

C L A N B O O K :

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C L A N B O O K :

Giowanni

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PRINTED IN USA.



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W&A

INTRODUCTION: KISSING COUSINS

Boston, April 4th

It was late afternoon when Kay Dolerno arrived at the Boston mansion of her mother's family. She was nervous. She had met her maternal cousins before, but not often and never in a large group like tonight's.

She lifted a fingernail to her mouth and then lowered it. They had all been filed, manicured, sculpted and lacquered expertly — not by some beauty salon worker but by her great aunt Isabel. (At least, "great aunt" was what Kay called her. She assumed Isabel had, like her mother, been born with the Milliner name and taken her husband's name.) Isabel was different from the rest of Kay's family: She was exotic and graceful and had a glamorous aloofness that Kay associated with the East Coast, and with Europe, and with other places far from her home in Georgia. It was impossible to imagine Isabel blushing, or ending up picked last for volleyball, or going to the bathroom. She had the unchanging perfection of a statue, and Kay was eager to see her again.

Kay also wanted to see her cousin Stewart Milliner, but she wouldn't tell anyone about that.

Isabel had said she would meet Kay at the party. That made Kay less nervous. Also, Isabel had brought her a beautiful red velvet dress for her birthday, but wearing the dress made Kay both more and less nervous at the same time. Isabel had given her another gift, which was in her stylish matching clutch purse.

"Do you think I'll need this?" Kay had asked.

"You never know," Isabel had said, with the secret smile of a worldly woman.

"But at the party? I thought it was just family..."

"Even with family, you never know."

Like the dress, the other gift made her both more and less nervous.

The car turned a corner, revealing the Milliner mansion. Everything that comforted her evaporated, and everything that scared her doubled.

She had seen pictures of her mother's childhood home before, of course, but they couldn't do it justice. The pictures didn't convey the barren smell of the land or the way it looked so much like a tombstone with the name worn off.

Stepping out of the car, she glanced toward one end of the house. Had she seen...? Maybe it was just the wind blowing leaves, playing on her nerves to look like flowing white cloth.

Kay had her hand raised to knock on the door when it opened, revealing her cousin — not cousin Stewart, though. Whereas Stewart was tall and healthy, the figure before her was short and pale with a bent and cringing posture.

"Cousin Kay!" He grinned and actually clapped his hands. He wore a tuxedo that hung awkwardly on him. He'd already managed to lose a cufflink.

"Hello, uh..." She struggled to remember his name. "Primo! Cousin Primo. It's, uh, good to see you."

Primo Giovanni smiled, showing even teeth that were the only perfect thing about him.

"Ah, Cousin Kay! I hoped you'd be invited this year. Come in!"

"This year...?" He ignored her question, grabbed her wrist and pulled her into the house. Looking around, Kay could see people of all ages, formally dressed, mingling, drinking. She saw a few blond heads, but not Stewart's, and she didn't see Isabel anywhere.

"Here, come with me Kay." Primo had not released her wrist, and he was pulling her insistently away from the party, toward the west wing of the house.

"I'd really...."

"No, I have something to show you! But you have to hurry!"

She'd seen Primo a few times when they were both children. He'd been ugly, whiny and tantrum-prone then, too. But he was one of the Giovanni, and Kay suspected they were the ones with the money, because even her proud mother deferred to them. Unsure what else to do, Kay went along with Primo, even though something about him, or the night, or the twisting corridors of the house made her skin tighten with fear.

Primo pulled her through a small side doorway and into a garden of thin, spindly plants.

"Primo, I'm not going another step until you tell me what you're going to show me."

"I just wanted to show you the sunset. From the top of the hill! I very much want to watch it go down all the way. Please come with me? It'll be perfect!"

Kay felt that cold sickness in her chest that came from watching someone humiliate himself and not realize it. He sounded so uncertain and needy that she acquiesced.

At the top of the hill was a cold stone bench under a desiccated tree with only one stout branch that stuck out like the arm of a gallows. Primo sat on the bench and stared, rapt, at the setting sun.

Kay joined him and, after a moment, frowned. Why had he been so insistent that she come with him if he was only going to ignore her? Wide-eyed, he gazed west, like a child watching TV. Her glance followed his for a moment, but even the sunset was ugly: Through the thick gray clouds, the red and purple orb looked tired and bruised.

Kay turned quickly. Had she heard laughter? But there was no one around.

"Primo? Is this what you...?"

"Shh! Not yet. It's not all the way down."



"That shouldn't be necessary. I'm simply concerned that your fondness for Primo might lead to regrettable haste in this important matter. Primo would be one of the youngest Embraces in the history of our clan. If he is as brilliant and valuable as you say, should we not wait a few years and allow him to pass on his qualities the mortal way?"

"Primo... is most eager to change. He knows his studies are limited while he is mortal. Now, in this crisis, can you afford to ignore a necromantic prodigy?"

"Well, I trust your judgment," Diego said, sounding suddenly bored. "If you feel he is so very worthy, I shall allow my great grandchild Giannaria to Embrace him. She has been most ardent in her desire for the consolations of childer."

Accorri blinked. "Giannaria? I thought I might give him the honor myself."

"Oh, that wouldn't do. Already, he has taken your blood as a ghoul, yes? Giving him the Embrace would bring him into a closer bond, and that sort of thing is usually reserved only for loose cannons. He does not require such controls, does he?"

"No, but..."

"If you feel like waiting, on the other hand, I might do the deed myself."

Accorri's face lit up with a greed he quickly concealed. "Oh, you honor us too much. What sort of wait are you thinking...?"

"He's already had the Proxy Kiss, so there's no hurry. Once I am satisfied that he is as precocious as you think, I suppose."

"I, uh... I suppose I'll have to think this over." Accorri covered his confusion with a sip from his heavy snifter. Eric, seeing his companion's confusion, smoothly entered the conversation in Accorri's place.

"And have you met Stewart?"

Diego's face was flat as he said, "Ah, Stewart." His tone immediately alerted Eric that something was wrong.

"Do you think Stewart is worthy of the change, Eric?" Eric glanced at Isabel, but her face betrayed nothing.

"Stewart would be a tremendous asset," Accorri said. "If you think we should wait on Primo, you could do no better than to Embrace Stewart."

"Really? I take it you're unaware, then, that he's been bound?"

"What?" Eric leaped to his feet before he could stop himself, but Diego was standing before the taller blond had finished rising. Diego's palm slapped the table hard enough to crack the heavy wood, and his voice was harsh.

"Blood bound, and not to one of ours!"

"That can't be!"

"It has been seen, Williner," Diego spat, his voice rich with contempt. "You constantly agitate for more authority, more autonomy, and yet this is how you squander the trust you're given! Count yourself fortunate if he's allowed to retain the Proxy Kiss. Or perhaps we should just bind him completely?"

"Who has done this? I'll break the bond by killing his domitor! Tell me, I... I beg you... signore." The last word came out with a humiliated crack.

"If the storm of ghosts has been such a crisis here as you claim, you have more to worry about than one wayward ghoul-child. Is this why you are in such dire straits? Because you're all thinking of your personal legacies instead of the family's needs? Or are you just exaggerating your problems so that we'll give you more license for your foolishness?"

For a moment the room was tense and deadly still.

Eric stared at Diego Giovanni. He knew, with cold certainty, that cursing him would be pure suicide but was surprised at how much he still wanted to do it, irrationally, insanely. Part of him whispered without words, showing him how sweet it would be to give in, to rage at his elder, to die in a brief, pure, thoughtless act.

Accorri watched closely. If Eric attacked, Accorri wondered, would there be any way — any conceivable way — Accorri could save him? His mind raced, going through every possibility. Except, of course, the possibility of joining him in a fight against Diego. That was simply not thinkable.

Isabel merely watched.

"I... don't think... you're being fair... signore." Each word rasped out of Eric Milliner like a knife coming up through his throat.

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Kay stumbled back into the house, to the wide eyes of her family. To every question, she just said, "Where's Isabel?" Eventually a Latin-looking man finally said, "I think she went back through the conservatory into Eric's office, but..."

Brushing away tentative hands, she kept moving. Behind her she left whispered talk.

"Did you see...?"

"I think she went off with..."

"Who is that, anyway?"

"...Isabel...?"

The conservatory was lovely. It had a Venetian-style trompe l'oeil ceiling, an inlaid floor, a baroque harpsichord flawlessly restored and tuned. A well-used bass viol sat on a stand in the corner, and a frumpy old woman sat on the bench at the harpsichord. She smoked a cigarette and caught the ashes in her hand.

"I need to see Isabel," Kay said, heading toward the door. Moving with surprising speed, the old lady got in her way.

"No one enters," she said with a thick Italian accent. Kay tried to move past her, but it was like trying to push a couch up a spiral staircase.

"No one enters," the woman repeated. Kay could feel the tears welling up inside her again when the door opened and three men emerged. The youngest of them was saying something in Italian to a blond man. Kay's Italian was very poor — something about how a man who could control his animals could still prosper. The blond man looked very angry in a cold and distant way. Then Kay saw Isabel and threw herself toward her relative.

"Kay! What... what's wrong?"

Clutching Isabel, Kay couldn't stop sobbing, even as she realized that the blond man and another, darker, man were staring at her.

"He... he tried to..."

"Shh, calm down now Kay." Isabel pushed her away, holding her at arm's length. "Kay! Look at me! Calm down!"

Gazing into Isabel's eyes, Kay felt the clenching sobs that had held her relinquish their grip. They were perfect, Isabel's eyes, dark and flawless and deep....

"Tell me exactly what happened," Isabel said.

"Cousin Primo tried to rape me."

Isabel's gaze flicked over to the dark-haired man, and as Kay looked around she realized the others in the room were staring at him — not at her, as she had feared.

The subject of their stares opened his mouth, closed it, then finally shrugged and said, "Shit. Well, good thing she's a fast runner, I guess."

His callous tone left Kay speechless. It also provoked a bark of laughter from the old woman and a glare from Isabel. Then the young man spoke.

"How did you get away?" He asked. The authority of his voice pulled her around to look, instinctively, and once she looked into his eyes the thought of lying, or even not answering, became impossible.

"I think I may have killed him," she numbly said.

"What?"

x x x

Accorri Giovanni had been a powerful man in life, and he was immeasurably stronger in death. The thought that this... this nobody girl... might have killed his beloved great-great-grandson obliterated all rational thought. Before even Isabel could react, he was at Kay's throat, lifting.

He was about to smash her head through the harp-sichord, when he realized that taking hold of her had broken her neck.

Isabel lunged at him. Eric's attempt to shield Accorri slowed her only for an instant but completely destroyed the bass viol when he landed in it. But it was enough: Before Isabel could reach Accorri, Diego was between them.

"Enough," he said.

Neither one would meet his eyes, but both stepped back.

"She was to have the Proxy Kiss tonight, Accorri," Isabel said, her voice tight, controlled.

"Fuck you," Accorri replied.

"Both of you be quiet," Diego said. Then he spoke again, this time in Greek.

A moment of chill spread over the room. Diego cocked his head and said, "Primo isn't dead. He is badly injured, however."

Accorri's grip tightened for a moment, then he dropped Kay's limp form to the floor.

"Signore, I—" Eric Milliner began.

"Hush," Diego said. Thinking hard, he was perfectly still. He did not blink or move his hands. He turned to Isabel.

"This Kay: She is the one of whom you spoke? The scholar-athlete?"

Isabel nodded, and added, "With enough guts to fight a ghoul and win," glaring at Accorri.

"She will receive the Embrace tonight," Diego declared.



"What?" shouted Accorri, for the second time that night.

"And you, Accorri, will give it to her."

This time, it was Isabel whose eyes widened with shock.

"Meanwhile, Isabel, you will find Primo and give the Embrace to him."

"But signore, this is... it's..." Even as he protested, his master's reasons were lining up in Accorri's brain. Each sire would be saddled with a disliked and distrusted neonate — the last people they'd enlist for treachery against their fellows. Also, each neonate would be bound by loyalty to the very family members they would most want to betray.

"Yes, Accorri?"

Accorri shook his head. "I wish you'd asked me to walk fire instead. But whatever you say. For the family."

"For the family," Isabel echoed, sourly. She turned to exit the music room as Accorri, resigned to his task, bent to it.

Diego turned to Eric Williner. "Perhaps you're right, Eric. Perhaps the Proxy Kiss is a bit old fashioned in these modern nights."

The old woman gave another bitter laugh.







CHAPTER ONE: A FAMILIAR CONCEIT

*Whereas his kinsmen chiefly brought him up;
So soon he profits in divinity,
The fruitful plot of scholarism graced,
That shortly he was graced with doctor's name,
Excelling all, whose sweet delight disputes
In heavenly matters of theology,
'Til swollen with cunning of a self conceit,
His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
And, melting, heavens conspired his overthrow;
For falling to a devilish exercise,
And gilded more with learning's golden gifts,
He surfeits upon cursed necromancy.*
— Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (1604 A Text)

You want a history of the Giovanni clan? You got it: A death cult of deranged Kindred Embraced the scion of the Giovanni family. This scion wasted no time burying a knife in their backs. He Embraced childer of his own, who became very rich, very powerful, or both, and all the other Kindred resented them for it. Knowing that the End of the World was coming, the Giovanni prepared while the rest of the Kindred fought with each other and guzzled fresh blood at each other's cotillions.

As to the future of the Giovanni clan, here it is, too: We win. When the great Gehenna comes and the rest of the undead are burning in smoldering columns of brimstone or sucking down their childer's precious vitae, Augustus will come forward, peel back the skin between the worlds of the living and the dead, and we'll all carve thrones from the bones of those too stupid to know what had been a long time coming.

Oh, but don't start writing checks just yet, *paisan*. You're new. All the smartmouthing I just did isn't going to help you get ahead. Not without some understanding.

Don't roll your fucking eyes at me. I'm telling you this as a favor to your mother, God rest her soul. You're one of the lucky ones. You get to learn the big picture. Most of the young ones have lazy sires or only listen when we get to the parts about making a million dollars or sitting on their brothers' faces. Most of the young ones die.

New blood like you comes pretty cheaply in the modern nights. So, now that you're Kindred you've got it all figured out, huh? All the Giovanni family secrets? Now you know why the April 4th reunions are so important and why so few get invited to them? Well then, answer me this. What is the significance of the reunion's date? And where did all these Kindred in our family come from?



No idea, huh? See, you've just gone from being ignorant kine (that's what we vampires refer to humans as, see) to ignorant Kindred. That's what most vampires refer to themselves as. Yeah, I know. It's like we've got a different name for everything. And by the way, don't ever use the word "vampire." It's stupid. Sure, Kindred is affected, but if you refer to yourself as a vampire to another Kindred, they'll probably look at you like you just shouted "motherfucker" in the middle of Mass. Shut up and deal with it. Giovanni can handle the human side of the family remaining in the dark about things; hell, we prefer them that way. With all the shit that's going down right now, what we cannot abide is another ignorant Giovanni whelp. Everything is a little too precarious to have another wet-behind-the-ears neonate Kindred around (neonate means your kind, newbie). So it's up to me as your sire, the one who Embraced you to bring you, my childe, up to speed. *Capice?* Good.

We got a lot to cover. On the plus side, though, this story's got everything — sex scandals, incest, *nigromancy*, connections to organized crime. The list goes on and on. So, sit back, relax and enjoy. Just promise me you won't make this shit into a movie, or I'll have to kill you.

BEFORE HISTORY

Now, this is the part of the "Welcome to being Kindred" talk where I'm supposed to tell you about crazy farmers murdering their brothers and ancient cities of Kindred coexisting with mortals and shit like that.

Well, I'm not going to. I'm not going to because it smacks of all that pompous self-satisfaction that the other clans have in spades. Invariably, *The Most Auguste Historiye of Our Noble Clanne* is a pack of self-congratulatory lies that other Kindred construct to fit their self-images. Believe me, I've heard enough tales of Toreador bull-dancer goddesses and marble-skinned Ventrue conquerors to know that you can trust a creation myth only so much as you can trust the teller. And remember, you're Kindred now — you can't trust *anybody* else.

Add to the fact that clan histories are largely propoganda the fact that they're outright wrong. Ask most of those other motherfuckers about the progenitor and you'll hear some cockeyed claptrap about Cain-with-an-"e" and being cast out of the Land of Nod (or maybe banished *to* the Land of Nod — I don't remember) and other sorts of riffs at the Biblical level. Now, I'm as faithful a Christian as I trust you are, but I know as well as any sensible Kindred that the Bible is fucking metaphor. Jesus, if he existed at all, was a man upon whose shoulders the weight of the world fell — in principle. He's like George Washington. He didn't

single-handedly bring the Word to a needy people, and he didn't spring from the unsexed loins of a virgin. Shit like that's just not physically possible. All of the deeds attributed to Jesus are the work of an uncountable number of early Christians, boiled down to the parable that is the Bible. It's the same with Kindred — "Caine" is an early manifestation of the Everykindred.

No, the truth of the matter is that there was no "first vampire." Or if there was, no one remembers the motherfucker's name. God didn't look askance at the world and say, "Okay, now it's time for some blood-sucking parasites to run around and fuck with the Children of Seth" — Seth being another metaphorical personage from the Bible, and the father of the race of mortals as we know it tonight. No, the earliest Kindred were part of the world as it was before the *sudario* — the wall that separates the dead from the living (and us) — came to be.

Look at some of the concepts of the afterlife that almost universally arise when you get into early cultures. The Underworld was a place you could physically go. To the Greeks, you could enter the Underworld through caves and caverns; it existed literally below the ground. To the Egyptians, traveling westward would eventually bring a man to the land of the dead. Certain Native American cultures believe that the soul goes to the "happy hunting grounds" after death. Even some more "modern" conceptualizations of what comes after death involve places: the Christian Heaven and Hell, the Norse Valhalla and Niflheim, Kabbalist Rabbi Joseph ben Shalom's "abyss of nothingness" that is crossed at the moment of death and Gnostic Awakening. These are all *places*. They're all locations. They're all geographically describable settings that, whether physical, metaphysical or spiritual, are places you can stand and smoke a cigarette.

It only makes sense, then, that if you can go to these places, you can *come back* from them.

That is what a Kindred is. It is, for better or for worse, a person who has come back from the place known as death. Not everyone can do it. And I don't think anyone can do it more than once.

Don't look sideways at me. I'm as Catholic as you are. I know that when I died I should have gone to Heaven or Hell. But I didn't. You didn't. Our souls, for whatever thanatological reason you choose to ascribe to it, got part of the way there, said, "Holy shit, I forgot something," and came back to inhabit our bodies. I don't pretend to know why — that's something the wisest elders in the clan have been studying since before there even was such a thing as Clan Giovanni. But I know that it's true.

I'm not trying to be all new-age and mystical with you. Fuck that. God has designs for a person, that's



what I believe. It just so happens that God's designs for those of us who became Kindred are just a little different from what's normal. If you ask me, you got no reason even trying to figure out why God wants Kindred stalking His creation. You may as well ask yourself why there're such things as wolves or lions. God knows. You don't. You can't, so don't fuck with it. You do your job and let God do His.

That "coming back," that return from the land of the dead is what sets you apart from the living, and it's what sets the Giovanni apart from the other undead. I'm not debating that the Embrace works. You don't have to walk to a special room that's labeled "Dead People" and step back out. Your body doesn't make the journey. Your soul does. It makes the trip and then returns to your body — that's the Embrace.

That being the case, I'm sure I have to shed only a little more light on the subject. Unless you're one of the lowborn American caste of Giovanni, you probably know that our stock in trade is souls, that the Giovanni have the power to grab the spiritual part of a mortal (or, more accurately, her spiritual residue left after she's departed) and do what we want with it. Hell, it wouldn't surprise me if some Giovanni elder somewhere knew how to create Kindred without even resorting to the Embrace, maybe catch the soul of a dead man and stuff it back into his body at the moment of transition. Ah, but never mind that — I'm getting away from myself.

The most important thing is to remember that, as Kindred, you were made. You were Embraced for a reason. Your soul animates a clinically dead body for a reason, or, more likely, a multitude of reasons that just happen to coincide. My reason for Embracing you isn't the same reason that Diego asked me to Embrace you, which isn't the same reason your mother wanted me to step forward and suggest it in the first place, which isn't the same reason that Margaret Milliner wanted to Embrace you instead of having me do it. And after all that, none of those reasons are the same reasons that God makes it possible for the whole thing to happen to begin with. Regardless of the nature of any single one of those purposes, those purposes do exist. That's the best way to look at it.

The worst way to look at it is to consider that you fucked up dying and came home for more. Welcome back. Now the rules are different.

MORTAL ROOTS

I'm not going to pretend to be an expert on this part. All the shit we're going to talk about happened as much as two thousand years ago. That's not to say we've hidden Kindred in our midst for two millennia. We've borne



that distinction for only the last thousand years, give or take. That's the reason most of those in the know believe us to be merely a product of the rise of the burgeoning middle class toward the end of the Dark Ages. That's the problem with the other clans; they overlook the longevity and resources of the mortal Giovanni family. Kindred pride can blind you to the fact that the kine can and do affect history. But I digress.

The fact is that the Giovanni family first came to prominence at the height of the Roman Empire. Of course, we weren't called the Giovanni at the time. Our precursors were known then as the Jovian family. Much as we Giovanni would later do during the Crusades, the Jovians made a tidy profit on the constant wars that plagued the Empire. The annals some elder seneschals keep at the Mausoleum in Venice even include cargo manifests the Jovian family transacted as early as 31 BC, when the Jovians shipped supplies to Octavian's armies in northern Africa and then, to make an extra buck or two, ferried spies and messages back to Rome for Mark Antony's side of the war. It wouldn't surprise me if the Jovians sold the Romans the metal to craft the nails they pinned Christ to the cross with (again, assuming that Christ was real).

And, in a tradition the Giovanni continue to uphold, the Jovians began our practice of *nigrinancy*. Of

course, the Black Art had yet to gain its dreadful stigma during the time of Roman dominance. Ancestor worship was accepted as part of the natural order. Emperors were gods, and most families kept some sort of shrine or another in their homes to please the spirits of the departed. Familial responsibility did not end with death, on either side of the *sudario*. It was important that the dutiful *lares familiares* be venerated and the spiteful *lemures* be appeased. In return, the spirits of our ancestors blessed the family's endeavors and came to our aid in time of need. In particular, the founder of our line was held in the highest esteem. Although his true name is lost to us, with the possible exception of Augustus or one of the most exacting *anziani* elders, he became identified with the deity *Dis Pater*, god of the Roman Underworld. Quite ironic, considering the root of our name came from Jove, god of the sky.

Through a combination of the mortal Jovians' shrewd business acumen and possible aid from *Dis Pater* and the family's other dearly departed, wealth flowed into Jovian coffers from all over the Empire. The Jovian family earned its wealth through moneylending, merchant ventures, shipping and travel, and even some degree of artisanship. You might say that they were one of the original conglomerates. Of course, that's not exactly true — the family certainly wasn't a very cen-



CLANBOOR: GIOVANNI

DIS PATER

Although unknown to many but the eldest of Giovanni Kindred and the most dedicated students of the family's history, the potent spirit that Giovanni *anziani* in the know consider the legacy of their family's progenitor has wielded great power in the Underworld for thousands of years. In that time, the spirit calling itself *Dis Pater*, or Father Wealth, has subtly influenced the living and undead descendants of the Jovian family with varying degrees of success. While the standard Giovanni opinion on *spiriti* is that they're only around to be used to achieve the family's goals, like any other exploitable resource, most *anziani* — and even Augustus himself — treat *Dis Pater* with respect. The Necromancers cite several reasons for this unique reverence.

First, *Dis Pater* is a being of immense power, both as a potent force within wraithly society and in terms of his own personal puissance, and it's prudent to have such a spirit on your side when many wraiths would be more than satisfied to see the Necromancers destroyed. The Giovanni's veneration and the emotional energy it generates serve to give the powerful *spirito* a reason to intercede on the clan's behalf when one faction or another in the Underworld decides it has had enough of the Kindred. For ages, a charge of direct violation of the *Dictum Mortuam* (the Code of the Dead, which until recently prohibited *spiriti* from interacting with the lands of the living) levied by someone of *Dis Pater's* influence was usually sufficient to put an end to any attempt at wraithly retaliation against the Giovanni. Tonight, given the state of things across the *sudario*, no one's sure of just what Father Wealth's reach may be. Just keep in mind that on more than one occasion, *Dis Pater* has used its influence to pull Giovanni far from the fire. And of course, by the same token, *Dis Pater* may also use his influence and might to harm those who displease him. The ancient wraith's level of power is such that those Giovanni who make the mistake of showing improper reverence or, worse still, irreverence, tend to suffer grave misfortune (sometimes culminating in their Final Death). As the Giovanni well know, a Kindred has no better incentive for respect than the sense of self-preservation.

Second, Augustus shows *Dis Pater* respect. Not that the entire clan is populated by yes-men (though given Giovanni Embracing practices, few Necromancers would deny some truth in that), but rather, this ties into the respect based on self-preservation mentioned before. If you disrespect someone Augustus Giovanni himself reveres, you are indirectly showing your disrespect of the Antediluvian himself. Given Augustus' temperament and ability to hold a grudge, this is not the way to enjoy a long unlife.

Finally, in the case of the eldest of the Giovanni especially, the reverence of *Dis Pater* is an ingrained habit. It's something the *anziani* practiced in their breathing days, with the Wealthy Father being venerated alongside the Christian saints in the uniquely Giovanni observance of Catholicism. In Giovanni dogma, *Dis Pater* is the equivalent of the patron saint of the Giovanni family itself. Although to some modern Giovanni, even a few in Italy, Catholicism is nothing more than a social event where family and neighbors spend an hour or two each week renewing ties of community, most of the mainstream branch of the family, at least, observes a devotion that, while unsettling to many Kindred outside the family, nonetheless takes a reverential stance on the Trinity and the agents of God on Earth, passed on or otherwise. The Catholic Giovanni are taught from an early age that in times of need a member of the Giovanni family may call upon *Dis Pater* for aid and that, if the need is great enough, he will respond — a fact that has been borne out for many of the *anziani* elders since becoming Kindred. Having a patron saint literally come to one's aid is a great way to reinforce a person's, or a Kindred's, reverence.

tralized entity, so far as I can tell. It was like any family, with the individual members doing what they wanted. It just so happened that the Jovian family was also a prime network. The guy who sold you Venetian sculpture also had a brother who could get you spices cheaper than everyone else paid for them, and their cousin quarried marble that would look perfect for the floors of your new *palazzo*. They were guildsmen and black marketeers, talent craftsmen and scurrilous middlemen. One would fuck your sister and another would whisper of your grievance to the Caesar. They were everywhere, almost unheard of (or at least not as promi-

nent as they would soon become) during the last days of the Senate and suddenly ubiquitous at the emergence of the Empire.

Some of the Jovians, I think, also had to be aware of the Kindred. I've talked to one of the *anziani* about what showed up on a really old bill of lading as "two casks, filled with earth and other sundry material, to be left for retrieval" at Roman ports in Corsica and at the southern tip of what became Spain. Of course, I can make no guarantees, but I'm personally certain that also, during the Punic Wars that served as the mortal cover for the Malkavian-Brujah vendetta, any number



of fleeing or rallying Kindred traveled between Carthage and Rome and perhaps back again aboard the earliest Jovian privateers. Certainly, some Jovian was Embraced by one clan or another for her personal assets. Who knows? Maybe even one of the Premascines — I'll talk about them later — or the brood-mother of one of those infamous Roman *Nosferatu dens* was one of the early Jovian Embraces.

Within 200 years — an ironically short and long time for Kindred, as you will no doubt find out unless you meet your Final Death early — this loose cabal of related mortals became a wealthy and increasingly close-knit family, setting the precedent for the Giovanni merchant princes of the coming Renaissance. Obviously, they weren't everywhere or in everything that found its way to the Empire, but that didn't matter. They were the Kennedys and the Medicis of their time. The Jovians had enough commerce going and enough contacts to expand it to keep their pockets fat for centuries to come.

With that wealth came power. Jovians gained high offices throughout the Empire, finally culminating in one of the family becoming emperor, Flavius Jovianus, in the fourth century. The Jovians had been Christian since it had been an option, if the almanacs of Ludo Giovanni are true. Flavius Jovianus became emperor after the death of Julian the Apostate, once again turning the Empire into a Christian nation after Julian's reign of paganism. Then again, Julianus Apostata was the nephew of Constantine the Great, who made the empire Christian officially. The state religion seesawed back and forth between emperors, but that's always the case with the issues in politics. Regardless of all this back-and-forth, the Jovians had chosen their side years before.

But the halcyon days were not to last. Flavius Jovianus ruled as emperor for one fucking year before dying on the way from the frontier to Constantinople. Yes, he had a Christian burial — I believe you can still find the tomb at the Church of the Apostles there. By the end of the fourth century, the Empire was already in decline in the West. Tribes of Germanic barbarians threatened to overrun Rome, and by the fifth century, it was obvious they would probably succeed. Rome was sacked twice prior to its eventual surrender to Odoacer in AD 476. Both times, the Jovians weathered the Germans' depredations by buying their longevity or with aid from their familial guardians. However, in their moment of greatest need, the *lares familiares* deserted them, or worse, appeared as *lemures* and added to the destruction.

FORTUNE'S FALL

What we later learned was that a great storm had erupted in the Underworld, to coincide with the Empire's fall. At the time, however, all the Jovians

knew was that the ancestors whom they had venerated for centuries had cut and run when their aid was most in demand. To this night, the Giovanni family no longer asks aid of wraiths, whether family or otherwise — rather, they compel it.

Fearing for its safety, the family cut its losses and fled to an island settlement founded by Roman refugees from Attila the Hun's invasions a quarter century earlier. After that, it was every man for himself for a while, but at the end of the fifth century, 12 of these island communities decide to band together under a council of their representatives. In the beginning, these settlements paid lip service to the Eastern Roman Empire, but it wasn't long before the Lombards waltzed in and kicked the shit out of the remainder of the Roman army in Italy. And so, more refugees fled to the safety of the islands of the Venetian lagoon, increasing the settlements' population. The Jovians, while on the ropes, weren't crushed, however. They adapted to the environment, settling in roles of leadership (who do you think was on that representative council?) and mercantilism. Whenever people had a need, the Jovians were always among the ones to provide.

Now the next couple of centuries were pretty quiet, by Italian standards. The Lombard invaders and the Roman forces reached a stalemate. The nascent Venice continued to grow, becoming more influential in the region, electing its first doge (the Venetian dialect of the Latin title *dux*) in the early eighth century as a response to rebellious sentiment engendered by Emperor Leo III's position in the iconoclast movement the previous year. The iconoclasts, Leo among them, saw religious iconography as sinful, because man had no right to represent God as filtered through his own feeble senses. The iconodules, on the other hand, saw no problem with representations of God, reasoning that by virtue of the Incarnation, God was man, and therefore it was no big heresy to represent him graphically. Needless to say, this was the religious hot button of the century, with iconodules claiming that the iconoclasts were replacing images of the glory of God with monuments to their own vanity (read a biography of Constantine V sometime), while the iconoclasts maintained that God's glory was God's glory and it's His decision how to reveal it. The whole situation wasn't particularly new; the question had been raised since the first stick figure that someone wrote "God" under had surfaced five seconds after the Word was spoken, but you know how easy it is to fire up the zealots on either side of an issue.

Shut the fuck up; this all has a point. From that argument, the Giovanni family emerged, complete with its modern surname, as a prominent power within the newly formed state. Divorcing themselves from the



references to Jove, god of the sky, the new Giovanni reinvented their identities in a new Italian (as opposed to Roman) context. This satisfied the iconoclast Jovians/Giovanni in that they no longer took "God" as their surname, and satisfied the iconodules in the family by removing the issue from debate altogether. Don't think that the concern was any less among the former Jovians than it was among the rest of Christianity. One of the Giovanni iconoclast's strongest proponents, Piero Giovanni, wrote two dogmatic treatises on the subject, practically screaming that, "We cannot be godly if we claim to be god when introductions are made." I hope that he's settled down now that he's dead.

NO REST FOR THE WICKED

After the resolution of that particular hysteria, things calmed down... until Charlemagne came onto the scene.

See, at the end of the eighth century, the Lombard king Desiderius decided to stick his nose into a dynastic dispute among the Franks. All this succeeded in doing was pissing off the guy who came out on top of the dispute, Charlemagne, and convincing him to head south to kick some Lombard ass. Which he did. Charlemagne defeated the Lombards at their capital of Pavia (south of Milan) in 774. In a very generous gesture, Charlemagne divided the conquered lands with Pope Adrian in Rome, creating the Papal States. Such generosity, and probably no small amount of coercion, induced the Pope to name Charlemagne's son Pepin King of Italy in 787. This is where Venice, and by extension the Giovanni, become involved.

At the turn of the ninth century, Oberlerio degli Antinori, then Doge of Venice, foolishly committed Venice to the Frankish empire — which by then had been dubbed the Holy Roman Empire — in an effort to strengthen his very tenuous grasp on power, fearing a coup like the one he himself had engineered to put himself in charge of Venice. By that time, Charlemagne was seeking to consolidate his power in Northern Italy by chipping away at areas like, oh, let's say Venice, that were historically subject to the rule of the Eastern Roman Empire. Then, when his position had become even less tenable, the Doge invited Charlemagne's son, King Pepin, to send an army up from Ravenna to occupy Venice.

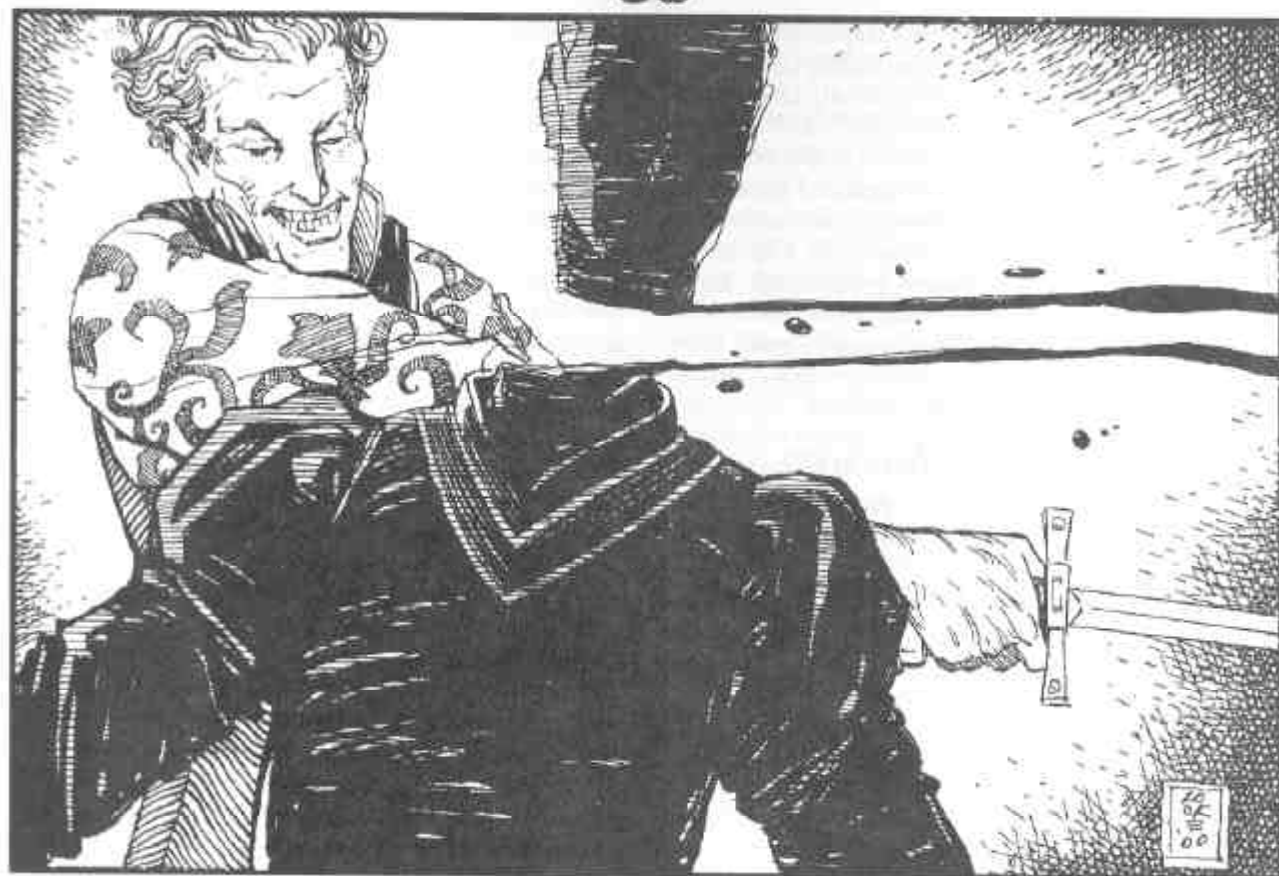
Overthrowing the inept Doge, the communities of Venice set aside their differences and formed a common defense. At the southern end of the Venetian lagoon, the communities of Chioggia and Palestrina fell quickly to the advance of Pepin's army in the spring of 810, followed soon after by Grado and Jesolo at the northern end of the lagoon. Then, however, Pepin was stymied by the city's watery defenses. The Giovanni were one of the patriot families responsible

for having all channel markers and buoys removed, making the shallow lagoon a hazardous maze of hidden shoals and swift currents impenetrable to the Italian king's navy. In short, it was a big "fuck you" to the dynasty that Venice had long sought to remain independent of. I think we should use that tactic again sometime — or maybe remove all the lane markers and directional dividers from the highways and thoroughfares when it becomes prudent. But that's neither here nor there. I can't think of too many times invading armies have threatened Boston or Venice in the past 50 years. It's still a great idea, though.

Anyway, Pepin's army spent six months camped on the mainland, where they suffered bouts of debilitating summer fevers, harassing attacks by the Venetians and constant rumors of a Byzantine fleet on its way to support the city. In the end, Pepin and his army withdrew, with only a token agreement by Venice to pay annual tribute to show for their efforts. King Pepin died a few weeks later, and his father Charlemagne gave up his ambitions of conquering Venice. That's what you get when you fuck with the Giovanni.

More important than the military victory, though, the campaign served to forge a sense of community among the Venetians that defined them for the next thousand years. The siege was also responsible for moving the Venetian capital from its original location on the barrier island of Malamocca to a better defended group of islands near the center of the lagoon, an area known as Rivo Alto, or more commonly Rialto. Many Venetian families, including the Giovanni, moved to Rialto for the protection provided by the treacherous shallows that lay between it and the invading force. Even after the siege was broken, the capital remained at Rialto, as did the Giovanni. The area at Rialto soon became the metropolitan center of the lagoon, the city known tonight as Venice. "Rialto" even remains the name of the commercial center surrounding the oldest bridge across Venice's Grand Canal.

For the next few centuries, Venice continued to grow, becoming the dominant maritime power on the Adriatic Sea. The Giovanni took advantage of the opportunities afforded to them by their location, their position and their wraithly benefactors and reestablished themselves as the wealthy heirs to the legacy the Jovians had left behind. It was at this time that we came to the attention of the Cappadocian clan of Kindred. Many of their members were obsessed with death, and several led nihilistic heresies, fed from the dead or maintained elaborate (for the time) laboratories where they pondered the mysteries of life and death. Some also made their havens in the monasteries of Europe and Northern Africa. Their interest in death was different



from that of the Giovanni, however. While the Cappadocians may have been contemplative in nature, their powers over the dead were rudimentary and not at all spiritual. It was almost the opposite of the Giovanni — while we venerated the souls of the dead, the Cappadocians could manipulate corpses and foster deadly disease.

Our ability with *nigromancy* intrigued these Kindred, especially their founder, if the old tales are to be believed. Although the Cappadocians were well versed in thanatology and had developed a necromantic power giving them mastery over physical death, they knew little about what happened to the souls of those who die. It was their elder's hope that the Giovanni might reveal these lost Roman secrets to them — which I guess, in a way, we did.

THE BIRTH OF CLAN GIOVANNI

In 1005, the elder of the Cappadocian clan himself Embraced Augustus Giovanni, then and forever after the patriarch of the Giovanni family, in the depths of the Cappadocian temple at Mount Erciyes in Turkey. There to witness the event were a couple of the Ancient's

chief troadies, Japheth and Constancia, who had both argued against bringing the Giovanni into the Cappadocian fold.

Fuck them all. They're dead now.

This wasn't just an Embrace of pomp and circumstance, though. This was the moment that the Cappadocians doomed themselves and the exact moment Augustus Giovanni made a deal with the Devil himself.

By different tellings of the story, the leader of the Cappadocians had long before been driven mad with the weight of undeath, or had achieved an almost saintly state of transcendence. Me, I believe that he was bug-fucking-nuts, which was probably why Japheth and Constancia opposed him. They could see that Augustus' heart was black as sin and as greedy as the merchant families that had been his ancestors from a millennium ago. Somewhere before the Giovanni became part of the fold, a cabal of these Cappadocians, the elder included, got the idea in their head that they could atone for the Curse of Cain by ridding the world of its cause. No, they didn't want to destroy the race of Kindred. Well, maybe some did, but that's beside the point. No, these lunatics decided that removing the cause of undeath was also the next step in their own undead evolution. They wanted to *diablerize* God.



I'm not making this up. Go through the library of any Giovanni who has any knowledge at all of the principles of necromancy and you'll find the works of some of these Cappadocians on their shelves. Read them, and it's frighteningly simple — these motherfuckers though that by killing God, they could become gods. Remember all that shit I was talking about before? About the Bible and the Cainite myth being metaphors? And about how stupid fucking Kindred take it all literally? Well, the Cappadocians were no better than their peers. For all the time they spent in monastic study and at the feet of the philosophers of the ages, they were too damn stupid to figure out that when their scrolls of thanatology mentioned "mastery of life and death," they were talking about power over the *spiriti*. "Life beyond life" wasn't the same eternal life promised by the Word; the "other world" wasn't Heaven or Hell and neither was "the home of the spirit." In their search for answers as to what the state of death actually was, they unearthed a few primitive and florid necromantic rituals. In their own vast sophistication and wisdom, they thought that the primitive sorcerers who wrote the rituals they found couldn't possibly be so advanced as to use artistic language. If I told you I was "rich beyond your wildest dreams," do you really think I'd mean literally that I had more money than your mind could possibly comprehend? Well, that's what these Cappadocians thought, and I guess that's why they were all screwed in the head. They thought they found the Big Answer and it was now just a matter of Asking the Right Question.

In a way, it's pretty tragic. I'm demeaning them, but that's only because cruelty so easily becomes humor to our kind. In the same amount of time it took them to doom their own futures they resigned themselves forever to failure. Even if we didn't come along and do the world the favor of taking them off the face of the Earth, they would have forever been plaguing the world with their skewed understanding. Just imagine if you grew up thinking "blue" was "red," how fucked up would you be? Okay, now apply that to the fundamental perception of your life or unlife instead of your wardrobe or car-choice color. Sad. Maybe I'm missing a vital part of how this could reveal the Cappadocians' true natures as the saintly instead of the deranged, but that's what makes me believe so strongly that they were out of their minds.

To get back to the issue at hand, the Cappadocians wanted to Embrace the Giovanni to learn their secrets of *nigromancy*. The Giovanni, of course, wanted to get something out of the deal themselves.

And that was where we got fucked.

I said that the Cappadocians were crazy, but I didn't say they were stupid. They figured that no one in their right mind would jump at the "chance" to

become undead. So, as you might guess, they candy-coated the whole thing. Eternal life! Power untold! Eternity free from disease and decrepitude! The whole line of bullshit you hear from neonates who haven't yet come to grips with what they are and sweet-talkers looking to Embrace their girlfriends. Of course, they didn't mention the dependency on blood, the fact that Augustus and his brood would never again be able to see the sun, or, oh, the simple caveat that you have to die to become a Cappadocian.

To his credit, though, Augustus was not a man who went off half-cocked. You don't become patriarch of a merchant family by being a moron. Augustus had spoken with Kindred before — he had even entertained offers from the Ventrue and a Germanic Toreador to do precisely what the Cappadocians were trying to convince him to do. But Augustus, damn his soul, knew what to look for in a potential sire. His driving goals in the arrangement were power and... well, opportunity. Augustus didn't forever want to be tied into the prestation games of the Ventrue and Toreador, and he certainly didn't want to be brought into the night with weak blood, even if he didn't fully understand the concept of generation at the time. He knew about the downside of becoming Kindred and was willing to accept it so long as he found a little room to maneuver after the Embrace. The Cappadocians, deluded, preoccupied and not the least bit worldly, gave him everything the Ventrue and Toreador couldn't — the power of a Methuselah and the chance to parlay that power, however treacherously, into a big fucking promotion for himself and his bloodline.

The heads of the Giovanni family debated it for probably the better part of a year. Remember, though that this was the beginning of the 11th century. It was the end of the Dark Ages and the beginning of the Age of Faith. Once they looked past the initial shock of horror at kicking around the idea of becoming vampires until the end of time, the family's elders saw nothing wrong with creating a pact with the creatures of the night. In the modern nights, if you gathered your family around you and said, "Wife, son; I've been thinking it over, and we should probably become blood-sucking predators of the night in order to maximize the return on the family investments," they'd run over to the neighbor's house so they could get a third signature on the form to have you committed to a mental hospital. Then, though, in less cynical times, taking this Devil's deal was the height of pragmatism. Death magic had long been practiced by the family in the form of ancestor worship — this new development certainly couldn't hurt. In fact, the elders reasoned, it might well bring the Giovanni closer to their ancestor-spirits. *Dis Pater* and the *laras*



familiares approved, having the same sense of value that many of the Giovanni *patresfamilias* did. They planned some logistics — obviously, not everyone in the family would be Embraced, because apparently that was forbidden, and the Giovanni brood would be so new to the whole thing that they would have to bide their time and learn the nature of their undead existences. Besides, Kindred apparently could not create mortal issue, and the family needed to continue to grow.

One fell swoop: fate sealed. At the Erciyes mountain temple, Augustus let the Cappadocians do the deed.

The whole affair wasn't without its petty betrayals, though. As I said before, Constanica and Japheth didn't agree with their elder's decision. As the elder Cappadocian bled into a vessel and instructed his progeny to pass that blood through the exsanguinated Augustus, Constanica and Japheth kept a bit of that vitae in order to hold a bit of power over the other two Kindred. The blood provided a sorcerous connection to the elder as well as Augustus once they turned him.

In the modern nights, this shit doesn't work anymore, and I can only guess why. Upon the Embrace, you have to receive blood directly from the sire. You can't just carry around a sealed container of blood and pour it into a dead guy's mouth to create insta-Kindred. But perhaps it was the fact that mysticism hadn't vanished completely from

ANOTHER THEORY

The Giovanni's painful Kiss is sometimes known as the Curse of Lamia, to certain learned or conspiratorial Kindred. During the Giovanni purge of the Cappadocian clan, Augustus himself diablerized the leader of a cult of Cappadocians known as Lamia. Lamia's powers reportedly included the ability to foster disease, to cough forth a cloud of mephitic vapor, and to transform her Kiss into an agonizing bite.

According to one account of the purge, Lamia used the last of her mystic powers to curse Augustus as he committed Amaranth upon her, blighting him and his issue to cause a similar agony whenever they fed. If this is true, it was a grand act of defiance. Skeptics, however, remain unconvinced. Could this secret cultist have harbored such power to afflict an entire bloodline with her spite? And Lamia reportedly fell in the early 18th century, but accounts of the Giovanni's painful Kiss have existed as far back as the first century after their Embrace.

As with so many other mysteries of the race of Cainé, the world may never know.





the world at that point, or the elder Cappadocian's blood was so potent that the rules didn't apply. Whatever, it worked back then. Now, when the whole of Kindred society hides from mortals instead of terrifying them at night, and the most puissant "elder" you're likely to meet in America is nine steps descended from the mythical Caine, this seems either absurd or, to turn my own arguments against me, metaphorical. But it's not.

You see, Japheth and Constanica hid their master's blood away. Constanica prepared a clay jar and sealed the vitae within with beeswax while Japheth spoke a curse over the jar, which is now known as the True Vessel. In fact, some Kindred historians speculate that our own clan's weakness came from that curse, that Japheth wished for the mortals upon whom we Giovanni feed to feel the same burning agony he and Constanica and the rest of the Cappadocians felt at their elder's decision not only to Embrace us, but to share his own powerful vitae with us. In any event, while the Giovanni didn't know about it, this True Vessel held immense power — power that could be used against us because of its unholy connection to us. It was the blood of betrayal, the vitae that doomed the Cappadocian clan.

THE PREMASCINES

Some smartass made up the word "Premaschine" as a joke and it stuck. It's from "pre," meaning "before," and "masca," meaning "bite." Before the bite. Before Augustus put the bite on the Cappadocians. Droll.

Anyway, despite the word for them being sarcastic, quite a few Giovanni Kindred were Embraced before the Giovanni were themselves a clan. Claudius Giovanni, for example, was the childe of Augustus before Augustus claimed his sire's blood. You'll no doubt hear of Ambrogino Giovanni at some point in your unlife, who, in addition to having the dubious honor of being perhaps the most self-interested fuck in an entire clan of self-interested fucks, has all but gone rogue, putting his own desires before the well-being of his fellows. Sure, he's still welcome at the dinner table, but that's only because whoever's hosting him would like some idea of what he's up to, if only to protect herself from him and maybe divert him toward a rival. A few more Giovanni Cappadocians must still be out there and active, too.

Not every Premaschine agreed with Augustus' decision to take the mantle of clan status upon himself, however. Just as some Jovians stood on either side of the Iconoclast heresy, so did some Giovanni Cappadocians stand on the other side of Augustus' blatant bid for supremacy. In the modern nights, they're only whispered about, but you can be certain they're out there. Nothing kills a Kindred except another Kindred, and





these venerable monsters had the good sense to go to ground before their personal issues of dissent became fatal for them.

Some are rumored to have taken refuge in the canals of Venice. They supposedly make their havens beneath the surface of the water. Granted, I've never seen one; no one I know has, but two of your *cuginos*, Lupo and Giuseppe, swear that they're down there. Personally, I'm more than happy to keep them as rumors. Think about it — they're at least four centuries old, they're bitter enough to have thought, "It's better to hang out beneath the water for hundreds of years than to see the family anymore," and whatever they've been doing down there for those hundreds of years, you just *know* it can't be pleasant. The very idea scares the shit out of me, and I've seen shit that would turn you paler than you already are. Now, you know that tonight's Venice is built on the ruins of old Venice, right? That every year, the water table rises just a bit higher in the Old World? Well, that's where they make their havens, in the submerged old city. If you ever have a chance to travel to the Mausoleum, you might even find a well on one of the higher crypt floors. Throw a penny or stone in there, and you'll hear the *plunk* of it splashing into the water. See where I'm headed with this? Somewhere, somebody among the *anziani* thinks it's a good idea to maybe keep the lanes

of communication open. Why else would a portal to the Premascines' lair have been built in the family's own haven?

Rumors abound of other Premascines as well. One of the crazy Mexicans somebody Embraced to foster a New World connection many years ago has been talking about a cult of very old, very hostile Giovanni known as the Harbingers of Skulls. Word is that these "Harbingers" have all been driven mad by vengefulness or neglect, having originally struck out on their own without anyone knowing shit about it. Other rumors about the Harbingers include your standard battery of Kindred paranoia — that they've joined the Sabbat, that they're the last of the "old clan" (which I guess is supposed to mean that they're Cappadocians and therefore bona fide Premascines), that they're the tools of some Antediluvian (Hello? We *know* our Antediluvian), or that they're ghosts given physical form. Whatever the case, they're always angry as fuck. I haven't heard much about them outside of South and Central America. That's what leads me to believe that they're a brood that followed the Kindred to the New World during the Age of Exploration, and subsequently vanished after losing contact. Still, if that was the case, they'd probably be on better terms with the Pisanob — the Mexican Giovanni — but that doesn't seem to hold true. I have heard, however, that some





very powerful Kindred that others claim are Harbingers have been active in the Far East and Asia Minor, even moving into Egypt at one point or another. Martino della Passaglia's sire was reportedly done in by one of the "old clan" or a Harbinger, depending upon who tells you the story, and Ambrogino's been strange bedfellows with a Harbinger named Unre. This is another case not unlike the aquatic Venetian Premascines. They're fucking old. They're scary. They hate you just for being born. Stay away from them.

Sorry. I went off on a bit of a tangent there. Still, this was when the biggest schism in the clan took place, right at the family's Embrace. Back when you could see the blood in Augustus' eyes. Unlike most other clans' intra-blood disputes, this one never really threatened to cripple the clan. Few enough of us existed at the time for this to be a huge ideological divide, and fewer still supported those radical fringes that advocated leaving the fold in the wake of the new potential becoming Kindred offered us.

TOWARD THE RENAISSANCE— IN TWO FORMS

After the Becoming, Giovanni history once again grows quiet for a few hundred years. This was a period in which the family was simultaneously conducting two calculated risks. First, not long after the Giovanni became Kindred, the First Crusade occurred at the behest of Pope Urban II, followed by a subsequent series of other Crusades. This provided numerous opportunities for the Giovanni. I can honestly say that without the healthy dose of good-old-fashioned mortal hatred for his fellow man, the Giovanni wouldn't be what we are tonight.

Ostensibly, the Crusades took place to turn back the tide of heathens, infidels, heretics, satans, Turks and other human detritus. Under the banner of "converting" these mongrel elements, war was waged, and furiously at that.

How did this help the Giovanni?

First, despite my modern and apologetic opinion of the whole affair, the Crusades were a holy war. The Giovanni, always devout in their unique fashion, had evolved from their Roman religion to the universal Catholicism of Western Europe. Say what you want about the practices we undertake, but we know that we're God's people at the end of the night. This holy war was a chance to prove our righteousness to the world and to God Himself. Much like the Jovians' ships brought Roman troops to northern Africa, the

Giovanni's ships carried platoons of holy knights to the Levant. Also, a few Giovanni fought on the front lines of the conflict itself. Cosimo Abruzzi, a ghoul who was Embraced on the field of battle, rode to Jerusalem with Baldwin of Edessa, who was crowned king. Cosimo ("the Faithful") turned against Baldwin on that trip, knowing that Baldwin's coronation would make Jerusalem a feudal state instead of Archbishop Daimbert of Pisa's vision of Jerusalem as a church state. That's an important point — regardless of some of the financial benefits the Giovanni reaped during the Crusades, their faith lay with the Church. Obviously, Archbishop Daimbert's desires didn't come to fruition and the Giovanni lent their support to the wrong player, but there's no better outcome than failure for what becomes a martyred cause. Maybe your own failure (or, as in Cosimo's case, death by burning) isn't pragmatic for you, but it serves a great rallying point for those who believe in your cause.

Next, let's be honest, the Giovanni made tremendous profit from the Crusades. Armies require supplies, many of which were also provided by Giovanni merchants, and also shipped on those same Giovanni vessels that carried Crusaders to the Holy Land. The Giovanni also returned fallen pilgrims to their homes... for a price... and ferried communications back and forth between the Popes and the field marshals. Even the battlefields themselves offered financial gain for Giovanni scavengers: After battles, the blood-soaked fields were often found littered with severed fingers — the aftermath of those who cut the digits from the dead in order to more easily remove the rings from their lifeless hands. When the Crusades had run their course by the late 14th century (yes, other Crusades occurred after that, but by then the Giovanni had already made a place for themselves), the already appreciable Giovanni coffers had swelled to as much as 10 to 15 times their previous value. That doesn't mean as much now, in the modern nights with their overnight Internet millionaires, but consider the value then. If I offered to increase your wealth by an order of fucking magnitude just because the Palestinians hate the Jews, would you pass up the offer?

Finally, and most important for the time, all the Giovanni help with the Crusades made for a sympathetic ally in Rome and the Vatican. I'm not going to suggest that we had the Church under our thumb — realpolitik doesn't work like that and besides, the few Lasombra, Ventrue and Toreador crawling through the clergy would never have allowed that to happen. Rather, the Pope gave his blessing to the Giovanni family. While our goals were different, they at least coincided on matters of faith and on the desire to keep the city-states free from unilateral



feudal rule. When the three greatest wielders of political power were the rich, the aristocracy and the Church, you're doing pretty well if you can put two in your corner.

THINGS GROW UGLY

It was right about this time, at the dawn of the Renaissance, that the Giovanni as the world now knows them emerged.

I think you know where I'm headed with this. With all the money the Crusades brought in, the Giovanni found themselves at a level of comfort far beyond many of the other merchant families, and, indeed, many European aristocrats. Rot set in, and quickly. The Giovanni had their every pleasure and whim catered to — so, to experience anything new, they had to turn to pastimes the rest of the world found... well, let's just say that many Giovanni chose to do what most others wouldn't dream of doing.

Like many nobles and wealthy families, the Giovanni had long been very selective about who they accepted into their family ranks. In many cases, cousins were married to each other to keep the blood from becoming diluted. As the rot spread through the family, however, "keeping the blood pure" became a mere front for whatever sexual taste struck the whim of a given Giovanni. Now, not all Giovanni are incestuous — that would have withered the family to invalids and vegetables long ago. But many Giovanni find themselves craving the comforts of their fellows. Sisters have borne their brother's children, uncles have spawned new lines of the family with their nieces, and mothers have doted unhealthfully on their little boys. In fact, putting aside the social impropriety of the whole fucking mess, most Giovanni afford a perverse status to those who don't stray from the family lines: You'll hear much talk of "single-blooded" Giovanni and their supposed superiority over the "double-blooded." In fact, that's why I agreed to sire you — you are the child of your mother and her father, and that makes you single-blooded, and thus a "favored" member of the family, much to my own esteem.

The tastes of the Giovanni didn't simply confine themselves to kissing cousins and the like from the nights of the Renaissance to now, though. In fact, the Giovanni had grown so jaded in a few short years that almost any ill behavior that you could conceive of had some enthusiast within the family ranks. Shit-eaters, rapists, drug fiends, pedophiles, whack-job religious cultists, fags, dykes, horse-fuckers, fetishists, murderers, and deviants of all fucking stripes — you want 'em, you got 'em. Even nigrimancy itself underwent its own Renaissance then, because not only were the spirits being dealt with, the necromancers thought it was fun to stick

their dicks in the corpses or cock-ride dead men, which of course angered the *spiriti* that used to reside in those bodies, making them easier to compel.

THE KHAZAR'S DIARY

Toward the end of the 17th century, our knowledge of the Black Art had the potential to progress even further when Claudius Giovanni, Augustus' right-hand Kindred, turned up references to something known as the Khazar's Diary while studying in Belgrade. According to the handful of papers Claudius found, this diary contained information that would transform our knowledge of nigrimancy from ancestor worship and skull-fucking into something that we could use to change the world globally.

For a long time, the Giovanni had supported the idea that if they could only return to the nights when the *spiriti* could easily affect the world, their power would grow. It's simple logic — the Giovanni are the only Kindred (well, the only Kindred of consequence) to practice the Black Art, and if the subjects of that art could universally increase in power, so would our own power increase by extension. This desire to tear down the *sudario* is known as the search for the Endless Night, whereby the dead and the living would share the same plane of existence or something. I'm not demeaning it; it's just a bit esoteric for me. Believe me, if it was easier to force an invisible ghost into the conference rooms of investment firms, law partnerships, courtrooms, senator's bedchambers and, well, anywhere "insider information" either occurs or is discussed, we'd be a hell of a lot more influential than we already are. In fact, we might not even need to hide from the world at all at that point....

But again, I'm wandering away from my topic.

Claudius turns this sheaf of notes over to Augustus, who tells him that he's seen a copy of this crazy Jew's diary at the Cappadocian temple in Turkey. The dutiful son, Claudius, goes to rifle the temple, which kind of coincides with something else that was going on that I'll talk about in a minute. Anyway, Claudius and his recovery party sack the place, taking everything of value and burning the rest. Some speculation suggests that Claudius torched it out of frustration over not finding the diary. Other Giovanni think Claudius found the book, but didn't want to turn it over to Augustus, so he faked the "absence" of the book and burned the temple so no one could go back and find it missing later. Still others suspect that Claudius was faithful, found the Khazar's Diary and presented it to Augustus, who kept the whole thing quiet to give him time to study the thing.

Here's where things get fucked up. The Capuchin shows up at the Mausoleum — he's one of those periph-



eral "other" necromancers that have so little to offer us... usually. Nobody knows what the Capuchin's deal is. He's a powerful member of the Capuchin branch of the Franciscans, and part of the group connecting the Giovanni to the Church. Whether or not he's Giovanni, I have no idea, but he's got an offer. He'll trade some of his influence in the Church for training in necromancy. Augustus takes the deal, seeing an opportunity to go through the Vatican's enormous vault of confiscated books and documents and maybe get to the bottom of this Khazar's Diary thing and push forward the quest for the Endless Night.

Plumbing the secret Vatican library, Augustus comes across a piece of Japheth Cappadoctus' journal that just happens to have a ghost bound to it. That's common practice among necromancers and other sorcerers: binding spirits to their grimoires in order to keep prying eyes from discovering their secrets. Well, this puissant guardian wraith is nothing compared to Augustus' necromantic abilities, so he overpowers the thing and forces it to tell him about anything Japheth kept secret, like, oh, the location of a Khazar's Diary, or anything like that.

Sure, the wraith says. Japheth had hidden a powerful artifact at the Erciyes temple.

WHAT IS THE ENDLESS NIGHT?

The text of the Khazar's Diary is rumored to contain a ritual that will allow the boundaries between the physical world and the Underworld to be erased. The ritual, according to those with knowledge, requires the souls of 100,000,000 departed individuals to enact.

The Giovanni have numerous different plans to gather these souls. Necromancy is the most functional, but the Venetians also have the ability to plan in the long term — we don't gather money just for the comfort of it. Yes, it's nice to have a new Benz and a score of silk suits every season, but garnering wealth is also practical. Given enough money and influence, the Giovanni can crash the global economy. As nations crumble under Giovanni-applied embargoes and sanctions, chaos reigns. Nations starve. Riots rage. War breaks out. People die. One more soul added to the stockpile each time that happens.

Selfish? Sure — but we'd be stupid to play the Jyhad for anyone other than ourselves.

Needless to say, 100,000,000 souls is no small matter. Still, the Giovanni have forever to assemble their resources....

It's going to be wonderful to have God as a neighbor.

Oh, really, says Augustus. And what was that? The temple's been destroyed, after all, so what could Claudius have possibly missed during his search?

The True Vessel, says the wraith.

Claudius met his Final Death one night later.

ELIMINATING THE THREAT

Augustus diablerized the founder of the Cappadocian clan in 1444, elevating himself to the Third Generation and splitting the Cappadocian clan into two distinct entities. On one side were the original Cappadocians, who were too fractious, superstitious and passive, frankly, to have seen Augustus' treachery coming or to do anything about it. On the other side of the split was the Giovanni family, which had swelled to such mortal numbers as to be a significant force in Kindred Society.

Nature, of course, abhors the Kindred, and Claudius and Ambrogino convinced Augustus that to deal with the threat posed by the remaining Cappadocians, something had to be done. Within a few short decades after Clan Cappadocian became Clan Giovanni, the other clans had taken to calling the Necromancers "Devil Kindred," not only for the diablerie of the Cappadocian founder, but for their less-than-savory pastimes. Rather than see the other Kindred unite against them, the Giovanni agreed to remain forever outside of Kindred affairs. Known as the Promise of 1528, this agreement, I think, was an effort on the part of the Camarilla to shut down another Anarch Revolt before it could happen. By making the Giovanni essentially apolitical outsiders, they would isolate the Venetian family and its undead population from the other Kindred. While the Anarch Revolt grew around frustrated fledglings' resentment of their elders, the "Devil Kindred problem" was, as the nascent Camarilla portrayed it, a clan war.

That's one of the blackest stains on the so-called honor of the Camarilla — they pretend to be a genteel society, a quiet congregation of monsters too civilized to call themselves that. If you ever attend one of their parties or salons, and I'm sure you will, you'll see them as possessed of a certain Johnsonian wit. There's an elaborate culture, founded on rules, politeness, civility and grace. There's also a society of snakes.

As it shook out, the Promise of 1528 was nothing short of the Camarilla's tacit approval of the genocide of the Cappadocians. They couldn't risk another faction's formation, as they were dealing with a young and formative sect known as the Sabbat at that time. Also, the Giovanni posed threats to power that had been the traditional domains of the fucking aristocracy that formed the backbone of the Camarilla — the Ventrue found themselves butting heads with the Giovanni



soon after the Renaissance, the Toreador vied with the Giovanni for patronage of the arts during that time and even the Tremere ran into the Giovanni as the family spread across Europe and into their Vienna stronghold. If someone had to die in order to preserve the fragile Camarilla, the elders of that self-appointed sect would gladly let that someone bleed.

And bleed the Cappadocians did. Although it took us the better part of three centuries to do it, we finally managed to destroy every last one of the Cappadocians. Their time had passed; they were merely the step that brought the Giovanni to our inevitable fate, and once that role had been satisfied, we no longer needed them. Giovanni Kindred and mortals alike raided Cappadocian havens, drinking deeply of their blood and turning their servants out into the streets. From the Middle East to the expanses of the New World, Cappadocian s crumbled to dust beneath the fangs of the thorough Giovanni.

Now, of course I'm sure some managed to go to ground or hide. When I said "every last one of the Cappadocians," I mean the ones who would have remained active. No doubt some went into torpor or sank into the earth. I've even heard persistent rumors of "the last Cappadocian!" (who usually turns out to be some unfortunate dink who dies after bringing such attention to himself) or broods that had escaped the living realm and fled to the Underworld. The end result, though, is dick. If they went to the Underworld, what the fuck are they doing for blood? If they're in torpor, they're not a threat. If they're slumbering in the soil, maybe some archaeologist will dig them up and expose them to the sun. While some Cappadocians must have escaped the purge, all they did was postpone their fates, not avert them.

CENTURIES OF GROWTH

In the aftermath of the Renaissance, the Giovanni had all but paved their way to being the most cohesive clan to face the future. Unlike the other clans, the Giovanni operate not only with a reverence for the elders, but also with a merit-based structure. Think of it as functional, planned obsolescence. Here, I'll show you.

As the Renaissance drew to a close, the next important age for the Giovanni was the Age of Industry. (Yes the Reformation was important, mainly due to our continued relationship with the Church. Still, that period was not one of marked economic difference from the Renaissance.) Thereafter, the modern nights became a time that's proven even more lucrative than the Renaissance for us. Tonight, it's easy to make money, and to do it quickly. Meetings with business partners nations

away can take place at the touch of a button or through a fiber-optic network. The clan grows in numbers as well as wealth, and since the Age of Industry, neonates began to be assets rather than vanities. Because no other clan apart from the Tremere has a formal structure, childer of these clans tend to be luxuries for their sires. Ventrue Embrace protégés, Toreador Embrace whoever's the "it" childer of the moment. The Nosferatu atone for their nastiness by picking people uglier than them to drag into their own personal hells.

The Giovanni, though, Embrace those with the vision to lead the clan toward the Endless Night. It's a war often fought without guns, as new "soldiers" learned in the most current ways of the world. While we revere our elders, we also understand the Kindred state for what it is, which is very often stasis from the moment of the Embrace onward. Honestly, consider Augustus Giovanni. The guy was Embraced in the 15th century. Do you really think he even knows how to work a telephone, much less corner global commodities markets by using his laptop to do day trading?

That's what the other clans just don't understand: Every Giovanni has a role. I'm not going to pretend that we're a family without our treachery and problems. In the modern nights, in fact, I sometimes think we resemble a corporation more than a family. Sure, we're related, but we fuck each other over if it does us some good. Hell, sometimes we literally fuck each other, if we think it'll make us feel good or give us an edge over a rival who just happens to be part of the same branch of the family tree. In the end, though, we have a goal, which other clans either never had or lost along the way.

Remember when I said we'd win? That's why. We not only know we're playing the game, we're using its own rules against it.

EXPANSION INTO OTHER FAMILIES

Despite the misleading name of our clan, Giovanni Kindred are not all former members of the Giovanni mortal family. Of course, we've got no problem letting the idiots in the other clans believe that.

In the thousand years we Giovanni have been Embracing Kindred, we've brought a number of other families into the fold — three major families, the Dunsin, the Pisanob and the Milliners, and a handful of minor ones. Each of these families possessed something the clan wanted — and what the Giovanni want, we take, as you're no doubt aware. You'd be surprised how easy it is to convince families to take



orders from you when you can guarantee them shitloads of cash and "immortality" for their best and brightest in return. In the face of that, concerns about who's in charge just seem to fade away. You think that's hypocritical with what I said before? Sure it is. But hypocrisy is the greatest luxury, and if you can't dwell in luxury, you may as well make your haven in a box in an alleyway.

A hundred million souls is a lot to gather. Look at these other families as the aid we've enlisted to do the dirty work.

THE DUNSIRN

The first of the major families the Giovanni coopted was the Dunsirn. It was the early 1700s, and the Giovanni were looking for a ticket to the growing markets of the New World. A clan of Scottish bankers who were all rich as Croesus, the Dunsirn came to Augustus' attention because they held controlling interest on a number of shipping ventures destined for the English colonies in North America. Not only that but the Dunsirn had been lending money for centuries, and as a result, they had accumulated favors throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Another less savory bit of information Augustus uncovered about them was that the Dunsirn were also cannibals. Of course, what may have been a deal breaker for anyone else was seen as a plus by Augustus, who holds a great appreciation for people who know how to keep a secret.

It seems that, several hundred years before, one of the Dunsirn discovered a taste for human flesh. Understandably shocked, the family banished the cannibal from the estate and disowned him. Not giving a damn, he hid himself to the countryside, found himself a bride and raised his own little family of cannibals.

Eventually, these guys tired of squatting in peat bogs and voiced their displeasure to the Dunsirn family proper. Of course, by "voiced their displeasure," I mean "killed and ate."

After disposing of the more genteel side of the family, these fellows took over the family business and have run it ever since. In that capacity, the Dunsirn serve as one of Clan Giovanni's chief moneymakers. These guys invariably chose to tithe the Giovanni in money rather than souls, as few of the Dunsirn show an interest in learning Necromancy. Maybe its because they know they would be stuck talking to their former dinner.

Also, for reasons we don't understand, the fucking Lupines have shown an inordinate amount of interest in the family and have even invaded Dunsirn estates on two occasions we Giovanni are aware of. What their

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problem with the Dunstr is, we got no idea. But then, who knows what the fuck those hairy *bastardi* are going to get bent out of shape about? Fuck 'em.

As an aside, you know what's fucking creepy as all hell? Watching one of their mortal issue eat a sandwich. Once I went to Stirling to roll their tithe into American commodities and I met one of their little haggis-to-be. Little freak didn't even say hello, just chomped away on that hard roll with mystery meat. It wasn't pleasant, and I didn't know whether or not to say anything, so I just shut up.

THE PISANOB

In the early 16th century, Hernando Cortes set off on an expedition from the Spanish colony of Cuba to investigate tales of a rich Indian empire in Mexico. Being opportunists, a few Giovanni went along with Cortes. What they discovered was the Aztec Empire and its capital Tenochtitlan and the largest scale and most formalized use of necromancy the Giovanni had ever seen. The Giovanni were suitably impressed. The conquistadors, on the other hand, were horrified. So, the Spaniards did the only thing a group of more advanced God-fearing Christians could do when confronted with a culture they could not understand. They slaughtered everyone and stole their stuff. Stupid spics.

As I said though, the Giovanni who had traveled with Cortes were impressed with the necromantic skill evinced by the Aztec priests. With their own *nigromancy*, the Kindred noticed trouble brewing in the Aztec part of the Underworld. It seems that a group of European *spiriti* had tagged along with Cortes' expedition too. Pretty soon, these wraiths were joined by others, and eventually, these ignorant fucks took to enslaving the wraiths of the Aztecs, who were just as ill prepared to defend themselves as their living counterparts had been. These zealous wraiths were even more thorough than the conquistadors, destroying the souls of thousands upon thousands of native *spiriti*. Pretty soon, all the killing on both sides of the *sudario* became terrible enough to spark another maelstrom. The Giovanni had dealt with a similar situation a mere two centuries earlier and so were aware of what was happening. The Aztec priests were caught completely flat-footed, however.

Not wanting to see such talent at necromancy destroyed outright, the Giovanni at Tenochtitlan sent word home via *spiriti* asking permission to Embrace some of these heathen priests. Augustus and the anziani were intrigued and agreed. So, our boys approached the priests, who referred to themselves as *pisanob* (which is a Mayan term that translates as something like "ghosts of the dead that walk the





POCHTLI THE PREMASCINE?

Given the Pisanob founder's unwholesome appearance and his predilection for calling forth shambling *zombu* servants, it is not surprising that rumors of Pochtli being Cappadocian rather than Giovanni began to circulate. However, rumors aside, there is, in fact, strong evidence that Pochtli may indeed be one of the fallen line's childer.

First, none of the surviving Giovanni who followed Cortes' conquistadors to Tenochtitlan claim to have sired Pochtli, though they readily admit to Embracing other Pisanob. In fact, if family records and Kindred memory serve, no fifth-generation Giovanni Kindred even visited the New World during the conquest of the Aztecs. (Given the reliability of travel on the high seas during the 16th century, no elder would deign to make a months-long ocean voyage without an extremely compelling reason.)

Second, tales told by other Kindred of Mesoamerica speak of an ancient vampire who dwelt among the Aztecs with a brood of his childer and was worshiped as the god of war, Huitzilopochtli. Obviously, the similarities between this Huitzilopochtli and the father of the Pisanob, Pochtli, are pronounced. However, these same Mesoamerican Kindred insist that Huitzilopochtli stalked among the Aztecs as far back as the 12th century, nearly 400 years prior to the first Giovanni setting foot in the New World.

And finally, some Giovanni cite the issue of Pochtli's corpse-like visage. Like the Giovanni's Cappadocian predecessors, Pochtli appears to be an ambulatory corpse, with pale, parchment-dry skin stretched tight over prominent bones and a hideous face with lidless, sunken eyes, no nose and lips that have receded to expose a maw of sharp fangs. The only "Giovanni" to evince similar features are the Premascines or a suspicious few "atavisms of the Blood."

As such, quite a lot of circumstantial evidence supports the theory that Pochtli is a survivor of Clan Cappadocian but no concrete proof exists. It's possible that Pochtli's sire met Final Death before he could return from the New World or that Pochtli's sire still exists but is unwilling to take credit for creating a deformed wretch like the head of the Pisanob. It's possible that Huitzilopochtli is another Kindred entirely or that he is merely a myth promulgated by Cainites who, by Giovanni standards, are little better than the savages they sprang from. Also, a number of cases have been documented in which Kindred have become physically malformed by the Embrace though their clan has no history of such deformity. Cainite vitae is a volatile substance whose effects on mortal physiology cannot always be predicted. Therefore, it's possible that Pochtli is nothing more than a Giovanni Kindred with an unfortunate countenance, who is being slandered merely because he is different.

If the rumor and conjecture are true, though, it raises plenty of questions. Why was Pochtli allowed to survive, rather than destroyed with the rest of the clan? Is he creating more of his kind within his ancient temple? And are his recent "failures" in dealing with the Harbingers of Skulls indicative of some sinister secret agenda, where he perhaps plans to join with the Lazarenes in their efforts to eradicate the Giovanni?

Whatever the truth, no answers seem forthcoming. And the conjecture continues.

earth"), with their offer and were escorted to their leader, a fellow known as Pochtli. Apparently, this proved to be copacetic with the man because Pochtli remains the unattractive head of the Pisanob branch of the Giovanni clan to this night.

I used to wonder why the Giovanni who visited Tenochtitlan were so quick to Embrace the Pisanob. The more I thought about it though, I began to realize how much the history of the Aztecs mirrored that of the early Giovanni family. Both were groups of refugees who were forced by circumstances beyond their control to move to a new homeland. Both settled in a harsh, watery area and, through force of will, helped carve out a mighty city of grandiose architecture, crisscrossed by stately canals — the

Giovanni in Venice, the Pisanob in Tenochtitlan. And both used the dark arts of *nigromancy* to empower themselves, only to have that power denied when it was most needed by the effects of a hellish spirit-storm in the Underworld.

THE MILLINERS

These guys are great. I've never met a Giovanni... hell, I never met a damn Putanesca who could hold a grudge like Francis Milliner.

It all started in Boston, Massachusetts, at the Columbia Trust Company in the early 20th century. It seems Francis was up for the presidency of the company when the current one, P.J. Kennedy (yes, of those Kennedys), retired. But lo and behold, nepotism rears



its ugly head, and young Mr. Milliner is passed over for promotion in favor of his much younger associate, Joe Kennedy. So Francis got screwed.

But our friend Milliner didn't let it die there. Our Francis had a lot of friends among the old-money families of New England. He had also made connections among New York's Italian immigrant population, the most significant being Andreas Giovanni, just off the boat from Venice. Using these connections, Milliner began to slowly chip away at the Kennedy financial base while the Kennedys themselves were busy playing politics.

Not content merely to destroy the family's finances, Milliner went so far as to buy the Kennedy estate right out from under them (they still pay rent there to this night, so say the Milliners). By this time, Joe Senior was dead, but Milliner continued to take great pleasure in destroying the man's legacy. Look at the facts. JFK and Robert Kennedy assassinated. Teddy's Chappaquiddick debacle with Mary Jo Kopechne. David Kennedy's drug overdose. William Kennedy Smith's rape case. Michael's ludicrous skiing mishap. Even JFK Junior's recent "accidental" plane crash. Of course, there is absolutely no evidence tying Francis Milliner or his family to any of these mishaps, but the old man does have a shelf prominently displaying six skulls in his study on the Milliner estate, the last of which was placed there on July 16, 1999, only hours after JFK Junior's plane was reported overdue at Martha's Vineyard.

Let's just say Francis' demeanor, his ability to hate and hold a grudge, suitably impressed Augustus, and he had the Milliners brought into the fold in the mid-'50s. They've since proven their worth, having been instrumental in the recent Giovanni takeover of Boston and had facilitated our behind-the-scenes operations for decades prior. Like the Scottish Dunsirn, the Milliners don't care much for Necromancy, being more concerned with the business of making money.

THE MINOR FAMILIES

In our rise to mercantile dominance, first through Crusade profiteering and then with the explosive growth in trade experienced during the Renaissance, we Giovanni absorbed several lesser merchant families that had tried to "share in" on our domains. Rather than simply drive them into the ground, the Giovanni family brought these lesser merchant families into the fold, where they continue to make a small but significant contribution to Giovanni wealth and prosperity.

The absorption of the della Passaglia in the 1400s gave us our first inroad to trade in the Orient. We did a brisk trade in outdated firearms in exchange for silks, tea

and, most lucrative of all, opium. More recently, the della Passaglia have spent the past quarter century studying the bizarre forms of Necromancy practiced by the Kindred of the East. It seems the death paradigm works differently there, and the della Passaglia are our resident experts on Asian thanatology.

The Ghiberti we acquired in the early 17th century when it became obvious how much money was just waiting to be made in the triangle trade between the United States, West Africa and the West Indies. Their contact with Africa's indigenous people (which was more than just a business arrangement with some of these guys, if you know what I mean) also afforded the Ghiberti a unique opportunity to study these peoples' concept of death, with their ideas about four-part souls and spiritual reincarnation. The Ghiberti even developed their own unique brand of Necromancy, the Cenotaph Path, which concerns itself with tracking down and binding wraiths — not too different from what these guys were doing to the living in Africa, if you ask me.

The Putanesca, whose very name translates as "of the whore," are a Sicilian family of low-rent criminals and thugs we acquired in the 1660s to do the family's dirty work. It may be the della Passaglia who import the opium, but you can bet it will be a Putanesca out on the street dealing smack. Growing out of the Sicilian Mafia, the Putanesca invariably live down to their goomba stereotype. The average Putanesca also has a temper that'd put a fucking Brujah to shame. Not the type to forgive and forget, these guys are real big on the concept of vendetta. If you've got one of these guys mad at you, it's not long till the whole damn family is out trying to whack you. Their only redeeming value is that the Putanesca seem to thrive on shit work. I guess that's why Augustus and the *anziani* keep them around.

Then there are the Rosselini. These guys have been around just about as long as the Giovanni and were quite proficient in necromancy before ever running into us, perhaps due to the same Roman roots. If the Cappadocians hadn't run into us first, it's quite possible that the Rosselini might have been singled out for the Embrace instead. As it is, we first came across these guys toward the end of the Renaissance, when a coven of them made the mistake of pissing off Claudius Giovanni while he was in Rome on family business. Claudius tore the souls from the living bodies of the Rosselini, agreeing to return them only if their sorcerers swore an oath of fealty to him and the Giovanni clan. Given their options, the Rosselini naturally agreed. Since then, Kindred of the Rosselini branch have proven as talented at *nigrinancy* as the Giovanni proper. However, where a Giovanni will do



the minimum he needs to compel a spirit to obey, a Rosselini will go over the top to commit an atrocity far out of proportion to what is required to assure a wraith's compliance just because she gets off on it. As a result, Rosselini Necromancers tend to crash and burn spectacularly, often driving *spiriti* to become *spettri* in the process.

The Giovanni clan also harbors a number of lesser families related to the clan through marriage to one Giovanni or another. Of these, Augustus has his eyes on five for possible "acquisition." These are the St. John (a cabal of English Masons), the Rothstein (Jewish-American Kabbalists with ties to Las Vegas), the Li Weng (a family of Chinese geomancers based in San Francisco's Chinatown), the Koenig (German arms manufacturers and death cultists) and the Beryn (a family of Flemish merchants operating from Luxembourg with African influence like that of the Chiberti). Until recently, there was a sixth such family, but the Mexico-based Hidalgo recently ran afoul of the Sabbat — the Harbingers of Skulls, according to the most nefarious rumors — and were wiped out.

HOLIDAY IN CAMBODIA

Not having had the opportunity to study the systematic slaughter exercised by Hitler and Stalin in Europe, the Necromancers of the della Passaglia family made a concerted effort to gain access to Cambodia in

the 1970s during the height of Pol Pot's killing fields. Paying off officials of the Khmer Rouge, the della Passaglia were, for the first time, afforded the chance to study death on such a mass scale.

It was also during this period that the della Passaglia first met the matriarchs of Southeast Asia's Golden Courts, the Penangallan, who are apparently the Cathayans' answer to the fleshcrafting Teimisce. Since then, these Eastern Kindred have shown an interest in acquiring knowledge of Western Kindred from the della Passaglia in exchange for giving them free rein to collect souls, which considering the number of people dying in Cambodia with either unfinished business or in utter despair was inordinately high and thereby more likely to create *spiriti* or *spettri*, respectively, seemed a rather sweet deal.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Due to the recent upheaval in the Shadowlands, the *nigromancy* of the modern Giovanni has suffered to one degree or another among all practitioners in the family. Because the mechanical aspect of this development plays such an important role in what the Giovanni have become (particularly over the past few years), Giovanni history continues in Chapter Two. The clan's role in the modern nights is discussed at greater length therein.





CHAPTER TWO: IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY

*Why should a man, whose blood is warm within, sit like his
grandsire cut in alabaster?*

— William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Scene I

Most Kindred sires choose who they Embrace. In the Camarilla, this is often a complicated matter of paying dues until one gets permission, then spending months, years — even decades — picking the perfect person to drag into eternity. In the Sabbat it can be a lot simpler. “Hey, he looks tough, let’s get him!” But those Sabbat who last more than a week or two tend to be those who were Embraced after some thought and deliberation. In neither case does either sect foster a perception of obligation. Neither group feels it *owes* the Embrace to any mortal.

Among the Giovanni, the criteria are completely different. Merit figures into it, but only within the narrow confines of family. A mortal may seem tremendously useful and worthy, but if she’s not one of the accepted mortal bloodlines, the odds of her becoming a Giovanni Kindred are slight indeed.

This doesn’t mean that every Giovanni cousin eventually suffers the Curse of Cainé, regardless of merit. Far from it. Most don’t even rate the Proxy Kiss, the brutal period of being a ghoul. But the

family, though widespread, is tightly knit. Everyone comes to a family Christmas party, damn it. If you receive an invitation to one of the other reunions — the ones they hold every April 4th — you better show up for fucking sure.

Many of the Giovanni are *mostly* ignorant, but only the truly clueless are *completely* ignorant. Too many rumors circulate, even among the backward bumpkins who aren’t going to be shown the Horrible Truth in a million years. They may not *know*, but they suspect. So many whispers and overheard remarks and strange goings-on make the rounds that even the dullest needle in the pincushion is eventually going to stitch something together. They know that some people in the family get picked, and if you’re picked, you get money. You attend *all* the parties, even the secret ones. You always look good, you always know what’s going on, you always have a smug half-smile when you look at the ones who weren’t picked.

Thus, even the Giovanni (and, to a lesser extent, the Milliners, Pisanob and Dunsirn) who don’t know



exactly what's going on know that *something* is going on. Something powerful. Something they want, very much, to earn.

The Giovanni, then, are a family of overachievers. But it's not as simple as just excelling in general. See, the ones who haven't been picked often have a hard time knowing who *has*. If you don't know for sure who made the cut, it's hard to suss out *why* they did. So while one Giovanni concentrates on making the starting soccer team, another turns down dates so he can practice the violin, and a third is just grade-grubbing as hard as she possibly can. They're all gambling that their chosen field is the one that earns them the big reward. Whatever it is.

In actuality, the Giovanni Embrace is just as complicated as the Camarilla one — just in a different way. What is intensely personal and private in the Camarilla is often decided in a forum of Giovanni elders. Diego Giovanni's grandchilde (and great-granddaughter) Gianmaria has wanted to bestow an Embrace for some time, but it's not her decision. Diego and other members of the low-generation *anziani* will have a heavy stake in deciding who and when Gianmaria Embraces. She might suggest that one of her mortal children is worthy of the Embrace, but Diego might instead have her do a Milliner or Pisanob. She can propose all she wants: It's her childe, after all. But the *anziani* can dispose, because when all is said and done, it's their blood — two times over.

In other cases, some rogue may just decide to Embrace when he takes the whim. It's happened before — some fuckhead drags his girlfriend into undeath; some fool Embraces a lawyer. It's better to ask forgiveness than permission, right? Not among the Giovanni, friend. At least, not usually.

The elders consider numerous factors when it comes to deciding who Embraces whom. First and foremost, there's generation. Higher generation vampires are more powerful. Therefore, the Giovanni would be the strongest clan if they just had elders like Diego do all the Embracing, right?

In theory, that's true. In practice, that was exactly what the son of a bitch who accidentally founded the clan did with the ancestral Giovanni. As near as anyone can tell, this Kindred figured, "If these mortals are powerful alone, how much more will they be able to do when augmented with my potent vitae?" The answer to that question was, obviously, that they were able to diablerize him and erase most of his brood.

So the modern Giovanni are cautious: They know that every neonate finds out about Amaranth sooner or later, and they don't want to make it any easier for amoral, uppity youngsters to start cannibalizing their ancestors.

The ghouls with the Proxy Kiss are, of course, well aware that it's better to receive the Embrace from someone like Diego than someone like Gianmaria (while they may not understand the complexities of generation, they're well aware of the political edge that being close to an elder gives). Thus, they are constantly competing to prove their loyalty to the family and to individual vampires. Remember, the Giovanni are a driven family, and the Proxy Kiss goes to those who stand out of a field of overachievers. The most common way to do this, of course, is to accept a blood bond to an elder. Often, doing so is something of a slippery slope: The ghoul takes the first drink outside the Proxy Kiss from a different domitor because it seems like a good way to ingratiate herself. She's now partially bound to two vampires, and thus inclined to think well of both of them. That makes her more likely to trust them to give her the second drink, which makes her so very trusting that the third drink only seems like common sense. Unless her other domitor stops her somewhere in the middle of this progression, she is likely to become completely bound. On the other hand, it's not unheard of for someone partially bound to two (or more!) domitors to become the object of a sort of bidding war between them. Often, she ends up totally bound to one and the dire enemy of the other. Is it any surprise that deathless overachievers competing for the affections of the same ghoul may come to hate each other?

Given the family belief that the blood bond clouds your judgement, it ironically turns out that many of these bond-addled ghouls *never* earn the Embrace. It's akin to the old baked goods proverb: Why buy the loaf when you can have the slices for free? Why reward someone with the Embrace if she's perfectly devoted as a ghoul?

The inevitable bond created by the Proxy Kiss itself is another factor in the elders' decision. They know that each neonate may well be bound to his original domitor, so they try to ensure that Giovanni who aren't completely trustworthy (like, say, Paolo Sardenzo) never have their thralls Embraced. Furthermore, each elder surely wants to make sure that she (or one of her childer) is the one giving the Embrace to the most useful mortal cousins. Of course, the other *anziani* are all thinking the same thing, and if they can't get the Embrace they want, they may gang up with other elders to make sure their rival doesn't either — the opportunism in the family doesn't stop after death, after all. Some very talented Giovanni ghouls have had their Embrace delayed for decades — not because nobody wanted them, but because too many *anziani* did. Because no lone elder can overcome the political coalition of the others, the ghoul sits on the shelf until he's so devoted to multiple domitors that he's no longer a great prize.



Once one looks past the political maze of blood bonds and the tactical labyrinth of generation, only then is a potential neonate evaluated as an individual. The criteria applied by the *anziani* differ from elder to elder, but often include...

Name — Hey, the Giovanni didn't end up where they are tonight without healthy doses of nepotism. This means that the less-promising child of a noteworthy mortal father may enjoy preferential treatment. The Millers and American Dunsin have been known to call this "the Bush effect." Or, if they're on the other side of the political fence, the "the John-John effect."

Talent — Sure, it's not the only factor, but it's still an important one. If you earn the Embrace, you do because you're damn good at *something*.

Nature of talent — On the other hand, if the clan decides they need more asskickers, someone who's placed in Spain's national Greco-Roman wrestling championship may find himself Embraced before a truly brilliant stock investor — who can, after all, continue investing during the day.

Genealogy — It shouldn't be a factor, but some elders still harbor a bit of a sentimental streak for the family. This would be more surprising in a Kindred who wasn't raised from infancy to think the family is the

most important thing in the world. Thus, a Giovanni is often more likely to ask the elder's permission to Embrace one of the children she had as a mortal (or a grandchild, or great-grandchild).

Gender — Four centuries ago, it was common knowledge that women were hysterical, inherently sinful, weak and good for little more than mopping, cooking and screwing. Of course, it was also common knowledge that the Earth was flat. Some of the *anziani* have overcome their now-anachronistic upbringing, but for most those old habits die hard.

ANZIANI (ELDERS)

In some ways, the Giovanni *anziani* are like Kindred elders all over the world. They're crafty. They're powerful. They're usually bitter and resentful. And they're paranoid the way only something with a "death-optional" existence can be.

Many of the *anziani* (as they're respectfully called) reside in the Venice mansion — the fabled Mausoleum of the Giovanni. Several of them have left Venice in order to organize Giovanni activities worldwide, however. Accorri Giovanni, who is relatively young for an eighth-generation Kindred, has made his Haven in New York almost since the city's founding.

DIEGO ON PROPHECY

The "red star." "Thin bloods." Myriad signs of the "final nights."

To all this, I say: Bah!

I've seen all this before. Red stars have risen and set — comets in the Middle Ages, then Communist Russia — even Sputnik had some Kindred scholars gibbering and weeping with fear of the rising Old Ones. Yet no Old Ones rose, no Gehenna, only shamefaced scholars looking crestfallen and relieved at the same time.

It's the same with the thin bloods. I knew a scholar and paranormal anatomist who believed that the Tenth Generation were the "thin bloods" of the prophecies, because after them it was impossible for Kindred to weaken any further, or some such. Another saw the foundation of the Camarilla as the completion of some line about "there will be no Embracing for these childer." Similar rubbish.

I disdain prophecy because I have seen thousands of hysterical prophets — mortal, Kindred and other — pointing portentously to the predicted site of disaster, booming out, "Lo! Behold!" in great voices, only to have nothing materialize. Every century had its "Y2K" disappointment, believe me.

More, though, I mistrust prophecy because I know that those messages have to come from somewhere, meaning they come from an intelligence. Although intelligence gives many gifts, it also creates its own expectations, its own false images, its own willful misinterpretations of the naked facts.

To put it another way: If I know what's going to happen, what does it profit me to share that knowledge? Would I not be wiser to prepare and let the future strike my enemies unaware?

No, those givers of prophecy show their knowledge only because it gains them something to have their predictions believed. Specifically, once they are believed they become part of the intelligent expectations of the hearer, who then (willing or no) makes the prophecy more likely. Why do you think they're all so vague? If I tell you, "You will fall down this staircase on April 8, 1921," you will simply stay away from the stairway on that date and I'm proved a false prophet. But if I tell you "You will fall down a staircase," well... Now, every staircase you walk upon becomes a threat. Perhaps the prophecy festers in your head so much that you trip just to have it done with. Or perhaps it distracts you from the real threat, from me with the blackened stake at the foot of the stairs, and then when you realize the prophecy was false... well, it's too late for you.



The notorious Ambrogino Giovanni travels throughout Europe, though if his actions are for his own benefit or that of the clan (or, most probably, some combination of both) no one can say for sure. Diego Giovanni is also known as quite the traveler, checking in on Giovanni activities in Africa and the Americas as often as once a decade.

More often, the *anziani* make their will known less directly. In ages past, their wraithly servants scoured the globe, spying on the elders' enemies no less than their allies and carrying messages of the elders' will. In the modern nights, some are finally confident with telephones and televisions for unimportant matters. For issues of greater urgency or significance, they still prefer a personal messenger. After all, if they understand it correctly, just *anybody* could tap into the wires of a telephone.

It is the elders, primarily, who are most interested in tearing down the Shroud, or *sudario*, and bringing on the Endless Night. However, their eagerness to unify the worlds of life and death is mitigated by their own innate caution. One doesn't survive centuries as an object of fear and hatred of other Kindred by being hasty or obvious. Thus, the *anziani* are slow, but unstoppable, in their accumulation of the hundred million dead souls they need to realize their ambitions. Or they were.

In 1999, they had managed to scrape together almost twenty-eight million imprisoned souls — over a quarter of the way to the Endless Night! Better still, over half of those had been harvested in the *last hundred years*. A booming population made for more remaindered spirits even in good times, and two World Wars were definitely not good times. Many of the optimistic *anziani* were looking forward to reaching the halfway point within decades. Given the way technological mayhem was becoming more and more refined, it was mostly agreed that when fifty million souls had been claimed, it would be time for them to cross the *sudario* physically, crash the world economy, provoke a nuclear war and harvest the second half all at once.

Then the realm of the dead imploded. The Giovanni aren't sure who exactly they want to blame for that. Some think it was a cabal of lunatic mortal necromancers who revere Orpheus. Others blame a handful of flesh-eating Kindred cultists who fled to the East in the wake of the maelstrom. Still others say it was the *spiriti* themselves, having gotten their shit together enough to do something major for once (even if the overall effect screwed the *spiriti* more than anyone else).

When the spirit-storm hit, it weakened the *sudario*, but more importantly it blasted through the pillaged souls of the Giovanni. The Giovanni had primarily designed their enclosures to keep their captured wraiths

in. They weren't meant to protect those ghosts from external dangers. But the maelstrom hit the Giovanni's five wraithly gulags all over the world (Boston, the Pisanob temple in Mexico, Cagliari on Sardinia, Marrakech in Morocco and, of course, Venice) and blasted them wide open. Many of the spirits inside were simply destroyed. A large number in Venice were immediately recaptured as they foolishly stuck around to avenge themselves on their captors. The depositories in the Americas had terse advance warning and were able to prepare for the storm somewhat better than those in Europe and Africa, but unavoidable losses still occurred. Worse, many of the *spiriti* that escaped have undergone the transformation to *spettri* and are determined to punish the Giovanni clan for their captivity.

Now, the Giovanni clan is down to a fraction of their former ghostly resources — a tiny ratio of what they need for their ultimate plan. The Necromancers, of course, have staged a great deal of discussion about how to deal with this setback.

No one is suggesting that the Giovanni abandon the Endless Night ritual — at least, no one is anymore. When the spirit monsoon hit, Augustus himself woke from a decades-long torpor and took a personal hand in the defense of the Mausoleum against its onetime captives. The first two *anziani* who suggested giving up in the face of storm served to slake his thirst, so the remaining elders don't talk in terms of "whether" but rather "how."

Augustus himself has provided no leadership: As soon as the Mausoleum was secure, he set out to examine the wreckage of the Underworld and the roiling storm within personally. The *anziani* believe he's crossed the *sudario* back into the mortal world, but they don't know exactly where he is. A few of the most loyal, or most bound, are concerned, but many of the others moodily await his return. Much as they might like to seize control of the family from him, they're confident that Augustus is unlikely to encounter anything in the world more dangerous and unpleasant than himself.

ANZIANI PRUDENTE (CAUTIOUS ELDERS)

The more cautious *anziani* admit that the maelstrom came out of left field, but are quick to point out the storm clouds do have a silver lining. Sure, most of their enslaved resources are gone. But the *sudario* is now so thin that they may not need nearly as many souls to complete the ritual. Furthermore, so many *spiriti* have been blasted through the *sudario* that they seem to be yoked to otherwise mundane people, places and things. (See p. 57, "The Maelstrom," for more about this.) These makeshift *catene* provide leverage with the wraiths now connected to them,

and because one place or object may serve as an anchor for several (or, theoretically, dozens) of spirits, just locating and obtaining one could ensnare a harvest of ghosts that would take a year to accumulate in calmer times.

Furthermore, the wreckage on the other side of the Shroud means no one's minding the store. In ages past, the Giovanni had to show some circumspection when it came to seizing the more powerful *spiriti* out from Underworld, because you don't come to be a powerful *spirito* there without allies guarding your back. Now, it's every ghost for itself, and that means an organized group of Pisanob or Ghiberti can imprison large numbers of very strong spirits by working together and targeting them one at a time.

The Necromancers aren't the only ones taking advantage of anarchy in the realms of the dead. The Underworld organization that forbade wraiths from taking action in the world of the living (such as possessing mortals, becoming visible, throwing dishes around and pulling similar "Amityville Horror" stunts) seems to have been blown to smithereens. That means the ghost society's equivalent of the Masquerade just went right down the toilet. So, not only are wraith Giovanni able to act with far less discretion or fear of reprisal on their side of the *sudario*, many other *spiriti* are being much more obvious as well. That makes it particularly easy to find them — especially if you're a well-connected expert with centuries of experience.

Consequently, most of the Giovanni elders see the glass as half full. They bought, bribed and blackmailed their way into a number of businesses that previously weren't worth the effort. Specifically, they initiated a hostile takeover of Kopagni Ergonomika in Europe and they've founded Dunsim Ergonic Consultants in the U.S. They've also bought controlling interest in a number of small surveying firms throughout the Western world.

These businesses provide two critical elements in the Giovanni quest to find these new "hot zones" of *spettri* and *spirito* infestation: Contacts and pretexts. Have people in your office building suddenly started complaining of weird noises, strange smells, unusual problems with the office equipment? ("Hey, the water cooler didn't use to sound like it was screaming.") Must be air trapped in the water pipes, or a fungus problem on the flip side of the drop ceiling, or mildly toxic reactant in the synthetic carpet. Better call in Kopagni Ergonomika. After all, they did a great job when the Grodschmidt Building had that weird stuff that looked like blood running down the walls.

If all goes well, the Giovanni connected with these businesses capture a passel of obnoxious ghosts and collect a fee from the grateful mortals as well.



Not all the *spiriti* ejaculated from the hell storm stuck to places, of course: Some attached to people. But in many ways, that's even easier. Sure, some people go to a priest when they start hearing disembodied voices or having visions of strangers in their homes. But (in the developed countries at least) they're a lot more likely to go to a shrink, and the Giovanni have been involved in the health care industry since its infancy. Dope up the poor haunted fucks on some Zoloft, cage the ghosts and explain away the memories of the necromantic rituals as paranoia or hallucination. Hell, have a drink while you're at it.

ANZIANI APPASSIONATI (EAGER ELDERS)

Other elders are less sanguine about the loss of centuries' worth of effort. These elders—some of whom were Embraced by Augustus himself—accuse the other *anziani* of wanting to pursue the Endless Night more than they want to achieve it. While small in number, these *anziani* are very vocal when they can shake off the cold haze of torpor and very powerful.

The *Anziani Appassionati* are in favor of tracking down and acquiring newly haunted areas through the ruse of geological surveying or asbestos removal or whatever. But to these elders, that's not nearly enough. The instant anchors help, but they're not a solution, not

THE PREMASCINES

Every group tells stories. If you're a Boy Scout, you might hear about the phantoms that haunt Uracca Mesa. If you're a Mason, you might get an earful about King Solomon (or the Wandering Jew). If you're a goodfella, you might hear about what some Fat Tony did to his punk son-in-law, back in the '60s. If you're in the Giovanni clan, you might hear the story about the Premascines.

Some of these stories are true, some are false, some started out true and got an encrustation of embellishment that has almost obscured the accurate outline.

The story goes like this: When Augustus Giovanni rose up against his sire, he wasn't alone. Several of his family members had his back, either by being immediately present or by offering their aid in other ways. Of these co-conspirators, some (Twelve? Four? Six? Seven?) survived to the modern nights and are known as the Premascines.

Seeing as the diablerie of whoever Augustus' sire was, anyway, took place in 1444, the Premascines are old. The story also goes that they are very close to Cainé—Fourth and Fifth Generation, probably. Because they were Embraced before the diablerie, they are also genuine members of the clan that came before us, if that distinction has much meaning. Some say they don't suffer the Curse of Lamia, while others say they were cursed at the same time as Augustus. There's also the claims that they have corpse-like visages or prophetic visions. Or that they have all three curses. Not that it matters much, because (so the story goes) they've been hidden in the water under Venice for hundreds of years. When you're a centuries-old waterlogged corpse, well, what does a little more pallor or pain mean to your victims?

That does raise the interesting question of what these ancient monsters ingest to survive. Tourists dragged off the canals? Nasty, cold fish blood! Those are some theories. Some Giovanni suspect that the other *anziani* have a well in the depths of the *loggia* where they dump enough blood nightly to keep the Premascines sedate. It's also been claimed that after centuries of studying Necromancy the Premascines learned to consume spirits of the dead and somehow transform them into something nourishing.

Others say these old ones can no longer tolerate mortal blood, and need *Kindred vitae* to survive. Variations on this story are: The Premascines are fed Giovanni neonates who screw up, they devour members of other clans who make trouble in Venice, or the family Embraces luckless mortals for the sole purpose of feeding them to the elders.

If the Premascines are anything other than a story told to keep the neonates in line, they are genuinely old, terrifyingly powerful, and more familiar with Necromancy than the vainest ancilla is with her own self. What they are not, however, is a resource for the family. While they may have been fellows at one time, staying underwater for centuries and inspecting the mysteries of the afterlife firsthand are not the way to stay sane and in touch. If they exist, they are too alien in their feelings and values to have any but the most superficial discourse with a person or *Kindred* of the modern nights.

If the Giovanni family has, as claimed, been keeping them fed and concealed, then it's possible that they might in turn offer their assistance. For example, if the Giovanni needed to have a squadron of phantom fighter planes from World War I attack a site in the mortal world (or any part of the Underworld) the Premascines might oblige. Certainly, *something* has been protecting Venice from wrath of wraiths and spectres alike for generations—even through the current Underworld unrest.



by half, because they're temporary. Eventually all the available anchors will be harvested, or broken by exorcists, or the *spiriti* there will simply lose their fight against the storms and the *spettri*.

No, if the Giovanni are going to achieve their destiny before the cursed Setites manage to rouse their dead founder (and the Giovanni *anziani* who know the most about the Setites all seem to be the most eager to take down the *sudario*), they need to do more than simply take advantage of a temporary situation. It's not enough to simply bail out the boat: It's also necessary to patch the hole.

In this case, the "hole" is the comparative lack of *spiriti*. To create more, mortals must die, in great numbers, preferably with a great deal of unfinished business.

To this end, the *anziani appassionati* seek areas of violence, tension and unrest on a national scale — preferably in nations with atomic weapons. India and Pakistan seem particularly ripe, but to date Giovanni agents sent there to fan the spark into fire have been universally chased out by Cathayans jealous of "their turf," or have vanished entirely, such as in the monsoon that racked Bangladesh. (In Pakistan, Andre della Passaglia was dismembered and mailed back to Venice. On the wooden stake through his chest was a message in neat calligraphy: "We humbly request

your recognition of our destiny. Ending the world is our job and will be done on our schedule.")

Similarly, China is a tough nut to crack. It would be an ideal tool for starting a massive war: It's got a gigantic standing army, and (thanks to abortion, infanticide and a culture that exalts male offspring) far more unmarried men in their twenties and late teens than women for them to wed. Historically, that's the recipe for a war of conquest. But again the Cathayans stand between the Giovanni and a ripe situation. Agents keep going into China, and sometimes they're successful — after all, it's a big country and the Kindred of the East can't be everywhere — but they're nowhere near amassing the influence they'd need to provoke a war.

As for the more hospitable Western world, the U.S. is too fat, happy and TV-sedated to involve itself in anything of the scale the anxious elders desire. South America and Africa are both very promising, but only in the sense of having many small-scale actions — and no one there is going nuclear. The Giovanni are working harder than ever to do their part in the flow of cheap weapons into these regions, and the collapse of the Soviet Union has made that a lot simpler. But when it comes to actually moving fissionable material from the former USSR into the hands of someone extremist enough



to use it... well, that's a sticky wicket. First off, the Russians had a lot fewer nukes than they let on. By far, the majority of the weapons the CIA spotted were decoys. If the CIA figured it out, they kept quiet: It's very possible, after all, to spy oneself right out of a job.

The Russians do a piss-poor job of guarding the nuclear material they *do* have, even by mortal standards, but that's why the UN and NATO (infested with those fucking Ventrue) are keeping a very close eye on what goes where.

A nuclear holocaust in Africa or South America is unlikely soon, then, but the Middle East is another matter. Israel's got the bomb, and isn't Egypt where all those damn Setites breed? Two birds with one stone would be very nice, but Israel — particularly Jerusalem — is thick not only with Kindred and Cathayans, but with other... *things*... of all descriptions. Obviously, not every politician in the region is something's relative, puppet or ward ("Would the Lupine delegate please leave the floor!"), but enough influence taints the area that the Giovanni are going to have to operate with great guile to get what they want. They're currently negotiating with a group of renegade Lupines and a faction of old-style magicians from something called "the Celestial Tradition of Hermetic Orders." The Lupines, contrary to the stereotype, seem to *admire* the "corruption" of the Giovanni, and the magi seem to think that if technology has enough repercussions, people will turn away from it and back to the old ways of magic. Obviously, werewolves and witches are stupider than Kindred.

Arrayed against the Giovanni and their sometime allies are a gang of werewolves who seem almost as knowledgeable about ghosts and the Underworld as the Giovanni themselves, and a bunch of vengeful occultist trash who are strangely resistant to the Gifts of Caine. Skulking around the edges of the conflict are the Setites, who appear to be enamored with the Giovanni's twisted Lupine contacts, and the Cathayans who, it seems, just resent everyone.

THE HONORED DEAD

Becoming undead, in any fashion, is very rare. Becoming a ghost because you *want* to is rarer still. On the other hand, six centuries is a long time, and the Giovanni are nothing if not intense about their goals. Consequently, more than a few Giovanni have become *spiriti*. A few are even *spettri*.

These allies on the other side are tremendously useful for the Giovanni who still move in the living realm. Luring ghosts into ambush is the very least of it. They can also use their wraithly perceptions by daylight

to spy on Giovanni enemies — without the Necromancer having to fear betrayal or insubordination... *too* much. As Giovanni *spiriti* age, their powers grow to the point that they can be a threat to any but the best protected of Kindred.

Just as important is their influence on the other side. Giovanni *spiriti* tend to learn ghostly powers of spirit-shaping and wreaking supernatural havoc in the world of the living (Discipline equivalents for these spirit powers are Vicissitude and a combination of Movement of the Mind and Lure of Flames). The uses of apportionation and ghost-flames are obvious, but it is for their ability to "fleshcraft" other wraiths that the Giovanni *spiriti* are most valued by their Kindred cousins. This is because such power gives them the ability to render other wraiths immobile, insensate — incapable of any action. Thus, the Giovanni clan secures its stockpile of souls for the Endless Night ritual. *Spirit* who are tithed for the Endless Night are not used for standard charges of espionage and harassment: That puts them at risk of destruction or escape. Instead, they are twisted into paralysis or stored in their *catene* and put in one of the Giovanni sepulchres.

Of course, a Giovanni wraith's association with its mortal cousins is a double-edged sword. The threat of necromantic revenge is a potent one, but working for menacing black magicians isn't a great way to make friends — especially when the ghosts captured by the Giovanni are often simply never heard from again.

Aside from the hatred of their *spirito* peers, Giovanni wraiths also have to endure the condescension of their Kindred relatives. It's nothing blatant or intentional, but most Giovanni inherently see *spiriti* as inferior beings, fit to be used, tormented and enslaved. Knowing that your dear grandma has become one causes no small amount of cognitive dissonance, as respect and affection go to war with ingrained contempt and callousness. Usually, the emotions reach a stalemate that is bearable, if not comfortable.

When you're the one who's been transformed into a wraith, the emotional conflict is far more intense.

THE GLOBAL GIOVANNI

Not every member of the Giovanni clan is a member of the Giovanni family. The structure of the family trickled down into the "client families" who were brought into the Kindred fold, however. An elder is still an elder, but the Giovanni *anziani* trump all other Elders combined. Of course, this has been the source of no little friction between the families...

THE PISANOB

The Pisanob have had a very hard time of it. Although most of their temple havens in the Mexi-



THREE VIEWS OF THE ENDLESS NIGHT

The Endless Night is when we take charge, man! People will be no different than ghosts, which means that you can feed off 'em till they die, and they'll just come back in a month or two. We'll be able to mindfuck ghosts and use necromancy on normal people, because they'll all be the same thing. It'll make that old Anarch Revolt look like Coney fucking Island.

— Cristobal Ghiberti, 13th Generation

The Endless Night will be more than a simple change of politics. It will be more, even, than the reunion of two sundered worlds. It will be the transformation of both. We, as Kindred, stand astride the worlds of life and death. But when those realms are reunited, might it not resolve the conflicts of our condition as well?

— Diego Giovanni, 6th Generation

Everything will finally be perfectly quiet. The mortal followers of Newton have grasped the Endless Night better than many in our own clan. They call it "the heat-death of the universe." All movement, even unto the molecular level, will cease. There will be no more matter, no more energy, no more hope or fear, no more life or death, no more this or that. No more good. No more evil. No more conflict.

— The Capuchin

can hinterlands remain secure, many outlying Pisanob havens in Mexico have been compromised. Between unchecked rampages by the Sabbat and Underworld conflicts with the Harbingers of Skulls, the Pisanob were beleaguered even before the crippling maelstrom in the spirit world. When half their phantom servants were destroyed in an instant, the Pisanob were finally vulnerable to the vengeance of spirits who had awaited a chance since before Columbus came to America. The only reason the temple of Pochtli has survived is that the maelstrom and its aftermath caught the Pisanob's enemies as flat-footed as it did the Kindred themselves. The Harbingers of Skulls suffered the ghostly apocalypse at least as badly as the Central and South American Giovanni. As for other Pisanob, they've found themselves frequently targeted by a group of humans who claim to be driven by a higher power to reclaim the world. Being the lead dog in Mexico has gotten the Sabbat bitten on the ass by these hunters, while the few Mexican Camarilla vampires sit back smugly and congratulate one another on the protection of the Masquerade. Numerous Pisanob have met their ends at the hands of these mortal hunters, too, finding themselves caught between the warring sects or compromised to save another Kindred's skin.

With supernatural Mexico largely in disarray, the organization of the family is a shambles. Individual Pisanob are still comparatively safe and effective working as arms merchants, mercenaries or (if they're traditional) hospital orderlies in the rest of South and Central America. But without the Mexican infrastructure, these Kindred are largely on their own.

For some, that's just as well: They're happy to continue their activities without their elders looking over their shoulders and shaking them down for spiritual tribute. The central Giovanni, of course, are loath to let the Pisanob go on their merry way, but with travel in the ghostly realms really, really difficult, their best bet for putting the Pisanob back together is to rebuild what was ruined in Mexico.

Rumors run rampant between those Pisanob who are still in contact with one another. "Augustus is coming here," says one, "because he's pissed at Pochtli and wants to drink his death personally." "The Giovanni are going to call Pochtli to Venice. If he goes, they'll kill him — assuming no one else nails him on the way. If he doesn't go, they'll turn the whole family out on its ear!" claims another. "No," says a third. "They're going to invite every Pisanob to an April 4th meeting at the temple for a massive counterstrike against everyone. They've got too much invested in us to abandon — but anyone who doesn't show up for the Big Push gets hunted down and bound!"

All the unrest among the Pisanob is very unfortunate, because one of Pochtli's experiments has, at long last, paid off. The result is called (rather arrogantly) the Ritual of Pochtli, and it might just be the tool that the Pisanob need to turn things around — if they can survive long enough to teach it to enough of the family.

THE MILLINERS

The Milliner family feels it has good reasons to be proud of itself. Unfortunately for them, the Giovanni family doesn't seem to share those feelings. To complicate matters for both, the Milliners know about the Giovanni's reservations.

From the Milliner point of view they've been doing a bang-up job. They've not only held their own against both the Camarilla and the Sabbat in America, they've done so while flourishing on the fronts of financial and criminal influence. Who realized the new language of organized crime was not Italian but Russian? The Milliners. Who persuaded the AMA that nationalized health care would be worse for their wallets than a doubling of greens fees on private golf courses? The Milliners. Who reaped enormous profits through investments in HMOs and privatized prisons, and also ensured such shoddy management and oversight that Giovanni clan members can feed in comfort and secu-



THE RITUAL OF POCHTLI (LEVEL TWO NECROMANTIC RITUAL)

The actions of this ritual were actually developed in concert with several Ghiberti vampires who have been residing in Pochtli's temple for almost two decades. Because both families had a lengthy history of elaborate ceremonies, they felt more comfortable researching with one another than with the mainstream Giovanni. What they have developed is something of a metaritual. It cannot be cast by itself, but only in conjunction with another Necromantic ritual, or with the heavily ritualized use of a Necromantic path.

The action of the ritual is this: Two or more Kindred necromancers restrain a mortal vessel and inflict incisions in the shape of blasphemous Egyptian hieroglyphs or Aztec symbols. They then drink from these injuries. Each participating Necromancer must make his own cut and drink from no other cut.

Thereafter, the Necromantic power the Kindred seek to employ gains the benefit of all the participants' knowledge. This ritual makes it possible for Necromancers to create truly fearsome feats of death-magic.

System: The player rolls to activate this ritual as normal—Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 5 (because it's a Level Two ritual). If the roll succeeds, the Kindred who have participated in the ritual may work together on the path or ritual the Ritual of Pochtli is intended to assist, and players share successes. Note that the primary application of Necromancy requires its own roll, and that successes (and failures) garnered by the group are pooled.

If a Giovanni tries to use the Ritual of Pochtli with a path or ritual, she must have the know-how to use Necromancy in the Ghiberti or Pisanob style (see below). Additionally, all Kindred participating in the ritual must know the Ritual of Pochtli as well as the ritual or path power the group seeks to enact.

For example, three Pisanob attempt to use the Ritual of Pochtli to flay the soul from a Sabbat ghoul who has invaded their haven. Each player succeeds on her roll to use the Ritual of Pochtli, and then they collectively attempt to use the Level Four Bone Path power, Soul Stealing. The first player gains three successes, the second gets two, and the last gets only one (which would have been two, but she rolled a 1). These combine for a total of six successes, reaping the ghoul's soul from his body for a total of six hours.

The downside of this power is that a single player's botch negates the successes of the entire group, resulting in a horrific failure for the ritual workers.

MET System: Every participant in the *Ritual of Pochtli* must know this ritual, know Pisanob or Ghiberti-style Necromancy and must activate the same ritual or path immediately after its use. You should role-play out the screaming terror of carving a target with necromantic sigils that also become puckered sores to slake your thirst, so long as you can do so without alarming passersby! (And if you're doing this sort of thing in public, then maybe you should think about getting a back room to do rituals away from spying eyes.)

Each individual who succeeds in the *Ritual of Pochtli* adds his successive power to the duration of the following Necromancy. If the group tries to perform *Summon Soul*, for instance, and three casters succeed in this ritual and then in the test for the power, the duration of the power is tripled (three questions/turns). Only those who succeed in both the casting of this ritual and the successive power or ritual add to the final effect. You cannot combine more than five people in this ritual.

ity? The Milliners. Who had three of America's most effective witch-hunters jailed as "potential Y2K extremists"? The Milliners. Who set up a powerful Setite to take the fall when the hunters were sprung? Once again, the Milliners.

Shit, who's the most prominent Kindred faction in Boston now, with fucking *Camarilla* recognition? The Giovanni. But who handed it over to them?

The Milliners.

They've given the Giovanni money, contacts, muscle—not to mention a string of prisons and Urgent Care centers nationwide that might as well be named "McVampires." Not bad for a family whose elder is at least two generations removed from the *anziani* and two centuries younger than their childer.

Do the Giovanni notice? Doesn't seem like it. No "nice job" out of Venice. No increased money, though you'd think they'd smarten up after the Milliners told them to huy into Cisco and MCI, and they *didn't*, and if they had they'd have made back ten times their investment. Permission to Embrace *cut back*. Permission to diablerize Camarilla and Sabbat enemies denied for those not blood bound to a Giovanni. Francis Milliner publicly dressed down by Diego Giovanni, practically in front of the whole family.

The Milliners give and give and give to the Giovanni, and what do they get? The boss gets a promotion. Remedial Necromancy lessons from Diego's pet freak-childer. And demands for more souls to make up for what was lost during the Great Spirit Shake-out.



THE DUNSIRN

The Giovanni's northern European connection has also felt pressure from the main family. While Necromancy has traditionally been a very low Dunsirn priority, some Giovanni *anziani* are now insisting that all Dunsirn neonates learn its grim practice so that they can tithe to the Giovanni in souls, rather than the traditional Dunsirn fiscal substitute. In fact, rumors have come out of the Mausoleum that even those older Dunsirn who don't know Necromancy may be "asked" to learn it — may, in fact, be commanded to Venice to learn it at the seat of the clan's power.

The Scots are known as a proud culture, and growing rich as robber barons is never conducive to humility. Thus, the Dunsirn are bristling at the suggestion that they need to be taken back to school — and at the knees of the Giovanni, rather than from their own family, too! Keeping up with the developments in the European Union isn't easy in the best of times, and especially not since the Camarilla and some group of sorcerers both have their fingers in the Euro up to the elbow. With the EU in its formative stages, the Dunsirn know it's critical to get their hooks in now, at the foundation, so that everything that grows after will grow around them. But it's at just this moment that the collapse of the Underworld has the Giovanni family getting upright and dictatorial.

THE MINOR FAMILIES

The della Passaglia family is, as they say in China, "living in interesting times." Inexplicably (to them), their decades of steadily chiseling their way into the confidence of the Cathayans have been hamstrung. Kuei-jin who were tolerant, if not exactly congenial, turned their noses up at the merchant family overnight. Requests for an explanation are frequently met with polite refusal. Demands are rebuffed — often violently. Slowly, the realization is dawning that the Kuei-jin may have simply spent centuries studying western vampires to learn their weaknesses. Now that the Cathayans are striking in California (and, it's rumored, in Kosovo), they have no further need for study. More chilling than the suspicion that they've been used are the rumors leaking out of the Cathayan Green Courts of Korea — that the Nagaraja aren't completely destroyed after all....

While the della Passaglia are being confused by fresh intrigues in the East, the lowly Putanesca family keeps on thriving, as it always has. Largely ignorant of necromancy, most are untroubled by the maelstrom. Focused in Europe and North America, they need not concern themselves with Kuei-jin wiles. They are concentrating, as always, on murder, vice and black-

mail. The influx of gangsters from Russia threw them for a loop briefly, but the red *mafias* appreciate the benefits of vitae as much as anyone. For the Putanesca, business is good.

Things are similarly going well for the Ghiberti family. While the African Necromancers suffered as greatly as anyone by the maelstrom, many of them had the good fortune to be in the middle of widespread political violence and unrest. Thus, it was comparatively easy for them to acquire the blood they needed for *Tempesta Scudi* — and to rapidly heal any injuries inflicted by stray *spettri* and vengeful wraiths. Because they don't have the Harbingers of Skulls to worry about (not like the Pisanob do, anyway), the Ghiberti have kept their lines of communication strong and have been able to use the Ritual of Pochtli to rapidly establish a strong presence in the chaos caused by the maelstrom.

Finally, the Rosselini have probably suffered the most of any of the minor families. It takes quite a bit to be considered "cruel" by the Giovanni, but the Rosselini managed it. More than one Giovanni secretly suspected that the reason the Rosselini wound up serving the Giovanni (and not the other way around) was philosophical more than tactical. The Giovanni pursue necromancy for the power to exalt the family. The Rosselini do it because they simply *like* it. It's an end in itself, and consequently the Rosselini often try to do as much as they possibly can, as sadistically as possible, just to push the envelope. This approach is in direct contrast with the other necromancers, who generally try to get the most done with the *least* effort. In practical terms, this means the Rosselini go to extremes when summoning, compelling and tormenting spirits. When the *sudario* went thin, summoning became easier and compelling grew harder — meaning that the Rosselini were suddenly conjuring more spirits than they could keep on the leash. Given their penchant for pissing off (and on) everything they summon, the Rosselini inadvertently turned themselves into a spectre mill. The *spettri* they created showed no gratitude at all.

UNICO SANGUEE DOPPIO SANGUE (SINGLE BLOOD AND DOUBLE BLOOD)

The notions of equality between genders and races are, to some Kindred, odd indeed. The older the Cainite, the more quaint and misguided (or, alternatively, radical and threatening) these ideas are likely to seem.

The *anziani* of the Giovanni clan are very old indeed, and their prejudices are firmly set. Their first



and strongest prejudice, of course, is that Giovanni blood is the best in the world. They don't feel any need to give reasons for this belief: From their perspective, it's just a fucking *fact*. Need proof? Okay, find another family that's been as successful. Find another family with an active "Antediluvian" that got that way, not by being chosen, but by choosing to grab the future by the short hairs. Find another Kindred clan that's got the coherence of a real family, instead of being a thrown-together batch of misfits, screwups, pity-fucks and impulse Embraces.

Found one yet? Didn't think so.

So the Giovanni are the best family and the best clan. That means that anyone who was both born *and* Embraced Giovanni has to be the cream of the crop, right? Not just born to greatness but chosen for it, too. They even have a phrase for it: *unico sangue*, "of single blood." Those who are "pure" Giovanni naturally con-

sider themselves superior to those who were Embraced into the clan, but not born into the Giovanni family — the Putanesca, the Milliners and all the others who are *doppio sangue* ("double blooded"). The *doppio sangue* are still more meritorious than other Kindred, just as other vampires are better than wraithly slaves. But they still aren't the best.

To the Giovanni, this is just common sense. They don't talk about it, just like people don't talk about why the sky is blue. That's just the way it is, obviously.

Of course, the Pisanob, della Passaglia and Dunsirn don't necessarily agree with all this crypto-eugenic arrogance. No one's going to call bullshit on a Giovanni elder for a subtle snub, but among themselves they roll their eyes and grumble.

That's because this superiority isn't just theoretical. Oh no. It may not be intentional or conscious, but the Giovanni act on their assumed superiority. If a project

INFANTILISM

The natural course of life is this: You're born, your parents rear you, you gradually become more independent until get your own place, but you still probably go to your folks for advice and help when the chips are down. Eventually, they die. That's when you're *really* stuck being an adult: Not only because you're living on your own and controlling your own life, but because you no longer have the *option* of running home to mama.

The Giovanni situation is anything but natural. They're born and brought up, just like everyone else, but most are never forced into the full self-determination that comes from having no other choice. The Giovanni *always* have a ma and pa back home in Venice, maybe checking up on them, making sure they're doing okay or (most important of all) *making sure they're doing the family proud*.

Even if your folks weren't Embraced, or if (heaven forfend) they suffered the Final Death, you still have a passel of *anziani* around. On the good side, they can bail your ass out of trouble. On the bad side, they pry and spy and meddle as much as they're able. And a deathless Kindred with unreasonable sums of money, plus spirit servants, is very able indeed.

Most Giovanni just grit their teeth and try to be competent enough to earn their elders' trust (imagine some bachelor pushing 30 who nods and says "I'll think about it" whenever his mom stops by his apartment with some decorating tips). A few, though, are willing to leave all that hard *thinking* and *planning* to their elders. Maybe it's someone who just got so worn down by incessant backstabbing and treachery that she's given up. "Go ahead, do whatever you want. You will anyhow."

More disturbing, though, are those who *relish* having their decisions made for them. These infantilized Kindred are like spoiled brats who do whatever their elders say in return for praise, clan status and coddling. In extreme cases, you have a mama's boy, seemingly 40 years old, talking baby talk to his site as he whines and begs for another quarter mil to shore up his haven.

Of course, you can't have Daddy's Little Girl without someone in the role of Daddy. The more sophisticated and elder Kindred generally don't fall into this trap: Sure, caring for your kids is a tough habit to break, but a century of being dead and killing others can have a corrosive effect on even the bonds of parent and child. The overprotective daddies and mamas are generally less than two hundred years old. Some of them know that they should let the fledglings spread their wings and fly (or plummet) on their own, but they just can't commit to it. Others see nothing wrong with "caring deeply."

This is a broad spectrum, of course. Most of the infantile or paternalistic Giovanni are very mild cases: A sire who's a little overprotective, a child who's a bit dependent and indecisive. But the clan has also sheltered some real basket cases. The extreme infants tend to show little foresight and throw tantrums whenever thwarted, counting on their parent-figure to clean up the mess (which is generally a pretty good bet). As for the (s)mother types — just don't mess with their "kids." It's hazardous to your health.



is important, it doesn't matter whether a Dunsirn is more informed or a Rossellini more experienced: Usually, an *unico sangue* Giovanni is entrusted with the ultimate authority.

This bias causes no small amount of friction and displeasure for the *doppio sangue*, of course. From their point of view, they do all the hard work, while the Giovanni sit back and take the kudos. Not only that — the Giovanni are more willing to risk shedding double blood than they are their own pure, precious, unsullied single blood. So when a really dangerous shit job comes along, you know the guy in the thick of it probably isn't going to be wearing those fancy G-crest cufflinks.

The *doppio sangue* put up with it almost all the time. After all, it's not too bad — and if a bad decision is made, the Giovanni are (if anything) *harder* on their own flesh and blood, because it's more disappointing when a single-blood Giovanni screws up than when some "lesser" member of the clan does so. And maybe they've started to buy the line themselves, on some subconscious level. After all, when all's said and done, the Giovanni are the ones with the mystic blood to hand out.

That's a hard argument to refute.

L'ECONOMIA SANGUINOSA (THE ECONOMY OF BLOOD)

Starting, as they did, as a family of merchants, the Giovanni tend to regard just about everything in economic terms. Their fundamental axiom is "get it cheap, sell it dear." While sometimes limiting, this approach does provide some insight into how the Giovanni regard the rich, red essence of vampiric existence — *vitae*.

If you ask Giovanni about the Curse of Lamia, many of them shrug and tell you that, in the long run, it's not a curse at all. When a mortal starts juicing his jeans every time you sink in the fangs, it's a lot easier to delude yourself that you're not stealing life, or that the mortal is not your *victim* or that you're not a monster. When they shriek and scream it's inconvenient, but at least you don't fall into the trap of thinking that what you're doing is anything less than reprehensible.

Psycho-philosophizing aside, however, the lack of an ecstatic "Kiss" makes it more difficult to form a blood cult or find a willing herd. Sure, they may say they're into it because of the "genuine experience of near-death intensity" or something, but the Giovanni know that only the real twists choose pure pain over pleasure. Using Dominate is an okay tactic for compelling obedience, but unless you're really good at

memory erasure (or cooking up alien abduction stories) it's not a perfect solution. The old smash 'n' suck approach still works, but Giovanni (usually neornates) who rely on it usually find out what the Masquerade is for — if the Camarilla doesn't beat the cops to their door.

One solution available to many Giovanni is to take blood from the dead, procedure that is fairly common in developed nations. Dead blood is usually thrown away in mortuaries once it's drained to make room for embalming fluid. The same sort of thing happens in hospital operating rooms.

This tactic works with remarkable, if unsavory, efficacy. It does have a few drawbacks, of course. For one thing, these are the sorts of places that intrepid vampire hunters and inquisitive sectarians watch closely. Furthermore, the Giovanni aren't the only ones who've figured out that if you want blood, you go where the blood is. Nosferatu who don't care for animal blood but who still don't have what it takes to get the good stuff fresh often gravitate toward morgues and blood banks, where their hiding skills make it fairly simple to rummage through the biohazard bins.

The other drawback to the morgue approach is that it's absolutely disgusting. It's kind of like spending eternity eating cold, congealed, unflavored gruel, when there's a literal moving feast all around you.

Another option is spending money to procure blood. The simplest way is to approach the saddest, most desperate crack whore you can find and say "I'm very rich and very, very kinky. I'll pay you a hundred bucks for a pint of your blood." Most Giovanni who do so drink the blood through a straw to make the "donor" less suspicious. A more discreet (but also more elaborate and cold-gruel-flavored) method is to set up a fake blood donation station. People come in, and the phlebotomist takes a few ounces "for testing." A unit of blood is taken and the plasma is spun out — but a few more ounces are surreptitiously drained off before centrifuging. The nonplasma portion is banked, the patient leaves with 25 bucks in his pocket, the plasma is thrown away (or used, untested, in hospitals) and a vampire drinks the secretly collected ounces. About three donors are required to produce a single night's worth of sustenance, but most victims never suspect a thing.

Still, this has all the disadvantages of a funeral parlor operation, with higher overhead to boot. Rather than screw around with cops, health inspectors and suspicious priests, many Giovanni have opted to go where life (and therefore blood) is cheap.



Necromancers have always been right at home on the battlefield. *Spiriti* are produced when people die with unfinished business and *spettri* show up when people die in utter despair and rage. Thus, it stands to reason that you see a higher proportion of both when people die young, fast and in incredible pain. If that necromancer is also a Kindred, then the chance to kill wounded people in a loud, confusing situation where everyone's distracted by flying shrapnel... well, that's a very rich icing on a very tasty cake.

The *unico sangue* Giovanni are less likely to involve themselves right down on the front any more. They have the money to get the goods they need in "civilized" countries where you can't trade a phosphorous grenade on the street for a gram of coke and last year's cell phone. Several of their "lesser" families have involved themselves in South American conflicts or the ever-present unrest of Africa, however.

When the Pisanobaren't working as hospital orderlies in order to feed themselves, they can often be found working for the Carabineros de Chile or serving as bodyguards for cocaine kingpins. Some of the better class of Pisanob have availed themselves of CIA training to climb the ladder in Colombian paramilitary organizations. After all, the combination of Lamia's Kiss and unholy Kindred strength makes for one hell of an effective interrogation.

As for Africa, the Ghiberti family there has gradually been shifting its attention toward the region's ever-present conflicts. From Sierra Leone to Burundi, Ghiberti mercenaries hire themselves out to create terror (or, if you prefer, "tactical opportunities") and implement genocidal pogroms ("suppress civilian unrest"). Their prices are high, their results are undeniable, and their one requirement is that their methods go unexamined.

Working as the clenched fist of a totalitarian government has many obvious advantages for an enterprising Kindred, not the least being that more blood gets shed than a *thousand* Kindred would know what to do with. The perception that it's raining vitae and all you have to do is go out with a bucket also keeps intra-clan bickering to a minimum in free-fire zones. After all, when people are regularly "corrected" by the government, no Masquerade is needed to cover up a kidnapping. One reason the Camarilla and the Sabbat are so liberal in interpreting the Masquerade in many areas of Africa and South America is that there's less need for it: The mortals are too busy butchering each other to notice a few more casualties from monsters who aren't breathing.

That said, drawbacks exist. For one thing, hardcore firearms (such as the aforementioned phosphorous grenades) are far easier to come by in Somalia than in the worst urban hellhole in the United States (for example). The Cold War pumped so much military aid into these developing nations that street urchins with undescended testicles and full-auto AK-47s abound. A vampire's haven is much more likely to catch a stray mortar shell in Serbia than in, say, Shaker Heights. Furthermore, people in developing countries have endured a disproportionate share of Kindred attention for decades. So, when a guy in Burkina Faso says his wife got drained dry by a bloodsucker, the neighbors' first instinct is to start combing the area at dawn — not to sling him in a loony bin.

TRADIZIONE (TRADITION)

THE PROXY KISS

The Giovanni have as many ways of giving the Proxy Kiss — the ceremonial feeding of Giovanni vitae to create a ghoul from a family member — as they have havens. Some Giovanni leaders set it up as a voluntary act in a "black mass" so that only the boldest — those willing to be damned for the family — become ghouls.

Others simply slip it into some normal food to create a ghoul who becomes addicted, but who initially has no idea of the cause. This method is favored for useful mortals who might not agree — in the hypothetical case that they were informed beforehand. After all, it's much easier to continue being a ghoul than it is to consciously decide to become one.

Some clothe the kiss in layers of farcical ceremony to throw off any inquisitive eyes and ears from outside the family. Some are simply very straightforward about what they're doing.

Regardless of its presentation, the practice of the Proxy Kiss is beginning to erode. In fact, only in Italy is it followed with regular loyalty. The rest of Europe and Africa still give it with a fair degree of faithfulness, but it's less and less popular in the Americas. Some of the Milliners have gone so far as to suggest that it should be considered an optional honor — and they stress *optional*.

The reasons for this resistance are, of course, as political as they are practical. The *unico sangue* Giovanni use the Proxy Kiss because, as the primary givers of the vitae, it puts the most neonates under their spell — exactly why the double-bloods *don't* like it. From their point of view, it's just one more gesture of mistrust (or contempt) from the Venetians.

Bestowing the Proxy Kiss is considered almost as great an honor as receiving it, because it means the



family and clan trusts the donor enough to deliver a family member into her power. It has not escaped the notice of the double-bloods that many who are chosen to give the Proxy Kiss are *unico sangue*.

Given the family suspicion of blood bonds of any sort, it seems that the Proxy Kiss tradition may soon be observed more in the breach. As the schism between the *anziani prudente* and the *anziani appassionati* widens, the Proxy Kiss is more and more likely to be considered noncompulsory. After all, the control provided by the bond was to the elders' advantage only when they were completely united.

APRIL 4TH

April 4th — the anniversary of the feast that cemented Augustus' decision to betray his sire and lead the clan into its own — is still celebrated every year by the Giovanni family. (The anniversary of the actual deed is also celebrated, but only in Venice, and only by the *anziani* in ceremonies of protection. Better safe than sorry, after all.)

Members of the family throw lavish parties, with mortals and ghouls starting things in the afternoon and Kindred joining (of course) after the sun sets. These parties aren't for everyone: Only those who know the truth about the Giovanni are invited — or those who are going to find out before the sun rises.

April 4th is traditionally when new family members are proposed to the local *anziani* for the Proxy Kiss and for the Embrace. Elders may Embrace (or order an Embrace) as they see fit, any time of the year, but on April 4th those without Embrace privileges are permitted to press suit for the Embrace of a favored mortal or ghoul. The rules for the Proxy Kiss are similarly strict. The Giovanni are actually more careful about bestowing the Proxy Kiss on family members (who may be Embraced one night) than they are about creating nonfamily ghouls (who are unlikely to become Kindred). After all, it's all right to have a mere ghoul nobody befuddled by blood bonds. It's a more serious thing for someone who matters — someone in the family.

Once the decisions have been made, the refreshments are brought out — usually at least one live victim for each elder present, along with extras for the newly Embraced (if any). By tradition, the newly created Kindred are given the first drinks, until they are sated. Then, individuals who bestow the Proxy Kiss drink. Then, any *anziani* present. Only when those three groups have finished are others allowed access to the victims. But at that point, on April 4th only, even the ghouls of the family are freely permitted to drink living blood alongside their betters, should they so desire. The ghouls are, however, expected to dispose of the bodies afterward.



TITHING

Some members of the Giovanni clan — children of ultraconservative sires, or very traditional Italian Kindred, for example — are expected to provide a tithe to their sires or the main family at least once a year. The nature and amount of this tithe depend on the individual Kindred, but the more authority you have, the more you're expected to pony up "for the good of the family."

Tithes may be provided in physical assets, or they are provided in souls. The currency provided is up to the donor. The Dunsirn generally give money. The Pisanob almost always tithe souls. The della Passaglia generally provide a combination. Neonates generally have their tithes "waived" (meaning, they are paid by their sires) until they have enough money or know enough Necromancy to make it worthwhile. Once they know enough to start imprisoning ghosts themselves, though, a tithe-bound Giovanni Kindred is expected to deliver three ghosts per year (or their monetary equivalent) to the closest family repository.

To be considered "delivered," of course, the ghost must be properly imprisoned, which requires the fourth rank of Necromancy. The imprisonment must be sufficient to hold the ghost for at least a week (by which time Giovanni on the other side of the Shroud will have assured that it's not going anywhere — see "The Honored Dead" on p. 42).

Tithing is almost always optional. Most Giovanni are made aware of the practice soon after their Embrace, but only the harshest sire forces "such anachronism" upon her childer. The more respected a Giovanni is, the more she's expected to tithe, of course, should she choose to do so. A neonate who tithes a single soul or a thousand dollars might be considered an infant who needs to be watched closely by his sire. A young but independent Giovanni may be expected to tithe three souls. A Kindred with greater authority might be expected to send in five, or seven. As for the *anziani*, they don't really tithe at all: They're engaged in so much full-time ghostnapping that the least of them routinely cages many times this number of spirits a year. Still, tithing is a practice best observed by those capable of doing it — too little is always too little and may be construed as insulting. After all, a "donation" of five dollars to the coffers of one of the richest, most prominent and secretive families in the world is hardly anything other than a snub. Much prestige can come from tithing, however, and most Giovanni past their first-quarter century as Kindred fulfill the obligation.

AN ITALIAN PRIMER FOR FOUL-MOUTHED NECROMANCERS

Anziano: A respectful term for a Giovanni elder.

Bastardo: Bastard.

Bucaiolo: Faggot.

Cagone: Coward.

Catene: Literally "chains" or fetters. Physical objects or places to which a wraith is metaphysically tied. Singular, *catena*.

Fata: Changeling. Plural, *fate*.

Gnomo: Idiot.

Merdoso: A shitty person (literally).

Rotinato: "Broken." Psychologically abused to the point that resistance is inconceivable. Old-world Giovanni usually refer only to ghosts with this term, but the younger generations use it on people and other Kindred as well.

Spetrio: A deranged ghost, a spectre. Plural, *spettri*.

Spirito: A moderately together ghost, a wraith. Plural, *spirti*.

Sudario: The immaterial barrier between the world of the living and the world of the dead; the Shroud.

Va' a farti fottere!: Go fuck yourself! (This expression is often accompanied by putting your thumb between your teeth and then flicking it at the person.)

GHOSTBUSTERS IT FUCKIN' AIN'T

Individuals with even the most rudimentary understanding of what *nigromancy* is recognize the existence of another world. It wraps around this one like a sheet, or maybe permeates it like a gas, or maybe underlies it the way the sea sits under Venice. This other world is where dead people are. They can see out of it and watch you and me (though often not very clearly). Unless you start practicing the Black Art, you'll never see it at all.

The reason you don't see it is an immaterial barrier between here and there. This barrier, the *sudario*, inhibits ghosts from influencing the mortal world. It's not uniform. We're still not sure exactly how it works, but the *sudario* definitely thins out when people around it are thinking creepy thoughts or if the setting is one that inclines people that way. Graveyard at midnight? Thin *sudario*. There it's comparatively easy for ghosts to do their thing. Nude

beach during spring break? There you get a *sudario* like lead plate. A strong necromancer can thin it out or thicken it artificially, but there's a good reason for all the black robe/red candle/animal sacrifice mumbo jumbo that goes on with necromantic ritual. It sets the mood, you see.

On the other side of the *sudario* is the Underworld. That's the "top" level of this other world. It's kind of a murky reflection of our world. When we look into the dead lands, that's the part we see. That's also the part from which they can look at us.

Underneath that, the Underworld has deeper levels that you can't look at unless you actually go there. Don't think about that too much. If you can't get there on your own, you have no business going. A pack of fuckwit renegades called the Nagaraja made the mistake of bringing guests along, and, well, it just turned out very damn bad for them.

Anyhow, that deeper level holds the ancient dead — the ones who've been around so long that they've lost all connection to the mortal world. They're pretty tough.

That deeper level — it's called the Tempest — used to have some developed areas in it, huge cities of dead souls, all going about their business. These dead cities had a common social structure, all these scheming political factions, trade guilds, even a fucking train going between cities. But all that shit is gone, by and large.

The reason all that structure went kablooie is something called a maelstrom. The Tempest usually felt like the equivalent of a bad storm — winds strong enough to pick you up, blinding rain, black lightning... a bad scene. A maelstrom is a thousand times worse. It's like having a tornado fighting with a thunderstorm inside a monsoon, only with rains of broken glass instead of water. I'm not entirely clear what started this maelstrom, but if any of the wraithly cities survived at all, they're isolated enough that you don't need to worry about them until the maelstrom calms down.

A few necromancers suspect the presence of another level underneath the Tempest. Not many of us claim to have gone there — probably less than a few score, in the six centuries we've been around. Of those explorers, maybe one in 10 came back. Out of those, maybe two came back sane enough to stick to one story when describing what they saw. They both talked about "*il dedalo*," which means "maze" or "labyrinth." The *dedalo* may be the body of a huge creature, or a structure created to keep all of that death-energy caged, or a trap so that the servants of complete annihilation are stuck fighting one another instead of climbing up to the living world. Or it may just be



where some of the nastiest things in the known universe reside because flayed skin and walls of living shit are their preferred décor.

Anyhow, right now the situation in the lands of the dead is total chaos. That might seem nice for us, but it's not. But to understand how screwed up the Underworld is; you need to meet the players.

SPIRITI (WRAITHS)

When someone dies with unfinished business and is too damn stubborn to lie down and say, "Oh, well," the result is a *spirito*. No one becomes a ghost just for funnies: They always, *always* have some compelling obsession strong enough to tie them to the mortal world.

I gotta think being a ghost is potentially the most frustrating existence in a world full of 'em. You have

VALENTINISM

During one of the last maelstroms, between the two World Wars, a loyal ghoul named Valentina della Passaglia died protecting her mistress, according to the few Giovanni who privately believe in Valentinist ideas. Publicly, like the rest of the clan, they call her a traitor. They say she was driven insane by the Malkavians or owed favors to the Setites or was misled by the Lasombra or simply fucked in the head by whatever mind-smashing beings crawl the ghettos of the Underworld. Traditionally, any discussion of Valentina della Passaglia ends with threats, boasts of what a Kindred would do to her: "I'd bind her to her own femur and assfuck the Pope with it," et cetera, et cetera.

This is because Valentina della Passaglia returned as a *spirito* and desperately warned her family that if they succeeded in calling the Endless Night, their power over spirits would be lost, not completed. Valentina insisted that destroying the *sudario* would leave the Giovanni at the mercy of the very spirits they'd been using and tormenting for centuries.

This idea was not popular, and it still isn't. However, more than one Giovanni vampire privately believes (or fears) that she's right. No one's about to openly defy the *anziani*, but then again, the Giovanni have never been known for operating openly.

Valentina's ghost hasn't been seen around for decades. Maybe someone caught her and dealt with her. Maybe she was destroyed in a maelstrom or by one of the Underworld's other perils. Or maybe she simply knows what her fate will be if she has contact with her family.

this thing you have to do, no matter what... but a lot of the time you don't have any power to make it happen. I'll give you an example. Suppose you're a ghost who's come back to, I don't know, make sure your son finds his granddad's heirloom watch or something. Some ghosts can't just say "Yo, son — look under my mattress, next to all the porn." Instead, they're stuck, wanting to act but largely unable. They watch living people like we watch TV. You can yell at 'em all you want, but it's not going to make Ross get back together with Rachel, you dig?

So one thing about ghosts is they're all on a mission and feel very strongly about it. Remember that fact.

Also remember this one: Ghosts are "sentimental" in the same way that you and me "try to avoid the sun," got it? All the stories about haunted paintings and swords and houses are based on fact. Ghosts are tied to physical, inanimate things (the objects are called *catene* in Italian, fetters in English). While that thing is safe and sound, the ghost can hide in it to regain strength. If that thing gets fucked, the ghost is equally fucked. This is doubly true in a maelstrom, but more about that later.

The third thing you need to know about wraiths is that they need emotions to survive. It's like they're freezing to death and certain emotions are the only fires that can warm 'em up. They flock to those "fires" the way you and I go after the Big Red Sweet. But each ghost has a specific frequency (or frequencies) that gets his goat. One guy might be tied to love. You'll find him always hanging around weddings and maternity wards, he has a blast on Valentine's day and gets pumped up at the local prom. Another guy might have sorrow as his bag, so he's cruising funerals and lurking around oncology wards.

With these three facts in mind, you should be able to deal with any wraith you encounter.

Among necromancers, we recognize two styles of dealing with the dead. I don't mean styles of actually doing the magic: you can probably find a dozen styles for that. I mean you have two ways to deal with ghosts once you make contact.

First off, you can use the soft way. You want a ghost to follow somebody for you? Buy him off. Maybe you purchase the house he haunts and make sure those kids in the Mystery Mobile stay far away. Maybe you help his son find the fucking watch. Maybe he gets off on gratitude, so you start leaving hundred dollar tips at truck stops so he can warm up easy.

This works pretty well: There's a reason ghosts spend so much effort trying to contact the living. It's real convenient for them to have someone on this side of the *sudario* to get stuff they can't pick up and



talk to people who can't hear them. The danger of this is that if a ghost accomplishes his mission, he stops being a ghost and you no longer have someone to do your dirty work.

On the other hand, you can work ghosts like a mean motherfucker. If you have the skills you can simply pound the shit out of them. (Even though they don't have a body to hit or shit to drop. Cool, huh?) But even with a minimal knowledge of the old Black Magic, you can make your will felt. Know your restless pally is attached to his wedding ring? Threaten to melt it down for fillings. He wants his son to go to college? Dominate the kid into smoking his first jay. Ghosts are just like people when it comes to responding to threats: Most of the time they cave if you handle it right. Just don't go overboard, or (like people) they snap and come back at you with *not* much to lose. In fact, since ghosts are *all* emotion, they may snap sooner rather than later anyway. Also, don't forget that they (unlike you) don't sleep and have all the sunlit day to fuck you over if they decide you crossed the line.

The biggest danger of the hardcore approach is that a *spirito* who suffers too much frustration may transform into a *spettro*. Every ghost has that potential, and once they make the change they aren't going to give a shit about the kid, the watch, the wedding ring or anything else. All they're going to care about is putting your ass paid. So watch it, okay?

I find the best approach is a little soft and a little hard. Don't help them complete their higher purpose, but *promise* you will. Help 'em get hooked on a feeling — that usually doesn't cost you much, but it's worth an awful lot to them. Find their *catene* for "safekeeping" but be ambiguous about it. Ideally, the ghost should see you as someone too powerful to challenge, who can do a lot for him if you're happy — and can do a lot more to him if you're pissed. Treat them the way your elders treat you and you're probably on the right track.

SYSTEMS: WHAT SPIRITS CAN DO

Storytellers and players wishing to use restless spirits in their chronicles may use the following equivalent vampire Disciplines to model the powers of ghosts. This is in addition to the standard abilities on p. 282 of *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

All spirits automatically have Heightened Senses. Other common powers are the equivalent of the lower levels of the Thaumaturgical path Movement of the Mind, Dementation, Vicissitude (only for transforming themselves or other ghosts, however) and Chimerstry, at levels the Storyteller deems appropriate to the particular wraith.

Uncommon powers include the Thaumaturgical path Lure of Flames and Dementation at Level Three or

SPIRIT SLAVES

A Giovanni with the Spirit Slaves Background (see p. 67) starts play with one or more spirits already doing her bidding. The number of spirits and their power depend on how many dots the character has in the Background.

Each individual spirit costs one dot. Wraiths' skills and attributes are built using the rules for neonate vampires, but with no additional Disciplines (except as described below), Backgrounds or freebie points. Each starts with a Passion Pool of 5. Every spirit automatically has *Auspex* 1 and one dot in another common power. Spending another Background dot on a spirit can give it an uncommon power (or one common power at uncommon levels). Spending two dots on a spirit can give it rare levels of power.

*Example: Brent chooses to have three dots in the Spirit Slaves Background. That means he could have three spirits doing his bidding, each with *Auspex* 1 and one other common power. Alternatively, he could choose to have two servants—a weak one and one who also possesses an uncommon power. Finally, he could choose to have a single servant with a rare power, or with two uncommon powers.*

higher (some *spiriti* can possess *Dementation* 3 without learning the first two levels). High *Auspex* is also uncommon. Ghosts can also gain the fourth level of *Dominare* without having the three previous levels, but this ability is rare as well. One uncommon power with no Discipline equivalent is known as embodiment: It allows the ghost to become physically solid. Doing so costs two points from the Passion pool, and lasts for one scene.

The truly rare powers are high level (3+) *Lure of Flames* or *Movement of the Mind*.

SPETTRI (SPECTRES)

Spiriti are basically human souls with unfinished business. *Spettri* are something else altogether. They are destruction incarnate—not in the sense of blowing shit up, but in the sense of the fine, dry ash that's left after everything's blown up. They're entropy plus intellect. They stand for absolute silence, oblivion, the cessation of all movement everywhere.

The difference between *spettri* and *spiriti* isn't superficial and philosophical like the *Camarilla*/Sabbat thing. They are as different as a caterpillar and a butterfly. Unfortunately, on the surface it is very, very difficult to tell them apart.

Spettri have their emotional gas stations like *spiriti* do, but it's always something negative, destructive—something that tears down without building up. They are

single-minded: Their ultimate goal is always to rip things apart, to wear down anything that's been built, to erase, dissolve and forget. Reduce everything to the absolute nothing they embody. Yeah, it's pretty fucked-up shit.

It's possible to do the whole pimp slap "I'm your daddy now, bitch" routine on a *spetro*, but don't expect the long-term obedience you can squeeze out of a *spirito*. You may think you've got one broke to saddle, but if you do, it's probably fooling you. They can be clever. They can anticipate and innovate—these aren't just the howling ghost equivalent of a mad-dog *Gangrel*. They're even capable of building and creating things if they think that in the long run that will help them eradicate. You can compel *spettri* for short times with *Necromancy*, but you can't make them psychological slaves. I've never broken one. The *Premascines*, maybe they have. *Augustus*... probably. But if he has, he ain't talking about it.

Understand that *spettri* have been sucked down and consumed by entities of unimaginable power—things that aren't human and never were. These beings... the *spiriti* equivalent of ancient *Kindred*... never existed in a sense you or I would understand. They're the opposite of existence. The only things they have in common with "being" are will, intelligence and power. Lots of power.

I know, it doesn't seem to make much sense. Just believe me, they're down there in *il dedalo*, okay? Lots of people don't believe in vampires, either.

WHICH ONE'S BETTER?

Many neophyte *Necromancers* wonder which variety of ghost makes for a better servant: The reasonable (but sometimes wishy-washy) *spirito* or the powerful (but hard to control) *spetro*? The answer depends on circumstances. *Machiavellian* types tend to use both—*spettri* for thug-work and *spiriti* for more delicate tasks. *Kindred* without the patience for all that plotting and manipulation prefer *spiriti* who can simply be bullied into obedience. The very few *Necromancers* who feel sympathy for the dead tend to prefer *spiriti* as well: After all, they're much better company.

In terms of power, a newly dead *spetro* is probably more dangerous than a newly dead *spirito*, both to its summoner and to her enemies. A *spirito* that survives for decades can become powerful indeed, however, whereas very few *spetro* seem to last more than five years before being torn apart by the very negation they serve. Needless to say, a *spirito* that's been around for a hundred years is a lot harder to compel by force...



Spettri have been engulfed and remade by these ghostly archfiends. They've been eaten whole and spat out changed by embodied nonexistence. Do you really think there's anything you can do to put a scare in one?

One other thing you should know about *spettri* is that they're in constant contact with one another. It's like every *spettri* is hooked up to all the other *spettri* on cell phones 24 hours a day. So if one's in trouble, the others may show up to save his ass... or to fuck him in the ass. What, you thought the embodiments of entropy cooperate?

Am I saying you should never contact or deal with *spettri*? Oh, certainly not. They're the active principle of destruction. We have lots of people we'd like erased. They feed off terror. We terrify by feeding. Between us and them, I see a lot of opportunities for a kind of "your peanut butter and my chocolate" synergy, see? Just don't forget that with a *spettri*, it's *always* using you as much as you're using it.

SYSTEMS: WHAT SPETTRI CAN DO

As creatures of destruction, it's more common for *spettri* to have powers that duplicate the Thaumaturgy Paths Movement of the Mind and Lure of Flames than similar *spirito* powers. Because *spettri* are the antithesis of existence, however, it's harder for them to operate in the world of the living: All efforts made by them to

influence the mortal world are at +1 difficulty. They also commonly possess a highly limited form of Presence. Instead of making themselves more attractive, however, they are only able to make actions that feed their passions more attractive—they make themselves more horrible, albeit compellingly so.

Otherwise, *spettri* have the same power profile as *spirito*, but the Passion Pool for *spettri* is 7. Due to their rarity, however, buying a *spettri* with the Spirit Slaves background costs an additional point.

THE RISEN

The bad news is, the Risen can kick your ass. The worse news is, there's a lot more of 'em around in the modern nights than there use to be.

A Risen is halfway between a *spettri* and a *spirito*, and pissed enough to claw right through its coffin. Like *spirito*, they are goal-oriented. If you're stupid or unlucky, you might find yourself standing between one and its goal. If you're really unlucky, you might be its goal. If so, nice knowing ya.

Some of 'em don't handle sticking their souls back in a rotted brain very well, and those are the stupid, aimless, most common type of Risen, like the *zombu* some Necromancers can animate. The rare ones are just as smart as they were in life. Those are the real trouble boys.





Worst of all, standard Necromancy doesn't work on them nearly as well. The Bone Path has some effect, but nothing spectacular unless you really know what you're doing. The standard compulsion shtick does not work at all.

If you're real nice to Diego, or his buddy Paolo, they might lend you a devil stick or teach you some rituals that can help a little. But frankly, if you have a problem with the walking dead, you need a lot of help.

SHAMBLER

This is a mostly brainless walking, rotting corpse with a one-track mind, such as a *zombu* created through Necromancy or a dull-witted ghost animating a dead body. It's capable only of fairly simple actions. Since the spirit-storm began, shamblers have even been popping up in groups of three to five — and sometimes many, many more.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 6, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

Abilities: Brawl 2, Intimidation 5

Willpower: 4 Passion Pool: 1, if any

Equivalent Disciplines: Fortitude 3

Note that mental Disciplines work on only the most aware of these creatures. Most shamblers are unaffected by mental Disciplines — or, indeed, any mental coercion — at all. Shamblers do not suffer any penalties due to wounds.

MET Statistics: nine Physical Traits, zero Social Traits, four Mental Traits. *Brawl*, *Intimidation* x3. Equivalent of *Fortitude* Disciplines *Endurance*, *Mettle*, *Resilience*. Immune to *Dementation*, *Dominant* and *Presence*, as well as *Serpentis*: *Eyes of the Serpent* and *Auspex*: *Telepathy*. Shamblers have a normal health level track but do not suffer any penalties due to wounds.

TRUE RISEN

These are individuals with unshakeable goals — often complex ones requiring planning and many steps. They are not tolerant of anyone who gets in their way.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 1, Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Willpower: 5 Passion Pool: 8

Equivalent Disciplines: *Obfuscate* 2, *Celerity* 2, *Potency* 2, *Fortitude* 2. Risen have 10 health levels and can heal a level of damage per turn by spending a Passion point. They suffer no dice-pool penalties from wounds, unless those wounds are aggravated, in which case, they begin to suffer penalties at their fourth health level of damage. In other words, assume that in the case of aggravated damage, a true Risen has an additional three Bruised health levels.

MET Statistics: See *Oblivion* for live-action stats of Risen.

USING NECROMANCY ON THE RISEN

The only Necromantic path that has any effect on the Risen is the Bone Path. Using *Tremens* allows the necromancer to inhibit the Risen's actions: For each success rolled using *Tremens*, the Risen loses one success off its next action.

Apprentice's Brooms is more effective, as this power overlays the Risen's command of its own body with a separate set of impulses. The Risen's will is primary, but when it's not consciously directing its limbs, they fall back on the necromancer's orders. In practical terms, any Risen affected by *Apprentice's Brooms* loses one die from every dice pool until the end of the scene.

The other Bone Path powers that have any effect on Risen are *Soul Stealing* and *Daemonic Possession*. *Soul Stealing* rips the Risen's soul from the body and sends the spirit portion back to the Underworld. Risen can resist *Soul Stealing* like a mortal victim, and they can return if the Kindred isn't smart enough to destroy the vacated corpse immediately.

Daemonic Possession puts another soul in conflict with the body's possessor — a conflict fought in the body that literally tears it apart. The attacking player rolls Intelligence + Occult against a difficulty of 6. For each success rolled, the Risen takes a level of aggravated damage that is soakable if the Risen has the equivalent of Fortitude. In no event, however, can a new soul take control of the Risen's body.

MET Necromancy and Risen: A necromancer can affect Risen with *Bone Necromancy* only with a successful Social Challenge. Using *Tremens* causes the Risen to suffer a one-Trait resolution penalty on its next action. Using *Apprentice's Brooms* causes the Risen to suffer a one-Trait bidding penalty on its next action (it must risk an additional Trait). *Soul Stealing* functions normally, sending the Risen's soul back to the Underworld. *Daemonic Possession* causes one health level of aggravated damage each time it's successfully invoked against the Risen in question.



THE MAELSTROM

Up until very recently, the Underworld was predictable — at least, it was in its broad outlines. You had the *spiriti* in the Shadowlands, or their cities in the depths beyond the Shroud. You had the *spettri* in the *dedalo*, the “sea” of the Underworld, and sometimes screwing around in the Shadowlands as well. It was pretty stable. We had contacts on all the levels, though a lot more in the Shadowlands than in the *dedalo*, natch. Deals were made. Things got done.

Now, all that’s turned to shit. No one seems real sure what happened. I’ve heard that the *spettri* had been massing for an all-out assault on the dead cities since the end of World War II. I’ve heard that Bangladeshi death-o-rama had hardcore mystic repercussions that simultaneously crowded the Underworld with fresh *spettri* and started the mother of all storms. I’ve even heard that the ghost of a nuke got used on the ghost of a city, and that the explosion blew apart pretty much everything the *spiriti* have been building since time began. It doesn’t really matter.

What matters is, the End Times are here. If this most recent storm is anything like the last two we saw (one for each World War), it’s gonna be around until the end of the world....

One thing it’s done is weaken the *sudario*, the barrier between our world and theirs. Sounds great, doesn’t it? Should be easier for the ghosties to show up and do their stuff. Should be easier to punch ‘em around, too — right?

Well, half right. It’s sure easier to pull them in. But it’s a damn sight harder to control them. I guess that working in our world is usually a real chore for *spiriti*, and the effort of just being here made them weaker and easier to control. Now that the *sudario* is thinner, they can expend more of their effort and concentration on telling us to fuck off. Or maybe it’s just Darwin in action: The ghosts who can keep it together in a maelstrom are the tough bastards who always *were* harder to deal with — but who usually stayed away from us.

The danger of the storm makes *catene* more important. Their anchors to the living world are like our havens — that’s where *spiriti* go to rest up after getting their asses kicked. Naturally, having a shelter like that is crucial when the weather is killing bad. Take hold of a spirit’s *catene* and you’ve got a real threat over its head. Destroy it and that ghost’s gonna be hurting.

The other weird-ass thing about the maelstrom is that a bunch of spirits have apparently been blasted right into our world, willy-nilly, all over the globe. That didn’t happen before — which kind of supports the theory that the maelstrom started on the *other*

side this time, instead of being a reflection of what happened in the living world. Apparently what happens is, these spirits are thrown clear out of the Shadowlands and kind of glom on to whatever (or whoever) they hit first on this side of the divide. Sometimes a person, place or thing will find a pack of ghosts attached to itself. These aren’t spirits with a connection from life: It’s not like French nobles lurking around the guillotine or soldiers haunting Gettysburg. It’s more like some teeny-bopper with mall hair wakes up one day and there’s two ghosts from fuckin’ Namibia attached to her who are going to be powerfully screwed if something bad happens to her. It doesn’t even have to be a person: We bought a gas station in New Zealand that had at least 20 *spiriti* suddenly latched onto it.

The ghosts who got blasted back through tend to be the newly dead, so they’re weak. If you can find one of these multiple fetters — Veronique calls them “buffets” — you’re in gravy if you handle it right: It’s your magic ticket to scared, naive ghosts who’ll do *anything* to protect it. On the other hand, that “anything” includes messing with you if they decide you’re providing more danger to their fetter than you’re preventing.

As for actually going through the *sudario*, that’s easier to do now, but also a whole lot stupider. The lands of the dead were always pretty damn dangerous, even when things were comparatively calm. Now they’re a war zone, and not in the good “lots of dying soldiers to feed on” way, but the bad “lots of things can kill you and want to” way.

Naturally, these sudden changes took us by surprise. I personally know of at least five of us who were on the other side when the shit hit the fan. None have come back, and I don’t expect that they will. I know another dozen of us who were taken by surprise when their rites started calling more ghosts who were harder to control. That cost us another five good people, and it’s going to take a while for poor Nicola to get back to normal.

It was a whole lot worse for our servants and allies on the other side. I’d guess that a flat half of them are just permanently gone. Of the *spiriti* we retained, many of them transformed into *spettri* after the trauma, so they aren’t even trustworthy anymore. On top of all that, a lot of our old “associates” on the other side are taking advantage of the weak *sudario* to even up some old scores. So watch your back.

One piece of good news (kind of) is that none of the other Kindred clans seem to have figured out that our legions of ghost servants got trashed overnight. In fact, in some cities where the Shroud got particularly thin, the local Kindred think it’s something *we* did and that we’re *more* powerful now. As far as I’m concerned, they can keep thinking that as long as they want.

The maelstrom is mostly a crisis, don't fool yourself about that. But it's also an opportunity. Calling ghosts is easier, even if controlling them is harder. That just means you have to be more of a politician and less of a strongman. The Sabbat and Camarilla and the rest of them may think that we just did something huge that brought all these new ghosts into the world. If you play them right, they'll fear you and keep away. If you play them wrong, they'll fear you and try to burn you into ash.

Best of luck.

THE MAELSTROM AND NIGRIMANCY

The weakening of the barrier between the realms of mortals and the dead has powerful implications for practitioners of Necromancy. Some tasks are easier. Others are more dangerous. Some are both at the same time.

Storytellers who wish to incorporate the changes in Necromancy wrought by the maelstrom can use the following guidelines. On the other hand, it's also possible that individual Storytellers may err on the side of simplicity and just use the rules in the main book, unchanged. That's fine too. But for those who want them, here are the changes, path by path.

THE SEPULCHRE PATH

•• Summon Soul

All difficulties for this power decrease by one. On a botch, however, it's quite likely that multiple spectres show up. Even on a simple failure, a spectre may well notice and make trouble for the character, at the Storyteller's discretion. Use this last situation sparingly, however, Storytellers, for if every failure attracted the attention of spectres, few Giovanni would survive to practice their Black Arts.

MET System: You gain a one-Trait resolution bonus on challenges to *Summon Soul*. If you fail a challenge with this power, though, and the difficulty is double your current Social Trait total, you can be overbid; if you lose the overbid as well, several spectres show up ("several" is defined by the Storyteller's mood at the time).

••• Compel Soul

A player's dice pool to compel the soul after summoning decreases by one die.

MET System: All *Compel Soul* tests suffer a one-Trait resolution penalty.

THE BONE PATH

•• Apprentice's Brooms

On a botch, the necromancer has accidentally created a shambler, as described on p. 56. It attacks the

necromancer immediately. If it can't reach her, it starts trashing anything it can get its rotting hands on.

MET System: Make a simple test (win or tie) each time you invoke *Apprentice's Brooms* (retest with *Occult* or *Thanatology*). If you lose (and lose the retest, if any), the created creature is a shambler not under your compulsion.

••• Shambling Hordes

On a botch, the shambling hordes attack the necromancer instead of following orders.

MET System: Make a simple test (win or tie) each time you invoke *Shambling Hordes* (retest with *Occult* or *Thanatology*). If you lose (and lose the retest, if any), the created creature is a shambler not under your compulsion.

•••• Soul Stealing

Due to the interference of the maelstrom, the difficulty for the Kindred making the contested Willpower roll rises to 7, while the victim's difficulty stays at 6. If the victim's soul is evicted, however, its player must make a Willpower roll against difficulty 8 for every hour that it's exiled from its body. Each failed roll results in a permanent derangement once it returns to its body. If the victim is a player's character, the Storyteller may opt to allow her to spend a point of permanent Willpower to avoid acquiring new derangements.

MET System: The target of *Soul Stealing* gains a one-Trait resolution bonus against the necromancer, so be careful unless you have a surfeit of Social Traits. For each hour/scene that a soul is forced from its body, it must expend one Willpower Trait or else it gains one permanent derangement. Once it runs out of normal Willpower Traits (if it bothers to resist), it loses one permanent Willpower Trait (although this event prevents acquisition of any derangements).

THE ASH PATH

All Ash Path powers are made with one die fewer in the necromancer's dice pool. The only exception is *Shroud Mastery*.

MET System: Whenever you make a test that pierces the Shroud in some way with the first three levels of the Ash Path (such as trying to spot something with *Shroudsight* or punching some ghost while using *Dead Hand*), you suffer a one-Trait resolution penalty. The costs for the powers themselves remain unchanged.

•••• Ex Nihilo

The maelstrom's intensity ebbs and flows. During a calm period, when other Shadowlands inhabitants suffer moderate damage from the flying debris, a Kindred Ex Nihilo takes no damage. But as the maelstrom becomes more powerful, it's quite likely to deal out a few dice of lethal (or aggravated, at the Storyteller's discre-



tion) damage each scene if the vampire isn't in a protected structure (these little peaks of power happen maybe once or twice each night *everywhere*). This kind of increase in intensity can climb all the way up the scale to 18 dice of lethal damage per scene as the Storyteller dictates the intensity of the storm, but that's rare and only at sites of incredible focus. The odds are strongly against that kind of intensity at the vampire's location. Still, it can happen.

MET System: Generally, while traveling *Ex Nihilo* you suffer one level of lethal damage per hour/ scene, unless you win or tie a Simple Test.

THE VITREOUS PATH

Rolls for the first three powers of the Vitreous Path (Eyes of the Dead, Hour of Death and Soul Judgment) are made at +1 difficulty. The two latter powers (Breath of Thanatos and Soul Feasting) have their difficulty lowered by 1.

SPIRIT MANIPULATION (THAUMATURGY)

Powers of this path are unaffected. The demons of the spirit world seem to be radically different from the ghosts lingering beyond the Shroud.

EVERYONE BUT US IS STUPID

It's sad, but true. You'd think that with a dozen other clans and fuck-only-knows-how-many more bloodlines, at least someone in there would have a clue. No such luck. Some of these other stiffs have a chance of putting the whole "I'm not dead and parts of it aren't so bad" thing together, but most of them miss it by a mile. Don't get me wrong — I'd love to see the sun again and not worry about catching fire every time my daughter lights a cigarette — but Caine gave his awful childer a few gifts to ease their endless nights of damnation. Since most of these Licks would rather pity-fuck themselves forever, though, and even the ones who realize the potential waste it setting each other on fire and cutting off their sires' heads, it's almost moot.

It's lonely, sitting at the Giovanni table. But it's a tolerable loneliness.

THE CAMARILLA

Accorri says:

Don't get me wrong: I like the Camarilla guys, in the way that you like the guy who puts gas in your car and is always trying to talk to you about business opportunities. They're a little annoying, and they're unclear on the whole "vampire" concept ("Ooooh, don't call us that! We're *Kindred!*"), but other than that the only thing I got against 'em is their success.

I suppose "Let's not get caught!" is simple enough that even the Malkavians can follow the bouncing ball. If they weren't such pansies about leaving feedbags alive, I might be tempted to go through the hazing process and learn the secret handshake (or whatever you do to get in the club). Still, I'm glad I don't have to spend my nights bending knee to some creaky "prince" who spends his time bitching about what shitty ideas democracy and free enterprise are. Welcome to the New Age, Vlad.

They've been going toe to toe with the Sabbat lately, which is fine with me. Let the two big yacht clubs fight. Every time they go for guts and gats, more domains go up for grabs. The real winner in this conflict is going to be the independent clan that can make the most gains while the Big Two pound on each other. If it wasn't for the maelstrom, that would be us, goddamn it.

Diego says:

As galling as their bullying and pretensions are in the short term, the Camarilla exists for one purpose only, and it is reactionary. They exist to conceal the existence of our kind, and many young Giovanni are shocked at how easy it is to quiet the Camarilla by holding them to their own Masquerade standards. And ultimately, the Masquerade is a good idea — for now.

To placate the Camarilla, it is only necessary to play to their preconceptions and to expose those facets of our operations with which they are familiar. They know that we have a certain facility with the dead. They know that we are great financiers. They do not, however, know of our plans for the Endless Night. If they knew, they would rise as one and wipe us off the face of the Earth.

We must concentrate on maintaining the fiction that money is our goal, and Necromancy only our means to that end. They understand avarice. If they think we are mere moneygrubbers, they will assume that we are as devoted to maintaining the status quo as they are. In that case, they will be content to play their silly political games against us, they will sneer and smirk when they count coup in some inane, transitory business deal, and they will be taken wholly by surprise when the *sudario* falls and they become our servants.

THE SABBAT

Accorri says:

All I can say is... what the *hell!*? Didn't these guys get enough kinky BDSM bullshit when they still had working penises?

Okay, sure, there's all that noise about stopping Antediluvians (who no one's seen since Abraham was a pup) and about getting in touch with True Vampire Nature and how it's a real fellowship, blah



blah blah. If you shut your ears and check what they do, it boils down to, one, everyone blood bonds everyone else and two, mortals get the Terminal Puncture. Oh, and three: Let's break stuff. I'm cool with number two, but I draw the line at adoring everyone I hang around with. If I work with someone, I don't wanna have mandatory affection too.

Diego says:

In its own way, the Sabbat is as stuffy and conservative as the Camarilla. But where the Camarilla looks down at the teeming masses of humanity and whispers "What if they rise up and crush us?" the Sabbat looks fearfully up toward the Antediluvian blood gods and whispers "What if they fall upon us?"

Just as I appreciate the Camarilla's admirable job of keeping the mortals from becoming troublesome, I also appreciate the Sabbat's efforts to prevent more Ravnos unpleasantness. Like the Democrats and Republicans of America, the Camarilla and the Sabbat agree on almost everything and are therefore constantly casting about for issues on which they can contend. Being Kindred, of course, the most common issue is simply naked power.

If one faction absolutely had to triumph, I suppose I would prefer Sabbat hell to Camarilla purgatory. Feeding would be simpler and no doubt they would leave more ghosts about. However, I suspect their "New Utopia" of Kindred masters and human slaves is not feasible in practice. Perhaps thirty or forty thousand Kindred exist worldwide — if that. And the Sabbat expects to enslave billions, who have recourse to tanks, flame-throwers and (let us not forget) the sun!

Fortunately, the Camarilla has taken it upon itself to rein in the enthusiasm of the Sabbat.

On the global level, the Sabbat and ourselves have an unstated policy of mutual disinterest. They have made the error of ignoring us on the personal stage as well, but I see no reason to follow their foolish lead. They're not a very fit tool, but if one reluctantly admits to a low level "pack" that the Setites are trying to rouse their Antediluvian, the Sabbat can be made to pluck the serpents' fangs. Naturally, they require little prodding to rampage against the Camarilla as well. But be very careful when it comes to manipulating them: Their constant blood sharing makes them unstable and frenzy-prone, and their fetishistic philosophies do little to inspire self-control.

ASSAMITES

Accorri says:

"To the workman shall go his wages." That's out of the Bible. Now that I think of it, most Assamites would probably wipe their noses with the Bible, if they still had snot to blow. Anyhow, the Assamites used to be useful,

reliable zips. A little upright and humorless, but what do you expect from a hired gun?

Like the best assassins, they're more sneaky than tough: In a straight fight, I figure your average Brujah biker punk could take one pretty quick. Of course, I've never in my life or unlife seen such a thing as a "straight fight" where Kindred are concerned. Hell, I've never seen a "straight fight," period.

Lately, they've been going utterly batshit on anyone they think they can fuck with. That means you and me in particular, since we don't have the strength of numbers like the big, bad Camarilla or Sabbat. They tend to think they can pick lone Giovanni off without repercussions, which is why we have to keep the pressure on them. If you make your haven in a town with a Tremere chantry, you can make this a win-win option by selling the Tremere information about the Assamites — if you don't decide to do it the other way around.

You have three advantages over Assamites: You got money, you got ghosts and you got self-control. The uses of money are obvious. Ghosts are good for digging up information, especially *daylight* information. The cannibals are past masters at sneaking around by night, but in the daytime they got jack shit, so you have the edge there. Finally, keep in mind that their drinking problem makes ours look like a walk in the park. If you can interrupt their feeding often enough (yet another good use for ghosts), you can chuck some Camarilla or Sabbat neonate in front of 'em and watch the diablerie fly. Once they've done that, you can pass off the details to either big sect and make the Assamite their problem.

Diego says:

I'm frankly surprised that the blood curse lasted as long as it did. As I predicted, the "management" in Turkey let its higher-generation scalawags off the leash as soon as the curse failed. For all their talk of honor and solidarity, their elders are not eager to be surrounded by childer with an addiction to Amaranth.

The Assamites dislike us, but actively despise the Tremere and often (by association) the Ventrue. The Ventrue are useful to us, and the Tremere envy their place: Therefore, it is best for us to direct the dislike of the Assamites against the Tremere to protect the Ventrue (and ourselves) as much as possible.

I predict great success for the Assamites — in the short term. However, their structure is not strong enough to contain a number of dangerous, trained killers to whom the taste of elder blood is completely irresistible. The elders will need to keep the neonates at ever-increasing distance for their own safety, which will erode their already weakened authority. I predict a major crack in their façade within two years.



BRUJAH

Accorri says:

All pain, no gain. All guts, no brain.

Diego says:

Given the Gangrel defection, the Brujah's position within the Camarilla is strengthened considerably. This is just as well: I suspect that Brujah brutishness is just what the Camarilla needs to fight off the Sabbat.

What few Brujah realize is that without the structure of the Camarilla, they would have nothing to rebel against and would (consequently) have to start doing something instead of simply railing against their betters.

GANGREL

Accorri says:

Just as the Sabbat starts to get uppity, the Gangrel decide to bite the hand that feeds them. Beautiful. Hey there, Kindred-Formerly-Known-As-Prince! Wanna hire out some ghosts for recon? I got a two-fer-one special goin'!

If I get everything I want for Christmas, these guys will become "Kindred society's" new guns for hire. While Assamites can be nice for cracking out hammerheads holed up in a city haven, it looks to me like the Gangrel might be a little better for running down problems who decide to quit town. Sort of a "hit man versus bounty hunter" setup. The sane Assamites you can still count on would sure be easier to haggle with if they had serious competition in their niche. It's good for the market, you know.

I don't know if that's real likely though. The Assamites, whatever their other flaws, are tightly knit, while the Gangrel as a clan are just a botched version of Tarzan Meets Dracula. On an individual level, I'm sure there are lots of them who are going to find that unlife outside the Camarilla can be cold and lonesome, especially when the Sabbat starts to settle some scores. Those lonesome strangers are going to be pretty vulnerable and probably more open to dealing with folks from another "outsider clan." It doesn't hurt that many of them have never seen a real, live hundred dollar bill, either.

Diego says:

The Gangrel defection merits a great deal of attention. Oh, I don't mean that the Gangrel are going to have much impact on our plans: I suspect they're going to suffer greatly from the attentions of the Lupines, if not mortal hunters. Other independent clans have hierarchies or systems by which they acknowledge their elders to gain the strength of unity. (Oh, except for the Ravnos. How could I ever forget the Ravnos?) The Gangrel, lacking same, can look forward to a steady attrition from their well-organized and numerous enemies.

While the Gangrel are of little use to our clan — I suppose they could be used for standard Putanesca scur work — the Camarilla must be feeling weak and nervous now that one of their two violence specialists has scampered off. If the Brujah ever take their feet out of their mouths long enough to walk away, the Ventrue might have to start doing their own dirty work.

It is therefore desirable to make things easier for the Gangrel, for a time. They must survive long enough to make things painful for the Camarilla. After that, they can sink or float on their own, but if they are hurt too badly, too quickly, they'll run back to their old masters with their tails between their legs.

Any aid should (or course) be given without risk. If possible, they should not know who is helping them, or even that they have been helped. If being obvious is unavoidable, proper care should be taken to make the recipient feel indebted.

LASOMBRA

Accorri says:

The Lasombra must have really been something, once upon a time. Actually, they're still something tonight. It's just that they're something largely anachronistic and irrelevant. Back in the Dark Ages you could get away with the brooding, uppity, *droit de seigneur* routine. But I don't care how smart, tough and ruthless you are, no one in the 21st century is going to acknowledge a fucking king, especially some whacked-out freak who proclaims himself the dread, dark lord.

See, the Lasombra (like many strong, capable people) don't know how to lose. They ain't used to it. So when they're going from strength to strength, get out of their way, because capitalizing on victory is what they do best. But when they finally do stumble — and believe me, when it's two clans against seven, plus the mortals, they're going to stumble — that's the time to take 'em for all they're worth.

Diego says:

Our Spanish cousins are a superb cautionary example. A fine combination of strength and intellect, courage and cunning, they have become bogged down in the untenable role of "Sabbat coalition builder" and fighting their tedious war against slumbering enemies that may or may not exist. This is what happens when you try to preserve an old situation instead of adapting to a new one. If they had turned their considerable energies and abilities toward something worthwhile, they'd be done by now. Instead, the future they contemplate is one of unremitting toil and conflict. What a waste of a perfectly functional eternity.



MALKAVIAN

Accorri says:

Even a stopped watch is right twice a day, but that doesn't mean I want one hanging on my wrist. The same goes double for Malkavians.

Diego says:

For thousands of years, we knew the real source of madness, and now some humorless German has convinced the world that it's because mama stopped breast feeding too soon. Rubbish.

Madness — and particularly the madness of Malkavians — is what happens when a mind is too exposed to the breakdown of the world. All the Malkavians can advise you about is what is leaking through from the other side. I can tell you the same: It is merely chaos.

The madmen can be surprisingly coherent and adroit in their actions, but it is ultimately only the rumble of thunder without the lightning's flash. Against the infinite patience of oblivion, they are insignificant.

NAGARAJA

Accorri says:

Never heard of it.

Diego says:

Dust to dust. I would not mind finding one in order to investigate rumors of their so-called "Vitreous Path."

I also would not mind if they were all extinguished and their knowledge with them.

NOSFERATU

Accorri says:

If I was a shit-stinky lump of fugly, I guess it might make me feel better to know the deep dirt on everyone else. Stay on good terms with these guys — so long as it doesn't involve letting 'em in your haven. Take it from me, whatever they're leaking on your furniture, it goes right through the fucking Scotchgard.

Also — when they start in with the "To me, my feral minions!" routine, it's time to haul some ass.

Diego says:

Like us, they are fortunate. Like our Lamia's Kiss, their curse shields them from the self-deception common among the Brujah and Toreador. They know they are damned. Unfortunately, anyone else with eyes to see or a nose to smell knows it as well.

They are also quite inquisitive. If any clan is going to find out about our ultimate goals, it will probably be the Nosferatu. Furthermore, as they are despised by others, they do tend to stick together (no pun intended). Thus, any Nosferatu spy found skulking about one's residence cannot be summarily diablerized and dismissed. That will only bring his fellow outcasts in search.





To protect oneself from Nosferatu spying (or from anyone else's, for that matter), it is advisable to perform the most secret rituals only in the secure confines of strongholds such as those in Venice and Boston. Some *spiriti* possess the ability to penetrate Nosferatu disguises, but this is far from being a sure thing. Physical precautions are more effective. I am unfamiliar with the last word in technological trapping, but I assure you a pool of burning oil gives pause to any skulker.

It is also imperative to keep one's residence free of vermin. But the presence of spirits generally frightens off any creature smart enough to communicate with a Nosferatu.

RAVNOS

Accorri says:

Aw, something bad happened back East to a bunch of arrogant, nomadic, lying, sticky-fingered Gypsy douche bags? Boo fuckin' hoo.

Diego says:

The Ravnos are in trouble, thanks, I believe, to something gone awry in their bloodline. They are so few now! We are also experiencing difficulties, courtesy of this new maelstrom. Unlike the Ravnos, however, our distress is not known far and wide in Kindred society.

I see two possible fates in store for Clan Ravnos. One is that the other predators will scent weakness and fall on them like jackals. The other is that the survivors will prostitute themselves for protection to whatever pimp they can find.

In the first case, it would be wise for Clan Giovanni to be at the table soon enough to dine well. In the second case, they are what my Milliner cousins would call "motivated sellers," which is never a strong position from which to bargain.

I recommend that we offer the olive branch of succor to the remnants of the Ravnos. It should not be unaccompanied by the thorns of scorn and price, of course: If we're "nice" for no reason, they'll surely recognize a trick. But if we offer them protection at a high price, I think we can wring more from them than those who will not forsake vengeance at any price. Eventually, the vengeful might become angry enough to be "motivated buyers."

What can protecting them cost? They are now too weak to dare offending us, and any theft gives us just cause to rob them in their distress. If any of their enemies are too strong, well, protection is easier to withdraw than to grant.

If you wish to steal from a man or even merely to cheat him, it is easier to do so if he is at your table instead of a world away.

SETITES

Accorri says:

You know what I like to do with the snakes? Beat the shit out of 'em. Don't talk to 'em, don't negotiate with 'em, don't screw around scheming against their fucked up mortal pawns: Just pound their asses down. Beat them into fucking paste. Goddamn I hate these motherfuckers.

Of course, things don't always go the way you want. If you can't just get the drop on one of these shitbags and give him the what-for with a fire ax, you may have to apply some strategy. If you can, use our general strategy — have ghosts follow him, suck dry any mortals he's got for allies (or, more likely, patsies), disrupt his feeding with spirits until he's weak and blood starved, then go in with the nail-studded baseball bat.

If even *that* ain't feasible, you can try to rile up the Camarilla ("You ain't gonna believe this, but they're violating the precious *Masquerade!*") or the Sabbat ("You ain't gonna believe this, but they wannawake up an *Antediluvian!*") or the Lupines ("Hey! Look over there!") or the Assamites ("Did you know Set is a Jew? Plus, I'll give you a quarter."). Don't try sending in the police, though. All you get is a bunch of Dominated, blood-bound cops fucking each other up the ass on meth.

If you absolutely, positively *must* deal with these fuckers... well, just don't look 'em in the eye, that's all I'll say.

Diego says:

The crux of our mutual hostility is a fundamental incompatibility between our goals and theirs. They want to resurrect some withered anachronism of a god and spend eternity being the first among its slaves. We, on the other hand, wish to reconfigure the world so that it is easy for us to be as gods ourselves.

Our plan is not without a grandeur, I think, that contrasts well with the essential squalor and masochism of theirs. Nonetheless, despite the differences, in one important way we are more like the Setites than any other clan: We are similar because we both have a goal. Not only a goal, but a concrete, transforming goal that can be moved toward resolutely and preserved indefinitely once achieved. Compare this with the goals of the Sabbat and the Camarilla: They are both passive and retrograde. They only want to prevent things from happening.

But change is inevitable. Conservatives always lose in the end. Only one master plan for the transformation of the world is acceptable, and it is not the Setites'.

The advantage we have is that we know of their eschatological ambitions, while they hopefully only



suspect ours. We cannot afford a direct confrontation, but it is nonetheless imperative that their plans be foiled.

Our struggle with them must perforce be a subtle one. We must impede and weaken them without them perceiving our interference. Given their cunning and their inclinations, this is difficult. Tricking a clan of thieves, liars and pimps is a task akin to bearding a lion in its den.

To succeed, we must play to our strengths and offset theirs. Our strengths are money and spirits. Money can be used to ruin their havens or (in the conflict-rich areas that both our clans favor) to hire mercenaries. Even the strongest of the Serpents tend to pause when stopping rounds from a repeating rifle.

More importantly, the restless dead are largely impervious to the Setites' usual fleshly blandishments. However, the Serpents are experts at the manipulation of human passion. If they perceive the needs of both *spiriti* and *spettri* for emotion, our own tools may be turned against us.

A covert war against the most duplicitous of clans is a daunting and dangerous task, but we do have one great advantage. Our founder is *already* awake.

TREADOR

Accorri says:

I'd like to dismiss the lot of 'em as a pack of *bucaidli*, but I've reluctantly had to admit that they can be pretty smart sometimes. I'm thinking about the Internet stocks here. Say what you want about the Treador, once they heard there was a new way to look at dirty pictures they were on it like dollars on a dirty cop. I put some money in when I saw which way the wind was blowing, but the clan elders in Venice just couldn't understand what was so great about being able to hook your calculator to a telegraph. Damn. But I suppose it wasn't our biggest missed opportunity in 2000.

Also, I think that "artistic entrancement" bullshit is a put-on. You want to know their real weakness? It's that they can still have orgasms, which means most of 'em are still carrying their brains between their legs.

If you're good looking you can probably entice them with the whole gothick, brooding, dark "allure of the forbidden necromantic dabbler" shtick. But the Internet stocks are played out, so what's the point?

Diego says:

As with so many of the clans, the great strength of the Treador is also their great weakness. That central factor is this: They are the closest among us to being mortal. Many of them refuse to realize that human emotions are only a hazard to *undead* like us.

Their mawkishness aside, the Treador are probably our strongest allies in the Camarilla. Their greed for ordinary pleasure and wealth are a refreshing change from the emotional machinations of the Lasombra, the incoherent political philosophy of the Brujah or the rigid, abstract power plays of the Ventrue. Their desperation to cling to humanity has made the Treador pleasingly pragmatic about other aspects of undead existence. Thus, they can be negotiated with to much advantage.

TREMERE

Accorri says:

I hate every last one of these goddamn commies, and the only reason I miss food is 'cause I can't hold one down and shit on him.

I ain't crazy about any clan with a "ruling council," but one that makes everyone lower on the ladder suck dick (or the undead equivalent) is just showing how chickenshit they are at heart. Oh, they're clever and they've got some tricks that would make Penn and Teller cream their jeans... but they're cowards when it comes to actually *doing* anything. For every Tremere who's taking care of business, there's two holed up in a tower somewhere working on the Path of Thumb up My Ass. This does mean their "panties," or whatever the fuck they call their witch-houses, are well protected.

The only thing they do better than fuck each other over is make enemies of other clans. The Trimisce have a raging hard-on to kill the Tremere 24/7/365-and-a-quarter, and the Assamites are possibly even *more* pissed off. If you can't bargain an Assamite down to fucking pennies when it comes to doing a hit on a Tremere, then you're a disgrace to your stingy, chiseling ancestors.

Speaking of chiseling, the other Tremere weakness is they think they're smarter than everyone else, even though most of these limpos couldn't out-haggle a Toronto used car dealer on the sharpest night of their unlives. They're always interested in new magical fucked-upness, so they're happy to make a "fair trade" of thaumaturgical knowledge for necromancy. Heh. I know a Pisanob in Cuba who's sold the first couple of ranks of the Bone Path three times, learning different Tremere paths every time.

By the way, you heard the joke about the Tremere who used a tampon as a tea bag?

Diego says:

The Tremere want to supplant the Ventrue as the foundation of the Camarilla. They are too well organized and responsive for this to be permitted. Under Ventrue influence, the Camarilla is conservative to the point of immobility. That is a good



thing. Under Tremere guidance, the Camarilla would become more focused and direct, and more capable of discerning our true goals. That would be a bad thing. However, the admirable tenacity of the Tremere should not be underestimated. Despite their reputation as neurasthenic scholars, they have survived everything the Tzimisce, Assamites and Gangrel have been able to align against them for centuries. Thus, we should not openly alienate them, lest they succeed at seizing the Camarilla and turn vengeful eyes upon us.

The opportunity in this situation lies in our own crisis. For decades, the Tremere have coveted our necromantic powers, even going so far as to produce their own, off-brand "Spirit Thaumaturgy" out of scraps from our superior Ash Path.

We have always resisted giving away our most powerful secrets. Now that the Shadowlands have suddenly become so perilous, perhaps it is time for greater openness with the Tremere. They have clamored so long: Perhaps we should finally sell them enough rope to hang themselves.

TZIMISCE

Accorri says:

Wow. Not only are they saddled with a name no one can pronounce, they all seem doomed to spend eternity playing with themselves. Now *that's* damnation.

Diego says:

The Tzimisce are experts in a highly arcane field that has no relevance to us, nor to anything else. We politely stay out of their way and expect the same courtesy.

VENTRUE

Accorri says:

These guys put the "anal" in "banal." Cute, huh? A Toreador told me that one. They've got more money than Croesus and their hooks are in every police department in the world. Half the EU and large chunks of NATO are either sucking them off or being sucked on, and either way the Blue Bloods win.

They have all this power, and what are they doing with it? Nothing. Literally, they are not actively doing anything — oh, unless you include looking for a "scientific explanation" for the undead condition. Instead, they're putting all that effort and energy into prevention.

That's what I love about the Ventrue: They spend their whole unlives covering ass because they figure that we "Kindred" will all hang together if one ass gets caught hanging separately. Keep up the good work, knuckleheads!

Diego says:

The key to the Ventrue is respect. Their highest priority is maintaining their delusions of primacy. Few

Ventrue conflicts cannot be salvaged by gestures of penitence. Hang your head, act as if you've been caught in an inescapable bind (which may well be true, given their admitted skill at managing the talents of other clans), unwillingly offer reparations and move on to the next step in bringing the Endless Night. Once the *sudario* is down, the Ventrue may well be our greatest Kindred foes, so it is necessary to limit their power as much as possible now. But challenging their power directly only provokes them to greater stubbornness. Remember always that in their minds, they are the nobles and we are the merchants. They are content to humiliate us, whereas a Lasombra or Tzimisce they would destroy.

OTHER TROUBLEMAKERS

LUPINES

Accorri says:

Stay the fuck away, period. Teasing the animals is only moderately safer than sunbathing.

Diego says:

The judicious use of a *spiritus* proxy can lead headstrong Lupines (as if one could find any other kind) into a Setite lair or Tremere chantry, but know that they are not as naïve about the spirit world as we might hope. If you attract the attention of vengeful werewolf, your best recourse is to flee and wait for it to age away.

MAGES

Accorri says:

Okay, lemme tell you about the sorcerers I personally knew. They formed a "circle," about three of these punks, pale, dressed in black and generally acting like blood doll wannabes. We made each other's acquaintance through some mutual contacts on the other side of the Shroud, and I eventually got to the point that I was willing to meet and talk with them. They wanted, surprise surprise, instruction about necromancy and the Kindred, and they offered their own knowledge in return. So we went back and forth for a while, doing the horse trader bit, and I tricked them all into partial blood bonds, but they were just a pain in the ass to deal with. They didn't want to get involved with the other clans: They didn't really give much of a fuck about Kindred society at all. They only wanted to know what we knew about the other side, but every time I'd tell them something they'd just kind of shake their heads or act snotty or try to "gently correct my misperceptions."

Then the maelstrom came along. Now, two of them are dead and the third one got himself stuck on the other side of the Shroud. Idiot. Sure, they got their avatarget quintessential paralytic whatever,



but I guess they didn't experience two spirit storms before this, did they?

Diego says:

My knowledge of the "worldbuilders" is slight, as is their effect on the world's Kindred. From direct experience, I would say that an alert magus is a good match for a neonate. Their comparative physical fragility is balanced by their versatility. Thus, in any Kindred-on-mage conflict, surprise is desirable. But I suppose that's true of any conflict.

If the enchanters have a general flaw, it is simply this: Like the Tremere, they tend to judge themselves smarter than anyone they meet. Even a crafty and powerful wizard is likely to underestimate the guile needed to survive centuries of Kindred realpolitik. They can be used, but as tools of unknown capacities and weaknesses, they are best used with great caution. Better to simply let time be your assassin.

CHANGELINGS

Accorri says:

Whatever. The only fairies I care about are the Toreador.

Diego says:

As with the sorcerers, my encounters with *fate* have been rare and not particularly satisfactory. Their claim of another world, "Arcadia," overlapping our own sounds similar to our own experience with the Shadowlands — and yet, we are unable to contact this region or confirm its existence. I am content that it is not relevant to our goals. Another supernatural zone means there is a possibility, however slight, that the Endless Night could have substantially unforeseen consequences.

I would like very much to acquire such a being for study. Unfortunately, our preferred method of securing souls for interrogation does not seem to work on *facries*, causing the additional challenge of keeping one imprisoned *and* alive.

HUNTERS

Accorri says:

I'd pawn my fangs and drink through a fucking straw to know where these little shits came from. Sinners in the hands of an angry God or something, probably. The best theory I heard came from a Tremere who was hanging out with some honest-to-Caine mage shooting the shit about the maelstrom and Bangladesh and all the other freaky nonsense that's been going down. Anyhow, the mages think all the mystic shit in the world is connected somehow — I think the Tremere called it a Hermetic model or a Platonic ideal or something — and that it's starting

to shift, or maybe crack apart. If they're right, that means *all* the magic tricks we use to stay out of sight are starting to crap out. These "hunters" are just ordinary schmucks upon whom our hiding Disciplines don't work anymore.

In fact, it was probably one of these bastards who cost us Birmingham. This philandering cracker named Henry Eames cleaned out the local nest of Camarilla pussies, allowing us to move right in. Unfortunately, he's still around, still making trouble. Kidnapping his daughter only slowed him down — he's got buddies coming out of the woodwork to whack a ghoul here and bruise up a neonate there. The cops are after him for murdering his wife (long story), so it's only a matter of time before the Toreador or Ventrue get their mitts on him, and then I'll have to haggle with them.

What's bad is, I've heard some of them can just rub their eyes and shrug off our "do what I tell you" thing. On the plus side, beating their asses into fine gel still works as well as ever.

Diego says:

In AD 1000, history notes hysteria, violence and a tremendous resurgence in superstition, eschatology and the kind of faith that leads people to do stupid and hurtful things. In the year 2000, I recall little in the way of the predicted "millennial terrorism," but I wonder if the passion and belief simply found another outlet. I have felt the force of a chanted sutra as powerfully as a brandished cross. Who is to say that the modern New Age beliefs propagated through television and tabloids have not found their own form of true faith?

Regardless of my theory, the fact remains that some mortals can indeed peer through the Camarilla's Masquerade as if it were glass. Not only that, they are able to perceive ghosts in the Skinlands as well. Thus, it is quite easy to use a compliant *spirito* to lead these crusading zealots to the local Elysium. Either the meddling mortals die or the troublesome Kindred do, and everyone goes home happy.

Everyone who matters, anyhow.

THE ORPHIC CIRCLE

Accorri says:

Who?

Diego says:

Wherever did you hear of the Orphic Circle?

You need not concern yourself with them. Like the Nagaraja, their time has come and gone. Should you encounter our renegade cousin Antonio and his associates, however, do not hesitate to inform me immediately. I am eager to express my displeasure to him.

NEW TRAITS

The following new Traits may help players and Storytellers round out their Giovanni characters. As always, these new options are just that — optional — and Storytellers may restrict their use in chronicles.

NEW BACKGROUND

SPIRIT SLAVES

Nunzio felt vaguely idiotic as he gestured with the knife at the stuffed animal. "Goddamn it Betsy," he yelled, "If you don't do what I tell you, I swear I will slit this furry fucker from tail to ears and shit in the stuffing!"

"Nooo..." wailed the little girl ghost. "That's Mister Pin Bunny! My daddy gave him to me!"

"I don't care if he's Mister Fuck Buddy, unless you watch that old bastard — the guy I showed you, with the big ears and the beard — the rabbit's gone, got it? Gone!"

The young ghost sobbed, provoking disgust deep in Nunzio's stilled heart. Maybe he should have tried the other ghost, the one tied to that goddamn weight belt, of all things... then Nunzio saw that Betsy was reluctantly nodding.

"You'll go?"

She dipped her head.

"Good. See? Was that so hard? And after you tell me what he did, tell you what: We'll go to McDonald's and you can watch some kids, all right?"

"The one with the playground?"

Jesus Christ. "Sure. Whatever."

This Trait represents a hold you have over a ghost, or several ghosts. Usually this hold is in the form of *catene* — either something that the ghost valued highly in life, or possibly a random object or place to which the *spirito* became attached during the maelstrom. Regardless, you have a hold over the spirit and can bully it by threatening its fetter. Alternatively, you might have information about the spirit's goals and can control it by aiding or impeding it. For more information on what ghosts can do and the ratings of this Background, see the "Spirit Slaves" box on p. 54.

- You have a hold on one weak *spirito*.
- You have influence over two minor ghosts, or one of greater power.
- You're the boss of three lesser ghosts, or fewer who can do more.
- Four ghosts are under your sway, or fewer who are stronger.
- You have mastered five weak ghosts, or fewer who are more talented.

MET System: You can apply this Background in place of the *Retainers* advantage that Giovanni usually pos-

sess. The *Spirit Slave* Background then differentiates between mortal confederates and bound souls. A Giovanni can purchase *Spirit Slaves* like any other Background, but it is not available to characters without *Necromancy*.

Ghiberti Necromancy

When brought into the Giovanni fold, the Ghiberti were already quite familiar with the finer points of African nigrimancy. Those unaccustomed to the fourfold souls of *abombo* (African wraiths) often have trouble controlling them — mechanically, an inexperienced Kindred suffers a +2 penalty to the difficulty of rolls to use *Necromancy* on the ghosts of indigenous Africans. Former slave traders, the Ghiberti combined elements of their prior profession and their unwholesome sorcery to create a path of *Necromancy* that made the enslavement of Ivory Kingdom wraiths easier to accomplish. Studying the strange powers of the ghostly *Morimari*, the Ghiberti learned to trace wraiths and bind them. Note that few (if any) Giovanni who are not members of the Ghiberti family have access to the knowledge of how to compel *abombo*, much less mastery of the *Cenotaph Path*.

THE CENOTAPH PATH

Experienced Ghiberti Kindred recognized that mystically compelling the dead required an extensive knowledge of the ghosts to be so commanded. Whereas many among the family content themselves with mastery of the occasional wraith and the means to affect corpses or the Underworld, more erudite practitioners looked into necromantic means to unearth locations or objects holding strong ties to the dead. Some such studies became rituals, whereas others developed into a discrete path concerned primarily with discovering or forging links between the living world and the Shadowlands.

Most students of *Necromancy* attribute the creation of the *Cenotaph Path* to the eras following the World Wars. The great numbers of dead and dying across the world, especially with displaced soldiers flung to far corners of the globe, made for a brisk trade in soul-catching. Those Ghiberti who could "sniff out" the recently dead (especially in quantity) managed to augment their pursuits with the use of *Cenotaph Necromancy* to find objects or locations important to the legions of wraiths. A few older members of the Giovanni point out that similar powers proved useful during the ancient heyday of Mediterranean expansion, in seeking out death cults or battlefields during the prime of Rome and Italy. Regardless, the path remains something of a rarity, as



it serves primarily to amplify the other powers of an already-skilled Necromancer.

Cenotaph Necromancy seems to function on the principle that a Kindred, already a cadaver, is an unnatural bridge between the living and the dead. Through this principle, the path allows the Necromancer to find other, similar linkages. The basic rudiments of the Cenotaph Path function easily enough once the Kindred learns to attune himself to these connections. Advanced mastery of the path usually entails some brief ritual to forge artificial connections, either through breaking taboos to draw the Shadowlands closer by focusing unsavory passions or through techniques of authority and purity designed to command the two disparate worlds together. (See *Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy* for information about Necromancy techniques.)

• A TOUCH OF DEATH

Just as a Necromancer may exert mastery over the Shadowlands, so too can some ghosts exert themselves in the mortal world. Whereas obvious displays of wraithly power such as bleeding walls or disembodied moans certainly won't be mistaken, some ghostly abilities exert subtle effects that aren't easily recognized. A Necromancer sensitized to the residue of the dead, though, can feel whether an object has been touched by a ghost or sense the recent passage of a wraith.

System: The Necromancer simply touches a person or object that he suspects is a victim of ghostly influence. The player rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty 6). If successful, the Necromancer can determine whether a ghost has exerted any sorts of wraithly power on the subject, or even crossed nearby, to the duration detailed below.

1 success	Last turn; detect use of ghostly powers
2 successes	Last three turns; detect use of ghostly powers
3 successes	Last hour; detect ghost's touch and use of ghostly powers
4 successes	Last day; detect ghost's touch and use of ghostly powers
5 successes	Last week; detect nearby passage of ghost, ghost's touch and use of ghostly powers

On a failure, the Necromancer receives no impressions. A botch reveals a misleading answer (an object may seem tinged with ghostly power when it's not, or vice versa). Should the Necromancer succeed in detection while touching an object or person that a ghost is possessing, he immediately becomes aware that the ghost is still inside. The impression gained in such a case is sufficient to count as a "strong psychic

impression" for purposes of the Sepulchre Path's powers, so the Kindred may be able to (for example) immediately command a ghost to exit a person whom it possesses.

MET System: You simply touch an object or person and make a Static Mental Challenge with a difficulty of 6 Traits, using Occult Ability for retests. If you succeed, you immediately realize whether any wraithly powers have been exerted on the subject during the current game session. If the wraith currently possesses the object or person touched, you become aware of this and may choose to exercise your Sepulchre Path powers (if any) as if you knew the wraith's name.

•• REVEAL THE CATENE

Necromantic compulsions function much more effectively when the caster uses an object of significance to the ghost in question. Such fetters tie the dead to the living lands through their remembered importance — a favored recliner for relaxing, a reviled piece of art foisted off by hated relatives or some object of similarly intense emotion. Many Giovanni can detect such *catene* through the use of rituals (see Ritual of the Unearthed Fetter, p. 165 of *Vampire: The Masquerade*). With this power, though, the Ghiberti can determine a fetter with just a few moments of handling. The Kindred simply runs his hands over the object and concentrates on it. He quickly receives an impression of the item's (or person's) importance to wraiths, if any; should the wraith be one known to the Necromancer, he immediately recognizes the object as a fetter to that (or those) wraith(s). Successful identification of a connected wraith is not exclusive; that is, if the Giovanni determines that the object is important to a given wraith, he can also determine if there are other wraiths tied to the item, though he must use the power again to gain their identities.

Many Necromancers use this power on objects already identified with A Touch of Death, in order to determine whether the ghost is trying to attune a given fetter or simply toying with the world of the living.

System: The Necromancer holds and examines the object for at least three turns — if it's an item, this means turning it over in his hands, running his fingers along it or otherwise giving it a critical eye; with a person, this may require a more... invasive... examination. The player then spends a blood point and rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty 7). If successful, the Kindred determines whether the object holds any significance to any wraith and, with three or more successes, the identity of at least one such wraith (which of course allows the Kindred to use the



Sepulchre Path on that wraith). If the Necromancer already knows any of the wraiths involved, their ties are revealed with their identity — so, if the Necromancer already knows of a wraith well enough to summon and compel it with other powers, successful identification of a fetter tells whether the object is tied to that wraith, in addition to any other impressions gained.

If a botch is scored, the Ghiberti can never successfully use this power on the item being examined.

MET System: Spend a Blood Trait and take half a minute (or three turns, if you are in combat time) carefully examining your subject (but don't touch other players — remember the No Touch rule). Then, make a Static Mental Challenge, difficulty 7 Traits, with *Occult Ability* for retests. If you succeed, you immediately know whether the object is a Fetter. If so, you gain an impression of the identity of one wraith to whom it is Fettered, though a Narrator or Storyteller decides what name to give. If the object is a Fetter to multiple wraiths, you will receive an impression as well as the information that "other wraiths are tied to this item," and you may exercise the power again to gain additional different identities (any identity already known to you is automatically excluded).

••• TREAD UPON THE GRAVE

The extended awareness granted with the Cenotaph Path allows the Necromancer to sense the vagaries of the *sudario* and to find locations where the Shadowlands and the living world come close. Often, the Necromancer experiences a chill or shiver when stepping into an area where the Underworld lies near the living one. With practice, the Giovanni can tell exactly where such locations are.

Experienced Necromancers learn that certain locations are susceptible to ghostly influence; these haunted areas often become homes of a sort for wraiths. A knowledgeable vampire can thus discover places where the dead are likely to congregate, the better to snare them with other Necromancy powers.

System: The player simply declares intent to sense the Shroud in an area and makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). Success reveals the Shroud rating. The Storyteller informs the player of the rating, while in story terms the Giovanni learns that the location is highly attuned to the Shadowlands, about average (not very close to the world of the dead) or far removed from the realm of death. Failing use of the power has no adverse affect, though it may be attempted only once per scene (so the Necromancer must either wait for a time or move to a different area before attempting Tread Upon the Grave once more).

A botch stuns the Giovanni into inaction for a full turn as well as costing him a temporary Willpower point, as he is overcome by shivers and the sense of overwhelming despair from the Shadowlands.

With three or more successes, the Necromancer can determine whether the Shroud's strength has been artificially altered in the area (perhaps through the use of the Ash Path or certain ghostly powers).

MET System: Spend a Willpower Trait and make a Static Mental Challenge against a Storyteller; the Storyteller determines the difficulty. If you succeed, you immediately determine the strength of the Shroud. If you fail, no information is revealed. You may use this power only once on any given location in each game session.

•••• DEATH KNULL

Not all who die go on to become ghosts — many lack the drive to hang on after death or simply have no overwhelming needs that compel them to stick around. Normally, even Necromancers have no way to sort those who might become ghosts from the masses who go on to whatever rewards await. Over time, though, a Necromancer can become sensitized to the pull of death that occurs when a soul escapes from a body only to hover in wait, enslaved by its postmortem desires. The weight of desperation becomes like a tangible tug, and some Necromancers even learn to savor this emotion even as they follow the sensation to find the new ghost.

Of course, actually discovering the new ghost can be problematic. The Kindred may need some means to see through the Shroud or may have to send other wraiths to look for the new unfortunate, especially if a large accident or massacre leaves too many corpses for the Ghiberti to easily discern and test names with other compulsions. Furthermore, new ghosts typically enter the afterlife insensate and covered in a sticky plasm that clouds their minds; the ghost must be freed from this spirit sludge before she can be useful, which again requires the Necromancer either to reach through the Shroud himself or to send a wraithly proxy to do so.

System: Whenever someone dies and becomes a wraith within a half-mile of the Ghiberti, the Necromancer automatically senses the demise (though many choose to ignore this "always-on" power unless actively seeking someone). This power does not automatically pinpoint the location of the new wraith or identify it, but the player may spend one Willpower point and roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 7) for the Necromancer to gain a vague sense of the distance and direction to the new wraith. With one success, the Kindred may sense a



vague pull in a general direction; with three successes, the Necromancer can sense the direction and guess distance to within a quarter-mile. With five successes, the Necromancer immediately senses the location of the new ghost to within a foot. A failure carries no penalty but a botched attempt naturally sends the Necromancer scurrying off in the wrong direction.

The Storyteller may rule that disturbances in the Underworld, intervening magic or other similar phenomena cloud this sensation, simply to prevent overburdening a chronicle with constant ghost-hunting and dice rolling.

MET System: A Storyteller or Narrator should inform you when a new wraith comes into existence within the play area (because this event will be rather unusual, and a Storyteller or Narrator should be present when a character dies, this requirement isn't too egregious). You may spend a Willpower Trait and make a Static Mental Challenge, difficulty of seven Traits, with *Occult Ability* as a retest, in order to determine the direction to the new wraith. Once you have that information (or fail to gain it), the rest of the job of location is up to you.

••••• EPHEMERAL BINDING

The most puissant Necromancers learn not only to sense the ties between living and dead, but to forge such ties themselves. The master of Ephemeral Binding turns an otherwise mundane object or person into a depository for his own mephitic energy, the undying Curse transforming the subject into a sort of linkage between living and dead. The Ghiberti smears his blood on the item in question, which mystically absorbs the vitae and, in doing so, becomes a vessel to anchor a spirit.

System: The Necromancer must coat an object with his blood (a full blood point's worth); if the subject is a person, then that individual must ingest the vitae. The player marks off the blood point, spends a point of Willpower and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 8). If successful, the item temporarily becomes a fetter to one wraith. If the Kindred already knows the name of the wraith or has a strong psychic impression, then the object can become a fetter at any range, even to a ghost who normally does not come near the living world (so long as the ghost still exists). Otherwise, the Ghiberti must be able to see or sense the ghost (with Shroudsight or other such means).

A fetter artificially created in this fashion functions for all necromantic and ghostly purposes as a normal fetter. It can be detected with other necromantic powers, the Giovanni gains a bonus to

Necromancy against the wraith attuned to it, and the ghost similarly finds exertion of its powers easier upon the subject (so the Giovanni might turn an unwitting ghoul into a consort for a wraith familiar with possession...). The wraith can sink into the fetter to heal; conversely, if the fetter is destroyed, the wraith is banished to some inaccessible region of the Underworld, perhaps never to return.

A fetter created with Ephemeral Binding lasts for one night per success scored. The expenditure of an additional point of temporary Willpower increases this duration to a week per success, whereas spending a permanent point of Willpower extends the duration to a year and a night.

Botching with this power not only causes failure but also makes the ghost immediately aware of what the Necromancer was trying to do. Most ghosts do not take kindly to meddling Kindred trying to make artificial chains for them.

MET System: You expend a Blood Trait and a Willpower Trait and make a Social Challenge against a targeted wraith (using *Occult Ability* for retests) — either one you can see, or one you already know. If you succeed, the subject of your power becomes a Fetter to the wraith for the duration of the game session; you can spend a Willpower Trait at the beginning of each new session to keep the item active as a Fetter, or spend a permanent Willpower Trait to make the object a Fetter for a full year of play.

PISANOB NECROMANCY

The roots of Pisanob Necromancy intertwine with the dark practices of the Mesoamerican cultures of the Aztecs and, to a lesser degree, their predecessors, the Mayans and the Toltecs. The death magic practiced by this branch of the Giovanni clan is inexorably tied to the elaborate ceremony of Aztec religious rites. As a result, the Pisanob have grown dependent on the ritualistic trappings employed by their forebears. Deprived of these, the Pisanob Necromancer finds using the Black Art much more difficult, if not impossible, to perform. In game terms, the player of such a character suffers a difficulty increase of +2 when attempting Necromancy rolls, though this may be overcome for a scene at the cost of one Willpower point.

As inexorably tied to ritual as the Pisanob are, it's not surprising that they've developed a number of necromantic rituals to which individuals within the family have access and guard preciously. Of the following, only the Ritual of Pochtli is widely practiced by Kindred outside the Pisanob branch of the Giovanni.



RITUAL OF THE SMOKING MIRROR (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

Named for the chief Aztec god Tezcatlipoca, this ritual allows the Necromancer to use an obsidian mirror to see as ghosts do. By gazing into the mirror's ebony depths, the Pisanob may discover an object's flaws; assess the general health of mortals or even read a being's aura.

At the start of the ritual, the Kindred decides which of the ritual's two aspects she will use — she may not use both at the same time. With Lifesight, the Necromancer may read auras as if she had the level two *Auspex* power, *Aura Perception*. Deathsight, on the other hand, grants the Necromancer the ability to see wraiths and the Shadowlands. It also shows the stain of oblivion on the living, which a knowledgeable Necromancer may use to diagnose and study illnesses; damage or disabilities from which a target may suffer with a successful *Perception + Medicine* roll (difficulty 4 to 8, depending on the ailment's nature). At the Storyteller's discretion, the Kindred may make a similar study of an inanimate object's flaw and how to repair them, if that object has a strong link to either life- or death-energies (such as a murderer's knife or a window box used to grow healing herbs).

To perform the ritual, the Necromancer grasps an obsidian mirror that has had its edge sharpened so that it cuts into the flesh of whoever takes hold of it. As the vitae flows onto the mirror's surface, it allows the mirror's reflective power to bridge the worlds of the living and the dead, much as it allows the Necromancer herself to do. If the Kindred wishes Lifesight, she calls upon the power of Tonariuh, He Who Goes Forth Shining. If she wishes Deathsight, she calls upon Mictlantéorl, Aztec god of the Underworld. The player then rolls to activate the ritual as normal (*Intelligence + Occult*, difficulty 4). If successful, the Necromancer may view the world as a wraith does via the reflective surface of the mirror for a scene. On a botch, the vampire may well invoke the ire of the deities upon whom she calls, with disastrous results.

MET System: As described above, a successful Static Mental Challenge, difficulty of four Traits (modified by the strength of the Shroud if some sort of Necromancy has altered that), allows the Necromancer to use a mirror as a focus to see the Underworld. The vampire can see with Deathsight, using a Mental Challenge with *Medicine Ability* to determine someone's state of health (and health levels) and performing a similar scan



on objects using *Crafts*, or *Lifesight*, gaining the ability to see auras with a Static Mental Challenge as described for the *Aura Perception Discipline*. Note that the player must have an item card representing the appropriate mirror used for this ritual, and further that only reflections in the mirror reveal these characteristics.

RITUAL OF DOCHTLI (LEVEL TWO RITUAL)

See p. 44.

DIVINE SIGN (LEVEL THREE RITUAL)

With this ritual, the Pisanob Necromancer may use the principles of Aztec astrology to divine a person's day sign. Used upon the living, this information allows the Necromancer to divine the target's future actions. In the dead, this knowledge forges a more intimate connection with the target, making it easier to cast other necromantic effects on her.

Upon learning a person's birth date, the Pisanob's player may roll to activate this ritual in order to cross-reference it with the *Tonalamatl*, the Book of Destinies, and thereby learn that person's day sign. If successful, the Kindred may use this to predict the target's next course of action, allowing him to deal with it accordingly. The effect on wraiths is quite different. As they have already died, the *Tonalamatl* can offer no insight into the spirits' destinies, which have already run their course. Instead, the ritual imparts upon the Necromancer so intimate an understanding of the wraith in question that it acts as a connection to the ghost, making it easier to invoke other Necromancy effects on that spirit. For story purposes, it's equivalent to holding one of that wraith's fetters (see *Ritual of the Unearthed Fetter* on p. 165 of *Vampire: The Masquerade* for details).

MET System: You make a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty of the target's Mental Traits) as you reference the subject's name in the Book of Destinies. (Acquiring a copy of the *Tonalamatl* may require the use of *Occult Influence*, and you may need special *Linguistics Abilities* if it's not translated.) If you succeed in casting this ritual against a living or undead individual, you gain one free retest in your next challenge against that individual. If you cast this ritual against a wraith, you act as if you hold a Fetter of the wraith for your next use of another *Necromancy* power on it. You must have the individual's birth date, whether acquired in game or through research and *Influence* (such as *Bureaucracy Influence*). This ritual's effects don't stack; you can't use it multiple times on someone to gain multiple retests. Instead, you can only recast it once you've used up the retest or Fetter substitute.

RITUAL OF XIPE TOTEC (LEVEL FOUR RITUAL)

In times past, Aztec priests would flay the skin from a victim and wear it as a sacrifice to Xipe Totec, god of suffering and renewal. In a similar vein, the Giovanni of the Pisanob branch of the clan may skin their prey alive, but for a more pragmatic reason — to steal that person's identity.

To perform the ritual, the Kindred removes his victim's top layer of skin with an obsidian dagger, taking care to damage the skin as little as possible in the process. The victim must survive the process (though she may well die of blood loss shortly after the ritual if not seen to properly). He then drains the victim's blood into a large ceremonial golden bowl. There the blood is mixed with *ocotl*, amaranth and other ingredients. When imbibed by the Necromancer, this mixture causes him to sweat a glistening sheen of blood (equal to one blood point). The Kindred then dons the skin of his victim, which on a successful roll absorbs the Kindred vitae and begins to heal, forming a second skin over the Pisanob's own. Naturally, the victim needs to be of similar stature — otherwise, the features become distorted and the disguise is rendered useless. This power also has no effect on Kindred or Lupines.

Under normal visual scrutiny, the ruse is flawless. Of course, it imparts none of the victim's knowledge or mannerisms (and does nothing to mask the Kindred's own undead nature). It, therefore, works best for situations in which contact with friends and family may be minimized. To preserve the skin's condition, the Kindred must bathe it in a blood point's worth of vitae nightly. When the Pisanob removes the skin (which causes one level of unsoakable lethal damage to the user and must be done with the same knife used to flay the victim in the first place), it is ruined in the process.

Needless to say, conducting this ritual will almost certainly require *Humanity* checks for characters of suitable moral stature.

MET System: You remove the skin from a victim (as a game action only, of course) — this means that you must have your living victim restrained or incapacitated, and you must have a skinning tool and appropriate time, meaning that the ritual is probably best cast out-of-play. You must make a successful Static Mental Challenge (difficulty of seven Traits, retesting with *Occult*) to enact the ritual properly with the flayed skin, or else it won't heal correctly. As with the *Mask of a Thousand Faces Discipline*, you should wear a name tag to indicate your change of identity. If you feel sufficiently clever, you can trust the player of the character whose skin you've stolen to play your



character *pretending* to be the original victim, though this is recommended only if you implicitly trust the roleplaying skills of your victim.

Remember that use of this ritual requires the expenditure of a Blood Trait, plus an additional Blood Trait each night (which is important for games that run over the course of several nights).

RITUAL OF *TEYOLIA* (LEVEL FIVE RITUAL)

Long ago, Mayan astrologers foretold that the end of the world would occur shortly after the end of a thousand-year period. The recent return of the Ravnos Antediluvian has re-enforced in Pochtli a belief that the Mayans were right. He believes that the foretold end of the world is, in fact, the inevitable Gehenna. In an effort to survive the end of the age, Pochtli and his lieutenants developed a means of tearing out the hearts of Kindred and preserving within them the heart's blood, or *teyolia*, of the Kindred so sacrificed. When Gehenna comes, Pochtli intends to offer the hearts of his victims to the terrible blood gods in an effort to have them spare himself and his undead family. This terrible rite is unknown to Pisanob Kindred beyond Pochtli and his most trusted lieutenants. If any Giovanni from apart from the Pisanob get wind of this practice, it's entirely possible the entire Pisanob branch of the clan would be extinguished.

To perform this ritual, the Necromancer must force a captured vampire to the summit of the Temple of Pochtli. There, lying face-up on the temple's altar, the Kindred to be sacrificed has her limbs held by four *camozotz* ghouls. The Necromancer then cuts open the victim's chest with an obsidian dagger, reaches inside and tears out the heart, visiting Final Death upon the sacrifice. The heart is then preserved in a specially prepared vessel, referred to as a *chac mool*. No roll is required. The process is successful unless interrupted.

It is possible to diablerize the sacrificed Kindred at a later date by drinking the heart's blood, with all the practice's concomitant benefits and drawbacks. It's also possible that the elder Pisanob might use the power inherent in the hearts to fuel even more potent necromantic castings... such as the strange but persistent rumors of South American Kindred claiming to be one person but looking wholly like another.

Typically a player's character won't know this ritual. The rite is best used as a specifically gruesome end to a character in story terms — a heart stolen by this rite is unlikely to ever return to play (since Pochtli and company need the hearts for *other things*) and so essentially it's just a nasty, nasty way to finish off a character.



MET System: Because this ritual requires no challenge, all you have to do (only!) is take your victim to the Temple of Pochtli — the unique one in Mexico — so probably outside of your game's usual locale, thus taking you out of play for a while (clever Storytellers will use this travel as an opportunity for another story, with the difficulties of smuggling vampires across international borders...). Cunning vampires may trick their prospective prey into "visiting" the temple with promises of aid, power, wealth or whatnot, though of course only a grisly death awaits.

NEW NECROMANTIC RITUALS

MINISTRADI MORTU (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

The Necromancer obtains a piece of a dead body and simmers it in a pot with half a quart of vampiric vitae. To this stew, the Necromancer adds rosemary (for remembrance), basil (the funerary herb) and salt (the alchemic principle of clarification). After bringing the concoction to a full boil, the Necromancer eats it.

If the ritual is successful, the caster can learn whether (or if) an individual became a *spirito* or *spettro* after death. Unfortunately, this information can be learned only about the person from whose body the "stew meat" was taken.

If the roll to activate this ritual is successful, the character discovers whether the subject of the grisly rite became a wraith or spectre after death, or if indeed she became either.

The blood component is spent progressively through the ritual: If the Necromancer takes the blood from another Kindred, she doesn't become partially bound from drinking it, nor does she add a point to her blood pool. Similarly, if she uses her own blood, her pool decreases by a point but does not increase when she consumes the soup.

Necromantic vampires without the Eat Food merit (see p. 296 of *Vampire: The Masquerade*) can't keep the soup down, but can still use the ritual and gain the information.

MET System: Basic Ritual. You must first obtain a chunk from a dead body (remember that very old vampires usually crumble to ash and don't leave suitable pieces). Boil this up in a stew, taking the usual ritual casting time, then devour it. (Need we mention that this is all representative, and we aren't actually advocating *real* cannibalism?) The soup must use two pints of vampiric blood — about two Blood Points' worth. If you succeed in the ritual, you learn whether the individual you've just physically devoured became a ghost after death.

If you somehow devour a chunk from a still-living victim — perhaps a severed limb, without knowledge of the victim's eventual fate — you learn only that the subject is not a ghost.

THE HAND OF GLORY (LEVEL TWO RITUAL)

The Hand of Glory is a mummified hand used by the Giovanni to anesthetize a home's residents and, thereby, allow the Necromancer free rein to do what he will in the residence. It was originally developed by thieves dabbling in the Dark Art, and was adapted by the Giovanni for similar nefarious purposes.

The creation of the Hand of Glory is a gruesome ritual dating back hundreds of years. The Necromancer wraps the severed hand of a condemned murderer in a shroud, draws it tight to squeeze out any remaining blood and preserves the hand in an earthenware jar with salt, saltpeter and long peppers. After a fortnight, the Giovanni removes the hand and dries it in an oven with vervain and fern. At the end of this process, if the roll to activate the ritual garners any successes, the creation is viable.

To use the Hand of Glory, the vampire first coats the fingertips of the mummified hand with a flammable substance derived from the fat of a hanged man and sets the fingers alight. The Necromancer then recites the phrase, "Let all those who are asleep be asleep, and let those who are awake be awake." All mortals within a household who are affected fall into a deep sleep and cannot be roused (the hand has no effect on supernatural creatures or hunters of the **Hunter: The Reckoning** ilk). For each unaffected occupant of a home, one finger of the hand will refuse to light. Of course, botches may result in all of the fingers being lit but no one in the home being asleep. The hand may be extinguished at any time by the Necromancer who created it. Anyone else wishing to douse the hand must use milk to do so. Nothing else works. Once made, the Hand of Glory may be reused indefinitely. Effects last for one scene.

MET System: Basic Ritual. A Hand of Glory serves as an excellent opportunity to play up some creepy props, so long as you're not in a public place. System-wise, creation of the hand requires that the character secure the appropriate materials (probably through the use of *Health* and *Legal Influence*) and then succeed in a Static Mental Challenge, difficulty of seven Traits. Of course, the invasion of a mortal home isn't a common scene in live-action games, but one never knows.... Storytellers might set up an opportunity to use a Hand of Glory to invade a vampire's haven, for



instance, with the power of the hand putting all mortals present to sleep.

Be sure not to use the Hand of Glory just to make all your players of mortals sit out the game, though! This ritual may be best used as a downtime action, allowing a Necromancer to sneak into a specific mortal household (or even to determine whether a given haven has any supernatural occupants).

OCCHIO D'UOMO MORTO (LEVEL TWO RITUAL)

To cast this ritual, the Necromancer needs an eye from a corpse whose absent soul became a *spirito* or a *spettri*. The eye is ritually prepared in a process involving incense, the new moon and a period of midnight chanting. The chanting climaxes when the Necromancer removes one of her own eyes and replaces it with the one from the corpse (fresher is better). Kindred healing takes over at that point, sealing the eye within the socket.

If the ritual succeeds, the Necromancer permanently gains the Shroudsight ability (see p. 164 of **Vampire: The Masquerade**). This ability is always active and does not require a roll.

Furthermore, if it was a *spettri* corpse, the vampire can hear the vague murmuring of any *spettri* in the area.

This ability isn't very precise; rather than mind reading, it's more like trying to overhear a low-voiced conversation in the next room. With a Perception + Occult roll, the Necromancer can glean a very vague impression of what the area *spettri* are up to. Botching this roll may well earn the Necromancer a new derangement (at the Storyteller's discretion), as listening in on the evil dead is not a habit conducive to mental health.

This ritual has some major drawbacks, the first being that its proper result is hideously ugly. Unless the vampire wears sunglasses or finds some other way to conceal her eye, her Appearance is reduced by one dot.

Also, dead or rotted tissue is not the best for normal perception. Any mundane visual Perception rolls are at +1 difficulty (possibly more if the corpse had bad eyesight in life). On the other hand, this very blurring offers some protection against Dominate and Eyes of the Serpent: These Disciplines are used against the dead-eyed Necromancer at +1 difficulty.

Most importantly, however, the *spirito* or *spettri* whose body was desecrated knows it, and very likely hates it. The ghost can find the Necromancer possessing his eye anywhere, and all wraithly powers used



against the Necromancer by that particular ghost or spectre are at -1 difficulty.

MET System: Basic Ritual. You pluck out your own (character's) eye and replace it with the eye of a corpse whose soul has become a ghost. If you succeed in the ritual challenge, you can permanently see into the Shadowlands at will. If the ghost was a spectre, you can also make a Mental Challenge against any spectre that you can see to discern its next action, though this requires an action on your part and if you lose you gain a Derangement for the remainder of the session. (Pick one at random; a *Dementation* deck is good for this.)

Undergoing this ritual causes you to permanently lose one Social Trait and lowers your Social Trait maximum by one. You also suffer all the drawbacks of the *Bad Sight* Flaw. However, you gain a one-Trait resolution bonus against *Dominate* and *Serpentis: Eyes of the Serpent* (and other powers that require eye contact).

The ghost whose eye you've stolen can automatically locate you and gains a one-Trait resolution bonus against you with all of its Arcanoi.

TEMPESTA SCUDO (LEVEL THREE RITUAL)

Unlike most rituals, *Tempesta Scudo* can be cast speedily. The Necromancer performs a short and awkward dance that ends with her biting through her own lip and spitting the blood in a circle around her. All spirits' actions within the circle of blood are made at +2 difficulty. All Risen within the circle have a penalty to their actions of +1 difficulty.

To cast this ritual successfully, the Necromancer must spend one combat turn performing the dance. At the end of the turn, she makes a Dexterity + Performance roll against difficulty 7 (if done outside of combat, the difficulty is only 6). During the next combat turn, she bites through her own lips (taking a level of bashing damage) and spits (spending one blood point). Then the normal ritual roll is made to see whether the power takes effect.

MET System: Intermediate Ritual. Despite its level, this ritual takes only one turn to cast. Expend one Blood Trait and take one level of bashing damage. You can delineate a circle three paces in radius around you. Any ghost that enters the circle suffers a two-Trait resolution penalty on all challenges; Risen suffer a one-Trait penalty. You may use *Performance* as the retest Ability for this ritual.

BASTONE DIABOLICO (LEVEL FOUR RITUAL)

Casting this ritual is a bit tricky because it requires the removal of a leg bone from a living person. The donor must survive the removal (at least for a little while). The bone is then submerged in molten lead.

Once it cools, the thin lead coating is inscribed with various runes.

The Necromancer then uses this metal-shod bone to beat its donor to death while repeating a droning Greek chant.

With a successful roll, this ritual produces a *bastone diabolico* or "devil stick." The stick can be activated by anyone who holds it and expends a point of Willpower. Activation lasts for a scene, and during that time any ghost, *spirito* or *spettro* hit with the devil stick loses a point from its Passion Pool (if you're using the rules from *Wraith: The Oblivion*, wraiths lose a point of Pathos and spectres lose a point of Angst). In addition to its normal effects, this club does an additional die of damage when used against the walking dead (not vampires), and such damage is aggravated.

Unfortunately for the Necromancer, ghosts can sense that the *bastone diabolico* is bad news, even if they don't know exactly what the thing does. They tend to stay away from anybody carrying one, which means that all rolls for such a character to use powers that summon or attract spirits occur at +1 difficulty.

The Giovanni clan stores many of these cudgels in their Venice vaults, and are actually more likely to lend one out to a neonate than to teach the ritual (after all, kidnapping somebody, mangling him and killing him was a lot easier to get away with a few hundred years ago). Most older devil sticks are made from tibias (for individuals who prefer a thinner, faster club) or femurs (for the type who like a big bludgeon with a knot on the end). Modern Necromancers are just as likely to use the patella to create a ghost-punishing weapon far easier to conceal.

MET System: Intermediate Ritual. Generally, you'll use a hapless mortal for this ritual; its casting kills the subject (since you beat him to death, you *bastardo*). Anyone can use the resulting devil stick by expending a Trait of Willpower. For the remainder of that scene, the stick causes aggravated damage to zombies and other animate dead, causes an extra health level of damage to such beings and drains one Pathos from any wraith struck or one Angst from a spectre. However, so long as you have a devil-stick in your possession (or in the same room!), you suffer a one-Trait penalty on resolution of all tests to summon and compel ghosts with any power.

A devil-stick uses the same Traits and bonuses as a club.

ESILIO (LEVEL FIVE RITUAL)

Like *Tempesta Scudo*, *Esilio* is a quick and dirty ritual. The Necromancer simply speaks five syllables.



No one can identify the casting language (at least, no Giovanni is telling if he has). According to the ritual's oblique history, this power of Necromancy came from the bloodline that preceded the Giovanni, and that the language is what God gave humankind before the confusion of Babel. The legend further states that while the particular meaning of the words is lost, they are what Caine's father said to him while exiling him to Nod.

Regardless of the truth of the matter, the Words of Exile are not spoken lightly. When the ritual is cast successfully, it opens a hole within reality itself — a rip between the lands of the living and the darkest depths of the Underworld. This tear is invisible to normal vision, but to Shroudsight it looks like a pitch black vortex opening within the vampire's own body (the very few unfortunate enough to look into the gap with high levels of Auspex are generally unwilling or unable to discuss what they beheld within). Any wraith — *spirito* or *spettro* — clutched to the Kindred's chest is instantly torn to shreds. Grabbing a ghost in this fashion requires a Clinch or Tackle maneuver. As usual with destroyed spirits, they don't come back for at least a month, if ever. A *spirito* destroyed in this fashion tends to return as a *spettro*, if it returns at all.

The Necromancer may clutch and destroy a number of spirits equal to the number of successes she rolled. After that, the vortex closes. It closes at the end of the scene if it hasn't already.

Of course, using one's body as a portal between our world and what a reasonably intelligent person might call Hell is neither simple nor healthy. For starters, it costs a blood point and a point of Willpower (which does not give an automatic success on the ritual roll). More importantly, each success rolled inflicts a level of unsoakable lethal damage on the Necromancer. Most importantly, every use of *Esilio* permanently reduces the Necromancer's Humanity by one point.

MET System: Advanced Ritual. Use of *Esilio* takes one turn. You must expend one Willpower Trait and one Blood Trait. Any wraith you successfully grapple is instantly dispersed and sent screaming straight to Hell, to return no sooner than a month later (and possibly never). You may maintain the portal so long as you sacrifice one health level (considered lethal damage that cannot be resisted) for each turn that you keep it open, including the first turn. You lose one Morality Trait when you invoke this ritual (even the Path of Death and the Soul finds it reprehensible, seeing as it destroys the souls of the dead).

NEW MERITS AND FLAWS

Merits and Flaws are not appropriate to every chronicle. See the Appendix of *Vampire: The Masquerade* for more information on using Merits and Flaws in your stories.

CONSANGUINEOUS RESISTANCE (1-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Your character cannot be blood bound by anyone who shares his mortal bloodline. That is, if you were born into the Giovanni family, you cannot be bound by anyone else who was born a Giovanni, though you can still be bound by Pisanob of the Giovanni clan, or by Kindred of any other clan. Similarly, a Dunsirn with Consanguineous Resistance could not be bound by others who were born into the mortal Dunsirn family, but could be bound by a Milliner of the Giovanni clan (for instance).

Incidentally, the Giovanni are extremely suspicious of anyone known to manifest this quirk. Although this blood-borne aberration hasn't been documented, a few savvy Giovanni have a rough and superstitious idea of what it is and does. It's generally associated with being a rebellious young smartass who needs to be put down (this is not as unfair as it sounds; by the time a bond resistance is really obvious, it's probably because a punishment isn't working). A character who is discovered to have this trait probably earns her sire's hostility at the very least.

MET System: As described above, you cannot be bound by anyone from your own mortal patrilineage. This is most useful if other Giovanni of your family are in play, of course, and can cause all manner of storyline complications if you're found out.

PROXY KISSED (4-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Before the Embrace, you received the traditional Giovanni Proxy Kiss. This means you have one free dot of Potence, and the other members of your clan tend to be comfortable that you were Embraced in "the proper Giovanni fashion." On the downside, you are partially blood bound to someone — probably someone other than your sire. Given the way the *anziani* like to balance things out, you may well have been Embraced by someone who dislikes or disagrees with your domitor.

You may take this Merit a second time (for a total of 8 points) to gain a free dot of Fortitude, indicating a very long service as a ghoul. If you do this, it means that you're: (a) partially bound to three Kindred, (b) one-third bound to one and two-thirds bound to another, or (c) fully bound to the Kindred who Embraced you, who will probably be in deep shit with the elders — if she isn't an elder herself.



MET System: You begin play with a partial blood bond to one other Giovanni Kindred (if an appropriate one isn't in play, the Storyteller should work with you to come up with one). You gain the Basic *Potence* level *Prowess* in addition to your other Disciplines, and you can learn the first Intermediate level with your starting Discipline levels. If you spend eight Free Traits for this Merit, you come into play with partial bonds to two Giovanni Kindred or a full bond to one, and you also gain the Basic *Fortitude* Discipline *Endurance*.

SANGUINE INCONGRUITY (5-PT. PHYSICAL MERIT)

Giovanni with this atavism are few and far between — fewer than a dozen reported instances have occurred since the clan rose from the ashes of the clan that preceded them. Kindred possessing it do not bear the Curse of Lamia; their Kiss causes no more damage than the blood loss itself. These vampires acquire a peculiar pallor upon their Embrace, however — they look like corpses, and no amount of blood ingestion can flush their features (as other vampires are able to do). Giovanni with this Merit are afforded wide berth, as the Giovanni tend to be quite superstitious about it.

MET System: You have a peculiar cadaverous appearance that gives you a one-Trait resolution penalty on all Social Challenges relying on Appearance-related Traits. You should use special make-up to represent this: blue around the cheeks and lips, black under the eyes and a general white around the rest of the face is a good start. However, you do not suffer from the normal Giovanni disadvantage.

INBRED (1-PT. TO 5-PT. FLAW)

Inbreeding, a common occurrence among the incestuous Giovanni clan, can take many forms, and this Flaw is best discussed with the Storyteller before a player takes it for her character. The Inbred Flaw covers all manner of physical, mental and emotional defects. A one-point Inbreeding is something simple and unobtrusive, such as eyes too close together or an underbite. A three-point Inbreeding is more severe: a congenital health condition (for mortals) or a crippling physical deformity. Five-point Inbreedings are grossly disabling or emotionally crippling — everything from uselessly atrophied legs to a permanent Derangement, decided on mutually by the player and Storyteller. Inbred conditions may or may not be immediately discernible, though their point cost should be relative to their magnitude.

MET System: The flaws of an *Inbred* Giovanni must be worked out with a Storyteller. For one

Trait, you suffer a one-Trait resolution penalty on Social Challenges, because you have an unwholesome or flawed physical appearance. For three Traits, you suffer this penalty and also a one-Trait resolution penalty on Physical Challenges due to congenital health defects. For five Traits, you suffer from an effect equivalent to one other Flaw chosen by the Storyteller in addition to the previous hindrances; maybe you're also *Lame*, or you have an extra *Derangement*.

SHADOW WALKER (6-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

The Giovanni clan is by its nature inexorably tied to the realm beyond the *sudario*. Giovanni suffering from this Flaw are so tied to the Shadowlands that even in the lands of the living they are forced to interact with the world of the dead on a nightly basis. To shadow walkers, objects in the Underworld are as real as anything to be found in the physical world. Such vampires find that the ghosts of walls may impede their flight, ghostly objects may strike them, and wraiths' powers work as if the Kindred were on the far side of the Shroud. This Flaw is similar to the Ash Path power *Dead Hand* except that *Shadow Walker* is always on and it in no way allows the character possessing it to perceive beyond the Shroud — see p. 164 of *Vampire: The Masquerade* for details.

The Storyteller may determine that certain Shadowlands topography interferes with you. Unless you have a Merit or power to do so, you can't see into the Shadowlands, so you have to be careful in feeling your way about — essentially a blind man subject to the Underworld landscape. You may be restricted by immaterial walls or environmental effects at a Storyteller's discretion. More importantly, wraiths can affect you directly — a wraith attacking you inflicts damage without any special means on his part. Conversely, you can affect things in the Shadowlands with your physical body, though chances are that you do so blindly. Your possessions and weapons do not have this special facility, so it's possible for you to swing a sword that passes through a ghostly wall, only to have your hand stopped by the wall, or to have a gun that can't shoot ghosts whereas their relic guns can put holes in you. Obviously, this Flaw is appropriate only for a game in which interaction with wraiths is fairly common or a Storyteller wants to pay above-average attention to the Underworld.

MET System: You are fully subject to the Shadowlands and the ghosts there. Ghostly architecture blocks you and wraithly attacks can injure



you. You can't actually see the Underworld without the use of other powers, but you can be impeded by it. When and whether this occurs is a matter for Storyteller discretion, but it can be quite a hindrance if you're trying to, say, attend a meeting and a ghostly wall bars entry to the room, or if you need to flee an enemy while ghosts also lash out at you. Typically, a Narrator should take an opportunity

once per game to manifest some inconvenience, causing one of your actions to fail automatically. This failure might be as simple as "You can't flee because you run into a wall" or perhaps, "Your attempt to *Dominate* the mortal fails because a ghost suddenly shrieks and begins firing a gun at you." For the one challenge, you fail automatically, retests and overbids notwithstanding.







CHAPTER THREE: SHAREHOLDERS AND CHARNEL HOUSES

*One should judge a man mainly from his depravities. Virtues
can be faked. Depravities are real.*

— Klaus Kinski

At once revered and reviled, the Giovanni have a grace and a sickness unrivalled by any other clan. What leads them to their greatest achievements is the same desire that leads them to their most vulgar indulgence. Is it the case with all great men and women? Does every saint hide a secret sin? And if he does, does the vilest of sinners harbor within him the light of genius?

It is almost invariably so with the Giovanni. Whether tied to Catholic guilt, centuries of ancestor worship, misplaced shame or carnal desire, a Giovanni must earn her right to excess.

Let us, then, see who and how.

SINGLE-BLOOD PRODIGY

Quote: You won't understand, and I've got better things to do than explain, for fuck's sake.

Prelude: Avoiding death altogether takes a lot more than luck. You have to be lucky and smart enough to be chosen. That means you have to be worthy. Almost no one is worthy.

You are worthy.

You're smarter than any living person you've ever met, and you've always known it. Sure, sometimes the fumble-fucking dumbasses got the better of you due to the caprices of circumstance or physical development. Sure, they made your life pretty goddamn uncomfortable, but that's their nature. Stupidity always hates intelligence. Blindness always envies sight. Part of their souls can almost reach for a light that would for them be a blinding revelation and which is for you just common thought. They can sense your illumination, but if those stunted perceptions were ever allowed to rise to the level of consciousness, the despair would be so intense that they'd probably swallow their own tongues to die on the spot, hoping for oblivion the whole time. They can't let themselves understand you: To do so would be to utterly condemn themselves.

Easier to torment.

Only your family — they're almost as illuminated as you — understands the truth. They've finally seen that the only sensible action is to remove you from the drab and stifling world of "life" with its schools and its malls and its *WWF Smackdown*, to unlock the doors of immortality and give you an eternity to comprehend the third way between being and nothingness.

You're learning fast and are only going to speed up as you go. Woe to anyone in your way.

Concept: You're shockingly arrogant and almost smart enough to make it stick. You've been fascinated by death and disdainful of life for as long as you've been conscious. Frankly, giving up life and the pretense of humanity has been the best thing that ever happened to you.

Roleplaying Hints: Necromancy matters. The Giovanni family (and, to a lesser extent, the clan) matters. Money is just a means to an end and you can't be bothered with it. In fact, if it's not Necromancy, it's not worth a moment of your supremely enlightened thought. If you don't understand something, it must be because it's not worth understanding. You're somewhat surprised that people dislike you, but you really don't give a fuck about them anyway.

Equipment: Black ritual robes, or whatever other clothes the servants hand you. PCS phone, laptop computer, stranglecord, FDA, a chauffeur and a procurer to take care of the ugly details of existence.

VAMPIRE		
THE HOUSE OF		
Name:	Alaric Connor	Greenwood, III
Player:	Christopher Brown	MAKIN'
Character:	Clan Giovanni	Concept: Single Blood Prodigy
ATTRIBUTES		
(Intelligence) (Strength) (Dexterity)		
Strength	■■■■■	■■■■■
Dexterity	■■■■■	■■■■■
Intelligence	■■■■■	■■■■■
ABILITY		
(Loyalty) (Social) (Machination)		
Alaric	■■■■■	■■■■■
Machination	■■■■■	■■■■■
Will	■■■■■	■■■■■
Dodge	■■■■■	■■■■■
Support	■■■■■	■■■■■
Repression	■■■■■	■■■■■
Intimidation	■■■■■	■■■■■
Leadership	■■■■■	■■■■■
Survival	■■■■■	■■■■■
Adaptation	■■■■■	■■■■■
ADVANTAGES		
(Machination) (Intelligence) (Virtue)		
Alaric	■■■■■	■■■■■
Intimidation	■■■■■	■■■■■
Will	■■■■■	■■■■■
Survival	■■■■■	■■■■■
Repression	■■■■■	■■■■■
MENTAL ATTRIBUTES		
(Machination) (Intelligence) (Virtue)		
Alaric	■■■■■	■■■■■
Intimidation	■■■■■	■■■■■
Will	■■■■■	■■■■■
Survival	■■■■■	■■■■■
Repression	■■■■■	■■■■■
MENTAL ATTRIBUTES		
(Machination) (Intelligence) (Virtue)		
Alaric	■■■■■	■■■■■
Intimidation	■■■■■	■■■■■
Will	■■■■■	■■■■■
Survival	■■■■■	■■■■■
Repression	■■■■■	■■■■■



CLANBOOK: GIOVANNI



HURRIED EMBRACE

Quote: *I just wish someone had told me how much easier feeding is when you kill them first.*

Prelude: You still haven't recovered.

Before it all started, life was good. Sure, your parents sent you off to a private school with no boys, and the snotty, stuck-up bitches there made fun of you for being "new money," and when you came home your parents never let you go out unaccompanied because it "wasn't safe." But you had cute clothes, lots of money (new or old, money is money) and servants who had to put up with any shit you decided to dish at them.

Then the world went mad.

It was *El Día de Los Muertos* — "the Day of the Dead." At first you thought it was an earthquake, when the dishes started breaking and everything started flying around. But earthquakes don't make walls bleed, don't make sounds like howling voices. Uncle Hugo told you that the Pisanob rule the dead, but you'd never actually *seen* the dead until that night. Then you watched their translucent forms

fling your brother down the stairs; chase your cook away with a burning, airborne tablecloth; hoist your father into the air and tear at his clothes.... You ran then, but the roots in the garden became hands, pulling you to the ground. The

spirit that you saw next looked no more substantial than cigarette smoke, but the hammer it drove between your eyes was completely solid.

The next thing you knew was hunger. You were drinking from the corpses of your servants even before you realized what you were doing. Uncle Hugo was standing above you, frowning. "Dulce," he said, "I wanted your initiation to be a beautiful thing, not this rushed and ugly mess. Still, better this than for your Pisanob soul to fall into the hands of those spirits."

You're nervous, and you miss your parents, but you're also looking forward to your lessons. You can think of a few things you'd like to do to the spirits who attacked your home. Not to mention those hair-pulling bitches at school....

Concept: You were a spoiled, immature 16-year-old girl who hadn't grown up and who now never will. You'll never kiss your first boy with living lips, you'll never really understand making love, you'll never have that final growth spurt. But you'll also never miss what you never experienced.

Roleplaying Hints: Everyone over 30 is either really stupid or really scary. You put up a tough front, but don't forget that underneath you're a young girl who watched her family die and saw that hammer coming straight at her head. Just when everyone has dismissed you as a bubblegum-brained twit, you can come through with a perception that's surprisingly accurate and unspoiled.

Equipment: Clothes from BCBG and Betsey Johnson, Vespa scooter, Victoria Ash CDs.



VAMPIRE

THE HUNTING GROUND

Name: Dulce Points: 100000 Character:	Species: Vampire Disposition: Gothic Class: Succubus	Generation: 12th Sex: Female Character: Hurried Embrace
--	---	--

ATTRIBUTES		
Strength 00000	Charisma 00000	Intuition 00000
Stamina 00000	Haziness 00000	Intuition 00000
Speed 00000	Appearance 00000	Will 00000

ADVANTAGES		
Learning	Skills	Disadvantages
Allure 00000 Allience 00000 Deal 00000 Dodge 00000 Feared 00000 Influence 00000 Intimidate 00000 Leadership 00000 Loyalty 00000 Luck 00000 Manipulate 00000	Animal Inst 00000 Craft 00000 Drive 00000 Etiquette 00000 Finance 00000 Melee 00000 Performance 00000 Persuade 00000 Stealth 00000 Trick 00000 Visual 00000	Academics 00000 Computers 00000 Finance 00000 Investigation 00000 Law 00000 Languages 00000 Medicine 00000 Music 00000 Politics 00000 Sports 00000

ADVANTAGES		
Characteristics	Disadvantages	Skills
Allure 00000 Leadership 00000 Manipulate 00000 Intimidate 00000 Luck 00000 Loyalty 00000	Honesty 00000 Politics 00000 _____ 00000 _____ 00000 _____ 00000 _____ 00000	Languages 00000 Intimidate 00000 _____ 00000 _____ 00000

Strength 00000	Stamina 00000	Speed 00000
Charisma 00000	Appearance 00000	Will 00000
Intuition 00000	Intuition 00000	Intuition 00000
Intuition 00000	Intuition 00000	Intuition 00000
Intuition 00000	Intuition 00000	Intuition 00000
Intuition 00000	Intuition 00000	Intuition 00000



DIPLOMAT PROVOCATEUR

Quote: "Necro-incestuous Mafiosi?" Really? And do you believe everything your sire tells you?

Prelude: Whether you were getting a biscotti from Aunt Gina before dinner or getting Cousin Angelo to put lotion on your back, your most powerful weapon has always been your smile.

People are fun: They can do a lot of nice things for you. It's particularly nice if you can get theirs before you have to give them yours, but haggling runs in the family and you suspect you got a double dose of it.

You received the Proxy Kiss from Angelo when you were 20. (He always had a soft spot for you when he was alive. Or maybe it could be better described as a hard spot. Anyway, he recognized talent.) As his ghoul servant in Barcelona, some vampires from other clans tried to lure you away. Sure, they had the power to make you want to please them, but they never seemed to realize that you also wanted to please yourself.

Angelo met a bad end; oh, well. You were instrumental in directing the vendetta against his assassins—but more, you were essential in making sure that the most important Kindred in



Barcelona felt that the clan's killers were doing the outsiders a favor by "enforcing the Masquerade." Smoothing things over earned you your recent Embrace, and you're now in good with both your family and those charming innocents in the Camarilla.

You weren't really given a choice about your Embrace, and there's a lot of things you miss about life. You miss biscotti and sunbathing, not to mention sex. But in a lot of ways it's easier to sleep with someone for the family's sake now that you don't really feel anything... now that you're dead.

Concept: You're naturally charming, cute and a good listener. If you'd been born into another family, you'd probably have grown up to be a great sales associate, or even a talk show host. As it is, you're playing "impartial third party" to the Camarilla on behalf of your elders.

Roleplaying Hints: Be nice to people in ways that don't cost anything. Be disarmingly honest with the people who are suspicious of you: Even if it doesn't bring them around, it impresses anyone watching. You're used to getting your way because people naturally want to please you. If thwarted, pout but don't make a big deal of it: You'll always have tomorrow night.

Equipment: Versolato evening gowns, PCS phone, automatic pistol, BMW 330 convertible, roofies

VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

Name: Limer Clan: Dominate Character: Charismatic	Generation: 13th Home: Barcelona Character: Diplomat, Provocateur
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Attributes		
Strength	Charisma	Intuition
Stamina	Machiavellian	Empathy
Reason	Appearance	Will

Skills		
Altruism	Assault	Academics
Artifice	Charm	Computer
Body	Deceit	Finance
Deceit	Dominate	Intimidation
Empathy	Etiquette	Law
Empower	Malice	Linguistics
Intimidate	Manipulation	Medicine
Leadership	Security	Music
Manipulation	Trickery	Politics
Subterfuge	Survival	Science

Advantages		
Alibi	Sanctuary	Yummy
Contacts	Robust	Command Presence
Reputation		Gifted (Deceit)
		Gifted (Intimidation)
		Gifted (Will)
		Gifted (Empathy)

Weaknesses		

Disadvantages		



AIDE-DE-CAMP

Quote: *We do have one option — don't tell anyone I offered you this deal, now, it's our little secret — that will let you come out of this smelling like a rose. It won't be easy or legal, but it will be effective. I'm going to need to call on you for a favor at some point, too.*

Prelude: How the hell can anyone in the family not know that the whole genealogy is riddled with vampires? Even if they don't see the situation for what it really is, even the children have to know that something's not quite right. Then again, it's what the Giovanni are brought up knowing... nature versus nurture and all that.

Luckily for you, you were clever enough to catch on quite early. You took the Proxy Kiss at 16 and were Embraced at the ripe old age of 20 after turning in your... uncle?... when he came to you and asked if you wanted in on a gun deal he was working out with some Sabbat slob in New York. Of course, you took over for him after the anziani had their way with him, but nobody knows that. At least, you hope no one knows.

Your strong sense of what was right for the family earned you the accolades of many ancillae and elders — you were one of the up-and-comers. Having been Embraced so young, you still had a sense for what the "profitable youth demographic" wanted. You pushed meth and E just before they became huge — so you made valuable inroads on the drug end. Pushing put you in contact with the local gangs, who could always use guns and drugs of their own. You had quite literally become the Giovanni *wunderkind*, making money with the Midas touch.

That's why it's so strange that your elders have asked you to be the clan's *liaison* to the Camarilla. What a fucking dead-end position! Overnight you went from one to watch to last night's news. It couldn't have been anything you *did* — the whole "reassignment" stinks of somebody's vendetta, somewhere. When you find out who it is, you'll make them pay for squandering these past few years of eternity.

Concept: Status came quickly for you and vanished almost as rapidly. Your silver tongue and savvy are assets in your new role as the prince's envoy. In the end, though, you've learned all too well how downright mercenary this "Kindred" thing is. Now your loyalty is to yourself, and you'll play for the Camarilla or the Giovanni (or the Sabbat, should you run into them again)... whoever's worth the most comfort is who you'll stick with.

Roleplaying Hints: You're playing a ridiculously dangerous game and you know it — once either side knows that you're not even worth the meager trust they've placed in you, it'll all be over. It's a shame that you're such a burnout at an early age. You had much to offer the family. But fuck them — they had their chance. Until they or someone else catches you in the middle of this week's double-cross, you'll live the high unlife.

Equipment: Zegna wardrobe, new Mercedes on short-term lease, manila envelope full of incriminating snapshots, aluminum baseball bat

VAMPIRE		
Name: Bonavent	Generation: 11th	
Discipline: Traditionist	Home: Chicago	
Clan: Giovanni	Class: Aide de Camp	
ATTRIBUTES		
Strength: 00000	Stamina: 00000	Presence: 00000
Dexterity: 00000	Charisma: 00000	Intelligence: 00000
Speed: 00000	Appearance: 00000	Will: 00000
ABILITIES		
Alertness: 00000	Animal Emp.: 00000	Academics: 00000
Artistic: 00000	Charm: 00000	Computer: 00000
Body: 00000	Drive: 00000	Finance: 00000
Brawl: 00000	Empathy: 00000	Investigation: 00000
Deceit: 00000	Intense: 00000	Law: 00000
Empathy: 00000	Intimidate: 00000	Leadership: 00000
Formidability: 00000	Intuition: 00000	Medicine: 00000
Leadership: 00000	Perception: 00000	Politics: 00000
Manipulation: 00000	Reason: 00000	Science: 00000
Observation: 00000	Socialize: 00000	
ADVANTAGES		
Contacts: 00000	Darkness: 00000	Various: 00000
Generation: 00000	Earthball: 00000	Generosity: 00000
Intuition: 00000		
Leadership: 00000		
Manipulation: 00000		
Observation: 00000		
Presence: 00000		
Reason: 00000		
Science: 00000		
Stamina: 00000		
Will: 00000		
Willpower: 00000		
Wits: 00000		
Work Ethic: 00000		
Wounded: 00000		
Masked: 00000		
Crushed: 00000		
Impaled: 00000		
Expunged: 00000		



CLANBOOR: GIOVANNI



VAMPIRE

Name: _____	Name: Dedrik	Generation: 9th
Discipline: _____	Discipline: Survivor	Discipline: Patrol/Grave Robber
Characteristics:	Characteristics: Giovanni	Characteristics: _____

ATTRIBUTES		
Physical	Mental	Stamina
Strength: ●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●	Perception: ●●●●
Agility: ●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●	Intuition: ●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●	Apparition: ●●●●	Will: ●●●●

ABILITIES		
Essence	Skills	Disciplines
Alchemic: ●●●●	Animal Instinct: ●●●●	Assassinate: ●●●●
Artifice: ●●●●	Crab: ●●●●	Control: ●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●	Drive: ●●●●	Disguise: ●●●●
Charm: ●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●	Domination: ●●●●
Empathy: ●●●●	Forgery: ●●●●	Law: ●●●●
Empowerment: ●●●●	Intimidation: ●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●
Escalation: ●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●	Machete: ●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●	Intuition: ●●●●	Music: ●●●●
Manipulation: ●●●●	Intimidation: ●●●●	Pathology: ●●●●
Perception: ●●●●	Intimidation: ●●●●	Science: ●●●●

ADVANTAGES		
Backgrounds	Dispositions	Weakness
Contacts: ●●●●	Macabre: ●●●●	Common Sense: ●●●●
Education: ●●●●	Patience: ●●●●	Self Control: ●●●●
Magic: ●●●●	_____	_____
Resources: ●●●●	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

PISANOB GRAVE ROBBER

Quote: Here's 100 dollars American. Come back in an hour and don't tell anyone I was here.

Prelude: Four days a week you stole your food, but sometimes only three, like when the church had a holiday meal. You clothes were whatever someone left hanging on the clothesline. Once you were old enough to drink — 12 — cerveza came either from behind one of the tourists' bars or from the hotels while the help tried to carry in the deliveries. You had no future beyond being another urchin in the sprawling hell of one of the largest cities on Earth.

That's when you met your new *patron*. He took you off the street, gave you clean clothes, fed you. All he wanted in return was some help procuring "specimens." He'd even help you learn his new "Black Science." For a brief time, you struggled with the scope of your new duties — stealing bodies wasn't something a God-fearing boy should do. In the end, though, you decided that God didn't know what things were like outside of Heaven. You did what you had to, and if it meant you would be Damned, so be it.

Nobody gets a break. That's how the Cainite world works, especially here in Mexico City, with all these blood-glutted Sabbath



running around, breaking legs and biting off heads. It wasn't any different for you when you were mortal, and things haven't changed since you died.

Concept: You are learning the Pisanob's new faith every night with the help of your sire. What you are doing is undeniably evil, but sometimes God needs evil to make the good worthwhile. Anyway, the sire says too much introspection isn't good for a boy in your position. You can't quite tell, but you think he's being condescending. After all, he seems to spend a great deal of time thinking and writing and reading. He's probably just being stingy. Either that or he thinks you're too stupid to do what he does. Until you figure it out, you do what the sire says, bringing him the bodies and leaving those girls in the pile alone.

Roleplaying Hints: You know that being Damned means more than just running around and digging up the dead, but the sire isn't showing you. He has been good to you, but you know that the other *vampiros* don't do what you do. The sire says they're all wicked and going to Hell, but they say all Cainites are already going to Hell, anyway. Wouldn't it be better to do what you wanted instead of fetching dead people when the sire told you to? It's a little scary to think about, but it might be worth the risk.

Equipment: Secondhand blazer and khakis, shovel, rosary



THE DEGENERATE

Quote: Yes, I'm quite aware that you're the prince. I was wondering how long it would be before you introduced yourself.

Prelude: In your experience, people respect that which they could never consider themselves doing. The poor respect the rich, the rich respect the famous, the famous respect the powerful. Only the most exceptional command wealth, fame and power at once. As you were born into that caste, you had to try even harder to distinguish yourself. After all, what good was being rich, famous and influential if all your peers were, too?

To that end, you turned to taboo. In the game of social one-upmanship, you set a far bolder standard than any of your compatriots. Let them have their whores and their designers drugs behind their respectable façades. Once your parents had "gone," you forced your sister to bear your daughter — and then forced your daughter to bear you a son. Such delectable debasement! Such ostentatious delight! It set your veins on fire like the cocaine you shot into your member just to say you did it!

Eventually, though, your acquaintances grew disgusted and eschewed your company or followed in your tracks and died trying to keep up. Looking back upon your life, you see that you have accomplished little in the way of lasting import beyond spending your family's lucre. Now that you're dead — oh, fuck it. You may change some night, but it won't be tonight.

Driver! On to the senator's party!

Concept: You have difficulty distinguishing between positive and negative attention. In fact, in your mind, little differentiation exists between the two. Disgust is the same as envy; shock the same as appreciation. Somewhere deep inside, the rational part of you realizes that you are rapidly sinking into your own hell; you slowly cease to exist as a person, becoming instead the mere sum of your misbehavior. Is that the ultimate fame? Or the ultimate failure?

Roleplaying Hints: You are the star, and if you're not, you will upstage him. Unlife is a competition for finite glamour, and no one remembers the loser. *Be careful with this character:* Don't let the character's immaturity overshadow his role in the chronicle. He exists ultimately at the whim of others, and his inclusion in a story should not be used as an excuse for a player with similar needs for attention to hoard the chronicle's spotlight.

Equipment: Yes

VAMPIRE

(The Dark Ages)

Name: Maxim Devolet	House: Devolet	Generation: 12th
Devolet	House: Rebel	House: Devolet
Character:	Character: Clay-Silver	Character: Clay-Silver

Attributes

Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Presence: ●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●
Endurance: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Will: ●●●●●

Abilities

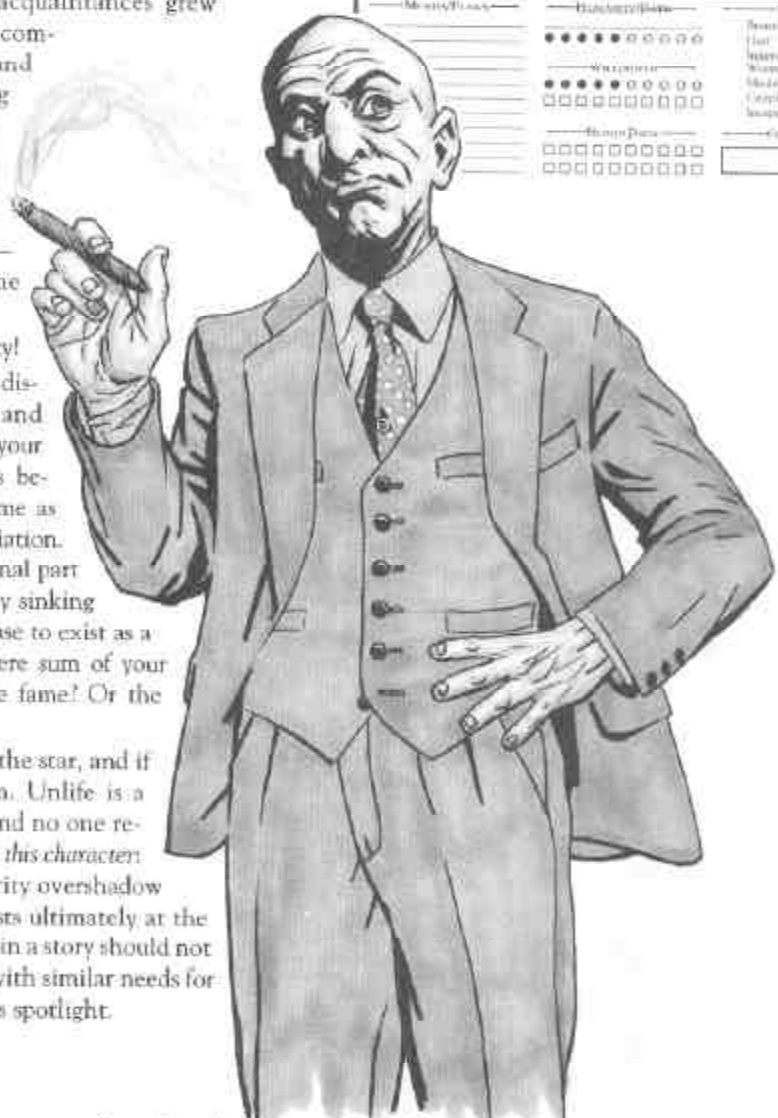
Acrobatics: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●	Charm: ●●●●●	Craftsmanship: ●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●	Drive: ●●●●●	Firearms: ●●●●●
Deceit: ●●●●●	Empathy: ●●●●●	Intimidation: ●●●●●
Disguise: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Leadership: ●●●●●
Escape Arts: ●●●●●	Healing: ●●●●●	Lockpicking: ●●●●●
Investigation: ●●●●●	History: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Intimidation: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●	Intimidation: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●
Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intimidation: ●●●●●	Trickery: ●●●●●
Melee: ●●●●●	Intimidation: ●●●●●	Unarmed Combat: ●●●●●

Advantages

Beauty: ●●●●●	Disadvantage: ●●●●●	Gifted: ●●●●●
Charisma: ●●●●●	Disadvantage: ●●●●●	Gifted: ●●●●●
Hard: ●●●●●	Disadvantage: ●●●●●	Gifted: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Disadvantage: ●●●●●	Gifted: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Disadvantage: ●●●●●	Gifted: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Disadvantage: ●●●●●	Gifted: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Disadvantage: ●●●●●	Gifted: ●●●●●

Merits/Flaws

Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●	Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●	Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●
Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●	Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●	Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●
Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●	Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●	Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●
Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●	Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●	Merits/Flaws: ●●●●●





FIDUCIARY WIZARD

Quote: *We can buy out that annoying Toreador's lien for a dime and write off the bad debt as tax credit. It's beautiful—we'll make money before we own the place even a single night.*

Prelude: You know how your relatives spend money. The problem is, that money's gotta come from somewhere. The Giovanni had always looked after its own, and when you became old enough, you wanted to do your part to pay it back.

You began the journey into unlife with the Proxy Kiss, as normal. Within a few years, your creative accounting and ability to see opportunity in crisis earned you some significant attention from the anziani and their broods. The Giovanni Kindred watched, wide-eyed, as you bought banks, rolled their assets into other banks, and then parlayed those investments into phantom principal seats on their boards of directors. Hundreds of years of old-fashioned investment built a strong foundation upon which you could stage your lucrative New Economy gambles. All it took was *badella* and a little luck.

The payoff wasn't quite what you had anticipated. Indeed, the Embrace was much more like punishment than a reward, all of its pomp notwithstanding. You view what it has given you, however, as all-new assets you can bring to bear while practicing the art of the deal. Kindred society is very much like an investor's club—these people can't work day jobs and have to be around forever. Knowing that, you can take their money and use it to make a bit for yourself and the family, and, if you're smart, pay yourself more than your "clients."

Concept: You love the thrill of making a deal. Other people and Kindred help you fulfill your purpose. When you meet them, you take their assets and turn them into profit.

Roleplaying Hints: You're no car salesman; you have grace and style. Offer advice willingly, but let your success speak louder than your words. Introduce yourself to everyone, as you can never have too many contacts or be a part of too many networks. Should the unthinkable happen—a contract goes belly up or money vanishes overnight—look for the opportunity left in its wake rather than stammering out apologies.

Equipment: Valentino wardrobe, new Bentley, reservations at Fauchon, *Wall Street Journal*, *Fast Company*

Equipment: Valentino wardrobe, new Bentley, reservations at Fauchon, *Wall Street Journal*, *Fast Company*

VAMPIRE
THE HANDBOOK

Name: _____
 (Last name) _____
 (First name) _____

Home: **Computer** _____
Desktop: Visionary _____
Cell: Business _____

Characteristics: **Gifts** _____
Power: _____
Generic: Fiduciary Wizard _____

ATTRIBUTES

Physical **Mental** **Metaphysical**

Strength: 00000 Charisma: 00000 Perception: 00000
 Stamina: 00000 Manipulation: 00000 Intuition: 00000
 Survival: 00000 Appearance: 00000 Will: 00000

ABILITIES

Essence **Skills** **Disciplines**

Alarum: 00000 Armed Car: 00000 Academic: 00000
 Address: 00000 Cash: 00000 Computer: 00000
 Book: 00000 Law: 00000 Finance: 00000
 Clasp: 00000 Negotiate: 00000 Investigation: 00000
 Contacts: 00000 Politics: 00000 Law: 00000
 Corporate: 00000 Sales: 00000 Language: 00000
 Credit: 00000 Telephone: 00000 Marketing: 00000
 Credit: 00000 Search: 00000 Clock: 00000
 Finance: 00000 Security: 00000 Drive: 00000
 Interview: 00000 Speech: 00000 Senses: 00000

ADVANTAGES

Backgrounds **Disciplines** **Merits**

Alias: 00000 Dominate: 00000 Gargantuan Power: 00000
 Contacts: 00000 Glamour: 00000
 Gossip: 00000 Intimidation: 00000
 Hero: 00000 Leadership: 00000
 Influence: 00000 Manipulation: 00000
 Resources: 00000 Persuasion: 00000
 Status: 00000 Speech: 00000 Control: 00000

Merits/Flaws **Disciplines/Power** **Merits**

_____ ●●●●●○○○○ Blood
 _____ _____ Fear
 _____ _____ Mental
 _____ _____ Mask
 _____ _____ Senses
 _____ _____ Control
 _____ _____ Intimidation

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____





FAILURE

Quote: *I used to be a big shot like you, kid. Now I'm shoveling shit in Palermo. Let that be a lesson to you: Never let them see you lose.*

Prelude: It all happened so quickly: The invitation to dinner, the Proxy Kiss, the Embrace, the haven on the Riviera. Then you had one bad month, and everything went to shit. Unions in the States. Textiles from the East tripled in cost. Even the fucking freight company you used went under. A 27-percent profit margin vanished almost immediately under a seven-figure debt.

Needless to say, the *anziani* weren't impressed. None of them would back your next play. Nobody wanted a once-successful neonate whose greatest legacy was the number of partners he'd dragged into his own cluster fuck. Even your mother turned you out of her haven once it became a social burden to have you lingering around the villa.

You decided to start over. Not like it was a choice, really. A second cousin offered to put you up as long as you managed the house for him. Swallowing your pride, you accepted. It's going to be a long, hard journey back into

favor, but it's not as if you don't have forever.

Concept: Grin and fucking bear it. You do what you're told, but you keep your eyes open for any chance to get out of your cousin's house. You have to temper your enthusiasm with good judgment. After all, it's better to burst back onto the scene than to nickel-and-dime your way up the ladder. In the end, you're probably doomed to failure, but hope remains alive even if you haven't.

Roleplaying Hints: You've learned the value of humility and hard work, so you aren't afraid to get your hands dirty. Take duty upon your shoulders, but only if the payoff is immediate and obvious. Some say you're your own worst enemy, but they've got silver spoons in their mouths. Measure twice, cut once. The seven habits of highly successful people are...

Equipment: Country estate work clothes, beaten pickup, garden implements



VANPIKE

THE BASTARD

Name: _____	Weapon: Sword	Character: 9th
Devs: _____	Home: Computer	Level: _____
Country: _____	Class: Wizard	Control: Failure

Attributes

Strength: 0000	Charisma: 0000	Intelligence: 0000
Speed: 0000	Stamina: 0000	Will: 0000

Abilities

Alarms: 0000	Animal Inst: 0000	Academics: 0000
Appraisal: 0000	Arms: 0000	Commerce: 0000
Back: 0000	Blade: 0000	History: 0000
Charm: 0000	Boats: 0000	Intelligence: 0000
Disguise: 0000	Bravery: 0000	Law: 0000
Empathy: 0000	Business: 0000	Leadership: 0000
Escape: 0000	Charm: 0000	Medicine: 0000
Intimidation: 0000	Charm: 0000	Music: 0000
Leadership: 0000	Charm: 0000	Oratory: 0000
Law: 0000	Charm: 0000	Politics: 0000
Leadership: 0000	Charm: 0000	Science: 0000

Attributes

Balance: 0000	Demolition: 0000	Verbal: 0000
Balance: 0000	Demolition: 0000	Verbal: 0000
Balance: 0000	Demolition: 0000	Verbal: 0000
Balance: 0000	Demolition: 0000	Verbal: 0000
Balance: 0000	Demolition: 0000	Verbal: 0000
Balance: 0000	Demolition: 0000	Verbal: 0000

Attributes

Strength: 0000	Intelligence: 0000	Charisma: 0000
Strength: 0000	Intelligence: 0000	Charisma: 0000
Strength: 0000	Intelligence: 0000	Charisma: 0000
Strength: 0000	Intelligence: 0000	Charisma: 0000
Strength: 0000	Intelligence: 0000	Charisma: 0000
Strength: 0000	Intelligence: 0000	Charisma: 0000



CUGINIDI SANGUE

PAOLO SARDENZO

Background: Paolo Sardenzo almost had it all, but between family politics, vengeful ghosts and two World Wars, he managed to lose most of it.

Paolo used to be a seductively charming young man with a knack for saying the right thing and an interest in the diabolical arts. A Giovanni on his mother's side, the clan gave him the Proxy Kiss in 1821 and Embraced him in 1867.

Sardenzo the ghoul was a diplomat, using his connections with the Carbonari insurgents to tilt the balance of power between the Camarilla and the Sabbat as the factions struggled for influence on the Italian peninsula. He and his domitor Diego had their eyes on mortal politics more than Kindred ones, however. While the two great sects were using kine politics as a means toward Kindred ends, the Giovanni were doing just the opposite — using Kindred struggles to shape kine politics to their liking.

The Giovanni — especially those whose memories went back to the nights of the doges and the merchant princes — were Venetian patriots, and in the 1820s they were sick of being occupied by Austria. Furthermore, as merchants they wanted a constitution that protected individual rights from abuses by kings and nobles. It took a while, but by 1861 all of Italy was united — except Venice and Rome. The Austrian Ventrué were eager to keep Venice under Austrian rule, but Paolo and Diego allied themselves with a Prussian Ventrué faction. The Giovanni gave the Prussians *sub rosa* aid, first against the Austrian Ventrué and then (when the Prussian Ventrué had solidified their roles among Camarilla leadership) against the Lasombra- and Toreador-infested France of Napoleon III.



Paolo's reward for his extraordinary service was the Embrace. In the years between 1866 and 1914, he brokered many fruitful deals between his own clan and other Kindred (particularly Gangrel and Nosferatu who found themselves in need of money). He also showed that his aptitude for Necromancy was as great as his aptitude for politics. In fact, he mixed the two by spearheading one of the first organized attempts at sharing scholarship with the Tremere.

Paolo Sardenzo really came into his own during World War I, however. Awed and delighted by the efficiency of modern warfare, Paolo believed that the means to achieving the Endless Night was at hand. He was an aggressive and charismatic harvester of shades, and his courage and success gained him many followers, until a shell landed a little too close to his daytime hiding place and exposed him to the sun. He survived by burrowing deeper into the ground, but the sunlight scorched his left arm and the left side of his face — scars he bears to this night.

Nonetheless, Paolo continued to agitate for a gamble on the Endless Night ceremony, telling himself that the followers who had left him were shallow weaklings. That was when Valentina della Passaglia returned from beyond the Shroud to spout dire warnings that the Endless Night would be the ultimate loss for the Giovanni, not their ultimate triumph. In the long run, her theory was rejected, but it did a great deal to blunt enthusiasm for Paolo's effort toward doing it *right now*.

Worse, however, was the Bloody Legion. That was the name of a group of war-dead wraiths led by Gaston Belladotti. Belladotti was the one who did the math and declared that although one Giovanni necromancer might be a match for five ghosts, there was no way he'd be a match for 50. Eventually, the Fourth Great Maelstrom and the wraiths' own Great War put an end to the Bloody Legion, but not before they and their leader had dealt Sardenzo and his faction a series of defeats — humiliating defeats to a Giovanni, for whom ghosts are but tools and minions.

Sardenzo fell out of favor with the family after the First World War, and he found that his "allies" in the Camarilla were far less receptive to a hideous family outcast than they were to a charmer with money and secrets. He skulked around Europe for years, searching for the ghost of Gaston Belladotti and confounding the efforts of a group of ghost-hunters, but he didn't really come to his clan's notice again until World War II.

When the mechanized terror of the Second World War gripped the continent, Sardenzo was back in his element. He began ardently insisting that here was another opportunity to bring in the Endless Night, but the Giovanni weren't nearly as interested this time. Fed up, Sardenzo and his few loyal followers made a fateful choice to disobey their elders and head off toward eastern Germany on their own, hoping to personally harvest the souls lost during the upcoming Russian campaign.

Things ended poorly. Sardenzo was caught, staked and dragged back to Venice. His companions were all slaugh-



tered. When the war ended and another uproar in the Underworld began, the Giovanni removed the stake in his heart, only to subject him completely to his mentor Diego's blood bond. The family knew that, whatever his flaws, Paolo was an expert on the dead realms and could be very useful. But once his usefulness was finished, the stake went back in and he was left to gather dust.

Sardenzo's captors removed his stake in 1985. Three decades had softened Diego's anger, and he was willing to give his brightest student another chance — as long as Paolo kept his nose clean and scrupulously pursued the family's interests. Privately, he also figured that the sweeping changes in technology and society would keep Paolo dependent and needy, at least for a little while.

By 2000, Paolo had more than caught up with the modern age. He became fascinated with computers soon after his awakening, and it was his advice that convinced Diego to make some modest, conservative investments in technology. Sardenzo is still tightly bound by his mentor's blood, but Diego finds it harder and harder to resist relying on someone so obviously intelligent and resourceful — especially since the start of the new death-storm....

Image: Paolo started out as a very handsome man in the continental mold — tall, dark, charming. But the left half of his face is hideously scarred, to the extent that it makes him look like a casualty of the wars he plied for profit. Further, he has removed his left eye and replaced it with a corpse's eye, which has festered in its new housing. Those who have seen his left hand note that it's similarly afflicted. He affects well-made, if somewhat old-fashioned, business suits.

Roleplaying Hints: Although you were once discreet and graceful, years of spite and failure have worn those qualities down to a brusque frankness. Indeed, you are often described as honest, if a bit forthright, and while that may be more than a bit incorrect, it does make people willing to overlook your... flaws. You do not oppress company with your physical grotesqueries, but rather ignore them — only the rudest of conversationalists would draw attention to a man's misfortune. And no one need know that such grotesquerie was elective....

Sire: Giovanni del Georgio (deceased, presumed diablerized)

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Survivor

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1867

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 3

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

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer 2, Finance 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics 4 (English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, Sumerian), Occult 4, Politics 3

Disciplines: Dominate 1, Necromancy 5 (Sepulchre Path 5, Ash Path 3), Thaumaturgy 4 (Path of Blood 4, Spirit Manipulation 1), Obfuscate 1, Potence 1, Protean 3

Rituals: *Minestra di Morte*, *Occhio d'Uomo Morto*, *Tempesta Scudo*, *Esilio*

Backgrounds: Resources 2, Allies 2, Contacts 3, Generation 5, Status 1, Spirit Slaves 5

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 6

Notes: Paolo Sardenzo is completely blood bound to Diego Giovanni. He has also taken draughts of blood from Diego's closest confidante, his grandchild (and onetime mortal great-granddaughter) Giannaria Giovanni.

Paolo has performed the *Occhio d'Uomo Morto* ritual on himself, and he has succeeded in binding the vengeful "demon" somewhere at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea. He has also created a combination Discipline from the fourth level of Thaumaturgy's Path of Blood and the third level of Protean. If Paolo is sunk in soil that is literally soaked with blood, he can absorb that blood into himself — even if he's in torpor. Of course, blood-soaked ground isn't terribly common... except in wartime or at the sites of atrocities....

ISABEL GIOVANNI

Background: It would seem that Isabel's tale mirrors the Giovanni family history with unpleasant accuracy. From an early age, Isabel found herself immersed in the loathsome subculture of the clan. Even as a mortal, Isabel learned the hideous secrets of her family — and even took to them in some cases. As her morality rotted, her power rose, and by the time she had borne her brother's child, she had earned the attention of the Kindred elders of the Giovanni.

In her early 20s, Isabel became a ghoul and tasted the power that the vine of the Damned provided. Such times were not particularly enlightened, however, especially in rural Italy and with regard to women. As such, it took over two decades for Isabel to convince her demitor that she was ready for the Embrace. Indeed, among the Giovanni such things aren't often petitioned by would-be childer, but rather decided by approving elders. Noting Isabel's skill with the Black Art as well as her knack at diplomacy, the *anziani* elders allowed one of the Giovanni Kindred to bring Isabel into damnation.

Since her Embrace, Isabel has been a mouthpiece for the clan, and again reflects the air of mystery and suspicion with which outsiders view the Necromancers. Rumors and exaggerated depravities travel in her wake — it is said that she can feed only from the severed heads of her vessels, that she has sexual relations with those from whom she feeds, that she keeps a host of captured ghosts bound to her own dead heart and that her bite carries the Black Plague or a more modern medical scourge.



Amid these tales, Isabel simply smiles and goes about her business. In many cases, such a reputation serves her well, as diplomacy comes more easily to those already feared. Isabel now answers directly to a group of elders, working as a liaison between Giovanni and the outside world. It is a thankless role, to be sure, and one fraught with peril, but Isabel's strong will and sense of duty to the family keep the Giovanni interests close to her heart. She maintains a comfortable unlife, even in these modern nights, and considers her various tasks and treaties to be a part of what helps her make that possible.

Image: Isabel possesses a continental beauty that is as much a result of her carriage and demeanor as it is the power of physical beauty. She exudes grace; she walks with the *je ne sais quoi* of a movie star or head of state. Her hair changes between chocolate brown and a lustrous, dusky black with the seasons, and her eyes are large and brown. Isabel prefers loose clothing that leaves more to the imagination than tight-fitting garments. When she is present, the environment seems to push her to the fore, as if she stands at center stage.

Roleplaying Hints: You are calm and collected in your dealings, except when it's obvious that you're not in control. In those cases, you become a bit edgier and conniving—and it shows. By and large, you find Kindred untrustworthy, products of selfish desires and hubris. You recognize these traits in yourself, too, and your greatest fear is being unable to rationalize what you've become with the world that continues to evolve around you. You also find relating to fellow Kindred sometimes jarring—in the Old World, you are still an ancilla, while most New World Kindred regard you as a veritable elder.

Clan: Giovanni

Sire: Fortunato

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Gallant

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1714

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Empathy 4, Grace 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts 2, Drive 1, Étiquette 4, Firearms 2, Performance 2, Security 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer 1, Finance 2, Investigation 4, Law 2, Linguistics (Arabic, Dutch, French, English, German, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish) 4, Medicine 1, Occult 4, Politics 4

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

Necromantic Paths: Sepulchre Path 4, Ash Path 3, Bone Path 2

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Clan Prestige 3, Contracts 4, Herd (only at the *loggia*) 2, Influence 1, Mentor 2, Resources 4, Retainers 1, Status 3

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 7

EMILIO ROSSELLINI

Emilio Rossellini was a mean, homely and distasteful—but moderately clever—crook. He might have amounted to something in life if he'd had more ambition, but Emilio was mainly into sexual sadism. Unfortunately for him, he was living before the Internet opened people's minds about bondage. His contemporary, the Marquis de Sade, spent most of his adult life imprisoned and syphilitic due to the same hobbies that Emilio practiced. Unlike de Sade, however, Emilio was protected by his family and by the Giovanni Kindred, who found it quite useful to have someone else abduct and dispose of their sustenance. What Rossellini did to people before they got bled dry was of little concern to his masters.

Although the primitive constables of Emilio's era couldn't catch him (or didn't care to, as his victims weren't important people), the same was not true of Frantz Dupage. Emilio had snatched, brutalized and then buried Louisa Dupage, Frantz's sister. Frantz stalked, captured, tortured and killed Emilio with a precision and ruthlessness worthy of any Kindred (or, indeed, of Emilio himself). That should have been the end of it, but Emilio's Giovanni masters were upset at the loss of a useful servant, and they vented their displeasure on Frantz. They weren't done with Emilio either.

Emilio had made a pact to return as a wraith, and so he did. At first he feared that, without a body, he would be unable to pursue the pleasures he'd known in life. It turned out that as a creature of emotion, he was far more fulfilled than he had been as a creature of flesh.



Emilio thrives best on a particular combination of attraction and repulsion. He can restore himself with a bitter married couple who stay together because that's all they know, or with a young lover who suspects his girlfriend is unfaithful — but who can't be sure. Of course, he's not always so choosy. Because he was a beaten-down thug in life, he also thrives on the fear spawned when others are afraid of him.

In the modern nights, Emilio finds purpose as a ghostly taskmaster and warden. He keeps other ghosts in line and dispatches them to their Kindred masters when duty requires it. It would seem that of all his unpleasant qualities, his sadism has found its greatest use after his death.

CLAUDIA DUNSIRN, THE GRAIL SEEKER

Archaeology's underbelly is a dark and dangerous field, not to mention just plain weird. The Giovanni have had an interest in ancient mortuary wisdom for centuries, and Claudia Dunsirn is just one of their many operatives.

Kindred might seem to have many advantages in the dangerous field of tomb robbery. Bitten by a poisonous spider? Oh, well. Fell down a 50-foot pit? Yeah, shit happens. Running away from outraged headhunters? Time for a burst of supernatural speed.

By and large, the undead have it all up on humans when they have the time to open a site and rifle through it at leisure. Not every dig is a chess match, however. Sometimes, it's a race, and that's when the ability to drive all night and dig during the day can be a decisive advan-

tage. That's one reason that Claudia's domitor, Guillaume Giovanni, never gave her the Embrace. On top of all the usual reasons for having a ghoul servant, Claudia could also drive the truck through the rain forest all day while Guillaume slept in his specially prepared capsule (he never, ever called it a "coffin").

Claudia and Guillaume were a good team. She adored him (of course — she might even have liked him without the blood bond) and he truly appreciated her strength, toughness and willingness to go the extra mile. That's not to say he told her everything, of course. In fact, at their last parting, he gave her only the vaguest intimation about his destination ("France, okay?"), and he hasn't been seen or heard from since.

Claudia tells herself she isn't worried. Guillaume was resourceful, crafty and not one prone to overconfidence. Instead, she's concentrating on another quest: The search for the notorious "Lamp of Constantine." If the legends are true, the lamp can paralyze any Kindred who comes within miles of it, and its unshielded light is as deadly as the sun. It also reputedly heals wounds, finds lost treasure and, in the wildest stories, has the power to remove the Curse of Cain. She isn't buying that last one for a second.

At the same time that she's been digging up ancient legends, Claudia has also been using the most modern technology she can find to track the movements of her two bitterest rivals — the Toreador ghoul Marcella Pryce and the Tzimisce vampire Troy Chervenik. Both of them seem to be closing in on Africa, so Claudia has been brushing up on her Swahili.



Giovanni™

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE:
DUMEANOR:
CLAN:

GENERATION:
HAVEN:
CONCEPT:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength _____ ●0000	Charisma _____ ●0000	Perception _____ ●0000
Dexterity _____ ●0000	Manipulation _____ ●0000	Intelligence _____ ●0000
Stamina _____ ●0000	Appearance _____ ●0000	Wits _____ ●0000

ABILITIES

TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness _____ 00000	Animal Ken _____ 00000	Academics _____ 00000
Athletics _____ 00000	Crafts _____ 00000	Computer _____ 00000
Brawl _____ 00000	Drive _____ 00000	Finance _____ 00000
Dodge _____ 00000	Etiquette _____ 00000	Investigation _____ 00000
Empathy _____ 00000	Firearms _____ 00000	Law _____ 00000
Expression _____ 00000	Melee _____ 00000	Linguistics _____ 00000
Intimidation _____ 00000	Performance _____ 00000	Medicine _____ 00000
Leadership _____ 00000	Security _____ 00000	Occult _____ 00000
Streetwise _____ 00000	Stealth _____ 00000	Politics _____ 00000
Subterfuge _____ 00000	Survival _____ 00000	Science _____ 00000

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS	DISCIPLINES	VIRTUES
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	Conscience/Conviction ●00000
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	Self-Control/Instinct ●00000
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	
_____ 00000	_____ 00000	Courage _____ ●00000

MERITS/FLAWS

HUMANITY/PATH

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

WILLPOWER

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

BLOOD POOL

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

HEALTH

Bruised		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injured	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mauled	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crippled	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incapacitated		<input type="checkbox"/>

WEARINESS

Their kiss causes pain instead of pleasure



Giovanni™

EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

MENTOR

CONTACTS

RESOURCES

FAME

RETAINERS

HERD

STATUS

INFLUENCE

OTHER

POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

FEEDING GROUNDS

VEHICLES

HAVENS

LOCATION

DESCRIPTION

C L A N B O O K :

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ISBN 1-58846-207-2
WW2363 \$14.95 U.S.



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PRINTED IN USA

