

TRAILS OF
**ASH AND
BONE**

A SOURCEBOOK FOR

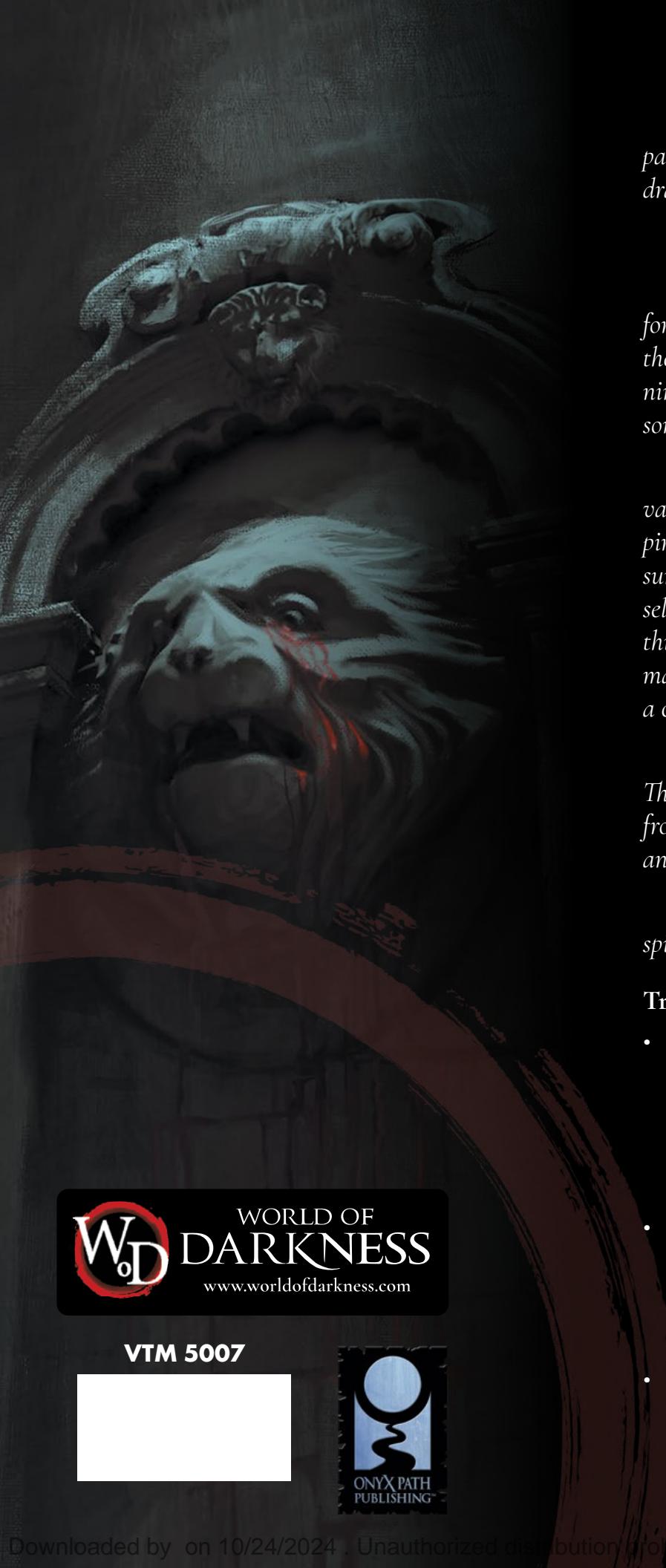
VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE



2021





It's a mistake to think of vampires as simple parasites that latch on to an unlucky victim and drain them until they drop. No, they're not ticks.

They're spiders.

Kindred lure victims into their webs and form a ring of protection and sustenance around themselves. And spiders, like vampires, are cunning. They ensnare the small and the weak, but some bind the strong and the mighty.

Think of the spider when you consider the vampire's herd, the vampire's retainers, the vampire's allies. They're all theirs, caught in a web surrounding a predator. Some even fool themselves into thinking they want to be there. They think that proximity to the predator is a boon, or maybe, just maybe, the predator will see them as a creature with a use greater than sustenance.

Do not fall for the lies of the vampire, recruit. Throughout their webs are trails of ash and bone, from all their friends, loved ones, companions, and cultists.

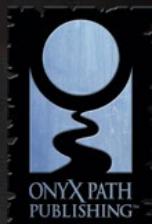
The vampire cannot help but be the hungry spider.

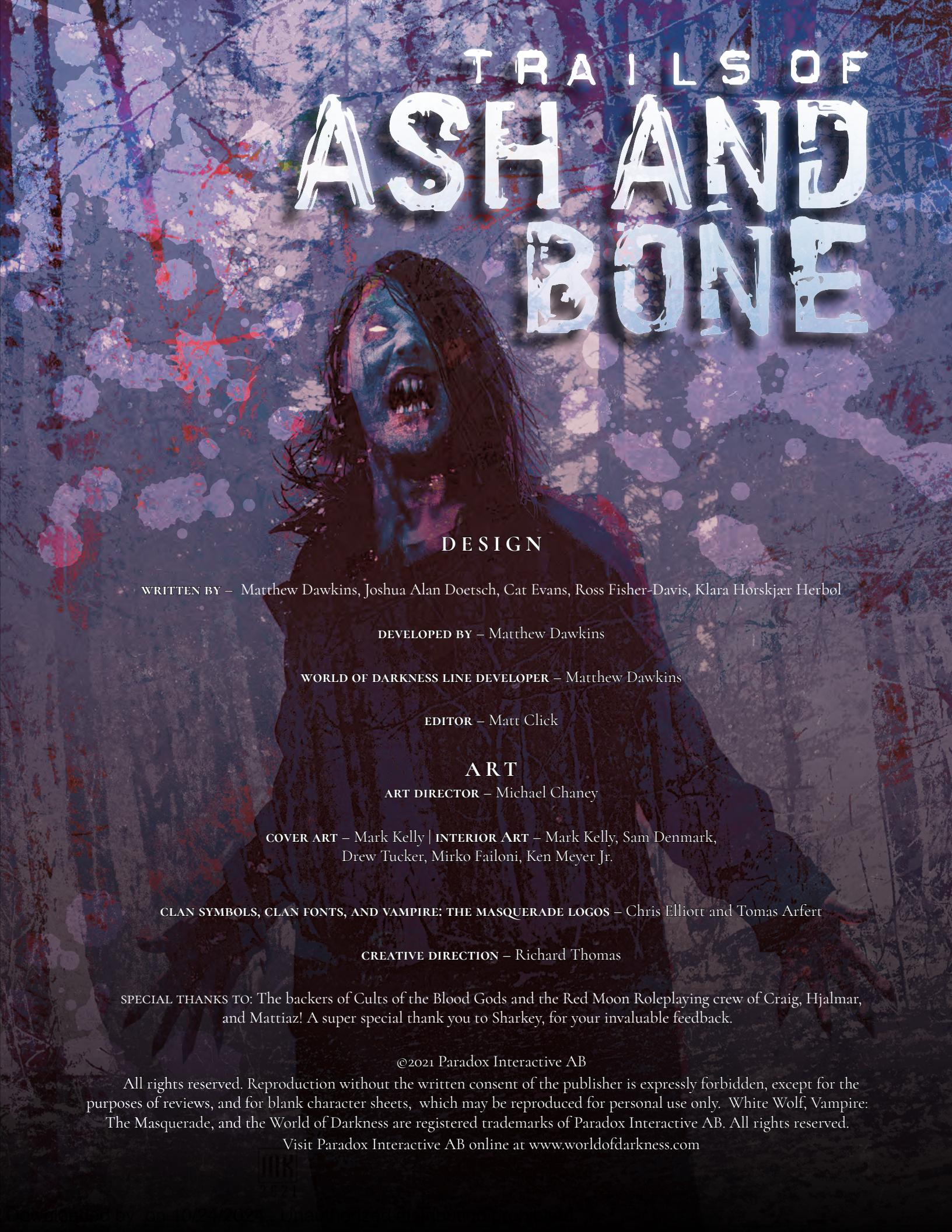
Trails of Ash and Bone includes:

- Four stories, each of a different theme, one set in the forests outside Copenhagen, another in decadent Atlantic City, one in arcane Florence, and the last in urban Birmingham.
- A set of fully playable ready-made characters, enabling a group of Vampire players to jump straight into one of these stories.
- New Loresheets and Oblivion Ceremonies, expanding the range presented in Cults of the Blood Gods.



VTM 5007





TRAILS OF ASH AND BONE

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Revelations in the Water That Is Not Water

By Joshua Alan Doetsch

On the nighted eve of the grand masked ball, a storm rages through the streets of Florence that no one breathing can see. Under the glow of such a mercy, sanity grows in sickly patches. Outside, something ululates from a honeycombed multitude of gnashing maws — when Carmen asks my honest opinion on the table settings for the upcoming festivity. I groan. No one else in the room reacts. Why should they?

Carmen selects colors, patterns, and other trifles. Then they look up from the samples and offer a smile only meant for me. Not everyone can name their own purgatory. My purgatory is named Carmen Giovanni.

Carmen conducts business in their silken bathrobe. Or is it a smoking jacket? Everything Carmen does, they perform with languid grace and practiced casualness. We stand in the study, at least I think so. The details are all humming mists. I see every past version of this ancient room, as well as a few of the future, all undulating on top of one another. Someone was chained to the far wall there and tortured with the Pear of Anguish. Or will be.

Servants and assistants buzz about the room. I barely see them. They are all vibrating blurs of quickly forgotten details. The living

haunt me but faintly. They bring in masks and costumes, many rejected, some accepted. Carmen asks opinions on live musical entertainment and then says something tastefully bawdy and the room quivers with laughter. Everyone adores Carmen. Unlike their ancestors and most of their descendants, Carmen will look a servant in the eye, use familiar tones and given names. They are charm incarnate.

With mock seriousness, Carmen examines the guest list for the masked ball. Slyly, they hold the list so that I too can see. They are familiar names, like the major arcana of a demoniacal tarot. The Gardner, the Mambo, the Gastronome, the Weaver, the Perfumer, the Priest, the Foreign Prince, and all the rest will be in attendance.

“I’ve made some last-minute additions to the guest list,” Carmen says to a faceless assistant, “over there on my desk.” These new names, however, are unfamiliar to me. Something new.

Time passes. Someone trims Carmen’s lustrous hair. It always grows back to full length during the day. It is at this moment that a shrieking horror lurches into the room, a thing that was recently, or not so recently, a man. Translucent skin chokes its bones. Vapor and

ectoplasm seep and fume from two holes in its neck. Its mouth gapes in a lamprey circle of teeth and suction. It charges toward Carmen.

I swing my sword. That is to say, I swing the memory of an echo of my sword. It is enough. The wretch falls bisected and still. Neither Carmen nor the barber react.

Carmen looks over the food menu, a subject far past their experience, but they have professional tasters to sample and describe in exquisite detail. Carmen listens in fascination to the recipe for cooking an ortolan bird.

The preparations follow thus: Capture the tiny bird and blind it with a set of pincers. Place the animal in a cage tight enough to allow no movement. Feed the creature a diet of figs, grapes, and millet. In the ever-dark of blindness, the bird will eat until it swells four times its normal size. Drown the engorged creature in a snifter of Armagnac. Pluck the marinated corpse and roast it for six to eight minutes. Serve immediately. The eater places the whole bird inside their mouth, feet first, all except the head, before biting down. Traditionally the eater does this while covering their face with a napkin to hide their gluttony from God. The teeth puncture the tiny lungs and stomach, releasing packets

of hot brandy into the mouth. The bird's head falls into the napkin.

Carmen claps and laughs, saying, "That! That is deliciously wicked. I know just whom I will entertain with that."

I know whom they mean. Whether that particular guest subsists on the meat or on the cruelty, I cannot say.

Carmen stands and stretches like a cat. "I'm going downstairs for a bath," they say to the servants. "Let us continue in ... two hours?" Carmen adjusts their robe. "Were you all peeking just now?" they say with a raised eyebrow. Everyone laughs. Everyone adores Carmen.

The scion of the Giovanni walks out of the room, and I follow. I always follow. We descend down several stairways. The light becomes less bright, the spatial arrangements less confusing. Everything is stone down here. Little has changed. What I see is closer to what is.

"Tell me," Carmen says to me, "do you think everyone will come together and celebrate and truly bond as one happy family?"

One such as I stands outside of time. From that vantage, one such as I sees far away things, past and future. Some might call this soothsaying, but it is a false gift. I can see only distantly. I am nearly blind to the immediate. When the End of Days comes, there will be no Before and no After. I will only see the Now — that is to say, nothing.

I speak, and my voice pierces the Shroud, and I say the words that echo to me from far away: "There is wrong done with the knife, and though the gods smile, there are those of the dead who will not let old wounds heal."

Carmen considers and chuckles. "Oh you, you are always so dramatic."

"Do you think Hel-Blár will attend the revels?" I ask.

At this, for only a mayfly moment, Carmen shivers. There exist few things in this world or in the next that cause Carmen Giovanni to shiver, and they grow fewer every year. I will feast on this tiny crumb of enjoyment over the next several sand grain months.

Down in the underground, the shrill chiming of an electronic bau-ble profanes the ancient air with its modernity. Carmen sighs and places the glowing rectangle to their ear.

"Yes? Oh? On the contrary, that is precisely what I want. I *want* the Ivory Tower there. They can't resist their curiosity, and their mere attendance implies participation and complacency in the way things are. And I want them to see us. All of us. So many of us! Hmm? No. No. They will not be allowed in those chambers, and that conveys the proper message to them in ways words cannot. Yes. Until then. Ciao-ciao."

We pass many doors. Carmen indulges a recreational moment to open one particular door and look inside. The room contains a rare treasure: the last existing Brazen Bull. It is a large, hollow statue of the horned beast all in bronze. Millenia ago, many a person was locked inside, before a fire was lit beneath the bronze belly. As the victim roasted within, the ingenious acoustics of the beast's throat and mouth converted the screams into the bellows of an angry bull. All the while, the flaring nostrils released spicy plumes of incense smoke.

The bronze is now cool, but I can hear the trumpeting call of all the past victims. Carmen closes their eyes and inhales, breathing in the memory of the incense, absorbing the powerful resonance and saving it for what is to come.

The final door is of a dull metal with no ornamentation. Though heavy, it swings open without a sound. The bare room has a domed ceiling of marble and a deep bath. Carmen disrobes, revealing exquisite, pale flesh. They place on their head a helmeted mask, the lacquered skull of a great, horned beast. They chant, first in Latin, then in Enochian, and then in tongues developed in the Underworld by no living speaker. Soon thereafter, several servants shamble in holding trays. The faces of these servants I can see clearly. Each tray contains a severed head, each well preserved.

As Carmen chants, the servants drop the severed heads into the bath. The liquid is clear, but it flows with a slow, loathsome plasticity and opalescence. Carmen's words reach a fevered crescendo. The now drowned heads respond, opening and closing their mouths in words no one above the surface can hear.

Carmen removes the horned mask, and a servant takes it. They turn to me with a grin.

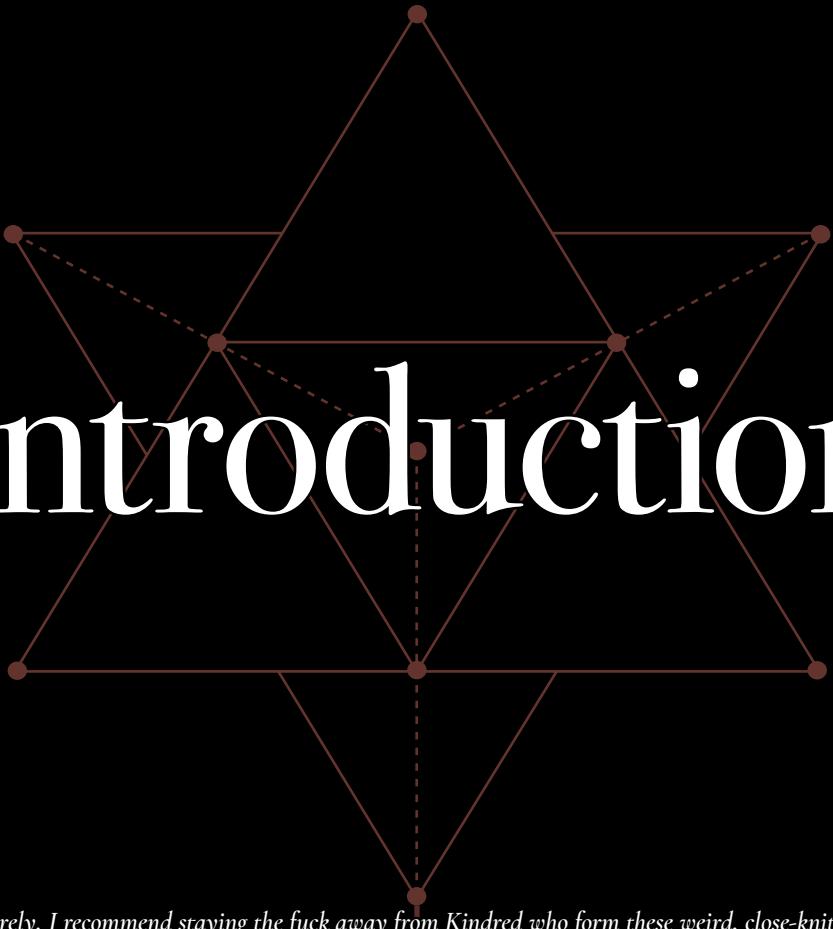
"Perhaps you speak truth. Perhaps wrong is done with the knife. Then we must turn the landscape until all is inverted, and the wrong thing becomes right. I will commune on this now."

With that, Carmen steps into the thick liquid, sinking down to the bottom of the deep bath. The mouths of the heads continue to open and close in mute cadence. Carmen's mouth moves too, speaking back to the gory chorus. Silently shouting, arching in ecstasy, Carmen pulls the heads to them, until vanishing beneath the pickled orbs. Though there is much churning below, the surface of the shimmering fluid barely moves.

The stone domed ceiling vanishes, becoming a swirling, starless sky. I gaze upward. I abide. I always abide.



mk
2021



Introduction

“Sincerely, I recommend staying the fuck away from Kindred who form these weird, close-knit cults. Keep everyone at arm’s length.”

— Lia Milliner, Money Launderer

Cults lead to grandeur.
Cults lead to destruction.

This book contains four stories centered on vampires and their cults, the price of betrayal and the benefits of faith. *Trails of Ash and Bone* presents you with distinct stories introducing brutal hierarchies and the comfort of belonging within a religion.

Every story is different, but they’re all about the pains and pulls of faith for the undead.

Flesh Becomes Ash

The content in the following chapters of *Trails of Ash and Bone* can be used straight from the book or adapted for any other story of *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

- **Revelations in the Water That Is Not Water** — In this short fiction, we’re introduced to the revolting appetites of one Carmen Giovanni.
- **Introduction** — Our brief exposure to the boons and banes of cults in *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

- **The Wellspring** — Our protagonists are sent to fetch the Prince of Copenhagen’s childe in the forests of Denmark, only for things to go horribly wrong.
- **The Family** — A member of the Hecata clan in Atlantic City has betrayed the family, and our protagonists are responsible for discovering the leak of clan secrets.
- **Open Your Eyes** — The Prince of Birmingham has fallen under the sway of a Golconda prophet and the domain’s Kindred are revolting.
- **Old Wounds** — In the historic domain of Florence, a gathering of Hecata Kindred is disrupted when a grisly murder takes place.
- **Loresheets and Ceremonies** — This chapter contains new Loresheets and Ceremonies for player characters to choose, allowing them to connect their characters to the Vampire’s lore and explore some of Oblivion’s depths.
- **Ready-Made Characters** — Ten intriguing, involved characters with backgrounds, ambitions, and traits appear in this chapter, perfect for any *Vampire: The Masquerade* story.



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2021



The Wellspring

*“For the outside world has nothing to offer, merely agony and pain.
Here is where true salvation lies. Here is where you will never be alone again. Here is home.”*

— Jakob, leader of the Wellspring

The Wellspring is a five-chapter story with heavy focus on humanity, desperation, and hope. The player characters must determine the fate of seven mortals in a dire situation. In this story, the player characters dive deep into human mentality at its worst, where physical and mental torture is encouraged, and expressions of individualism banned. They encounter individuals of various ages and stages in life, all affected by isolation to different degrees, and learn deep secrets with horrible consequences if released. But sometimes, from the depths of human despair hope can unfold, as the members of the Wellspring may show the coterie.

The player characters play a vital role in the Wellspring, as they dig deeper and further into not only the mechanics of cult existence but also the cultists' stories. In this story, the player characters must make difficult choices as they dig deeply into the cult's background. This story challenges not only the vampires' view on humanity as a concept but also the characters' own Humanity. Will they free the Wellspring, or exploit its power?

Introduction and Storyteller Advice

The Wellspring centers on the concept of player freedom and initiative. The Storyteller should encourage players to investigate and discover the Wellspring's secrets according to what interests them. Provide the story elements to the players, and lightly guide them to mix and match the pieces. This story is deliberately non-linear, with a toolbox approach to encounters. The best way to prepare for this story is to read it beforehand, select scenes that appeal, and keep others in mind for introducing based on player actions.

The Wellspring takes place over a week, maximum, and heavily focuses on player characters, SPCs, and the dynamic of the cult, therefore the Storyteller should understand the cultists and their group to run the Wellspring successfully. Take time to read about the cultists and create an idea of who they are before running the game. Adding Storyteller-created cult members is an excellent idea, if the Storyteller wishes to expand the game's focus.

The following text provides story hooks, player handouts, dynamic characters, and an open plotline. Discuss with the players beforehand the themes they want to explore in the Wellspring, and more importantly, discuss any touchy or “forbidden” subjects, as the Wellspring can dive into difficult human emotions and experiences. The Storyteller should avoid material that might harm the players in any way. The Vampire: The Masquerade core book contains safety guidelines, and we recommend you check them out.

Assist the players in forming their group dynamic and determining their characters’ relations with each other. Characters can be from any sect or clan, as each might respond to the situations the Wellspring presents in an interesting, distinct way.

Players required: 2–4

Duration: 6–10 hours

Prologue

He is dead. What was once a threat to your life — a bestial creature, a rotten soul — now lies before you as nothing more than a pile of ash drifting away on the wind, his remnants escaping between the oak trees. Was this truly all the feared vampire was? Was this it? Somehow, you feel as if this is only just the beginning and more awaits behind the trees...

Why Are You Here?

Politikommisær Gorm of Copenhagen, a close ally to the Prince and a respected member of the Kindred community, asks the coterie to investigate the whereabouts of a powerful vampire known as Jakob, hiding within Rold forest. Gorm wants the coterie to bring Jakob back safely, as he’s the Prince’s childe. The Prince will not easily accept the final death of her childe.

Unfortunately, Jakob is now a degenerated wight. Doubly unfortunately, the wight was powerful, and the coterie wielded all their might to best him, and their conflict brought him to final death. The Wellspring begins right after this battle occurs as the PCs stare down at the ashes.

What’s My Motivation?

Depending on the player characters’ clan and sect affiliation, their reason for embarking on this mission could come down to loyalty; promises of payment in the form

BUT MY CHRONICLE’S NOT SET IN DENMARK...

This applies to all the stories in this book, and books such as *Chicago by Night* and *Let the Streets Run Red*, but if your chronicle is set in another domain, just shift this tale to another location. Change Prince Belinde to another vampire, make Jakob a player character’s lost sire, and shift titles like “politikommisær” to “sheriff” or “inspector.” We use Copenhagen as a local backdrop as it’s an intensely urban environment not far removed from wide tracts of countryside, including the forest in which this story is set. You can easily move this tale to Washington State, Stuttgart, or Rio de Janeiro, given their proximity to great expanses of woodland.

of cash, territory, boons, or siring rights; or boons to be collected down the line. If the characters are more mercenary in nature, Politikommiser Gorm may have hired them to find evidence of the Prince’s feral childe so they can mutually blackmail Prince Belinde of Copenhagen.

For a more humane coterie, more deeply entwined with this plot, Jakob may have murdered one of their loved ones since his descent into becoming a wight, or perhaps one of their Touchstones was recruited into the Wellspring, and they now seek to rescue them. Any number of reasons might lure them into the forest.

The following are reasons for a coterie to become involved in this story:

WE OWE THE PRINCE A FAVOR / WE WISH TO WIN THE PRINCE’S FAVOR

If the player characters are indebted to the Prince, they’re sent to find Jakob to repay the favor. This, and wanting to prove themselves to the Prince, are good ways for misaligned coteries comprising gangsters, supermodels, artists, and stockbrokers to come together. The Prince cares less about the coterie composition, believing most will probably fall to Jakob in their attempt to retrieve him.

POLITIKOMMISÆR GORM WANTS TO BLACKMAIL THE PRINCE

If the player characters are mercenary, the politikommisær (or another vampire) tells them about the infamous vampire in the forest, and the rumor that they’re the Prince’s misbegotten childe. Recovering the vampire with a stake through their heart would prove to be a formidable blackmail chip.

JAKOB RECRUITED / MURDERED A PLAYER CHARACTER'S LOVED ONES

Jakob was an old vampire, and despite the edicts he placed on his cultists, he left the forest semi-regularly to hunt and enrich himself on fresh blood. The cult's size is so meager by the story's start, that Jakob couldn't sustain himself on them as a herd, anyhow. In one of Jakob's forays into the city, he may have harmed a character close to the protagonists, or even recruited them to his cult. The trail leads back to the forest, and the politikommisær may become involved with an offer to add a reward if the protagonists find the feral Nosferatu.

"I LOST MY LOVED ONE..."

If the player characters have roots in local mortal society, and are known for investigating or handling strange affairs, a mortal might approach with a faded photo of one of the cultists, asking the protagonists to help look.

The Wellspring Cultists

Sharing the dim spotlight with the player characters in this story come the cultists of the Wellspring: all mortals (to one degree or other), all in a desperate situation, and all acting to tug on the player characters' desires, fears, and Humanity. The Storyteller should get familiar with these characters ahead of the story and feel free to add new ones. The Wellspring is a character-driven plot, so adjust the characters to suit your story. Keep in mind that any of these characters are interchangeable with connections from the player characters' pasts, or such SPCs could be added to the congregation.

SØREN BROGAARD

Ever since Søren graduated from one of Copenhagen's most esteemed business schools, the pressure to perform and excel from first his parents and later his wife intensified. He formed a small yet successful business with his childhood friend but in order to satisfy his wife's monetary demands and grandiose shopping habits, he knew he had to take drastic measures. Unknown to his partner and family, he started laundering money through his business for a variety of criminal organizations. Just as his plans came together and he could satisfy both his family, parents, and his economic quandaries, the police raided his business and found everything. Knowing he couldn't return to his family — let alone society — without facing judgement and a prison sentence, he disappeared.

Through Søren's new contacts in Denmark's criminal environment he met Villy, who gave him temporary sanctuary and a card that read "Need an escape? Call this number." Søren called and soon after, he joined the Wellspring.

The only people aware of Søren's continued existence are members of the Wellspring, of which he's been a member for two years. As soon as Søren entered the cult, he was elevated to the leading position under Jakob's guidance, much to Villy's disdain. Søren is now Jakob's only ghoul.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 2, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 5; Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 4; Occult 4

Disciplines: Animalism 1

General Difficulties: 4/2

MARIA MÓNICA JØRGENSEN

When Maria was 19 years old, she travelled to Denmark on a student visa and had no intention of returning to her home country. Her father died when she was young. Her mom fell into a deep pit of alcoholism. During her studies she met her eventual husband, and within a year of knowing each other, they married and had twins. Maria's husband was always possessive over her, a possessiveness which slowly turned to anger and violence if she did not do as he asked.

One night, after a vicious fight, Maria packed her belongings and left with her children, never to return. She gained custody of both, but a loneliness followed her. She had no friends in Denmark and the culture was still foreign to her. One morning, while standing in line at the welfare center, an elderly man behind Maria struck up conversation. He told her he could see she struggled and there was a way out. Next week, Maria and her two children had their first meeting with Jakob.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 2, Social 3, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Stealth 3, Survival 3; Awareness 3, Medicine 3

General Difficulties: 3/2

ISABEL JØRGENSEN

Entering the cult as when she was four years old has left Isabel's memory of the outside world scattered and

fractured. She remembers cars and the little apartment she used to stay in with her mother, and she misses the cherry lollipops she got at the dentist, but little more is left of her memory. To many of the cultists' annoyance, Isabel's presence means there's rarely a quiet moment. Her only playmate is her brother, and despite being his twin, they could not be more different from each other.

Isabel often runs around the woods near the camp to pick bugs from trees or set traps for mice and birds. She has a keen interest in crafting and building contraptions. She often asks questions about her existence in the woods and why they don't have a house with water like they once had. Isabel is the cultist who shows the most fear toward Jakob and he's often the only one she listens to.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 1, Social 2, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 3

Exceptional Dice Pools: Survival 2; Technology 2

General Difficulties: 2/1

SIMÓN JØRGENSEN

Opposite his rambunctious sister, Simón prefers to stay quiet, and can often be seen playing on his own with a toy or reading a book. Simón lives most of his life in his own mind, imagining things that could be beyond the woods. Despite never talking about it, Simón has vivid memories about his past and knows that there is a life outside of the cult, but he never dares raise the subject with his mother or sister.

Simón spends most of his time in his side of the cabin, finding new ways of hiding his books from Jakob, who doesn't permit Simón's book-reading. Simón has taught himself how to read and has kept a diary covering the last year of events in the camp.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 1, Social 1, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 3

Exceptional Dice Pools: Craft 2, Stealth 2; Subterfuge 5

General Difficulties: 2/1

VILLY FABRICIUS

Villy is the oldest member of the Wellspring in both age and time spent in the cult. He was introduced to the cult by a business partner, a gentleman by the name "Jakob," who was looking to create his own company.

Villy was reluctant. He had an established homelife with a wife and children. While a part of him grew tired

of the same everyday routine, he was comfortable with his lot. It was his kernel of frustration that Jakob cultivated, seeding every one of their conversations with talk of how Villy should find somewhere new and start over, with freedom from the rat race, the familial grind, and the constant disappointment of parenthood. Jakob needled and needled, offering Villy money, status within this new company, and most importantly, a restart for his life. Villy eventually buckled, agreeing to create the Wellspring with Jakob, believing it to be a form of organic farming commune distant from the urban sprawl he was used to. He gave up everything and placed all his trust in Jakob.

There came a time quite swiftly, of course, when Villy realized everything he was doing with the Wellspring was against common sense and ethical intelligence. He knew the "employees" at this startup were little more than desperate homeless and outcasts, and he was occupying a joint leadership role for a bizarre personality cult. Most importantly to Villy and his business-minded sensibilities, there was no money to be made here. He expressed this all to Jakob in a frustrated outburst, only to be met with threats against his family back in Copenhagen in response. He was to stay with the cult and shepherd them whenever Jakob wasn't around. If he failed, if he left the woods, if he even attempted to contact his family, they'd die painfully.

Villy bowed before Jakob and took on stewardship over the Wellspring, but it took him over a decade to truly buy into the "hope" it was selling to its members. After 20 years in the cult, Villy now takes up a background role, and has been pushed aside by newer and stronger members. His disdain for being cast aside after many years of service is apparent, and now Jakob's gone, he doesn't know what his future holds.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 2, Social 4, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Subterfuge 5; Survival 3

General Difficulties: 3/2

NATASHA VEJLSTRUP

When Natasha's parents threw her out of their house for hiding drugs in her mother's jewelry box, she had little money to take care of herself and refused to seek help from authorities. Determined to take care of herself despite her 16 years of age, she resorted to sex work and drug dealing to make it through the day. Her pimp would often provide her with what she needed for survival, but during slow weeks or if she was sick and couldn't work, she had to survive with what she had. When she was 20 kroner short of buying a liter of milk and a loaf of bread, a woman with two children

offered to pay for what she needed. She offered Natasha a place to sleep, although it would be under modest circumstances and a fair distance from the city. Natasha joined the Wellspring, and to date, hasn't left the forest.

Natasha is loyal to the structure of the Wellspring, but less so to Jakob, within whom she identifies many of the behaviors she associates with some of the terrible people she met in Copenhagen. She appreciates the sanctuary of the wilderness and the community of the family atmosphere, but she finds herself asking Villy lots of questions whenever he returns from the city. She is likely to latch on to newcomers with all kinds of enquiries about life beyond the tree line.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 2, Social 3, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics 3, Survival 3; Medicine 4

General Difficulties: 3/2

KATRINE BRICATO

Growing up to a life of wealth and decadence, Katrine faced few difficulties in her childhood. Her parents were rarely home and thus Katrine was left to her own devices and decisions. She isn't sure when she met Jakob for the first time, but she remembers him coming to her parent's house frequently throughout her tenth summer, and him showing a keen interest in her. She was never allowed to listen in on what Jakob and her father talked about, and she and her mother were told to leave the room on many occasions.

Katrine was sure she was going to end up at a boarding school by the time she turned 11, so it was to her surprise that she discovered her mother packing her belongings. Katrine asked her mother what was going on, and her mother, tears in her eyes, instructed Katrine that it was time for her to go.

Despite Katrine's protests and struggles, she was placed in the back of a van and driven away. Seven years after, Katrine still thinks back to that day, but she has accepted her role as Jakob's partner, and forced herself to care for him despite his violent tendencies. With Jakob's final death, she falls into a despondent state. Jakob was all she had, and as awful as he was, she doesn't connect to her fellow cultists on the same level.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 1, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Leadership 2, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 5

General Difficulties: 3/2

CULTIST AGENCY

The Wellspring cultists work best if they're more than just set dressing and plot devices. These characters all escaped (or were taken) from society for a reason, and through exchanges with the player characters they should express their desires, fears, and reasons for wanting to remain isolated in the woods over returning to friends and families back home. For this story to function at any meaningful level, these characters should perform useful tasks and act as counsel for the protagonists, so emotional bonds might form. Don't be afraid to tell a player about how, after three nights of intense exchanges, one of the Wellspring cultists has developed into their character's Touchstone, for instance.

OTHER CULTISTS

The Storyteller is encouraged to add one or two additional cultists to the Wellspring. One should have a personal connection to one of the protagonists, such as a relative who went missing years before, a kidnapped Touchstone, or a ghoul who vanished one day. The other should be a more distant connection of one of the other player characters, such as someone with whom they briefly worked in their breathing days, or someone they remember seeing reported as missing on the news.

Building in these connections allows the player characters to form a deeper attachment to the Wellspring's members.

The Wellspring Beliefs

The Wellspring's been through around 30 members by the time the story starts, with only a handful of those remaining. Some have passed in and out well before the story starts, with several dying at a disappointed Jakob's hands or fangs, and others fleeing never to be seen again. The surviving cultists assume those people who run away are absorbed back into the corrupt urban machine, but the reality is Jakob hunts them down or, if they start running their mouths about "the Nightwalker in the woods," Belinde or one of her kommisær's swiftly silences the blabbing mortal.

Those who remain with the Wellspring do so due to fear, a belief in Jakob and his "divine gifts," or the realization that a wilderness commune with its share of hardships and torments is still preferable to pointless toil and anonymity in a city like Copenhagen. They've built a self-sustaining life for themselves in the forest, hunt-

ing rabbits and deer, growing crops, fishing, and eating berries — when not engaging in cult rituals of celebration and competition. Everything they do is in exaltation of Jakob, who existed (before becoming a wight) for the adulation he received.

Jakob's cult tenets are as follows:

GIVE THANKS TO THE LEADER FOR ALL GOOD THINGS.

The cultists are led to believe their existence in the wild wouldn't last without Jakob's protection and infrequent blessings, in the form of vitae he bestows to them. These are so infrequent, in fact, that only one cultist can be considered a ghoul through repeated drinks.

SUSTAIN THE WELLSPRING WITH THE GIFTS OF THE WILD AND OF JAKOB, REJECTING THE CORRUPTION OF THE CITY.

Jakob tried on many occasions to form cults in cities, but cities have distractions in the form of jobs, families, friends, and an incessant bombardment of news. His belief was that for the Wellspring to flourish, it needed to divorce itself from civilization.

THE CITY AND ALL ITS INHABITANTS ARE CORRUPT UNTIL THEY GIVE THEMSELVES TO THE WELLSPRING.

“Giving themselves to the Wellspring” is a subjective rule that Jakob and his followers have twisted depending on the cult's membership at any given time. When Jakob was lucid, he would baptize new cultists with his own vitae. At other points, to give oneself was to receive a

brand, have sex with a cultist in high standing, or take a risky trip into the city to empty an account and go on a shopping spree for the cult (this latter one occurred on several occasions when winters were hard or when crops failed).

EVERY MEMBER OF THE WELLSPRING IS EQUAL BENEATH THE LEADER AND THEIR APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVE.

The cultists adhere to this rule, which obliges them to share their dwellings, personal belongings, and thoughts, especially at Jakob's demands. As many cultists emerged from broken backgrounds, a forced equality has given them a greater sense of fairness in life.

BREATHE, LOVE, LIVE, AND DIE FOR THE WELLSPRING.

Putting the cult above all — and by the cult, this means Jakob — is of utmost importance, and in some respects, the biggest ask. The first three elements are theoretically simple, extolling the virtues of living life and loving one another freely. To die for the Wellspring, however, is a rule rarely tested. If abided, cultists should be prepared to sacrifice their lives for one another, and especially for the leader.

THE LEADER IS FOREVER, UNTIL A NEW LEADER COMES. WAIT FOR THE NEXT LEADER, NO MATTER WHAT.

This contradictory tenet was one Jakob put in place in a moment of panic. He felt himself falling to the Beast some years ago, but wanted to ensure none of his cultists



would abandon him if this occurred, or if he fell to torpor. Before this story started, he made communication with a childe of his, Maja, as again he felt the descent calling.

THE LEADER MUST ALWAYS BE A NIGHTWALKER.

Jakob was wary of one of his more headstrong cultists usurping the Wellspring while he slept, or an outsider arriving and luring them away. By specifying the leader must be a “Nightwalker,” he narrowed the chances of any such event taking place.

THE LEADER SELECTED YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE SPECIAL.

Jakob felt empowering the cultists in this simple way was an effective method of making them feel better about leaving society behind.

NEVER DENY THE LEADER'S ROLE AS YOUR SAVIOR.

To engender loyalty in his cultists, Jakob wanted it perfectly clear that it was because of *him* that the cultists were chosen, saved, and liberated. He kept vague exactly what he was, actually encouraging conjecture among the cultists in that regard, occasionally asking “What do you think I am?” of his followers. He always said he was “a Nightwalker,” but when asked if that was the same as being a vampire, he’d mock and humiliate the question’s asker, making them feel small and stupid amid their fellow cultists.

Follow the Leader

Though the story begins with Jakob’s destruction, we provide his background in case the player characters are interested in finding out more about the fallen cult leader who also happens to be the Prince of Copenhagen’s childe. His cultists know snatches of this information, which Jakob was always proud to confess. Likewise, Maja and the Prince (later in this story) may impart some of this if the player characters seek context for Jakob’s actions.

JAKOB

Epitaph: Cult Leader

Quote: “*Life is much better in a community. Come, let me show you.*”

Clan: Nosferatu

MORTAL DAYS: SOMETHING MORE

Born into poverty in post-Reformation Odense, it took Jakob’s parents every krone of their meager sav-

ings to send him to the local Latin school, with hopes of pushing him up from the ranks of serfdom in which they languished. To Jakob, this was a godsend: he craved a chance to become more than an obscure peasant. He required recognition and admiration.

Jakob was, sadly, never an exceptional academic. Stymied in part due to his childhood of manual labor at a shoemaker’s, were literacy and numbers were far less important than a boy’s ability to stitch and cobble, but also because of the school’s classists principles, he suffered daily at the school. He couldn’t afford private tutelage or the variety of books the other students accessed. His teachers were cruel, especially to one as lowborn as Jakob. Many an afternoon was spent scrubbing desks or being locked in the teacher’s cupboard for minor infractions, while his classmates learned their lessons over his weeping for help. They refused to establish a friendship with him. To be seen with Jakob was to be scum.

Jakob hated his circumstances, his teachers, and his fellow pupils, but hated even more the knowledge that he had no way out. He adamantly refused to return to the shoemaker’s or tell his parents of his dire situation. He felt forced to find another technique, if he was going to succeed.

The young man broke into the schoolhouse one night and pored over teacher diaries, altered students’ work with subtle errors, and destroyed parchments entirely. If he was going to struggle, everyone would struggle. He gathered enough personal information to blackmail the staff and humiliate the pupils. He daubed anonymous graffiti implicating teachers in scandals stolen from private journals, wrote to the cathedral about the poor Latin instruction being delivered at the school, and started pushing himself as the one honest peasant in a field of highborn miscreants. His techniques were dirty, but to Jakob’s mind, completely necessary. He wanted people to look up to him.

One of the schoolhouse teachers was an elderly man named Holger. He was as unpleasant to Jakob as the rest, but he possessed a vital element his fellow teachers did not: a homicidal urge to protect his secrets. Holger’s clandestine love (actually a blood bond) for a woman named Belinde was found one morning, scrawled in muck on the classroom boards. Pages from his diaries had been copied verbatim and nailed to doors. Holger knew the perpetrator as soon as he spotted the smug Jakob, and took him to the cellar, where students were regularly beaten. Holger began his beating of the boy, his ferocity growing, and looping a rope around Jakob’s neck, attempted to throttle the life from him. It was sheer luck that allowed Jakob to fall backward, pushing Holger to the ground, where his head cracked open on the stones.

Jakob hid in the cellar for the remainder of the day. Nobody came looking for Holger, nobody came looking for Jakob. In the evening, when Jakob resolved to move the body, something shifted behind one of the cellar walls.

Belinde, of Clan Nosferatu, awoke.

She immediately recognized her dead ghoul and was close to eviscerating the young boy when he stood up straight and confessed "This man tried to kill me, and I stopped him." Admiring something in the simplicity of Jakob's statement, she went on to listen to the student and recognized his inability to fit into society. She was visibly monstrous, and ever on the outside, looking in. Belinde saw potential in the young student. He struggled against adversity, much as she did. A spark of what once felt like care and compassion flared in her dusty heart.

Belinde approached Jakob, promising him success outside society's constraints and away from the cold judgment of others. Soon after, Jakob stopped caring about his school and focused on serving Belinde. She didn't give him any meaningful tasks, but just enough to keep him occupied, clothed, and fed. For Jakob, Belinde's attention finally gave him the sense of validation he sought so desperately. Her horrific appearance never bothered him.

As Jakob convinced Belinde of his worth, she elected to end his mortal life, and restart it with the Embrace. His trust in her made her job that much easier. He didn't resist when she plunged her fangs into his neck, but the screaming started as he felt his life ebb away.

A few nights after his 25th birthday, Jakob joined the ranks of the undead.

KINDRED NIGHTS: TRUE MESSIAH

Even as a mortal, Jakob disliked other people. So much so, he refused to spend time with individuals of

"lesser intellect." Swiftly, Belinde realized her childe was — with the dubious benefit of undeath — becoming an ungracious prig. Her affection for his pluck and determination ebbed.

From the time of Embrace, his Beast had significant control over him. Jakob had an explosive temperament that only worsened as years went by, resulting in his attempting to humiliate fledglings in court, so he might receive greater recognition than them, or delivering sadistic treatment to mortals when denied his wishes. When his plans went awry, he'd resort to physical attacks on fellow Kindred, sometimes ambushing and even murdering his peers. Eventually, the Prince ordered him to stay away from Elysia, since he would create chaos every chance he found. Jakob lacked the charisma to be a manipulating herald and the diplomacy to represent his clan: he was just a menace. It was only his sire who prevented his destruction.

When Jakob put the flame to another vampire's haven, Belinde told him he could no longer be a part of Camarilla society. His crimes had gone too far, and her protection would extend over him no longer. Yet, his innate need for validation devoured his self-worth. He knew he had to find a following — even if he had to force people into his orbit.

Jakob was never religious in life but observed how diligently kine went to worship to thank a god or gods they could never know truly exist. He watched as war and money tore families apart and people died in the name of religion and community, and that's when he knew he could create something beyond the expectations of Kindred and kine society. For years, he studied mortal flock mentality, what made them believe in the unbelievable, what made them give up their entire life for one cause, until he knew he had enough information to create his own religious movement. He didn't want

to love people based on their merits but rather on their devotion to him.

Jakob's formed his first cult at the end of the 16th century, and it was a successful order until the Malleus Maleficarum found popularity in Scandinavia. He knew he had to remain hidden lest he burn at the stake. His disciples patiently awaited his return, but town officials heard rumors of the cult's existence. Jakob watched as inquisitors drowned people he saw as family in the Odense stream, one by one, under the moonlight. He did nothing to prevent it and once more, the Beast chewed at his heart. After this event, Jakob entered a despair-induced torpor. He woke up in 1799, a year before he met Maja, his eventual childe, and in a succession of attempts over the coming centuries, formed cult after cult to sooth his frayed spirit. Each fell apart as he raged and frightened them into fleeing, turned them against one another, or consumed them.

It was in 1975 he formed his latest, and most successful cult, which he called the "Wellspring." He chose this name as he felt they represented a fresh start, a source of inspiration for him, and hopefully, new life for all his cultists. He realized he could no longer recruit members of his own, as his lack of Humanity prevented him from understanding how to successfully interact with mortals. He obtained Villy through a combination of bribes and threats, and crudely introduced him to the ways of the cult. From then on, the Wellspring steadily grew. For years, Jakob remained in the shadows of the cult, observing it from a distance and controlling it first through Villy but later through Søren, and with the cult's successful growth, his Humanity showed signs of returning. He'd selected a cadre of outsiders, just like him, and it was Jakob's genuine belief that the "Wellspring" could give them purpose and strength, while sustaining his need for validation.

SO HUNGRY...

In this story, it's advised the characters begin at Hunger 1 and add two Hunger levels per member of the coterie between each character. Whether the players want one character to have Hunger 2 and another 4, or one vampire to have none and another to have 5 is up to them. Hunger plays a crucial part in this story, so it starts higher than it normally might.

And then his sire reached out to him for the first time in decades, and the Beast took over. Always precariously on the edge of descent, Jakob's fury took over, and he could resist the transformation into a wight no more. The player characters encounter him after he's well and truly fallen into the lowest state of vampiric being, his last act of rationality being to remove himself from his mortal followers so that when the Beast took him, he didn't immediately rip them to pieces.

Chapter One: Behind the Trees

The player characters receive a phone call only minutes after they destroy Jakob. Gorm calls the group to make sure everything has gone to plan. This is where the Storyteller should state the following (and adjust as necessary for the group):

You were tasked with returning Prince Belinde's errant childe — a vampire named Jakob — to the court of Copenhagen. You hadn't been given much information as to why, beyond his acting in an unstable manner outside the domain, but the instruction itself was clear: paralyze and bring him in.

Unfortunately, staking the vampire was an impossibility. Jakob was too feral, too ferocious, for you to pin down, mentally subjugate, and least of all stake. You fought for your unlivs, and the end result was Jakob as a smear of grease and ash on the forest floor, and each of you starving but standing.

Now the politikommisær, Gorm of the Banu Haqim, calls you on your one-use burner phone to ask for an update. You're covered in Jakob's vitae and ash, standing in the woods, in the early hours of the morning, too far from the roadside to get back to civilization in time for the dawn. Gorm asks again: "What happened?"

The coterie must decide: Do they lie about killing Jakob and risk getting caught when they return empty-handed; or do they tell Gorm the truth and find the city's hounds at their backs?

THE PHONE BLACKOUT LAW

The Camarilla has a blackout rule on the use of phones in Denmark after a number of prominent Kindred found their calls traced and their havens destroyed in short order. Eight Kindred have now been assassinated, with the belief being the phones led attackers to them. The running theory is a segment of the Second Inquisition analyze every call for words such as "clan," "blood," "vitae," "prince," and the like, but nobody knows for sure.

Prince Belinde and her kommisær expect all business to be conducted in person, via dead drops and encrypted letters, through graffiti tags, and, when extremely necessary, using ghouls as messengers. Belinde expects vampires to control their business, and she maintains the ethos of "We're eternal beings, so if your news can't wait until Elysium, learn to practice a little patience."

The fact the coterie were given two phones for this assignment is unusual and emphasizes the importance of the vampire they were sent to capture. They have been instructed to make no outgoing calls with the phones (they have no credit on them), and to only expect calls from Gorm. The coterie are told that after a call, the coterie should destroy the SIM card.

To convince Gorm of the lie, they must make a successful Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 4). Feel free to come up with your own responses in your role as the politikommisær, or use the examples below for inspiration:

LYING TO GORM

"Good. The Prince wants the childe back before sunrise, so I expect you here well before that — with an unharmed Jakob, of course."

TELLING THE TRUTH

"... You did what?! Oh, this is bad. This is bad. You are aware this is the Prince's childe, right? There will be hell to pay if you return now. You must stay out of sight until I've figured this shit out. Stay in the woods until I call you. I'll call you on your second phone. Destroy the first one. You know the phone blackout law."

I Saw It All

The coterie is deep within Rold forest, one of the largest forests in Denmark spanning 30 square miles of hundred-year-old trees, moss clad rocks, and springs of

shimmering water. While tourists use half of the forest, with it bordering the gardens for three different opulent estates, a part of the forest remains largely unvisited and almost impossible to navigate. Here, thick gnarly bushes and trees replace beautiful glades and beds of flowers. Oak and pine trees stand tall everywhere the coterie looks, making navigation difficult, while the thickness of the forest makes sunlight scarce and even absent in some areas. This is where Gorm's associates dropped the coterie off, and given a direction to head in, in order to find the errant Jakob. They walked at least two hours before they stumbled upon Jakob and are now deep within the forest.

Within the trees, after leaving the site of Jakob's destruction, the player characters spy a couple of makeshift wooden huts in a glade. If they approach, they must make a successful Wits + Survival (Difficulty 4) to spot a trap in front of them. It is a deep hole the Wellspring set up, covered by brittle twigs and leaves. If they succeed, they can continue around it, if not, they fall into the hole and take 1 Superficial Health damage from the impact.

Whether or not the trap is triggered, the head of a child pops out from one of the bushes. This is Isabel, who saw the entire fight while hiding from both the player characters and Jakob. She is wearing what looks like a roughly sewn dress made from a light blue bed cover, with a knitted belt around her waist. Her hair hangs down to her waist with one side tucked behind her ear. She emerges from her hiding place, holding a stick in one hand, and looks at the coterie in fearful awe. She then turns around and sprints away as quickly as her body can carry her across the rough terrain.

In order to chase her down, the player characters must make a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll (Difficulty 2). If they reach her, she turns to them and says she saw what they did. She asks if the PC is "one of them." If they do not reach her, the next time they encounter the girl is at the cult's encampment.

The player characters must decide how to handle the girl, if they catch up to her. She watched them fighting Jakob in rapt amazement, and from familiarity with the cult leader and now witnessing the protagonists, she's drawing comparisons between the two. She's partially aware of what vampires are (though she and the other cultists name them "Nightwalkers" as Jakob always felt "vampires" sounded unappealing and "Kindred" too low impact). She also knows from Jakob some of what vampires can do. The coterie might ask her following questions. Feel free to alter the answers, or use the following examples:

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

"What do you mean? I live here. My family lives back there."

HOW MUCH OF WHAT JUST HAPPENED DID YOU SEE?

"Everything. I did look at a caterpillar on the ground for a while though..."

WHO IS YOUR FAMILY?

"Hm ... my mama and brother and all the rest of the members. We are seven in total, I think."

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "ONE OF THEM?"

"Nightwalkers. You are Nightwalkers. The prophecy taught us that one night, after a great battle, we would receive a new leader. Didn't know it would be more than one though ... but I never really listened to those stories when Søren read them for us."

If the coterie asks her if she knows a way out, she acts with genuine confusion, since she can scarcely remember life outside the forest. She tells the player characters she isn't allowed to leave the Wellspring, since the outside world is full of monsters who only want to hurt her. If the player characters want to dig deeper into what Isabel means, they must make a successful Intelligence + Insight (Difficulty 2), as she is clearly uncomfortable in the situation. If they succeed, she tells them she knows there is an outside world, but her and her family are the few chosen ones who must stay in the forest and wait for the ascension. As she informs the coterie, it sounds like she is reading from a script, or as if she has uttered those words thousands of times before.

If the coterie does not ask her to lead them to the cult, she invites them with the words:

"I know you need blood and to stay away from the sun, or else you'll turn into a pile of dust just like Jakob. Mama told me herself. We have houses ... and food. You don't have to stay for long, I promise."

If the player characters agree, she leads them through the forest, around several more primitive traps, and closer to the cabins they spotted earlier, until they find themselves in the middle of the cult site.

Obstacles in the Way of Departure

The Storyteller shouldn't block the player characters from leaving the camp, though they should advise the players that the possibilities of a mortal cult are intriguing on one hand — as a potential resource for information on the Prince, as a potential herd, or stock of retainers — but a breathing Masquerade breach on the other. Unless the player characters hold title as hounds, kommisærs, or similar, it's not their responsibility to tidy up breaches where they occur, but that doesn't mean the responsibility doesn't transfer to them when they discover the Wellspring.

Isabel can innocently entice them into investigating further with the following:

FOR POLITICALLY-MINDED KINDRED...

Isabel reveals that the leader once told them all about his mother (the Prince) and used to whisper secrets about Copenhagen into the cultists' ears, or otherwise mutter incessantly about them. Saying this may entice politically-minded Kindred to find out what the cultists know, as they may be able to use it against the Prince or obtain blackmail material on other Kindred and ghouls with whom the characters have rivalries. For this, it's worthwhile examining any such relationships the player characters have already formed.

FOR THE ESOTERICALLY-INCLINED...

Isabel explains how Jakob was able to make everyone in the woods love him and follow him through good seasons and bad, and she never worked out how. She describes him as "a magician" but when pressed, says she once saw him blot the sun out. The truth is: Jakob had the benefit of a blood bond and was able to anticipate a solar eclipse one time — but talk of his deeds may compel esoterically-minded vampires into digging into the cult. The Storyteller is welcome to add a low-level blood ritual from *Cults of the Blood Gods*, written up and buried away beneath one of the cabins.

FOR THE HUMANITARIAN VAMPIRE...

Isabel describes the challenging but content way of life that exists for the cultists out here, in the wild. She says they relied on Jakob to do most of the hunting for them, and this has led to most of them being hungry indeed. For humanitarians among the coterie, the cultists' plight might seem dire, but their stubborn refusal to depart the forest should pose a challenge. The Storyteller is encour-

INFORM GORM

The protagonists may feel their best course is to tell Gorm about this group of kine who know about "Nightwalkers," or if their Convictions allow it, murder the herd into silence. This is tricky, giving the coterie's single permitted phone call. If they do somehow contact Gorm, his anger for being called aside, he tells them to stay where they are, discover what these mortals know, and keep a lid on things for now. On one hand, it's easy to murder mortals and bury them in the woods, but if others know about them, there could be a dangerous ripple effect (and if there is, it's up to the Storyteller to determine the outcome of this variable) following a mass murder.

The player characters may expect a reward if they deal with this Masquerade breach swiftly. Prince Belinde shows gratitude if they murder each of the mortals in the cult, but the moral cost to killing largely defenseless adults and children should be high, and killing kids earns the vampires a foul reputation in the city Elysium.

aged to remind the players that if the cult is abandoned, and they all die or even one of them makes it back to civilization and describes the player characters, it could prove troublesome.

FOR THE VAMPIRE LOOKING TO EXPAND THEIR INFLUENCE, HERD, OR RETAINERS...

Isabel emphasizes the duty that each member of the Wellspring feels toward "the leader." She can half-heartedly recite some of the cult's tenets (see p. 24), to encourage any of the player character with a mind to expanding their assembly of retainers to take advantage of this fallow cult.

FOR THE PERSONAL CONNECTION...

Isabel might namedrop a cultist with whom one of the player characters was close. How this cultist is presented depends on the Storyteller's wishes, but a willing or content cultist is a far different motivator than an intimidated or tortured one. Undoubtedly, Jakob has brainwashed and tormented every member of the Wellspring at some point, but how the player character reacts when meeting up with an old acquaintance

is an opening for ongoing drama and struggle.

Screw This

If the player characters insist on braving the wild and finding their way back to the road, the following challenges might await:

- The woods are a mass of difficulty-to-navigate forest terrain and primitive traps. The player characters must make Wits + Survival rolls (Difficulty 3) to bypass these with any ease.
- The player characters find themselves turned around, as they didn't pass through boggy marshland on the way to find Jakob. Navigating the waist-deep water requires a Stamina + Survival roll (Difficulty 4), at risk of losing personal belongings, from wallets to weapons and shoes to mobile phones.
- The dawn approaches. It took at least an hour to drive to the forest and two hours of picking through the trees to find Jakob. It's close to midnight when Jakob falls, providing little time to get out of the forest, find a

car, and drive home in time to avoid the sun.

- To compound matters, one of Jakob's victims has been discovered near the forest's outskirts, with police currently surveying the scene. These cops know nothing about the vampire or his cult, and suspect a wild animal attack, but they may find the sight of several people clambering out of the wilderness worthy of question.

Where Home Lies

Isabel leads the coterie into the middle of the glade. Around the glade stand four cabins made from materials of the surrounding forest. All of them are without windows, and with a clear lack of proper insulation and modern facilities like plumbing and electricity.

Near the cabins, the crackling of a slow fire is the one of few distinct sounds, aside from the chirping of insects in the grass and birds calling nearby. A thick wall of trees and bushes surrounds the glade, making the site feel even more isolated. A successful Intelligence + Awareness roll (Difficulty 2) reveals a small wooden box around the size of a grown man isolated from the rest of the huts, wedged between two trees, with a round symbol engraved into it at head height. This same symbol repeats on everything from doors to stools sat around the fireplace. The player characters now have several options for what they can do.

Give the players time to discuss their plan of action. Let them investigate and discover at their own pace, and make sure to explain how isolated and otherworldly the location feels. Almost as if they've stepped into another age. Of note, they receive no phone signal here.

Talk to Isabel

After Isabel brings the coterie to the campsite, she hangs around for a while, playing with her stick. This gives the coterie an opportunity to ask her further questions while they investigate. Following are examples of questions from the coterie and answers given by Isabel:

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

"It's home! The safest place for us to be. Jakob always said that — when we got the wanderlust. No reason to leave when we have everything we need."

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

"Sleeping. I snuck out because I heard noises, but I am really not supposed to. We've got to be up before the sun rises. Following the schedule is important."

WHEN DID YOU COME HERE?

"Hm ... I don't remember. But it was long ago. And it's best not to remember, Mama says."

WHAT ARE THOSE CABINS FOR?

"We mostly sleep in there. Sometimes I play hide and seek with Simón and sometimes when it rains Villy reads to us from the book and we have to remember what he reads."

WHAT ARE THE SYMBOLS ABOUT?

"That's the Wellspring circle. I don't really know what it is for. But Jakob said it is important and it needs to be there to protect us."

WHAT IS THE WOODEN BOX FOR?

"... it's for when you've been naughty and disobeyed the rules."

Isabel is withholding information about the box. In order to convince her, a successful Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 2) is required, since she does not respond well to threats. If successful, she informs the coterie the box is called the "thinking box," where you spend

days with scarce water and no food as a form of punishment.

Investigate the Cult Site

The glade is large, and a few clear paths lead from it in different directions. Following are descriptions of what can be found around the site following the paths in the grass and how to find them:

A Blood Trail

A successful Intelligence + Survival or Investigation (Difficulty 3) reveals droplets of semi-dried blood on leaves and the grass on a narrow path leading into the woods nearby. The path leads deeper into the forest, until it reaches a hatch in the ground. A successful Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 2) opens the hatch. Opening it reveals a rickety ladder leading deep underground. This was Jakob's hideout in his last few months, when the Beast had taken over so much of him, he could no longer show himself to his own cultists. Previously, he stayed in a cabin among the other members.

The hideout is made of nothing more than a couple of wooden planks balanced on two stones acting as a table and a linen sack in the corner. Everything in Jakob's hideout is covered in days-old congealed and caked blood, so much so it is difficult to tell if the mud beneath the characters' shoes is actual mud or thickened plasma.

In the hideout, the player characters can find a key to the thinking box hidden underneath the linen sack, with an Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 3). The key is clearly for a padlock. The player characters can also find a photo album with pictures of a far less bestial Jakob, spanning from when



the Wellspring was originally created to a few years ago. Every picture is dated. There's also a section of the album with a picture and name of every member of the cult — both previous and current, made apparent by a black x covering the faces of ex-members.

If the characters look through the entire photo album, they find a key to Jakob's cabin stuck inside a plastic folder.

IT'S DAMNABLY DARK

The forest is of course unlit when the player characters are wandering around it, meaning small things like blood trails, hidden keys, and traps are hard to find. The Difficulty for each roll is written under the assumption they've got lighters, torches, or Disciplines allowing them to penetrate the darkness. If they decide instead to navigate entirely under the starlight, increase each Difficulty for searching and spotting items in the dark by 1 or 2.

Ritual Circle

A narrow path leads away from the cabins. Walking down the pathway, the player characters discover where the cult practices its rituals, made apparent by a bedsheets hung from two trees with the Wellspring circle crudely painted on its surface. Tree stumps of varying sizes create a circle around a wooden table, with a tablecloth secured to the surface with

nails, and in front of the stumps a small podium made from two stacked pallets. The pallets bear clear red stains from blood seeping into the wood.

On the table, hidden beneath a plastic sheet, are several surgical tools including scalpels and tourniquets. Hidden underneath the tablecloth, the characters find a bucket containing an iron rod with the Wellspring circle at the end, used to brand the cultists with the logo.

The coterie does not have much time to look around. On a successful easy Wits + Awareness or Animal Ken roll, they hear animals padding through the bracken or find evidence of dog spoor in the clearing before they hear a snarl and growl behind them. Three large wolfhounds are ready to pounce. These are Jakob's

guard dogs. They escaped weeks ago, and the cult has not been able to track down since. The dogs are close to starving, and perhaps through their thralldom to Jakob, can smell his death on the player characters' hands and clothing. They attack the player characters and Isabel shortly after detecting them, unless a successful Charisma + Animal Ken (Difficulty 5) or use of Animalism pacifies them.

GHOUL WOLFHOUNDS

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 1, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 5 (unnaturally bolstered)

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 6; Animal Ken 4, Intimidation 4; Awareness 5

Disciplines: Fortitude 1, Potence 1

Special: Add +1 piercing to damage done by ghoul wolfhound bites.

General Difficulties: 5/2

Approaching the Cabins

The three cabins are a few yards from one another, the largest one being in the middle and in better shape than the two others. The hut on the left is the size of a garden shed and the one on the right a little larger, though it looks abandoned.

The Main Hut (Middle)

The main hut houses the majority of the cultists, more specifically Isabel, Simón, María, Katrine, and Natasha, the latter three all bearing visible scars in the shape of the cult's circular symbol. By making a successful Wits + Awareness roll (Difficulty 2), the characters are able to hear sleeping noises from inside. If the player characters decide to wait until the cultists wake, they wake one hour before sunrise, and the story skips directly to Meeting the Cultists on p. 26.

If they decide to sneak inside the house in an attempt to look around and investigate, they can try and convince Isabel to unlock the door. This takes a successful Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3). Opening the lock requires a Strength or Dexterity + Larceny roll (Difficulty 2). Both scenarios require Dexterity + Stealth (Difficulty 3) in order to not wake the cultists. If this roll fails, the cultists wake, and the plot skips ahead to Meeting the Cultists on p. 26.

The interior of the hut is spartan. The cultists lie sleeping on the floor on mattresses made of fur and dried grass, and it is difficult to walk around without stepping on anyone. An oil lamp slowly flickers in the back of the room near an iron stove. A pile of wood lies at its side, next to a basket of dried leaves. Each cultist has a dedicated area beside their sleeping areas for personal belongings. The children have a few drawings and stones next to theirs, while some of the adults have notebooks and jewelry. If the coterie successfully investigates the hut without getting caught, they are able to find a paper hanging on the back wall stating the following:

Obey the words of the Nightwalker, the leader, your savior. Outside life is dangerous and unnecessary. Be thankful for the protection provided by the Wellspring. You are the chosen one. Remember:

Give thanks to the leader for all good things.

Sustain the Wellspring with the gifts of the wild and of Jakob, rejecting the corruption of the city.

The city and all its inhabitants are corrupt until they give themselves to the Wellspring.

Every member of the Wellspring is equal beneath the leader and their appointed representative.

Breathe, love, live, and die for the Wellspring.

The leader is forever, until a new leader comes. Wait for the next leader, no matter what.

The leader must always be a Nightwalker.

The leader selected you because you are special.
Never deny the leader's role as your savior.

Nightly plan:

- 4 AM: Energize the Nightwalker
- 5 AM: See to the Nightwalker's safe return
- 7 AM: Morning gathering – breakfast
- 9 AM: Meeting with the fully initiated
- 4 PM: Family gathering and ritual
- 6 PM: Evening celebrations
- 8 PM: Lockdown

In between daily events, each family member is required to gather resources, study the words of the Nightwalker, secure forest traps, and maintain the circle. Leisure is a privilege provided by the Nightwalker or Søren. Only the fully initiated are permitted at the morning meeting.

Villy and Søren's cabin

The two men of the Wellspring sleep in a smaller and separate cabin, which is also locked and requires a Strength or Dexterity + Larceny roll

(Difficulty 2) to enter. The interior is largely the same as the main cabin, although there is more room for personal belongings, and both Villy and Søren have wooden beds. The characters quickly realize one of the beds is empty, next to the bed Villy

is sleeping in. Villy bears one of the cult's circular symbols as a scar on his right cheek. Søren is missing and fades the coterie as soon as they exit the house. If they decide to investigate, they find notes on the last meeting with Jakob:

Wednesday, the 5th

Participants: Nightwalker and Søren

Food resources low, especially during winter. Usual area for birch tapping has been demolished. Moving the campsite is discussed next meeting.

Talks of creatures knowing of Jakob's whereabouts. Several beasts spotted near the forest for unknown reasons. Focus on setting up additional traps as security measure.

Villy showing signs of weakness. Overheard by the younger ones talking about living his last time in better condition. Needs straightening up.

Youngest ones almost of age. Introduction to blood rituals next week. Consider removing mother from ritual.

Jakob's Hut

Before retreating to his hole in the ground, Jakob was an active member of the cult, and frequently available for the cultists to talk to, and this hut is where he would make his haven. The hut has been vacant for several months, which is apparent from the overgrowth of plants around its perimeter and obvious holes in the wood where sunlight would blare in. The hut is locked and can be unlocked with the key found in Jakob's hide-out, but the door still doesn't move. It's jammed shut, requiring a successful Strength + Brawl roll (Difficulty 2) to shift it.

The hut is cluttered and almost impossible to navigate through. Although being the smallest of the huts, it is full of functional furniture like a bed, a table and two chairs, and a tilted bookshelf with its contents scattered all over the wooden floor. Most of the books and notes have been water damaged and are destroyed beyond recognition but searching through the pile on the floor, the player characters soon stumble upon a book with the Wellspring logo on its front. Jakob requires the book be read annually by every single member of the cult, in order to remember its words. The book is 97 pages in length, and full of everything from helpful survival tips to how to carry out certain rituals. Three rituals are mentioned: Bloodletting, Initiation, and Coming of Age. From the book's front cover falls a cheap necklace bearing the Wellspring symbol.

The blood-letting ritual shows crude drawings of a person strapped to a table while liquid drips from their arm into a bucket. The instructions are clear, describing step by step how much to drain and how to stop the bleeding. It also describes how the Nightwalker should always drink the first portion of blood directly from the arm of the servant, with the other cultists drinking a

mouthful of blood to follow. If any of the cultists are questioned as to the purpose of this ritual, they either do not know or hypothesize that Jakob was bringing them all closer together through the sharing of blood. They *know* drinking from him made one feel stronger and more loyal, and psychosomatically, they found themselves becoming more loyal to one another through the drinking of their fellow cultists' blood in kind.

The initiation ritual describes branding on the body with an iron rod, which can be found by the ritual circle, and the feeding of blood directly to Jakob. The cultists see the initiation ceremony as a brief moment of pain followed by a lifetime of sanctuary under Jakob. The Wellspring clearly fosters a peer pressure element to this ritual, with some of the cultists saying, "we suffered, so new arrivals should suffer as we did."

The coming-of-age ritual is much like the initiation ritual, where a branding with the iron takes place, but this time on the face. It then depicts copulation between two people. Participants then pledge their permanent allegiance to the cult and give up their bodies for use by their fellow cultists. This ritual is the one few cultists are happy to discuss, as even following years of mental subjugation, not all of them are at ease with the idea of free love within the commune, though the branding is acceptable. Søren is one of few to speak of it openly, and he believes Jakob enforced this ritual to give the Wellspring reasons for love and pleasure through sex, and unity through the facial branding.

If the coterie looks through the rest of the pile and makes a successful Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 3), they find personal effects belonging to the cultists, including a business contract written by Jakob and signed by Villy decades ago. A successful Intelligence + Finance roll (Difficulty 2) reveals Villy was

brought in to form a farming, survivalist commune for organic produce. Other items include pieces of jewelry, family photos, wallets, car keys, and soft toys.

Chapter Two: Welcome

This chapter revolves around getting to know the cultists and their way of living. There's room for the coterie to talk to every member of the Wellspring, and further investigate the backstory of the cult. More importantly, the player characters face difficult ethical decisions as they witness rituals and cult activities with questionable motives and outcomes.

The Wellspring story is largely a sandbox. If the player characters did not get around to investigating certain sites of the camp or breaking into certain huts, use the sections from Chapter One as needed. Feel free to add rolls if needed, since the cult is aware of the coterie's arrival; sneaking around might prove difficult.

Meeting the Cultists

When Chapter One ends, the cultists wake to greet their guests. They all look dazed and close to starving. The cultists' first response is concern. They know Jakob has been missing for over a week, but that's not unusual. What is unusual, is the arrival of so many newcomers. Jakob (and sometimes Villy or Søren) only brought new inductees to the Wellspring one at a time.

It's up to the player characters how they introduce themselves and reveal what happened to Jakob. If Is-

abel thinks they're trying to hide the truth, her loyalty is first to the Well-spring, and so she announces that they turned him to ash and paste.

The responses from the cultists to this revelation is a mixture of excitement, awe, and horror. They've always been told there's a prophecy surrounding the next leader (and they speak about this openly), but they didn't know it would entail Jakob's murder. Søren, in particular, denounces the player characters. He was sure he was the next in line and seeing his fellow cult members worship someone else angers him. He threatens them for their actions against their leader.

This section can be used throughout the story as the player characters progressively meet the cultists. These are just examples of how the cultists talk and behave, and the Storyteller should add layers. Upon meeting the player characters for the first time, the cultists are split between excitement, mourning, and fear. They'd been told a new leader was on the way, but some have dedicated their lives to Jakob, his protection of them, and cannot imagine a greater pleasure than his kiss. Some cultists see the player characters as their new leaders. Maria, Villy and Natasha offer them their blood, despite an Intelligence + Medicine roll (Difficulty 3) revealing their unhealthy, possibly anemic states.

Each cultist has story hooks for the Storyteller to use throughout the story. This allows the player characters to investigate even further and allows them to create bonds with the cultists. Allow the players to explore and establish connections from the following examples, or alternatively, add other story hooks. Additionally, characters the Storyteller's introducing to have prior connections to the player characters can use story hooks written for other SPCs, or new ones specifically tied to the protagonists.

Søren

Søren is either at the campsite or the ritual circle. He is the most distrustful of the cultists, remaining isolated from others. If the protagonists don't work on winning over the other cultists in the Wellspring, Søren tries to turn them against the "usurpers." He is a gangly, six-foot-two man with a straggly beard and steel grey eyes. The Wellspring sigil is branded into his right cheek. He seems to be the best kept member of the Wellspring.

WHO ARE YOU?

"Who am I? I was given the name Søren, but what I am is the future of the Wellspring. The prophecy was foretold. It was all planned. Jakob gave me his word I would be the next in line. That's who I am. You killed our savior. I'll kill you."

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

"I am here because this is my destiny. All my life I've been ridiculed and told I wasn't good enough. But here, I have power. Jakob gave me a fraction of his godly gifts. Now Jakob is gone, I make the rules, and this place needs straightening up. First things first: vengeance for the leader."

WHO WAS JAKOB?

"The founder of our beautiful Wellspring. He is the Nightwalker. The one who gives us life, hope, and protection. The gatekeeper to the next ascension. His kiss is sublime. His power godlike. His sanctuary impenetrable, until you murdered him."

HOW DO WE GET OUT OF HERE?

"Oh, that's easy. But are you sure you want to? See, Jakob and I knew you were coming. We might be isolated, but we have our contacts with the outside world. Jakob often spoke of his mother, and her desire to rein in his ambition. I'm sure she won't be pleased hearing some outsiders came to kill him."

SØREN STORY HOOKS

- Søren knows when the player characters have been in Jakob's underground lair, and demands the coterie give him the key to Jakob's house. The coterie must either hand over the key or figure out a way to hide it from Søren, as he makes a scene in front of the other cultists declaring the vampires stole "the Nightwalker's treasures!"
- Søren is a ghoul, a secret he wants kept from the rest of the Well-spring. He's concerned the cultists might think he usurped Jakob's powers after his death. The protagonists can, with a successful Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 2) pick up on Søren acting strangely around them, sniffing at them occasionally, basking in their auras despite his clear distaste for them, and note — if they're around the cult for a sustained period — his swiftly faltering health. If the player characters confront him, Søren begs them not to share the information with the rest of the cult. His need for vitae increases throughout the period the vampires remain, until he approaches the most-trusted player character and begs for a swallow of their life-extending blood.
- If the protagonists attempt to flee the forest, he makes his own way out on foot. He can be tracked with a successful Intelligence + Survival roll (Difficulty 3). Søren reaches a car — which he and Villy sometimes take into Copenhagen to pick up supplies — and drives into the city to contact Belinde and report and what befell her childe. This takes the plot in a different direction to what's presented here, but if the Storyteller wishes to array forces against the coterie, Søren could act as a saboteur to their plans.

Maria

Maria is found near her two children, mostly around the campsite or picking herbs in the nearby forest. She is one of the more pleasant members of the group, who is just trying to get by. She also does not seem bothered by the disappearance of Jakob. She has long dark hair wrapped in a colorful scarf and is wearing a simple long dress with a floral pattern. She proudly displays the Wellspring symbol as a scar on her forehead.

WHO ARE YOU?

"I'm Maria, the mother of Isabel and Simón. I heard Isabel introduced you to the family, but I am sure you already knew who we were to begin with, with the prophecy and all ... I hope we can serve you diligently."

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

"I had nowhere to go with my two babies and was offered refuge here. I don't mind the spartan kind of living. I actually find the forest calming and I think it is good for Simón and Isabel to get in touch with nature."

WHO WAS JAKOB?

"Oh ... Jakob was a unique sort of man. He took me in when I had no home and has shown me nothing but generosity and kindness — as long as I stick to the rules that is, ha-ha!"

WHAT PROPHECY?

"Now you are being silly! You were beckoned here by the leader to take your place as our new Nightwalkers. The tenets only spoke of one leader ... but I guess more is better!"

MARIA STORY HOOKS

- Maria knows her two children must soon be branded again for the coming-of-age ritual, but she wants to convince Søren to wait another year before doing so, as she believes her children are too young. If the cultists take Søren's side, Maria has little to no trust in the player characters. He's the main instigator behind cult practices, and she's looking for kindness toward her children from the new leaders, encouraging punishment for Søren if he defies the Wellspring.
- The player characters catch Maria ripping out pages of the cult's book and rewriting small parts. She's



removing all sections stating their new leader as a single person and replaces them with multiple persons. She mentions she finds it a bit odd they've been told all this time their leaders will be one strong and powerful Nightwalker but accepts this is not the case and continues her work.

- Maria has an odd moment of reflection where she recalls encountering one of the protagonists before now. As their time together goes on, Maria recalls further details, culminating in remembering a time when the vampire fed from her. She takes this as prophetic, that they're meant to be together, and slyly states that she'll position herself as "chosen" among the cultists due to this blessing.

Isabel

Isabel wildly runs around the forest, playing with a toy or stick, asking the other cultists questions about everything she can find. She has a small mark of the Wellspring on her left wrist.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT SØREN?

"He is fun sometimes ... but other times he is really scary and mean. He yells at Mom and Villy and makes Mom cry. I don't like that."

DO YOU WANT TO BE A MEMBER OF THE WELLSPRING?

"... Yes! It is the only way to have a good life. Søren said that himself. So did Jakob. And it'll protect us from all the monsters from the outside world."

ISABEL STORY HOOKS

- Isabel lost one of her shoes in the forest lake a few hundred yards from the campsite. She now must wear a sack around her left foot to move around safely. She tells the player characters she tried getting it on her own, but failed since the water is too deep for her. If the player characters decide to go, they encounter two starving ghoul wolfhounds roaming the area (see p. 24).
- If the coterie hasn't discovered Jakob's hideout, Isabel tells them she has seen a latch in the dirt inside the woods. The coterie can convince her to show them if they help her find her lost shoe or play with her a while. Her playtime takes a turn toward the macabre, as she expects the vampires to hold their hands over open flames (an informal "rite of hardening" Jakob used to encourage the cultists to follow) or catch and pull apart a small animal.

- Isabel immediately gravitates to one of the protagonists as a proxy parent figure, now that Jakob is gone. She follows the vampire everywhere and gets upset if turned away. To show her worth, she brings the character a dead rabbit to drink from, saying "when Jakob would wake from long sleeps, he'd sometimes suck on one of these."

Simón

Simón mostly remains inside the larger cabin where he reads, writes, or draws. He is the more silent of the two children in the Wellspring and does not make eye contact with any of the characters should they approach him. He is shy and reserved for the most part, but also seems more mature than his sister. He wears a plaid shirt with several repaired tears and a pair of worn jeans, which look too big for him. His back bears the emblem of the Wellspring.

WHO ARE YOU?

"I'm Simón. Who are you?"

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

"Because my mom is here. There are monsters outside, they say. It's not safe."

WHO WAS JAKOB?

"The leader of the family. I couldn't describe him. His face used to change all the time, and the last time I saw him it was like looking at a wild animal."

WHERE CAN WE FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE WELLSPRING?

"You could read our book. It has all the rules and stuff."

SIMÓN STORY HOOKS

- Simón overheard Søren and Jakob talking about getting rid of "the old" and making places for newer and stronger family members. He tells the coterie Søren often puts Villy into the "box" for days on end without food, and he has been talking about doing it again soon.
- While reading his books at the campsite at night, Simón has seen quick shadows and eyes in the darkness which looked more man than animal. If the player characters follow the boy to where he spotted the eyes watching him, on an easy Intelligence + Survival roll they can find the remnants of a human trail leading deeper into the woods. Someone is aware of the cult. The trail disappears into one of the marshes around a mile from the glade.

- Simón confides in one of the player characters that he wants to get out of the woods. He knows there's a world beyond (he's read about it in his books and is punished whenever he raises it). He promises to be a good boy if they'll take him.

Villy

Villy remains positive toward the coterie, but it is clear he is a sceptic when it comes to the prophecy of a new leader. He mostly stays around the campsite, reading books for Isabel and Simón, or roams around his cabin. He is a short elderly man with pure white and unruly hair, often biting down on a pipe. The years of being in the Wellspring have taken a toll on his body, leaving it crooked and with hindered movement. An old scar, etched into his forehead, resembles the Wellspring symbol.

WHO ARE YOU?

"Villy. The oldest member of our little family, as you can probably tell. Listen, I don't care much for strangers, and usually I would have had you in one of my traps by now ... consider yourselves lucky."

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

"Jakob — he led me here. It was a business deal. It took me some time, but I concluded that it was the right thing to do. The only thing to do. And it may look like a stone age existence — but look: We love like a family, we will never abandon one another, and the leader kept us safe from the dangers and corruptions of the outside world. It's a simple life, but we have everything we need to live."

WHO WAS JAKOB?

A friend and mentor. Eccentric, some would say, but nonetheless someone who saved a handful of people through his lifetime. Better than a bunch of city Night-walkers who don't know what unity is, at least as far as Jakob described them.

VILLY STORY HOOKS

- Villy has noticed Søren growing increasingly menacing and cruel toward the women and children of the Wellspring. Punishments, which earlier were cruel but manageable, have turned into torture. The members are growing scared of him.
- Villy needs help to set up new traps around the campsite. He is too fragile and old to carry the material on his own, so he asks the player characters to assist him. This gives the player characters an advantage when trying to exit the forest again, since they now know where some of the traps are.

- Villy explains off-handedly that the Wellspring has been through many members, some of whom haven't made it to the modern day. Though he's only mortal, he's been with the cult for over 20 years and has helped bury cultists who died from exposure, starvation, from being drained or savaged by Jakob, or helped put down escapees when Jakob commanded it. If the player characters treat Villy with kindness and respect, he breaks down a couple of nights in and succumbs to the guilt of what he's done, leading the protagonists to a burial ground containing at least nine skeletons.

Natasha

Natasha immediately shows great interest in the coterie and is completely convinced they are going to be the next leaders. She approaches the coterie with a barrage of questions about who they are, what the world looks like outside now, how they survive outside, and who told them to come here. She dismisses any attempt of a rational explanation and the true reason why the coterie is there, and sticks to what she believes in. She also offers some of her blood to the coterie. She is a 17-year-old girl with long red hair and freckled pale skin. A fresh Wellspring scar on her face denotes her acceptance into the fold was only recent. She can be found washing clothes by the lake or near the campsite.

WHO ARE YOU?

"A servant of the family! My name is Natasha, and I am seriously so stoked you are finally here! You have no idea how long we have waited for you. Please tell me what I can do to introduce you to everything."

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

"My parents threw me out. Ignorant bastards with no idea what the world's truly about. Luckily, I was brought here, and my life totally changed for the better. You know, for all the conveniences of living in the city, I've never felt more joy than waking up out here, in nature, and finding a chance to exalt in the simple things. We all feel this way."

WHO WAS JAKOB?

"At first, I thought he was pretty cool, but he grew kind of ... weird with time. When I first saw him, when I was a kid, he dressed all smart and shit. But in the last few years he's looked more like an animal than anything else. He barely even talked to me. I only saw him a few times before he disappeared into his hideout all the time, and Søren kind of took over leadership. Or at least that's how Søren likes to think of it. Don't really like that guy, but he protects us and goes hunting in the city for us when we need it."

HOW DID HE CHANGE?

"It happened kind of slowly at first. Even when I joined the Wellspring, I could tell he wasn't normal, you know? Then, I heard the word 'Nightwalker' from Villy, and it explained things, but still ... you're Nightwalkers too, so why is he so different? Søren said Jakob was preparing for the new leader to arrive, which is why he was so agitated."

NATASHA STORY HOOKS

- Søren has tasked Natasha with locating the key to Jakob's cabin. She doesn't know where to begin and asks the coterie for help. She doesn't want to give the key to Søren, however, as she believes the person who occupies Jakob's cabin becomes the cult's leader. In fact, somewhere in his cabin is a necklace bearing the Wellspring symbol, which only the leader is permitted to wear.
- Natasha takes one of the characters aside and tells them, in confidence, that the Wellspring's leader gets all the cult's "riches." She says the leader must stay with the Wellspring for at least three nights and undergo initiation, but then they are entitled to the Wellspring's hoard. It's possible a vampire may coerce Natasha into revealing this wealth prematurely. If so, she leads them to a covered hole in the woods containing dolls of each of the cultists, past and present, that Jakob stitched together. Within each doll is a vial of congealed blood, belonging to the cultist.
- Natasha knows one of the traps was set off yesterday and the person caught in the trap is still here. The trapped individual is a Brujah spy named Kasper Sintar, sent by Copenhagen's Anarch Movement to find out more about Jakob, having heard rumors he might be a gap in Prince Belinde's armor. Kasper's been stuck in the trap — a hole in the ground covered by leaves — for three nights, and only evaded the sunlight because of the sheer quantity of undergrowth that fell in with him. He attempted to manipulate Natasha (using his Presence Discipline) into rescuing him, but Maria pulled her away. The young Brujah submits to frenzy as soon as he's helped out of the trap, and attacks one of the cultists or player characters. If defeated without being killed, he runs off into the forest, leaving the coterie be. Due to his frenzy, it's almost impossible to talk him down, but if they manage it the player characters can discover that Kasper and his friends were seeking out Jakob due to the rumors of his terrorizing local kine, and the possibility that humiliating him might humiliate the Prince. If the coterie stakes him, they must figure out where to keep his body safe from the sun during the day, if they indeed care to preserve his unlife.

KASPER SINTAR

Kasper is a Brujah fledgling who snooped around the campsite not long ago with his coterie. He has been trapped in a hole in the ground for several nights and is on the verge of frenzy when the protagonists find him. He yells at them to let him out before adopting a mellow (but tense, given his hungry state) inflection, begging them to show him mercy. He directs the use of his Presence Discipline toward them if threats and pleading are unsuccessful.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 3, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Politics 4

Disciplines: Fortitude 1, Presence 2

Katrine

Just like Søren, Katrine is affected by the loss of Jakob. She keeps to herself and is the most difficult to talk to out of all the cult members. She won't approach the coterie, and it takes a bit of convincing for her to open up. She has short hair with bangs clipped to the side by a hairpin, a long skirt made of a purple bedsheet, and a faded *Ghost* t-shirt. She bears no scars on her face, but multiple brands on her arms and legs. She sits near Jakob's cabin or roams around in the forest. Compelling her to talk requires a Charisma or Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 2) as she mourns Jakob's destruction and blames the player characters.

WHO ARE YOU?

"... I'm not sure anymore. I used to be Jakob's muse. Now, I have no purpose."

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

"I was brought here when I was young to be by Jakob's side. That was my destiny. My destiny must now be to protect the family and everything Jakob has worked hard on building. As I was Jakob's partner, now I must remain the partner of the Wellspring and the new leader. Why did you kill him?"

WHO WAS JAKOB?

"A lost soul in his last years. I don't even think he knew what he was. To me, he was a protector, a visionary, a partner, a father — to some of us, he was everything. He saved us from horrible lives and gave us a new chance away from predators and defilement."

KATRINE STORY HOOKS

- Katrine wanders off into the forest, aghast at the idea of Jakob's destruction. For much of her life, he's

been her everything. She takes provisions and sleeping equipment, and even erects a tent for herself. She'll undoubtedly perish attempting to live alone in the woods, leading to Maria and Natasha pleading with the player characters to persuade Katrine to rejoin the fold.

- Katrine asks the player characters to take care of the Wellspring. She's lucid enough to realize the Wellspring is without direction and would have trouble fitting into society. She isn't convinced they are the true leaders, but they are all the Wellspring has now. According to the Wellspring book, the leader must always carry the symbol, a necklace with the Wellspring circle Jakob always bore. Søren wants to carry it, claiming to be the new leader, but Katrine believes he's a twisted individual, likely to fall even more into depredation without Jakob's hand on the back of his neck. She doesn't believe him capable of care, and she states the need for the necklace to end up on someone compassionate.
- Katrine wants Jakob's ashes kept safe. She asks the coterie to find a secure place to hide the ashes and hands them a bowl covered with a linen cloth tied to the edges with string, suggesting they be kept within. Katrine has no mystical need for Jakob's ashes, but dutifully aids the player characters if they assist her in storing Jakob's remains.

Daysleep

During their stay with the cult, and likely apprehension about the Prince's potential reprisals, many of the Wellspring cultists take to discussing how furious Jakob's mother

WHAT'S A NIGHTWALKER?

The cultists have some strange ideas about what vampires are, based on Jakob's behavior and what he's told them about "Nightwalkers" in the city. Their beliefs are summed up as the following:

- Nightwalkers aren't vampires. Vampires are creatures of mythology. Nightwalkers are creatures of blessed importance to the Earth.
- Jakob (and any other Wellspring-initiated Nightwalker) can feed from someone and "bless them" with great pleasure and long life by doing so. Uninitiated Nightwalkers spread disease and pain through their bites and are to be avoided.
- Nightwalkers sleep during the day to gain stamina through the sun-kissed earth. The sun's rays don't destroy Nightwalkers, instead imbuing in them immense levels of uncontrollable power, which no rational Nightwalker seeks.
- City Nightwalkers are festering and corrupt, and prey on anyone they deem lower than them. Wellspring Nightwalkers (only Jakob, to date), prey only on the consenting.
- Nightwalkers never age and can only be killed by other Nightwalkers.
- Nightwalkers do not need food or drink because they're at one with the Earth and take their nutrition in as they sleep. They do drink blood to form a communion with their prey (if it's Jakob) or to cause pain (if it's a city Nightwalker).
- Only Nightwalkers and Planet Earth can make someone a new Nightwalker, and such special people must be chosen. To be chosen is a great responsibility, and most fail. Nightwalkers who make other Nightwalkers are the respective mothers or fathers of their new Nightwalker children, and often attempt lead them from the blessed way of life.

is likely to be, while others spit that she's the reason he was out in the woods in the first place. Katrine describes Belinde — in Jakob's words — as "symbolic of everything wrong with the city." They continue this chatter as they wonder aloud at their fate.

The player characters have little time after the cultists wake to interview them, search the area, and explore the Wellspring's purpose before the call of the dawn. Even the most irascible of the cultists allows them to sleep in the main cabin while the cult works during the day, hunting, foraging for berries, resetting traps, and teaching one another survival skills, basic sciences, and the belief that the Wellspring are the chosen recipients of "the Nightwalker blessings."

Whenever the player characters sleep at the Wellspring camp, they experience a disturbed rest, filled with visions of burning circles, Jakob's tortured descent into madness, and the cultists all sacrificing themselves so the player characters can become fat like blood-bloated pigs. When they wake from their first day in the forest, however, they find themselves covered in leaves, with flowers in their mouths and tucked between their fingers and toes.

The visions of each player character varies according to the Storyteller's preference. They might even allow them to experience their own Memoria of times they've been subjected to hatred and persecution in the city, leading to the idea of feeling refreshed in the wild. This clarity

might help explain why Jakob felt the necessity to make a haven so far from an urban environment.

Dining Al Fresco

Once the player characters have addressed some of the cultists, roamed the campsite, engaged in a few story hooks, and slept for the day, Søren calls the entire Wellspring together for an impromptu evening meeting. Søren stands on a wooden stump, with one foot planted in the grass and his arms crossed as the cultists gather around him. If the coterie hasn't located the necklace of the leader by this point, it hangs around his neck.

If the player characters have demonstrated that they are "Nightwalkers" like Jakob, Søren declares to the cult that they must bless the Wellspring by drinking from one chosen vessel each. He explains that doing so bonds them to the Wellspring, and vice versa. Each cultist nods in agreement, describing the great pleasures they've experienced when feeding Jakob.

The cultists create a row, rolling up their sleeves and presenting their wrists, as if it is pure routine. A Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 2) reveals none of the members show any signs of fear or nervousness, except for Simón and Isabel, who both look paler than usual. Søren turns to the coterie.

"The blood is the purest form of blessing. Jakob told us so. We believe it must travel directly from the vein to the mouth of the Nightwalker, not being exposed to the impurities of the air, in order to stay strong and powerful. The Nightwalker chooses their own vessel, as Jakob once did. Please, feel free to drink from whomever you choose."

Any player characters with a Hunger level of 4 or higher should roll to resist a hunger frenzy, which draws them directly to one of the vessels if they fail.

Each member of the Wellspring has a different Dyscrasia to their blood; depending on who the members of the coterie decide to drink from, they are affected differently. See *Vampire: The Masquerade* p. 230 for sample Dyscrasias, with additional options provided below. The matter of informed consent is an important one in this scene, as the vampires are potentially feeding from brainwashed victims or even children. Therefore, if the player characters decide to drink, the Storyteller should consider Stains, unless their Convictions or the Chronicle Tenets justify such behavior.

- **Simón:** Hidden — Add one die to all pools to hide from others, including Obfuscate rolls.
- **Isabel:** Playful — Add two dice to one test when attempting to entertain or amuse another person.
- **Villy:** Retiring — Slake an additional Hunger when feeding from someone who is sleeping.
- **Maria:** Magnetism — Gain 1 free experience point toward the purchase of Dominate or Presence. This fully consumes the Dyscrasia.
- **Natasha:** Fanaticism — Add two dice to one test where the action is fueled by belief in a higher cause or power.
- **Katrine:** Betrayed — Add two dice to one test against the type of target against which the vessel resents or on rolls against the specific individual by whom the vessel was betrayed.

Refusing to Drink

The coterie might decide none of them wants to drink from the members of the Wellspring. In this case, Søren angrily tells them they

either drink or be left without cover from the sun and sustenance in the woods, which may admittedly not be within his power to deliver. Of note, this draws into question what exactly Søren knows about vampires, as according to the rest of the cult, "Nightwalkers" aren't vulnerable to daylight and don't *need* to drink blood.

Persuading Søren to relent requires a successful Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 4) or Charisma + Intimidation roll (Difficulty 3). He's more likely to acquiesce when bullied than when charmed. The other cultists may align with the player characters, though the vampires must win more than half of them over and set them against Søren in this case, which requires a Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 4), but if successful, it quietens Søren.

Drinking from Søren

Søren is the only member not offering his blood to the coterie, since he is Jakob's ghoul and has pledged to only serve his master. The player characters might choose to forcefully feed from him, and must either overpower him or use Disciplines to subdue him. Doing so frightens the children in the cult but wins Villy's, Natasha's, and Maria's favor.

Not Nightwalkers

If they have not confided in any of the cultists or acted in a way to show their Kindred nature, Søren decries them as intruders, and orders the Wellspring to gain vengeance for their lost leader. In his words "we extended them comfort for a brief time, but their presence here is an insult to Jakob and the Wellspring."

The player characters have the brief opportunity to demonstrate their undead nature in some way, before Søren takes out a sickle, Katrine grabs a burning branch from the fire,

and a reluctant Villy points a sharpened stick at them. The rest of the cultists are too terrified of this encounter to act against the player characters, unless the vampires did something to insult them.

A fight in the campground is likely inelegant and brief, as people tumble into the large fire, crash through cabins, and swing tree branches to defend themselves. Søren is the only reasonably threat due to his Disciplines and greater knowledge of vampires (he tries to force his target into the fire or stab them in the heart).

Disabling Søren is the most effective way of subduing the combatants. If Villy or Katrine fall, the rest of the cult join in on the assault. In this case, four of the cultists need bringing down, or the children must be threatened, for the Wellspring to stop its vengeance-fueled attack.

Peace

Whether the player characters drank from the Wellspring or beat them into submission, one of the adult cultists speaks up to give the vampires the choice of staying or leaving. If they're clearly "Nightwalkers," the Wellspring cultists beg them to stay and protect them as new leaders; but they understand if the newcomers want to leave the cult abandoned. The cultists emphasize they probably won't make it through the winter without a new leader. If their state as undead is still unknown, the cultists beg them to tell Jakob's mother about the Wellspring, before imploring them to leave.

Chapter Three: Circles and Signs

The player characters have got to know a little about the bizarre, vagrant cult of the Wellspring.

Chapter Three is built around several events happening over one 24-hour period. The first event takes place in the middle of the day, while the rest takes place when the Storyteller decides. All the events are related to the cult and their practices and serve to challenge the coterie's social, physical, and mental abilities.

I Can't Find My Mom!

The player characters are awakened in the late afternoon by Simón. With tears in his eyes and a red hand mark on his cheek, he informs them that Søren has taken Maria to the forest in anger over her not wanting to give up her children to the initiation ritual. Sobbingly, he ex-

DAYTIME HOURS

When a vampire wakes for the day, they can only act for a single scene, after which they must make a Humanity roll (Difficulty 3). A win permits an additional scene of action and a critical win lets them stay awake for as long as needed. When acting during daylight hours, the maximum dice pool they can roll equals their Humanity rating.

plains he tried to stop Søren, but he was much too strong. He says he knows the sun might give them unbridled power (something Jakob warned the cult about Nightwalkers, despite it being untrue), but doesn't want to risk his mother coming to harm.

Helping Simón

Søren dragged Maria a hundred yards into the forest where he has tied her to a tree and is currently yelling at her. The coterie may decide to stop Søren before he hurts Maria, but could just as easily decline, given the danger of the sunlight. If the group takes too long to discuss, Søren starts beating Maria.

Approaching Søren without his noticing requires a Dexterity + Stealth roll (Difficulty 3), compounded with the fact that the density of the trees above only provides partial cover from the sun's rays. See *Vampire: The Masquerade* p. 221 for damage from sunlight, reduced to being inflicted every other turn. It takes four rounds to reach Søren at a sprint. If they fail or do not wish to sneak up on Søren, he tries to attack them with a sickle. He fights relentlessly, the reducing vitae in his system pushing him to desperate acts of violence.

Søren is physically and mentally capable from years of rough living and might not be an easy victory, let alone during daytime. See p. 13 for Søren's traits. If injured or convinced to flee, he attempts to disappear into the forest, and find the Wellspring's one vehicle so he can drive to Copenhagen and track down Belinde.

If the coterie saves Maria, she and her children promise them whatever aid the Wellspring can provide and that they owe a life debt: something Jakob once told them as the most important debt a person can owe. Maria doesn't know exactly what a life debt is, but now sides with the vampires in all discussions.

Refusing to Help

At night, the coterie finds Maria sitting in silence at the campsite, holding her arm, which is clearly broken, and

hiding her face in her sleeve. Simón and Isabel refuse to speak to the player characters the rest of that night and no longer provide them with blood. The three cult members turn their backs to the player characters for the remainder of the story.

The Box

During the daytime, the cult carries on with daily tasks and rituals, including (in the case of Villy), their own law and punishment system.

As the player characters wakes up after their day of sleep, they may notice Villy is missing. If they ask after his whereabouts, none of them answers and they deflect questions (unless Maria and her children were befriended during the day). A successful Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 2) makes one of the cult members reveal Villy has been sent to "the box." The cultists judge each member's effectiveness throughout the week, and if a cultist didn't aid the family in a worthwhile way, they're sent to the isolation box. This punishment is of Jakob's devising, as he never wanted the Wellspring to form close enough bonds to realize they had no need of him. Villy voiced this belief on many occasions and was consistently shouted down by his fellow cultists.

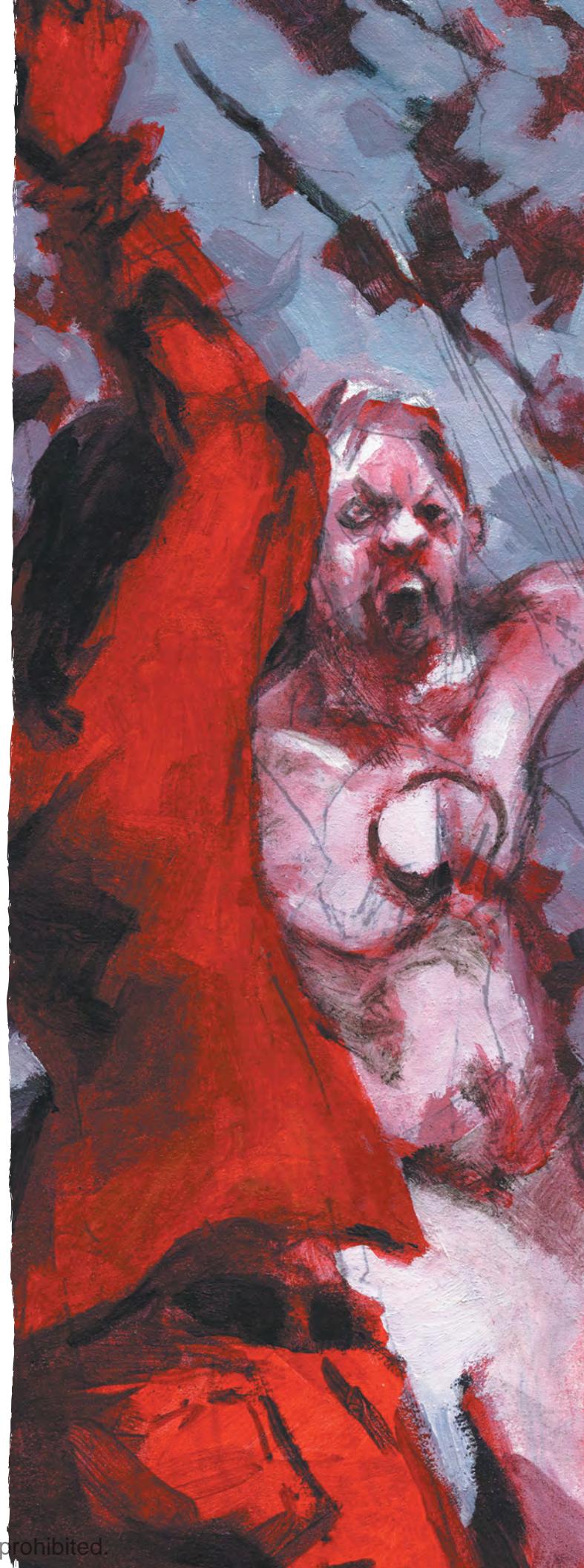
Convincing the Cult

The player characters, if Villy's internment pricks their consciences, might attempt to convince the cultists that the old man needs to be let out. They must convince a majority of the members before they are successful, and this can be done with a successful Charisma + Persuasion (Difficulty 4) or Charisma + Performance (Difficulty 2) if one of them can take on the role of preacher or emotional orator. If successful, the cult lets out a parched but alive Villy.

Forcing the Cult

A physical exchange with the cult might be the first instinct for the coterie, if they formed any kind of attachment to Villy. The cultists are scared of any such conflict, though if Søren remains present, he fights back as only a starving ghoul might, sickle in hand. He has little hope of harming them in an effective manner, but he feels increasingly like his leadership is being undermined.

Force might seem like the easiest way to rescue Villy, but it creates doubt in the cultists' minds and makes them reconsider if the player characters are truly their new leaders. From now on, it is more difficult for the player characters to talk to the cultists and obtain information out of them, increasing the Difficulty of such attempts by 1. The box needs a successful Strength + Brawl roll (Difficulty 3) to have its locks broken.



Sneaking In

Although the box is not guarded, it is close to the rest of the cabins and visible from the firepit in the middle of the campsite. The coterie can make their way unseen to the box with a successful Dexterity + Stealth roll (Difficulty 4) and once there, must pick the two padlocks if they did not obtain the key. The locks can be picked with a successful Dexterity + Larceny roll (Difficulty 3). If the player characters are caught, they must use one of the above solutions, although taking the convincing route is difficult as the cultists are upset.

Once Villy is released, the coterie must also figure out how to keep him either hidden or safe from the rest of the cult, and what to do once the cultists discover he is no longer in the box.

Villy's Revelation

Villy, upon being freed, speaks openly and emotionally about his part in the Wellspring's formation and how he now feels Jakob mentally enthralled him. He damns the Wellspring and how it's ruined so many lives. Villy screams at everyone that the Wellspring is a fraud, that Jakob was a monster, and how they should get out of this accursed forest. This would be a good occasion for Villy to show the player characters the burial pit for fallen Wellspring cultists.

He attempts to drag the children with him before fleeing the campsite, but if any of the other cultists are present, they swiftly stop him (which may lead to Maria taking lethal action against him, as a potential kidnapper). Unless calmed down, Villy makes every attempt to flee from this point, heading for the Wellspring's one car.

Villy's Exit

If the players aren't interested in helping Villy, he finally exits the box

in the early hours of the morning. As he steps free, he suffers a heart attack in front of the cultists and the player characters, his attachment to life dissipating with Jakob's death. The player characters may save him with a quick Wits + Medicine (Difficulty 3) roll, but without treatment in a hospital or a dose of vitae, he remains unconscious and expires over the course of the next couple of nights.

Coming of Age

As the coterie might be aware from investigating the campsite, reading books, and talking to the cultists, the "coming-of-age" ritual can happen at any time, and the cult has decided it takes place tonight. Jakob's previous partner Katrine leads the ritual. In order to keep Maria from causing any trouble during the process, the cultists lock her inside her cabin. Natasha prepares Simón and Isabel in one of the remaining cabins. Katrine informs the coterie the ritual takes place soon. She explains they must take part in the ritual as the Wellspring's leaders.

Talk to Katrine

After years of brainwashing and being convinced her only purpose in life was to entertain Jakob in the last years of his existence, communicating with Katrine is like talking to an emotionless being. She expresses no concern for the children, no joy for the ritual, and no insightful comments when asked. She merely answers and continues what she is doing. The coterie finds her at the ritual circle, where she draws circles and symbols on the forest floor, places candles, and displays the tools needed for the ritual on the altar. She wears a makeshift crown on her head made from human teeth pierced with copper-thread and interwoven with flowers and plants (Jakob gave this to

her, and the teeth belong to former cultists). Her dress is long and white, with sleeves so long they nearly drag along the ground. She has decorated her face with the Wellspring circle on her forehead and black soot around her eyes.

Katrine informs the coterie about the ritual, and how afterward, the children are full members of the family and take part in important decisions and meetings for which they were previously deemed too young. She tells the coterie Jakob always wanted children of his own, but Nightwalkers aren't capable without a blessing from the earth. His vision with Simón and Isabel was to make them forget about the world outside and only have their memories be of the Wellspring. She explains the ritual entails the children pledging an oath they've been practicing beforehand and that they, like the rest of the members, must be branded with the mark of the Wellspring on their faces. Notably, Katrine does not bear the mark on her face. If asked why, she coyly retreats. It requires a Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3) to have her admit that Jakob always complimented her "perfect facial beauty" and therefore branded her everywhere but her face.

Convincing Katrine to not carry out the ritual is difficult but not impossible. Her years of dealing with Jakob left her with a sturdy will. Making any types of social rolls against her is challenged with a Difficulty of 5, equal to her Willpower. If successful, Katrine tells the PC they can carry the mark of the Wellspring instead of the children.

Find Maria

Maria is locked inside one of the cabins at the campsite. The player characters can hear her cries and yelling from inside, repeatedly begging for the cult to leave her children alone. The player characters can

unlock the door by forcing it open with a successful Strength + Brawl roll (Difficulty 2). If they manage, Maria begs them to stop the ritual no matter the cost. She informs the player characters they might be able to convince Katrine by reminding her of her own innocence as a child. Maria hands them a photo album with pictures of Katrine as a child and tells them to bring it to her.

If the coterie complies, Katrine's will crumbles (she takes Aggravated Willpower damage) and her mental resistance reduces to a Difficulty of 2 against attempts to convince her, whether mundane or supernatural.

Find Simón and Isabel

The children are hidden deep within the forest and are both being dressed in white gowns similar to Maria's. Their faces are painted with black soot, but they do not have the Wellspring circle on their faces. If Søren and Villy are not dead, they and the guard dogs patrol Natasha and the children as they get ready. In order to find the children, the coterie must first track them down. This can be done with a successful Intelligence + Survival roll (Difficulty 3).

The children are both scared yet doing as they are told in as calm a manner as they can, while Natasha is dressing them up. If the coterie decides to try and rescue the children, they can do so in different ways depending on who is present in the scene. If both Natasha, Søren, Villy, and the dogs are present, the Difficulty to persuade or intimidate anyone is 5, their solidarity giving them strength.

If Søren is not present and the player characters have taken the necklace representing leadership and one of them is wearing it, they can successfully convince them to hand over the children with a reduced Difficulty of 3.

The Storyteller can complicate this challenge by placing it deeper in

the forest, beyond a couple of primitive traps Natasha and Villy erected while Søren prepared the children.

Participating in the Ritual

If the ritual proceeds, it takes place at midnight at the ritual circle, which has been lit up with flickering lights from branches set alight and planted in the earth, battling to stay aflame in the brisk breeze kicking up leaves from the forest floor. Katrine has her back to the rest of the cult and the coterie, as they gather in the circle. The nature of the ritual differs depending on whether the children are being marked or the Kindred are marked, but the process and events are similar. The player characters or children are brought to the middle of the circle and clad with a white cloth over their heads, as Katrine turns around with a bowl in her hands and starts her speech:

“Servants and Nightwalkers. We are brought together on this night to celebrate the wellspring of the dead and that of the living, to welcome into our family new rivers that will become a part of us, the Wellspring. We sacrifice in the name of the one who fights the Beast, the one who protects us from the world of evil, and in turn ascend.”

Katrine walks toward the fire and retrieves a branding iron with a Wellspring circle engraved in its tip.

“We receive the mark of the Wellspring, with promise to always be in debt to the family and always serve the Nightwalker.”

The two children or the player characters are asked to lay in the middle of the circle. Each character takes 1 Aggravated Health damage upon receiving the mark. Each member must also make a roll to resist terror frenzy, rolling Willpower (with dice equal to one-third of each rolling vampire's Humanity added to their respective roll) against a Difficulty of 3. Failure sends them running into the forest,

tearing through the cultists if they stand in the way.

Stopping the Ritual

If the coterie successfully stops the ritual just before or in the middle of it, the Storyteller should decide whether the cult now sees them as powerful, godly beings, or if they turn their back on the player characters. This event might even split the cult in half, where some members support the decision, and some don't.

Jewelry Theft

If the player characters obtained the leader's necklace and Søren or Katrine are still active, they accuse the vampires of stealing, but the rest of the cult now turns their full attention toward the protagonists as their leaders. Jakob wore the necklace before he fell to the Beast, and it was made with the use of blood sorcery.

When an individual wears this necklace, they may willingly raise their Hunger rating by 1 level and reduce the Difficulty of all rolls involving the Leadership Skill by 1 for the remainder of the scene. The blood sorcery affects the wearer as long as they wear the necklace. Mortals and ghouls gain no benefit from wearing it, beyond its association with cult leadership.

The benefits from wearing this necklace aren't immediately known, requiring a character with Intelligence + Occult (Difficulty 4) to analyze its construction and discern its ability. This would be a good opportunity for the Storyteller to tell a player character Tremere or Banu Haqim that the necklace is familiar to them, especially if they're from the local region. The Storyteller can add that the necklace was stolen from the respective clan's collection of artifacts close to a century ago, but replicated in a drawing seen before now.

Chapter Four:

The True Leader

Chapter Four takes place on a night after the rituals have taken place. This chapter starts off dramatically as the coterie wake to panicked screaming. The sun has barely set as they awake, but just enough for them to be safe from its rays. Before Jakob fully lost himself to the Beast, he knew he had to send a message to his clan, more specifically his childe, to travel to the forest and “take care of the Wellspring.”

Now, his childe has arrived. Her plans concerning this cult may differ to those of her destroyed sire, however.

The Coming of Maja

Any player characters from Copenhagen and with at least two dots of Status know of Maja, though they had no way of knowing her lineage, beyond being a descendant of the Prince. Any such vampire can make an Intelligence + Politics roll (Difficulty 2) to recall Maja is renowned for her brutality, supposedly having been Embraced and left in a forest to survive for years, and when discovered by Prince Belinde in the last century, was enlisted as a hunter on Belinde’s behalf, known as “Copenhagen’s Unofficial Archon” or “the CUA.” To some, she’s an instrument of Camarilla terror. To others, she’s a fable of how not to raise a childe. To everyone who knows of her, she’s the Nosferatu with skin coated in fingernails, from head to toe, and she clicks, clacks, and crunches as she walks.

Upon arriving at the campsite, she attacks the first cultist she finds. As the coterie follows the sounds of the screaming, they see Natasha (or indeed any one of the cultists who remain) dead on the ground, her throat slit open and with a worryingly small pool of blood underneath her. She stares up into the sky and dies with a horrified expression on her face. The rest of the cult stands around her, looking at the body of the young woman, covering their faces in horror. A couple of yards from them Maja, clad in black and with blood streaked in her blond hair, is crouched down on all fours, much like Jakob when the coterie fought him. She gets back on her feet and turns around to face the cult and the player characters. Her twisted Nosferatu face smiles and she snarls:

“So ... I heard you need a new leader.”

Give the players time to figure out what their next step should be. Following are suggestions as to the different ways the game can progress.

Maja’s ghoul brought her here in a body bag. They’re now on hand to join their mistress.

MAJA

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Jakob

Embraced: 1825 (Born 1780)

Ambition: Milk my sire’s cult for what little worth it possesses.

Convictions: None

Touchstones: None

Humanity: 3

Generation: 9th

Blood Potency: 3

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 6

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Craft (Shelter) 4, Drive 1, Melee 4, Stealth 3, Survival (Forests) 5; Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 1, Intimidation 4, Leadership 1, Streetwise (Hiding Places) 3; Awareness 3, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics 2, Science 1

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Obfuscate 2, Potence 4, Protean 1

General Difficulties: 6/3

DITTE HENNINGSSEN

Maja’s ghoul is just as bestial and animalistic as her. Although being much smaller than her, Ditte’s body shows signs of physical labor. Their long dark hair hangs over their face in an unkempt manner, and their slight underbite distorts their face making them look even less human. They don’t communicate with the player characters on their own but back up anything Maja says with one-word sentences. Ditte wears a black hoodie and a tartan shirt wrapped around their waist with a pair of navy jeans and a beanie. Ditte carried their domitor all this way in a body bag, through the day. The bag now rests on the forest floor.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 1, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 6, Melee 8, Stealth 7; Intimidation 6



Disciplines: Potence 1

Special: Ditte wields a stake and carries a knife.

General Difficulties: 5/2

Talking to Maja

Maja is more than willing to talk to the coterie but won't immediately reveal any of her plans to them. She bears a menacing smile throughout the entire conversation, as if she is trying to be forcefully polite with whomever she speaks. Following are questions the coterie might ask Maja and examples of what she can answer. Maja is not used to a lot of social contact and her nature reflects that fact.

WHO ARE YOU?

“Me? I’m Maja, one of your kind, if I’ve judged you correctly. You all smell like death and dusty bones, so I’m sure those cavities of yours don’t bear a beating heart. I’m also Jakob’s childe. Yeah, who would have thought a monster could breed a monster, huh?”

WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?

“Oh here and there ... just been spending some time in Norway and Sweden the last century, the forests here grew too small for me, you see. Too much drama for me in little old Denmark, had to expand my horizons and hunting grounds, if you will. Meat quickly ... rots around these parts. I made a stop off in Copenhagen recently, which led to Jakob reaching out to me.”

The Storyteller has the choice here of saying Villy or Søren reached out to Maja during Jakob’s descent, which may act as justification for why Søren is so adamant that the player characters aren’t the new leaders. Alternatively, Jakob reached out to Maja in person and begged her to become the new Wellspring leader.

WHAT HAPPENED/WHY DID YOU KILL HER?

“Well, having traveled in haste, I simply didn’t have time enough to eat. You see, when hunting, you don’t always go for the biggest prey but for the easiest one. And I mean, look at her. Completely defenseless. Easy as one, two, three.”

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS WITH THE CULT?

“You mean my cult? I have yet to decide. Never really been much of a leader type myself, but I’m sure we can put them to

good use. It would be a shame to see all that good blood go to waste. If nothing else, they are perfect food on the go. You think they can travel far on foot? They seem a bit scrawny to me."

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS WITH US?

"You? I don't even know who you are! I do know my sire was supposed to be here, but can I assume some unfortunate accident befall the useless bastard?"

As the player characters talks to Maja, the cultists all hide behind and near them, clearly seeking protection from the foreign threat. Maria tries to calm down her children, who are both crying at what they just witnessed, while Katrine is covering up Natasha's mauled body with a bed sheet. If Villy and Søren are still alive, they both look traumatized at the entire scene and remain in complete shock and silence.

Attack Maja

As the cultists draw back in fear from this new threat, the coterie might decide their best response is to attack in order to defend themselves. If Maja sees the coterie preparing for an attack, she tries to calm them down by telling them she has no interest in attacking one of her own kind, and mentions she's "the CUA," expecting recognition of her informal title. If this fails, the coterie must fight Maja. The cultists, who are all in shock, are unable to help the coterie out.

Much like her sire, Maja attacks like a wild animal, immediately going for the deathblow as soon as she can. She is physically stronger than her sire, but not nearly as fast and limber. She aims to severely injure the player characters in order to protect herself. Maja brandishes a large hunting knife that inflicts +2 light piercing damage. If the player characters severely injure

her, she attempts to run into the forest, abandoning Ditte if needed.

If Maja's ghoul Ditte joins the fight, her fighting style is reminiscent of Maja's, yet a little less bombastic and aggressive. She only goes for a kill if Maja is threatened, and clearly has no fear of dying in the process.

Confront Maja

After hearing Maja's plans, the player characters might dig even deeper into what she wants to do with the cult. This information can be obtained with a successful Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 4). Maja answers honestly and tells the player characters about what her sire did to her, and how the only reason she answered his call was because it gave her an opportunity to destroy his life's work. She plans on years of servitude for the cultists, or to silence them permanently, based on their being threats to the Masquerade.

Convincing Maja to give up on her quest for vengeance requires her being offered something juicy in return, a successful Manipulation + Persuasion or Intimidation roll (Difficulty 6), or the best option: the players roleplaying their characters in a way that convinces the homicidal Nosferatu that the members of the Wellspring do not deserve to die for the sins of their maniac leader.

If the player characters convince Maja to give up her quest for revenge, she steps back for a second, furrowing her brows as she glares at them. She looks down at the corpse of Natasha, which is still lying in the tall grass before she nods. She agrees to leave the cult alone, but only if she is allowed to make one more sacrifice to satisfy her needs. She tells the player characters:

"Fine. I'll leave your little social club alone if you provide me with one

more sacrificial lamb. It could be one of them ... it could be one of you ... after all, it is better I just kill one more than the whole lot of them, right? And it's a long walk back to Ditte's minibus..."

Maja is just teasing, but wants to see how far she can push these moral paragons.

Leave the Cult

At this point in the story, it might be completely natural for the player characters to not want to go through a potential fight for the cult again. Unless bonds have been struck or reforged with the cultists (bearing in mind some may be personal connections from before the Embrace, or disappeared loved ones from recent years), they might withdraw and leave the cult to their own devices.

If this is the case, the Storyteller should consider the player characters' Convictions and whether this action warrants Stains on their respective Humanity ratings.

What of the Prince?

Whatever the outcome of the interaction with Maja, this is when Gorm, the domain politikommisær, calls them on their second phone. His message is short: "You're welcome back in Copenhagen — but bring this cult of Jakob's with you. The Prince will want them dealt with."

If the player characters disposed of or lost their second phone before this occasion, the Storyteller has a choice: leave them in the wilderness, as Gorm's not going to send a search party, or have Maja explain (before a fight or before she departs) that the Prince has been trying to get ahold of them for the past couple of nights and is livid.

Chapter Five:

The Well Is Empty

The coterie has come to a decision about the fate of the Wellspring. Every decision the player characters make at this point has consequences. Depending on what they choose, there are multiple endings to this story.

Sacrificial Lamb

If the player characters give up the cultists to their new self-proclaimed leader, Maja appears satisfied. She orders each cultist to go inside their cabins and pack their few belongings. Maja wants to travel with the cultists south into Germany and use them as a reliable source of blood, for as long as they last. She smiles at looks at the coterie.

“There’s nothing like mortal servants, right? Especially ones who are so fucking brainwashed they can’t even remember what the word integrity means. Thank you keeping them broken down for me. Consider a boon owed to you, for whatever that’s worth.”

The cultists exit shortly thereafter, all looking equally numb except for Simón who quietly sobs in his mother’s arms. It’s up to the Storyteller to decide whether the cultists wish to say farewell to the coterie, whether they have any parting words, or if they stay silent. Shortly after, Maja ties the cultists up in a row, and drags them into the forest with a violent yank.

The Storyteller should consider adding Stains to the player characters, if their Convictions allow it. They’ve saved themselves from needing to maintain an unstable herd, or cult of retainers, but may have doomed each of the mortals involved through their decision. While the player characters didn’t create this situation, handing the Wellspring over to a clearly murderous Nosferatu is scarcely better than handing them to the Circulatory System, placing them in Elysium as blood dolls, or selling them to any other blood trafficking group.

The Prince

The coterie might decide the best solution to their dilemma is to take the cultists to the Prince and the politikommisær.

The way out of the forest might be smooth sailing for the characters, with little to no disturbances or it can be a dangerous affair. First, they must find a way to

circumvent the many traps surrounding the area. They can either ask one of the cultists, who points out a few traps they helped set up, but can’t remember the rest, or roll an Intelligence + Survival (Difficulty 2) to determine where the traps are located. If they helped Villy set up traps earlier in the story or saved Maria’s children during the coming-of-age ritual, the cultists know the exact way out of the forest.

If they took Gorm’s call, he offered for a van to collect them at the spot on the road at which they were dropped. Otherwise, they can utilize their own allies to help them escape, but alternatively they might hijack a car on their own. If the coterie decides to take public transport, have a confrontation with mortals interested in the bedraggled cultists following in the player characters’ wake, or with a vampire or ghoul who states the protagonists are a walking violation of the Masquerade.

My Childe

The Prince awaits the coterie in the lobby of her penthouse apartment in Copenhagen. She is wearing a sleeveless dark dress and long pearl necklaces around her neck. Her dark hair, a wig, looks more messy than usual and the expression on her infamously featureless face is, as ever, unreadable. Prince Belinde is known as “the mannequin” by those with a modicum respect and as “the sex doll” by those without, based on her perfectly, smooth, almost unmoving features, and locked open lips.

“I had one order. That order, was to go into the woods, figure out where my childe was, and bring him back to Copenhagen.”

As she speaks, she slowly approaches the player characters, but without making eye contact with a single one of them. Her hands stay planted in her pockets the entire time.

“Tell me where he is. Where is my childe?”

The player characters must decide what the best option is, and Gorm is pointedly looking away from them during this confrontation. On a Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 4), it’s clear he’s told Belinde the truth, but has been instructed to stay out of it. If the coterie wishes to lie about what happened, they must make a successful Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 6) to convince her that Gorm was lying about Jakob’s destruction.

“WE DESTROYED HIM.”

Blinde halts in her step. She stands motionlessly, facing the glass which makes up the entire backwall of her apartment, almost as if she is frozen in time. It seems like an eternity before she finally reacts.

“He was a lost cause from the beginning. We used to be friends, of a sort. This was before I knew the monster I’d

created. I thought I could save him. He was a poor child with no future, ostracized by society. I quickly learned you cannot fix that which has already been spoiled.

“HE DISAPPEARED.”

“Disappeared?!”

The Prince turns around in a second and sets directly toward the group at speed.

If the player characters successfully lied to her, she accuses them of letting the most dangerous vampire in Denmark loose and being responsible for any carnage he leaves in his wake. They are left unrewarded and held in low standing.

If the player characters unsuccessfully lied to her, she calls them on their bullshit, and describes Gorm as the perfect servant, while they’re little better than fools and cowards. She musters as much emotion as her face can convey before leaning over them and uttering that they’re all banished from Denmark and her sister Scandinavian domains.

Lost and Afraid

Belinde addresses the issue of the cult as soon as she has figured out what happened to her childe.

If the cultists are present as requested, she walks toward them and studies each of their faces and bodies, especially taking notice of the brands on their skin. She then proceeds to ask them their names, how long they have lived in the forest and their relation to Jakob.

She asks them to sit down on the couch and asks them how much they know about vampires. If the cult has not been instructed in the dangers of telling the Prince about what they know of Kindred society (and they know scant little, unless the player characters informed them), they nervously explain everything Jakob taught them, from feeding rituals to

being blessed by “the Nightwalker’s kiss,” or the process they call “the ascension” into becoming “a Nightwalker.” Belinde keeps a calm demeanor throughout the conversation, asking them different questions about the cult and Jakob. It is recommended the Storyteller keeps the scene short and punchy, but the atmosphere intense and with a feeling of unpredictability, as Belinde barely reacts to any gruesome details. If the cultists lie about what they know, the players can roll for their subterfuge, using the specified cultist’s social dice pool (or Subterfuge pool if they have it as an exceptional pool) against a Difficulty of 5. If the player characters coached them in what to say, the Difficulty reduces by 1. If they fail, Belinde flings the cultist to the floor before telling them to tell her the truth or die.

If she feels they know too much, she utters an edict:

“As you can hear from our poor mortals here, they know far too much for us to possibly let them back into society again. There’s just no way in hell I can allow this to happen. My first inclination is to swiftly get rid of them before they can cause any more trouble.”

This message is met with a gasp from the cultists, and one of the children crying. She continues in the following vein:

“However, if nothing else, these mortals have shown how diligently they can serve one of our kind, and they undoubtedly know the ways around our ... needs. I guess politics can be taught later.”

The Prince looks intensely at the coterie, as if considering her next line. She utters this if the cultists successfully lied, as well:

“If you are willing to take these mortals under your wings, and by that, I mean turning them into your retainers and loyal servants, I would not be opposed to letting them live. This of course requires a fuck-load of work from your side, as these ... mortals here

are barely people and handling their reintegration into kine society, dealing with the issues of what happens when people who know them from before their indoctrination ask where they’ve been, and so on, may prove onerous. Keep in mind some might be registered as missing or even kidnapped. Think on that before you decide.”

LET US HELP THEM

If the coterie agrees to the Prince’s suggestion, they must decide who takes care of each cultist. The Prince tells the coterie forcing them to drink vitae now is the best option, as they are then under the player characters’ protection and less likely to be attacked by fanatical Kindred afraid of a Masquerade breach. Have a scene with each individual character and the cultist they have decided to take on. It is up to the Storyteller whether the cultists are apprehensive and refuse to cooperate or gladly receive the protection of the characters.

DEATH IS THE BEST OPTION

If the coterie declines the Prince’s offer, she shrugs and with a quick push of her panic button, Gorm’s Kindred security team — the domain kommisærs — appears through the door. In front of the player characters, they murder each member of the cult in a violent, brutal display of flashing blades and gnashing fangs.

If the players are prepared to handle it, the Storyteller can describe the terror of the cultists as some attempt to flee their executioners, a couple fight back, and the rest just accept their fate, weeping. Horrifyingly, the great spillage of blood compels a roll to resist hunger frenzy from the player characters (Difficulty 3), though they might succumb to a fury frenzy, especially if any of the cultists were adopted as Touchstones.

Eventually, the hounds drag the bodies out of the apartment. The Prince turns to the coterie with an expressionless face.

“Always a shame to let good blood go to waste. I suggest you take your leave before you cause more trouble.”

THE KOMMISÆRS

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Social 3, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Intimidation 6; Investigation 6

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Fortitude 1, Potence 2

General Difficulties: 6/2

Maja

If the coterie brought Maja along with them, the Prince shoots her a cold look before walking over to the CUA, whether she is staked or fully aware of her surroundings. Belinde places her hand on Maja's forehead and pushes her head back.

“Your playtime is over, Maja, and your feral shenanigans are done. You should have come to me as soon as Jakob reached out to you. I’ll teach you how to behave like a civilized Nosferatu.”

Maja is either dragged from the room or walks out like a chastised child, shortly thereafter. If the Storyteller wants to build Maja as a recurring antagonist, she can depart with an insult or threat toward the player characters.

Come with Us

If the player characters saved the cultists from years of agony and suffering, it's possible they're now completely dependent on the player characters. Even Søren, if he is still alive, obeys the player characters fully as he owes them his life. They're all standing around the coterie in a group, huddled together and looking at the vampires to take the next step.

Our Little Secret

If the player characters decide to integrate the cultists back into society, they risk a massive breach of the Masquerade — even more so if they were introduced to the Prince, learned more of Kindred society, and were then released. But, if they see no other way out, and leave the fate of the cultists in the hands of mortal authorities, they might explain to them how important it is no-one should know vampires exist, and they may forbid them from telling anyone about their time in the cult. Most of the former Wellspring cultists refuse at first, as they do not understand the rules attached to Kindred society.

They can be convinced with a successful Manipulation + Intimidation or Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 4), though this persuasion is unlikely to hold forever.

Depending on how they release the cultists back into society, different results follow. If they hand them over to police, one of the cultists eventually breaks during interrogation and headlines in the newspapers days after talk about a secret cult in the Danish woods, which in turn catches the Prince's attention. If the Storyteller choose to play through the Prince's reaction and the consequences is up to the players and Storyteller.

If the coterie release the cult into society without any supervision or guidance, the Anarchs who sent spies looking for Jakob soon discover these confused individuals who loudly talk about their time in the cult and the existence of “Nightwalkers.”

If the coterie hands the cult over to a hospital or a mental health institution, they have successfully provided the cultists with enough help and support to talk through their trauma and not break the Masquerade, though they may end up spending the rest of their lives in institutions. Few endings for these cultists spell a happy future.

Be Mine

The player characters might be so infatuated with the cultist lifestyle they decide to stay on the campsite and become the leader of the Wellspring full-time. Depending on their existence and status outside the cult, this might have major consequences for the characters' role in Kindred society, jobs, families, friends, and Touchstones. In this case, have a couple of scenes ready for the character who chooses to stay, reminding them of the world outside and the responsibilities they've left behind. This could be a lover or close Kindred companion trying to reach out and convince them to come home. It could be the Prince's hounds looking for the vampire. It could be mortal police who were tipped off to something is going on deep inside the woods.

The characters may also decide to take the cultists under their wings and either take care of them, force them into the ranks of thralldom, or Embrace them to keep them safe. This requires the player characters keep them out of harm's way, as they slowly integrate into an undead kind of normalcy, with the added burden of needing to provide them with housing, identities, and maybe even jobs.

If the Prince wasn't consulted, she'll be on the hunt for the vampires responsible for her childe's destruction, though she won't pursue the cultists, as she won't learn the full details of the Wellspring unless Søren reached her to report on the player characters' arrival.

There is No Other Way

The coterie may see no other way out than to mercy-kill the cult members on their own or mentally manipulate them using the Dominate Discipline, a blood bond, or constant reinforcement with Presence. If concerned about releasing walking threats to the Masquerade, humanely killing them may be the only logical option for some coteries.

Depending on what the players are comfortable with, either the members fight for their lives, begging for the coterie not to kill them; or they accept this fate as at least better than ending up within Maja's jaws.

Epilogue

The players have now concluded the Wellspring and whether the player characters managed to save the cult and take them under their wings or give them up to mortal authorities, see them continue their lives in servitude with a new leader, or see them killed by their own

hands or those of the Prince's hounds, their actions bear consequences. The following options can be used if the players continue to play as their coterie in another story or chronicle or if they wish to have more playable scenes within the Wellspring. Feel free to come up with new ideas to continue the story; these are merely story hooks that can be used for inspiration for further roleplay:

Anarch Infiltrations

This story hook is relevant if the coterie is hiding the cultists without the knowledge of the rest of the Kindred society. Anarch spies have kept an eye on the coterie and the cult members long before the coterie first met them. They have been fascinated by their alternative way of living and how they created their own rules within a strict societal form. A couple of weeks after the player characters rescue the cultists, they are approached by representatives of the Anarch Movement who offer to give the cultists a better life outside the Camarilla in a place where breaking the Masquerade is not as crucial as having



a life in freedom. The Anarchs attempt to ensconce the former cultists in the small burg of Freetown Christiania, known for its relaxed mortal laws and lack of Camarilla oversight.

Difficult Tutelage

This story hook is relevant if the player characters addict the cult members to their vitae, turning them into ghouls. The characters face difficulties when trying to merge the cultists back into society. Simple tasks like using credit cards and even cell phones prove difficult, and the cultists stick to their old ways of life for a long time. Some of them insist on only sleeping outside and still perform rituals. This creates talk among the Kindred in Copenhagen, and leads to confrontations during Elysium, where other vampires are worried about the new ghouls' behaviors in relation to the Masquerade.

Whispers from the Past

This story hook is relevant if the coterie had mortal police take care of the cultists. A member of the coterie receives a phone call from Politikommisær Gorm, who read the frontpage of the newspapers that evening. He mentions mortal police have interviewed individuals lost in the woods for years and claim the existence of vampires are not fiction and they walk among us. The coterie must figure out a way to either manipulate the police or journalists to protect the Masquerade or somehow make the cultists stay quiet about their experiences in the cult.

Homeless

This story hook is relevant if a hospital takes care of the cultists. After being released from the hospital, the cultists have no place to go, let alone anyone they know they can seek out for help. One night, they track down

where some of the characters make their havens and ask them for help and guidance, since they are the only persons they know in the Copenhagen. The characters must decide how to help the cultists — if indeed they help them at all.

I Recognize That Mark

In a story down the line, a Tremere with whom the player characters are acquainted takes one of them to the side to show them a fascinating book discovered in one of Copenhagen's oldest churches, which he believes was penned by an adherent to the fabled vampiric state of Golconda. He rattles on about the book's contents at length before stopping at what he finds the most fascinating: a reference to a "wellspring of life," along with a symbol the player characters recognize from the cultists' brands. If the cultists are still in their company, the Tremere puts two and two together. If not, the player characters are left wondering what exactly Jakob was trying to achieve and whether any of the cultists (if they're still alive) have knowledge of it.

What Have You Done?

This story hook is relevant if the coterie either killed the cultists themselves or saw them killed by Politikommisær Gorm and his hounds. Try as they might, the characters have trouble sleeping during the day. Visions of the cultists begging for mercy at their hands, and the crying of the children they could have saved, trouble them incessantly. These visions follow the coterie for a long time and might affect them in different ways. To what degree is up to the Storyteller, but can be everything from impairing certain rolls, having insufficient sleep, to permanent flaws and stains on their Humanity. There's no easy way out from having permitted the murder of innocents, troubled though they may have been.



MK
2021



The Family

“You don’t get to walk away from this.”

— Lubango, Samedi of the Hecata

When you’re the member of a clan, you’re part of a family. You may be the most upstanding and accomplished savant in your field, but if your clan has a bad reputation in your current domain, that shit rubs off on you. You may be a wretched deviant responsible for any number of sins, but if the Prince is a member of the same clan as you and your clan have diligently defended the city from the Second Inquisition, you might just score a pass based on your heritage.

However, family goes beyond deeds. Family imposes expectation — sometimes obligation, sometimes sin — on its members. No more so than among the Hecata. In this story, we see and experience what happens when a family member betrays their own, and what that family does to restore order to its ranks.

Introduction

The Family is a *Vampire: The Masquerade* story that plunges characters into an unfamiliar domain with a new political and religious hierarchy. In this story, characters must investigate the Kindred society of Atlantic City (or indeed, any other coastal domain to which this story

can be adapted) to discover who has been betraying the Hecata, and make the decision of whether to eliminate the leak for the good of the family or side with the traitors to improve their personal circumstances at the cost of family loyalty. As they pursue their investigation and make their decisions, they face potential reprisals from the Anarch Kindred of AC and any Hecata they cross in the domain.

Players required: 3–5

Duration: 10–12 hours

Story Breakdown

For the Storyteller’s eyes only.

The key beats of The Family are as follows, including the backstory revealed through play:

- As far as Kindred outside of Atlantic City are concerned, the Hecata boss of Atlantic City — Ornella Giovanni — has been in control of the domain for two decades. Blood dolls, cash, and drugs are routinely funneled to and from Atlantic City under Ornella’s supervision, with semi-regular letters being

sent to Donatello Giovanni in New York to report on clan activities.

- In actual fact, Ornella disappeared last year, leaving the disparate elements of the Hecata in the domain without a leader. With no guidance coming from Venice, the clan's central powerbase, or New York, where Donatello Giovanni holds sway over the Hecata, the Anarchs crept in, seized the domain, and have led it ever since under the watchful eye of Toreador Baron Edith Blumenau.
- In Ornella's absence, her ghoul Thomas Zingaretti has been managing the nightly running of Giovanni operations as well as holding responsibility for forging letters written in her name.
- Ornella Giovanni actually entered hiding at the invitation of Blumenau, who as well as being an Anarch, is a matron of the Bahari. Displeased at the recent clan restructuring combined with constant shit rolling downhill from New York, Ornella was won over by Blumenau's talk of freedom from the Hecata hierarchy and bought into the idea of recreating herself. After several months she recruited Lubango of the AC Samedi to serve the Bahari. Since that time, Ornella has given herself over to Blumenau's proposed meditation method of occupying a form of oubliette in complete isolation, only to have blood poured over her occasionally. From time to time she's lifted to the surface to maintain her grip on sanity.
- Blumenau struggled to extract the last remaining Camarilla holdouts from Atlantic City via threats or violence, and resorted to buying the city's Warlocks off with Hecata secrets Ornella gave to her in confidence during one of her moments of reprieve from "meditation." Those Tremere subsequently decamped to New York.
- The player characters discover this leak of clan secrets (or maybe a prominent Hecata, such as Donatello Giovanni of New York, informs them) and it becomes incumbent upon them to travel to Atlantic City, plug the gap, and find out why Ornella's letting these secrets out. The player characters may be harmed by this leak, creating a personal motivation to get involved. Through research they can learn of the resident Hecata: the boss, Ornella Giovanni; the eschatologist, Ms. Strand; the gangster, Lubango; and the money launderer, Lia Milliner.
- Blumenau took over Ornella's territory at the Three Bears Resort, as well as inheriting her ghoul and casino operator, Thomas Zingaretti. As far as Hecata outside Atlantic City are concerned, the Three Bears

is still a safe venue for the player characters to make temporary havens, so they're due to be installed there throughout the investigation's duration.

- If asked, Zingaretti confirms that Ornella left the casino and his life a year ago and Blumenau stepped in to fill the void. Zingaretti also confirms that the clan's interests are still worked on by Hope, Strand, and Lubango, with all matters channeled through him. He knows nothing about a leak.
- Zingaretti informs Blumenau of the coterie's arrival and she requests a meeting with them on the city's famed boardwalk, where she offers them every assistance in solving their problem so they can leave as expediently as possible. She is accompanied by a number of her kine bodyguards, including a mortal named Jay, or "Sideface." She offers to set the player characters up with one of the local Hecata: Ms. Strand of the Cappadocians. She doesn't mention Lia Milliner, who is just in the domain on business, or Lubango, as she doesn't want to implicate a fellow Bahari. If they ask, she says she wouldn't know where to find them.
- Blumenau attempts to intimidate the coterie into leaving Atlantic City, at first with blackmail and threats, before escalating to a break-in into their hotel suite, preferring to scare them away initially rather than murder them and draw the ire of their clan in New York.

The following encounters are each optional, but help piece together the puzzle of the family leak:

- Blumenau tells Lubango that the player characters are intending on eliminating Ornella Giovanni (a lie, at least initially), leading to his gang assaulting them if they enter his territory, with the aim of it looking like an unrelated stick-up. He remains deeply secretive and fundamentally loyal to Ornella, and via Ornella, to Blumenau. If pushed, he attacks them with the full force of his gang.
- Blumenau's mortal retainer, Jay, tells the paranoid Ms. Strand that the coterie is intending on murdering her for being a Cappadocian. Blumenau wants the player characters to believe Strand is responsible for the leak, which is why she sets up a conflict between the two. The player characters may be able to reason with Strand, who tries to kill them, and discover they've been set up. She implicates Jay "Sideface" as the responsible party.
- If the player characters seek out Lia Milliner, they find she's acting with neutrality, but she reveals

Ornella Giovanni's accounts are all still active and still acting as a channel for dirty money that Lia cleans up. If persuaded, she explains where her agents collect dirty cash, which happens to be within sight of Ornella's hidden haven and contains a handful of mortal Bahari observers.

- If the protagonists interrogate Zingaretti or search his apartment, they find he's been bugging the executive suite for months for the FBI, and has recordings of Ornella and Blumenau meeting.

Following the sourcing of the above information, the player characters should be aware of some of the following:

- Ornella Giovanni is still active.
- Lubango is in Ornella's employ.
- Ms. Strand is not the leak, but they're led to believe she is.
- There's a cult growing in the city.
- Edith Blumenau tried to have them killed or driven from her domain.
- Blumenau and Ornella are likely working together.

Beyond this point, the protagonists must choose how they intend to proceed, with the possible breakdown as follows:

- Zingaretti, driven to desperation at risk of losing another domitor, attempts to burn the coterie to death in their hotel suite.
- The player characters locate Blumenau, who does not name Ornella unless her city or existence comes under threat, showing she's just as prone to betraying a member of her sisterhood as Ornella was her family.
- The player characters discover Ornella, who explains she provided Blumenau with Hecata secrets trusting her, as a sister of the Bahari, to not disseminate them further. She doesn't regret Hecata information escaping the clan, however, and refuses to return to the fold having tasted the freedom of the other side. She offers the coterie the same freedom, and if Blumenau is gone suggests they run Atlantic City as a city independent of the sects and the Hecata.
- If Ms. Strand was enlisted to aid the player characters, she strongly advocates for Ornella's destruction.
- If Lia Milliner plays an active role, she suggests gaining permission to blood bond Ornella and keep her on a tight leash to show her the meaning of family loyalty.

- If Lubango survived to this point, he's prepared to eliminate the player characters, or, if Ornella has been captured, to burn her and prevent her being forced to betray herself.
- The player characters might conclude this story freeing Ornella and shifting the blame to Blumenau, murdering or staking Ornella for their sponsor, or choose a wholly different path. Ultimately, Blumenau accepts the course that causes the least disruption to her domain, even if that requires betraying a fellow Bahari. The player characters may even take the opportunity to remove Blumenau and take Atlantic City for themselves.

The route through and conclusion of *The Family* is open to player action. This story isn't linear, and may result in red herrings, such as Ms. Strand being the source of the leak, conflicted loyalties, short cuts, and many optional encounters dotted throughout the story, each of which handles a mortal or Kindred event in Atlantic City. These optional encounters can largely be placed at any point following the player characters' arrival in AC.

Character Advice

There are various reasons the leak of Hecata secrets could impact the player characters, from their having a business deal with the AC Hecata and being concerned about information from this deal leaking, to sharing lineage with some of the AC characters, and the player characters being concerned about those characters' wellbeing. Additionally, the Storyteller should consider any mortal connections the characters have with the domain, and whether they're under threat or stand to benefit as a result of actions taken in this story. All these options serve as motivators for the player characters.

Some plot elements are worth incorporating into character contacts, cult affiliations, and wealth resources, no matter the player character origins. Storytellers are encouraged to have characters possess at least one of the following connections to the plot:

THE CHARACTERS HAVE HAD PREVIOUS GOOD DEALING WITH ORNELLA GIOVANNI

Ornella's communications have quietened, or have clearly written by another hand, since last year. Whether due to blood ties, fondness, or a business association, they're curious what befell Ornella and before the story starts, discover a leak of Hecata information starting in AC.

THEY ARE AWARE OF A SEEDLING BAHARI CULT IN AC, WHICH MAY SUBVERT THE EXISTING HIERARCHY

No matter whether the player characters have cult affiliations of their own, the rumors reaching them of a Bahari

presence in the domain act as either a lure to investigate, destroy the Lilith worshipers, or set up one's own temple, cult, or similar, if such freedom to practice is given in this domain.

THEY HAVE A MORTAL FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOES BUSINESS WITH THOMAS ZINGARETTI

The mortal link to the story can come either as a threat or a lure, as a mortal relation might call the character and say how they think Zingaretti has fallen under the influence of someone dangerous. Maybe they're reporting this out of concern, or perhaps they're intimating that the Three Bears Casino is ripe for a takeover.

THEY USED TO VACATION IN ATLANTIC CITY DURING THEIR BREATHING DAYS

The nostalgia element is a potent one for some player characters, especially if the Storyteller is prepared to use Memoriam to take the protagonists back to a previous encounter in the domain. Seeing how far the domain has fallen may provide impetus to rejuvenate it, or seize it.

ATLANTIC CITY IS A DOMAIN RIPE FOR POTENTIAL, FOR A KINDRED LOOKING TO ESTABLISH A NEW TERRITORY

Few Kindred outside of AC know the domains inner workings, but through word-of-mouth it's a largely lawless domain filled with transitory kine, corrupt cops, and industrial development, all of which might be a foothold for an enterprising young coterie.

The following are additional options available to the players, with coteries consisting of a mix of Hecata, Anarchs, and Camarilla Kindred entirely possible:

Hecata

The player character Hecata could descend from or share lineage with some of the Necromancers present in Atlantic City. Ms. Strand makes for a good ancestor, just as Lia Milliner might be a Blood sister with a mutual sire. Likewise, a connection to Ornella Giovanni sets a tone of familial bonds, which places greater pressure on the player characters to make the correct choice at the story's conclusion.

Due to the connection to family inherent in the Hecata, mortal connections to the coterie could have homes or businesses in Atlantic City that as a sub-story, the player characters could investigate, call in on, or see threatened by the city's Anarchs or Bahari.

The player characters in this story could be recruited by Donatello Giovanni due to their standing in the family or because they're hungry to increase their reputation. They could all be sourced from different domains, but more likely than not, they hail from New York or another domain thick with Hecata, such as Boston or Las Vegas.

TOUCHSTONES AND CONVICTIONS

Many *Vampire* stories place special emphasis on Touchstones, and for good reason: they're an effective way of maintaining Humanity. In this story, it's unlikely player characters see their Touchstones at risk unless they bring them to Atlantic City, or if they start the story as vampires from that domain. With this in mind, the Storyteller should record the player characters' Convictions and keep them in mind for tests of morality and belief throughout the story. Touchstones are of course still at risk from the machinations of enemies made in AC, and characters like Blumenau have sufficient reach and contacts beyond her domain to threaten characters close to the player characters if they intrude dangerously close to her affairs.

Camarilla

Camarilla Kindred may become interested in AC activities due to the mass migration of sectmates from this domain. With the Hecata apparently also on weak footing, perhaps this is the chance to fold the territory once again into the Ivory Tower, or at least discover the domain's secrets before making such a decision.

The Camarilla could be sending the coterie as envoys or commandos, responsible for establishing a "beachhead" in Atlantic City for the sect's return. The Storyteller could shift the city's Hecata members to different Camarilla clans, with Ornella a Tremere leaking thaumaturgical or political secrets to New York's Anarchs.

Perhaps a vampire such as Donatello Giovanni approaches the vampires for this operation because the Camarilla of New York owe him a major boon for his role aiding them in the sectarian wars that concluded two decades ago. While unusual for the Hecata to align with the Camarilla, Donatello might also reason that Atlantic City's Hecata wouldn't suspect a coterie consisting of non-family members, and it would be easier for Camarilla vampires to find out who was leaking information to their sect.

Anarchs

The Movement plays a key role in this story, with Atlantic City a newly Anarch domain. More revolutionary Anarchs may balk at the idea of the "Camarilla-lite" Blumenau (as Anarchs in other domains refer to her) in charge, and suggest a change in leadership. In this scenario, the Sto-

ryteller should emphasize Blumenau's reputation for old-fashioned ways and hierarchical leanings, to make her appear as an Anarch in name only.

Prominent Anarchs in another domain may want Blumenau investigated as they believe she's been brainwashed, resulting in a distracted and vulnerable Baron. In this case, the Storyteller is encouraged to make Ornella appear to be the Bahari ring-leader, when in fact Blumenau is the matron and steadily drifts from the Movement in favor of her religion.

Atlantic City

The following can be drip-fed to the player characters as and when they ask for information on the political situation in Atlantic City or based on flashbacks to their meeting with Donatello Giovanni or another potential sponsor. Storytellers can provide information from this section as a result of roleplay and successful Intelligence + Politics rolls.

AC by Day

Atlantic City is a small domain on America's East Coast, and a study in contrasts. Throughout its history, the city's main source of legitimate industry has been tourism, acting as the chosen destination for many a New Yorker or Philadelphian, with the first half of the 20th century seeing people travel from even farther afield on the railroad leading directly to the city, often staying for weeks in one of the city's luxury, ocean view hotels. These days, it fulfills the same role except most people fly in to the city's single airport or drive in via the one main road, which is lined with billboards advertising the casinos still in operation in the city's only thriving quarter.

Since the 1920s, AC's possessed a deep underbelly of criminal activity, encompassing everything from

alcohol and gun smuggling to human trafficking and illegal sports betting, with drugs, prostitution, and many an assassination on the side. Throughout the Prohibition era, the power of organized crime in the city swelled, and while it's diversified in the last half century, the massive presence of legalized casinos has served criminal interests in other ways. Outside the money laundering, illegal betting, and sex work taking place in and around the casinos, a thriving drug trade sustains a wide network of users and dealers in the broader city.

AC itself rarely contains a standing population greater than 40,000 people (though the wider Atlantic County contains over five times that number, many of whom work within the city limits). The constant flow of tourists, sailors, people attending trade shows, and undocumented criminals and migrants, means the city figure's considerably higher than the purported 40,000, though constantly shifting. Despite the glitter and glamor of the tourist trade, the city's unemployment rate has slowly crept upward with the years, leading to great disparity between the luxury, tourist-focused parts of the city, and the run-down, or constantly under development industrial and residential areas. The difference between the two is staggering, as driving three blocks from the casinos, the beaches, or the AC Boardwalk can find tourists in areas bereft of appeal. To the embittered residents of Atlantic City, the only part of the city being maintained is the section visitors see. The shift in building, road, and utilities quality within a mile's drive is staggering and sharp, and visible for anyone entering via the expressway toll road, which controls access into and out of the city.

The city's most notable landmark is the Atlantic City Boardwalk, built in 1870 and still standing today, after persistent reconstruction efforts and despite natural disasters and erosion wearing it down. While recent recessions have seen the sudden closure of many casinos throughout Atlantic City, a score of casino resorts with beachfront entertainments, stages, and live shows, act as the main draw for tourists and criminals alike. The city likewise builds itself as a center for conventions and trade shows, utilizing the large numbers of hotels, large vacant buildings, and floors of casinos that lost their gambling licenses for the purpose. Quirky shopping malls, restaurants, and boutiques litter the most heavily developed parts of the city, and flourish despite the city's steady economic downturn, most as curiosities than as places anyone would typically choose to shop. The effects of Hurricane Sandy, floods, outages that have never been repaired, and persistently degrading building materials lead to the entire city looking out of place and out of time.

Within spitting distance of every glittering casino, crime rears its ugly head. This so-called "Vegas of the East" contains one of the worst violent crime rates in the United States, with gang wars, drug addiction, and aggressive cops only exacerbating the issue. Instances of brutality against civilians are on the increase, and when the cops aren't laying down a beating or shooting the wrong guy, they're just dispersing drug deals and moving them to fresh corners, away from the "better" parts of the city. For their part, most AC street criminals choose to keep away from the tourists unless planning a mugging, car theft, or hijack. The heat from involving themselves in the part of the city that everyone's watching is rarely worth the trouble when there's always someone looking for a next hit or meth or heroin.

There are luxurious areas in Atlantic City, but they're tightly confined to a narrow piece of land and beachfront. Where Vegas has the desert at its edge, Atlantic City has all the hallmarks of urban decay encroaching on the false nirvana at its core.



AC by Night

Atlantic City occupies a diminished role within Kindred society. Never a major domain by any means, it used to be a neutral meeting ground for representatives of the various sects, a place a vampire could go to clean up dirty money or deal in blood dolls and bloodier deals, and much as the kine used it as a tourist destination, it allowed a respite from big city politics. The citywide Elysium that allowed for parleys ended in 1999, when the sectarian wars reached their peak, and the ability to rinse stolen money and goods through the city was severely curtailed when Ornella Giovanni declared herself city boss in the year 2000.

AC's ability to sustain more than a few Kindred is difficult, bordering on impossible. The mortal population is too low, and reducing every year. Even the number of tourists visiting the city diminishes with each passing season, with casinos closing their doors, the city's upkeep falling by the wayside, and criminal activities moving to more lucrative environments.

With this in mind, it's alarming that Atlantic City contains 15 or more vampires, far beyond what the Masquerade should be able to conceal. The way the Kindred do it, and the way they've always done it in AC, is to conceal their activities within the tourist sector, the criminal networks, the casinos, and the transport and logistics industries, all of which are decreasing in weight in AC, but are each receiving a push from their Kindred masters to thrive and rejuvenate the domain. The issue is, Kindred rarely push in the same direction, they certainly don't all work with a single vision, and they're each prone to sabotaging another's efforts.

Atlantic City is a domain on the verge of collapse, only held together because most Camarilla Kindred don't acknowledge it as being separate from New York, the various facets of the Second Inquisition are focused on larger domains, and the mortal police force is too corrupt and ineffective to view vampire attacks and exsanguinated bodies as anything other than drug-related crimes

and the trafficking of vessels as just another aspect of mortal organized crime, which they lack the funding to handle. Therefore, despite its teetering position, Atlantic City acts as a place where deals still take place without much scrutiny, and where an outsider vampire can make a haven (at least temporarily) without penalization from a Prince or Sheriff.

For a century, the Giovanni family were a subtle, but dominating force in Atlantic City. Two decades ago, Ornella Giovanni — the vampire Donatello Giovanni of New York installed to act as boss behind the scenes — took control of the domain following the disappearance of the city's ostensible Prince, Hanlon of Clan Malkavian. Local Kindred had often suspected there was a Giovanni in charge, but for as long as the Masquerade remained in place and the domain stayed out of the constant sectarian wars raging up and down the American East Coast, nobody important took issue with the weak Prince or his puppet master. One of Hanlon's few rulings outside the Camarilla's six Traditions was

“resident, law-abiding civilians may never form a part of our herds.” This law barely holds through to tonight, though vampires commonly prey on criminal elements, tourists in hotel casinos, and climbing aboard cruise liners making their way up and down the East Coast.

Within the Giovanni family, Ornella was directly subordinate to Donatello. For close to 120 years, she served him dutifully, kicking up what was necessary, handling any problems he sent down to New Jersey, and generally strengthening the clan’s hidden influence. When Prince Hanlon disappeared overnight without a word to the Kindred in his domain, Ornella openly claimed the city for her clan, in contravention of Donatello’s preference for discreet methods.

Despite her bucking the Hecata line, Ornella has been a stalwart steward of Atlantic City, with the family’s interests still apparently being served. Meanwhile, the Camarilla presence in the domain has gradually decreased to a couple of holdouts, and the Anarch presence has sharply increased, signifying changes known only to Atlantic City’s Kindred. These changes have been kept from Donatello and other concerned vampires of New York, but the line is as it’s always been: as long as the Masquerade is maintained and the profits keep rolling to the Kindred who matter, the runt domain of Atlantic City can keep doing what it’s doing.

Atlantic City Kindred

Storytellers should use care in revealing too much of this section at the story’s start, as it details some elements uncovered during the plot. To the knowledge of the visiting Kindred, Ornella Giovanni is the city boss, and while Edith Blumenau may consider herself Baron of the local Anarchs, nobody

else does. Nobody outside of the domain beyond matrons of the Bahari are aware of Blumenau’s Bahari cell. Storytellers shouldn’t feel compelled to use every vampire in this section, and just pull on the threads that interest them.

For many years, Atlantic City has lacked much in the way of formal hierarchy. Its Kindred population includes three coteries at most. Sectarian influence, as a result, is in a devolved state. There was a Prince but no Primogen council, and only a token enforcer. There was a boss, but Kindred were permitted to pursue whichever activities they chose as long as Ornella’s requests and orders were met. Now there’s a Baron, and while most Kindred in Atlantic City defer to Edith Blumenau for citywide decisions, AC vampires are largely at liberty. That may change if Blumenau decides to shift Atlantic City into a domain only consisting of Bahari vampires.

When taking the following positions and coteries into consideration, keep in mind that many vampires crossover into other groups, such as Blumenau being the Baron, an Anarch, and a Bahari, and Ornella being a Hecata and a Bahari. Some characters do not show up in the scenario as written, but they are usable should the Storyteller wish to incorporate the wider Atlantic City setting.

The Ruler

If a vampire asks on which side of the political divide Atlantic City falls, they’d be told a mix of answers, from “the Camarilla had a Prince installed until recently,” to “the Hecata took control a few years back, but they seem to be toeing the Camarilla line,” all the way to “it’s secretly becoming something halfway between an Anarch Barony and a Bahari theocracy — but keep that quiet.”

The workings of Atlantic City are unknown outside Atlantic City, despite its proximity to New York,

and even many Kindred within the domain are clueless as to who’s in charge or if it even matters.

Edith Blumenau, Clan Toreador

— Blumenau has seen the rise and fall of many a vampire in Atlantic City and has been an eager participant in engineering those shifts in power since her Embrace in the early 20th century. She’s never identified as a “Cammie 1%er,” as she calls them, instead gravitating toward the Anarch Movement, where due to her cool common sense and rationality, she’s won many supporters. Her nightspot, the “Ruby Throat,” was a popular hangout for members of the Movement during Prohibition, and she’s held a deep-seated love for gambling ever since she established her club.

Blumenau made the long journey from America to Budapest in 1950 to see if she could trace any of her mortal relatives and convince them to come back with her to the States, but all she found was unmarked graves and names on lists, cementing her rejection of callous and cruel authority. It was while in Budapest that she listened extensively to the Bahari of that domain, and upon returning to Atlantic City, set about cultivating her own religious garden.

In recent years her growing cult found the willing ears of Ornella Giovanni, who — sick and tired of following her grandsire’s capricious orders — willingly joined the Bahari. Until that time, Blumenau’s cult had entirely consisted of kine. Ornella joining convinced Blumenau that her garden was ready to flourish.

Blumenau took the reins from Ornella, who gave them up without question as she underwent her own spiritual development. In turn, Blumenau used information Ornella gave her regarding the Hecata to buy off the Camarilla remnants in the domain and secure Atlantic City for the Anarchs.

She protects her garden at all costs.

The Anarchs

The city's Anarchs form a sizeable coterie, some of whom drift in and out of AC, others making permanent havens and either assisting in propping up Blumenau's position and beliefs, or working on replacing her with someone less driven by spiritual concerns.

Abigail Kirby, Caitiff — Of all the Kindred in Atlantic City, Abigail has been here the longest. Abigail's family was one of the financiers of the AC Boardwalk in 1870, and she still remembers its construction as if it were yesterday. She was Embraced in one of the many arcades in 1908, an older woman by then, but no less committed to the city. Among the most well-known Anarchs of the East Coast, she earned the Camarilla's enmity when, during the sectarian wars, she proclaimed "no Anarch of Atlantic City will assist the Camarilla in their war," and many Anarchs followed that lead. She strongly believes in the Kindred of a domain serving that same domain, and regularly feeds her companion Edith Blumenau advice on how to rejuvenate the city. She makes her haven in an apartment within walking distance of city hall. Kirby is familiar with the Bahari and suspects Blumenau is working just as hard for their agenda as she is for the Anarchs, which troubles the older Caitiff.

Ferdinanda "Ferdie" Dixon, Clan Toreador — Both sired by the same vampire, but 30 years apart, Ferdie always felt she was in the shadow of her Blood sibling, Edith. While Edith pursued spiritual revolution, Ferdie aggressively pursued influence over the unions, which were until recently (in vampire memory) incredibly prominent in the state of New Jersey. Ferdie's star was rising, but with so many unions busted and Blumenau successfully indoctrinating Ornella Giovanni, she lost her shine in the eyes of many Kindred. Ferdie is an

Anarch through and through and believes in hitting the Camarilla in their wallets by disrupting the economic sectors they tend to influence. Since Blumenau's adoption of the title "Baron," Ferdie has considered whether to foment a rebellion against her sister. Ferdie makes her haven in Union City, but regularly drives to Atlantic City to mingle with other Kindred. She believes the Bahari are a death cult fixated on irrelevant mysticism, and worries that an increase in its membership could spell an end to Anarch rule over Atlantic City.

Painite, Thin-Blood — Many Kindred believe this young girl, barely a vampire, adopts a pseudonym like many of her kind. Painite is in fact her birth name, her parents opting to name her after the rarest of gems. Painite is a little starry-eyed and generally optimistic, grounding many Anarchs with her talk of humanity's inner beauty and worth. She was only Embraced a month ago and still lives with her parents, who have become incredibly concerned about their daughter dropping from school. They want to take her to a doctor for her aversion to daylight, but so far, she's persuaded them she'll soon recover.

Justin "Poodle Pumper" Simmons, Thin-Blood — On one hand Poodle Pumper is the biggest running joke among AC's Anarchs. He doesn't mind his brethren among the Movement laughing about how he botched a hit on a rival drug kingpin, instead only succeeding in killing the man's dog, but if a vampire outside the sect joins in, he swiftly loses his cool. On the other hand, Poodle Pumper's the deadliest Kindred in the city, with more bodies to his name as a mortal than most Kindred take down in undeath. This thin-blood is wholly committed to snatching lives for the Anarchs and for his gang, the Simmons Crew. He associates the Camarilla with city police, and like the police, he won't touch Camarilla

vampires for the heat it'll bring down in doing so. He has, however, done everything in his power to sabotage their claims on the city. Poodle Pumper maintains a spartan haven on Mediterranean Avenue.

Savio "Popcorn" Cámara, Thin-Blood — Popcorn keeps his past to himself, leading to conjecture that he's everything from a famed Mexican revolutionary to a low-level Latino gangster. He arrived in Atlantic City in 1992 and quickly attached himself to Edith Blumenau's coterie, dabbling in her Bahari worship, but primarily acting as a bodyguard and trafficker. When the Anarchs started pushing the Camarilla out of the city, Cámara planted the explosives that saw three buildings — two stores and an apartment — blow up in spectacular fashion, with each being attributed to gas leaks. Since then, he's been known as Popcorn. He often sleeps in the Three Bears Casino, acting as muscle for Blumenau when she needs it.

Waxman, Clan Lasombra — Waxman was young when Prohibition raged and organized crime took over Atlantic City. He looked up to those gangsters, and even did his own share of bootlegging for Italian and Irish gangs. From his vantage point, Embraced as he was in the 1950s, those nights should have never gone away. Waxman pursues an odd course few understand, where his method of anarchy is to strengthen the tyranny of law, thereby increasing the ingenuity of and need for criminal enterprise. To this end, he commits egregious, vulgar crimes, such as gang wars, putting guns in the hands of kids, and widens the rift between the criminal and the legitimate. He wants the law to become increasingly brutal. He wants gambling banned and gun laws made stricter. He wants to make the situation so dire, that his people — mortal and otherwise — are compelled to turn to criminality to survive. Waxman makes his haven in a yacht named "Moonshine," in

the marina. Waxman has heard of the Bahari presence in the city and dreads the idea of a Lilith cult taking vengeance on everyone who's perceivably wronged its members.

The Hecata

The Hecata make up the second largest faction in Atlantic City, having until recently held the domain in their grasp. As far as most Kindred are concerned, they still do.

Ornella Giovanni — Ornella has, for most of her life, been utterly committed to her family. She was raised by strict but loving parents, taught the family trade at an early age, and despite sexism rife within the Giovanni, was positioned as mortal underboss of Atlantic City before receiving the Embrace.

The Embrace changed things. A slow burn cut through Ornella's loyalty, as she realized her position as a vampire was identical to that as a mortal, only she'd be forced to retain her role forever and was now underboss to some Camarilla moron. She advised Prince Hanlon of the Malkavians while siphoning off much of the city's worth to her New York masters, and steadily, it became clear nobody valued *her* achievements. Nobody saw *her*. They saw the family name, and for Ornella, the name was losing its luster.

Ornella murdered Hanlon out of frustration. She knew she couldn't strike at New York's Giovanni, so she positioned herself as city boss. What frustrated her even more, was the family didn't care; she could have done this years ago, and they wouldn't have stopped her. Feeling lost and without purpose, she entered Edith Blumenau's orbit and found the Anarch's talk of personal enlightenment, renewal, and sisterhood appealing. To Ornella, the Bahari represent a fresh start.

Ornella now resides in a well beneath a women's shelter in Atlantic

City, away from the glitz of the Three Bears Casino she once helped operate. She spends her time underground, in a cage, discovering herself and who she wants to be. Through lengthy confessionals she's spilled many family secrets — in confidence — to Blumenau, which unbeknownst to Ornella, her confidante has been using to further her own interests.

Lubango — Lubango was born and grew up in Guyana, but with his family he migrated to AC, joining the city's burgeoning migrant community. He attended school and church, stayed clean, and intended on pursuing a career in engineering. But then, his sire took a liking to the strong young man, and forced the Embrace on him.

Undeath turned Lubango's world upside-down. Unable to maintain an honest job, distanced from his family, and finding himself mired in the world of the dead due to his sire's interests, he found himself hanging with a small gang, which grew to become his crew, and eventually, one of the largest criminal collectives in the city. By the time Ornella took notice of Lubango, he was behind the most widespread drug trade in this part of New Jersey. All cultural affiliation has long since vanished from his gang, and these nights he commands a broad crew, most of them in their teens and early 20s.

Ornella spoke with the Samedi and won him over to the side of the Giovanni, and later, as she grew disenfranchised with her family, his loyalty narrowed to her alone. He agreed to act as her chief defender and bodyguard in all conflicts, on the basis that his gang maintain their hold on the drug trade. He's the only Hecata who knows that Ornella is still in the city (though he doesn't know she's currently bound in a barrel), and acts as go-between for her and Blumenau and her AC clanmates. He listens closely Bahari beliefs and feels inclined to follow them, though he's not yet an initiated cultist.

Ms. Strand — In life, Strand was a horror novelist operating under the pen name of Antony West. She possessed a morbid curiosity when it came to death, reanimation, and the increasingly publicized murderers such as HH Holmes and Jack the Ripper, and translated this interest into gripping prose that won her many admirers.

When Strand was Embraced by her Cappadocian sire, the first thing she was taught was "the Giovanni hate you and want you dead" and "everyone else in our bloodline was massacred by the Giovanni." Unsurprisingly, these words, first uttered to her in the 19th century, left Ms. Strand in a permanent state of paranoia not alleviated by the forming of the Hecata, which she suspects is just a front to bring vampires like her out of the woodwork and make them easier targets to hunt and kill.

Strand moved from domain to domain throughout her undead, and while she reported to Ornella Giovanni following the Family Reunion, and schooled the Giovanni in necromantic arts (both are of similar age, but Ornella's focus was never Oblivion), she was constantly looking over her shoulder for the blade of a Giovanni assassin. Her haven is within a vacated industrial laundry building.

Lia Milliner — Unlike many Kindred who find the Embrace ruins their lives, Lia Milliner has steadfastly continued her role as a hedge fund manager and successful money launderer, and refuses to acknowledge the changes that operating by night and consuming blood impose on her. She owns havens up and down the American East Coast, rinsing cash for vampires and criminals of all stripes, but delivers a more generous rate to members of her own family.

Any Kindred with a knowledge of finance might know of Lia Milliner's stewardship over the Millbank Hedge Fund, which has made a lot

of rich mortals even richer. Those vampires high-end Camarilla Kindred with a knowledge of finance might even know of Milliner's illegal services and links to highly discreet offshore bank accounts.

Milliner's presence in Atlantic City is temporary: she only stops here to facilitate deals regarding money illegally obtained via the casinos. To her knowledge, while Ornella Giovanni is visibly missing, she's still involved in clan activities. Milliner doesn't want to get involved in domain conflict, just as long as the money keeps flowing. She stays in a penthouse suite at the Borgata Hotel.

The Bahari

The children of Lilith are a small but influential cult within the domain, with Edith Blumenau as the religion's regional matron and Ornella Giovanni as a recent convert, who likewise pulls Lubango of the Samedi into the faith. The majority of the city's Bahari are kine, though several lilin from other domains have made the journey to Atlantic City to consort with Blumenau and observe how her garden grows.

"Sleeper" George Price, Clan Toreador — Few Kindred appear as unassuming, average, and disinterested than Sleeper, a Toreador with a combover, a middle-aged man's paunch, a bland sense of style, and a monotone drawl. And yet, Sleeper was one of the most enthusiastic writers on the subject of Lilith as a mortal, and he was Embraced into the cult for his extensive research on the "Mother of Monsters."

His role in Atlantic City is to observe Blumenau's progress and advise her on the beliefs of the cult, before moving on to another domain. From his assessment so far, Blumenau hasn't done enough to bring other Kindred into the fold, and in his quiet way he's disappointed by his clannmate. He temporarily resides in the

Borgata Hotel, not realizing he shares the space with Lia Milliner.

Kima Znaimer, Clan Brujah — Inspired by Edith Blumenau's words to fellow Anarchs about finding spiritual independence from the line of Caine, Znaimer joined the already overpopulated domain as the Baron's newest disciple. Originally from Baltimore and an active Anarch revolutionary there, she was almost lured into the cult of the so-called "Emperor of D.C.," Lucius Sejanus. Znaimer craves approval, and is mercurial in her interests. She knows she's easily swayed, but sincerely believes the Bahari are the best option for her unlife.

Presently, Znaimer works beside Popcorn as Blumenau's bodyguard, though her skills lend themselves more to preaching. Znaimer hasn't risen to a status whereby Blumenau is happy to provide her a haven, with the Baron instead encouraging her new follower to "make your own garden before uprooting mine." Seeing this as a challenge, Znaimer has occupied a space in Fairview Borough, closer to New York than to AC, though she makes the journey to the domain almost every night to listen to her Mawla's words of wisdom.

The Camarilla

The Camarilla doesn't issue a monthly email informing its members which domains have changed hands or when, and Atlantic City was seen as so inconsequential that barely any Camarilla Kindred noted Prince Hanlon's disappearance, outside those remaining within the domain. With fortunes turning, few such vampires exist, but one clings on to dreams of former glory.

Felix Lodz, Clan Tremere — When the other Camarilla Kindred departed Atlantic City, they left Felix behind. They told him he was to maintain the important Atlantic City chantry, but Lodz believes he was misled. The chantry is a single-story

second-hand book store off Marven Gardens, and while it has some treasures within, he thinks his sectmates may have just disliked him enough to abandon him.

Lodz harbors the belief that there's an ongoing war between good and evil, with evil working to crush and corrupt those lowest on the chain of power. Rather than identifying as an Anarch, however, he believes it's his role to inspire the Anarchs into the light. This Warlock believes in literal angels and demons, drawing much mockery from his clannmates. His increasing eccentricities include talking constantly, over-emphasizing mortal traits such as blinking and coughing, and painting white crosses on the front of his book store.

Recently, Lodz came into the ownership of a candle that never burns down. He doesn't know who delivered it to him (he didn't light the candle until weeks after disposing of the parcel, without checking for a return address or secret message), but weighing up if it came from a mage, a vampire, or God, he's decided it came from God (or one of His angels). He now keeps the candle lit in his upstairs window at all times, hoping to signal similarly virtuous Kindred. To date, it has not.

The Outsiders

Atlantic City is a city most visit briefly before heading home or on to their actual destination. One vampire arrived on a transatlantic ship a few years ago, and has been quietly observing the domain's inhabitants ever since. He's decided he might stay.

Diogo, Clan Unknown — When Diogo boarded the ship in Morocco, he was missing a left leg, his face was mangled, and something nasty was growing inside his chest. By the time he arrived in Atlantic City, his leg had regrown, he'd shaped his face to a visage more to his liking, but the thing in his chest... It's still there. It's

in his heart, blooming like fungus. Diogo knows he wouldn't be welcome in this domain, but he has nobody and nothing. The vampires he once considered brothers and sisters are dead and gone. He makes his haven at the ACUA Waste Water Treatment Facility but spends much of his time shifting his appearance, watching Kindred activities, making notes, and wondering when best to strike, align with a faction, or sell the intelligence he's gathered.

Domain Activity: Lining

Atlantic City Kindred have a ritual form of hunting and feeding referred to within the domain as "lining." This activity entails charting the docking and departure of cruise liners (and occasionally, large cargo vessels), docking in at Atlantic City, then hunting (whether through assault, stealth, or seduction) the crew and passengers of these ships in the nights following their arrivals.

Lining is one of the rare instances where Atlantic City's Kindred congregate in a single area, with up to a dozen vampires boarding a ship like pirates in the night, smuggling their way into cabins, and draining their fill from their preferred vessels. AC vampires find a dark humor in and obsession regarding lining, often speaking excitedly about incoming ships or reminiscing about a particular bounty on board a liner long-since departed. Kindred are forbidden from harming each other on board these ships, by order of the departed Prince Hanlon, the vanished Boss Giovanni, and the now leading Baron Blumenau.

While the moral implications of lining are often dire (passengers on cruise liners tend to be elderly and less able to survive feeding), it provides a perfect cover for Atlantic

City's Masquerade. Old folks die on cruise ships all the time, sadly, and a sudden bout of anemia is rarely diagnosed. When it is determined to be the cause of ill health, passenger and ship are by that time up in New York or New Haven, or down in Tampa or Miami, and neither Kindred nor Inquisition have connected the dots back to Atlantic City.

The next ship's arrival is a common topic of conversation among AC Kindred, with some vampires using the subject to test whether another Kindred is truly an AC native. No matter whether the vampires are casino operators, gangsters, or hiding behind a professional veil, they religiously monitor the comings and goings of their next buffet.

Domain Activity: Wagers

It comes as little surprise to visiting Kindred that one of the most common pursuits among AC's Kindred and kine is gambling. The difference between the Kindred gambling pursuits and those of the kine, is while vampires may occasionally dabble in something as mundane and transient as cash betting, their preferred pursuit is wagers connected to territory, vessels, and boons. While the primary participants of these wagers are Anarchs, no Kindred are excluded if they attend the Three Bears or the Ruby Throat during one of Edith Blumenau's gatherings.

To occupy themselves from night to night, Atlantic City's Kindred have developed a gaming system whereby vampires subject themselves to wagers from other Kindred in the domain. You can only place bets on Kindred fulfilling these wagers if you have been subject to one in the past, with the ringleaders of this system initiating the trend in the 1920s and long since passing into the record books.

Wagers in Atlantic City range from juvenile acts to more nuanced pursuits. Younger Kindred impose wagers such as feeding from a public official and making a recording to prove it, or using Disciplines to go on an inordinate winning streak in one of the city's casinos. Older vampires, such as Blumenau and Kirby are trying to edge these wagers out of circulation, in favor of more nuanced pursuits, such as establishing a regularly attended community center in a dangerous part of the city to rejuvenate an area and strengthen the herd, holding the most well-attended gatherings (with A-list celebrities) on the Boardwalk, or convincing private individuals to invest heavily in the area in realistic development projects.

As a collective, the city's Kindred nominate the wager and set a time limit on it, and at that point, one vampire must volunteer themselves to act as the subject. If no volunteer is forthcoming, the Kindred with the domain title of "court bookmaker" (currently Abigail Kirby) selects a subject. Odds are then placed on that vampire's likely success or failure, and they may accept assistance in succeeding, just as other Kindred may attempt to sabotage them, without taking action that might lead to the vampire's destruction or exposure of the Masquerade.

Whether the volunteer succeeds or not, they gain a small portion of whatever the city's Kindred placed down as a wager, with the remaining spoils going to whomever betted correctly. As examples, the profits might entail a casino hotel's population being treated as the winners' herd, a new block of housing being carved up as territory or for new havens, every loser contributing to the winners' next purchase through the Circulatory System blood trafficking trade, or temporary influence through some of the losers' spheres of interest. Money of course might change hands too, as well as boons for cashing in at a later date.

Prologue

The following can be drip-fed to the player characters as and when they ask for information on the political situation in Atlantic City or based on flashbacks to their discovery of the leak, or meeting with Donatello Giovanni (or another potential sponsor). Storytellers can provide information from this section as a result of roleplay and successful Intelligence + Politics rolls.

Just a few nights ago, the player characters became aware of an information leak from the Atlantic City Hecata. Rumor has it, the Tremere local to the player characters used knowledge of the Promise of 1528's termination date (a secret kept between high-ranking members of the Hecata and Camarilla) and the Family Reunion to successfully squeeze their neighboring Hecata into a deal that didn't favor the Necromancers. This information would have been considered secretive among the Hecata, and never intended for Clan Tremere's eyes. Interrogation of one of the Tremere retainers revealed the source of the intelligence as Atlantic City.

Perhaps the player characters discover this through one of their Camarilla contacts among the Warlocks, or maybe word reaches them through a mortal agent with knowledge of the Giovanni family's panic following this release of information. If the Storyteller wishes to use the Hecata recruitment angle, the player characters could have been summoned to one of Donatello's clubs in the Village, in New York City, where they were told about this dangerous reveal.

The player characters' contact explained to the coterie that a good place to start looking into this leak would be the Three Bears Casino, and a meeting with Ornella Giovanni (if the contact is a vampire) as she runs the casino and acts as boss of the domain, or Thomas Zingaretti (if the contact is a mortal) as he's the casino frontman with suspected connections to organized crime. A sponsor with sufficient resources can arrange a helicopter flight to the Three Bears Casino, though a road trip is equally possible.

Research or questioning allows the player characters to discover the city contains several Hecata: Lubango, Ms.



Strand, and maybe Lia Milliner at the Borgata Hotel. If they're being recruited by a vampire like Donatello Giovanni, he expresses that neither Ornella nor any of the other city Hecata should be aware of the player characters' arrival, as he doesn't want the city cleaned up before an inspection.

Chapter One: Three Bears Casino

When the player characters arrive in AC, the tourist part of the city is abuzz with the visiting trade, evident from the grossly illuminated Boardwalk, casinos stretching up the coastline, and the clashing sounds of music from clubs and bands playing in different parts of this small area.

A woman by the name of Hanna Höhne works the Three Bears Casino rooftop (if they arrived by helicopter)



while a man named Billy Blick runs the valet service at ground level, greeting guests and escorting them to the more accommodating reception areas, suites, and casino floor. They explain readily that they weren't informed as to the protagonists' arrival, but wealthy clients have been known to drop in unannounced. Neither Höhne nor Blick have knowledge of vampires or their affairs.

The casino staff are happy to show the vampires to most customer-accessible places in the hotel and casino, but require a Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3) or a compelling argument for them to introduce the characters to Zingaretti. If asked about Ornella Giovanni, the staff explain "that name's a blast from the past" but go on to describe her as a criminal from over 20 years ago who used to run illegal operations in the city's casinos. Neither Höhne nor Blick heard of Ornella since her Embrace, and they're unaware she became Thomas Zingaretti's puppeteer.

If the player characters ask about Zingaretti, Höhne and Blick explain that Thomas Zingaretti was a producer in the music industry with a few platinum discs to his name, but entered the casino operation trade when he part-funded the opening of the Three Bears a decade ago. He still runs the joint, though he only meets the highest rollers, celebrity guests, and significant political figures, spending the remainder of his time working behind the scenes.

Meeting with Zingaretti

If the player characters were successful in convincing Hanna or Billy that they should meet Zingaretti, they're escorted to the restricted sixth floor, which contains offices for important personnel and Zingaretti's personal living area: he rarely leaves the casino. The characters may find their way here via other means, including those listed below:

- The elevators can only be made to stop at the sixth floor using a staff key. Such a key can be snatched from a worker's chain using a successful Dexterity + Larceny roll (Difficulty 4).
- Staircases running up and down the hotel have fire doors on every floor, including the sixth. However, these doors are alarmed, requiring an Intelligence + Technology roll (Difficulty 3) to disconnect, and to complicate matters further, these doors open *out* onto the staircases more easily than they push *in*, requiring a Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 3).
- Player characters may attempt to bluff their way to the sixth floor via a different staff member, and while low level croupiers and security can't access

the floor, individuals such as the floor manager, pit bosses, and head cashiers can, requiring a Charisma or Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 5) to convince them they're supposed to be allowed in, with each dot of Fame possessed by the bluffing vampire reducing the Difficulty by 1.

Zingaretti is closed off behind a pair of tall, gold-plated doors carved with a bizarre tableau of bears, Native Americans, and a little girl who could be assumed to be Goldilocks. A secretary named Richard May works outside his office until he retires for the night, and inevitably wakes up shortly after he does, matching the boss' working hours as closely as possible. Naturally, he has no appointment booked for the player characters to meet with Zingaretti, but it only requires an easy Manipulation + Persuasion (or Intimidation, if the characters are growing frustrated by this point) to convince May to call Zingaretti and tell him some guests wish to meet with him.

Zingaretti's first response — matching that of his staff — is he's not expecting anyone and these guests are to be escorted to their suites, the casino floor, or out the front door. If they resist, he asks May to call security. The player characters can enter Zingaretti's office easily enough (the doors are unlocked), but they'll need to drop a name such as "Donatello," "Ornella," "New York" or display something of their undead nature for him to call off security. They can attempt to bluff their way in, but Zingaretti is hard-headed, requiring the characters to meet a Difficulty of 4 on their attempt to charm or frighten him, if any of the aforementioned names aren't raised.

Zingaretti is a small man in a grey suit, his thick white hair contrasting against the sunbed-tan seared into his skin. He speaks fast and habitually plays with the signet ring on his left little finger. He has no little finger on his right hand, and refuses to state why if questioned (Ornella cut it off some decades ago for stealing from her).

If persuaded as to why they're here, a clearly nervous Zingaretti explains that Ornella (he calls her "Boss Giovanni" took a sabbatical the year prior, leaving the running of operations in his hands. He nervously confirms he's continued to send everything requested to New York, with not a cent missing.

If the player characters ask where Ornella Giovanni is, he says he doesn't know. A Wits + Insight roll determines he's telling the truth: he genuinely doesn't know where she is. If questioned regarding his status as her ghoul, however, he doesn't hesitate to explain he entered the employ of Edith Blumenau, who now runs the casino through him.

This revelation might rock the player characters, who until now are unlikely to have heard much about Blumenau, or that the casino is anything other than Hecata

domain. If intimidated, Zingaretti squeals and whines that he was without a source of vitae, and Blumenau stepped in. He's unashamedly devoted to her (which may be the effects of being her ghoul), but defends himself if interrogated. He asks what else he was supposed to do, when the hunger would grow too great and rapid aging was a possibility.

If asked about the leak, Zingaretti again claims ignorance, and is telling the truth. He does however offer to set them up with Blumenau (he never refers to her as a Baron, as he remains outside Kindred politics), as she may know more of what they're discussing. Likewise, he freely names Lubango and Ms. Strand as sources of money and "other things" the New York Hecata demand. They always deliver on time and at the casino, meaning he doesn't need to know where they make their territory. He clearly finds Ms. Strand terrifying, blaming her emaciated appearance and tendency to speak into the shadows (actually to a wraith that follows her around).

Zingaretti offers the player characters a suite especially designed for Kindred, inside the casino, without windows, should they desire it. If they prefer separate accommodation, he promises that all external suites have blackout blinds, and other vampires have used them before without issue.

As soon as the player characters have left his office, Zingaretti calls Blumenau and explains who the player characters are. If they requested a meeting, he arranges for Blumenau to meet them at the Rainforest Café on the Boardwalk at 22:00 the following night. He leaves a message in their room to this effect. If not, Blumenau takes matters into her own hands to drive the coterie from the city.

THOMAS ZINGARETTI

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 1, Social 5, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Persuasion 6; Awareness 5

Disciplines: Dominate 1

Special: Zingaretti wields a small pistol with a +2 damage value.

General Difficulties: 4/2

Safe Haven

Several rooms in the hotel go without windows, due to the volume of interior space on the upper floors, but only one is specifically kitted out for Kindred visitors. The safe haven is on the ninth floor, one down from



the penthouse (reserved for mortal guests), and while it lacks views of the city or sea, it does contain four bedrooms, three bathrooms, a wall-size television, a laptop and tablet advertised as “secure” (though both are tapped by Blumenau’s servants to record activities), a bar, and a fridge stocked with food. In many ways, it’s an ideal haven for a coterie.

The room contains two recording devices — a camera wired into the TV set and a microphone in the light above the room’s central table. Player characters sweeping the room for such surveillance find them on an Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 3 for one device, Difficulty 4 for two devices). These are Zingaretti’s devices, which he uses to create recordings of vampire activity should he come under threat later. They don’t tie directly to the plot, but do act as leverage should Zingaretti (or Blumenau) need to blackmail the

characters at a later point.

This plot element is one the Storyteller can pursue as they see fit, as while it doesn’t connect to the information leak, it could lead to law enforcement investigating the player characters, Blumenau or the player characters eliminating Zingaretti, or provide the ghoul with leverage over them.

Exploring their Surroundings

The Three Bears is a character of its own. We encourage the Storyteller to populate it with interesting guests and staff, and minor events to make the place feel vital. The casino and hotel are a microcosm of Atlantic City’s moldy decadence. Describe the place as feeling three or four decades out of date, with its fixtures and fur-

nishings peeling and breaking down, the styles and shades on the walls and carpets as faded and unfashionable, and the inhabitants a mix of depressed and drunk and (rarer) buzzing with excitement from a big win or a noseful of coke.

Zingaretti’s Quarters

Zingaretti’s private quarters are off-limits and only accessible via his office, unless the player characters bully their way in (Zingaretti won’t try to stop them himself, but pleads with Blumenau to get rid of them the following night), or if they sneak in while Zingaretti and his secretary are occupied outside the office, using a Wits + Stealth roll (Difficulty 3) to evade any security.

His quarters take up a full half of the sixth floor, but seem barely lived-in. As Blumenau’s ghoul, he’s almost permanently working or entertaining

guests, and when he isn't doing that, he's getting sleep. This results in his home resembling a museum to a music producer — his former profession — as platinum and gold discs line the walls telling the story of his life in Motown, and photos of him shaking hands with musicians, actors, and even President George H.W. Bush.

Zingaretti has another office in his quarters, which he uses for purposes unrelated to the casino. The room contains an assortment of autobiographies, and the word processor and digital recorder in this room indicate he's trying to write a memoir. Listening to the recordings doesn't reveal anything relating to Kindred society, but that could be because he hasn't reached the part where he's met Ornella Giovanni yet. It could give the player characters cause for the concern, but how they act on this information is up to them to decide.

Zingaretti's office does contain a few further items of interest, visible to anyone asking for the room's contents — a Rolex watch hanging on a small bust of Julius Caesar; a miniature treasure chest atop his desk; and buried in a bottom drawer, only discoverable using an Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 5, unless the player characters specify that they're searching everything), a summons from a year ago, asking him to meet with an Agent Allen Roscoe of the FBI to discuss suspected activities in his casino.

The Rolex, if examined, has an engraving in the back:

*"To Thomas,
I consider you the truest of friends,
Ornella"*

A successful Intelligence + Finance roll (Difficulty 3) dates the release of this Rolex to fifteen years ago.

The miniature treasure chest is locked, with the key on Zingaretti's person at all times. It's possible to break it open using a Larceny roll (Difficulty 4 if combined with Strength, Difficulty 3 if using Wits to pick the lock). It contains a rolodex of celebrities and important Atlantic City business owners, but if the player characters are looking for names of Hecata from the domain, they can find telephone numbers for Lubango and Lia Milliner within.

If the player characters call Lubango they get an automated answerphone. The Samedi doesn't call back, instead referring any information from the call to Blumenau. Milliner on the other hand is keen to meet the player characters on the following night, and offers to meet them at the fountain in Oscar E. McClinton Waterfront Park, at 21:00 the following evening. She explains she has other engagements tonight and won't be swayed.

The Casino Floor

On a weekend evening such as this one, the casino floor is filled with out-of-towners and a few local regulars, playing

the tables and the slots. The cacophony of sound in the casino only matches the visually offensive din of flashing lights, as servers carry trays of drinks to gambling parties, depressed or elated punters move from one zone to the next, and the ever-present eye of security stands at each corner.

For all that Atlantic City is run down and the Three Bears hotel looks like something from the wrong century, the casino itself is modern and efficiently run. The thinking is this: People don't come to Atlantic City to sleep in hotel rooms; they come to AC to spend money, and casinos want them gambling until they're running empty. By the time someone's burned through their kids' college funds, they don't care much for the quality of accommodation. Zingaretti expresses this openly, if asked.

If any of the player characters decide to try their luck gambling, the Storyteller is encouraged to either play a hand of the game in question (if they have the cards and know the rules) to set the casino atmosphere, or resolve any gambling attempts with a Wits + Larceny roll (Difficulty 4) if competing at speed against others, or an Intelligence + Academics roll (Difficulty 4) if playing a more long-form game, studying the slot machines for likely payouts, and so forth.

Popcorn watches the Kindred on the casino floor, if Zingaretti has had the opportunity to call Blumenau following their arrival. He maintains a distance from them, dressed in the same black and gold attire of the other casino security, but on a Wits + Awareness roll (Difficulty 3) it's obvious he's watching them and only them. Unlike the other security personnel, he doesn't have a name tag. If approached, he mutters that he's got nothing to say to them. If pushed, he states that he's ensuring they don't do anything stupid. If identified as Kindred, he stares daggers before retreating, and reports to Blumenau that this newly arrived coterie are loose-lipped and dangerous. If he determines they're using Disciplines to game the casino (perhaps they stare too long at the croupier before betting, or blatantly issue a command for someone to "fold"), he orders them to leave, or risk the wrath of management. Security attempt to escort them out if they refuse, and call the cops if they put up a fight.

SAVIO "POPCORN" CÁMARA

Clan: Thin-Blood

Sire: Sacred Jared

Embraced: 2008 (Born 1987)

Ambition: Keep the Three Bears secure

Convictions: Never let harm reach my loved ones

Touchstones: Marta Las Plumas — Popcorn's new girlfriend

Humanity: 5**Generation:** 14th**Blood Potency:** 0**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2; Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 3**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 5**Skills:** Brawl 4, Firearms 2, Survival (Streets) 3; Intimidation 4, Leadership 1, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3; Academics (Mathematics) 3, Awareness 3, Investigation 2, Politics (Anarch) 2, Technology (Explosives) 4**Disciplines:** None**THIN-BLOOD MERITS:**

- Anarch Comrades
- Lifelike

THIN-BLOOD FLAWS:

- Bestial Temper
- Mortal Frailty

General Difficulties: 4/2

Casino Encounters

The casino and hotel offer a panoply of potential encounters for the player characters, testing their Humanity, adherence to the Masquerade, and respect for the domain and Atlantic City's kine.

THE WHALE

A wealthy tourist loudly splashes cash around the roulette wheel and baccarat table, tipping servers happily, standing other gamblers with his own cash to keep them in the game, and generally drawing attention to himself. This individual could be a celebrity or a big business owner from overseas, just looking to have some fun. One of the player characters catches his attention, and he asks them in to blow on his dice or touch his chips for luck. He's generally exuberant, and if he makes a win after the vampire's involvement, he gives them a handful of chips for their trouble.

The Storyteller might opt for this individual to act as a distraction for a cheater elsewhere, a chance to involve a character one of the player characters might admire or see as a potential ghoul or childe, or simply have the whale (as high rollers with big accounts are often known) suffer some misfortune later that the player characters witness or participate in. He's staying in the casino hotel penthouse and hosts a party there the following night, to which the player characters could be invited.

THE HOUSE ALMOST ALWAYS WINS

While gambling effectively does require skill, especially as far as arithmetic and probabilities when playing blackjack and pontoon, and bluffing when playing games such as poker, the odds are stacked against the players. Therefore, the Difficulty for any gambling attempt should be 4 or higher, unless Disciplines are used to sway the odds, such as Auspex for reading the dealer and other players' intentions, Presence to distract anyone at the table, or Dominate if the gambler feels like risking Blumenau's hospitality.

Dice pools for gambling vary depending on the game. Wits or Dexterity + Larceny makes sense for a fast-paced game requiring sleight of hand. Wits + Insight works for a game where detecting the tells of others is vital, and Composure + Insight helps to conceal one's feelings. Intelligence + Academics, Finance, or Technology applies to games the players have time to study. In short, gambling comes in many forms and requires a variety of skills to tip odds in the players' favor.

The Storyteller can always put everything down to chance and just have players roll a single die, with an 8 or above rendering victory.

THE DRUNKEN LOSER

In one of the corridors of the hotel, on the way to the elevators, a woman is leaning against a wall with her hand on her forehead. She's staring blankly into the middle distance, after gambling away everything she has. Now she's drunk on free martinis, and sluggishly extols her pitiful state to the player characters, growing aggressive with them if they attempt to ignore her.

This individual illustrates one of the desperate lows a mortal might sink to, especially in a place like Atlantic City. She starts begging one of the friendlier-looking vampires for help winning her cash back, interspersed with her crying about not being able to go back to her family after this, vocalizing that she "might as well just walk down the pier and not stop." Whether her genuine feeling or not, the possibility exists that she might go through with her declared action unless the player characters intervene, possibly clashing with their Convictions.

GAPS IN SECURITY

Walking the floor, an observant Kindred can determine the route the collectors take to carry their cash-filled Halliburton cases (a trademark of the Three Bears) to the casino counting room. If they study this route, they notice that just briefly, someone wedges the

typically locked door to the counting room (accessible via a winding corridor and lined with multiple cameras) open with a chair, likely contravening the house's security procedures.

The typically locked door being held open in this way may pose as a lure for a character with a love of theft and a Discipline such as *Obfuscate*, or just pique the player characters' curiosity, as this is just one of the many security flaws present in the Three Bears. Croupiers and cashiers filling these cases in public view, the set route across the casino floor, and the uniform appearance of the Halliburton briefcases. If the player characters bring this to Zingaretti's attention, he's more inclined to be helpful toward them, as long as it doesn't interfere in his service to Blumenau.

CHEATING THE HOUSE

If the player characters stop to gamble, and study the players around them, they may well encounter some theft in action. Across two card tables, a couple of players are working together, sending each other silent signals to outfox their respective dealers and other gamblers. It seems one of their marks is failing to guard her cards, allowing the cheaters to corner and exploit weaknesses. At a slot machine, an elderly woman pours quarters into the one-armed-bandit but conceals the actions of a fraudster within her frail frame. She has affixed a small device to the machine, just as waist level, that reads the tumblers within so she knows exactly which buttons to push and when.

Player characters can spot these activities using *Intelligence + Insight* or *Larceny* (Difficulty 4) to iden-

tify concealed behavior, or *Wits + Awareness* (Difficulty 4) to spot a physical act of criminality in progress. The Storyteller can adjust the Difficulty if the thief is highly competent or a luckless amateur. A player character may wish to blackmail a successful thief into handing over their earnings or turn them in to the casino security, in which case they're offered a complementary room. The mortal side of the casino is unprepared to offer anything further, but Blumenau expresses her gratitude by permitting feeding from vessels in their secure suite.

MUFFLED SCREAMS

The Three Bears contains many a labyrinthine corridor network, used only by staff to get from one station to another, such as for the purpose of transporting cash and chips. If the player characters gain access to these corridors, a *Wits + Awareness* roll (Difficulty 2) allows them to hear muffled screams from behind a locked door. Should they break or bust in with a *Strength* or *Dexterity + Larceny* roll (Difficulty 2), they find casino security beating a young man, tied to a chair. They've already broken his fingers. The dripping of blood and his pulped face inspires a roll to rest hungry frenzy (Difficulty 2) if at Hunger 4 or higher.

At least one security officer commands them to leave while another escorts them back to the casino floor, explaining they're best off forgetting what they saw. If pushed, they tell the player characters this man was a card cheat whose lucky run ripping off joints has gone on for over a year. They just caught him sneaking in wearing a wig and a false nose, but before he could steal anything



on this occasion, they snatched him up and delivered “cheater’s justice.”

If the player characters respond to this by involving the law, the young man is gone from the security room before the cops arrive. The security officer is more inclined to threaten them into silence than bribe them, but if persuaded otherwise with a Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3), tells them to go to the cashier station and say “Mobray fronts them for three,” which gets them \$3,000 worth of chips on the house. The player characters won’t be able to find the thief after this, as Blumenau drains him dry and has his body cut up and deposited away from the casino.

SUDDEN HEART ATTACK

The excitement of the casino is too much for one gambler, as their heart goes into arrest, they fall across the felt of the card table, and then slide to the floor. A few screams go up, security calls for an ambulance, and everything — just briefly — stops.

This scene could be a ruse for a planned heist or come as an opportunity for another gambler to grab chips or cash from a table. Notably, in the case of an emergency like this the croupiers are trained to immediately cover their tables and hold all players present, until the situation concludes.

The unlucky gambler isn’t dead immediately, but no doctors on vacation rush to them, and everyone seems paralyzed with indecision. The player characters might have the expertise to do something to help the individual, requiring an Intelligence + Medicine roll (Difficulty 2) to determine this was likely a heart attack and not choking, a brain hemorrhage, or some other cause of arrest, and a Strength + Medicine roll (Difficulty 3) to revive them. A dose of vitae between their lips brings the victim back immediately, but it’s up to the Storyteller whether they return as a ghoul or a newly Embraced vampire.

TICKET WINNER

It’s often a wise investment for casinos to offer free (or low cost) food and beverages, entertainment and beauty treatments, because they want people staying inside the casino, gambling, for as long as possible. One way the Three Bears generates good feeling and makes even the unluckiest gambler feel like a winner is through a lottery system. Every hour, one player from a table is selected (theoretically at random, though the staff observe the gamblers through eye-in-the-sky cameras for good looking or homely individuals), and that person wins a full spa treatment, room service, and front row tickets to the band performing at the Three Bears live music venue the following night.

If the player characters elect to gamble, the Storyteller should select one of them as the winner. They may

choose not to partake in the offered luxuries, but on the other hand, it’s a rare occasion to feel pampered and special in an unlif that’s all too often cold and uncaring.

INTERESTING VINTAGES

The dyscrasias of mortals spread throughout the casino provide a heady mix of joys, staggering lows, and a lot of anger, sometimes directed at the casino, more often directed at the gamblers themselves for having wasted all that money.

Vampires with a talent for Auspex may pick up on the throbbing resonance from some of the kine at the Three Bears, generating a feeling of having entered an opium den rich with intoxicating spices. Blumenau hasn’t given them permission to feed from mortals inside the casino when they first arrive, but the temptation to sample some of these piques of emotion could prove too much for the hungry vampire.

The Boardwalk

The Atlantic City Boardwalk acts as the city backbone, providing access to hotels, resorts, casinos, shops, and more. Multiple piers stretch out into the sea, the Garden Pier offering arts and culture, Steel Pier containing over-priced rides and carnival games, while the Central Pier Arcade proudly holds a go-kart speedway down its length. While these entertainments might seem frivolous, they act as a pleasant distraction for stressed Kindred and kine, and many discreet places behind which they can feed.

The Storyteller should describe how the Boardwalk feels alive with life. From the arcades to the historical museum, the restaurants to the Atlantic City Art Center; all thrum with life, emitting an inconsistent noise of voices, footsteps, and beating pulses.

If the player characters choose to explore the Boardwalk, the Storyteller can explain how in this part of the city, high-end shops and restaurants such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton entice them in, open all night, as do the range of casinos offering their own stores, bars, and gambling spaces.

While no encounters are fixed for the Boardwalk on this night, the player characters can find and scout out the Rainforest Café, where they’re due to meet with Blumenau. The café backs onto the sea and sits near the center of the long Boardwalk, giving an impressive view of the flow of humanity. At this time in the story, the Storyteller should focus on engagements with the kine over the city Kindred, but if they want to add an air of danger or intrigue, a character such as Painite or Kima Znaimer might observe them or introduce themselves, if the player characters display obviously vampiric abilities.

CAINE'S ELEVEN

Some players are going to wonder aloud how easily they could rob a casino. It'll happen, don't worry. While this story isn't built around a heist, using Disciplines to hypnotize or otherwise influence a croupier, evade cameras, or sneak their way into a cash room, is possible. Notably, however, difficulties to bypass security and stay hidden while carrying bags of cash are high (consider 5s or higher), as casinos are built like secure bank vaults, with multiple layers between gamblers and great quantities of cash, with dozens of eyes on the floor, the croupiers, the pit bosses, and the floor managers, all looking for something amiss.

This doesn't mean it can't be done, but raiding a casino should be a major plot rather than a petty theft, and the prospect of grand larceny is bound to draw the attention of mortal law enforcement. Stealing from a casino where vampires are present and influential is equivalent to stealing a Prince's blood dolls and Touchstones: you don't make a haven in a casino unless you care a great deal about the money passing through it. Like blood, it's sacred, and inviolate. Disrupting the flow draws attention and insults the host, and in Atlantic City, the host of the Three Bears — whether the player characters know it or not — is Edith Blumenau.

AC contains several casinos, and while this story doesn't pretend every casino is influenced by one or more vampires, it can be assumed any of the Kindred mentioned in the Atlantic City Kindred section (see p. 53) have stakes in these lucrative pies.

Both vampires, while quiet about their own affiliations and uninterested in Hecata politics, urge caution: Atlantic City hasn't been targeted by the Inquisition yet, but there's rumors of the mortals gaining a deeper foothold in Newark and Jersey City, not that far away.

PAINITE

Clan: Thin-Blood

Sire: Savio "Popcorn" Cámara

Embraced: 2020 (Born 2005)

Ambition: Keep a low profile while I'm learning

Convictions: Keep my family from learning the truth

Touchstones: Nadia Service — mother who still dotes on Painite

Humanity: 7

Generation: 15th

Blood Potency: 0

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1; Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 5; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 9

Skills: Athletics 3, Craft (Painting) 3, Drive 1, Stealth 4; Animal Ken 3, Etiquette 1, Insight 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1; Awareness 1, Technology 2

Disciplines: Presence 1

THIN-BLOOD MERITS:

- Anarch Comrades

- Discipline Affinity: Presence

THIN-BLOOD FLAWS:

- Baby Teeth
- Dead Flesh

General Difficulties: 5/2

KIMA ZNAIMER

Clan: Brujah

Sire: Philip Freeman

Embraced: 1998 (Born 1966)

Ambition: Impress Edith Blumenau

Convictions: Never allow the destruction of your creations to go unavenged

Touchstones: Trudi Andrews — mortal Bahari and devoted ghoul

Humanity: 6

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 5, Manipulation 2, Composure 4; Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Skills: Craft (Gardening) 4, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Melee 3, Survival 2; Etiquette 2, Insight (Beliefs) 4, Leadership 1, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 1; Awareness 2, Finance 1, Investigation 1, Medicine (Herbal) 2, Occult (Bahari) 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Potence 2, Presence 2

General Difficulties: 5/3

The Borgata Hotel

The only Hecata whose location is known prior to the player characters' flight to Atlantic City, is Lia Milliner. Any character with a financial background (three or more dots in Finance, or four or more dots in Resources) has heard of Milliner and her East Coast operations, along with her habit of staying in luxury at the Borgata Hotel. Some Kindred even suspect she owns a stake in the MGM Resorts chain, which owns the hotel. Lia maintains a temporary haven in the penthouse suite. While she's aware Ornella nominally runs the Three Bears, she prefers to not rely on family favors for trivial matters such as accommodation, hence her suite at another hotel.

The player characters may visit the Borgata, which is a ten-minute drive from the Three Bears and not on the Boardwalk, but locating the Milliner in the thriving casino, hotel, and leisure facilities present at the Borgata is easier said than done. Unknown to the player characters, they cannot encounter Lia Milliner at this point: she's settling business deals elsewhere in the domain. But through a challenging Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3) or if they gain access to one of the hotel reception computers, an Intelligence + Technology roll (Difficulty 2), they can see the penthouse suite is registered in her name for the remainder of the week.

Reaching the penthouse requires a key card registered to that floor, which can again be charmed from a staff member (using the previous roll and Difficulty) or stolen from behind one of the front desks, on a successful Dexterity + Larceny roll (Difficulty 3).

These hurdles in the way of reaching the penthouse may result in the player characters becoming convinced Milliner is within. Instead, if they enter with the key card, they interrupt her accountant, who in Milliner's absence is watching a war movie on the penthouse's big screen. When he realizes the player characters aren't Lia Milliner, he drops his bucket of chicken and spills his Pepsi over himself, cursing loudly before asking (without any fear) who in hell the player characters think they are.

The accountant — a mortal by the name of Henry Mona — is an abrasive prick. He tells the intruders that Milliner isn't there, and won't be there until the morning or the following night. He doesn't divulge anything regarding his client's vampiric nature, as he doesn't understand it himself. He threatens to call security and if threatened in turn, he'll point out "I'm Miss Milliner's wallet: do you really want to damage me?"

The most Mona does to accommodate the player characters is take their details and tell Milliner they stopped by without invitation. She *will* call them, but Mona gives no indication of this being likely.

If the player characters harm or seriously threaten Mona, when Milliner does reach out to them any Difficulty for a social roll with her increases by +2, as she highly values this man.

Though this scene is presented as part of Chapter One, it's possible the player characters don't seek Lia Milliner out until the second night. If this happens, the Storyteller can decide how accessible Milliner is, depending on how fast they want the plot to flow: Lia knows Ornella is still around and in hiding, so speaking with her provides confirmation of suspicions that might arise through play.

HENRY MONA

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 2, Social 3, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Intimidation 6; Finance 9

Special: If the player characters harm Henry Mona, any social encounter with Lia Milliner comes at a +2 Difficulty.

General Difficulties: 4/1

Chapter Two: Meet the Family

This chapter might go one of several ways. The expectation is that one or more of the following occurs on the second night the player characters are in Atlantic City:

- The player characters played nice with Thomas Zingaretti and now have a meeting arranged with Edith Blumenau, for 22:00 at the Rainforest Café.
- The player characters were hostile with Zingaretti, didn't meet him, or otherwise declined the invitation to meet with Blumenau. In this situation, Blumenau commands her followers to terrorize the player characters and drive them out of Atlantic City.
- The player characters discovered Zingaretti's rolodex and called Lia Milliner, who arranged to meet with them at the park at 21:00, or they encountered Milliner's accountant, from which Milliner calls them and arranges the same meeting.

The following scenes therefore encompass a range of encounters, and the Storyteller should be aware of them before running this chapter. Elements of each scene can be transposed into others or reused later in the story, if needed. This chapter might run anywhere between one and three nights in length.

Coffee with Blumenau

The Rainforest Café is a busy little spot on the Boardwalk, backing onto the ocean and containing the constant sound of chatter and clinking crockery. Filled with tourists enjoying a late-night snack or hot drink as they watch the procession of people walking by, and catered by unhurried staff with a smile, the Rainforest contains a sweet atmosphere.

Edith Blumenau maintains a smart Mask. She dresses like one of any number of visitors to Atlantic City, wearing a t-shirt adorned with the Three Bears logo, keeping her skin flushed pink with vitae, and tipping the servers generously, with a smile. She doesn't stand out at all, unless she wishes to do so. She appears to be in her early 40s, of slender build, and with tied-up dark hair. Her most distinctive feature is the tattoo of a tulip on her right forearm, which she received after the Embrace from a Kindred somehow capable of permanently marking undead flesh.

She's on the lookout for her Hecata visitors, and from her table pretends to sip a coffee while peering into the crowd for signs of unlife. If any of the player characters fail to give themselves the Blush of Life, have a Humanity rating of less than 4, or otherwise act in a clearly inhuman way, she gestures for one of her many followers — five of whom occupy seats in and around the café — to

approach them. Otherwise, she waits for the player characters to get wise to the eyes scanning the passers-by and patrons at tables, with a Wits + Awareness roll (Difficulty 2), and commends them if it doesn't take long for them to realize they were being watched. One of her bodyguards points the player characters directly to her table.

Introductions to Blumenau

Blumenau is courteous, welcoming the player characters to Atlantic City and asking after their business. She hastens to add that while the café is filled with bodyguards, they're more for show — she doesn't need them. She explains any of the domain activities noted on p. 57 if the player characters show an interest in Atlantic City and asks if they've gambled yet, encouraging them to try the blackjack at the Three Bears or the pontoon at the Borgata. She's clearly excited when she speaks about wagers.

If asked regarding her political persuasion or role in the domain, Blumenau says with feigned humility that accepting the position of Baron was a hard decision, but local members of the Movement expected her to try her best, which she does every night. She describes it as "a gamble that paid off."

Ornella

Blumenau acknowledges that Ornella Giovanni has been missing for a year, after which the Anarchs took the reins in the domain, with herself as Baron. If asked about Ornella's whereabouts, Blumenau denies knowledge. The player characters must succeed at an Intelligence + Insight roll (Difficulty 4) to determine that she's lying, though pushing her on this just forces her to laugh and say that Ornella is fine, wherever she is, and that the last she heard Ornella

had found a new religion outside the family business.

The Leak

If the player characters are so blatant as to explain there's a leak of Hecata information, Blumenau smiles but just shakes her head before expressing her sorrow at the family's misfortune, but explaining that Hecata business is no concern of hers. She is of course aware of the leak, as she obtained the clan's information from Ornella and in turn sold it to the Camarilla. Prying this from her at this stage is impossible, but again, her duplicity is detectable with an Intelligence + Insight roll (Difficulty 4).

Hecata Whereabouts

If asked for the whereabouts of Hecata around Atlantic City, Blumenau tells the player characters that she's a Baron, not a Sheriff or Prince, and it's not her duty or in her interests to know the havens of every Kindred in the domain. Nevertheless, she pretends to think awhile and with an "a-ha!" tells them where she believes Ms. Strand makes her haven, in a vacated industrial laundry around a 30-minute drive from the Boardwalk. She'll find it on a service like Google Maps, if the player characters ask. Again, her lying regarding the other havens is detectable with an Intelligence + Insight roll (Difficulty 4), but if confronted on this she pretends to have the sudden realization that Lubango can be found somewhere in Pleasantville, which is around 15 minutes away by car. She knows where in Pleasantville he makes his haven, but isn't going to confirm this unless forced.

Favors

The player characters might ask Blumenau to pull some strings and get the Hecata together for a clan



meeting, which she confesses she has little power to do. However, she's happy to send word to their representatives of a potential meeting and insists on making the calls herself. Blumenau explains it could take a few nights to arrange, so in the meantime they should enjoy themselves at the Three Bears.

In the time it takes for this theoretical meeting to form (she only calls Lubango, and only with the order to assault the player characters), she intends to drive these new Hecata out of the domain or destroy them, for poking their noses in unwanted places. Regardless, she expects payment for this service and says the best way of delivering it is through gambling at the casino.

Repercussions

If at any point Blumenau feels intimidated, she summons her bodyguards to the table and breaks off the conversation, telling the player characters they're unwelcome in AC

and should leave within 24 hours. In her words, "the Hecata no longer call the shots here."

Once the meeting concludes, Blumenau dispatches her chief bodyguard and runner, Jay, to inform Ms. Strand that the player characters are on their way to destroy her because they represent the Giovanni, and the Cappadocian purges have recommenced. It's an elaborate lie, but causes the intended effect of Strand's homicidal paranoia. Her reasoning is as follows: Blumenau wants the player characters to determine Strand is the cause of the leak, and if she gets the opportunity, explains Strand's aggression as her reaction to being

discovered as a traitor.

After sending Jay to handle Strand, Blumenau calls Lubango and tells him that if the player characters enter Pleasantville, he's to arrange a devastating assault on them that could be chalked up to a "gang war gone wrong," ideally with no survivors.

Blumenau has no desire for Kindred snooping around in Atlantic City and doesn't want to be the recipient of Hecata ire for leaking that clan's intelligence, so if Strand fails and the player characters don't look for Lubango, she proceeds to her next plan, which is to have them threatened by cops outside the casino,

FRIENDSHIP WITH BLUMENAU

It is of course quite possible the meeting goes spectacularly well, with Blumenau complimented and feeling no danger from the player characters. In this case, the Storyteller has the option of dialing back the violence they're due to encounter. She still sets up Strand via her servant, Jay "Sideface," but uses Lubango as a bodyguard rather than as the captain of an assault team. She works the social angle, pinning "evidence" on Strand as the leak's source, just to get the coterie out of AC.

recorded performing Masquerade-breaching acts, and if they still haven't got the message, assaulted in their hotel room in the daytime.

The odds are stacked against the players in this situation. They're in a tightly monitored Anarch domain and their investigation threatens the Baron. It should become apparent with every attack that they're unwelcome and in danger, and someone with a lot of influence is pulling the strings.

EDITH BLUMENAU

Clan: Toreador

Sire: Sir Henry Johnson

Embraced: 1911 (Born 1867)

Ambition: Remove these interfering Hecata from AC

Convictions: Allow nobody to violate my garden

Touchstones: Jay "Sideface" — mortal retainer and firm disciple

Humanity: 5

Generation: 11th

Blood Potency: 3

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 4; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 7

Skills: Athletics 2, Craft (Construction) 4, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1; Animal Ken 1, Etiquette 3, Insight 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership (Bahari) 5, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 4; Academics (Architecture) 3, Awareness 2, Finance 3, Occult (Lilith) 4, Politics 3

Disciplines: Blood Sorcery 3, Auspex 3, Presence 3

General Difficulties: 6/4

The Police Intervention

If the player characters made no arrangements to meet with Blumenau upon arriving, or the player characters remain in the domain after the encounter with Strand, the Baron instructs her lead disciple, Jay (see p. 71) to have some dirty cops (Officers Stephen Jessop and Beatrice Washington) wait in a car near the Three Bears Casino and when the player characters have made sufficient distance from casino and hotel employees, to perform a stop-and-search.

If the player characters are wary upon exiting the casino on the second evening, and succeed at a Wits + Awareness roll (Difficulty 3), they spot the idling squad car. It stands out among the other vehicles in the area. If the player characters approach the vehicle, one of the cops gets out of the car and draws his pistol on them, ordering them to freeze, put their hands above their heads, get on the ground, lay on their fronts, and put their hands on the asphalt outstretched, either side of them. If they make no such approach, the cops take a more cautious approach and wait for the player characters to make distance between themselves and the casino, before asking to see proof of their identification and reasons for being in Atlantic City. They don't wear bodycams, and the vampires may notice this with a Wits + Awareness roll (Difficulty 2).

The intention isn't to destroy the player characters (two cops are unlikely to succeed if they manage it) but to scare them into realizing they're not welcome in AC. Blumenau believes she can make them turn tail and run if she makes their lives difficult. Therefore, the cops ask a lot of questions, pick up on any excuse to justify cuffing one of the vampires, and draw their weapons at the slightest provocation (or even with no provocation, if they think the optics are in their favor with passers-by).

The cops radio for backup if the coterie put up any resistance to their orchestrated harassment. The two officers flee if their radios or car are disabled or they lose their guns, or if the player characters make it clear they'll be leaving Atlantic City tonight (which is what Blumenau wants). It's possible the player characters capture one or more of them. If the player characters drag them elsewhere, such as under the Boardwalk, into an alley, or down the drain, they can interrogate these kine for information. Restraining them in public is a good way to provoke a confrontation with further police.

ATLANTIC CITY COPS

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 2, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Firearms 6, Streetwise 4; Investigation 4

Special: The police officers in this scenario arm themselves with pistols (medium gunshot, +3 damage) or stun guns (light impact, +1 damage).

General Difficulties: 3/2

Interrogation

Blumenau's hired underlings know next to nothing of the player characters, beyond their boss wanting them driven out of town. Threatening them with a Charisma + Intimidation roll (Difficulty 2) has them admit they were called by a guy they sometimes do business with named "Sideface," on account of his inability to look anyone in the eye and his tendency to constantly avert his gaze. They think he's a dirty cop from another precinct. Sideface offered them \$2,000 to scare the player characters, and if asked how they were able to identify them, one of the captives tells the player characters their photos are on her phone.

If the player characters check the phone, they find stills of footage of them from the Three Bears Casino just last night, though Zingaretti didn't provide any of the footage from the spy camera in their room.

The player characters may well ask the cops to direct them to Sideface, but they explain they only have his number, not a location. Plus, they were paid upfront electronically and have no need to meet him. Nevertheless, the player characters may fabricate a reason to meet with Sideface, such as by sending him a text message using one of the cops' phones. If the reason for the meeting is expressed as an emergency, he agrees to meet them at just past midnight at the Pic-a-Lilli Pub in town.

Face to Sideface

If the player characters pursue the course of meeting with Sideface at the Pic-a-Lilli, unless they met Blumenau at the café or bring one of the shooters with them, they won't know what Jay "Sideface" looks like. He's sat at the bar with a full Guinness in front of him, and a player character who makes a successful Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 2) picks up that he looks away whenever the bartender walks by.

Jay isn't expecting an encounter with the player characters, and if they approach him directly, he bolts into one of the pub restrooms, at which point he attempts to climb out through a small window. If the player characters follow him, they find a boozy bar patron relieving themselves, between them and Sideface. This patron is easily scared off.

The player characters either catch up with Jay as he climbs through the window or in the alley behind the pub. He's fanatically devoted to Blumenau and the Bahari, with the Difficulty of interrogating him for his mistress' name and intent set at 5. If forced to talk, he concedes that Blumenau set him to the task of scaring the player characters away and says "it's for the Mother of

Eden, for the Mother" repeatedly, as a mantra. He knows nothing of the Hecata leak.

JAY "SIDEFACE"

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 3, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 6, Firearms 7, Stealth 6; Etiquette 4, Intimidation 4

General Difficulties: 3/2

Meeting with Milliner

The player characters encounter Lia Milliner at the Oscar E. McClinton Waterfront Park, sat on the edge of a fountain as she frowns, staring intently at her phone. She's dressed in a sharp business suit, complete with tie, and her long hair is tied back. Her pale skin against the lights emanating from the fountain water makes her appear translucent. She only looks up from her phone when the player characters address her, at which point she holds up a finger and then finishes what she's typing, before clicking 'send' and putting her phone away. It buzzes periodically as she walks the park with the player characters.

Lia Milliner isn't surprised by the idea of an information leak from Atlantic City, given the disharmony between the remaining Hecata of the domain. She considers herself a Hartford Kindred, despite that domain's heavy Tremere presence, just here on business, but holds a dim view of Ornella, Lubango, and Ms. Strand. She explains her role is to manage investments up and down the East Coast, and that sometimes entails collecting and delivering cash, or personally handling the finances of less capable Kindred so they're turning a profit.

On a Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 4), Milliner explains some of her recent activities. Just this week, she acted as a consultant for Lubango so he can acquire a better quality of meth and heroin and expand his distribution, bargained down the rent on Strand's haven and mini-domain, where she performs her experiments, and collected funds from Ornella Giovanni. She also assists in money laundering for each of the Hecata, as well as several Anarch Kindred and the only Camarilla vampire in the domain, Felix Lodzi.

The player characters may be surprised to hear Milliner raise Giovanni's name, but as far as Milliner's aware, while Ornella left the Three Bears property, she still operates in the domain. Electronic payments still issue from her various business accounts, and her personal finances are still arranged in cash, albeit at a drop point. For her to

divulge where this takes place, the player characters must succeed on a Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 5), or if they invoke Donatello's name (or a different financially-connected sponsor) to convince her, a Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3). She explains the drop occurs in Room 201 at the Sunset Inn, on Huron Avenue. She hasn't dealt with Ornella personally in over a year, but the Milliner often works via intermediaries, and Ornella does the same. Milliner sets up a date and time, and arrives with money, contracts, and documents for signing, or returns with the same after meeting with one of Ornella's mortal representatives, who are never men. These individuals are staff from Luxemburg House (see p.89).

If asked about the political state of Atlantic City, Milliner proclaims that "Not long ago the city was Camarilla. Then it was Hecata. Now it's Anarch. The cash keeps flowing, which means the bosses are happy, which also means I don't care about the domain's politics. It also means I can do business with anyone. Clan secrets aren't my concern."

During the meeting with Milliner, she explains she's feeling damn hungry, having been working solidly for the last few nights, and knowing there's a pleasure yacht in dock off Clam Creek, just ten minutes' walk from their location, suggests the player characters join her on draining some tourists. This hunt is entirely optional, but if the player characters start on Milliner's bad side due to their giving Henry Mona rough treatment (see p. 67), this is a way to get back into her good books and nullify the added Difficulty to social rolls.

Milliner remains in the domain for the next five nights, before heading to New York.

LIA MILLINER

Clan: Hecata (Milliner)

Sire: Albert Dunsirn

Embraced: 1996 (Born 1972)

Ambition: Leave every domain with more money than I entered with

Convictions: I will never allow someone to shake me down

Touchstones: Henry Mona — accountant and figure of worship

Humanity: 7

Generation: 11th

Blood Potency: 2

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 5; Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 9

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Larceny (Forgery) 4, Stealth 1; Etiquette 3, Insight 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 3, Persuasion (Investments) 4, Subterfuge 2; Academics (Economics) 3, Finance (Money Laundering) 5, Investigation 1

Disciplines: Dominate 4, Fortitude 2, Oblivion 1

General Difficulties: 5/3

Strand's Cold Comfort

By the time the player characters reach the vacated laundry building in Ventnor Heights, Ms. Strand has already been told that a Giovanni hit squad is coming to kill her, courtesy of Blumenau and her mortal disciple, Jay. She's in the throes of paranoia and has spent the few hours preparing her oversized haven and makeshift necromantic laboratory with her Oblivion Ceremonies.

From the outside, the laundry building resembles a factory disused for up to half a century. The red brick is showing, the letters that once stood above the main door have all fallen or been stolen, resulting in naked spikes protruding from the brickwork, and only a faded logo of a person operating a mangle indicates the building's former purpose. Since then, the windows have all been boarded, all but the front door and back roller door have been sealed with planks or metal sheets. It perfectly resembles the kind of urban hole it intends to be.

Strand has been using this building for only a short duration, preying on the homeless, on drug addicts, and on individuals delivered to her by Lubango and other AC Kindred. She drains them, experiments on them, and if possible, reanimates them or summons their spirit to serve her, until she moves on to other prey. The laundry still contains many of the old top-loaded industrial-sized washing machines, and it's into these she pours the cadavers and body parts of completed or aborted experiments. As she's able to seal these metal monstrosities, little odor of decay reaches the streets outside, but the laundry interior reeks of blood and offal. The building is technically owned by Edith Blumenau, but Strand doesn't know this and doesn't care, just as long as she's not disturbed.

Gaining Entry

Knocking at the door yields no response from Strand or any of her servants, though it does make her scuttle into one of the massive steamers and close the door behind her. If the player characters break in with a Strength + Larceny roll (Difficulty 2) or sneak in with an easy Dexterity + Larceny roll, they find her incanting and

smearing vitae over a fresh corpse, which jerks to unlife at her feet. If they fail their rolls, Strand flees into one of the large machines and relies on her servitors to handle her assumed assassins.

The Undead and the Unliving

Aside from the corpse Strand was working on when they arrived, the Cappadocian's necromantic monstrosities don't spring into action until the player characters are deep into the laundry, giving the place a serene sense of calm, offset only by the stench of blood and the spatter over countless surfaces. The building is a mess, with part of it gutted, walls half-demolished, machines once vital to the laundry in pieces or intact, just inoperable. The laundry feels like an

immense giant whose organs have decayed or ceased to function, and looking from floor to tall ceiling, it could be mistaken for a tomb.

Once they've begun investigating the location, aggressive corpses start lurching from large washing machines and tumble dryers, pouring out of the openings as if being birthed into new life. They growl and gnash, and number between three and five (depending on the challenge the Storyteller feels the player characters can counter). The aggressive corpses move as quickly as a normal human.

To compound issues further, after at least one round of combat, two wraiths — summoned and compelled by Strand — begin their assault on the coterie. A poltergeist hurls fragments of machinery at the characters, while a screamer attempts to terrify

the player characters into the arms and jaws of the aggressive corpses.

This scene works best if the Storyteller utilizes the industrial scope of this factory, including the following:

- Rusted staircases that give way under foot.
- Hanging, swaying gantries that require a steady balance to navigate.
- Narrow, restricted spaces between large machines.
- Disused offices filled with strewn paperwork and vandalized furniture.
- Crawlspaces beneath machines that might allow someone to evade an attack.



- Scattered metal objects, which might work as improvised weapons and shielding.
- The rank smell of blood and iron dust in the air.
- Industrial-sized washers filled with rotting corpses.
- Wide-open spaces where machines once stood, but now only bolts and girders protrude from the floor.

The poltergeist's priority is to keep one of the doors sealed if any of the player characters make a break for it: Ms. Strand wants them dead more than anything.

For anyone who uses Where the Shroud Thins (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p.205), the Shroud in this location is treated as frayed for the purposes of Oblivion use (resulting in a -2 Difficulty on Oblivion rolls). Anyone accessing the Shadowlands from this location finds it exists as a pit of carcasses and confused, howling dead.

The sounds of sirens approach at the end of the scene if repeated gunfire emanates from the laundry. While gunshots aren't uncommon in this part of the city, a sustained gunfight is.

POLTERGEIST

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 3, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics 6, Brawl 7, Larceny 6, Stealth 7; Intimidation 6

Special: Poltergeists may physically influence the environment and any objects and people in it a number of times per scene equal to their Willpower. If they incur Aggravated Willpower damage, their number of actions decreases to match their current Willpower. These wraiths use the objects in the room to inflict additional or halved damage (from flung knives, television sets, etc.) with thrown weapons use six dice (their exceptional Athletics dice pool).

General Difficulties: 3/2

SCREAMER

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 5, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Stealth 5; Intimidation 8, Performance 7, Persuasion 6, Subterfuge 6

Special: Their primary function is to terrify with their screams, similar to the Dread Gaze Presence power (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 267). When a screamer uses this power, they roll eight dice (their exceptional Intimidation pool) against the victim's

Composure + Resolve, with the results emulating those of Dread Gaze without the visual requirement.

General Difficulties: 4/2

AGGRESSIVE CORPSE

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 0, Mental 0

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 0

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 6; Intimidation 5

Special: Aggressive corpses take Superficial and Aggravated damage in the same way as vampires, except they are immune to sunlight. They cannot heal or mend damage. They cannot be mentally dominated or influenced as they are bound to their master. They do not need eyes or ears to perceive everything around them as someone with unimpeded vision and hearing might. Bites from the aggressive dead inflict +2 Aggravated Health damage to mortals.

General Difficulties: 3/1

Strand's Last Stand

Strand is a fearsome necromancer in her own right, but is petrified of being found and murdered by the Giovanni, which is why she seals herself away in an industrial tumble dryer and repeatedly screams for the player characters to leave the laundry, to leave her family alone, and to take their cannibalistic, Venetian predations elsewhere. The emaciated, bulging-eyed Strand can be pulled from her machine, but if someone makes physical contact with her, she uses Touch of Oblivion (see *Chicago by Night*, p. 294) on them to wither their limbs, or, if the Storyteller is unfamiliar with that power, she attempts to sink her fangs into her attacker.

Defeating Ms. Strand as a coterie is simple enough once her minions are removed from the field, but talking to her is a greater challenge. She does not respond to attempts to intimidate or persuade her, instead falling into a terror frenzy (which she's at the cusp of throughout the scene), requiring someone to stake her and speak with her after its removal, or use some other means to sway or immobilize her, such as Dominate or Presence.

A pacified Ms. Strand says she was informed by "that nice man Jay, who follows Baron Blumenau around," that the player characters were Giovanni assassins looking to destroy one of the few Cappadocians on the East Coast. She knows nothing of the information leak and didn't consort with the Camarilla when they controlled AC, giving her few avenues to supply information even if she wanted to do so. She never trusted Ornella, but respected her position. She lost touch with her after the Giovanni "took up with those Lilith types."

If the player characters spare Ms. Strand, they're allowing a monster to stay in circulation. They may however earn her as a Mawla by doing so, and as she's an expert in Oblivion Ceremonies, this could be worthwhile to any practitioner of the Discipline.

MS. STRAND

Clan: Hecata (Cappadocian)

Sire: The Gaunt Man

Embraced: 1895 (Born 1849)

Ambition: Pursue my experiments without disturbance

Convictions: None

Touchstones: None

Humanity: 2

Generation: 8th

Blood Potency: 4

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 1; Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 4

Skills: Brawl 3, Craft (Crime Fiction) 4, Stealth 3; Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 1; Academics (Literature) 4, Awareness 1, Investigation 3, Medicine (Anatomy) 5, Occult 5, Science 2, Technology 2

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Fortitude 3, Oblivion 5

General Difficulties: 6/3

Lubango's Warm Welcome

Lubango likely enters the fray when he's sought out by the player characters.

This strong-built, Guyanese man, with patches of hair on his head and a knotted beard dangling from his chin has a way of terrifying anyone with whom he comes into contact. His skin is more gray than brown, and he never blinks. It's possible the first place the player characters go to find him is Pleasantville, where various other characters indicate he makes his haven. The corners of this burg outside Atlantic City are the province of drug dealers and lookouts, and if Lubango knows the player characters are en route, he has his young gang members keeping their eyes open for the visiting Hecata.

Entering Pleasantville Conspicuously

Upon exiting their vehicle, player characters should make a Wits + Awareness roll (Difficulty 2) to notice a lot of the civilians on the street duck into buildings, signifying an outbreak of violence but only providing the player characters with a round in which to react. Lubango's intention is to catch them in a crossfire, with four members of his crew on one side of the street, and six on the other. They use cars as cover, fire from windows and doorways, and hurl two Molotov cocktails once they're pinned down. Lubango's crew are under instructions to kill the player characters when they're on their territory.

The best method of breaking this ambush down is to provide details of objects, buildings, and people around the player characters at the time the attack occurs, including the following:

- Old automobiles line both sides of the street, funneling the traffic to a single lane.
- The buildings on either side of the street reach as high as three stories, and most are residential, with a small convenience store wedged between two residential blocks.
- A covered manhole in the middle of the road acts as a possible escape route.
- Some of the houses have threadbare front yards, on which discarded bikes and furniture rest.
- The attackers shout insults down at the vampires constantly, to mock the intruders and build up their own spirits.
- None of the shooters are particularly good shots, but the ricochet of blasted asphalt and metal splinters from the cars are almost worse than the bullets.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE COMPLICATIONS

There's a lot of blood — some wet, some dry — in Ms. Strand's laundry. If any character is at Hunger 4 or higher, they must resist a hunger frenzy (Difficulty 3) or aim for the nearest source of thick, nourishing blood, even if it's another vampire.

Further, while none of the bodies in the laundry are there due to the player characters, the Storyteller should consider whether any player characters with high Humanity need to struggle to resist fury frenzy directed at Strand, due to the sheer volume of death in this building.

- A civilian cowers behind a car and begs one of the vampires to help them inside.
- One of the Molotov throwers aims at the car the player characters arrived in, if it wasn't a taxi that's already departed.
- An elderly person shouts from one of the houses for everyone to keep the noise down, that this used to be a nice town, and other such pointless platitudes.

If the player characters are injured in the ambush, Lubango exits one of the buildings in his overalls and heavy boots, and strides over to them with a bag of improvised fragmentation grenades over one shoulder and an assault rifle in his hands (both considered medium gunshot, +3 damage value, though the grenades injure anyone within close proximity to the blast). If the vampires aren't pinned down, he aims the gun at whichever vampire he spots first and lets loose a volley of bullets. He then hurls a couple of grenades in their direction.

The attackers won't risk police interference (the cops won't show up until several minutes after the gunfire ends). If the characters try to drive off in their car and it hasn't been immolated or totaled, the gangsters follow them as far as two blocks before scattering. They disperse within a minute of the first shot being fired regardless, as everything in the course of this conflict rapidly takes place.

LUBANGO

Clan: Hecata (Samedi)

Sire: Zephaniah

Embraced: 1986 (Born 1961)

Ambition: Increase my influence in Atlantic City

Convictions: Nobody will claim an inch of my territory

Touchstones: John Agard — poet whose material soothes Lubango's Beast

Humanity: 4

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 2

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 4

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Craft (Combustion Engines) 3, Drive 2, Firearms (Flamethrower) 3, Melee 2, Stealth 1, Survival 4; Animal Ken 1, Intimidation (The Stare) 5, Leadership 3, Streetwise 4; Awareness 2, Finance 2, Occult 2, Technology (Engineering) 3

Disciplines: Fortitude 4, Oblivion 1, Potence 2

General Difficulties: 6/2

LUBANGO'S CREW

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 3, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Firearms 6, Melee 5; Intimidation 4

Special: Lubango's crew arm each fire handguns with a +3 damage value, and two of them use Molotov cocktails (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 380) during the course of the conflict.

General Difficulties: 3/1

Entering Pleasantville Discreetly

If the player characters enter Pleasantville on foot and not as a bunched up gang, they may draw some odd looks if they're dressed inappropriately for an evening in one of the more violent parts of the domain, but they won't draw the concerted firepower of arriving in a car in the middle of Lubango's territory. It requires an easy Composure + Streetwise roll to evade notice through acting inconspicuously, but doing so is a good way to avoid an assault.

Engaging Lubango

Getting Lubango to agree to a conversation is unlikely, given his loyalty to Blumenau and her wishes to see the coterie driven out of Atlantic City. However, they could rush him when he makes his attack and ferry him away from Pleasantville. Alternatively, they might trace his exact haven via information from Lia Milliner or through talking to one of the city drug dealers with a successful Manipulation + Streetwise roll (Difficulty 3), and get the drop on him while he's counting cash in his haven.

Lubango makes his haven in a well-kept house in Pleasantville, with a fenced-off front and back yard, three stories of living space decorated in his preferred, Guyanese style, and with a car and motorcycle in the garage. He doesn't keep drugs on the property but does own a healthy supply of guns, keeping one stashed away in every room. Most curious about his setup is the collection of poetry in his lounge and the engines he builds from scratch in his garage, showing this intimidating monster clearly has a couple of hobbies. The Storyteller can decide whether he has any bodyguards patrolling the property (use the traits for Lubango's Crew), though Lubango is over-confident, and may not see the need.



In the event he's cornered, Lubango's first instinct is to fight and use all the tools at his disposal to maim or immobilize his opponent. He relays that his allegiance is still to the Hecata — he still sends money to New York and family is family — but his love is for Ornella and her Bahari faith. This may be the first time the player characters discover the Bahari involvement in Atlantic City, about which Lubango is hesitant to speak further, as he doesn't consider the

player characters enlightened enough to understand. It takes a successful Charisma + Intimidation or Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 4) to confirm the Bahari of Atlantic City gather in a women's shelter on Huron Avenue, named Luxemburg House. He relays that an outsider Bahari named the "Sleeper" is currently observing Ornella's induction into the cult.

He's actually surprised if told the protagonists tell him they're in AC to

investigate a leak of family information, and he's shaken if convinced that Ornella or Blumenau is behind it, with a Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 4). He knows Ornella is under Blumenau's care and tutelage and can put the pieces together that Blumenau obtained this information from Ornella and sold it on to the Camarilla. If persuaded in this way, he offers to take the player characters directly to Ornella for answers, as he wants to know the truth.

THE BAHARI ANGLE

From both Strand and Lubango, the player characters might hear of Lilith and the Bahari. Researching the two from a mortal perspective, at Atlantic City Free Public Library (which stays open until 23:00 for students on some nights) requires an easy Intelligence + Academics or Investigation roll to find out Lilith is a character from Jewish mythology, appearing in the Babylonian Talmud as Adam's first wife. Any information the players can find online is equivalent to what the library contains.

Researching the Bahari from a Kindred perspective requires pulling on the characters' Mawla (or equivalent, appropriate Backgrounds), or making an Intelligence + Occult roll (Difficulty variable depending on information given) if they might have heard of the cult before now. Difficulty 2 reveals they learn the Bahari are a predominantly non-male cult dedicated to change and rebirth, but with no centralized authority. Difficulty 3 reveals some Bahari believe in change through growth and cultivation, others through masochism and scouring historic sins from the body and spirit. Difficulty 4 reveals the Bahari aren't fundamentally at odds with the Hecata, as many Lamiae are technically members of the clan and the cult. Difficulty 5 and higher highlights the cult's practices and strongholds, as detailed in *Cults of the Blood Gods*.

Night-Time Raid

While the player characters are out in Atlantic City fraternizing with their clanmates to varying effect, Blumenau gives several of her hired hands access to the vampires' secure suite in the Three Bears, to trash the place and steal the vampires' luggage.

The burglars arrive when given the go-ahead by Popcorn or Zingaretti (to confirm the protagonists are out of the building) and are dressed in cleaners' uniforms and use a keycard to enter the suite. If one of the player characters remained behind or sneaked back in outside Popcorn or Zingaretti's notice, the thugs attack the vampire/s present, not knowing what they're dealing with. They're unarmed and think it'll be easy to lay out a tourist.

If subdued, these hired burglars identify their employer as "Sideface," in much the same way as the cops do in Police Intervention (see p. 70).

If the player characters aren't present when this raid takes place, it's likely they'll go to Zingaretti for answers. He apologizes profusely for the breach in security, reasoning they must have made some enemies. He refuses to open his checkbook to reimburse them without Edith Blumenau's permission but generally acts obsequious and shamed about the situation, which he is, as despite Blumenau giving permission for this attack, the casino is in his name.

The one thing Zingaretti offers as a means of recompense is a flight back to whichever domain they came from, on the house. The player characters may question why he's permitted to make such an offer when he won't compensate for luggage, to which he gestures emptily with his hands and just mutters "Blumenau told me I could..."

THE BURGLARS

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 1, Mental 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 2

Exceptional Dice Pools: Larceny 5

Special: These individuals are unarmed and have no knowledge of vampires.

General Difficulties: 3/1

The Camarilla Avenue

The player characters may attempt to follow the leak back from the Camarilla to its source, though the city only has one Camarilla vampire within its limits:

Felix Lodz. The coterie are unlikely to know this immediately, unless they have a contact among the Tremere or former Camarilla AC Kindred, and Zingaretti (if asked) only vaguely knows what a "Cam-a-ree-yuh" is, thinking they're asking for one of the house singers at the Three Bears, named "Cara Meea." Blumenau is similarly unhelpful, suggesting the Camarilla are completely absent from Atlantic City following the Anarch takeover, though an Intelligence + Insight roll (Difficulty 3) is sufficient to tell she's lying. It takes an impressive Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 5) to make her feel it's safe to give Lodz' name. On more than five successes, she states that the local Camarilla only agreed to leave if they could keep one representative in the domain.

Easier routes to finding Lodz come via the city's other Kindred, who aren't nearly so paranoid about the solitary Tremere and what he might know of the leak. Milliner, Strand, Lubango, and minor players such as Kirby, Popcorn, and Poodle Pumper all know of Lodz and where he makes his curious little haven, a second-hand book store named Books and Bindings near Marven Gardens.

Books and Bindings

Books and Bindings is barely recognizable as an operating store, with the white crosses painted on its exterior walls and windows, the tatty, barely readable sign next to its front door, and the candle oddly placed in the upstairs window above the shop door. Nevertheless, the front door is unlocked and Lodz is at work in the shop, re-binding a first edition of *Ulysses* with a great deal of care. The entire shop is a firetrap, with stacks of books, loose papers, and haphazardly laid out shelves making for a claustrophobic maze.

Lodz blinks repeatedly, talks at length, and coughs often — affectations his sire instructed him to develop to appear more human. He's clearly nervous and attempts to speak primarily about books and plays even when approached about Kindred society, breaking occasionally to declare Kindred "the lowest form of devils, waiting for the angels to come and raise us back to heaven." He has no formal religion, in Kindred terms, but believes earnestly in angels he hopes to signal with his eternal candle.

Lodz is largely unhelpful on subjects such as city politics and the Hecata, but if asked about Blumenau or the Camarilla who left him, he quiets for a moment before rambling that "Yes, Mrs. Blumenau stopped by once or twice, spoke at length with the previous regent... Something about a Promise and ghosts... It wasn't long after that they left and I was put in charge."

Lodz has no authority in AC and his sect abandoned him because it was easier than moving him to New York or Philadelphia. He is however an indirect avenue to dis-

covering Ornella provided clan secrets to Blumenau, who in turn sold them to the Warlocks.

FELIX LODZ

Clan: Tremere (Traditionalist)

Sire: Ehrich Weiss

Embraced: 1973 (Born 1911)

Ambition: Keep the chantry safe

Convictions: Die before abandoning Atlantic City

Touchstones: Duncan Clench — director of the Atlantic City Theatre Company, who Felix loves from afar

Humanity: 5

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 5; Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 8

Skills: Craft (Bookbinding) 3, Drive 2; Etiquette 2, Insight 2, Performance (Acting) 2, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 3; Academics (Literature) 3, Finance 2, Occult 3, Politics 2, Science 1

Disciplines: Blood Sorcery 1, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 2

General Difficulties: 5/3

On the Offense

The player characters — hunted, ambushed, and assaulted — may feel that Blumenau requires confronting. While they're unlikely to know if she has anything to do with the leak, she definitely has something to do with all the harassment they've received since arriving in the domain. The main issue is, the players characters are unlikely to know where her havens are, and Atlantic City has no static Elysium.

For pacing reasons, it's preferable that wherever the player characters go to find Blumenau, they cannot locate her on the second night. Time should run down as they approach the dawn, with any of the night's previous events (detailed in this chapter) eating up a lot of time. However, players shouldn't be left short if they've followed clues to what should be a rewarding conclusion. It's recommended that Blumenau has a proxy in place at one of her sites, who can answer questions regarding the domain, the Baron's actions, and why they feel Blumenau is justified.

The player characters likely trace Baron Blumenau via one of the following routes:

- If the player characters confronted Jay "Sideface" earlier in this chapter, or tracked him cautiously, he could reluctantly lead them to one of Blumenau's havens.
- Knowing Blumenau has control over the Three Bears, the player characters might threaten Zingaretti to draw Blumenau out, forcing him to make a call to his domitor.
- Player characters cannot go down the modern investigative route of searching for Blumenau's properties online, as she doesn't use her name on deeds and titles. However, the player characters may be able to extract one of her false identities from Jay, Milliner, or Lubango, and bribe cops or city workers, if the characters have the Allies or Contacts in the right places, to locate them.

Blumenau maintains several havens around the domain, but for choice, the Storyteller can reveal she has the Three Bears, a permanent hotel room in AC Caesars, and a yacht in the marina. As mentioned, while she's not present on the second night, one of her Kindred allies is — though it's an Anarch rather than one of her Bahari brethren. Abigail Kirby intercedes if Jay or Zingaretti calls on Blumenau, or is found in the Baron's haven studying city plans and writing up notes for infrastructure shifts if ambushed.

Kirby is a diplomat by nature, softly spoken with a husky voice, attempting to appease whomever she addresses. She's an older woman, appearing somewhere in her 60s or early 70s, and wears a tight-cinched black and white dress, while her neck, ears, and wrists jangle with jewelry. She has a shock of gray hair she's never attempted to dye, and despite being a vampire for over a century, still smokes a cigarette using a holder.

If it's clear the player characters are agitated, she attempts to soothe them, explaining she represents the Anarchs of AC as much as Blumenau, but they're not going to get to the Baron if they're planning violence. She attempts to justify Blumenau's actions, telling the player characters they arrived without invitation, immediately occupied rooms in one of the Baron's havens, and probably pushed her servants around. Additionally, it wouldn't be unsurprising if another faction, which the coterie represent, wanted to retake the domain by force, hence why she's acted to drive them out.

What Kirby doesn't do is connect the dots between Blumenau's actions and the Hecata leak, and she doesn't mention the Baron's religious leanings as she doesn't consider them relevant. Only if the player characters raise these points does Kirby take a long drag on her cigarette, drum her fingers on her front teeth, and then nod, but she doesn't provide an opinion unless the player charac-

ters succeed at a Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3). If successful, Kirby relates that several Anarchs feel unhappy about the Baron's religious motivations, explaining nobody in Atlantic City signed up for a theocracy to slide in once the sect took power. She's aware Ornella is in Blumenau's Bahari cult, but doesn't know where the Giovanni is situated.

Kirby's intent is to mollify the player characters and handle any domain issues herself. She guarantees their safety in the Three Bears, assigning her own people to ensure their suite isn't disrupted, or paying for them to stay at another one of the hotels with the same offer of security, if they're prepared to leave the following night. She's unprepared to betray Blumenau to this coterie of outsiders, no matter their charges against her, because ultimately, the Baron is the Baron.

ABIGAIL KIRBY

Clan: Caitiff

Sire: Unknown

Embraced: 1907 (Born 1838)

Ambition: Make Atlantic City flourish

Convictions: Never resort to violence when diplomacy will do; Put the domain over individual progression

Touchstones: Father Philip Roberts — Kirby's confessor at her local church; Kayleigh Eyres — city planner with whom Kirby works

Humanity: 7

Generation: 9th

Blood Potency: 3

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 4; Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 8

Skills: Athletics 2, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Survival 1; Etiquette 4, Insight 4, Intimidation 1, Leadership 3, Persuasion 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1; Academics (City Planning) 5, Awareness 1, Finance 3, Investigation (Corruption) 3, Politics (Atlantic City) 4, Technology 2

Disciplines: Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Obscure 2, Presence 3

General Difficulties: 6/3

On the Defense

The assaults on the player characters may render them cautious, and with good reason. They may seek out a new place to stay, potentially abandoning any luggage remaining at the Three Bears, and seek to rally their strength. player characters on the defense are likely to do one or more of the following:

SEEK OUT A NEW SAFE HAVEN FOR THE DAY

player characters might pull on Allies or Contacts, or use their Fame or Resources Backgrounds to find new lodgings. Every hotel — of which there are several — has space, but not all of them have interior, sun-proofed rooms, likely leading to stays in the bathtub and wardrobe when the dawn arrives. The Storyteller can throw out the names of some of the resorts around the city, such as Caesars, the Borgata, and the Showboat, or offer up any of the less reputable areas of the domain, including vacant factories and rowhouses, the drains, or a sand burial under the Boardwalk. The Storyteller should note where the player characters choose, and reference this against the city's Kindred detailed starting on p. 53, in case any clashes over territory are likely.

CALL HOME

Nervous Kindred might call their sponsors or associates in their home domain and report the shitshow they've walked into in AC. The response is less than sympathetic, as if they have a sponsor with greater influence than them, they express in circumspect terms that the situation demands their presence more than originally thought: if Ornella is gone, someone needs to secure the domain or at least ensure the new Baron isn't screwing them out of money (if the pretext of the coterie's journey was fiscal). If they player characters represent the Hecata, they need to ensure Lubango, Strand, and Milliner are all still working in the clan's interest. The call concludes with a "don't call this number again until you've got results."

FLEE ATLANTIC CITY

It's easy for the player characters to hop into a taxi, a bus, or a train, and take the Atlantic City Expressway out of the domain. Doing so puts them out of Blumenau's reach (and interest, as she wants them gone and this is accomplished if they leave), but puts them first in Pleasantville (which Lubango controls) and then into a wider area nominally independent from the sects. If the player characters pursue this route, the Storyteller can have a little fun introducing them to weird, isolated Kindred of New Jersey, stranded between the domains of Atlantic City,

New York, and Philadelphia. Such a story goes beyond the scope of The Family, but is a good way to introduce fringe cults from *Forbidden Religions* or bizarre vampires with no reach beyond their mortal herds.

Hunting, Gambling, and Other, Less Civilized Entertainments

Outsiders visit Atlantic City to explore their vices with impunity. Without the Camarilla yoke hanging over Kindred here, the primary law is Masquerade, with the secondary rule being that city residents should not be treated as prey (though the latter is tough for Blumenau to enforce on passing Kindred).

The Storyteller is encouraged to provide exposure to the domain activities on p. 57, and add any of the following encounters to help provide Atlantic City with character, providing they don't interfere with the story's pacing:

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING

When one of the player characters commences a hunt or attempts to seduce a mortal into acting as a vessel, the prey's eyes widen and they back away rapidly, repeating "I know what you're doing, I know what you're doing." Atlantic City has a relative dearth of vessels when held in contrast to its Kindred population, resulting in mortals from whom vampires have fed on multiple occasions. In the case of this mortal, the last feeding experience was enough to induce flashbacks, and if they're not stopped, they're going to run into the open and shout out that the player character is assaulting them.

For added impact, an Atlantic City Kindred might witness this scene and take the player character to the side after things calm down, explaining this is why the former Prince put a restriction on feeding from people who live in AC. As the last remaining Camarilla vampire in this domain, Felix Lodzi is a character to use for this purpose, though his eccentric, skittish nature may result in the player characters doubting his words.

THE MASOCHIST BLOOD DOLL

Some kine *crave* the pleasure of the feed, with these deviant mortals known colloquially as blood dolls. Rarer than them are the blood dolls who seek out the Hecata kiss, infamous in Kindred circles for the excruciating pain it causes. In this encounter, an attractive young man, slender and stylish but a little awkward with it, hangs around the Three Bears and other Kindred-influenced areas. He was once a frequent vessel for Ornella Giovanni, until she disappeared, and has grown addicted to the pain of the Hecata bite. He's

excellent at spotting the tell-tale signs of Kindred behavior, and Blumenau, Popcorn, and Zingaretti have attempted many times to eject him from the casino only for him to find his way back inside. He sidles up to one of the player characters and offers his body for their use, promising them a soundproofed apartment so he can scream to his heart's content. Even better if they're a member of the Hecata.

THE WAGER

If the player characters successfully ingratiate themselves with the Atlantic City Kindred, the subject of the wager (see p. 57) arises. One is already in force, with Poodle Pumper as the individual attempting to fulfil a wager set down by Blumenau and the other Kindred. Poodle Pumper's enthusiastic for the task, though he's finding some aspects of it challenging, leading to his approaching the player characters for assistance, offering them a cut of his profits if they help him succeed. He's vague about the wager's details until they at least commit to it in principle.

Poodle Pumper explains that a Ukrainian mobster — Semion Bragin — and his entourage have flown in to Atlantic City to make an international drug and human trafficking deal with some of the local criminal elements, but the wager is for Poodle Pumper to kidnap each of Bragin's three bodyguards, one at a time across a succession of nights, store them somewhere without killing them, and then force the isolated Bragin to commit a crime in public view before releasing the bodyguards. Poodle Pumper's thinking is pretty juvenile — he wants Bragin to jog down the length of the Boardwalk nude — but he's open to suggestions. If he succeeds at this task, the city's Kindred promise Poodle Pumper dominion over the Ruby Throat (see p. 86) and \$50,000 to invest as he sees fit.

YOU'RE THE MARK

On top of Blumenau's harassment, the player characters find themselves the subject of a domain wager, though they may not be immediately aware of this. It starts when Zingaretti introduces them to an officious-looking woman named Darcy Lorenza, and works best if they're Hecata vampires or linked to organized crime or investing in property. Lorenza explains she's aware of their status, and she wants to make them an offer to invest in a new resort construction on the Boardwalk, presently named "The Venetian Casino." Lorenza states that they've had difficulties reaching the New York Giovanni as Ornella was their point of contact, but they're desperately in need of \$40,000 to pay off city planners, which Ornella was due to supply. She's looking to the coterie to provide the funding before they depart.

This is all a ruse, as the bare bones of the Venetian have been under development for over 15 years, passing

from investor to investor with little progress. In fact, Lorenza is an agent for the Lasombra, Waxman, whose wager is to find suitable marks to con out of \$30,000 or more. Hearing about the player characters' arrival, he targets them and provides Lorenza with the little information he knows about the Giovanni family, Ornella, and convinces Zingaretti that the offer is legitimate.

This scenario may see the player characters lose dots in Resources if they fall for the con, though this in turn earns them respect from some of the wager's participants (if they accept the con graciously), possibly translating to dots in Allies or Contacts among the Anarchs' mortal associates.

ANOTHER STOP AND SEARCH

Uniformed cops like to make their presence known on the Boardwalk, ostensibly to make the tourists feel safe. Unfortunately, it can serve to exacerbate tensions, and restless cops have a tendency to stop people out of boredom. A duo of cops — Officers Sam Pound and Mark Burmholdt — attempt to stop one of the player characters, especially if they're a person of color, with whom they'll be measurably less polite. If the player characters ask for details, the cops repeatedly state "this is for your own safety" and "are you refusing to comply?" They're attempting to provoke the character into an act of defensiveness or aggression, and pull their firearms if they feel they can get away with it.

While some tourists stand around and watch and others swiftly make a distance, a depressing number

catcall and mock the player character under police threat. All of this might result in a frenzy roll, a trip to the local precinct, or the use of powers such as Presence to change the cops' attitudes. No Kindred are behind the police aggression. See p. 70 for Atlantic City cop traits.

METH AT LOW, LOW PRICES

The drug problem in Atlantic City worsens every year, with the city authorities doing all they can to contain the trade to areas beyond the Boardwalk. This doesn't prevent the occasional dealer from trying their luck in the tourist-heavy area, and in this scene, a young woman, appearing no older than 18, tries to lure one of the player characters into a quiet space behind the go-kart track on the Steel Pier, where she offers a bag of crystal to make their "evening pop." If the player characters take the deal, the girl reveals herself to be an undercover cop and attempts to get cuffs on them, pulling a radio from her handbag to summon backup.

The entire act is clearly entrapment, which the solitary player character may attempt to argue, requiring a Charisma + Intimidation roll (Difficulty 4) or supernatural means to convince her to drop the attempt at arrest. If pressed, she explains the department wants drug arrests on the Boardwalk to show there's a crackdown taking place, but she's been working the area for a month and knows the real dealing takes place inside the hotels or off the Boardwalk.

ADDLED PREY

The question of consent when feeding is one all Kindred find themselves confronting during the course



of their unlivess, especially when they find themselves utilizing powers of hypnotism, the intoxicating potency of vitae, and the pleasure of most feeding attempts. Therefore, when a hunting player character finds a clearly intoxicated mortal, staggering and tripping over their feet, it may feel like a prime opportunity to feed with no obvious repercussions. Doing so does convey the hit of the dope this fiend has just injected, however, which adds +2 dice to all attempts to resist frenzy and -1 die to any rolls involving mental and social Attributes. This effect remains in place for the rest of the night. The vessel though goes into cardiac arrest following the feed, adding another Humanity-related quandary to proceedings.

LOST AND CONFUSED

An old man tugs one of the player characters on the sleeve and asks “are you my son?” This elderly fellow is a dementia sufferer, and has got himself lost from his wife and children, who brought him to Atlantic City to jog some memories of his mis-spent youth. This scene exists to evoke some sympathy from the player characters, as the man is clearly confused and likely to be taken advantage of if not reunited with his family or taken to the cops or a nearby hospital. His dialogue flits between memories of how Atlantic City used to be and meandering questions about his next meal, his children, and his insistence that the window needs opening, even one isn’t present.

CAUGHT IN THE MARCH

Atlantic City Boardwalk plays home to many marches for everything from civil rights to religious liberties. On this night (or any other during the player characters’ AC stay), an evangelical anti-gambling march makes its way from one end of the Boardwalk to the other, complete with placards and chants, stops for speeches and press photographs, and a light police presence observing the event. The marchers number fewer than 50, with most onlookers deriding their cause. A reporter puts a microphone in one of the player characters’ faces, asking for their opinion on the subject, and later one of the marchers starts shouting at one of the player characters, declaring they’re “a slave to sin” and should “pick up a placard and march with us.”

At one point, a teenager marching with the evangelists is on the receiving end of a shove from an irate tourist who bemoans any interference with his vacation, and things turn ugly. The cops don’t resort to tear gas or batons on this occasion, but do clear this area of the Boardwalk for the next 20 minutes. The event may act as good concealment for a meeting in a crowd, a discreet feed, or the chance to escape pursuers. The Storyteller should consider merging this with Police Intervention on p. 70 if they want more disruption in that scene, and if they’re involving more of the city Kindred, a vampire such as Waxman is in prime place to sponsor a march like this.

JUSTIN “POODLE PUMPER” SIMMONS

Clan: Thin-Blood

Sire: Acker Heron

Embraced: 2005 (Born 1981)

Ambition: Win the next city wager

Convictions: None

Touchstones: None

Humanity: 4

Generation: 14th

Blood Potency: 0

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms (Pistol) 4, Melee 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1; Animal Ken (Dogs) 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise (Gangs) 4, Subterfuge 2; Awareness 3, Finance 1, Investigation 1, Politics 1, Technology 2

Disciplines: Thin-Blood Alchemy 1

THIN-BLOOD MERITS:

- Anarch Comrades
- Catenating Blood
- Thin-blood Alchemist

THIN-BLOOD FLAWS:

- Branded by the Camarilla
- Clan Curse: Ventrue — Feeding restriction of mortals aged over 70
- Dead Flesh

General Difficulties: 4/2

WAXMAN

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Miss Fitzsimmons

Embraced: 1958 (Born 1902)

Ambition: Increase the influence of organized crime over Atlantic City

Convictions: Never allow a cop to show you disrespect

Touchstones: Alonzo Chiappa — mob boss currently serving time

Humanity: 5**Generation:** 12th**Blood Potency:** 2**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 7**Skills:** Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Larceny (Illegal Gambling) 4, Stealth 2; Etiquette 1, Insight 1, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Persuasion 3, Streetwise (Organized Crime) 3, Subterfuge 4; Awareness 1, Finance 3, Investigation 1, Politics (Mob Structure) 2**Disciplines:** Dominate 2, Oblivion 2, Obscure 1, Potence 2**General Difficulties:** 5/3

Chapter Three:

Fact from Fiction

The Storyteller should move on to this chapter once the player characters have discovered most or all of the following plot points:

- Ornella Giovanni is still active.
- Lubango is in Ornella's employ.
- Ms. Strand is not the leak, but they're led to believe she is.
- There's a cult growing in the city.
- Edith Blumenau tried to have them killed or driven from her domain.
- The leak came from Blumenau, and she may have gained this information from Ornella.
- Blumenau and Ornella are likely working together.

Their actions are therefore directed at Blumenau from this point, or Ornella, if they found out where she makes her haven.

Zingaretti Burns

One of the surest ways to get Blumenau's attention is through harassment of her ghoul, Zingaretti. The issue is, Blumenau won't rush to his defense if he's physically threatened, as she doesn't feel he has enough value to

warrant her intervention. She, however, arrives at the Three Bears or a mutually agreeable location if the player characters have a meaningful way of threatening her casino or political position.

This leaves Zingaretti in an unpleasant position. If the player characters make threats against him or worse (to his mind, anyway), threaten Blumenau within his earshot, and they make the mistake of retaining their haven in the Three Bears, he likely disables the sprinklers and elects to start a fire on their floor of the hotel, directly outside their room. To compound matters, he does so during the day. This however does not occur if Abigail Kirby provided the player characters with security or if they have their own kine servants watching the room from outside.

This scene could easily prove lethal to the player characters, as escaping an interior hotel room where the only exit is ablaze, is difficult for anyone, let alone for vampires who struggle to stay alert during daylight hours. Unless the player characters brought ghouls or mortal retainers to keep watch for them from inside the room, the first they become aware of the fire is when the heat reaches their sleeping quarters. By this time, the fire has spread across their suite and a fire truck is on its way, called by another concerned member of the hotel staff.

With a lack of windows through which to escape, the player characters have a few options available:

- The vampires could hunker down in theoretically fireproof parts of the hotel room (such as the safe, the fridge, a large, a metal luggage trunk, if they're small enough), though the heat is still intense enough to cause one point of Aggravated Health damage every round if they attempt to wait out the inferno.
- They might attempt to escape by running through the fire and out into the corridor. If someone woke them when the fire was only at the door, they suffer two Aggravated Health damage running through the fire wreathing the door frame. If the fire itself woke them, the room is ablaze, dealing a total of three Aggravated Health damage per round (it takes two round to cross the entire suite) unless they make successful Dexterity + Athletics rolls (Difficulty 3) to find the safest route through the smoke and flame, reducing the damage to two Aggravated Health damage per round.
- The extractor fan above the bar and another in the bathroom leads to a larger vent, through which the player characters can crawl out, if they climb up successfully using a Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 2). If the blaze is already in the room, increase the Difficulty by +1 and inflict two Aggravated Health

damage for every roll each player character fails, as their legs dangle in the fire. This vent takes them safely away from the fire and into one of the other hotel rooms, or the laundry room on this floor.

If the player characters exit into the corridor, they have the added complication of windows through which unbarred sunlight shines. Diving to the floor and bellycrawling to another interior room still inflicts one Aggravated Health damage every round, due to the ambient sunlight. If the vampires pull the cords of the blinds as they go by each window, damage is reduced to inflict every second round.

Thankfully, one of the rooms to the side of the player characters' is vacant, but a family occupies the other. The one they find themselves at, if trying to find a place to hide, is down to the Storyteller to judge. If they've managed to escape the burning room with minimal harm, put mortal obstacles in their way. If they're on their last legs, have them bundle into a dark, safe room.

But what of Zingaretti?

Zingaretti's location during all this is up to the Storyteller to determine, as the ghoul is in a terrified state, having just put the torch to clammates of his former domitor. Here are a few options:

- Zingaretti dithers in the corridor, watching the blaze spread with a mixture of pride and horror. This allows the player

characters to grab him and drag him into one of the rooms if they exit the hotel room via this method.

- Zingaretti heads back to his office and leaves a voice message for Blumenau saying he's "dealt with the problem" before either taking his own life out of abject fear of having done the wrong thing, or operating as if the fire is as big a surprise to him as it is everyone else.
- Zingaretti flees the hotel, afraid of the repercussions for setting fire to the Three Bears. The police either arrest him or he hides out in Atlantic City for a couple of nights before crawling back to Blumenau (or any other Kindred) for his fix of vitae.

If Zingaretti remains on the premises, he foolishly believes the fire consumed the player characters.

The Fire Crew

Following a major fire in the hotel, safety procedure is to evacuate the building entirely. If Zingaretti or the player characters are on hand to offer a bribe, the fire marshal may declare the hotel "safe." The player characters — if involved in such an exchange — should be encouraged to come up with a creative reason for the marshal, however, as taking this action would violate the city fire code.

The player characters, even in their languorous states, may feel unsafe remaining at the Three Bears

OPERATING BY DAY

After awakening during the day, a vampire can only act for a single scene, after which they must make a Humanity roll (Difficulty 3). A win permits an additional scene of action and a critical win lets them stay awake for as long as needed. When acting during daylight hours, the maximum dice pool they can roll equals their Humanity rating.

following this scene. Exit into the drains beneath the hotel or the underground parking lot are just about their only options during the daytime, unless one of the player characters is a thin-blood with the ability to transport the bodies of the characters to another hotel.

Blumenau Cauterizes

Following repeated assassination attempts across a short space of time, the player characters may feel that now is the time to punish Edith Blumenau for her poor hospitality.

Several of their prior actions may result in Blumenau reaching out to them to settle this matter diplomatically. These include having met with Abigail Kirby and treating her with respect, winning Blumenau's friendship, participating in the city wagers, and following Atlantic City Kindred laws. See Killing with Kindness below.

If Blumenau feels threatened, because the player characters made Lubango question his loyalty to the Bahari, because they damaged the casino, or if they assaulted Jay (who she adores), she dispatches Lubango or Jay (if either are still loyal and alive), to incinerate the player characters. See Just Plain Killing on p. 88.

Killing with Kindness

Via Zingaretti or even via Lia Milliner, Blumenau reaches out to the player characters and invites them to a small roulette club named the Ruby Throat, occupying a space near Central Pier Arcade, where she promises a peaceful negotiation.

The Ruby Throat is one of the original gambling joints in Atlantic City, and one of the first businesses Edith Blumenau established. It's her private club for gambling and political



deals, and she only invites Kindred and kine to it if she respects them. Tucked away above a jewelry store and beneath an Italian pizza restaurant, this single-floor joint couldn't look more inconspicuous. The only sign of the roulette club bearing its name is the "Ruby Throat" stenciled into the ground floor buzzer.

Blumenau isn't alone in the Ruby Throat. Just as the player characters travel in a coterie, she's assembled her own, comprising of any number of the Anarchs detailed earlier in this story. They stand, sit, and generally lounge in this smoky dive, which looks like something from the Prohibition era, while Blumenau idly spins the roulette wheel.

Blumenau tells the player characters she has no more designs on their final deaths. Her attempts have caused too much disruption to the domain and

her assets, and she makes a half-hearted apology for any trouble they've experienced. If Zingaretti tried to destroy them, she apologizes earnestly for his unruly actions, promising he'll be punished. She asks them again what exactly they desire in Atlantic City, before dropping the ball in the roulette wheel and giving it a spin.

If the player characters ask her to hand over Ornella Giovanni, Blumenau stares at them and says "I'm not about to betray a sister of Lilith." At least one of the Anarchs in the room scoffs at this. She adds, "But you can go to her and speak, if you give your oath no harm will come to her. If you break that oath, the Hecata will be hunted whenever they appear in Atlantic City, for at least a century. That is, if your clan isn't wiped out when the Promise of 1528

comes to an end..." Blumenau's tired of the conflict and reveals the Giovanni's location as Luxemburg House, though she warns that a Bahari named the "Sleeper" is looking after Ornella, and won't take kindly to her initiation being interrupted.

A SPIN OF THE WHEEL

Before the player characters leave, if they comported themselves politely and with respect to Blumenau, she offers them a wager. She acknowledges that her attention's turning more to matters of faith, and she might need someone to run the Three Bears in her stead. If the coterie contains an Anarch or Hecata, they may fit the bill. Either way this proposition goes, the rest of the Anarchs in attendance decry the sudden offer until it is phrased as a city wager.

Blumenau's not just going to give the casino away. Either from her researching the Kindred in nights prior, or through conversation with them now, she targets one with meaningful influence in another domain, and wagers that against the Three Bears Casino, in sight of everyone present. "If either party should welch on the deal," she says, "talk will travel that our words mean nothing." She opts for the roulette wheel as her preferred means of deciding, allowing the player character the chance to choose red or black. If the ball should come to rest on green, then she offers to up the ante, throwing in her luxury yacht, if the player characters have something of similar value to wage.

Blumenau doesn't interfere with the spin of the wheel. If the player characters attempt to do so, the Difficulty should be at least 5, due to all the eyes on them. The Storyteller should ask the player character making the wager to roll two dice, one at a time. On the first, odds are red, evens are black. If the second lands on a 10, the result is classified as "green o," meaning the wager increases.

If Blumenau's coterie detect the player characters are cheating, Popcorn and Poodle Pumper threaten violence immediately, but the Baron suggests their cheating is punishment enough, as they'll send word to their fellow Anarchs elsewhere that the player characters are dishonest, and business deals with them are not to be established lightly. This may affect the player characters' Status Background, depending on the Anarch presence in their home domain.

OPPOSITION TO THE BAHARI

If the subject of the Bahari is raised in this meeting with the Anarchs, it takes an Intelligence + Insight roll (Difficulty 2) to determine most of the Anarchs are unhappy with this cult sprouting in their domain, despite their loyalty to Blumenau. This unhappiness can be exacerbated, if the player characters are smart. Waxman, Kirby, and Ferdie speak loudest against the Bahari ideals and refer to the cult as "some cell obsessed with vengeance and burying people in bloody earth."

Blumenau won't shift from her beliefs, but the Anarchs can be manipulated into forcing her to step down, but this is something achieved more through roleplay, and the player characters telling Bahari horror stories, if they have familiarity with the cult or succeed on a Charisma + Occult roll (Difficulty 5).

REPRISALS AGAINST THE ANARCHS

Given the trouble Edith Blumenau caused the player characters, they may attack the Anarch coterie on sight, or plan a reprisal soon after leaving, seeing as several Anarchs are all in one place at one time.

If the conflict takes places within the Ruby Throat, the Storyteller should find time to emphasize or incorporate the following elements of the small joint:

- The claustrophobic nature of the three-room gambling house means any vampires fighting each other are likely to bump into each other, crash through walls, and upturn furniture.
- The heavy drapes on either side of each of the three large windows are flammable, but also useful for binding a thrashing vampire.
- Popcorn, Poodle Pumper, and Dixon are all armed with handguns, with Popcorn and Poodle Pumper also carrying daggers. Blumenau has a sawn-off shotgun under the roulette wheel table.
- If the characters fight without using firearms, one of the servers from the restaurant above hammers on the door to ask the Kindred to keep the noise down.
- The only obvious ways out are through a window into the sea, through a window or door onto the exterior staircase, or through a window into the road. More inventive methods include punching through the floor to the jeweler's downstairs or into the small pizza place above.
- If present, Dixon, Waxman, and Kirby are the first to bolt. Their loyalty to the Baron is less than that of Popcorn, Painite, and Poodle Pumper.
- The single lightbulb gets smashed early, plunging the Ruby Throat into a darkness lit only from the flashing casino lights on the other side of the street.
- Gunfire draws the cops quickly, as this venue is on the Boardwalk. The first patrol shows up after three rounds of fighting. They attempt entry if the sounds are of smashing and screaming. They call for backup and then enter if they hear gunshots.

FERDINANDA "FERDIE" DIXON

Clan: Toreador

Sire: Sir Henry Johnson

Embraced: 1942 (Born 1916)

Ambition: Reinvigorate the unions in New Jersey

Convictions: Always put the collective above the individual

Touchstones: Ana Saralegui — trade union chief and protégé

Humanity: 7

Generation: 11th

Blood Potency: 2

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3; Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 6

Skills: Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 3; Animal Ken 2, Ettiquette 2, Insight 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership (Unions) 5, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 1; Academics (Modern American History) 3, Awareness 1, Finance 2, Politics (Socialism) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Dominate 1, Presence 3

General Difficulties: 5/3

Just Plain Killing

If Blumenau feels threatened, she doesn't send the player characters a cordial invitation to meet up; she plans to end their unives with no more half-measures. She has three methods at her disposal, as detailed below:

LUBANGO

If the player characters planted a seed of doubt in Lubango's mind about the leak and Ornella and Blumenau's loyalties, he doesn't answer Blumenau's call. If he has a way of contacting the player characters, he leaves them a message saying "Baron wants y'all as ash before the night is out, but I refuse to start the fire. Watch your backs."

If the player characters took part in the Pleasantville shootout and escaped without conversing with Lubango about Ornella, Blumenau, and the Bahari, he's prepared to do as Blumenau wishes and hunt the player characters down.

In this case, the Samedi's actions depend on where the player characters are staying, how visible they are, and how many Kindred know of their whereabouts. If they've been completely discreet about their AC haven, Lubango has no way of knowing where they are, and waits for them at Luxemburg House (see p. 89). If they've acted conspicuously, he tracks them in person, armed with his flamethrower, and defies the Masquerade to (in his view) protect his beloved Ornella from Hecata traitors.

An encounter with Lubango should be set up like a scene from a slasher movie, except in this case the slasher is a Samedi with an axe. He should ideally appear when the player characters' coterie splits up, from the shadows, an alley, or a doorway, clad in his overalls, boots, gloves, and with axe in hand. He swings the axe once as a threat, or a taunt, before hefting it in the player character's direction. If the vampire flees, Lubango doesn't pursue

head-on, instead circling to cut them off and attack their car, or themselves, if they're on foot. Portray him as if he's an unstoppable force, and frightening for a vampire. Refer to p. 76 for Lubango's traits and treat the axe as a huge melee weapon with +4 damage.

If the player characters take Lubango down without killing him, he accepts defeat and confirms Blumenau dispatched him to deal with them. She told him they were coming to kill Ornella Giovanni for failing the Hecata. If the player characters explain otherwise with an easy Manipulation + Persuasion roll, he looks prepared to frenzy at Blumenau's betrayal. He heads to the Ruby Throat to burn the place out, with or without the Baron being inside. He'll also provide Ornella's location if they give their word that she'll remain unharmed.

Of note, a vampire striding around Atlantic City with an axe is likely to draw a lot of kine attention. News flashes interrupt regular TV and radio programming and the cops attempt to cordon off the area of the city in which Lubango and the player characters find themselves. Lubango doesn't have an exit strategy beyond playing dead and waking up in the morgue after the news crews move on. His Masquerade strategy is to pin the actions on one of his gang members, hopped up on PCP.

THE ANARCH COTERIE

The city's Anarchs are fundamentally beholden to Baron Blumenau, though not all of them are combatants, and they're far more open to reason than Lubango and Jay "Sideface." If the Samedi and her dirty cop are unavailable, she asks her coterie to go hunting for interlopers.

Much of the Anarchs' response to this command comes down to their prior interactions with the player characters. They have minds of their own and outside of Popcorn and Poodle Pumper, don't consider themselves members of a hit squad. If the player characters have acted in a way that Blumenau can say to her coterie-mates "look what they've done to our domain," though, they reluctantly pick up their weapons.

The Anarchs operate as a unit, much as the player characters might. If the player characters are staying in a communal haven, the opposing coterie attacks from all sides: some enter through the door, another subtly slides through the window, while another might descend from the ceiling. They know speed is key, but outside Popcorn and Poodle Pumper, they attempt to stake or render their targets torpid over destroying them. The player characters should make Wits + Awareness rolls (Difficulty 4) if the Anarchs are about to break into their haven, and can attempt Persuasion or Intimidation rolls against them to make them stand down, using the results of the respective Anarchs' Composure + Resolve rolls to determine Difficulty.

If the player characters are dispersed, the Anarchs still act as a unit but ambush the player characters in their smaller groups, trying to haul them into their cars or mow them down, knock them off the Boardwalk and into the sea, and attack them there out of sight of witnesses, or lure them into traps with promises of information. As before, allow player characters the opportunity to anticipate these attacks, or to evade them with Dexterity + Athletics rolls (Difficulty 4) or detect a trap with Wits + Insight rolls (Difficulty 4).

Importantly, while a couple of the Anarchs are ready and willing to fight, none of them are trained in military operations. They're a mixture of youths, gangsters and politicians, and act with as much tactical soundness as anyone told to take out a group of powerful enemies.

A fight between two coteries has the capacity for a lot of dice rolling, so the Storyteller is advised to call a halt as soon as one character is seriously hurt or destroyed, or after three rounds. The Anarchs back off and tell the player characters to "get out of Atlantic City." If they're engaged in conversation, the Anarch coterie cite their concerns about just wiping out a handful of licks on the Baron's say-so.

JAY "SIDEFACE"

While Jay's less threatening in terms of raw power, what he does have is contacts within the police department, being a detective himself. Jay's plan is to have at least some of the player characters arrested on falsified charges, before having them murdered in jail as they await processing. This is therefore a two-stage process.

The first stage sees Jay call his police contacts, who put out an APB physically describing the player characters, stating they're wanted for violent assault and theft from the Three Bears Casino. The cops then patrol the streets as normal, but keep their eyes open for the player characters. If the players state their characters are staying indoors or traveling in discreet vehicles (such as with tinted windows, a van with room in the back, or similar), the cops don't find them. If the players travel openly, or remain at the Three Bears, they spot the increase in cops on a Wits + Awareness roll (Difficulty 2) and must succeed on at least two Dexterity or Wits + Stealth rolls (Difficulty 3) as they make their way across the city.

If the cops identify the player characters, they draw their weapons and command the player characters to perform the usual procedure of putting hands in the air and getting on the ground, before putting hands behind their heads, at which point they attempt to cuff the vampires. If the player characters resist arrest, the cops aren't shy about opening fire. If they don't resist, they're locked up in the city jail in a holding pen with eight kine, all affiliated with the same gang — the Dirty Blok. The gang members ignore the player characters in holding with

them unless they're wearing expensive clothes, watches, jewelry, etc., which they attempt to intimidate from the Kindred, requiring a Composure + Resolve roll (Difficulty 3) to resist.

The second stage of Jay's plan sees him visit the jail (see p. 71 for his traits), where he refuses to make eye contact with the vampires (hence his sobriquet of "Sideface") but throws a bag to the Dirty Blok gang members, containing an assortment of shivs. He says, "My employer will cover bail for all of you if you wipe out these punks," before exiting to the guard station. The gang members don't hesitate, arm themselves, and lunge at the player characters.

If the player characters survive the attack, their actions are on camera, and Jay re-emerges to confirm as such. He tells them "Miss Blumenau wanted me to record that footage and send it to her, for sending to your superiors. She wanted me to tell you this, despite the fact you'll be in this cell for 24 hours due to our over-stressed booking system. Enjoy the morning light when it comes in..." and he leaves, pointing to the narrow ceiling-level window.

Breaking free from jail requires ingenuity from the player characters, and may require cutting through some cops (see *Atlantic City Cops* on p. 70 for their traits), or at least mentally manipulating them. Sideface hasn't finished transferring the jail recording to Blumenau if / when they escape, creating a race against time as Jay's prepared to hide behind other cops while awaiting his download's conclusion.

If the player characters stay in the jail cell for the morning, of course, the window lets in a blast of sunlight (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 221), on top of the struggles they'll have operating during the day.

DIRTY BLOK GANG MEMBERS

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 2, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 3

Exceptional Dice Pools: Intimidation 3

Special: The gang members are armed with shivs, which inflict +2 light piercing damage.

General Difficulties: 3/1

Luxemburg House

Ornella Giovanni has been secreted away in an oubliette under Luxemburg House ever since she disappeared from the Three Bears a year ago. The building is a women's shelter and the staff there do good work, providing



sanctuary, aid, and options for sufferers of abuse, threats, and stalking. It also acts as a center for the city's Bahari. Blumenau runs the place like a church, expecting her charges to reach states of social awareness, and personal enlightenment. Through the matron, an old lady named Hattie Williams, she ordains that everyone within should experience true, spiritual change before departing. While only a handful of the women within are members of Blumenau's cult, and the rest move on (sometimes wondering at the faith group running the place), the years since Blumenau's conversion to Lilith worship has seen a steady trickle of mortal Bahari emerge from Luxemburg House.

If the player characters arrive here early, with Lubango as an ally, the Storyteller can increase the challenge of entering Luxemburg House or locating Ornella Giovanni underneath it.

Entering the Sanctuary

Luxemburg House has several barriers to the player characters' entry, especially if any of them are men.

The first barrier is based on gender. Gaining entry to a women's shelter requires an easy Charisma + Subterfuge roll if the player character appears non-male (Difficulty 1, increasing by 1 for each additional person trying to enter), but if the player character appears as a man, they need to make a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 5, increasing by 1 for every man trying to enter).

The second barrier is a physical one. A permanent guard remains posted just inside the shelter door, and pats down anyone attempting entry. The guard insists any weapons are removed and stored in the building safe.

The third barrier is the matron and her register, recording anyone entering, though the shelter doesn't demand ID. Appropriately, Luxemburg House is cautious about anyone accessing it under false pretenses.

The final barrier is the player characters' freedom to move: new arrivals are expected to receive a rundown of rights, responsibilities, duties, and to report the name of one trusted person from outside the center, and are then escorted to a bedroom, from which they're told where the common room, kitchen, bathroom, and enclosed garden can be found. The building contains 16 bedrooms, six of them containing twin beds, thereby theoretically allowing for 22 women to take refuge in the shelter.

The player characters may instead attempt to

SPLITTING THE COTERIE

At this point of the story, it's unlikely any men in the coterie are going to get into Luxemburg House without difficulty or use of Disciplines, so what's the Storyteller to do if the coterie splits up or entirely consists of men?

A split coterie should have any of the locked-out vampires having to deal with Lubango, the Anarch coterie, or Jay "Sideface" (see *Blumenau Cauterizes*, p. 85). Essentially, one half of the group deals with the social concerns within Luxemburg House while the half outside the center must evade capture or slaughter.

A wholly male coterie needs to approach this scene differently. If they don't find a way inside the center and to Ornella Giovanni, a staff member from the center such as the matron, Hattie Williams, might leave the building on an errand, where she can be questioned or influenced with Disciplines. The center staff are a caring group, and could be duped into opening their doors if they saw someone in distress outside (though they'd also call for the police or an ambulance, if they saw something violent).

Crucially, Ornella Giovanni does not leave the center under any circumstances. Neither Luxemburg House's staff or tenants, nor the Bahari, are inclined to just give themselves to their persecutors. For all they know, that's exactly what the player characters are.

break in. The garden sits in a courtyard in the middle of the building, rendering inaccessible unless over the roof via a Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 3), and the windows are all locked, requiring a Dexterity + Larceny roll (Difficulty 4) to enter without breaking the glass.

Once within, the player characters have the added quandary of where to find Ornella Giovanni. The staff know about her, but convincing them to reveal her location requires mental manipulation with Disciplines (against a Difficulty of 3) or mundane methods of persuasion and intimidation (Difficulty 5). The Difficulty is high due to a combination of factors: the staff have all tasted Ornella or Blumenau's vitae at some point; they're devoted to the protection of the center's tenants; and most importantly, abusive partners, pimps, and other assorted lowlifes come to the center's door regularly, demanding entry or to make threats against the staff. The staff are hardened to such attempts.

LUXEMBURG HOUSE STAFF

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 4, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Insight 6; Medicine 6

Special: The staff are all unarmed.

General Difficulties: 4/1

Vulnerable Women

Luxemburg House has a "lights-out" police of midnight. The building is only at half capacity, and if the player characters arrive before midnight, six of the

11 women receiving sanctuary are in the common room, chatting, smoking, playing cards, and watching TV. If a nurse escorts the player characters into the common room, some of the women present look up and acknowledge the new arrivals, while others just go on with their evening. If they arrive without an escort, the room's inhabitants are pointedly colder. They don't extend greetings unless there's a staff member to make the introductions.

If a nurse accompanies them, the player characters must be discreet about asking after Ornella Giovanni. They must make a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 3) to ask outside the nurse's earshot, otherwise she interrupts to say "we do not ask after people at Luxemburg House. If you know someone from outside the center, then you can speak to them directly, but don't go asking other ladies about them. Some of our guests like to keep themselves private or check in under assumed names, and with good reason."

Other than the staff, only one of the inhabitants knows who Ornella Giovanni is. A Bahari and long-term resident of Luxemburg House, Mariette Addison is tasked with keeping an eye on the other women and acting as the cult's voice within the tenant group, where sometimes the nurses and counselors are too authoritative. Addison is a small, weathered, kindly woman who clearly acts as den mother to the other tenants, chatting with them, setting up activities, and counselling them from an empathetic perspective, when asked. If she hears the player characters asking after Ornella Giovanni, she speaks with them privately and asks why they want to know where she is. If they express any kind of threat, she leads them to Sleeper (see *Bahari Supervision*, p. 92) but if they seem genuinely concerned for her wellbeing, dictated via role-

play or a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 4) if they're lying, she takes them to the garden (see *Isolation Chamber*, p. 93).

It's possible for the player characters to guess at Ornella Giovanni's location themselves, if they've been studying the Bahari before now. Rather than giving them the answer earlier, the Storyteller should reward any player characters who researched Lilith or her cult by telling them "many Bahari, while initiating into the cult, find places of quiet and solitude, or verdant gardens, to meditate."

Or Maybe Not

Neither the Storyteller nor the players should make the mistake of thinking that everyone at Luxemburg House is a shattered victim, incapable of resistance. On the contrary, the people who take sanctuary here are bolstered by the support they receive, the sisterhood of their fellow tenants, and the guidance of Bahari like Blumenau, Hattie Williams, and Mariette Addison.

If the player characters force their way into the women's shelter, bully or cajole tenants, or overtly use Disciplines, it's enough to make at least a few of the tenants tackle the controlling vampire while others protect the influenced resident. They're only human and are unlikely to fight to the death, but if a vampire unleashes inhuman powers or spills blood, they barricade themselves in one of the rooms to escape the Kindred, while one of them calls the cops or just shouts out of a window for help.

The staff are incredibly defensive over their tenants, and if the vampires start maiming and killing, they go for the safe in the staff room, where an assortment of small weapons (a couple of pistols and knives, mostly taken from tenants on arrival) are kept. They call the cops if possible, but act to defend the building's occupants with lethal force.

LUXEMBURG HOUSE TENANTS

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 2, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 3

Exceptional Dice Pools: Insight 4

Special: The tenants are all unarmed unless they reach the safe in the staff room, in which case they gain pistols or knives that deal between +1 and +2 damage.

General Difficulties: 3/1

Bahari Supervision

A Bahari nicknamed the "Sleeper" arrived in Atlantic City recently and observes Blumenau's rites with an inquisitive and quietly judgmental air. He's an oddity as one of few men in the shelter, but keeps himself to himself in the staff room, surrounded by paperwork, books, and diagrams. This pudgy, balding, bespectacled Bahari is a cult scholar, and is hard at work performing research into the faith.

If the player characters interrupt the Sleeper, he quietly lowers his glasses to look at the intruding Kindred and swiftly assesses them for what they are. He questions their intentions, and if they respond with threats of violence, he leads them into a trap in the garden. If they merely wish to question Ornella, they must convince him with a Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3) or lie with a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 4).

The Sleeper has no love for Ornella as a rank seedling in the cult, but he does feel utter loyalty to the cult. Knowing he presents as an inadequate combatant, he'd prefer to unleash a frenzied Ornella on the intruders and jam a dagger a hundred times into the engaged player character's back than start a fight himself.

If given the opportunity, he protects his research notes above Ornella or any inhabitant of Luxemburg House.

“THE SLEEPER” GEORGE PRICE

Clan: Toreador

Sire: Duke

Embraced: 1898 (Born 1851)

Ambition: Refine the Bahari's practices

Convictions: Lies must always meet punishment

Touchstones: Charlene Harper — research assistant and friend

Humanity: 6

Generation: 9th

Blood Potency: 3

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 7

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Larceny 1, Melee (Dagger) 3; Etiquette 2, Insight 4, Leadership 1, Performance (Or-

atory) 3, Persuasion 2; Academics (Talmud) 5, Awareness 2, Finance 1, Investigation 3, Occult 4, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Blood Sorcery 3, Celerity 3, Potence 1

General Difficulties: 6/4

Ornella's Isolation Chamber

Ornella Giovanni is Blumenau's first attempt at converting a vampire to the faith of Lilith she picked up in Budapest, and as there's no instruction manual for initiation, she utilizes and incorporates pieces of Bahari practice from the various domains she's visited, and as closely as possible attempts to emulate the way she was brought into the fold.

The garden at the center of Luxemburg House is a verdant, flourishing greenhouse, with rich vines and exotic plants growing up every surface with nearly sufficient density to block out the stars above. An apple tree stands in one corner, arched in its growth. In the garden's middle stands a covered well, with a crank beside it. The cover is a thick metal slab, but with a lever that opens slits in the slab like a drain cover. If the player characters search the thick vines, they find a decomposing body with a fresh apple in its mouth.

Ornella alternates between raging, resting, and meditating at the bottom of the well, in a thick cocoon of semi-congealed blood. She occasionally emerges to make decisions requiring her signature, thumbprint, or vocal say-so, but rarely for longer than an hour, before descending once more. She's incubating, waiting for the moment of rebirth she knows is coming.

How Ornella acts here comes down to the circumstances of her awakening. If the player characters were led here by someone they threatened, or the player characters find their own way to the well and pull the crank, they can make a Wits + Awareness roll (Difficulty 3) to hear her growling and spitting above the sounds of the creaking crank as she ascends. She's already in fury frenzy, and lunges at the first person she sees, a blood-caked, naked monster.

If fresh blood or vitae finds its way down the drainage slots before her ascent, Ornella remains lucid. The blood lacquering her body glistens, she acts in a dreamlike way, and she declares that she's "reborn as a childe of Lilith."

In all cases, Ornella emerges with a rotten apple in her left hand.

Revelation Betrayed

If Giovanni emerges from the well "reborn," she's communicative, but acts as if she's just smoked opiates. Her words are drawn out and she meanders into spiritual tangents. She does recognize that she's a member of the Hecata, but when questioned on whether she's the leak, she rambles about confiding in and confessing everything Blumenau, who she feels would never betray her. She sings that divesting her secrets was a necessary step on the way to enlightenment.

The player characters might attack her for this betrayal, which she anticipates. The Storyteller should utilize Bahari powers from *Cults of the Blood Gods* to emphasize her alien nature, and while her Blood Sorcery level doesn't indicate the ability for her to use Eden's Bounty (it's a level 5 ritual), it can be assumed she and the other Bahari who tended to her have set the power up in the case of disruption. She bites down on the rotten apple and instigates the ritual. If the Sleeper, Hattie, or Mariette are present, they attempt to force the player characters down the well. The player characters must succeed at a Dexterity + Athletics roll (Difficulty 3) to avoid being pushed over the edge, with the descent causing +3 impact Health damage. Climbing back up requires a Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 4). If Ornella is able to jump back down and maul them, their story should be treated as reaching its conclusion.

If Giovanni is left to her own devices having been "reborn," she wishes the player characters well and climbs back down the well. If the Sleeper is present, he describes her as "a little over-ripe, perhaps, but it won't be long before she truly is a Bahari, reborn from the earth like smooth clay or a perfect flower, prettily petaled but for her thorns."

If Giovanni attacked the player characters and was subdued, she's a quivering, confused, and scared wreck once the stake is removed or she's brought back to lucidity. She acknowledges that Blumenau asked her all about the clan, and in her eagerness to find new purpose, found the barriers she'd set up knocked down. She told the Baron everything she knew about her clan's secrets, for want of belonging. Her disgust at the way her clan has treated her has not abated. If she was destroyed, then she never gets to realize Blumenau's betrayal.

ORNELLA GIOVANNI

Clan: Hecata (Giovanni)

Sire: Hope St. John

Embraced: 1922 (Born 1901)

Ambition: Complete my initiation into the Bahari

Convictions: Never feel remorse for serving Lilith

Touchstones: Thomas Zingaretti — former ghoul, still present in Ornella's heart

Humanity: 4

Generation: 10th

Blood Potency: 3

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Larceny (Fraud) 4, Melee 2, Stealth 1; Etiquette 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 1, Persuasion (The Deal) 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1; Awareness 2, Finance (Gambling) 5, Occult 4, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Blood Sorcery 3, Dominate 4, Oblivion 1

General Difficulties: 7/4

Epilogue: Family Values

The conclusion to this tale is entirely dependent on player character actions. Perhaps they leave her to her conversion and report success to their sponsor, whether it be Donatello Giovanni, a Camarilla agent, or Anarch contact. Perhaps they deliver the ashes of someone else, such as Ms. Strand, or Edith Blumenau, to Donatello Giovanni. Maybe they destroy Ornella Giovanni for her treachery, if they're Hecata, and return home for their reward. Perhaps their actions lead to their establishing a foothold in the domain, where the Hecata and Anarchs once held a tight grip.

Optional epilogues might include:

Ornella Reborn

If Ornella Giovanni is permitted to complete her initiation ceremony into the Bahari, she emerges as the first "home grown" Bahari in Atlantic City and inspires several of the Anarchs and Lubango to follow suit. Her survival angers her other clanmates, whether or not they know her to be the leak's source, as she's clearly no longer following clan dictates. They hire a coterie from outside the clan, likely Anarchs or Autarkis, to assassinate her as a stain on the family.

NO CULTS OF THE BLOOD GODS?

If you do not own Cults of the Blood Gods and wish to demonstrate Ornella's unusual powers, have her use the Blood Sorcery powers from *Vampire: The Masquerade* with a strangely botanic twist. Corrosive Vitae and Extinguish Vitae can be transferred through the plants in the garden and Clinging of the Insect appears more like the plants are lifting Ornella, for example.

If the player characters were Hecata, they're chided for allowing her to survive as a traitor to clan belief, though unless her responsibility as the leak was proved, Donatello accepts that family doesn't turn on family without just cause. Donatello suggests sending the player characters back to Atlantic City to claim the territory once in the clan's hands: namely the casino and if Lubango has been compromised, the street level gangland activity.

If the player characters include some Bahari, they may be invited to Atlantic City as Blumenau's and Ornella's guests now the initiation has been completed. Steadily, the domain drifts away from the Anarch Movement and to the worship of Lilith. Therefore, if the characters are Anarchs, they may return to the domain to ensure this doesn't occur.

Local Justice

If the player characters defer to individuals such as Lubango, Strand, or Lia Milliner for a decision on Ornella's fate, their response varies. Milliner doesn't want to jeopardize the domain's lucrative nature, Strand is happy to see a Giovanni burned, and Lubango — unless convinced otherwise — defends Ornella to the death.

The Anarchs, meanwhile, are happy to preserve Ornella regardless of their religious beliefs. They see Ornella as proof that vampires can break from their chains, which means the world to their jumbled ethos.

If the player characters are Hecata or possess a wealthy sponsor, Donatello or the Mawla supports the local decision in this case, as long as the money continues rolling from the city without interruption, and ideally the leak has been stymied. This may require the player characters taking up a permanent presence in AC.

Defecting to Atlantic City

The player characters may think better of returning to a Mawla like Donatello if they lack evidence of the leak's source, or fail to destroy Ornella Giovanni. In this case, remaining in Atlantic City is an option, albeit a precarious one. Real estate — in Kindred terms — can ill afford a permanent coterie setting up on the Boardwalk. If Blumenau is still around, she suggests (with no hard feelings) that perhaps they can take up territories in the unusual, micro domains of Jersey City, Newark, Paterson, and Elizabeth, but use AC as a communal ground for meetings and profit, as long as they abide by her rule and Anarch primacy.

Donatello is less likely to receive this news well. If the player characters were supposed to report in, he dispatches mortal members of the Giovanni family to investigate their whereabouts and terminate them as rats.

Lying to the Sponsor

The player characters may return to their sponsor claiming a job well done, but in lying, they risk earning a fiery end. Telling a bald-faced lie to a more powerful vampire about the leak requires a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 6). Bending the truth, such as explaining Blumenau leaked the information but the player characters couldn't find the source, reduces the Difficulty to 4.

The Mawla isn't satisfied unless delivered the ashes of the traitor, and through use of his Disciplines (if a Hecata), they attempt to interrogate the wraith of the deceased. This could explode in the player characters' faces if they've lied, so it's up to the Storyteller whether the sponsor is successful in summoning the ghost, or questioning it, or believing the answer he receives.

Serving the Family

Family is all, especially if at least one of the player characters was a Hecata. For the player characters who murder Ornella and deliver her ashes to Donatello, they can expect a proud "good job" and payment for their hardship.

However, if they've left Atlantic City in a state where money will no longer funnel to New York's Hecata, Donatello's good nature quickly drops. He explains "I was going to reward you with territory and some deep pools of wealth, but now you must acquire them yourself, from AC."

If the player characters left Atlantic City much as they found it, minus Ornella Giovanni but with security that cash and bodies continue to flow, Donatello agrees to carve out pieces of a new domain for the player characters. Depending on where the Storyteller wishes to set the next story, that domain could be anywhere within the Hecata's reach.



MK
2021



Open Your Eyes

“All Kindred come so close to salvation, but few are prepared to sacrifice what is necessary for their redemption.”

— Kallias, Golconda Guru

Birmingham: The UK's second city is synonymous with urban decay and post-industrial malaise. This disease of the soul has even infected the city's Kindred and the Camarilla is rotting from the top down, every powerful vampire in the domain moldering in their own stagnant complacency. A new era beckons, ushered in by a silver-tongued messiah who promised Prince Casaubon the secrets of Golconda. There might be truth in his platitudes, or there might not; chances are, Birmingham shakes itself apart before anyone finds out for sure.

Introduction

Open Your Eyes explores what happens when the Kindred are offered a precious, fleeting, ray of hope. A charismatic cult leader promises Golconda — escape, freedom, and peace. Maybe it is attainable, maybe it isn't — that's for the Storyteller to decide. The only objective truth here is this: If you let a pack of monsters loose on the possibility of a good, pure thing, they will tear it apart to feed their writhing litter of personal agendas. Characters in Open Your Eyes are invited to find out whether hope is real, and to wrestle with whether truth matters more than power.

As with the other stories in this book, Storytellers are encouraged to change locations and character descriptions as they see fit. Birmingham's hallmark is its size, the mood of a city trapped between industry and commercial rejuvenation, and a firm split between expensive housing and low-income areas where crime is rife and the police turn a blind eye to offenses such as drug dealing, thefts, and assaults. Similar domains include Amsterdam, San Jose, and Chicago.

Players required: 3–5

Duration: 10–12 hours

Character Advice

There are several ways the player characters might access this plot: personal concern for the Prince's well-being, curiosity about a Golconda prophet, hired by the domain Steward to preserve the domain security, or out of a need to manipulate city politics and faith. The strongest link a character might have to this story is an interest in seeking Golconda or any form of redemption from the vampiric state.

Domain Coterie

Whether you set the story in Birmingham or another domain, there are many benefits to having at least some of the player characters be from the city. Doing so enables fast connections with SPCs introduced in their story (or replaced with your own SPCs), and if the player characters are a coterie at the time the story starts, they should be familiar with the other city coteries such as the Prometheans, the Wire-Walkers, the Fates, and others (see p. 108). This setup entrenches the PCs' place in the plot; the Prologue only requires minor adjustment to cater for it.

Pre-Generated Characters

The pre-generated characters provided in *Trails of Ash and Bone* work well for this story. They're outsiders, some with prior experience of sinister cults and strange and occult powers, and motivations for them to get involved in this story include following the supposed prophet, Kallias, to prove whether he's a fraud, or being hired by the Steward Audrey Barrowman as expendable assets. If the players use the pre-generated characters, it's advised they add their own touches to them, such as Contacts and Allies in the domain, a Mawla from among the cast of SPCs presented, or a Touchstone with connection to one of the other vampires in the city.

Camarilla

Characters with Camarilla affiliation may want the truth behind the Golconda prophet, as Kallias' behavior threatens to disrupt the domain's political structure. Any Camarilla Kindred might also spot the opportunity for advancement up the sect ladder, if the Prince is overtaken by spiritual wanderlust.

An individual like Barrowman prefers to not approach Kindred from

A NOTE ON GUNS

Guns are rare in the UK. They're extremely difficult to obtain legally, but relatively easy to come by illegally if one has the right connections. Most Kindred in Birmingham find guns aren't worth the trouble of obtaining. Any mortals acting in an official capacity (security guards, non-specialized police officers, etc.) are armed only with batons, and potentially tasers. Adjust traits from the core rulebook and other supplements accordingly.

within Birmingham, as she doesn't want loyalty to Prince Casaubon clouding any judgements. Barrowman might, if the characters are locals, leverage the player characters' Touchstones or resources in an effort to ensure their silence as they investigate, or in case they stumble upon something that threatens the status quo (or Barrowman's own ascent).

Anarchs

The situation with Kallias and his marvels is an interesting one to Anarch Kindred, as whether he's real or a fraud, his actions could leave the domain wide open for a revolution. The Anarchs in Birmingham are pretty complacent, but an event like this could spur them into action with the right leaders to galvanize them.

Audrey Barrowman assumes Anarchs such as Haze and Lataka, in this story, are committed to keeping the peace due to her relationship with them, but discovers as the plot proceeds that she's mistaken.

Anarchs tend toward closer relationships with the kine than Camarilla Kindred, so the rumor of a vampire who can tame the Beasts of other Kindred may appeal to humanitarians among the sect. Likewise, a vampire who struggles with their own Humanity may wish to seek out Kallias for the same reason the Prince is doing so.

Others

At the start of the story, no vampires who have encountered

Kallias or the results of his marvels, are able to explain his unusual blood powers. This kind of intrigue might draw vampires from the Hecata or Tremere, as he apparently possesses esoteric knowledge they lack, or vampires from cults such as the One True Way or Church of Set, as his skills could be put to good use in service to their aims.

Mercenary Kindred may offer their services to a vampire such as Barrowman, offering to investigate the Prince and this Kallias in exchange for payment in the form of boons or territory.

An alternative connection to the plot may involve the player characters having close personal ties to the Prince or another Kindred Kallias affected, such as Estelle or Farid. Perhaps word reached them about his gifts, and now they're transfixed with the idea of unravelling this conundrum, or ensuring their friends or associates weren't duped.

Prologue

How the player characters access this story is down to their respective connections to the plot, as determined between the players and the Storyteller. However, the following is an introduction to the story's key elements, using Steward Audrey Barrowman in the role of a Mawla or prominent connection in the domain. This character is easily interchangeable with any politically-minded vampire with whom the protagonists have contact.



If the player characters are outsiders, Audrey Barrowman contacts them before they ever arrive in Birmingham, via mutual acquaintances. They are to meet with Audrey, in her official capacity as Steward of Birmingham, on the night they arrive in the city. If local, they are directed to meet with her the night they receive the message. The goal is to ensure they don't have time to snoop around, and that they get all their facts from Audrey rather than being tainted by any other source.

Wherever they're coming from, a black-windowed limousine collects the player characters from their haven or whichever transport hub they arrived through. The driver is Audrey's ghoul, Zack Iqbal. He doesn't tell the characters anything about the reason for Audrey's summons, and if they persist in asking questions or threaten him, he takes immense pleasure in implying that something awful is about to happen.

"I'm genuinely grateful this is above my pay grade. There are things I'm happier not knowing. You should know though ... I haven't been asked

to drive you home."

An easy Wits + Insight roll determines that Zack knows more than he's telling. In truth he knows Audrey's preoccupied with Kallias and that this meeting is her first move against him. A Manipulation + Persuasion or Intimidation roll (Difficulty 3) obliges him to divulge this, though bullying him is an effective way of angering Audrey, whom Iqbal informs of any such treatment.

The meeting takes place at The Wheelhouse, a Victorian public house converted into a chic cocktail bar overlooking one of Birmingham's many canals. From the VIP rooftop bar, where the characters and Audrey are the only guests, the characters get a commanding view of the neon and concrete sprawl of the city under a mist of light pollution. Audrey has no security: she's meeting this group of strangers, outnumbered and alone, and she expects the player characters to see this for the power move it is.

The Steward is visibly bored as she works her way mechanically through some expected pleasantries: did the player characters have a safe

journey, have they visited Birmingham before, etc. She barely listens to their answers, clearly intent on moving on to the real reason they're meeting.

"A great many people will tell you Birmingham's boring. They're usually from London, but in spite of that they're usually right. That's changing and I don't like it. What do you know about Golconda?"

She provides a basic summary of facts: Kallias arrived from somewhere in Europe, with the preposterous claim that he possessed the secrets of Golconda. Now he has the ear of the Prince. Audrey assumes he's manipulating Casaubon's famously jaded state but claims she is open to the possibility that there's some truth in Kallias' claims. An Intelligence + Insight roll (Difficulty 2) indicates that she doesn't mean that: she's already made up her mind about Kallias. What she really wants is proof that the Prince has fallen for a con artist.

She doesn't tell the player characters that she's planning to use the evidence they gather to humiliate and oust Prince Casaubon. Audrey

claims she only intends to present the truth, and get this dangerous outsider removed from her city. If pressed, Audrey admits that Casaubon flew into a rage at the former Martinet, Hiram Kent, after he asserted that Kallias was a fraud. The post is currently vacant, with most vampires assuming the Prince destroyed the Martinet.

She offers the player characters rights to territory in Birmingham if they come through for her, or use of her connections to the Circulatory System human trafficking network. If that doesn't convince them, she appeals to their curiosity: "If you don't find out the truth, you'll always wonder, and our kind have a devastatingly long time to obsess."

Audrey needs the player characters. She considers any reasonable requests for rewards including money, favors or other boons.

She'll work on getting the player characters a meeting with Kallias but it takes a couple of nights even for her (she does not like admitting this). Until then, she gives them three leads to follow up on, as files transferred from her phone to theirs. These provide brief background summaries of Marvels 1-3 (see relevant sections) including Estelle, Farid, and Vix's names, pseudonyms, and locations where the characters might make contact.

The phone is a burner, and the coterie are free to leave messages on its voicemail. Audrey responds when it's convenient for her.

Audrey doesn't tell them anything about the political landscape unless the player characters insist on it: she doesn't believe there any serious, immediate threats to the coterie, and she wants the characters to draw their own conclusions. She does suggest they talk to the Anarchs, and directs them to Writing on the Wall (see Lay of the Land, p. 107).

If the player characters don't ask about hunting and sleeping arrangements, Audrey assumes they

STEWARDS, MARTINETS, BARONS, AND PRINCES

Domains across the world use different titles for similar positions, such as the Birmingham's Steward occupying a similar role to Chicago's Seneschal, and Birmingham's Martinet being peacekeeper compared to New York's militant Sheriff. These shifts in title allow Storytellers to give domains a sense of personal character while expanded, adjusting, or restricting the responsibilities of the titled SPCs.

Notably, while the British Isles was until recently divided into Baronies, with each Baron reporting to London's Prince (barring some rebellious exceptions), the events of The Fall of London led to Camarilla Barons declaring themselves "Princes" and Britain's few Anarch city leaders adopting the now free "Baron" titles for ease of understanding. Even among the dead, political structures occasionally show signs of adaptation and growth.

are capable of fending for themselves, and says only that they're free to hunt within the ring road that encircles central Birmingham and that they can stay in the cellar of the Wheelhouse if they don't have any other arrangements. She is taken aback that any Kindred would arrive in a new city without arranging secure accommodations, however.

The deal concluded, Audrey leaves, informing the characters that the bar manager, Casia, will find them something to eat if need be — "it's delivery only." That is to say, Casia can hire some local escorts who are used to providing this service to join the characters in the Wheelhouse's roof bar to "party."

If this prologue doesn't fit the intended tone, or perhaps the Storyteller wishes to invoke more personal connections for the player characters and rely less on a "hire for a mission" plot, then we encourage you to use a character like Barrowman as the first major contact when piecing together this puzzle. She's a motivated character with a reason for seeing this Golconda priest exposed as a fraud, and could easily be a sire, Mawla, or Blood sibling to a character, if not a friend or court ally. Feel free to have a mortal or ghoul connection aware of this plot's periphery say "I hear there someone at The Wheelhouse who knows more about this..." or similar, to get the player

characters to a location and individual where they can obtain the preliminary information hooks for this story.

Chapter One: Marvels

The coterie are the masters of their own destiny. They have a set of leads from Audrey or another contact, and the promise of a meeting with Kallias in the near future. There are more mysterious, miraculous events associated with Kallias for them to uncover and explore, and plenty of ways for them to start looking into city politics.

The First Marvel: Estelle

One of Kallias' first acts in Birmingham was to publicly "heal" a Malkavian's mental ailments simply by laying on his hands. The Malkavian in question is Estelle Hargreaves, and she has not been seen in public since. Audrey's files direct the characters to the office of Estelle's therapist, where she attends sessions at 21:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

MALKAVIAN THERAPY

No amount of therapy is going to remove a Malkavian's bane, and Estelle knows this. She visits a therapist more as a means of maintaining her Mask and giving her someone to confide in than as an aim to find a "cure" for her condition. If asked about the subject, she suggests this is wonderful means of adding layers to a cover identity, and following events in London, Kindred should be attempting to appear as mortal as they can.

The office is in a run-down, residential street of decrepit brick buildings. Several have converted into dental practices, solicitors' offices, childminders, or other businesses, but the changes were half-hearted: the overall impression is of a job half-done, with a few signs dotted about and a street left unsure of its identity. Heavy traffic, even late at night, makes it hard to think straight.

The coterie can intercept Estelle as she enters or leaves, or wait for her in her therapist's waiting room, though they must justify their presence to the no-nonsense security guard, Saira (see p. 127), who serves as receptionist after dark.

Estelle is a tall, striking black woman. She is immaculately presented, expensively and conservatively dressed, and the third eye tattooed in the center of her forehead is completely incongruous. She takes pains to minimize her West Midlands accent. She nibbles at the skin around her fingernails, occasionally drawing vitae which she then distractedly sucks clean. She doesn't bleed unless she forces herself to, as she's undead, but she's practiced this habit for years.

Estelle is a seer and a prophet, and Kallias did indeed intervene when she was in the thrall of her bane. Kallias alleviated that episode, but it would be wrong to say that she is "healed." Firstly, mental health is never that simple for the living or the dead. Estelle is still prone to anxiety, black and white thinking, and extreme sensitivity to rejection/criticism — all symptoms of a borderline

personality disorder that have been part of her nature since before her Embrace. Furthermore, her visions have abandoned her since Kallias stepped in. Estelle is hiding this from everyone except her closest allies. Without her visions, she doesn't know who she is but she suspects the answer is "nobody who matters." She goes as far as to fake visions while the coterie are present (Wits + Insight or Intelligence + Occult (Difficulty 4), to discern that this is a performance), predicting their doom ("a thousand years beneath the earth") if they continue to pry into Kallias.

If confronted with her deception, Estelle breaks down and admits what happened, and that she blames Kallias. What he did to her was not a mercy or a miracle, it was a spiritual lobotomy. Whether he has the powers he claims or not, Estelle considers him a monster, and even states outright that "Golconda addresses the Beast, not the mind! People are confusing Golconda with the powers of the lost clan..." She begs the characters to keep her secret, and she grants any boon they ask of her (converting Estelle to a 1-dot Mawla while she is lying low, rising to 2 dots when she is back in Kindred society, probably at the end of the story).

The Second Marvel: Vix

A thin-blood named Vix claims that Kallias encountered them by

chance just after they'd been mugged and shot, and healed them. This is a complete work of fiction, and an Intelligence + Occult roll (Difficulty 4) or pre-existing expertise in Golconda tells the player characters that Golconda is more about overcoming the Beast than it is about physical healing. This ruse began as a way to gain some status and recognition amongst the Kindred but had the unexpected benefit of letting Vix reconnect with their sire, who is also their great aunt and the last remaining member of their family. Neither of them wants to lose this newfound bond, so exposing the truth puts the coterie in considerable danger.

Finding Vix

Audrey's briefing indicates that Vix has a distinctly unglamorous existence. They're an Uber driver who lives in a flatshare in a grotty, dilapidated part of the city surrounded by decaying industrial buildings and concrete overpasses. It's a miserable situation, even for one of the Mercadians.

The flat is a disaster zone, with grime in every corner and a cleaning routine built on antibacterial wipes and denial. Vix's flatmates are a postgraduate student named Jon, who is stoned most of the time, and a self-employed graphic designer named Ashley who rarely leaves her bedroom. Neither of them knows Vix well, but even they know that something's been going on with them for the last couple of weeks. They're usually antisocial but ten nights ago, they started getting dressed up and going out every night. Four nights ago, they packed a bag, transferred this month's rent money to Ashley's account, walked out the door and haven't been back since. Their car, a black sedan, is still parked outside. Ashley's room shares a wall with Vix's, and she heard them having several long phone conversations with

“their grandmother” in the week before they left. Vix never said anything about a near death experience, a heroic stranger, or anything else that might refer to her brush with Kallias.

Either Ashley or Jon can give the player characters Vix’s phone number.

Going through Vix’s bedroom, they find a sketch of Kallias’ face (see p. 102), along with some scribbled notes: “Gentle — patient — quiet — wise or faking it.”

Vix answers their phone. They’re willing to talk to the characters about their experience. They’re staying at the Victoria Hotel, in the city center and can meet in the hotel bar any night, any time.

Interview

The Victoria Hotel is a boutique hotel in the center of Birmingham. Its décor is cold and modern, with brushed steel and black glass brought to life by huge statues and objects d’art from former British colonies. Enormous stone buddhas gaze over the bar, African masks and weapons decorate the walls in reception; it’s appropriative and tasteless, but expensive. When the characters arrive, they’re given a VIP welcome. The reception staff defer to them like they’re aristocrats, the bar staff treat them like royalty. Even visibly deformed Nosferatu don’t receive a flinch or a second glance. The coterie pays for nothing.

Vix, a skinny individual with heavy makeup covering acne scars, red dreadlocks, and a tendency to crack their knuckles when they’re lying or under pressure, is waiting in the bar with an auburn-haired woman whose confident demeanor and Burberry suit project a classical image of old money. Vix introduces her as Francesca de Launcey, their great-aunt ... and sire.

Vix launches into their story excitedly, with great passion and a lot

of detail. Francesca watches quietly, her lips occasionally thinning with displeasure when Vix fixates on a detail. Vix claims they’d just dropped off a passenger — pickup from a hot yoga class, drop off at a bar in a rough part of town — and stepped out of the car to vape (they don’t breathe, but that never stopped them smoking). Two men approached them, asking for the time, then for change, the classic opening to a mugging. Vix insulted them, one of them pulled a gun, and the next thing they knew, they were bleeding out on the ground while some “hot, blond, force of nature” pushed the men off them, then laid his hands on them. His touch felt like sunlight — like sunlight used to feel — and when he was done, they were healed.

“He was gentle,” they recall. “Patient with me, even though I was losing my shit. He had a quiet way about him, like he was either very wise...” They pause to smile. “Or faking it.”

Thus, their story concludes. Vix claims they went their separate ways afterward, and they’ve never sought out Kallias again. They didn’t know who he was until they started hearing his name around — “I’m not a complete pariah, you know. I hear things.”

An easy Intelligence + Insight roll reveals that their conclusion sounds rehearsed, and Intelligence + Investigation reminds the player characters that these are the exact words they read on the sketch in Vix’s room. If pushed on either of these points Vix becomes defensive, demanding to know what right the player characters have to interrogate them.

The Victoria Hotel is one of Audrey Barrowman’s personal domains. If the situation becomes tense — if the characters move from interviewing to interrogating Vix, or threaten them or Francesca — security (use *Audrey’s Henchmen* on p. 127) appear from nowhere and politely ask the coterie to leave. If the situation

escalates to violence, the bar staff call the police. Breaches of the Masquerade result in firm and decisive punishment — Audrey isn’t interested in covering for her new employees.

Investigate

There are no records of an incident like the one Vix described, on the relevant night or either side of it. No police records, no 999 calls from concerned bystanders. No eyewitness videos posted to the internet. There is no sign that the mugging and miraculous rescue happened, because it didn’t. There is no evidence to be found, no matter how hard the characters look.

Attendees of the yoga class, do, with some prompting or a picture recognize Vix’s black sedan as the Uber car (some don’t; human memory is a terrible, fallible thing).

Intimidate

Francesca de Launcey is not an idiot. She’s carried out her own investigations, and she knows Vix is lying. There isn’t a shred of evidence to back up her childe’s claims. However, in the rush to curry favor with the Prince, no one else is investigating (that she knows of). That means that Francesca’s regrettable, unmentionable thin-blooded childe is suddenly social currency. Vix is perceived as being connected to Kallias, which means indirectly close to the Prince, and so is Francesca, by association. This comes as a relief to her: she’s always been fond of the child, and she’s enjoying this opportunity to spend time with them. If anyone takes that away, let alone exposes Francesca as complicit in the lie, her vengeance is swift.

If Francesca suspects that the characters doubt Vix, and/or learns that they’ve independently investigated Vix’s claims, she comes to them in their haven. With contacts in

the city's Kindred and kine, it's easy for Francesca to monitor them and find out where they're staying unless the characters have been extremely secretive.

She matter-of-factly lays out the truth: Vix lied because they saw an opportunity to gain status, and Francesca isn't questioning them because it's useful. The moment she heard Vix's name mentioned in respectable circles, she took the progeny under her protection. If it ever becomes public knowledge that Vix is not the recipient of a genuine marvel, Francesca leans on Blue Blood contacts in the UK, Europe and the US to financially ruin the characters. Everyone in the coterie loses two dots of Resources (one until the end of the story, one permanently). This assumes the characters have investments, bank accounts, etc., so cannot reduce Resources below 2 dots.

The Third Marvel: Farid

Audrey's third lead takes the characters to Farid Latif, one of the city's Nosferatu. Farid is a neonate, and his ties to mortal friends and family are still strong. When his sister was diagnosed with late stage cancer it nearly broke him. His sire had to lock him up in the Queensway for a week to stop him forcibly Embracing her. Her condition deteriorated fast, and he was at Elysium, at the grand introduction of Kallias, when the phone call came to say she had passed. He broke down in public and once again had to be restrained. Kallias offered to come with him to the hospice, to see if there was anything that could be done. While Farid was suspicious of this kind stranger, no one else was offering to accompany him and he preferred not to go alone.

While the nurses were explaining to Farid that he was too late, and

THE LOST CLAN

What many of Birmingham's Kindred see as Golconda, and Kallias may advertise as the same, seem to more closely align with the mending powers of an infamous lost clan of Kindred that few vampires of tonight recall with any detail. For any of the player characters to make this connection requires an Intelligence + Occult roll (Difficulty 4 to tell them this doesn't sound like Golconda, Difficulty 5 to tell them this sounds like something "the lost clan" once practiced). Of course, it's possible that Golconda comes in many forms including healing the soul, the mind, and the flesh of Kindred and kine. If any of the player characters are vampires of Clan Tremere and report these findings to a Mawla or elder Warlock, they're told to follow this lead ever more closely.

Humaira had already passed away, Kallias slipped away. Ten minutes later he was sitting next to Humaira's bedside, laughing and talking with her. The hospice staff were mortified, apologized profusely for what must have been human error, and Farid was reunited with his beloved sister. Those are the facts. Everything else is for the player characters to piece together.

Farid

Getting to see Farid is not easy. His sire thinks there's still a risk he'll try to Embrace Humaira, and Owl is not in the business of creating thin-blooded monstrosities. Farid is in isolation in the BT tunnels but that doesn't mean he's out of reach. He's got Wi-Fi, and Audrey's briefing includes one of his pseudonyms for which he's erected a skeletal Facebook profile.

Humaira

Humaira is easy to find. After getting out of the hospice she went back to her life: she's working at the chain cinema directly above the Queensway (though she has no idea what's below her) while she waits to re-enroll in her nursing degree at the University of Birmingham.

She's a soft-spoken, slight, young woman with Instagram-ready makeup and a range of stylish, silk hijabs. She's not keen to talk about what happened to her — how she miraculously kicked cancer — and requires some persuasion or coercion. Any threats or intimidation get back to Farid, and while he's not powerful, he has enough contacts among the Nosferatu to give the coterie some meaningful enemies.

Humaira has no idea whether she died. It seems unlikely, unless it was in a strictly technical sense. It seems more likely to her that there was some kind of reporting error, equipment malfunction, or good old-fashioned human mistake. She claims to feel no connection to her "brother's weird friend" who sat and talked with her that night, but she says that so quickly and forcefully it's easily read as a lie. It takes further coercion to make her admit that she woke up with the taste of blood in her mouth. That she drank a stranger's blood ... and that she craves more, not necessarily from Kallias but from someone. She even suspects that it's keeping her healthy: her cancer is still in remission, but she's increasingly feeling pain and fatigue, the way she did when she was ill. Humaira's starting to hunt online for some way to sate her craving, convinced there

must be a fetish community out there that can help. If the coterie gives her any sign they're not human, Humaira latches onto them as a possible solution to her problems. She may or may not have died and been resurrected; she's ready to believe in vampires. She follows the coterie around Birmingham, proving extremely persistent, and becomes increasingly insistent, and desperate, that they help her.

As a soon-to-be nurse with ready access to blood bags, she could make a useful ghoul — or a danger to the Masquerade, if she gets desperate enough to start drinking non-Kindred blood. Her brother, of course, would not approve.

The Fourth Marvel: Marley

Kallias's fourth marvel isn't on Audrey's list. It's common knowledge, but because everyone involved has disappeared, Audrey couldn't find a decent starting point for the characters' enquiries. Most of the city's Kindred (including the player characters if they are local) have heard about this though and mention it in most discussions of Kallias.

Before the arrival of Kallias the most pressing problem in Birmingham was the descent of a Malkavian named Marley into a frenzied, mindless wight. Kallias claimed to be drawn to him, and simply walked out of a meeting with Casaubon and the Martinet, travelled several miles across Birmingham as if he was following a trail, and tracked the wight to its hunting grounds behind a nightclub. Then he subdued Marley, and one of the martinet's agents watched, mystified, as sense returned to the vampire's eyes and his humanity reasserted itself.

This marvel should be easy to verify but there's just one problem: everyone involved, except Kallias has vanished.

Marley

Marley made their home in an underground car park that was once attached to a shopping center. The mall acquired better facilities, most entrances to the parking lot were sealed off, and Marley moved in. It's a lightless hole in the ground with unsettling echoes and a chaotic, complicated mess of behavioral strictures — “close the door ten times before you leave,” “lights on, eyes closed,” “WASH YOUR HANDS” — scrawled on the walls, charting Marley's descent into compulsion whenever his bane took hold.

It was always more of a nest than a home, with a pile of fabric for bedding, stacks of books and cardboard boxes of possessions left here and there. There's a charnel pit too, a skip where Marley's victims decomposed. Marley was not a neat individual. The haven has been burned out: every possession incinerated, including the bodies, of which only bones and teeth remain. Marley's remains are in here too, though they're impossible to identify without painstaking forensic science, in the form of an extended (one roll per hour) Intelligence + Science roll at Difficulty 6.

Wits + Technology (Difficulty 2) determines that there are cameras — new, working ones — set up to cover the whole car park. They were installed after the fire and they're transmitting to somewhere. An Intelligence + Technology roll (Difficulty 5) reveals they go to the hunters' hideout (see *Opposition* on p. 105).

Martinet's Deputy

The agent who witnessed Marley's miraculous restoration, Chloe Bell, has not been seen for several nights. This is not, in itself, a cause for concern: Kindred aren't always social creatures, and under a week of solitude is barely the blink of an eye.

Chloe keeps — kept — her haven a closely guarded secret, and no one can tell the player characters where it is. Chloe is most easily tracked via her herd: the women's self-defense class she taught at a local gym. None of the women have seen her for a week, though several remember her talking to a pair of men in the car park after their last class. It looked like it was getting heated, but knowing Chloe could handle herself, no one stepped in.

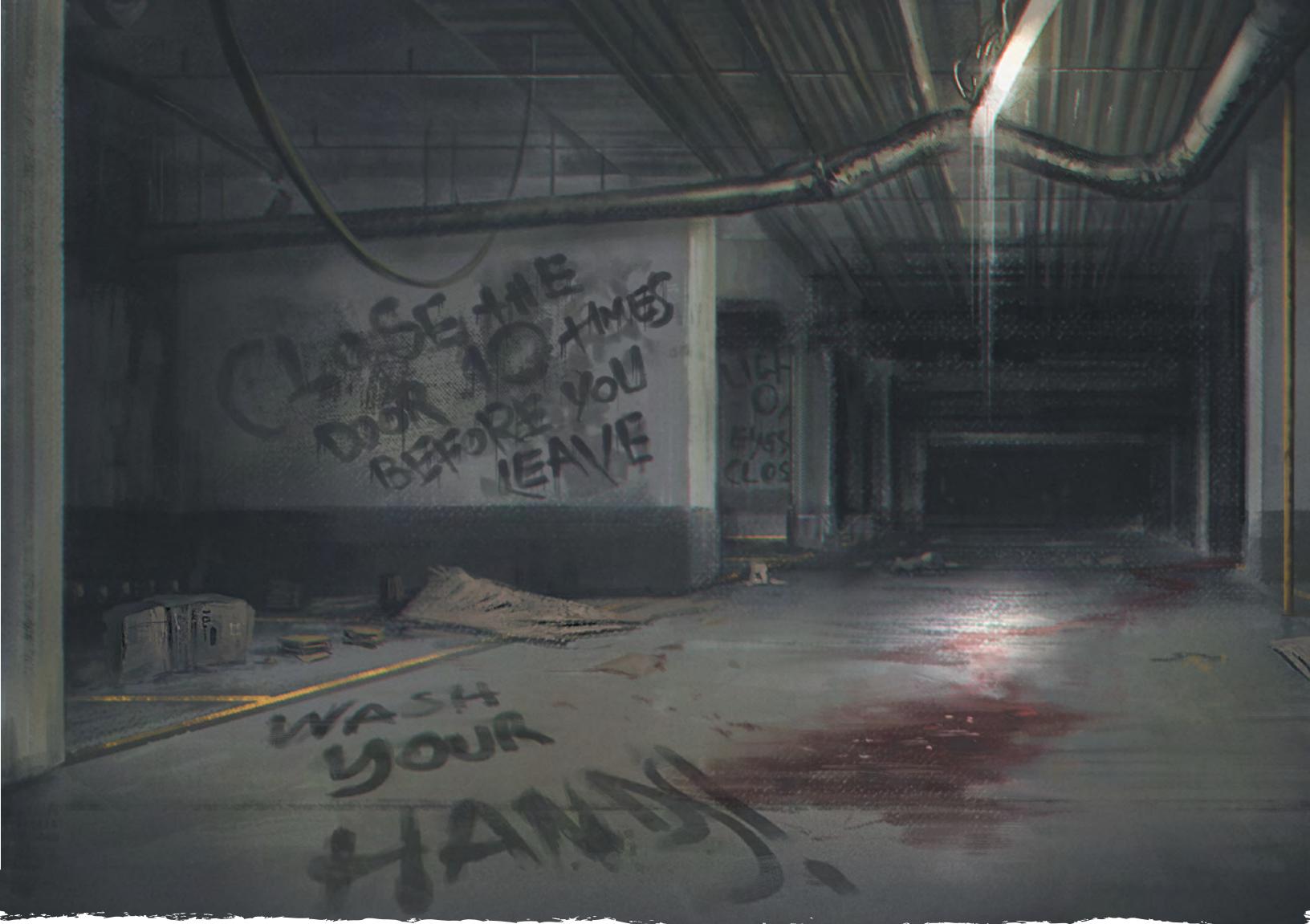
The gym has security footage of this confrontation, which ends with Chloe being forced into the back of the van. Police records indicate that the van was later found abandoned at the side of the road outside the city.

Escape

The club where Marley, as a wight, was hunting is called Escape. It's a huge club, with a capacity of nearly a thousand people: an excellent place to feed unnoticed, especially if you have a taste for intoxicated victims. The music varies, but it's always played loud enough to reverberate through flesh and bone and banish any capacity for coherent thought.

It's common knowledge that a few people got attacked behind the club over the last few weeks, out by the bins, but that's the only trace of Marley, let alone Kallias' marvel. There's another rumor that a bunch of vigilantes are watching the club now. Opinions vary on whether this is to protect the patrons or indulge in a selection of hate crimes.

This rumor is true. The cell of hunters who took out Marley and Chloe are staking out the club. Every night at least one of them is watching the alleys and taxi ranks that drunks drain out of, and another is on the club's security team, keeping an eye on the dance floor and the numerous hidden corners. They assume other vampires feed here, and they're going to find them.



Opposition

The hunters had their eyes on Marley before Chloe Bell and Kallias found him. They lack the discernment to tell the difference between a dangerous wight and a perfectly civilized predator, so after the “marvel” they split up, followed all three of the monsters involved (the hunter who followed Kallias has never been seen again, and is presumed dead), and destroyed Marley and Chloe.

Now they are monitoring Marley’s haven and Escape. Once they become aware of this group of monsters tracking them down, they switch focus from investigating Kallias and concentrate on dealing with this new threat. They follow the coterie, stake out havens, and strike if an opportunity presents itself, for example if one

of the player characters is alone during the day. Their preferred method is fire. You can’t beat tossing a couple of Molotovs into a room and locking the doors.

The hunters (see p. 127 for traits) are a group of desperate mortals who lost people they loved and have scores to settle. They look like a cross between survivalists, army reservists, and vagrants: camouflage gear, improvised weapons, and possessions stuffed in backpacks and trunks of cars. They’re driven, scarred, and jumpy — and they do not negotiate with monsters.

Two assault the player characters if they feel safe; four if the situation is risky. They have up to eight associates holed up in a rented unit on an industrial estate an hour outside Birmingham. It is not well-defended:

the hunter cell assume they are safe during the day, and they’re usually out during the night on shifts, scoping out other Kindred ahead of daytime attacks.

Locating the hunters’ safehouse firstly requires the player characters noticing they’re being followed and watched, with an Intelligence + Awareness roll (Difficulty 4). Confronting the hunters at night is a good way of making them back off, as they know the Kindred are stronger at night. Following them at this point either leads to their coordinating an ambush on the vampires in an alley, quiet street, or vacant building (if one is close by and they can exchange plans), or fleeing into a populated area such as a nightclub, police station, fast food restaurant, or hospital.

If the player characters keep cool, they can use mortal associates to follow the hunters back to their safehouse during the day. Breaking into their safehouse is a fairly simple process, though anywhere between one and eight hunters are there during the daytime, planning their next operation, leaving nightfall as the best time to attack, when inhabitants are likely to number fewer than four. If the vampires or their servants successfully break in with a Wits + Larceny roll (Difficulty 3 to bypass the lock), an Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 2) reveals a contact number for Hiram Kent, the former Martinet of Birmingham. No one answers if they call the number but if they use one of the hunters' phones (for example, taken from their corpses), Hiram calls them back and asks what the hell they want.

If the characters play the role of hunters, Hiram snaps at them that they shouldn't be bothering him; they have all the information they need, and they should be focusing on planting devices in Elysium: The Rotunda Gallery. See the Miracle of Elysium (p. 110) for more on this plot thread.

The Fifth Marvel: Dawn

The coterie can stumble onto this marvel following a lead from the Nosferatu (see Lay of the Land on p. 107) or in the process of investigating Audrey.

Audrey used Debbie Parrott, an employee of her secret Mask, Melissa Nicholls, to circulate a rumor that video footage existed of Kallias walking in the daylight, eyes upturned to the sun. She didn't have any footage, just a link to a video on YouTube, though the video itself "has been removed by owner." Word passed from Debbie to the retainers of other Kindred, and

eventually to the Kindred themselves. Audrey was banking on someone telling Casaubon to curry favor, and she was right. No one has ever seen the video, though by this point everyone claims to know a friend-of-a-friend who has. What matters is that those who want to believe in Kallias believe in the video. This includes Casaubon, who has his ghoul Vaisey searching for the original, desperate to see it with his own eyes.

Debbie Parrott

Debbie Parrott received a payment of £10,000 from her employer, Melissa Nicholls, for "media support." She's employed by Nicholls Consulting as a "lead generator," and she works out of the Precision co-working space three days a week. Precision is owned by Audrey Barrowman and several of her clanmates, in a coterie some Kindred dub "city investors." It's possible a player character with Resources located in this domain is a part-investor.

Precision is based in a converted Victorian factory. The building has been gutted, and the cavernous rooms combine with the sounds of dozens of business meetings, phone calls, the clatter of keyboards and the clack of footsteps to create an echo chamber that makes working there an unpleasant experience.

The rest of the time, Debbie is a homemaker and mum to three children aged under five. She's a perpetually tired woman in her early thirties who chain-smokes cigarettes, the smell of which lingers in her synthetic-fiber suits.

Debbie has no idea that the woman she works for, who she only sees occasionally, is anything but a rich lady who doesn't do a lot of work. Debbie's job is cold-calling lists of thousands of potential clients, offering Melissa's management consulting skills. On the rare occasion she gets a good lead, she passes it to

Melissa, makes a commission, and thinks nothing more of it.

Being asked to send a link to a random YouTube video — which then turned out to be defunct — around the WeWork list, plus a couple of people Melissa's loaned Debbie to before, was weird. Debbie admits that. But £10,000 to send a link that probably didn't do any harm was fine by her, until someone started following her. There's a white van parked outside her house at all hours, and she keeps seeing the same "scruffy, junkie-looking bloke" following her. It's starting to scare her.

If the characters investigate these claims, Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 3) leads them to Grant Peters, who monitors Debbie for the Prince's ghoul, Vaisey. He's a nervous, sweaty man who gives out his employer's name and phone number the moment he's threatened.

The Video

The footage of the "miracle" was posted to YouTube two weeks ago, by a user named Goddess_Eos. The account was created specifically to post the video. It has never posted anything else, or even watched another video on the platform. The trail of profiles and accounts it connects to ends at a disposable email address from a service called Trashmail. It ceased to exist minutes after the account was created.

The video has now been "removed by user." An Intelligence + Technology roll (Difficulty 2) reveals that the video was removed less than an hour after being posted. A roll with three successes indicates that the video was removed before there was any traffic to the URL: nobody could ever have watched this video. With four successes a hacker can find the video, because nothing's ever really gone from the internet.

The clip is thirty seconds long and shows nothing more exciting

than a view of a busy street in the city center, by night. Some cars go past, and in the distance high-pitched, exuberant shouts suggest groups of mortals enjoying a night on the town. The video is not remotely what it purports to be.

The Prince's Ghoul

Vaisey, Casaubon's ghoul, regrets telling the Prince about the video, but if he hadn't he knows someone else would have. Initially Casaubon laughed it off, assuming the claimed marvel was fraudulent. The more time he spends with Kallias, however, the more he believes every claim he makes — or in the case of this video, doesn't actively refute. And Kallias accepts every claim made about his marvels with the same inscrutable shrug.

Vaisey is concerned about Kallias' increasing hold over Casaubon. He's conducting his own investigation, prying into the same reports the characters are. The video is the one that bothers him though: someone went to the trouble to set it up, and he can't track it back to Kallias. That means someone in Birmingham is somehow using it against the Prince, and he is determined to find out how.

Vaisey's found Debbie Parrott but can't connect Melissa Nicholls to any of the Birmingham Kindred. He's got a cheap PI, Grant, watching her and hackers on his payroll monitoring traffic to the link. When the player characters interact with either of these leads, Vaisey finds them and contacts them, asking for a meeting the next night.

Investigating Audrey

It would be perfectly reasonable for the coterie to seek out more information on their new employer.

Audrey's Masks

Audrey's most substantial mask is Elizabeth Gellman, property mogul who runs Gellman Crown Investments. She works closely with buyers in Asia-Pacific, so lives on a schedule incompatible with UK daylight hours. Uncovering this Mask is easy: every vampire in Birmingham knows it.

Audrey occasionally uses another identity, that of Melissa Nicholls, business consultant. This mask is flimsy, and it's easy to determine that Melissa is not a real person. It's not so easy to tie her to Audrey. Audrey only uses Melissa for business she doesn't want traced back to her.

Anarchs

Everyone knows Audrey is unavailable on Sunday nights, unless there's something of serious importance to handle. It's a private appointment but most of the Ventrue and Brujah in Birmingham know that's when Audrey meets with the Anarch leader, Haze.

Audrey and Haze go way back. They were childhood friends before their Embrace, then active suffragettes, then neonates together in the Kindred society of Birmingham. Their relationship varies between respect and actual friendship founded on the fact that they both care about Birmingham more than Casaubon does. They have different visions for the city, but they do care. The two try to meet every week. They share a meal — from Audrey's herd or Haze's (fortunately, Audrey's feeding preference is simply blue-collar workers, especially domestic servants) — and discuss the matters of the moment. These matters include how frustrated Audrey is with Casaubon, as any of the staff at Writing on the Wall (see *Lay of the Land*, p. 107) can attest.

Poison Whispers

Audrey doesn't care whether Kallias is really a mystic with the power to transcend the Beast. She believes he's a charismatic con artist but whether she's right is irrelevant. She has no interest in Golconda. What will bring her soul peace is wresting control of Birmingham from its undeserving Prince. Kallias is a convenient weapon for her to wield.

She's more concerned about Kallias finding out and cutting her off from Casaubon than she is about the Prince himself finding out what she did. He's not that engaged or, in Audrey's opinion, that intelligent.

The Lay of the Land

The coterie may wish to know more about the domain's Kindred. An Intelligence + Politics or Intelligence + Investigation roll gets them enough information to find representatives of the city's coteries. For the purposes of this story, the player characters always find the people they're looking for, but how successful their roll is determines whether they cause offence or embarrassment in the process.

The Prometheans

Birmingham's Prometheans coterie is technically Anarch-affiliated, but they're like a stick of dynamite without a fuse. Prince Casaubon is too lax to enforce much discipline, and Haze, of the Prometheans, has a good relationship with the Steward. Until recently they were complacent about the state of the city; it's taken the arrival of Kallias to show the Brujah leader, Haze, how messed up and apathetic they've all become. The Prometheans spend most of their time working with Birmingham's

many disenfranchised, disadvantaged mortals and Kindred, especially where Camarilla Kindred have subjugated them.

When they take a break, they often do so at Writing on the Wall, the tattoo shop run by Haze's treasured friend, Lataka. Writing on the Wall is open to the public and does an entirely innocent trade during the day. When the sun goes down, the Tremere Lataka — a striking, mixed-race (black and Caucasian) woman with tight curls of purple hair and a short temper — opens up the shop to her friends to party. She dislikes Kindred strangers, and is confrontational, even openly threatening, if she finds out they're vampires, until unless they win at a Manipulation + Intimidation or Persuasion check (Difficulty 3).

On whatever night the characters show up, Haze is also present, letting Lataka ink a detailed back piece of a cityscape on fire that disappears by the next night. Mostly, Haze is there to flirt with Lataka. Haze is much more willing to talk, especially to other non-Camarilla vampires.

They're not convinced about the Golconda nonsense, but the Prometheans do believe that Kallias retains his morality, or at least a desire for it, and they respect that. Anything that gets the Prince to actually give a damn about his city is a good thing, and if this doesn't do it there's going to be a riot. The Prometheans are going to make sure of it.

If the player characters aren't Camarilla, Haze warns them against getting sucked into the petty, city politics: "Just a bunch of complacent, privileged old wankers disappearing up their own arseholes."

The Temple

Estelle was the recipient of one of Kallias' first marvels, and as she represents the city's coterie of seers and occultists, they've been thrust

forward into center stage. Many of them are deeply uncomfortable there. Worse, Estelle was "healed" without her consent, losing her second sight, and her coterie-mates are out for blood. Estelle's sire and companion, Primogen Roland Maier, has ordered the coterie to avoid the Camarilla for the time being.

The easiest place to find the Temple is their feeding grounds: the psychology department of the local university, or any of three different hospitals. Every member of the Temple believes Kallias has strange powers, but they're incensed that the other clans are more excited about "salvation" than concerned about letting an outsider run roughshod over a vampire's state of being, corrupting their very natures. If something isn't done about Kallias, and soon, the Temple must act.

The Wire-Walkers

It is a stereotype universally acknowledged among Kindred that in any first world city, the most monstrous vampires, especially among Clan Nosferatu, make havens beneath the streets. In Birmingham, the stereotype holds true and they have it easy: there are miles of tunnels under the city, from long-buried subways to the disused "BT tunnels," the 35-metre deep network of passages built to allow access to the UK's landline phone network in the event of a national emergency, to mail tunnels and secret passages from the courthouse to a nearby jail. There is even an abandoned underground cinema called The Queensway, where the Wire-Walkers meet and sometimes even tolerate guests.

If the player characters don't achieve at least three successes on a Wits + Survival roll to navigate the tunnels, they are lost in the twisting, lightless tunnels for so long fear and hunger set in, and are found by Owl (see p. 124) on her way back to the

Queensway. Otherwise, they reach the Queensway after about an hour.

The Wire-Walkers, chiefly Owl, are following the same leads as the characters. They're cautiously skeptical, but ready to go where the evidence takes them. Kallias has done nothing to court them, which makes them think he's either arrogant or genuinely uninterested in power. Their own investigations are inconclusive, but Owl can give the coterie a couple of extra leads to follow up if they'll share their findings. One thing's for sure: anything that makes the Fates (see p. 125) sit up and take notice is unnerving.

The Young Offenders

Fledglings, Caitiff, and thin-bloods live throughout Birmingham: working depressing jobs, maintaining semi-normal mortal covers, and surviving on the scraps the Camarilla allow them.

Opinion is divided amongst the Young Offenders — not that anyone has asked for their opinion. On one hand, this seems like hypocritical crap: other Kindred disdain them for being too human, but rush to embrace a cult that promises them the same thing. It's almost like it was never about weakness at all, and all about defending the status quo. On the other hand, there's clearly about to be a schism between believers and non-believers. The Young Offenders haven't picked a side yet, and they could go either way. They're waiting to see which side respects them most for aligning with their position.

The Fates

The trio of Tremere known as the Fates are the only visible Warlocks in Birmingham. It's rumored that they keep childer cloistered in their Chantry of Dunsane Priory, a former religious site converted into a stately home under Henry VIII.

The three witches, veiled and calling themselves Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, rarely take an interest in the city at large. They summon visiting Tremere to them when it suits them to do so.

The characters can find Dunsane Priory easily enough but the Fates' wards are extremely strong, covering the entire wrought iron fence that marks the perimeter of the estate (see *Vampire: The Masquerade* p. 275 for effects of Tremere wards). Trained, magically bound animals — guard dogs, birds of prey — prowl the overgrown grounds, shrieking alarm when they encounter trespassers, and the rumors that the Fates keep their childer captive and hungry are true. There are three of them in Dunsane Priory, and all are capable blood sorcerers directed to make sure any unwelcome guests don't trouble the Fates. In addition, Kindred trespassing on The Fates' territory without permission triggers a terrible, sorcerous fear: characters in Dunsane Priory without The Fates' express permission must roll to resist terror frenzy, driving them from the grounds if they fail and not restrained.

The Fates are inclined to believe in Kallias' promise, but they're not convinced that it's Golconda on offer. From what they've heard, he's demonstrated some impressive and unusual powers, but they smell more like a form of blood magic than spiritual enlightenment. Kallias won't let the Fates close enough to really inspect his results themselves. For the time being, they're acting like they believe in the Emperor's New Clothes: it's the only way they'll get to see for themselves. All three of the Fates desperately hope there is truth to Kallias' promises. They pretend to be ignorant of the fact that their sudden interest in politics and presence at city gatherings makes the other clans nervous.

The Fates are bringing in Andrew Duchevski, a Tremere from

Turin, for a full report of what Kallias did in the last city he visited. They do not reveal this, but characters may be able to learn it by other means (sneaking away to explore the chantry and going through paperwork, for example).

The City Investors

The City Investors coterie make sure they're easily accessible. Between the Victoria Hotel, near the transport hub of New Street Station and the Precision shared workspace collective in the trendy and bustling urban village of the Jewelry Quarter, it's easy enough to make an appointment through the right channels.

The easiest representative to find is Banu Haqim Martin Plover, a recently Embraced former PR executive who now runs communications for his coterie, including helping to control what information they share with the rest of the Kindred. He meets them at Precision.

The City Investors claim to have debunked every single marvel but this is a lie. They've faked evidence where they needed to. Martin, or any other City Investor encountered, stays carefully neutral on the subject of Kallias. A Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 3) indicates that there is a lot left unsaid. A contested Manipulation + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3) lets the characters learn the following.

This, the City Investors opine, is what happens when you let the Sensates run a city. There's no Golconda, this is a scam. Casaubon has been derelicting his duty for decades, and only respect for Audrey has kept the domain in line. Casaubon is going much too far this time. The City Investors do not trust Audrey, despite her belonging to the coterie, believing her loyalties are divided between Casaubon and Haze, leaving nothing for them. They want her out almost as badly as they want to get rid of Casaubon.

You Are Seen

If the player characters have been asking a lot of questions indiscreetly, word travels fast. The Kindred in Birmingham enjoy gossip as much as the next vampire. If they haven't sought out some of the coteries as described in Lay of the Land, the coteries come to them. One night after they arrive in the city, the Wire-Walkers start monitoring them using rats, pigeons and the occasional urban fox as their eyes, requiring the player characters to succeed at Wits + Awareness or Wits + Survival rolls (Difficulty 4) to discern this. On the second night, Warlocks and any financial or political power players in the coterie receive invitations politely requesting that they show up at Dunsane Priory and the Victoria Hotel, respectively, the following night.

The Prince's Ghoul

Vaisey takes an interest in the characters two nights into their investigation, one if they've been particularly obvious. He offers them a meeting at the Rotunda at their convenience — which anyone who's had reason to deal with Vaisey before understands to mean "immediately, preferably yesterday."

Vaisey, a handsome, auburn-haired former musician, reminds people of what the Prince would be if he wasn't so jaded. He's fierce, commanding, and keenly interested in everything that goes on in the city. Why? He's scared all the time. He thought being a ghoul would mean becoming a glamorous plaything, not making sure the power balance of a city full of monsters never tips out of his favor. Every few months he vows he's going to leave Casaubon — leave Birmingham — and put his life back together. He doesn't because he's addicted to sipping the vitae of an eighth-gener-

ation vampire, and nothing else will ever compare. He never shows fear when dealing with the Kindred, and he's sure that's what has kept him alive so far.

The Rotunda is a spectacularly ugly building: a green-glass and metal cylinder overlooking the tangle of roads that make up central Birmingham. There are few less inspiring sights in the city but the tower is old and prestigious, and Casaubon bought it as a development project. He got as far as filling it with luxury apartments that were then sold as investment properties to absent, overseas buyers. There is precisely one social space: the Rotunda Gallery, which Casaubon gifted to Vaisey. Vaisey has no interest in it, so it has hosted the same exhibition of uninspired pop art portraits for the last eighteen months. The Prince's ghoul holds meetings in a back room of the gallery, in a white-walled office devoid of personality and in need of a coat of paint.

Vaisey meets the coterie alone, relying on his position as Casaubon's favorite to protect him from harm. He's aware of the characters' activities, in general: he's been investigating Kallias' marvels too, and found traces of the coterie's work in the process. He asks for their honest assessment of Kallias, nods thoughtfully at whatever they say, then asks whether they've met him.

"You won't, either, if you're relying on Audrey. She doesn't have access. If you want to meet the creature at the center of all this ... you need me. Conveniently, I might need you too."

Vaisey asks them for their impressions of the Dawn video (see p. 106) and encourages them to look into it if they haven't already done so. If the characters fill in the connection between Melissa and Audrey his mood darkens immediately as he realizes Audrey is setting up Casaubon to look like a fool, and that it likely

foreshadows an attempt to oust him from power.

Vaisey cares deeply about Casaubon, and it shows when he talks about the Prince. He expresses concern for his mental state. This obsession with the promise of Golconda is wearing him down, and if it turns out to be false Vaisey is going to have to pick up the pieces. He'll grant the coterie an audience with Kallias if they'll share their intelligence with him — and also share whatever they know, or learn, about what Audrey's playing at.

"She does not care for the Prince. If she's gathering evidence, it's to make him look the fool. She thinks she'd run the city better, but she'd tear it to pieces. There are hunters on our trail and the Anarchs aren't as tame as she thinks they are. Help her, and you're probably dooming Birmingham to collapse, though you might get to be Barons of the ashes."

Chapter Two: The Miracle at Elysium

Give the characters time to investigate the leads in Chapter One. They will need at least a few nights. Don't rush them: the more they know, the more questions they should be left with. When they're running low on leads, Audrey's ghoul Zack Iqbal calls them on the burner phone the Steward gave them. The Prince has announced a special Elysium, two nights from now. Casaubon has promised Kallias will perform a marvel to conclusively establish that his claims to know the secret of Golconda.

Elysium is held at the Rotunda Gallery (see *The Prince's Ghoul* on p. 109). The characters are not only invited but expected to attend. Zack

also informs them that Audrey wants to meet the night before to go over the evidence the coterie has collected.

The Pre-Meet

Audrey instructs the coterie to visit her at the Victoria Hotel. Zack collects them from reception and takes them up to one of the executive suites. Its elegant, black and bronze, art deco design is only slightly spoiled by photographs of the ugly, brutalist city outside. The suite is windowless and accessed via an elevator requiring a key card.

The characters arrive just as Audrey is concluding her evening meal. She's been stress-eating: three hotel staff have been drained to unconsciousness and left draped over assorted pieces of furniture in the sitting room. Zack seems displeased by this, and immediately after announcing the characters' arrival sets about calling other hotel staff to tidy up. The quantity of spilled blood and fresh victims may necessitate a check for hunger frenzy for characters at Hunger 4 or higher (Difficulty 2).

Audrey, with blood around her mouth and down her crisp, white shirt, watches the characters glassily from one of the sofas.

What follows is an interrogation. Audrey becomes gradually more engaged the more the coterie tell her. Her body language remains languid and indolent but her eyes are sharp and her questions downright piercing.

Audrey is concerned with evidence. She is interested in the characters' conclusions, but she wants to see facts laid out as if this were a legal case being tried in court. She is dismissive of unfounded speculation, and irritated by any sense that the characters believe Kallias' claims. She expertly dismantles any arguments that are not provably true. Whatever the characters believe and are

trying to tell her, if they present their findings truthfully, Audrey comes out of this meeting even more certain than before that Kallias is a liar and Casaubon is a credulous fool. If they characters lie convincingly, they may be able to persuade her that *they* believe Kallias, but this only convinces Audrey that they are idiots: she cannot believe in Golconda.

While this experience might, indeed should, be unpleasant for the characters, Audrey is preparing them — and herself — for the treatment they will receive when they try to persuade the rest of the Kindred that Kallias is a conman.

Audrey is also keen to know what the characters have learned about the other groups of Kindred in Birmingham and how they see Kallias. They are not her only information source, of course, but she's interested in additional perspectives and any secrets they may have learned that she could not access.

Divided Loyalties

If the characters give the impression they are loyal to Audrey, she speculates that no Prince should be so easily led astray, and that it would be in the city's best interests to have someone more hard-headed in power. She gauges their reactions carefully.

If the characters give Audrey reason to believe their loyalties lie with the Prince, Kallias, or any other faction, she withholds further information about her plan to move against Casaubon. If they know too much, in her opinion — if they have learned of her manipulation of the Dawn video, for example — she acts against them as described in Truth and Consequences.

By this point, curiosity or other loyalties should keep the characters engaged with the story even if they sever ties with Audrey. After all, Golconda is a compelling mystery.

The Anarchs

Audrey is aware that Haze and the Prometheans are talking about taking action against Casaubon. She thinks that means Haze is on her side, and supports Audrey's bid for power. If told otherwise, she orders the characters to deliver a warning on her behalf. She leaves it to them to determine the mode of the message, but the meaning should be clear: Audrey has the power in Birmingham, not Haze, and she won't tolerate the Anarchs breaking ranks.

Nobody should die, but other than that she invites the characters to be creative in how they get their point across.

Audrey's Own Schemes

If the characters confront Audrey with the Dawn video, or any other suggestion that she has her own agenda, she admits nothing. Even if the coterie seems to approve of her manipulations, she is cautious and says only that if such actions revealed flaws in the Prince's character it might not be such a bad thing for the city to become aware of them.

Truth and Consequences

If the characters know too much about Audrey's intentions, and Audrey becomes aware of this, they have to be silenced. If they have retainers or allies, or known Touchstones, she sends agents to kidnap them during the day to ensure the characters' obedience. If not, she sends her people to their haven while the characters are out, ransacking it — and perhaps stealing some prized or incriminating possessions — and leaving a warning that if they don't stay in line, the next time they'll be at home when it happens. How this shakes out depends on the characters.

- **Kidnap:** If the player characters' trusted mortals are apart from the characters — going about their daily lives, for example — the abductions go off without a hitch. The characters receive a message reminding them to "Stay on the right side of history." If the characters are with them at all times, Audrey's agents (see p. 127) strike during the middle of the day. Strong security means the attempt fails; limited security means the characters have a chance of waking up (Wits + Awareness, Difficulty 2) and no security means they wake up just after the abduction takes place. If they're staying in the Victoria Hotel or the Wheelhouse, they have effectively zero security.

- **Vandalism:** If there is any security whatsoever, or the characters' temporary haven(s) is/are hard to find, this fails. Characters should find evidence of an attempted break-in or hear of people asking around after them.

Averting Elysium

If the characters already encountered the hunter cell described in The Fourth Marvel: Marley, they may know, or suspect Hiram Kent is planning a violent interruption. Audrey is distracted and unless the coterie is dazzlingly persuasive, she assumes that a group of hapless mortals can't cause much trouble. She'll order more security.

Elysium

The Rotunda Gallery gets a makeover for Elysium. The uninspired pop art remains, but the lights are turned down low — a substantial improvement. Screens are erected and curtains hung, providing an illusion of privacy. Guests are fed from the Prince's own herd. It's either low-key

or disgracefully cheap, depending on the point of view of the observer. One thing is certain: a night at the Rotunda Gallery is a far cry from the glamor and heritage of Elysium elsewhere.

Vaisey is Keeper of Elysium, which largely involves making sure access to the Prince and his special guest, Kallias, is restricted.

The gallery is overcrowded. Everyone who is anyone has turned out to witness the promised spectacle. Representatives of every clan are here, including all of the Kindred the characters might have met in the course of investigating Kallias' marvels.

Elysium is an opportunity for the coterie to investigate (at least shallowly) any marvels they didn't delve into earlier.

This Elysium is about to go completely off the rails. Kallias is a no-show, and the former Martinet has sent a cell of hunters to storm the event, as revenge for his exile. In general, this scene should have players questioning whether spiritual

enlightenment, even if it's real, is worth the trouble it's caused.

Security

Security is surprisingly lax for such a large event. Six ghouls (see *Elysium Security*, p. 127) are working security, but their efforts are not coordinated, as they all report to vampires from different coteries. With the office of Martinet currently vacant, it's not clear who is in charge, and no one wants to take orders from anyone else. There are huge gaps in security: gaps between patrols, times when exits go unwatched. It would be dangerous, if anyone was foolish enough to violate Elysium.

Added to their minor internal power struggles, the retainers who remain are resentful that they're getting a magic show rather than an announcement of a new officeholder.

The characters can spot the various flaws in security with an easy Intelligence + Leadership roll.

The Prometheans

Most of the Prometheans in Elysium are restless. They are hyper critical of everything the Prince has done, from staging this grand performance to leaving the city without a Martinet.

If Audrey had the characters lean on her, Haze pushes back. She doesn't care all that much about the rules of Elysium, either. She's confident the Prince doesn't care enough to enforce them; despite Vaisey pretending to the contrary, he's terrified of her, and security just aren't doing their jobs tonight. If the characters don't notice the weak security on their own, and Haze is friendly with them, she and Lataka point out the risk.

The Wire-Walkers

Several Wire-Walkers are present, including Farid who has been let out of confinement especially. His elders are keeping a close eye on him and are both disappointed and faintly



embarrassed by his credulous belief that Kallias is right, and that he too might one day walk once again under the sun.

Several of the Wire-Walkers are hopeful, in truth, but the rest are better at hiding their optimism.

The Temple

With Estelle harmed and Marley dead as a result of Kallias' presence in the city, the Temple are defensive and antisocial. Any vampires who show sympathy for the Prince or faith in Kallias experience severe hostility from Temple Kindred.

Estelle is present, but physically sheltered by one or more of her coterie-mates at all times.

The Fates

The Fates are present, and silent. Literally. The three veiled witches do not speak, and communicate with petitioners only by snapping their black lace fans in gestures that their ghoul, Natasha Clement (a punk teenager bedecked in silver jewelry and high on the power of borrowed vitae) interprets into curt, formulaic answers.

One of those canned answers is that the Fates don't need a display of power to convince them the Healer (as they have begun referring to Kallias) is everything he claims.

The characters may be able to convince Natasha to explain why. The Fates have received a guest at Dunsane Priory. Andrew Duchevski has arrived, vowing that Kallias is something potent indeed. And so, with Andrew's assistance, The Fates now conspire to commit diablerie on him. Natasha doesn't tell them that part.

The City Investors

The City Investors are reserved, but present. They're extremely con-

scious of the conflict between Audrey and Casaubon (even if Casaubon doesn't know it yet), and not willing to take sides at this point.

Francesca de Launcey is present with Vix, who she keeps close. If the characters show any sign of denouncing Vix as a liar, Francesca makes veiled (initially) then pointed threats. She's spent the last few nights ferreting out the coterie's secrets. If there's nothing to find, she implies that she has something potent but doesn't say what.

The Prince

This is probably the characters' first opportunity to meet Casaubon. He's an imposing figure: tall, gaunt, and overdressed. He flashes rapidly between mirth and cruelty, and takes any criticism of Kallias as a personal insult. Meanwhile, he'll tolerate any insult levelled at the Camarilla or the Kindred of Birmingham.

He could not care less what the coterie thinks of Kallias.

Casaubon still trusts Audrey ("her profound lack of imagination keeps me honest."), who is constantly in his company tonight. If the characters can separate the two of them and inform Casaubon of Audrey's schemes — and present proof — he assures them action will be taken. He doesn't answer further questions on the subject.

As the night goes on, Casaubon becomes more irritable and short-tempered: Kallias should have arrived by now.

The Wannabe

Humaira has been stalking the characters for nights, but it's not their fault she knows where Elysium is being held. She got that information from her brother (in his defense, he did not understand that telling her he was "finally getting some time

off" and using it to "take in a show at the Rotunda" would be easy for her to interpret). She arrives shortly an hour or so into proceedings, making a scene at the door as she begs to be allowed in.

She cuts herself, promising the creatures inside the gallery her blood, her body, anything they want. If she has met the characters, she claims to be with them.

Farid explodes at even the suggestion that other Kindred are interested in his sister. He violates the peace of Elysium without a second thought.

The Interlopers

Humaira is not the only human making the decision to storm Elysium. The second group, however, are not begging for acceptance but preparing to wipe out the vampiric menace. The hunter cell that killed Marley and Chloe Bell are back, sent by Hiram Kent to take revenge on Casaubon — unless the characters already decimated them (there are two or fewer left alive), in which case they won't bother.

The remaining hunters were informed as the Elysium's location, and on the day before the event planted five firebombs throughout the Rotunda. These bombs are on a timer, with Hiram Kent having informed the hunters that all Kindred should be present by midnight.

What takes place depends on the following:

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS HEARD ABOUT PLANTING THE DEVICES / ENCOUNTERED THE HUNTERS

If the vampires know about the plot, they can perform an extended Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 2 for one bomb, 3 for two, and so on up to Difficulty 5) to locate the bombs. Disarming them is relative-

ly simple: these aren't complicated explosives but plug-in IEDs, requiring an Intelligence + Firearms or Larceny roll (Difficulty 2) for each device.

Of course, the player characters may be fine with them going off, could have called in a warning beforehand, or had mortal contacts disarm them. If they removed the threat discreetly, the surviving hunters wait on the first floor until 11:55, and noticing the bombs didn't go off, either assault the vampires using firearms and blades (if the player characters have made the Kindred appear weak or they antagonized the hunters) or flee to fight another day.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS DIDN'T HEAR ABOUT THE DEVICES / ENCOUNTER THE HUNTERS

In this scenario, the Storyteller rolls a die to determine how many of the bombs go off at the stroke of midnight. They inflict damage in the same manner as the Raufoss (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 380), though the bomb locations are down to Storyteller discretion, and for the sake of drama and good storytelling, it's more interesting for a secondary SPC to go up in flames immediately and play out the terror frenzy and flight of the player characters afterward.

The main group of hunters remain outside the front door lobby, as at least one screaming ghoul security attests after being stabbed, but there is a fire exit, which only two of the hunters are guarding. There is a basement below the gallery, which the older and more blasé vampires take shelter in, relying on their juniors and retainers, plus the dedicated security staff, to take care of the problem. If the worst comes to the worst, the basement connects to Birmingham's miles of tunnels. They'll escape.

Helping any of the local Kindred to safety elevates the characters in that vampire's esteem. Casaubon and Audrey don't need their help: getting the Prince and Steward safely into

the basement is everyone's top priority. Not even Audrey wants to gamble with these odds.

Haze has the clearest head, and insists on taking one of the hunters alive. This falls to the player characters, who need to succeed on a Charisma + Intimidation roll (Difficulty 5) or use of Disciplines such as Dominate or Presence to make them confess everything: that they were working for Hiram Kent, who they believe to be a mortal whose brother was murdered by vampires. Accusations start to fly — at the Wire-Walkers for the betrayal by one of their coterie, at “the city authorities” for allowing this to happen while they were obsessed with a “magic shyster.” Haze is the only one bold enough to level blame at Casaubon. While he is snarling a threat, she storms out.

Elysium dissolves for the night, and the many shaken, emotional Kindred retreat to their havens to scheme. What support Casaubon had is severely diminished: his treatment of a respected city elder, fueled by his desire to believe in Kallias, put all Birmingham Kindred in danger. Word travels among Kindred in contact that Hiram Kent now has a Blood Hunt on his head. Despite how his grievance may be warranted, his actions against court were not.

Meeting Kallias

Where the characters meet Kallias depends who got them the appointment. Vaisey or Casaubon send them to Four Oaks; anyone else arranges the meet in one of the coterie's properties in the city (see *The Lay of the Land* on p. 107). They have to do so via Vaisey: no Kindred except Casaubon has direct access to Kallias. If Kallias comes into the city, he is accompanied by two bodyguards (see p. 127). The bodyguards have orders to report everything that is said or done at that meeting to Vaisey.

Casaubon has given Kallias accommodation in a lavish and highly secure new-build house in the suburb of Four Oaks. The area is green, expensive, and absolutely without character. Whatever the area used to look like, it's now composed of carefully planted copse and identical red-brick houses.

The house itself is one of five in a secure, gated community that sits behind a tall brick wall. A private security force, whose wages are paid by Casaubon, patrol the grounds. The house in which Kallias is staying is used infrequently, but the neighbors assume it's an Airbnb and don't care enough to ask questions. State of the art alarms, cameras, locks, and no fewer than two panic rooms (one in the basement, one on the top floor) provide enviable security. Unfortunately, almost all the security uses smart devices, so can be hacked and bypassed with any device with Wi-Fi and a Wits + Technology roll (Difficulty 3).

Casaubon and Vaisey are the only people who know of the existence of the Four Oaks house (except for Kallias' disciples — see *Disciples* on p. 115): he's not quite so unprepared for Audrey's betrayal as the Steward thinks.

Motivation

Kallias claims not to want anything from Birmingham, beyond a place to shelter and to share his truths with any who wish to hear them. Whether he's being genuine varies for every Storyteller and every playthrough.

Golconda

If one could relay the path to Golconda in a conversation, enlightenment would be much more common. In Kallias' words, Golconda is, broadly speaking, a path of asceticism

and self-examination. He explains it as coming to terms with one's Beast and accepting that one is neither a degenerate post-human nor a monster-in-waiting, but a third state. It is not incompatible with the city politics of the Kindred, but it may give an individual a new perspective on petty power-seeking. He says there's no reason Casaubon should not continue as Prince of Birmingham. He may even gain a new passion for the role.

Kallias claims to have learned of Golconda many hundreds of years ago, from an elder who cloistered herself in a labyrinth beneath a Mediterranean island. Her name is Phaedra, and he does not know if she is there any longer. He lost contact with her decades ago. If Kallias is as he seems, this is true. If not, it's a lie, but Kallias sticks to his story even if accused of deceit.

If the player characters have been informed about "the lost clan" and the contradictions between what they've heard of Golconda and what Kallias is doing, in his healer role, he pleads complete ignorance and isn't lying. He doesn't know his parent clan.

Run Out of Turin

The characters may already know that Kallias was forced out of Turin. He doesn't bring it up, but if asked about his time there he responds with sadness that not everyone is as ready to embrace new ideas as Prince Casaubon. The Kindred of Turin were skeptical and bitter, and saw every request — for shelter, permission to teach the way of Golconda to their children — as an attempt to exploit them.

Disciples

Kallias is not alone in Four Oaks. He has four disciples from amongst the city's Kindred: the Nosferatu Farid, a Brujah named Rex, and Heliodo-

ra and Tris, two of the city's neonate Toreador. The disciples are not present for Kallias' meeting with the characters. They're in a sitting room at the front of the house, all engaged in quiet conversation: a philosophical discussion about what the Kindred's Hunger and the Cainite curse really signifies.

This is Farid's first meeting and he is quiet but intense, desperately hoping for something that can save him from this existence he despises. The others are wary of outsiders, but keen to convince the characters that Kallias is sincere. They don't feel exploited, he hasn't asked them for anything — though if he did, they'd be delighted to oblige. They treat Kallias like something between a father and a savior and criticism of him, or even pointed questions, offends them deeply.

Marvels

Kallias acknowledges that some of the miracles attributed to him are not his work. Many, even. He doesn't see any need to spend his time suppressing rumors and correcting facts. If people choose to believe such things are possible that serves everyone's best interests: it opens their minds to possibilities they would otherwise never accept.

Proof

Kallias does not perform miracles on command, nor does he explain how he does them. "The path to Golconda," he says, "starts with faith." If the characters choose to interpret this as him avoiding scrutiny, so be it. He doesn't need their belief. He's not looking for anything from them. If they are interested, he teaches them — but the path to enlightenment is slow and painstaking.

What do they lose if they put their trust in him? Status amongst others too set in their ways to open

their eyes? Pride, by acknowledging that they are neither apex predators nor jaded intellectuals for whom the night holds no surprises?

Kallias remains calm and amicable however the coterie treats him. His guards, provided by the Prince, won't tolerate the use of physical or supernatural force and throw the characters out if they get violent; for anything short of that, Kallias prevents them from acting simply by holding up a hand.

I Spy

The coterie are not the only vampires visiting Kallias this night. One of Birmingham's Wire-Walkers, Owl (so named for her huge, golden eyes and the grotesque flaps of skin that connect her arms to her body), has tracked Kallias down. It's taken a month of being supremely nice to Vaisey and poking through the Prince's many bank accounts. Owl is outside the gated community, but several of her spies — owls, naturally — observe more closely.

An Intelligence + Awareness roll (Difficulty 3) allows a character to spot the grotesque, oversized owls perched on branches in the trees around the house, as does Heightened Senses or any other trait that affects observation. If any of the characters happen to be looking at footage from the house's security cameras (sent by default to a tablet in the kitchen and TV screens in both panic rooms) no roll is required. The owls are unpleasant to look at, balding and with bloody talons and beaks.

Kallias' security team won't find the Obfuscated Owl if they look for her, but the characters might. She leaves when she realizes she's been spotted, running a quarter mile out of the neighborhood and to a parked car. With a Strength + Athletics dice pool of 6, she shouldn't be impossible to catch. Owl is nonchalant about the situation: of course, the Nosferatu,

like everyone else in the city, want to know what's going on. And, naturally, she didn't want to explain herself to a bunch of strangers with unknown loyalties, so she legged it when they saw her.

She hasn't learned much of interest, except that unless Kallias is keeping kine in the basement, he's not feeding regularly — which makes his endless patience and good nature pretty impressive.

A Messenger

The night after Elysium, a Tremere arriving from Turin calls on the Fates' chantry. It's hard to keep this knowledge private. If the characters are on good terms with Audrey, Vaisey, or Haze one of them alerts the coterie to this new development. Turin is known to have been Kallias' last domain so any of these contacts ask that the coterie meet with Andrew Duchevski and see what he knows.

Andrew is a handsome, rakish man with a timeless air about him and an intensity that is unsettling. He speaks openly about his experiences with Kallias in Turin. He found himself in a similar position to the player characters now: searching for anything that would prove conclusively who Kallias was, and what he was capable of. While he found credible evidence of real marvels — mostly acts of healing — he also found several fakes. It was unclear whether Kallias orchestrated them, or whether others merely sought to gain power by association with him. He announces, with a predatory excitement, that he was forced to conclude it was a matter of the Blood. He has, he says, chosen to believe in Kallias' importance.

The Fates are present throughout this encounter but do not speak. A Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 2) clues a character in to a palpable excitement among the Tremere present.

This isn't academic curiosity: they're planning something.

It's unlikely that the coterie learns more than that, but with good relations with the Tremere, a diligent effort to get Andrew to talk (Charisma + Persuasion, Difficulty 5), or spectacular investigative abilities (Intelligence + Investigation, Difficulty 5) they might discover the truth: Andrew and the Fates are formulating a plan to abduct, interrogate, and take power from Kallias.

This scene has two purposes: first, to summarize the characters' situation to help them think more clearly about next steps; second to introduce another plotline that could conclude the story.

Chapter Three: Power Plays

Once Elysium is breached and the characters meet Kallias, events are in their hands. Elysium is the last straw, and several factions in the city prepare to make a move. The coterie's choices directly affect who holds power in Birmingham at the end of the story.

Moves and Countermoves

Audrey Barrowman has correctly gauged that most of the city's Kindred would support a change in leadership. She calls on Haze and the Anarchs to move against the Prince, directing them to his haven. The characters are encouraged to participate: roles in the Birmingham Camarilla are theirs for the taking if they do.

Audrey's prepared to offer the player characters a tidy sum in terms of money, territory, and even Embracing rights, if they agree to wrest

the domain from Casaubon and into her favor.

If the characters have alerted Audrey to Haze's plans, this job belongs to the characters, as does the work of convincing Haze and her companions to leave the city — a stand-off that might well end in combat.

If the characters alert Vaisey or Casaubon, the confrontation plays out differently. Instead of finding Casaubon and Vaisey alone in their luxury apartment, they're surrounded by the local Toreador and numerous mortals, including their contacts in the media and law enforcement. The opportunity for an execution is lost, Audrey and Haze are exposed, and both leave the city. The characters are richly rewarded with both wealth and positions in Birmingham (the role of Steward is not open).

Haze appears to comply with Audrey's instructions. The Anarchs storm Casaubon's haven, and stake and behead the Prince ... and then Haze comes for Audrey at her haven. She's given one chance to leave the city, or the Anarchs aim to subdue her and her ashes get to join Casaubon's (and Vaisey's) on display in the Rotunda Gallery.

Haze acts with a squad of six Brujah (use the *Elysium Security traits* on p. 127)

If the characters have given Haze any reason to think they might support her, she tries to enlist their support in this action. With the characters on Audrey's side, they might be able to either intimidate Haze into backing down or beat her in combat. She'll even agree to single combat to settle it. With the characters on Haze's side, Audrey is so outnumbered that she surrenders and agrees to leave Birmingham.

The Fates attempt to abduct Kallias. If Casaubon is still in power after Audrey and Haze act, Vaisey alerts the characters to Kallias' disappearance. If the coterie makes the

connection with the Tremere's excitement they can negotiate, storm the chantry (see the description in Lay of the Land), or follow any other course of action that occurs to them. If the characters don't intervene, Andrew and the Fates carry out a Truth of Blood ritual to determine the truth about Kallias.

If he really is a powerful elder with the secrets of Golconda, the Fates attempt diablerie, convinced that a ritual Andrew has devised will grant them his knowledge rather than merely some of his power, but the ritual not only fails but releases Kallias' soul before the Fates can consume it. If Kallias is a liar, they simply execute him.

Epilogues

The characters are kingmakers. They have influenced, or even outright decided, who should control Birmingham: a pragmatic former Steward, a Prince who dared to dream but lost sight of reality, or an Anarch who wants to burn down the old power structures and start over. Whatever happens, there are changes in Birmingham, and the characters get front row seats.

The player characters might have had their hopes of Golconda dashed, or rejected the possibility of salvation entirely. If Kallias was real, the Fates may well have destroyed precious knowledge. Do they need to be punished? If Casaubon remains in power, they certainly do. Or perhaps, as Hecata, the characters are well-placed to seek out Kallias' ghost and pry its secrets loose.

Hiram Kent is still active outside Birmingham. He'll be back, and he will expect to claim his old position — which is now occupied by one of Audrey or Hazel's allies, or even one of the characters.

It's going to be an awfully long time before Birmingham sees another quiet night.

JEREMIAH CASAUBON

Epitaph: Prince of Birmingham

Quote: *"When did the years begin to trickle away like grains of sand? Surely, there should be more than this."*

Clan: Toreador

MORTAL DAYS: THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

The aristocratic Casaubon family owned most of the West Midlands. Born to immense privilege and cursed with a keen mind, it was a family joke that Jeremiah's first words were "I'm bored." Nothing satisfied him or held his attention for long. He burned through books and tutors, his intellect decimating the former and his attitude the latter. When he turned twenty and was sent down from

Oxford University in disgrace his father threw him out of the house. If he'd been a wiser man, he would have cut Jeremiah off financially too. Casaubon blazed a trail across Europe from Paris, to Athens, to Rome, soaking in history and culture, conducting affairs with actors and courtesans, and fighting duels over the slightest insult.

Still nothing satisfied him. The only thing that came close was writing. In every new city he found a new muse, wrote a new crop of poems. Every critic who read his work winced, except the ones who laughed. Jeremiah's verse simmered with energy and anger, out of step with the Romanticism of the age. Over time Jeremiah convinced himself that his only talents were seduction, debauchery, and spending vast sums of money. He never stopped writing, but he stopped admitting he cared about it.

In Venice he found his final muse, the Toreador Nicolò Foscarini. The vampire had seen styles and artistic movements come and go, but he'd never seen anything like Jeremiah's keen, knife-sharp rage. Casaubon's anger enchanted him, and he became a patron and mentor to the young artist who he considered ahead of his time. The embrace was an accident: a duel over a gambling debt left Jeremiah bleeding to death on the edge of a Venetian canal, and Nicolò's only choices were to let him die or offer him eternal life. His decision was one both men rapidly came to regret.

KINDRED NIGHTS: HOMECOMING

The Embrace did away with any artistic talent Jeremiah ever possessed. The shock of his new existence dulled his edge, which only made him more frustrated, impulsive, and intolerable. Nicolò tolerated Jeremiah's foul temper and resentment for almost twenty years before issuing an ultimatum: either Casaubon returned to England and never troubled the fine continent of Europe again, or he would greet the dawn. Jeremiah tried London for a while, but he made enemies there too, never settling under the Mithraic reign, and eventually slunk home to Birmingham.

The town had grown in his absence. The industrial revolution was in full swell and Birmingham was on its way to becoming the greatest industrial city in the world. This did not interest Jeremiah. He found the city soulless, and the Kindred who propelled it to wealth and status even worse: dull and soulless. Jeremiah spent the best part of two centuries complaining, sniping, and criticizing, never pushing his luck so much that he was punished.

When, in the late 20th century, manufacturing in Birmingham died and the city sank into post-industrial despair, Jeremiah finally took an interest. Words had failed him as a medium, but maybe this was to be his art: crafting a whole city in his image. Birmingham would be beautiful and glittering, flourishing as a center of art and culture, like flowers growing out of polluted, poisoned

earth. Over a hundred thousand of the kine left Birmingham and the Kindred feared that worse was to come. Jeremiah offered something badly needed: he gave the vampires of Birmingham hope that they could change, and change the humans, keep Birmingham growing and flourishing.

To cut a long, sad story short, propelling the city into a new age turned out to be difficult so and Jeremiah grew disheartened. His failure weighed on him. He had no interest in running a city, but his laissez-faire rule has been good to the other clans: they've been able to scheme and maneuver and be the masters of their own destinies. It's never been worth deposing him.

PLOTS AND SCHEMES:

- **Something Greater:** Casaubon still harbors a vague desire to make Birmingham something greater than it currently is. He lacks the motivation, however, and it's exceedingly difficult to stir any passion in him.
- **Back Door:** Casaubon is jaded and bored, but not as much of a fool as his enemies assume. He has substantial hidden assets that would allow him to go to ground in Birmingham or outside it, if the need arose. He has escape routes to Edinburgh, Paris and Stockholm prepared.

DOMAIN AND HAVEN:

- **Downtown Penthouse (Haven 4, Herd 2, Retainer 2, Luxury)** Casaubon's primary residence is a luxurious loft apartment in the center of Birmingham. Known as a patron of the arts, he invites actors, artists, and other creatives to socialize there. It's debatable whether there are distinct parties, or a single party that's been ongoing for the last several years. Casaubon doesn't know or care: he joins the revelry only when he needs to feed. Vaisey, his loyal and adoring ghoul, is responsible for maintaining order and covering up the occasional "drug overdose."
- **Four Oaks** See "Kallias."

THRALLS AND TOOLS:

- **Vaisey (Retainer 3)** Vaisey is one of the few people whose company Casaubon can tolerate for more than an hour or two: he's witty, and just sharp-tongued enough to keep the Prince interested. He lets the ghoul run far more of the city than he should, even granting him authority that should be restricted to Kindred, such as Keeper of Elysium. Vaisey is utterly in love with Casaubon, and entirely loyal — despite spending every waking moment in fear for his life. In exchange for his trust and gifts, Casaubon gets a ghoul who manages his finances and makes it his



business to be aware of any imminent threat to the Prince.

- **Private Security (Retainer 2)** Casaubon has two ghoul bodyguards, both huge, sculpted, and unnecessarily attractive. They're currently on loan to Kallias.
- **Investment Portfolio (Resources 4)** Casaubon doesn't actively manage his money, or know how much he has, but Vaisey does. It's cautiously invested in dozens of different funds, all chosen for their reliable performance.
- **Law Enforcement (Influence 3)** Several senior police officers receive bribes in the high five figures every year, in exchange for burying cases that the Prince and his retainer don't want investigated.

KINDRED RELATIONSHIPS:

- **Audrey Barrowman (Useful Servant)** Casaubon regards Audrey as ruthlessly competent and completely lacking in imagination. His complacency makes him trust her much further than he should.
- **Kallias (Savior)** Casaubon has strangled any sense of skepticism to dedicate himself completely to his new hero. He trusts and believes Kallias unequivocally and supplies whatever the newcomer asks for.
- **Haze (Thorn in the Side)** Always needling, always digging. So insistent that things can and should be done better. Only the fact that Audrey cares so much for her stopped Casaubon driving out this strident hag from his city decades ago. Now, he's not sure he has the authority to make her leave.

- **The Fates (Respected Advisors)** The Tremere are secretive and sinister, but Casaubon respects their performance and sense of drama. Their advice has never steered him wrong yet.

WHISPERS

- **Abdication:** One reason Casaubon is still on the throne of Birmingham is the whispered assumption that he'll abdicate. Flattering and staying close to him seem like excellent ways to be named his successor.
- **Occultism:** Rumor has it this isn't the first time Casaubon has flirted with spirituality; that the Fates' predecessor controlled his actions through whispered premonitions for decades.

MASK AND MIEN

- Casaubon maintains the appropriate paperwork and ID for the mask of Peter Foscarini. Peter only exists on paper: it's the alias used to maintain Casaubon's investment portfolio and other financial interests. He never uses the identity for other purposes.
- Casaubon is a peacock. High heels, copious amounts of gaudy jewelry, and a full face of makeup that accentuates ice blue eyes and a smile like a slit throat. It's for the best that most of the time he merely looks blank and bored. When he takes an interest in something it usually foreshadows a cruel joke or a fit of rage. He enjoys vivid colors and patterns, gold braid, and pleather, and he especially enjoys making inferiors pretend they like the way he dresses. He's a tall, gaunt Caucasian man with ringlets of strawberry blonde hair and a loose-limbed elegance in the way he moves.

Sire: Nicolò Foscarini

Embraced: 1783 (Born 1755)

Ambition: Find meaning in a meaningless existence

Convictions: Never allow another vampire to destroy my optimism

Touchstones: Cristian Radu — a young art student whom the phrase "elegantly wasted" could have been written to describe. Casaubon identifies strongly with him, and desperately hopes to see him amount to something: if he can do it, perhaps Casaubon isn't fated to drift aimlessly forever.

Humanity: 5

Generation: 8th

Blood Potency: 4

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 2; Intelligence 3; Wits 3; Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 6

Skills: Craft (Prose Writing) 3, Melee 3; Etiquette (High Society) 4, Insight 2, Intimidation (Unhinged) 4, Leadership 3, Performance (Oratory) 1, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge (Benefit of the Doubt) 3; Academics (History of Art) 3, Awareness 2, Politics (Camarilla) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 3, Fortitude 2, Presence 5

General Difficulties: 6/5

AUDREY BARROWMAN

Epitaph: Steward of Birmingham

Quote: "Have some bloody ambition, man."

Clan: Ventrue

MORTAL DAYS: SUFFRAGE FOR ALL

Audrey's family owned factories. The Barrowmans were respectable, upper middle-class, uninspiring and she was not close to them. She was too independent, too ambitious, and too much trouble for them. She avoided marriage, laughingly embraced the possibility of dying an old maid, and suggested that if that seemed to be her fate, she would simply set up home with her great friend Hazel Covington.

Audrey's father died when his daughter was 23, of a perfectly prosaic illness that would have been preventable a few decades later. Her brother Steven had no head for business, and almost bankrupted the family before Audrey quietly took over running things while he kept himself distracted with gambling and a series of mistresses. There was nothing she could do when he lost all three of their factories in a card game: her name wasn't on any of the deeds, and she had no official power over the businesses.

The suffragette movement had interested Audrey before that, but her involvement went no further than attending meetings and reading pamphlets. After Steven ruined the family businesses and Audrey's income, she directed her anger into the cause of women's suffrage. If she'd had more power, more rights, she wouldn't have been forced to depend on an idiot for her lifestyle. She and Hazel became tireless campaigners. Audrey, well-spoken and intimidating, wrote essays and spoke in public while Hazel took more direct action.

For the Ventrue Leona Fitzroy, Audrey was a fascinating phenomenon: she was the future given flesh, and to Leona she seemed an excellent way to tie herself to the new age. She convinced Audrey that the society of the Kindred was meritocratic, or at least that sex was no barrier to success.



KINDRED NIGHTS: SECOND PLACE

Leona had been economical with the truth. She didn't tell Audrey that while sex might not matter, lineage did. So did the potency of one's blood. Leona was of the tenth generation, making Audrey's blood too weak for her to be taken seriously. And then there was age. For a fledgling to step into the night and expect to be handed power, as Audrey did, was ridiculous. She found herself sidelined once again. Her first decade as a vampire saw her characterized as strident and entitled, and she was only gradually able to offset that with a reputation for competence.

It was Hazel who indirectly caused the shift. It was inconceivable to Audrey, not to mention intolerable, that Hazel should grow old and die while Audrey lived on. Besides, they had always been stronger together. Audrey would have asked permission to Embrace her friend herself, except that Hazel would have been even weaker than she was. Instead she traded Leona's assets — her voice in the politics of the city, her money, land and herd — in exchange for a fellow Blue Blood's promise to make Hazel Kindred. She learned to trade favors, to bite her tongue and make deals she didn't like with people she loathed, for the sake of longer-term gains. It was the kick she needed. Audrey became known as someone who got things done: quietly, efficiently, and often before others even saw the need for action.

In fact, Hazel had already come to the attention of a Brujah, who gave her the Embrace before the sire Audrey had selected was able to.

And yet. The elders of the city still saw no need to recognize Audrey with rank or title. Casaubon changed that: he had no interest in the practicalities of rulership, at which she excelled. She'd proved herself loyal to her

allies, and to the Camarilla, and he deemed her ideal to stand as his Steward. At first, she glowed with pride at the recognition. She was even passingly fond of the dreamer: he was wildly incompetent, but at least he recognized and valued competence in others, and his hope and ambition were compelling.

After decades working for Casaubon, the novelty has worn off. He's a selfish, short-sighted idiot just like Audrey's brother and the elders who ruled Birmingham before him. She won't be anyone's subordinate anymore. She'll show Casaubon as the credulous dreamer he is and snatch the throne of Birmingham.

PLOTS AND SCHEMES

- **First Among Equals:** Deposing Casaubon is Audrey's current focus. Each move she makes is considered through the lens of how it affects her efforts.
- **Landed Gentry:** Audrey makes her money through property investment and development. Birmingham, like any city of the old world, is relatively densely populated with Kindred. That means every square foot is part of somebody's territory. She's looking forward to thinning the numbers a little after she takes power so that there will be more for everyone ... but especially for her.

DOMAIN AND HAVEN:

- **Barrow Hall (Haven 3, with Watchmen 2, Security System 3, Luxury)** Audrey recently re-purchased her ancestral home. After converting it into luxury flats, she retains one wing and the basement for herself. As an exclusive gated community, excellent security is to be expected.
- **Victoria Hotel** Audrey is one of the key investors in the boutique Victoria Hotel, which serves as a central meeting point for the city's Ventru. The hotel provides safety, security, and a prestigious location in the center of an excellent feeding ground. Few vampires make permanent havens there, but secure, lightless rooms are available by request. The Ventru receive visitors there and hold formal gatherings when they want to impress.
- **Precision Co-Working** Like the Victoria Hotel, ownership of Precision is shared between several of the city's Ventru. It provides resources and a convenient meeting place.

THRALLS AND TOOLS:

- **Friends in Low Places (Contacts 3, Police; Contacts 3, Private Investigators; Contacts 4, Journalists)** Audrey has a wide network of associates. Private

investigators, journalists, and police officers are all at her beck and call.

- **Property Portfolio (Resources 4)** Audrey owns large amounts of commercial and upmarket residential property. She has an eye for spotting gems and has made several excellent deals.
- **Local Government (Influence 4)** Audrey has long-standing relationships with every department of Birmingham city government. Between her deep pockets and ferocious lawyers, most officials know better than to cross her. This level of influence converts to lesser sway over other organizations: Audrey leans on the city, and city officials lean on police or the media on her behalf.

KINDRED RELATIONSHIPS:

- **Jeremiah Casaubon (Rival)** Fondness and hope has soured into bitter rivalry. Audrey is sick of serving a man who can't muster the energy or interest to lead.
- **Haze (Old Friend)** Audrey regrets that they are not as close as they once were but would do anything to support Haze.
- **Kallias (Hate)**. He's a liar and a fraud, and Audrey finds it offensive that anyone in Birmingham is taken in by his transparent lies.

WHISPERS:

- **Shadow Ops**: Audrey is the one who has dealt with Lasombra looking to shelter in Birmingham, though none have yet produced the sacrifice required. It's speculated that she has several, maybe even dozens, of Lasombra she could demand help from if she needed it.
- **Soft Hearted**: Many believe that Audrey is too fond of both Casaubon and Haze to ever move against them, and that she'll be in second place forever.

MASK AND MIEN:

- Audrey's most substantial mask (Mask 3) is Elizabeth Gellman, property mogul who runs Gellman Crown Investments. She works closely with buyers in Asia-Pacific, so lives on a schedule incompatible with UK daylight hours. Her other mask, Melissa Nicholls (Mask 1) is used only for underhanded business she needs to keep secret.
- Audrey is well-groomed and professional. She keeps up with contemporary fashions, and always has a fashionable, elegant wardrobe that gives the impres-

sion of a well-heeled businesswoman. Currently that means smart suits and understated accessories.

Sire: Leona Fitzroy

Embraced: 1911 (Born 1880)

Ambition: Step out from behind the throne

Convictions: Don't let anyone deny you the credit you're due

Touchstones: Hayley Merchant — a distant descendant who knows Audrey as a great-great-great aunt. Audrey lives vicariously through her, encouraging her to prominence that eluded her during her mortal life.

Humanity: 6

Generation: 11th

Blood Potency: 2

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 5; Intelligence 4; Wits 3; Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 9

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Stealth 2; Ettiquette 3, Insight (First Impressions) 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership (Subtle Guidance) 3, Persuasion (Negotiation) 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3; Academics 2, Investigation 2, Politics (Power Networks) 4

Disciplines: Dominate 4, Celerity 2, Fortitude 2, Presence 3

General Difficulties: 5/4

KALLIAS

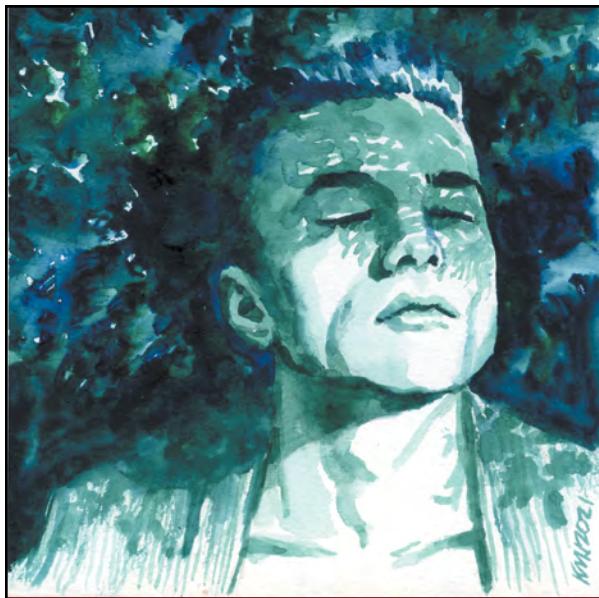
Epitaph: Disruptive guru

Quote: *"The truth is there for those who have the will and patience to see. Will you open your eyes?"*

Kallias is complicated. Either he really is an enlightened elder vampire, who humbly wants to share his wisdom with the world, or he's a sophisticated, charismatic con artist taking advantage of vulnerable Kindred's desire for spirituality. Versions of his history and interests are provided to support either of these possibilities.

MORTAL DAYS: WIDE EYES

Kallias was born and raised on the island of Naxos, in the brief period when the Republic of Venice controlled the island but paid tribute to the Ottoman Empire. Naxos was complex, a place of competing religious and political factions, and Kallias found it easiest to ignore all of the noise, and focus on the few things he could rely on: his own curiosity, the purity and focus of the early monks and saints he read about in the theological texts



his father, an Orthodox priest, kept in his collection. Kallias intended to become a monk, and if fate had not intervened in the form of the elegant, predatory, Contessa Emiliana Mezzanotte. Bitter and cynical herself, she found the unworldly young man charming — so she took him, luring him away from his family to accompany her on a voyage to Constantinople. She tired of him before journey's end but by then she'd already made the poor decision to Embrace him. She abandoned him in Constantinople and Kallias never saw his sire again.

Or

Kallias was born in the Greek islands in the late 19th century. Poverty and hardship were rife, and his family emigrated to the USA before Kallias was ten. Life was easier there, but unsatisfying. Kallias' parents opened a restaurant in New York city, and like his parents and siblings, Kallias worked there. Unlike them, he believed this was the lowest point of his life, and he was destined for better. He hung around the theaters and concert halls and other upscale venues where the city's great and good mingled with riff raff like him, and eventually his handsome face caught the eye of glamourous socialite Emma Macke. He believed he was seducing her, charming her out of money and gifts, while Emma — one of the Kindred — delighted in letting the idiot mortal pretend to play her. She gave him the Embrace as a gift, convinced he would keep her entertained for centuries but less than a month later a pair of lucky hunters put a stake through her heart and tossed her head in the Atlantic.

KINDRED NIGHTS: SEE THE LIGHT

Whichever origin is true, Kallias made his own way in the nights that followed his Embrace. He became even

more self-reliant than before and finds ways to either sidestep Kindred society or make it value him. If he really is an enlightened follower of the path to Golconda, he found his way to the elder known as Phaedra in her labyrinth beneath a tiny island in the Mediterranean where she initiated him into the ways of self-knowledge, asceticism and soul-seeking that brought him closer to true understanding.

If he's a con artist from Chicago, he just claims he did, and has mastered enough piecemeal scraps of knowledge from different Disciplines to fake some strange abilities.

PLOTS AND SCHEMES

- **Illuminate:** If Kallias really is a guru, he wants safety and the opportunity to teach — not necessarily in that order.
- **Manipulate:** If Kallias is lying, he wants to accumulate money, other resources, and power. Becoming the power behind the throne of Birmingham sounds like an excellent way to spend the next few decades.

DOMAIN AND HAVEN:

- Four Oaks (Haven 3, with Watchmen 2, Security System 2) Casaubon has granted Kallias the use of a comfortable, private property in an affluent suburb for the duration of his stay in Birmingham.

KINDRED RELATIONSHIPS:

- Prince Jeremiah Casaubon (Mentor/Puppet master) Kallias either sees Casaubon as a troubled soul and wants to help him find peace and purpose, or as a useful idiot whose emotions are easy to play on.
- **Audrey Barrowman (Obstacle)** Audrey's stubborn refusal to open her mind either disappoints (if he is what he appears to be) or frustrates and concerns (if he is lying) Kallias.

WHISPERS:

- **The Shunned of Turin:** Kallias was thrown out of the city of Turin after the city's Camarilla got wise to his schemes.
- **Two Faces:** Whatever Kallias' true intentions, he is followed by rumors and suspicions that he is a manipulative charlatan.
- **A Lost Clan:** Some in Birmingham call Kallias a "healer," both as a description of the miracles he is said to perform and an oblique reference to a legendary clan of vampires.

MASK AND MIEN:

- Kallias has no Mask — unless his claim to be a centuries old vampire is a lie.
- Olive skinned and blond, with a heart shaped face and a knowing smile, Kallias looks like a Renaissance statue that stepped down off its pedestal. He dresses simply, in linen and natural fibers, and pays little attention to his appearance. Kallias is strikingly beautiful even without supernatural assistance, but is he is a fraud he often supplements his natural gifts with Awe.

Sire: Emiliana Mezzanotte or Emma Macke**Embraced:** 1574 (Born 1550) or 1921 (born 1897)**Ambition:** Convince the world to step into the light of Golconda ... or amass power and luxury.**Convictions:** Welcome curiosity, never preach dogma / Look after yourself, because no one else will**Touchstones:** Kallias travels, so the actual identity of his Touchstone changes every time he settles into a new city, but they always fall into the categories described here.

Jamie Osbourne: a life coach who helps his clients rid themselves of materialism in favor of examining what they really value / Nikki Grosvenor: a con artist recently arrested (and therefore featured in every newspaper in Birmingham) after a successful ten-year career of fleecing rich old men of their valuables.

Humanity: 9 or 4**Generation:** 8th**Blood Potency:** 4

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Composure 5; Intelligence 3; Wits 3; Resolve 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 10

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2; Etiquette 2, Insight, Leadership (Inspiring) 4, Persuasion (Reasonable) 4, Performance 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (Beguiling) 5; Awareness 2, Academics (History) 4, Medicine (Diagnosis) 3, Occult 3, Technology 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 3, Presence 5

If Kallias is lying, these Disciplines are enough to explain many of his Marvels — Dominate's ability to implant false memories is particularly useful. If Kallias really is an enlightened being, he has access to powers that cannot be explained by known Disciplines. He is a miracle worker.

General Difficulties: 6/4**FRANCESCA DE LAUNCEY**

Francesca is vain, lazy, and amasses power and status purely in order to make herself more comfortable. She never had any ambition beyond marrying well and living an easy life. Only when she watched her friends and family grow old and infirm, and then pass away, did she start to appreciate what her great uncle had done for her by Embracing her to carry on the family line. She attempted to do the same for her great-grandchild Vix but produced a thin-blooded embarrassment whom she has kept away from the Camarilla for years.

Francesca sees Kallias' arrival as an opportunity to ride his slipstream to favor by showing her support for him and thereby growing close to the Prince. She would switch her allegiance to Audrey if she knew about the Steward's upcoming power grab, but Audrey doesn't trust Francesca enough to tell her.

Clan: Ventrue**Sire:** Jonathan Albright**Embraced:** 1934 (Born 1902)**Ambition:** Obtain privilege and status with as little responsibility as possible**Convictions:** Status is everything

Touchstones: Karen Holt — a Birmingham "lady who lunches." Rich and idle, just as Francesca would like to be.

Humanity: 6**Generation:** 13th**Blood Potency:** 1

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 5; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 10

Skills: Drive 2; Etiquette 3, Insight 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 3; Academics 2, Awareness 1, Finance 2, Politics 2, Technology 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 1, Presence 3**General Difficulties:** 4/2**FARID LATIF**

Farid is the most recent addition to Birmingham's Nosferatu. A somewhat sheltered young man from a close family, he came to Owl's attention after he leaked a minor political scandal online. Plus, his skills as a cybersecurity specialist prove extremely useful: he's filled a niche the Rats didn't otherwise have covered.

Farid loathes what he's become: not just an ugly, withered creature with a mouthful of needles, but a monster dependent on the suffering of others for his survival. He misses his family deeply, though he stays in constant contact with them digitally, and refuses to give up on the possibility that he might rejoin them one day. This can't be forever.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Owl

Embraced: 2018 (Born 1994)

Ambition: Find a way to make unlife livable

Convictions: No monster is completely beyond redemption; Information wants to be free

Touchstones: Humaira Latif — younger sister; Parveen Abbasi — grandmother; Dave Richards — Farid's first boss as a White Hat hacker.

Humanity: 8

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 4

Skills: Drive 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 3; Insight 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2; Academics 2, Investigation 3, Science 2, Technology (Hacking) 4

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Obfuscate 2, Potence 1

General Difficulties: 4/3

OWL

As she grew up, the woman who would become Owl gorged herself on spy novels and films, snooped through every family secret and traded gossip about her friends for momentary celebrity in school. After that, life went downhill. She was kicked out of polytechnic after trying to blackmail one of her lecturers with the threat of revealing his affair with a student and after that ... she got bored. If she hadn't had so much free time, she wouldn't have been able to spend months tracking mysterious occurrences in her neighborhood, and she wouldn't have found Helena Gore. Helena was impressed, and took the girl under her wing, first as a retainer and then eventually as her child.

Now, Owl likes to call herself an information broker, but in truth she's still a snoop and a blackmailer. She's just got a network of birds and rats working for her, and much more interesting people to blackmail.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Helena Gore

Embraced: 1983 (Born 1946)

Ambition: Shake things up in Birmingham by exposing dirty little secrets — or be adequately remunerated for silence

Convictions: The truth must always out; Never rest on your laurels

Touchstones: Nadia Price — journalist on the local paper, Owl likes to drop her juicy leads from time to time; Mike Hendry — student with a gift for breaking and entering so he can take photos of abandoned buildings

Humanity: 6

Generation: 11th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Larceny 3, Melee 2, Stealth (Stakeouts) 4; Animal Ken 3, Insight ("Tells") 4, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3; Awareness 3, Investigation 3, Technology 2

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Obfuscate 3, Potence 2

General Difficulties: 4/3

HUMAIRA LATIF

Her brother became a strictly digital presence, she was diagnosed with cancer, and then it's possible she may have come back from the dead. Nursing student Humaira is having the worst year. After all the contact she's had with the Kindred, she's started to figure some things out. While it's terrifying, in an abstract sense, that there are monsters who feed on human blood and her brother might be one of them, it's much more urgent that she find one to feed her their blood before the disease comes back. It's an obsession.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 2, Social 2, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Insight 6, Medicine 6

General Difficulties: 3/1

ESTELLE HARGREAVES

Estelle was raised in a family that didn't believe in mental illness, so her BPD went undiagnosed and

untreated. “Pull yourself together” was such a common refrain that Estelle sometimes woke up with the words on her lips. She struggled to fulfil family expectations — higher education, a professional career, and a stable family — and ultimately cut ties with them. She found a new family though, or rather it found her, in the form of the Malkavian Gioia. Gioia enjoyed Estelle’s propensity to craft visions of dire futures and then believe in them as fiercely as if they were prophecies. She Embraced the young woman to help her develop her gifts.

Her visions and insights gave Estelle purpose, until Kallias interrupted them. She’s bitter, frightened of this loss of identity, but too scared of Kallias and his allies amongst the elders of Birmingham to act.

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Gioia

Embraced: 1991 (Born 1966)

Ambition: Restore her gifts and with them, her sense of self

Convictions: Understanding is key to survival: don’t turn away from hard truths

Touchstones: Jan Fleming — therapist

Humanity: 5

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 2

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 4

Skills: Brawl 1; Etiquette 2, Persuasion 3; Academics 2, Finance 1, Occult 2, Technology 1

Disciplines: currently Celerity 1, Potence 2

General Difficulties: 4/3

HAZE

Hazel Covington grew up in the same circles as Audrey Barrowman. Nice girls from good families, not the type expected to flout their upbringing and become suffragettes. While Audrey was reading pamphlets and forming opinions, Hazel was associating with labor movements and bomb-throwing anarchists. Universal suffrage was one thing, but an end to all stifling, outdated political systems based on privilege was Hazel’s goal. Brujah and their servants were numerous in the circles she moved in, but she was never a target for the Embrace until it came to their attention that the Ventre had eyes on her. To this day, Haze blames Audrey’s scheming for her transition to undeath.

Still, Hazel — or Haze, as she became in the 1970s — was never one to let anything beat her. She found her feet amongst the Kindred quickly: never was there a system more in need of demolition. But Kindred politics move slowly, and Birmingham’s inertia caught her in its tides. First, she trusted Casaubon to change the status quo, then she trusted Audrey to at least hold him responsible. Now, not a single position has changed hands in decades and the Prince and Primogen are all obsessed with their newest diversion, the mysterious Kallias.

Haze is done trusting people. Casaubon’s decision to exile the martinet was the final straw. If the Camarilla won’t stir from their torpor to oust this tyrant of privilege, she’ll take the city in hand herself. She’ll make it dynamic, thriving, full of mortals with fire in their blood, instead of a post-industrial wasteland.

Clan: Brujah

Sire: Darcy Charpentier

Embraced: 1923 (Born 1880)

Ambition: Transfer power in Birmingham to the Prometheans

Convictions: Always oppose political stagnation

Touchstones: Val Stevenson — a trade union leader and activist, who reminds Haze strongly of herself when she was alive.

Humanity: 7

Generation: 10th

Blood Potency: 2

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2; Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 6

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 1; Intimidation (Imposing) 4, Leadership (Rabble Rousing) 4 Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2; Medicine 1, Politics 3, Science 1

Disciplines: Celerity 3, Potence 3, Presence 2

General Difficulties: 4/3

THE FATES

The trio of witches known as the Fates arrived in Birmingham in the late 1990s, and the few Tremere who had previously made the city their home were never seen again. The Fates are usually completely uninterested in city politics, appearing in public only when summoned. They spend their time amassing secret knowledge for their own purposes.

Each of the Fates uses these traits:



Clan: Tremere

Sire: Unknown

Embraced: 1865 (Born — unknown)

Ambition: Know secrets no other creature dares to learn

Convictions: Knowledge is more important than life

Touchstones: Joseph LeBeau, the mortal librarian they've kept imprisoned in their chantry ever since they abducted him from Birmingham University library. He's good at his job.

Humanity: 3

Generation: 8th

Blood Potency: 3

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 5, Composure 5; Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 8

Skills: Stealth (Silent) 4; Etiquette 3, Intimidation (Sinister) 4; Awareness (Uncanny) 4, Investigation 3, Occult (Blood Sorcery) 5, Science 1

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Blood Sorcery 5, Celerity 2, Dominate 3

General Difficulties: 5/4

ANDREW DUCHEVSKI

This handsome, lanky man is well-dressed and has a timeless elegance that makes the intensity of his green gaze troubling. Andrew has made enemies of many factions of the Tremere, in many places, with his insatiable lust for forbidden knowledge. He'll stop at nothing to amass more knowledge.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: "Saint" Javier Velez

Embraced: 1815 (born 1795)

Ambition: Push the bounds of sorcery

Convictions: None

Touchstones: None

Humanity: 6

Generation: 10th

Blood Potency: 2

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 7

Skills: Athletics 2, Craft (Ritual Craft) 2, Drive 1, Larceny 1, Melee 2; Animal Ken 1, Etiquette 1, Insight 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1; Academics (Greco-Ro-

man myth) 2, Awareness 2, Finance 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Infernalism, Blood Sorcery) 3, Politics 2, Science (Chemistry) 1, Technology 1

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Blood Sorcery 4, Dominate 3, Oblivion 1

General Difficulties: 5/4

Other Antagonists

HUNTERS

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 3, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 6, Intimidation 5

Special: The hunters are desperate individuals with a range of makeshift weapons. They've fashioned long blades (heavy melee, +3 damage), but their most dangerous weapons are Molotovs (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 380) and some highly illegal flamethrowers (fire, +3 damage).

General Difficulties: 4/2

CASAUBON'S / KALLIAS' BODYGUARDS

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 3, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 6, Brawl 6, Firearms 7, Intimidation 5, Melee 6, Stealth 7

Disciplines: Celerity 1

Special: Handguns (medium gunshot, +3 damage).

General Difficulties: 4/2

AUDREY'S HENCHMEN

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 3, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 6, Brawl 6, Melee 7, Intimidation 5, Melee 6, Stealth 7

Special: Audrey's henchmen carry batons (heavy impact +2) and tasers (light impact +1)

General Difficulties: 3/1

SECURITY GUARD (SAIRA)

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 3, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 5, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 7

Special: Baton (heavy impact +2).

General Difficulties: 3/1

ELYSIUM SECURITY

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 3, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee 7, Intimidation 7

Disciplines: Celerity 1

Special: Blades (light piercing, +2 damage)

General Difficulties: 4/2



MK
2021

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Old Wounds

A whirling banner sped at such a rate

It seemed it might never stop; behind it a train

Of souls, so long that I would not have thought

Death had undone so many.

— Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*, Canto III, Lines 45-48

The Family Reunion brought everyone back together. The Giovanni, the Cappadocians, the Harbingers, the Lamiae, the Samedi, the Nagaraja, all of the many faces of death, they've all taken their seat at the dinner table, rictus grins all around. The placements are set. It's time to feast and revel with the most dysfunctional family to ever have bled down the centuries, and no city celebrates the Reunion more lavishly than Florence.

And still ... can millennia of hatched and cross-hatched hurts and betrayals be forgiven? Is forgetting an option to the clan who can hear ghosts? A coterie of young Kindred is about to receive an exclusive opportunity to take part in the festivities, and even to help shape the ancient city itself. "Opportunity" and "curse" are both words that can be said with a smile.

Imagine that macabre table, seated and surrounded by a family of starving, death-obsessed maniacs, each holding a sharpened dinner knife. A single helping of juicy meat lies on a platter in the center. Everyone smiles charmingly. The lights go out. The player characters are the wishbone.

Introduction

Old Wounds is a political story delving into the immemorial feuds between the disparate bloodlines of the Hecata, and whether, in the historic domain of Florence, their rifts can ever be repaired. When a Giovanni and a Cappadocian are both found destroyed in this city of Hecata dominance, the coterie needs to navigate the political intrigue and solve the murders. Did they kill each other, or did a third-party attempt to open old wounds and send the city into the Camarilla's arms?

This scenario serves as sandbox full of machinations, decadence, and a generous portion of shambling cadavers and disembodied spirits. This highly malleable story encourages the Storyteller to take what they like and reshape the rest as desired. **Old Wounds** opens up the domain of Florence for an immortal murder mystery. With a little research, industrious Storytellers may turn the setting into an ongoing story.

Players required: 3-5

Duration: 10-15 hours

Story Breakdown

This information is for the Storyteller's eyes only.

Enter Florence, city of deep history, beauty, and spectral things lurking in the crawly cracks. Here, the bloodlines of the Clan of Death have fully embraced the Family Reunion, cementing Hecata dominance in the domain. However, old wounds run deep and the current civility is as lavish and thin as sheer silk. On the eve of a grand masque celebrating their coming together, the Hecata discover a Giovanni and Cappadocian of prominence both murdered. This revelation could set the clan into a frenzy of old grudges, tearing the alliance apart, and sending control of the city back the Camarilla who salivate at the chance for regaining power.

The coterie enters the story by way of an invitation to this grand masque of the Hecata. Player characters enter a world of supernal decadence, genteel intrigue, and necromantic horror. During the festivities, the announcement of the double Kindred murder sends a row through the vampires of Florence. To keep the peace, one of the councilors suggests an impartial group investigate the mystery, nominating the coterie.

The player characters are given one week to present their findings, as well as unprecedented access to the secrets of the Hecata. The coterie investigates the scene of the crime, explores the labyrinthine streets, and interviews the eccentric motley of personalities of the local Kindred. The intrigue runs sophisticated but deadly. Everyone has an opinion as to who the murderer is (or at the least, who the coterie should accuse). Everyone wants to sway the player characters. There are veiled threats, ominous warnings, naked violence, and all manner of ghostly phenomenon. Just beneath the society of civil

monsters, lurks untold depths of depraved rituals.

The coterie might ask, that in a city of necromancers, why has no one summoned the wraiths of the victims? Someone is keeping that from happening. In a city of necromancers, this does not narrow down the list of suspects.

Ultimately, the coterie must decide how best to invest their efforts – either to discover the real truth or to work the politics of protecting themselves with whatever truth they decide to present. The hunt for the true murderer leads the coterie on a nightmare journey into the Shadowlands to find the soul of a dead witness (assuming they are willing to pay the price of the only vampire in Florence willing to make the trek).

The coterie might or might not solve the mystery. When the vampires of Florence again gather, what answers do the player characters present? They might cultivate their own truth (either for their own ends or at the pressure of powerful forces). Whom do they blame? Whom do they protect? If the truth or a lie keeps the clan united (or scatters it), what do they do? The coterie has the power to influence whether the Hecata stay together and in control of the city or fracture, giving it all up to the Camarilla.

The aftermath of *Old Wounds* could turn sinister. In the investigation of the murders, player characters see things that might stain their souls. They learn secrets that no neonate should know. Can the Hecata let them walk away?

Theme and Mood

History and blood. Florence is a city of beauty and art, dazzling architecture and spires. The Storyteller should use the dizzying tangle of streets and stunning buildings to create a sense of historic scale.

This story sinks its hands, elbows deep, into the squelching aesthetics

of necromancy and the cultured depravity of the old-world Clan of Death. If *The Family* is a story about the Hecata's criminal mask, *Old Wounds* is a story about the Hecata's dark arts and ritual murder face.

Players should experience a sense of danger, but nothing so overt as a fanged mercenary with an assault rifle or a Lupine bursting through a wall. The battlefield is refined. The Kindred here are well-practiced at cordial intrigue. This is the city of Machiavelli.

However, there should be a slow-burning build of something ominous and oppressive – a mood, a haze – the sense that something unspeakable is happening behind any unopened door. The Storyteller should encourage a feeling of perpetual conspiracy and vague malevolence. Films such as *Midsommar*, *Chinatown* and *The Wicker Man* make excellent examples.

Character Advice

Old Wounds presents a modular story. Storyteller and player choices shape the narrative greatly, and the first of those choices involve the nature of the player characters. This tale of intrigue focuses on a coterie of neonates.

Personal Motivations

The best stories involve personal motivations, and those must be the angles the Storyteller first explores when introducing the players to this tale. Ask about the characters the roles the players wish to play, and add them to the lineages, alliances, and correspondents of some of the SPCs presented in this scenario.

Make the city of Florence appeal to the players as a location to invest in, in terms of territory and mortal relations. While the idea of a mortal contact under threat is tried and tested to the point of undead, intro-

ducing the player characters by way of gentler mortal association, such as invitation to a business deal, the chance to acquire a safe haven or undertake a trip with the family, or the opportunity to see a dying relative in the domain before they expire, may hold appeal.

It's always a fine idea to have hooks already in place, ahead of the story start. While this story does contain a letter inviting Kindred to participate in its plot, this is an option and not the rule. They can learn about the establishing plot from across multiple contacts and companions, an interested Mawla or a sire wishing to test them. They may even represent sectarian interests wishing to spy on events in Florence, especially given the interest some Camarilla and Anarch agents have in the current Hecata situation.

Hecata

Neonates of the Hecata have the most obvious and personal stakes in this scenario. The recent Kindred murders could tear apart clan unity in Florence, if not set a chain reaction in domains near and far. What the Hecata player characters discover in their investigation and present to the vampire community will have a dire effect on their extended Cainite family.

As with most things involving family, it gets complicated. What happens when clues point them to someone they know, or a trusted family member puts pressure on them to skew their findings? What do you do when family members of equal esteem want the opposite of you? The drama here is inner-family entanglement.

Camarilla

Camarilla and Hecata relations are cordial in Florence, but, in this city, things are at their most danger-

ous when polite. The Clan of Death makes a grand show of wanting unbiased findings by pulling investigators from the youth of their rivals, knowing such young vampires will be pliable, particularly when dazzled or terrified by forbidden secrets.

The Hecata also want to groom the next generation of Camarilla leadership in Florence with an already instilled notion of subservience to the Clan of Death. The drama here is being the wish bone pulled by two frightening factions. The coterie is torn between pleasing their new benefactors and the sect that expects their loyalty.

Others

The coterie may investigate the affairs in *Old Wounds* from outside the Hecata and the Camarilla. Such a group of player characters could be an established coterie or one pieced together from Anarchs, the unaligned, and members of other Cainite cults, such as the Bahari or Mithraists, with the former possession a connection to Hatsumi, a character in this story, and the latter possessing a connection to Roger de Camden, another vampire present in Florence.

The drama for outsider Kindred is of a different sort. This coterie does not feel the pressure from family or sect superiors. The tension is from outsiders looking in. There is no family or Ivory Tower to turn to, and safety is only what they can construct for themselves in the moment.

Mixed Coterie

Old Wounds is a fine opportunity to play the unique flavor of a fully mixed coterie. This can be an established group of unlikely bedfellows or one custom assembled by the Hecata (perhaps with the Camarilla offering a neonate or two for this investigative committee). The drama here is one of tested loyalty and inner-coterie

paranoia. Non-Hecata neonates must wonder, when the ectoplasm hits the fan, who their Clan of Death comrades will side with — their family or their coterie?

Local or Visiting Coterie?

This dynamic can be applied to all of the suggested coterie types above. Are they Kindred local to Florence or visiting? Local vampires have familiarity with the geography (physical and social) of the city and support networks established. The drama, however, is personal. Whatever their actions in this story, they must live with those results with monstrous neighbors who can hold cold-burning resentments for centuries. Visiting Kindred have fewer familiar pressures, but absolutely no homecourt advantage. They mustn't live with these Kindred, long term, after they conclude their investigation (assuming they can get out at all).

The City of Florence

Enter Florence, the center of medieval European trade and finance, the birthplace of the Renaissance, “the Athens of the Middle Ages.” Always a city of wealth and turbulent politics, the Medici plied their cunning trade here, with smiles in public and ruthless words and deeds in the dark. Intrigue was not born in Florence, but it was honed to a fine, gleaming edge here. It is also a place of art, architecture, and great thinkers, as the Medici knew the value of patronizing such things. Florence is the city of Dante Alighieri, Niccolò Machiavelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo.

By night, Florence has traditionally been a place of Toreador, Lasombra, and Giovanni power. Recently, as immortals gauge such things, that

balance has tipped in the favor of the Hecata. Florence is a metropolis of vast, layered history, and who better to fathom those depths than a family of necromancers?

A Kindred History

The following letter works either as an aid to the Storyteller, helping establish the domain history so they feel comfortable running a story set in Florence, but can

be chopped up, handed out, or amended as advice and information provided to the players during the story's course. There's an opportunity part way through the story for the characters to inherit this letter, or something like it. This is the entire document, but doesn't need to be presented in this way.

Greetings young Kindred,

The bearer of this letter awaits your reading and your reply, but please do not rush on his account. Let him enjoy these moments. He is quite fond of sherry. And destroy this letter upon reading it, won't you? I adore my penmanship as much as anyone, and it seems a waste to lose such an artifact as this, yet we've a precious Masquerade to worry about, don't we?

You must know the lay of the land, insofar as our broader kin are concerned. An in-depth exploration of our history is something you must arrange yourself, but I grant you the broadest of brushstrokes.

*Let us begin at 1000 CE, just about the start of the Golden Age of Florentine art. This was also the beginning of a long-standing alliance between the, well, you would call them the Toreador and Lasombra. Neither of those are the best monikers claimed by either clan. But who am I to play the part of *rigid* prescriptive, eh? Whatever our names, we joined in a marriage of machinations at the same time as that great flourishing of our beloved city state. Coincidence? I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions.*

*In 1164, Prince Alansus fell to an assassin. Thus, began the Century of Two Princes. From 1164 to 1258 two rival Princes – Avcius the Golden and Pantilio the Cruel, each of Clan Lasombra – maneuvered for supremacy. What a grand game that was. In the end, Avcius, my great-ancestor claimed *praxis*.*

From there, we enjoyed a time of greatness and plenty that persisted nearly eight hundred years. That isn't to say it was a time of stability. The political landscape was tempestuous, but that is the preferred landscape of my clan. It was a paradise of whispered words, weaponized letters, daggers, wordplay at the highest stakes. I could speak of the rise of the Medici, but that is such a tangled knot. You would benefit more from my scrivening of rise of the Hecata.

Let us look to the year 1916. That was the year a preternatural phenomenon raged across the Underworld. Ghost unfettered and twisted conquered the government of the dead in Florence and surged into the lands of the living.

Strange nights. Imagine an elder, a being of such might, flailing uselessly at invisibles. Imagine vomiting up a whole night's worth of fire hunting upon the tufted carpet, and that boiling, clotted mess rising to attack. Imagine the sun is coming up, and so you make your way to your coffin or darkened room, only to find the short hallway is endless. Many of our kind learned what it is to be afraid of the dark.

Enter the Giovanni. Our heroes! Understand, the Giovanni had been a fixture of power in Florence for centuries, but they knew their place. The Florentine Giovanni learned

their lessons from the Medici well – to make oneself indispensable, to expertly invest one's efforts and resources, and to eventually eclipse those for whom one serves.

The Giovanni had always been useful and welcome, but as of 1916, they were indispensable. They did not overcharge. They did not take advantage. They helped us. My predecessors handed the Giovanni more positions, more duties, more power. They leaned on the necromancers more and more. My predecessors became lazy, fattened ticks, and so they popped.

The decades proceeded like this. More graverobbers entered the city, but these were not Giovanni. Then came this "Reunion" and they were all Hecata. Then they claimed power.

I cannot say the night or even the year it happened exactly. There was no moment of transition. We were the proverbial frog in the pan, the water heating so gradually that it does not know it is cooking until it is cooked. They seeded their power so slowly. They coaxed our reliance on them so subtly. There was no violent coup. There was no public proclamation. One night we all looked up, and all we saw were Hecata. So many of them! There were no words, only meaningful looks that spoke hideous volumes.

The Hecata achieved praxis by imperceptible degrees. I can only applaud until my hands bleed. And though things are not as bad as 1916, the wraiths are restless again, and again we rely on the necromancers. Yet how does such a collection of ancient enemies become a family? Carmen Giovanni, now the nominal head of his family in Florence, welcomes all of the more ... provincial bloodlines with open arms. They seem to hold their cousins in line with this policy, though there was an exception. Emmanuel Giovanni, elder brother of Carmen in life, raged against the coming together of the Clan of Death. I am told that Carmen locked their brother in the Brazen Bull and roasted him, a sacrifice of their own higher blood to prove to the other graverobbing bloodlines of their seriousness. Do I sound impressed? Carmen is my rival, true, but I can afford a modicum of respect for such a masterstroke.

Florence still welcomes the Camarilla. I myself hold a seat on the city's council. Yes, all Lasombra here are of the Camarilla. To be fair, we never did fit in with Gratiano's miscreants. The Florentine Shadows do not have to leap through the same flaming hoops that our siblings in other Camarilla cities are reputed to have. The Camarilla needs us. We are the instrument of retaking beloved Florence.

The Hecata are a grand triumph of a tapestry, but they cannot endure. They have too many frayed ends. They are a maladjusted family. We are an institution. It is right that we should rule, and the opportunity to rule will present itself. I bide my time. I make myself indispensable.

I have arranged your attendance to an upcoming masked ball, where you can meet the most important Kindred of this city. Consider the price a minor boon.

Until next time, I remain, as ever,

Rinaldo Albizzi

The Weaver

Florentine Council

P.S. Give the bearer of this letter another sherry and then kill him. He's been whispering in Carmen's ear. I can trust my seal found you unbroken and my letter unread. He is a betrayer, true – and so bound for the Ninth Circle of Hell, according to our most famous poet – but some things are simply not done. Consider your boon repaid.



The Hierarchy of Florence

The Hecata dominate Florence. The governing body of the Kindred is the Florentine Council. Carmen Giovanni's first, unexpected move, when seizing power, was to give every major bloodline of the Hecata present in the city an equal seat. The Clan of Death also grants one seat to a representative of the Camarilla.

The Florentine Council

Carmen Giovanni, Clan Hecata (Giovanni) — Representing the Giovanni on the Council, Carmen is the nominal leader of their family in Florence after the former head was destroyed in the purge surrounding the death of Augustus. Carmen seized power through the gamble of utterly embracing the Family Reunion earlier than most, even going so far as to destroy their own brother, a hardline opponent of this coming together. Carmen is a social butterfly and con-

summate party host. Everything they do, they do with an infectious smile and humor. See p. 163 for their traits.

Zohreh, Clan Hecata (Harbingers of Ashur) — She served as representative of the Harbingers of Ashur on the Council. A respected elder of the Cappadocians, the feelings Zohreh held for the Giovanni are done a disservice by the word “grudge.” However, Carmen’s aggressive pursuit of the Reunion and his formation of the Florentine Council took her off guard, and it is said the two came to an agreement in a private meeting. It is by Zohreh’s word that many of the most intractable Harbingers were brought into line in the city. Unfortunately, Zohreh finds herself recently murdered, threatening the tenuous peace.

Jinno Hatsumi, Clan Hecata (Lamiae) — She serves as representative of the Lamiae on the Council as well as the leader of a Lilith cult in Florence. Her fellow Lamiae help keep the peace. Hatsumi maintains and holds domain over the Boboli Gardens. See p. 163 for her traits.

Ghede L’Oraille, Clan Hecata (Samedi) — She serves as representative of the Samedi on the Council.

She claims to share her body with the wraith of a notorious pirate of ages past, though this boast may be one of her peculiar jokes. What is known is that she controls much power in mortal death cults in and out of Florence. See p. 163 for her traits.

Ravinder Narula, Clan Hecata (Nagaraja) — Known also as the Gasteronome, he represents the Nagaraja on the Council. Ravinder is in charge of his own cult, a small, but global group of elite mortal foodies who crave forbidden tastes. See p. 164 for his traits.

Rinaldo Albizzi, Clan Lasombra — He represents the Camarilla on the Council. Descended from famous and infamous Lasombra Princes of Florence (in particular Anicus the Golden), Rinaldo is the visible leader of the Camarilla contingent in the city. He operates out of the Antico Setificio Fiorentino, a centuries-old silk factory that still weaves silk in the old style. Rinaldo himself is a deft expert with the ancient equipment and is often referred to as “the Weaver.” See p. 165 for his traits.

Citizens and Visitors

Ugolino Giovanni, Clan Hecata (Giovanni) — Ugolino was among the Giovanni who most vocally opposed the Reunion in Florence. However, after Carmen killed his own brother Emmanuel over that very point, Ugolino fell silent on the matter. Unfortunately for Ugolino, he has been recently murdered. If rumor is to be believed, it happened while he held an unlikely meeting with a bitter enemy: Zohreh the Cappadocian.

Francesca da Rimini, Clan Toreador — An Ancilla of the Ivory Tower in Florence, Francesca operates out of a six-hundred-year-old perfume shop. It is said she dabbles with more than the mundane in her laboratory, having seduced more than one Giovanni lover into teaching her some rudimentary necromancy. It is also said she keeps a Duskborn pet to help make her perfumes something more than natural. Indeed, her scents cause even jaded elders to experience near-living emotions for short spells, and they pay a premium for it. See p. 164 for her traits.

Tommaso Sforza, Clan Hecata (Rossellini) — Embraced a priest and still taking to his unlif as a priest, of sorts, centuries later, this exorcist occupies an odd place in Kindred society. His occult expertise makes him useful, and every faction of Florence genuinely believes his lack of interest in the politics of the damned, so he they generally leave him alone. See p. 164 for his traits.

Hel-Blár, Clan Hecata (Harbingers of Ashur) — It is unknown whether this ancient creature was a Norse woman Embraced into the ranks of the Cappadocians or an established member of that clan who fled north into Scandinavia when the Giovanni attempted to purge that bloodline. In either case, a cult worships her as an avatar of the goddess of death Hel. She holds no proper position within Kindred society in Florence, nor does

ADDING A DASH OF CHARACTER

The above text offers a sketch of Florence and its resident Kindred. Storytellers are given lots of room to take these bare bones and add extra flesh and appendages. Look to the player characters' Relationship Maps for more mortals and monsters to fill in the city's population.

she appear the least bit interested in having one. The other vampires watch her move about in fascination and fear. She is the most accomplished explorer of the Shadowlands in the city. See p. 164 for her traits.

Marianna Giovanni, Clan Hecata (Harbingers of Ashur) — Childe of Claudio Giovanni, Marianna holds an infamous hatred for her sire's entire lineage, dedicating her unlif to its destruction. The Family Reunion complicates this mission. What is Marianna doing in Florence? Does she plot murder? See p. 165 for her traits.

Roger de Camden, Clan Hecata (Harbingers of Ashur) — The Prince of Edinburgh visits Florence to attend the masked ball celebrating the Family Reunion. The old Cappadocian simultaneously represents the Hecata, the Camarilla, and his own Mithraic cult. When things turn dire, which of those three designations will gain priority? See p. 165 for his traits.

Of Anarchs and Others

Anarchs and unaligned Kindred are in the extreme minority in Flor-

ence. Those in power do not particularly persecute the Anarchs. They don't spend much thought on the Anarchs. The fire of the Movement has not come to the opulent streets of Florence. It is a distant problem (at least so far). Anarch characters have a unique experience in this city. In a twist, they might find more in common with the Camarilla Kindred and make strange bedfellows in resisting all of these depraved death cults. On the other hand, they could cozy up to the Hecata and enjoy luxuriating in the Ivory Tower's defeat ("Who cares what these corpse fuckers do in the basement when they collar and flog the Cammies in public?"). Anarchs find they must play things more subtly in Florence, lest they make the Camarilla and the Hecata more cozy with one another by offering a common enemy.

Prologue

Old Wounds requires player characters to be in Florence. If they reside in the city, this is already accomplished. If they are visitors, reasons

AN OPTIONAL HANDOUT

As mentioned earlier, the letter by Rinaldo Albizzi, presented earlier in this chapter under "A Kindred History," can be given as a handout to player characters who are in the Camarilla (or whom Albizzi trusts or thinks he can use). The letter can be addressed to a player character and serve as their introduction to the Kindred history of Florence. The information can also be included in a face-to-face exchange with the Lasombra. If a letter, it is delivered by a ghoul servant who has betrayed Albizzi (or at least, Albizzi suspects so in a fit of paranoia). Alternatively, the information in the letter could be conveyed to multiple player characters from multiple sources, with each player character learning a little so they can piece together the setting like a puzzle.

for their journey to Florence might include:

- The coterie is passing through (together or separately) Florence on the way to other pursuits.
- A Hecata coterie visits Florence in order to celebrate at the masked ball and see this shining example of the Family Reunion.
- A Camarilla coterie is sent to Florence to help the Ivory Tower in their current struggles there.
- The player characters have come at the behest of a sire, friend, or ally.
- An Anarch coterie has come to Florence just to witness the Ivory Tower on the losing side.
- The coterie arrives in Florence to indulge and enjoy in its splendor, without the slightest idea of the wicked gears currently churning in the city.

An Invitation

Each player character receives a letter from Carmen Giovanni inviting them to a masked ball the following night. The letter is scented with a perfume so exquisite, smelling it heals one level of Superficial Willpower damage (the Toreador Francesca da Rimini created this preternatural perfume). The letter can arrive a number of ways, including (the Storyteller is encouraged to mix and match these methods with each player character):

- The character finds the letter mysteriously waiting for them in the location where they sleep. Investigation reveals no trace of anyone entering.
- The letter is delivered by a small mound of several reanimated hands fused together. One hand

carries the letter, and another carries an eyeball by which the whole amalgam sees (though this eye can be passed hand to hand, depending on the configuration the amalgam takes as it moves). The hands are clean, finely stitched, and well preserved, the skin having attained a strange shade of green. The crawling thing does not smell of rot, but of sweet, floral scents. Closer examination reveals a rainbow assortment of withered flower petals peeking through the sutured seems. Use the Homuncular Servant traits (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 210).

• A wraith possesses random mortal as the character passes. The possessed mortal suddenly changes demeanor and voice, their physical movements become as jerky as a marionette controlled by a palsied hand, and they say, “The one who calls my name compels me to give you this message.” The possessed mortal then recites the letter, after which, they instantly go back to their normal personality, unable to remember anything they said while possessed. Use the Puppeteer traits (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 216). Anyone with the ability to see wraiths sees a frustrated, middle-aged man, half in modern clothing and half in a Shakespearean costume. He constantly mutters to himself, as if terrified of forgetting his lines. Translucent blood drips from his wrists. If compelled to give answers, the wraith knows nothing else regarding this affair or the one who sent him.

• An electronic object suddenly gives the character the letter (text on a computer screen, smartphone, digital advertisement sign, a vehicle’s digital touch screen

display etc.). The message can also be delivered audibly through a phone, intercom, radio, television, or emergency speaker of a suddenly stopped elevator. The wraith controlling the machine types or says, “The one who calls my name compels me to give you this message,” before reciting the letter. The message terminates in odd, fragmented images on the screen or a scramble of hard-to-identify sounds through audio speakers. The device then resumes normal function. Use the Ghost in the Machine traits (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 216). Anyone with the ability to see wraiths sees a pretty young woman constantly typing into a dead device. She was a social media influencer and still shows the wounds sustained in a hit-and-run. If compelled to give answers, the wraith knows nothing else regarding this affair or the one who sent her.

- When the character looks into a reflective surface, they see the image of a drowned old woman who was in the water a long time. She speaks to them in an incongruously sweet voice, saying: “The one who calls my name compels me to give you this message.” She then recites the letter. If the character leaves before she can finish the letter, the drowned woman follows the character from reflective surface to reflective surface. After the letter is recited, the wraith follows the character for the rest of the night. Use the Screamer traits (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 216). If spoken to, in any way, after delivering the message, the drowned woman uses her scream ability to terrify the vampire. If compelled to give answers, the wraith knows nothing else regarding this affair or the one who sent her.

HANDOUT #1: LETTER FROM CARMEN GIOVANNI

Greetings,

Good evening to you in this beautiful city of memory immemorial. Tomorrow evening, I shall host a masked ball of ineffable magnificence in celebration of my great family coming together. I ravenously desire your attendance. I know! An invitation sent so last minute is unforgiveable. I blush. I burn! Yet I have no doubts you will grant me maximum reconciliation. Do not fail to witness the delights I have in store. Come costumed in whatever mad motley tickles your soul. Come to the Palazzo Pitti. My people will find you and show you into our private revels.

*Illimitably yours,
Carmen Giovanni*

This Is a Whodunit

Old Wounds is a story centered around a murder mystery. The night before Carmen Giovanni's masked ball, two Hecata (Zohreh the Cappadocian and Ugolino Giovanni) suffered Final Death in the Palazzo Vecchio. Carmen Giovanni and a select few know of this, but the wider city does not. The news could tear apart the Hecata in Florence at this crucial juncture. Carmen plans to announce the murders at the masked ball. They also plan to delegate a young group of Kindred as the investigators.

This Is Not a Whodunit

The flimflam, sleight-of-hand trick of Old Wounds is that it is a tale of

intrigue and cult horror masquerading as a murder mystery. The Storyteller should lean hard into this decoy, using all of the tropes and trappings of a proper whodunit. As the coterie investigates and interviews the Florentine Kindred, a realization creeps in: this is not about solving a murder. Their task has less to do with finding the actual truth, and more to do with playing the game of gauging the rewards and penalties that will befall them based on what answer they give.

In this pit of honeyed-venom intrigue, the characters discover they were not chosen for their skills or impartiality, but because they are malleable vessels for the truths the monsters of Florence wish to sculpt. Many interested parties desire many divergent truths. Can a band of neonates survive so many hands pulling them in so many directions?

GO WITH THE FLOW

This is a sandbox and toolbox story. The Storyteller can arrange the murderer and particulars in endless variation. The order of scenes in the following sections is only a suggestion. Rearrange as necessary. When a player has an interesting hunch, makes a good roll, or is playing an expert investigative character, consider making that inquiry or maneuver retroactively vital to the plot, even if it wasn't.

The Storyteller might even push this point to the extreme, allowing the coterie to detect the full truth of the murder right away, only to discover that this isn't the real game. The game is realizing how dangerous it is to hold the truth and finding a way to survive it. The tension is the coterie getting in deeper and deeper.

How It Might Have Happened

In preparation for running this story, the Storyteller must choose the particulars of the murder at the center of it all. Shuffling the SPCs into different roles can provide fresh re-playability for Storytellers who run this story multiple times. The Storyteller can twist the following suggests as desired.

The Murder Victims

The clothes and greasy ashes of two prestigious Hecata Kindred litter the floors of the Palazzo Vecchio. Ugolino Giovanni and Zohreh had a well-known and long-running hatred of one another. A secret meeting

between the two seems unlikely. What brought them to the Palazzo Vecchio, just after sundown, on the eve of the grand masked ball? Some possibilities:

- The two vampires met in secret to discuss clandestine doings. Together, the two unlikely allies could make a power play against Carmen Giovanni.
- The two enemies met in secret to discuss a common foe: Rinaldo Albizzi and his Camarilla cohorts.
- The two necromancers came together so that one could offer an artifact or occult secret to the other for a price.
- The two vampires encountered each other by sheer accident.
- One of these two Hecata convinced the other to meet up under false pretenses.
- A third party (the murderer?) convinced each of the two Hecata separately to be there at that time and place.
- The two old enemies agreed to meet to discuss the disturbing things going on in the Shadowlands of Florence.
- The two necromancers met and conducted a ritual to summon something powerful from the Underworld, and it all went wrong.

The Murderer

Who orchestrated this murder most foul? In a city so intricately webbed with courteous treachery, the possibilities become dizzying. Let us look to the list of suspects.

THEY KILLED EACH OTHER

Zohreh and Ugolino Giovanni killed one another. One or both

planned on offering physical violence from the start, or they met for any of the above suggested reasons and the Beasts of these two old foes simply got the best of them.

This is the simplest explanation, but the anticlimax of it serves the themes of this story well. The other powers that be in Florence will try to push the coterie into making accusations that suit their plots. Hecata looking to keep the family together (namely Carmen Giovanni) will not like what is implied with this answer and will likely pressure the coterie to adjust the truth.

Alternately, Ugolino and Zohreh do kill each other, but by the indirect hands of a malefactor necromancer (potentially any of the Hecata of the city) who sent a powerful spectre to possess one of the two, causing the deadly attack.

CARMEN GIOVANNI

The head of the Florentine Giovanni had Zohreh and Ugolino killed — performing the deed personally or with the help of ghouls, shambling corpses, or summoned spectres. Carmen assembles the coterie, because they believe they can manipulate the truth of the murder via these impressionable Kindred. Their possible motivations could include:

- Carmen suspected that these two Hecata were plotting to undermine the Reunion.
- Ugolino and Zohreh had secret dealings with Rinaldo Albizzi.
- The two dead Hecata are the sacrifices Carmen makes to solidify clan unity. They plan to frame the murder on the Camarilla, proving to all of the bloodlines of the Clan of Death that they must stick together.
- There is no grand political reason. Ugolino and Zohreh offered some deeply personal slight, and Carmen indulged in revenge.

MARIANNA GIOVANNI

This renegade famously holds a vendetta against her clan. The idea of the Family Reunion nauseates and infuriates her. How could the other bloodlines go crawling back to the Giovanni? They all deserve what's coming. Marianna murders Zohreh and Ugolino to demolish the Reunion before the cement of its foundations can even dry.

TOMMASO SFORZA

The Catholic priest turned occultist is not a particularly murderous sort. However, Zohreh and Ugolino have done unspeakable things to the dead, beyond the pale even for the Giovanni. Tommaso could not ignore it. He killed both Hecata, likely with the help of the souls of those the two had wronged.

HEL-BLÁR

The ancient Harbinger killed the two Hecata for reasons only she herself knows, and there is no one in the city who can force the answers from her. The Florentine Kindred react differently to this revelation. It is less like indicting a murderer and more like confirming an unnatural phenomenon as the cause of death. How do you punish a hurricane for killing your citizens?

JINNO HATSUMI

The formidable Lamiae killed the two Hecata. In the past, each had done a terrible thing to the Bahari. In this case, Hatsumi's loyalty to her sisters in Lilith eclipses her duty to clan.

GHEDE L'ORAILLE

This Samedi speaks for the loa and the souls of the dead. The crude necromancy of the other bloodlines in the Clan of Death have abused the spirit world for time out of mind. The Family Reunion has not tempered this practice. Ghede L'Oraille manifests the judgement of the loa in the land of the quick. The Hecata must be dismantled, and it starts with two deaths.

RAVINDER NARULA

The Nagaraja gourmet enjoys two things above all: dinner and murder. The political and personal backdrop of Florence offered a perfect canvas with which to paint a murder. Ravinder set it all in motion and now delights in watching the investigation, fallout, and ripples through the Kindred community.

RINALDO ALBIZZI

The Lasombra needs to end the Family Reunion in Florence so the Camarilla can take its rightful place in leadership. He plays a dangerous game. If the truth comes out, it could strengthen the bonds he wishes to shatter.

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

There was no grand political design. Francesca and Ugolino were once lovers, but things withered on the vine, the Giovanni rebuked the Toreador. She has taken her terrible revenge. Killing Zohreh was simply to mask the motive. Francesca manipulated the Cappadocian and Giovanni to meet and come to blows, and then finished off whoever was left. Rinaldo, discovering what Francesca did, is furious at the possibility of giving the Hecata more cause to find solidarity. He works with Francesca (and anyone else available) to spin things properly and damage the Hecata's bonds if he can.

ROGER DE CAMDEN

The Prince of Edinburgh murdered two fellow Hecata. What's more, he's prepared to help direct the investigators into discovering his wicked deed as well as his "attempt" to break the Hecata up with it. Lord Camden knows how fragile the Family Reunion is at this nascent stage. It requires a little nudge. Let the city come to the conclusion that he, an agent of the Camarilla, set this all in motion. An outside threat cements the unification of the Clan of Death. He knows the leadership of the Hecata will pick up on his subtle cues

BRING YOUR OWN BODIES

The Storyteller may use the above-listed suggestions regarding the key players in this murder plot or fill in those roles with characters of their own. Look to the players' relationship maps. The drama can become thornier and more complicated if, say, a player character's sire is one of the murder victims or murderer suspect.

and know he is on their side. In the meantime, he can weather the scorn of the less initiated, not to mention gain accolades among the Ivory Tower for his noble attempt. Even if the scenario does not set Roger de Camden as murderer, he may try to ease the narrative in that direction, if the Hecata's unity seems in danger.

HORRORS FROM THE SHADOWLANDS

In the wake of Augustus Giovanni's death, the Shadowlands rage with storms. Spectres and worse creep up through the depths, and they do not like the Hecata. A spectral horror, perhaps the Hungry Gestalt (see below), ripped its way into the Skinlands and destroyed Ugolino and Zohreh. This is an answer that Carmen Giovanni can work with, particularly if he can show that it was not the doing of any of the other Hecata. It is good for business if the other Kindred fear the lurking ghosts and rely upon the Clan of Death all the more.

The Hungry Gestalt

This spectral abomination serves as a most excellent horror to stalk the coterie. The specifics of how it came to be and how it interacts with the plot are up to the Storyteller. The Hungry Gestalt is the blasphemously conjoined spectres of two evil souls. In unlife, the Lasombra Anicius the Golden and Panfilio the Cruel fought as rival Princes of Florence for nearly a century. They

were more than mere archenemies, they formed a bond of perfect co-hatred, nurtured over the decades. That bond persisted into the afterlife.

The shades of Anicius and Panfilio found each other in the Underworld and came together in a savage embrace. Whether it was their exquisite hatred, their mastery of the forces of Oblivion, or some other force of perdition that fused them together, who can say? They are forever locked together, clawing and biting into eternity, like two event horizons devouring one another. They should not be. They should have each fallen, alone, into Oblivion. Yet the gravity of their mutual hatred pulls each to each, like two growths wedged and clogging the drain, keeping each other from slipping over the edge. In damnation, Panfilio and Anicius complete one another.

They appear as two chalk-white cadavers. The torso of Panfilio grows out of the back of Anicius, the former seeks his revenge by gnawing on the head of the later. Often Panfilio's mouth opens so wide as to completely hood the top of Anicius's head. The spectres howl cosmic blasphemies, their bodies the epicenter of a surging mass of tendrils made of the stuff of Oblivion. These hideous appendages move the entity about at great speed, attacking anyone within reach, even as the two tortured souls maul one another.

The Hungry Gestalt can interact with the plot of Old Wounds in a number of ways, including:

- The entity is an unhappy accident, either a symptom of the

chaos in the Underworld or the creation of a necromancer who lost control. The Hungry Gestalt is not directly part of the murder plot, but a complication the coterie must navigate.

- The entity is the murder weapon, created or directed by a necromancer to kill Zohreh and Ugolino. The insane spectre may be off the leash of its master and wreaking random havoc or it may be commanded to destroy the coterie investigating the murders.
- The entity was created or directed by a necromancer for the purpose of stopping the investigation.

The Hungry Gestalt is mobile plot device. The Storyteller can bring the monster in at any time. It can serve as an engine of stalking suspense — causing strange and increasingly familiar phenomenon to let the players know it is near. It can possess mortals to intimidate the coterie. It can break through to the Skinlands to battle the player characters directly. See p. 167 for the creature's traits.

Creeping Dread

Old Wounds is a story of haunting fears and cultish horror. These moods come both from the profane rites of the Clan of Death as well as the wraiths, spectres, and other oddities from the Underworld. Ghostly activity infests Florence. It is one of the reasons the Hecata hold power in the city.

The Storyteller should dig into the player characters' backstories. Ask the players what their characters fear, regret, or feel guilt over. These are the juicy morsels the wraiths can use to properly haunt the coterie. Here is a sampling of strange phenomenon to spring on the players throughout the story:

A LOOK AT THINGS TO COME

The Hungry Gestalt serves as a visual metaphor for what lies beneath the veneer of civility in Florentine Kindred politics. Panfilio and Anicius played the game well and look at the state of their souls now.

- A character feels intense pain in their withered guts, vomiting up bloody masses of maggots, and must make a Rouse Check for the blood loss.
- Random mortals suddenly take interest in the coterie. Each mortal is different but talks in a similar manner and with some unifying mannerism (chews hair, refers to characters as “friend of mine,” draws spirals into any nearby surface, etc.).
- Characters suffer “day terrors” waking in the day, but completely paralyzed. They feel a pressure on their body. Through the edge of the periphery of their unmoving eyes, the character sees that a cadaver is either laying entwined with them or sitting on their chest. Unable to move or even turn their head, the vampire cannot see the whole body of the intruder, just glimpses of grey flesh. When the character fully wakes at night, they are alone with no sign of intrusion in their place of slumber.
- Characters wake up to find occult symbols and ritual circles chalked into the wall or floor near their place of slumber.
- A character feels someone bump into them in the crowded streets but are unable to pick out who

it was. While nothing's missing, there is a new object in one of their pockets, a small bauble made from tiny bones tied together.

- Blood keeps manifesting in the coterie's vicinity (on walls, through faucets, etc.), causing the characters to make hunger frenzy checks at inopportune times.
- A character wakes up just before dusk, standing in front of a window, hand on the curtain, the only thing between them and the deadly sun. They do not remember how they got there.
- If a player character's feeding ends in the death of a vessel, that corpse immediately sits up and shrieks, yelling accusations of murder at the vampire for all the world to hear. Alternatively, the corpse does not yell, but simply follows the character around, quietly, until dismembered.

Canto I: The Masque

Howsoever the coterie comes to be in Florence, the story proper begins with a masquerade ball thrown

MANY FLAVORS OF NECROMANCY

The Family Reunion made the Hecata a diverse pantheon of monsters. Make sure to give each SPC's necromancy a different style. The props, words, and rituals they use should be flavored by their bloodline and personality. The Hecata house traditions of the dark arts from around the globe.

by Carmen Giovanni and the rest of their newly reunited Hecata kin. This celebration takes place in the historic Palazzo Pitti. There is sure to be much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might excite disgust.

The Palazzo Pitti

Situated on the south side of the River Arno, the Palazzo Pitti is a vast Renaissance palace. The core of the present palazzo dates from 1458. The Medici family purchased the palace in 1549, and it became the chief residence of the ruling families of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. The Giovanni have held shadowy dominion over the palace for centuries, helping to turn it into a treasure house, amassing paintings, luxury items, and occulted artifacts not seen by the public at large. In modern nights, the palazzo serves as the largest museum complex in Florence.

Should the player character consult any other Kindred on their last-minute invitation to the Hecata's masked ball, they may learn any of the following:

- The vampires of Florence in general, and the Giovanni in particular, are renowned for throwing magnificent parties.
- Elysium at these celebrations is fiercely protected, even across sect lines. The Florentine Kindred take a certain glee in hosting controversial figures safely (at least while within the walls of their parties).
- The Camarilla regularly attends these affairs. The head of the Camarilla in Florence is a Lasombra.
- Clan Hecata is using this masked ball to celebrate their reunion.
- Receiving a direct invitation from Carmen Giovanni is a great honor. Attending such an event is a good way to form ties to the most powerful Kindred of the city.

On the night of the masquerade, when the coterie approaches the palazzo, a servant of the Giovanni recognizes them on sight and approaches in an authentic Renaissance costume (much to the delight of passing tourists). The ghoul says, "You are expected. Our most gracious host welcomes you. I will show you to the revels."



THE GUEST LIST

All of the major Florentine Kindred attend the party, but the guest list also includes faraway visitors. The nature of this masked ball allows the Storyteller to give cameo appearances to just about any vampire they desire, either from canon or their own creation.

The ghoul then guides the coterie through a private entrance. A confusing series of twists and turns leads the characters to a section of the palace where no mortals are currently allowed. A masked herald announces their arrival, each by name and lineage. All dead eyes turn toward the coterie.

Masks of the Hecata

The grand ballroom is decadently adorned, lit by grand chandeliers, bedecked with famed Renaissance paintings. Kindred already fill the room. The masquerade costumes range from subtle to extravagant to grotesque. Blood is provided, as well-conditioned blood dolls rotate to avoid messy fatalities. Sharp and ornate implements are on hand for Hecata who do not want to bite a screaming vessel. Red wine flows from fountains to sate the kine and lower their resistances.

Carmen Giovanni graciously welcomes the characters in person, loudly and with the aim of letting all the other guests see. This alone grants each character in the coterie a temporary +1 to Status for the night. Carmen is a vivacious partier and in a playful humor. They boldly wear a costume that invokes the Red Death – frightful, yet they somehow make it salacious.

Carmen makes a brief round of introductions between the coterie and a few of the city's Kindred. They then say, "Please excuse me. I have an announcement to make to the city that should ... shake things up. Interesting times!"

Carmen grins in a manner suggesting this thought gives them a thrill. A successful Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 3) reveals they are also a bit nervous. The Giovanni then takes their leave.

Party Business

During the party, the player characters may have any number of social encounters. If they are not socially proactive, the gregarious Kindred of Florence take the initiative. These encounters can occur before or after the announcement and may include:

FORBIDDEN DOOR

The celebration is confined to a single, large ballroom. One door in particular is off limits. Hecata occasionally enter or leave by that door, but no one else is allowed, not even younger Hecata. Any player characters seeking entrance are denied by a Hecata guarding the door. Unknown to them, the coterie will have access to this door before the end of the night. If the player characters bypass the guards, perhaps causing a distraction to do so, the Storyteller can read ahead to Through the Forbidden Door (see p. 145), but shouldn't be afraid to erect Cainite or ghostly obstructions.

OF PRINCES PAST

Rinaldo Albizzi stands in one corner of the ballroom, admiring a set of paintings. He tells any inquiring characters that Florence was once ruled by a line of powerful Lasombra Princes. The Keeper points out two paintings in particular which depict Anicius the Golden and Panfilio the

Cruel, two rival Lasombra Princes who vied for control of the city from 1164-1258.

"Can you imagine?" says Rinaldo. "Worthy adversaries for nearly a century strong, a powerful bond outlasting countless marriages and friendships. In the end, Anicius, my great-grandsire won the game and became sole Prince. I can just imagine the sweet taste of that patiently-seeded victory, but also a note of bitterness, the end of such a perfect relationship."

Player characters who see the paintings have a chance of recognizing the Hungry Gestalt as the warped, conjoined spectres of Anicius and Panfilio.

ONCE A PRIEST

A dark-haired man in the simple black clothes of a Catholic priest stands not far from the forbidden door. He has no other costume or ornamentation, and his mask is a simple affair of minimal effort. The other guests tend to sneer at him. He watches the Hecata go in and out of the forbidden door.

Should a character approach him, he says, "I know what you're asking yourself, 'What is this priest doing among such diabolical heathens? You know, many Christian denominations think the Catholic practice of praying to any dead person, be they pope, saint, or the Immaculate Mother herself is a form of necromancy. I still do my appointed task, as I see it. These nights I take my communion where I can get it."

The priest introduces himself as Tommaso Sforza of the Rossellini. He's an ancilla, though he behaves more like a younger Kindred, passing as almost human. He is happy to have a pleasant chat, and his talk seems genuine and surface level, without the gilded barbs and games of the other guests.

Tommaso says that he is a priest, an exorcist, and an occultist, fancying himself a "Christian theurgist."

He can talk at length on the subject. "Even some of the popes dabbled in the arts. Pope Benedict XIII was charged with using necromancy in 1409. It is said he sought a book of necromancy available only to the Saracens and had purchased the tome for some one thousand francs. Allegedly, the book was discovered under the pontiff's bed."

Before parting with the player characters, Tommaso will look at them earnestly and say, "Be careful, you are deep in the Dark Wood now, on a savage road. It is easy to get lost." He gives the characters his card, saying to contact him should they need to.

If asked about the forbidden door or invited inside once the coterie is granted access, Tommaso politely declines, saying, "I am a sinner, it is certain, but I will not indulge those vices."

THE LITTLE DEATHS

Two slight Kindred stand in a corner of the ballroom. The waifish creatures appear to have been just out of adolescence when Embraced (though it is hard to tell under their full masks). They are twins and Harbingers. Other Kindred refer to them as "the Little Deaths." They do not speak, but seethe with barely contained rage. After Carmen's announcement, they storm out of the party. See p. 165 for their traits.

THE PATER OF MITHRAS

Roger de Camden sips blood from a vessel through a silver straw, while wearing an impeccable suit and the Death's Head Mask. He moves about the ballroom, seemingly just at ease among the Camarilla contingent as with his fellow Hecata. Everyone seems to respect him yet also find him infuriating in that no one seems to be able to pin down his true allegiances. Though busy, he grants a short conversation to polite characters, seeing as how they received a personal welcome from Carmen Gio-

vanni. He seems to know something is coming yet will not say what.

THE SECURITY

Jinno Hatsumi arrives late, just before Carmen's announcement, saying only that she was on official business. She wears no costume or mask. She checks in with one of her fellow Lamiae guarding the forbidden door. Her eyes dart about the room assessing. She has little time for small talk, but will say, "Carmen is about to make an announcement, and I must keep the peace."

DRINKING FOR TWO

Ghede L'Oraille drinks from vessels flavored with alcohol consumption. The Samedi draws blood with a sharp silver pin, gently kissing the wound better after. Her bawdy laughter fills the space. As a party trick, she allows the ghost of what she claims was a famous pirate to possess her. Ghede's voice changes to a deeper, gruffer timber, and she sings filthy old sea chanties to the laughter of her audience.

*'Twas on the good ship Venus,
By Christ you should have seen us,
The figurehead
Was a whore in bed,
Sucking a dead man's penis!*

EAT PREY, LOVE

Ravinder Narula sits at a table. A servant brings out a platter containing a small piece of rare red meat artfully presented. The Nagaraja pops the morsel into his mouth and chews with many sharp teeth. He is the only Kindred masticating solid foods tonight. He shudders and arches with ecstasy. Should a character interrupt the tasting, Ravinder holds up a curt hand, saying, "No! Desist. Silence. I am having ... mmm ... a moment. A supernal moment!"

After several long moments, Ravinder opens his eyes. If the characters politely remained quiet, Ravinder says, "Manners are to be treasured. You and I must dine sometime soon."

With that, Ravinder hands the characters a card and excuses himself, saying he has something special to prepare. He goes through the forbidden door and is not seen again unless the characters enter later.

A TOREADOR SCORNED

Francesca da Rimini tries to charm her way past the guard of the forbidden door. Her supernatural powers of persuasion seem to work as the lovestruck Hecata guard looks just about to open said door. Two more Hecata come out and shake their heads at Francesca. This is an old game. For a split second, the Toreador flies into a rage, cursing in Italian, all fangs and spittle, but, just as quickly, she reins it all in, giggles demurely, and seeks her entertainment elsewhere in the ballroom.

Francesca is mildly curious about the coterie, asking them what Carmen's interest in them is. She will try to socially instigate a little trouble between the coterie members, asking which one of them is the leader and other such games, though these attempts are more playful than serious. A discerning character might notice the perfume she wears is similar to what scented their invitation. Francesca is all too eager to invite new Kindred to her perfume shop.

HEL'S WAKE

At midnight, a large clock sounds the hour. The music ceases. Every vampire falls silent. It may take the characters a few moments to notice all of the Kindred stare in the same direction. Seeing the wide-eyed look on the faces of every vampire proves that there are chords in even the most jaded, dead hearts which can be plucked to elicit dread and awe.

Standing at one end of the room is the ancient Cappadocian Hel-Blár. No one saw her come in. She is simply there. She stands unusually tall and lanky, dressed in layers of gossamer materials that look old. A veil

THE ART OF SOCIAL WAR

This story is a heavily social one. The vampires of Florence spar on a gregarious stage. The stakes are just as high and deadly, the cues just more subtle. This is an excellent time to showcase social characters and the Social Combat rules (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 304). When violence does occur, it's swift, ruthless, and with a smile.

of the same material covers her face, blond-white hair escaping in tendrils. The vague shapes and movements beneath the veil suggest a theatre of horrors hidden behind a curtain. One long hand looks lovely, if pale. The other hand is a gnarled corpse claw, the flesh a peculiar shade of blue, the "death-blue" of her namesake.

The ancient monster moves from one end of the ballroom, slowly, to the other. Nothing is said, not even one joke cracked, as she makes this journey. Having attained the other side of the room, Hel-Blár exits. She has no further interaction with the ball or its guests. After she's gone, music and voices fill the ballroom again. Everyone revels as though she was never there, laughing at how silly they were to have fallen silent.

Carmen's Announcement

A murmur scuttles through the assembled Kindred just before Carmen Giovanni makes their announcement. The news has already reached a few of them. Before it can all erupt, Carmen enters the ballroom and gathers everyone's attention.

They say, "Fellow representatives of the Council, siblings of the Hecata, cousins of the Ivory Tower, and the rest of you darlings, tonight we celebrate the coming together of my larger family. No one takes the Reunion with more gravity than I, so I offer my extended family full honesty and transparency." Carmen pauses a long moment, before saying, "Last

night, Zohreh of the Cappadocians and Ugolino Giovanni were found to have suffered the final death within the walls of the Palazzo Vecchio."

At this, chaos erupts in the ballroom – shouting and posturing and fangs all around. The ancient feuds all reignite at once. The Giovanni and Harbingers call for each other's blood. Ghede L'Oraille shouts for justice. The Little Deaths gnash and howl for the heads of the guilty. Jinno Hatsumi tries to keep the peace. Ravinder Narula is nowhere to be seen. Rinaldo Albizzi and Francesca da Rimini watch the exceedingly calculating, keeping out of the way.

If more physical action is desired, fights can break out. The coterie can watch, help mitigate the chaos, or add to the carnage. With so many angered necromancers, spectral voices and ghostly phenomenon haunt the room. Lights flicker.

Before things can devolve too far, Carmen Giovanni shouts out, "Florentines!" The chaos pauses. "We have all the time in the world to behave like beasts, but we are Floren-

tines. Let us conduct ourselves so! Let us investigate. Allow me to ... suggest something unusual."

Carmen pauses, looking out to each and every Kindred, masterfully hooking their curiosity. They wink to the coterie.

"I suggest we assemble a cadre of investigators," Carmen says. "No one from the Council. We are biased, entrenched. Heh. We are suspects. Why not these fine fellows?" Here, Carmen indicates the coterie. "Flexible, impartial minds. And perhaps we should ... yes. Why not? Why not?! Yes! Let us grant them the Autonomy of the Grave. Full access to us and our secrets. We can surely abide such delicious younglings to enter places we would fear to allow our older peers to tread, eh? Autonomy of the Grave for one week. Then we return here, and they present their findings. We have all the time in the world to do the brutish, predictable thing after that. We lose nothing. At the least, we gain a week of rare entertainment. Why skip straight to a dessert of slaughter when we have a full repast of mystery to savor first? Are we in agreement?"

Perhaps to the shock of the coterie, given how deadly serious things had become, the Florentine Council agrees.

"Agreed," says Jinno Hatsumi.

"Agreed," says Ghede L'Oraille.

"Agreed," says Rinaldo Albizzi.

"... agreed," say the Little Deaths

CARMEN'S GAMBIT

Florentine Kindred lap up elaborate entertainment. Even in the throes of a deadly feud, they will pause with their enemies to enjoy a devious game, a bit of black humor, or a surprise show of audacity. Carmen counted on this. The thought of some hapless neonates navigating the devious labyrinth of their society is just too delicious. Through such diversions, Carmen keeps their city from ripping itself apart for another night.

The vampires of this city are also bound by a fierce pride in being Florentine. This distinction is not limited by mortal lineage or geography. A vampire living here drinks and circulates the blood of Florence, hears the ghosts of Florence, becomes part of Florence. Any Kindred who lives here long enough is considered Florentine even by their most hated enemy.

with some reluctance, speaking on behalf of their now empty chair.

“So glad to have consensus, though it matters little,” says Carmen. “The investigation begins tomorrow evening. There will be no more talk of it tonight. Tonight, the old wounds are closed. Tonight, we revel.” Carmen pauses, looking out at their fellow kindred across the room before passionately saying, “You Florentines are the quintessence!”

Just like that, the room full of murderous vampires drop all of their ancient vendettas and commence carousing once again.

Autonomy of the Grave

Through this Autonomy of the Grave, the coterie gains full access to the older Hecata and their secrets in the city. The Florentine vampires seem to take this seriously. Even neonate Hecata get something out of this, being allowed access not usually granted to ones so young. This is a great opportunity to showcase deep lore regarding the Clan of Death, things neonates might not normally be allowed to learn.

It is possible that the Autonomy of the Grave is an ancient tradition among the vampires of Florence. It is just as likely that Carmen made it up on the spot. With nuance and subtle familiarity with their fellow Council members, Carmen may have silently telegraphed to them, selling a room full of monsters on a spot of sport in the time it takes the living to draw one breath. An elaborate joke on some wide-eyed whelps! Even

in deadly treachery, the Florentine Kindred are bonded by their cruel humor. Is a joke worthwhile if no lives are on the line?

After the Announcement

In a hair's breadth, the vampires of Florence have gone from the edge of slaughter back to debaucherous jollification. Should any of the player characters ask about this or seem surprised, one of the Florentine Kindred will shrug and say:

“This is Florence. We are at our most serious when joking, our most deadly when at play. Our smile is our snarl. Our laughter is our battle cry. We move sideways, ever sideways, like monstrous crabs.”

It seems to be a powerful part of their culture. Not one local vampire will talk about the murder for the rest of the night, not even the much-aggrieved Little Deaths.

Carmen Giovanni approaches the coterie and says, “Return here tomorrow night, and I will take you to the scene of the crime. Tonight, enjoy. Indulge in a little sin. Our most sacred mysteries are for you to explore.” Carmen indicates the forbidden door and winks.

From here, the coterie may continue socializing in the main ballroom (utilizing any of the unused scenes above), see what lies beyond the forbidden door, or split up according to their desires. Though none will speak of the business of the

REMEMBER THE STAINS

Old Wounds takes characters down a disturbing deep dive into the ritualistic world of necromancers. They may see and learn things that forever change them. Using the rules for Stains (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 239) gives weight to what the characters experience. The price in Florence is not always what the local vampires extract from you, but what witnessing their dark miracles does to your soul.

murder investigation, all the Kindred now look at the player characters differently.

Through the Forbidden Door

The door is now open to the coterie. It leads down several flights of stairs into an underground series of hallways and rooms available only to the more advanced Hecata and their special guests. The door leads to transcendent experiences – the torture of the human soul and the revivification of the animal clay.

Down in the depths, the player characters get a sense of just how many Hecata are in the city. The more introverted members of the clan lurk down here, away from the party. Here they fraternize, experiment, and show off to one another. For all the ancient betrayals and hurts they bare for one another, the Hecata are a diverse group of necromancers who have come back together, to suddenly find new and different ways to perform their dark arts. Many are eager to exchange secrets.

Something in the architecture and the unworldly powers of the wraith sentinels that guard the place befuddles any sense of geography. The characters feel forever lost down here. All that exists are a series of rooms and the vague, foggy interludes between them.

Characters should experience several encounters of surreal horror and depraved pleasure. They should experience a sense of descent, a funhouse sampling of the true nature of the Hecata. They should wonder, by the end, if there is any going back. The Storyteller can use any of the following encounters or custom make some of their own.

HOST CLOT

Entering this room, the characters discover just what Ravinder Narula has been up to. The gourmet

THE PROFANE

When dealing with a decadent, over-stimulated family of incestuous, immortal necrophiles, the material can get dark and heavy. If the whole table is interested in exploring those themes and images, this is certainly the right setting for it. However, it is important to make sure everyone is on board. *Old Wounds* is a particularly good scenario to utilize safety measures or at least have a chat between all the players before beginning. Find out what is alright, what pushes the boundaries, and what is a hard pass.

Keep in mind, also, that suggesting the profane can be just as effective (and often more so) than rubbing an audience's face in it. This can be as simples as walking into a room and seeing only the aftermath that suggests the events that took place or catching the barest glimpse into a room before the door shuts. Stipple in a few details and let the players fill in the terrible gaps with their own imagination.

Nagaraja is preparing a special dish. He stands over a raised, stainless steel trough roughly six feet long. He stirs a red, gelatinous substance. A few other Hecata stand around the trough, waiting eagerly.

"It all began with a question: how does one eat a ghost. Well, there are more esoteric ways to feed from a wraith, but I desired something more visceral."

Ravinder claims the mixture is made of blood and several other ingredients that he is not yet ready to share, though he admits he uses a type of jellyfish that is effectively immortal. Finally, Ravinder bites his wrist and bleeds a small amount of vitae into the mixture.

"Just about ready."

The Nagaraja begins a pleasantly melodious chant. As he sings, he

removes a tarnished wedding ring from a handkerchief in his pocket and drops it into the gelatinous goop with a plop. Those with knowledge of Necromancy will know he is summoning a wraith.

"I entice the ghost into the jelly, and then I ... entrap it in the jelly."

The goop renders into a near-solid gelatin, taking on a vaguely humanoid shape. The almost featureless body jiggles and writhes, a rudimentary mouth opening and closing, mutely screaming in terror and agony.

"Bon appétit."

The other Hecata hungrily dig in, devouring the jelly soul in scooped handfuls. They chew and slurp ecstatically. Ravinder invites the player characters to partake in the feast.

"I insist. Trust me, this is a food even you can eat."

Characters who participate in this blasphemous meal may gain Stains. They also gain the friendship of Ravinder who will act favorably to them for the rest of the story. Characters who eat a handful of the

THEY'RE SHOWING US TOO MUCH!

Once the coterie receives the Autonomy of the Grave, the Hecata become willing, even eager, to lay all of their skeleton-filled cupboards bare. From this point on, the necromancers open their secrets to the characters. This is an excellent opportunity for a Storyteller to showcase bits of deep lore not normally known by neonates. Such secrets could include, but are not limited to:

- The upcoming expiration of the Promise (see **Cults of the Blood Gods**, p. 126).
- The disappearance or death of Augustus Giovanni (see **Cults of the Blood Gods**, p. 129).
- The Endless Night, Augustus's grand plan to tear down the Shroud (see **Cults of the Blood Gods**, p. 147).
- Fundamentals, practices, and secrets of necromancy and Oblivion (see **Cults of the Blood Gods**, p. 203).
- Secret histories of Florence, the Kindred who live there, and the way the Hecata operate in the city (to be determined by the Storyteller).

At first, the characters might be quite keen to have this backstage pass to chthonic knowledge. However, a sense of foreboding should slowly bleed into that excitement. Much like the rising tension in the film *Midsommar*, the coterie should come to a paranoid conclusion: "Oh no ... they're showing us too much!"

To better complete their task, the more they must delve into the secrets of these ancient death cults. The more they learn, the less likely they will be allowed to leave. All of the Florentine Kindred are so polite and cooperative. How does one extricate themselves from such a pleasant trap?

The horror arrives with the realization that there is a point of no return and deepens with the further realization that there is no way to know where that point exists. This dread is particularly poignant for non-Hecata characters, but even Hecata neonates realize they are learning too much too quickly.

writhing gelatin also gain a Dyscrasia. Refusing the meal adds a +1 difficulty to all social rolls with Ravinder or the other Hecata in attendance.

Soon, there is nothing left of the quivering mass.

PLEASURE ROOM

Passing by a half open door, the characters hear the orgiastic sounds of pleasure, from perhaps a dozen people. However, if they look in the room, there are only well-preserved cadavers laying on tables. Alternatively, there is a single Hecata Kindred, in the room full of bodies, who looks up at the interruption and smiles.

THE BRAZEN BULL

One room contains a full-sized bronze statue of a bull. Carmen Giovanni stands before the bull, admiring it. They explain that this is a one-of-a-kind artifact, a deadly device from millennia ago. A person was locked inside the bull, and a fire was started beneath its metal belly, cooking the poor wretch. Through genius acoustics, the mouth and nostrils converted the screams of the victim into the trumpeting sound of a bull's bellow.

"The bull carries a powerful resonance, helpful to certain rituals, but it also gave me an idea."

Carmen pulls out a mask with a mouthpiece, explaining how they designed it to convert the screams of a vessel into a musical sound.

"Would you like a demonstration?"

If the player says yes, Carmen calls in a blood doll, manacling and securing him to a table.

"Don't worry, it's for his protection."

Carmen puts the mask on the mortal before biting his wrist. The agony of the Giovanny's bite causes the man to scream, but the mask turns that scream into a discordant, piping sound.

"I admit it is an incomplete idea. I have not yet perfected it."



Witnessing this demonstration may give a character Stains, but also gives the character a +1 die to social dice pools with Carmen. If the player declines the demonstration, Carmen takes no offense. They simply nod thoughtfully and say, "The currency of one's soul is indeed precious. We should only spend it on experiences we truly desire."

LIKE A SEASHELL

This room contains a lush fainting couch. A Hecata who appears as a young teenager lays on the couch hold-

ing a skull. She swirls her tongue inside one of the skull's empty eye sockets.

"If you stir the ocular cavity, with your tongue, just right, you can induce the ghost to moan secrets in your ear."

Here, she puts the mouth of the skull to her ear and sighs contentedly.

"Oh yes ... Like the sea in a shell."

HOMUNCULAR PIT FIGHT

This large room pulses with excitement. Several Hecata cheer

and curse as bets are made. Half of the room contains a shallow fighting pit where Homuncular Servants (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 210) do battle. The other half of the room contains tables and crates containing human parts and living animals, all fodder for the Awaken the Homuncular Servant Ceremony. The rules are simple. All competing homunculi must be created on the spot with the parts available. Grotesque creativity is encouraged.

Canto II: The Scene of the Crime

A night of supernatural debauchery concludes. A murder investigation begins. During the daylight hours after the masked ball, the coterie may sleep with the tranquility of the dead, or they might find their dreamscapes haunted by spectres imagined or otherwise. When the sun sets, the full weight of the task thrust upon them presses down.

The true sandbox of this story opens up. Allow the characters to confer with one another and plan their next move. The scenes presented in this section (as well as in Canto III) are likely to occupy the majority of the story and are not offered in a set chronological order. The structure depends heavily on the choices the Storyteller made in preparing the story and the choices players make as they investigate.

Utilizing Backgrounds

The coterie may wish to employ their Backgrounds to gather intel. They might send their Retainers

to do footwork or speak with their Allies, Contacts, or a helpful Mawla. Characters experienced in Oblivion may wish to speak with local wraiths to get a lay of the spectral land. Any information discovered will need to be tailored to the choices the Storyteller made in setting up the murder scenario. Information gathered through Background expenditures (or during interviews with Florentine Kindred) can include:

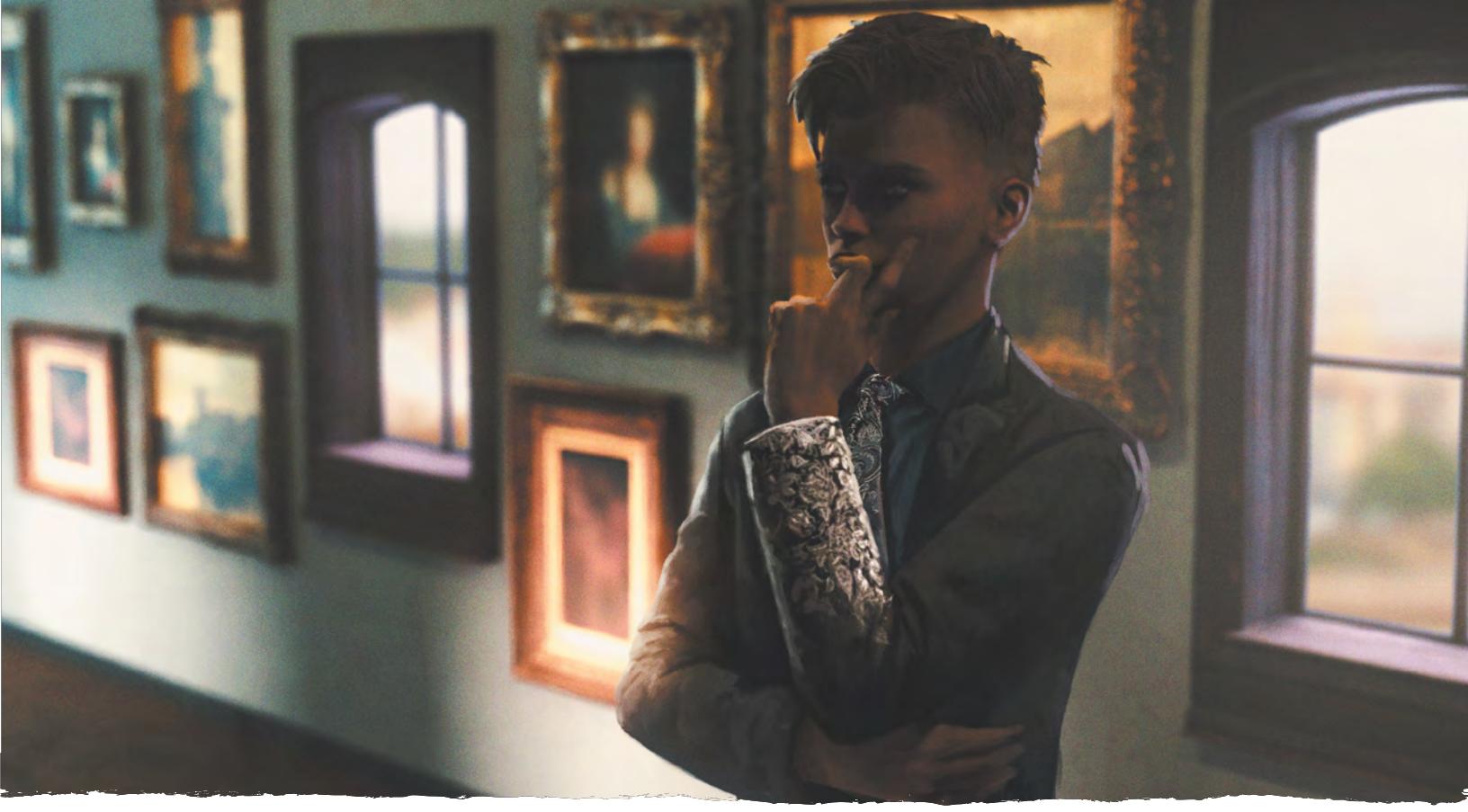
- Zohreh and Ugolino Giovanni are old enemies. It was with great difficulty that they were brought to the table for the Family Reunion.
- On the night of their Final Death, Zohreh and Ugolino Giovanni met one another at the Palazzo Vecchio. This meeting was apparently made in secret from the Hecata at large.
- The Hall of the Five Hundred, in the Palazzo Vecchio, has been closed to the public for a week (presumably through Kindred influence).
- A ghoul servant Ugolino Giovanni was also found dead at the scene of the crime.
- The Hecata control both the Palazzo Pitti and the Palazzo Vecchio, as well as the Vasari Corridor that connects them.
- Francesca da Rimini is a former lover of Ugolino Giovanni.

What's more, it is rumored she learned some rudiments of necromancy from him. Not all of the Hecata were pleased about this.

- The Camarilla used to control Florence. Little by little, the Giovanni took more responsibility and power. The Ivory Tower had no idea just how many Hecata were in the city until the Reunion.
- The Shadowlands of Florence are in turmoil. Wraiths and spectres have become aggressive, especially to Kindred. Strange phenomena plague the city.
- The Kindred of Florence are unanimously frightened of the ancient Cappadocian Hel-Blár. She is the only necromancer in the city who still makes regular visits to the Shadowlands.
- Tommaso Sforza finds himself quite busy these nights plying his trade as an exorcist. A constant stream of awful things pours out of the Underworld, inhabiting mortal bodies.
- Rumor has it that the Little Deaths, the twin Harbingers of Ashur, still seethe with rage after the Family Reunion and desire any excuse to hunt down the Giovanni.
- Jinno Hatsumi is the head of the Bahari cult in Florence. Her fellow cultists include both Kindred and kine (and perhaps other beings). Zohreh is said to

RINALDO AND CARMEN

As an alternative power dynamic in Florence, Rinaldo and Carmen are allies, admirers, and more. The city is their game board to stave off boredom, and their respective sect and clans are just so much adornment for these diversions. They adore playing against one another. This relationship takes priority over all others. Rinaldo helped allow the Hecata to take primacy in Florence. This both helped Carmen cement their power and made the Florentine Lasombra indispensable to the Camarilla who are desperate to reclaim the city.



have come into conflict with the cult sometime in the past.

- Ghede L'Oraille has the ear of the loa and a more equitable relationship with wraiths than many of her Hecata kin. She has been instrumental in mitigating the damage of the current turmoil in the Shadowlands of Florence.
- Rinaldo Albizzi and Carmen Giovanni both have spies hidden

in each other's camps. The two cordial enemies seem to delight in this game for control of Florence.

An Escort to the Murder Site

The most likely start to the investigation is the location of the Kindred double murder. The night after the masked ball, Carmen Giovanni sends the following message to the coterie (via mortal courier, wraith, or burner phone):

Do me the honor of meeting me at the Palazzo Pitti, and I will personally give you a tour of a murder most foul.

Outside the Palazzo Pitti, a ghoul in a crisp suit, holding a notepad device, recognizes the characters and graciously shows them inside.

PORTRAITS AND A LETTER

If, during the masked ball, the coterie did not play out the encounter with Rinaldo Albizzi, where he pointed out the portraits of two ancient Lasombra Princes of Florence (see “Of Princes Past” in Canto I, p. 140), have Carmen looking at these two portraits as the coterie enters this scene. They can offer the same history and commentary, giving the characters another opportunity to recognize the faces of the long-dead Princes when they encounter the Hungry Gestalt.

If none of the characters belong to the Camarilla, then they did not receive a letter from Rinaldo Albizzi as part of their starting handouts (see “A Kindred History,” p. 132). In this case, when the characters enter this scene, Carmen holds a copy of the letter. They hand it to one of the characters, saying, “This was in the pocket of a little Ivory Tower neonate who attended my party last night. Tell me what you make of it.”

Carmen allows anyone in the coterie to read the letter and awaits their reply, listening to their input with genuine interest. If asked what their own opinion is, they simply say, “Rinaldo does keep things interesting. His history is even reasonably accurate.” If asked about the fate of the Camarilla neonate in question, Carmen only laughs before leading the coterie into the Vasari Corridor.

The ballroom is eerily quiet after the raucous celebration of the night before. Carmen Giovanni stands alone in the vast room, wearing a suit of dark-emerald hue. They look about the empty room as if still taking in the party, the way a cat looks into empty spaces in the small hours.

At the approach of the coterie, Carmen looks up, smiles, and says, "My darling sleuths! Forgive the great responsibility I have pushed upon you, but I have no doubt you will rise to the task. Now, walk with me."

Carmen warmly takes one of the characters by the arm and leads the coterie into the Vasari Corridor.

The Vasari Corridor

Ancient Florence was a gilded jungle of intrigue. Treachery often manifested as a literal dagger in the back. With this in mind, the Medici commissioned the Vasari Corridor, giving them safe passage between their home and the government buildings. The Vasari Corridor is an elevated, enclosed passageway connecting the Palazzo Vecchio and the Palazzo Pitti.

From the Palazzo Pitti, the corridor narrows as it winds its way over rows of houses in the Oltrarno district. The corridor cuts across the face of the Church of Santa Felicita. It swerves around the Torre dei Mannelli, because the owners of the tower refused to alter it at the time of the corridor's construction. Crossing the River Arno at Ponte Vecchio, the corridor then follows its north bank, joining the Uffizi Gallery on its south side. Finally, the Vasari Corridor connects with the Palazzo Vecchio on that building's south side.

The Vasari Corridor stands to this night. The Hecata own the buildings around the corridor through proxies, and they use the walkway for the same reasons as the Medici. A few years back, the corridor was closed for "safety reasons," to be reopened to

tourists in the next few years. In the meantime, it is a place for Kindred, protected by a centuries-old Elysium tradition.

WALK AND TALK

Carmen Giovanni personally escorts the coterie through the Vasari Corridor, from the Palazzo Pitti to the Palazzo Vecchio. Carmen makes enthusiastic conversation for the entirety of the journey. They happily discuss any topics the coterie mentions, but will also bring up topics including:

- The Kindred or mortal history of Florence.
- Any of the art or architecture the coterie sees during their walk.
- The current state of Kindred politics of the city.
- The fine art of necromancy.
- Details regarding the murder victims.

Carmen is happy to talk about the history of the Vasari Corridor itself. "We are quite safe here," they say. "No Florentine Kindred would dare to break the sanctity of Elysium in the corridor. Partly, it is due to a tradition reinforced with centuries. Partly, it is due to a pervasive belief that we have bewitched these benighted halls in such a way as to bring every tortured shade and mournful soul of Florence down upon a transgressor. Is that true? Well..." Here, Carmen pauses and brings the coterie closer with a conspiratorial tone. "I offer this free morsel of advice to you, my sweetlings, and it will serve you well: It's not what you *can* do that is important, but what your peers and enemies *believe* you can do." Carmen winks.

If asked about their opinions on who committed the murders, Carmen plays coy. "I do not wish to taint your judgement with preconceptions. Come see the scene of the crime first."

The Palazzo Vecchio

This imposing structure collected many names over the centuries and is now known as the Palazzo Vecchio, the town hall of Florence. Its tall clocktower overlooks the Piazza della Signoria and a copy of Michelangelo's statue *David*. The building teems with art, history, and secrets. Two huge globes, designed by Giorgio Vasari for the Medici Family, hang within, one for the earth and another for the heavens. The Medici Hall of Maps contains fifty-four maps created in the 16th century. A death mask of Dante Alighieri rests in a case on the second floor, though it is thought to have been carved some 162 years after the poet's death.

Since the murders of Zohreh and Ugolino, the building remains closed to the public for "renovations." Carmen Giovanni leads the coterie from the Vasari Corridor into the Palazzo Vecchio through a passageway in an apartment on the second floor. Carmen leads the characters directly to the *Salone dei Cinquecento* ("Hall of the Five Hundred"), unless asked to show the coterie anything else or give a tour. The Giovanni proves all too easy to distract with such diversions, evincing a demeanor far too casual for the weight of the circumstances.

The Hall of the Five Hundred

Built in 1494, this imposing chamber stretches 52 m (170 ft) long and 23 m (75 ft) wide and 18 meters (59 ft) high. For a short time, the Savonarola family ousted the Medici from power and founded a new Florentine Republic, which lasted between 1494 and 1498. Fra Girolamo Savonarola commissioned the room to serve as the seat of the Council of Five Hundred, a more democratic government modeled after the Grand Council of Venice. In 1498, Savonaro-

la was arrested, hanged, and burned at the stake in the Piazza della Signoria as a “heretic, schismatic, and for preaching new things.”

The Medici returned to power in 1540, choosing the Palazzo Vecchio as their residence, entrusting Giorgio Vasari to radically transform the building. Among the Kindred, the Giovanni (and now the Hecata) traditionally hold power over this building.

Expansive frescoes dominate the walls, depicting scenes of military victories by Florence. Thirty-nine panels illuminate the ceiling with *Great Episodes from the life of Cosimo I* as well as the city itself, all painted by Vasari and his assistants. The central panel features Cosimo I in apotheosis. The raised stage called the Udienza dominates the north side of the hall, backed and lit by two enormous windows.

Architecture inspired by a Roman triumphal arch enhances the power of the sovereign, hosting a number of niches housing statues of members of the Medici family. Six statues along the walls depict the “Labors of Hercules” by Properzia de’ Rossi. In the central niche at the south of the Hall reposes Michelangelo’s sculpture *The Genius of Victory*.

At the top of Vasari’s fresco, *The Battle of Marciano*, is the inscription “Cerca trova” (“Seek and ye shall find”).

INVESTIGATING THE SITE OF THE MURDER

Carmen Giovanni lets the coterie into the Hall of the Five Hundred but does not follow. “I am, after all, as much a suspect as the rest. See what you can see and then speak with me after. For now, the remains of Zohreh and Ugolino Giovanni await you.” Just before the coterie enters, Carmen adds, “Oh ... and the body of a ghoul servant of Ugolino’s. Quite messy.”

Characters find the room as described above. What is left of

Ugolino and Zohreh lies upon the stage at the north end of the room – two body-sized smears of greasy ash, the thrashing patterns forming a gruesome resemblance to the angels children make in fresh snow. Each ash pile contains a garment: a pinstriped suit in one and a dress of anachronistic design in the other.

Elsewhere in the room lays the corpse of Hugo Giovanni, the ghoul of Ugolino. This body is intact, however advanced decay suggests an older ghoul. Hugo’s head is gruesomely twisted around backward. Alternatively, the conditions of the ghoul’s body can reflect the particulars of the murder, as determined by the Storyteller.

What the characters discover in this room depends largely on what the details the Storyteller chose for the murder victims, the murderer, and the means execution. A Resolve + Awareness roll (Difficulty 2) reveals hidden or discarded objects, footprints, breaks in patterns, or other such clues. A successful Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 3) offers insight as to what happened at the scene of the crime. Successes over the margin giving a deeper understanding and a critical success offers a character a near-preternatural moment of reconstructing the events. Some of the information gathered could include:

- The cause of death proves difficult to determine on the ashen remains of the vampires, though other clues may paint the picture (bullet holes in the walls, a discarded weapon, etc.). The ghoul’s cadaver offers a better bounty of forensic data.
- A battle between supernatural entities might have left significant damage in the ancient room.
- Four or more successes on an Investigation roll allows the character to determine the

pattern of violence. Did Ugolino and Zohreh attack each other? Was there a third party attacking them and, if so, how many?

- If Zohreh and Ugolino met to conduct a necromantic ritual (say to summon/create the Hungry Gestalt), the remains of that can be found (ritual circle, ritual ingredients, etc.).
- An otherworldly attack or event could leave its own esoteric evidence: objects in the room impossibly decayed, ectoplasm, cold spots, etc.
- Anything else left by the murderer(s): torn scrap of clothing, blood, broken bit of a weapon, a dropped object, etc.

DISCIPLINE USE

Characters may employ their unnatural gifts as Kindred to aid in the investigation. A generous Storyteller rewards creative Discipline use.

Blood Sorcery: A character can learn more information from spilt blood on the scene. Rituals provide other avenues of investigation.

Animalism: No animals can be found inside the building. The Hecata take thorough measures to ensure potential animal spies do not invade their properties. Characters might question local fauna about the recent comings and goings around the outside of the Palazzo Vecchio.

Auspex: “Heightened Senses” boosts perception rolls and allows for other possibilities, like recognizing the scent of the murderer. “Premonition” offers visions of vague insight, at the Storyteller’s discretion. “Spirit’s Touch” provides the most obvious benefits to the investigation, particularly if used on the clothes of the murdered vampires or the murder weapon itself.

Oblivion: There are no wraiths in this room. Any local wraiths questioned will say that they stayed away from the

WHAT OF THE WRAITHS?

In a city of powerful necromancers, why has no one simply summoned the ghosts of the murdered to question? All attempts to summon the wraiths of Zohreh, Ugolino, or Hugo fail. The Hecata of Florence already tried. Characters with necromantic expertise know that slain Kindred rarely leave a wraith behind.

It is, however, suspicious that Hugo cannot be summoned (especially since his corpse has a fetter on it). Any Florentine necromancer will suggest the possibility that the wraith was purposefully bound somewhere, perhaps in the Shadowlands. Given the current turmoil in the Shadowlands of Florence, no Hecata will brave a trip there. None save for Hel-Blár.

Hall of the Five Hundred on the night of the murder, not liking what they sensed within. If the Hungry Gestalt was involved with the murder, other wraiths may fearfully claim to have seen the entity enter the building. Using “The Binding Fetter” (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 204) power reveals that an antique tie pin, worn by the dead ghoul Hugo Giovanni, is a fetter.

After the Investigation

Carmen Giovanni awaits the coterie outside the Hall of the Five Hundred. They escort the characters through the Vasari Corridor and back to the Palazzo Pitti. During the walk, they ask the coterie of their impressions of the murder site. They happily answer any questions regarding the Florentine Kindred or necromancy. If the coterie did not detect the fetter worn by the dead ghoul, Hugo, Carmen points this out. Back at the Palazzo Pitti, Carmen descends down into the private, Hecata-only underground portion of the building the characters gained access to on the night of the masked ball. The coterie is welcome to accompany them. If asked whom Carmen thinks the killer is, they play coy, but hint to the characters at what they want out of this investigation.

WHAT CARMEN WANTS

Above all, Carmen wants the official conclusion of the investi-

gation to point to a scenario that strengthens the bond of the Hecata in Florence (or at least avoids causing infighting), whether it is the truth or not. A Hecata vs. Hecata killing is to be avoided at all costs. Carmen is even willing to forgive the actual murderer if they can help fabricate the desired results. Acceptable scenarios include:

- The Camarilla as the killer. An Ivory Tower plot to manipulate the Hecata makes the ideal outside threat for Carmen to rally the Hecata with.
- A spectre as the killer. A random horror from the now tempestuous Shadowlands not only keeps the Hecata from attacking one another but shows the other Kindred that they *need* the Clan of Death more than ever. A ghostly killer created or summoned through a joint ritual performed by Zohreh and Ugolino is less ideal, but still acceptable. Carmen is careful to avoid the appearance that a third-party member of the clan had anything to do with it.
- Marianna Giovanni as the killer. Marianna harbors a famous hunger for revenge against her vampire and mortal family. She would make a suitable scapegoat. All the better if she is the actual killer.

- An outsider as the killer. Florentine Kindred pay the Anarchs, autarkis, and other fringe vampires little mind, but perhaps a scapegoat can be made to order from that lot. Perhaps the coterie can be convinced to help.

- The coterie as the killers. If necessity forces their hand, Carmen sets up the characters to look like the murderers. Carmen explores the other options first, but sets this in motion from the beginning as a contingency – sending agents to filch personal objects from the characters in order to have “found” them on the scene, sending a wraith to possess a character to make them act in an incriminating manner, etc. At the next gathering, Carmen reveals to all the Kindred of Florence their elaborate plan in ensnaring the true murderers.

IF CARMEN IS THE MURDERER

If Carmen is the murderer, they act in much the same way, seeking an accepted scenario that keeps the Hecata united. They gently test and probe to see if the coterie will willingly help with this plan. If not, there is always intimidation, blackmail, or framing. A necromancer has the power to speak to the dead whom the characters have wronged.

CARMEN'S DARK RITUAL

When they arrive in the secret underground halls beneath the Palazzo Pitti, Carmen says, “I have a ceremony to perform. You are welcome to stay and observe or be about your business elsewhere. You have the Autonomy of the Grave after all.”

With that, Carmen opens a plain metal door and casually strips out of their suit. Naked, they stride into a room featuring a round stone pool and domed ceiling. Six shambling corpses enter the room. The walking cadavers are clean, finely stitched,

CONFESIONS OF A BRAZEN BULL

Carmen Giovanni always uses honey instead of vinegar to get what they want. They enjoy the use of charm and rarely make overt threats. If the coterie does not appear to fall in line with Carmen's plans, they suggest talking to the other Kindred of the city. They hint at the danger the coterie faces, having seen just a little bit too much of the secrets of the Cult of Death. Carmen hints that they need a kind sponsor to survive this mess.

If, when Carmen and the coterie arrive at the Palazzo Pitti, it seems the neonates need more aggressive convincing, Carmen takes the characters down to the Brazen Bull (mentioned in Canto I). The Giovanni strokes the bronze bull statue and explains its history. They also tell of their older brother, Emmanuel, who fought against the Family Reunion. Carmen gathered the fractious bloodlines of the Clan of Death and made a show of cooking their shrieking sibling within the metal beast. "For they so loved their clan that they sacrificed their only brother."

and well preserved, the skin having attained a strange shade of green. They do not smell of rot, but of sweet, floral scents. Closer examination reveals a rainbow assortment of withered flower petals peeking through the sutured seems. Use the Mindless Corpse traits (see Cults of the Blood Gods, p. 208).

The corpse servants each carry a tray containing a severed head, which they dump into the pool of clear, but viscous liquid. Carmen then begins a ritual (the full description can be found in this book's opening fiction, "Revelations in the Water That Is Not Water"). If the characters stay to watch the entire ritual, they wake up, the following dusk, in their place of lodging with no memory of how they got there. The last thing they remember is the stone domed ceiling vanishing, becoming a swirling, starless sky.

their own devices. They have just under a week before they must present their findings to the city's Kindred. They must split that time between sleuthing and working the politics of the city to ensure they navigate the hidden politics unscathed.

The Florentine Elite

Carmen Giovanni suggests the coterie talks to the more important vampires of Florence and is happy to make introductions and set up appointments. Some of these Kindred reach out to the coterie themselves. They're all so fascinated with the characters now. Having so many Cainites interested in you, all at once, is never a healthy thing.

The Gastronome

Ravinder Narula, the Nagaraja representative on the Council of Florence, invites the coterie to dine with him at his lavish apartment nestled in the labyrinth of alleys and artisan shops of the Oltrarno quarter. A mute ghoul servant, with massive scars across his throat, admits the characters inside and shows them to an opulent dining room. Ravinder, attired in a smoking jacket, sits at the head of a great table. A half-dozen mortals also sit at the table. Seeing the characters, Ravinder smiles, showing his many sharp teeth, and says, "Leave us," and the mortals obey, shuffling out. The characters vaguely recognize the humans as being celebrities and the elite. They are part of Ravinder's small, but global cult of powerful epicureans in search of forbidden experiences, from gourmet delights to pleasures more esoteric.

With the coterie seated, the mute ghoul lays out a decadent feast. The food is so exquisitely prepared and presented, it takes some time to notice much of it is human. Not every morsel on the table is of cannibalistic fare, and Ravinder takes exaggerated showmanship in the ritual of eating an ortolan bird and describing its preparation, the details of which can be found in the opening fiction of this book, "Revelations in the Water That is Not Water".

Unless characters possess the Eat Food Merit or the Organovore Flaw, they must follow the normal rules for feeding on solid food if they

Canto III: The Unusual Suspects

After investigating the site of the murder, the characters are left to

THEY FIGURED IT OUT TOO EARLY!

Depending on the details of the murder and the actions of the coterie, they could learn the truth early in the story. They might find just the right clues at the scene of the crime. The murderer could attack them or even approach them for help. When and if the players solve the murder, the tension shifts from the mystery to the complicated problem of living with the danger of possessing this truth.

wish to participate in the dinner (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 236). Without such a Merit or Flaw, a vampire witnessing Ravinder's gory mastication must succeed in a Stamina + Composure test (Difficulty 2) just to remain at the table. Anyone who remains at the table gains Ravinder's respect. Anyone who eats with him gains his affection.

If any characters complain of their inability to ingest the food provided, Ravinder leads them to a room filled with beeping hospital equipment. A sedated man lays unconscious on a stretcher, kept alive despite missing an unlikely amount of anatomy. "Don't worry, he is out of pain," says Ravinder. "Do feel free to sup upon him."

After dinner, Ravinder takes the coterie into a cozy study. Books and paraphernalia line the walls, all revolving around the subjects of gourmet cooking, the dining traditions of various cultures, cannibalism, and murder. The Nagaraja smokes from a large hookah with multiple hoses and mouthpieces, inviting the characters to join him. "The trick," Ravinder says, "is to summon the Blood to your lungs while holding the smoke inside." With practice and the Blush of Life, a character can feel the effects of the special blend, as colors intensify, lines blur away, and the world takes on an impressionistic tone. For the remainder of the night, the character receives a one-die penalty to all rolls involving manual dexterity and a one-die bonus to all rolls involving meditation, Insight, Occult, or the Oblivion and Blood Sorcery Disciplines.

If attacked, Ravinder uses Obfuscate to vanish while the mute ghoul sacrifices himself as a distraction. The coterie must now live with the paranoia of knowing an expert in murder is out there, perhaps desiring revenger. Should the characters investigate Ravinder's kitchen, various bits of animal and human anatomy animate, surging out of the walk-in

refrigerator to attack. Use the Hominular Servant traits (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 210).

WHAT RAVINDER WANTS

"I do believe everyone enjoys a good murder, provided they are not the victim." Besides the gastronomical arts, Ravinder is an expert in the theory and practice of murder. He has encyclopedic knowledge of the history of murder, the study of serial killers, forensic theory, and other such subjects and is delighted to talk of these things at length.

Ravinder is ravenous for knowledge about the murder of Ugolino Giovanni and Zohreh. He wants detailed descriptions of everything at the scene of the crime and photos if possible. He asks the characters their theories and if they've talked to anyone else in the city.

The Nagaraja delights in putting his keen mind to the puzzle, pointing out details the coterie might have missed. It's quite possible he's solved the crime by the end of his conversation with the characters, though he is loath to just hand them the answer. That is no way to play the game. He could be convinced to solve the crime for the coterie, for a price. If he does so, or if the characters have figured it out, he tells them their troubles have only begun. "The truth is far too immense a burden for you, my friends. I calculate you will discover this all too soon."

IF RAVINDER IS THE MURDERER

Ravinder's attitudes are exactly the same if he's the murderer. He killed his fellow Hecata for the pure academic thrill. Florence is an intricate wind-up mystery box, and the Nagaraja set it all in motion with a perfect murder. Fascinated with how the city reacts to this and to the coterie's investigation, he probes the characters with conversation.

If the characters figure out it was him and confront him on it, Ravinder

claps. "You had my interest," he says. "Now you have my respect!" Ravinder does not attack the characters unless attacked himself. He takes no action to convince the coterie of what to do with this knowledge. He rightly suspects Carmen Giovanni does not want an official conclusion that includes a Hecata murderer.

With his ability to become invisible to wraiths, Ravinder is the only Hecata, other than Hel-Blár, willing to brave the Shadowlands of Florence. He bound the wraith of Hugo Giovanni and placed it somewhere in the Underworld. Alternatively, if someone else is the murderer, Ravinder makes a fine co-conspirator, hiding Hugo's soul away so that anyone investigating must solve the crime the old-fashioned way. Whether the murderer or not, Ravinder makes a good potential ally to craft a scapegoat to take the fall for the killing.

The Gardener

Jinno Hatsumi, the Lamiae representative on the Council of Florence, agrees to meet the coterie at Boboli Gardens. Designed by the Medici, the historic garden opened to the public in 1766 as the quintessential "Italian Garden" which would become the model for many European courts. An open-air museum, the garden showcases large fountains, caves, ancient and Renaissance statues, and the Buontalenti grotto. It is secretly a Bahari garden and hub of the Lilith cult of Florence. It is said there are Kindred buried in torpor on these grounds, which gives the plants unnatural life.

The coterie arrives after hours to an empty and quiet garden. Hatsumi receives them and shows them around. She clearly takes pride in the garden. "So much of our existence centers around death," she says. "I like to grow things. I have a green thumb and a black."

If combat breaks out, the plant

life of the entire garden defends Hatsumi as if under the effects of the Ritual Coax the Garden (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 55). If a battle against the solitary Hatsumi seems too simple for the Storyteller, they should consider adding further Bahari with similar traits to the Lamia.

WHAT HATSUMI WANTS

Above all, Hatsumi wants to keep the peace in Florence. The embarrassment of losing two prominent Hecata in her city sets her in a foul mood. She resents Carmen assigning a group of whelps the job of investigating this high-profile crime. The opposed tension of finding the true murderer and maintaining the delicate union of the Hecata has her on edge.

IF HATSUMI IS THE MURDERER

Hatsumi's loyalty to her cult eclipses all other ties, even to clan and city. Zohreh and Ugolino Giovanni did something terrible to the Bahari, and Hatsumi paid them in kind. She would rather not kill the neonates but will to defend her cult. She might even try to recruit them or bury them in the garden until they see things her way.

The Mambo

Ghede L'Oraille, the Samedi representative on the Council of Florence, agrees to meet the coterie. The provided address leads to a dive bar at the edge of town with a wooden sign so decayed, the name is no longer legible. The handful of mortals drinking in the near-dark inside point the characters to the basement. Descending the rickety steps, the coterie hears the voices and raucous laughter of a sizeable party.

At the bottom of the stairs, characters discover a barren, dirt-floored basement occupied only by Ghede L'Oraille and the multitude of wraiths she's invited to inhabit her

body. The Samedi writhes, sliding along the ceiling as though gravity has reversed. She speaks in multiple voices and languages, shouting and laughing in ecstatic tongues. Any liquid spilled in this room flows up the walls and pool on the ceiling.

"Brave revels for one, brave orgy for one!"

Ghede eventually falls to the floor, instantly rising and saying, "Let's go out!" She tops off from her cultists upstairs, inviting any characters who desire to feed. The blood of the cultists is tinged with alcohol and possibly other substances, use the rules for "Tainted Blood" (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 310).

Ghede L'Oraille takes the coterie to La Specola, the largest and best-known wax anatomical collection and part of the Museum of Natural History in Florence. La Specola is the oldest public museum in Europe, first opening in 1775. The museum is closed, but Ghede has special access. She excitedly shows the coterie such sights as a taxidermized form of a hippopotamus the Medici family kept in their garden and the extraordinarily realistic wax models of humans and entrails. She points out gutted wax women depicted in semi-erotic poses saying, "Those were the favorites of the Marquis de Sade."

In the basement of the museum, Ghede is happy to answer questions regarding Florence, spirits, or necromancy. She suspects someone has bound the ghost of Hugo Giovanni somewhere in the Shadowlands. She also lets spirits enter her body and speak through her, giving their perspectives and clues.

Ghede warns the coterie that a dark and powerful twined spirit stalks them. Performing a ritual to contact this spirit, she suddenly speaks ancient Italian, in two voices. Possessed by the Hungry Gestalt, Ghede momentarily attacks the coterie before casting the spirit out and apologizing.

Ghede L'Oraille is beloved by the dead. If ever attacked, wraiths come to her aid without needing to be compelled. Enemies of Ghede must contend with endless harassment by ghosts and with her mortal cult who worship her as the loa of her namesake.

WHAT GHEDE WANTS

Above all, Ghede L'Oraille acts as an advocate of the dead. She does not like the way many of the Hecata treat wraiths and will help them get their justice. Her inebriation is largely an exaggerated persona she uses to make others underestimate her.

IF GHEDE IS THE MURDERER

The Hecta in general, and the Giovanni in particular, have mistreated the souls of the dead for millennia. The Clan of Death must be dismantled and rebuilt into a cult that treats wraiths more equitably. Ghede L'Oraille began this process with the deaths of Zohreh and Ugolino. She may have done this by creating or directing the Hungry Gestalt. If the coterie can be made to see the necessity of her actions, she will try to recruit them.

The Little Deaths

These twin Harbingers of Ashur find and surprise the coterie while they are about their business. They may shadow and stalk the characters on several occasions, using coercion, intimidation, and even violence to get what they want.

If combat should occur, the Little Deaths may bolster their numbers with Aggressive Corpses (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 212) or younger Harbinger Kindred (use the Kindred Ruffian traits on p. 167).

WHAT THE LITTLE DEATHS WANT

The Little Deaths want the Giovanni to pay. The Family Reunion infuriated them, and they were

only pacified through the influence of their sire, Zohreh (herself a fierce enemy of the Giovanni). Her death was the last straw. They want the Giovanni purged from the Hecata. They seethe on the verge of frenzy at any given moment.

IF THE LITTLE DEATHS ARE THE MURDERERS

It was a crime of passion. How could their sire betray their bloodline and throw in with the Giovanni? In a moment of frenzy, the Little Deaths killed Zohreh and Ugolino. Later, with more calculation, they decided to use this event to kick off a final war with the Venetians.

The Weaver

Rinaldo Albizzi, the Camarilla representative on the Council of Florence, invites the coterie to see him at L'Antico Setificio Fiorentino. Tucked away in the historic San Frediano neighborhood, this silk factory was founded in 1786 and operates to this day.

A shop clerk ushers the characters through the storefront into the factory proper. The 19th century looms they pass are among the newer machines in the building. On the other side, character meet Rinaldo, who meticulously weaves silk on an older machine.

“This device dates back to the late 17th century,” he says. “Built according to the designs of the old maestro himself, Da Vinci. So much of Kindred existence employs the art of mouth and mind. It’s important to master something with your hands, no? Every strand in its place.”

Rinaldo performs his painstaking work, one thread at a time, as he talks, delighted to speak with the neonates on the history and politics of Florence, as well as the current murder mystery. Should violence occur, the Lasombra is aided by fellow Camarilla vampires. Use the Kindred

Ruffian traits on p. 167 (these Kindred can be of any Camarilla clan).

WHAT RINALDO WANTS

Despite the appearance of Hecata power in Florence, Rinaldo knows they are a hair’s breadth from devouring each other. They only need a push. The recent murders are the opportunity he’s awaited. The conclusions of the investigation must lead to Hecata infighting. They must not offer an outside threat the brings the Clan of Death closer together. Rinaldo is ruthless in getting what he wants.

The Magister does not wish to eliminate the Hecata. As a small family, they offer a useful contribution to Florentine society. As a large clan in a leadership position, they are a danger to themselves and the rest of the Kindred. Rinaldo tries to impress this upon the coterie, even if they include Hecata neonates.

“Understand, I bear no ill will to our Hecata cousins,” he says. “They have my understanding and respect. They are, however, a flawed tapestry. Their ancient wounds fester under bloated civility. Better to lance it now than to see it burst later. Better to pluck the loose thread—”

Here, Rinaldo makes a mistake in his silk weaving. He takes a moment to master his frustration and continues, “My apologies. I despise mixed metaphors and expect better of myself. In any case, the Hecata are forever a part of this city, but they should not rule. Better for even tempers and institutions to take the lead. Otherwise, their family turmoil dooms us all.”

IF RINALDO IS THE MURDERER

Taking the initiative, Rinaldo sets the dominos in motion by committing the murder. He takes steps to create the narrative of a Hecata killer. He uses a necromancer accomplice (possibly Ravinder Narula) to bind the soul of Hugo Giovanni so that no one can question the wraith.

The Perfumer

Francesca da Rimini, Toreador, agrees to meet the coterie at Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella. This 600-year-old perfume shop and pharmacy once sold apothecary treatments for the Black Plague. Entering the shop envelops characters in scents of flowers and spices. Elaborate chandeliers, rich drapes, and centuries-old furniture decorate the space. A shop clerk shows the coterie into a back room.

Francesca greets the coterie saying, “Welcome to my little laboratory.” She enthusiastically shows the characters around and talks of the art of perfume making. Endless shelves contain jars and containers of scents and ingredients, some of which stretch into the realm of the esoteric. Several large glass containers contain human body parts suspended in a fluid. Francesca brags of seducing necromancers into teaching her the rudiments of their arts, just enough to devise a way to instill the essence of people into her scents.

Francesca keeps a few preternatural perfumes on hand that she sells to Kindred for favors. These can have any strange effect the Storyteller desires, including:

- Allowing a vampire to relive a potent emotion as though alive (highly sought after by elders with dwindling Humanity), healing one level of Superficial Willpower damage.
- Grants the vampire one bonus die on Presence dice pools for the night.
- Grants the wearer a one-die bonus to social roles with wraiths for the night (with the side effect of attracting the attention of wraiths for that period of time).

Francesca is eager for a character to ask her how she accomplishes her special art. With little prompting,

she says, "Why don't I demonstrate?" Here, the Toreador pulls a small curtain obscuring a box, revealing a form sitting in an office chair. Missing both legs and one arm, this living torso is completely covered in a form-fitting PVC bodysuit. A latex mask covers the entire face except for an opening that reveals one eye.

This one-armed figure is an unfortunate thin-blood, fully bound and dominated by Francesca. The Degenerate wheels the Duskblood over to a worktable. She whispers to the Duskblood, directing them. Through a fusion of thin-blood Alchemy and her own arts, the supernal scents are created.

"Understand that I am the creator," says Francesca who then indicates the Duskblood, "And this is my instrument. Would you praise the brush or the artist? The surgeon or the scalpel. Well ... to be fair, it is a lovely scalpel."

If asked about the origin of the unfortunate Duskblood, Francesca only says, "Hate is such a pedestrian revenge. Now love ... Love is far thornier." At this, she coos and caresses the Duskblood who nuzzles her back making indecipherable, muffled sounds.

If attacked, the Toreador moves at great speed, smashing particular bottles which fill the room with noxious, obscuring smoke, aiding her escape.

WHAT FRANCESCA WANTS

Francesca wants the salacious details of the fallout from the murder, and its social impact on the Florentine Kindred, more than the actual details of the case. She wants to know everything about the Hecata the coterie will tell her, and she's particularly interested in how Ugolino Giovanni suffered and died.

IF FRANCESCA IS THE MURDERER

Scorned by her former lover, Francesca murdered Ugolino or had him murdered. Zohreh was either

collateral or a red herring. Rinaldo Albizzi was at first furious at this stunt, but then convinced Francesca to be a co-conspirator in a plot to use these deaths to put a wedge between the newly formed Hecata. To that end, Francesca convinced another necromancer to hide away the soul of the dead ghoul Hugo.

The Foreign Prince

Roger de Camden, Prince of Edinburgh, agrees to meet the coterie at the Museo Galileo. Though it is after hours, the characters are admitted inside. The ancient Hecata stands alone in the museum, gazing into a glass case containing the middle finger of Galileo.

Without looking up, de Camden says, "It's funny. In life, the Inquisition condemned Galileo Galilei as a heretic, yet this spec of his anatomy is given the worshipful homage normally reserved for a saintly relic. Perhaps he's only giving the church the middle finger. Leonardo da Vinci is known for his paintings, but he was also quite the skilled anatomist. By his own count, he dissected thirty cadavers in the pursuit of knowledge. That I can respect. Now, little neonates, tell me, how goes your dissection of this murder mystery?"

WHAT DE CAMDEN WANTS

It's hard to get a reading of what de Camden wants or who he sides with. He happily runs through the possibility of each and every Florentine Kindred as the murderer, giving the strongest argument to each hypothesis without handing the coterie any definitive conclusion.

IF DE CAMDEN IS THE MURDERER

Roger de Camden killed his fellow Hecata for the reasons given in the Prologue. Even if he is not the murderer, he may try and sway the investigation in that direction if things look bad for Hecata unification.

The Priest

If the coterie seeks out Tommaso Sforza, skip to "A Favor for a Priest" in Canto IV.

WHAT TOMMASO WANTS

Tommaso desires to continue his work as a priest, and stay away from Kindred politics as much as he can.

IF TOMMASO IS THE MURDERER

Zohreh and Ugolino Giovanni did profane things to the spirits of the dead (perhaps including the creation of the Hungry Gestalt), even by the standards of the Hecata. Tommaso brought divine justice upon their heads. If confronted, the vampire priest shrugs and says, "They had out-Heroded Herod and renounced their existence."

Other Encounters in Florence

Other encounters can occur as the coterie explores the knotted streets and plots of Florence. A few possibilities are offered here.

Intimidation

The Florentine Kindred often use honeyed words, but outside of the parties and halls of power, things take a more vicious turn. The interested parties and powers that be in the city all want the coterie to come to different conclusions for the investigation, and they are willing to play dirty to get those results.

KINDRED MUSCLE

Younger vampires pay the coterie a visit. Their goal is to intimidate the characters to fall in line with the wishes of their masters, whether that is to desist with the investigation or to skew said investigation in the desired direction. These Kindred may use their

words, outright violence, or simply stand eerily outside the characters' window to get their message across. Use the Kindred Ruffian traits on p. 167.

THE DISPLEASURE OF THE DEAD

The coterie may run afoul of the denizens of the Shadowlands. Displeased necromancers may send terrible things to haunt the coterie, or the characters may have the misfortune of suffering the random spillover of the calamity currently taking place in the Underworld. Wraiths and violent cadavers may harass them. The Storyteller should use the suggested encounters in the "Creeping Dread" section of the Prologue for inspiration. Alternatively, a character finds a severed human or animal head in their lodgings, screaming threats and instructions on the behalf of an angry necromancer.

The Hungry Gestalt is Out There

Whether it is the murderer, the directed murder weapon, or simply a

complication spat up by an uncaring Underworld, the Hungry Gestalt is out there. This spectral abomination is an available tool for the Storyteller to inject tension or horrific confrontations as needed. If the coterie does not opt to enter the Shadowlands in the pursuit of the truth in Canto VI, a battle or ritual struggle against the Hungry Gestalt serves as a fine climactic encounter.

Political Danse Macabre

It should dawn on the coterie that discovering the truth is not a protection but a liability. They require support to shield themselves from the Florentine Kindred displeased by the outcome. The coterie might even abandon the investigation in order to court allies and patrons. This likely leads to more clandestine meetings, favors, side missions, actions against the rivals of would-be patrons, witnessing more dark rituals, and even joining one or more of the cults of Florence. This nightmare sandbox is for the characters. They may as well enjoy playing in it before it swallows them up.

Canto IV: The Underworld

On a long enough stretch, all roads lead to the Shadowlands. The hunt for the truth of the Hecata murders leads to the ghost of Hugo Giovanni, the slain ghoul of Ugolino. In a city of necromancers, "dead men tell no tales" is a lie. The Hecata of Florence suspect Hugo's soul is bound and locked up in the Shadowlands. They tell the coterie that the only vampire who braves the Underworld these nights is Hel-Blár.

A Deal with Hel

Among the vampires of Florence there are none willing to take the coterie to Hel-Blár nor even to set up the meeting. They will, however, offer an address. The characters must procure a vehicle and take a night drive. A lonely road leads to a dilapidated catholic church outside of the city. The leaning structure threatens to topple.



Rot and desolation hold dominion within. Feeble candlelight plays off grimy stained-glass windows. Water from a recent rain slowly drips through the many holes in the roof. Every crumbling statue, angel and saint, is painted so that half of the face shows the white of stone and the other half blue. A dozen mortal cultists pray, paying the coterie little attention. Dozens of offerings – mostly cats, dogs, and goats – dangle, in various states of decay, from nooses strung through the rafters.

A chill wind blows through the drafty building, extinguishing the light. The cultists relight the candles, revealing the presence of Hel-Blár. The ancient Cappadocian perches on the broken altar like a great bird. Her cultists drop to the floor in supplication as she lifts her moldering veils, revealing her face. Half is pale and lovely. Half is a rictus skull barely fleshed with skin of the death-blue hue of her namesake.

Hel-Blár speaks directly into the characters' heads, in a voice that makes them shudder with its tectonic grinding, saying, "Who enters this abode of sighs?"

Should the coterie mention Hugo Giovanni and a trek into the Shadowlands to question him, Hel-Blár confirms this is within her power. She agrees to take the coterie across the Shroud and be their guide, if they first pay her price.

"Below the Crypt of Santa Reparata, rests a shriveled heart in a reliquary," Hel-Blár says into the minds of the coterie. "Bring it to me." She then projects the image of a cracked mosaic floor into the characters' heads.

"Beware the Catacomb Saints," she adds, making the sign of the cross over her chest. "Expect destruction, unless you find the answers to their challenge from Tommaso Sforza."

The player characters may not wish to track down Sforza and find out this information. If not, Hel-Blár should mock them for their

THE HOLY CADAVERS

During the 16th century, a labyrinth of catacombs was discovered beneath Rome, containing thousands of skeletal remains presumed to be early Christian martyrs. The Catholic Church commissioned artisans to reassemble the cadavers and adorn them in gold, jewels, and rich fabrics. These "catacomb saints" were sent to the Catholic churches of German-speaking Europe to replace the holy relics lost during the Protestant Reformation. None among the Kindred know who seized three of these holy corpses and hid them in a crypt in Florence.

arrogance and repeat that at least one of them will meet final death if they do not, or if they cannot tap into their own faith to defeat them. The characters shouldn't be punished if they wish to make the journey without advice. If they venture on without consulting Sforza, the puzzle in the following section shouldn't be unsolvable, and the Storyteller should reward inventive action on the part of the players.

If the player characters do return to Sforza, he's as genial as usual, but unprepared to give up such precious information freely, requiring the player characters lose two dots of Resources between them for the remainder of the chronicle. He uses the money or gifts to feather his own nest and improve his standing among Florentine Kindred. With payment rendered (or promised), Sforza takes them through the ceremony required to pacify the Catacomb Saints.

The Catacomb Saints

A series of excavations beneath the Florence Cathedral, between 1965 and 1973, revealed the much more ancient basilica of Santa Reparata, a structure of extreme importance to the early Christians of Florence. Public tours are offered, but not after hours. The coterie must sneak into crypt or otherwise convince the night guard to let them in.

Once in the crypt, a successful Resolve + Awareness roll (Difficulty 4) allows a character to locate the cracked floor mosaic Hel-Blár projected into their mind. A Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 5) breaks through the tiles, revealing a hole to a hidden sublevel.

Down Below

Down the hole, stone handholds in the wall make the ten-foot descent an easy climb. The room below is pitch black. A light source, or supernatural perception, reveals twenty-foot by twenty-foot room carved in stone. On the far end of the room, upon a stone podium, rests a reliquary of silver and gold, about the size of a small lantern, containing a withered heart. Between the characters and the reliquary repose three Catacomb Saints (see traits on p. 167). Each of these resplendent corpses is expertly assembled and encrusted with jewels, precious metals, and royal clothing. Each holds a raised chalice. Two of the Catacomb Saints stand, and one lays reclining on a stone slab. Should any vampires of Humanity 6 or lower try to walk past the cadavers, they animate, raise a holy symbol, and activate their True Faith against the low Humanity Kindred.

DEACTIVATING THE SAINTS

A vampire is unlikely to bypass the True Faith of the Catacomb Saints unless they possess high Humanity. Sforza's advice from earlier was that a vampire must bleed (one



Rouse Check worth of *vitae*) into the chalice of a saint while chanting, “*Gustáte et videte*” (Latin for “taste and see”). Said chalice invisibly empties itself, and that Catacomb Saint is rendered inert for the scene. Once all three saints are appeased in this way, the coterie is free to take the reliquary heart desired by Hel-Blár. As previously mentioned, the Storyteller should reward innovative methods the players come up with, as well.

A Favor for a Priest

This scene can occur later in the story or early on. The coterie might seek Tommaso Sforza out to question him about the murder or he might seek them out. Should the coterie

complain of their troubles with the Catacomb Saints, other Florentine Kindred likely direct them to make use of Tommaso’s expertise.

Tommaso proves congenial company, happy for the conversation. Eventually, he asks the characters for a favor. The Shadowlands of Florence rage with spectral storms, and unclean things come out of the underworld to torment the living. The vampire priest does his best to mitigate the suffering this causes the mortals. However, he requires aid on a particularly nasty exorcism.

The Exorcism

Tommaso takes the coterie to set of apartments in a residential area,

explaining that a tormented family lives on the second floor. From the street, the characters hear weeping and prayers and otherworldly voices shrieking blasphemies in ancient dialects of Italian. From his satchel, Tommaso removes an occult artifact called a Hand of Glory – the severed hand of a hanged thief, coated in wax made from the dead man’s tallow.

“A grotesque implement of my beneficial trade,” the vampire priest explains.

Tommaso concentrates, and the wick extending from each finger of the mummified hand lights in candle flame. The weeping and prayers inside cease, but not the enraged voices.

“The others are sleeping now,” Tommaso says.



Inside, several mortals slumber throughout the apartment. A locked door leads to a small bedroom containing an old woman possessed by six violent spectres. Her ragged hair sways as though she is underwater. Her rolled-up eyes show solid white. Her finger and toenails are broken and bloody. The room reeks of every possible bodily fluid.

Once the door is opened, things happen quickly. Tommaso speaks invocations, beginning a ritual of abjuration, as he holds up the Hand of Glory. The five finger candle flames burn brighter with an unnatural blue illumination. Tommaso must acquire 25 successes on an extended test, rolling Charisma + Occult every round. Levels of damage received subtract

from the total successes. When the necessary successes are achieved, a tiny window to the Shadowlands opens, sucking the spectres back whence they came.

The spectres do everything they can to disrupt the ritual. One spectre remains in possession of the old woman and uses her body to attack Tommaso. The other five leave the body and use their powers to cause harm. Tommaso needs the coterie to protect him while he performs the ceremony, attacking the wraiths or otherwise shielding him (use any of the wraiths from *The Family*, p. 74, with the same abilities, though they're more likely to throw ornaments, lit candles, and fire than pieces of industrial machinery in this story). Characters with dots in Occult, Oblivion, or Blood Sorcery may join in the ceremony (adding an extra die to the pool for each additional participant).

Into the Shadowlands

Once the coterie returns to the decaying church and gives the reliquary heart to Hel-Blár, she agrees to guide them through the Shadowlands on the perilous journey to Hugo Giovanni. The death goddess points to one of her cultists, who reacts with joy, voluntarily hanging himself from the same rafters as the animal sacrifices, maintaining an ecstatic smile the entire time.

As the supplicant asphyxiates, Hel-Blár slices them with a scalpel from sternum to pelvis, showering blood onto a white sheet placed below the hanging cultist. She performs Split the Shroud (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 213), slicing the bloody sheet at the conclusion of the Ceremony. She then reads the entrails of the dead cultist.

Satisfied, Hel-Blár invokes another Ceremony, Ex Nihilo (see *Cults of the*

EXORCIST ALTERNATIVES

Alternate ways to use this scene include:

- Rather than the six spectres, Tommaso needs help banishing/destroying the Hungry Gestalt. If Tommaso murdered Zoreh and Ugolino, he may have done so because they summoned or created the abomination.
- The coterie could use the boon they earn from Tommaso to enlist his help in defeating the Hungry Gestalt if that's one of their goals.

Blood Gods, p. 213). She ritually raises a knife and a clay bowl. The cultists chant, “With the knife called ‘Famine’ she fills the bowl called ‘Hunger.’ Yet it is never full. It is never full!”

Hel-Blár cuts herself with the knife, bleeding into the bowl. Cultists hand each of the characters two dirty pennies and a wooden mask baring the stylized likeness of Hel-Blár, bisected with white and blue. Once the characters don their masks, Hel-Blár yanks off their footwear and anoints their feet in her own blood with icy hands.

At the climax of the ritual, Hel-Blár speaks into the characters’ heads saying, “Now we descend into the sightless zone. Now we descend into greater wretchedness.”

With that, Hel-Blár steps onto the sliced, bloody sheet, falling impossibly through the floor as if the spot was a gory, wet aperture. A voice in the characters’ minds shouts, “Follow fast and follow faster!” Should any character hesitate, monstrous hands yank them in.

A Walk in the Underworld

On this side of the veil, Hel-Blár is even taller and more monstrous.

Ghostly faces press out against the gossamer fabric covering her midsection. She holds a great lantern of dull metal that emits a baleful green light. Once in the Shadowlands, Hel-Blár makes her slow trek into the necropolis of Florence. She is not a forgiving guide, and the coterie must keep up or become forever lost.

Use the rules for moving through the Shadowlands in *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 215. The Shadowlands of Florence prove particularly dangerous. Violent storms rage, and the dead shades gnash with aggression. The cityscape writhes in a phantasmagoric blend of all the alleys and architecture that ever existed there, buildings growing and shrinking with the motion of carnivorous plants. Strange angles form an expressionist nightmare. Hungry doors lead to Oblivion. Up is not always up, nor down always down.

Hel-Blár's lantern lights the way and keeps the worst of the wraiths at bay. Angry souls try to lure the characters from the light, and some break through to attack. Use the traits for spectres (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 377) as well as the other wraith types found in *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 216. Among the teeming dead are the victims of vampire feedings. These ghosts sport puncture marks where bitten, the holes oozing angry fumes of plasma. Their mouths gape like lampreys. These angry dead use the same traits as their appropriate wraith type, only their feeding attacks gain a bonus die and deal a bonus level of Aggravated Willpower damage. If the Hungry Gestalt has not been dealt with, it may attack during this journey. If the murderer has control over the Hungry Gestalt, they may send it to guard Hugo.

Should the coterie make it to the wraith of Hugo Giovanni, they find him chained to a wall. For his freedom, he gladly shares everything that he witnessed on the night of his murder.

Canto V: Murder Theatre

One week after the masked ball, the Florentine Kindred gather again in the same ballroom in the Palazzo Pitti. The costumes are less garish, but the vampires are no less gregarious. The coterie has one last opportunity to make the rounds, socialize, and play the game of intrigue that could divert disaster. All of the refined monsters of Florence have one final opportunity to influence the characters. Offers are lavish. Threats are veiled, but no less pointed.

Eventually, Carmen Giovanni takes to a small stage, saying, "Florentines! You engorge my dead heart with pride. Lesser monsters would bow to the Beast, but

AN UNINVITED GUEST

If more action is desired for this scene, and the Hungry Gestalt is still around, it can make an appearance during this gathering, tearing into the room and creating a hole in the veil that other spectres surge through.

we have maintained the peace this last week. Now, our young, but talented sleuths have their findings to share. I give them the stage!"

The characters now have their chance to present whatever truth they choose, offering a simple answer or performing a lavish murder mystery reveal. They may back their case up with evidence, impassioned speech, or trickery. If Hugo's soul is free (and the coterie has access to Oblivion or a willing necromancer), they may summon him to give testimony.

It is possible the coterie will please some of the councilors. It is impossible to please them all. All reactions are hidden behind the armor of polite smiles. The peace in the ballroom is sacred. Once outside those walls, everything is fair game.

Epilogue

Whatever choices the coterie makes, they greatly affect what is to come for Florence. The Hecata might come closer together in the fallout of the murders, setting a tone for the clan in other domains. They coterie might just barely manage to keep the necromancers contented enough to keep their withering peace. The Hecata of Florence might tear itself apart, paving the way to Camarilla control. If they present their case well, they likely bring about the Final Death of the accused. The Storyteller must weigh the actions and results carefully.

GET OUT!

If *Old Wounds* is played as a one-shot, and the players don't mind their characters coming to horrible ends, the Storyteller can steer things to a fiendish conclusion. However well the characters pulled off their task, they've seen too much of the Cult of Death. Everyone is still polite and friendly, inviting the characters out to endless social gatherings, splitting them up. One by one they fall. Some die the final death. Some get planted in the Lilith garden. Some are forced into cults or suffer stranger fates. Maybe one even gets away...

It's likely the coterie made some enemies, but did they make enough friends? They might leave the city, if they are able to. They might stay and enjoy the pleasure of new patrons and the sting of new foes. They might even join a cult. Old Wounds can end here or setup a longer storyline that explores the aftermath. While the malefactors of intrigue come and go, Florence remains eternal.

Antagonist Traits

All murder mysteries should sport a motley cast of characters. Florence is all too happy to oblige.

Hecata Kindred

The Hecata of Florence are a family united, except when they are not.

CARMEN GIOVANNI

Clan: Hecata (Giovanni)

Sire: Anna Maria Giovanni

Embraced: 1833 (Born 1811)

Ambition: Maintain Hecata unity and supremacy in Florence

Convictions: Never display weakness to the enemy

Touchstones: Emilia Giovanni – Gifted artist and source of great joy

Humanity: 5

Generation: 7th

Blood Potency: 5

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3; Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 4; Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 8

Skills: Brawl 2, Craft (Sculpting) 2, Drive 1, Melee (Knife) 2, Stealth 3; Etiquette 4, Insight 4, Intimidation (Veiled Threats) 3, Leadership 4, Performance (Dance) 3, Persuasion 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 5; Academics (Art History) 3, Awareness 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult (Wraiths) 4, Politics 3, Science (Astronomy) 2

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Oblivion 4, Presence 3

General Difficulties: 7/5

JINNO HATSUMI

Clan: Hecata (Lamiae)

Sire: Sister Katherine

Embraced: 1919 (Born 1888)

Ambition: Protect my Bahari cult

Convictions: Suffer none to profane Lilith

Touchstones: Luca Bellezza – A gardener at Boboli Gardens

Humanity: 6

Generation: 10

Blood Potency: 3

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 8

Skills: Athletics (Throwing) 3, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Craft (Gardening) 3, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Larceny 1, Melee (Swords) 4, Stealth 3, Survival 1; Animal Ken 1, Etiquette 1, Insight 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1; Academics (Theology) 1, Awareness (Ambushes) 3, Investigation 2, Occult 2

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 1, Fortitude 3, Potence 3, Oblivion 2

General Difficulties: 5/4

GHÈDE L'ORAILLE

Clan: Hecata (Samedi)

Sire: Drowned Roger

Embraced: 1927 (Born 1898)

Ambition: To be the voice for the dead

Convictions: Heed the word of the loa

Touchstones: Mama Nancy – Mortal priestess in her cult

Humanity: 6

Generation: 9th

Blood Potency: 4

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl (Fight Dirty) 2, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Melee 1, Stealth 3, Survival

2; Animal Ken 2, Insight (Empathy) 4, Intimidation 2, Leadership 3, Performance (Violin) 2, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2; Awareness 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult (Ghosts) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 3, Oblivion 4

General Difficulties: 5/3

RAVINDER NARULA

Clan: Hecata (Nagaraja)

Sire: The Eater of Names

Embraced: 1947 (Born 1841)

Ambition: Experience a truly transcendental sensation

Convictions: Never harm an invited dinner guest

Touchstones: Yvette Allard – A chef

Humanity: 3

Generation: 8th

Blood Potency: 4

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 5; Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 9

Skills: Brawl 3, Craft (Cooking) 4, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Melee (Knives) 4, Stealth 4, Etiquette (Mealtimes) 3, Insight 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3; Academics (History of Serial Killers) 3, Awareness 1, Investigation 5, Medicine 3, Occult (Underworld) 4, Politics 1, Science (Biology) 1

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 3, Oblivion 4

Special: Ravinder can use Obfuscate to hide from wraiths.

General Difficulties: 6/4

TOMMASO SFORZA

Clan: Hecata (Rossellini)

Sire: Massimo Giovanni

Embraced: 1879 (Born 1847)

Ambition: Avoid the machinations of the Giovanni

Convictions: Protect the living from the dead and vice versa

Touchstones: Sibilla Costa – Bookish woman who works at an occult bookstore

Humanity: 7

Generation: 8th

Blood Potency: 3

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 8

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Larceny 1, Melee 2, Stealth (Crowds) 3; Insight 4, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3; Academics (World Religion) 4, Awareness 4, Investigation (Paranormal Mysteries) 3, Medicine 1, Occult (Exorcism) 4, Science (Mathematics) 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 1, Fortitude 1, Oblivion 4, Potence 1, Blood Sorcery 3

General Difficulties: 6/3

HEL-BLÁR

Clan: Hecata (Harbingers of Ashur)

Sire: Unknown

Embraced: Unknown

Ambition: Infuse my divine influence on this earth through my cult

Convictions: None

Touchstones: None

Humanity: 4

Generation: 6th

Blood Potency: 7

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Charisma 5, Manipulation 2, Composure 5; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 10

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Kindred) 4, Craft (Runes) 2, Melee 4, Stealth 4, Survival 2; Insight 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 1; Academics (Norse History) 3, Awareness 4, Investigation 3, Medicine (Dissection) 2, Occult (Underworld) 5

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 1, Oblivion 5, Potence 2

General Difficulties: 7/5

MARIANNA GIOVANNI

Clan: Hecata (Harbingers of Ashur)

Sire: Claudio Giovanni

Embraced: 1444 (Born 1421)

Ambition: Make the Giovanni pay

Convictions: None

Touchstones: None

Humanity: 6

Generation: 6th

Blood Potency: 5

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 4; Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 8

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Kindred) 3, Larceny 2, Melee 4, Stealth 4, Survival 3; Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 3, Insight 4, Intimidation (Interrogation) 3, Performance (Singing) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Seduction) 4; Academics (European History) 4, Awareness 4, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult 5, Politics 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2, Obscure 2, Oblivion 4, Potence 2, Blood Sorcery 2

General Difficulties: 7/3

THE LITTLE DEATHS

Clan: Hecata (Harbingers of Ashur)

Sire: Zohreh

Embraced: 1979 (Born 1966)

Ambition: Cut the Giovanni out of the Hecata

Convictions: None

Touchstones: None

Humanity: 3

Generation: 9th

Blood Potency: 2

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Melee 3, Stealth 2; Intimidation 3, Streetwise 1, Sub-

terfuge 2; Academics 2, Awareness 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Fortitude 2, Oblivion 3, Celerity 2

Special: Both twins use the same traits. When working in concert, they receive a +1 do appropriate dice pools.

General Difficulties: 5/4

ROGER DE CAMDEN

Clan: Hecata (Harbingers of Ashur)

Sire: Constancia

Embraced: 731 (Born 695)

Ambition: I will return Mithras to glory

Convictions: Never show fear in the face of death

Touchstones: Nina Jones – His longtime ghoul

Humanity: 5

Generation: 5th (after Ritual of Transferring the Soul)

Blood Potency: 9

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4; Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Resolve 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 9

Skills: Athletics 3, Melee (Knives) 4; Etiquette 3, Insight 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership (Organization) 4, Persuasion 4; Academics (Philosophy) 5, Awareness 3, Occult 5, Politics (Camarilla) 4, Science 4

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Celerity 3, Dominate 3, Fortitude 5, Obscure 5, Oblivion 5, Presence 4

General Difficulties: 7/5

Camarilla Kindred

The Camarilla may have fallen out of power in Florence, but they are united and without all of the family baggage.

RINALDO ALBIZZI

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Angela Martelli

Embraced: 1899 (Born 1863)

Ambition: Return the Camarilla to power in Florence



Convictions: Never fail to admire and learn from the strengths of your enemy

Touchstones: Andrea Albizzi – A mortal descendant

Humanity: 5

Generation: 8th

Blood Potency: 4

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3; Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 4; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 8

Skills: Craft (Silk Weaving) 4, Melee (Swords) 3, Stealth 1; Animal Ken (Riding) 2, Etiquette 4, Insight 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 4, Persuasion 4, Subterfuge 5; Academics (Florentine History) 4, Awareness 2, Finance 1, Investigation 2, Occult 2, Politics (Camarilla) 4, Science (Mathematics) 2

Disciplines: Dominate 4, Oblivion 4, Potence 3, Presence 3

General Difficulties: 6/4

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

Clan: Toreador

Sire: Ysabel Cardoso

Embraced: 1881 (Born 1862)

Ambition: Addict the elders of the city to the nostalgia my perfumes give them

Convictions: Always pursue love above all other concerns

Touchstones: Hannah Meyer – A foreign music student who caught her ear

Humanity: 5

Generation: 7th

Blood Potency: 4

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 2; Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 3

Health 6, Willpower 5

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Craft (Perfume) 5, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Melee 3, Stealth 2; Etiquette 3, Insight (Desires) 3, Intimidation 1, Leadership 2, Persuasion 4, Subterfuge (Impeccable Lies) 4; Academics (Italian Literature) 2, Awareness 2, Occult 2, Politics 3, Science (Chemistry) 3

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 5, Dominate 1, Oblivion 1, Presence 4

General Difficulties: 6/3

Other Kindred

KINDRED RUFFIANS

Clan: Any

Humanity: 6

Generation: 10th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 6

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Larceny 2, Melee 3, Stealth 3; Intimidation 3, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1; Awareness 2, Investigation 1, Technology 2

Disciplines: Six dots spread out among their clan Disciplines.

General Difficulties: 4/3

Wraiths and Shambling Horrors

Terrible storms brew in the Shadowlands, pushing all manner of spectral and rotting horrors into the Skulldands.

THE HUNGRY GESTALT

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 7

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl (Kindred) 5, Drive 4, Melee 4, Stealth 5, Survival 2; Insight 2, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 2; Awareness 5, Investigation 1, Occult (Oblivion) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 3, Dominate 3, Obscure 2, Oblivion 4, Potence 5

Special: It is not possible to strike the Hungry Gestalt unless it takes solid form. Only dark magic or an exorcism performed by a priest or inquisitor can banish, destroy, or enslave the Hungry Gestalt. It possesses a mortal using a power equivalent mechanically to the Possession (Auspex-Dominate) power. The Hungry Gestalt uses Manipulation + Drive to control a possessed human into performing functions they would normally avoid. It uses Dexterity + Brawl to hurl objects telekinetically. The Hungry Gestalt uses Oblivion to form shadowy tendrils to attack with. All uses of Oblivion to control, bind, or banish the Hungry Gestalt are at a two-die penalty.

General Difficulties: 6/2

THE CATACOMB SAINTS

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 5; Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 10

Skills: Brawl (Kindred) 4, Melee 4; Intimidation (Holy Terror) 3; Awareness 3

Disciplines: True Faith 3

Special: Catacomb Saints take Superficial and Aggravated damage in the same way as vampires, except they are immune to sunlight. Damage mends itself, miraculously, after 24 hours. They cannot be mentally dominated or influenced. They do not need eyes or ears to perceive everything around them as someone with unimpeded vision and hearing might.

General Difficulties: 6/2



MK
2021



Loresheets, Powers, & Playable Characters

“Oh, there’s no need to whisper. If you think they can’t hear you, you’re tragically mistaken.”

— Roger de Camden, Prince of Edinburgh

Loresheets add distinct and often dramatic background elements to a character, expanding their past with events or relationships that can grant unique boons and abilities. While characters may only choose one Loresheet and one Bloodline, Storytellers may decide that ‘Descendant of’ Loresheets found here (and in *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 390-391) count as bloodlines for this purpose.

This chapter also contains new Oblivion ceremonies for use by vampires of necromantic persuasion. While Hecata and Lasombra Kindred are the most common wielders of Oblivion-based powers, some of these cer-

emonies and powers present in *Chicago by Night* and *Cults of the Blood Gods* can be at the core of a story, where rumors reach the protagonists of a Tremere who has dabbled in subjects forbidden to their line, or a Cai-tiff who has mysteriously developed the ability to dissolve flesh with a touch.

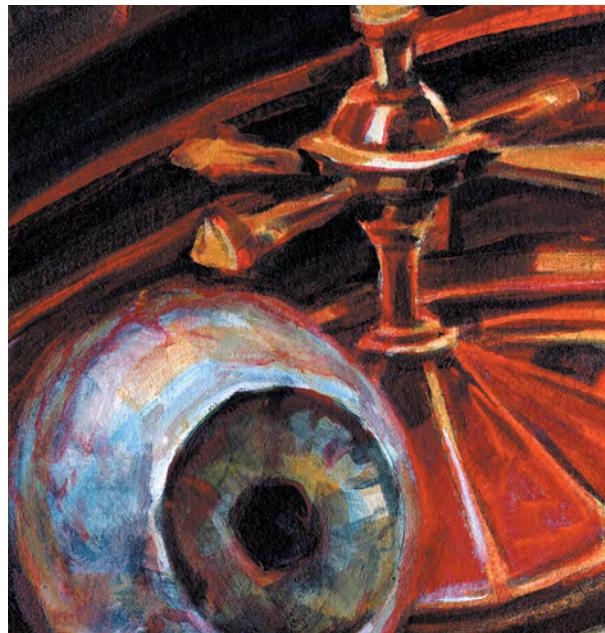
Consider the benefit of making Loresheets, Disciplines, rituals, and ceremonies mysterious, intriguing, and terrifying concepts in your stories, especially when delving into the little-known reaches of Kindred societies and religions.

THE RUBY THROAT

Atlantic City has a reputation to uphold, and for those who travel to the shore to toy with the fickle whims of lady luck, there's no reason that death need stop the fun. Originally established in the prohibition era as a member's only roulette club by a popular boardwalk dancing girl, the Ruby Throat became a den of powerful people wagering far more than money. Rumor has it a well-known sea facing hotel was won over a single roll one night at the Ruby Throat.

During the Second World War, the location the Ruby Throat operated out of was retrofitted into a factory. The founder, now a rich woman well past her dancing years, planned to happily retire and allow the club to fade into the shadows. A local Kindred named Edith Blumenau loved both her and the marvelous club she had built far too much to allow either to leave the city, and made both a permanent fixture of the boardwalk.

Note: The Ruby Throat is easily moved to any other city with a history of gambling or organized crime, and switches locations from opulent sites to flea-bitten dens.



LORE

• **Rubbing Shoulders:** You've sat at the table for a game or two at the Ruby Throat. You didn't win, but you picked up a little knowledge on the other Kindred round the table. By name-dropping a significant individual around the streets of Atlantic City, you gain one die on rolls to get into places or acquire information otherwise out of your league, but pick the wrong name and it's likely to get back to them.

•• **What's in your Sleeves:** Someone accused you of cheating at the Ruby Throat and you publicly put them in their place. You dealt with the situation so well, you were offered work as a bouncer. This role allows you a two dice bonus to all intimidate rolls when dealing with Kindred in the criminal scene, and you

can put names to faces of almost any Kindred who might frequent Atlantic City night spots.

••• **Chicken Dinner:** A hand went your way recently and you got your choice of coveted prizes. Once per story you gain a human vessel with a Dyscrasia of your choice, to feed from as desired. Unless specified, the Dyscrasia does not fade after use. You are responsible for this retainer for the time you use them, and if anything happens to them, you will owe the house significant reparations.

•••• **High Roller:** You've had a string of luck at the Ruby Throat that got attention, some even said it was unrealistic. Any existing Resources Background is increased by two (to a maximum of four), and you gain access to Herd (••) when-

ever you are within Atlantic City, each vessel has a resonance of your choosing. You also suffer the flaw Adversary (•), as a fellow Kindred thinks you're gaming the house.

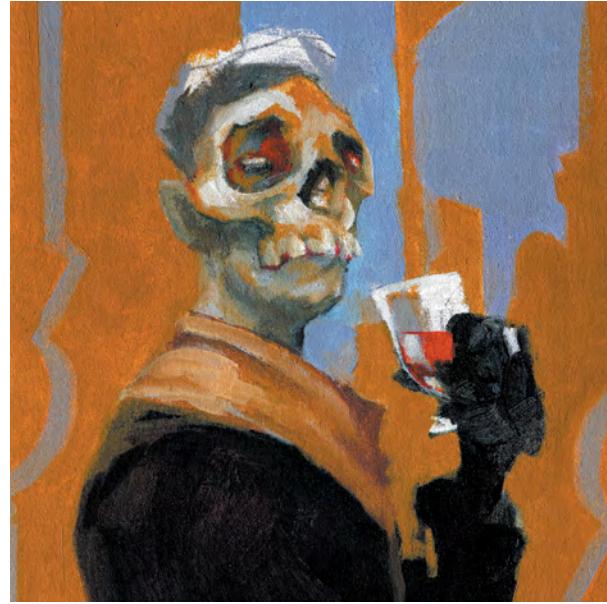
•••• **Dead Man's Hand:** You've been invited to play at the Johnson table, the highest risk game the Ruby Throat offers. The annual event draws spectators and is the talk of the Kindred underworld. The prizes of such an event are fabulously desirable and often unique. Winning or losing could be a matter of significant status gain, or terribly embarrassing loss. Word gets out about the players involved, and up until the game comes to pass, you benefit from Status (•••) among Kindred in Atlantic City and the ability to access any lesser games and gambits without a roll.

DESCENDANT OF ROGER DE CAMDEN

(HECATA CHARACTERS ONLY)

Few figures among the foundations of the Clan of Death are as ancient and enigmatic as Roger de Camden. Known by many names throughout history, the shadowy Kindred who now rules as Prince of Edinburgh has spent lifetimes studying and honing an intimate understanding of the boundaries between life and death.

A scholar, martyr, and a survivor, de Camden walked among the eldest Cappadocians, his powerful vitae resonating down through the centuries all the way to tonight's Hecata. To you. Whether through the boasts of your sire, or poring over a dusty book of names delivered to your haven, you have discovered that you are a descendant of Roger de Camden himself.



↔↔ LORE ↔↔

• **Proud Childe:** Your grandsire is among the most storied and respected of any to walk among the Clan of Death. While within any Hecata controlled domain, haven, or social gathering, you have two dots of Status (••).

•• **Corpse**: You follow in your ancestor's footsteps with a fascination and understanding of the deceased. You gain two dice to any pool for investigating the cause of injury or death of a body. At any time, if a nearby wraith chooses to, they can always communicate to you with ease.

••• **Eye to Eye:** Roger de Camden's relationship with the godlike Venttrue Mithras was deep, complex, and the gossip of generations. While the Blue

Bloods respect little outside their own clan, they recognize how significant de Camden was to the lonely unlife of one of their greatest. You receive a benefit of two dice to all pools for Persuasion or Intimidation actions when dealing with Kindred of Clan Venttrue, and careful mentions of your lineage could get you through doors non-Venttrue might normally never pass.

.... **The Way of all Flesh:** The bloodline of de Camden screams out to the spirits of the recently deceased, dragging them back to the physical realm long after they should have departed forever. You can perform the Embrace as normal on an old corpse so long as it has not rotted beyond recognition. This rebirth is far

more traumatic than usual, and the fledgling is deeply affected by whatever they experienced in their brief time between lives.

..... **Perchance to Dream:** Like your forefather before you, you are forever preoccupied with the world of the dead, their souls so close you can almost reach out to touch them. Occasionally during your daily rest, or indeed when lying in torpor, your spirit wanders into the Shadowlands (see **Cults of the Blood Gods**). What you may see there, or what wraiths may be drawn to your presence, is anyone's guess. If you are attacked while in the Shadowlands, you are immediately returned to your physical form, suffering one level of Superficial Willpower damage.

RELICS OF THE VEIL

When mortals speak of haunted rooms, of places where temperature drops and whispers tickle the senses, they are often unknowingly in the presence of a powerful fetter or relic connected closely to the realms of the dead.

In the hands of mortals or Kindred without the proper understanding, relics connecting those in the world of the living to those beyond the veil provide nothing more than a feeling of unease, but in the right hands they can be powerful talismans assisting those who deal in the power of Oblivion. Strange objects, some found in passing, some passed down through families and bloodlines over centuries, each one is connected somehow to the world beyond the veil, and brings with them the attentions of wraiths and other entities.



LORE

• Torn Shroud: This small fragment of torn material resembles a frail, semi-translucent shroud. It's cold to the touch, and the fibrous, fleshy nature of the material gives it a feeling of almost biological consistency. The shroud was of great importance to something once, and echoes of its old purpose remain. While holding the shroud, you gain one die to your pools to use any Oblivion Discipline. The shroud is delicate, and with constant use it simply dissolves to nothing.

• Burning Effigy: The origin of this odd little doll is unknown. You came across it by chance, and although it's made of nothing more than a jumble of sticks and colored string, something about it makes you think it looks a little like you. Once, you can ignite the doll and burn it to ashes. Upon waking next dusk, you heal up to two extra levels of Aggravated Health damage. Somewhere, possibly even a great distance away, this pain is felt by something else. After a story, you find the effigy in your haven untouched by flames.

• The Gaunt Robe: The plain gray robe has existed in your family for generations. Its origin is unclear, and the

thing is hardly worth holding onto. It's threadbare and falling apart, and needs careful care to keep together for much longer. When the robe is around your shoulders, it's oddly comforting, like being held closely. While wearing the robe, you can spend one Willpower point to gain two automatic successes in any roll to resist the abilities of wraiths. The robe is delicate, and must be taken care of to avoid being damaged beyond use.

.... The Nails of Dismus: Three of these 8 inch long, gnarled lengths of unidentifiable metal are known to exist, usually on display in a cathedral of the old world. Somehow you possess one of these coveted and cruel looking relics. They function as a light piercing weapon with a +2 damage value and can incapacitate a vampire as if it were made of wood. Any Kindred staked with the Nail of Dismus suffers a level of Aggravated Willpower damage at dawn every night they remain staked, as the nail drives their waking moments into constant visions of suffering and horror. The Nails of Dismus are known to be linked to an ancient and deeply hateful wraith.

..... Codex Caecitus: Bound in white flesh from a pig fed on human remains, this massive book is held shut with a locking brass latch. Page after page of the heavy tome is filled with maddened scrawling, nightmarish biological sketching, and blocks of seemingly incomprehensible text in an unknown cipher. Allegedly penned by a blind monk under the service of Cappadocius, the codex has been passed between monks and scholars for centuries, each of them seeking meaning in the yellow and cracking pages. Once per story the current owner can, after long hours of meditation over the book, decipher one of the hundreds of coded passages. The revelations contained therein could be any number of powerful secrets surrounding the realm of the dead, including the names of significant wraiths, the fetter of a particular wraith, or the knowledge of any chosen Oblivion ritual. If the codex is in the hands of a non-Hecata, the Necromancers aggressively seek to reclaim what they believe is rightfully theirs.



Oblivion Ceremonies

The following Oblivion ceremonies are common among those Kindred who find cause manipulating the inhabitants and substance of the Underworld.

Level 3

Fortezza Sindonica

A modern variation on a powerful Giovanni family warding spell, this Ceremony is kept strictly within the Hecata clan. Intended to severely disable or halt attacks or espionage from other necromancers, this ward pulls tight the veil in such a way that forces any wraith who attempts to cross it to become momentarily stretched between the worlds of the living and the dead.

Prerequisite Power: Where the Shroud Thins

Ingredients: Powdered bones, salt, an iron or silver chain long enough to encircle the desired area, the caster's vitae, a severed human finger, a metal basin.

Process: The steel chain is laid along the circumference of the desired area, meeting and leaving no gaps. Mixing the ingredients into the basin, the caster dips their hands into the mixture, coating up to the wrist,

and applies the mixture by hand along the chain at equidistant intervals. With a final sigil located in the center of the chain, the Ceremony is complete. Wraiths who attempt to cross the chain are dragged into a horrid momentary echo of physical form, often in states of torturous wailing terror. Wraiths so affected are temporarily visible to any casual onlooker, leading to terrifying tales of the appearance of screaming ghosts.

System: This Ceremony costs three Rouse Checks instead of the usual one, but the caster does not make their Ceremony roll until a wraith attempts to cross the chain, triggering its effect. This Ceremony is strongest when fresh, but lasts a year and a day after it's performed. If the ward is triggered more than seven days after it was performed, subtract two dice from their pool. The wraith rolls their Willpower in a contest against the caster and if the necromancer succeeds, they inflict torturous pain upon their victim. The wraith suffers three points of Superficial Health damage and can't enter the circle (or leave if it instead points inward). If trapped within the boundary, they lose two dice to all Willpower rolls and rolls to use their supernatural abilities. The other parameters of this warding Ceremony are identical to Blood Sorcery Warding circles (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 275).

If the wraith is possessing an individual or object when they cross the chain, the same effects apply, and the unlucky individual suffers 3 Superficial Willpower damage as the wraith is violently forced from them.

Knit the Veil

Using the knowledge gained from their mastery of the beyond, the necromancer is able to not only mend minor tears in the shroud, but seal shut any weakness, making the area impenetrable for the duration of the Ceremony.

Prerequisite Power: Where the Shroud Thins

Ingredients: Ground bones, an iron needle, cat gut thread, the caster's vitae, a goat tallow candle.

Process: The caster scatters the powdered bone around an area no larger than a football field to mark the boundary of this Ceremony. Then, they prepare the candle by piercing their flesh and passing the thread under their skin. Using the needle, they carve runes down the length of the candle and then wrap the thread around it until they pull it from under their skin. The candle may then be placed inside the boundary and lit, burning with a pale and unmoving flame that artificially thickens the Shroud around it with radiating, uncomfortable warmth.

System: When lighting the candle, the caster makes their Ceremony roll, subtracting one die from their pool for every wraith present within the boundary, on either side of the Shroud. Upon a win the Shroud density (see *Cults of the Blood Gods* p. 205) of the area becomes Impenetrable for as long as the candle burns. On a critical win, the Ceremony's duration is doubled and no being may spy across the Shroud. Undisturbed, it persists for as many nights as the caster has Oblivion dots. Another necromancer who attempts to Split the Shroud (see *Cults of the Blood Gods* p. 213) here must win against the caster's successes as a Difficulty, doing so ends this Ceremony and reduces the Shroud density as per that Ceremony.

Level 4

Death Rattle

This Ceremony allows the caster to inflict the full sensory experience of a chosen wraith's death upon a target.

Prerequisite Power: Fatal Precognition

Ingredients: A wraith's fetter, a personal item owned by the intended target (living or undead, but not another wraith), the caster's vitae, over proof rum, a black candle, a clay bowl large enough to hold the fetter and target's personal belonging.

Process: The caster must be in close proximity to the desired wraith in order to successfully complete the Ceremony, typically through the use of Summon Spirit. The fetter and target's possession are combined in the bowl along with the caster's vitae. The candle is held over the bowl and lit allowing the wax to drip into the contents of the bowl. The name of the wraith and the target are chanted repeatedly. As the wax melts, it forms a seal between the items inside of the bowl, creating a bridge between the wraith and the desired target. When this seal is broken, the rum ignites the possession of the target and they experience the death of the wraith.

System: The caster makes their Ceremony roll and the target contests with Composure + Resolve whether or not they know they're being targeted. On a win by the caster the victim experiences a vision of the wraith's death, with a higher margin leading to a more vivid experience. For example, one point of margin is enough for the target to have brief flashes of the moment, while five may cause the target's experience to be so vivid that they will be shocked to realize they're not dead afterwards. If the wraith died a violent death, this causes Superficial Willpower damage equal to the margin of the roll, but even a peaceful death inflicts one point as they experience the wraith's dying gasp. A critical win from the target rebounds this trauma back onto the necromancer, inflicting the margin as Superficial Willpower damage to them instead.

Be it a personal curiosity in death, to investigate the situation of a death first hand, or an attempt to gain a deep understanding of a particular wraith, the caster may wish to be the target of the Ceremony. They roll only against the normal Ceremony Difficulty, and the caster must open their mind to accept any resulting Willpower damage.

Ready-Made Characters

These characters are ready for player use straight out the box to jump into a *Vampire: The Masquerade* game. Storytellers may also find these characters useful as extra SPCs to flesh out your stories with fresh faces for your players to encounter or oppose.

CHRISTOPHER DEACON

Concept: Criminal, Lawyer

Quote: “No, that’s not how we’ll play this. Listen closely, here’s what you’re going to say...”

Clan: Hecata

MORTAL DAYS: THE GLASS CEILING

Christopher’s father drilled success into his son’s head from an early age. Crushing academic success across every level of education, Christopher maintained the belief that second best is swiftly forgotten. Not just an incredible mind, Christopher played the social game with a deft hand, forging strong friendships among the absolute best of his fellow students at Oxford.

By his early thirties, Christopher was not only a respected barrister, but he also regularly associated with the finest of British society. Be it dinner with celebrity clientele or skiing on the weekends with the old Bullingdon boys, Christopher was never left out.

When his rising fame became a detriment to the ego of power players in Christopher’s firm however, his strictly regimented personal ladder ground to a halt, finding himself passed over for promotions he was amply qualified for. Christopher sought greater allies and further mentorship to continue his rise.

Christopher knew it looked good to be seen at dinner with reps from a rival firm, and so when he was contacted by an American lawyer who’d allegedly known Christopher’s father-in-law at school, he responded positively. In the months that he and his benefactor spoke, Christopher discovered quite a rapport with his new mentor. The older man was a ruthless teacher, pushing Christopher with theoretical arguments, discussions on moral quandaries, questions on legal gray areas with no right answers. Christopher felt grilled by the man, forced out of thinking how he’d been taught in years of standard legal process, and he excelled at it. Invited to meet his mentor face to face, Christopher was picked up in a town car and chauffeured to a hotel bar. The man awaiting him there was younger



than expected, polite and cordial in a fine Italian suit, with the knowledge and sophistication of a man impeccably well versed in his career. Christopher was assured that he could learn a great deal from Arthur Milliner.

KINDRED NIGHTS: THE GLASS ELEVATOR

Christopher’s contemporaries were stunned when, after his meteoric career, the young barrister took leave of his position. It wasn’t unusual for a man in his prime to suddenly leave, citing emotional stress or the desire to start a family, but people had thought Christopher was in it for life.

Christopher found that the pursuit of power and knowledge he sought in mortal life was a joke compared to what could be acquired in death. His old friends boasting of kicking their feet up in Downing Street for a few years seemed puerile compared to new allies in the dark running banks or law firms for a century.

Finding himself unconfined by the restraints of both morality and time, Christopher’s urge for success only grew. With the limitations of a natural lifespan no longer a concern, his obsession with rising became fiercer than ever. Why settle for anything less than the apex of the tower he found himself in?

Christopher Deacon has aspirations, and he never forgets that second best goes forgotten.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Christopher is a social climber and is careful about his close associations. He seeks allies above friends, and useful ones at that, but knows everyone has a use if manipulated correctly. A talented leader, Christopher is eager to take the helm in most situations but isn’t too proud to know when to take a knee or show demonstra-

ble respect when needed. He burns no bridges and knows that old relationships come back around. He may be ruthless in many aspects of his life, but Christopher values honesty greatly, in both his dealing with others, and what he demands in return.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- **High Society** (Ally 2, Influence 3) Christopher has a group of mortal friends among politicians, lawyers, and socialites who still hold him in high regard. Some still reach out to him, knowing he's 'retired' from the legal life, but respect his opinion and still want crib notes from the best student in class. In turn, Christopher can reach out for advice, or perhaps a string pulled here or there.
- **Legal Professional** (Resources 2) Christopher was a successful man in life, and he continues to be so in death.
- **Feeding Merit** (Iron Gullet 3) Christopher drank things down in his days in the boys' clubs at university that would make even a Kindred hesitate.
- **Rival** (Adversary Flaw 2) Christopher's rise as a neonate was not unnoticed by a rival Embraced into the clan around the same time. The enmity is not aggressive, but it is clear and present. This enemy looks for holes in Christopher's well-presented clan image, and if Christopher were to step out of line, you better believe they would find out about it.

MASK AND MIEN:

- Christopher is legally retired from business and is known to be living somewhere pleasant, away from city life. He still owns real estate but has cleaned his hands of personal investment in his previous law firm.
- Christopher is a well put together man in every sense. Well fitted navy blue suits, waxed shoes, and cufflinks for every day of the week. Briefcase. He's clean shaven and his short blonde hair is simple and professional. Although traditionally good looking, Christopher doesn't stand out in a crowd and is free of distinguishing features. No scars, no tattoos, average height and weight for a trim man of his apparent age. Without relying on his sharp clothing, he would be difficult to accurately describe.

Sire: Arthur Milliner is an active and forward-thinking young ancilla, seasoned enough to have seen great upheavals and significant transformations within his

corner of Kindred society. He appreciates Christopher's modern knowledge and ruthless demeanor, and he knows that his childe's respect and honesty reflects well on him.

Predator: Bagger

Embraced: 2002 (Born 1968)

Ambition: To further increase his personal power and the respect of the clan.

Suggested Desire: Prove himself to his sire, and as an indispensable member of the family.

Conviction: Christopher does not allow himself or his allies to be deceived.

Touchstones: The greatest teacher Christopher ever had, Dr. Stanton, now retired Oxford professor of Law. Christopher's model for a dignified intellectual.

Humanity: 7

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3; Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Skills: Drive 1; Etiquette 3, Insight 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Persuasion 3, Streetwise (Black Market) 1, Subterfuge 2; Academics (Legal) 3, Awareness 1, Investigation 2

Disciplines: Dominate 2 (Compel, Mesmerize), Fortitude (Unswayable Mind), Obscure 1 (Silence of Death)

HOLLIDAY “BURGUNDY” HALL

Concept: Rare nightclub sighting

Quote: “I see beautiful faces out there tonight. That's good... I like that. This is for all of you.”

Clan: Hecata (Harbinger)

MORTAL DAYS: LET IT FLOW THROUGH YOU

Holly Hall grew up in an untroubled home, the much-loved daughter of a middle-class family slowly fighting to escape the poorer district of New Orleans. She did well in school, had good friends, and collected bugs. Things were good for a few years in a row, and finally things were looking up, when Holly's family was torn apart in the years that followed Hurricane Katrina. The catastrophe destroyed her father's business. Month after month of legal battles that followed destroyed any money left over and the marriage of her parents with it.

Holly blamed herself for not keeping her family together, and she ran away from home. School records were all missing, and when Holly lost interest and stopped attending at 14, no-one came looking for her. As the city trudged on resolutely, Holly thought there was no proof left she ever existed at all. She would spend the next few years of her life on the streets of the city, living in various homes, making transient friends among street kids and the homeless, always feeling directionless. She saw the brutal treatment of the people who lived on the street — she would inevitably end up blaming herself when one became the victim of police brutality or the cruelty of tourists.

The only thing that would invigorate Holly's love of her city was the music found there on the street. She began picking up guitar and soon showed a clear aptitude for it. She'd play on the street, with old jazz musicians, living on tossed coins, and soon found a stage to play on at an old basement bar owned by a friend of her father's. The owner ignored her age, and sometimes gave the girl a safe place to sleep when times were rough. People came to see the prodigy play though, and soon Holly had fans among the people of New Orleans. Fearing she would inevitably ruin this life, Holly decided it was time for her old self to die. She began taking to the stage donning a Mardi Gras mask, and no longer used her given name. On stage, she was Burgundy. People came to see Burgundy play, and next festival season, one pair of eyes behind the countless masks in the crowds saw Burgundy, heard the pain and loss in her music, and decided the girl needed to be saved.

KINDRED NIGHTS: LET IT FLOOD THROUGH YOU

The Embrace was a rebirth into powers that Holly could barely comprehend. The old blood of her sire surging through her veins focused her like a laser. She felt strong, she felt capable, and for the first time she felt master of her own destiny. Aided by the encouragement of her attentive sire, Holly has learned much, and she has learned fast.

No longer feeling helpless in life, Holly strives to master fate, to overcome the desperation and hardship that struck so many families. As Burgundy, Holly can still be found playing in quiet clubs and bars. She keeps to no schedule, no discernible pattern, and her fans eagerly speculate where the ghostly musician appears next. Her rising celebrity is a value to be exploited by her new family, and her shows are often dotted with some unusual faces watching from the crowd.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Holly is a dreamer and an eccentric. She won't open up to anyone about her private self, and she is happy to



play the enigma. She is perceptive but simultaneously absent, watching keenly when people think she's away with the fairies. She's likely to remember exactly what was said in an earlier conversation, even though she didn't take part or offer any input at the time. Her obsession with death comes from a life hard lived, with little experience in an easy life. She's automatically distrustful of anyone that comes from money, absolutely without respect of politicians and leaders, and considers anything she can't touch to be transitory. The promise of a thousand dollars transferred to an account somewhere is nothing of concern to Holly compared to a C-note she can crumple in her hand and feel.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- **The Hole (Haven 1)** A moody little stone-walled studio apartment below a last resort burger joint, a brisk walk from the cemetery. It's rarely quiet around there, but no-one spares it a second glance.
- **Feeding Merit (Iron Gullet 3)** Holly grew up rough, and never let something as simple as "been in the trash" exclude her from a meal.
- **Bonding Merits and Flaws (Bloodhound 1, Blood Junkie 1)** The potency of Holly's sire's vitae did something to both enhance and whet her appetite. She's always had a connection to the blood beyond an average Kindred. She can smell her favorites from across the room, but also relishes the taste of more dangerous fare.
- **Musician (Fame 1)** Holly's mask is known on the streets of New Orleans, a figure glimpsed on stage and caught at the bar for a few words if you're lucky.

- **Sire (Mawla 3)** Ilduara is a wise and loving sire. She may leave for months at a time, with not a word of her destination or her activities, but eventually her bone-white mask returns, to fill Holly's night with words of kindness and support.
- **Herd Flaw (Obvious Predator 2)** Something behind the mask scares people, the way she holds herself, the glaze over her eyes glinting through the holes. It may be exciting in a bar environment, but on a lonely street away from the lamps even an avid fan would hesitate to approach her.
- **Feeding Flaw (Prey Exclusion 1)** Holly spent most of her life on the streets, making friends and being a part of the community there. She does not feed from street performers or beggars. She knows better than anyone who has it hard enough already and doesn't want to add nightmares to the dreams of the unlucky members of society.
- **Mythic Flaw (Stigmata 1)** The vitae of an elder may have proven a little too much for a young body like Holly's. When hungry, vitae drips from her hands and oozes from the eye-holes of her mask.
- **Loresheet (Harbingers of Ashur 2)**

MASK AND MIEN:

- A few old friends and fans know that Burgundy and Holly are the same person, but not many. Those who do also know that she prefers to keep to herself. The appearance of the mask was seen as an eccentric but not out of the question quirk in the personality of the girl they knew.
- Growing up, Holly's mother loved to do her hair, and Holly's well-kept afro puffs frame her face perfectly. Holly is a dark-skinned Black woman of five and a half feet in height and slim as a willow. Startling brown eyes stare out from behind an intricate Mardi Gras mask of white and gold. She dresses in dark club-wear that runs toward retro, and rarely shows much skin.

Sire: Ilduara is a strange and waifish woman, often mistaken for some kind of eccentric artistic bohemian. From behind her carved oaken mask, she muses on death, existence and meaning. Ilduara saw the pain in Holly's music, and yearned to give the girl a purpose, to show her that the other side of the veil was nothing to fear.

Predator: Graverobber

Embraced: 2016 (Born 1993)

Ambition: To perfect her art and revel in existence.

Suggested Desire: Be confident and fearless, and never let anyone know how scared she is behind the mask.

Conviction: Protect street performers and the people society ignores.

Touchstones: Sam, the proud proprietor of Sam's Zombie Bar, has known Holly since she was a kid on the streets. Sam always has a spot for Holly on the little stage at the back of the bar, and while he's always been a shoulder to cry on and an ear when needed, he's never pried or asked too many questions.

Humanity: 6

Generation: 10th

Blood Potency: 2

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Skills: Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 3; Insight 1, Intimidation 1, Performance (Music) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2; Awareness 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Grave Rituals) 2

Disciplines: Fortitude 2 (Resilience, Toughness), Oblivion 3 (Ashes to Ashes, Where the Shroud Thins, Aura of Decay)

Oblivion Ceremonies: Gift of False Life

MATISYAHU “MOTTI FENN” FENNHEIM

Concept: The Golem of Atlantic City

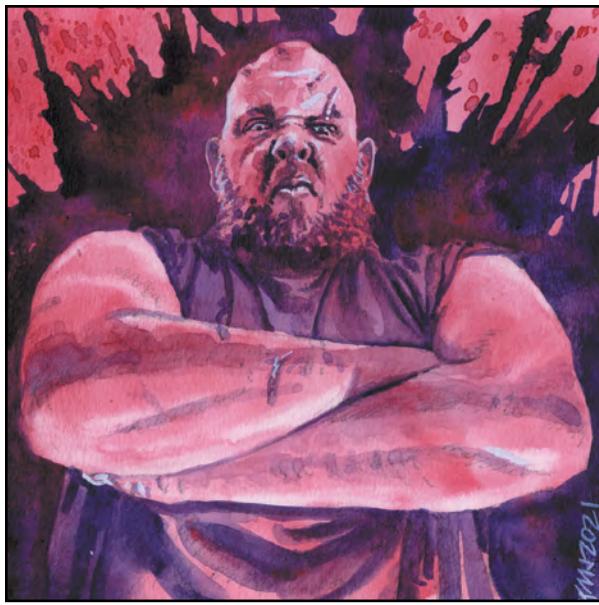
Quote: *“That one there? The one showing her teeth? She's my favorite. I call her Molly. Short for Malakh hamavet. That's the name of the Angel of Death.”*

Clan: Gangrel

MORTAL DAYS: FORMED OF CLAY

Matisyahu Fennheim was the only son of a German Jewish family living outside New York in the late 70s. His father was a mechanic, and young 'Motti' ran errands for extra cash. He was always a big kid, strong as an ox, and was doing hard labor long before legal working age. His natural affinity for animals also made Motti an effective trainer to the many dogs kept in his father's mechanic yard.

Motti's father assisted with a variety of illegal activities out of his business, including chopping stolen cars



and exchanging illicit goods. Motti met plenty of people who needed bodyguards, hired muscle, or just an intimidating face to stare at someone while a deal was being done. Motti may have been the biggest thug in the room, but behind his emotionless face was a mind quicker than he ever let on. Motti watched and he learned, and by the time he was 25, Motti had moved to Atlantic City with a little side business all his own, running protection and driving for organized crime.

One night on a routine drive through the city, the man Motti was chauffeuring was attacked by an unexpected assailant. Motti and his biggest Rottweiler burst out of the driver cabin, and when the man who was attacking his passenger squared up to him, Motti swung an axe into his chest.

Motti realized he was in over his head when the assailant pulled the axe out and sent his dog whining in fear with a single glance. The man fell upon Motti with a bite worse than any junkyard dog. Motti woke up in the street, finding his dog licking the blood from his face, and his attacker sat nearby enjoying the evening.

KINDRED NIGHTS: FORGED IN FIRE

Balance of power amid the mortal underworld was schoolhouse ruckus compared to the plots of Kindred organized crime. Motti saw a room to expand business. Operating out of his industrial chop shop haven, surrounded by the dogs he had raised, Motti became a hub of activity among low level criminal Kindred, evolving beyond dealing just drugs and arms into blood and secrets. The dogs who once guarded his property are now allies closer than any crony or thug Motti could employ, and the whispers of pigeons and street rats have become a more trusted source of city activity than any paid spy.

With the change of information and the expanding of his world, Motti also became more paranoid. Always a man slow to trust others, Motti became more emotionally closed off. He calls few people friend, and he severs ties with business partners who fail in their responsibilities without hesitation. Motti isn't a man interested in great shows of respect and humility, he simply seeks results. The Golem of Atlantic City allows no room for second chances, and once a name is scratched out of Motti's good books, it takes a supreme display of competency and skill to get invited back in.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Motti is cold, hard, and businesslike. He's smarter than he lets on in most situations, and usually prefers to say the least amount possible and watch until people talk themselves into either a hole or a lie. When he does speak, Motti is calm and takes no shit. He got where he is in life through hard work, and knowing that if you want something done right, you do it yourself.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- **Criminal Career (Contacts 3)** Motti's criminal career has landed him in a position of respect among many of Atlantic City's worst characters.
- **Whispers (Infamy 2)** Motti is well known and feared in both the city's underbelly and may be recognized by local law enforcement.
- **The Shop (Haven 2 — Security Systems 1)** Motti's base of operations is a small warehouse in the city's industrial district. Electronic gates surround the property, and a kennel area houses his faithful dogs.
- **Hard Worker (Resources 2)** Motti has an assortment of income from debtors, properties, and extortion over the years.
- **Feeding Merit (Eat Food 2)** Although usually only doing so to keep his mother happy, Motti can keep down regular food.

MASK AND MIEN:

- Officially, Motti Fenn died in what was classified as a carjacking. Local police were happy to see the end of the man, known for as much trouble as he was, and the investigation was slipshod at best. His many arrests and misdemeanors make him a recognizable face to Atlantic City police however, and his fingerprints are most definitely on police files up and down the eastern seaboard.
- Motti Fenn is an absolute brick shithouse of a man. Just over six foot and powerfully muscled, Motti

would be a quick hire for any bouncer or bodyguard job going. His shaven head is bumpy and scarred from years of fights, and his blue eyes have an empty, drowsy look to them, well-practiced for maximum discomfort at whoever he chooses to stare at. Not too concerned with fine clothing or appearances in general, he'll most often be found in an unwashed work shirt and heavy work pants, and suspiciously stained steel toe capped boots. His mother's Star of David hangs around his neck, and on his belt is usually found hanging a dog whistle and a hand-axe.

Sire: Ranq is a New York Gangrel, employed on many occasions as a hit man and general source of havoc. Motti's sheer guts impressed him, and Ranq likes having men in his corner for the inevitable emergency.

Predator: Alleycat

Embraced: 2006 (Born 1976)

Ambition: Power, control, order. Atlantic City is in chaos, and Motti wants to see the city put in its place.

Suggested Desire: Become a force of stability and control in the region of Atlantic City

Conviction: Motti doesn't abide animal cruelty. He's beat a man senseless over a kicked dog on more than one occasion.

Regardless of his questionable morality, Motti's respect for the religious community he grew up in is still strong, and he'll protect that community with ferocity.

Touchstones: Adina Fennheim has lived alone since Motti's father was stabbed in a disagreement over 50 bucks a decade ago. Speaking poor English and certainly not paying attention to any local news, Adina has no idea of her son's supposed death. Motti drops in to support his mother whenever he can, fake his way through home cooking and tell her all about his good and honest security firm job.

Motti's beloved dogs, always there for him, closer now than ever.

Humanity: 5

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 1; Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 4

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl (Grappling) 2, Drive 2, Larceny 2, Melee 3, Stealth 1, Survival 1; Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2; Academics (Theology) 1, Awareness 1, Finance 1, Politics 1

Disciplines: Animalism 2 (Bond Famulus, Feral Whispers), Protean 1 (Eyes of the Beast), Potence 1 (Lethal Body)

RATKYD

Concept: Genius/Failure

Quote: "Nah, this is buggered, you need a new one. I can do it for you cheaper though. Be done in no time. 20 quid, and throw in some fags?"

Clan: Hecata

MORTAL DAYS: ACTUS REUS

Surely someone remembers what Ratkyd's actual name was, but if so they aren't sure whether the scrawny kid would still respond to it anyway. From an early age, they were sneaking out and playing in the Birmingham rail yard, messing with machinery, almost getting killed hiding under railroad sidings. Their parents were uninterested in their child's development, and they saw the constant summons to school to be lectured about the importance of attendance as a never-ending bore. The teachers were always the same, so disappointed, such a mind going to waste. The child had no drive, no application.

Ratkyd would rather look at books and read ghost stories. An obsession formed, and more than one disturbing imaginary friend hung around in younger years, but Ratkyd's parents weren't wasting time with a psychologist.

One day, Ratkyd just stopped going home. They'd rather be smoking weed with their friends or picking pockets at the high-street when it got crowded. They talked about death a lot. Not in fear, but in fascination. Other kids on the street used to joke that if anyone were gonna show up missing one day, it'd probably be little Ratkyd.



Making money was hard, and lifting wallets only got you so much. Ratkyd learned fast though and got talented at cracking stolen phones. Jail-breaking banking apps and then returning the phones proved risky but rewarding when the right info came back. They were handy with technology and built shitty computers on the cheap out of dated parts.

Ratkyd was contacted one day by a creepy guy who wanted help sending anonymous emails. Ratkyd's type was creepy anyway, and the guy talked all kinds of stuff about death, so they had good conversations while they set up a dodgy VPN and rode coffee shop Wi-Fi. It turns out the guy didn't have the money he'd promised in the end, but he claimed he had an alternative method of payment that Ratkyd would be stupid to turn down. No-one had ever said Ratkyd was stupid, after all.

KINDRED NIGHTS: PER VIA, AD ASTRA

Ratkyd awoke into unlife with new eyes. Able to perceive the minutia of life more clearly than ever before, and with a grasp of death, that which had always fascinated them, better than ever. Ratkyd always felt vulnerable, not just on the streets, but at home. With their newfound vision they feel like allies surround them, confidants to whisper to and friends to hide behind. Preferring to react rather than act, Ratkyd still keeps to the streets. Couch surfing whenever possible or just crashing wrapped in blankets under the old stand-by railway siding, Ratkyd mostly goes unnoticed like any of Birmingham's mounting homeless community.

Ratkyd is even better at every aspect of the larcenous craft, spiriting items from bags and pockets as deft as a card trick. Before the Embrace, Ratkyd was no stranger to taking advantage of an unlocked door or slipping their slim body through a carelessly open window, but now it's become so easy it's almost a joke. Quiet as a ghost, Ratkyd spirits into homes to disappear cash and jewelry, and more than once has bedded down for the day in an occupied home, so well-hidden the inhabitants are none the wiser. Naturally adverse to confrontation, they have also made these silent invasions a primary source of feeding.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Ratkyd is smart enough to know that they are a small fish in a big pond. They stay out of the light, keeping their head down, and focus on the prize. That doesn't make Ratkyd a coward, and they are easily talked into something profitable or even dangerous if it seems exciting enough.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- Friends above the gutter (Contacts 2) Ratkyd has spent a lot of time on the streets and knows where to buy and exchange parts and services for the cheapest

in Birmingham. In touch with a local pawn shop owner for years, Ratkyd is owed more than a few favors there.

- Friends below the lamps (Allies 2) Ratkyd has been a somewhat mythical member of the street kids of Birmingham for a while now. They may not be anything special, but they look after their own, and if someone was after Ratkyd, you can bet a pursuer finds all sorts of trouble in their way.
- Street Dweller (No Haven 1) Ratkyd is a childe of the street in every way. They get nervy lying down in the same spot for too long, and they find somewhere new every chance they get. Even if offered a safe place for the day, they'll likely ignore the offered room in favor of a part of the house that feels more 'them.'
- Empty Pockets (Resources — Destitute 1) Ratkyd is poor as hell, and always has been. When they have nothing, they steal and beg; when they have a little, they share it.

MASK AND MIEN:

- No one would miss Ratkyd if they disappeared entirely, and no one noticed when their routine changed a little. To the casual acquaintance, they aren't any different, the same weird street kid. Time was that people used to make fun of Ratkyd, take advantage of them. That didn't seem to happen anymore though, and it's hard to put a finger on exactly what changed.
- Ratkyd is a small and scrawny figure, easily mistaken for some lost little teen, and knows how to play that up to get out of trouble. A mop of greasy black hair and pasty skin is all that can usually be made out of their features beneath a couple filthy hoodies and t-shirts two sizes too big.

Sire: A no good neonate who cut and run. Ratkyd doesn't hate them though. He helped them open their eyes to a whole new way of seeing things.

Predator: Sandman

Embraced: 2018 (Born 1999)

Ambition: To survive, without having to fear. To succeed, without having to put too much work in.

Suggested Desire: Ratkyd desires to learn, and their fascination with death has been taken to a new level by the knowledge they are beginning to pick up. Sharing skills with fellow Hecata would interest them greatly.

Conviction: Ratkyd doesn't steal from those who help people. Social workers, teachers, paramedics, all these are callings that Ratkyd respects, and keeps their hands out of the pockets of. In fact, Ratkyd stands up for them, hurting those who hurt them.

Touchstones: Ratkyd was always bad at taking advice or accepting help, but they noticed when people made the effort. Unlike the parents that never seemed to give a damn, Mr. MacGowan was a math teacher who asked Ratkyd how they were doing, offered to lend an ear, and had words of advice. Even though it wasn't his job, he actually cared. Ratkyd likes to drop in and see how the old math teacher is doing now and then.

Humanity: 6

Generation: 13th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 4

Skills: Craft (Electronics) 2, Larceny (Pickpocketing) 3, Melee 1, Stealth (Break-in) 3, Survival 2; Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2; Investigation 1, Occult 1, Technology 4

Disciplines: Auspex 1 (Sense the Unseen), Obfuscate 2 (Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage), Oblivion 2 (The Binding Fetter, Where the Shroud Thins)

BETTINA BELUZZI

Concept: Queen of the Night

Quote: "Book them to perform for the next two weeks, they're the prince's favorite. Do be sure he finds out."

Clan: Ventrue

MORTAL DAYS: A BRIGHT LITTLE LIGHT

Growing up, young Bettina was the picture of polite upper class Florence society. She lived by the river in Florence, where pretty and smart little Bettina excelled in her strictly supervised home-schooled classes, and she attended English and Latin sessions on the weekend. According to her tutors, Bettina was well above her grade level, and was on course to live up to her father's fervent wish to follow him into the medical field.

Bettina's academic excellence came to a crashing halt as a teenager when, upon finally attending public school for the first time, she discovered her scholarly aspirations came second to her newly discovered social desires. Bettina was quick-witted, charming, and incredibly beautiful, and every boy noticed. A child when it came to dealing with social popularity, she soon began to crave it and



revel in it more than any grades. Bettina became a regular at some of Florence's best clubs. Why spend time with her nose buried in studies when she could be seen at the VIP tables? Bettina turned heads wherever she went, and the last few years of her education were filled with the absolute best Florence nightlife had to offer.

All things end, of course, and Bettina hit the wall hard when her parents, disappointed with her performance and her new attitude, cut off her money. Refusing to either give up the new life she was enjoying, or to go crawling back to apologize, Bettina instead found employment at one of her favorite bars. Her parents would positively die to see her as a barmaid, and the idea was fun for a while.

Not the type to do anything by half measure, Bettina charmed the manager into a better position running the floor within a few months, and then charmed the owner into replacing the manager before the next year was out. She enjoyed the role, and the place thrived under her leadership, but it still felt like renting a pretty dress, when you could own it instead. Bettina became the face of the business, knew every pretty face and every big name who drank and danced in those hallowed halls, and learned the currency of the night came with it, trading table service and VIP treatment for public appearances and endorsements. It was only a matter of time before the true power in the night came knocking, seeking Bettina's charm and contacts. No-one knew Florence by night better.

KINDRED NIGHTS: BLINDING

Bettina became the favorite ghoul of a Ventrue skilled in manipulation and money but missing that implacable social edge in which Bettina was so innately skilled. A few years later, Bettina would seek her official

promotion, and talked her way into the Embrace like she had everything else in life. Bettina took over ownership of the bar at once, and she began her work as Florence's queen of nightlife. She transformed the upper levels of the bar into a haven of impeccable fashion and absolute class, welcoming the aristocracy of European Kindred for entertainment and enjoyment in member's only nights throughout the year. Bettina is out to make friends and allies — and does so with dangerous flair.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Bettina is a skilled socialite. She's eager to talk, to schmooze, to charm. She steps into every night like she owns it, and certainly does intend to, given half a chance. She doesn't like to get her hands dirty physically, and she makes allies of those who would step in to handle just such a situation. Bettina is confident to a fault, and she won't miss the opportunity to show how much better or smarter she is than someone else given the chance. Bettina's Ventruie palate is refined to those that she sees as elegant and lovely. The idea of feeding from the ugly or the ill-put together fills her with revulsion, and she sees it as no different from a human choosing to eat food that has fallen in the filthy street.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- **Indigo Club (Haven 3)** When Bettina began working the bar, it was a one-story affair with simple entertainment. Now, Indigo is a three-story verified hot spot on the map of Florence's best nightclubs. Two stories open to the public, four bars and three dance floors, and a stage area featuring popular acts all year round. The third floor is restricted to personal friends of the owner, a safe respite for Kindred in the region seeking shelter, or to chat with the occasional European celebrity in the green room.
- **Businesswoman (Resources 3)** Bettina deals with her profits carefully, and her accountant does excellent work.
- **Tabloid Favorite (Fame 2)** Bettina is well known in Florence society, and is a benchmark of young business success.
- **Beautiful (Looks 2)** Bettina can drop any jaw across the room. Her expensive clothes are pure Italian extravagance, she's been seen with rock stars and actors and always looks better than them. The time she was 'accidentally' photographed nude at a pool party made the lucky paparazzo over a million Euros.
- **Latin (Linguistics 1)** Bettina can read and write fluent Latin, with a personal flair.

- **Mask Flaw (Known Blankbody 2)** Bettina is not subtle and is not shy of making herself known and seen everywhere she can. One too many connections have added up, and the SI have isolated Bettina as associating with Kindred, or possibly one herself. She needs to stay alert.
- **Former Manager (Enemy 1)** Bettina has crossed more than a few people on her way to the top, but few hung onto the grudge like her old manager. Furious at being replaced by the young woman when he'd skillfully managed the bar for twenty years, he'd do anything to tarnish her reputation.

MASK AND MIEN:

- After Bettina's parents cut her off, she did much the same in return and went no contact. Her pride keeps her from making any effort to reconnect with her family. They do know the bar she owns though, and in an emergency might try to contact her.
- Bettina is a classical beauty. A few inches shy of six foot tall with olive skin, a shapely figure, long chestnut brown hair styled in the latest fashions from night to night. She favors vibrant red in dresses, hats, and heeled shoes. She's not the type to carry accessories beyond the absolute bare essentials, but every item of clothing on her person is only the finest brand names.

Sire: Bettina was a ghoul for several years, serving the Roman aristocrat Giuseppe Bartoli. He sees much in Bettina, valuing her poise and grace, and making use of her many contacts and the vast popularity of the Indigo club. He may be polite and social with Bettina, but sees her clearly as a childe, and won't allow himself to get caught up personally in her schemes, more likely to raise a glass and wish her buona fortuna than actually help out in any active way.

Predator: Siren

Embraced: 2008 (Born 1991)

Ambition: To be beloved of the night and everyone in it. Bettina doesn't see having power over people as joy, she instead prefers to be loved and admired, and with a wink, encourage them to fulfill her wishes.

Suggested Desire: Moving forward, always upward and beyond, is Bettina's drive. She has heavily considered what kind of childe she would make of her own; she's just waiting for the perfect person.

Conviction: Bettina likes to teach and inspire. She wishes no harm to come to children, and she would put herself at risk to protect them from another Kin-

dred. She is profoundly disgusted by the idea of young humans being Embraced.

Touchstones: While Bettina's parents are much estranged, and she has little interest in communication with them, she would not wish to see them harmed or in difficulty for any reason. Bettina would immediately pull strings if it would help them but would make sure they never found out it was her.

Humanity: 6

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 1; Etiquette 3, Insight 1, Leadership 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (Seduction) 3; Academics 2, Awareness 2, Finance 2, Politics 1, Technology 1

Disciplines: Dominate 3 (Cloud Memory, Mesmerize, Submerged Directive), Presence 3 (Awe, Lingering Kiss, Entrancement)

ANOUSH VARDANIAN

Concept: Revolutionary Medium

Quote: "Don't be scared, tell me what happened. Come closer, whisper it in my ear if you have to."

Clan: Hecata

MORTAL DAYS: WARRIOR FOR THE LIVING

Anoush was a girl with the weight of the world on her shoulders from an early age. As far back as she can remember, Anoush was told little family history but stories of sadness, and the horrors that her grandparents had been lucky to live through in fleeing their homeland. Anoush's father taught his daughter that in this world only your voice mattered, and that the greatest evil in this land were those who silenced the voice of others.

New York's Armenian community was small, but supportive. Anoush was a smart girl, and whatever she applied herself to, she learned fast. She spoke excellent English and would tutor her mother and brother when her father wasn't around. Leaving for college, Anoush had become a headstrong and clever young woman, but her father's words and her family history were a burden she often thought about. She felt responsible for change, to be that great next generation her grandparents had fought so hard for. She wanted to be that voice. Suspicious of governments and authority, Anoush soon involved herself



in multiple college movements and clubs. While she was popular in these causes for her confident attitude and driven personality, soon enough Anoush became disappointed with the fruitless endeavors of the movements. Public demonstrations were angry and directionless, online discourse degraded into yelling matches and trolling. It was noise without voices. She wanted to fight for a cause, not be pointed like a weapon at demonstrations and message boards. When the college botched its reaction to the assault of a student on campus, Anoush watched voices be silenced and stepped on once again. After the mishandling of the investigation and the campus' refusal to change, Anoush knew her place was elsewhere.

Anoush dropped out at once and devoted her time to a series of social causes in the New York area. She looked for those with no voice of their own, helping re-home victims of domestic violence, supporting the homeless, and supplying aid for the addict community. All the while, she continued to search for purpose. The older Anoush got, the further into depression she drifted. The pain she saw every day on the city's sad streets left her with the same awful feeling that her father's words were true, that it was in humanity's nature to keep silencing each other, to step on those below you. Still, night after night, Anoush was in the homeless shelters, the soup kitchens, and in the alleyways of New York, trying to give voices to the silent. It was in a shelter where she met the man who would change everything, a wealthy patron of the cause who watched Anoush work for many months, who occasionally offered advice, and asked the strangest questions. He wanted to know why Anoush did all this, and the two would often talk late into the night in one of the shelters. The man had knowledge that astounded Anoush,

and answers for questions that she thought hopeless. One evening, following the death of a homeless man in the shelter, Anoush broke down. She explained her loss and hopelessness to her strange benefactor, who told Anoush that there were always answers to her questions, and that voices were never truly lost. It was time to show Anoush how to hear them.

KINDRED NIGHTS: SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD

Among the Kindred, Anoush became more attuned than ever to the world around her. She continued her work in seeking those who had been silenced, in a far more direct way than she would ever have dreamed. Her new family is giving her the education she so sorely sought in life. Anoush speaks to the wraiths whose ears she now held, gave them counsel when they whispered fears, and learned much in return. Anoush finally felt a place in this world, a woman who walks between walls, to learn the secrets of the city and those who've died within it. Seeing the Hecata as a family rather than an organization allows Anoush to easily superimpose her old prejudices of authority upon the Camarilla and other elder organizations, and Anoush is a proud soldier at the behest of her new family.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Anoush is a woman driven by a strong moral cause, not necessarily to protect, but to stand up for and give strength to the weak. She dislikes authority in all forms and may be openly disrespectful if spoken down to. The elders are the new government, ready to have old ways upset and overthrown if necessary.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- **Dark Secret (Masquerade Breacher 1)** Anoush gives succor and hope to the people she meets. Sometimes she simply refuses to lie. The ones she talks to might often be nothing but the sick and dying, those slipping through society's cracks, but eventually everyone speaks to someone else.
- **Feeding Flaw (Prey Exclusion 1)** Anoush does not feed by force and drinks directly from consenting kine only. Although she accepts that others must sometimes, she still sees the act as distasteful, and Kindred who do so are not any better than violent abusers in her eyes.
- **Bonding Merit (Unbondable 5)** Anoush rebels against the idea of control and authority on a primal level, so much so that even her blood seems to fight back against it with uncanny strength.
- **Friends in Low Places (Allies 1)** The denizens of the street know that Anoush is a safe person. They may

be nothings and nobodies, but she's protected them in the past and they'll do the same for her.

- **Dirt Poor (Resources — Destitute 1)** Anoush keeps no cash and stays on the move, either sleeping rough where she can or in shelters like most of the people she seeks to help.

MASK AND MIEN:

- Anoush is in contact with her mother and brother often. They know she does work with the homeless, or something like that, and when people ask, they say how proud they are of her. Anoush's father barely talks to anyone.
- Anoush is a tall and moderately well-toned woman, with light brown skin and long black hair, usually kept in a simple bun. She can disappear into a crowd if she chooses to, but she's not the type to do so voluntarily. She has a fierce stare, a gruff manner, and people would say she's the type to get shit done. She dresses nondescript and functional, but her combat boots are always good for sprinting, and she'll inevitably carry a backpack holding a plethora of medical equipment, food scraps, and the occasional fix for an addict in dire need.

Sire: Peter St. John observed Anoush working with the nearly dead for a long time and groomed the young woman for some time without his prospective childe realizing what was happening. Peter respects Anoush's passion and knows she can be a valued member of the family, if aimed just right at their enemies.

Predator: Consensualist

Embraced: 2012 (Born 1987)

Ambition: Work with her new family to improve the lives of those she cares for.

Suggested Desire: Use the powers of the blood to aid the dead and dying as best she can. Make her ancestors proud, she knows more than ever that they're watching now.

Conviction: Anoush seeks to give support and assistance to those in need. In particular, drug addicts and socially stigmatized disease sufferers such as the HIV positive.

Anoush does not take blood by force, and although she understands its necessity, stubbornly won't be present or in any way assist other Kindred to do so.

Touchstones: Anoush's father is particularly important to her. Although the aging man may not speak

English and refuses to take an active interest in the world around him anymore, he was still a good father to Anoush and her brother.

Anoush's younger brother Art is the light of her life. He's grown into a talented young man and is eagerly pursuing a career in Engineering at college. The family curse of melancholy hasn't seemed to have infected Art, and Anoush does anything to make sure he stays safe.

Humanity: 8

Generation: 13th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 7

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Larceny 3, Melee 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2; Intimidation 1, Leadership 3, Persuasion (Victims) 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1; Academics 2, Investigation 2, Medicine (Drugs) 2, Politics 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2 (Sense the Unseen, Premonition), Oblivion 2 (The Binding Fetter, Where the Shroud Thins)

Oblivion Ceremonies: Summon Spirit

ALEK KÖNIG

Concept: Corpse Artist

Quote: *"Too much is a common mistake; it's better to have too little and then to add on. Now... just the smallest rise to the corner of the mouth. There, now she could just be sleeping."*

Clan: Hecata

MORTAL DAYS: LIFE IS STRANGE

Alek was a weird kid, and when his parents found a box of animal bones from the local woods hidden under his bed, they were concerned they were raising a psychopath. After time spent with a child psychologist though, they were assured the boy just had an advanced interest in the way things work. Just like building blocks, the boy wanted to take things apart and put them back together. He obsessed with books about the human body, and as he grew older, explored a multitude of medical conditions and indulged in a little amateur taxidermy.

Going into the medical field was not Alek's original dream. He saw death in almost a more artistic light than in a physical one. He loved the way bones fit together, the way muscles move, and flesh stretches. He didn't have

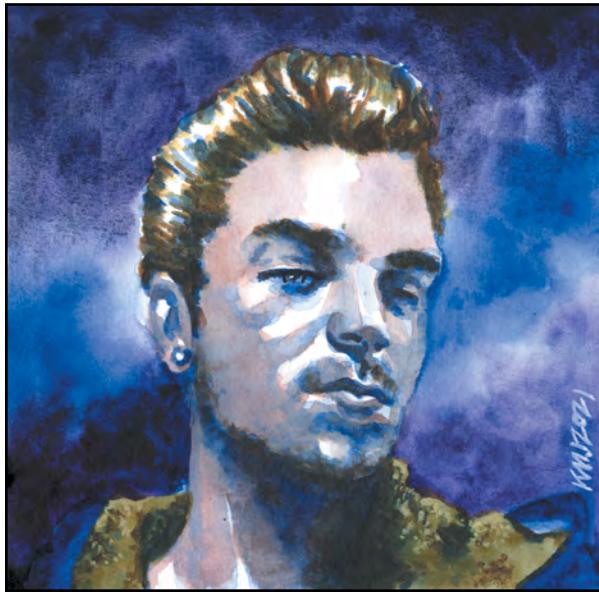
the patience for medical school, and being a doctor just wasn't right for him. Alek's uncle gave him advice on a few occasions, pushing Alek for direction and offering suggestions, and when he explained that Alek's great uncle had been a mortician, Alek sought work in the mortuary sciences.

Alek was indeed an artist. While he developed his animal taxidermy hobby into a modest skill, the human bodies he worked on were truly something. The subtle smile to an elderly mouth, the inquisitive quirk of an infant eyebrow, Alek could replicate them with clear talent. Alone with his artistic subjects, Alek continued a lifelong belief that there was nothing to fear in death, it was simply another experience.

Alek's uncle would visit occasionally, and they became closer than Alek and his own father had ever been. His uncle too had the same view of death, and always enjoyed hearing Alek's feelings on the subject. By the end of Alek's second year as a professional, his uncle invited him to Copenhagen to join him at the mortuary owned by Alek's great uncle. Strangely enough, although it proudly bore his name, there were no pictures of the founder to be seen about the place.

KINDRED NIGHTS: LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL

Alek was welcomed into his new Hecata family as an artist with a passion unlike any other. He saw the beauty in death from such a young age and yearned to explore it among the Kindred with an earnest energy. He continued to work among the dead in Copenhagen, making the passing from one side of the veil to the next as pleasant as possible for those left behind. Mortal families saw him as an eccentric but deeply caring individual, and his business flourished. Alek attends funerals in the area, arranging wakes that perfectly tell the story of the deceased,



sending loved ones off with joy. Happy to join the work of the larger Hecata family, Alek seeks a true purpose and a driving force in the night.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Alek understands that death is only hard on the living and is an enthusiastic lover of life itself. He feels no loss at being a Kindred, simply glad to explore the strange world we live in from another point of view. Alek is non-confrontational and doesn't make enemies easily. He prefers to feed in the most quiet or comfortable setting possible, without violence whenever he can. He seeks knowledge, understanding, and experience. He'll try anything once and isn't scared to put himself at risk. Death is just another adventure.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- Skilled Hands (Resources 2)** Alek is paid a dependable wage from his employment. He is a skilled mortician/funeral director.
- School Buddies (Contacts 2)** Alek has been in the funeral and medical adjacent fields for some time. It's likely he knows people in hospitals, graveyards, museums, and the like.
- Sire (Mawla 2)** Alek's sire Aksel is a wealth of information on the occult and the worlds of the dead. When Alek seeks advice, he's a dependable man to turn to.
- The Back room (Haven 1)** Alek lives in the comfortable apartment attached to the funeral home in Copenhagen. It's a simple little place, with heavy shutters and metal doors.
- Promising New Blood (Status 1)** Alek was groomed well and is a popular young member of the family. He's seen as a bright young neonate who doesn't step out of line. Yet.
- Bonding Flaws (Long bond 1, Bond Junkie 1)** The mysteries of the blood are sweet to Alek. The taste of secrets in the blood of other Kindred make him indulgent in them, and he spends a long time ruminating on these whispers after every taste.

MASK AND MIEN:

- Alek is in contact with his parents and old friends from the countryside. He holds up his steady job and is clean as a whistle on paper. He's well respected in small circles of the city as being a thoughtful and attentive professional in mortuary science.

Alek is a tall man, over six feet in height, but carries himself like a man shy of this fact. He doesn't impose on a room and slouches somewhat. He dresses plainly, occasionally found in the white lab coat he wears when completing his work. Good looking in a typically Nordic way, Alek has soulful blue eyes that have a reassuring warmth to them, and medium length blonde hair.

Sire: Alek's great uncle Aksel has been Kindred for several decades, living as his own son for the recent few. Grooming Alek as soon as he saw the boy's obsession with death, Aksel sees his childe as necessary young blood in the family's new direction.

Predator: Sandman

Embraced: 2015 (Born 1990)

Ambition: Develop a deeper understanding about death, seek the secrets beyond the shroud.

Suggested Desire: Grow his power, expand the breadth of his knowledge. The rise to power he never sought in life is much clearer and more exciting now.

Conviction: Alek respects the dead and wishes for others to do so. He does not take part in or allow others to steal personal items from mortal deceased or commit the act of grave-robbing.

Touchstones: Alek has a close relationship with his mother, who is proud of her son. She regularly calls him, and when she has time off from work, she'll come to the city from the countryside for a brief visit. She understands her son is a busy man, and that he's often meeting with clients during the day, but he'll still always find time to take her to a show or around the city by night.

Humanity: 7

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Skills: Craft (Taxidermy) 4; Insight 3, Streetwise 2, Academics 3, Awareness 1, Finance 1, Investigation 1, Medicine (Anesthetics) 3, Occult 2, Science 2

Disciplines: Fortitude 2 (Unswayable Mind, Toughness), Obscure 1 (Silence of Death), Oblivion 1 (Ashes to Ashes)

ALLETTE DURAND

Concept: The Critic

Quote: "Observe how Goya made all the figures look off in different directions, what are they searching for? And this one, with his lovely cloak, it's like he's about to turn to stare at you at any moment, don't you think?"

Clan: Malkavian

MORTAL DAYS: QUI VIVRE VERRA

Allette was a born artist and spent the majority of her young years growing up in Paris eagerly visiting museums and galleries. She dreamed of her art one day hanging in the Louvre, and she set dreams upon artistic success in every way.

By college, Allette ran into the problem of discovering her art just wasn't particularly good. She was technically skilled, no teacher could argue, but they would say she lacked passion, fire, energy. All the things it was impossible to teach or quantify, Allette allegedly lacked. Allette knew that her calling could not have been confused, and instead believed that everyone but her was horribly wrong about everything. She graduated Art College, didn't smile in the portrait, and immediately lost her diploma somewhere at home and never thought about it again.

She tried music instead. She quickly got good at the guitar and played in local bars. People said she sounded a little like this artist, or a lot like that artist. She starred in artsy indie films, and never saw her name singled out for mention in the reviews. She tried modeling, sculpture, photography, pornography, dress making, dance... Thirty long years later, Allette sat in the audience of a run-down theater watching her latest directorial attempt play. A man behind her leaned in and told her that she was absolutely and unequivocally perfect. He introduced himself as the Critic, and that he had been searching for her work for a century.

KINDRED NIGHTS: FIN DE SIECLE

The Critic Embraced Allette in the empty smoking area of the theater rooftop, and he told her of the great responsibility now upon her shoulders. His eternal purpose had been passed on to her, and now she was the Critic, the burning artistic soul who must search for all time for the next perfect expression of art. Allette's eyes were opened and immediately she understood that her life had been leading to this. She had to have learned so many disciplines, lived so many lives and learned so many skills, so that she could truly understand and evaluate them all equally.

Allette now travels everywhere, a cosmopolitan figure with a deep understanding and appreciation for



art of every possible kind. Seeking that next true perfect expression, Allette is found at gallery openings, tiny independent theater productions, street fights, fashion shows, and cat competitions, seeking beauty everywhere. When confronted by something particularly eye-catching, Allette may be taken with the urge to appropriate it. She doesn't particularly see this as stealing, and quite honestly believes her patronage and kind words are the highest honor an artist could possibly receive.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Allette moves through the world with a flighty and careless attitude. She may turn up anywhere, and never stays in one place for too long. She is fearful of missing out in her great search, and quickly becomes anxious if forced to remain in one location, especially if it's boring. There is little rhyme or reason to what Allette may find beautiful or fascinating, and she often obsesses or marvels over strange or unusual displays of creativity. She often finds meaning in art that is absolutely antithetical to the artist's intention, and she isn't shy about explaining to them why they are the ones who are wrong. Her criterion for genius is mystifying, but there is a logic to it, and the Critic knows what she likes. Allette still deeply loves performing herself, and she never turns down the opportunity to put on a show for an audience.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- Well Known (Fame 2)** Allette has been seen at galleries and shows all over Europe. No-one seems to know exactly who she works for or usually who invited her though, but everyone whispers about the fabulously eccentric French woman with the wonderful artistic passion.

- **Art Community (Contact 3)** Allette always knew she would one day have something in the Louvre. Turns out, it was a person. Allette's contact in the Louvre can provide information on significant artists and historical people, as well as get her in touch with some of the art world's finest.
- **Valued Opinion (Influence 1)** Though no-one knows what journal Allette writes for, and they may not have seen her name on prominent websites, there's an unbelievable rush in getting kind words from the Critic. Her opinion can never be predicted, and no-one knows who the Critic will turn her favor toward next.
- **Antique Dealer (Resources 3)** Along with the responsibilities of being the Critic, came the accounts. Years of buying, selling, and trading art has made Allette quite wealthy. She's capricious with the money however, and she may feel the urge to buy an item for ten times the obvious worth if it speaks to her.
- **Feeding Flaw (Prey Exclusion 1)** Allette takes care in who she feeds from, knowing that she takes a little part from every one of them when she does. People she considers uncouth or non-artistic are out of the question. Police, suits, anyone rank and file or typically boring simply don't make the cut.
- **Mythic Flaw (Folkloric Block 1)** Allette believes deeply in the gravitas of her quest, and the weight that her every step must therefore carry. For such a powerful figure to enter a private home uninvited is out of the question.
- **Retainer Flaw (Stalker 1)** Allette used the services of a trusted retainer to help with her purchases for some time, but soon it became clear that he simply couldn't be relied upon. Allette fretted that his simple view wasn't sufficiently refined for her uses, and she had to let him go. The young man was deeply offended by the slight against his intelligence and skills as an appraiser, and never let the grudge go. Every time he sees Allette mentioned in artistic circles, it grinds against his ego, but he can't stop following her. Something about Allette was addictive beyond explanation.

MASK AND MIEN:

- Allette's family lost touch with her during her experimental days and were ashamed of what they heard concerning the antics of their once so promising artist daughter. Her parents have long since passed on, and Allette's doctor brother and his family would be deeply shocked to run into her.

- Allette is a refined older woman, whose bright and playful eyes hint at her inquisitive mind. She's a woman of slight build, but she carries herself with excellent poise. Always well dressed in pleasant but not too showy dresses and sharp jackets, Allette has long black hair faded to an elegant gray, usually kept in a neat bun.

Sire: The Critic (Prior). The previous Critic searched for eighty years before locating Allette. A quiet and simple man who loves film. Freed of his monumental task, he can now finally relax. He now spends his time watching movies, quite unconcerned with anyone or anything around him.

Predator: Scene Queen

Embraced: 2000 (Born 1948)

Ambition: The search for the next perfect artistic expression is quite consuming, and Allette knows that only she is capable of making such a decision. When she does find the perfect piece of art, which in modern day could just as easily be a tweet or a video game as it could be a painting or dance, she stops at nothing to find the creator and make them her childe.

Suggested Desire: Allette knows that her failures in life were leading up to her role as the Critic, and she knows that she cannot succeed as an artist until she has first completed her great task. Once she has done so, she knows that she can return to being the artist she always dreamed.

Conviction: Destruction of art and artistic means is absolutely against all Allette stands for. Her first instinct in a burning building would be to rescue a beautiful painting or a rare record instead of a person in danger.

Artistic expression must be treasured and valued, and young creators are never to be stepped on or disrespected. Allette is not jealous of those who succeed, she treasures each and every one.

Touchstones: Allette had an art teacher that inspired her to greater heights. When he suggested that she lacked passion, Allette was crestfallen, and always wanted an opportunity to show him what she was truly destined for. He still lives in Paris, a well-known elderly art tutor, and Allette loves seeing his work.

Allette's favorite artist as a student was a Spaniard who produced strange and surreal paintings in layers of acrylic as thick as a thumb. He's ancient now, still painting and creating, and Allette never misses one of his public appearances.

Humanity: 7

Generation: 12th**Blood Potency:** 1**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 7**Skills:** Craft (Painting) 3, Firearms 1, Larceny 2; Etiquette (Art) 3, Insight 1, Leadership 1, Performance (Dance) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2; Academics 1, Finance 1, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Technology 1**Disciplines:** Auspex 3 (Sense the Unseen, Premonition, Scry the Soul), Dominate 2 (Cloud Memory, Mesmerize)

MATT ANGELO

Concept: The Valet**Quote:** "You can't blame Nick for walking into that setup, that's just Nick bein' how Nick is, you know? That rat Gangrel who set up the meet though? You ask me, that guy's trouble..."**Clan:** Brujah

MORTAL DAYS: WISEGUYS

Matteo Angelo was the youngest of four brothers, and life was rough in the Angelo household. He was a small kid, and each one of Matt's bigger brothers picked on him mercilessly. Their father was mostly uninterested, and if Matt said anything, he'd get a spanking for tattling. In the Angelo family, telling was a crime and you got punished for it no matter how young you were. Their father had all sorts of stories about people who talked too much, and the Angelo family had no shortage of crime anecdotes going all the way back to Ellis Island. Matt's dad was out of the game, he had a family after all, but his uncles and grandfather were wise guys, and Matt and his brothers knew it. When Christmas rolled around, there wasn't ever much under the tree, but Matt and his brothers could count on a card with a fifty-dollar bill for each of them from Nonnino (their grandfather).

A high school dropout, Matt had no interest in academics, but he had a mind for metal. He worked a few low-level grease monkey jobs around his hometown of Chicago as he grew up. He made friends with taxi drivers, valets, delivery boys, and considered drivers the life blood of the city. He knew the big shots sat in the back but felt some connection to the man up front, the one plotting the course, taking the names where they needed to be on time and smooth. When his bigger brothers started getting involved in the family business, Matt was eager



to play his part and make the family proud. Little Matt would always be little though, and he was overlooked and scoffed at like a kid every time.

Matt knew how to take his time. He'd learn tricks from the professionals he met, he practiced driving cars from the shop he had no business being in, he'd shoot at cans for hours out by the lake, and he would listen. His brothers boasted and talked, and through the men behind the wheel, talk got back to Matt. Started being the case that Matt knew where his brothers would be before they did. Matt always knew it should have been him chosen to take up the family business. His brothers were bullies, and nothing more.

One time Matt picked up news that one of his brothers was part of an arms buy with a Sicilian dealer. The same grapevine had told Matt that the dealer was set to rip off the Chicago locals and probably put his brother in the ground. Matt took a beaten-up old squad car out to an overpass near the meeting spot and watched like an eagle. He didn't know how his brothers could be so dumb, and when the Sicilian made his move, Matt was behind him, putting a bullet in both his men before they knew he was even there.

The Family had taken a look at Matt when he was younger and seen him as the smallest kid. His brothers had said he was a push over, and not worth the time. It had taken them too long to notice that the little guy made up for it with balls of steel. When asked what should be done with his idiot brother, Matt said absolutely nothing. His brothers may be stupid, but they were family after all.

Repeatedly Matt proved himself cool headed and capable. He knew how to bide his time, how to wait, how

to do what needs to be done without making a show of it. Soon enough, Matt was his grandfather's go to driver. Matt liked the creepy old guy and thanked him for all those Christmas cards over the years. Finally, Matt had the chance to learn, to absorb all that family knowledge that his dad had never given him. Not the money and the back breaking and the fear, but the brotherhood, and the respect. His grandfather had some family stories that Matt found almost hard to believe, going all the way back to Ellis Island, like the old guy had been there personally.

KINDRED NIGHTS: FAMILY MAN

Matt's introduction to his true family was like coming home for the first time. The brotherhood he'd always sought but never found, the family he'd wanted but never had. There was power there, in his grandfather and in the Kindred around him, the big guys in the back seat, and he was damn proud to be the man up front, eyes on the road ahead. Matt has learned the streets of Chicago like the back of his hand. Developing his skills are always a drive for Matt. He sees himself as the man to come to when you need something done, and that takes talent he's happy to work at, Matt enthusiastically pursues increasing his capabilities.

The big names of his domain see Matt as a reliable tool, and many ancillae appreciate his attitude. With Matt, there's no aggressive push to climb and force his way up the ladder. Expecting up-and-comers at every turn, a man who knows his place is something of a commodity. Matt has proven himself a consistent weapon with which to take against rival mortals and Kindred alike, all wrapped in such an inconspicuous little package. Beyond his obvious skills, Matt has a deep loyalty to his family, and more than once has demonstrated a keen understanding of the importance of the blood. Even when one of his own inevitably screw up, Matt is a craftsman of words and knows how to shift it cleverly to keep everyone in the family nice and blameless when it counts. Matt works not only as a driver and man-at-arms for his family, but as a go-between for a lot of dealing with kine. He may not be intimidating looking, but Matt can put the screws on when required.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Matt has forever been the little man who people regularly underestimate. He's a subtle man though and doesn't make a show of small man syndrome. He prefers instead to let results speak for him, and professionally attends to his work. His word is his bond, and Matt is proud to be a man who gets the job done. Happier to be the weapon in the hand of the bigger players, Matt has no aspirations for becoming the big man himself. To Matt, the idea of being the boss involves boring decisions and pressure, and always watching your back. He prefers to

be the man on the street, the man with his hand on the wheel or gripping the pistol, being able to fix problems firsthand.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- **Underworld (Contacts 3)** Matt has become known on the streets as a dependable man who keeps his loyalties and pays his debts, and he knows someone to call if he needs to get hold of a gun or a decent car.
- **Valued Employee (Resources 2)** Matt is paid for his time well, and he doesn't like to get too showy with his spending. As a result, he's got a nice nest egg for emergencies.
- **Brothers (Allies 2)** Matt is close with his brothers, and if he needs to call in help in a tough situation, he can get a couple guys with a couple guns in no time.
- **Sire (Mawla 2)** Matt's sire Marco is a tough and fearless Brujah who is happy to teach Matt a thing or two if he has the time.
- **Mythic Flaw (Folkloric Block 1)** Matt was raised in a family where Catholicism wasn't a choice, it was a birthright. He may not have kept the faith too strictly, but the old lessons stuck in his head. Matt firmly believes that Holy Symbols are no longer for his eyes.
- **Priors (Infamy 2)** Matt has an outstanding warrant for his arrest following being sighted in a stolen car.

MASK AND MIEN:

- Matt is known well by locals in Chicago and sees his family from time to time. His elder brothers work in the lowest levels of the family business, not sure exactly what goes on in the higher areas but know not to ask too many questions.
- Matt is a small but good-looking guy. Five and-a-half feet tall and wiry slim with a warm Mediterranean skin tone. His black hair kept short and simple, Matt is clean-shaven and his sharp brown eyes are always alert. Since the Embrace, he tends toward neat and well put together clothing, with pressed trousers, nice dress shoes, and a good shirt. You wouldn't catch him in a tie or cuff links though, those are for the guys in the back seat.

Sire: After the grooming process for Matt was over, Marco Ricci was selected to sire the young family member. Marco is a distant biological cousin to Matt, and a few decades older. A focused and physically capable man, Marco saw the Embrace as a duty to the family and was a proud guide in Matt's earliest days as Kindred.

Predator: Alleycat**Embraced:** 2015 (Born 1988)

Ambition: Matt loves working with the family. It makes him proud, and he wants his family to be the best. To become a made man that any Kindred feels confident to work with — that's what Matt seeks.

Suggested Desire: Prove to himself and to his new family that he's capable and consistent with his hands-on work.

Conviction: While he's fine with implicating rivals and others within crime rings, Matt would never snitch or inform on anyone in the family to higher authority.

Touchstones: Two of Matt's elder brothers are in the crime game and are even being looked at for possible ghouls should they exceed themselves. The remaining brother is the smart one, their mother always joked. A simple family man with the wife and kids that Matt never got, Matt likes to take time to see his brother and live a little moment of the normal life.

Humanity: 6**Generation:** 13th**Blood Potency:** 1

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 3, Firearms 3, Larceny 1, Melee 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1; Animal Ken 1, Intimidation (Stickups) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1; Awareness 1, Technology 1

Disciplines: Celerity 2 (Rapid Reflexes, Fleetness), Potence 2 (Lethal Body, Prowess)

BASTIAN DUCASSE

Concept: The Shepherd

Quote: *"Come my child, come into the light, let me take a look at you."*

Clan: Hecata (Samedi)

MORTAL DAYS: GUARDING THE HERD

In the slums where Bastian was born, they used to say there was two ways to escape the streets. You either became a drug dealer, or you became a priest. Bastian was the eldest of five siblings, and it fell to him to look after the younger ones when their mother worked making trinkets and selling cheap guided tours to lost tourists. Mama Ducasse raised her children honest and good, and



they looked out for one another, and knew that family was everything. When Bastian was 13, he left with nothing but the clothes on his back, walking by foot to Port au Prince, seeking to become that which he knew as right in the world, a man of the cloth.

The church taught Bastian to work harder than he ever imagined. He swept the church floors, washed the streets, and earned callouses on every finger from constant maintenance and upkeep. He learned to read and write in what spare time he got, and he got a few hours of sleep a night in the pews with God's other young helpers. Where others came and went after a few weeks or a few months, Bastian stayed at the old church for years. He became the first face any visitor would see entering the creaking halls, with kind words for the fallen, a cold cloth for the brow of the weak. The little church was kept afloat in tough times by the donations of a wealthy man Bastian knew as Mr. Dajuste.

Bastian was a kind soul, and the old priest saw this. Bastian never officially became a priest recognized by the Catholic Church, but he was given the robes when the old man finally passed on, and with the heavy keys in his hand and his arms spread open to welcome those lost, he played the part to perfection. Always assisted by the helpful Mr. Dajuste, Bastian never had trouble when developers sought to buy the church property, or the interference of higher church officials who sought to replace Bastian. Mr. Dajuste had a way of making things go away.

When the earthquake hit, Bastian sheltered as many as would fit into the confines of his tiny sanctuary. Many were saved, but the structural integrity of the building was damaged beyond repair, and the church was finally demolished during the rebuilding effort. With nothing left in his life, Bastian feared for his direction, but Mr.

Dajuste was there, offering him a job as a part of his greater family. The man promised Bastian that together they could work toward the greater good, and that Bastian would forever have a place doing that which was right in the world.

KINDRED NIGHTS: LEADING THE WAY

Under the wing of Mr. Dajuste, Bastian left the islands for America, seeking his place in the world. Bastian saw himself as a missionary, the role he had always sought. Not simply taking the weak and needy under his wing but bringing faith and power over fear to those in need, wherever they may be. As Kindred, Bastian felt he was more attuned to mortals than ever before, watching down upon them like a guardian. Beyond the lives of mortals, Bastian became eager to develop his understanding and role in the greater Hecata family. While many see Bastian as something of a joke for his faith and his spirituality, many find themselves oddly envious of the peace at which Bastian seems to be able to find with his existence. Deep within himself, Bastian fights an intensely personal battle, feeling the weight of his faith upon his shoulders and the urge to throw it all away. Quite hidden from others, Bastian is a Kindred deeply afraid of his hunger, and the fear of what he might do every time he loses his temper. To Bastian, his hunger is a quite literal demon, the face of which stares back at him every time he sates his hunger — finding a way to conquer that demon is a selfish drive that Bastian is terrified to face.

GUIDE TO PLAY:

Bastian is a man of great morals and great wrath. He is kind, but firm. Warm, but his easy smile has a don't-push-me threat behind it. He seeks to use his power for worthy causes, and he isn't hesitant to bring down force upon those who oppose him. Traveling the world, he seeks those who are lost, who need aid, or who face great injustice. In his time as a mortal, Bastian gave shelter; now he knows it is not enough to be reactive and must force the changes to be made with a steady guiding hand.

BACKGROUND DETAIL:

- **Sire (Mawla 2)** Mr. Dajuste watched Bastian grow for almost twenty years in Port au Prince, seeing his development from a hard worker for just a heel of bread to a man who worked every day for others. Dajuste knows that Bastian is a strong-minded, thoughtful man who does what it takes for the greater good, and is there to back his childe up, his old walking stick in hand. He's particularly wise in the worlds of politics and legal red tape, and how to use both cleverly and efficiently.
- **Papers in Order (Mask 2)** Mr. Dajuste saw to the details when Bastian left Haiti, so he wouldn't run

into any trouble trying to cross borders. Due to the notoriously poor record keeping from Haiti at the time, it was easy to create bulletproof documents for Bastian to travel with.

- **Feeding Merit (Iron Gullet 3)** While mocked mercilessly for it by his sire, Bastian spent his earliest Kindred days feeding from bagged blood from the relief effort supplies. Bastian continues to drink from bagged sources where available, and if he does require a living source, Bastian tries to lessen the terror of the experience as much as possible.
- **Mission Funds (Resources 1)** Bastian has a small amount of disposable cash from his travels, and cares to spend it wisely. If he comes across more than he requires, he donates it to local churches.
- **Wanderer (No Haven 1)** Bastian is transient, and while Port au Prince is his home, he has not lived there since the destruction of the church. He will often attempt to choose churches or places of worship as his temporary havens.
- **The Skeptic (Adversary 2)** In his early Kindred days, Bastian oversaw helping a homeless camp in the streets of New York. He inspired them to move on and seek their own paths. This camp had been the hunting ground of a morally depraved Toreador for some time, and the loss of the herd that she toyed with angered her greatly. She sees Bastian as a charlatan and a fake, and even though he has no knowledge of her, she is eager to have her revenge upon him for the perceived slight.
- **Loresheet (Descendant of the Baron 2)**

MASK AND MIEN:

- Bastian was born in a time of little government accountability in Haiti, with many falsified reports, and to those who knew him, he was counted among those lost in the earthquake tragedy. His mother does not know that Bastian still lives, and it is a source of great pain for him to not contact her.
- Bastian is a tall and handsome Caribbean man in his thirties, with a kindly smile and a body built from a life of demanding work and physical labor. He has dark skin, clean-shaven with black hair so short it's almost stubble. He dresses in simple clothing, but often wears his collar or other Catholic regalia if the situation might benefit from it.

Sire: Mr. Dajuste was a Haiti native under the early rule of Duvalier, and he learned the arts of both subtlety and rebellion to survive under Papa Doc's despotic rule. An older man with an intimidating glare, Dajuste is always well dressed and bears neat gray dreadlocks, he feigns a limp and walks with a cane.

Predator: Bagger

Embraced: 2010 (Born 1978)

Ambition: To find a new flock to protect with his new strengths. To lead those people on to greatness and happiness.

Suggested Desire: Find a place for his faith within the family; reconcile his understanding of the afterlife.

Conviction: Bastian will punish those who destroy, deface, or otherwise harm religious iconography or locations. He hunts those who steal from churches or the pious, and does not trust allies who make a habit of doing so.

Touchstones: Bastian's family still live, and while he understands he must leave them to their lives, his

youngest brother traveled to America to become a musician. Bastian finds his brother's music a constant source of joy, and he drops by to see him perform at any opportunity.

Humanity: 7

Generation: 12th

Blood Potency: 1

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3; Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 7

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Larceny (Lock-picking) 1, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1; Etiquette 3, Insight 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1; Awareness 3, Finance 1, Politics 1

Disciplines: Obscure 3 (Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage, Mask of a Thousand Faces), Oblivion 1 (Ashes to Ashes)