemies of the sect, and the bishop desperately needs allies at this time.

For his part, Christobal is torn. In some ways, he sees Fatimah as a traitor to the Sabbat. Through the Sabbat, Christobal has found the nobility and purpose that he so fervently sought as a privateer. Yet, the night that she spoke to him of Sharif and of true duty still lingers in his thoughts, and the very idea of a grandson slaying his grandfather rails against everything he knows of honor. He does not know what to do or which way to turn, so he maintains flagging loyalty to the bishop, but has privately told his sire that he cannot bring himself to act against Fatimah in any way.

Christobal has since taken measures to protect himself and his pack. The latest incarnation of the *Joana's Grace* is an extremely modern vessel, equipped with heavy weaponry, thick hulls, powerful engines and special modifications made to accommodate the needs of Cainites. Light does not penetrate to any lower levels, and emergency blood supplies are kept on board, as well as an arsenal that would be the envy of most soldiers of fortune. He still has the nameplate from his first ship, as well as pieces of her prow, but the rest is all state-of-the-art. When Christobal is aboard, he seems to gain strength from the memories of his distant past and of a beautiful woman from Valencia whom he once loved so dearly.

Image: Christobal still cuts an unmistakably dashing character, even though the nights of frills and colored pantaloons have long since come and gone. These nights, he dresses more for comfort and ease of movement than anything else, as he is fond of carrying numerous weapons of various calibers and purposes. Just as in life, his elegant good looks arouse the simmering rage of envious men more often than they do the longing stares of interested ladies.

Roleplaying Hints: Never flinch and never falter: The undead are predators of the worst sort who will look for any sign of weakness to exploit — therefore, you must show them none. You are proud of your Lasombra heritage, as it has proven that there is indeed nobility to be found beyond the grave. Act with honor in all things, even among those who possess none themselves.

Secrets: Christobal knows that the Sabbat is a hair's breadth away from falling apart in Cairo. All it takes is one misstep on the part of his sire, or even one of the other Sabbat, and the entire city could come crashing down upon them. Unfortunately, Christobal understands that the people whom this would hurt most of all are those of his own clan, and he fights with every step to prevent this.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Munther al-Aswad

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Gallant

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1823

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts (nautical) 5, Etiquette 2, Firearms 4, Melee 5, Performance 2, Pilot (ship) 4, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 2, Area Knowledge 4, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics 1

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2, Obtenebration 3, Potence 2, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Herd 2, Influence 1, Resources 3

Virtues: Conviction 5, Instincts 3, Courage 5

Morality: Path of Honorable Accord 7

Willpower: 6

JAMES "JIM" SPENSER

Background: Jim Spenser is the pseudonym of Ahlaim James Khatib, an Arab-American born in Massachusetts after the second World War. After his Embrace into the Sabbat, he was given the ignoble task of working as liaison between the Sword of Caine and the Giovanni of Boston. Through careful manipulation, the Giovanni slowly honor-bound Jim to their service, and they have been using him as a foil against their opposition ever since.

Although Jim will not be the one to speak on such matters, careful investigations into Boston might well reveal the truth and perhaps allow others to bring him into their service as well. The Giovanni have given Jim the task of scouting Cairo so that they might finally return to Egypt. The last Giovanni family in Cairo, the Ghiberti, disappeared around the close of the 19th century, and all previous attempts by clan members to establish a stronghold in the city failed miserably.

James intends to find out who or what destroyed the Ghiberti and then, if possible, remove the threat for the Giovanni, thus fulfilling his dirty obligation to the clan. To this end, he is quite willing to work with newly Embraced Kindred or vampiric outsiders to the city, whether as savior or as master. He guards his background behind a veil of youthful ignorance, but the few who have insulted his honor or threatened him have met with grisly fates. He is a master of the art of slaying both the living and the undead, and he has done his best to make each kill disturbingly unique in some way. In addition to his considerable martial power, as the unofficial Giovanni representative in Cairo, Jim can draw on the considerable assets of the clan should the need arise.

After hearing of the prince's decree regarding the Giovanni, Jim managed a brief meeting with him, wherein they discussed the city's history and possible futures. Jim emerged from the meeting room with the



firm belief that he may be able to solve the Giovanni problem in Cairo without resorting to the use of his well-honed skills.

For the time being, Jim is the guest of the Sabbat bishop in Banu al-Lam'a, although he has already made regular forays into several other districts during his short time in the city. He is particularly curious as to the Assamites of Banu Yashkur, and he has taken a keen interest in the politics of his erstwhile clanmates since the breaking of the Tremere curse.

Image: Jim carries off the appearance of a young vampire with an ease that disarms adversary and ally alike. An attractive Arab-American clothed in sober, contemporary styles, Jim endeavors to strike a balance between the Western influences that pervade Cairo and the traditional dress typical of the eldest among his clan. While his overall bearing suggests a most intense proficiency, his face typically suggests nothing at all — a disquieting skill that he mastered well before becoming one of the undead.

Roleplaying Hints: You are severe when it comes to interacting with the other Cainites of Cairo. Although you have begun to make the most of your time here, you did not enjoy being sent here in the first place. You have come to resent a great many things about the city, such as the fact that the Sabbat are the only ones who will give you the time of night, as well as the fact that this should even bother you. Should someone treat you with respect, however (especially when they would otherwise have no outward reason to), then you are cordial and well-mannered to the point of being effu-

sive. During these times, it is nearly impossible to see the inhuman assassin lying just beneath the surface.

Secrets: Jim suspects that whatever eliminated the Giovanni did so as a direct result of their Necromantic practices. He knows a surprising amount about the elder vampires of Cairo, and he recently survived an accidental encounter with a mummy while reconnoitering the Southern Cemetery. Jim currently hopes to find some pawns of his own to further investigate both the Cities of the Dead and Cairo's various sites of powerful faith, intending to report whatever fate befalls them to his allies in the Giovanni. Although Jim is proud neither of what he has done nor what he is currently forced to do, his word is his honor and his honor his existence. Without it, he is nothing.

Clan: Assamite *antimbu*

Sire: Fairweather Mehmet

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1962

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2,

Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Demolitions 3, Drive 3, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3,

Melee 2, Performance 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Investigation 4, Law 3,

Linguistics 2, Occult 3

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Dominate 1, Obfuscate 2, Quietus 4

Backgrounds: Allies (Giovanni) 3, Contacts (Black

Hand) 1, Resources 2, Sabbat Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 6

BANU AHL AR-RAYA

AL-MUNTAQIM, THE AVENGER

Background: When Amr ibn al-As sent his two best strategists to the fortress of Babylon to negotiate the terms of its surrender, he had no idea that his emissaries would come to make it their home for the next millennium-and-a-half. Al-Muntaqim, the older of the two, was a battle-hardened veteran well before the Arab conquest of Egypt. One of the very first converts to Islam, he distinguished himself fighting

alongside the Prophet against the nonbelievers in Mecca, and he had even personally taken part in the *hejira* — Muhammad's flight into Medina.

When the undead Patron of Babylon met the two negotiators outside the walls of the fortress, he did far more than take them into his confidence — he took them out of time as well. While the two could clearly see the rest of the Arab army in the distance, the encampment itself lay still. All the soldiers stood motionless, some frozen mid-step. Not even their campfires flickered.

Agonistes calmed their nerves with soothing tones and engaged them in discourse pertaining to their convictions and their cause. After what seemed like hours, he nodded as though satisfied and rose, quietly proclaiming that they were to be the heirs of his mission in Egypt. He explained to them of his duty to the inhabitants of Babylon, and, after teaching them much of the world that they were about to inherit, he Embraced them both. The future of Babylon was now in their hands.

After this monumental passing of the torch, the two brood brothers settled into cold unlife. They established Banu Ahl ar-Raya around the fortress of Babylon and attempted to assist one another in their progress along the spiritual path that they had inherited from Agonistes. Although Al-Muntaqim tried to remain true to all his sire's teachings, his cynicism often got the better of him, and he struggled to maintain his shaky place along the path. The plague-like spread of the false Brujah particularly enraged him, and he longed to bring them all to justice.

When word arrived of Agonistes' destruction — presumably at the hands of the whore Troile — Al-



Muntaqim flew into a rage. He entered his first frenzy in centuries, slaking his fury's thirst on a visiting caravan-sary run by usurping Rabble. According to the accounts, the Avenger tore through the sprawl of tents, slaughtering the Cainite merchant's mortal servitors ruthlessly. Upon reaching the vampire himself, the Avenger set fire to the surrounding caravan, trapping the terrified merchant inside with him. Moments later, he burst through the fiery wreckage of the tent with the Brujah's head dangling from his hand. When the fires cooled at last, the Avenger had abandoned his ancestral home. His only message indicated that he was traveling east, out of Africa as his sire had done, presumably to bring Agonistes' true executioner to justice.

Unknown to those he left behind in Cairo, Al-Muntaqim's time in Asia was equally as much a spiritual pilgrimage as it was a quest for justice. During his travels there, he met and learned from many of the mysterious Kindred of the East, including one who claimed to have known his sire. This man, known simply as "Ona-Zhir," seemed to know a great deal about a great many things, including the sickness in the Avenger's unbeating heart.

The stranger counseled Al-Muntaqim on the various paths through which his aims might be fulfilled, and they all began with a drastic change from within. If the Avenger ever expected to achieve his goals, he must cast aside the teachings of his pacifist sire and forever steel his heart to the tasks of necessity. Al-Muntaqim agreed, and he set himself down the path that his new instructor laid before him. When the teacher saw a pupil finally ready to embrace his destiny, he gave Al-Muntaqim a parting gift — a mighty spell to assist the Avenger in his quest for vengeance. This gift, Ona-Zhir promised, would allow the Avenger to draw upon the desultory power of clanless vampires, briefly giving him the strength that he would need to take on Troile... and win.

Upon his return to Cairo, the Avenger confided in the one Cainite whom he knew would assist him in his efforts — the prince himself. Together, they established a "safe haven" for the clanless on the Nile island of Gezira. In reality, the entire residential district of Zarnalek now comprises the border of Ona-Zhir's ritual. On the night of Gehenna, when the Antediluvians return to take their reckoning, all Caitiff inside the area at the time will instantly be subjected to the spell's effects, giving the power of their souls to the Avenger and leaving their bodies and blood to the hunger of the Thirteen.

Image: The Avenger is a man of stern aspect and gloomy stride. His considerable prowess as a warrior is evident in every facet of his appearance, and only the bravest or most congenitally stupid would commit even the slightest insult upon his person. Strangely, those

who afford him genuine respect (beyond their initial fear) are often rewarded with equally genuine esteem.

Roleplaying Hints: Hell is a not a physical realm of fire and pain, nor is it a madness of our own imaginings. You have seen the truth, that hell is centuries upon centuries of undead rage, frustration and impotence — of eternally powerless power — and you curse God for delivering it upon His most obedient servant. Now that you have a means by which all the failures of your long existence might be vindicated, you will meet the Final Death screaming before you see yourself yet again denied.

Secrets: The Avenger's greatest secret pertains to himself and his collusion with the prince. If the city at large were to discover their brutal plan, they both would have much to answer for.

Clan: True Brujah

Sire: Agonistes

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 640

Apparent Age: early 40s

Physical: Strength 7, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 6, Dodge 5,

Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts 3, Etiquette 4, Melee 7, Performance 4, Security 2, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics 4, Area Knowledge (Cairo & Far East) 5, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics 4, Medicine 1, Occult 5, Politics 3

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 6, Obfuscate 3, Potence 7, Presence 4, Protean 3, Serpents 2, Temporis 5

Backgrounds: Arcane 4, Contacts 3, Clan Prestige 4, Resources 4, Retainers (*ghúls*) 2, Status 3

Virtues: Conviction 5, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Morality: Path of the Scorched Heart 8

Willpower: 9

AL-MUNTATHIR, GOD'S WITNESS

Background: For Amr's other emissary to the fortress of Babylon, the Embrace was a curse of a different kind. As a young boy growing up in tribal Arabia, the man who would come to be known as Al-Muntathir had been a rare child indeed. He showed marvelous aptitude for scholarship at an early age, and he had learned to read and write by his third birthday. His mind had always been unusually powerful, but he was "blessed"

upon his Embrace with an extraordinary gift from Allah. From that moment on, Al-Muntathir would remember everything he ever experienced, and he could replay events in his mind as though they had been recorded on film.

This blessing allowed Al-Muntathir to fully take in all that his sire taught him of the sect he had helped to create — the Tal'mahe'Ra — before departing Cairo in 640. Unfortunately, the "gift" had also ingrained in him a terrible responsibility. Through the circumstances of his Embrace, Allah had spoken, and this fact would forever after define the worldly role of Al-Muntathir, God's witness.

Al-Muntathir took his dual role very seriously at first, doing his best to stay true to the teachings and spiritual ideals of both Agonistes and Muhammad, the two men who had shaped the course of his existence. Things progressed smoothly in Banu Ahl ar-Raya until word arrived that Agonistes had been butchered somewhere in the Far East, presumably by the usurper Troile, who had instigated a private pogrom upon all those of the true blood. Upon hearing the news, Al-Muntaqim quietly took his own leave of Cairo, not to return for another five centuries.

With the departure of his brood brother after so long, Al-Muntathir found himself at a loss, suddenly desperate for guidance. With Al-Muntaqim gone, he wanted simply to withdraw, but clan, sect and khitta affairs needed tending to, and there would be nothing left of Banu Ahl ar-Raya if Al-Muntathir did as his brother had done. So he sought out the first of his undying childer, the famed Cairo historian Ibn Khaldun, that he may pass the reins to another for a time in



preparation for a long-deserved sleep. But when he tried to lay himself to rest, Al-Muntathir found that he could not. Allah had refused to allow him to shirk his duties, and thus his curse, by entering torpor voluntarily.

The prospect of additional centuries of existence began to drive Al-Muntathir mad, and the only respite he received came in the form of his allies in the Tal'mahe'Ra. Through them, Al-Muntathir could remain anchored to the outside world as well as connected to fellow archaisms like himself. Although his duties in Cairo prevented him from joining his comrades in their Underworld stronghold of Enoch, he continued to correspond with them regularly. Indeed, Al-Muntathir was the very eyes and ears of the enigmatic sect in Egypt for several centuries.

Since the fall of the Tal'mahe'Ra, however, Al-Muntathir has been sequestered in his modest dwelling at the southern tip of Old Cairo. He has surrounded himself with antiquated relics of glory nights gone by, and his residence has become a veritable museum for the Islamic Age. Aside from the occasional conversation with his persistent childer, Ibn Khaldun, the only companionship Al-Muntathir requires (or will even tolerate) is that of his perennial *ghūl*, Moumtaz, an extremely rare albino Timbavati (African white lion) whom he rescued from poachers in the late 12th century. Since that time, Moumtaz has grown to nearly 12 feet in length and well over 700 pounds. The lion is extremely intelligent, and it has become accustomed over time to carrying out his domitor's every command, as long as it is remotely within his capabilities to do so.

Image: Al-Muntathir was rather pale to begin with, for an Arab. The passing of centuries as one of the undead has only exacerbated this pallid countenance, and he now appears washed out and sickly in anything other than the softest of lighting. The Elois' eyes, the eternal windows to his soul, have lightened over time as well, and they currently appear as an unsettling admixture of dark brown and cornflower blue. When seen, he wears the modest tribal attire of his breathing days, and, on the rare occasions in which he speaks, he does so in a muttering staccato of formalized, classical Arabic.

Roleplaying Hints: For you, the price of undeath was simply too high. You have seen far too much in your time, retaining every unbearable moment with perfect clarity, and your soul is heavy with the weight. You fear that God has finally forsaken you, His eternal and faithful witness, and your repetitious prayers now whisper only of your ultimate desire for conclusion.

Secrets: The return of Al-Muntathir's brood-brother fills him with sensations long forgotten to him. Although he is genuinely glad to see that his long-lost

blood-sibling did not perish in Enoch as he had once believed, there is more to it: He also suspects (and prays) that the Avenger will provide him with the culmination he so desperately needs, and the prospect fills him with a heady anticipation. All that he needs to do now is that which he has always done best... wait.

Clan: True Brujah

Sire: Agonistes

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Loner

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 640

Apparent Age: early 40s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3,

Empathy 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Crafts 4, Etiquette 4, Melee 2, Performance 4,

Stealth 3, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics (humanities) 5, Area Knowl-

edge 4, Enigmas 3, Investigation 3, Law 2, Linguistics 4,

Medicine 3, Occult 4, Politics 3

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 5, Dominate 2,

Fortitude 5, Obfuscate 4, Presence 4, Potence 2, Pro-

tean 3, Quietus 2, Temporis 7

Backgrounds: Arcane 5, Contacts 3, Elder Status 5,

Resources 3, Retainers (Moumtaz) 1

Virtues: Conviction 2, Self-Control 5, Courage 2

Morality: Path of Self-Focus 4

Willpower: 4

IBN KHALDUN, SCHOLAR AND STATESMAN

Background: The life of Ibn Khaldun was long and distinguished, perhaps more so than the life of many who are ultimately chosen for the Embrace. He was born in Tunis to a family that had served in high administrative positions throughout North Africa for many generations. For 25 years, Ibn Khaldun held various governmental posts before retiring to Algeria to pen the *Muqaddimah*, an outline of his philosophy on history and the rise and fall of political dynasties.

Ibn Khaldun moved back to Cairo after the publication of his book to live out the rest of his days in the most glorious city of Islam, where he became a renowned educator, philosopher and diplomat. He was even the one chosen to negotiate terms with Tamerlane after the Mongols stormed into Syria at the end of the 14th century. Indeed, Ibn Khaldun became the greatest

social scientist since Aristotle, and the world would see no equal until the birth of Niccolò Machiavelli.

It was Ibn Khaldun who first established history itself as a hard science, and he has subsequently been widely credited with being the father of sociology. His work adopted a comprehensive approach to history in both functionalism and conflict perspective, as outlined in his greatest work, the *Kitab al-Ibar*, a definitive history of Muslim North Africa. Toward the end of his life, Ibn Khaldun concentrated his efforts on the maintenance of the fundamental civil structure of Islam, and he was the Grand Maliki Qadi of Cairo many times. For one to receive a written *fatwa* from Qadi Ibn Khaldun on an issue was considered a great honor, and Cairene men's fortunes were often made or broken on whatever opinion the brilliant judge expressed therein.

Although Ibn Khaldun "died" an elderly man in 1406, and was even given a grand funeral by the Cairenes who adored him, he was secretly Embraced into Banu Ahl ar-Raya by one of the very Arab warriors about whom he had written so judiciously. Al-Muntathir had approached his would-be child much as he himself had been approached by Agonistes, offering the elderly Islamic scholar the chance at deathlessness — the opportunity to watch first-hand as societies moved forward through time, while always serving the greater good of humanity as a whole. Aware of the opportunity that he was being given, Ibn Khaldun graciously accepted, and there by the grace of God went he.

Although Ibn Khaldun initially believed that he was being brought into the fold to continue the good work while his sire sank into torpor, he soon came to



CARD BY NIGHT

realize that his own Embrace was a cry for help. The departure of the Avenger was hard on his sire, and much of what Ibn Khaldun did in the early years after his Embrace was damage control for his sire's fragile mind. Indeed, Al-Muntathir's continued effectiveness as an agent for the Tal'mahe'Ra was due in large part to the ministrations of his devoted child. Ibn Khaldun recognizes that during his Embrace his sire put more than his blood into him: He also placed in Ibn Khaldun what little remained of his hope.

Since the destruction of Enoch, however, Ibn Khaldun has become both uneasy and unsure. His sire has withdrawn more than ever before, even refusing correspondence from the remaining members of the Tal'mahe'Ra. The downfall of their parent sect may well prove the downfall of his sire as well, and Ibn Khaldun is beginning to realize that it is time itself (ironically) that he truly races against in order to prevent this from occurring.

Aside from being a literal expert on the City Triumphant, Ibn Khaldun knows much about the shadow history of the Kindred, particularly as it pertains to the rise and fall of the Tal'mahe'Ra. In an attempt to make some use of the knowledge he has gleaned in this regard, Ibn Khaldun has recently completed yet another work of philosophical history — a vampiric successor to the *Kitab al-Ibn*, centered around his beloved city of Cairo. It is his hope that young Egyptian Cainites can rise above their petty differences in the coming nights by educating themselves about the history of their shared homeland. Ibn Khaldun fervently believes, as he always has, that reason and community may forever outshine ignorance and disunity, as long as they are goals to be set and deliberately achieved.

Image: Time has had an extremely unusual effect on Ibn Khaldun. Although he was Embraced as an old man, he appears to have been getting younger over the last six centuries. To those who knew him when, Ibn Khaldun easily cuts the figure of a man 20 years his own junior, and he appears to have more energy than many neonates and almost every other Cairene elder.

Roleplaying Hints: You were a wise father to the citizens of Cairo well before you ever knew that the undead were anything more than a bedtime story intended to frighten unruly children. As a councilor, you are accustomed to a certain degree of respect — even from neonates — and you take great pride in representing the oldest of Cairo's tribal domains. The only Cainites to whom you are indifferent are the rabble-rousing pretenders that pass through your city from time to time. Although you are not as extreme as some True Brujah in this regard, you bear no love for the ignorant

get of Troile, and you typically "encourage" any who visit Cairo to keep moving on.

Secrets: Ibn Khaldun is no fool. He fully believes in learning from the past, and he is now attempting to trace the activities of his recently returned "uncle," Al-Muntaqim. He found the Avenger's timing a bit coincidental under the circumstances, and, as every member of his bloodline knows all too well, there are no coincidences among the undead.

Clan: True Brujah

Sire: Al-Muntathir

Nature: Mediator

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1406

Apparent Age: late 50s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 5, Expression 4, Leadership 4, Intimidation 5, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Melee 1, Performance 2, Security 5, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics (sociology) 5, Area Knowledge 5, Bureaucracy 4, Investigation 5, Law 6, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics 5

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 4, Potence 5, Presence 6, Temporis 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Clan Prestige 1, Contacts 4, Influence 3, Resources 4, Status 5

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 5, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 8

Willpower: 6

PETRA, MATRON OF ABU SERGA

Background: A Cairo native, Petra was born during the twilight of Turkish rule at the close of the 18th century. After Napoleon arrived in Egypt, a vicious backlash against the Christians ensued. The French were making a mockery of Islamic culture and religion, and the frustrated citizenry lashed out in response. Petra, a Coptic Christian living in Old Cairo, was stoned and left for dead one night by a religious mob outside the walls of the old fortress of Babylon. But as she lay dying, Shagaret al-Durr Embraced her, and in so doing, indebted Petra to her for all eternity.

Initially, Shagaret attempted to use her nearly martyred child against those who opposed the cause of the Alnilam, the poster girl for the suffrage movement, as it were.



Whenever Petra faltered, her sire would remind her of that night when she was spared a gruesome death at the hands of Muslims who would murder her simply for her religious beliefs. Such manipulations worked for a time, and Petra became the leading voice in the fight to end Christian disenfranchisement in Cairo.

That all ended when Petra met Shahid. As one of the Hajj, Shahid had been a prominent figure on the other side of the conflict, and it was in this capacity that the two first began their relationship. Remarkably, Petra soon found Shahid to be neither parochial nor closed-minded in his personal beliefs, listening attentively to every word she had to say. The two found that they were in agreement on many issues, and they soon began meeting regularly to discuss their plan to repair the jagged rift that was undeniably crippling the Hajj. Beyond that, however, both of them knew in their hearts that they were falling in love.

For her part, Petra is torn between her loyalty to her sire and her love for Shahid. She believes in Shagarat's cause, but she questions both her sire's methods and motives. In addition, she senses in her sire a deep and profound despair that will, one night, prove her undoing. Petra wishes that she could connect with her sire spiritually, and she is saddened by the fact that religion is merely a political platform to the Tree of Pearls. Nonetheless, she continues to pray for all Nosferatu, in the hope that they will come together as she and her true love have.

Recently, Petra has focused her attentions on the young Caitiff girl whom she discovered outside her church late one night. The neonate seemed not only lost and somewhat shaken up, but miraculously preg-

nant as well! In addition, she didn't seem the slightest bit affected by Petra's considerable faith (only Shahid can claim the same, and even he feels its power when he gets close enough). Petra sees this series of events as a sign from God, and she has pledged herself to the protection of the extraordinary young girl and her unborn child. For now, both remain sequestered within Abu Serga, patiently awaiting the time when the girl must finally give birth.

Image: Petra's form is unique, even for a Nosferatu. Upon her Embrace, Petra's clan deformity manifested itself as what appeared to be divine stigmata. When not concealed under *Obfuscate*, thin rivulets of blood seem to run freely from Petra's eyes and her clothes are often drenched with the copious evidence of her supernatural nature. Her pallid skin, where uncovered, appears as a topographic map of raised blisters and painful-looking boils.

Roleplaying Hints: Most of the time, you are the kindly and beneficent suppliant, a true child of God and watchful mother to all those under your care. Even so, you are still one of the Damned Childer of Caine, and your patience when dealing with those of your own kind seems to be wearing thin. You have grown extremely territorial of "your" church and its surroundings, and the arrival of the Herald has only aggravated this temperament.

Secrets: Petra has become aware that others in Cairo are looking for the Caitiff girl, though she is unsure as to what they could want with her. She is considering telling Shahid of the situation in the hopes that he may be able to provide some answers.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: The Tree of Pearls

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Martyr

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1800

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 5, Expression 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Etiquette 3, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Area Knowledge 3, Investigation 4, Linguistics 3, Medicine 4, Occult 3

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 2, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 5, Potence 2

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Influence 3, Retainers 2

Virtues: Conscience 5, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 9

Willpower: 8

True Faith: 3

BANUAL AS-SA'IDI

IZZAT AL-KHUNZIR, IBN AL-BALAD

Background: The councilor of the Setite-held khitta in Cairo is not only a ruthlessly calculating killer and diablerist, but some call him a traitor to his own clan as well. Nonetheless, he is one of the only Setites in the world who yet strives to cling to his beautifully frayed *humanitas*. And this — the most heinous of his many

sins in the eyes of his clanmates — may ultimately prove his undoing.

In life, Izzat was a successful merchant who bartered in everything from cloth to rare spices. He grew up surrounded by the splendor that was medieval Cairo, and he was in love with his own homeland. Indeed, for Izzat there was no greater place in all the world, and his became a face of some renown among those who used the city streets to sell their various wares. It was in this capacity that he first attracted the attention of Bilaal, the Setite entrepreneur who ran several respectable (and many other not-so-respectable) business ventures across the city.

Unfortunately, Bilaal saw only Izzat's contacts and business acumen, never realizing the reason for both: that Izzat truly loved Cairo's pulsing throngs of children, and gladly included himself among their number. But he was Embraced nonetheless and shown the Epicurean ways of the Dream Court. And, although Izzat

AFIFA, THE HERALD

15th-generation Caitiff, sire unknown

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Survivor

Embrace: 2000

Apparent Age: early 20s

Afifa lived a strange enough life before the Embrace; now it is positively bizarre. Afifa's father, the son of post-war missionary, had moved with her to Cairo in the early 1980s to start a new life. Afifa never knew her mother, and her father rarely spoke of her, saying only that she had "moved on" shortly after Afifa was born. Nonetheless, he did his best to provide for them both under difficult circumstances, and Afifa grew up both proud and strong.

After her father died suddenly, Afifa was left to make her own way in Cairo. With few other options, she soon fell in with the wrong crowd, eventually becoming the property of an unknown Cairene Kindred. One minute she was gazing into a stranger's eyes at a private party; the next thing she knew, she was strapped to the back of a camel and heading westward in a daze. She remembers falling asleep to the sounds of the desert, and when she awoke, a beautiful young Egyptian girl was determinedly digging her free of sand. The girl introduced herself as Nazirah, one of the Disciples of Anubis... and one of the undead. When she realized that she, too, was a Kindred she nearly fainted. When she realized that she was a pregnant vampire, she nearly died again.

Although Afifa was grateful to Nazirah and the other Disciples, she was too overwhelmed by her situation to react with any real prudence. She panicked and fled the Disciples' temple in the early hours of the morning (sunlight doesn't seem to hurt her as badly as it does the others), making her way across the Nile and into the city at Old Cairo. She was soon discovered by the Coptic Nosferatu, Petra, who brought Afifa inside the church of Abu Serga, where the desperate neonate and her unborn child could be relatively safe from harm. Although she is still very confused by her condition, Afifa has decided to see her mysterious pregnancy to term, and she will remain in Abu Serga until she is ready to deliver.

The Herald appears as a beautiful young woman of ambiguous ethnicity with long, thick hair the color of sunlit bronze. Many would suspect that she treats it with henna, a powdered shrub used by Middle Eastern women to dye both hair and skin, but it is not. Her hair — much like her beauty — is entirely her own, and she is all the more radiant for it. Additionally, Afifa is infused with the natural glow so often attributed to pregnant women, making her vampirism all but nonexistent to the naked eye. Although none have seen it, Afifa also bears a crescent-shaped mark at the base of her neck that appeared soon after the young Kindred discovered that she was pregnant.

quickly took to the networking and social manipulation inherent in his clan, much of the Dream Court's ritualism and ideology was alien to him.

His sire, having witnessed Izzat's voracious mortal appetites, had assumed that his new childer would adapt well to the Setite philosophy of ecstatic abasement. Instead, something in Izzat rebelled against his sire's teachings. The Dream Court's spiritual path, he came to realize, denied that which was inherent in him as an Egyptian — the deep-seated sense of community, responsibility and true belonging. Although he understood and accepted his newfound existence as one of the Damned, he could not bring himself to revel in it. Izzat had indeed been Damned by the Embrace, not freed, as his sire would have had him believe.

Although Izzat first tried to accept his role at Bilaal's side, the passage of time began to wear on his nationalist sensibilities. Everywhere he turned, his own sire was using and abusing the citizens of Cairo. Bilaal even had a lucrative slave trade going, long after the Mamelukes had officially done away with slavery in its traditional sense. Finally, some time around the middle of the 14th century, Izzat petitioned the Sleeping Lord for the right to take Bilaal's place at its side. The Temple Head agreed, allowing that if Izzat could accomplish this daunting task, then he deserved that which he sought — as long as it was what Izzat truly desired. After some insidious planning, Izzat executed both his scheme and his sire, hungrily devouring Bilaal's very essence in a torrent of pent-up frustration and rage.

Izzat led a double unlife in the centuries that followed. In the underworld of the Dream Court, he was a

loyal and seemingly fervent follower of the path, partaking in all the important rituals and eagerly Embracing new childer. On the streets above, he served the interests of his beloved country diligently, cultivating strong relationships with other like-minded Kindred and kine. He even assisted a Lupine known as Shukri Lightning-on-the-Dunes during World War II, when Rommel's Afrika Korps was bearing down on his beloved city from the north.

After helping to bar the door to Egypt against the Nazis, Izzat finally turned his attentions to the British, of whom he had long since tired. He called on his Egyptian ally one last time during the events of Black Saturday, when he contrived events so that the Lupine's pack dispatched a number of troublesome Kindred who were threatening to disarm the Free Officers' movement — Kindred who wished Egypt to remain firmly under British control.

Izzat then used the country's growing nationalism to subtly guide the Embracing practices of the Setites under his sway. While Izzat himself had always endeavored to Embrace Cairenes, many within the Dream Court sought to expand clan interests by doing just the opposite. Thanks to Izzat's recent efforts, however, nearly all of the Setites Embraced in Cairo since the country gained its independence have been native Egyptians. While many have noticed this trend, few have dared question the councilor's policies. With the relative weakness of his "competitor" Kahina (up until recently), none have opposed his word. After the Temple Head, Izzat is the most powerful and respected Setite in Cairo.

It was those of Izzat's line who drove the honorless get of Horus the Betrayer from its windswept sands, and it was Izzat himself who has fought for centuries to save his beloved homeland from invaders of every creed and currency.

Image: Izzat, much like his sire Bilaal, is enormous. In life he was well fed, partaking of all the splendid bounties that daily poured into medieval Cairo, and he seems to have carried the considerable evidence of his appetites into undeath. While others become lithe after their transition to undeath, Izzat seems to have somehow grown with age, and he is now a veritable mountain of a man. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Izzat was Embraced not only beardless but bald, and this detail only furthers the stark contrast of his overall countenance.

Roleplaying Hints: Your sire died because he had no honor, and you would see half your clan fall likewise if you had your way. The lost childer of Set have been led astray somewhere along the line, and it saddens you more than words can describe. For now, you play the role of councilor and father to the city's younger Setites, educating them to both fear and respect you. When the



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time comes, their support might be all that stands in the way between you and destruction.

Secrets: Izzat's code of beliefs is his greatest and most personal secret. Were his clanmates to discover that his loyalties lie to his homeland above and beyond his Blood, they would likely remove all continuing claims he may have to that precious vitae. For now, he still runs his line's affairs, maintaining close ties with both the other councilors and the city's prominent conservatives, Fatimah al-Lam'a, Nazrudin the Wise and the prince. He has recently begun to suspect another's hand behind the curious methods in the Malkavian elder's madness, while seeing a kindred spirit (or at least useful tool) in Nazrudin's nationalist clanmate, Assad.

Clan: Followers of Set

Sire: Bilaal the Guide

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1293

Apparent Age: late 40s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 6, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Empathy 5, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 7

Skills: Crafts 4, Etiquette 4, Firearms 3, Melee 1, Performance 4, Security 4, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 4, Area Knowledge 5, Bureaucracy 3, Camarilla Lore 4, History 5, Investigation 4, Law 5, Linguistics 4, Occult 3, Politics 6, Setite Lore 5

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 4, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 7, Potence 3, Presence 5, Serpents 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Clan Prestige 3, Contacts 3, Influence 4, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 5, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 7

Merits/Flaws: Huge Size

DAVID MOORELAND, SOLICITOR

Background: An American lawyer educated in England, David Mooreland was Embraced during World War II by Izzat al-Khunzir, who had grown desperate for any influence over international (especially British) affairs. He publicly admired the solicitor's limitless ambition as well as nearly limitless resources, while secretly intending to use him as a foil against those who



supported the continued presence of the British in Cairo. After fulfilling his initial usefulness in this capacity, Mooreland slowly became the ever-present thorn in his sire's side.

After learning of his sire's heritage, and of the Temple Head's practice of allowing a member of its court to commit ritual diablerie if that member surpassed his sire's feats with his own, Mooreland began to look for ways to make his lasting mark upon Cairo. Toward this end, he soon came across old records that indicated that the Setites did indeed once have a legitimately recognized domain under Sultan Antonius, in the area around Al-Fustat. But when the area was abandoned and subsequently burned to the ground, many just assumed that the khitta itself dissolved with it. Mooreland, ever the diligent attorney, recognized the difference between theory and practice, and brought the matter before the Consultative Council.

With the facts staring him in the face, the prince had no choice but to acquiesce. The Setites did indeed have a right to a recognized domain of their own in Cairo. However, the only territory that they had a claim to was the territory that they *used* to have a claim to — the area around Al-Fustat. Nevertheless, a small domain was better than no domain, and, for the first time in centuries, the Setites had a recognized khitta in the City Triumphant.

Unfortunately for the Setites, the area was still a largely uninhabited piece of arid dirt and trash, and the other Kindred snickered at the prince's cleverness in beating the attorney at his own game. Determined not to allow the prince to make a joke of his efforts, Mooreland worked diligently to repopulate the area

with artisans and craftsmen, slowly transforming the area into a domain worth having again.

Mooreland expected his reward to be, at the very least, a seat on the Consultative Council. After all, if it weren't for him there'd be no Setite seat to occupy. However, when he stepped forward to make his claim, both the prince and the other elders casually rebuked him. All things considered, they preferred his sire to represent the new Setite domain, thank you very much.

Mooreland was appalled. Before he arrived, the Setites had no legitimate standing in Cairo. Before he exerted his influence, there was no life in an area that used to be the ancestral feeding grounds of the Followers of Set. Yet, none of this made a difference to the stubborn and insular elders of Cairo, and he despised them for it.

Although he was respected for his efforts in assisting his fellow clanmates, he did not accrue the wealth of influence and respect among Cairo's Kindred that he felt he so richly deserved. Fed up, he retreated to more comfortable surroundings — the fast-paced world of the kine — where he continued to prosper as he ever had.

Underneath his humbled exterior, however, the undead attorney raged. He had been not only thwarted but slighted as well, and he desired terrible revenge on those responsible. In his dealings, he came across a group of Kindred calling themselves Allah Walid who were devoted to the overthrow of the prince (yet, in retrospect, he feels that the group may have come to him). He has funded their efforts in the time since, and, while he unsure as to the group's numbers or leadership, he is a firm believer in its goal. Nothing would please him more than to see the mighty Caitiff prince brought down from on high.

Image: Mooreland dresses in the finest suits, expertly tailored to display the best that his dead body may have to offer. His features are round and squinting, with beady eyes, a bulbous nose and dark, curly hair. David's sly ability to turn an English accent on and off at will has come in handy on numerous occasions, and he still uses it whenever it is to his advantage to do so.

Roleplaying Hints: You exude a practiced air of quiet confidence and propriety that makes people trust you enough to willingly put themselves in your hands. Your law professor once told you, "Do whatever it takes to close the deal." And, although this applies to salesmanship more easily than to the practice of law, how different are the two, really?

Secrets: In addition to his secret membership in the cult known as Allah Walid, Mooreland has gotten wind of the existence of the Herald, and he has put

every resource at his disposal toward finding her. Should he be the one to procure her for the Sleeping Lord, he is certain that it will earn him the right to diablerize his sire, leaving himself as the Temple Head's right hand.

Clan: Followers of Set

Sire: Izzat al-Khuzir

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Conniver

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1941

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Leadership 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Melee 1, Performance 4, Security 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Bureaucracy 4, Camarilla Lore 2, Finance 4, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Politics 3, Sabbat Lore 2, Setite Lore 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Dominate 1, Obfuscate 2, Presence 2, Serpents 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Influence 4, Resources 4, Retainers 2, Status 1

Virtues: Conviction 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Path of Typhon 6

Willpower: 5

KAHINA THE SORCERESS

Background: Although it is unknown when she was Embraced, the Sorceress first appeared in Cairo in 542, following one of the city's first and most terrible periods of plague. She was one of two Setite elders in charge of the new Dream Court, which had recently moved into the area around Al-Fustat. Whereas her counterpart, Bilaal, became the outward face of the clan, it was she who was responsible for the night-to-night maintenance of the Dream Court itself — and the continued care of the sleeping Eternal of Sothis at the heart of its temple.

It was Kahina who first discovered that the faith of the city's inhabitants as a whole, as well as its fundamental belief in reality, were counterpoints to the wellness of the sleeping Eternal. During periods of the city's history when faith was at a high point, the Plague Lord would suffer more, his form gaining much less strength to resist its curse while in torpor. Mortal faith in any god other than Set was doubly detrimental to the Setites of the Dream Court. Since then, Kahina and those under

her sway have slowly but surely eroded the faith of the city's inhabitants by any and every means at their disposal, magical or otherwise.

Although she is an elder herself, Kahina was out of favor for centuries with many Setites at the Dream Court, since she had failed to find ways of effectively combating the crippling effects of Hatshepsut's rite (see Chapter Five). Although she never solved the problem *per se*, Kahina did make some creative strides in the process. She contrived to circumvent Hatshepsut's rite by working her Setite magic through a non-Setite Thaumaturge. The acting Tremere regent and her new path are the result of these efforts. Before the rite's destruction in 1999, Kahina used the Tremere to invoke her sorcery for her, thus sidestepping the letter of Hatshepsut's law.

Although she suffered politically at the hands of her rivals at court, she did not despair, for it was to her and only her that the Sleeping Lord communicated its specific thoughts and desires, and Kahina wore this fact like a crown. When a terrible plague called "Jackal Fever" swept through Cairo in late 1999, the Sorceress knew that the Eternal would soon stir from its silent slumber. And although it did not awaken immediately, the Eternal called out to Kahina in her mind, bidding that she acquire for it a certain neonate — a red-haired, thin-blooded, *pregnant* neonate. This Caitiff girl, who has since been referred to as the Herald, was to become her top priority. The Lord of the Dream Court, the Voice of Set himself, had spoken.

Since then, the Sorceress has focused the majority of her efforts on the acquisition of the Herald, even to the extent of sharing information with her long-time rival,



Councilor Izzat al-Khunzir. She believes that with the combined efforts of the temple's two most powerful elders, the Sleeping Lord can naught but acquire the Caitiff girl in due course. Although Kahina is unsure as to why the Eternal requires the Herald so quickly, she has come to suspect that something has gone wrong with its sleep cycle, as it has still not yet risen from torpor.

Image: Unknown to most, Kahina's true form is hideous beyond belief. Her own body, more repugnant than that of the most hideous Nosferatu, is at once desiccated and pestilential. Thanks to her powers of concealment, however, all other Kindred of Cairo see only the demure Egyptian maid she resembled in the time before her Embrace. Her city-wide deception would be complete were it not for the Damascene demon-hunter, Muhandis, whose acute perceptions pierced the veil of her Obfuscate centuries ago. The mad Toreador believes her putrescent visage to be part of the high cost she has paid for centuries of trafficking with the forces of darkness.

Roleplaying Hints: You are far too old, and your business far too pressing, for you to concern yourself with such trivial matters as politesse, tact or even civility. You act as you are and you say what you mean, and doing so usually gets you what you want from others. You are more than happy to leave the social politicking to the councilor.

Secrets: Being the High Priestess of the Dream Court, second only to the slumbering Temple Head, and a true *perfecti* along the Path of Typhon, Kahina is deeply involved in the affairs of the city's various Kindred. Although Councilor Izzat al-Khunzir is the political face of the clan in Cairo, Kahina is the whisperer in the Kindred's ears, and she has often been the agent of their moral degradation. In addition to her slow and steady hold over the Tremere (through their acting regent), she has recently cultivated an alliance with the True Brujah, Al-Muntaqim, and she is currently attempting to persuade him to tend to the Muhandis problem.

Clan: Followers of Set

Sire: Unknown

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Rogue

Generation: 6th

Embrace: Unknown

Apparent Age: late 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 6, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Crafts 3, Etiquette 4, Melee 2, Performance 3, Stealth 5, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 2, Area Knowledge 5, Investigation 4, Law 1, Linguistics 4, Medicine 1, Occult 6, Politics 3

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 5, Dominate 4, Fortitude 3, Necromancy 4, Obfuscate 5, Serpentis 5, Setite Sorcery 6

Necromantic Paths: Sepulchre Path 4, Ash Path 3

Sorcerous Paths: Path of the Dry Nile 5, The Snake Inside 4, Path of Ptah (Conjuring) 3, Path of Duat 2, The False Heart (Corruption) 2

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 2, Resources 3, Retainers (*thralls*) 4

Virtues: Conviction 5, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Morality: Path of Typhon 7

Willpower: 7

Note: Akhu sorcery is covered in the book, *Blood Sacrifice*. Storytellers who don't wish to use this resource should remove Kabina's Path of Duat Trait.

SHIRKOL, ENVOY FROM ASWAN

Background: A recent arrival to Cairo, this Egyptian Setite is a representative from the Court of Steel and Sky, the Temple of Set in Aswan. He has come to Cairo to check on the status of the Sleeping Lord, who is the focus of his superiors' goals for the city. According to the timetable he was given, the Maiden of Plagues should have reawakened by now, under control of one of the Setite sorcerers of the Court of Dust and Bone. Since such has clearly not occurred yet, Shirkol has been sent to investigate and report back as to the status of the Sleeping Lord.

Just in case things haven't worked out as planned, he has a cover story for his presence in Cairo. The Aswan Court finally wishes to "make peace" with their Cairene cousins to the north, and he is to be the agent of those negotiations. Shirkol was chosen for not only his fanatical devotion to his path, but for a peculiar aptitude at resisting emotional sway of a supernatural kind. As most Setites excel in this latter arena, he comes well-armed to deal with those of his own clan, should they attempt to "show him the light."

Unfortunately for Shirkol and his superiors, all did not go according to plan. While the spell did succeed, imprisoning the Methuselah's essence with a specially prepared vessel, the sorcerers themselves vanished before any further action could be taken. Shirkol knows the truth behind his presence in Cairo, but he is legiti-

mately unaware of the status of the Court of Dust and Bone, and he would be surprised to learn of its fate.

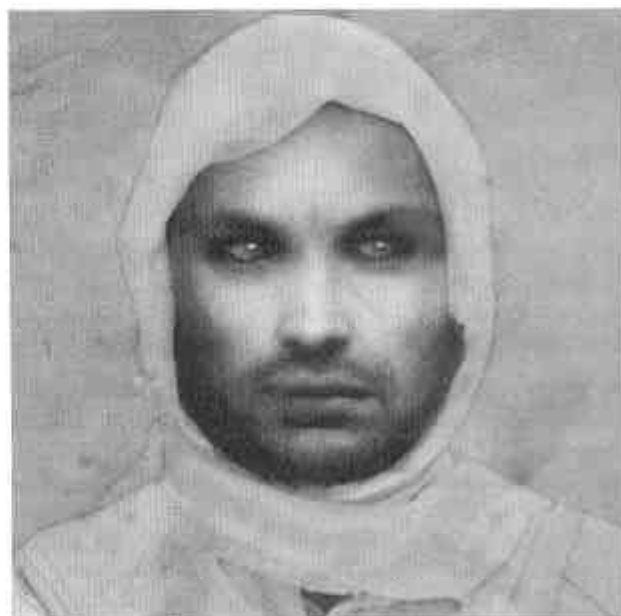
In the meantime, he has begun to test the political waters, making gentle forays into the complicated realm of Cairene Kindred interaction. He has met with a few of the city's elders, as well as with the majority of those politically active among the Setites. Although they have not yet actually taken him below into the tunnels of the Dream Court itself, he is confident that such a visit is forthcoming.

Image: Shirkol is a swarthy, dark-skinned Egyptian with extremely short, black hair. A thin moustache rests beneath his nose, and his eyes seem to focus forward, even during conversation, as though intentionally concentrating on nothing in particular. From the way that Shirkol walks and talks, many believe at first that he is blind.

Roleplaying Hints: You would do just about anything for the greater glory of Set, and you seethe at the thought of your idle cousins in the Dream Court being gifted with knowledge of his whereabouts, while you, his most obedient servant, remain eternally in the dark. One way or another, these ignorant hedonists *will* provide the answers you came for, or you will show them the true meaning of darkness.

Secrets: Shirkol knows about the conspiracy to usurp control over the Sleeping Lord, and he protects this secret with his unlife. He was sent to determine whether or not the spell succeeded, and he fully intends to remain in Cairo until the Eternal awakens. For the time being, however, he is the honored guest of David Mooreland, who has long desired open political (and, yes, financial) relations with the Setites of Aswan.

Clan: Followers of Set



Sire: Farid Borundi
Nature: Judge
Demeanor: Fanatic
Generation: 9th
Embrace: 1939
Apparent Age: early 30s
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Empathy 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3
Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Melee 2, Performance 4, Stealth 4, Survival 2
Knowledges: Academics 3, Area Knowledge (Cairo) 2, Area Knowledge (Aswan) 4, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Politics 3, Setite Lore 4
Disciplines: Animalism 1, Obfuscate 3, Presence 2, Serpents 3
Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Resources 3, Retainers (blood-bound childer) 2
Virtues: Conviction 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 4
Morality: Path of Sutekh 4
Willpower: 5

BANU ZAMALEK

WAULKEEN OF ZAMALEK

Background: Waulkeen was discovered as an infant by an agricultural surveyor who was taking measurements for the *khedive* on the Nile island of Gezira. He had apparently been abandoned some days before, and no one could figure out who his parents were or why he had been taken to the island in the first place. Rather than turn him over to some ill-run social services organization, the surveyor decided to keep the baby boy as his own. He named the boy Waulkeen, meaning "jack of all trades," as good omen of things to come.

When Khedive Ismail's palace on Gezira was finished, Waulkeen's father was one of many workers and artisans invited to take up residence on the island. Although the community was small, its residents were well provided for, and they lived more comfortably than most mainland Cairenes. Waulkeen himself grew up, received an education and fell in love, all in the very spot around which he would stake his vampiric claim over a century later.

Waulkeen was Embraced during Florence Nightingale's visit to Egypt in 1849. An unknown vampire, conceivably part of the royal entourage (he never knew), was smitten with the talented boy and took him violently one night out on the island. Waulkeen

remembers little about the Embrace itself, as the events afterward demand much more attention. Waulkeen "awoke" from his Embrace night to the realization that he was blind.

Upon learning of his newfound conditions, Waulkeen undertook an intensive study of all things vampiric. He collected numerous works of Cainite fact and fiction, and had his love, Najat — who begged to join Waulkeen in the Embrace some years later — read them to him. They explored this newfound condition together, and the impact that Waulkeen's lack of lineage would have on his existence in Cairo. His library is now among the finest and most complete of the Middle-Eastern Noddists, and he was the first Cainite to translate vampiric texts into Braille.

At first, Waulkeen was delighted to hear that the vampiric prince of his home was clanless like himself. But the more he learned, the more he came to realize that Mukhtar Bey's claim to domain was an omen that portended terrible things to come. Numerous occult references bespoke of a terrible convergence on the domain governed by a Caitiff — "woe to the city ruled by a bastard prince!" — when the Final Nights arrived. Passages of the *Book of Nod* specifically referred to the rise of a Caitiff prince as being a sign of the end. No matter how much Waulkeen wanted to deny it, the truth became evident: Cairo was both a generator and a magnet for the coming apocalypse, and nothing would be left of the city when it was all over.

Desperate to save his city and his kind, Waulkeen dedicated himself to rally support for his kind. His plan was to make himself enough of a power in Cairo to save the Caitiff from the appetites of the Antediluvians while ensuring that he was the strongest of his kind in the city. (Thus would he ensure that no other Caitiff



would suddenly have pretensions to godhood.) Then, he planned to depose Prince Mukhtar Bey. Waulkeen figures that as long as Cairo is the domain of a non-Caitiff, the city might be just as safe as any other when Gehenna arrives... for whatever worth that is.

To assist in this effort, Waulkeen formed a secret society dedicated to the removal of the prince by any means necessary. He called this society Allah Walid—"God wills it." He keeps his identity as the nexus and brainchild of the cult his most precious secret, using the remainder of its membership to accomplish his own goals. He knows that one of the cult's members, the Tree of Pearls, has designs on the domain, and, for lack of a better option, he is currently planning to use her to undo the prince. If she succeeds, so much the better. If not, there are others. One way or another, Cairo must be saved, and, to do that, Mukhtar Bey must be removed from power.

Image: Waulkeen is fair-skinned teenage boy of medium height and slight build. He stands out from other Cairenes, but he seems equally at home in any crowd. His hazy ethnic background becomes irrelevant to any observer viewing his eyes, as they are infinitely more interesting. Although his blindness was theoretically a mystical function of his Embrace, Waulkeen's actual eyes were somehow affected as well, and they commonly appear as orbs of solid black suspended in the hollows of his eye sockets.

Roleplaying Hints: What you must do for Cairo saddens you, but you see no other way. All the signs point to the same inevitable conclusion, and it is this terrible eventuality against which you struggle. No price is too high when the alternative is willingly inviting the hunger of the Antediluvians to your very door.

Secrets: Waulkeen knows a great many secrets, most of which pertain to issues grander in scope than the events surrounding the City Triumphant. The more Waulkeen learns, the more he fears the coming Final Nights, and the bolder he grows in his ultimate drive to prevent the nightmare that will be Gehenna, especially for those of his kind.

Clan: Caitiff

Sire: Unknown

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Architect

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1849

Apparent Age: mid-teens

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 1, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Empathy 3, Expression 3, Leadership 5, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 5, Melee 1, Performance 4, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 3, Area Knowledge 4, Bureaucracy 3, Investigation 3, Law 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 3, Politics 4

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 2, Celerity 3, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 2, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Influence 3, Resources 2, Retainers (Caitiff) 3, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 6

ADRI THE SEEKER

Background: Born in India in 1959, Adri's otherwise normal life came to an end in 1980 when he witnessed a terrible battle between seven... things. He was crossing a field to get home one night, and the grass, which was bone dry, as the area was suffering from a severe drought, crackled under his feet. He saw them clearly, however, and, to this night, he still wishes that he hadn't. He could not consider any of them human in good conscience, but he watched, fascinated, as several of them changed into horrible, misshapen demons. The others, in turn, summoned down fire from the sky and beasts from the land. Huddled behind a pile of debris, Adri realized that he was witness to a fight between monsters, and that he may well furnish a meal for the survivors.

Thinking quickly, Adri set fire to the dry grass. The human-looking things backed away and called darkness down around their unfortunate foes, who did not see the fire until it all but enveloped them.

Adri was right about one thing — he did indeed provide nourishment for the victors. What he had not counted on, though, was joining them. The youngest of the Raynos Embraced him, and for just over a decade, Adri slowly came to grips with the rigors of unlife and the ongoing struggles with the Kuei-jin. Just as Adri was beginning to feel at home with his newfound state of existence, everything fell apart.

By the grace of whatever gods might have cared, Adri was away from his fellow Raynos when the Week of Nightmare descended upon the clan. He entered frenzy, as did most of the others, but his frenzy was markedly different. Rather than a mindless, cannibalistic rage, Adri found himself subject to intense hallucinations and visions. Some of them were of the battle taking place only scant miles from him, as crane, tiger and dragon battled something so inhuman that it appeared only as a void in the young vampire's fevered dreams. Some of them, however, were of a city infested with rats, and inhabited by shambling hordes of mindless, sickened people whose forms were covered with scores of weeping sores.

When the vision ended, Adri felt an irresistible pull toward the dark continent of Africa. As he traveled, the visions would return occasionally, guiding him. When a vision faded, Adri always found himself miles further from the last place he remembered, his thirst fully sated. Adri has finally arrived in Cairo just recently, and has not had a vision since. He keeps careful watch for the rat creatures from his dreams, however, and the sight of any openly disfigured or diseased human makes him very anxious indeed.

Adri has taken up residence in the northern Nile-Island district of Zamalek for the time being, claiming to be one of the clanless, which, in an apocalyptic way, he is. Waulkeen knows of Adri's presence, being the one who granted him permission to stay within Banu Zamalek, but Adri suspects that Waulkeen is intentionally keeping his existence from the prince for the time being. Even more disturbing, he has come to believe that the Caitiff prophet is fully aware of Adri's true lineage — not simply that he knows Adri lied about being Caitiff, but that he somehow knows Adri to be one of the few remaining childer of Zapathasura in existence.

Image: Adri was a nondescript Indian man in life, and the Embrace seems to have only lightly brushed across his olive skin and fine, classical features. But for his brooding eyes, which always appear bloodshot and fatigued of late, he is the very picture of composure. He is often seen wearing the same khaki pants and suede jacket, as Adri does not own a change of clothes.

Roleplaying Hints: Speak slowly and deliberately, as though carefully choosing each word for some hidden merit. These new surroundings frighten you, as does the fact that the dreams have abated since your arrival here. You had come to rely on them for guidance, and without them, you now feel the vast loneliness of your situation. Your only comfort lies in the notion that others of your kind may have been led here as well...

Secrets: Through his visions, Adri has learned of the connection between the state of Cairo's mortals and the Dream Court, but he has yet to figure out what it all means. Once he does, Adri's continued existence may suddenly become a liability to the Followers of Set.

Clan: Ravnos

Sire: Uthra Suri

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Visionary

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1980

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4



Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts (repair) 4, Drive 2, Etiquette 1, Firearms 2, Melee 1, Security 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 1, Computer 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 1, Politics 1

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Chimerstry 1, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 2

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 4

BANUAL-AZRAQ

SHERIDAN FOSTER, CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS

Background: This powerful Ventrue is the last direct descendant of Antonius in Cairo, and his enemies whisper that the corruption which felled the former sultan lies thick in Foster's veins. His attitudes on royalty and rule are discrete, carrying through in every sense to his direct progeny. They show the utmost respect and decorum in the presence of their sire, but, outside his many havens, they vie with each other for his favor and look down upon the members of other clans, as they have been "brought up" to do. Some residents of Cairo suspect that he has inflicted blood bonds upon his progeny to ensure their loyalty, while others believe that the Ventrue simply fear losing their unives of excess and power that Foster's resources affords them.

Regardless of the reasons, the Kindred of the city do not trust the Ventrue to do anything but look after themselves, and Foster's legacy of self-interest is partly to blame. About a decade ago, a young visiting Toreador, unfamiliar with the peculiar ways of Cairo's Kindred, openly accused the entire Ventrue clan of being nothing more than Setite pawns. Although the fledgling managed to obtain a promise from Camarilla elders that the matter would be investigated, it was not, and the foolish Toreador disappeared under curious circumstances shortly thereafter.

The Nosferatu of Banu al-Hajji whisper that Councilor Foster has no honor, yet even they do not know the full truth. Foster has bound many of his progeny for fear that they will betray him, just as he betrayed his own sire. In 1924, the Setite Methuselah Kemintiri came to the city looking for the Spell of Life. Instead, she found a willing servant in Foster, who offered to aid her in exchange for absolute power over his clan's interests in Cairo.

When Ventrue archons came to Cairo, Foster convinced them (with Kemintiri's aid) that his sire was her loyal servant. The archons slew Foster's sire, opening the door for his takeover. As a way of thanking them for their loyal service to the Camarilla, he led the team of archons into an ambush of Kemintiri's design. None of the archons escaped with their unlives. Now, Foster continues to serve as a willing pawn of the Setites, trading his soul and his lineage for an unlife of opulence and financial dominion.

Currently, the chairman's perfect existence sees a new threat in the form of a young Ventrue by the name of Robert Van Owen, childe of one of the long-dead archons and now an archon himself, who has come to Egypt searching for answers. Foster believes that Van Owen has allies both outside and within the city, having already survived one attack by hunters. In addition, he has proven eerily resistant to both Dominate and other, more subtle overtures. When Van Owen arrived, Foster thought at first that his European clan members suspected him of his past, desiring bloody revenge in the form of the young archon. Now he fears something far worse: that perhaps the Setites have tired of him.

Image: As councilor of Antonius' ancestral domain, Foster lords over his clan with an air of affected royalty. Always dressed in finery, from hand-woven silks with spun gold to the finest suits that Western tailors can craft, Foster wordlessly reminds those in his presence that he is Clan Ventrue in the city of Cairo.

Roleplaying Hints: You know things. Others often think that they are getting the best of you, but they are truly not, as nothing escapes your scrutinizing eye. You were brought into the Ventrue for your noble blood and attention to detail, and you never let anyone with



whom you deal forget this fact. It has become "kill or be killed" in Cairo, especially for one in your particular situation, and you will do all that you must to protect yourself and your way of unlife.

Secrets: Foster has recently begun to gather a wealth of information on the city's seedier side from his Assamite associate, Beomedian Khulud. Although he must pay handsomely, the information that the black marketeer provides has become vital to the successful operation of Foster's many under-the-table business dealings. In addition, Foster knows of the existence of the Herald, as his Setite associate David Mooreland has requested Ventrue assistance in locating the young Caitiff girl. Foster has jumped at this task, in the hopes of further (re)ingratiating himself with the Dream Court.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Lord Ashton

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1769

Apparent Age: early 40s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Crafts 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms 3, Melee 2, Performance 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 3, Area Knowledge 3, Computer 1, Finance 5, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics 1, Occult 2, Politics 5

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 5, Fortitude 4, Presence 5, Serpents 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Clan Prestige 1, Contacts 4, Influence 5, Resources 5, Retainers 4, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 8

HUSSEIN AL-HUSSEINI, THE FACILITATOR

Background: Hussein's life needed changing. All through his youth in Cairo, he dreamed of something happening to him — something different. His mother chastised him, telling him that Allah would take his life in the direction that He felt appropriate, and it was hardly Hussein's place to question His plan. Hussein was content enough to wait for Allah to take the reins, but He never did, and the young man's life continued on...

Hussein avoided the first World War by becoming very ill and coming within an inch of death by fever. As the war wound down, he felt an odd twinge of regret that he hadn't fought, just because it would have been something new. He scraped together a bit of money and left Cairo for a few years, and, by sheer luck, he managed to avoid the influenza pandemic that was sweeping the globe. Again, although he had no desire to die such a horrible death, he thought perhaps it might have been more interesting than his life had ever been. He returned to Cairo in 1921, accepting interim work as a driver for a delivery company. It wasn't very interesting work, but it paid, and Hussein would imagine as he drove through the streets of Cairo that his truck held something special, some long-lost treasure, a special weapon, a secret new medicine... *anything*. Then, one warm October evening, his wish came true.

He picked up a large trunk from a ship and loaded it into his truck. It was to be shipped to a guest at a Cairo hotel; a man by the name of Sheridan Foster. The trunk was heavy, and something inside hissed when it shifted — it sounded almost like sand. As Hussein drove the truck toward the hotel, he imagined all manner of outlandish stories about his new cargo. As the sun crept lower, he decided he'd have just one peek. Priming himself for disappointment, he pulled the truck into an empty lot and picked the lock on the trunk.

An arm reached out, grabbed him, and yanked him swiftly inside. The trunk, as it happened, contained none other than Sheridan Foster himself.

Foster, having not fed in several nights, drained Hussein almost to death. As he lay dying, Hussein coughed forth a brittle laugh. Foster, a little bemused by this, asked what was funny, but all Hussein could say was, "Finally." Partly out of spite and partly because he needed a competent native liaison, Foster cursed al-Husseini with the Embrace.

Hussein took to unlife quickly — now he had a whole new culture to learn, as well as a task. His knowledge of Cairo's streets and cultures allowed his sire to slink quietly around the city without being noticed by other Kindred, gathering support and resources to make his move against his sire, Lord Ashton, the most powerful Ventrue in Cairo. Hussein scoured the city looking for any source of power or edge he could find, and his long years of daydreaming and imagining helped him look in places that others wouldn't think (or would be afraid) to look.

Three years later, Hussein helped Foster broker an arrangement with Kemintiri, the rogue Setite Methuselah. In exchange for information on the archons who had come to Cairo (as Kemintiri was and still is a member of the Camarilla's infamous Red List), the ancient Setite slew Lord Ashton, opening the door for Foster's ascension to power in Cairo.

Since then, Hussein has become Foster's right-hand man and favored child. He is one of the few Kindred who "overlaps" the many circles in Cairo, having dealt with many different individuals over the years on his sire's behalf. As a result, he has come to be regarded as a man who can and will get things done, and he is now quite a familiar face all around the city.

One of his latest victories was introducing his sire to Beomedian Khulud, an Assamite businessman who runs black-market operations in Cairo and cuts the Ventrue in for a hefty percent. Through Khulud — who is known on the street as simply the Vulture — Ventrue interests have both broadened and deepened in Cairo. Hussein hopes that he might soon be rewarded for his efforts in the form of substantial interest in the new "lines of business" that he has helped to bring about.



Image: Hussein is a short Cairene with a stocky build and a wide face. However, the way Hussein carries himself seems to give him some illusory length of bone, as well as the posture befitting a man of legitimate nobility. When engaged in conversation Hussein's eyes light up, and he nods often, as though perpetually in agreement.

Roleplaying Hints: Having grown up in the Middle East, you understand that the first step toward successful negotiation is always the establishment of a genuine mutual regard, and you strive to accomplish this with every new encounter. While your decorum has indeed made you a highly competent facilitator, it has also (somewhat ironically) resulted in your becoming a man of surprising integrity over time as well, and many find it a pleasure doing business with you.

Secrets: As the Final Nights draw close in other parts of the world, Hussein has begun to detect traces of his old ennui, and he wishes again for something fresh to occur. Of all people, however, Hussein should know that one must be careful what one wishes for in Cairo.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Sheridan Foster

Nature: Thrill-Seeker

Demeanor: Conformist

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1921

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Masquerade 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Crafts 1, Drive 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Melee 2, Performance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 4, Finance 1, Investigation 2, Law 4, Linguistics 2, Occult 2, Politics 3, Science 1

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Dominate 3, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 1, Presence 2, Serpents 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 5, Influence 4, Resources 3, Retainers 3, Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 5

BANUAL-GIZA

NADIMA, PRIESTESS OF DREAMS

Background: Nadima al-Muqanna was born to a tribe of Sufi Bedouins in the Western Desert. From the time that she was a young girl, she had heard the stories:

The Bedouin tribes of the Egyptian desert were watched over by a secret cabal of benefactors who revered customs and rites more ancient than their own. Among her people, it was understood that if one saw certain things in the desert at night, that it was the way things had always been, and to trust in the Protectors. The Protectors were the other side of the Bedouin cycle of life, and to have one without the other was to throw their existence itself off balance.

Therefore, Nadima thought very little of it when her older sister left the tribe for good one summer day. She had gone to join the Protectors, her elders had said, and that was the end of it. Fifteen years later, however, her sister returned as though she hadn't aged a day. She was in the company of a strange man who wore the smile of a jackal in his eyes. The man explained that Nadima had been chosen as well — on her sister's word, no less — for the same honor that had been granted her sister years before. Nadima accepted the honor and left the tribe to join her sister at the Grand Temple of Anubis outside of Memphis.

There Nadima learned of many ancient mysteries, including the eternal role of the Disciples themselves as guardians of the Queen of Repose and inheritors to the war against Set and Apophis. She accepted her duties dutifully, and soon grew adept at the ritual side of Disciple unlife. Her penchant for *hekau*, as the high priest called it, was as innate in her as it was strong. When the dreaming began in earnest, the high priest praised Nadima as an incarnation of Isis — forever mystically linked to Anubis himself.

Some years later, Nadima's sister went missing while on a journey into the Western Desert. She had traveled to locate a missing Bedouin tribe that hadn't



been heard from in the area for several years. When her sister did not return, her sire, the high priest Abu Sham'al, left to go find her himself, leaving instructions that Nadima was to take over his priestly duties if he were not to return as well. He did not.

Since then, Nadima has guided the Disciples of Anubis in all their spiritual efforts, at times acting as the mystical "operator" between her Disciples and their Underworld progenitor, Anubis. With the awakening of the Queen and the subsequent nullification of the Rite of the Sun King (see Chapter Five), Nadima's existence has become tumultuous at best. Since the destruction of Amenti (the spiritual home in the Egyptian Underworld) during that great spirit storm, Anubis has plagued Nadima with a stream of dreams so intense she can barely stand it.

The most important of these dreams concerned a pregnant Caitiff child whom he called the Herald. He made it quite clear that her rescue should be of paramount concern to all his Disciples, now that the Queen had arisen. He warned that her discovery would not be easy, and that time was of the essence, but that there would be a mortal child in Cairo, of similar means and parallel form, who would be the key. After an exhaustive search (and a few false starts), they discovered the girl of whom Anubis spoke, and she indeed led them to the Herald, as had been foretold. However, she escaped from the temple soon after and hasn't been heard from since. Nadima has focused all temple resources to the recovery of the girl, and she prays that it is not too late. Although Nadima now listens for the sound of sober guidance as she sleeps, her recent dreams have offered only silence.

Image: Nadima is tall for an Egyptian, with a regal bearing that suggests nobility rather than her humble origins as a Bedouin. Throughout her unlife, she has had only a single brush with frenzy, but the episode forever left its mark on her: Her eyes, which never shut unless she is sleeping or conducting rituals, are of a uniform black with merely a thin sliver of white circling the irises.

Roleplaying Hints: You are burdened with a terrible responsibility. For 4,000 years, the Disciples have kept the minions of Apophis at bay. For them to fail now after so long — on your watch — is not a failure you could bear. You have already lost your sister and your sire. You will be twice Damned if you will stand to lose anyone or anything more.

Secrets: Nadima knows a great deal about the ancient war between the Osirian League and the Followers of Set. In addition, she knows that an ancient Setite Methuselah sleeps beneath Cairo and that it is poised to awaken any night. Therefore, she now marshals all the forces at her disposal for the terrible battle that she knows to be at hand.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Abu Sham'al

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Visionary

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1763

Apparent Age: late 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 4, Etiquette 1, Melee 2, Performance 4, Security 4, Stealth 2, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 2, Area Knowledge 5, Investigation 3, Law (tribal) 4, Linguistics 3, Medicine 3, Occult 5

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 2, Fortitude 4, Protean 5, Setite Sorcery 5

Sorcerous Paths: Breath of Set (Weather Control) 5, Path of Anubis (Spirit Manipulation) 5, Divine Hand 4, Alchemy 3

Backgrounds: Allies (Bedouin) 5, Contacts (mummies) 5, Resources 3, Retainers (Disciples of Anubis and *ghuls*) 5

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 8

Willpower: 9

Notes: As High Priestess for the Disciples of Anubis, Nadima has inherited, unearthed and personally developed several rituals to assist in their cause. Two of the most important of these are Blessed Communion and The Becoming (both level five). The former allows her to establish a link to the Underworld whereby she and others involved in the rite can contact Anubis himself (and, up until recently, Hatshepsut's *ba*) for guidance. The latter, a long and involved rite which must be cast during a Blessed Communion, allows a Disciple to tailor his Protean studies thereafter to assume the Jackal-Man shape — the common bond that signifies and unites the Disciples of Anubis.

Note also that Akhu sorcery is covered in the book, **Blood Sacrifice**. Storytellers who don't wish to use this resource should remove Nadima's Divine Hand Trait.

NAZIRAH, THE SEVENTH CHANCE

Background: There was once a lovely young Egyptian girl who adored her father and mother. The fact that she was plain and that she was small made no difference to her loving parents. To them, she was their princess, and her king and queen delighted in playfully

ving for her affection. Her mother filled her dresser with homespun finery, while *baba* lavished her with a gallery of gifts made from household items. Even though she saw the truth each time she went to the *souq* — it hit especially hard whenever she returned home — she loved the fantasy, and she loved her parents all the more for giving it to her.

The dreams began when she turned 13. She dreamed of sights and of people who often felt familiar, but which she could not place. Most nights, her nocturnal hosts gathered around her in a circle, watching her expectantly. Other times, she felt as if she were lying awake, but still dreaming. During these times, the image of a troubled girl with red hair appeared before her, circling on the ceiling above her bed. The girl was trapped in a vortex of sand, unable to escape or even cry for help. Strangely, the frightful image filled her with no fear, only with the desire to help, along with the sense that she must.

Several years later, while gathering dates at a market, she was hit by a sudden vision, this time in the middle of the day. In it, she saw the same red-headed girl struggling in the sand, but this time the girl was calling out to a nearby bird, a white dove hovering just beyond her fingertips. When the vision passed, Nazirah became instantly and absolutely certain of two things: first, that the girl was real, and second, that she knew where the girl was. Unthinking, she dropped her bundles and headed out to the edge of the Western Desert, stopping only long enough to fetch some water for the trip.

Only much later would she realize that she herself was the dove.

When Nazirah finally found the spot she had seen in her vision, the red-haired girl was nearly dead. Suddenly determined, Nazirah quickly dug the young girl free, pulling her up and out of the smothering desert sand. Just then, Nazirah was overwhelmed with the sense of being watched, and she turned to see a pack of jackals emerge from the sandy haze before her. These were the Disciples of Anubis, and they had been trailing her to where the girl lay.

Their leader, a wise Bedouin woman named Nadima, took Nazirah — chosen by Anubis himself — as her protégé and Embraced her into the Disciples. She then explained the prophecy that Nazirah had just fulfilled, wherein Anubis foretold of the arrival of the Herald, a clanless and pregnant vampire who would be found and rescued by a mortal girl of parallel age and bearing. Anubis had warned that time was of the essence, and that if the Herald was not found in time, that all was lost, and he meant *all*.

Nazirah, the priestess explained, had been the seventh girl in which the Disciples had placed their hopes. The first six, although they were similar enough

to qualify as potential candidates, had turned out to be nothing more than ordinary young girls. Time was running out, and the Disciples had just about given up hope when Nazirah came along. As soon as the Nadima saw her, the priestess confessed, she knew: Nazirah was the one, the seventh chance.

Just when Nazirah was coming to accept her new situation, a dreadful development occurred. One night not long after her desert rescue, the Herald fled the Temple of Anubis in the early hours of the morning, disappearing across the river and into the city. Since then, Nazirah has been frantically searching her mind for clues as to the Herald's possible whereabouts. The other Disciples have full faith in Nazirah's connection with the girl. They only hope that it is not too late.

Image: A small Egyptian girl with hair as fine as sand and dark, watery eyes, Nazirah is unlike most others of her clan. Her lithe and delicate form remains as yet unmarred by the mark of the Beast. Indeed, she is quite calm for a young vampire, and she typically goes against form regarding other Gangrel stereotypes as well.

Roleplaying Hints: Although you know that you can never truly go back, you miss your parents every waking minute, and the thought of them worrying about what became of you makes you sadder than words can describe. You accept that you are the chosen one and all that, but it is hard on you. You will do what you must, and do it with pride, but this is not something you asked for, and you know it will be many years before you can reconcile what you have become.

Secrets: Nazirah knows a good deal about what goes on in Cairo, especially considering her age. Her network of ghoul doves, while recognizably out of place in some of the city's seedier districts, provides her with



a stream of steady (if somewhat simple) information. She feels terrible about letting her sire down, but she feels that she can rectify the situation, if given the opportunity. Nazirah has discovered that the Setites have plans for the Herald, and she desperately seeks to find her before they do.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Nadima

Nature: Martyr

Demeanor: Conformist

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 2000

Apparent Age: late teens

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 4,

Expression 2, Hagglng 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 1, Etiquette 1, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 2, Investigation 1, Law 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Fortitude 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Mentor 3

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 4

ABD AL-JILEEL, THE APPRENTICE

Background: As a mortal, Abd al-Jileel had been a simple Bedouin man leading a simple life of work, rest and more work. When he grew into manhood, the elders of the tribe began to pressure him to take a wife and start a family, as was his duty to the tribe. As Abd al-Jileel was not the first son, his parents had not pre-arranged a marriage for him, and any such decisions were left entirely up to him. He had been a shy young man, however, and he never managed to win the attentions of any woman who might make a suitable wife.

Before he could wed, Abd al-Jileel fell ill during one of Egypt's vicious spates of pestilence. As a part of his illness, he was struck with a terrible fever that induced vivid and dreadful hallucinations. He was tormented with visions of a nightmarish dreamscape Egypt, of a desert bright with fire and a sky dark with soot. After several unbearable days and nights, his fever finally broke and the phantasms mercifully subsided.

Although he went on to make a complete physical recovery, Abd al-Jileel would discover just how much the sickness had taken from him when he eventually got married. No matter how hard he and his new wife tried, they were unable to conceive a child. Even after he took

a second wife, as was his right by tribal law, he found that she too could bear him no children. The terrible reality became apparent then: Abd al-Jileel had been cursed, and no selection of spouses would allow him to produce an heir.

Abd al-Jileel had always suspected that something was wrong, because he had been the only member of his tribe to recover from the plague. He now understood why it was Allah had spared him: He had been saved in order to be tested. Abd al-Jileel abandoned his tribe and wandered into the desert alone, seeking a means by which he could atone for his sins against God. Several weeks later, he was rescued from starvation by a wandering Gangrel who happened upon him by pure chance. Abd al-Jileel seized the opportunity for the Embrace, knowing that it would give him an eternity to make amends with the Almighty. After parting ways with his sire, he made his way back to Cairo, where the Disciples of Anubis found him and inducted him into their ranks.

Over the years, Abd al-Jileel cultivated numerous contacts among a clan of jackal-headed Lupines who had been ousted from their homeland millennia ago (by Set himself, if the stories they told were true). Within the last year or so, however, Abd al-Jileel has lost all contact with them, leaving him gravely concerned about their possible designs for the City Triumphant.

Since that time, Abd al-Jileel has cultivated a new relationship — this time with his Toreador neighbor, Muhandis. After hearing of Muhandis' past exploits, the Disciple now desires to learn from him all that he can in the ways of demon-hunting. In the few short visits he has made to the reclusive Toreador's estate, he has begun to learn the rudiments of the Tanqel-Allah, the road of the martyr warrior, though he doesn't yet fully realize the path he has begun to walk.

Abd al-Jileel is afraid of neither conflict nor change, and, should his relationship with Muhandis continue, Abd al-Jileel could grow into a powerful enemy of the Baali. He sees himself taking up the good work that his mentor abandoned so long ago, with the eventual hope that he may bring the mighty Toreador out from his shell and back into the world once again. From there, Muhandis might finally be ready to receive the Assamite elder's entreaties. And from there...

Image: Abd al-Jileel is powerful-looking Bedouin with strong features, a thick flowing beard and sharp, canine eyes. Whenever one encounters him in the desert, he has a haunted and narrow look, as though he is scanning for something in the distance.

Roleplaying Hints: You are serious about a great many things, not the least of which is the destruction of the idol-worshipping Baali. It has become apparent that this was all God's plan from the beginning. From the curse to your Embrace and the "relocation" of Muhandis,

Allah always meant for you to walk this path, and you are inspired to be doing His work.

Secrets: Abd al-Jileel suspects that something terrible lurks buried in the sands of the Western Desert. Although he is unsure how, he is convinced that these suspicions, and whatever it is that they concern, are tied to the terrible visions that drew him into undeath so long ago. With Muhandis' learned instruction, Abd al-Jileel hopes to grow strong enough to travel there himself one night and finally face his fears.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Unknown

Nature: Penitent

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1917

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Etiquette 2, Melee 4, Performance 2, Stealth 3, Survival 5

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 4, Investigation 4, Linguistics 2, Occult 3

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Fortitude 3, Protean 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Retainers (*ghāl jackals*) 3

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 5



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Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 6

Notes: As a Disciple who has undergone the Rite of Becoming, Abd al-Jileel can assume the Jackal-Man shape of Anubis, a form that he always enters whenever dealing with Lupines. This form is similar to their man-beast form, granting the Disciple a +3 to all Physical Attributes and reducing his Appearance score to 0. Using this ability requires the expenditure of three blood points.

MUHANDIS, ARCHITECT OF FAITH

Background: Born to a noble family of A'yan in the Hariqa district of Damascus, Muhandis was educated at an early age to be a Man of the Turban, one of the religious elite. Every day, five times a day, he would go to the great mosque to pray, and he would sense each time that something was not right. While he prayed, he felt his faith waver, as though some outside force were bearing down upon it. Intrigued by the fact that he only sensed this vibration while he stood inside the mosque, Muhandis began an intensive study of Islamic architecture — especially as it pertained to the notion that faith could support the structural embodiment of itself.

His esoteric studies soon drew the attention of Sultan Darshuf, the vampiric overlord of Damascus, who Embraced him into the city's domain-claiming dynasty of Toreador. His sire purported to be something of a religious thinker in his youth as well, blaming his initial attraction to Muhandis on his questing spirit and nobility of blood. Therefore, it nearly destroyed Muhandis when he found out that it had all been a lie, and that his sire had Embraced him simply to draw his attention away from the Baali who pulled the city's strings from the shadows.

When Damascus fell to the Mongols under Hulagou in 1260, Muhandis turned on his depraved family. He would rather throw them to the dogs, and Damascus with them, than preserve a dynasty that was rotten to the core. Although he never confronted his own sire (Darshuf had disappeared during the initial invasion of the city), Muhandis was responsible for unearthing several remaining Baali, as well as one of their unholy, subterranean organ pits. His exploits of the time became legendary, and the Mongolian Gangrel beside whom Muhandis had fought still tell tales of the brave Toreador warrior who "razed Damascus" along with them. Toward the end of Damascus' fall, Muhandis met with one of the fabled devil-hunters of the Middle Kingdom, who instructed him in the finer points of laying low such ancient evils and even presented the Toreador with a moral code that strengthened him.

Soon after, the armies of the infamous Mameluke Sultan Beybars arrived, ousting the brutish hordes of

Tartars. (And they would be kept away from the region until the dawn of Tamerlane, some 140 years later.) Beybars had ordered his generals to bring back to Cairo those Damascene individuals of talent and repute — primarily the renowned Damascene armorers and architects — and Muhandis accompanied these migrating workers to Egypt.

Throughout Mameluke rule, Muhandis was a fixture of the city. A great many of the mosques, *madrassas* and *hammams* built during this time have been aided, in one form or another, to the devout Toreador. Even mortal architects and city planners came to know him by name (albeit as a mysterious patron of the city, and not as one of the undead). In all his efforts, Muhandis' driving goal was to seal off Cairo from the Baali and their unholy host; to ensure that the Jewel of Islam would remain sacrosanct, that it might never fall as low as his Damascus home once did.

Although his quest was pure, centuries of uncertainty and solitude have driven Muhandis into a state of secluded paranoia. He ceased trusting other Kindred entirely, believing that behind every vampire's actions lay the machinations of the Baali and their demonic overlords. He sees their foul touch in what are actually the operations of the city's many Setites, whose idolatrous ways only exacerbate this mistrust. He has seen the true face of Kahina the Sorceress, and he would rid the planet of her blasphemous form for good if he could manage to overcome his own insecurities.

Although Muhandis has consistently rejected the entreaties of the Assamite elder Antara, he has grown more receptive of late to the Bedouin Gangrel, Abd al-Jileel, one of the Disciples of Anubis. In simply recounting his gallant tales of glories past, Muhandis has set the pious Gangrel along the spiritual path of the demon hunter, the Tariq el-Alaam. Abd al-Jileel is proving to be an apt pupil in this regard, and if things continue on as they have, Muhandis might well mentor his new "apprentice" right into the dawn of a new age of vampiric valor in Cairo.

Image: Muhandis was once the very model of Syrian nobility, and the passing of centuries has done surprisingly little to diminish this. Although his skin is pale for his ethnic origins, his demeanor is ribald and strong, his features still full of vitality. When found at his manor in Muhandiseen (which he almost always is), his dress is elegant and refined, yet traditional.

Roleplaying Hints: You take your role in the guest-host relationship very seriously. If someone comes to you seeking assistance or counsel of any kind, you pay more attention to how he acts than to why it is he has come. Regard Cainites warily, as though you are "on to them," but be polite in your word choice and give them every opportunity to speak their minds.



Secrets: Muhandis knows more about the layout of Cairo than anyone, on a spiritual as well as geomantic level. He is intuitively aware of what he calls "faith lines," areas of the city where zones of faith abut one another, and he believes that Cairo's salvation may lie in keeping them intact and interconnected. In this regard, Muhandis is right in his paranoia about the Followers of Set. Although they are not demonic in and of themselves, they do the devil's work regardless.

Clan: Toreador

Sire: Sultan Darshuf

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1058

Apparent Age: late 30s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 6, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 5, Expression 5, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 3, Melee 6, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Academics (theology) 4, Area Knowledge 4, City Secrets 4, Expert Knowledge (architecture) 6, Investigation 5, Linguistics 4, Occult 5, Science 3

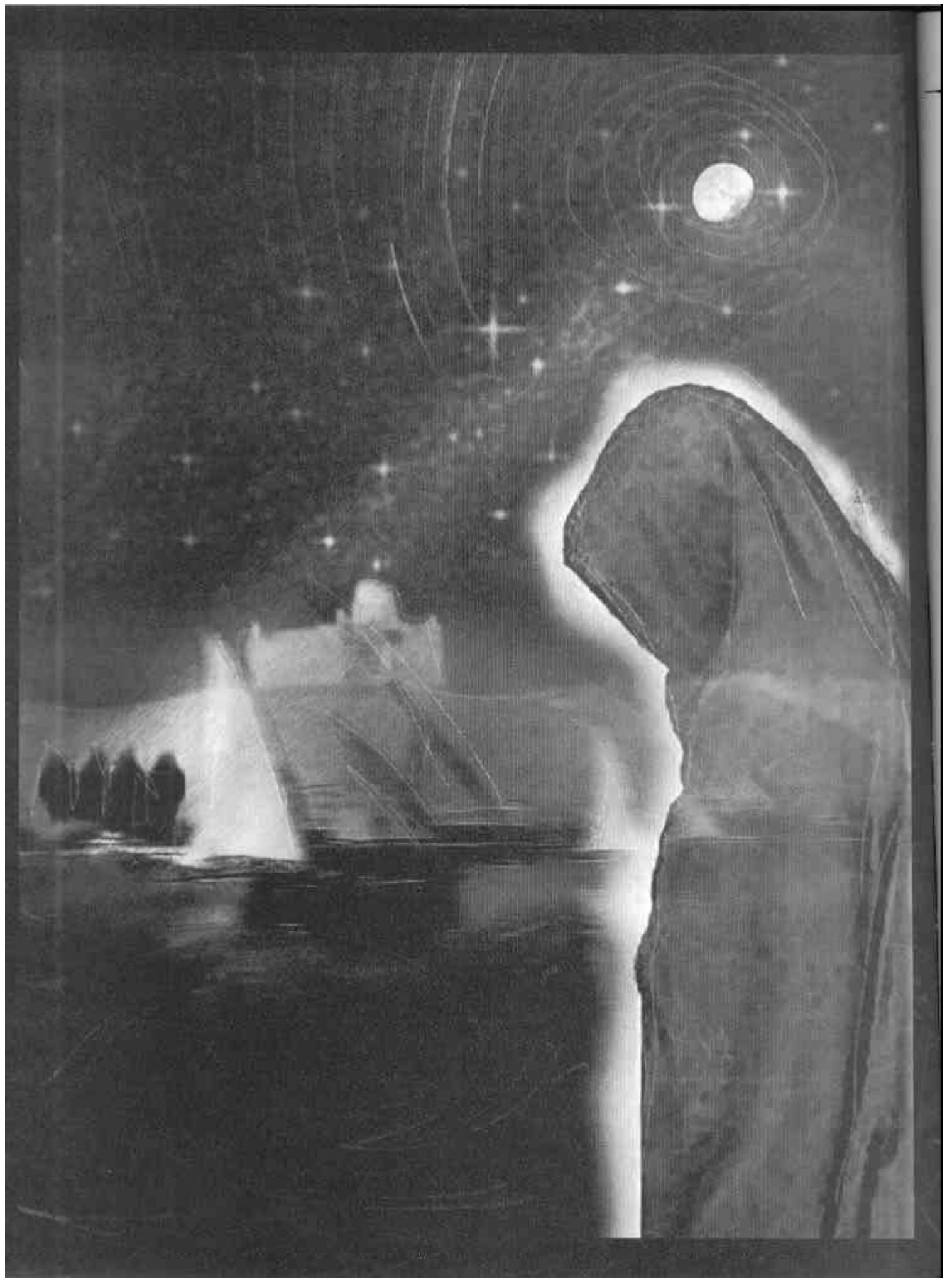
Disciplines: Auspex 6, Celerity 5, Chimerstry 3, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 3, Potence 4, Presence 5, Quietus 4

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 4, Herd 3, Influence 3, Resources 4, Retainers 3

Virtues: Conviction 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Morality: Tariq el-Alaam (Path of Paradox) 7

Willpower: 8





CHAPTER FIVE: UMM EL-DUNYA

STORYTELLING CAIRO

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space
—William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*; Act I, scene 1

The information presented in this chapter covers the various thematic, cultural and narrative elements involved in running a chronicle set in Cairo, so it is intended for Storytellers only. While various aspects of the setting will innately affect the players as well, their overall enjoyment should be the paramount concern, and leaving certain details of the city to the Storyteller only enhances this enjoyment. Faith in the Storyteller's ability and a player's willingness to be both surprised and swept away are crucial to creating the most vivid and engaging storytelling experiences, especially in any games set in Egypt. If you know now that you will not be the one storytelling *Cairo by Night* for your troupe, *please read no further*. Trust that when the time comes for you to be drawn in to the City Triumphant as a player, you will appreciate her all the more.

UMM EL-DUNYA

The prospect of setting a chronicle or story in the Mother of the World may seem daunting to those who are unfamiliar with the Middle East. While it is true that most troupes lack the intuitive understanding of Egypt that they may have of their own locales, the setting provides a Storyteller with some great opportunities. Stories set in Cairo allow the troupe to learn about Arab culture and explore the mysteries of Egyptian civilization, both past and present. The city lends itself to stories that combine elements of *Vampire: The Dark Ages* — the power of faith, mortal superstition and ancient secrets — with all the modern themes inherent to the Final Nights. Cairo is a melting pot in the World of Darkness, where Sabbat, Camarilla and independent vampires can and will meet

and often mix. Stories involving any of these types of characters are appropriate for the City Triumphant.

We suggest three basic approaches to using *Cairo by Night*. First, Storytellers may simply use it as a sourcebook for material to inject into their chronicle. When using characters from Cairo, a Storyteller should be careful regarding the power levels involved. Cairene vampires are more potent than those in most Western cities. They are not to be trifled with, nor treated with the causal flippancy so common among American undead. In addition, their Final Deaths may have far-reaching ramifications that should also be considered before introducing them to an ongoing chronicle. Antagonists from across the world have many reasons to covet contacts in Cairo. As the home of ancient vampires and mystical artifacts, Cairo can provide Western Kindred with access to power not found in the United States. Opportunistic Tremere in particular, unaware of their clan's extant arrangement with the Prince of Cairo, might be interested in raiding the city, and it may well be that some of the residents of Cairo might follow such thieves to the end of the world. Also, many of the residents of Cairo may decide that they need allies to aid them in their ancient struggles. They may visit a distant city in search of recruits or potential sources of power. They may also send minions to far lands in order to summon vampires to them, which leads to the second way to employ Cairo as a story setting.

Cairo isn't exactly a vacation spot for most Kindred, but it does make for great stories. Using the city for a story outside of the chronicle's familiar locales typically works well. First, it provides a change of pace for the troupe. Are the players complaining that the same, familiar antagonists have become too predictable? In Cairo, they may very well be unable to tell the "good guys" from the "bad guys." Are the players growing overconfident, assuming that their mix of Disciplines and Willpower will enable them to escape any situation? A single encounter with an irate mummy should cure that complacency straight away. A change of environment can often help refresh a chronicle, allowing players to explore both new surroundings and their own characters. Often times, adjusting to a new environment provides all the impetus that a stagnating story really needs.

Characters can have any number of reasons for going to Cairo. Researching the occult, uncovering ancient knowledge, obtaining a powerful artifact, receiving "requests" from Camarilla elders or even the invitation of a Cairene vampire all provide plausible reasons for a modern troupe to seek out Cairo. In order to make the trip work, have a contact or ally who can give the characters a safe place to sleep and help guide them through the city. Giving them a good introduction to Arabic culture should prove a useful aid as well. The characters shouldn't feel

perfectly safe or secure, but they shouldn't feel that Cairo is a death trap, either. At least not initially.

Taking time out of a regular chronicle for a sabbatical in Egypt also allows the Storyteller to look at her setting and make changes while the characters are gone. She can adjust events or introduce new Storyteller characters, allowing the surprises to continue even after the return home. As a related benefit, using Cairo as a side trip can give the Storyteller something new and interesting to explore while helping to keep the creative juices flowing.

The most ambitious way to use *Cairo by Night* is to simply set a chronicle in Cairo itself. Besides becoming familiar with this book, Storytellers should take the time to personalize the city. No work on Cairo can possibly cover all of her various aspects, from glorious to gritty. New characters can and should be created to flesh out the setting. Think of the themes and attitudes present in the City Triumphant that would appeal to your troupe, and develop those ideas in advance. Help the players become familiar with the setting as well, so that they may begin to feel comfortable in what will most likely seem a strange (if exotic) environment. After doing so, the setting information presented in this chapter should be more than enough to get your Cairo chronicle underway.

THE CAIRO COMMUNITY

Although all of Egypt's many roads — from commerce to culture — meet here in the capital city, the pavement of all these divergent paths is laid with faith. In a large sense, the Western notion of a distinct separation of church and state is an unfamiliar one throughout the Arab world. Many of the city's greatest architectural achievements exist solely because enough faith existed to support them, and the merit of potential construction projects was typically based on how well they would serve the religious community at large. Indeed, the Dark Medieval concept of "faith as currency" was nowhere any more prevalent than in the Middle East, where the power and wealth of the caliph — the ultimate religious authority for centuries — became unparalleled among the citizenry.

Since the dawn of man, the power of faith has served to bring entire communities closer together. Throughout the centuries, this paradigm has seen surprisingly little change, especially in the Arab world, where the dominant religion is seen as being the common bond of its people. Although Islam is not the sole force driving modern Cairene society, it remains one of the most important. It has shaped the city's growth for over a thousand years, guiding the citizens of Cairo through days and nights both past and present. It will likely continue to affect the ebb

and flow of the city's future as well, however indistinct that future may appear.

ISLAM IN EGYPT

The Muslim faith arrived in Egypt for the first time in the seventh century, with the arrival of the sweeping tide from out of Arabia. At that time, the majority of Egypt's religious citizens were Coptic Christians who had suffered under Emperor Diocletian's murderous pogrom and the unforgiving rule of the Byzantines. Later, when the seat of the Coptic Patriarchate was moved to Cairo, the city would become an even more potent nexus of belief, but, in the year 640, the Copts were a battered and disconsolate people. Babylon-in-Egypt was ready for a change, and this change was finally brought about by the Arab general, Amr Ibn al-As, who brought Islam across the Sinai and into the more populous areas along the Nile. Within a relatively short span of years, nearly all of Egypt had converted to the vibrant new religion. Those who did not were treated as fellow "people of the book," and they were granted freedoms unheard of under the Byzantines. Once settled, Egypt became the new land of opportunity for many Arabs, and her numbers soon swelled with Muslim immigrants eager to make new lives in the fertile land along the river.

At one time or another, Egypt's Muslims have been under the spiritual authority of numerous outside forces. Initially under the caliphate in Medina, time and tribulation would see Egypt governed in turn by a host of bickering caliphs from not only different families, but from different cities and even different faiths, on one occasion. It is important to remember that, while political boundaries came and went, religious authority often remained true, and military matters were often put to rest by the assurance that one's subjects were still under the religious (if not political) authority of another.

After the first Islamic power struggle, Egypt's Muslims paid tribute to the Umayyad caliph in Damascus until 750, when the Abbasids of Baghdad wrested control of the caliphate. The authority of the Abbasid caliph was recognized until the late 9th century, when Ahmad Ibn Tulun declared Egypt an independent state. During this time, many Muslims under Ibn Tulun still recognized the spiritual authority of the caliph, but they kept quiet due to their firm support of their governor's bid for independence. Baghdad taxed Egypt quite heavily during those days, and the Egyptians were eager for a chance at autonomous prosperity. Although it was initially successful, the move was an affront to the supremacy of the caliph, and Egypt was once again assimilated into the Abbasid empire in 905.

Later that century, Egypt would come under control of an opposing caliphate once again — this time, a powerful Shi'a family from Northern Africa who claimed



descent from the Prophet's daughter, Fatima. Although the Fatimid caliph made Cairo the capitol of his empire — thereby putting the religious leader in close proximity to his Egyptian subjects for the first time — the move fractured the country's Muslims even more than living under the authority of far away Baghdad had done. The religious identity of the Egyptian Muslim became a strange creature indeed, possessed of a Shi'a head and a Sunni body. While Egypt, and Cairo in particular, flourished under the 200-year reign of the prosperous Fatimids, many rebelled at the abomination that their homeland had become.

Although it would never know supreme religious authority over all Muslims, Cairo would go on to become the center of the Islamic world nonetheless — if not in name, then certainly in spirit. While Islam requires that all its adherents visit the holy city of Mecca at least once in their lifetimes, many Muslims choose to make their own pilgrimages to Cairo, where the living history of their religion is eternally on display. Islam is truly *alive* in Cairo — in every style, form and medium imaginable — and the City of a Thousand Minarets certainly lives up to her name. Despite often being outshined by the religious significance of Mecca, Jerusalem and Medina, Cairo still remains the "shining star of Islam" for many Muslims.

THE ASHIRRA

The Kindred of the Middle East share a unique relationship with Islam. Whereas other religions typically repel and often terrify the undead, Islam seems to attract them, making penitents and martyrs of those whom God would condemn. The region's Muslim Kindred, the Ashirra, have been prominent in Egypt since the nights of Al-Fustat, when several of them made the blossoming City of the Tent their new home. During the Long Night, Cairo rose to prominence as the center of the movement, making the city a nexus of both scholarship and worship once more. Many influential Ashirra traveled to Egypt during this time — including Suleiman ibn Abdallah, the venerable Lasombra founder of the sect — to study and pray alongside the others of their kind, forming a powerful community of Kindred devoted to the teachings of the Prophet.

Many Ashirra devote their unlives to the study of the Qur'an (literally, "the recitation") and how best to interpret Muhammad's teachings, given their precarious situation. A Syrian parable about the "Cat Who Went to Mecca" has become popular among them, as its ultimate message is one of pious resignation. The lesson of the fable is that while it is the duty of every Muslim to follow the word of God, one must also be eternally aware of one's nature and follow it as well. Fans of the story (and its moral implications) often point out that since all is the will of God, then the existence of the undead must certainly be likewise. Therefore, the only solution for the humble

PILLARS OF FAITH

In addition to the teachings of the Qur'an and other fundamental tenets of Islam, there are five practical devotions that all Muslims must perform. These five religious obligations, called Pillars of Faith, are as follows:

The Shahadah: The Shahadah, or profession of faith, is a public declaration of the submission to God that is core to the Islamic faith. By repeating the phrase, "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His prophet," the faithful Muslim fulfills the first pillar.

The Salah: The second pillar requires all Muslims to pray to Allah at five specific times of day: at daybreak, noon, afternoon, sunset and at night. During these times, the call of the muezzins floats out as one voice from the top of every minaret, summoning the faithful to prayer. Life in Cairo grinds to a halt as the millions turn to face Mecca, falling to their knees in prayer.

The Zakat: A religious tax is imposed upon each follower of Islam in order to help provide for those less fortunate. These tithes pay for community services and programs that benefit the needy, be they Muslim or not.

The Sawm: The religious fast is an obligation that falls on the first new moon in the month of Ramadan. For 30 days, all Muslims must fast during daylight hours in order to bring themselves closer to Allah and remind them of what the poor must endure throughout the year.

The Hajj: The last pillar is a religious pilgrimage that each Muslim is required to make at least once in his lifetime. During the 12th month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims from all over the world travel to Mecca and Medina to circle the Ka'ba and reenact Muhammad's flight.

Ashirra is to acknowledge his place in God's plan and to make the best of what has been made of him.

Thus, many Ashirra simply practice their faith in the best (and often only) way they know how, and they are often prevented from experiencing the fullness of the religion due to their accursed natures. Islam's Five Pillars are given more than mere lip service by the majority of the Ashirra, but aren't typically followed as closely as they are by those more devout. The Shahadah is the easiest to perform, and many of Cairo's Ashirra can often be found proudly and publicly professing their faith when they have little else to do, as though the quantity of their adherence to one pillar will forgive their inability (or unwillingness) to perform the others.

The majority of Ashirra typically perform the Salah three times over the course of an evening: once upon awakening, once around midnight, and again just before sunrise. Only the exceedingly devout (such as the Hajj) observe the traditional requirement of five prayers each "day." For these faithful undead, much of their long unives is spent in prayer.

The Ashirra of Cairo support the Zakat widely and often vocally, at least in theory. While the Kindred of Cairo are no greedier than those of any other city, they are often much poorer, having little to offer those less fortunate than themselves — if such individuals can be found at all. Naturally, those more well to do among the Ashirra can and often do donate heavily to the underprivileged, and they rarely use their wealth to their own political advantage when pertaining to matters of religious endowment: In Cairo, the power of God humbles even the Damned.

The most delicate matters of faith among Cairo's undead involve the fast and the pilgrimage. Most Ashirra recognize the danger in depriving themselves of vitae, and many draw the line at self-imposed starvation. The hunt for blood is the singular force driving all undead, and some refuse to believe that God would have made them this way only to then demand their abstinence. Still, during the holy month of Ramadan, the majority of Ashirra observe some measure of blood denial. Most simply split their activity cycle in two, treating midnight as their equivalent of sundown and waiting to feed until then. During medieval times, a clever Lasombra named Haroun el-La'il made casual mention of the fact that the Qur'an demands that Muslims fast only during *daylight* hours. Naturally, Haroun wasn't suggesting that no fasting of *any* kind was needed — simply that fasting during the day was all that was technically *required*. As all undead sleep through the day anyway, however, this particular perspective essentially freed the Ashirra from religious obligation altogether, as far as fasting was concerned. This Lasombra's legacy has been followed in ages since by lazy Ashirra who have come to believe that simply by waking after the sun has set, their obligation to the Sawm has been fulfilled.

As for the pilgrimage to Mecca, the entire notion is considered out of the question by all but the most devout. Not only is international travel a shaky prospect for the undead, but the idea of willingly dropping oneself into what amounts to a sea of True Faith is sheer and utter madness. The Nosferatu Ashirra of Cairo are, as usual, the exceptions to this standard. Under Ibn Ja'far the Golden, the Hajj are encouraged and often expected to make the arduous pilgrimage to Mecca, there to learn directly from the founder of their kind — Ibn Ja'far's grandsire, Tarique. As the majority of Ashirra have forsaken this last and most dangerous obligation, Ibn Ja'far's orthodox stance has only

served to further widen the gulf between the Hajj of Cairo and their Muslim brethren.

LIFE AND UNLIFE ON CAIRO TIME

The predominance of Cairo's populace is Muslim, but the political state of Egypt is still a republic, and, as such, it finds itself consulting three separate calendars on a regular basis. Despite its being an unusual practice to be sure, many Cairenes take it (as with many things) in stride, claiming that it simply makes being in Cairo that much more interesting.

The most familiar calendar, the Western one, dates from the birth of Christ over two millennia ago, its progress being marked by the passing of the solar year. The Coptic calendar is solar as well, but it dates instead from the accession of the Emperor Diocletian in AD 284. During Diocletian's reign, the most vicious of the Roman persecutions of the Christians took place, particularly in Egypt, and the Copts keep it always in remembrance through their chronology. The Islamic calendar — the standard "day-to-day" calendar of life for many Cairenes — dates from the flight (*hejira*) of Muhammad from Mecca in AD 622 and, unlike the other two, is lunar rather than solar. Because the Islamic calendar rotates in relation to the other two calendars, each Islamic year begins 11 days sooner than the previous year.

For this reason, figuring out any given Western date on an Islamic calendar (or vice-versa) is not as simple as adding or subtracting 622. A "formula" must be applied, wherein one divides the Islamic year by 33 (as it is one thirty-third shorter than the Western), subtracts the result from the current Islamic year, and then adds 622 to the result. The result is that same year on the Western calendar. Therefore, if it is AH (standing for Anno Hegirae — the count of years since Muhammad's flight) 1422, the corresponding Western year would be AD 2001.

For the vampires of Cairo, this strange trinity (and its attendant arithmetic) is largely irrelevant from a practical standpoint. They still rise and sleep on the same schedules that they always have kept, much like vampires throughout the world. In addition, all official transactions in Egypt are governed by the Western calendar, and those who wish to conduct business soon come to rely on it, regardless of their religious beliefs. One important distinction, however (and one that the Ashirra are often fond of pointing out), is that any given day in the Islamic calendar begins at *sundown* rather than at midnight. The only real effect that this oddity typically has on mortals is that Islamic festivals appear to begin the evening before Westerners expect them to. The basic cause and effect of this arrangement can be compared to the placement of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, which fall on two separate days on the Western calendar — were they Islamic holidays, they would both technically fall on the same day.

When viewed in a certain light, this difference affords vampires who follow Islam the opportunity for a unique perspective. In a sense, it legitimizes the Ashirra's claims that they alone among the Childer of Caine are not irretrievably damned. God himself has provided them with a means by which they may make restitution, as the "dawning" of each new day is the time when the vampire awakens refreshed, ready to begin his allotted activity cycle. Therefore, compared to the rather paltry handful of hours in which other vampires must conduct their affairs, the Ashirra may use the full measure of each day afforded them by God. Although it is a slight distinction (and some would say a semantic and meaningless one), the vampires who follow Islam view it as a simple truth of their belief — a fundamental aspect of their existence among the Damned.

FAITH AND THE CITY

Throughout history, the constant faith of the Cairenes has been a force inseparable from their daily lives. They pour it into the very mortar used to build their homes and places of worship, reaffirming the power of their god with the laying of every stone. They knead it into their daily

THE ISLAMIC CALENDAR

Month	Duration (days)
Moharram	30
Safar	29
Rabei el-Awal	30
Rabei el-Tani	29
Gamad el-Awal	30
Gamad el-Tani	29
Ragab	30
Shaaban	29
Ramadan	30
Shawal	29
Zoul Qidah	30
Zoul Hajja	29 (30 in leap years)

EGYPTIAN HOLIDAYS

Regardless of which calendar one follows, several holidays are celebrated all across Egypt over the course of the year. On these days, all government offices, banks, schools and most businesses close in observance. These secular days of rest are as follows:

April 25	Sinai Liberation Day
May 1	Labor Day
July 23	Anniversary of the 1952 Revolution
October 6	Armed Forces Day
Monday after Easter	Sham el-Nessim
January 1	New Year's Day

bread with their hands, and when that bread has risen, they break it with those same hands to partake of it with their families. Indeed, the act of breaking bread has always been sacred among Cairenes, and the symbolic act of reabsorbing one's faith in the bread one has baked only serves to strengthen the resolve — both within and without. The cycles of life are well observed by the Cairenes, and faith is a fundamental aspect of them all. Here, in the City of a Thousand Minarets, faith has literally moved mountains, and it is with faith that her citizens will make the desperate leap into the Final Nights.

Although it comes in different forms and creeds, the overall effects of faith remain strangely consistent across religious lines, and many vampires have felt a most familiar burn at the hands of an unfamiliar faith. Indeed, True Faith is more common in Cairo than, arguably, anywhere else in the world, and a great many sites around the city are infused with its ambient power. To Kindred, several such sites in close proximity to one another create an audible and nearly tangible phenomenon. The result is a constant hum not unlike the cry heard by the undead in the lands of Arabia — an inescapable reminder of the accursed nature of their existence.

Although it is not as oppressive, this effect is certainly more omnipresent than its Arabian counterpart known as the Keening. Visiting vampires are often *more* unnerved by the simple, queasy sense of unease that pervades every inch of space in Cairo, than by the more potent but mercifully centralized wailing of the Ka'ba stone. Some in Cairo liken the feeling to a great dome of loud and heavy air resting overhead, covering the city as if it was a sumptuous dish. Many vampires in Cairo actively avoid the Sufi mystics known as "whirling dervishes," believing that they alone among mortals can hear the constant whirl of the city's collective faith, and that they chant in order to attune themselves to its divine frequency. True or no, scuffles between undead regularly break out all around the city — conflicts that are often blamed on the tensions caused by this incessant vibration, rather than on the short tempers and long egos of those involved.]

FAITH AND THE UNDEAD

Since the nights of the Second City, the undead have tried to strike a balance between dwelling among the kine and existing as outsiders to the Children of Seth. In all that time, those mortals who carried a genuine and pious faith in a higher power have acted as a constant reminder of how delicate that balance truly is. While the effects of a mortal's faith being brought to bear are widely known, the effects of an area's Ambient Faith on the undead are not so.

Whenever a vampire finds himself at a place with an Ambient Faith rating, his player must succeed in a Will-power roll before that character can enter. The difficulty is equal to (2 + the Ambient Faith rating of that particular

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GOD

Faith does indeed permeate all areas at all times, but several places across the city have their own special (and often higher) Ambient Faith ratings. Wise Kindred have always made it a primary order of business to learn the various danger zones of Cairo upon arriving, and the task of showing these individuals around the city has changed hands over time. During the Long Night, the Serite merchant Bilaal plied a good trade in keeping Kindred abreast of Cairo's growing zones of faith. After his Final Death, no Serite stepped up to

inherit the "family business," and the responsibility naturally fell upon the Hajj — a task that they were more than willing to assume at the time and have since come to take some measure of pride in.

The Hajj of modern Cairo charge no fee for these guided tours, rejoicing instead in the renown that comes with discharging their sacred duty. Naturally, should they pick up the occasional tidbit of information along the way, it can only help the Ashirra (and thus the city) in the long run.

The following is a partial list of the holy sites that can be found around the city:

Holy Site	Ambient Faith
Abu Serga (Church of St. Sergius)	5
Al-Adra (Church of the Virgin)	2
Al-Azhar	5
Aqsunqur (The Blue Mosque)	4
Bir al-Halazun (Yusuf's Well)	2
The Citadel	2
El-Muallaqa (The Hanging Church)	4
Mari Girgis (Church of St. George)	3
Mausoleum of Qait Bey	2
Mausoleum of Sultan al-Ghouri	4
Mosque of Al-Hussein	5
Mosque of Al-Hakim	2
Mosque of Amr Ibn al-As	1
Mosque of Ibn Tulun	6
Mosque of Mohammed Ali	3
Mosque of Munyyad	4
Mosque of Qalawun	4
Mosque of Sultan al-Ghouri	3
Mosque of Sultan Hassan	<i>special</i>
Sitt Barbara (Church of St. Barbara)	3
Synagogue of Bert Ezra	3

Note: Storytellers are encouraged to ascribe a non-numeric value to the Ambient Faith of the city itself. While it certainly does exist, the idea is to provide the characters with a constant feeling of unease, rather than a specific game mechanic. Should you feel it necessary to use one, however, simply apply a penalty of one to the difficulty of all rolls made while the characters are inside the city. This penalty continues for a number of nights equal to (11 - the character's Willpower rating). After that time, he has become inured to the effect, and he may rest and act normally. While local Kindred are, naturally, immune to the letter of this game mechanic, they are still subject to the spirit behind it, and Storytellers are encouraged to emphasize its effects.

holy site). Should he succeed, the vampire may enter, but he will likely feel ill and somewhat disoriented until he leaves. (Storytellers may apply a dice pool penalty to all rolls made within the area, if so desired.) Failure means that he can not access the holy site of his own volition, and if he is forced to do so, he will suffer one health level of lethal damage immediately. This penalty is compounded

by the loss of an additional health level of lethal damage for each scene in which the character remains in the area. A botch results in the loss of one health level per turn, as the pain and nausea build to excruciating intensity. Should a character be forced to remain in a holy site for more than three turns after a botched roll, a second Willpower roll is required against a difficulty of 7. Failing this roll means

that the character enters frenzy. A borch on this roll indicates that the vampire actually combusts, suffering three health levels of aggravated damage per turn thereafter until he is free of the area or doused in a large amount of water. (Needless to say, *holy* water merely agitates this situation.) The player of any such character must immediately make a Courage roll (difficulty 9) to keep the character from entering frenzy as well.

The application of True Faith upon the undead is a mental and spiritual matter, as well as a physical one. In Cairo, the Muslim Nosferatu of the Banu al-Hajji seem to have a unique, working relationship with faith, as long as it is of the Islamic variety. Although they are equally subject to the effects of True Faith, only the Hajj — alone among all the Ashirra — seem to be able to move freely around the holy sites of Islam. Their reverent leader, Ibn Ja'far, has repeatedly demonstrated a remarkable tolerance for the otherwise agonizing effects of True Faith on the vampiric form. This fact alone would lend some credence to the notion that its effects are actually based in the mind — or, as the Hajj so often claim, in the soul.

While it is true that the holy sites of Islam seem to "open their doors" to the Hajj, the gates of other religions remain just as barred to them as to other, more secular undead. More than one vain Muslim Nosferatu has felt the sting of venturing too deep into Coptic Cairo, and it is understood that no matter how pious one of the Hajj may be, he must always remember his place. This lesson serves as a constant reminder of both the power and sovereignty of the Almighty — just as their acceptance inside the holy sites of Islam is a reminder of His mercy.

Lately, the Hajj of Cairo have begun to feel a new pattern in the collective hum of the city's holy sites — the song that they call the Keening, in parity with a similar phenomenon in Arabia. Its relatively mild whirl has begun to waver in intensity, rising in strength during the day, reaching a new apex during the midday call of the *muezzins*, and ebbing back to "normal" levels by sundown. In short, it has begun to mirror in effect its more potent cousin in the land surrounding the Ka'ba stone. At no point during the Keening's new ebb and flow does its level dip below what it has always been, and the Hajj have begun to fear what it all could mean in the coming times. All the signs point to the dawn of *something* on the horizon, and the worried prayers of Cairo's Hajj grow more fervent with each passing night.

THE CAIRO CHRONICLE

HOUSE OF TREMERE

The Tremere of Cairo have existed in a curious kind of limbo since the establishment of the Egyptian Antiquities Service. Under the reign of Muhammad Ali, the

Antiquities Service and facility built to serve it were established in 1835 in a school beside Erbekkiya. After the pasha used the site as storage for presents that he wished to give to distinguished visitors, it was transferred to the Citadel, where it received only slightly better treatment. In 1855, having acquired some notoriety through the discoveries of the famed archeologist August de Mariette, the collection was paid a visit by Archduke Maxmillian of Austria. An advisor of the Archduke's — a contact of the powerful Tremere of Vienna — became most interested in the collection and the Antiquities Service, and he contrived to meet with Mukhtar Bey during his stay in Cairo.

The Tremere were developing an interest in Egypt, and the enterprising fellow took the opportunity to negotiate a bargain with the Mameluke ruler of Cairo. As the Caitiff prince was always eager to form new relationships with the vampires of Europe, the two soon reached an agreement: The Tremere would receive free passage in Cairo, along with the rights to the Egyptian Antiquities Service and all its discoveries. In exchange, the Tremere would not be permitted a khitta in Cairo, nor would the prince ever grant a Tremere feeding or haven rights in any area of the city except on the Museum grounds itself. As long as the Tremere kept their numbers small — small enough to be supported by a single collective haven — they were welcome to exist in Cairo. Therefore, the Tremere could come to gorge themselves on Egypt's vast stores of knowledge, but not on its vitae. The Egyptian Museum became the Tremere Chantry, haven and khitta all rolled into one. To seal the deal, and as a sign of good faith, the prince allowed the Archduke to take the entirety of the original collection back to Vienna, where it remains to this day. Since then, the Tremere have guided the Antiquities Service to amazing archeological finds throughout Egypt, the bulk of which are brought back to the Museum in Cairo for further study by the Tremere.

Lately, the Museum has been working on an exciting new cache whose existence remains hidden from the world at large. Just over a year ago, a previously unknown temple appeared in the Western Desert outside of Wadi Natrun. Although the area had been previously charted, the structure was simply never found before, and its discovery has the Tremere of Cairo flush with anticipation. The Museum chantry head, Kasper von Aupfholme, left Cairo soon after the temple's discovery to personally oversee the ensuing dig, and he has been sending back relics from the recently titled "Shenouda Cache" as they are discovered. His child and curative assistant, Hyapatia, oversees matters from the opposite end, eagerly awaiting the arrival of each new relic.

LOT 14

Unfortunately for Hyapatia, a recent delivery from the Shenouda Cache contained an item known as Lot 14. Inside the crate lay an immaculately preserved canopic jar

formed of an obscure and perfectly smooth white stone. Etched around the outer rim was a series of unfamiliar hieroglyphic sigils that the young Tremere soon grew obsessed with deciphering. After some tinkering, she broke enough of the hieroglyphic code to release what she believes is a *djinn* — right out of the fables she had read so often as a child. Unknown to Hyapatia, the jar contains the imprisoned essence of the Lord of the Dream Court, sequestered within by the sorcerers of the fallen Setite temple in the Western Desert. The Cairo Methuselah's entombed spirit has only fostered Hyapatia's mistaken impressions, while methodically using her to further its own schemes. As her romantic fascination with Lot 14 grows, Hyapatia is becoming more and more intrigued by the Shenouda "djinn" and all the wistful dreams she believes that it can fulfill...

THE RITE OF THE SUN KING

The citizens of ancient Egypt had little reason to believe that they would ever see dynastic rule come to an end. It had always been the way of the world in the land of Khem — the way of the gods, and the way it would eternally be. Therefore, when the Osirian League began making preparations to keep its enemies from usurping control over the land of Egypt once again, it had to look to the primary avenue of control that lay open to the Setites: the court of Pharaoh.

A Gangrel calling himself Anpu devised a means by which this main source of influence could be held in check — a powerful spell dubbed the Rite of the Sun King. Under its terms, no ruler of Egypt could ever again have his ear bent to the whispers of Setite corruption. Anpu had been the guardian of the ill-fated Cult of Isis when the Spell of Life fell into Set's hands. He blamed himself for the momentary lapse in vigilance that resulted not only in the death of so many among the Osirian League, but in the eventual creation of the seven foul entities known as Bane Mummies as well. His mission — one of atonement and stark revenge — was not to be denied.

Unfortunately for the Osirian League, the power of the rite was such that it had to be perpetually maintained from the other side. In short, someone would have to dedicate herself to eternity in order for the spell to thrive. Anpu waited patiently for the right individual to appear. He had received a vision telling him to watch for strength of purpose in a most unlikely place, and to make his choice only when it finally appeared before him. When Queen Hatshepsut rose to power, Anpu took notice. Here was a woman of great character who courageously took the reins of a war-torn Egypt, subsequently administrating her beloved nation with justice and grace. When the Oracle officially proclaimed her Pharaoh, Anpu knew that he had found the one. Hatshepsut lived out her days under the tutelage of the Osirian League and, when her time came, was subjected to both the Spell of Life and the Rite of the

Sun King. She was wrapped in the latter and buried in a secret location outside Memphis, there to be watched over by those of Anpu's line — the Disciples of Anubis — in an eternal vigil.

According to legend, the magical perimeter created by Hatshepsut's rite — manifesting itself across all worlds — corresponded precisely to the area covered by the scattered pieces of Osiris' body, with its outermost edges being marked by those pieces buried most distant from the others. Deir al-Bahari, Hatshepsut's mortuary temple outside Luxor and one of the most beautifully constructed buildings in the world, was erected to mark the boundary of the spell's southernmost rim. The Chapel of Anubis within its interior is said to be built around the site where Osiris' heart was first found and retrieved, and it is here that the Osirian League faked the entombment of Queen Hatshepsut's body following her death. Her temple went on to serve as the supernatural border between Lower and Upper Egypt — a massive, stone reminder of the rite's power and the Osirian dominance it would come to signify.

Although it posed no physical barrier to those of Set's line, the Rite of the Sun King greatly hampered the one thing they trafficked in and relied upon the most: temptation. Not only were all direct attempts to subvert or coerce Egypt's rulers doomed to fail, but the practical effects of all Setite magic — from Thaumaturgical rites of Akhu to their beloved Serpents itself — were greatly reduced within the rite's area of effect. In addition, none of the Children of Apophis could physically enter the ensorcelled area without suffering significant discomfort (a long-forgotten feeling to most of them). According to the tales, whenever a Bane Mummy tried to venture too far into Lower Egypt, he would begin to feel as though some force were attempting to tear free his *ba* from his body. On one legendary occasion, the wildly insane Kharebutu the Fourfold Fiend, was said to have attempted to force his way into the rite's area of effect through sheer will alone, only to find himself soon spiraling helplessly into the Underworld.

For millennia, Hatshepsut's rite held fast, suffocating the Setites with its slow and steady oppressiveness. Although the definition and application of its effects mutated over time as differing power structures took control of Egypt, the spell's functionality remained much the same. During the Mameluke era, the spell acted to protect the sultan and his closest emirs — likewise during Ottoman rule. During Egypt's brief stint as a kingdom, it sheltered the royal family and all the top ministers. Only after 1952 did the Disciples of Anubis begin to wonder as to how the rite would continue to protect those in control from the machinations of Set's childer. While the nation's status as a republic opened several inroads of influence, the spirit of the spell seemed to change with the times, and those

closest to the country's new president were found worthy of no less guardianship than those who had attended Pharaoh in ages past.

This all changed after a frightful period of nights in mid-1999 known as the Week of Nightmare. A great storm in the realm of the dead — the likes of which hasn't been seen since Fat Man and Little Boy — seized the Underworld, tearing through Amenti, and throwing the entire Egyptian deadlands into disarray. Its unearthly might shook Osiris from his eternal meditation in Duat, nearly destroying the Beautiful One in the process. It did likewise to the Queen of Repose, violently whipping her free-roaming *ba* across the Egyptian Shadowlands, and back into her recumbent mummified form. Motionless body and itinerant soul came together at last in a deafening roar of Underworld energies... and Hatshepsut awoke.

With the Queen's spirit no longer present in the Underworld to maintain the exhausting ritual, the Rite of the Sun King shattered. For the first time in over 3500 years, the Followers of Set were free to operate unrestricted in all the lands of their birth. The Children of Apophis — long since exiled from the area through the rite's manifestation in the Underworld — became free at last to roam across the entirety of their homeland.

The golden age of peace that the Osirian League had fought so hard to preserve was at an end.

FALL OF THE HOUSE OF PEACE

For over a century, the Children of Osiris maintained their Cairo home in an elegant yet tasteful manor on Sharia Mohammed Farid, just southwest of Abdin Palace. Built during the Ismaili expansion of Central Cairo, the Dar es-Salaam ("House of Peace") grew to become the largest Temple of Osiris that the world had ever known — the global headquarters of a bloodline, if truth be told. The four-story manor house was home to more than 30 Children of all prior clans and walks of life, and it maintained a strict policy of never turning away a Child in need.

This magnanimous beneficence came to a sudden and brutal halt in mid 1999. A three-alarm blaze erupted within the district of Abdin, engulfing more than four surrounding city blocks. When fire departments were summoned to the scene, they arrived to find that the source of the conflagration was the Dar es-Salaam itself. The entire structure — courtyards, *mashrafiyya* and all — had been consumed in a hungry and unrelenting flame that was already spreading to the adjoining houses. The House of Peace had become a towering inferno, and with it burned the Children of Osiris, signaling the end of an era begun almost 10,000 years ago.

Witnesses report seeing several individuals stumble past the open windows, completely engulfed in white fire. Others claim that they saw silhouetted figures evaporate into thin air right before their eyes. What can be verified

is that a number of survivors were escorted from the burning building that day. Some emerged gasping for air, having been nearly overcome by the smoke. Others seemed to be unaffected by the fumes, but they were greatly disoriented by the brightness of the sun — almost as if they hadn't been outside for years.

Officials never did confirm the cause of the fire (publicly), but a rumor was leaked that it was somehow started in several different places inside the manor — *all at the exact same time*.

THE CHILDREN OF HAQIM

For many centuries and through many struggles, an intra-clan peace existed between the Assamites of Cairo. This peace came to an end with the formation of the Camarilla and the ensuing pogrom on those of the clan. Antara, the Banu Yashkur founder, used his extensive contacts among the region's Camarilla vampires to negotiate the Assamite position, helping to broker the treaty that resulted in the shameful Tremere Curse. Although he was among the first in line to subject himself to its effects, many resented the founder for his so-called cowardice in the face of the enemy.

Since then, something of a rift has developed among the Assamites of Cairo, and Banu Yashkur can be said to be divided into two camps in the coming Final Nights. There are those who continue to follow and support the venerable Antara, and there are those who would see him removed from all power and standing, considering him a terrible modern representative of their clan in Cairo. The majority of those who make up the latter group are younger Assamites and, more often than not, followers of Antara's most vocal opponent, Tel'aat. While the founder retains the support of his child, Councilor Imanna, as well as several other distinguished clan members, the tide is beginning to turn in favor of Tel'aat and his followers. Although she is a respected representative of their domain, Imanna may soon fall under her sire's legacy if she can not assume the mantle of leadership and rein in the disparate factions of the clan.

What many of the younger clan members are unaware of is that the city would be in considerable trouble without Antara. It is through his efforts alone that the power of the Dream Court continues to be kept in check. His seals covering the mouth of the Well of Sorrows behind the Gayer-Anderson House ensure that the Setite Methuseleh's corruption stays in the sewers below, while his message of unity continues to keep the Kindred above at least in peaceful negotiations. All-out war would surely have erupted not only between rankled clan members but between the clans themselves, were it not for his continued presence as the voice of reason in Banu Yashkur. Despite the best of intentions, the fruition of Tel'aat's plans could ultimately lead Cairo to ruin.

THE FOLLOWERS OF SET

As far as many Kindred are concerned, the story of Egypt is the story of Set and those would follow his legacy of loyalty and immorality. While the clan is indeed tied to the land, which has always been its ancestral home, the story of the Egyptian Setites themselves is one that would likely confound those outside the clan. Since their earliest desert nights, the Setite courts of Egypt have existed not as a unified front against opposition to the clan, but rather as examples of how the clan itself, more than any outside force, fails its Antediluvian god.

After millennia of fratricidal treachery and deceit, only five major temples of Set remain within Egypt's borders come the Final Nights, and even this number is in question as one court has suddenly all but ceased to be. All the courts described herein have existed for millennia, and have been quarreling viciously amongst themselves all the while.

THE COURT OF MIRACLES

Unlike the other major temples to Set, Egypt's northernmost court was established only after a foreign presence had already staked its claim. Located in Alexandria, the Court of Miracles was founded in the 2nd century BC by a mysterious all-female cabal of Setites. Its founding members seem to have enjoyed peculiar and often romantic relations with Alexandria's rulers of the era — the Ptolemies — and they are rumored to have somehow been involved in the arrival of their progenitor, Alexander the Great.

Shortly after its foundation as a true Temple of Set, the Alexandria court was called upon to join the war against the Osirian League. However, to the shock of the other Setites, it refused. During this time, all manner of rumors began to float down the Nile toward the other, more traditional courts to the south. Indeed, the vast majority of the clan "gossip" of the time pertained to the new, unorthodox cult of Setites in charge of the capitol city's temple.

When the city of Cairo grew to prominence after the Arab conquest, the Court of Miracles was once again called upon — this time by the far-off Setites of what would come to be the Court of Steel and Sky, which had lost its Antediluvian lord in the intervening years and grown concerned about the rise of the Dream Court. What was once an innocuous (if tolerable) cult of hedonists dedicated to the perverted worship of its own sleeping god had quickly grown into its own as a military and economic power. Worse yet, Cairo's star was still on the rise, and its rapid expansion did not seem to be slowing down in the slightest.

Nevertheless, the Court of Miracles remained obdurate, even willfully so. Even after Cairo's rising star had long since eclipsed the brilliance of their own city, the

Setites of Alexandria refused to allow the southern courts to pull the Court of Miracles into their power games. Still, they understood the wisdom of good business, and they began to engage in open trade and diplomatic negotiations with their cousins in-country, while the Setites of the Dream Court remained steadfast in their insularity.

After the death of Alexandria's Prince Marcellus during the events of Black Saturday, however, the Court of Miracles began to change. It closed off negotiations with many of its clanmates and even evicted one Setite ambassador who had taken up permanent residence. As far as the Followers of Set are concerned, the glorious memory city of Alexander has all but shut itself off from the outside world over the last 50 years. Many are baffled at the situation, and some believe that the answer lies in the undeniable connection between the former prince and the Court of Miracles itself. At the time of Marcellus' death, both had made the beloved port-city their home for the mind-boggling duration of over 2000 years — a fact that is not easily dismissed.

THE DREAM COURT

Beneath the cramped and dirty streets of Cairo lies a seething monument to madness. The majority of Cairo's lower system of sewage tunnels, as well as all the old medieval aqueducts and byways, houses the second largest temple of Set in the world (after the Grand Temple in Uganda). With its immense scope and size, it easily dwarfs newer, more Western temples, and it even puts the other Egyptian Courts to shame. In addition to the considerable number of "clergy" in residence, Setites from all over the globe come to witness and join in the various obscure and often captivating rituals that the temple regularly holds. The clan as a whole knows that the spiritual heart of its treasured Path of Ecstasy beats loud and strong in the twisting labyrinth of tunnels underneath Cairo, which are known collectively as the Dream Court.

In its early years, the court exercised whatever ways and means were at its disposal; anything available was put to immediate and often indulgent use by the enterprising Setites. But the center of the court, such as it was, was always the Temple Head itself — the Sleeping Lord of the Dream Court. The court's first incarnation was built around a large underground cave that became the Methuselah's resting place after the Setites ousted its previous inhabitants, a warren of primitive Nosferatu that had made the muddy soil its collective haven from the sun. Soon thereafter, as aqueducts and cisterns were introduced into the growing city, the Dream Court grew. As Cairo above expanded upward and outward, so too did its subterranean counterpart, swelling outward and downward at a steady pace throughout the last thousand years. The court experienced its largest and most recent expansion with the advent of Cairo's extensive sewer system,

which saw constant growth and modernization (through Setite "assistance") during the last century.

As a result, the Dream Court of the Final Nights is a massive and surreal structure — a maze constructed of equals parts nightmare and dream. Walking within is somewhat akin to walking upon a carpet of oily snakes, and the closer one comes to the center, the more surreal the experience becomes. By the time one reaches the inner chambers of the court itself, the sense of displacement is as overwhelming as it is complete. The air takes on a heady consistency, filled with the hazy smoke of numerous braziers and censers, and the walls seem to shift and pulsate lazily of their own accord. Distractions are plentiful, as are the slaves, and the thin but pervasive smell of blood drives vampires who are unaccustomed to its presence (such as unwelcome visitors) to the brink of frenzy. The court and every cursed thing within seems crafted for both madness and Dionysian excess.

The outer perimeter of this subterranean spiral has attracted a legion of twisted creatures that are drawn to the wanton aura of the sleeping Maiden of Plagues. These wretched things resemble small, dirty pairs of feet placed beneath a maw full of razorlike teeth, and they are the Dream Court's unwitting line of defense against unwanted intrusion. Early in the 20th century, the Setite elder Kahina developed a mystical means by which those who belonged (or had been "invited" by the Setites) could be snuffed out by these creatures, leaving those who were protected unmolested in their travels to and from the Dream Court. Since then, the two groups have existed in relative harmony, delighting in one another's delicious depravity.

At the center of this maddening spiral sits the Temple Head of the Cairene Setites, called the Sleeping Lord by some, the Maiden of Plagues by others. Whatever the entity's name is, the entity is the undeniable hub of all Setite attention in Cairo, and rightfully so. At well over 5000 years old, it instills the proper amount of terrified reverence within those who come to attend it at court. Many have seen the crippling havoc that the creature can wreak with but a thought. All in attendance have come to believe that their Sleeping Lord sleeps in order to maintain dreaming contact with its sleeping grand-sire — Set himself — and that it is the only one, of all the Father's children, to receive this precious blessing. It is this last notion that gives the Cairo temple its world-famous moniker, filling all those in attendance at the Dream Court with both numbing fear and an uncontrollable excitement.

In addition to its inescapable aura of power, the Sleeping Lord has made blood servants of a handful of an extinct animal species — whispered to be the lost feline breeding stock of an Egyptian tribe of werewolves. These sleek and powerful creatures, numbering some two dozen (all are centuries old, at least), are

blood bound to the Methuselah, and they protect it with their unnaturally prolonged lives. Some say that the endangered cats were a gift to the Sleeping Lord from Set himself — all the more reason why Cairo's Setites give them an extremely wide berth.

As if age, power and reputation weren't enough motivation for awe, the entity itself is a marvel of the natural order gone horribly awry — a sight maddening enough to send even the most stalwart to their knees. An ageless, sexless, nearly formless mass of blackish-green flesh, the Methuselah's body (such as it is) swarms with unmentionables of every gruesome shape and consistency. Various ichors ooze across its scabrous hide, and it

THE REVERIE

For centuries, the Dream Court subtly influenced the minds and hearts of the city's teeming populace through the dreaming meditations of the Sleeping Lord. But after the Assamite elder Antara acted to seal the creature's maddening presence in the tunnels below, new steps needed to be taken to ensure the spread of the Temple Head's vision for the kine of Cairo. Therefore, the Setites of the Dream Court have brought the city to him for the last century-and-a-half.

These Setites led stupefied mortals from the city above into the labyrinth of tunnels below, there to bask in the unholy radiance of their Temple Head. This process is referred to as "the Reverie," and it is considered a highly sacred religious rite among the Setites of the Dream Court. Through this Reverie, the Setites of Cairo keep the waking world above distracted and at ease, while they suck the city's very life away.

Mortals chosen for the Reverie are treated with a special combination of illicit pharmaceuticals and post-hypnotic suggestions, then carefully placed around the lip of a sunken pool at the center of the maze of underground tunnels. Upon a black dais in the center of this pool rests the Sleeping Lord of the Dream Court. Only when the mortal in question has fully succumbed to the Methuselah's maddening presence is he then returned to the city above.

While mortals taken thus do not remember the details of their nocturnal activities, some are allowed to recall the experience in dreams, wherein they see whatever visions the Sleeping Lord has given to bring back with them. Most are taken at random, but some are targeted for capture for one reason or another. These individuals are typically chosen for their knowledge, influence or position in the world of the kine, and they are subjected to the Reverie many times over the course of several months. At the end of this process, such mortals — called *thrills* — have lost all sense of personal awareness, becoming unwitting agents of the Dream Court in the bustling city above.



belches noxious fumes from an unknown number of hidden orifices. Should one be able to look at the thing for any length of time, he would notice that, above and beyond all this, the creature appears to be *melting*. Its form has distended over time, and, although eyes, nostrils and even fingers can be seen protruding from various unsavory sites, the Sleeping Lord of the Dream Court resembles nothing of the human being it might once have been.

THE FIRE COURT

In response to the advent of Hatshepsut's rite, the Fire Court was established in the second millennium BC just across from Deir al-Bahari near modern-day Luxor. It was intended to act as a fortress on the front lines of the conflict, where Set's childer would work to undermine the spell whose radius of effect began mere yards from their newly erected temple. Although they failed to discover either the source or how to nullify the rite's effects, it was not for lack of trying. In the Fire Court's 3500-year history, its residents have gathered much information about the occult through both in-house study and the numerous distinguished visitors who have traveled to attend their high priestess, the child Methuselah Neferu.

One such visitor was the infamous Sascha Vykos, a Tzimisce elder and Noddist scholar who, during the 19th century, was Neferu's resident master interrogator. Although the Fire Court and the Dream Court have worked closely with one another over the centuries in matters relating to the Rite of the Sun King, they are still ideologically opposed. The Fire Court has forever been a stronghold of Typhonism, and its inhabitants, in their inimitable Typhonian way, are considered antiquated relics by the unorthodox Setites of Cairo.

Another point of contention rests with the Giovanni. For their part, the denizens of the Fire Court don't understand their Cairene neighbors' aversion to the Giovanni. Over the centuries, Neferu and her entourage have learned a great deal through Giovanni intercourse (and, on occasion, dissection). As the Dream Court wishes to foster the impression that nothing occurs in their city without at least tacit permission, the Fire Court remains unaware to this night that it is *not* the Setites who strive to keep the Giovanni out of Cairo, but a force even more terrifying.

(For more on the Fire Court, see *Giovanni Chronicles III: The Sun Has Set*.)

THE COURT OF DUST AND BONE

For many centuries, even the Followers of Set declined to brave the arid wastes of the Western Desert. Mortals (and, therefore, feeding) were scarce here, and few Setites saw reason to erect an actual temple in a Set-forsaken spot amidst a sea of sand. Not many, but a few nonetheless.

In the early years of Christianity, a temple to Set arose in the Western Desert outside of Wadi Natrun. It was

founded by a family of Typhonian fanatics descended from an elder Setite who claimed to have "found the key to unlocking the power of the Setite form." Through sorcery and scholarship, these insular Setites strove to come closer to Set's wisdom and, thus, to Set himself. Although it is the second youngest of Egypt's major active temples, it has still seen constant use for almost two millennia, and it had become a powerful center of Setite mysticism and learning by the dawn of the modern era.

For centuries the Court of Dust and Bone remained an aloof and uninvolved member of the Egyptian Setite family, bearing a constant (if quiet) distaste for its idle and hedonistic cousins at the Dream Court. While the other courts bickered over ideology and the mortal resources at their disposal, the Setites of Wadi Natrun were content to remain isolated in quiet study. With the shattering of the Rite of the Sun King in 1999, however, they were greeted with an unusual offer from their Typhonian brothers at the Court of Steel and Sky.

The Aswan Setites put it quite plainly: All they desired was access to the substantial resources of Egypt's capital city—something long denied them by the Setites of the Dream Court. While the dreaming Methuselah was in torpor, and, therefore, in a considerably weakened state, the newly empowered sorcerers could craft a potent spell to entrap the Methuselah's dreaming spirit while it roamed. If they are successful, the Setite sorcerers could then replace the trapped spirit with that of one of their own. It would simply be a matter of subsequently "reawakening" as the Maiden of Plagues, and beginning to influence matters in Cairo directly.

For their part, this pact would grant the Setites of Wadi Natrun access to valuable lore that had been forbidden them for centuries, including (if the rumors were true) the location of Set himself. The added fact also existed that the Court of Dust and Bone would be in control of the Dream Court at the conclusion of their endeavor, the Aswan Setites reminded, if all went as planned. All that would be expected in return was the right to operate unrestricted within the city of Cairo thereafter.

Together, the Setites of both camps began to work on the spell that would be required to accomplish such an end. The Court of Steel and Sky submitted endless resources in the form of materials and other costs, while their fellow conspirators concentrated on discovering the complex magical formula required for such a spell. When the work was finally complete, the Setite sorcerers channeled and focused all their power against the dreaming Cairo Methuselah, temporarily imprisoning its ancient essence within a specially prepared canopic jar.

The spell as well as the scheme had been successful, and the Setite sorcerers were now ready to take the final step and replace the spirit of one of their own inside the

Methuselah's tortured form. All seemed to be going according to plan... that is, until the sudden and befuddling disappearance of the entire Court of Dust and Bone. Several months ago, every body inside the temple—each Setite in attendance therein, as well as every mortal cultist—simply vanished. All that was left behind was the structure itself, and all its many inanimate treasures... including the ensorcelled canopic jar containing the spirit of the Maiden of Plagues.

With the temple's mystical wards no longer in effect, the entire structure suddenly became visible to the naked eye for the first time in centuries. Soon enough, local mortals happened upon the abandoned temple, resulting in the notification of the Egyptian Antiquities Service and, therefore, the Tremere of Cairo. Within a matter of days, the head of the chantry himself left the dusty halls of his museum to pursue this thrilling new find. The ensuing so-called "dig" began promisingly. Dr. von Aupfholme began sending back artifacts from the Wadi Natrun temple, labeling them in successive lots as a new exhibit called the Shenouda Cache. Shortly thereafter, however, all contact with the team ceased entirely, leaving the Tremere of Cairo concerned. According to the single report they have since acquired on the subject, every member of the accompanying archeological team has vanished from the site without a trace.

THE COURT OF STEEL AND SKY

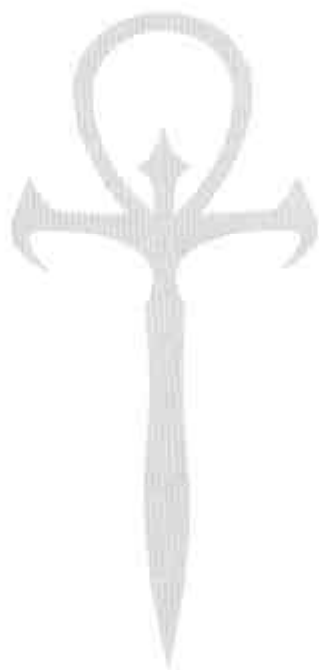
Egypt's southernmost stronghold sits on the site of an ancient temple where, according to legend, Set himself once held court after being driven from Lower Egypt. In its current incarnation, however, the court itself is the youngest of Egypt's existing Setite temples. Unlike their antiquated cousins to the north, the Setites of Aswan have welcomed the sweeping changes that have visited Egypt in the last century. They strive to keep their fingers on the pulse of emerging technologies in the new millennium, and they have struck up a tentative working relationship with a cabal of like-minded Lupines who operate in and around southern Egypt. The Court of Steel and Sky also left behind a satellite temple in Abu Simbel which reports on the activities of the surrounding Lupines, as well as the numerous tribes of Bedouin that they have sworn to protect.

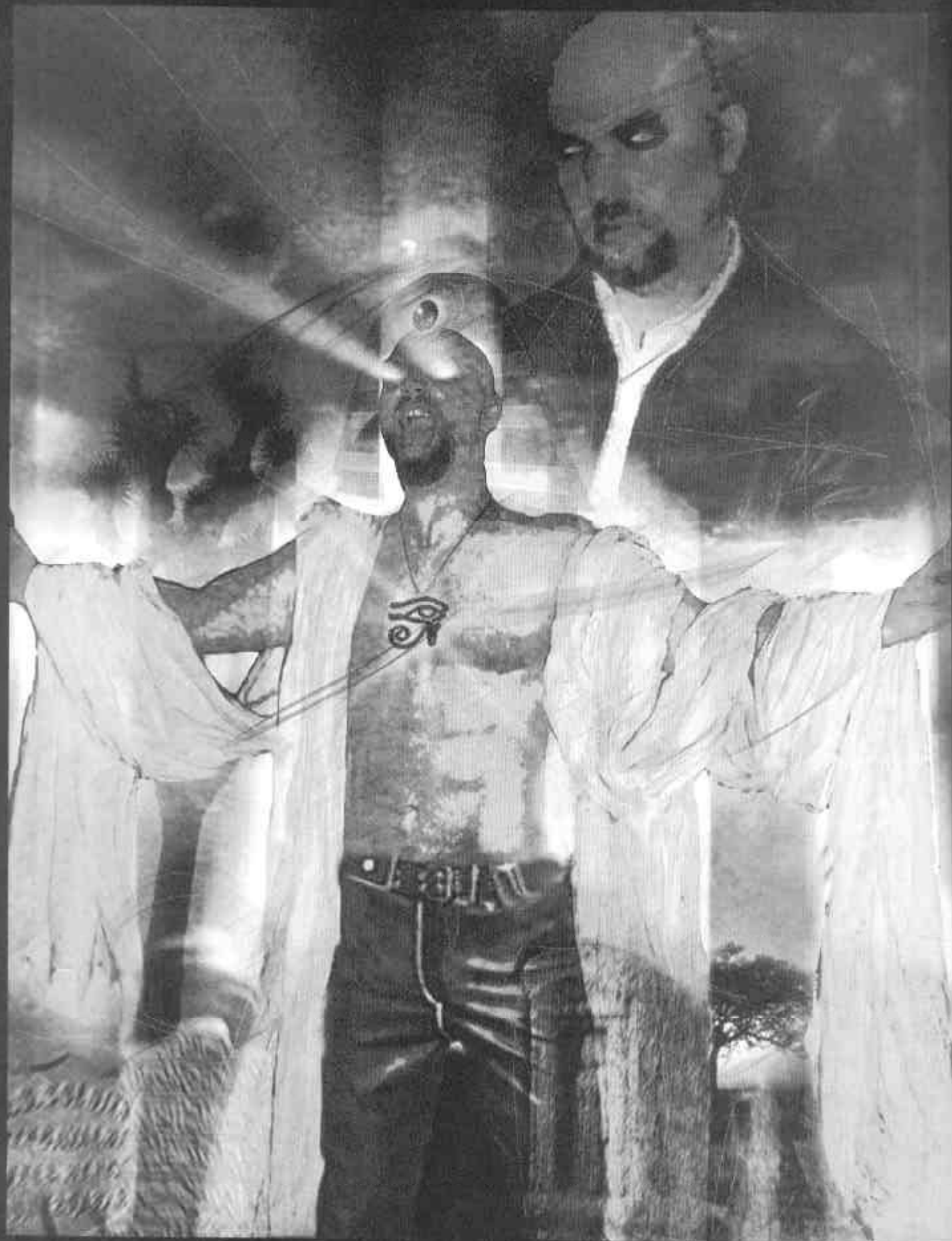
Their modernist outlook has also led them into extensive dealings with mortal finance and development agencies such as USAID and UNESCO, resulting most famously in the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Completed in 1970 after 18 years of work, the dam was built to regulate the flow of the Nile and provide a consistent water supply to the Egyptian people. Behind this project, the Setites of Aswan have used the dam and the resources it brings in to do their part in the war against the Osirian League. Over the years, they have used the

dam to cause significant water damage to many ancient sites along the Nile in their efforts to combat the Rite of the Sun King.

Although they had been unable to locate the spell's source, they reasoned that they might be able to disrupt its effects by corrupting whatever structure the rite was housed in. In one such case, the creation of the High Dam reservoir necessitated the relocation of an entire temple at Abu Simbel which otherwise would have been submerged. The edifice was relocated block by block to higher ground, but the dismantling actually concealed an attempt to unseal any existing spells that the structure may have maintained. However unsuccessful the attempt was, the Abu Simbel project is remembered to this night as a bold display of Setite power and influence.

The Aswan Court is also the current residence of the Nubian Kindred known as Jubal — one-time advisor to Sultan Antonius — who works alongside the Setites to undermine the activities of Cairo's vampires. Following his flight from Cairo in the 15th century, Jubal was welcomed with open arms in Aswan, where he has acted as Court Vizier ever since. He particularly loathes Prince Mukhtar Bey, whom he blames for the death of his former liege, and he has gleefully encouraged the bitter rivalry between the Court of Steel and Sky and Cairo's Dream Court during his tenure as counsel to the Aswan Temple Head. It was upon the embittered advisor's word that the decision was finally made to forge an alliance with the Court of Dust and Bone against the Setites of Cairo.







APPENDIX:
SHADOWS IN DUST
THE HIDDEN HOST

I think the point is to make us despair... to remind us we are animal and ugly
—Father Merrin, *The Exorcist*

Despite the undeniable age and power of Cairo's active Kindred, some, yet dwarf their petty unlives with the sheer weight of their existences. (Those who watch from the shadows as the pawns of the Final Nights move themselves inexorably into place.) And, although these few figures typically keep to those same shadows, the potential weight of their actions is unmistakable. One overt move from some of those described herein would

send ripples throughout the city, affecting each life and unlife with which they might come in contact. As such, players may soon find their characters' efforts in Cairo being either subtly guided or hindered in some way, without ever knowing why. Those who take notice and are able to dig deep enough into Cairo's mystery may well find themselves eventually led to one or more of the following remarkable individuals.

ABDALLAH, INCONNU MONITOR OF CAIRO

4th generation Cainite of indeterminate clan, sire unknown

The Kindred who would come to be known as Abdallah was Embraced under peculiar circumstances in Mesopotamia, some time around the year 0 AD. While a baby boy-child was being born unto Joseph and Mary in far away Bethlehem, an aged Kurdish shepherd was making his way along a lonely stretch of hill upon the pastures behind his home. Suddenly, from all around him the world began to shake, and a nimbus of white light appeared at the crest of the meadow beyond. Time itself seemed to first slow and then stop completely, as a dark figure appeared to him, set against the backdrop of the meadow's eldritch glow.

With a voice like boiling water across ice, the shadowy being spoke. It knew of the state of the shepherd's darling Mara, who even now began to enter labor in expectation of the birth of his first child. The figure spoke to him of family and of a line — the shepherd's own — and of a grand plan involving both. Abdallah, the entity explained, was the first father of a line that would eventually come to produce a man whom it referred to as the "Doorway," the last descendant, and the one through whom all of his kind would unite during the end times.

The entity further explained that Abdallah would be brought into "life everlasting," that he may serve as the eternal monitor of this most important of prophecies, for who better to see the signs for what they are than the mortal progenitor himself? The being told him he must wait and watch for three portents. First, one of Abdallah's line would appear, and he would come to great power in the mortal realm as both defender and uniter. Second, a being of the "in-between life" — that is, undead — would arrive. He would come claiming no vampiric family, but he would stand proud in the fact. Third, this clanless warrior would eventually (and inevitably) rise to sovereignty over those of his own kind. He would be the first such "bastard"



CAIRO BY NIGHT

prince that the world would ever know. After the Embrace, the entity vanished back into the swirling void from which it had come, leaving Abdallah as both ancestor and heir to his newfound mission.

For over a millennium, Abdallah wandered the Middle East, waiting for a hint of the first sign and growing ever wearier at the agonizing passage of time. In the interim, only the rise of Islam kept him sane and focused on his task. It seemed to Abdallah as if the Prophet spoke directly to him, and he grew to see how his own mission fit seamlessly into God's plan. Islam, he understood, was the path that must be walked, and the individual spoken of in the prophecy would be a Muslim of his line who was destined to act as the door to Heaven itself.

Then, in the late 12th century, came a man of Abdallah's line by the name of Salah "the Righteous." Salah al-Din, as he came to be known, swept through the Middle East, tirelessly defending his homeland from the Crusading Franj. When he arrived in Egypt, claiming its vast kingdom after the death of the last Fatimid Caliph, he fulfilled his second role in the prophecy as uniter. Abdallah knew that he had found the one, soon following in his descendant's footsteps in making the City Triumphant his new home. After Salah's death, Abdallah began to wait for the second sign — his reappearance in the world of the undead.

Exactly two centuries after the mortal rise of Saladin, a vampire named Mukhtar Bey arrived at Antonius' court, claiming no lineage and no line. When the Caitiff easily passed the sultan's tests of mettle, thereby becoming a full member of the Ventrue's entourage at court, Abdallah knew that the second sign had arrived. Mukhtar Bey — the vampiric reincarnation of Salah al-Din — was the last descendant of Abdallah's line.

During this time, Abdallah joined the ancient sect known as the Inconnu, in the hope that by doing so he could keep those who might know of the prophecy from interfering with its fulfillment. He became their Monitor in Cairo, effectively marking the city as his own as far as the other elders were concerned.

But all was not well in the sultan's court. Mukhtar Bey was indeed growing to prominence, as the prophecy had described that he would, but he also seemed to be growing dangerously attached to the powerful Roman Ventrue to whom he had pledged his loyalty. Abdallah knew that, by that time, Antonius had fallen so far under Setite sway himself, that such a fascination on the Caitiff's part would make him a *de facto* pawn of the Setites as well — which was precisely the thing Abdallah wished to prevent. Fearing the presence of a blood oath (which would have prevented Mukhtar Bey from escaping his own plight), Abdallah began to plot the removal of the antiquated Ventrue at last.

When the time came for Abdallah to put his plan into effect, he did so operating through a revolutionary Lupine named Ahmed Slips-the-Mirage. Most of the Kindred in the city at that time knew of the rising Lupine insurgency, and Abdallah simply waited for the most opportune time to strike, when tensions between the two groups had peaked. The stratagem was a masterstroke. Not only did it

rid him of the infuriating sultan, but the resulting fury among the city's Kindred ensured that Egypt's Lupine presence would remain minimal for centuries to come.

Unfortunately for Abdallah's dream, the assassination was disastrously ill timed. He had expected the Lupine attack to bring out the best in his Caitiff "protégé" — to give him the opportunity to rise and grasp the greatness for which he had been destined. But when Abdallah entered the palace grounds after the battle, Mukhtar Bey was nowhere to be found. Confused, Abdallah withdrew to recalculate, and he has not emerged since.

Currently, the ancient Caimite waits for yet another sign, a signal that all may not be lost, and that the time of which the prophecy spoke may yet arrive. Abdallah fears that in acting too quickly during the Night of the Long Knives, and thus prematurely hastening the arrival of the third sign, he somehow foiled God's plan. He now watches the movements of his protégé very closely, taking special note of the return of the True Brujah warrior known as Al-Muntaqim. He knows that the two have been engaging in some kind of secret correspondence, and he feels that the nature of this intercourse is vitally relevant to his own beliefs. Should Abdallah discover the true purpose behind their collusion, those beliefs may well shatter — along with what remains of his sanity.

ANGELIQUE, GUARDIAN OF THE NECROPOLIS 5th generation Cappadocian, childe of Lazarus

The reclusive Methuselah who dwells in Saqqara is one of the most powerful Kindred currently active in Egypt. She was Embraced when the Cappadocian scholar known as Lazarus first moved to the land of the dead in the early years of Christianity. According to legend, Lazarus wandered the desert upon his arrival in Egypt, paying a visit to each of the many new Coptic monasteries that had begun to dot the region. He came upon one particular monastery, finding an unusual young woman alone within. She was surrounded, literally, with the decomposing bodies of the monastery's inhabitants. All had apparently died from some bizarre plague — all except the girl, who murmured softly to the monks' remains as though they were still capable of listening.

Lazarus knew that he had found his new home in Egypt, and he Embraced the sickly looking girl on the spot, making her the first and only childe Embraced during his self-imposed exile. Lazarus entered torpor soon after, and Angelique pledged herself to the eternal service of both his body and his ethics. She remained in Saqqara, a silent presence throughout the centuries, while the nearby city of Cairo grew to global prominence. Silent, that is, until the arrival of the Giovanni.

Angelique contacted Mukhtar Bey through her operatives of choice, the Lilim, who quietly brought her concerns before the Mameluke prince. Although he certainly bore no love for the Giovanni, his had always been an open city, so it was not his place to summarily evict them until such time as they acted in a manner unbecoming the Kindred of his city. Therefore, he politely refused the request, inviting the Lilim to extend to their marron all other resources at his disposal, should she ever find need.



The response was for Angelique to make a necromantic overture in the form of the grisly display known as the *danse macabre*. She chose to endanger the Masquerade with these uprisings of the dead, which also served to create considerable unrest among the kine. Although he was rarely one to buckle under such vulgar pressure, the prince recognized the power of the ancient Cappadocian, and he eventually capitulated after years of increasingly disturbing incidents.

A compromise was reached whereby, if the current family of Ghiberti Giovanni were to up and leave Cairo for some reason, then further forays into Cairo by the clan would be refused. That was the best the prince could do, and the rest was up to Angelique. In addition, he would keep the Kindred of his domain away from the west bank of the Nile, particularly the vast necropolis sprawling between Giza and Saqqara. In exchange, she would cease all overt disturbances, as well as act to rein in the area's significant population of restless dead. She further promised to keep the prince abreast of any significant developments in the Underworld through her intermediaries, the Lilim.

Soon after, the Ghiberti who had been stationed near the Nile side port met their ends in a mysterious fire, from which only a single ghoul escaped to tell the tale. The prince seized the chance provided him and created a propaganda campaign around the incident, accusing the Giovanni of endangering both the Masquerade and the other Kindred who dwelt in the area. Since that time, the Giovanni remain the only clan to be unequivocally banned from his city — a stance that continues to be supported by the majority of Cairo's Kindred residents.

These nights, Angelique is busily preparing herself for the return of her sire, who begins to stir from his eons-long meditation even now. She alone knows the location of his tomb, and she would take the secret to the grave and beyond, if necessary. From his place of fitful sleep, Lazarus

has begun to speak to her in waking dreams, making her intuitively aware of what is to come and what preparations need to be made. If her interpretations of these visions are correct, his awakening will signal both a reconciliation of the Harbingers of Skulls (known as the "Lazarenes") and a most terrible reckoning with the brood of one Augustus Giovanni, and she finds herself anticipating the arrival of both with an almost childlike glee.

THE SLEEPING LORD, MAIDEN OF PLAGUES
5th generation Follower of Set, childe of the Scorpion King

Had Set's general in the war against the north been aware of the consequences of standing against the avenging angel of Ra, he may well have thought twice about it. Brave as he was, the Scorpion King merely sought to face down the rampaging beast that seemed bent on tearing the rightful kingdom of Set out from under him. In so doing, he was inadvertently subjecting all those of his line to that over which Sakhmet held frightfully potent dominion: pestilence.

Had the Scorpion King been victorious in his mighty battle with the Eye of Ra, who knows what would have occurred. When Sakhmet smote him into nothingness at last, however, she may as well have done likewise to all those whom the Setite lord had ever sired, as all such individuals were instantly and eternally subjected to her wrath in the form of a terrible blood curse. One such childe, a mere neonate at the time, was the very individual who would grow to become the Lord of the Dream Court resting beneath the modern city of Cairo — a creature known in the millennia between as the Maiden of Plagues.

For centuries after its sire's death, the cursed Setite sought simply to create childer of its own, that it might broaden its power base. All potential candidates in this regard either died in writhing agony or were driven mad by the Embrace — such was the power of Sakhmet's curse. Either way, the Lord of the Dream Court could not propagate. It soon gave up on this endeavor, eventually seeking only to escape the tortured form that had become its eternal prison, a form that grows weaker with each passing night.

The creature initially found that by entering torpor, it could delay the pestilential rot that overwhelmed its once-human body. Whenever it slept, thus putting the activity cycle of its undead form into stasis while refreshing its mental and spiritual fortitude, it found that it could concentrate its power more effectively. During sleep, it focused its energies toward the mystical subjugation of Sakhmet's curse, hoping to eventually best the wretched spell altogether. Although it never accomplished this feat, it did find that when it awoke after such a meditation, it could release all the energy it had thus contained without suffering any of the deleterious effects on its person. Although hundreds, and often thousands, suffered from the periodic rise of the Plague Lord over time, the creature itself was spared. Eventually, however, its defenses would



break down and the curse would take hold again, forcing the accursed creature into torpor once more.

Recently — in the past couple of centuries or so — the cycles of torpor began to grow longer, with each period of waking activity growing shorter. The Methuselah came to envision the time when it must forever sleep in order to simply preserve its existence. Realizing that after so many times around, the curse it had eluded for so long would finally come to claim its due, the Plague Lord knew despair.

That is, until the appearance of the Herald.

The Methuselah seeks the Herald as a way out from under Sakhmet's terrible curse. After foretelling of the arrival of the One With Child, it immediately made her acquisition a top priority for those who attended it at the Dream Court. Some who know of her existence believe that their lord wants the Caitiff girl for her unborn child, some for her thin and clanless blood. Others still believe that she is the key figure in an ancient Setite prophecy. Of all the things that the appearance of the Herald might foretell, the Plague Lord's final chance at salvation is the most certain: Without her, it is doomed to an eternity of imprisonment of an entirely different sort, ignominiously trapped within the vessel known as Lot 14.

NETJERU-KHEMI, THE HEART OF JUSTICE
The Undying Son of Horus

None of the undead in Cairo dares to venture into the Southern Cemetery in the Cities of the Dead. Even the young Kindred know that something (or someone) dwells there with power beyond even their ordinary comprehension. For years, Kindred who strayed too far into the southern portion of the cemetery simply vanished. Mortal agents sent to investigate returned with no memories of their experiences, and even Auspex has failed to reveal what they may have encountered; the memories simply aren't there to find. Although many vampires in Cairo are concerned about the area, the Cities of the Dead are now

home to over three million people, and they would make vital feeding grounds to any who could liberate them from what lurks within.

Those who are bold enough to challenge the area, however, may be in for more than they bargained for. The lord of the Southern Cemetery is a venerable mummy — one of the first among the Shemsu-Heru. Long ago, in a time the Reborn barely remembers, Set slew and Embraced his true love before his very eyes. The Antediluvian spared him for reasons unknown (presumably because the young Egyptian mortal was beneath his godlike notice). Now, some seven millennia hence, Netjeru-Khemi wields far more power than even Set could ever have envisioned. Centuries upon centuries of anger have only further chafed at his frail sanity, and he has come to see himself as a judge of the undead whom he believes violate *ma'at* (balance and harmony) by their very existences. He knows many occult secrets, including how and why the Setites ritualistically remove their hearts. (He knows that they do this so that, when their time comes, their tainted souls cannot be weighed at the gates of eternity.) Therefore, Netjeru-Khemi has vowed to do what the gods cannot, acting as judge and executioner to those who would dare sidestep their judgment.

For all his power, however, the embittered mummy has a secret of his own that tears at his soul. Time and hate have washed away the face and the name of his true love. His once vibrant memories have faded, leaving only his feelings for her, and the frustration and pain of his disgrace torment him incessantly. More than anything, he wishes to find his lost love and free her from her terrible curse — or to destroy the abomination that she has become. During his time in the Cities of the Dead, he has gathered several potent artifacts and developed many secret powers in his drive to topple the considerable power of Cairo's undead. He has abilities far beyond those of most mummies, even to the extent that most would consider him the god of his own domain.



ARTWORK: SHADOWS IN DUST: THE HIDDEN HOST

Netjeru-Khemi senses that this time is one of great significance. The eldest among the undead will soon rise, leading to an age of darkness and terror wherein they battle one another over the sole right to devour humanity. He believes that when this happens, Set will reveal himself and step forward to make his claim. When he does, Netjeru-Khemi will confront him, and if his long-lost love has not been found by then, he will deliver unto Set the judgment that the monster has eluded for so long. If he is victorious in this, all the get of Caine will then know the full measure of the wrath of the gods....

One way or another, the time of the cursed get of Caine is coming to an end.

HATSHEPSUT, QUEEN OF REPOSE

The Undying Daughter of Horus

For over 3500 years, one among the Shemsu-Heru took a brave stand in the name of her father against the minions of the Father of Lies. This Reborn, the only mortal woman to have ever worn the crown of Pharaoh, served as the undying key to the door of the Rite of the Sun King in all that time. Although Queen Hatshepsut subjected herself to the potent spell, ensuring that the line of Egypt could never again fully fall under Setite sway, she did so at a terrible price. Due to the taxing power of the rite, Hatshepsut was driven to spend eternity as spirit, forbidden from ever again rejoining her mortal form. Those few who knew of the sacrifice — primarily those others within the Shemsu-Heru — were both humbled by her loyalty and indebted to her devotion.

Indeed, because of the Queen of Repose, Egypt was able to become the province of the Shemsu-Heru once more. After Set slithered into the darkness some time during the first century AD, the Shemsu-Heru experienced something of a renaissance in their homeland — with the power of the rite confirmed and Set operating on the front lines no longer, many Egyptian mummies felt confident to return to Egypt. In the centuries following, many Reborn passed through the area either on business or for pleasure, and they were all greeted cordially and tended to by Hatshepsut's guardians — the Disciples of Anubis. Some even asked to visit the sleeping queen, as though she were a treasured monument or place of pilgrimage. In a way, she had become both.

During the Week of Nightmare, however, events occurred in the Underworld that precipitated a spirit storm of immense proportions — the first such upheaval in over half-a-century. This storm drove Hatshepsut's spirit back into her body, violently reuniting the two after centuries apart and, thus, waking her instantly. In so doing, the mystical connection required to maintain the spell's energy was severed, destroying the Rite of the Sun King forever.

Hatshepsut now finds herself awake for the first time in millennia. The sole purpose for her existence has become sadly and suddenly obsolete, leaving her plagued with feelings of guilt, confusion and doubt. Although she has witnessed the advancement of civilization over the years, she has done so across the blurry haze of the Shroud, and she was found vastly unprepared to rejoin reality. The stimulation alone has been overwhelming, as if stepping from a sensory-



deprivation tank, and she currently spends much of her time in a trance-like fugue. Although the Disciples do their best to see to her needs, they are beginning to wonder just how shaken up the queen might truly be. Unfortunately, there is little hope for re-invoking the precious Rite of the Sun King (or even a modernized version thereof) until Hatshepsut fully regains her senses — something that they are not certain will ever even occur.

ABU AL-INTIQAM, THE LIGHT BRINGER
Awakened Mortal, former Child of Osiris

When the Dar es-Salaam burned down in July of 1999, it took with it many of the Children of Osiris' secrets. Among these were the keys to maintaining *ma'at*, which the Children used to stave off the rapacious Beast within themselves. The undisputed master of these secrets was the head and founder of the House of Peace, himself — an elder Child of Osiris who was thought to have perished in the mighty conflagration.

While it is true that the vampire in question died that sweltering day in July, the man himself did not. The Beautiful One had risen from his meditation in Duat and, seeing the unholy state of his childer after so long a sleep, brought judgment down upon those of his line. Those who had flouted the will of their progenitor, shredding his legacy in a downward spiral of gradual surrender to the Beast, were consumed by Osiris' rage, the rage of a father whose heart had broken by the betrayal of his own children. Those who remembered their place, however, maintaining their precious humanity through both his teachings and his precious gifts, were spared their father's burning wrath.

Abu al-Intiqam, being the most devout resident of the House of Peace, was one such childer redeemed. Fittingly,

it had been the former Child's utter devotion to peace that ultimately spared him the agony of a fiery Final Death. His unthinking adherence to the tenets of his progenitor was rewarded with the lifting of the Curse of Caine from his soul, bestowing upon him the gift of life anew. Rather than die instantly, however (he had long since outlived the normal life span for which he had been intended), he simply began to age normally from that point on. What's more, he had full recollection of his considerable time as one of the undead. Through the progenitor of the former Child's bloodline, Allah himself had spoken.

Now that he is mortal once again, Abu al-Intiqam is determined to turn the world of the undead on its ear, single-handedly, if necessary. He views the rest of his allotted life span (brief by way of comparison) as a count-down — the ticking clock upon his newfound purpose. In the few short years that he has left, he will use all he has learned in seven centuries of existence to ensure that the damned Childer of Caine come to know the peace that can only be found in the utter annihilation of the Beast Within. He knows firsthand what awaits those who are worthy, and he has vowed to show them the way before it is too late for them. As for the rest... those who willingly choose to embrace the darkness rather than lead their unives in search of light shall know the judgment of the Lord. As a vampire, Abu al-Intiqam had been the unquestioning head of a house of peace. As a mortal, he will become the unforgiving hand of God.

The Light Bringer has already contacted the Sayyadin of the Dar el-Adil, and he is now making preparations to take his righteous fight to the foe. Should these two become full confederates in their endeavors, the Kindred of Cairo could well be headed for one hell of a reckoning...



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