



Book Two: Usurpers

"They say the that the bones of St. Cuthbert rest not far from here," Meerlinda said, her low voice barely breaking the cold, crisp silence of the autumn evening. She stood at the window of her tower room from which she could see the stately outline of Durham Cathedral silhouetted against the moonlit sky. In her hands she held a chased-silver goblet, now empty of the warm, rich vitae that served as her only sustenance.

"Do you believe the tales, lady?" Geraint de Montfort asked as he came to stand beside her at the window. His gaze, like hers, fastened on the nearby abbey. The young man, bound to her service as an apprentice and companion since a few nights after her arrival in this godforsaken part of England, had helped her secure the tower she now occupied and that served as the Tremere chantry. Meerlinda stole a glance at him from the corner of her eye. Geraint seemed composed, despite his knowledge of this night's importance in his life. Such equanimity in the face of the elaborate ritual of sanguination and infusion that comprised the Tremere embrace would stand him in good stead during his first nights as a Cainite. Meerlinda had schooled him carefully, preparing him for his transformation; soon, he would demonstrate the degree of his attentiveness to her lessons.

Meerlinda shrugged. "It matters little," she said. "Once, long before you were born, I might have sought diligently for such a treasure, as much to deprive the Church of a plaything as for whatever power those bones contained. But now," she raised her own goblet before her, in imitation of the priestly elevation of the sacramental chalice, "this provides me with all the magical nourishment I require." She handed the goblet to Geraint and turned away from the window. "Attend to your duties, now," she told her apprentice. "I expect you to have resolved any unfinished business that remains to you before you return to me. I will see you after the midnight candlemark." Geraint bowed and left the room.

A small desk in the center of the room held a pair of unopened scrolls. One from the chantry at Ceoris and the other from France. Meerlinda seated herself at the desk and picked up the first of the missives, sighing as she reread Etrius' angled script. As usual, her fellow Cainite's message contained his customary misgivings about his woeful state of life. With the first words, Meerlinda shook her head ruefully. Etrius would never change. His horror at the price of gaining immortality had not lessened with the passing of over a century. Neither had his anger at Goratrix, the instigator of the grand experiment that had transformed the leaders of the House Tremere from mortal magi to immortal children of the line.

Her lips moved as her eyes passed over the passages of Etrius' letter and found the "news" that he dutifully conveyed to her.

Our master spends much time in the deep sleep that we have learned to call "torpor." The nightly management of our affairs increasingly falls upon my shoulders. I begin to wonder

just how wise it is for us to remain in these forsaken mountains surrounded as we are by hostile forces that would like to see us better than to see our complete annihilation. I speak, of course, of the Tzimisce.

I fear we have traded our diminishing powers as mortals for an insecure place in a dark and unholy society that does not welcome us. We work feverishly to unlock the thaumaturgical knowledge so vital to our survival, yet our rituals seem pale in comparison with the True Magick we have sacrificed upon the altar of our greed. By night, we hear the howls of the beasts sent

in search of us by their voiyode masters. By day, we receive no respite. While we pass the sunlit hours in the tormented slumbers of the Damned, the Fiends' mortal servants scour the mountain for signs of our resting places. They are joined in this by the members of the Church, who send their knights against us. On

wards and the inaccessibility of our halls serve to protect us, and I fear the time will soon come when even those precautions fail.

My only joy in this pitiful slumber lies in the knowledge that Goratrix no longer haunts these halls. Yet a measure of solace is tempered by my fear of the new inquiries his foul intelligence pursues. France is not far enough from me for my liking.

The rest of the letter contained solicitous inquiries

Meerlinda's own position and requests for news concerning her outside Ceoris — particularly regarding the activities of Goratrix.

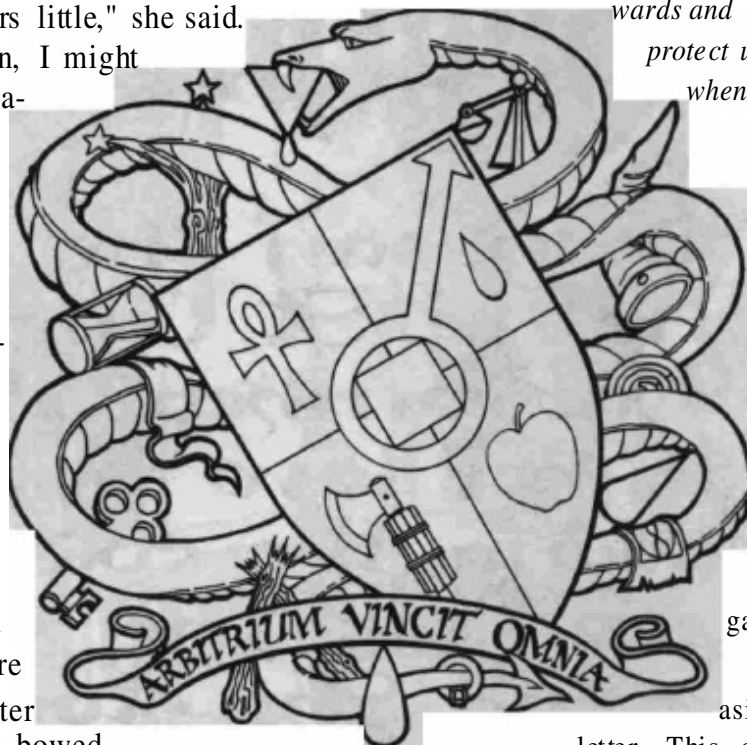
Meerlinda smiled and put the letter aside, turning her attention to the next

letter. This one, from Goratrix in his capacity as ruler of France, differed from Etrius' communication in several important aspects. Most prominent was the author's approval of his existence. Rather than lamenting his changed status, Goratrix gloried in his transformed state.

You and I are fortunate to have escaped the confines of this barbarian countryside for more civilized climes. I have been listening to Etrius' constant moaning about "our pitiful homeland," but he cannot see it. You know as well as I that we have attained a level of civilization beyond our most potent imaginings. More than ever, this breathing world and its puny inhabitants have become as our toys in our hands. So far removed have we grown from the concerns that we need no longer trouble ourselves with anything beyond the pursuit of knowledge, and the power attendant

A long self-laudatory passage followed in which Goratrix described his latest alchemical experiments upon himself. Meerlinda grimaced as she read his words with gruesome detail.

Laying aside both scrolls, she sat in contemplation. In her answers she would inscribe to both her fellow Tremere the distance from the heart of her clan had not less



involvement in the ongoing dispute between Etrius and Goratrix. Both still looked to her for advice. And, as usual, she would give it - cautioning each of them to remember their common blood and the bonds that served to unite them in the face of growing enmity from outside the countries' gates.

Meerlinda pulled her thoughts away from the contentiousness of her fellow elders and fastened instead upon more immediate concerns: the bestowal of the Embrace upon her apprentice. Focusing her consciousness upon the glyph she had placed over the door to her laboratory, Meerlinda scried the room in which Geraint even now busied himself with his preparations for the ritual of the embrace. She watched with approval as the young apprentice arranged the pewter bowls which would be used to contain his lifeblood. Once, Geraint paused to take a deep breath, visibly forcing himself to relieve the tension manifest in the taut muscles of his neck. His lips moved slightly, muttering the words of the oath of loyalty he would recite immediately after his transformation. Meerlinda nodded to herself as she watched him for a few more minutes. Satisfied with what she saw, she severed her connection to the scrying device and returned to the task of answering the pleas of both Etrius and Goratrix.



Geraint returned just as Meerlinda finished pressing her gold signet ring into the daub of wax on the second scroll. Tomorrow, one of her retainers - not Geraint - would see to their delivery.

"Are you ready?" she asked her apprentice.

Geraint nodded. "I am, my lady," he replied. "All has been prepared as you have ordered."

"Does the thought of eternal life prove daunting, now that you stand ready to receive it?"

The apprentice turned his face toward the window. The town of Durham now lay occluded in the darkness that followed the setting of the moon. "Why try again for Astonsbury, why search further for the Sangreal, when

the cup of immortal life rests here, within my grasp?" Meerlinda rose. "And have you no fear that this path leads to your soul's damnation?"

Geraint smiled faintly. "You offer me eternity in which to reflect upon that question," he replied.

Meerlinda nodded, satisfied. "Then let us proceed to the sanctum, where you will drink from the cup of bitterness and strife, of joy and learning. From this night forward, you shall stand among those who have embraced the outer darkness in pursuit of the inner light. Tonight, through this, you become one of the children of Tremere."



The Usurper's Seed

And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same Pottage.. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall my birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

- Genesis 25:30-33

This night has seen your birth into the House of the Usurper. The other clans of the Cainite describe us thus, for we have seized their secret of life eternal and made it our own. We have cut down one of their mighty ones and put our own founder in his place. For this, they hate us. For this, they seek our destruction. Yet, we survive.

Mere survival does not constitute the whole *raison d'être* of our existence, though - no, far from it. The beasts of the field survive, as do the human kine from whose vitae we draw our sustenance. Our clan serves a loftier purpose, for we seek to preserve a power that even now diminishes in the world around us. I speak of magic. For we are a clan of magi, though the nature of our magic has changed.

THE TRANSFORMATION

By will and by magic have we insinuated ourselves into the bloodlines of the Children of Caine. In describing here our transformation from mortal to immortal, from those bound to the cycles of base reproduction and fleshly cares to those freed from those concerns by the eternal darkness we have embraced, I make no idle or frivolous boast. I but present to you, my child, a true declamation of the means of our genesis as a clan of dying wizards - or former wizards, if the harsh truth be known. For in our achievement of endless existence, I fear we have traded away our birthright as surely as we have seized others' inheritance of immortality.

Think back on the exquisite agony of your Embrace. When the last of your blood flowed from your veins and the first drops of my vitae burned their way into the core of your being, you passed into a state of dying - not death of our living flesh transformed into immortal matter. You screamed as something inside you shattered.

That moment of fragmentation and the slow, agonizing feeling of dissipation that ensued signified the incorporation of magic into your very essence even as it heralded the death cry of

your wizardly power. From a potential worker of magic you became, instead, a magical creature *in essence* no longer able to command the forces or harness the elemental mysteries of the world. Instead, you have become those mysteries.

Our transformation lies at the heart of our dilemma. By infusing ourselves with the *vis* that now courses itself with our blood, we have set ourselves apart from the world. As mortal magi, we ate from the tree of knowledge and sought to content ourselves with the slow absorption of its secrets. As Cainites, we have swallowed the forbidden seeds of immortality, and now the whole of eternity opens before us, a gaping chasm into the abyss of the unknown. Knowledge gained a pungency far beyond our mortal expectations.

Yet, we suffer from our sacrifice of mortality. I stand, my child, that our choice was an irrevocable one. The steps we have taken cannot be retraced; they have changed us forever. I fear that what we have lost cannot return to us, and that the path we have chosen for you, which you now tread alongside us, leads only deeper into the eternal night in which we must dwell. Still, we embrace that darkness, for without it, we have no light.

THE PURPOSE OF KNOWLEDGE

In becoming immortal, we have had to rediscover how to use our magic. The ways of mortal wizards no longer avail us. In transforming our nature, we have gained the capacity to perform those magical charms and rituals once served to impose our will upon the natural world. Instead of harnessing the emanations of magic, we have placed that yoke upon ourselves, utilizing our

magic to replace our vanished power. When you learn to control the halo which surrounds all living creatures, you will find that we exude a radiance of brilliant scintillae that makes the dispersal of magic throughout our corporal bodies a

As individuals and as a clan, we strive to master the knowledge of our newfound methods of magic, which we call Thaumaturgy. Already, we have learned to do much of what we lost in becoming immortal. We can hope that the rest will follow from diligent pursuit of experimentation. Now that we exist outside the confines of mortal flesh, the constraints that inhibit humans no longer exercise control over our actions.

THE ONUS OF SURVIVAL

Apart from recovering our knowledge of magic and comprehending our new state of existence, our clan seeks to establish for us a place in the Cainite hierarchy. The process of self-transformation began in 1022, when Goratrix produced the elixir which initiated our change from mortals to immortals. Since that time, we have had to conduct further dissemination of our vampiric gift under conditions of utmost secrecy. Not all members of House Tremere have as yet undergone our transformation. Further, those other houses of the Order of Hermes who know or harbor suspicions of our great experiment grow increasingly antagonistic toward us. We dare not flaunt our achievement outside our own house, lest those who were once our fellow wizards condemn us out of ignorance.

We cannot maintain our pretense of humanity indefinitely, however, and to that end we have intensified our efforts to complete the transformation of all the members of House Tremere. Until that time, and perhaps even beyond, we must adhere to a rigid code of loyalty among ourselves and obedience to our elders. Only in this fashion can we protect our secrets and pursue our goals without disturbance. Unlike the other Cainite clans, we know the value of presenting ourselves as a disciplined, unified force.

In like manner, we must stay ever alert to the dangers from our supernatural enemies. The other Cainites refer to us as "Usurpers," and the term holds some truth. We have claimed for ourselves a birthright not originally intended for us, and have dared to set ourselves as equals among the children of Caine. Clan Tzimisce despises us for stealing their vitae in order to effect our transformation and for our expansion into the lands of Eastern Europe, over which they once held sway. That our search for the secret of immortality required the sacrifice of one of their elders - in addition to a brace of our own acolytes - has caused an irreconcilable rift between our clan and theirs.

Further, once we discovered that Cainites dwelled within a highly structured society heretofore unknown to us, we realized the necessity to establish ourselves as a bloodline equal to those of the other vampires. Thus, House Tremere took into himself the power and generation of the antediluvian Saulot. We did not anticipate the scorn and hostility that would be instigated by that action.

Was Tremere's Amaranth of Saulot a mistake in terms of our survival as Cainites? You need not answer that question immediately, my child. In part, it serves a rhetorical purpose. Every action we have taken since that fateful night bears questioning with regard to its unforeseen consequences. Our enemies beset us on all sides and from all quarters. We exist because of our caution and our determination; ironically, our willingness to undertake risks also contributes to our continued survival.

THE SEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE

As we move farther away from our mortal colleagues and grow more intimately bound up in Cainite society. Note that I do not refer to it as the "society of the Damned," as I have heard other vampires describe their state - and, indeed, my friend and fellow Council member Etrius so often pronounces it. Heretical though it may be, I believe that God reserves

judgment for mortals, and for mortals alone. We have become something different.

As important as any of our other pursuits, the gaining of acceptance by our co-equals looms as one of our most immediate concerns. Once we existed as a house of magi among other houses. Now we form a clan of Cainites within a world of disparate and often quarreling clans. Though the other Cainites call us Usurpers, they cannot deny our existence. Already we have formed a few alliances with those Council members who despise our Tzimisce enemies. No doubt any clan that approaches us believes that it acts out of self-interest; for

we must content ourselves with allowing them to carry out their decision. Winning a place for ourselves within the hierarchy of vampires counts as but the first step in a far more ambitious process.

THE ATTAINMENT OF POWER

We aspire to more than mere acceptance. We wish the advantages granted to us by our unique thaumaturgical powers. Clan Tremere possesses the potential to gain dominance among its Cainite brothers and sisters. Despite our relative youth, our clan, we count among our number some of the most aggressive

resourceful minds in Cainite society. The other clan has grown set in their ways. Moreover, their own petty concerns over ancient rivalries prevent them from assembling a united force to oppose our ascension to power among their ranks.

Our clan structure provides the necessary stability to carry out a campaign to increase our standing and authority within the fractious shadow realm of Cainite governance. This campaign, of course, must remain occluded from the minds of those who might oppose us. The obstacles that confront us are formidable, as did the prospect of unlocking the secret of immortality; yet we succeeded in our first quest. I have

no doubt that we shall likewise prove successful in attaining a rightful place of leadership within the world of the undead.

THE SPREADING OF THE SEED

As a clan of usurpers, Clan Tremere must carve out for itself realms of power and influence, taking territory and establishing our presence where we may. As magi, we once held sway over many villages in Eastern Europe and Transylvania. Here we constructed schools of learning that served as our channels



Unfortunately, our presence in those lands of wild and full magic aroused the ire of the vampires of Clan Tzimisce. Raids by these undying ones and by other supernatural creatures resulted in the loss of many of our strongholds. Now only a few remain.

As magic diminished throughout much of the world, the House Tremere sought an ingress into Eastern Europe where we found places where magic still flourished, albeit in strange and often incomprehensible forms. Still, it enabled us to continue to harvest the *vis* we found so necessary for the continuation of our abilities.

Now that we have freed ourselves from the dependence on such external sources of magic, needing only the cooperation of common mortals to resuscitate our own internal magic, the House Tremere possesses the capability of expanding its borders. We are establishing enclaves throughout the known world.

The House Tremere itself has ordered our dispersal in order to assert our presence in as many countries as possible. In this way, we force the other clans to recognize our existence and give ourselves the ability to present our case to sovereign powers. Vampires more likely to ally with us against a common enemy. In addition, by locating our elders in various parts of the world, we can decrease the likelihood that any single vampire by our enemies can deprive us of our most potent members.

EASTERN EUROPE AND TRANSYLVANIA

Despite attacks by the Tzimisce, we still control lands around the Carpathians, our primary stronghold. Our fortress Ceoris, greatest of our chantries and home of our founder, lies deep within the mountain. As rivals of the Tzimisce threaten the *voivodes'* hold, among them the Eastern lords of Clan Ventrue, agents of the Toreador and Brujah clans, we find it necessary to reassert ourselves — though in secrecy — in some of the emerging cities. In Prague and Krakow, where universities arise as centers of learning for mortals, we have established inconspicuous chantries and offer discrete alliances with non-Tzimisce vampires. In the cities of the Siebenbürgen in Romania, we extend our presence as well. For long nights of occupation are underway.

In Poland and Lithuania, a few Tremere outposts arise, feeding on the vitality of the pagan populations of these regions. Although the Tzimisce still hold sway in these realms, other clans beside our own have succeeded in contesting the Fiends' claim to the land.

THE BRITISH ISLES

Mithras and the Ventrue control much of England, though the Toreador contest them vigorously in the south outside London. In the city itself, we have acquired a foothold who may yet ease the way for our entrance into Cainite

Although the ancient prince of London has no love for our clan, we have managed - as you well know - to make a few inroads. Here in Durham, far from the interference of the Northumbrians and those who hold Glastonbury, we hope to stay far enough away from the affairs of London to pursue our interests in peace and gather the strength that we need to expand our influence. Eventually, we hope to spread into Scotland and Ireland, taking advantage of the residual pagan magic that still permeates those outlying lands.

FRANCE

The Toreador hold nearly uncontested sway over most of the lands of France outside of the region of Brittany, where the Norman Ventrue maintain supremacy. Nevertheless, we have found that the new universities springing up in Paris and some of the other growing cities provide us with ideal locations for building chantries. Tremere has sent Goratrix to oversee the expansion of our clan's interests in Caesar's *Gallia*. His resourcefulness - along with his Gargoyleservitors - should prove useful in protecting our new French chantries.

In the south of France, both Tours and Marseilles hold promise for the growth of our clan. Marseilles, in particular, offers many advantages for us. Lacking a prince and governed by Cainite trading interests, the port city provides us with ample space in which to maneuver, provided we do not conflict with the mercantile aims of the Ventrue and the Lasombra.

HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

In the land of Germany, we stand to gain one of our longest spheres of influence, due to the interclan rivalry among Ventrue, Lasombra and Toreador. In exchange for certain tokens of assistance, we have had promise of support from the Ventrue. The ongoing - and clandestine - negotiations between Ashram, one of our clan's most subtle agents, and the Ventrue Jorgen von Verden have helped us to insinuate ourselves in the duchies of Saxony, Silesia and Pomerania. We have accepted the invitation of Austria's Ventrue to establish a chantry in Vienna. Already, it shows signs of becoming one of our most productive centers of research.

SPAIN

Insofar as we can surmise, the Christian kingdoms of Castile and Leon, now combined into one state, fall under the dominion of the Lasombra and Brujah clans. Although we have chantries in Toledo and Santiago, we take great pains to conceal our presence lest we run afoul of the strength of the Church in these lands.

In the southern lands of the Almohad Empire, we have only just begun to insert ourselves. The Assamite presence in this land of the Moors makes us exercise the greatest caution in our endeavors there. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the prospect of studying the works of the Islamic scholars, many of whom are well-versed in occult learning.

ITALY

The merchant cities of northern Italy exist in a constant rivalry with each other, in both the mortal and the supernatural realms. We have taken advantage of that fact to establish chantries in a few of these cities, hoping to remain uninvolved until such time as we can afford to act openly. Though the Cainites avoid the Papal States, some of our more adventurous members have attempted to make contacts among the Nosferatu, who are rumored to have access to many

underground libraries of the Eternal City. The acquisition of knowledge necessary to our great work makes the positioning ourselves in Rome, though great, worth the effort.

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE AND THE MUSLIM STATES

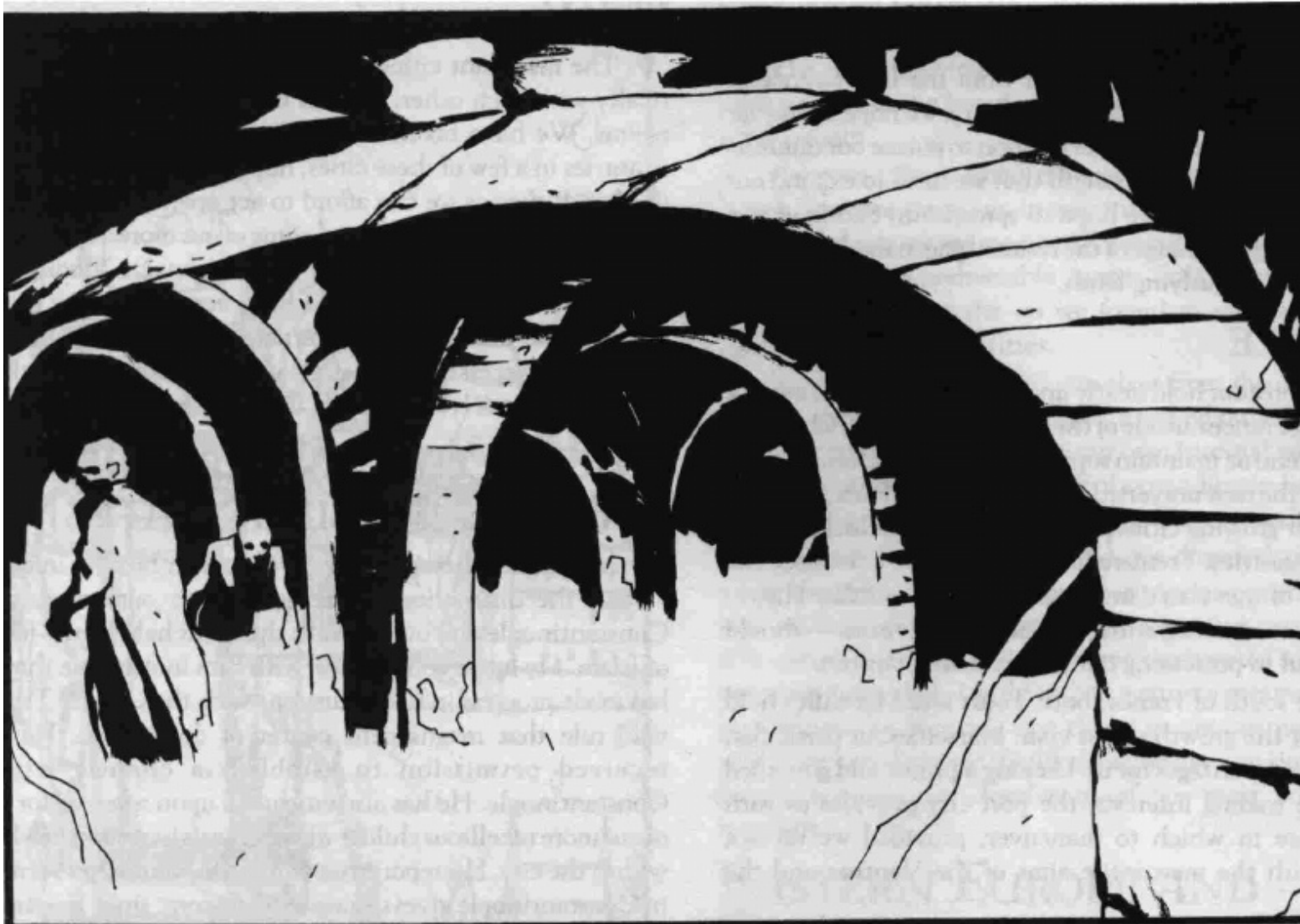
My child Abetorius - your own elder brother - has the distinction of acting as both our emissary to Constantinople and our agent to the lands held by the followers of Islam. My latest communion with him informs me that he has made progress in his discussions with the Cainites who rule that magnificent center of civilization. He has received permission to establish a chantry in Constantinople. He has also embarked upon a search for one of our more rebellious children who conceals herself secretly within the city. His report that one of the Salubri lies in Constantinople gives us cause for concern, since we cannot afford to allow any of Saulot's line to remain active to work against us.

In the lands controlled by the Turks and the Assassins, we must walk carefully and inconspicuously. Although we have been able to gain passage through the mountains among the Cappadocians, they control the veneration in which many local peoples hold Saulot's children makes an open presence difficult to sustain.

CHANTRIES

preference, to dwell in the quiet havens, we find our strength in numbers. As mages, we are for the most part, apart from the world, secure in our cloisters. There we conducted our magical experiments and put our knowledge to our acolytes. The communal nature of our existence helped us form a bond of loyalty to one another that made our house strong.

We continue with the practice of residing in cloisters both for our protection and for the benefits we gain from the society of others like ourselves. In those chantries that contain human magi, we strive to keep the truth of our nature hidden until such time as we can complete the transformation of all members of House Tremere. We, therefore, move cautiously among our ignorant mortal colleagues lest they discover our secret before we have had time to administer the Embrace to all of them.



Our newer chantries - such as our own here in Durham - need maintain no such pretense. You have known of my empiric state since your first draught of my vitae. The mortal servants and retainers who keep watch over us during the twilight hours believe what we condition them to believe. Our transformation has given us an astonishing control over the limited minds of our human servitors.

Within the safety of our chantries, we pursue as many interests as there are children of Tremere. Each of us has her own research into the nature of our changed magic. You have seen the thaumaturgic experiments that I have conducted in my own laboratory and have helped dispose of my failures (and, in some cases, of my successes as well). Each chantry strives to make some contribution to our clan's growing storehouse of occult knowledge.

Most chantries house a library of scrolls and tomes collected during our days as magi of House Tremere. More recently, we have acquired other valuable books and writings from our dealings with other clans or through the efforts of therepid Celestyn, whose exploits have achieved an almost legendary status among our elders. In particular, his written accounts of his contacts with the Tzimisce have provided us with much material on our enemy and proven advantageous in helping us to combat them.

While a few of our chantries resemble fortresses or asteries, thus affording us with a formidable array of defenses, some chantries - the smaller ones - use subterfuge and wards to render them unnoticeable and to provide protection against discovery and intrusion. In some cities, we disguise our chantries as herbalists' shops, while in other places we content ourselves with inhabiting the catacombs or crypts beneath a ghoul's surgeon's or alchemist's establishment. Even our largest chantries seldom hold more than two or three of our clan, but such numbers are enough to give us a measure of expansion.

Although I cannot divulge to you the locations of our chantries, I may mention a few of the most prominent and intriguing - ones.

CEORIS

Once the heart of our Hermetic Order of magi, Ceoris now occupies a central position for our clan. Deep within the Carpathians, its stone walls steeped in the magic of the land itself, the fortress has survived wave after wave of assault from the Tzimisce and their minions, as well as from other natural enemies that haunt those desolate mountains. I cannot yet speak to you of the defenses that protect Ceoris, but I can state that both magical and physical protections exist and that they have served to deter those who would come the

ted. Were I to attempt to breach the wards that surround Ceoris without the express permission of its residents, I fear that even I would meet with an unhappy fate.

From his sanctum in the bowels of Ceoris, Goratrix discovered the means of our transformation. There, too, he created the Gargoyles, who served to turn the tide in our war against the Tzimisce. You have undoubtedly noticed the creature who perches high atop this tower - a gift from Goratrix to make certain that I was not without guardians here in Durham. I will speak more of it - and those like it at a later date.

Our founder now sleeps in Ceoris, or so I believe. Etrius, one of the original seven who underwent the ritual of change along with Tremere, serves as the unceasing guardian of our clan's Antediluvian. Even in his torpid state, Tremere still exercises a compelling presence throughout the clan; his efforts serve as a model for our own personal achievements as well as for our attainments as a lineage.

DURHAM

This chantry, as you know, lies just outside the city of Durham, within sight of the cathedral that houses some of the oldest relics this isle offers. The tower we occupy has been here since Roman times. I have found it sufficient for our current needs, in particular because of its underground chambers and the passageway our servants have just completed. Upon my arrival here, I saw to the setting of the magical wards of Durham Tower as well as the strengthening of the fortifications already in place.

Here we are far enough away from Prince Mithras' court in London that we do not threaten him unduly with our presence. I have heard that he does not take kindly to our presence. That is something I hope to change, once we have established our right to this small plot of ground. And if this place fails, there will always be another - this green and pleasant land contains an abundance of suitable homes for us.

Legends claim that the bones of the sainted Cuthbert are here, as are the long-lost Lindisfarne Gospels. There are the usual tales of pagan magics and standing stones as well, though you'll find those anywhere in England that two rocks are piled upon one another. Certainly, magical energies still course through the ground here, fed by the belief of the populace and the encouragement of the monks. The overwhelming aura of magic that permeates this ancient land, sacred to both pagans and Christians, reminds me of the magical resonance present throughout large parts of Transylvania.

Ceoris rose to prominence due to its proximity to the magic-rich soil of Eastern Europe; I have hopes that our Durham chantry will, in time, absorb some of the pervasive emanations of magic that surround it. Although we can no longer imbue ourselves with the *vis* of the land, its mystical energies - I believe - assist in our thaumaturgical endeavors and experiments and seep into the blood of the mortals upon whom we feed.



PARIS

Once head of the chantry at Ceoris, Goratrix now leads our spearhead in France. His chantry in Paris, so I hear, lies not far from the university district there. Goratrix and his followers have constructed an underground labyrinth that serves to dissuade unwanted visitors. His Gargoyles act as guards and defenders, in addition to serving as his spies throughout the city.

The Paris chantry should prove one of our strongest centers of scholarly research, as I am certain that Goratrix himself spends most of his evenings in his laboratories. His continuing efforts in studying the vampiric form have increased our knowledge of what we have become.

VIENNA

The Vienna chantry has only recently come into existence. Invited to the city by the Ventrue in order to help them strengthen their hold on the region, we have established a small but thriving community of Tremere near the heart of the city. Although I have few details as to the defenses of the Vienna chantry - overseen by Etrius himself, I am told - much effort has gone into concealing its location from the other Cainites of the city. Reports have come to me that the chantry's library rivals the one in Ceoris.

LITHUANIA

Perhaps the strangest of our chantries lies near the outskirts of Riga. Since its formation shortly before Tremere formalized our clan through his assimilation of Saulot's essence, the Riga chantry has preferred to remain only peripherally connected to the rest of our clan. We have received minimal communication from the Tremere of Riga,

no hint that they have discovered a way to extract latent power from the land itself. This goes against everything we currently know about our state. Efforts to compel them to collaborate on their findings have proved unsuccessful. My personal belief is that the Lithuanian Tremere walk a dangerous path, which may lead them outside the auspices of our clan.

THE TIES OF BLOOD

I must now speak to you of the strength of our blood and how we use it to bind us to one another, and to the leaders of the clan. Along with the draught of my own vitae, which brought you into your new existence, you also took into your body a mixture of the blood of the members of the Inner Council. Tomorrow evening, upon rising, you will repeat this process, thus bringing you to the edge of confirming a Blood Oath to the clan's elders - myself included.

I hope this does not dismay you. We require it of all newly embraced Tremere for several reasons. Our existence at this moment - and for the foreseeable future - relies on our ability to exert a unified presence in the face of those who oppose us. That we must enforce such a predisposition of

loyalty upon you reflects the depth of the precautions we take to preserve the secret of our existence. Our best understanding of this need; our worst fear "insulted" by the lack of trust. I have no doubts that we will number you among the former, however.

The current war for survival against mortal and immortal foes demands that we cleave to one another. The world is as the monsters that we are; other Cainites view us as intruders. We have no allies save each other, and we do everything in our power to excise any hint of betrayal from our ranks.

You bear within you the mystical reminder of kinship with those who first crossed over into the forbidden garden of the undying. Consider your draughts an oath rather than a link in a chain of servitude. We all have a stake. Yours are the elders of Clan Tremere.

SIRE AND CHILDE

Blood binds you not only to your clan, but to your sire as well. In most clans, so far as we have discovered, the bond exists between a new Cainite and her creator resembling the relationship between parent and child. This holds true for our clan, as well. More than that primal bond, however, other ties formed by the passing of my blood into you. Just as a fledgling wizard serves a term of apprenticeship to his master, so, too, does your education into the ways of our clan fall to me to oversee. You have become my apprentice in thaumaturgical magics, and my legacy for the continuation of our clan.

Do you feel this connection? Once you learn the ways, you may commune with me at any time and at any place, not merely through the enactment of a simple ritual. Our blood enables this magic.

THE ORGANIZATION OF CLAN TREMERE

We observe a rigid hierarchy within our clan for a number of reasons. We draw from our experience as a house of importance the importance of maintaining a stable order of prominent lines of instruction pass from elder to younger, from the experienced to the less knowledgeable. This pyramidal structure gives us a strength and harmony of form.

At the apex of our clan stands Tremere himself. Just below him in authority are the members of the Inner Council, some of us who first experienced the vampiric transformation. Most clan policies come from this level of authority; Tremere attends to the weightier matters to attend to. Below that are the heads, who instruct those within their chantries and put into effect the decisions of the Inner Council.

For the most part, those of us whose blood is strong exercise power over those who are weaker. Most Cainites believe that this is the established order of our kind. Within our clan, however, strong blood alone does not constitute

a criterion for authority. The most potent in blood are

most cases, the most knowledgeable. The possession of knowledge and its attendant power sustains our right to guide those with lesser expertise.

Since we fight a war for survival, we must consider ourselves as an army of sorts. This lends additional justification to our need for leaders and followers. Thus, we have derived our present structure as the best means possible whereby we may defend ourselves from outside attack.

CONCERNING OUR NATURE

There remains much to impart to you with regard to our nature as Cainites. You must forgive me for a momentary expression of my personal bitterness in this matter. Unlike the clans who trace their beginnings to the early reaches of time, we came to this state of being as neophytes - unprepared in many ways for the restrictions of our unlife and untutored in the powers we possessed. Our road to self-knowledge has taken more than a century of study and experimentation, often at great cost. Other Cainites have been loath to assist us.

For decades, we labored under many misconceptions. We have had to struggle for every scrap of information we now possess about our heritage, our strengths, our weaknesses and limitations. Remember that, and you will never feel the temptation to open yourself to anyone outside our clan. We stand alone on the fringes of the darkness, illuminated only by the light created by our own efforts. If we bloody our hands by our quest for enlightenment, it is because our enemies have forced us into a battle we did not begin.

Besides making him equal to the other clans' Antediluvian founders, Tremere's incorporation of the essence of the Vulot also provided him with that ancient one's knowledge of the ways of Cainites. Thus, we have corrected many of our early notions about ourselves. There exist two explanations of the origins of Cainites - one which identifies us with the cursed descendants of the murderer of Abel and one which proclaims us as the bastard children of Lilith, Adam's exiled first consort and the mother of all witches. From time to time, Tremere has hinted of yet a third origin of the race of vampires coming from somewhere in the East, but refuses further

elaboration.

From our own experiments, we have learned to beware both sun and flame, but immersion in water has no adverse effect upon us. We need not slay those upon whom we feed, though we must take precautions to ensure that our vessels do not remember what has transpired or that, if they do, that they keep silent on the matter. We have still not solved the mystery of why a wooden stake through the heart only immobilizes, but does not destroy, us. Experiments with both living and non-living wooden weapons have proven inconclusive.

We have yet to comprehend fully how our transformation affects our inability to tolerate certain items or our reaction to certain natural phenomena. The vampiric condition expresses itself in a variety of ways among individuals within our clan. Some of us recoil from the symbols of faith, while others find that crosses and saintly images have little effect on them. Some are wielded by those of righteous fervor. In the Carpathian Mountains, peasants use garlic to ward their homes from Cainite intrusion. In some cases, but not in all, this precaution proves successful. Some Tremere have discovered they are unable to drink running water. Others, like myself, have no difficulty drinking even the swiftest streams.

The nature of our resting places also remains a subject for study. In the beginning, we imitated the habits of the Cainites we studied, sleeping in crypts or digging graves for ourselves in the grounds beneath our chantries. Now we know that such practices are not necessary, and that we can safely conceal ourselves completely from the rays of the sun. We do not survive the harsh hours of daylight. Nevertheless, we still persist in these morbid habits, whether out of fear or out of a necessity to remind themselves of their closeness to the world of the dead.

SPECULATIONS

While other Cainites content themselves with satisfying their ambitions with dreams of political power, we find the need to formulate a precise understanding of the nature of our supernatural state. Our wizardly tradition compels us to pursue the secrets of our undead nature regardless of the consequences. As a result, most of us have adopted several theories concerning our nature.

Some members of our clan believe that the vagaries of our existence stem from alchemical impurities engendered during the Embrace, when the sire's blood fuses with the dying blood of the childe. Imbuing the initial vitae fed to a childe with various tinctures and infusions and then studying the resulting transformations has led to ambiguous and inconclusive observations. The transmutational process from human to Cainite still defies many of the known laws of material transformation.

Another group, led by Celestyn - when he is not engaged in his exploratory endeavors - has attempted to identify the variations that exist among us with astrological significance.

Plotting the conjunctions and oppositions of the stars at the hour of a new Tremere's Embrace. The conviction that our exclusive attachment to the night proves our connection to the starry firmament seems to offer some promise of providing answers to why we differ from one another. In small variations in the precise calculations of the constellations' movements throughout the heavens, the proponents of stellar attachment hope to ascertain why some of us awaken as soon as the first stars set while others remain in slumber until the first stars rise or until the rising of the moon.

A third school of thought seeks to measure the precise balance of bodily humours at the time of the Embrace, searching for correspondences between an overabundance of one of the four elemental fluids and its expression within the infinite temperament. Thus, an imbalance of choleric humour results in a predisposition toward the condition known as frenzy, while an overly sanguine individual suffers from an excessive need for blood. Those individuals with an excess of plethoric humours often require longer periods of rest, while their melancholic counterparts succumb more easily to torpor.

One group examines our separation from the natural order of life. Bypassing through the state of death without the departure of our souls to the place of judgment, these "naturalists" believe that our removal from the processes of life, death and the afterlife is responsible for our aversion to the sun as well as our extreme trepidation in the presence of flame. Proponents of this theory have yet to explain why the other elements - air, water and earth - do not affect us so adversely as fire.

My own particular interests lie toward the mystical experience of our transmutation. It is no coincidence that I have chosen to send me to the Isle of Britain and that I elected to attempt to establish a chantry near the reputed resting place of the Holy Grail. The ingestion of the blood of our Cainite ancestors and our resulting transformation bear

some similarity in my own mind to the miracle of transmutation currently under dispute by Church theologists. Whether this means that we have transgressed or obeyed the divine law, *that* is the substance of my research.

I must also mention those among us who firmly believe that we have embraced the Devil's works by becoming diabolists. These diabolists actively engage in all manner of occultic acts and exercise their basest instincts toward humanity. They contend that, since we have transformed ourselves into the minions of Hell, our true vocation lies in the proliferation of damnable actions. I fear for what might result if these members of our clan gain ascendancy within our ranks.

EXPERIMENTS

Through alchemical and magical experimentation we have increased both our knowledge of our place in the world and our ability to defend ourselves. Do not be afraid to keep your mind keen in the pursuit of occult understanding. Had we not dared to combine the essences of Gangrel, Nosferatu and Tzimisce Cainites into a mystical amalgam, we would not be able to control the Gargoyles who so ably interpose themselves between us and our foes.

In addition to the work of Goratrix, other Treants have engaged in studying the effects of our vitae upon mortal life. We have learned its efficaciousness in promoting rapid healing of near-fatal wounds and its retardation of the aging process.



throughout servants. You yourself benefited for many years from the life-prolonging essence of my blood before I bestowed the embrace upon you.

My most recent experiments have to do with, not the future of our vitae, but rather the bestial transformation that overwhelms us when we succumb to frenzy. Tests that I have performed upon the few Gangrel I have been able to capture have enabled me to understand, in part, the odd metamorphosis that results from their losses of control. It is my hope that provoking my current subject into repeated bouts of fury, I can determine the stage at which a Cainite ceases to resemble anything remotely human and gives herself over entirely to her bestial inner nature. So far, I have been unable to reverse the process, but all knowledge - even the awareness of one's failures - has its uses.

One area of experimentation fills me with trepidation; only my trust in you allows me to mention its existence. There are some Tremere who seek to discover what effect our Cainite nature has upon summoned spirits. As human magi, we had long prohibitions as to the nature of spirits we could command and the conditions under which they might be summoned. We do not know if our altered state of being has affected our ability to make compacts with creatures from the spirit realm. Unfortunately, I suspect that some members of our clan have decided to test our influence over infernal spirits. I believe that the idea of summoning and binding demons does not appeal to you. See that it continues to exercise no pull upon your inquisitive mind.

Your own inclinations will undoubtedly draw you toward experiments of your own devising. For the time being, I shall act as your instructor in the proper procedures, in order to bring you to the point at which you may pursue your own desires without my constant supervision. Above all, you must learn to exercise caution both in choosing your experimental subjects and in disposing of the remains of your studies. The monks of the nearby abbey believe us to be a community of cloistered scholars and, thus, do not interfere with us. I desire that this situation continues, so that our work may proceed without interruption.

FINAL

EXHORTATIONS

The hour grows late; the darkness of the night will soon give way to false dawn, at which time we must make our way to new ground. Your exile from the sunlit world begins with this day's dawning. Do not give in to the temptation, however great, to test the truth of your susceptibility to the sun. With the passing of time, if you are fortunate, you may forget your longing for the sun's warmth and the garish colors of the day. Learn to content yourself instead with passing your nights in the glow of a fever of study and learning that the coming of day brings only thoughts of repose.

Never forget that we dwell among those who would destroy us. Until we have completed the transformation of the rest of House Tremere, we cannot afford the smallest of our secret to filter to the other Hermetic houses. At the same time, we must not Embrace too many of our kind without the means to ensure their survival. Exercise caution you too much about our beleaguered state.

Here in England, we do not experience the constant threat of peril that our clanmates in Eastern Europe feel, yet we must maintain our vigilance. We prefer to provoke as few enemies as possible. It is enough that the Tzimisce, Nosferatu and Ventrue desire our destruction; we do not need to add other clans to our ranks of our foes. Our prospects for achieving acceptance in a land not dominated by our enemies gives us some latitude. We must, therefore, make the best use of our relative safety to further our advancement without antagonizing other members of Cainite society.

We cultivate the appearance of supplicants among the common clans who fall prey to flattery; among those who value learning, we assume our most scholarly mien; to the aristocrats, we strive to emphasize our aesthetic sensibilities. Those who seek political power need to see us as supporters of their ambitions. To the mortal world, we must appear - when we appear at all - as scholars, pedants, or recluses. If this dissembling strikes you as deceptive or furtive, keep in mind that in being false to others, we are true to ourselves. Usurpers they may call us, but we claim what we deem is our rightful portion of eternity.

Tomorrow evening, after you have partaken of the elders' vitae and thus entered fully into the communion of blood, I will begin your instruction.

Thaumaturgical magic, along with the other abilities innate to our clan. We will also seek to determine if you possess any aversions or repulsions to garish colors, symbols or other objects so that you may know what, if anything, you must avoid. The process of finding a way to satisfy your hunger for blood will grow easier as you learn to separate yourself from the kine upon whom you feed. In time, your growing powers will act as proof to you of the distance you have come from your mortal life.

For now; rest content in the knowledge that you have successfully passed your first night among the undead. From now on, in an endless procession of nights, your existence belongs not to God or the Devil or to yourself, but to all of us who dared to abandon the comfortable, intended garden of humanity for the limitless vista of the night. No longer must you dwell in terror of that which we cannot comprehend. In becoming one of the Usurpers, you have become the terror that others cannot fathom. Your legacy, bequeathed to you, through the gift of my blood, by Tremere himself. May you prove worthy of the trust that has been placed in you this night.

The House of the Supplanter

Unlike the other Cainite clans of the Dark Medieval period, the Tremere cannot call upon millennia of history and experience to guide them through the complexities of survival in a world grown suddenly unfamiliar and perilous. They have had to learn through trial and error how to cope with the dangers created by their transformation. The Tremere's relative youth as a clan has resulted in a curious mixture of naivete and inventiveness. Although it has learned much about its vampire nature since 1022, Clan Tremere's knowledge of vampire society and the fine points of vampiric existence remains incomplete. In some instances the Tremere commit glaring errors of etiquette and tactics; in others gain advantage from unique and creative solutions in situations where other Cainites' responses are bound by the shackles of tradition.

Above everything else hangs a sense of urgency. Clan Tremere's genesis as vampires has embroiled it in a bloody conflict with several clans, most notably the Tzimisce, whose blood formed the basis of the elixir that allowed the wizards to become Cainites. Clan Tremere's penchant for experimentation on captured Cainites has also aroused the anger of both the Gangrel and Nosferatu, the Usurpers' favorite subjects for magical and alchemical research. Furthermore, the danger of the vampires' discovery by the other houses of mages within the Order of Hermes (with which House Tremere still remains affiliated) grows nightly. The Tremere realize that they cannot maintain their ruse indefinitely, and thus frantically seek to complete the transformation of all the magi within their grasp. Within five years, in 1202, the scandal of the house's empiricism will rock wizardly society. As a result, the Tremere will be declared anathema and targeted for destruction by most of their former fellow magi.

An aura of resignation also permeates the House of the Usurper. Having embarked on their fatal journey into the realm of undeath, the Tremere see no recourse but to make the best of their decision. Nightly, the horror of their existence

impresses itself upon the Usurpers, impelling them even deeper into their damnation in order to understand the demands in hopes of overcoming them.

THE COMPLEAT TREMERE (SELECTION)

The need to swell their ranks in order to increase their chances for survival has led the Tremere to begin a search for promising recruits. The Usurpers still give priority to those mortal mages already within their grasp, marking them as primary candidates for the Embrace.

There are simply not enough mortal magi remaining in the house for this to be anything more than a short-term solution. As the clan expands outward from their stronghold in Ceoris, after Tremere's diablerie of Saul, the Usurpers have undertaken a concerted effort to identify and Embrace other likely individuals.

Mortals with a strong interest in magic, alchemy, astrology, or astrology attract the Tremere. The Usurpers frequently identify promising candidates as "apprentices," leading these mortals to believe that they have embarked on a study of occult arts. After a suitable period of training, which sometimes includes making the apprentice into a ghoulish servitor, the candidate receives the Embrace.

The Tremere have also recognized the need to attract skilled warriors and diplomats among their numbers. They have thus Embraced veteran soldiers and individuals with highly developed skills for negotiation and etiquette. Occasionally, the Tremere select mortals connected with the Church in order to gain influence within that institution, but the lasombra and Toreador jealous of these Usurpers out.

MAGI AND MAGES: A POINT OF TERMINOLOGY

The earliest members of Clan Tremere came from House Tremere of the Order of Hermes; as such, they were *magi* (the plural of *magus*). Modern practitioners of True Magick refer to themselves as *mages*. In the Dark Medieval world, the word *magus* pertains to practitioners of True Magick, although some Tremere continue to refer to themselves as *magi*.

THE NATURE OF THE EMBRACE

For the Tremere, the Embrace takes the form of an initiation rite, surrounding the process of transformation with the trappings of ritual magic. By maintaining the charade of an advanced occult ritual, the Usurpers

may thus entice even the most unwilling member of House Tremere into the vampiric fold. In Ceoris, many unconverted members of the house still mortal magi targeted for the change are summoned without warning into the presence of one of the Council. Informed that they have been chosen to undergo a unique ritual of advancement, these wizards usually submit willingly to the bizarre ritual of blood-draining and forced infusion of their sire's blood. The fledgling Cainite realizes the true implications of her transformation only when it is too late. While transformed magi rebel against their changed circumstances, most of them quickly adapt to their new existence - particularly after they have been two-thirds of the way under the bonds of a Blood Bond to the elders of the clan.

Rather than allowing her childe to feed directly from her veins, a Tremere sire usually first draws blood into a goblet and forces her childe to drink it. This practice both enhances the ritualistic nature of the Embrace and re-enacts the ceremony of the first original transformation. At least two and sometimes more draughts of blood are thus fed to the new Tremere. The first goblet contains only the sire's vitae, establishing the all-important bond between sire and childe. The second goblet, however, also contains a drop or two of the mixed blood of the clan elders.



edgling Tremere receives a second infusion of founders' vitae (but *not* her sire's) on the evening following the Embrace, bringing the child to the verge of a Blood Oath to the founders of the clan.

A Tremere who desires to Embrace a mortal usually makes extensive preparations before doing so - including curing the necessary mixture of blood from the clan's founders. Special couriers, known as "redcaps," serve the Order of Hermes (including House Tremere) by traveling from chantry to chantry, delivering messages and transporting valuable items for their masters. Occasionally, these couriers' duties include delivering a vial of precious liquid (founders' vitae) to certain chantries. At other times, this responsibility goes to trusted ghoulish servants or to recent converts (and their unsuspecting coterie).

USURPER ROGUES

Despite Clan Tremere's attempts to enforce loyalty through a dual infusion of founders' vitae, occasionally a newly Embraced Tremere refuses to submit to the demands of the clan. If she succeeds in fleeing sire and chantry, a rogue Usurper faces a difficult existence, devoid of sanctuary among others of her clan. All too often, such a renegade falls prey to one or another of her many enemies - the Tzimisce, Lupines or mortal hunters - or else finds herself without a safe haven from the ravages of sunlight.

Rogues who manage to avoid such perils represent a constant danger to other members of the clan. Because of the liability they constitute, Clan Tremere pronounces a ban of anathema upon all such defiant childer. Rogue Tremere avoid other members of their clan, seeking the company of Cainites from other clans instead. Even then, they are rarely trusted by their companions.

Few rogues learn more than the most basic form of Thaumaturgy, for no Tremere in good standing will share more advanced thaumaturgic teachings with these fallen ones.

Rumors persist of a chantry, hidden deep in the Carpathians, that holds several Usurper rogues. Search parties sent to validate such rumors have so far managed to discover no real evidence that such a chantry exists. Nevertheless, Clan Tremere maintains its vigilance against the possibility that its rogue childer may one day unite with the clan's enemies in a concerted attempt to usurp the Usurpers.

RITUAL OF CLAN LOYALTY

The ritual swearing of an oath of loyalty to Clan Tremere and its founder is an integral part of the Tremere Embrace. Although the wording of the oath grows ever more complex over time, its essence remains unchanged from the earliest nights. Taking its form from the original oath sworn by members of the Order of Hermes, the Tremere oath joins its swearer to remain loyal to the clan, its founder and all its members. Administered to the newly created Tremere immediately after the Embrace, the ritual serves to impress upon the fledgling not only her place in the clan but her responsibilities to her superiors.

In the Dark Medieval world, an oath often carries within it a true compulsion, making it difficult (though not impossible) to break. Enhanced by the use of Dominate, the loyalty oath of Clan Tremere has a terrible strength that goes beyond the impetus even the most fearful mortal can bear. Though this ritual of oath-taking does not irrevocably bind the will of the swearer to the clan, it does act as a deterrent to many actions that might go against clan goals.

While there are no set rules to compel a Tremere character to obey her elders slavishly because of the oath, a Storyteller may, at his discretion, require a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) whenever a Tremere character wishes to act in direct defiance of her clan or her elders.

Each newly Embraced Tremere formally swears an oath of loyalty to Tremere, the elders, her sire, and the clan. Conducted either during the ritual of transformation itself or shortly thereafter, this complicated oath carries with it a mystical compulsion that makes it a difficult one to break.

Although the Tremere occasionally resort to a "battlefield Embrace" in circumstances which require haste, individuals so transformed receive the full benefits of vitae and formally swear their oaths of loyalty afterward as possible.

UNIQUE BLOODLINE'

In Lithuania, Clan Tremere has transformed itself to a unique bloodline. Since it separated itself from the main branch of the Tremere before the clan founder glorified Saulot and solidified his place as an Antediluvian, this cadet bloodline has diverged from its parent in several significant ways.

TELYAVELIC TREMERE

Taking their name from the Lithuanian god Telyavel, the protector of the dead, the Tremere of Lithuania form an exclusively pagan branch of their clan. Unable to recover from the original horror of their transformation into Cainites, a small group of new Tremere left Ceoris purportedly to assist in the spread of their new clan's influence in the world. In reality, they desired only to search for some means of reversing the catastrophic change they had undergone.

In the wilds of Lithuania, these Tremere discovered a refuge among the pagan population, who saw them as incarnations of Telyavel (or Kaleval) and welcomed the newcomers into their midst as priests and shamans. Discarding the name "Tremere," these Cainites began referring to themselves as Telyavs, reserving their former clan name only for blessedly rare interactions with chantries outside Lithuania.

In addition, the Telyavs sensed a mystical emanation from the land, one which permeated the soil, forests and animals. They learned from their pagan followers that this emanation "came from the *Siela*, the part of the spirit that remains bound to the world after death and also inhabits animals, plants and even stones. Excited by this discovery, the Telyavs soon developed a Thaumaturgical Path based on combining their vitae with soil, the sap of trees or the blood of animals, producing a variety of effects. In addition, their intimate closeness to the vis-rich soil itself enables them to draw upon the metamorphic aspects of their Tzimisce blood.

Unlike their colleagues elsewhere in Europe, who prefer to distance themselves from mortals and conduct their business in secret, Telyavs operate openly among the pagan population of Lithuania. Their nocturnal habits and sanguinary tastes seem utterly appropriate for their roles as servants of the protector of the dead. While they do insist on keeping their chantries' locations secret, they move about in human society with relative freedom.

Though the Telyavelic Tremere are no closer to restoring their original humanity than they were when they first separated themselves from their parent clan, they have managed to attain a compensatory sense of connection with the living world. By assuming the duties of priests and shamans, they have also carved out for themselves a place in pagan society as a bridge between the living and the dead.

Sobriquet: Shepherds

Appearance: Unlike most Tremere elsewhere in the dark Medieval world, the Telyavelic Tremere actively Embrace women, seeing them as embodiments of the dark mother-goddess figures of local paganism. Although the majority of this group is still male, nearly a third is female, and many of these were Embraced in middle age. Eschewing the lumber clothing of their more scholarly parent clan, the Telyavs dress to fit in with the local population, adopting either the dress of the common folk or the robes and symbols of their newly adopted patron deity.

Haven: The majority of Telyavs occupy a chantry near Kaunas. Situated in a copse of trees atop a sacred hill, this chantry remains one of the clan's best-kept secrets. While the rest of the Tremere know that it exists, only the Telyavs know of its location. A few other chantries of this bloodline exist throughout Lithuania and Poland. Occasionally, a lone Telyav dwells among her pagan followers, protected by ghouls. In addition to their chantries, Telyavelic Tremere often have secondary homes, which also serve as shrines for pagan worship.

Background: Candidates for the Embrace must come from the ranks of pagans. Many of them are priests and priestesses of the old religion. Lithuania has become a battleground between the pagan tribes and the Christian Order of the Sword, so a few Telyavs also come from warrior stock.

Character Creation: Telyavelic Tremere generally have Shamanic or druidic concepts. As in their parent clan, Mental Attributes and Knowledges assume primary importance in most cases, although a warrior may emphasize Physical Attributes and Talents. Natures and Demeanors usually reflect the Telyavs' pagan outlook. Backgrounds include Allies (their mortal pagan followers) and Influence. Most often they follow either the Road of the Beast or the Road of Humanity.

Disciplines: Auspex, Presence, Thaumaturgy

Weaknesses: Telyavelic Tremere find it difficult to counteract the effects of True Faith or the display of Christian holy symbols. Difficulties to resist frenzy are two higher than usual when confronted by an enemy who uses her True Faith as a defense, and Telyavs recoil from the sight of the cross or other symbols of the Christian faith.

Organization: The Tremere of Lithuania adhere to a modified pyramid. Each generation drinks twice of the blood of the previous generation, thus bringing them to the verge of forming a Blood Oath with their sires' generation. Typically, a number of Telyavs gather together to oversee the Embrace of a new member, thus ensuring a sufficient supply of elder blood to establish the hierarchical bond between generations.

Destiny: The Telyavelic Tremere continue to exist until the 16th century, when the union of Lithuania and Poland results in the triumph of the Christian religion over

paganism. Hunted by the Church, they are eventually out in a grand conflagration that destroys their main haven and most of its members. Within a few years, the remaining Telyavs are captured and destroyed by the Inquisition and the armies of the new Christian state.

Quote: *The Earth and all that dwells within and upon her secrets to me. Through the power of my blood, I become*

ON ROLEPLAYING TELYAVS

While the Telyavs do fill a role explicitly within the bounds of the pagan culture to which they have fled, it doesn't necessarily make them nice. The local pagan culture is alien to many of the original Telyavs, making their integration into the Lithuanian culture uneasy at times. Other Telyavs can take their putative role as protectors of the dead a touch too literally and wreak havoc on the living.

In short, these are not shiny, happy, friendly vampires who spend their evenings dancing in the woods and communing with nature. The Telyavs, despite whatever good qualities they may possess, are still bloodsucking monsters who have appropriated a mythological role that was never intended for them. To ignore the essentially artificial nature of the Telyavs' place in Lithuanian society is to render them caricatures.

NEW TRAITS

MERITS AND FLAWS

NATURAL VICISSITUDE (5 PT. MERIT)

You have "inherited" more of your clan's stolen Tzimisce than most of your clanmates and have thus become somewhat of a throwback to your "parent" clan. You may, therefore, choose Vicissitude, rather than Dominate, as a clan Discipline. Improving at Vicissitude, however, may present difficulties. Unless you can locate another Tremere willing and able to teach you the mastery of Vicissitude's higher levels, you must seek further

improvement from the Tzimisce (most likely through coercion).

FALSE THIRD EYE (4 PT. FLAW)

For reasons unknown to you or your sire, your Embrace left you with the imprint of a third eye upon your forehead. This reminder of Tremere's diablerie of Saulot renders you an embarrassment to other members of your clan and a source of distrust to all except those who know you. The "third eye" does not open or function. Unless you conceal it under a wig or a veil, the stigma is obvious to all who see you. Social rolls are at +2 difficulty whenever you interact with Cainites other than your coterie or closest allies. Attempting to pass as a Salubri is not advisable.

NEW THAUMATURGICAL PATH (NON- MELANIC)

The war between the Tremere and the Tzimisce in Eastern Europe often involved more than combat between Cainites. With Usurpers and Fiends pit mortal armies against one another on the battlefield and in siege warfare. The necessity of maintaining and moving troops and supplies from one place to another in a timely fashion led to the development of a form of Thaumaturgy to assist in rapid transportation. This path lasts until the 19th century, when scientific discoveries enable the invention of steam-powered travel (such as the railroad), thus making this form of Thaumaturgy obsolete.

WAY OF PASSAGE

This Path allows the thaumaturgist to endow swifter than normal movement and, in some cases, increased endurance to objects or creatures other than himself. Thus, horses can run faster and farther, and draft animals can pull wagons and siege machines at greater speeds and for longer periods of time.

System: In addition to the standard expenditure of 1 Willpower and a Willpower roll, the player rolls Manipulation + Ken (difficulty 7) and spends an additional Willpower point for each Attribute the vampire wishes to affect. Only one roll

is to be made, regardless of whether or not the vampire is affecting a mount's speed or endurance or both. The number of successes determines the number of days (24 hours) the effects last, so that this is not useful in combat. Although the mount may be faster, the rider does not benefit from this with extra actions; in fact, may find the increased speed of his mount a detriment to successful combat maneuvers. Rapid travel from one place to another remains the primary focus of this power. This power may not act as an alternative to Celerity or Fortitude and cannot be used on humans, Cainites or other supernaturals.

No individual descriptions are necessary for each use of this Path, since the effects remain consistent; only the number of individuals or objects affected increases as the thaumaturgist gains mastery of the Path. The Storyteller may modify the following effects to allow for combinations of ridden mounts and those used to pull wagons.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| * | One mount |
| * * | Up to six mounts or one laden wagon |
| * * * | Up to 12 mounts or four supply wagons |
| * * * * | Up to 24 mounts or eight supply wagons or one siege machine |
| * * * * * | Up to 48 mounts or 16 supply wagons or four siege machines |



NEW THAUMATURGICAL PATHS (SIELANIC)

Utilizing the power of the *Siela*, or the animistic spirit present in the earth, stones, plants and animals, the Tremere of Lithuania have devised a pair of Thaumaturgical Paths that allow them to assume aspects (and in some cases, the forms) of animate or inanimate objects. Based on shamanic practices, these Paths combine aspects of both nature- and spirit-based magic. Some Tremere outside Lithuania believe this pair to be an offshoot of *koldunic* sorcery, a province of the Tzimisce, and look upon those who practice the Sielanic Paths with suspicion and distrust.

Telyavelic Tremere always learn one of the two Sielanic Paths as their primary Thaumaturgical Path. Other Tremere may learn either Path by studying with a Telyavelic Tremere. Non-Tremere may also learn this Path, provided they already possess knowledge of Thaumaturgy and can convince a Telyavelic Tremere to teach it to them.

The Sielanic Paths disappear with the extinct Telyavelic Tremere bloodline; with the resurgence of vampirism in 20th-century Lithuania, a few Cainites there to rediscover the lost principles of Sielanic Thaumaturgy based on incomplete and sketchy records.

PATH OF THE WORLD'S BLOOD (SIELANIC)

This power allows the vampire to become part of the natural world that surrounds her, partaking of the elements inherent in the earth, trees, rocks and life forms of area to which she has attuned herself. While most practitioners of this Path regularly use it within their "home" territory, a simple ritual (see below) enables the character to attune herself to any plot of ground provided she has sufficient knowledge in which to do so.

This Path occasionally requires the vampire to ingest some rather foul concoctions of her own blood mixed with animal blood, soil, even leaves and grass. It remains a continual mystery (particularly to those outside the Tzimisce circles) how the practitioners of this Path can drink such mixtures without promptly heaving them. Some Telyavelic study of the Path prepares one for such necessities.

ers posit that a form of transubstantiation, such as that which is said to change the bread and wine during Mass, is at work. Whatever the reason, the Telyavs continue to swallow and work their magic without difficulty.

Note: Sielanic Thaumaturgy is not quite traditional Thaumaturgy. As a result, it uses the same roll as the normal Thaumaturgy discipline *except when specifically stated otherwise*.

EYES OF THE EARTH

The vampire "sees" everything that goes on within 10 miles of her haven (or shrine) by utilizing the spirits of the grass and other plants, trees, rocks and animals in the vicinity. Thus, a Telyavelic Tremere dwelling within her chantry may know instantly of the approach of worshippers or strangers. In addition, she can also view events transpiring within the range of her attunement. Such visions do not come with handy explanations, although. No sound comes through, and unless the Telyavelic can read lips, she cannot know anything that is being said in a spied-on location. Further, if the sorcerer wishes to keep track of a particular person as he travels, and if she views him for longer than one night, she must locate him once again after each broken contact (to sleep or perform other actions, for example).

System: The vampire ingests an infusion of her own vitae mixed with soil, grass shoots, leaves, animal fur and bird feathers (or blood from these creatures). The number of successes achieved on the Willpower roll determines the duration of the subsequent "earth-sight."

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| 1 success | one turn |
| 2 successes | one hour |
| 3 successes | one night |
| 4 successes | one week |
| 5 successes | one month |

* ROOTS OF POWER

This ability enables the Sielanic practitioner to draw on the power latent in the earth itself to enhance her physical abilities - so long as she remains in contact with the soil.

System: The vampire expends a blood point by cutting the soles of her feet and letting her blood soak into the parched earth. The number of successes gained from the

Willpower roll determines the number of points the vampire can add to her Physical Attributes. No single Attribute may be raised above 5. For example, three successes allow the character to add one point each to Strength, Dexterity and Stamina, three points to any one Attribute, or two points to one Attribute and one point to a second. The duration of this effect is one scene, and the effect covers an area of approximately 50 feet around the vampire's original position (i.e., where the Cainite's blood first touched the soil).

* * * ARBOR OF PROTECTION

The vampire uses this ability to seek refuge within living wood of trees. Thus, he is able to encase his body in any tree that stands inside his realm of attunement. In this fashion, he may conceal his presence from enemies. The vampire blends with that of the tree in such a way that increases the difficulty of detecting his presence through Soul Searching. In addition, the character may use any Disciplines and is not dependent on physical gestures that he possesses; however, the vampire can "see" his surroundings, he cannot receive contact with specific creatures, so any power which requires meeting the victim's gaze does not function. Should the vampire enter a tree to avoid the coming dawn, he is protected from the sun so long as he stays within the tree. If the tree is chopped down, the vampire suffers five levels of damage and is forced out of the trunk; setting the tree afire inflicts an amount of aggravated damage.

System: The vampire drinks a mixture of blood and vitae prior to the player expending a blood point and making a Willpower roll. A single success allows the vampire to enter inside a tree for one turn; two successes extend the duration to an entire scene. Three or more successes allow the vampire to maintain his position within a single tree for up to 24 hours. When the time limit expires, the tree ejects the vampire.

* * * * COURSE OF THE BEAST

This power gives the Sielanic practitioner the ability to assume the shape of any animal that exists within her realm of attunement and, in some cases, to change from one animal form to another. The vampire gains all the physical attributes and skills of the chosen creature, although she retains her undead nature. While transformed, the vampire may use any Disciplines she possesses, as well as other powers that the storyteller considers reasonable within the limitations of the power. The ability lasts from moonrise to moonrise.

System: The vampire mixes her own blood with that of an animal and drinks it, then expends three blood points to activate the power. Each success on a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) grants the character the ability to shift into one animal form. Thus, three successes enable the vampire to assume the shape of a deer for swift travel, then transform into a badger to conceal herself and move about easily under water.

finally, take on the form of a bird to fly to safety.

* * * * WAY OF THE STONE

The vampire uses this power to transform himself into what resembles a stone dolmen. As such he can withstand the rigors of daylight and is immune to flame. In addition, he can even move about in a very limited fashion. The vampire can move the stones that walk and move about during the night to the practice of this potent art.

System: The vampire expends three blood points to allow his blood to drain onto a boulder, at which point he assumes the boulder's rough shape and consistency. The

of successes gained on the Willpower roll (difficulty 7) determines how long he may remain in his stone form. The features of the vampire become indistinct, taking on a semi-erased aspect with barely discernible facial features and body parts. Nevertheless, his eyes, ears, mouth and appendages all function normally, except that the difficulty for all physical actions is increased by two and movement is at one-fourth normal rate.

| | |
|--------------|---------|
| 1 success | 1 turn |
| 2 successes | 1 scene |
| 3 successes | 1 hour |
| 4 successes | 1 night |
| 5 successes | 1 week |
| 6+ successes | 1 month |

These durations represent the maximum time limit; the vampire may abort the effect earlier if he wishes.

PATH OF THE SHADOW (WORLD SIELANIC)

Through this power, the Sielanic practitioner reaches across the border between life and death, using her own unliving body as a conduit for contact with the world of the dead. In addition, on more advanced levels of this path, the sorcerer is able to touch the essence of Telyavel himself.

This path disappears with the demise of the Telyavelic bloodline, though it is rumored to have become subsumed as part of Dark Thaumaturgy and other Infernal Disciplines (see Dark Ages Companion for more information).

(Note: For more information on dealing with the souls of the dead, see Wraith: The Oblivion and Vampire: The Dark Ages, specifically pp. 255-258)

SEE THE DEAD

The vampire can view the ghosts of the dead that inhabit the area upon which she focuses her attention. In addition, she can determine the general attitude of these wraiths. Relatives of a person who has recently died often seek out the local shaman to ask whether the soul of the departed seems content or if it needs propitiating in some fashion.

System: The vampire must expend a blood point and concentrate on a specific area. The player then makes a Willpower roll. A single success allows the vampire to detect the presence of any wraiths (or Spectres) in the vicinity of her concentration. More successes allow her to determine details about the ghost's attitude.

* REPEL THE ANGRY DEAD

With this power, the vampire can banish hostile ghosts from a designated area, such as the home of a relative of the angry wraith. In some cases, the banishment is only temporary and is attendant on the performance of some action intended to appease the ghost.

System: The vampire must first locate the angry ghost (through the use of See the Dead). His player then chooses a blood point and rolls the character's Willpower. The number of successes obtained determines the number of hostile banished ghost remains away from the designated location (house, a grave, etc.). The vampire can determine if the actions need to be taken to ensure the permanent repelling of the ghost through a second Willpower roll (difficulty 7). A single success is necessary for the vampire to ask the ghost what must be done to satisfy it.

* * * COMMAND THE FRESHLY DEAD

The vampire can command any ghost that she can compel to obey her. With this power, the practitioner may receive answers to questions within the ghost's realm of awareness or request the soul to deliver a message to someone else. Additional simple actions fall within the parameters of this power, although the vampire cannot compel the ghost to do anything that requires a complex form to accomplish.

System: The vampire must first use See the Dead to locate a desirable ghost. Then comes a contested Willpower roll against the wraith (most ghosts have 5 Willpower). For each success the Cainite achieves over the successes scored by the wraith, the ghost answers one question or performs one action within the command of the sorcerer.

* * * * ARMY OF SOULS

The Sielanic practitioner uses this power to raise a spectral troop to act as defenders or to deliver warning messages to enemies. These ghosts appear as ethereal images of the long dead. Although the tattered images cannot 'manifest' completely in the physical world, they can use their

powers to hurl objects or frighten away attackers.

System: This power costs two blood points and requires a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). The number of successes determines how many ghosts (mindless shells of flesh called Drones) the Cainite can summon. The ghosts must wait their rest at the end of the night upon which they were summoned.

* * * * WALK THE ROAD OF SHADOWS

This power enables the vampire to cross physical barriers between the world of the living and the world of the dead and enter the Underworld (or Shadowlands) for a brief time. While she is in this dark and barren realm, she appears as its denizens as a particularly solid wraith. She can interact with wraiths freely while in their realm, although she has no control over how they will regard her. Any combat that ensues causes damage to both the sorcerer and her wraithly foe. Practitioners who function as priests sometimes use this power to transport mortals into the Underworld as part of a complex initiation ritual.

System: This power costs three blood points and requires a Willpower roll (difficulty 8).

A single success allows the Cainite to penetrate the Shroud and

derworld. Three successes enable her to take another son along with her. The sorcerer may remain in the derworld until dawn forces her to leave, until she flees, or is driven out by its residents. This power does not allow her to travel into the deeper Underworld.

SELANIC RITUALS

BECOME ONE WITH THE LAND (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

This ritual enables the Sielanic caster to attune herself to a specific plot of ground; the area covered may not exceed 10 square miles but may be less than that. The caster combines her own blood with several handfuls of earth from the land she wishes to claim. By covering herself with this mixture before going to sleep for the day, the vampire is able to absorb the essence of the land into herself. Thereafter, she is able to enact the powers of the World's Blood within the area designated before the enactment of the ritual. Whenever a Sielanic practitioner relocates, or travels to another place, she may attune herself to her new location in the same fashion. She may only be attuned to one place at a time, although she may renew lapsed attunements by repeating the ritual.

System: The vampire combines her blood with some natural substance (such as animal blood, tree sap or soil) to effect the desired result. After the ingestion of this mixture, the next step is the expenditure of two blood points and a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). The number of successes determines the duration, intensity or range of the desired effect.

ONE WITH THE LAND (LEVEL FOUR RITUAL)

This extremely powerful ritual grants the caster an almost complete identification with his domain. He becomes "one with the land" and, through this intimate connection, instantly knows of anything that threatens the land or its creatures. He can sense if something is wrong with the soil (and thus give advice on how to ameliorate the problem). Additionally, he knows the location of any hostile forces, can predict weather patterns that affect his domain, and can exercise subtle control over the creatures of the land itself. He can cause trees to move slightly to clear paths through forests, change the course of streams or make them to make crossing difficult or cause boulders to rise from the earth to block a mountain pass.

System: The caster buries himself in a grave near the center of his domain, remaining within the earth for one full day. Upon rising the following evening, he imbibes an infusion of his blood combined with the soil in which he has lain, thus uniting his essence with that of the land. Periodic expenditures of blood (eight blood points per week) can maintain the connection indefinitely. If a week passes without the caster spilling his blood to the ground, the connection breaks; the caster must repeat

the ritual to reestablish his tie with the land. The Storyteller should assist the player in determining the precise manifestation of this ability so that its uses don't wreak undue havoc on the story.

TOUCH THE PROTECTOR'S MIND (LEVEL FIVE RITUAL)

This ritual links the caster's mind with that of the protector of the dead. This ability is only useful in extreme circumstances, such as when an invading vampire threatens the protected realm of the sorcerer. By tapping upon the essence of this ancient being, the vampire is able to enhance her Physical and Mental Attributes and gain access to powers beyond her normal abilities.

System: The vampire spends one hour in meditation, focusing her thoughts upon establishing contact with the mind of Telyavel. The Cainite's player then expends blood points and makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). A single success puts her in contact with the mind of the protector. The caster immediately gains 10 dice to allot to Physical or Mental Attributes in any combination, but she may not increase any Attribute beyond its maximum. In addition, all her Disciplines function as if she had one additional level in them, including the ability for her to use powers she has not yet mastered. The ritual confers upon the vampire the ability to remain active during daylight hours and provides some immunity to sunlight, provided the caster does not directly expose herself to the sun's rays (i.e., she must remain in the shade or under some sort of cover). This ability lasts from moonrise to the next. No successes means that the vampire fails in her attempt to touch the death god's mind. Five successes means that the vampire takes five levels of aggravated damage (which she may attempt to soak). In addition, the vampire may acquire a permanent Derangement (if her player is successful in a Willpower roll) from touching the god's mind too closely without receiving his blessing.

NEW BACKGROUND

FAMILIAR

Although your Embrace has deprived you of the ability to function as a magus, it did not break the bond you had with your familiar. This bound spirit may take the form of any animal, such as a cat, raven, mouse, frog or other creature normally associated with magi or witches. Conversely, your familiar may appear as a homunculus or mannikin, or even as animals (horses, goats, bears and the like) as well as mythical creatures (such as dragons) are not available as familiars. The number of points you put into purchasing your familiar determines its relative power. Only Tremere characters who were magi before receiving the Embrace may take this Background.

Although it no longer acts precisely as a magi's familiar might, your bound spirit still performs simple tasks and acts as a guardianship duties for you. It also holds you to the agreements



de upon initially binding it to your service, however, so you
st adhere to those terms in order to keep its favor. The
enefits purchased at each level include all the ones from
ver levels.

* Your familiar performs minor services but does
risk itself for you.

** Your familiar acts as an early warning to alert
u of the presence of intruders, but does not prevent them
m entering your haven.

*** Your familiar can perform fairly complicated
ks and act as a messenger for you. It also attempts to deter
stle creatures from entering your haven, although it does
confront them directly.

**** Your familiar has developed a true fondness for
u despite your unliving state and your lack of standard
gic. It not only acts as an assistant (within the limits of its
m), it may incur minor risks to its own material form in
der to protect you from harm.

***** Your familiar has a very strong bond with you
d serves you as faithfully as any retainer sworn to you by
ood Oath.