

MORRIS
PAGE

COMPAÑION



The title 'VICTORIAN VAMPIRE COMPANION' is rendered in a highly decorative, blackletter-style font. The word 'VICTORIAN' is at the top, 'VAMPIRE' is in the middle, and 'COMPANION' is on a banner at the bottom. The letters are thick and black, with intricate flourishes and a gothic aesthetic. The background is a light, marbled paper with a swirling, organic pattern.

VICTORIAN VAMPIRE COMPANION

By Ann Sullivan Braidwood, Mark Cenczyk, Genevieve
Cogman, Daniel L. Quackenbush, Mikko Rautalahti
and W. Van Meter

Vampire created by Mark Rein•Hagen



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VICTORIAN AGE VAMPIRE COMPAÑION

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Introduction

*These in the robes of glory,
Those in the gloom of defeat,
All with the battle-blood gory,
In the dusk of eternity meet; -
- Francis Miles Finch,
The Blue and the Gray*

One always has something more to say about the world, and particularly about an era as rich as the milieu of **Victorian Age: Vampire**. This book gathers together some supplemental thoughts on matters already touched on and introduces some brand-new topics.

A historical era is not simple: the millions of people who inhabit a city and the dozens or hundreds of millions spread across a continent don't all do the same things or think the same thoughts. Every society has its trends, the things that a great many people do and think, but exceptions and alternatives always exist. Furthermore, even with the Victorian age's unprecedented ease of communication and travel, more than one society is active in the world.

Players of **Vampire** know the difference between general tendency and specific detail when it comes to vampiric characters. Every Ventrue has some sort of feeding restriction, but each Ventrue has a somewhat different restriction. Every Toreador is susceptible to the lure of beauty, but each Toreador has the freedom to decide how to feel about that vulnerability and finds beauty in somewhat different places. Every Brujah has the potential for relatively easy mastery of Potence, but not every Brujah actually develops it. So it is with each of the clans: their general strengths and weaknesses shape characters only so far. Individual history and outlook determine what the potential means in the individual's existence.

That's true of societies as well.

Victorian England is very much a Christian society, but not all of its inhabitants are Christians. Some poor people reject all faith as the pernicious lies their would-be masters tell to distract them just as some poor people cling to their faith for hope in the midst of great suffering. Some prospering middle-class merchants believe their success flows from God's blessing in accordance with Scriptural promises that God rewards the virtuous, and right next door are merchants who make a show of piety but believe their success proves that only hard work and good fortune matter. Some aristocrats believe themselves chosen by God and charged with the grave responsibility of governing in a just and holy manner, others believe themselves given power by God to do whatever they wish, and still others believe that religion is a convenient story to tell the lower classes so as to keep them in their place. Ongoing scientific revolutions lead some to doubt their former convictions and simultaneously fill others with a renewed sense of divine order beneath sometimes chaotic appearances. People being people, they usually cover the gamut of imaginable responses to the circumstances of their time.

Nor, of course, do they just sit around and respond. They each make the times, in their various ways. The despairing and doubting pickpocket who curses God and Queen when arrested inspires one wealthy observer with the scornful sense that the slums need better propaganda and another with the compassionate sense that the lords of the realm must do much better with their God-given authority. Often the message each receives reinforces their respective preexisting convictions, but not always: flashes of inspiration may strike at any moment, and from those moments whole new social movements sometimes spring. The sum of daily experience shapes what people look forward to, dread, reminisce nostalgically for or just overlook.

Victorian Age: Vampire can be a richer, deeper, more rewarding game when players and Storytellers allow room for diversity. "Most" isn't "all," and gaming is more like life itself when surprises and contradictions can



emerge. This book is filled with historical and fictional characters (and groups) who run contrary to prevailing trends. Some have inherited legacies from past societies now almost gone, while others hope to build a future in their own image. Some just are what they are and don't worry about fitting in. The art of capturing a society's richness lies in balancing the general truths with specific exceptions such as these.

The counterpart to the mistaken belief that social norms have no exceptions is the belief that there are no norms. In the real 19th century, some ideas and practices were in fact more common than others. The same is true of the fictional communities of the Kindred. While exotic bloodlines and esoteric secret societies do exist, they are rare. Most of the brood of Caine go their whole existence without ever encountering some of the tiny populations covered here, and characters who are part of the tiny populations must be resigned to being perpetual outsiders. The guardians of the norm do not fall all over themselves to welcome outsiders just because they're player characters, anymore than they engage in pointless persecution for want of the wits to see that outsiders can have their place, too.

From Lost Past to Unknown Future

When we look back at the past, we can see how the events of one year helped prepare the ground for the events of the next, and how trends emerged, matured and finally passed. When we're immersed in things, we don't have that advantage. Even characters with prophetic powers see the future only in part, as a matter of potential and symbols more than as a collection of solid, reliable data, and few characters are genuinely oracular. Rapid change constantly creates situations nobody was prepared for and nobody actually wanted.

For instance, at the start of the nineteenth century, city governments were almost always small and unimposing organizations, staffed by well known local authorities mostly for the honor of the thing. Within just a few generations, the cities in the midst of the Industrial Revolution grew by orders of magnitude in population and became much more complex — not just larger but with a great many more *kinds* of activity going on. Later critics could point to the desirability of zoning regulations, pollution restrictions, coordinated schooling and social services and many other steps to spread the benefits of industrialization while controlling the problems as much as possible. None of that was obvious to the people on the spot, however. The early captains of industry were just as surprised by much of what happened as everyone else, and most were no better prepared to deal with the surprises.

At all levels, most political and economic power in the Victorian age rests in the hands of people who don't quite know what they're doing. They're not all stupid bumbler, it's just that the world keeps changing and nobody in authority really knows for sure what is now happening, as opposed to what they can find out about what was happening a little while ago. When reliable information is in short supply, the people who must make decisions fill the deficit with their own convictions, whether warranted or not. This explains why so many decisions seem ill-considered in retrospect. They *are* ill-considered, and nobody else in the position could actually have had much more information than the people stuck there and then.

Much of the Victorian yearning for and admiration of certainty and permanence begins with the quiet recognition of the unavoidably dubious and ephemeral nature of modern life. People in any age seldom need to

The Sense of Mission

The Victorian era abounds with grand schemes. Almost everyone in the midst of the industrial revolution or watching it from outside can answer these two questions:

- **What's wrong with the world?** It may be as simple and personal as "I don't have enough of the money going around," or as grand and complex as "there is no universal government promulgating true Christian socialism."

- **What needs to happen next?** Depending on the individual's analysis of the problem, it may be a get-rich-quick scheme, a campaign to build a new political party and gain control of Parliament, or anything in between. Just as Victorian architecture runs to the very ornate, so do personal plans. Anything too simple would seem suspicious, whereas complexity shows quality of thought to most Victorian schemers.

A great deal of Victorian culture makes more sense when you realize that it's full of people who think that the bigger and more involved the scheme, the more desirable it is.

be exhorted to do what they're already doing: sober people need few lectures about the perils of drunkenness. The Victorian fascination with solid, unchanging social order is so strong precisely because many Victorians know, whether they'd ever admit to others, that very little of their world can be counted on to stay put. Some people respond to this knowledge by trying to seize control of change from behind the scenes, others by retreating into their own little worlds they can manage more thoroughly than they can the world at large. Almost everyone who stops to think about his own personal history and environment at all feels the underlying doubt and must respond to it in some manner.

What's in This Book

- **Chapter One: Behind the Façade** covers secret societies. It begins with a general overview of the major forces in (real and alleged) secret history, particularly the Knights Templars and the Rosicrucians, and goes on to describe a wide variety of secret societies ready for use in a chronicle. Each one comes with information about its history and current activities as of the 1880s–1890s, ways vampires may be involved with it and resources available to its members. The chapter concludes with mechanical guidelines for measuring characters' involvement in a faction of any secret society in terms of pooled Background ratings: how to decide the faction's initial resources, how to measure its progress or decline and how factions fight against one another for control of contested assets.

- **Chapter Two: The Twilight Globe** supplements Chapter Four of *Victorian Age: Vampire* with more details about the world around Victorian London, both inside the British empire and beyond. A general description of each continent precedes comments on specific points of interest and overviews of noteworthy Kindred courts. The vampiric domains covered here range from continental centers of power to barren outposts of the brood of Caine where adventurous or desperate individuals pursue their individual destinies far from the mainstream of their kind's existence. Some material that isn't strictly geographical in focus, such as the ways the regimentation of factory life affects leisure time, apply to many parts of the world.

- **Chapter Three: The Night Society and Beyond** offers a variety of potential allies and antagonists, from Kindred mad scientists and their peculiar creations to monsters of the animal and plant kingdoms. It also includes a wide selection of vampire hunters with which Storytellers can complicate the existence of overly complacent characters (and which can serve as fodder for a chronicle in which PCs are themselves mortal vampire

hunters). Here are bold searchers of the unknown, dreadful nemeses and a sinister power alluded to in the annals of Sherlock Holmes.

- **Chapter Four: The Stories of the Age** explains how Victorian horror stories are put together and takes them apart again to show Storytellers how to run stories in their chronicles that work like various sorts of gothic literature: ghost tales, tales of bad places and more. Each entry comes with a checklist of concerns and ready-made examples that provide an in-character hook (which the Storyteller can use as is or modify to taste), lay out a premise and suggest paths of development and conclusion.

- **Chapter Five: Victorian Characters** covers a smorgasbord of related topics. It includes descriptions of several bloodlines: the Caitiff, the Daughters of Cacophony, the Gargoyles, the Kiasyd, the Salubri and the Samedi. Each group occupies a distinct niche in Victorian Kindred society and enjoys unique opportunities which will be lost in the times between the Twilight Era and the Final Nights. If you think you know all there is to know about the bloodlines and have dismissed them ... look again. In addition, this chapter discusses details of abilities and backgrounds distinctive to the Victorian era, from the uses of Drive in Victorian times to the special importance of Contacts as the Industrial Revolution continues. While Disciplines work the same on the mechanical level in the Twilight Era as they do in the Final Nights, they sometimes *mean* different things; here you'll find comments on the theological implications of Animalism, the consequences of London's air quality for Obfuscate and more matters of that nature. Finally, a few new merits and flaws reflect aspects of Victorian Cainite circumstances that can't readily be quantified in other ways.

- **Chapter Six: The Practical Arts** is brief but no less important for that. It describes the changing start of the art in various technological fields, including transportation, communication and lighting. Find out more about what your character has seen and done in the world, and how things continue to change all around. The descriptions also include brief looks ahead at the innovations that will follow in the early 20th century, fodder for omens, invention and astute responses of other sorts. Finally, the book concludes with some tips on doing historical research and the pitfalls that can most readily drag a historical game down into tedium or other unsatisfactory outcomes.

How to Use This Book

With grace, style and tremendous mutual enjoyment, of course

As always with new material of this sort, players and Storytellers should read it carefully and discuss what they want to add to their particular chronicles. The new rules here don't give characters a lot of kewl new powers, but they do provide more detailed guidelines for handling some character interactions with rivals and victims, and they can change the flavor of the game.

The bloodlines increase the range of options available to players for vampire lineages, but they're all rare and not guaranteed to appear in any particular domain or fief. Storytellers may prefer not to use them at all, or to keep them as Storyteller characters.

The emphasis of the historical and cultural coverage in this book is on increasing understanding and opportunities for characters to do interesting things appropriate to their circumstances, but again, every new datum can change a chronicle's overall tone. "Different" doesn't have to be either "better" or "worse," but it is certainly not the same.

In every case, take this book as a set of additional *possibilities* rather than *requirements*. You do not betray the spirit of **Victorian Age: Vampire** by declining to use a bit of description or a rule that doesn't fit the style you have in mind. Many gamers find it better to add new elements slowly, with time to evaluate the effect each one has on play, and if you prefer not to rush any changes you wish to make, don't rush them. Conversely, go slowly in deciding "no, no, definitely not." Particularly if a player requests the addition of something in this book that seems as though it might jeopardize another part of the chronicle, discuss it before reaching a final decision. Players who want to lobby for a change should be prepared to explain calmly and clearly how it fits the game and adds something worthwhile; Storytellers should be prepared to listen fairly and remain open to the possibility of fresh insight. The right answer for any given troupe is the one that leads to more fun for everyone involved.





Chapter One: Behind the Facade

FREEMASONS, n. An order with secret rites, grotesque ceremonies and fantastic costumes, which, originating in the reign of Charles II, among working artisans of London, has been joined successively by the dead of past centuries in unbroken retrogression until now it embraces all the generations of man on the hither side of Adam and is drumming up distinguished recruits among the pre-Creational inhabitants of Chaos and Formless Void. The order was founded at different times by Charlemagne, Julius Caesar, Cyrus, Solomon, Zoroaster, Confucius, Thothmes, and Buddha. Its emblems and symbols have been found in the Catacombs of Paris and Rome, on the stones of the Parthenon and the Chinese Great Wall, among the temples of Karnak and Palmyra and in the Egyptian Pyramids - always by a Freemason.

- Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*



Bierce's definition satirically rendered a widespread phenomenon among secret and occult societies: the tendency to associate themselves retrogressively with ancient cultures and older secret societies. Certainly, it seems that claiming association with the Knights Templar and the Rosicrucians is practically a prerequisite for the formation of an acceptable secret society. Is it simply a matter of modern men hoping the mystery and reputed power of these fabled orders will rub off on them, or do these two groups truly loom so large in the occult history of mankind that they have spawned countless other orders? The reality of the situation is that so many groups have for so long pursued revisionist agendas in regard to their descent from Templarism and Rosicrucianism that it is practically impossible to ascertain what the true dispositions of these groups may have been, beyond the well documented public activities of the medieval Knights Templar and the agreed-upon, if not factual, tenets of historical Rosicrucianism.

What Suits the Chronicle

Each element of this book is optional, to be added to a particular chronicle if and only if the Storyteller and players wish to do so. That dictum is true of *every* element of *every* game book, but the point bears repetition here. Some chronicles will benefit greatly from the addition of the whole range of conspiracies and movements presented here, and those chronicles should include them all. Some will benefit from including just a few of the groups and suggested mechanics; they should use just those pieces. Some chronicles take up themes which would only be undermined by the presence of secret societies; they shouldn't use anything that will disrupt their focus.

This chapter draws on real history (and real assertions by people who were probably lying, mistaken or otherwise detached from the truth), the history of the World of Darkness and fresh invention. No chronicle is "truer" for including everything here or "false" for setting parts aside. Every chronicle creates its own version of the World of Darkness through the selection of settings, characters and events at the outset and through the way they change in play. This chapter should open up fresh vistas rather than drag you places you don't want to go in the chronicle you participate in.

Templarism & Rosicrucianism

The Rosicrucians, or the Order of the Rose and Cross, or the Order of the Rosy Cross (there are countless opposing versions of both the name and the history of the order) is said to have been founded at an unknown time in Germany by a probably-fictional Christian Rosenkrutz, who in turn rather predictably was founding his order to preserve a yet-older tradition. The modern order, the source of most of the above, can be traced to the publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis* in 1614, the first Rosicrucian manifesto. The order's nebulous doctrine is one of guiding humanity toward spiritual enlightenment and truth, and fairy-tale notions of battling the enemies of the Light (presumably the Light's soldiers are the Rosicrucians and their allies). Further clouding the issue, the order claims that



Rosicrucianism is initiatory, rather than being a doctrinally traditional and organized group, and that formal orders only form sporadically and as membership and the times demand. Rather hard to pin down any solid facts in all this ephemera, other than the existence of would-be heirs to the tradition here and there throughout the 17th through 19th centuries. The term “Rosicrucian” is rooted in the Latin words “rosae” and “crux,” or rose cross, and the livery of the Knights Templar was a red cross on a white field.

The Templars’ 200-year history is a cautionary tale for those who would seek to gain influence and power in Europe, in Victorian times and later. The Poor Fellow Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, the Knights Templar, were a militant monastic order formed near the end of the First Crusade with the aim of protecting pilgrims en route to the Holy Land. The Templars also took the first steps that led, some say, to modern banking. Circumventing the usury laws of the time that restricted money-lending to Jews, the Knights could take a traveler’s money or assets at one end of a pilgrimage route in exchange for a chit or token, which could be redeemed at the other end of the pilgrimage. This seems simple enough to the modern mind, but at the time it was quite the innovation. Coupled with two centuries of very wise investments in infrastructure development and ready loans to powerful figures, the Knights Templar made themselves very rich, very powerful, and very much a target. A joint effort by Pope Clement and French King Philip the Fair saw the Templars accused of heresy, tried and killed. Grand Master Jacques de Molay, the last known leader of the Templars, was burned in 1314.

At this point historical fact ends, and the myth and mystery of the Templar legacy begin. It is said that as he was about to burn, de Molay cursed his accusers and invited Clement and Philip to meet him in the afterlife within the year. Details of the trials and accusations against the order centered on supposed heresy and black occult practices. Did magical secrets really exist in the Templar Order, or were the heresy charges a way for the supposedly bankrupt Philip to seize the Templars’ vast wealth? Did certain members of the Poor Fellow Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon escape capture with aid from secret allies and go underground? Many theories, and actually a great deal of amusing, if not trustworthy, evidence, abound to support all manner of supposed conspiracies about the continuation of the Templar Order.

Pope Clement died a month after Jacques de Molay’s execution, King Philip seven months after that.

Freemasonry, which predictably claims association with the Knights Templar and the Rosicrucians, presents its own odd problems and possible sources of confusion to the scholar of secret and fraternal societies, due to its popularity and the pervasiveness of its membership. Virtually every other notable society has members who are also members of fraternal Masonic groups, and in fact many groups require that potential initiates are already Freemasons. To add fuel to the fire, many groups are splinter factions of Masonry or borrow heavily from Masonic traditions in their own practices.

None of this is unique to Freemasonry, however. Freemasonry is simply the clearest example of what is a widespread trend among secret societies: very few people are members of just one group. You can go so far as to say that secret societies are a subculture in and of themselves, and not as individual groups. “Secret society culture” rewards those who can claim to know the most secrets and belong to the most hidden orders. Most, if not all, of these groups have very strong social or fraternal components to their foundations, so they can function as purely social outlets for their members, like gentleman’s clubs with occult or political overtones. All this means that different groups work better for different activities, and that groups compete with one another for prestigious members and their own status as organizations. By joining one group, a young man can encounter among his fellow members those who are also members of many other groups, which he can further join himself and perpetuate what is a terribly complicated matrix of social attachments and circles. Consider also that very large or very secretive organizations can additionally have subgroups and inner circles within the single parent society, and one begins to see both the complexity and also homogeneity of this culture.

To Kindred, this should all seem terribly familiar — so much so that it is a simple, and correct, assumption to make that secret society culture is often more fingers than pie. Why shouldn’t Kindred use this for their own ends? Secretive cabals who pursue influence in a wide variety of areas and who are hungry for knowledge or assistance against real or perceived foes are as close to perfect a vehicle for Kindred manipulation as could be asked for.

More significantly, to the vampire seeking to make his mark on society, these secret groups are commonly active at night. The restraints of work schedules and the desire for secrecy (be it warranted or merely theatrics) make them an unprecedented portal to the doings of the daytime world. More people are active into the nighttime hours than ever before. A nighttime meeting of upper-class gentlemen at an elegant chapter house or

member's drawing room is a new and very welcome occurrence for careful vampires seeking to pass among mortals without drawing attention. Conversely, masked and robed occultists meeting for arcane rites in cavernous basements are obviously predisposed toward the nocturnal schedules of the dead.

The Freemasons

For a secret society, the Freemasons enjoy a strange trait: practically everyone has heard of them. Their status as a secret society owes more to the fact that they don't tell anyone what they're doing than any effort to conceal their existence. Despite the fact that they are the least secret of secret societies, they are probably the most widespread and likely the most influential. Part of the reason for this pervasive nature is the fact that Masonry is made up of an often bewildering array of overlapping and related groups, all operating under the aegis of the tradition of Freemasonry, and not a unified doctrinal organization. The York Rite, Scottish Rite (which isn't Scottish), Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Rectified Scottish Rite and a great many more groups have historically formed, developed parallel to one another, splintered, rejoined or assimilated other groups and so forth over a span of almost two centuries.

Overall, Freemasonry shares a common traditional and ideological foundation, despite the seeming chaos of names and orders. At ground level, so to speak, Masonry is organized into local lodges that gather for meetings and events at a meeting room or lodge house. The day-to-day business of these lodges is mostly concerned with planning charitable works and awarding memberships and degrees, or studying for the initiation tests that members must pass for the new degrees. This generally involves, at the basic levels, memorization of some symbolic knowledge, secret grips and words and the like.

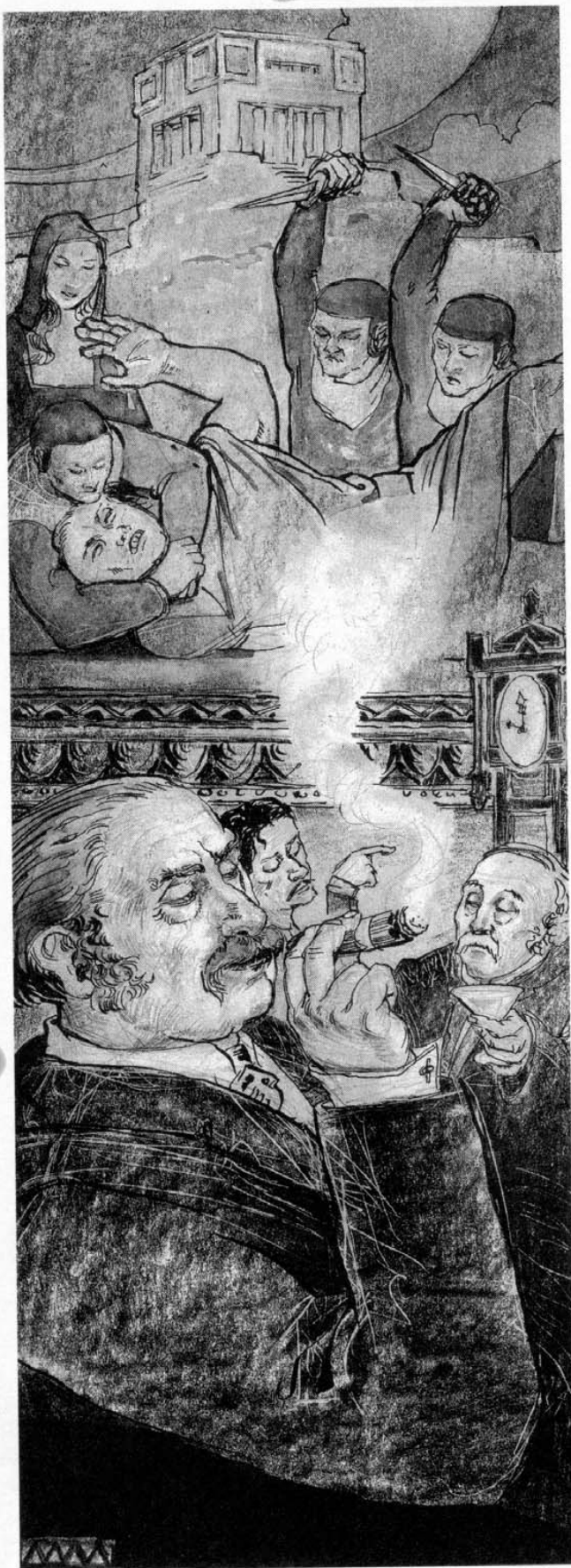
In practical terms, Masonry is just what it bills itself as: a fraternal organization, a social outlet and a contact and mutual support network for its members. It seeks to encourage certain good moral beliefs and charitable work. As with any exclusive organization, however, other things happen as a consequence of the union. Masons back each other on business or political endeavors, work to ensure the promotion or hiring of brother Masons in industries in which they have influence and combat those things in society that they find undesirable. The dark side of Freemasonry is no different than the dark side of any large group in this regard: Freemasonry seeks to increase its strength and cement its preeminence as a league of powerful men. Because they are so well placed and insular, many of those who wish to excel in life feel they must become Freemasons.

It is a commonplace of high society that membership is a guaranteed way to achieve success, and not entirely untrue. Many members thus join simply to use Masonry as a stepping-stone, because without membership they have a ceiling to how high they might rise in society. Unfortunately, these men eventually find themselves in positions of leadership and respect in Freemasonry at large, making their views true regardless of whether they were to begin with.

Masonic Mysticism

Although often marginalized, a mystical thread runs through the tradition. In years past it was much more significant, drawing inspiration primarily from Rosicrucianism. Unique and central to Freemasonry is the probably mythic Hiram, Master Builder of the Temple of Solomon. His murder at the hands of laborers attempting to extort from him the secrets of Masonry is the central event reenacted in allegorical form during the ceremonial elevation to Master Mason. He remains a central symbolic figure, representing death before dishonor, struggle against base urges, the labors of the righteous for the good of all and so forth. All of this is largely seen as theatrics in the Victorian era, most lodges being little more than comfortable places to have a cigar.

Freemasonry is also a breeding ground for splinter groups, special-interest factions, Masonic inner circles, non-Masonic societies and more. It would be safe to say that a majority of Masons are also members of one or more subgroups or outside societies, and can often find themselves at odds with other groups who are themselves operating within Freemasonry. French Masonry, for example, is characterized by revolutionary or collectivist-empowerment politics and is at odds with English Masonry, which is more interested in keeping power and influence in the hands of an elite minority. Add to this mix various adherents to Masonic occult or ideological systems and their subfactions, and it becomes apparent that Freemasonry as a whole is hardly the monolithic institution that many perceive it to be. Wheels turn within wheels, often overlapping and often in conflict socially or politically, and an initiate can almost always rise to another tier or circle.



Wheels within Wheels

The many permutations and varieties of Freemasonry could fill this entire chapter (and, some might argue, all the groups in this chapter *are* Masonic). When most people refer to Freemasonry, they mean what is called the Blue Lodge, what could be thought of as “outer Masonry.” This is the rank and file fraternal membership. Blue Lodge Masonry awards only three degrees of membership: Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason. In many lodges, only Master Masons are involved in meetings and decision-making, though Freemasonry claims that degrees are not a hierarchy of control or a ranking system. The Master Mason who currently presides over a local lodge is called Worshipful Master, and the regional lodge, which oversees many lodges, is called a grand lodge. In America, for example, every state has one grand lodge.

The so-called Red Lodge of Freemasonry is the more esoteric arm and awards degrees up to 33, and some say beyond. Red Lodge Masonry is generally associated with the York Rite, but the term may apply to any appendant body of the organization that awards degrees beyond the foundational three. Historians argue that the various Red Lodge factions sought to increase the number of degrees as a means of exerting social pressure on a large membership toward the end of consolidating power in an elite and tested few. In many cases the term Red Lodge is applied to any facet of Freemasonry that is more secret or mysterious, of which the public at large is supposedly unaware.

Opportunities

All of these traits — the multiple factions, the semipublic and favorable reputation, the subtle conflicts and tensions — make the tradition of Freemasonry an attractive cover for outside powers, be they Kindred, other secret societies or something more sinister. Who is going to notice yet another quiet faction when set against the backdrop of a Masonic lodge? Bystanders are used to seeing gentlemen come and go at night, en route to their well respected and charitable organization’s meetings. By using Masonry as a front, practically all of the pitfalls of operating a conspiracy are neatly filled. Secrecy, odd symbols or schedules and the like can be explained away as the doing of those upright but eccentric Freemasons. When joined with the fact that the law is often loath to investigate Masons (or, in many cases, the law *is* Masons), it becomes obvious just how attractive Freemasonry can be as a shield. Consequently, many have taken it up as just such a defense, and Masonic lodges are used as blinds and recruiting grounds for all manner of covert activity.

The Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon

America has its share of secret societies, premier among them the Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon. The society has much in common with Freemasonry, from which it is almost doubtless descended. It is secret, like the Masons, in that it does not publicize its rites and doings to nonmembers; it is deeply involved in charitable works and is a powerhouse in political and social influence. It is said, by those in positions to discuss such matters, that the society does, or could, have a great many of its members in Congress, or indeed in the Presidency itself. This is because part of the doctrine of the Weeping Moon is social prominence; members are actively encouraged to pursue social and political agendas and to strive to become vital parts of high society.

Also like the Masons, the Enlightened Society preaches a doctrine of the betterment of humanity, and the empowering pursuit of truth and mastery over the world. Unlike Freemasonry, however, the society is socially progressive. Membership is open to both men and women, and no restrictions exist on race or faith. This openness is at odds with the directive toward social prominence, however, at the London chapter. Such egalitarian attitudes are a bit much for London society and are seen as quaint and naïve by the peerage. The society is eager to assist its members in pursuit of agendas in London, however, and as eager to assist the members it has attracted from Great Britain.

Also unlike the Masons, the Weeping Moon is steeped in spiritualism. Its goals have been summed up as "Progress through mysticism." So committed are they to this pursuit that all members must have a full lunar horoscope drawn up when they are initiated, and the horoscope is used to divine which of the society's castes the member becomes a part of. This practice is emblematic of the Enlightened Society's focus on lunar occultism and symbolism, and the fertility magic associated with lunar deities and occult systems. The Weeping Moon's scholars are among the world's foremost within this specialty, and they have wasted no time in developing contacts with those in and around London who wish to trade occult knowledge of this nature. A special focus to the society is working to gather and study information about the practices of ancient cultures of Britain with lunar deities, and many Celtic and Druidic revival groups have been wooed to alliance with the Weeping Moon with the offer of access to the society's huge libraries of agricultural and sexual rituals.

Enlightened Society Castes and Titles

Members of the Weeping Moon Society are placed in castes based on their lunar horoscopes, to best make use of their supposed natural tendencies and talents.

- **Absent Moons** are the innovators of the society, those who question the assumptions of others and lead them to new understanding.

- **Horned Moons**, named for the horned appearance of the crescent moon, are the moral core of the Enlightened Society. They are mystics, collectors of lore and leaders.

- **Balance Moons** are charged with using rationality and foresight to manage the society and its financial endeavors, and to plan for the future.

- **Nascent Moons** are the most varied caste, its members the most sociable and charismatic of the Enlightened Society. They are its diplomats, orators and barristers.

- **Harvest Moons**, rarest of the castes, are the security force of the Weeping Moon and its muscle in the rare times such a thing is called for.

Titles and offices in the Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon are merit-based and of a simple pyramidal hierarchy.

- **Acolytes** or **Initiates** are the common members at the bottom of the pyramid.

- **Revealer of Mysteries** is an honorific title given to a deserving member who has distinguished herself. The title brings with it the right to form a new chapter if the member so desires, and members who do so are called **Malviosins**. A small region, such as an American state, is overseen by a **Circle of Stars**, a council of respected members who have achieved a great deal of occult power and discipline. A larger region and its Circles of Stars is presided over by a **Tender of Lunar Lore**, of which only a dozen or so exist.

- **The Most Enlightened Master, the Grand Unveiler of Mysteries** presides at the top of the pyramid. The current Most Enlightened Master is Lloyd Fairweather, a staggeringly charismatic and well liked American businessman whose mastery of his society's occult practices is unparalleled.

Tobias Lane is the Revealer of Mysteries of the London chapter. Lane is an incredibly charming and classically educated American, if a bit of an open Anglophile, and has done his best to ingratiate himself with many influential upper-class merchants and a few lesser aristocracy. He spares no expense in his attempts to impress and regularly throws lavish parties and contributes to charitable societies for their fund-raising balls.

Opportunities

For a London Kindred, the Society of the Weeping Moon is a promising and rare opportunity. It has a strong power base in America but is new and actively seeking allies and members in London. The members would be grateful to anyone who could help get them established. Additionally, they are willing to assist members who wish to develop contacts or influence in America. A major drawback, however, is part of the society's doctrine, known only to the upper ranks, of freeing humanity from the oppression of paranormal beings. The Weeping Moon knows a great deal about the monsters that prey on men and actively works to undermine and destroy what "monsters" it finds. This doctrine is focused almost entirely on rooting out and killing lycanthropes and beast-men, and most of the society's knowledge is of them. Still, Kindred meddling in the Weeping Moon's affairs had best tread carefully: the society's Horned and Nascent Moon castes hold real occult power.

Secrets

The higher a member rises in the Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon, the less the organization looks like an upright and moral one. The sacred rites, already a bit shocking with blood and sexual practices, become more dark and violent. The occult teachings reveal themselves to be twisted and unlike what the outer doctrine would have everyone think, and the seemingly selfless charitable work is seen to be part of a larger plan of complete societal domination and control. The Enlightened Society is in service to dark, otherworldly forces, forces that the leadership knowingly and blasphemously serves.

Worse yet, their rites and occult practices truly work, having been taught to them by the servants of the things that the society serves. Practitioners can traffic with twisted creatures of the spirit realms and use their divinations and second sight to lay men's souls bare for examination. The most advanced leaders have given themselves wholly over to the forces of corruption and destruction.

Destiny

After Lloyd Fairweather's accidental death in a printing press in the early 1900s, the Enlightened Society slowly withers and disappears, its members looting its coffers and stores of occult knowledge and vanishing from history. Revealer of Mysteries Tobias Lane of the London chapter becomes a notable member of the Princes of Tiermmas (detailed elsewhere in this chapter) and its offspring, the Pretanic Order. He is gruesomely mur-

dered by unidentified assailants while revisiting America during the Second World War.

The Order of the Oriental Fellowship

A lesser-known occult and fraternal society, the Oriental Fellowship is best known for its frequent fictionalized mention in the colorfully morbid detective tales published by member Dr. Nigel Morrisby. The Fellowship was formed by the now-decrepit Lord Craven during his youth with the aim of uncovering the secret behind a supposedly magical system he calls the Pretanic Keys, the source of which he has allowed the members of the order to form their own theories about but never elaborated upon himself. What is known is that as a young man Lord Craven came into possession of enough of the system to arouse his considerable curiosity, but not enough to work with. His regular meetings with occult-minded associates grew over time into a formal network and eventually the Order of the Oriental Fellowship.

In pursuit of their quest the order's members have accumulated a goodly amount of general knowledge of all things spiritual, along with many early misconceptions about Asian mysticism from which they unfortunately drew their name, and have an excellent reputation as occult researchers. So good, in fact, that membership in the order is quite an honor among college professors, museum researchers and other respectable academics, and members of the order frequently give lectures to classes studying the religious and spiritual practices of ancient cultures. This reputation has gone far toward lending the Fellowship a certain fraternal or Masonic air, and members have undertaken charitable works and scholarship programs for the benefit of educational institutions and museums over the last two decades, a practice that reinforces their excellent regard in academic circles.

The Fellowship's reputation for excellence in occult research has also garnered it a great deal of patronage from parties interested in commissioning independent research studies on occult subjects. The popularity of spiritualism and the occult in recent decades has served to make difficult the study and pursuit of the matters the Fellowship excels at, both because of the glut of poorly researched material available and the resulting trend toward researchers more interested in debunking mysticism than truly working to investigate and understand it. So, when someone has a demand for meticulous and

credulous study, those who want the best come to the Oriental Fellowship.

Many find it ironic that in recent years a group of what appears to be actual Asian mystics has joined the inaptly named Oriental Fellowship. Lord Craven and his inner circle especially feel that the techniques these new members have brought with them, including various yogic practices, breathing exercises and kundalini and mantric disciplines, have brought the Fellowship to the threshold of unlocking the potential of the Pretanic Keys. Also due to the investigations of this secretive Asian cabal, the Fellowship has allied and begun trading knowledge with the Princes of Tiernmas (see below, p. 21). With materials and information gained from the Princes' extensive collection of Celtic and Druidic knowledge, the order has more clearly identified the Pictish origin of the Pretanic Keys and thus the methods of properly using them. Already many of the order have reached new understandings of the Keys, which they have determined are the building blocks of an ancient initiation path, and have begun work codifying this path into a system for more regular use.

The leaps and bounds with which the study of the Pretanic Keys has progressed due to the input of these new allies are not enough to stifle the dislike many of the Fellowship's old guard bear at what they see as an intrusion on their proper and gentlemanly group. It is, at heart, a result of bigotry and jealousy. The Asian cell within the order is largely noncommunicative with the general membership, preferring to deal directly with old Lord Craven, and others mutter that the "wogs" somehow have the old man around their finger in his dotage. The Princes of Tiernmas, on the other hand, are in general seen as a proper and studious organization, apart from the rural nobles and Scottish lairds who strike most Fellowship members as just plain coarse.

Opportunities

The scholarly bent and excellent reputation make the Order of the Oriental Fellowship an attractive organization within which to seek influence for Kindred looking for a source of occult information or a test bed for magical theories. Equally appealing is its newfound expertise in Asian spiritual practice, which is very broad and shallow, but rock-solidly authentic. Vampires of pre-Roman origin, or the agents of such an elder, could easily provide the Fellowship with first-hand information, properly couched in academic terms of course, and win them over practically overnight. Another option for co-opting a portion of the order would be to assist the disaffected faction in regaining their preeminence over the Asian

membership and their friends from the Princes of Tiernmas.

Secrets

The prejudiced faction with the order is not too far off the mark. The Asian cabal and their allies, a similar cabal within the Princes of Tiernmas, do have old Lord Craven around their collective finger. How they did it, though, is just what Craven says: they truly have given the Fellowship the tools it needs to unlock the Pretanic Keys. In another twist, however, the Pretanic Keys are nothing like what Lord Craven and his circle believe they are. They are, in fact, part of an initiation system that lead the practitioner down a black road of corruption and service to powers of that nature, a path of service these outsiders have knowingly used the Fellowship to follow.

Destiny

The Grand Lodge-house of the Order of the Oriental Fellowship burns to the ground in a tragic fire in 1897, claiming the lives of the majority of the old guard, including Lord Craven. Wounded, the order cannot sustain itself. Most of its remaining members and knowledge join with the Princes of Tiernmas in the formation of a new group, the Pretanic Order, led by a shadowy figure from the occult underworld, the Laird of Demborough. The Pretanic Order goes on to achieve some notoriety as a left-hand path school of magic in England and America, though its founder and his inner circle are killed in a raid on their upstate New York compound by law enforcement officials during World War II.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

Though it borrows heavily from Freemasonry, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is a strictly occult secret society. Its founders, occultist S. L. MacGregor Mathers, physician Dr. William Robert Woodman and coroner Dr. William Wynn Westcott, all Masons, tell a tale of the genesis of their order that rivals the most intricate fictions. All three men were eminent members of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia. This English Rosicrucian Society was (like the majority of supposed Rosicrucian orders) of reportedly noble aims and dubious parentage. This particular group claimed sanction and a direct line of initiation from the apparently infallible and possibly mythical "continental Secret Chiefs," with the

aim of establishing a presence for the true Rosicrucian Order in England.

For a time, these three men were in fact the leaders of the E.R.S., and during this period they claimed to have discovered a ciphered manuscript found either in a Masonic library, a used book stall or the estate of a recently deceased brother Mason and occultist. Whatever the cipher's source, the three say that they identified the system used from a 15th-century hermetic manuscript and successfully deciphered it. The product, they claim, was a series of outlines for the ritual initiation practices of an occult group called *Die Goldene Dämmerung*, the *Golden Twilight* or the *Golden Dawn*. A slip of paper found with the cipher manuscript bore the name *Fräulein Anna Sprengel*, one of the "continental" or respected old-world Rosicrucian adepts living in Germany. Through correspondence with Sprengel the three received her permission to form the English branch of this forgotten and, it is assumed from the circumstances, eminently Rosicrucian "Golden Dawn." With that sanction from the continental Rosicrucians, the first lodge of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded in London and named the *Isis-Urania Temple*.

Its founders intended the Golden Dawn to be the latest in a long line of incarnations of the tradition of Rosicrucianism, focusing all its resources and energies on magical empowerment. Toward that goal, the Golden Dawn has undertaken what is possibly the most ambitious project of occult scholarship ever proposed: the gathering, meticulous scientific study and synthesis of every hermetic discipline into a coherent, elegant, and systematic course of study for initiates of all ability levels. A foundational curriculum, open to both men and women of ability, aims to empower the student in his pursuit of the goal of realizing the divine within himself and aligning it with the divine in the world around him, to study and uncover the truths of life and through this individual empowerment and truth-seeking to empower all mankind. It is no less than a codified science of ascension that they seek to create, to bring humanity into the Light. Heady stuff, to be sure.

The founders of the Golden Dawn are skilled and knowledgeable occultists. Mathers especially has a keen and often intuitive grasp of the principles of ceremonial magic and hermeticism in general. Without that excellence and erudition, the monumental task of constructing a workable initiation system that draws on all aspects of the Hermetic arts would take decades: astrology, alchemy, Kabbalah, tarot, numerology, Gnosticism, neo-Platonism and Enochian magic are all complex subjects, and the Golden Dawn includes them all along with techniques of Asian mysticism, witchcraft and

more. In only a handful of years a system of ten degrees took form, based on the Cabalistic Tree of Life, with courses of study for each degree and the ceremonies of initiation into every degree. The groundwork for what could be the most significant mystic undertaking of all time was completed with very little time and to exacting standards — truly these men are prodigies if what they have wrought is what they hoped for.

The Golden Dawn, with its temples in London, Edinburgh and Paris, has in a short time attracted to itself a large portion of the most talented and dedicated magical practitioners in the West. It counts among its initiates the wealthy, the influential, scientists, clergy, aristocrats, merchants and commoners, all of whom wish to dedicate themselves to a very old cause using a very new path. They do not seek anything for their society except excellence and exploration of the very nature of life and truth. Those few outside the Golden Dawn who know of it are, almost without exception, impressed with the scope and quality of their system. Mme. Blavatsky of the Theosophical Society (see below, p. 25) goes so far as to lift her order's ban on membership in other occult schools to permit crossover between the two groups and works with the Golden Dawn to give them the benefit of her probably unparalleled (for a Westerner) knowledge of authentic Eastern occultism. Already, copycat societies such as the Aeon Rite have sprung up in the wake of the Golden Dawn.

Many secret societies pride themselves on their libraries and knowledge of the minutiae of magical practices. Many have legitimate claim on reputations for innovation and scientific advancement of the hermetic arts. But the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is simply unmatched. Its members build upon every success; every innovation of every scholar whose work is available to them has been incorporated into their practices. Unwilling simply to synthesize the techniques of the past, the order follows up on every new insight, every new discovery, actively researching and developing new and better teaching methods and magical practices. It is the most comprehensive and all-encompassing system yet devised, and the order is possessed of the greatest library of occult materials of any known group.

Opportunities

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is all it's made out to be, regardless of the possible holes in the story of its origin. Its members are talented, dedicated and very, very driven. Obviously, for those who seek power and influence in the world of hermeticism, the Golden Dawn is the single most coveted prize in all of Europe and the Americas. It is all too easy to imagine

what the prodigies of the Golden Dawn might accomplish under the direction of those who are themselves occult power embodied in once-living flesh or who have personal knowledge of the West's hermetic history.

Those who seek acolytes or progeny to train in the often-hermetic Thaumaturgy of the Kindred find the order a veritable buffet of highly trained, disciplined and willful subjects. More obviously, for seekers of magical lore among the undead, the Golden Dawn is the best and most obvious choice. There may even be vampires who would like to work up the ten degrees of initiation of the order because they agree with the aims of the order, or for their own ends. On the other hand, if one has enemies among those who practice ritual magic—Clan Tremere, for example—would it not be well worth the effort to subvert the order that your enemies are doubtless courting?

Clever Camarilla Kindred realize the benefits of debunking and discrediting spiritualists, mediums and their ilk. The Masquerade gains strength when the supernatural seems a sham. Imagine, then, the laughing disbelief of the populace if the most progressive and effective occult order of the age were to be exposed as frauds, liars and charlatans. Credulity would take a vicious blow, and the Camarilla would improve its position accordingly.

Secrets

The actual origin of the Golden Dawn—the cipher manuscripts and their source, the existence of Anna Sprengel, the existence of Die Goldene Dämmerung, even the validity of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia's claim to descent from the true tradition of Rosicrucianism—already these stories have been told and retold, contradicted and upheld so many times that only the founders could know the real events. The actual truth of the matter might only be known by Dr. Westcott, who found the cipher manuscript. Mathers, who deciphered the manuscript and from it created the Golden Dawn system, may have invented any or all of it, with or without the others. It may have been a hoax created by all three men to give their new order an air of respectability. At this point, some will choose to believe every possible version of the origin of the Golden Dawn, regardless of what they are told or shown. Effectively no truth is to be found on the matter. It is even well within the realms of possibility that the secret of the origin of the Golden Dawn is just as the founders describe it.

Beyond the Gordian-knot history of the order's genesis, the Golden Dawn's secrets are largely mundane ones. The three founders do not by any means always see eye to eye and are well on their way toward hard-to-

conceal feuds. Mathers especially is seen by many as an autocratic, egomaniacal dandy and is perennially in the midst of a conflict of personality with someone or another. A simple fact of life to consider, which the order treats as if it were a secret, is that no matter how lofty or altruistic the aims of a group might be, it is still a group of often sensitive and definitely flawed individuals. For all the Golden Dawn's admirable doctrine, the founders and many of the members are not perfect and belong to a subculture that prides itself on willfulness and inner strength. It takes a great deal of effort to keep the whole system running smoothly, and it is only a matter of time before a confrontation or conflict of some sort erupts.

Destiny

The Golden Dawn remains the pinnacle of magical orders until, in 1900, it can no longer withstand the constant pressure of warring egos, personality conflicts and politics among the membership. The order vanishes from prominence during several decades of tension and splits. Several of the schismatic groups continue the work of the Golden Dawn under different names: Stella Matutina, Alpha et Omega, Ordo Templi Orientis, to name a few, but they are only fragments of the once-magnificent Golden Dawn. Rumors persist until the modern day that the Golden Dawn was laid low by its patrons, the Secret Chiefs of an inner, hidden hermetic order, for revealing too many secrets too quickly or for attempting to mass-distribute hermetic knowledge.

Despite the shattering of the unified order after hardly more than a decade of primacy, the Golden Dawn remains the single most influential hermetic initiation order of all time, and the single greatest influence on hermetic initiation in general. The system created by the Golden Dawn remains in use by nearly every group that splits from the main order in the early 20th century, and as inspiration or research material for the formation of a great many more modern orders. Love him or hate him, the Golden Dawn is also the parent of the man many call one of the greatest minds of hermeticism, and certainly the most influential magus of the 20th century, Aleister Crowley. Crowley and his former secretary Israel Regardie widely publish books detailing the previously secret practices and techniques of the Golden Dawn, ostensibly to put the power of initiation into the hands of humanity. These materials are still commonly available in the early 21st century and are the standard upon which most modern hermetic study is based, forming the basis for perhaps many thousands of self-initiations and self-educations in the hermetic Mystery Tradition — as per the original aims of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

The Brotherhood of the Twin Princes of Tiernmas

The Princes of Tiernmas are, or rather were, a group of gentleman archaeologists, historians, folklorists and linguists who turned their shared love for the study of the pre-Roman Britons, from whom they all claimed decent, into a novel and engaging secret group dedicated to the study and practice of the rites of ancient Celtic Druidism. The Princes took their name from a mythic king from legend, a suitably dark and savage character to make plain the group's commitment to the embrace of the old ways. Such at least was the initial notion for the Princes, the impulsive creation of amateur folklorist Sir Robert Strachan, who intended the group to be an escapist pastime for the group of scholars, a more visceral option than their previous years' tours, digs, lectures and library trips.

It was at first vaguely uncomfortable for them to actually reenact the ceremonies and rituals they had all researched and bantered over for so long. With the robes and the sticks and all the rest, it felt rather silly to be loitering in a cornfield like that. They kept at it, though, and after a time the Druidic practice became a new avenue, a needed boost for them to actively pursue their studies once again. The publication of the first volume of their scholarly journal on Druidism came the following year, the same year they started identifying themselves as Druids by religion and not just as a hobby.

Strachan adopted the traditional Druidic honorific "Ollav" and as Ollav Strachan rededicated the Princes of Tiernmas as a Druidic religious order with himself as the Grand Druid. Their purpose renewed, the Princes redoubled their efforts archaeologically, academically and mystically, seeking out historical sites and evidence to bolster their knowledge of Druidism. Museum shows and exhibitions of the Princes' very respectable shared collection of archaeological finds and live performances of Druidic rites secured the group both positive press and a small but steady influx of new disciples. In an uncharacteristically aggressive phase, Ollav Strachan went so far



as to participate in an exhibition tour of regional schools, debating matters of theology with an aged Anglican bishop, and as often as not clearly winning the support of the crowd in favor of his argument that Druidism is a more honest and authentic answer to the religious needs of humanity. Riding the wave of exposure and enthusiasm, Strachan's Princes undertook their largest project thus far, a comprehensive geomantic survey of County Clavan using traditional Celtic methods. The places of power the survey discovered were to be purchased and dedicated as natural preserves and Druidic holy sites in the name of the Princes, and the greatest of them would support a new megalithic circle and altars in the traditional style. This is what the Princes of Tiernmas are, or were.

The current state of the Princes, now the Brotherhood of the Twin Princes of Tiernmas, is as bewildering to Brother-Prince Ollav Robert Strachan and his Druids for its sheer improbability as it is for the subsequent extreme good fortune and camaraderie for all involved. Brother-Prince Robert Dunsirn, the other Twin Prince, second-in-command of the Brotherhood and Steward of Demborough (in addition to ceremonial blood-brother and uncanny likeness of the Ollav) has since often said that it must have been the gods themselves cultivating the lines of their shared destiny to have had that remarkable and portentous day unfold as it did.

On the third week of the survey of County Clavan, the Princes enjoyed a far more fruitful and informative outing than they could have wished for. They had secured or were securing every plot of land they had made an offer on, and the ley lines and signs in the land had been as clear to Ollav Strachan as the words on an advertisement.

It isn't often that a group like the Princes meets another circle of followers of the old ways just as both enter the dark, wooded heart of the land. Having the band of rough Scots one has just encountered, on holy ground, kneel and give honor to an outsider Ollav when it is thought no one is left knows what an Ollav is: that is an important and synchronous event. When the Scots band summons its noble if rustic pagan lord to the grove and he is of a sort who could be the Ollav's twin brother, sharing even the name Robert: that can be nothing less than a sign.

The Brotherhood of the Twin Princes of Tiernmas makes its home in County Clavan, in the rambling country manor and attendant clutch of farmhouses and outbuildings that overlooks the gently rolling Moysleet fields from atop the adjacent hill. A stone circle now stands in the field to one side of the grove, a sweeping semicircular arc of menhirs on the grove's other side.

Both circle and arc serve to house the many statues and idols representing the Brotherhood's gods. The largest idol is a golden representation of the god the Twin Princes have taken as their patron, "Crooked" Crom Cruach, black God of the Harvest. The remains of the offerings and sacrifices made to him, for a bountiful income for the coming tour season and a healthy market for the Brotherhood's investments, collect in ever-larger piles.

The buildings and property belong to the Laird of Demborough. The Scots are called the Laird's Men, though the last actual laird died generations ago. Lord Robert Dunsirn is the Steward of Demborough, though Demborough was left behind lifetimes ago. Robert is the ninth Steward of Demborough; by ancient agreement the third son of every generation is given over to the Laird's Men to be their lord and steward. He is a steward of knowledge, overseeing an ancient pagan tradition in his master's stead, until such time as the laird returns to reclaim his men, his relics, his library and his rites. This harmoniously coexists with the tradition brought to the union by Ollav Robert Strachan and his Druids. The two groups are now one, with the aims and ways of both.

The Twin Princes Robert were both reasonably affluent men prior to their union. As a consequence of their very successful museum and lecture tours, publishing business, the generous tithes paid to the Brotherhood by their sizable flock and an aggressive investment strategy, the Brotherhood is very, very rich and a highly respected body in the global Celtic and Druidic communities. The Brotherhood's collection of pre-Roman Celtic artifacts will soon be the best in the world, so well regarded that American oil tycoon Jeremiah Lassater, friend to the Twin Princes and fellow student of geomancy, has agreed to pay for a multiple-museum American tour for the collection. Also attracted by the Brotherhood's expertise in pre-Roman Briton culture, a cabal of Asian mystics from London's Order of the Oriental Fellowship wooed the Brotherhood into an alliance, seeking assistance in the unraveling of an apparently Pictish magical system. The system isn't trivially easy for the Brotherhood to explain, but it's not far off from that. More time-consuming is working with the order to implement and codify the uses of the system. The more Masonic Oriental Fellowship is in the meantime an excellent source of contacts and peerage for the Twin Princes.

Opportunities

The Brotherhood is unusual in having an excellent reputation and extensive contacts in academics and society while remaining a rural group with only occasional business tours into and around urban areas. Should

they be confronted in their home, they have no ready access to nearby allies. The Brotherhood is almost grossly wealthy and is in possession of a number of very strange items of occult significance. During the infrequent times they travel, the Brotherhood travels in high style in expensive motorcars, private train cars or well appointed chartered ships. If the current plan for an American tour goes off well, the quality of travel arrangements will only improve. As a cover for someone who needs to travel extensively and comfortably, the Brotherhood would serve nicely.

Kindred with an interest in pre-Roman Briton culture or pop Druidism would be hard pressed to find a better source of information and resources relating to the subject. The Brotherhood would probably be notably unfazed by the notion of vampiric allies or members, with a little preparatory work on the vampires' part. Given the serendipitous nature of the group's formation, they are somewhat inured to the fantastic.

Secrets

The decades could not pass quickly enough for Robert Dunsirn, mortal member of the Dunsirn family of Clan Giovanni. He was shipped off to fulfill his family's end in some ancient bargain, to oversee the security for a house full of wrong-feeling curios and to the spiritual needs of a mangy cult of brutal shape-changing monsters and their kin, the Laird's Men. Trained from a young age for just this miserable task, it was all too easy simply to fall into the required role for thirty or so years and then return home for a proper meal and the promised reward of immortality.

Dunsirn and the Laird's Men were as stunned as anyone by the seemingly random meeting with Strachan and the Druids. The union seemed the only thing to do after such a monumental coincidence, and everyone involved has come out smelling like a rose (figuratively, in some cases). Strachan and his men are slowly coming to understand the nature of their position and their spiral-tattooed, bestial Scot friends. Like everyone else in the group, no one seems to care much about the peculiarity of recent years, and no one ever thinks to question the frequent oddities. The truth is that all of these people (and anyone who becomes involved with them) are prisoners of a destiny much larger than themselves and are being watched over and shepherded by a variety of corrupt and destructive spirits.

Ollav Robert Strachan has a secret. He doesn't really understand religion, even Druidic religion. He certainly knows a great deal about it, but somewhere in his soul is some small but vital part that is out of place. He simply can't comprehend what role religion is supposed to play

in someone's internal life. All this time Robert has been going through well rehearsed motions. It's fun, it's given him a very exciting life, it makes him rich, and it permits him to openly mock the dreadful and monolithic edifice of Christianity safely as a well known, harmless heretic. He picked the name Tienmas almost completely at random from a book.

Robert and Robert looking alike is the doing of no outside force. It is simply a very improbable coincidence that has understandably caused two strangers to form a strong, almost familial, bond under very odd circumstances.

Destiny

In early 1897 the Brotherhood finds itself swept up into the destiny of the Laird of Demborough, and a greater destiny above even him. The odd serendipity that seems to affect the group from time to time puts the Brotherhood in a position where it must back a political coup by its Asian allies in the Order of the Oriental Fellowship, help plan a meeting of powerful men from all over the globe and execute a dangerous and powerful ritual solely to enable the apparent suicide of one man. All this is scheduled to happen on the same night, in the same building, in London. The Brotherhood of the Twin Princes of Tienmas accordingly engineers a gathering of great powers and the subsequent cover-up fire which destroys the Lodge-house of the Order of the Oriental Fellowship. From the ashes of this seeming fool's errand, the return of the Laird to his people is made manifest. He forms a group called the Pretanic Order, predicated on the Pictish system of magic uncovered by Robert Strachan, from the survivors of the Oriental Fellowship, his Men and many of the Brotherhood.

The Twin Princes Robert are never heard from again, neither by the remaining Brotherhood nor by the Dunsirn family.

On November 1, 1899, fully three fourths of the Brotherhood and the population of Moysleet, County Clavan, Ireland die during an overnight festival among the standing stones and pagan idols.

Die Unterbrochene Kette des Arman (The Unbroken Chain of the Arman)

The ongoing Germanic cultural revival and nationalist movement, driven by the thoughts and rhetoric of innovators like Hegel and Wagner, have produced many cultural and folklore societies. Sponsoring festivals featuring traditional music, lectures on mythology and

folklore, performances depicting historical events and more, they are becoming important centralized bodies within the movement. A new development, a hybrid of Germanocentric Darwinism and Theosophist mysticism, is Ariosophy, the presence of which is yet another catalyzing agent for the increasingly popular racist/ nationalist movements.

For Germans living in the Austrian empire, however, political pressures and the lingering effects of the Austro-Prussian War separate them from their comrades across the border. Germans in Austria form their own cultural societies so that they, too, can take part in the renaissance and be a part of the unity. The largest of these groups, the Germanan Bund, claims over one hundred thousand members. Within the Germanan Bund are many social circles, planning boards and specialty groups. One such specialty group, Studenten für die Erhaltung der Germanischen Mythologie (Students for the Preservation of German Mythology), researches and develops series of educational lectures on mythology, history and folklore for presentation at Bund events. The Studenten für die Erhaltung der Germanischen Mythologie, while it actually does give lectures on mythology, is a front for an eclectic Germanic hermetic occult society called the Unbroken Chain of the Arman, founded as a response to the lack of German groups of this type in Austria.

According to the Unbroken Chain, the foundation for their order is based on the teachings of the god Wotan to his cult of priest-kings, the Arman, who preserved this knowledge in secret through the ages and presumably founded or permitted the founding of this group. According to the canon of the order, in the long centuries between the time of Wotan and the modern (re-)founding, the Arman cult was connected with both the Knights Templar and the Rosicrucians.

The Unbroken Chain, more than any other comparable occult society, is characterized by a very eclectic assortment of magical practices and beliefs, though all shine through a lens of Germanic mythology and symbolism. The root of their practices is an amalgamation of the basics of hermeticism and Theosophy. Two practices that set the Unbroken Chain apart from other hermetic orders are their focus on the very German runic magical alphabets, including the Arman rune system unique to this group, and their very heavy pagan influence. The various gods of Germanic and Norse mythology and the trappings of pagan witchcraft and megalithic geomancy feature prominently in the group's rituals.

The Unbroken Chain has two major factions. Fairly conventional academics and occultists regard their more devoutly pagan brethren as oddities. This second group pursues practices and beliefs very different from the

mainstream Unbroken Chain, including nature worship, nudism, equality of the sexes, vegetarianism, use of natural medicines and tolerance of other races and homosexuals.

A very small third faction is worth mentioning not because of its influence or size but because of the oddity of its claims and its persistence in seeking their acceptance. These few claim that there is Arman blood in the German royal lines and that Arman heritage increases the chance that one will develop psychic abilities. It is the belief of this faction that the Unbroken Chain should work to protect these royal lineages and attempt to breed in more Arman blood. Of special interest to them is the Habsburg line, which they claim has the greatest amount of Arman blood of all the royal families. These scholars of bloodlines hope to breed a lineage of heroic German monarchs who possess preternatural mental powers.

Continental Societies

In this era of revolutionary thought, political experimentation and overnight societal upheaval on the European continent, operating a secret society carries substantial risks. It takes only one paranoid or hostile authority figure to decide that a harmless order of astrologers or a secretive circle of sexual adventurers is actually a front for militant cryptopapists. When tensions run high, a secret faction is a secret faction, regardless of its actual goals. Consequently, many groups, especially those with extreme political stances, have migrated to England or elsewhere. The organizations that choose to remain active on the continent are either very brave, very skilled, or (most commonly) have gone to ground to wait out whatever their current source of worry may be.

Despite the Unbroken Chain's possibly naïve, slapdash hybridization of hermeticism and Germanic mythology, or perhaps because of it, the group's occasional publications and sporadic representation in other orders have won it a fair amount of respect or at least respectful amusement. Active chapters now exist outside of Austria: one in London, a handful around Scandinavia and the Low Countries, in the German empire itself and most notably a single chapter in the American city of Philadelphia. This level of widespread acclaim, subcultural though it certainly is, is a great accomplishment for a group initially formed as an Aus-

trian supplement to an existing global trend and can be attributed to a dearth of well organized and relatively accessible occult societies predicated on Germanic myth and symbolism.

Opportunities

Though it is characterized by a more fanciful or mythic paradigm than most, the Unbroken Chain is in practice actually a solid and typical specimen of an occult society. It is an obvious choice of ally for those with an interest in Germanic occultism and for those who support the cultural revival. Its thus-far successful cover within the Germanan Bund is also a potentially useful trait ready for exploitation, as is its recently developed multinational status. For those who find an organized German population within Austria worrisome, the Unbroken Chain is a subtle, yet effective, place to strike.

Secrets

The Unbroken Chain has only secrets of the sort to be found in practically any such group: politics among the members, occasional questionable scholarship and a hard-to-swallow magical pedigree. The growing popularity of the ultimately racist Ariosophy occult movement

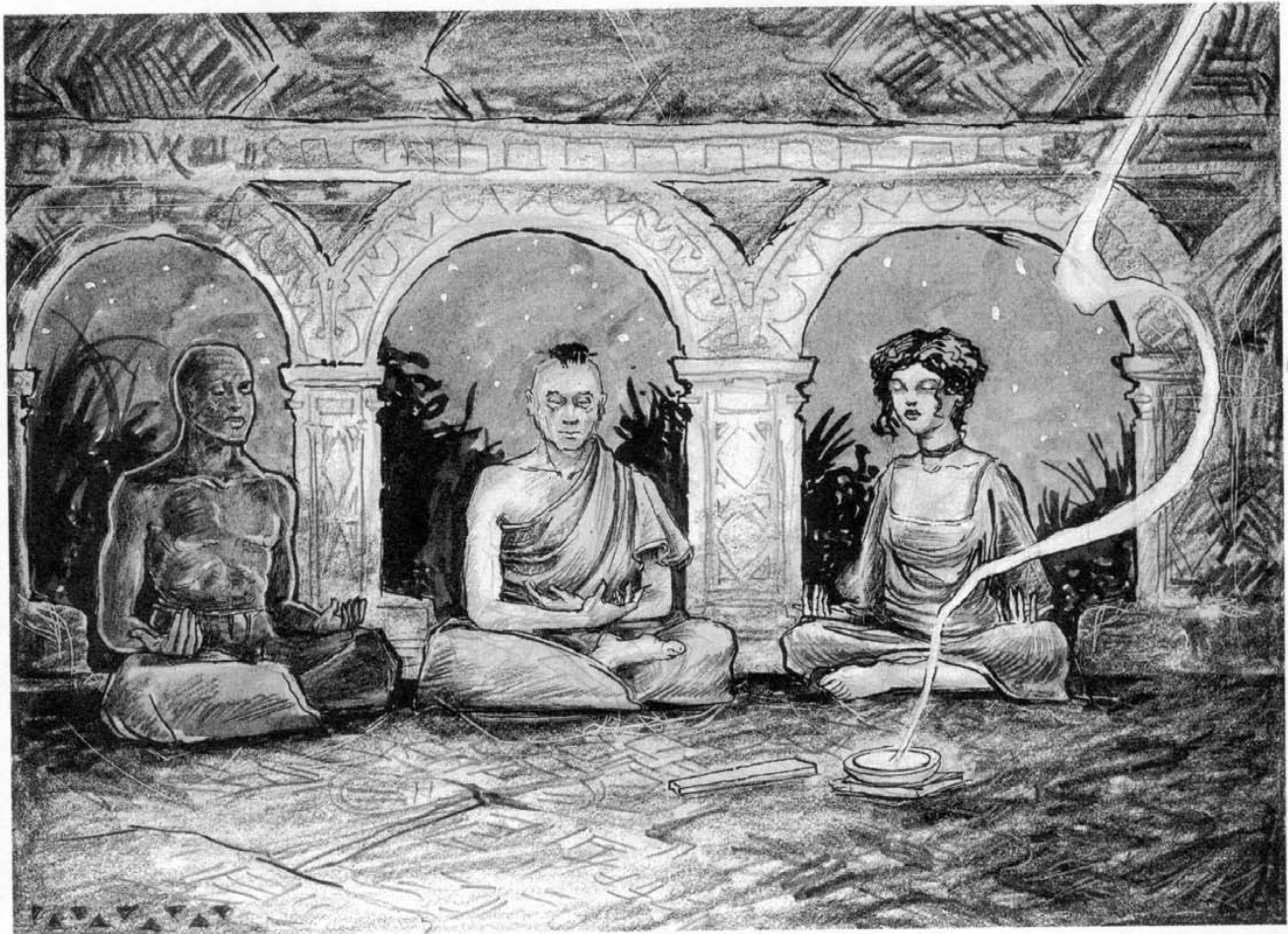
is not exactly a secret, unless seen with the clarity of hindsight.

Destiny

As with so many occult societies, the Unbroken Chain of Arman's lifespan as a unified order is a short one. Several of its factions and practices spin off into other groups and movements. It is a significant precursor to the so-called Nazi Occultism and the neo-Pagan/Wiccan movements of the next century, the latter playing a key role in German gay and women's rights movements.

The Theosophical Society

Theosophy, which takes its name from the Greek word *theosophia*, meaning "divine wisdom," is the creation of Mme. Blavatsky, who formed the Theosophical Society around her system. It is important to note, however, that Theosophy as a belief system is quite popular independent of the Society and is already stud-



ied by many groups unconnected with Blavatsky. To the majority of these groups, and really for the West as a whole, Theosophy is the gateway for the first widespread exposure to authentic Eastern mysticism. Consequently, the continued development of Theosophy as a whole is well out of Mme. Blavatsky's direct control, having become its own beast entirely. Still, she continues to contribute to the movement with further teachings from the mahatmas, transcended adepts who are her teachers on the astral plane.

The central tenet of Theosophy is that all things are connected to and emanate from a transcendent divine principle or energy, and thus are part of a universal whole encompassing all creation. This whole, including the microcosmic humans within it, is engaged in a cyclic journey of evolution, seeking to improve itself and achieve an inconceivable state of divine perfection and awareness of unity. All the world's religions, by this thinking, contain a seed of divinity, as do science, art, philosophy and all other areas of human endeavor — all part of the drive to know and evolve toward the central divine energy. As with the cyclic cosmologies of the faiths that inspired it, Theosophy also incorporates the ideas of reincarnation and Karma, the latter being the cosmic tendency toward balance that requires that good deeds be done to counter negative actions and that negative actions done earn negative actions done in return.

Spearheading the current trend toward the spread of Eastern mystical thought into the West, the Theosophical Society and its founder Helena Petrovna Blavatsky figure highly in credulous society, both popular and controversial. Since its formation in New York City by Madame Blavatsky and her partner Col. Henry Steel Olcott in 1875, the Society has been very visible worldwide for both its fantastic claims and the vocal efforts of detractors to debunk said claims. To be clear, the Theosophical Society is not so much a secret society as it is a society with a limited appeal and an intellectually particular accessibility. The end result is much the same as if it were secret: few people know what it's up to, even if it appears in the news.

The Society, now based in Adyar, India, teaches a novel mystical system incorporating techniques of Hindu and Buddhist faiths with the mediumistic and psychic abilities so common among spiritualists of recent decades. The Society is not Theosophy, though, but a group supplemental to it and founded on three principles. First, it is dedicated to the formation and embodiment of a universal brotherhood, making no judgments for sex, race, faith or the like. Second, the Society is to undertake comparative studies of religion, philosophy, science, the arts and other areas of human

endeavor in order to better understand the underlying truths of them all, and of the drive to evolve that is at the root of all such undertakings. Last, investigation of the unexplained, or supernatural, phenomena in both nature and capabilities of mankind is of paramount importance in the search for hidden truths and wisdom. Unspoken is the desire to thwart what is seen as a stifling Christian dominance on the everyday spirituality of the West, a desire that is rapidly becoming a narrow-minded Asiocentrism.

In contrast to its elegant cosmology and relatively uncomplicated founding principles, the Theosophical Society is the target of a disproportionately large volume of debunkings, accusations of fraud and conspiracy, and materialist incredulity. Mme. Blavatsky and her close associates in the order are said to make use of common séance misdirection tricks to impress the credulous, and of engineering a wide array of theatrics to give credence to her claims of patronage from ascended astral masters. It is a testament to either the Society's zeal or its guile that, despite the attacks, it continues to thrive.

Opportunities

For the rare Kindred who seek to justify their state with a desire for spiritual fulfillment, the Theosophic idea of the universality of the divine is an attractive one. More generally, the movement and Society both are dense with those who are attracted primarily to the fringe lifestyle and outsider status. Vampires of a similar mind could move easily among these faddish cliques. Theosophy is, for those with the need for it, an excellent cover story for eccentric-seeming Europeans abroad in India, and vice versa.

Judgments as to the true motivations of its founders aside, the Theosophical Society is very interested in making a profit from its efforts. This desire makes a convenient handle by which to seize the group.

H. P. Blavatsky dies on May 8, 1891 when the flu complicates her lifelong problems with her kidneys. That is what they say, at any rate.

Secrets

Many of the charges of fraud that have been leveled against the Society are true. Blavatsky has an immense appetite for theatrics and has on many occasions foiled herself in her attempts to add drama to the generally somber business of, for example, meditation. Among her other faults, she was a prolific plagiarist, and whole passages of her writings are taken almost verbatim from older works. It is probable that Indian Ravnos are vastly amused by the ease with which they can infect Europe

with all manner of far-fetched bunk, simply by dazzling a visiting member of the Theosophical Society.

Destiny

Like nearly all its peers, the Society splits and splits again into a variety of new groups over the next century. It and its teachings survive to the Final Nights and are second only to the Golden Dawn in significance for occultism and New Age movements. When it comes to the spread of Eastern practices to the West, however, the Society is nearly solely responsible. The ideas Blavatsky first spreads in the late 19th century remain the most popular Eastern and Eastern-derived concepts a century later.

The Illuminated Rosicrucian Order

The Roman poet asked, "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" or "Who watches the watchmen?" Rosicrucians answer, "We do."

A group so secretive that many of its initiates do not even know its name until they have been members for years, the Illuminated Rosicrucian Order is perhaps the most purposefully and successfully oblique body of mortal occult conspirators active in the Victorian era. Necessary, given that their aim is to be to secret societies as secret societies are to society at large, they are a conspiracy among conspiracies.

Initiates are selected from the ranks of other societies when they exhibit a keen mind, a questing spirit, a sense of discretion and a commitment to the advancement of humanity under the ideals of the Rosicrucian tradition. A member of the order then cultivates a relationship with the initiate via correspondence, often for many years, subtly encouraging continued study and gradually revealing the possible existence of an order committed to the very ideals the new initiate's passion has been aroused toward. Those who retain their unswerving dedication to these ideals after this period of testing are contacted, again by letter, by the Grand Master adept of the order and informed of their status as initiates. In many cases, they are told that they have, in fact, been initiates of the order for many years, since long before they were ever contacted.

The order, according to its custom, is actually the Inner Order. Other groups, such as the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia or the many arms of Freemasonry, serve as the public, or Outer, Order of the True Rosicrucian Order. Once fully involved, initiates remain

in contact with and aware of only their sponsoring member, the Grand Master, and any new initiates they themselves are called upon to sponsor. A single Masonic lodge could be populated entirely by Illuminated Rosicrucian Order initiates and none among them would suspect, or such is the order's intention. The activities of initiates are largely as they were previous to their induction save that they now engage in a constant regular schedule of letter-writing to and from their sponsors and, occasionally, other initiates. These letters, which nearly always use Inner Order names to protect identities, use a wide array of ciphers and symbolic code schemes to further obfuscate the order's business.

The Grand Master of the Innermost Order

The current Grand Master, called Frater C*I*C as his Inner Order name, is the Rev. Dr. Alessandro Balsamo. The presumably Italian Balsamo is immensely well regarded by the handful of initiates to whom he has revealed his identity in writing, and the even smaller number who claim to have met him in person. His personal magnetism and command of all modes of effective communication are reportedly astounding, and he is said to be a very calm man with a great, dry wit. The order has never advertised which Grand Master Balsamo is or how many there have been before him.

The correspondences of the order's initiates are, while certainly best kept private, generally not overwhelmingly sensitive. Typically an initiate simply keeps his sponsor informed of the state of affairs in other societies in which he is a member, general news from the region he calls home and the details of his current endeavors, studies and contemplations. To junior initiates from their sponsors come letters containing advice both metaphysical and practical on how to proceed with studies and surmount life's trials, with a focus on encouragement toward further spreading the ideals of Light and Truth to one's peers. In this way the order quietly shepherds the other societies and guides them in their good works. An incidental consequence of this network of exchanges is the ability to cross-reference and compare one's work with the labors of fellow initiates far away or otherwise inaccessible. Many supposedly lost or vanished details of ancient orders and in some cases evidence of entire lost orders known to scholars of the Rosicrucian tradition today are in fact only known due to discreet guidance from the order. An anonymous letter to the proper researcher can offer facts which might be

the keys to a new discovery, and the unrecognized order behind it all is free from the shackles of pride and fame that can often stifle further accomplishment of the sort.

Opportunities

For those with knowledge of its existence, the Illuminated Rosicrucian Order is a possible source of both great knowledge and concern. How much do its members know, and what could be done about them if it is found that they know too much? Groups such as this give the Camarilla cause for great concern. On the other hand, the order could be an unprecedented instrument of control for someone clever enough to beat it at its own game. For anyone with a passion for solving puzzles, exploring the maze that is the Rosicrucian Order is a potentially endless diversion from ennui.

Secrets

Whoever sits at the center of the Illuminated Rosicrucian Order has made for himself an apparatus of social control with surpassing elegance and subtlety, and uses it to engage in a campaign of intelligence and misinformation that is practically global in scope. Throughout the 19th century, the order has initiated members in and directly monitored nearly every major hermetic, Rosicrucian and Masonic society as well as Christian monastic orders and the like. It fabricates evidence of ancient orders and traditions, slowly introduces these fabrications through the work of its initiates and then capitalizes on the misinformation to cement its control over the credulous and unwary. It is a simple matter to impress a scholar with a lost manuscript fragment when the manuscript itself was purposefully created, decades ago, for such a charade. This is just one example of the tricks on the order's varied palette.

Despite the games, whoever masterminds "Rev. Dr. Alessandro Balsamo" and the order does in fact work to assist those who follow the Rosicrucian path. Conversely, the unknown mastermind will rabidly strive to ruin or discredit any society or individual it feels has gone astray from the noble path or has come to dominate his field overmuch, and will in lesser cases work to "teach a lesson to" those it feels are in need of such.

The order seems well aware of Kindred it finds in its midst and seems to bear only those prejudices that even a vampire would agree are prudent.

Destiny

The Rosicrucian Order is as invisible to history as it is in the Victorian age. It is easy to assume that it continues to play its game, under who knows how many

new names and fronts, aided immeasurably by the fruits of the Information Age.

The Red Lodge

Inexpertly named by its founders, who are not connected to the so-called Red Lodge of Freemasonry but were vaguely aware that the name indicated an elite inner circle, this notorious circle of hooligans is also variously known as the Vine and Sword, the Hunt Lodge Hell-fire Club, or "those vicious bloody lordlings" (this last by the residents of the rural villages near the group's lodges, bullied and fearful for the virtue of their daughters). Their continued status as a secret society owes more to their skill in avoiding prosecution than their skill at avoiding detection, having at various times fallen back on all manner of fraternal, nationalist, martial, academic and spiritualistic jargon to divert attention from the debauchery, violence and sexual deviance which are their true priorities.

The lodge is older than any of its current membership, mostly young men from minor aristocratic families and their assorted cronies, having been formed as a response to the criminalization of formal sword dueling in the 16th century. The modern lodge is still used by its members to practice and engage in all manner of fencing, *sans* the mesh mask and other protective garments of "sport" fencing. A facial scar earned in a fight is considered a badge of masculinity in the lodge and cause for a raucous celebration (as most things are in the Red Lodge). In addition to cutting each other up, lodge members consider themselves gentleman adventurers, with hunting a favorite focus. The various well stocked hunt lodges the group uses for its revels are also used for actual hunting and are decorated with the trophies of kills from both home and far abroad. Someone always has a plan for a safari or other exotic voyage in the works. The recent claims that the lodge is a center for the practice of the Black Arts is almost certainly a result of the members themselves, always looking for a sensational prank to play. The Red Lodge has nonetheless managed to avoid undue scrutiny from society, largely due to the generally correct belief that members will outgrow the urge for constant merriment and indulgence. The unwillingness of many to come into conflict with these scions of wealth and aristocracy certainly plays a part, however.

Opportunity

A group with which one might encourage excess and brutality among the future power elite of the Empire is, to some, a great prize. From a more pragmatic perspec-

tive, the lodge's access to wealth, discreet "companions," travel and remote locations are of obvious use to vampires. Nor should their use simply as entertainment for jaded Kindred be underestimated.

Secrets

Various members of the Red Lodge have, at various times, indulged in all manner of vice: drugs, sodomy, rape and even murder. A group within the lodge hunts the so-called "most dangerous prey," other men, when the thrill of killing dangerous beasts such as lions or bears has grown stale.

Destiny

The Red Lodge is quietly crushed and erased from history by an alliance of noble families after the Great War in an attempt to cover up a series of crimes perpetrated by the group and to protect their guilty sons from the consequences of their actions. Unfortunately, the Red Lodge held no monopoly on the commitment of black acts by the jaded and amoral products of elite society. Rich men and their sons continue to think themselves untouchable well into the Final Nights.

The Poor Radical Dynamiter Knights of King Mob

The current alliance, some would say assimilation, of Britain's Radical Party to the less extreme Liberal Party strikes many Radical hardliners as the death knell of their movement's significance to above-board politics. As a result, many adherents to the Radical cause seek more revolutionary means. Existing extremist groups have also taken advantage of the situation to recruit new members from the ranks of the dissatisfied Radicals or to form new groups entirely. One such fledgling extremist group calls itself the Poor Radical Dynamiter Knights of King Mob, a colorful allusion by educated founder Edward O'Donovan to the lengthy names of militant knightly orders such as the Templars.

O'Donovan, once a well spoken and intellectual voice of the Irish Fenian movement, has gathered many



embittered and disempowered former Radicals and First International Socialists around a decidedly Anarchist core group of German and Italian revolutionaries whose notoriety in their homelands has made continuing the fight there impractical. Setting aside their individual crusades, the Knights have taken as their own the global cause of revolution and anarchism, and acted upon the words of fellow revolutionary Auguste Coulon, "No voice speaks so loud as dynamite."

Simply placing and setting off explosives is only a small part of what the Knights do, though. They feel that to best serve the cause they must collect and disseminate the much sought-after knowledge of how explosives are made to their fellow fighters for freedom. In this way, the Knights contribute to the struggle on a global scale. To this end, the Knights now collect every scrap of information available to them on the subject: from other experienced revolutionaries, chemistry and engineering textbooks, military veterans, craftsmen and any source that presents itself. Armed thusly, they immerse themselves in the study of explosives and their manufacture, meeting nightly to commit their discoveries to paper in the form of simple diagrams and practical courses of study. Their tracts, diagrams and handbooks are then translated and distributed to groups all over Western Europe and the Americas, winning the Knights a great deal of acclaim from their peers.

The Bomb Business

Making dynamite and explosive devices is a complex matter and hard to pursue discreetly even in an age when forensic science is young and unreliable. In addition to the chemistry involved, skilled machining is necessary to produce a quality bomb. A group that wishes to produce a variety of incendiary devices, and a serious group will want the right bomb for the job in all cases, is faced with the challenge of acquiring a number of not-inexpensive materials and tools without attracting the attention of the establishment, the agents of which know full well what to look for to spot a burgeoning bomb-production enterprise. Information on the construction of explosives is therefore like gold in the revolutionary underground, and those who successfully obtain and distribute usable instructions gain status among their brethren in the struggle.

The Dynamiter Knights do engage in their own bombings, despite their educational focus, favoring prisons, courts and the homes of judges as targets. Their actions are well known as technical masterpieces: expertly timed, properly placed for maximum structural (and infrastructural) damage and always done with just enough flair to ensure widespread gossip.

Anarchist and Socialist groups who support a political revolution are among the most vocal enemies of the Dynamiter Knights and their ilk, whose brutal means, they say, serve only to hurt the movement and make all revolutionaries murderers in the eyes of the people. When they respond at all, the Knights point to continued injustices and abuses of power worldwide as the harvest reaped by sowing words. Unsurprisingly, given their international fame and violent activities, the Dynamiter Knights are among the most wanted of groups in all of Europe. Authorities in London are practically frantic for a break in their ongoing investigation, the Knights having thus far remained one step ahead because of their meticulous organizational skills and foresight.

Opportunities

For those with revolutionary agendas of their own, the Dynamiter Knights could make excellent allies, provided their trust could be earned. Association with this group is also practically a passport to acceptance by revolutionary groups the world over. Agreeing with them is not a prerequisite for attempting to manipulate them, however. The ability to dynamite a building is one often wished for by those of many political leanings.

Anyone whose assistance contributes to the apprehension of the Dynamiter Knights, on the other hand, would earn a great deal of leverage with the government. Wise Kindred would do all of the above.

Secrets

Edward O'Donovan is quite thoroughly mad. Once he was an educated and kind-hearted young man who found himself drawn to Socialism for its promise of improving the lot of the poor and working class. His arrest for association with an Irish revolutionary newspaper landed him in a prison camp operated by the Crown, where for many years he and hundreds of other supporters of Irish home rule were subjected to long days of manual labor with inhuman cruelty from their jailers and inadequate food, lodgings or medical care. Edward spent several months handcuffed behind his back and was put on a restricted diet in solitary confinement for refusing to select his religion from a list that did not include his faith. (The Irish people, in an admirable and clever

protest, elected O'Donovan to Parliament as the representative for County Tipperary, which Parliament of course overruled.) The government was eventually pressured to give amnesty to these prisoners, but it was too late for Edward O'Donovan.

Today he is a man characterized by a pathological desire to dismantle every aspect of the society that imprisoned him. His every thought and deed are a step toward that goal; he has no pastimes or relationships that do not in some way contribute to his war. It has not been an issue thus far, but O'Donovan will in no way permit any obstacles to bar his way, be they friend or foe. He is quite willing to send men to their deaths and to kill any of his allies whose suggestions of less extreme measures interfere with his methods.

Destiny

The Dynamiter Knights' meteoric rise to prominence continues to match their more and more frequent bombings and calls for more extreme measures in their publications. By the turn of the century, even other revolutionary extremists have begun to call the Dynamiter Knights too bloody, too willing to let the end justify their means. Edward O'Donovan's body is found in an alley in 1901, shot at close range in the back of the head, but no widespread arrests of Dynamiter Knights follow. The group slowly breaks up, its members joining other groups or disappearing from history. The publications of the Dynamiter Knights remain in circulation well into the 20th century and are an inspiration for revolutionary groups from the Situationists to the Black Panther Party.

In 1954 elderly Sinn Fein leader and former member of Irish Parliament Rory Hughes is found in his home, shot at close range in the back of the head. Though it was not publicized by the news at the time, "Edward O'Donovan, thou art avenged!" was written on a nearby wall.

The Young Men's Christian Anarchist League

The decidedly tongue-in-cheek name of this circle of political activists is indicative of its often humorous approach to revolutionary thought. A young group with young members, the League was formed in emulation of more established and well known groups like William Morris' Socialist League. Where Morris' peers exalt the

movement in poetry or paint, however, the League's clever sons of merchants eschew the fine arts in favor of mass-produced satirical handbills and banners in the style of product advertisements, theatrical and carnival posters and church event circulars. Their regularly published newspaper *Strange Truths* appears, on cursory examination, to be a common sort of sensational true-crime tabloid. *The Word* is a clever enough facsimile of a typical evangelical leaflet that many idle readers never realize it is, in fact, a collection of Socialist essays.

Despite their whimsical approach, the members of the League are generally quite serious about the subject matter of their publications and are active supporters of many movement events and establishments, such as London's well known underground Autonomie Club and the debate events of William Morris. Their willingness to lend the use of their printing equipment and expertise has gone a long way toward remedying their early reputation as jokers and purely social-scene anarchists. Members of the League are now often invited to write satirical essays for a number of more serious publications and are beginning to receive accolades for their efforts. Not everyone appreciates the League's approach, and a vocal segment of Socialist/anarchist society claims that humor cheapens the very serious business of working for change in government takes steps to bar the League from events when they can. This, of course, has merely made new targets for the League's campaign of wit.

Opportunities

While not as directly useful as many groups, the colorful practices of the League make them an attractive choice of allies for those with a taste for something different. Certainly from a pragmatic point of view, a group with a working print shop is of obvious use if that is all that is needed. Unlike many revolutionary types, the League has money to spend in support of the cause and could be made to spend in a particular way if someone were to direct them properly. Because they have resources and everyday lives as businessmen and printers to protect, blackmail is a very effective tool to use against the League.

Secrets

The League has no terrible secret beyond the fact that most of its members are more interested in showing off how clever they are than they are in anarchism.

Destiny

The League eventually succumbs to disinterest on the part of its membership, or unwillingness to chance

their livelihoods should they be found out. Looking back on their lives during their golden years, a few of the former members of the League wish they had had the courage and resolve to keep at it.

The Round Table

A council of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the world, assembled as the brainchild of British diamond magnate Cecil Rhodes, the Round Table takes as its stated purpose to serve as the administration of a global imperialist government dedicated to bearing the "white man's burden" and ensuring continued consolidation of power into the hands of the Anglo-centric power elite best suited to the task. Though some may have heard the name of the Round Table, or even guessed at the existence of a similar group, the doings of the Round Table are among the most private in the world simply because its members are men so powerful that they long ago stopped having to answer to anyone. Rhodes, Rothschild, Morgan, Lassater, Rockefeller, Milliner, Carnegie and more — this is company so prestigious that Prime Ministers and Presidents aren't even considered for inclusion, a new global aristocracy where skill in gathering wealth and power trumps mere noble birth.

The Round Table, or, as Rhodes sometimes says, "The Society of the Elite," serves foremost as a forum for these men of power, a common ground from which they can coordinate business actions to maximize profit, join forces to bring pressure on governments or institutions, pool resources to fund causes which benefit their cause and police one another's doings when they are a threat to the stability of the shadow government they seek to establish. Most significantly, the members of the Round Table being accustomed to the necessity of planning for the future, agree on and institute measures to ensure that their heirs and successors are equipped to continue this great work long after the founders themselves are dust. Emblematic of this thinking is the trust created by Rhodes in one of his many wills, from which promising students who show promise in continuing the Round Table legacy receive financial support and the resultant accolades.

As with any gathering of men of such power, the Round Table is a hotbed of Machiavellian plotting and power mongering. Every member has too much to lose to simply relent to the wishes of Rhodes or the majority. Every decision or policy is the result of a war of wills, subterfuge and sometimes full-fledged shadow war as

members use their near-peerless influence to turn groups through which they can exert pressure on groups under the thumbs other members. Looked at a certain way, it can be said that the Round Table is a microcosm of Europe and America, the politics of the Western world writ small.

Opportunities

It is not unreasonable to assume that the Round Table lies at the center of more attempts at Kindred influence than any other body of the age. Its members represent the top of the ladder in banking, steel, railroads, oil and more, and every vampire with any appreciable influence in any of those industries is going to find his concerns more and more frequently coming in contention as the Round Table draws all their interests together. So widespread are the schemes of the Round Table that virtually any Kindred might find themselves tied up in them. This is among the highest concentrations of power that exists, and only the truly skilled manipulators will enjoy any measure of success here.

Secrets

The activities of the Round Table encompass more secrets than could be detailed here. With interests in every area of mortal power and would-be controllers from practically every possible group in the world of the unseen, any sort of secret that can be imagined can be found here. From Andrew Carnegie's anti-imperialist actions against his peers to the British members' use of Canadian monarchist agents to prune the influence of J. P. Morgan in the railroad industry and more besides, plotting within the Round Table could be a full-time concern for enterprising Kindred, and is. Zealously pro-capitalist and anti-capitalist propaganda both provide excellent sources of possible secret details. Kindred surround the Round Table, make no mistake, and they are the most cunning and skilled of their kind when it comes to influencing the mortal world. *Caveat emptor.*

Destiny

Cecil Rhodes' Round Table is often later cited as the genesis of the one-world government that so many conspiracy theorists claim holds the world in the palm of its hand, the dreaded new world order. It will be said to have been the forebear of the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderberg Group, the Council on Foreign Relations, the United Nations, NATO, the World Bank, the WTO, and practically every other organization that could be seen as supporting a multinational one-world government.

Is There No Help for the Widow's Son?

Making Secret Societies

Tick-tock tick-tock: the collective actions of secret societies are like a steady clockwork clatter in the background of the Victorian age. Characters are in many cases almost guaranteed to cross paths with any of dozens of groups, with hundreds of factions exerting a similarly multiplicitous array of pressures on society. For those who seek political or social influence of even the most cursory nature, it is simply a fact of unlife, one of the expected features of the game of power. All well and good

for telling a story, but the particulars of modeling someone's stake in a society through the Storyteller rules system can become a bit easier with a brief reexamination and discussion of expansion of the systems involved. Characters can certainly simply have a member of the Golden Dawn as a Major Contact, for example, or justify the purchase of Influence as Masonic membership. With just a touch more complexity, however, larger-scale Background constructs can reflect the administration of entire societies (or factions therein) or a greater involvement in the management of a character's dealings with a society, or secret society culture in general.

Pooled Backgrounds

Players interested in having their characters control a secret society, or segment of one, can pool Background points in Allies, Contacts, Herd, Influence, Mentor, Resources and Retainers during character generation to

Raising Backgrounds after Character Creation

These rules provide a consistent system for players to build their characters' Background Traits through experience points, in addition to or instead of the customary practice of the Storyteller's adjusting them in response to roleplaying. All of these rules are optional.

- **Simplest.** Backgrounds cost Current Rating x 2 experience points to raise by one dot.
- **Simple.** A character may raise one Background trait by one dot with the investment of Current Rating x 2 weeks of dedicated effort. "Dedicated" means in this case that the character is not out adventuring or engaging in strenuous activity that isn't directly related to the Background being improved.
- **Complex.** The Background trait increases by one dot when the player accumulates 2 x the new level in successes in an extended roll (4 successes to go from • to ••, 6 successes to go from •• to •••, etc.). The player may make no more than one such roll per session or per week of game time — that is, one roll per session no matter how much time it covers beyond one week *and* one roll per week of game time no matter how many sessions it takes to play out that week. The roll uses the Background in conjunction with an appropriate ability, such as Finance + Resources to build up the character's wealth and Academics + Contacts to develop new ties at a university, and the player may make this roll only after the character has made significant and successful use of the Background in play.

Shadow War: Contesting Backgrounds

Forces in the world of secret societies fight for control of mutually desirable resources, be they people, the authority to promulgate and refine an idea or tangible goods like money. This is generally a messy and mutually destructive process.

Each side in the struggle makes a complex roll of the sort described above, with the same limitations on frequency. When one side accumulates twice the other side's current rating in successes, the victorious individual or group takes away one dot from the enemy and adds that to its own rating.

A Background contested for too long or too often may erode, vanishing as a result of the stresses of sustained back-and-forth battles for power. The storyteller should decide ahead of time what it takes to erode a Background. When using the rolls described here, a contest that goes on for (6 x the new level) weeks without a resolution falls by one dot. The Storyteller may want to make it easier than usual to rebuild Backgrounds eroded this way, such as by reducing the multiplier by 1 for reconstructive efforts, or even more when the characters have extensive supporting Backgrounds and a well prepared plan roleplayed well.

reflect the coterie's assets. (Generation and Status necessarily remain the property of individual characters, and Fame does not apply to secret societies except as discussed below.)

The players choose one Background as the Anchor, central to the society and the other Backgrounds selected. Selecting Resources as the Anchor, for example, reflects a society that manages its Influence or Contacts through wealth, be it banking, business ownership or simply a predisposition toward paying well. Any poolable Background can be used as the Anchor. Pooled Backgrounds can be purchased at levels beyond that which an individual character could, to reflect the increased management power of a coordinated coterie. The storyteller should give some thought to setting a cap on pooled Background levels at character generation, and for her game in general, or the power wielded by the players' coterie can grow out of hand. For most coterie, a maximum of 10 dots prevents the accumulation of unlimited power while still granting the characters significant scope for shared action. Larger and more powerful factions can of course grow larger than this.

The Anchor's rating is the limit to which other Backgrounds in the pool may be raised, and should the Anchor be lowered during the course of play, such as through negligence or meddling, the new Anchor level is the cap and the other Backgrounds in the pool drop to match that cap. Backgrounds lowered because of damage to the Anchor are generally raised to their previous level when the Anchor is repaired, pending experience point expenditures required by the Storyteller. (See accompanying sidebar for suggested rules for this purpose.) All of the characters who contribute points have full access to the total pooled Backgrounds, unless the players agree to some limitations. It is important to note that Backgrounds with finite use, such as the monthly spending limit of Resources, are depleted from the pool when used and cannot be used by other characters until the Background refreshes.

Eric's players decide that their coterie, a group of high-class Americans operating in London, are the masterminds of a society called the Sons of the Union, a patriotic group for American businessmen overseas. They select Resources as their group's Anchor, to reflect that wealth is their key to power. Tom puts in 3 dots of Resources, 1 each of Allies and Influence, and 2 of Contacts. Dan puts in 2 dots of Resources, 1 of Allies and 3 of Contacts. Elliott, having spent most of his points on Potence, contributes only 1 dot of Resources and 1 of Influence. The Sons of the Union thus has 6 dots each of Resources and Contacts, being a very wealthy circle with many business connections. The group also has some friends at the American embassy from its Allies of 2, and

an Influence of 1 to reflect the mercantile pressure it can exert. Even though Elliott put in only 2 of the total points, he still has unlimited access to the pool.

During the course of play, a string of disastrous investments lowers the Resources of the Sons of the Union to 5. As Resources is the Anchor of the pool, the group's Contacts also drops to 5 as business associates shy away from the stalling society.

A player can withdraw his character's stake in a pool at any time but will receive back one fewer dot than he invested, due to the inefficiencies of sudden restructuring. If the player wants to withdraw his character's support of the pool smoothly, he should accumulate successes equal to the number of dots being withdrawn on an appropriate extended roll, with the per-roll time scale being determined by the storyteller (see sidebar "Raising Backgrounds after Character Generation" for a discussion of tailoring systems to suit your game). Players wishing to switch their Anchor to a different background can do so after raising the new Anchor Background one dot, remembering to lower any Backgrounds in the pool to meet the new cap. Storytellers may wish to require a period of time to be invested by the characters in restructuring their society, to reflect the new Anchor. One week per dot generally suffices, unless circumstances make the change much easier (one day per dot) or much harder (one month per dot) than usual.

Other Background Considerations

The following questions should guide players and Storytellers thinking about Backgrounds in the context of secret societies.

Is the pool constructed by your group representative of an entire secret society, or is it solely the segment of a larger society in which your character or characters enjoy some measure of control? Freemasonry, for example, is a huge organization that would require the investment of hundreds of dots of Backgrounds to reflect total dominance. Most players will design for their Masonic coterie a Background pool that represents a single local lodge or a widespread but minority faction due simply to the huge amount of points required to do otherwise. With a more minor or localized secret society it is, on the other hand, quite possible for the Backgrounds invested by the players to represent all the assets of the group. Where the player characters do not control every aspect of a society, it is significant that the storyteller spend some time thinking abstractly about what mortal or Kindred characters might also have investments in a given group.

Does a Background in the characters' pool stands for an asset within the society, or is it representative of something the society can do? In the example above, the Sons of the Union have 6 dots of Contacts. Is this because they have members everywhere that the player characters can contact for information, or is it because the members of the Sons are well connected themselves? These concerns illustrate well the sort of thinking players and storytellers should do before simply assigning numeric values to Backgrounds from the list below and moving on, lest inconsistencies during play detract from the game.

- **Allies.** Allies are most often other members of the secret society to which the player characters belong. They are friends and peers, willing to help because of a fraternal bond or ideological compatibility with the society. As with normal Allies, the friendly relationship must be maintained by the characters, which will sometimes need favors done for them as well. Groups that feature a lot of regular social activities for members will often have high Allies ratings. Some societies may have Allies outside their membership, as when a public figure cannot openly be a member of a group due to conflict of interest but still supports it.

Allies as the Anchor of a Background pool means that the society as a whole is one that is foremost about trust, friendship, mutual goals or whatever reason a group of people is willing to help one another. Many Masonic groups are Allies Anchored.

- **Contacts.** Societies that are more concerned with a business or a practice and less with social functions, such as a magical group or craft union, will favor Contacts over Allies to reflect a more functional and less friendly relationship. Groups with highly or well placed members, with access to information and power structures outside the society as part of their professional or social lives, should also have a high Contacts rating. Some societies simply cultivate extensive contacts as well, as with underground groups or groups that for whatever reasons need secret or private channels for information or guarded information. Contacts can also represent a group whose members have access to records and libraries, either from their private collections or from the workplace. A hermetic society well known for having an extensive occult library could be bought as Contacts. It is worth noting that a small group of very mobile individuals can function as a very high level of Contacts. One man may just be one man, but when his work takes him all over the city every day, or all over Europe every year, he is a much greater source of information than a handful of sedentary contacts.

Status and Fame

It is often necessary to gauge the reputation of a society. Who has heard of the group? How do they feel about the group's activities, if they know of them? It is a complex and often confusing matter to reflect with traits, especially given the paradox of secret groups who are also public groups, such as the Freemasons, who are well liked by society at large but whose doings are still secret. In some cases, it makes sense to add specialized versions of Status and Fame to the chronicle.

Secret Society Fame measures the prominence of a secret society. As with the Freemasons, this can seem a paradox, but keep in mind that "secret" often means that a group's doings are kept private, not its existence. A group like the Masons is so prevalent that it tops the chart at 5 dots, as it is well known throughout the world. Conversely, the Round Table is a group known only to its membership and their immediate subordinates. Though all of its members have very high Fame personally, as a group they probably have no Fame at all, and prefer it that way.

Secret Society Status obviously has nothing to do with standing in Kindred society, as the more familiar Status does, or at least it usually doesn't. Secret Society Status measures the reputation of the society in the minds of those select individuals who know about it. Think of Secret Society Fame as the size of the window and Secret Society Status as what can be seen through it. Many people know of the Freemasons and because of their history of charitable works and general benevolence they also enjoy a Secret Society Status of 5. Though practically no one has heard of the Round Table, its ceaseless efforts to bring civilization and progress to the world probably mean that those few knowledgeable people regard the society quite highly, also around 5. A well known group with a reputation as dastards and villains would have a high Secret Society Fame and low or no Secret Society Status. A new or small group with strange, but not vile, habits would have low ratings in both. These traits should generally not serve as the Anchor for a Background pool, particularly not for new characters and new factions, nor should they grow above 5 dots total.

Societies who use Contacts as their Anchor Background sustain their power through information: who they know, where, how fast they can gather data and how good it is. The Illuminated Rosicrucian Order, with its intense focus on gathering and sharing information among members, is an example of a Contacts Anchored society.

- **Herd.** Herd is a fairly straightforward Background, though it needn't always reflect an actual "herd" of mortals. An organization of medical professionals quietly pursuing knowledge through vivisection, for example, could have access to a great deal of blood. More usual sources for sustenance are available easily to those active in the medical community, as well. Certainly the treatment of those in asylums is a matter well outside the public eye. Blood is a not uncommon feature in occult ceremony, of course, but needn't be drunk as part of the ritual.

Herd as an Anchor Background, while rare and of specific use, could perhaps be the keystone in a society predicated on parlaying medical contacts and access to blood for influence among Kindred peers, or a religious group used for feeding while the devotees' assets and doings are controlled by the church.

- **Influence.** Influence over politics, business and society in general is the presumed end goal of many secret societies that seek to promote an agenda or doctrine. Like Contacts, Influence can reflect a group with well or highly placed members who, unlike Contacts, are willing actually to work toward goals and not just retrieve information on behalf of their society. It can be as simple as having members among high society willing to say a word or two to the proper people, or counting as members actual policy-makers from business and government. The age of media dominance over public opinion has not yet fully dawned, but it is a growing trend. Newspapers do serve as a source of information in shaping public opinion on matters.

Societies whose Anchor is Influence gain their power from respect and access to those with power. A group that enjoys the ability to pressure and shape the politics of the culture in which it exists can have money, friends and information. The Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon, in its native America especially, primarily operates as an Influence Anchored society, as do many Masonic groups.

- **Mentor.** This is an interesting choice for inclusion in a secret society, one in which other, more powerful,



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Kindred are a contributing factor to the player character's power. On one hand, elders may be loath to share their hard-earned influence in the mortal world. Allowing young potential rivals access to an established power structure is a potentially effective way to control them, however. Less sinister is the idea that some elders may simply wish to have assistance in managing a large, complex society.

Those characters whose stake in a society is predicated on being subordinate to more powerful entities, usually Kindred, are part of a Mentor Anchored group. It is common for an elder or more powerful coterie to allow its assets to be used by underlings, and access to a secret society is no different. A coterie given access to the Golden Dawn by the hypothetical council of Tremere who helped arrange its founding would be an example of a society made with a Mentor Anchored pool. Consider also, what if groups such as the Theosophical Society truly did receive their directives from Secret Chiefs from the astral plane?

- **Resources.** It is perhaps true that everyone needs Resources: money, property, goods and credit. It is also true, within certain bounds, that money can go far toward buying friends, information and power. Often overlooked by players, though, is the question: How does someone become rich without already having some measure of Influence, Contacts or the like? It is a rare person who is simply wealthy. Something earned that money, and something must be done to maintain it. People can seldom buy power with hard assets alone; they need trust

and credit. Those who have some property and a good reputation can, with some small effort, acquire for themselves loans or the like. A wealthy patron, be it a group or individual, who provides a character or society with financial backing is in effect a Resources rating.

Secret Societies Anchored with Resources are predicated on financial power, be it mercantile, banking or some other source of assets. The power and influence that other Backgrounds represent is simply bought, or drawn by the magnetism that money has to attract power. The Round Table is a society with a truly immense Resources trait for its Anchor.

- **Retainers.** For a secret society, Retainers are those men and women who can be counted on to follow orders, in many cases doing things unacceptable to society at large. These are the loyal cult members willing to lie, steal or even take life. They are the inner circle agents, willing to do whatever it takes to advance the society's goals. Groups with members of a vocation already predisposed toward visceral action, such as policemen or agents of a government or criminal organization, can reflect this by having fewer Retainers than the number of dots would indicate but who are individually more skilled.

A society with Retainers as its Anchor is one with many agents actively and loyally working toward its goals. The efforts of these agents earn the group its other assets: money, spies or control. The Dynamiter Knights of King Mob are a group with a Retainers Anchor; it is powerful because its members actively pursue their group's ends.





Chapter Two: The Twilight Globe

*To-night, God knows what thing shall tide,
The Earth is wracked and fain —
Expectant, sleepless, open eyed;
And we, who from the Earth were made,
Thrill with our Mother's pain.
— Rudyard Kipling, "False Dawn"*

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is the proving ground for the Victorian ethos. London's prominence as the seat of the British Empire remains undisputed, to be sure, but the Kingdom's other regions make their mark upon the Victorian paradigm as well. Life in the cradle of the Industrial Revolution quickens at a hitherto undreamt pace, transforming previously unremarkable towns and counties into the engines of industry and commerce. Intellectual, scientific and political advances augment the economic success of the "workshop of the world," affording (some of) the Queen's subjects a splendid existence. The waves of modernization sweep up the islands' Kindred in their surge, and opportunities to claim power and influence separate from the capital do not go unnoticed by those vampires in the outlying fiefs.

The Industrial Axis

Outside of London, the industrial cities of the north and in Wales make the greatest impact. Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and Bradford stand at the forefront of economic power, and their ascension transforms the social and political landscape for Kindred and kine alike. Connected to the rest of the British Isles by the growing railway network and to the Atlantic trade routes by the port of Liverpool, the north redefines rhythms of labor, population, social theory and standards of living.

The factories and mines attract laborers from rural areas throughout the islands. Cities swell with people and their amenities: by the closing decades of the century the northern counties rival even London in population. The frenetic growth is not devoid of consequences. Housing was often haphazard at best during the formative years of the 1840s; while a few owners built new dwellings in anticipation of boom times, workers mostly claimed every inch of space in older Georgian mansions abandoned by prosperous nobility in a mass exodus to the countryside. The famous "row houses" go up only in the 1880s; by then the overcrowding, atrocious sanitation and water quality, disease and death are already legend.

Manchester

Sitting 180 miles northeast of London, Manchester is the manufacturing pioneer of the United Kingdom, with more than a hundred cotton factories. While industry grew steadily during the boom of the 1840s, a "cotton famine" in the 1860s reversed this phenomenon, and now the massive mills have fallen silent in the later Victorian era, suffering from increasing international competition and European-wide economic distress.

Nevertheless, Market Street, the main thoroughfare, remains "the most congested street in Europe," its narrow path crammed with residents of the thousands of brick houses thrown up without any real nod to civil engineering. Thousands more from the suburbs, many of them immigrants, commute to the city by tram and rail to join these urban folk. Kine and Kindred alike walk the streets under a constant patina of black dust belching from factory stacks. Gardens, public or private, are viable only in those suburbs untouched by factories. The rivers, despite the city's best efforts, remain filthy ditches.

Time, the Measure of All Things

Apart from the 12- and 14-hour days, the widespread child labor and an unsafe working environment, the machine-made discipline and “steadiness” of the factory system seep into every aspect of workers’ lives.

The rhythm of a society where people labored on farms or as individual artisans was very different. Work was done from sunup to sundown in the fields, and by candlelight deep into the evenings in some professions. The individual tasks determined the amount of time that was spent working. Field hands and journeymen controlled the tempo of their daily labors, simply picking up the pace if they saw themselves falling behind. Harvest time brought entire villages together to assist in the gathering of crops. People socialized during the day in the field and the smithy. Regular market days, traveling fairs and religious feast days regularly broke up the week.

This all ends with the factory system. The advent of reliable clocks in the 18th century completely transforms not only the nature of work but also the nature of life itself. Production quotas drive the worker’s day. The time spent at the loom or the steam engine belongs to the employer, and he expects every possible moment to be put to productive use. Socializing disappears, replaced by lists of fines meted out for lollygagging on the job. Work and home life become two separate things; a person’s “job” becomes something he goes to do and comes home from. Time off for religious feasts and market fairs vanishes; worship and shopping take place on Sunday and Sunday alone. With their lives rescheduled according to the mill or the mine, the majority of workers find that their new “free time” requires some getting used to. Men and women both get drunk. Men, much less likely to suffer either physical impairment or social stigma for siring children out of wedlock, also pursue getting laid.

Kindred in the Manchester fief have seized quiet advantage from the city’s expansion. Spurred on by the thinkers of the Manchester School, which opposed government interference in trade and economics, up-and-coming “bourgeois” Kindred diligently construct a northern sphere of influence to offset the power of Mithras’ London. With the upheaval surrounding Mithras’ disappearance and the uncertain fate of the London seneschal, several Mancunian powerbrokers seek to carve out a center of not-so-loyal opposition within the Avalonian court structure. The opening of the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894, which directly connects the city to Atlantic trade and bypasses the port at Liverpool, provides the first truly independent link that Manchester Kindred have to the rest of Europe.

Apart from the factories and their necessary transport routes, the rest of the city contains the typical conveniences of a major Victorian conurbation. Business and banking establishments are concentrated along Market Street. City government and cultural houses, including the Victoria University of Manchester, the old Royal Infirmary and the royal exchange, are located in the southern part. As befits a city dedicated to industry and technology, Manchester boasts many scientific and literary associations, including the famous Literary and Philosophical Society. For those individuals looking for a more refined atmosphere, Manchester has 53 public

parks and open spaces, nine theaters and the Bellevue Zoological Gardens.

Despite recent economic unease, Manchester’s symbolic power as the “shock city” of the Industrial Revolution remains unsurpassed. It focuses ambition in the mortal population, both among owners whose newfound wealth fuels their ambition for social “respectability” and among those in clerical and merchant positions yearning to live a decent middle-class existence. A sense of utility dominates the region; writers and politicians often speak of a new social hierarchy, one in which worth is tied to one’s usefulness. This ambition transfers to Kindred as well, particularly those lower down the generational ladder. Power is couched in terms distinctly different from the traditional ones. Those Kindred fortunate enough to prosper monetarily speak of a separate source of might, based solely on their affinity with the pace and direction of modernization. Vitae can always be had among the 600,000 or so inhabitants of Manchester. The coming wave of power is driven by progress — and many Kindred are willing to ride it to its highest crest.

The Rural Remainder

The Midlands, with their clipped hedgerows and well maintained estates, are still the playground of the nobility when urban pleasures tire and hunting, racing

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

Princess Alexandra Victoria of the house of Hanover ascended to the throne in 1837. By the time of her death in 1901, she ruled an empire whose scope had not been seen since the heyday of Rome. She gave her name to an age of astounding social, intellectual and political change. Yet even as she received the crown from William Howley, the 91st Archbishop of Canterbury, Victoria and her fellow aristocrats' place in society was already eroding.

By the midpoint of her reign in 1870, the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution push the aristocracy farther and farther toward the margins. Factories displace landed estates as the main generator of income, robbing the nobility of their traditional symbol of strength — the land. Medieval scenes of the all-powerful lord of the manor ruling iron-fisted over flocks of serfs are no more. The increase of property owners among the bourgeoisie leads to an influx of voters throughout the United Kingdom, thus diluting the nobles' traditional political power as representatives to national parliaments. Education opens to the middle class, affording their sons a chance at Oxford and Cambridge, or at least one of the many newer universities. The army, whose officers represent another bastion of aristocratic presence, is not spared transformation. Traditional military values of courage, loyalty and steadfastness — the pillars of the noble mindset — are supplanted by the bourgeois standbys of technical know-how, improvisation and enterprise.

The values of the Victorian age—progress, originality, risk-taking—are foreign to many aristocrats (though of course some of the great adventurers, explorers, inventors and other risk-takers of the day are also lords). Raised in an atmosphere of leisure and dilettantism, they have neither the experience nor the training to perceive the direction in which the world is moving. The lucky few adapt to the new age, and some even excel in their newfound talents. Most, however, do not.

and the like seem more appealing. Cities like Bath in Somerset have become social and recuperative centers for the well heeled. Yet low wages and scarce industry grip the majority of the south. East Anglia and the counties south of the Thames fare no better. The increased mobility of ordinary people taking leisure trips to the southern and eastern coastal cities offsets economic stagnation, but the impact is minimal. Moreover, the influx of strangers from London and other prosperous regions breeds culture shock between the Queen's rarified subjects and rough-hewn locals.

Farther north in Yorkshire and the counties bordering Scotland, isolated farmhouses and one-house estates eke out a basic subsistence on a brooding and desolate landscape. In Yorkshire, the abundance of coal and a busy ship-building industry help the standard of living, both as inexpensive fuel and as a bargaining chip for laborers, who are paid better to remain on the farm as incentive to dissuade them from going to work down the mines.

Glastonbury

The Winchester fief, which encompasses Bath, Glastonbury and Salisbury along with Winchester itself, has stood in perennial opposition to London for centuries, mainly due to the immense thaumaturgical nexus of Glastonbury Tor and its environs. (Mithras' lasting hatred for Tremere also encourages adversarial thinking on

the part of the Winchester and Glastonbury vampires.) The rise of spiritualism and the concomitant decline of organized religious authority play into the hands of the Tremere. The surge of interest among artists and scholars to recapture the mythic Arthurian past only enhances the importance of the region.

The number of mystical sites in and around Glastonbury is staggering. The Tor is the oldest and most famous, one of four hills jutting impressively from the otherwise flat plain that overlooks the town. The Tor, along with nearby Chalice and Wearyall Hills, comprise parts of an immense zodiac, 10 miles in diameter and 30 miles in circumference, that marks the landscape. (As the zodiac can only be seen from a height of at least 20,000 feet, it will be "hidden" from mortal eyes until 1927.) Out of the Tor's lower western slope thrusts the Living Rock, a megalith power stone that releases a mild electrical current to anyone who touches it. The Living Rock designates the site of the Tor Fair, which is rumored to be linked to Glastonbury's "Faery Fairs" where the (supposed) faerie folk gather.

Atop the Tor sits the remains of a castle built close to two thousand years ago. Legend holds it to be the old Celtic stronghold of Gwynn ap Nudd, the ruler of the underworld known as Annwn. Reachable by a seven-tiered ascending labyrinthine path, the castle was supposedly claimed by King Arthur, who made it his keep after journeying to Annwn to rescue Guinevere. Its

erstwhile owners notwithstanding, the castle atop the Tor remains a powerful thaumaturgical focus, one which the area's Tremere take great pains to guard in the hope that they might harness its energies. Such guardianship has gone to drastic lengths in centuries past. Upon the discovery of Arthur's grave in the 1100s, stones from the castle were used to build the Church of St. Michael atop the Tor. The church stood for a few years before an earthquake razed it in the 13th century. More than one Kindred puts the incident down to a group of Tremere mages causing the collapse.

The castle was further dismantled to build Glastonbury Abbey, which stood until Henry VIII closed it in 1539. The Abbey grounds contain several Christian sites, including the Chalice Well, the Pilgrim's Bath and the grotto at the White Spring, said to mark yet another entrance to the underworld. The legend of the Holy Grail centers on Glastonbury — Joseph of Arimathea reportedly buried the sacred cup on the grounds of the

later abbey. After the abbey's closure, the townspeople salvaged its stones to build many of the houses in Glastonbury proper. Amazingly to some, the Tremere allowed this use of the stones. In fact, over the years the magical energies therein have aided the area's Kindred in cowing the mortal population.

Now the renaissance in all things Arthurian has encouraged the Tremere-led primogen to enlarge the buffer between themselves and London. Primogen representatives travel to nearby Bath during the season and consult with other Kindred opposed to Lady Anne's position in London. Several Toreador, influenced by the writings of Tennyson, Swinburne, Rossetti and other Arthurophiles, express great interest in an alliance with the Glastonbury contingent. These Toreador and some of the Tremere also infiltrate many antiquarian societies, whose research into Britain's church architecture has led to several interesting discoveries in the sacred geometry of the region.

Ports: The Lifeblood of Civilization

The docks are the center of communication for any civilized nation. Britain runs her empire through ports like London, Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow. The trade and travelers flowing through are crucial to the flourishing of the empire. It's much the same in every other European nation and from the Americas to the Far East.

The ports are built and operated entirely by private companies, often to great profit. Government authority over the waterfront won't begin for decades yet, driven in large measure by the demands of twentieth-century wars.

London's docks, as suits a city that lies at the heart of the greatest empire the world has seen, handle more ships than most ports could conceive of: a staggering 2,000 or more ships heave to every year. The ships using the docks are split fairly evenly between great sailing ships, including the famous clippers which made the India run, and newfangled steam-driven boats. In London and some other particularly busy port cities, the congestion sometimes grows so great that boats must drop anchor offshore and wait for a few days for a dock to become free.

The larger ports, in particular those with rivers running through them, usually have passenger steamers working their way up and down the river too, meaning that the port has to cater to local as well as long-distance travelers.

The Waterfront by Day

A gentleman taking a daytime constitutional walk down to the local docks may find much to interest and amuse him. As he approaches the docks, he sees a veritable forest of masts rising above the surrounding buildings. Chimneys belch dark smoke into the air, while a multitude of flags of different nations flap in the breeze. Beneath them, great vaulted warehouses rise into the sky, dwarfing the smaller offices and dwellings around them.

Now the scent begins to assail his nostrils: wine and spices, sweat and wood smoke, animals and tobacco. The air is full of the sound of dozens of tongues, as sailors and travelers from all parts of the world mingle, talk and work.

As the gentleman enters the dock proper, he finds huge crates, barrels and containers strewn all around. The noise of sailors singing songs — some bawdy, some unusual and distinctly foreign — gives a musical

background to the general din. Chains clatter, ropes and anchors splash as they hit the water, and the orders of captains and foreman ring out clearly.

Most of the workers around the gentleman have been hired as casual labor, working by the day or even by the hour on specific jobs. Work goes through peaks and troughs and most laborers can expect long periods of unemployment. Few employers ask for any experience or qualifications, so plenty of competition always exists. That competition keeps wages down to pennies an hour.

Few of those working on the docks will ask the gentleman his business, merely try to get him out of the way of a crate coming down from a crane, a cart loaded with luggage coming up from behind him and other immediate distractions. In the general bustle, almost everyone will assume the gentleman has some legitimate business with someone else.

The Waterside by Night

A Kindred making that same constitutional by the light of the moon encounters a very different prospect. It is far quieter now, and the sounds of the waves lapping against the sides of the boats can heard clearly. Those workers with a steady income have retreated to their homes a decent distance away from the docks. The casual workers, most of whom live in the shabby dwellings that cluster tightly around the docks, are still very much in evidence, as are the visiting sailors.

The public houses are full of noise and light as seaman and dockhand alike seek to spend their earnings in as pleasant a manner as possible. This explains the presence of ladies whose affections are available for a few pennies. Men who choose not to indulge themselves in the pleasures of the flesh often choose fisticuffs instead; dockside brawls are common throughout the Victorian era.

The owners of the docks are partly to blame. Many of them pay their wages on Friday night in the local public houses, in the hope that the workers will drink away most of their wages before they even receive them. This brings the money straight back into the owners' pockets and keeps the men dependent on the dock companies for work. Not surprisingly, many of the workers' wives besiege those pubs, seeking to stop their feckless husbands from drinking away the week's food money.

The docks are not completely lawless. Most of the shipping companies and the dock owners employ their own security guards and police forces to keep order by both day and night. Of course, they focus on the security of the goods and vessels and not at all on the law of the land. Their job is not an easy one: the ships and warehouses full of goods from all corners of the empire and other foreign parts are tempting targets.

Cargo may lie unattended for days or even weeks while customs issues are resolved or outbound ships made seaworthy and crews recruited. These neglected cargoes look attractive to the local underworld, and most cities play host to one or more highly organized gangs of dock thieves. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, London-based shipping firms build the enclosed dock. Ships enter such a dock through a lock, so that the vessels can float on an even keel in deep water whatever the state of the tides. This speeds the process of loading and unloading, allowing the goods to move to and from the warehouse far more quickly. The large walls surrounding these docks deter all but the most determined gangs from attempting to raid the warehouses.

A gentleman of any wealth and standing would do well to avoid the area, or at the very least take care to disguise himself well as one of the lower classes. Should he travel through the docks without such a costume, he can expect to find himself set upon by ruffians and brigands and, if he is particularly unfortunate, greeting the dawn in a watery grave.

Many gentlemen travel there in groups, though, usually well protected by police officers. These slumming parties sometimes come with philanthropic intent, to ease the suffering of the poor and uneducated. More often, though, they come seeking tawdry entertainment with an element of risk. Many of the opium houses that prosper in the shadows of the docks hold refined gentlemen smoking alongside coarse, burly dockhands.

Scotland and Ireland

The Acts of Union (incorporating Scotland in 1707 and Ireland in 1800) do not sit well with large sections of the mortal populations; the Kindred populations, whose memories are far longer, regard the concurrent rise of the London fief as similarly unwelcome.

The landscape of both places shares a preternatural grandeur that the primness of the London cityscape cannot equal. Scotland's mountains, moors, roaring waterfalls and craggy outcroppings imbue the nation and its natives with a militant self-assuredness and a distrust of their genteel southern neighbors. To be sure, vampires native to Scotland retain the gruff, boisterous, violent nature that flourished in the mortal clans before the Highland clearances shattered their power and scattered their remnants. The rise of industry in Edinburgh and Glasgow attracts some enterprising Camarillans, but both cities' fiefs are rent by internal struggles resulting from their decline in the wake of union with England. As a Toreador stronghold of long standing, the Edinburgh fief is closely connected to some of London's very complex politics (see **London by Night** for details). The villages in the lowland south, as well as those in the mountainous north, contain few if any Kindred; they have surrendered much of the countryside to indigenous werewolves and other monsters of the wilderness.

The political atmosphere in the capital of Dublin, where Home Rule is the only issue that matters, galvanizes the Connachta fief, which considers itself historically to be the main antagonist of Mithras' court. The kine tug-of-war between unionists and Irish nationalists produces alternating feelings of elation, despair and violence, which the Kindred tap to their advantage and feed on as readily as they do vitae. The dynamic in the vast agrarian locales contrasts sharply. Here the influence of the Catholic Church, manifested in local priests and an abundance of "chapels" (an understatement for the imposing churches that dot the land), is ironclad among the faithful.

Dublin

Dublin sits on the bay of the Liffey River, which divides the capital into two halves; the city proper is bounded by the Circular Road. Twelve bridges cross the river, the main one being O'Connell Bridge, which connects Sackville Street (the city's main thoroughfare) with the major avenues in the southern part. On Sackville itself are the city's main hotels and the post office. The avenue's southern end is marked by the monument to the great Irish freedom fighter Daniel O'Connell, and its northern end spills into Rutland Square, home of the



Rotunda, a popular public house with several meeting rooms available well into the evening.

The banks of the Liffey feature several government buildings, including the prison, the royal barracks and the “Four Courts” complex, which houses law courts, the Board of Trade, the Local Government Board and other municipal headquarters. Many other government buildings, offices and suites around the city lie vacant after the divestiture of national authority. Kindred often use these places for meetings and “political societies” to plot Connachta-sanctioned intrigues against the London fief.

Dublin Castle sits south of the river on Westmoreland Street, fronting the city hall, and is where the Connachta fief is headquartered. Westmoreland also houses the Bank of Ireland and Trinity College, which houses a trove of ancient manuscripts, including the Book of Kells. To the west lies Phoenix Park, with the zoological gardens, the Hibernian military school and the “Fifteen Acres,” a natural amphitheater. Northward lie the botanical gardens, and to the south the suburb of Rathmines, the site of “Bloody Fields,” where English colonists were massacred by natives in 1209.

The capital of Ireland has not reaped the bounty of the 19th century. The transfer of power to London after the 1800 Act of Union sparked the decline, as hundreds of Irish government officials and their families abandoned those businesses that catered to the needs of national politics. Trade restrictions, alien rule, oppressive laws meted out to keep down an “inferior” population, religious strife and the great famine of 1845 accelerated the velocity of the fall, and now Dublin is one of the poorer “capitals” of Europe. The influence of the Connachta fief also withered in the wake of the transfer of mortal power. As Connachta lost sway, London benefited, a circumstance welcomed by none of the Brujah or Toreador who command the fief’s primogen. Yet even as Dublin’s economic fortunes dwindle, literature and the arts bloom. By the late 1890s the capital reaps the cultural wheat of Yeats, Joyce, O’Casey and other creative giants of Ireland.

While the Toreador might appreciate such literary output, it little ameliorates the real-world political situation. The anti-London zeal of Connachta’s Brujah has not gone unnoticed in London, and over the years representatives from the two fiefs have played political chess over their stature in the Court of Avalon. Kindred with influence in the press trade barbs back and forth, suffused in the vitriol over the Home Rule issue. Parliamentary bills are alternately passed and quashed, and political violence and assassination of key mortal allies heightens tensions between the two camps. Nerves are

frayed on both sides, and any thought of a peaceful, equitable settlement has long since disappeared.

Pronunciation Guide

Here is a rough guide to certain tricky names in this chapter, in order of appearance. The pronunciations here reflect relatively informed and clear speech and might change greatly in the mouth of a character with a thick regional accent, speech impediment or advanced stage of intoxication.

Mancunian: man-CUE-nee-an. (The Latinized adjective for all things Manchester.)

Celtic: KELL-tik. (Hard “k,” not like the basketball team.)

Gwynn ap Nudd: Gwinn uhp NOOTHE. (“Nudd” rhymes with “smooth.”)

Annwn: AHN-oon.

Eire: AIR.

Yeats: YATES. (Rhymes with “gates.”)

Isar: EE-sahr.

Frauenplatz: FROW-en-plahtz.

Landshut: LANZ-hoot.

Pontchartrain: PONE-shar-train.

Borgne: BORN.

Vieux Carré: vyoo kahr-AY. (“Vieux” sort of sounds like “view.”)

Place d’Armes: PLAGSS DARM.

Métis: may-TEE.

Riel: REE-el.

Caudillos: kau-DEE-yos.

Rua do Ouvidor: ROO-ah dough OOV-ee-dor.

Groote Schuur: GROHT-eh SHOOR. (“Schuur” pronounced like “sure,” if “sure” were a two-syllable word.)

Kiau-chau: kee-OW CHOW.

Wei-hai-wei: WAY-HIGH-WAY.

Maori: may-OR-ee.

Europe

While the United Kingdom remains the center of the late Victorian era, the islands themselves exist in a state of splendid isolation from the rest of Europe, cozily shielded from untoward happenings on the Continent. Much of significance across the social spectrum — military conflict, political upheaval, nationalistic activism and the like — is either muted or missed completely by

the majority of Britons. Many Kindred under the aegis of the Avalonian court, including the self-styled powerbrokers in London, deal with their Continental counterparts only when necessary, preferring to leave them to their own devices in facing the onslaught of the modern age.

For their part, the Kindred in Europe hardly appreciate the arm's-length approach of their British cousins. General opinion holds that, after a certain point, the more established generations of Kindred are all in it together, and it does no one any good for the Court of Avalon effectively to observe the fray bemusedly from a safe distance across the Channel.

The First Circle of Civilization

Life within the circle of nations closest to the United Kingdom resembles no period before it. The transformation of the political landscape, culminating in the creation of the German Empire in 1871, drastically shifts the balance of power. Diplomats envy and fear Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's unparalleled acumen in joining together no less than 3,000 different entities into a cohesive whole. Through a careful strategy of electoral maneuvering, parliamentary bullying and rally-around-the-flag warmongering, Bismarck has constructed a geopolitical force on the Continent poised to claim supremacy in all matters affecting Europe. Bolstered by the incredible scientific discoveries constantly pouring from the empire's factories and research institutions, German ingenuity and cleverness appear unstoppable.

Certainly the French, heretofore the dominant political voice in Europe, prove no match. Soundly thrashed by its neighbors to the east in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, France's star is definitely on the wane. German triumph shatters the birthplace of the Revolution of 1789 militarily and spiritually. Its technical backwardness exposed, France cedes the historically debated Alsace-Lorraine provinces to the victors. Blood spills freely during the Paris Commune of 1871; the resulting Third Republic expends its energies defending its legitimacy against all comers, most of them internal. Radicals gain ground and scandals blossom. The toxic atmosphere of the Dreyfus Affair grips the country in the 1890s and eventually emasculates the remnants of the army.

Switzerland and the Low Countries, for their part, play the role of cautious observers. Parliamentary democracy enjoys a relatively stable and well ordered accession in these countries. Universal manhood suffrage comes to Switzerland in 1874 and to Belgium and the Netherlands in the 1890s. While Switzerland practices true democracy (having modeled its 1848 constitution on that of the United States), the Low

Countries prefer constitutional monarchies, where royal wishes are communicated through prime ministers. The spread of voting rights erodes true kingly influence and moves these entities closer to workable democracy. Regardless, everyone keeps one eye on the not-so-subtle shoving match between Germany and France (and to a lesser extent England), as diplomatic niceties can do only so much.

Strasbourg

Alsace-Lorraine is an eternally disputed territory, passing from French to German control, and over and back again, in every European war worth mentioning. Strasbourg, the nominal capital of the region, has seen every bit of every battle, siege, handover and reclamation, and its Kindred have learned to take the constant back-and-forth with the proverbial enigmatic Gallic shrug that passes for comment on the ways of the world. Currently administered by a joint civil and military government reporting to Berlin, Strasbourg also houses a Catholic see and the headquarters of the 15th Corps of the German army. The city itself boasts redoubtable fortifications (its original planners not being complete fools) and hosts a garrison of more than 16,000 men of all arms, in place since the surrender in 1871.

Strasbourg retains much of its medieval character, with narrow, irregular streets running throughout the heart of town toward prominent buildings like Münster Cathedral and the Episcopal palace. Those edifices that were destroyed in the war are now being rebuilt and expanded. Strasbourg now boasts some of the finest examples of modern public architecture in Europe, including the new home for the University of Strasbourg and its technical colleges and faculties, the college observatory and the teaching hospitals on the south of the old town. The main occupations of Strasbourg have not changed since the Middle Ages. Tanning, brewing, winemaking and raising geese for *foie gras* are as profitable as ever and are complemented by modern production of steel goods, paper and furniture.

The city's position on the Rhine, and its connection by canals to the Rhone and Marne Rivers, keeps trade moving briskly. Strasbourg's real value, however, is its strategic position: on the border of France and Germany, a short trip downriver to Switzerland or upriver to the Low Countries. While the region is mostly German, the population does not appreciate the occupation — having suffered harsh exactions during the war, hard feelings run deep in the city and the province. While any real armed conflict between Kindred was minimized, the typically overofficial Prussian martial law makes coexistence among the clans an uneasy bargain.

Kindred regard Strasbourg as a convenient point of departure to practically anywhere in Western Europe, and the city's primogen are content to maintain the old garrison town as a free city for travelers with the ability to pay their way and the requisite brains not to cause trouble. Doing so under cover of a resented mortal rule, for some, is an ideal method of deflecting attention away from vampiric machinations. For others, it is existence on a knife's edge.

Munich

The Kindred of the old Holy Roman Empire are an historically stubborn and prideful lot. Believing themselves the inheritors of the ancient states of Charlemagne, they have not reacted well to the swiftness of Bismarckian unification. Gluing together a bewildering assortment of kingdoms, principalities, margravates, dukedoms and overgrown backyards into a functioning empire plays rather loose with delicacy, and more than one vampire's boundary has been violated in the quest for oneness. Kindred throughout the Kaiserreich plainly oppose the new arrangements, and none can match the fervor of denunciation coming from their counterparts in Munich.

Munich occupies an elevated plain on the Isar River, midway between Strasbourg and Vienna. The old town is laid out in a semicircle fronting the river, threaded with the usual unplanned narrow cobblestone streets, while the modern part of the city expands outward from the periphery. Munich itself is a work of art, its construction aping architecture from other countries and eras: a simple stroll through the city affords one a tour of the last two thousand years of human creativity. Rebuilding efforts have widened many streets, and along them sit palatial mansions and public buildings, as well as many gardens and parks, including the 600-acre Englischer Garten in the northwest. Two of the main streets, the Ludwigstrasse and the Maximilianstrasse, feature most of the signature churches, banks, government buildings and museums. Both streets empty into the center of the old town, near the Frauenplatz main square. The Bavarian national museum houses an immense scientific collection. The library owns more than one million volumes, and the University of Munich, which moved from Landshut in 1800, is one of the finest technical centers in Europe.

Unification went very badly for Munich and Bavaria. Restrictive anti-Catholic laws and policies enacted during the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s burdened the overwhelmingly Catholic province, making it a rallying point for anti-imperialist movements. Following the chancellor's lead, the prince of Berlin, Gustav Breidenstein, made a play to enlarge his own power base,

sending legates south to establish alliances against the Munich Kindred. Reacting, Kindred in the capital of old Bavaria have set themselves in square disagreement with Breidenstein. The primogen secretly dispatches representatives throughout southern Germany and into Austria, Switzerland and Italy to drum up allies against Breidenstein's all-encompassing rule, albeit with initially mixed results.

Munich's Kindred also engage in secret discussion with the leader of the Berlin opposition, the Malkavian Sophia Lustig, hoping to open a second front. Neither Berlin's nor Munich's Kindred delude themselves about the dearness of the stakes. Germany is amassing influence in political, scientific and economic spheres at an unnerving rate, and whoever controls Germany will find it laughably simple to direct the future of Western Europe.

The Second Circle

The nations of southern and eastern Europe continue along their largely agricultural focus, yet the lack of steam-powered industry does not preclude evolution in other realms. Nationalist movements spur political unification in Italy and Austria-Hungary, marshaling disparate ethnicities and regions under common states.

Statecraft of this nature finds antagonists in many corners. Ruling monarchs are loath to grant credence to nationalist movements, fearful of enfeebling their own power. Localized nationalities complain about their new (and often diminished) roles in the unified states. Czechs and Slovaks voice a desire for their own independent state based in the traditional region of Bohemia. Serbs, Croats and other southern Slavic groups are adamant in their discomfort with partitioning a single peninsula. Tsarist Russia, always searching to expand its political clout, sides openly with these "forgotten" groups, willing to play the role of an older sibling in supporting these regions' desire not to be ignored.

Russia's maneuvering is not without precedent. The aggregate power of the ruling monarchical dynasties shrinks from its height in the first half of the century, when the fall of Napoleon and the rise of the Congress of Vienna led to alliances among the monarchs of Europe to maintain stability and keep France from repeating the conquests of the *Grande Armée*. With more real power assumed by representative bodies, the royal families fall back on the old-fashioned way of cementing alliances: they marry them (or at least arrange for their children to do so).

Victoria herself leads the way. The "Grandmother of Europe" orchestrates the marriages of her children and

grandchildren to the ruling houses of Germany, Russia, Greece, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the former Bourbon-Orleans line of France. This intimate twist in European affairs often throws together Kindred from across Europe who normally have little reason to interact or hold common interests. The ensuing friction in granting leave to operate in one another's domains, or in extending hospitality to strangers with little knowledge of or regard for princes' laws, triggers universal suspicion.

Sevastopol

Famous primarily for its impregnability during one of the most famous battles of the Crimean War, Sevastopol remains Russia's central strategic port of contact with the rest of Europe. The estuary, situated among the chalk cliffs on the southwest coast of the Black Sea, is large enough to accommodate every single ship in all the navies of Europe — a situation not overlooked by those English, French and Turkish forces that laid siege to the town in 1855. Sevastopol withstood the siege, but the bombardment leveled a large section of the town, driving out the inhabitants and leaving only 14 buildings standing.

The tsar granted many privileges to encourage resettlement and reconstruction, but less than one eighth of the prewar citizenry returned to pick up the pieces. Kindred operating in the region leapt at the opportunity to increase their influence over the mostly deserted streets, lording the night over many half-brave, half-foolish souls who did venture back. The lack of vitae, however, became an acute problem; it was not long before a number of vampires commenced surgical strikes upon each other to winnow down the competition. Yet rebuilding and replenishment did occur, and Sevastopol is now one of the prime seaside towns in Europe, offering sea-bathing resorts and sanatoria for wealthy clients to relax and recharge on Russia's only warm-water port. Remade a naval arsenal in 1870 and recommissioned a military fortress in 1890, the town also houses a marine research institute and two navigation schools.

It also attracts its share of native Kindred, many of them Tzimisce and other Sabbat from around Eastern Europe who reject the cosmopolitan leanings of the imperial seat at St. Petersburg and harbor incalculable rage against several Camarilla clans for tagging along during the siege and moving unhindered about the town. Rumors of alliances with renegade Assamites in the Ottoman Empire swirl in the rarefied air of the most private spas (whose clients are anything but "curable"), and reports of Kindred meeting unpleasant ends while hoping for an impromptu Elysian experience increase in

frequency. The majority of western-based Kindred consider the possibility of Sabbat leaders opening a true eastern front from Sevastopol risible. Only a European-wide conflict could provide the cover for such an event coming to fruition. That, to many, is remote at best.

North America

For most Europeans, the New World is that place where everything is out of proportion, ungoverned and set irresponsibly loose. It's a land settled by sordid money-grubbers, fanatics and recently by the losers in various European social struggles. Nothing has a proper place to occupy, in part because its leaders are themselves unsound and given to sundry obsessions. For their part, even Americans who deplore untrammled social upheaval regard Europe as ossified and stagnant.

An American tradition of pulling pranks doesn't really help matters any. In a series of letters to the *Times* of London, Benjamin Franklin inserted deadpan jokes like "Ignorant People may object that the Upper Lakes are fresh, and that Cod and Whale are Salt-water Fish: But let them know, Sir, that Cod, like other Fish, when attacked by their Enemies, fly into any Water where they think they can be safest; that Whales, when they have a Mind to eat Cod, pursue them wherever they fly; and that the grand Leap of the Whale in that Chace up the Fall of Niagara is esteemed by all who have seen it, as one of the finest Spectacles in Nature!" More recently, essayists like Mark Twain have folded together genuine journalism with straight-faced satire, and when they write about a continent with as many genuine mysteries and marvels as the New World, it's hard to tell the jokes from the serious passages.

European dignitaries regard the authors of such works and the authorities who praise them as unreliable. Americans generally take this lack of respect as a goad to demonstrate their achievements all the more, to prove the Old World wrong in its ancient assumptions.

The United States

The United States endures a fitful recovery. Still grievously wounded from the carnage of the Civil War (which afforded untold occasions for pockets of Camarilla and Sabbat to settle scores from back in the Old World), the healing process has produced deep and unsightly scars. Beginning with Lincoln's assassination immediately after the Confederacy's surrender, it was clear that many in the South were not going to accept the postbellum arrangements peaceably or willingly. The legacy of Reconstruction and the detritus left by legions of

carpetbaggers hardly helps matters. Military governments, loyalty oaths, political confusion and social resentment make for a hard peace between the formerly warring sides.

Yet the promise of rebirth enraptures the nation. With a succession of eminently forgettable presidents, risk-taking businessmen and entrepreneurs wield true power. Settlements out west, bolstered by a railroad boom that dwarfs the European system, attract people seeking to restart their lives after the war's maelstrom. The population increases by half, totaling 75 million people by 1900, all driven by dreams of comfort and prosperity.

Fulfilling such dreams, however, remains elusive. The scope of industry has not bettered conditions for workers in America any more than in Europe; life at work and home has not sloughed off the patina of misery that so often attaches to the laboring class. Freedmen in the South find little respite under the erratic sharecropping system. Poverty, social inferiority and constant suspicion and violence from lynch mobs and the Ku Klux Klan are undivorceable from daily life. Immigrants pour into Eastern ports seeking their fortunes, only to find themselves unemployed, disconnected and ghettoized from the citizenry. The West suffers, too. Once-thriving boomtowns bust as mines and wells play out, and overspeculation in the railroad industry leaves tracks running to places no one cares to go. Cynical treaties with Indian tribes are routinely broken as each side trades massacres with the other. Drifters and bandits roam aimlessly from town to town, terrorizing settlers and travelers. The "American dream," concentrated in the enlargement of wealth and capital, is attainable by only a select few. For the rest, it is a dream in name only. For others still — for those who know how to manipulate circumstances to their advantage — the dream is as alive as ever. Especially for Kindred.

New Orleans

Located just upstream from the mouth of the Mississippi River, New Orleans is like no other city in the United States. Topographically isolated by the river and Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne, New Orleans charms persons of all backgrounds. The city is the most distinctive portal to the North American continent, intermingling French, Spaniards, Cubans, Irish, Germans, Greeks, Croatians, freed slaves, local Indians and Creoles. Originally a colonial outpost both for the French and Spanish, New Orleans quickly became a leading commercial port, emerging as the South's chief cotton and slave market during the first half of the century. Even then, the city retained its communal quirks, and such

individuality has only intensified at the close of the century.

New Orleans is electric with activity. The Vieux Carré — the old rectangle demarcating the original city walls — abuts both the modern commercial center of the American Quarter to the southwest and the ageless wonder of the French Quarter to the northeast. Canal Street, the main boulevard in the American Quarter, is the center of retail and street life in New Orleans, housing the various mercantile exchanges, the Customs House and a number of gentlemen's clubs. Lafayette Square, just off Canal, fronts City Hall, the Post Office, the Old Fellows' Hall and the churches of St. Patrick's and First Presbyterian.

The French Quarter, though, is New Orleans, home of Mardi Gras and the year-round carnivals that fill the city with its devil-may-care character. Here the bulk of Kindred establish themselves, partaking of the unfettered nocturnal vice when not slumbering in aboveground mausolea in the city's many cemeteries. The Spanish colonial architecture dominates the Quarter, cutting lush figures with its stucco façades, huge wrought iron gates and fences, imposing arches and balconies, opulent fountains and statues festooned with unruly vines and drooping foliage. Wide avenues and dusty quadrangles recall the heyday of colonial governance, especially at Jackson Square, the old parade ground in the Quarter. Known also as the Place d'Armes, Jackson Square was the public agora during colonial rule; it now functions as a sort of Elysium for Kindred to meet and pass information among one another free from possible reprisal. St. Louis Cathedral sits on the square, flanked by the Calaboose and Cabildo, the old Spanish government houses that are now law courts.

Other landmarks along the Vieux Carré include Beauregard Square, the former site of New Orleans' slave auctions, and the former Hotel St. Louis, rebuilt as the Hotel Royal in 1884, which was the site of the former Reconstruction government of Louisiana. Some hold-over Kindred who came with the carpetbaggers still use the hotel as a base of operations, although they are about half as welcome as the Yankees were. The military government during Reconstruction, headed by Union General Benjamin Butler, cultivated resentment among many in the city, and the punitive measures affected Kindred as well. Butler's administration left little room for the vampiric element to maneuver without attracting attention from the exacting general. Though it is doubtful that Butler discerned the Kindred's existence, he damn well knew unrest when he saw it and was determined to have none of it under his watch.



The end of Reconstruction in 1877 loosened the restrictions on the city, but it left a contingent of interloper Kindred from the North, who having tasted the heady draught of power in New Orleans are eager to savor its bouquet a while longer. Concentrated in the American Quarter and operating out of the venerable St. Charles Hotel, these Kindred (mostly Ventrue) hope to bring the more modern neighborhoods of the city under their dominion, leaving the French Quarter and the older colonial sections to the native, albeit bizarre, Kindred. At first, comity was grudgingly accepted; the Toreador prince exercised an uncharacteristic episode of goodwill by allowing one representative into the primogen council with a sort of minister-without-portfolio status. Lately, though, the Northern upstarts have used the city's role as a port of entry to bring a contingent of Giovanni merchants and necromancers from the Old World, hoping to gain useful allies against the primogen. The turning point came in 1890, with the murder of a New Orleans police superintendent by a gang of Sicilian immigrants — the resulting anti-Italian feelings among the population look to be just the thing for the primogen to make a significant move against the Ventrue-Giovanni coalition in one fell swoop. Of course, the Giovanni didn't get where they are today by being pushovers, and they don't plan on vacating their position without a big, bloody, costly fight.

Canada

In 1880 Canada is scarcely a dozen years old, having been granted dominion status by the Queen. As a dominion, Canada makes its own law while retaining allegiance to the mother country. This status — the first of its kind in the British Empire — places the True North in an awkward position regarding its own identity. United by one constitution under the British North America Act of 1867, Canada still fends off undue influence from the United States and struggles to hold the several provinces together in its own right.

The internal dynamic of Canada in the latter part of the century does not resemble that of a stable and content political entity. Several distinct communities exist in the provinces, each with strident views as to their relative worth in the confederation. Québec, the only non-British province in the country, vociferously guards its peculiar French Catholic culture from encroaching waves of British and Irish immigrants. The Maritime Provinces in the east — New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island — fret about their potential isolation; it was only the promise of a railway system connecting them with the metropolises of Montreal and

Toronto that cajoled the Maritimes into joining the confederation. Ontario, the largest and most modern province, arrogantly opposes Québec on practically every matter. Manitoba remains mostly desolate, and British Columbia on the Pacific coast, separated by the vast western territories, may as well be on another planet.

The railroad makes true unity possible. The Canadian Pacific Railway, opened in 1885, connects the provinces with Ottawa; it alone can shuttle members of Parliament to the capital. The railway symbolizes progress and civilization across the immense prairies and forests, transporting freight and people into the uncharted regions. Lesser railways branch off the CP, funneling optimistic settlers into newly carved farmlands and logging and mining communities. Canada enjoys a small economic boom during this time, with towns flourishing along the CP line. Toronto, Montreal and the other major cities explode in population as immigrants fill the streets.

Success exacts a price, though: increased settlements in the interior run afoul of the many native tribes in the vast western territories. Sporadic fights between natives and settlers culminate in the North West Rebellion of 1885, when the native Métis leader Louis Riel forms an illegal provisional government in what will later become Saskatchewan. Riel and his followers trade surgical strikes with Mounties and volunteers throughout southern Saskatchewan until a federal force arrives and finally captures Riel, who is tried for treason under an obscure 500-year-old English law and hanged soon after.

Kindred weigh their prospects carefully in Canada. While the lure of hegemony over small bands of settlers is strong, the perils of an existence in isolation cannot be shunted aside. The wilderness — which encompasses, essentially, everything more than 190 miles north of the U.S. border — teems with native werewolves who, already threatened by the influx of railroads and settlers into their pristine realms, are more than willing to loose their rage upon the vampire who takes a haven someplace he oughtn't. Moreover, while towns grow in certain regions of the west, the bulk of the population migrates to the major cities: Toronto and Montreal in the east, Winnipeg and Vancouver in the west. Thus the rural populace depletes, and to maintain any semblance of power or regular store of vitae, Kindred follow the human movements into the burgeoning urban centers — sacrificing their hopes of calm, undisturbed havens for another round of lethal competition with the other vampires prowling the cities.

Toronto

Toronto, one of the largest and most influential cities in the dominion, sits on the northern shore of Lake Ontario, almost dead north from Niagara Falls. Toronto is the seat of government for the province of Ontario, containing the parliament buildings and law courts, as well as the prestigious University of Toronto, famous for exemplary faculties in arts, sciences and medicine. The city itself is mainly residential, with most of the population enjoying a bit of elbow room along relatively uncramped streets. Consequently the city is widespread, with many parks and secluded green spaces scattered throughout the municipality.

Toronto is the center of a vast agricultural community in southern Ontario, which accounts for many of the nonmanufacturing goods that the city exports to the other provinces and south of the border. It is the business and commercial center of the fledgling nation; five branches of regional railways emanate from the city, following the St. Lawrence River east and roughly skirting the Great Lakes to the west and into Manitoba. The Canadian Pacific, however, is not one of the five. Being a Montreal-funded enterprise, the CP connects only to Ottawa, bypassing Toronto completely — a fact that infuriates Torontonians to no end. The Kindred in Toronto view this arrangement exactly as do the city's business and political leaders — as a deliberate slap in the face from the Québécois, with Ottawa as a willing pawn. The majority of Toronto's Kindred, as befits their regional nature, loathe the Montreal sects with a white-hot intensity. Convinced that the lot of transplanted self-important Frenchies wield unwarranted authority over dominion politics, the Toronto primogen are determined to position themselves, through their business and political connections, as the sole power in the developed provinces.

México

Freshly independent from Spain in 1823, México lost half of her territory — Texas, California, Arizona and New Mexico — to the United States in the Mexican War in 1848. Compounding this national shame, México's ineffectual leaders borrowed huge amounts of money from European banks at disastrous terms. When the government defaulted, a combined armed force from Britain, France and Spain launched an invasion in 1861 to seize México's ports and force repayment. France took the matter a step further. Emperor Napoléon III schemed to establish a French capital with his brother-in-law, the Austrian archduke Maximilian, as a figurehead ruler. Maximilian was executed several years later, but then



the United States turned its gaze southward. Relying on the Monroe Doctrine to keep European colonization out of México, the U.S. flexed its muscles in the region and became the Colossus of the North, a lurking menace ready to descend on the fragile and battered nation. Within México, chaos and corruption reigned. Rival political leaders exacted tribute from citizens and foreigners, and local authorities allowed robbers and murderers free rein.

In 1876, an innkeeper's son named Porfirio Diaz took power, determined to restore order. He did so ruthlessly. Diaz has quelled the criminal elements, doused the flames of civil strife and rescued the economy from near bankruptcy. He rules with a piercing understanding of the hostility among the different ethnicities and classes in the country, and a willingness to juggle tact and mercilessness in maintaining stability. Diaz had his start under President Benito Juarez, an educated Indian who managed to rise to power in the face of very common bigotry and persecution, and whose lasting legacy to México is the separation of church and state (a change that upset many Kindred schemes along with mortal plans). Diaz has preserved that legacy along with his own innovations.

Diaz enlists bandits as *rurales*, or local law officers, to kill one another with the blessing and encouragement of the federal government. He arranges executions of criminal leaders, staging them as failed escape attempts from prison, and he reappoints rival cabinet members as the governors of hell-and-gone states. Diaz balances the tensions between Spanish Mexicans, half-caste mestizos and native Indian tribes with an eerily disarming nature, issuing orders in a calm and level, but always final, tone of voice. It is this relentless absolutism that characterizes México, truly a one-man state.

Mexico City

Diaz himself took Mexico City from Maximilian in 1867, driving foreign influence out of the country for good. Like its deliberate ruler, Mexico City itself is meticulously laid out, compact and almost exactly oriented with the main points on the compass. It is said to have close to 900 streets and alleys, but this is primarily due to the habit of renaming streets every block. The city's amenities are quite modern, with stone- and asphalt-paved roads and both electric and gas lighting in most areas. The arrival of electricity has encouraged a large number of industries to establish themselves in the capital and its outskirts. Power plants, in fact, are the crucial elements in México's prosperity, running the 155 factories and manufacturing houses.

Plazas dominate the landscape and front the central buildings. The main square, the Plaza Mayor, contains Diaz's national palace, the city cathedral and the mayoral palace. The principal commercial street, Silversmiths' Alley, runs west from the plaza to the Alameda public gardens, a 40-acre plot built on the site of the old Aztec market and execution spot, and the site of the country's first *auto-da-fé* in 1574. The Plaza de Santo Domingo contains the old convent and church of Santo Domingo, and the School of Medicine, which stands on the former headquarters of the court of the Inquisition. It is a building avoided by most Kindred — rumors circulate that an underground sect of Inquisitors based out of the nearby Jesuit church is planning a new wave of hunts.

If so, they have their work cut out for them. War fever simmers among Mexico City's Kindred. The generations-old crime and corruption have allowed a party of Sabbat vampires to infiltrate the capital. Exploiting the lack of Camarilla support on the heels of Maximilian's overthrow, a number of Lasombra thrive in the shadows of Diaz's iron rule, sending pockets of Brujah *antitribu* (whom they reimburse quite handsomely with vitae from the poorer Indian populations on the city's outskirts) to tangle with the once-dominant European Kindred. Whispers about one of the Lasombra actually Embracing Diaz are received warily by both Kindred and the Inquisitors. The idea of that pitiless sanguinary bastard in charge is bad enough; the thought of him sporting advanced levels of Obtenebration is too ghastly for either group to contemplate.

South America

North America caters to the more casually disposed breed of Kindred. Not every vampire who traverses the Atlantic cares to put roots down in the land of the Pilgrims. For every boatload of undead arriving in New York or Newfoundland, just as many decide to go south, eschewing the democracy, vulgarity and coarse manners of North American society for somewhere more refined. After all, just because one relinquishes his former haven does not mean that he has to relinquish his sense of decorum.

While North American society rejects the rigid European mores, the countries of South America are more receptive to those ideas of hierarchy and respect that define the Victorian world. Indeed, Old World tradition has been a central pillar of South American society since the days of the conquistadors. Kindred trailed behind the Spanish and Portuguese conquests, nourishing themselves on the fringes of mortals' pursuit of gold, raw materials, slaves, Christian converts and the

Fountain of Youth. The overwhelming imperial presence shaped the social institutions along decidedly European lines, and pivotal Kindred exercised disproportionate power over the native populations.

By the beginning of the 19th century, those selfsame natives, buoyed by the successes of the American and French Revolutions, struck out against their imperial overlords. The collective Wars of Independence flared up in every colony on the continent. Spain and Portugal, forbidden by the Monroe Doctrine from interfering in the Americas, could not quell the uprisings. By 1831, the whole of South America was made up of independent republics.

Far from panicking, perceptive Kindred see a throng of opportunities in the new postcolonial arrangements. Independence does not guarantee stability, and those revolutionaries who threw off the yoke of centuries-old conquest find themselves adrift in a sea of unintended consequences. *Caudillos* — military adventurers and their cliques — occupy shaky positions of leadership in the new republics, operating more from a constant desire to postpone their inevitable deposal than from any affinity for statecraft. Urban agitators find it impossible to control their followers once freedom from colonial rule is achieved. Order is preserved at gunpoint and is often accompanied by preemptive butchery of the indigenous populations — in case they too fantasize about independence.

Into such chaotic circumstances step the tried and true forces. The church, foreign developers and immigrants from the former colonial powers prop up authoritarian regimes and ingratiate their way to the top of the social ladder. By the end of the century, the countries of South America regain a significantly European flavor in the major cities. Every new nation still has something to offer, be it mineral wealth, cheap labor or elevated status for foreign arrivals and their deep pockets.

Kindred from every clan and no clan pursue their own activities. Tremere search the lost cities of the Amazon and Incan ruins, looking to tap into the rituals of tribal sorceries. Lasombra inveigle themselves into positions in the church and large estates in Argentina and Brazil, sating their own megalomaniacs. Brujah continue to stir up trouble among the radicals. Insufferable Malkavians linger on the fringes of junta politics and languish forgotten in the bowels of prisons. Toreador and Tzimisce compete to see who can get the most out of Carnival. For Kindred, this part of the New World is much like the Old, only run better — at any rate, better for their purposes.

Buenos Aires

Few places in South America cling as tenaciously to the grandeur of the great European capitals as Buenos Aires. The capital of the Argentine republic has grown impressively since independence came in 1810, although the jumbled organization of the more recent suburbs tellingly contrasts with the older and more carefully planned city center. Foreigners and rural Argentines flock to Buenos Aires in considerable numbers; the 1895 census counts more than 600,000 people, which easily dwarfs every other city in South America. Besides acting as the seat of government for the republic, Buenos Aires is also Argentina's manufacturing center, featuring thousands of industrial establishments that total hundreds of millions of dollars in capital and profits. Several Ventrue with connections to European shipping and manufacturing concerns have their hands in more than one large concern.

With such an embarrassment of riches, Buenos Aires attracts the largest percentage of foreign money and visitors, and the layout of the city strives to make such visitors comfortable. The architecture, for many years reflecting the city's Spanish colonial roots, has expanded and modified in style; now the capital sports many costly and attractive public buildings and monuments. The main concentration of foreign wealth resides along Avenida Alvear and Avenida Mayo, where the elegance of private residences and the elaborate ornamentation of public edifices take their cues from the great capitals of Europe. As in most cities of Mediterranean origin, plazas and parks are plentiful, particularly the 840-acre 3 de Febrero Park, commemorating the 1852 Battle of Monte Caseros that drove the dictator Juan Manuel Rosas from power and broke the hold of the *gaucho* ranchers over Argentine politics. Art, music, theater and equestrian pursuits thrive in the rich and stately atmosphere, captivating both foreigners and the city's Toreador contingent.

This splendor masks a sensitive political situation. The metropolis has been plagued with military skirmishes over its place in the republic. It becomes an independent city in 1880, detached from the province of Buenos Aires (much like Washington, D.C. is detached from Virginia and Maryland) after army head General Roca captures it from the municipal defense militia. Roca assumes the presidency soon after, and while he is successful in putting down borderland uprisings, the determination of the outlying provinces to curtail Buenos Aires' power leads to his defeat in 1886.

Roca's successors prove ineffectual in comparison; each administration is in the pocket of a different special-interest cabal, be it a league of provincial governments, a cartel of native businessmen or a direc-

torate of foreign plutocrats. The carousel-like nature of presidential administrations, punctuated by pitched battles between government troops and homegrown mercenary squads, habitually obstructs the smooth flow of business and commerce throughout the country. Lasombra seize upon this, underwriting groups and funneling materiel to dummy organizations to foment unrest and disrupt several of the more influential international concerns. Argentina's resources are depleting in the hands of corrupt governments, and several potent members of the Camarilla are making noises about sending in gangs of shock troops to wage a full-out nocturnal war against the Sabbat-subsidized troublemakers.

Rio de Janeiro

It is curious that Brazil, the largest country in South America, was colonized by diminutive Portugal, itself often minimized by its neighbor on the Iberian peninsula. Such a curiosity scarcely troubles the city's inhabitants. Rio's citizens take pride in their city's peculiar role as the foil to other capitals — Buenos Aires in particular — and are passionate in sustaining their distinctive status.

For passion, in all its forms, is Rio's lifeblood. Extravagance is the rule, from the thick and bountiful vegetation draping the Serra de Carioca mountains northwest of the city, to the picturesque valleys dotted with splendid suburban dwellings within the municipal boundaries. As with Buenos Aires, the center grid of Rio de Janeiro is laid out with precision, but a century of growth resulted in suburbs erected independently of one another and the older city, with ramrod-straight avenues crisscrossing boulevards that meander through the valleys or along the main bay.

Rio's bay and port are the largest in the country — like Sevastopol, deep and large enough to hold the world's navies — and feature numerous commercial quays for shipping companies and rail and tram connections to all parts of the capital and beyond. The waterfront abounds with activity, from larger commercial ventures to "independent" operators to ordinary citizens promenading down the Avenida Beira-Mar between the Passeo Publico gardens and the Saude waterfront. For activity, the waterfront stands second only to the Rua do Ouvidor, the most famous street in the old city, which houses shops, cafes and newspaper offices. The street plays an integral part in the social and political life of the city: here a Rio citizen can toy with the great issues of the day while watching the world itself, natives and foreigners alike, wander by.

Tempers can flare in such discussions, and not without reason. Rio's climate is hot and debilitatingly humid,

and it overcomes many European visitors. While Kindred themselves are not normally affected by climate, the unrelenting, oppressive nature of the environment affects those on whom they feed. More than one newcomer from the Old World discovers adjusting to the humors churning in the constitutions of the populace to be an unpleasant shock. Acclimated Kindred count on this and stand ready to exploit the newcomers' conditions, particularly if they are enemies just arrived from Europe.

The situation among the vampiric population is not as brittle as in Buenos Aires, but that does not mean that conflict is altogether unknown. Rio, and Brazil in general, struggles to maintain its separate character from the rest of Spanish South America, forming early alliances with Britain during the Napoleonic Era to safeguard its trading roots and ensure protection for the Portuguese royal family fleeing the Grande Armée. Toreador connected to the Portuguese court extracted assistance from their counterparts in Mithras' domain and have affirmed an unspoken alliance between clan members in Rio and London — an asset to the Toreador in their working truce with the Lasombra.

For their part, the Lasombra have characteristically pulled crucial strings in the city's recent history. Certain Keepers reportedly take instrumental roles in Marshal Fonseca's military uprising of 1889, which banishes Emperor Dom Pedro II and his family to France and establishes the Brazilian republic. Whether this is the garden-variety cynical maneuver of Lasombra kingmakers or calculated revenge for the 1888 "Golden Law" that abolished slavery without compensating slave owners (thus wiping out a good deal of free labor for Lasombra rooted in the sugar and coffee plantations) matters little in the current situation. (Nor does it actually matter if the real Lasombra involvement was marginal or nonexistent, if their rivals believe that the Lasombra have enough power to influence events.) What does matter is that Rio enjoys a wary truce between Camarilla and Sabbat factions, a truce that merely needs one liberty too many taken during Carnival to explode. Liberty remains one thing that is always freely taken in a place like Rio.

Africa

By no means are all Kindred ignorant of the African continent. The southern coast of the ancient Mediterranean world was home to Setites in Egypt and Brujah in old Carthage, and subsequent arrivals of Romans, Moslems and Crusaders introduced many more children of Caine to the region. Yet as with mortal Europeans, the endless interior of Africa retained its mysteriousness for centuries. Few kine ventured deeply into the bowels of

the continent; traders in gold, ivory and slaves contented themselves with establishing coastal bases and waiting for native middlemen to deliver the goods to them. Kindred, for the most part, had even less use for whatever secrets the heart of Africa might have offered, being thoroughly occupied with keeping hold of their European demesnes.

The progressive nature of the Victorian era has reformed such outlooks. Confidence bordering on arrogance in European technological and cultural superiority blossoms during the later Victorian decades. The “white man’s burden,” a half-skeptical gesture of magnanimity that inspires Europeans to bring modernity and social maturity to the “backward” races of the Dark Continent, courses through the intellectual debates of the day. Private and public “colonial societies” form. Explorers make the rounds on the European lecture circuit and speak to packed audiences about the wonder and limitless potential that Africa holds.

The zeal of colonization intensifies at the tail end of the century. Visions of unmined ores and gems, of unclaimed raw resources, of continental railways and properly educated native allies dance provocatively through the European consciousness. Nations send official representatives up and down the coast and into the deepest part of the continent to obtain choice lands. Adventurous Kindred, both independent and clan-sanctioned, follow in the footsteps of these colonial pioneers, penetrating into innermost Africa in search of new domains, powers and stores of vitae. Tremere seek the intricacies of native shamanisms. Ventrue and Giovanni move to control the trade routes in gold, diamonds and rubber. Gangrel revel in the richness of the untrammelled landscapes, and Nosferatu seek the legendary sources of ancient civilizations.

The enterprise comes easily at first for vampiric travelers. Camarilla civilization, embodied in the Six Traditions, becomes the standard of decorum to impart on willing allies. The clans conclude that their noble and ancient lineages as the rightful descendants of Caine bestow them with the unquestioned authority to Embrace and subjugate Africans in their purview lest the uncivilized masses fall further into savagery at the hands of the Sabbat. Such an undertaking, though, often encounters difficulties. Clan representatives and independents regularly interfere in one another’s missions. In their determination to obtain larger and larger power bases, differing vampires pit their just-contracted allies against one another in proxy wars for control of territory and the land’s bounty.

By the mid-1880s it is clear that some ground rules are needed. Influential Kindred observe the agreements

reached at the 1885 Berlin Conference, wherein the nations of Europe pledged to stay out of one another’s way on the African continent. Taking Berlin as their cue, respected elders make the rounds to domains throughout Europe. Holding the Berlin agreements up as an example of mutual cooperation, these forward-thinking vampires lobby princes of the great European capitals to make similar arrangements with one another. Infighting in the European theater, they say, reflects badly enough on the Camarilla; infighting in an unfamiliar landscape (what with the already growing Sabbat presence) almost guarantees failure.

Eventually the princes relent, making unwritten pacts with one another. Ostensibly overseen by the Camarilla’s inner circle, Europe’s princes set mutual limits on the amounts of havens and Elysiums, outline quotas for Embracing natives and thrash out rough principles of mutual defense against the Sabbat.

In practice, these interclan concords function true to form. That is, they don’t. Clan leaders pay lip service to the ideas while giving their underlings permission to move unrestrained throughout the continent. Ambitious colonizers found new domains, some of them encompassing hundreds of square miles, and keep the subject peoples docile with cavalier brutishness. Independent explorers remain untouched by the pacts, hiring themselves out as mercenary “caretakers” of remote regions. Those Kindred who reap profits from gold, ivory and diamonds guard their concerns with peerless ferocity. For Kindred, the “Scramble for Africa” more than earns its name. The continent acts as both playground and battleground, in a disorganized and frantic zero-sum exercise where power, wealth and vitae drive its participants to unfathomed depths of ruthlessness.

Cape Town

The capital of the Cape Colony — British South Africa — baldly illustrates the frictions of internecine warfare among the Kindred. Located on the southwest tip of the continent, almost one thousand miles from Johannesburg, Cape Town is a truly heterogeneous place, where British administrators, native blacks and foreign interlopers grind against one another under a thick atmosphere of heat and paranoia.

Originally settled by the Dutch, Cape Town now operates firmly under British rule. All of the former instances of Low Country presence have disappeared, and older architectural styles and avenues have been ripped out and rebuilt to English designs and specifications. The authority of those Ventrue colonizers sent to Cape Town under the aegis of the Amsterdam prince Johannes Castelein has noticeably waned in turn. The

sheer distance of the colony from Castelein's reach is the primary factor for this. Attempting to echo the Amsterdam set-up of separate pockets of authority over the myriad of cultures in the city, Castelein's representative stretched their power alarmingly thin. The discovery of diamonds in the Kimberley region in 1869 attracted a force from the Court of Avalon, determined to take control of the "Big Hole," the enormous crater from which the stones were mined.

Called the "Kimberley Nine," this Avalonian contingent scythed through Cape Town. Isolating neighborhoods throughout the city, Mithras' gang picked off Castelein's people one by one, corrupting their allies with promises of wealth from Kimberley. No quarter was given. Hidden by the remote location, the Avalon Kindred committed untrammelled diablerie on the vulnerable Dutch princes. Halted only by a decree from the Camarilla's inner circle, the Kimberley Nine assumed virtual domination over Cape Town. The Dutch Kindred were driven into a sort of rump domain within the capital, soundly defeated but by no means utterly destroyed.

The rump domain generally covers the neighborhood of Greenmarket Square in the city, the center of town during the Dutch period and, for the remnants of Castelein's legation who shelter under the old town hall, the least Anglicized part of town. The domain lies close to Government Avenue, one of Cape Town's two major thoroughfares, whereon the colony's Houses of Parliament, Government House, library, museum and botanical gardens are located.

Despite the proximity of mortal authority along Government Avenue, the British Kindred choose to base themselves farther down the boulevard, where Government Avenue becomes Adderley Street and leads to the railway station and the bay. At the head of the bay sits the old Dutch castle, erected in the 17th century. The Kimberley Nine headquarter here, as per Mithras' standing orders. Although the current prince is an original member of the Nine, some of them have been rotated to other British colonies as enforcers, being replaced as necessary from London.

To the west of the castle lies the Parade Ground, a large oblong space occasionally used by the prince as a combat arena for settling disputes, or in extreme cases as an execution yard. Less than a mile from the railway station is Groote Schuur, a sprawling Dutch country house occupied by the titular founder of the modern Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes.

The scope of Rhodes' power in Cape Town, and over southern Africa in general, stuns even the Kindred. His personal worth, drawn from his ownership of the DeBeers

diamond mines and Consolidated Goldfields Limited, is almost immeasurable. Maneuvering himself into the premiership of the Cape Colony in 1890, Rhodes immediately set all his efforts on destroying the Dutch colony at Transvaal to the east. Worries in the Colonial Office back in London about the growing status of Johannesburg fuel Rhodes' ambition to make his city the true power in South Africa. This culminates in the disastrous Jameson raid in 1895, a botched guerrilla invasion of the Transvaal that ultimately leads to his fall from power.

Rhodes' disgrace creates a vacuum within Cape Town, over which the Kimberley Nine and the Dutch rump legation struggle nightly. Apart from being the colonial capital, Cape Town holds the monopoly on passenger traffic between the Colony and the United Kingdom, and the Dutch know that reclaiming the town would bring absolute Amsterdam-led control to the southern tip of the continent. With thousands of foreigners (including fortune-hunting Kindred from all over Europe) descending on South Africa seeking their personal swag, it becomes increasingly challenging for the Nine to weed out possible enemy agents or interlocutors with the rump domain. The vast and colorful Malay population, which clusters along the market stalls on Plein Street south of the Parade Ground, presents an additional wrinkle; more than once have Kindred from this former Dutch colony in Asia been caught spying for the prince of Johannesburg.

The situation is presently at its lowest ebb. Both princes have passed a series of decrees that preclude any attempt at peaceful coexistence. Any Kindred found in the wrong domain at the wrong time receives a quick interrogation and banishment to parts unknown or, more likely, a speedy destruction. This standing summary refusal of the Fifth Tradition chills many Kindred back in the mother country, but few are willing or energetic enough to challenge what has evolved into the status quo in Cape Town. To those Kindred determined to wrest South Africa from their Dutch adversaries, a violation of the Traditions here and there is a small price to pay.

Asia

The Kindred presence in Asia has been sporadic and rare. Impressions of Asian vampires are all of a piece: Cathayans are inscrutable and unpredictable, grounded in a time and place far removed from anything the average Cainite can comprehend. It takes Kindred of singular resoluteness and patience — of which precious few have appeared over the centuries — to delve into Cathayan society and emerge with even mild acceptance

from the indigenous supernaturals. Those Kindred who parted the Eastern veil started early; the Passaglia merchant family, a subset of Giovanni who arrived with Marco Polo's expedition, remains the classic example. The Passaglia (and the Giovanni in general) regard their independence from the Camarilla as the core of their Asian success. To them, the thought of the Camarilla clans tripping over one another to organize a concerted Asian incursion would be comical, if it weren't so utterly pitiful.

Of course, that hardly stops the colonial juggernaut. Unwilling to forsake the enormous untapped markets, Europeans bargain, insinuate and battle their way into the Orient in the beginning half of the 19th century. British victory over China in the Opium War secures a foothold in Shanghai and dominion over Hong Kong, with agreements that Britons would be free from prosecution under Chinese law in these locales. The rest of Europe follows suit, and by 1861 19 "treaty ports" are established along the Chinese coast. The Russian empire seizes the northern Ili Valley in the 1870s, and France and Britain appropriate Indochina and Burma respectively in 1886. European delegations station several naval bases in China — Russia at Port Arthur, Germany at Kiau-chau, Britain at Wei-hai-wei, and France at Canton Bay — as much to forestall one another's poaching as for any inherent strategic concerns.

For the Camarilla, the imperialist seduction is too powerful to ignore. The simplicity of these territorial ventures emboldens clan leaders, who deputize trusted subordinates to the Chinese mainland. Soon every clan heads east, and soon they discover what the Giovanni knew all along: kine accomplishment does not by definition translate to Kindred success. For every effective administrator like Robert Pedder, the Hong Kong-based Ventrue whose calm diplomacy in maintaining a profitable arrangement with his Chinese opposite is unsurpassed, more than enough bullheaded fiascos like the Tremere "pincer movement" led by Thomas Wyncham occur, which has created more problems than even the Council of Seven imagined.

What Cathayans think of the Kindred varies from place to place, which itself is a shared frustration. Foreign habits and powers aside, little unity of thought or purpose exists among Cathayans. The indigenous vampires follow no common traditions, nor do they hold common worldviews that Camarillan representatives can categorize. Many Cathayans resist the insolent foreign devils, but just as many — particularly in the mercantile realms — are willing to partner with Kindred if it serves their purpose. Reactions are intricate and cryptic, and offense is quite easily given. Moreover, the impinging European

presence fractures the native population into two distinct camps: those who wish to accommodate the Westerners, led by the emperor, and those determined to eradicate them, spurred on by the dowager empress.

The latter camp, which will ignite the Boxer Rebellion in 1899, nourishes a reactionary, xenophobic outlook on the direction of China. While the Boxers refrain from open warfare and murder of European missionaries and legates, sympathetic Cathayans engage in a number of surgically precise attacks on Kindred interests in China. Already quite dislocated in China's enigmatic miasma, Cainites now find themselves open targets.

The situation in Japan is comparably better, but only just. The "opening" of Japan to Western traffic in the 1850s, culminating in the Meiji Restoration of 1868, led to an embrace of Western ideas, mannerisms, dress and thought among the leaders of the island empire. Nevertheless, the majority of ancient tradition has survived this modernization. Japanese society — especially the vampiric classes — remains grounded in its conservative ways, tsk-tsking at the unseemliness of an imperial court desperate to slough off any "shameful inferiority" to the West. "Inferiority" hardly describes these groups, and their narrowing role in the new Occidental forms of government, business interaction and social mores quickens the anger in their blood. Samurai, once the pinnacle of the Japanese warrior class, are shuttled into roles in commerce or the reorganized military or moved offstage altogether; displaced *ronin* also cause trouble for the new imperial structure.

Japanese vampires from these marginalized classes fixate upon the Kindred as the root cause of their fall from grace and actively plot against them. Anti-Western sentiment slithers through the island's underbelly, coupled with expansionist desires of a Japanese empire spanning the western edge of the Pacific Rim. The latter idea bursts forth in 1894, when Japanese forces invade the Chinese mainland, seize Formosa and the Pescadores and force China to recognize the "independence" of Korea (conveniently overseen by Japan itself). Europeans, horrified at the prospect of being shut out of Asia, force a humiliatingly unequal treaty upon Japan, negating its gains on the mainland.

Its astounding success in China snatched away, Japan vows to redouble its efforts. Secret societies flourish, made up of bands of assassins determined to avenge Japan's diplomatic defeat by eliminating influential leaders throughout Asia. One of the most successful of such cabals, the Black Ocean Society, assassinates Queen Min of Korea in 1895. Japanese vampires found their own sects, infiltrating the mainland "treaty ports" and



enacting their own vendettas upon Kindred whom they are convinced are responsible for Japan's ostracism.

With the larger portion of the Far East effectively quarantined, the only safe recourse for power and havens lies in the outlying regions: the island and peninsular colonies of Southeast Asia. British Kindred based themselves in the first holdings along the Straits Settlements in Malacca and the city of Singapore. This location, the halfway point on the India-China route, attracted the bulk of audacious vampires striking out for the Cathayan mainland. A few minor scrapes with Low Country Kindred in the Dutch East Indies quickly broke up, each coterie retreating to its respective corner and coexisting in relative peace for a number of years. Circumstances altered after the Opium War, however, as legations from other countries arrived in search of their own holdings. Unable to exert much force in the various treaty ports, these Kindred let loose their energies upon the smaller countries. They lord over these places with a disinterested rapaciousness, concerned only with what lifeblood they can drain.

The demarcation is baffling even to those most directly involved. French Indochina, Portuguese [?? Siam was never ruled by any European power] Siam and British-controlled Burma and Singapore jostle for prominence on their own peninsula, while the Dutch exert hegemony over Indonesia, Java, Sumatra, Borneo and southern New Guinea. Germany controls northern New Guinea and the older Spanish islands of the Marianas and the Carolines; Portugal holds East Timor and Macao. These outposts, used mostly as refueling stations for European trading and naval ships, serve as meeting places for Kindred to regroup and ally with one another to vanquish anti-Western opponents. Tangible advantages are limited, and enemies prowl even in these remote places, several of them rogue Assamites stationed in Malacca and other Moslem trading ports of centuries ago. Uncontrolled by Assamite elders, these *falaqi* are hardly affected by the political falsities of the old Treaty of Tyre and eagerly strike back at the intruders within their domains. Rumors of deals between these vampires and the native Cathayans circulate every so often, but few in the Camarilla give them much credence — which, safely instated back in Europe, is easy for them to say.

Australasia

Then come the Antipodes, the "opposite" lands.

Largely neglected by colonial administrators in London, Australia and New Zealand have increased in population and attractiveness throughout the century, welcoming immigrants from across Europe and Asia. For

newcomers, they offer wealth, reputation and the opportunity for personal renewal. The colonies are perplexing Edens — unfamiliar, bountiful, robust, yielding to European presence yet defying Old World conventions. Society runs on a different track here. The unbreakable strictures of class and birth in the United Kingdom hold no weight in this part of the world. An amazing social cohesion flourishes; a sense of fellow feeling, of “mateship,” exists here as it never could in the mother country.

This blank canvas tempts Kindred the most, particularly those vampires of a lower order in the Byzantine web of Camarilla traditions. These nations represent the last best hope for any real advancement within their damned world, liberated from the arbitrary decrees of crapulous elders and addled Antediluvian pronouncements.

Australia

Australia has recovered well from its ignominious founding. Conceived as no more than a dumping ground for reprobates, recidivists and political undesirables (a necessity after England’s loss of the American colonies for that very purpose), the initial decades of settlement scarred the island harshly. Felons greatly outnumbered the few legitimate settlers and were kept in line only by being penned in barracks and parceled out as forced labor to the more “respectable” arrivals. Mithras readily availed himself of this solution for his more notorious foes, particularly those who possessed dangerous information. He preferred to stake, seal up and ship off such adversaries to this new back of beyond, and if they perished en route, so much the better.

While Queen Victoria discontinued the practice of Australian exile in 1840 (only to resume it in the 1850s), the Court of Avalon felt no parallel compunction, merely sending its unwanted members as mysterious cargo in the deepest holds of settler transports. Those Kindred who survived the journey were surprised to come upon a network of support among the undead, in place from the voyage of the First Fleet in 1788. With that vanguard criminal element sailed a small band of Kindred agitators, fed up with their elders’ protracted struggles. Led by a Brujah named Red Meg, this coterie pledged to reshape the vampiric presence in Australia, to abandon the tortuous clan games in favor of mutual aid and respect. They knew more of their kind would come, driven out by the stifling Camarilla politics. Sent to the end of the world, future exiles would find a new world awaiting them.

The banished still came, along with settlers seeking their fortune after gold was struck in the 1850s. As the mortal population increased, cities like Sydney and

Melbourne soon rivaled London and Manchester. Unbound to clans and unchecked by elders, a growing Kindred population took pleasure and pride in its shunned status. Once undignified scoundrels, they refashioned themselves as lords of vast holdings across the continent, like their elders of centuries ago. Anarchs became princes and “shepherd kings”; neonates amassed wealth from gold and opal mines; autarkis traveled the new railway system and ran amok in the interior townships.

This unfettered activity could not last indefinitely. Cainites being what they are, the intoxication of Australian autonomy inevitably led to clashes with both fellow vampires and irrepressible mortals. The last quarter of the century signaled the denouement of Red Meg’s utopia (if it ever truly existed). Abram, the first prince of Sydney and a member of that original band of upstarts, let his natural paranoia delude him into thinking himself a latter-day Constantine the Great. He abandoned Sydney for Melbourne decades ago and tried to rule both places; as expected, his boldness devolved into megalomaniacal episodes. Driven from power in 1879, Abram now spends his nights in exile. He lives on, but it is unknown where — or what he plans during his time out of sight.

Sydney

The capital of New South Wales is the largest and most prosperous city on the continent. Located on two tongues of land thrusting into the Port Jackson inlet, Sydney has one of the most impressive harbor complexes in the world. Port Jackson, Middle Harbour and Botany Bay (the site of Australia’s infamous prison) branch inland into dozens of smaller harbors, coves and tributaries and provide a wealth of public beaches during the day and secluded points for Kindred to funnel allies and resources around the city at night. George Street is the main avenue in Sydney, housing the town hall and post office. Pitt Street runs parallel and leads to the main railway station. Macquarie Street runs along the 138-acre Domain Park; here are located the treasury, parliament and mint.

Sydney is loosely governed. Sarrasine, the undeclared prince and Abram’s former second-in-command, gives wide latitude to Kindred doings within his domain, reportedly because he extracts some measure of tribute from every Kindred in the capital. Even though his rule has been short, Sarrasine cloaks the vampiric facets of the city in a haze of corruption, degeneracy and influence peddling. He feigns a Caligulan attitude of pleasant disinterest in quotidian affairs while privately indulging his personal whims in a manner that rivals the more debauched potentates throughout history. The harbor is an unmonitored zone of Kindred smuggling and piracy,



the fruits of which spill into the city environs. The struggle for an upper hand is singularly bloody-minded. Mortal ghouls beholden to various Kindred smugglers (and even some legitimate shipping concerns) tangle in dimly lit warehouses and back rooms of bars. The more enterprising vampires import heartier replacements from the other Australian colonies or simply break them out of Botany Bay.

The economics of Sydney do not temper matters to any degree. With the collapse of the land boom and gold speculation in the early 1890s, Sydney's role as a trading and banking center has diminished. Looking for strength in numbers, other colonies clamor for an Australian federation, which makes the Kindred in Victoria, Queensland and elsewhere aware of the unattractive prospect of routine interaction with Sarrasine. Talk of a federal capital in Sydney only deepens their reluctance, for several of them view this potential development as giving that giggling psychopath *carte blanche* to sink his fangs into their own private realms.

Adelaide

The only city in Australia not founded by convicts, Adelaide consciously guards its separate character from

the rest of the English settlements. Settled in 1836 on the Torrens River by the explorer and surveyor Colonel William Light, the capital of South Australia was planned as a world apart from the unseemliness of its distant continental neighbors. British leaders designed Adelaide as a place to export Victorian values of propriety and reason to a continent full of sinners. The city quickly gained a reputation as a guarantor of civil and religious liberty. Lutherans fleeing persecution in Prussia arrived soon after its founding, and by the 1850s Adelaide's population was nearly half non-British.

The municipal environs reflect Adelaide's primly planned look. The city proper is divided into residential northern and commercial southern quarters, separated by a broad strip of parkland through which the Torrens runs. The river itself is crossed by five bridges and arrayed with pleasant foliage along its banks. The government buildings are in the southern quarter along King William Street, including the town hall, post office, courthouses, parliament, library and Adelaide University, opened in 1882. The residential north and the suburbs are interconnected by tram and rail, and Adelaide's main train station is the terminus of a railroad that hugs the south-

east and east coasts, traveling to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

Curiously, the British government gave no money for the city founding. Adelaide is a settlement completely un beholden to the Colonial Office; consequently the city keeps virtually all of its income. A wheat boom in the 1870s kindled a rash of magnificent building projects, strengthening the area's veddy, veddy British character. Adelaide also benefits, unbeknownst to the city's aldermen, from prudent capital infusion by the London fief.

Unfortunately, the course of events in Australia has not been well received in London. Mithras' original intent of Australia as a place of exile has backfired disastrously. He made a belated attempt during the 1860s to rectify the situation, sending a small legation to Adelaide to monitor the dealings in the other cities. It was a feeble effort, and by the century's final decades it was clear a fresh tack was required.

Lady Anne recognizes this and has dispatched a willing ally as prince, a Toreador called Miranda, to ensure that the chaos in Sydney does not spread. Despite Miranda's enthusiasm for the job, the effort may be for naught. The Kindred in Adelaide do not blend in at all with other Australian Cainites, which severely curtails normal vampiric intrigues. Furthermore, the growing sentiment for federation increases the likelihood of individual princes finding common political ground, one element of which being a rabid resentment of those who banished them in the first place. The closer Australia comes to independent unification, the more Adelaide's Kindred are threatened with isolation and subsequent obliteration.

New Zealand

Dwarfed by its neighbor to the west, this pair of islands patently refuses to be guided by anything stemming from Sydney or Melbourne. New Zealand's first colonists encamped in the 1830s along the mountainous coastlines and struggled for self-sufficiency, hacking their way through thick rain forests and tangling with pirates, escapees from Australian prisons and cannibal Maori natives. Unable to dislodge the biggest threat in the Maoris, the colonial authorities struck a treaty granting them sovereignty in exchange for selling land to the settlers, a situation far removed from the indifferent seizure of territory in Africa and Asia.

New Zealand was helped by the discovery of gold in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Inevitably settlers and prospectors, many of them coming from the depleting mines in Australia, flocked to the islands. The Otago

province tripled in population throughout the 1860s. Almost as quickly, the mines petered out in the 1870s, leaving many prospectors broke. Although the rush built up South Island with railways and public works, North Island was overlooked and ravaged by the Maori Wars of the early 1870s.

The current decades bring a semblance of stability to New Zealand, mostly due to the colony's novel approaches to solving its own problems. The Maori Wars, while bloody and long, ended with recognition of native political rights, bestowing adult suffrage and Maori representation in the central legislature. With a population increasing to more than 750,000 by century's end, New Zealanders see themselves as embodying a special role in the South Pacific — that of a smaller-scale Britain, extending its own empire over Polynesia and the other island regions. They regard their Australian neighbors with indifference if not outright hostility and refuse to be relegated to a lesser role in some future overbearing federation. Radical ideas like granting women's suffrage in 1893 encourage New Zealanders to envision their new homeland as the vanguard of social reform in the world, bringing progressive ideas to their corner of the globe and, in their own measure, displacing heavy-handed and uncompromising Victorian customs.

Dunedin

Clinging to the southeast edge of South Island, the dour city of Dunedin is the end of the end of the earth. The harbor is Dunedin's redeeming feature; the inland remains uncleared, and the view from the southeast coast features only ocean and the ice that designates Antarctica far on the horizon. Yet the city itself is quite habitable, confounding the conventions of its location just as the larger colony confounds preexisting opinions of its role in Australasia.

Founded in 1848 by rugged Scots, Dunedin (the old Gaelic name for Edinburgh) reflects much of its namesake in climate and contour. The primeval outskirts, ringing the city as a single public space called the Town Belt, remind its founders of the bracing landscape of home. The Otago gold rush transformed Dunedin into a hotbed of activity. Mining and agriculture blossomed, and the city enjoyed visits from some of the most famous personalities of the age, including Mark Twain and Benjamin Disraeli. The boom produced mixed results. Overcrowding in the 1860s led to a typhoid epidemic. Compounding this, the avalanche of wealth brought severe inflation, and when Dunedin went bust it experienced an economic depression unrivaled at any other time in its short history.

The massive, gold-subsidized public building during the 1870s exacerbated matters. Dunedin elders considered themselves the caretakers of a great religious and social experiment, destined to build a city on a hill not unlike that of the Puritans in New England. To them monuments were meant to be momentous, exhibiting the solid, eternal qualities of Victorian respectability even in such a remote place. Larnach Castle is the epitome of such thought; constructed from 1871 to 1886, this edifice needed 200 workmen to complete it at a cost of £125,000, totally ignoring the dire economic realities of the city.

The rest of Dunedin is no less extravagant, modeled intentionally after buildings in Great Britain. The University of Otago is copied from its predecessor in Glasgow. Otago Boys High School would not be out of place in Eton or Harrow. The police station follows closely the original blueprints for Scotland Yard. Terrace houses come straight from the industrial north in England, as do many of the factories and mills.

Dunedin's commitment to study manifests itself in the number of educational institutions; the university features several faculties, and the Athenaeum, the museum and the numerous schools are no less notable in their own right. The main street encompasses Prince's and George Streets, which pass through the Octagon, a massive central city park. The town is laid out around the

Octagon, itself ringed by the main municipal buildings, the hospital and several warehouses and stores. Several of the commercial concerns have gone out of business and serve as hovels for criminals and for Kindred to avail themselves of a quick dose of vitae. The commercial dilapidation reproduces itself in many parts of the city, a testament to the gold decline and the collapse of land values. Many of the depressed plots were sold, overpriced, to absentee landlords — including a few Kindred from the Scottish fiefs.

New dredging techniques have led to a slight resurgence in gold mining, but hardly enough to compensate for the gravity of the loss. The decline of Dunedin as a shipping nexus worsens matters. The few Kindred in Dunedin proper operate independently of any prince but among themselves profess a loyalty to Edinburgh and sympathize with Adelaide over the uncertainty in Australia. In many ways, Dunedin acts as the ideal town for the most traditional Kindred: a cityscape nostalgically mirroring that of steadfast Europe, with an undercurrent of economic despair and sporadic lawlessness among its lower classes. Miranda of Adelaide observes this and harbors a small but concrete desire to pack up stakes and leave her southern Australian base for Dunedin, should the situation warrant. Whether the hospitality and loyalty of Dunedin's Kindred extend to such lengths is another matter altogether.





Chapter Three: The Night Society and Beyond

A soldier told Pelopidas, "We are fallen among the enemies." Said he, "If you are we fallen among them more than they among us?"

*- Plutarch, *Speeches of Kings and Great Commanders**

This chapter illustrates some of the possibilities in Victorian society for allies and antagonists - vampiric, human and altogether other. The individuals described here can be used as is or modified to suit the needs of a particular chronicle.

Master and Servant

The industrial revolution is changing the face of humanity almost overnight. Old fears abate fast, and the nights of the vampire kings who held the populace in fear are a thing of history. Still, the world is not yet entirely laced together. One can still convince a single man not to print an article, and by doing so keep something a secret forever

In the Victorian age, the Masquerade isn't taken lightly, but it can be stretched very thin indeed before it breaks. In fact, many of those who do break the Masquerade can still get away with it — after all, if nobody finds out about it and not one witness lives to tell the day, what does it matter?

Many members of the Night Society, the vampires and their allies and lackeys among humanity, take advantage of this splendid secrecy and the new possibilities offered by scientific discovery. The Tremere push their magics further than ever before, creating complicated technomagical servants that make gargoyles seem ordinary by comparison. Tzimisce take their fleshcrafting to horrifying and fascinating extremes and don't bother to hide it very well. In an age where the massively deformed John Merrick, also known as the Elephant Man for the tusklike growth on his face, is a celebrity respected (and ridiculed, of course, but at least accepted as a part of everyday life) by the British public at large, and P. T. Barnum's freak show, grandly titled the "Greatest Show on Earth", tours America, one can pass off many strange things as, if not quite natural, at least decidedly not supernatural. Giovanni necromancers openly press the restless dead into their service, animating corpses and parading them around shamelessly, going so far as to forge souls into modern machinery and create strange contraptions powered by the very essence of the dead.

Never again will the Kindred be so free to experiment with comparatively advanced technology and their own supernatural abilities in a remarkably public fashion, secure in the knowledge that even if something goes wrong they can still contain the problem.

Of course, this is not a very healthy attitude. Some Kindred become overconfident, and mistakes are made; young Kindred in particular, products of this new and wondrous age who don't have the benefit of experience, assume that they can get away with it, at times with disastrous results. Here, a half-controlled automaton escapes and joins the general populace, much to the horror of the latter. There, a magical experiment gone terribly wrong brings forth beings that have no place in this world. Many elders find themselves constantly surprised by the pure impudence of the new guard: while they expect neonates and ancillae not yet quite to know their place, the liberties many of the young ones take are practically unheard-of.

The results are predictable enough. Elders may be somewhat slow to respond to certain changes in their society, but they will not have their authority questioned. More than one young vampire finds himself staring at the morning sun after flaunting the Masquerade. Of course, this doesn't deter eager pioneers.

Ghoul servants, particularly the less extreme ones, are very useful during the Victorian Age. Not only can they earn money and develop influence in the mortal world in acceptable and relatively trouble-free ways, they can turn the limitations of the Victorian society into oppor-



tunities. Reformers and revolutionaries may aim at more equitable distribution of authority, but money, power and international intrigue remain the prerogatives of an elite few. These are the days of amateur politicians and gentlemanly plutocrats who lay down the course of history over drinks and cigars while the womenfolk tend to their own affairs. When the balance of power within the society is so greatly tilted in favor of the few, a well planned blood bond can make all the difference in the world.

The lowest echelons of society offer power of different sorts. Organized crime isn't unheard of, but vast criminal conspiracies are relatively rare — most people don't have the education or aptitude for such an enterprise. Naturally, this doesn't apply to vampires, who are conspirators *par excellence*. Criminal gangs led by trusted ghouls can be powerful forces indeed. Simply robbing the wealthy can bring in considerable income, and more complicated schemes — smuggling, drug trade, protection rackets, extortion and so forth — are even more lucrative. Good planning, combined with particularly brutal violence, goes a long way. To simplify things further, forensic science is still in its infancy, and while London may have the most modern police force in the world, the bobbies' ability to investigate or curb supernatural crimes is limited at best. After all, organizing a jail break, for example, is not too complicated when a supernaturally strong ghoul can simply yank the bars out of a window after beating the guards senseless.

Dr. Thomas Fountaindike

Background: Possessed of a monstrous genius, Dr. Thomas Fountaindike has long been a well known member of the Cainite scientific community. Sadly, his latest creation — a steam-powered humanoid automaton — and its implications for his future work now interest him more than the trifles of the outside world, and he no longer enjoys much contact with his peers and colleagues.

The Motorised Man (as Fountaindike insists on calling his creation) is built of steel and is animated by the soul of a destroyed vampire called Marcello. His next goal is to develop a new type of necromantic ritual, one that allows actual independent thought. While he considers the Motorised Man a great achievement, he is all too aware of its limitations. Letting the ghost control the automaton would be an obvious and simple solution, but that would not suit his needs — after all, if he wants independent servants, he can just force a little blood down someone's throat. No, what he is after is a next step of evolution, newborn sentient beings created by a fusion of science and magic. A lost soul is obviously needed to



Dr. Fountaindike & Janos

animate such a machine, but surely it should be possible to create at least a simulacrum of intelligence?

Dr. Fountaindike is already hard at work incorporating the inventions of Charles Babbage into complicated machine that should, he hopes, give his next creation the ability to react properly to new and changing situations. This research consumes Dr. Fountaindike entirely; he is antisocial and often locks himself away from distractions for weeks. His laboratory is a chaotic jumble of notes, tools and consumed and discarded corpses that his assistant occasionally wheels out when the stink starts to become bothersome.

Still, for all his seeming inhumanity, Dr. Fountaindike doesn't live in a moral vacuum — he is aware of the fact that Marcello dislikes his current abode (though he has no comprehension of the blind, uncompromising hate Marcello feels for him) and thinks that's a shame. Still, sacrifices must be made for the greater good, and besides, Marcello was already dead — surely this immensely useful and scientifically important form of existence is an improvement over the eternal boredom and meaninglessness of death? Some people, the doctor is quick to point out, just don't know what's good for them.

Image: Dr. Thomas Fountaindike appears to be a fit, blond man in his mid-twenties. While he doesn't much care about his appearance while at work in his labora-

tory, he likes to dress up for those rare occasions he actually leaves the lab, donning white leather gloves, a top hat and other suitable accessories. He is quite ignorant of the latest styles, fashions and topics of conversation, but that's why he retains Janos Handoval in his service.

Roleplaying Hints: You're not so much antisocial as you are consumed by the great task at hand. Unless it concerns your work, you really can't be bothered. You have a perfectly good assistant who can take care of the troublesome details. You are always willing to talk shop with people who know the field, however, and in those instances you are friendly, clever and intelligent. You're not interested in petty power games and other struggles — you have dedicated your life to your work.

Applications: Scientifically minded vampires in search of answers may well find them from the chaos that is the mind of Dr. Fountaindike. Word of the progress and breakthroughs he has made has circulated throughout Kindred society, crossing the borders between sects, and both Camarilla and Sabbat are interested in his achievements. Perhaps the characters must make sure that the doctor and his considerable skills don't fall into the wrong hands — or perhaps they are the very party who attempt to kidnap him?

Clan: Giovanni

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Visionary

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1830

Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Crafts 4, Etiquette 4, Firearms 2, Melee 4, Security 1, Stealth 2

Knowledge: Academics 3, Area Knowledge (London) 3, Linguistics (French, German, Latin, Russian) 4, Medicine 4, Politics 1, Science 4

Disciplines: Dominate 1, Necromancy 4

Necromancy Paths: The Sepulchre Path 4, The Ash Path 1

Backgrounds: Resources 4, Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 5, Courage 2

Morality: Humanity 3

Willpower: 6

Janos Handoval

Background: Had Janos Handoval not been discovered by Dr. Thomas Fountaindike, he would probably not have had a particularly happy life. A dwarf spending his life in considerable pain, Handoval was not looking forward to growing old. Thanks to Fountaindike's medical skills and the vampiric vitae he forced down Handoval's throat, neither pain nor aging are any longer a concern for him.

Handoval's body may not be in prime condition, but he has proven time and time again that nothing is wrong with his mind. In addition to helping Dr. Fountaindike with his lab work, Handoval is also charged with maintaining the good doctor's ties to the rest of the Giovanni, a task he's eminently well suited for. Despite his stunted growth, Handoval has a golden tongue, and he knows how to deal with the Kindred. He has mastered a well cultivated mix of toadying and independence — enough to establish himself as a personality, as opposed to "snack," but not bold enough to make anyone think that he has ideas above his station.

In addition to these "official" duties, Handoval is a well known figure in the scientific circles of London. Although his own skills certainly don't hold a candle to those of Dr. Fountaindike, he is not an ignorant man, and what's more, he has seen enough of Fountaindike's work to bluff his way reasonably well. He has gone out of his way to ingratiate himself with a number of prominent figures in the field — Handoval is charming and funny, and gives a very convincing impression of a man with extensive connections. Handoval is not above manipulation, blackmail and other petty but effective means to gain power for himself and his master, and has been known to strongarm people on occasion to get his way. While he puts on a convincing front of a charming and civilized dwarf, some hate and fear him. Thus far, the fear they feel far surpasses the hate.

Handoval knows that he can easily manipulate the distracted and eccentric Dr. Fountaindike, who tends to believe anything Handoval tells him about the outside world. He happily takes advantage of that and has managed to carve a remarkably comfortable niche for himself. Still, he knows who's the boss if push comes to shove, and even without the Blood Bond he'd be extremely loyal to Dr. Fountaindike. He considers Dr. Fountaindike to be, if not a friend, at least a friendly relative who has saved him from a life of misery, and he is thankful for that. Dr. Fountaindike may be an insane old fool, but as far as Handoval is concerned, he's *his* insane old fool.

Image: A hunchbacked dwarf, Handoval would probably be considered disgusting by many if it weren't for his beautiful facial features that border on angelic. He dresses expensively and stylishly — thanks to the good doctor's gifts, he can afford it. He's extremely polite, speaks with a practiced upper-class accent and never, ever makes the mistake of forgetting his position in the food chain.

Roleplaying Hints: If Dr. Fountaindike wants something, it's your job to make sure he gets it. Of course, Dr. Fountaindike doesn't always know exactly what he wants or even what's good for him, so at times you need to tell him. Despite your willingness to manipulate the old man, you are protective of him — after all, you are doing it for his own good. He is your lord and master, and you are bound to him. You're equally at home with scientific circles and the scum of the streets.

Applications: Handoval guards what he considers his territory jealously, and those who trespass on it can expect him to retaliate, though he will not do so directly and will make sure that such attacks cannot be traced back to him.

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Conformist

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Crafts 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Melee 1, Security 3, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Academics 2, Area Knowledge (London) 1, Linguistics (Latin) 1, Medicine 1, Politics 3, Science 2

Disciplines: Potence 1, Fortitude 1

Backgrounds: Resources 3

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 5

Marcello, the Motorised Man

Background: A complicated combination of engineering and necromantics, the Motorised Man is a hulking, humanoid creature nearly seven feet tall, incredibly powerful, tireless and all but unstoppable, driven by a potent steam engine.

The automaton is mostly used for manual labor, guard duties and other similarly straightforward tasks — it has extremely limited intelligence, and while it can



Marcello, the Motorised Man

understand even complicated verbal commands and recognize people, it is in reality remarkably stupid and only capable of these things out of habit. It has no initiative and is wholly incapable of improvisation. Instead of adapting to changing situations, it will follow its commands to the letter.

The motivator behind its feeble thought processes is not the genius of its designer but a ghost known as Marcello. Formerly a conservative Ventrue elder burned to Final Death by a Sabbat pack at the beginning of the century, Marcello was one of those unfortunate souls who die but cannot move on. His misfortune continued — he was unlucky enough to be snared by Dr. Fountaindike and in a complex ritual forged into the furnace that powers the Motorised Man. Screaming in pain and outrage as flames scalded his being and Fountaindike unceasingly hammered him against the unyielding anvil, Marcello felt control over what was left of his own soul slipping away. An eternal fire burns within Marcello now, and that in turn creates the steam that fires the pistons of the great automaton. More importantly, within his battered soul also burns an undying hatred for Fountaindike.

Marcello doesn't want to be the ghost in the machine, but he has no choice in the matter. He dreams of gaining control of the contraption he's been bound to

and using its immense power for exacting revenge on those who have imprisoned him, but, sadly, he has little chance of ever doing so. He has few plans beyond that, but the idea of living in a seemingly indestructible body is not entirely unappealing to him — it'd certainly be better than the bleak meaninglessness of his existence after his Final Death. Besides, it's wonderful to be able to see the sun again after all these years. While he cannot bear being unable to control this metal shell, the change in his circumstances has reawakened a thirst for life in Marcello — the onset of ennui, so characteristic to many elder vampires and the Ventrue in particular, has been reversed, and he dearly wishes he could partake of life's pleasures again and truly experience this wondrous new age.

Image: A hulking, bulky creature, the automaton cannot be mistaken for a human. Built of gray steel and

decorated with elaborate designs, the Motorised Man is a work of art, yet not many would call it pretty — “modern” and “impressive,” perhaps, but never beautiful. A brightly burning furnace is set in its midsection, and a constant hiss of escaping steam emanates from its steel body.

Roleplaying Hints: As the automaton, you hear and obey. You understand orders but cannot communicate with anyone. Since you have no personality, it's just as well; you wouldn't have anything to say. As Marcello, you are volatile, easily annoyed and extremely vindictive, and you don't bother to hide it. You have a low tolerance for empty words and always prefer action to banter. You have nothing against vampires in general — after all, you used to be one. You don't much like the Giovanni, though, and dream of slowly killing Fountaindike. You are not aware of the fact that destroy-

Soulcrafting (Level Four Necromantic Ritual)

This dangerous but well appreciated ritual is not yet well known among necromancers, but it has gained a fair degree of popularity among the technically minded Giovanni vampires. Soulcrafting allows the necromancer to bond a soul with a previously created machine, animating and enhancing it with the very essence of the restless soul.

This ritual has to be performed at a location with a forge, and the object to which the ghost is to be bound must be present. The necromancer must design and build the machine in question herself, and it must be made of steel. (It may have parts made of some other material — leather seats, wood paneling or rubber tires, for example — but the parts of the actual machinery that make the construct operate must be of steel.) The machine's design must be theoretically functional, though it may well be fantastic in nature or require impractical amounts of fuel. Considering the technological limitations of the Victorian age, most of these machines are by design steam-powered, though they don't have to be.

The casting itself is a long and arduous process. The ritual lasts for a full night, from sunset to sunrise, and during this time the vampire physically forges the soul into the desired shape while the ghost writhes and screams in the flames and under the hammer. Once the forging is finished, the soul becomes an integral part of the machine, still sentient and aware of its surroundings but unable to act independently. These unholy unions of spirit and steel become semisentient — incapable of actual reasoning, but still able to follow even complicated verbal orders.

Depending on the nature and function of the machine, the end result might, for example, be a steam-powered carriage that runs by itself or a machine capable of tunneling through the earth at considerable speeds. Such constructs never need to be refueled, though they might need to be repaired if they are damaged. If the construct is completely destroyed, the soul is set free again.

The necromancer begins the ritual by summoning a soul intended for the joining, usually with the Necromancy power of *Summon Soul*. Considering vampires' natural fear of fire, this ritual holds certain dangers. In addition to the normal Intelligence + Occult roll (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, Revised Edition, p. 165), the caster must succeed in a Willpower roll against difficulty 7 once every hour until sunrise. A failure means the character automatically succumbs to *Rötschreck*; a botch means that, in addition to this, he catches on fire. Should either happen, the soul is instantly set free and the machine intended for joining is completely destroyed. Contrary to normal rules, the character may not spend Willpower points to regain control; he will instead remain in frenzy for at least an hour, reeling from imaginary hammer blows and (possibly very real) flames. If the ritual fails, the targeted soul escapes but can be summoned again; on a botch, the necromancer can't call that soul back again for a year and a day.

ing this metal body would set you free and mistakenly believe that the destruction of your physical shell would also destroy your soul.

Applications: Characters who possess suitable necromantic powers can communicate with Marcello. Marcello cannot be summoned from the automaton, but he can be communicated with if the characters are in the automaton's presence. Marcello will certainly attempt to recruit the assistance any character who can communicate with him and doesn't seem to be allied with Fountaindike.

Clan: None (formerly Ventrue)

Nature: (Loner)

Demeanor: (Bravo)

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social: (Charisma 2, Manipulation 4), Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, (Intelligence 5, Wits 5)

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 2, (Empathy 3), Intimidation 1, (Streetwise 1), (Subterfuge 4)

Skills: (Etiquette 3), Melee 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: (Academics 2), (Area Knowledge (London) 2), (Finance 3), (Linguistics (Italian) 1), (Politics 4)

Disciplines: Potence 5, Fortitude 5

Attack: In addition to normal punches and kicks, the Motorised Man can direct scalding steam at its opponents. Roll Dexterity to hit; successful attacks inflict 5 dice of lethal damage.

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, -5, -5, Broken down

Virtues: (Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 3)

Morality: (Humanity 4)

Willpower: (4)

Note: Stats in parenthesis are Marcello's, and they are relevant only when someone bothers to communicate with him (or if he somehow gains control of the automaton). The automaton itself is mindless and soulless and thus immune to powers that affect either (including Obfuscate). It has no intelligence, but for the purposes of any reflexive rolls it might have to make, assume it to have one dot in any relevant attribute, unless stated otherwise.

Sir Doctor Jebediah Aaron Cotton/ Jerry Aaron

Sir Doctor Jebediah Aaron Cotton is well known in mortal high society as a philanthropist, a scientist and an educated man. He's less famed for his extralegal activities, including drug trade, extortion, corruption and experiments performed on less than willing subjects,

though many know that should they desire something more exotic and potent than mere absinthe, opium or laudanum, Sir Jebediah is the man to go to.

Sir Jebediah is one of those people everyone wants to keep around but no one wants to spend any time with. A pale man with a grating voice, a weak, clammy handshake and a sniveling demeanor, he is welcomed for his gifts but despised for his personality. He toadies to one and all, going so far as to assume a servile attitude to even the most pathetic mortal of any status, yet he makes no attempts to hide his constant paranoia and often rudely questions people as to their motives. Money flows through his fingers easily — whether the cause be orphans, a new branch of scientific research or some other cause, Sir Jebediah is almost always willing to make a donation regardless of whether the supplicant has any credibility to speak of.

All this doesn't win him any friends among his fellow Kindred. Even his fellow Malkavians look down on him with a mixture of pity and disgust.

Sir Jebediah does have his saving graces, however. He is a masterful chemist, and the decadent high society of London is filled with wealthy people willing to try something new and exciting. Sir Jebediah is the man to cater to these tastes; he specializes in hallucinations,



dreams and pleasures. An accomplished chemist and researcher of his own unnatural condition, many of his drugs include a secret ingredient — highly processed vampiric blood. While his pills, powders and potions do not to bring forth the effects a mortal normally undergoes when imbibing vitae, combined with Sir Jebediah's considerable chemical expertise the end results are incredibly powerful. Indeed, a number of unfortunate deaths always occur whenever Sir Jebediah experiments with a new concoction.

Sir Jebediah doesn't mind taking a taste or two from his own clients' veins. He calls it quality control and refuses to admit that these tastes (disturbingly often taken from those test subjects who perish from massive overdoses or unviable compounds) are putting a great strain on his already stressed psyche.

This part of his operations serves to maintain his status and contacts within high society. Certainly, some disapprove, but on the whole Sir Jebediah is a vital part of mortal high society.

An even less well known side to his operations exists in the form of far more mundane criminal activities. Sir Jebediah is the head of a large gang that engages in all sorts of criminal activities, ranging from lucrative drug trade to ordinary robberies and extortion, dabbling in smuggling and slavery on the side. His success can be attributed to meticulous planning, generous bribes and a fear-inducing reputation among the denizens of the extralegal community.

The last item on that list is taken care of by Jerry Aaron, a thug, extortionist and murderer. He is well known in the London underworld, but few know that Jerry and Sir Jebediah are actually the very same person. In fact, even they themselves aren't entirely aware of it. When Sir Jebediah leaves the stage, expensive, tailored suits become common clothes, and what formerly was admirable athletic prowess now becomes imposing bulk. Sophisticated turns of phrase become coarse language; bony knuckles replace elegant fingers.

Jerry certainly isn't the toughest Cainite in London, but he makes up for his lack of strength with brutality and tenacity. He has a terrible obsession with power and intimidation over mortals that occasionally also extends to weaker vampires and ghouls. He prefers to leave mortal victims alive, able to spread the fear. Jerry moves through the London underworld leaving a trail of limbs broken beyond repair, slit faces and dislodged teeth in his wake. He also provides Sir Jebediah with new test subjects — who's going to miss a few whores or beggars? What Jerry wants, Jerry takes, and Jerry wants blood, fear and respect.

This dual existence is highly complicated. Sir Jebediah dislikes Jerry and considers him to be a stupid little man of no class, devoid of understanding of higher levels of finance or high society. For him, Jerry is a necessary evil, both on a purely practical and a more personal level. Jerry sees Sir Jebediah as a spineless and limp-wristed snob with little understanding of practical matters, helpless without his assistance but sadly indispensable for his skills and contacts. Neither of them is wrong. Their dual existence is strictly hierarchical; Sir Jebediah draws up the plans and calls the shots, and Jerry sees to their execution.

Jerry is unable to take advantage of Sir Jebediah's scientific abilities or social skills, just as Sir Jebediah is unable and unwilling to engage in brutal violence or assert his authority with anyone, even though Jerry takes great pleasure in both. Neither of the two can keep secrets from the other, since they share their memories on a subconscious level. This disturbs Sir Jebediah in particular, who fears that since Jerry knows his deepest secrets he might plot against him, and he is assuaged only by the fact that he knows everything Jerry does and can keep tabs on him.

Most local Kindred know of his condition, and most of them don't care. They simply decide whether they wish to deal with Sir Jebediah or if they prefer to talk to the hulking thug, and make arrangements accordingly. As long as they are willing to maintain the charade everything goes smoothly. No mortal is allowed to realize that they are the same person, however, and anyone who does can expect to meet Jerry in a dark back alley.

Image: Sir Jebediah is an aristocratic gentleman from London's high society, while Jerry hails from the streets of that very same sprawling metropolis, complete with the stench. Sir Jebediah is a tall, athletic man with a closely shaved chin and a long locks of oiled red hair, whereas Jerry is a savage man built of imposing rock-hard muscle, and he sports a wild mass of red hair. Their voices, body language and speech are utterly different.

Roleplaying Hints: As Sir Jebediah, you love high society, the company of your peers, the thrill of scientific discovery and a good conversation. Anybody who appears to be even remotely important is someone you desperately want to please. Still, at the same time, you are paranoid and quite certain that everyone plots against you. As Jerry, you love the sound of breaking bones and insist on cowing every mortal you deal with, with your presence and threats if you must, with violence if the situation permits. On some level you are aware of the fact that you share the same body with another person, but you steadfastly refuse to admit to this.

Applications: Anyone interested or involved in drugs may run into either Sir Jebediah or Jerry, depending on the circles they move in. Those looking to gain a few favors may find employment from either — in their line of business, things must always be done, obstacles removed, and palms greased. Those who complicate matters for either may soon find themselves in trouble; Sir Jebediah in particular has notable connections among mortals and his kind alike, and Jerry has plenty of associates, undead and otherwise, who take delight in hurting others.

Clan: Malkavian

Nature: Visionary (Rogue)

Demeanor: Conformist (Monster)

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1769

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4 (2 as Jerry), Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5 (2 as Jerry), Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 5 (as Jerry), Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Intimidation 4 (as Jerry), Streetwise 4 (as Jerry), Subterfuge 2

Skills: Etiquette 4 (as Sir Jebediah), Firearms 2, Melee 4 (as Jerry), Security 1, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 3 (as Sir Jebediah), Area Knowledge (London) 3, Finance 4 (as Sir Jebediah), Linguistics (French, German, Latin, Russian) 3 (as Sir Jebediah), Medicine 5 (as Sir Jebediah), Politics 3 (as Sir Jebediah), Science (Chemistry) 4 (as Sir Jebediah)

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 1, Obfuscate 3, Potence 2, Fortitude 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Fame 2 (as Sir Jebediah), Influence 2 (as Sir Jebediah), Resources 5, Retainers 5, Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 3

Derangements: Multiple Personalities, Paranoia (as Sir Jebediah), Obsession (as Jerry)

Willpower: 5

Mortal Authorities

Victorian police forces, when they exist at all, are badly organized. Solving crimes is not a particularly refined process — most investigation relies on eyewitnesses and confessions, very often given under duress. Much of the evidence used to convict criminals is obtained from informers, who are often engaged in crimes

of their own. Procedures may vary wildly one city (or even district in a city) to another.

London is the notable exception to the rule, as it has its own, well organized police force. London's Metropolitan Police Force was reformed in 1829 by Home Secretary (later Prime Minister) Sir Robert Peel, and its Criminal Investigation Department is particularly effective and modern. Many other countries, including the United States, are already patterning their own police forces after the London model. Still, in most other cities, law enforcement is handled by watchmen, who tend to be more useful in catching people in the act than actually solving the crime after the fact.

CID (or Scotland Yard, as it is popularly known, called so after the location of its headquarters) has made great progress, but crime detection is still in its infancy — dusting for fingerprints or conducting ballistic tests is unheard of. Progress is being made, and compared to the police forces of the beginning of the 19th century, CID is very efficient indeed.

Of course, they are woefully underequipped to deal with vampires. Beings who can turn invisible or climb the highest walls, command animals or erase the memory of their activities from the minds of onlookers are effectively unstoppable by even Scotland Yard, much less the more primitive police forces of the world. If they encounter vampires they cannot stop them, and they have little chance of even surmising their presence after the fact.

It's not surprising, then, that the authorities have to turn to more drastic methods of dealing with the undead threat. While the Kindred take great pains to keep their existence a secret from the mortal world, they are only moderately successful. After all, those who have access to every intelligence report from an entire nation find out a great many things indeed, and besides, the world has always held mortals who know and mortals who talk; it's inevitable that some catalog this information and take advantage of it.

To those concerned with national security, the Kindred are a nightmare. They don't care about borders, laws or authorities. They scare and kill citizens and subvert already complicated situations of local and international politics to their own ends. They generally act with impunity. What's more, they pose a considerable personal threat to those who oppose them.

Such authorities aren't entirely without means of their own. While they certainly want to keep the masses placid and unaware of the monsters who walk among them, in the end, should the truth come out, the Kindred would be the ones most threatened by the revelation. This need for secrecy makes the Kindred predictable and vulnerable — should the authorities decide to pare down

their ranks, they can only do so much in retaliation. On the other hand, if the authorities continue such practices, the monsters will have no choice but to strike back. Thus, secrecy abounds on both sides of the fence; a cold war rages as both parties attempt to harm the other without implicating themselves in the act.

To this end, governments may grant individual agents vast powers. In the real world, so-called “extraordinary agents” or “agents plenipotentiary,” who had effectively unlimited authority to act as they pleased in the name of the government, existed but were quite rare. Such individuals could make any agreement in the name of the government and in general fully act in its name when dealing with foreign powers. Obviously, governments were very careful and selective when granting such powers to agents.

In the World of Darkness, however, such agents are more common because they’re far more necessary, and might be sent in to actually negotiate with the Kindred. Such status provides agents with some degree of immunity from the Kindred, as it is one thing to ignore or abuse authorities on a local scale and quite another to thumb your nose at someone who is speaking for the entirety of Her Majesty’s Government (even if the vast majority of said government isn’t aware of the agent’s existence), for example. Killing such a person would be akin to a declaration of war and would be bound to have extremely serious consequences to the vampire population.

Furthermore, agents plenipotentiary might well have extraordinary powers in addition to extraordinary authority. Mortal magicians and other beings with unconventional qualities are out there, and some of them have patriotic tendencies, proper government connections and the ambition required for the job. Thus gifted individuals would be prime material for such assignments — vast authority combined with the ability to hold his own against a vampire would make someone a useful agent indeed. After all, an ordinary agent might walk out of a meeting with a vampire not only having agreed to everything the Cainite has suggested but also in complete loss of control over his future actions.

In the end, a delicate balance of terror exists, complete with strikes, feints and acceptable losses.

Some organizations also, despite their lack of official affiliation, often operate close to, among or against the Kindred in a capacity that can be likened to official sanction. The Pinkerton Detective Agency, for example, operates mostly in America but sends agents abroad as necessary. The agency is, among other things, the inventor of the mug shot and has at this time in history the largest collection of mug shots in the world. In addition to chasing criminals, “Pinkertons” are also hired to act as

bodyguards. Indeed, the founder of the Agency, Allan Pinkerton, acted as the Chief of Secret Service during the American Civil War. They also investigate suspected spy rings, and they can be expected to undertake most other types of missions where their famed skills are useful. While its famed detectives aren’t “real” police officers, they are likely to receive a great deal of respect and cooperation from authorities.

Letters of Marque

Privateers, empowered by letters of marque — which allowed their bearers to make war on ships from specific nations — and letters of reprisal — which granted those who had been plundered by enemies the right to attack enemy ships for financial gain, usually until a specific amount of money had been gained — were quite rare at this point in history. In the World of Darkness they have greater possibilities.

Independent mortals without actual connections to the government may be granted the right to hunt supernatural creatures without having to worry about the consequences. Those undertaking such missions would undoubtedly be sworn to secrecy, but they would have authority to act freely and without having to worry about authorities taking exception to their antics.

Storytellers are also encouraged to keep in mind that while characters of this type can be challenging and interesting antagonists, they also make excellent player characters in what is guaranteed to be a difficult and hard-edged campaign. After all, it’s intimidating enough to go after bloodsucking horrors with fully automatic weapons and flame throwers, but doing the same with Victorian equipment and a handful of authority that might or might not be respected by the Kindred is even more of a challenge.

Anne of Lilies

The existence of Anne of Lilies is not so much a secret as it is something nobody particularly wants to think about unless he absolutely has to.

Born in 1852, she is the daughter of a British merchant living in Hong Kong. Her mother died of typhus at an early age, leaving her father to look after her. In 1874 her father took her on a trip to mainland China with the intention of securing new trade relations. The details of the expedition are unknown; her father never returned from the trip, and neither did any of the servants they

Verbatim meeting transcript, transcribed at the request of Sir Edward Appleton. Marked: "Confidential" / "Internal Foreign Office use only." Location: Office of Sir Edward Appleton. Date: 3/12/1875. Present: Sir Edward Appleton (Special Secretary to Foreign Office), Sir Warren Smythe-Darlington (Special Secretary to Home Office)

Sir Warren Smythe-Darlington: "Edward?"

Sir Edward Appleton: "Warren! Do come in. How do you do? So good to see you, and you have my apologies for calling this meeting at such a short notice."

WSD: "Not at all, Edward; I had a few things to take care of here as it was, so it's no inconvenience at all."

EA: "Good. Splendid. Now ... ah"

WSD: "I assume this has to do with the —"

EA: "Yes! Yes. Bad business, that."

WSD: "Bad. Dreadful."

EA: "Dreadful. Yes. Warren, I'll come right to the point: I have been asked to enquire as to your intentions regarding the matter?"

WSD: "Well, naturally, we have kept it out of the papers, and as for the bodies, they were buried with all haste —"

EA: "Yes, splendid work. Cholera, wasn't it? I daresay no one will disturb them in a hurry."

WSD: "Yes."

EA: "To be honest, though, the chaps are more concerned about the big picture, rather than this particular incident"

WSD: "Yes?"

EA: "Well, Warren, I think it may seem to some of the chaps that you are dealing with the symptoms rather than the disease itself, so to speak"

WSD: "Yes. Well, actually, our chaps at the Home Office feel rather strongly that this is a problem for your chaps at the Foreign Office to tackle."

EA: "Certainly not!"

WSD: "Well, you know how the chaps are, Edward, and frankly, I'm afraid they are right. After all, these fiends certainly aren't British. Indeed, if I might offer some advice, perhaps they should be dealt with as any foreign agent or spy?"

EA: "But Warren! Surely you know that most of these creatures are British subjects, acting in an entirely domestic capacity."

WSD: "They may claim to be British subjects, perhaps, Edward, but what kind of an Englishman would be capable of such ghastly deeds? And surely this is an international problem — not unlike Marxism in that all countries are subtly being subverted by it."

EA: "But the Foreign Office is quite firm —"

WSD: "Ah. Well. To be entirely clear on this topic, Edward, the Home Office has just recently been instructed to assist the Foreign Office by hushing up any domestic problems that might arise to the best of our ability, but I'm afraid that is the extent of our authority and responsibility in this matter."

EA: "Instructed by whom, if I may ask?"

WSD: "I would rather not say, if you catch my meaning."

EA: "I see."

WSD: "Dreadfully sorry. Personally, I would love to tackle this problem, but chaps like you and I, we are mere civil servants. Our master's voice, and all that, eh?"

EA: "Quite."

WSD: "Well, if that's all, I really must run. There are only so many hours in a day. Good day, Edward. Give my best to Lizbeth, will you?"

EA: "Good day, Warren." (door opens and closes) "Bugger."

Transcript ends.

took with them. Only Anne returned to their Hong Kong home, unannounced and seemingly unharmed, but unwilling to answer any questions about her father or what had happened. Indeed, nobody seemed to know exactly how she had returned to Hong Kong.

Within days she paid a visit the highest-ranking British covert operative on the island — who was quite shocked to have a young girl breach his cover with such casual ease — and informed him of three things.

First, she would be given full cooperation of the British government in whatever endeavor it pleased her to undertake. Second, in return, she would provide them with detailed intelligence about supernatural beings that might threaten the integrity of the Empire and whatever plots the Chinese government might bring to bear against the British. Finally, any attempts to violate her privacy or hinder her movements would prove to be costly indeed in ways they could not begin to understand.

To prove that she should be taken seriously, she then took away the use of his body below the waist with a single word. Quietly she informed him that he would remain in this state until he gave her an affirmative response, and that should such a response fail to arrive before the lily which she removed from under her tongue and set on his desk withered, she would return to eat his soul and make the offer to his successor.

The agent found himself lying on his expensive carpet in a pool of his own bodily wastes. Unable to move his lower body even a fraction of an inch, he took the threat seriously and wasted no time in contacting the governor of Hong Kong to tell him in no uncertain terms that whatever the governor might wish to do, this woman should be left alone at all costs.

Anne now makes her home on a small island south of Kowloon, where she lives alone, without any servants or other companions. The manor is large and in good condition; she frequently demands that the Empire take care of some problem or another with it. The entire manor is overrun with lilies. Not a single room is without several overflowing vases and planters. She doesn't appear to ingest anything besides the flowers, and during a negotiation she often reaches over to the lilies, picks one and swallows it whole.

In the few instances she has offered any information about herself, she claims to be ageless and to come from the stars. While this claim is obviously insane, it is worth noting that she doesn't appear to recognize her family or former friends at all — and, of course, no one denies her considerable powers that defy all reason. She also appears to be able to solve any equation, no matter how complicated, instantly in her head. She isn't aging in any visible way and continues to look as though she is in her early

twenties. At this point, no one who knows about her can pretend that she is merely well preserved.

Furthermore, insane or not, it's clear that she knows what she's talking about. While Her Majesty's agents are numerous and effective, Anne has information no one else seems to have access to, and she has yet to be wrong even once. Her Majesty's representatives contact her when they face dilemmas they cannot solve by themselves. Those who visit her manor have reported seeing thousands upon thousands of sheets of paper strewn endlessly across the floors and furniture. On these papers strange mathematical equations and drawings of unfamiliar constellations have been drawn with painstaking detail. Looking at those papers for too long appeared to cause particularly unpleasant headaches, and at least two visitors reported nosebleeds that started in conjunction with the pain, as well as disturbing dreams during the following nights.

To make matters worse, she makes demands whenever she meets with someone on business. She removes lilies from her mouth, ears, nostrils, even under her eyelids and hands them to the poor souls sent in to negotiate with her. Then she makes a demand and informs them in a melodious but emotionless voice that should it not be met before the flower withers, she will eat their souls.

These demands range from having her manor repainted or some other entirely mundane task to bringing her the ashes of five stillborn children or other seemingly insane demand. More often than not, these demands relate to her flowers — the ashes of the stillborn, for example, she poured into the water she then used to water the lilies in full view of the man who made the delivery.

The flowers are surprisingly resilient, lasting from a few days to as long as three weeks. Only a single recorded instance exists of someone failing to fulfill her demands. The man in question was found in his office in broad daylight, covered in beautiful lilies that had apparently sprung from deep within his body. The office smelled of clean, fresh earth and the sweet lilies. Those who found the man felt happy and relaxed at the sight. Some even took the time to smell the flowers. Only after they left the area were they struck by the horror of what they had witnessed.

It's no wonder that she is not a popular source of information. Still, at times talking to her is the lesser of two evils. Some things out there would do the Empire irreparable harm, and if one has to deal with the devil to save the Queen's domain, so be it.

Whether the question concerns vampires, mortal wizards, lupines or some other supernatural threat, she

can answer it. Curiously, she appears to be ignorant of things before someone asks her about them — on several occasions, someone has asked a question and she has answered, only to be angered by the very answer she herself has given. It is not at all uncommon for her to refuse to answer a question on the grounds that it is not relevant to the matter at hand or the Empire's safety. In these instances, no room for negotiation exists.

She rarely leaves the island, and it's even rarer for her to leave Hong Kong. She's been to London a few times in the past decade and has sworn never to return there again, claiming that the filthy air obscures her view of her beloved stars. On clear nights, she prefers to spend her time leaning on the railing of her grand balcony, craning her head upward and gazing up at the stars or bending over the expensive telescope she demanded and received from the Empire along with the island and the manor.

Image: Anne of Lilies appears to be in her early twenties. She wears simple gowns and other similar attire, and her long, blond hair usually hangs free. She blinks so rarely that when she does it is usually to emphasize something she has just said. She speaks in a quiet and melodious voice, unless someone angers her.

Roleplaying Hints: Nobody understands you, nobody ever could, and it's offensive that they would even try. What they need to do is leave you alone or give you what you want. You love the stars; if only you could reach them again, all would be well, but you're starting to think that will never happen. Those who suggest or even hint that you are insane are the worst fools in existence, and you do not suffer fools at all. Death is too good for them, but unfortunately it's all you have to offer. You do not

make your demands lightly or without your reasons, and those who appreciate their souls understand this.

Applications: Few vampires know of Anne of Lilies' existence or what she is capable of, and those who do tend to avoid her. Thus, she is more likely to be a source of information for vampire hunters employed by the Empire.

The fact that she can answer any question presented to her, supposing that it concerns the supernatural or the Chinese government or is relevant to the immediate safety of the Empire and asked by an official representative of Her Majesty's Government, could very well be brought to the attention of the Kindred who would, naturally, consider her a major threat to the Masquerade.

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Architect

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 1, Empathy 3, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 2,

Knowledges: Academics 1, Area Knowledge (Hong Kong) 3, Finance 4, Linguistics (French, German) 2, Politics 3

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

Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 5, Courage 5



Morality: Humanity 1

Willpower: 9

Note: Anne of Lilies is immune to all powers that affect the mind; hers is an intelligence so inhuman that she simply cannot be reached on that level. Furthermore,

physical pain doesn't seem to affect to her at all, and earthly matters appear to be irrelevant to her. Thus, forcing her into cooperation is extremely difficult unless the would-be extortionist has the power to extinguish the very stars themselves.

The Power of Flowers

Anne of Lilies is a disturbing character of considerable power. Her actual origins are left up to the Storyteller, but here are two possibilities.

- **Human.** Anne is obviously quite insane, and blessed or cursed with strange powers born from sorcery, mutation or an infernal pact, but in the end she is a human being who can be killed. For all her power, she bleeds normally, and a bullet to the brain stem will put her down permanently and without consequences, the same as any other human being.

- **Possessed.** Anne and her father discovered something originating from the nether realms and made the fatal mistake of tampering with it. As a result, something deeply and profoundly inhuman now occupies the body of the young girl. Should someone — a member of the church or a scholar well versed in the occult, for example — exorcise the spirit or simply kill the host body, the creature would have to find a new host too weak-willed to resist its attempt to regain a physical body. A thaumaturgist versed in spirit magics might be able to trap the creature while it is between host bodies and perhaps even learn to tap into its powers.

Many possibilities exist, but Storytellers should keep in mind that by explaining something in great detail to the players one risks reducing it to the mundane.

While Anne can kill or paralyze humans with a single word, supernatural beings, such as vampires, aren't quite as easy targets for her. Should she attempt to use her power on such a creature, both parties roll Willpower, difficulty 6. The first one to accrue five more successes than the other one wins the contest. If Anne wins, her will overpowers the target's and she can paralyze parts of the target's body at will, effectively rendering the target crippled, deaf, mute or even dead, depending on what strikes her fancy. If the target wins, he becomes immune to this power for the rest of the scene.

As long as the contest is underway, neither Anne nor her target can perform any other actions; they must concentrate entirely on their mental struggle.

Should Anne hand one of her lilies to a vampire and make her demand, things might get very interesting indeed. Either the vampire meets the demand, or he suffers the same flowery fate mortals do. (Whether Anne actually consumes mortal souls is unclear, but no mortal killed in this fashion turns into one of the restless dead. It should also be noted that whether Anne remains alive is irrelevant; once the demand has been made, her continued existence is not required for the curse to remain in effect.)

The good news is that a vampire cannot be killed by the flowers; for *Kindred*, unlike mortals, the flowers blossoming throughout their bodies aren't particularly harmful. The bad news is they cannot be hidden and they can't be eliminated short of three complete exsanguinations (draining the character to 1 Blood Point and supplying fresh blood or vitae from others) and three cycles of being reduced to torpor by a customized version of Atrophy (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 182) that is recorded only in tomes stored in two Chinese libraries of blood magic. Should the flowers be cut off or even dug out by the roots — an unpleasant and messy business, to be sure — they grow back in a few minutes. They cover every spot of a character's skin and may even grow in the victim's mouth or other unpleasant locations, making speech impossible or rendering the character deaf or blind.

At this point, of course, the character becomes a walking Masquerade breach. Finding the single solution would require a great deal of painstaking research and association with skilled thaumaturgists. Whether turning one's body into a playground for the Tremere is worth the chance of possibly finding a cure for the lilies is a judgment call no vampire wants to make.

The pleasant smell is a small consolation at best.

Rizhto Pahlmen

Background: A man of indeterminate Eastern European origin, Pahlmen has a shady past and strange connections to disreputable people all over the continent. He has a reputation in certain circles — if someone must die, he's the man to make it happen. Even if it's someone who's already dead.

Alexander II was a man of liberal reforms, but Alexander III has put a stop to such practices. He prefers to rule with a firm hand without too many fools telling him what to do, and he doesn't like vampires, who act as they please and refuse to bow to his rule. Still, he's no fool, and realizes that he cannot press them to service. The Czar is willing to tolerate these beings and overlook certain actions as long as they behave themselves. It's not very surprising that Pahlmen, already with nine vampire kills under his belt, ended up working for the Czar, taking care of those Kindred who flaunted their independence too openly.

When the Czar wants to send a message, Pahlmen is the man to do it. He doesn't negotiate — by the time he is called in, it is time for direct action. Answering only to the Czar and a handful of others, Pahlmen acts with nearly unrivaled freedom and can expect full and unquestioning cooperation from any Russian government agency. In exchange for his independence, he offers the Czar his unwavering loyalty.

To date, Pahlmen has executed more than thirty vampires, most of them in the name of the Czar, in retribution for actions against Alexander III's sovereignty. He has amassed enemies among the Russian Kindred, who hate and fear him with an intensity usually reserved only for elder vampires. Recently he has also made excursions to the outside world, most notably Berlin, London and Paris, in search of offenders who have attempted to escape the Czar's wrath. He appears to have an uncanny knack for locating his targets' havens, and this in particular worries many Kindred. Combined with his tendency to anticipate even the most devious attacks, he is a dangerous and deadly adversary.

Pahlmen never travels anywhere without a group of hand-picked agents, all of whom are experienced and capable. They have killed vampires before and will do so again. They aren't stupid enough to be fearless. What's more, they are smart enough never to play fair. When traveling abroad, he always has diplomatic credentials. Though his actual position and authority vary on a case-by-case basis, he and his men always have diplomatic immunity, and local authorities will have a hard time apprehending him.



Rizhto Pahlmen

Image: Rizhto Pahlmen appears to be a fit man in his early forties. He has a weak chin, a very large nose and heavy, bushy eyebrows, giving the impression of his eyes being buried deep in his skull. His thick, dark hair is graying at the temples. He is a conservative dresser who prefers "appropriate" to "flashy."

Roleplaying Hints: You like killing vampires. Not because they are undead monsters (though putting those evil bastards to the ground is certainly more rewarding than killing normal humans), but because you love to hunt the ultimate hunters. The fact that you can do just about anything in the pursuit of your duties and get away with it is a good bonus. You are loyal to the Czar, but mostly out of professionalism; politics don't interest you. You're not here to make deals or talk — you're here to kill. Still, you're polite and sociable. You may be a killer, but you're not a Philistine.

Applications: If the player characters make too much noise in Russia, they may end up with Pahlmen hot on their trail — and even if they don't personally cause trouble for the Czar, it is always possible that someone they know does. It's equally possible that the characters have the job of killing Pahlmen — one of the Russian Kindred may feel that outside operators are required to have the job done properly.

Nature: Thrill-Seeker

Demeanor: Director

Apparent Age: Early 40s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 4, Melee 4, Ride 3, Security 4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 3, Enigmas 3, Investigation 3, Law 2, Linguistics (English, French, German, Polish) 3, Occult 3, Politics 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Influence 3, Resources 5, Retainers 5, Status 4

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

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 6

Note: Pahlmen has the Merit Oracular Ability (See **Vampire: the Masquerade**, p. 300), and he uses it with great accuracy. This ability not only allows him to locate his prey when they are at their most vulnerable but also gives him advance warning about upcoming attacks on his person. In most cases, this manifests as an itchy nose, which directly contributes to his reputation as a man who can smell trouble coming.

Colonel George “Hound” Brooklet

Background: Colonel Brooklet, like so many others, spent the majority of his career in Africa, fighting savages and clearing the way for British colonialism. A competent and respected soldier, he was well known for his willingness to lead from the front, as well as for his sharp, barklike laugh and his enthusiasm in the pursuit of his prey. Both of these latter qualities earned him the affectionate nickname of “Hound.”

During a nighttime attack on enemy positions, Brooklet — then a major — and his men were surprised to find that some of the men they fought were clearly not men, but monsters in human form. Running into vampires certainly wasn’t something he expected, but when it became clear what they were dealing with, he took to the task with his customary efficiency and vigor. Much to his pleasure, he found that, alive or undead, if you pump enough bullets into someone, he stops moving.

Injured in another battle and rotated out of combat, Brooklet now found himself promoted and working a boring desk job in London. The life of an idle officer didn’t suit Brooklet very well; he soon grew bored and restless. While it might have been possible to receive a field assignment — his injury had healed well enough — he had grown uncomfortable with the way most wars

seemed to be fought. True to his nature, he preferred a less impersonal, more adventurous approach to warfare.

At a gathering of his old men, someone mentioned the idea of forming a mercenary company — the kind that would hunt those creatures they had encountered before. Surely a demand would exist for men willing to undertake such work? Making a few discreet enquiries through his military connections, Brooklet found that should they make such a career choice, they would certainly not suffer from unemployment. It didn’t take them long to make the decision.

Now Brooklet commands a mercenary company of forty men, known simply as the Pack, available to those who have the connections and the money to hire them. While they specialize in vampires, they also have been hired to hunt lupines and other supernatural creatures. All of Brooklet’s men are experienced soldiers and well aware of the threat they face — in addition to helmets and rifles, all men carry stakes and bottles of flammable materials, silver bullets, holy water and religious symbols among other items. They aren’t entirely sure which ones of the stories are true, but why take chances? At least the stakes and fire seem to work rather well on vampires, and the silver bullets put lupines down like the rabid dogs they are, so they must be doing something right.

The Pack employs military tactics in its operations, and Brooklet is blessed with a particularly keen tactical eye. His company is supplied with military equipment. In addition to quality rifles and other similar small arms, they also have access to light artillery and other similar, more impressive weapons. Brooklet enjoys loyalty and respect from his men and extends the same to them without question.

The Pack operates both in Britain and outside its borders; on several occasions, it has been employed by the Foreign Office to take care of particularly difficult problems. Brooklet enjoys very good relations with Her Majesty’s government and can expect a reasonable amount of assistance from it.

Image: George Brooklet is a heavysset man with dark, thick curly hair and bright blue eyes. His two front teeth are slightly crooked inward — they can be easily seen, since he constantly smiles. He prefers to dress casually and doesn’t enjoy fancy clothes — he finds them too restrictive. His military background can clearly be seen in his posture and movements, though. When in the field, he and his men all wear uniforms, complete with rank and insignia of the company. He walks with a slight limp, though his old wound doesn’t particularly inconvenience him.

Roleplaying Hints: You are casual to a fault. There are fellows who like their collars stiff and their drinks



Colonel George "Hound" Brooklet

watered down, but you're not one of them. Despite this, you're a professional and one of the hardest men alive, and they'd better not forget it. You are very concerned for the well-being of your men and refuse to take stupid risks. When in the field, your casual manners are quickly replaced by a commanding presence.

Applications: Brooklet and his men are not likely to come after individual vampires. Rather, they are more often hired to take care of bigger problems — should a group of well-organized Kindred set up shop somewhere, Brooklet and the Pack can be called in to clear them out. While they can and often do operate in urban environments, they are at their best in the wilderness. They aren't particularly low-key, though — big explosions and extended firefights are bound to break out when they go to work.

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Celebrant

Apparent Age: Early 50s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 4, Streetwise 2

Skills: Etiquette 1, Firearms 4, Melee 3, Ride 4, Security 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Linguistics (French, Swahili) 2, Occult 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Resources 3

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 5

Malcolm Sheffard

Background: When a wealthy American industrialist's daughter disappeared, his father suspected that a visiting gentleman from London was to blame. He contacted the Pinkerton Agency for help, and they contacted their London agents to investigate the subject in his native habitat and support.

Pinkerton detective Malcolm Sheffard received the assignment. He was not a particularly good detective, though he had been a very good one at the time he was originally hired. That was years ago; now he drank too much, smoked too much opium and did the absolute minimum of work required to keep his superiors from firing him.

Sheffard located the subject and tailed him. Though he was drunk most of the time, Sheffard still knew his job, and his subject remained unaware of him.

Over the course of the next weeks, he tallied up the subject: He was wealthy. He was careless. He was sure of himself. He never checked for tails. He enjoyed the company of aristocracy. He associated with underworld elements and clearly commanded respect from them. He lived in a classy but badly maintained mansion. He had predictable habits. He slept through the days and was only seen during the night.

On a fateful night, Sheffard witnessed the subject assaulting a whore in an alley. The man slammed the whore against a wall; crimson sprayed against the wall as his fingers flicked impossibly fast across her throat. He saw a flash of fangs, and then the man — the monster — buried its face in the whore's neck.

Sheffard ran. He tried to drink himself into oblivion, but he wouldn't pass out. He knew why — he had to know more. Soon he found himself sneaking into the monster's haven on a mission to discover more, terrified but confident that the creature would follow its established routine and not return home until the next evening.

He was wrong and was forced to hide in the basement, behind a heavy velvet curtain, in a room with a pedestal. He heard noises very close by and nearly succumbed to the impulse to scream out in terror — but when the moment stretched and nothing happened, he

finally dared to peek. He found the creature, still fully clothed, seemingly asleep on the pedestal.

Sheffard sought to escape the basement, but the heavy steel door leading into it was locked. The steel shutters over the small windows were secured with heavy, cast-iron padlocks. Frantic in his need to escape, Sheffard finally decided on a window, drew his revolver and fired at the padlock in order to force his way out, then spun around, ready to fire on the monster. To his great surprise, the thing on the pedestal never even stirred. He threw the shutters open, ready to crawl to freedom.

Sunlight streamed in. Filtered and weakened though it was by the filthy London air, it was still a welcome sight to the detective. The monster on the pedestal felt differently about it. Sheffard heard a piercing scream from behind him, and when he turned, he saw it thrashing, smoking and bursting into flames. Within a few seconds, nothing was left but ashes and smoke. Horrified and astonished, he seized his chance: he gathered what information he could from the premises and burned the place down, destroying all evidence of his presence.

Now that Sheffard has seen the enemy, he knows it must be destroyed. How, he doesn't know — but he is making discreet inquiries and putting two and two together. It will take time, but he's not in a hurry.



Malcolm Sheffard

Image: Average build, average height, average face and average clothes. That's the way Sheffard prefers it; he doesn't want to stand out. He sports a thick mustache and thin eyebrows and has a permanent look of disinterest pasted on his face, marking him as someone who isn't involved or interested in anything you might be doing. Only his sharp and lively eyes betray him to those who take the time to watch him.

Roleplaying Hints: You were a drunk and a failure, but that was before. Even a whiff of alcohol still makes you salivate, but you no longer drink. You know that monsters are out there, and though you aren't entirely sure which stories about them you should believe, you are in the process of collecting information about them. You go about it the way a good detective does: methodically, intelligently and quietly. You know that your reputation in the agency is bad, but between your official cases, you're building up a file — one with hidden back-up copies and numerous "in the event of my death" set-ups — and once you have enough irrefutable proof of these creatures, you will take it to Mr. Pinkerton himself. You are very, very afraid, but it no longer matters. They must be destroyed, at any cost. You will provide the intelligence, and others will do the hunting.

Applications: Malcolm Sheffard can start collecting information on the player characters, in which case the characters may well be in trouble — Sheffard is a bad Masquerade breach waiting to happen. Alternatively, he can be pointed on a rival vampire. While Sheffard is no fool, it's not impossible to trick him into doing someone else's dirty work. Should the chronicle focus on vampire hunters, Sheffard could be an invaluable contact, or possibly even a person who manipulates the player characters and gives them targets. Of course, anyone hiring a Pinkerton in London may well end up with Sheffard. The Storyteller should decide exactly how much information he has gathered on the Kindred on general and the London Cainites in particular, but Sheffard should at least be well informed enough to not make any obvious mistakes.

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Conformist

Apparent Age: Late 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

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

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Melee 2, Security 4, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Academics 3, Area Knowledge (London) 3, Enigmas 3, Investigation 5, Law 2, Linguistics (French) 1, Occult 1

Backgrounds: Resources 2, Contacts (Pinkerton Agency, CID, local underworld elements) 3

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

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 5

Other Things Dark and Curious

While vampires are undeniably at the top of the food chain, they aren't untouchable. Kindred have their share of enemies and perhaps more, and aren't accustomed to dealing with threats other than human or Kindred. It's bad news to them, then, that many things that defy explanation stalk the Victorian nights.

Vampires aren't the only creatures of the night, and they know this. Most Kindred have heard rumors of werewolves, human magicians or other hostile creatures — some have even had personal encounters with them.

They are known risks, but this is an age of exploration, and white spots still appear on the maps of the

world. Who knows what creatures lurk in the hidden parts of the world and may return to civilized countries with brave explorers? The savage jungles and unexplored wastelands hold many secrets, and while many laugh at stories of the existence of strange creatures and monsters, wiser vampires know better — after all, they are considered to be a myth by the world at large. The Gangrel who roam the wilderness at times speak of creatures even stranger or more dangerous than lupines.

Strange creatures from unknown lands are only part of the horror. Things also stalk the streets of even the most civilized cities — indeed, it appears that the greater the city, the more likely that creatures are lurking in the shadows. Sanitation, while improved from the days of the Black Plague, is still rather primitive. Garbage rots in back alleys, and rats have free reign in many parts of the city. Strange things spawn in the dark cesspools of the sewers, and while the Nosferatu and their spawning pools may be blamed for some of the beasts that crawl into the light, they are rarely responsible for these mongrels that are too peculiar to live and too rare to die. Some of them are vicious but mindless beasts, others are almost human in their deviousness. Some are clearly supernatural and display varied and disturbing powers.

Paris, 8 April, 1871

Mistress Alexandra,

I regret to inform you that in my duty to protect your haven during your extended stay in the New World, I have miserably failed.

*On 6 April, I was interrupted in my work when I heard considerable commotion from the street. I sent young Fergus to investigate. He never returned; instead, a savage creature with bloodied fangs burst into the study. It resembled an African gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*) in form, but it was no taller than a man. The hair covering its body was completely white, except where it was stained with fresh blood.*

In the following struggle, the creature smashed the oil lamp, and it furthers my shame to admit that the proximity of the flames caused me to momentarily lose my head and flee. When I regained my composure and returned to the haven, the creature was gone, having wrecked the study and surrounding areas before making its way out again through the front door. Young Fergus had been forced into torpor by his struggle with the creature, but I am pleased to report that he is already up and about, none the worse for the wear. For what it's worth, the fire caused very little damage, and I am happy to report that your library and sanctum are still quite intact.

According to eyewitness reports, the creature only entered the building when it was provoked into doing so by young Fergus, who has been properly punished for his lack of discretion and foolhardiness. It is my considered opinion that this was not a deliberate attack but rather a random if rather bizarre event. However, I am somewhat concerned that the beast is still on the loose. Having ingested a considerable amount of young Fergus' vitae, I fear that it may now prove to be a particularly resilient foe. Nonetheless, I am confident that the Sheriff is up to the task of hunting it down.

Your dutiful childe,

Jean-Pierre Beauchamp

Even traditionally innocent plant life takes on new and dangerous qualities. Explorers bring back particularly vicious flesh-eating plants that seem to have a particular hankering for vitae, and some among the Kindred have no qualms about cultivating and refining such plants to their own, very specific ends. Nor is all dangerous flora foreign; many cities have their own botanical dangers. On some nights, a quickly growing moss creeps from the sewers and wraps itself around the bodies of the sleeping homeless, turning them into rich dirt overnight, and elsewhere tendrils of outlandish lichen sometimes creep into the bedrooms of the unwary through cracks in the windowpanes and silently release clouds of spores. In the morning, the beds are empty, and what looks like a fine network of spider web completely fills the room

Finally, the occult is very much the rage among the upper classes of the Victorian age, especially in London, and this enthusiasm appears to attract strange beings. Some theorize that the very power of belief these people radiate causes beasts to become real — and not all of them are incorporeal spirits, trapped in the otherworld and unable to act in the physical world.

Monsters? What Gives?

While **Vampire** is not traditionally a game about monster bashing, Victorian literature is full of strange beings and goings-on. From the relatively scientific fantasies of H. G. Wells and Jules Verne to the far more baroque nightmares of writers like Sheridan Le Fanu, mysteries and unprecedented phenomena abound. No chronicle has to include such things if they seem inappropriate for its particular themes; use them only insofar as they enrich the game in ways that suit the participants (if not their characters).

The Giant Rat of Sumatra

In 1881, the merchant ship *Matilda Briggs* arrived in London, having left Sumatra some months earlier. The ship was supposedly loaded with spices, but in truth its cargo was a large shipment of opium. The ship didn't dock gently; instead, it crashed into the pier. In the ensuing chaos, a ratlike creature the size of a large dog leapt from the ship, mutilated a dockhand and disappeared down an alley.

Once the police boarded the *Matilda Briggs*, a horrible scene of slaughter appeared before their eyes. Of its original crew of thirty, only six were still alive. Their

officers' orders were unambiguous: the case should be handled very quickly and quietly, and under no circumstances should the public be alarmed. A covert hunt for the escaped creature began, but it evaded all capture for months and killed at least a dozen people, until it was finally hunted down, trapped and destroyed by a private detective hired to handle the case as discreetly as possible.

None of the surviving crew members was sane. They babbled of a monster and were terrified of ordinary rodents to the point of attempting to take their own lives when faced with a harmless, caged rat. They could tell the authorities little, but apparently the captain of the *Matilda Briggs* had brought the creature aboard during their stay in Sumatra. It had behaved well enough for weeks, but during the last two weeks of the journey it had suddenly turned on the captain, and after that the crew itself. All of the men spoke of a fierce intelligence burning in the rat-thing's eyes and claimed that it knew their secrets and ate their dreams.

From that night on, British authorities were instructed to pay special attention to all ships that had recently paid a visit to Sumatra, but to date no other similar creatures have been encountered. Still, where one is, others may be also

While giant rats of Sumatra start out as disproportionately large but otherwise ordinary rats, prolonged exposure to intelligent beings — mortal humans, vampires or any other creatures capable of independent thought — turns them into terrible monsters. Naturally telepathic, the giant rats are psychic vampires, leeching intelligence from their victims. Even the very souls of their victims are consumed in the process; thus one whose mind has been eaten by a giant rat of Sumatra will not become a ghost and cannot be contacted by necromancy. If the rat is destroyed, every soul thus trapped is released.

While the rats cannot communicate verbally, they are all naturally telepathic and have a power similar to the *Auspex* power of Telepathy, with the exception that they don't have to spend a point of Willpower to contact the minds of supernatural creatures. They may also project terrible visions into the minds of others by rolling Intelligence + Subterfuge. The target is aware of the attack (though not necessarily where it is coming from) and may resist with a Willpower roll. This is an extended action; once the rat has more successes than the target has Willpower, the target becomes insane — intense paranoid schizophrenia is the most common result. The rats are of the opinion that insane minds are far tastier and more filling than ordinary ones, and thus they often spend days or even weeks driving their victims insane

with horrific visions before finally devouring them. Naturally, for a giant rat of Sumatra, Malkavians are a grand feast waiting to happen.

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 7, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2

Skills: Stealth 5

Attack: Bite for 7 dice

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

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

Mind Drain

If a giant rat of Sumatra spends at least a week in the company of an intelligent being, it becomes intelligent itself. The rat gains a single dot of Intelligence, the equivalent of a young child or a retarded adult. This has no adverse effects on the being in question.

Unfortunately, the rat cannot become more intelligent simply by basking in the stray thoughts of other beings. To become more intelligent, it must devour the minds of others. The rat eats the brain of its victim, usually along with any other body parts it feels like eating. (Unlike vampires, giant rats don't need to consume strange things to survive; they merely want to do so. They subsist on what any other rat would, albeit in far greater quantities, and can starve to death if they cannot find anything to eat.)

The rat gains an additional dot of Intelligence for every ten victims it consumes, whether human, vampire or any other intelligent being. (At Storyteller's discretion, beings who have an Intelligence rating higher than five dots may grant the rat more than one dot of Intelligence.) After it has reached five dots of Intelligence, it can continue to become yet more intelligent by continuing to eat the minds of its victims, but at this point every new dot of intelligence gained requires (10 x current Intelligence rating) victims. Every insane victim devoured by the rat counts as two sane victims.

Note that giant rats of Sumatra who have reached this level are superhumanly intelligent. Though they are thoroughly evil and twisted, they may be willing to cooperate with vampires, realizing quite correctly that working together may be a far better choice than being destroyed.

Morality: Humanity 1

Willpower: 5

Notes: Giant rats of Sumatra may gain other abilities as their intelligence increases. While their front paws aren't ideal for manipulating weapons or tools, they're easily agile enough for turning pages of books or other similar tasks. This template represents a rat that has gained just enough intelligence to become a problem — Etiquette, Finance, Performance, Politics, Subterfuge and other abilities are most appropriate for more advanced rats. The most advanced rats may also develop Backgrounds that reflect their ability to enlist or command human and other followers; rats given time and opportunity may build secret networks to rival those of Moriarty and Mithras.

Demon Lichen

Demon lichen grows deep under cities. It's a fragile plant, ill-suited for survival; it cannot derive sustenance from sunlight, water and nutrients. When the Great War begins in the early 20th century, air has already become too polluted for it to survive. Still, for the time being, it thrives, feeding on living creatures.

The heart of the lichen is hidden away in some small nook in the bowels of the city, more often than not in a small crack in the wall or a natural hollow, almost completely inaccessible by people. It sends out very long tendrils that slowly travel to the surface, seeking the warmth of living bodies. When they come close to one, they release a cloud of spores. When the spores come into contact with the victim, they first cause him to fall into a deep coma. Shortly afterward, the victim's skin begins to dissolve and turns into fine, sticky weblike material that bursts out from his body, attaching itself to the ceiling, walls and furniture. Sooner or later, the webbing comes into contact with the lichen's tendrils. At that point a connection is established between the victim and the lichen, and the victim's body immediately starts to dissolve into a fluid. This fluid is transmitted into the lichen through the pulsating web. Once the body has been entirely dissolved, the lichen retreats, leaving behind only the depleted webbing and the victim's clothes, if he was wearing any. Fillings, earrings and other foreign objects are also left behind, but the body itself disappears completely.

Completely mindless and unable to defend itself, demon lichen can nevertheless be difficult to get rid of: cutting loose or burning individual tendrils does nothing to the rest of the plant. The tendrils themselves are completely harmless, but the spores they release can be deadly. The demon lichen can only effectively release its spores within enclosed spaces; in very large rooms or



outdoors the spores drift too far apart to be of any use. They inflict a level of automatic bashing damage every turn and immediately put normal mortals in a coma. Webbing starts to burst out only after the victim is immobile. Vampires are unaffected by this effect while awake and active but can still end up victims of the lichen during slumber and torpor or when immobilized by a stake.

The best way to destroy demon lichen is to burn it completely away at the center of its existence. Once the thick, white mass of lichen has been destroyed, the tendrils immediately wither away and die. This can be a difficult task, since the lichen's tendrils often travel far away from their point of origin, usually located deep underground in places that the tendrils can easily sneak in and out of but which human-sized beings have a hard time reaching. Many Nosferatu are familiar with demon lichen and exterminate them as soon as they run across them.

Demon lichen that has consumed a vampire becomes a serious threat. While the lichen doesn't gain any actual intelligence or purpose, a shadow of the vampire's memories remains, and the lichen attempts to spread itself to the vicinity of those for whom the vampire had

strong feelings — love, hate, affection, disdain or anything at all. What's more, after imbibing the vampire's vitae, demon lichen grows faster than before, and its tendrils cover great distances in the course of a single night, crossing from one end of a great metropolis to another.

Demon lichen's actual health levels depend entirely on how big it has been able to grow. Small ones may have just one or two health levels, whereas large ones may have dozens. The more victims they claim, the larger they become. Individual tendrils may be cut or crushed by one level of either lethal or bashing damage and immediately wither away when destroyed. Those who want to destroy the lichen completely had best refrain from destroying all of the tendrils they discover, as without them finding the lichen itself is nearly impossible.

The Eyeless Urchins

It is terrible to be cast out into the cold and terrible to grow up without a mother. Yet in this age it is not an uncommon thing. Too many parents simply cannot afford to or don't want to take care of their children.

Many of them end up in orphanages — unpleasant places, to be sure, but it's usually better than living on the streets, if only barely. Nobody asks after an orphan. Some foundlings don't even have names until someone bothers to invent ones for them or they come up with monikers themselves. An incredibly lucky few are adopted, but most spend their early lives in cramped conditions. Those who survive sickness, physical abuse and poor conditions grow up to be malnourished young men and women. Some fortunates make their way out of these miserable conditions either through perseverance, luck or a combination of the two, but most live, grow old and die in the same squalor they were born into.

Some unwanted children never end up in orphanages. Some people are of such feeble morality that they dispose of these children in an even less humane manner. Some adults can wring a tender neck or weigh a baby down and throw it in the Thames, but even the most corrupt of men tend to lack the nerve to murder a newborn themselves. More often than not, they leave such babies to the elements in some filthy back alley, run away and drink until the shrill cries disappear in a drunken haze. Some are rescued by passersby, but most such children die shortly of cold and hunger.

Every once in a while, one or two small children creep up from the shadows to the frightened infant. Cold fingers pick the child up, and, acting on instinct, the newcomer leans close to the child's face. In the chaste kiss of a sibling, a tiny flicker of ectoplasm flows from one set of lips to another, and the crying stops with a final, terrified wail that echoes in the darkness long afterward. The child is carried away. It is not fed; it no longer eats. It is not kept warm; no clothing can warm the fragile bones of this child. Yet it grows up to join its peers. Its eyes rot away, but it is blessed with an unnatural and accurate sight that defies reason.

Not quite alive, not quite dead, the baby becomes one of the eyeless urchins. Their clothes, what little they have, are soiled. No onlooker can tell where filth ends and skin begins. They are thin and bony and desperate, but their empty sockets are aglow with an eerie light.

The urchins dwell in parts of London mortal eyes rarely, if ever, gaze upon. They know the narrowest alleys, the holes in the pavement and the loose bricks in the walls. They know the underground tunnels, the sewer lines that no grown man would ever fit into. Their routes lead across the rooftops, below the buildings and through the narrow spaces between sewage and civilizations; they can cross the city without once setting their foot on a major street. They move quickly and quietly, in packs, and they always seem to know exactly where they are going.

When they aren't moving, they congregate in safe havens such as cellars, abandoned attics, spaces in the ceilings too small for adults to reach. They sit and huddle together for warmth that will never come. Nobody cries; no tears are left. Nobody talks; they have nothing to say. Nobody hungers; they are beyond hunger.

All they can think of is the cold.

When it becomes unbearable, the people of London who walk the streets at night may hear the patter of small feet against cobblestones and suddenly find themselves surrounded by a dozen or more eerily quiet children. The eyeless urchins don't ask for handouts. Instead, like an organic wave, they pour forth from sewers, alleys and other small spaces, surrounding their victim.

Not just anyone will do. They require a warmth that goes beyond mere physical temperature. Only those who have sired or born children will do, and even then more than the mere act of procreation is required. To the empty sockets of an urchin, the warmth of parental love glows like a beacon.

The urchins prefer to take mothers — many a whore plying her nightly trade to pay for the food her baby needs has met her end in the darkness beyond the gaslights — but loving fathers will do as well if no women are available. Sometimes the Urchins break into homes, taking both parents at once, only minutes before adding the now-orphaned children to their own ranks.

It is never enough. The rush of warmth the urchins extract from their victims soon fades, and they are left looking for the next one.

The bodies of the urchins' victims appear to be unmolested, but they are cold (even in the middle of the summer) and rigid, as if in a permanent state of rigor mortis. It isn't muscle tension that causes the rigidity but the bones themselves, frozen in whatever position they were in when the victim died — usually in a telltale position of attempted defense. The bones are also strangely brittle. Any attempt to move the victims' limbs to another position causes them to snap.

It's a mystery to the authorities, who cannot understand what killed these people. Nobody can shed any light on the matter. No witnesses can be found, no evidence. Nobody sees the eyeless urchins. They are everywhere and nowhere. They don't ask questions and they don't share their stories. All they want is someone to hold them.

The motherless children of London are coming home, and they are looking for a little warmth.

Image: The urchins are small children and don't usually attract much attention. London is, after all, full of the little bastards; it's a rare citizen indeed who pays





much heed to what they do. Filthy, scrawny, barely clothed and perpetually hungry, they are no different from any other child of the streets. Only their eyes betray their true nature. Behind the mass of unkempt hair, hollow and rotten eye sockets glow with an eerie, greenish light of bioluminescent nature.

Roleplaying Hints: Cold. Must be warm. Mother is warm. Mother is close. We go to Mother for warmth.

Applications: The urchins aren't much of a threat to vampires as such. As Kindred aren't alive, they are of absolutely no interest to the urchins; in any case, physically the urchins are mere children, if particularly vicious ones. Ghouls and other mundane servants or associates may be ambushed and killed by the urchins, however.

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Survivor

Apparent Age: Under 10

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 5

Skills: Brawl 4

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (London) 5

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 1, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 1

Willpower: 4

Notes: The eyeless urchins always appear in groups of a dozen or more and rely on their numbers to overwhelm opponents. Make normal Brawl attacks for the urchins against mortal or ghouled humans, except that the urchins cause Lethal damage. They do not punch or kick their victims; rather, they cling to them in a twisted approximation of a child hugging a parent. These attacks are completely ineffective against Kindred.

Independent Humans

Governments and organizations associated with them deal with Kindred, or at least with the consequences of their actions, on a regular basis, but interaction with the undead is by no means the sole province of those with authority and the blessing of some government or the other.

Some individuals are always fascinated by vampires, and no wonder: unaging, inhumanly graceful, mysterious, beautiful and terrible — weak-willed and easily

swayed mortals are easily fooled by them. Depending on the Kindred in question, such mortals are either favored or tolerated, used or abused, respected or sneered at. Still, not everyone who deals with vampires is starstruck. Some people are in it for the profit, because they get a kick out of dealing with the supernatural or simply because they don't have a choice. Some have serious personal reasons for working with (or against) the Kindred, and for others it's a question of conviction.

Regardless of the specific circumstances, it's possible for a mortal to find a profitable niche in which to interact with the Kindred without becoming a blood-bound slave to them. To remain in such a position for an extended time may not be easy, but some manage it.

Jacqueline Kipling-Halfstaff

Background: In the early 19th century, the Halfstaff Shipping Company did good business in the slave trade. Thousands upon thousands of people were shipped from Africa to America, and the profits were beyond satisfactory. The Halfstaff family was past prosperous and on its way to being rich.

Unfortunately, when Jacqueline Halfstaff inherited the company after the death of her father in the latter half of the 19th century, slavery had already been abolished both in America and Britain, and the once great shipping fleet was a shadow of its former self. What's more, the family fortune had all but dwindled away. Luckily for her, the 1868 Pharmacy Act, which restricted the sale of opium to professional pharmacists, gave an answer to her problem. Smuggling opium wasn't that different from shipping slaves, and now the profits were considerable. Selling opium in Britain was illegal, but it was easy to buy in India and other Asian locations.

Today, Mrs. Kipling-Halfstaff — she married Daniel Kipling, a barrister of considerable legal skills and proud owner of a personality far too weak to slow down his wife — is turning a tidy profit as the head of a large international smuggling ring. The Halfstaff Shipping Company traffics in many kinds of items but concentrates mainly on opium. Her success rests on meticulous planning, generous bribes and a fear-inducing reputation among the denizens of the extralegal community. This last part isn't her own doing but rather part of a discreet arrangement with the Camarilla, which had already had dealings with her husband in the past and came in as silent partners whether she wanted them or not. Mrs. Kipling-Halfstaff isn't overjoyed about this, but she has to admit that vampires make good business partners. They pull the strings behind the scenes to make sure her business runs smoothly and the law stays away from her, and she



Jacqueline Kipling-Halfstaff

reciprocates by shipping anything the Kindred want wherever they want, no questions asked.

The arrangement has proven mutually satisfactory. The company is doing well, she enjoys a fair degree of independence, and — much to her own surprise — she is happily married. While not that much actual love exists between her and her husband, they get along very well and enjoy each other's company, and that's more than she ever actually expected to get.

Image: Jacqueline Kipling-Halfstaff is handsome, not beautiful. She makes up for what she might lack with excellent taste in clothes; strictly speaking, she's not a showoff. Her clothes are good quality but not too expensive, and while she knows her best sides, she doesn't strut. She is a tall, surprisingly athletic woman sporting long locks of red hair, neatly brushed and tied back.

Roleplaying Hints: You are calm, collected and cool — but not so cool as to appear cold. You love the glamour of high society but cannot stand the prudish attitudes that more often than not demote you to the level of an ornament. Still, you enjoy the company of intelligent people and a good debate, and if both can be found at the same time, all is well. Halfstaff Shipping Company is your company and your property, and though you know that as a woman you unfortunately can't claim

complete independence and get away with it, you'll be damned before you let anyone tell you how to run your business. You dislike and fear vampires, but a deal's a deal, and you put on a good show of carefree cooperation for them. They reciprocate by not killing you, and you have a feeling that that's about as good a deal as you can get from these monsters.

Applications: Anyone interested or involved in the drug trade may run into Mrs. Kipling-Halfstaff. Those who complicate matters for her may soon find themselves in trouble; she is well connected both within mortal and Cainite society, and individuals in both prefer to see her business thriving and don't mind hurting people in order to accomplish that. Camarilla vampires who need something — themselves, perhaps — shipped from one corner of the world to another can always contact the Halfstaff Shipping Company. Vampiric clients and their special requirements are taken care of with discretion and skill.

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Architect

Apparent Age: Early 40s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 1, Empathy 3, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 2

Knowledges: Academics 1, Area Knowledge (London) 3, Finance 4, Linguistics (French, German) 2, Politics 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Influence 2, Resources 4, Retainers 5, Status 1

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

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 6

Jacob Stonerose

Background: Closely associated with Oscar Wilde, often seen and even more often heard of in the occult circles of Europe, Jacob Stonerose is a man who has a well deserved reputation for flamboyance, egotism and decadence. What he loses to Wilde in wit and presentability, he more than makes up for in occult knowledge and shady contacts.

Stonerose is a homosexual, which is an open secret in the circles where such practices aren't much frowned upon. While he takes pride in his preferences, he still has the smarts not to flaunt them in the faces of those who will not accept him. After all, laws exist against such

practices, and Stonerose — while not categorically opposed to standing up for what he is — would rather not face the judge on charges of sodomy or, indeed, any charges at all. He moves effortlessly through all levels of Victorian society, but he prefers to be among those who are rich enough to live the good life and free-spirited enough to act as they please.

Kindred looking for information on the occult often look up Stonerose and take advantage of his extensive knowledge and connections. Stonerose has a large and well guarded occult library that contains ancient and secret volumes. Stonerose has a great deal of knowledge but no practical experience in magick (he insists on the "k") — while he knows a great many rituals by heart and could certainly be a mortal wizard of some note, he has never performed one and doesn't intend to. He believes that practicing such arts never leads anyone to a good end, and thus he's only interested in the information itself, not its applications.

As payment for his services, Stonerose accepts both money and occult knowledge. In the case of latter, "knowledge" means documents, books, detailed accounts from credible eyewitnesses or other similar things; hearsay and vague references will not be acceptable. He insists on payment upon delivery — he doesn't accept favors or promises of things to come unless he considers the client to be particularly trustworthy or too dangerous to be argued with. In the case of the latter, he starts to take precautions — he has powerful clients, who are likely to want to ensure that Stonerose stays in business.

Stonerose remains firmly unaffiliated with any particular sect or clan, though certain Tremere in particular make frequent use of his services. He is wary of vampires, but more out of practical reasons than any fear of the supernatural. Not all of his clients are vampires — other strange beings and even ordinary mortals deal with him. Stonerose doesn't care, as long as the pay's good. He isn't cheap, but he's fair, if only because he definitely doesn't want to antagonize his clients.

Image: Decadent, graceful and beautiful, Stonerose dresses flamboyantly but always tastefully — if only barely. He has exceptionally large hands and feet, but their size belies their natural speed and dexterity — skillful sleight-of-hand tricks are his specialty, and he can almost always be seen playing with cards, coins and other similar items.

Roleplaying Hints: You are always hungry for more occult knowledge and will be glad to deal with anyone who might offer you some. You flirt with beautiful men and women, though the latter usually seem to be able to tell that you aren't really interested. You are witty (though



Jacob Stonerose

Skills: Etiquette 4, Firearms 1, Sleight of Hand 4, Stealth 1
Knowledges: Academics 4, Enigmas 4, Finance 1, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics (French, German, Greek, Latin) 3, Occult 5
Backgrounds: Contacts 5 (simply everybody, darling), Fame 2, Influence 2, Resources 4
Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 3
Morality: Humanity 5
Willpower: 6

The Brotherhood of Penitence

Vampires act with impunity; they are immortal beings, beyond God's laws and retribution, free of morals and codes of conduct except those they choose to impose upon themselves. This is what many vampires believe, but they are wrong, and the Brotherhood of Penitence exists to prove the point. The members believe vampires to be imperfect angels, created by God with several flaws, but only one that truly matters — a lack of conscience. Yet God, in His infinite mercy, decided to spare them and gave the Brotherhood the task of both serving them and acting as their conscience.

The earliest records the order has of its existence date back to the late 13th century. Members of the order believe that they have existed for far longer, but the most ancient records were destroyed in 1442 when the order was nearly destroyed by the Kindred and only a handful of the order's members managed to escape.

The Brotherhood expects vampires to follow a code of conduct, and rewards or punishes them accordingly. The code follows Humanity's Hierarchy of Sins relatively closely, but important differences exist.

Vampires are not humans, therefore they do not have to follow the same rules as humans do. Killing while feeding, for example, is acceptable behavior; that is their divine right as angelic hunters. Wanton murder or unnecessary cruelty is frowned upon, however, and murdering other Kindred is a great sin. (Diablerie, however, is entirely acceptable and even commendable, as the victim doesn't so much die as unites with the diablerist, thus creating a stronger vampire.) Entering frenzy is frowned upon, especially if it results in the deaths of mortals or other vampires — giving in to the Beast and letting it run loose is considered to be antithetical to angels. On the other hand, creating progeny is considered to be a great thing, a reaffirmation of God's will.

The Brotherhood is composed of three groups: archivists, watchers and balancers.

Archivists are the heart, mind and soul of the entire order — everyone else is expendable, but archivists keep

not quite as witty as you think) and love to run in circles around those who can't quite keep up with your verbal exercises, but you're not stupid enough to do it to vampires. You have no desire ever to become one, what with all that distasteful messing about with blood and aversion to sunshine and so forth, but they're certainly interesting. And yes, you prefer boys with a pulse, no matter how beautiful they are.

Applications: Characters looking for information on the occult or the occult scene in Europe will more likely than not end up talking to Jacob Stonerose. Many in these circles are hard to contact without suitable references from someone, and Stonerose is quite willing to provide them if the characters can meet his price. Stonerose can most often be found in London, but he travels around all of civilized Europe on a regular basis.

Nature: Celebrant
Demeanor: Bon Vivant
Apparent Age: Mid-30s
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Subterfuge 3

the records that allow the Brotherhood to function. These records include information on the order's history and on every known vampire and are updated as often as possible.

The watchers travel the world, looking for Kindred and information on their activities, writing extensive reports and sending them to the archivists. Hundreds of them are all over the world: most major cities have at least two watchers, often unaware of each other and believing themselves alone in the area. Thus archivists attempt to ensure that the reports they receive aren't too homogenous and limited in scope.

Archivists constantly evaluate the vampires they know about and often decree that someone should be punished or rewarded based on his recent actions. Vampires who break the code may face inexplicable financial problems, deaths or permanent injuries of loved mortals, strange accidents, vampire hunters or other mortals who have somehow gained detailed information about them, even sunlight streaming into their havens during the day and burning them, but somehow ceasing a mere heartbeat before Final Death. On the other hand, vampires who sire many childer and refrain from unnecessary

violence may find themselves suddenly in good fortunes — troublesome mortals may disappear, intelligence about their enemies' movements is delivered to them, arcane knowledge becomes available by a stroke of good luck and business opportunities arise.

Watchers are the Brotherhood's eyes and ears, and theirs is the dangerous and lonely duty of keeping an eye on Kindred and reporting their actions to the archivists. While no watcher is allowed to take direct action against a vampire — as they do not know the entire story behind any given situation, their judgment is automatically considered to be faulty — they are allowed to take drastic measures in their pursuit of knowledge. Thus, mortals or ghouls may be captured and tortured for information (and killed afterward, to preserve secrecy), havens may be broken into, files may be stolen and so forth.

The order considers its members above the code it expects vampires to adhere to. Wanton murder of mortals is forbidden to vampires, but the order's operatives are allowed to engage in all sorts of misdeeds as long as they further the order's divine cause. The only limitation is that watchers may never take risks that would compromise the order's secrecy. Many of the rewards and

Do They Know Me?

How comprehensive are these records? Do they actually have accurate information on the player characters, for example? Possibly! If the character in question has kept a very low profile, it's more than likely that absolutely no information on her is in the Brotherhood's archives. On the other hand, well known figures in either sect, famous anarchists, elders and other Kindred who have made names for themselves certainly have their own entries in the archives. The word gets around, and sooner or later it will reach the ears of the Brotherhood. The older the vampire, the more likely it is that the archives have information on her.

Whether this information is accurate, useful or even relevant is another question entirely. Indeed, the vast archives include volumes upon volumes of insignificant minutiae that the archivists use to draw their conclusions on the vampires' characters, with varying degrees of success. The watchers, despite their best intentions, are unable to keep full track of their subjects' activities, and fake names, rumors, misunderstandings and intentional misinformation spread by the Kindred cause even further confusion. Even other vampires don't know what the rest of their kind are up to, so how could a mortal outsider have a chance of doing so?

Therefore, it's not uncommon for a vampire to have several entries under different names in the archives and be treated as several different individuals by the archivists — in extreme cases, one may receive assistance while another may end up targeted for retribution, even at the same time. It's not uncommon for balancers to undertake missions that concern Kindred who have already long ago moved to another city or even died the Final Death. Even more importantly, the incomplete and fragmentary nature of the archives causes the archivists to connect the dots with alarming inaccuracy. Monstrous vampires may be rewarded while saintlike vampires end up fighting for their lives.

While the archivists themselves certainly believe that they pass judgment on Kindred with full and well informed objectivity, an outside observer would find this claim laughable at best.

punishments unwitting vampires bring upon themselves can be arranged by the manipulations of watchers, but when more drastic measures are required, their skills aren't sufficient to the task at hand. The order's warriors, known as balancers, are well suited for hunting vampires.

Using arcane astrological means, the archivists divine proper times of birth for the fiercest and most dedicated warriors. Suitable candidates are stolen from their parents by watchers within two weeks of their birth, and these children begin their training as chosen warriors as soon as they are able to hold a weapon.

Before that, they grow up in ascetic and harsh surroundings conditioned with continuous sermons, lectures and potent chemicals. Their lives are strictly regulated; any attempts to form friendships or other ties to their fellow balancers-in-training or their teachers are punishable offenses. Questions are not encouraged. Those who prove too weak, too emotional or otherwise unworthy of the great honor are killed outright. Not surprisingly, the number of recruits in each "class" dwindles as the years go by. Those few who survive are exceptional tools of murder, completely loyal to the archivists and the order itself.

When balancers start hunting a specific vampire, they usually have a decent idea of that vampire's strengths and weaknesses; after all, such an attack is only authorized after painstaking research that may have taken decades or even centuries. A balancer never willingly kills a vampire other than his target (though he may incapacitate one in order to fulfill his mission), though both normal mortals and ghouls must survive collateral damage as best they can. Vampires who manage to survive a balancer or two are usually left alone, as they considered to be under God's protection and part of some greater plan — after all, how else could the order have failed?

The order is well informed about vampires' society and powers (at least by mortal standards) and has great resources at its disposal, collected over the centuries — money and the best equipment are always available for its agents. It doesn't have a great deal in the way of manpower — dedicated and properly trained agents are hard to come by. Members of the Brotherhood of Penitence may, at the Storyteller's discretion, have True Faith (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 272). Even if they don't, they are fiercely dedicated to their cause and take to their duties with fanatical zeal. Even the Inquisition can't boast similar dedication among its operatives; not a single member among the Brotherhood is unwilling to die for the cause — even though most of their field operatives have no idea why they are doing what they are

doing, their single-minded dedication keeps them from asking questions.

Archivist

These elderly men spend most of their time buried in paperwork. They never leave their remote, well hidden hideout, so player characters won't meet them unless they specifically go looking for them. Only half a dozen of these scholars exist. Experienced and intelligent watchers are promoted to archivists as required — after all, unlike their subjects of study, archivists don't live forever. Archivists are superb at manipulating and brainwashing their underlings, but for all their intelligence, they are grossly misled and prone to overestimating the quality and/ or importance of the information they receive.

- Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
- Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2
- Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 2
- Talents:** Empathy 2, Subterfuge 2
- Skills:** Etiquette 3
- Knowledges:** Academics 4, Enigmas 4, Finance 1, Investigation 2, Law 3, Linguistics (French, German, Italian, Latin) 4, Occult 4
- Backgrounds:** Resources 5
- Virtues:** Conscience 4, Self-Control 5, Courage 2
- Morality:** Humanity 4
- Willpower:** 6

Watcher

Watchers aren't warriors. They can defend themselves against mortals, ghouls and other opponents, but a vampire will not have any trouble dispatching a watcher. Watchers never carry anything on their persons or in their belongings that would point toward the order, and will sooner take their own lives than compromise its secrecy — poison capsules are routinely carried for just this purpose. They never take notes; instead, they commit everything to memory and use extremely complicated codes when sending reports to the archivists.

- Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
- Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2
- Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
- Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3
- Skills:** Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Stealth 4
- Knowledges:** Academics 2, Enigmas 3, Finance 1, Investigation 4, Law 1, Linguistics (French, German, Italian, Latin) 3, Occult 2
- Backgrounds:** Contacts 3, Resources 4



Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 5, Courage 2
Morality: Humanity 5
Willpower: 6

Balancer

About two dozen balancers exist in the world. When they aren't on a mission, they hone their already considerable skills and concentrate on guarding the archivists. Balancers are as cold and emotionless as human beings possibly can be — far more so than most vampires, as a matter of fact. They have no friends, no social ties, and they have never been loved. Many of them aren't even aware of the concept. A lifetime of brutally effective conditioning has made their personalities undeveloped and weak, leaving only steely conviction. They don't consider themselves to be human or inhuman — they are balancers, and that is enough. Balancers don't infiltrate, plot or plan — they simply go where they are directed by archivists and watchers, and kill using the most effective, underhanded and straightforward methods possible — for example, burning down an entire building filled with mortals just to kill the vampire target is considered to be an acceptable and sensible tactic.

Balancers ignore all dice penalties brought on by pain, stress, fear or other similar states — they are too single-minded to care. (Common sense applies here — if a balancer's limb is chopped off, for example, dice penalties obviously apply; at that point, tenacity becomes a nonissue.)

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 5
Skills: Etiquette 1, Firearms 5, Melee 5, Stealth 4
Knowledges: Enigmas 1, Investigation 1
Backgrounds: Resources 4
Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 2, Courage 5
Morality: Humanity 2
Willpower: 9



Exotic Mysteries at Home

In its structure and its devotion to esoteric doctrine, the Brotherhood resembles the Eastern cults beloved of Victorian mystery writers and hated by the colonial administrations which must deal with them. Characters familiar with India, for instance, might well mistake the Brotherhood for a Western branch of the thuggees, while characters with experience in Africa or Latin America could likewise confuse it with cults and secret societies of those lands. The Brotherhood sometimes deliberately exploits this resemblance to point suspicion at other targets while carrying out its own schemes.





Chapter Four: The Stories of The Age

Amid the smog and respectability that are in the popular imagination thought to represent the fabric of the Eighteen Nineties, there nevertheless flourished beneath this crust poisonous growths and monstrous orchids, beings that took the outward semblance of humankind, murder, magic, rites older even than civilisation, devils, fiends, labyrinths of the damned

- Konrad F. Dietrich, The Undercurrents of History in Western Culture



Victorian Age: Vampire chronicles don't have to take on the forms of Victorian stories, but since they already include the background and characters, using the rest of the tradition as well can enrich the game. Characters can and sometimes should discover that all the things they feared when alive prove all too true now that they are undead.

The classic Gothic story was pre-Victorian, and by the 1830s it had developed its major conventions: dark convents of corrupt nuns, evil at the heart of churches and cathedrals, tortured heroes and heartrendingly innocent heroines, dominating guardians, shadowed mood and deep intensity. In the Victorian era, themes of the darker side of nature barely restrained by law and civilization are joined by newer approaches in which potential explanations exist and at some future point science and rational thinking may explain it all.

Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* includes examples of both the evils of nature and the clarifying influence of science combined. The evil is the savage raw force of the brute, unleashed sexuality and bloodthirst deliberately divorced from the rational and legal imperatives of society. The suggestion is also that science can explain the situation and may in time even be able to resolve it ... though, of course, it must be used in a way that does not violate the bounds of proper behavior.

Gothic Conventions

Certain literary conventions apply in the pure Gothic form and are carried over into the later Victorian forms of horror story. The Storyteller can use these to provide background and depth to an ongoing chronicle or to fill in the gaps when she requires a stock NPC at short notice. Some of the most common are as follows.

- **Natural Law.** Nature is meant to behave in certain ways, which can be codified, understood, measured, comprehended and used. They fit neatly with the strictures of society, they obey the laws of God and man, and they provide a happy and safe framework for human beings. Bowdlerized versions are available for further study in suitable religious texts or in modern scientific discussions of farming and industrial methods. Nature was made for man, not man for nature.

When this goes *wrong*, all hell is loosed on the world. If characters can't depend on nature to behave properly, what can they depend on? All rational expectations are suddenly undercut and undependable. Anything could happen. This is fear. The things which are happening are wrong. This is horror.

What is a vampire's place in nature? Everyone, from parlor spiritualists to genuine occultists to vampires themselves, has a theory about what a vampire is — whether he actually believes in them or merely regards them as a psychological construct intended to denote sexual predators and fear of menstruation. Theories vary from twisted religious interpretations — vampires as angels of wrath, demons sent to punish the sinful — to secular and even scientific ones, where the story of Adam's sons is merely an allegory for nomadic and pastoral tribes, and vampirism is a semimythical explanation for a disease originating in the latter.

It is hard indeed to find a theory in which the Kindred are not an offense against nature and thus antithetical to everything which the

Victorian world stands for. How does it feel for a character to be fundamentally abhorrent of his own body — not because he must feed on blood, or commit murders, or cannot bear the touch of the sun, but because he knows in the depths of his soul that a creature such as himself is an offense against the natural order?

- **Crimes of The Previous Generation.** The sins of the characters' ancestors will inevitably come back to haunt them. Children *are* responsible for what their parents did and must make amends or suffer. A family line is a heavy weight on a hero's shoulders, and he must struggle to be worthy of its honor and endure its shame.

This has obvious significance for vampires. Even among the Sabbat, a character may be held responsible for her sire or clan's deeds or nature, and far more so with the Camarilla. Nobody can escape the horrors of the past: not the Nosferatu with their whispered stories of Nictuku, not the Sabbat with their fear of the Antediluvians, not the Caitiff with their heritage of metaphorical bastardry, not the Salubri with their diablerized founder, no vampires ever.

- **Foreshadowing.** In a good Gothic story, and in most Victorian horror, the dreadful future is foreshadowed for those who have the eyes to see and the wit to understand. Signs and portents indicate what lurks on the horizon, and the superstitious see omens everywhere. Stone statues of ancestors fall and shatter to presage a family's doom, storm clouds gather in the sky as a character discovers the crimes of his true love, and grandfather clocks come to a stop just before disaster strikes.

Kindred may or may not choose to see omens in the world around them, but those who practice Auspex or Thaumaturgy should not be surprised if the future marks the present with shadows of what is to come. Malkavians will have their own opinions, depending on their particular lunacy. Practitioners of esoteric arts may see vampires as omens in themselves, harbingers of death and chaos in the mortal world.

- **Innocence, Virtue and Peril.** The innocent is a rare thing, a miracle in the world, an icon of beauty and youth, guiltless and righteous, an emblem of purity in a dark Victorian setting. To be innocent in Gothic horror is to be virtuous and honest. Innocent children do no wrong, innocent maidens act for the best, and innocent youths live and breathe honor and courage. But innocence is a fragile flower and a constant temptation and challenge to Gothic villains. They seek to claim the innocent as their own property or to pervert it into something easier to manipulate. They offer their victim riches, beauty, power or even simply surcease from torment and fear, in exchange for her innocence. If the innocent agrees and surrenders her purity of soul and

body, scarcely even conscious of what she is giving up till it is done, then she is lost forever. Stained innocence cannot be restored.

Some vampires are drawn to innocence, whether to preserve it from their own fate or to corrupt it into their own image. Others see it as a deliberate insult to their own inward and outward monstrosity. Innocence is simply incompatible with vampirism, and the Curse of Caine marks even the most spotless white rose with blood that can never be washed away. It is the nature of vampires to destroy innocence whenever they brush against it, however pure their motives, and however dark and horrific the resulting tragedy.

- **Helplessness.** In some Victorian horror, the essence of terror is knowing that one is unable to affect events. The hero and heroine can do nothing to stop what is going to occur. The family curse will inexorably come down on the heads of innocents, the dark machineries of progress will grind the hopes of the poor but worthy to dust, and the corrupt aristocracy will laugh and spurn the hapless soiled dove. Brave investigators of mystery, even with the power and clarity of science behind them, will be forced to admit defeat when faced with the overmastering power of nature — or of the unnatural. This is actually an older theme which is slowly replaced in some parts of Victorian horror by the conceit that science can and will provide understanding and eventual mastery of the supernatural. In the meantime, however, heroes are frequently helpless against the coming darkness, and they *know* it.

Even vampires, with all their disciplines and strength and age, can be helpless against greater powers. These may be elder vampires who are too strong or too well connected for the characters to fight, Lupines attacking from the dark wilds, magi who command strange forces or even mortal hunters such as the Inquisition. Sometimes a vampire cannot resist the forces gathered against him or protect the things which are important to him. Of course, an important element in this is the knowledge of what the peril is — or, at least, that peril exists — and of one's own incapability when faced with it. Knowledge isn't always useful, if all it can tell you is that you are going to perish in agony

- **The Forbidden.** There are certain things which man was not meant to know, places he was not meant to go, and powers he was not meant to wield — not so much in the Lovecraftian style, where the abominable horrors from beyond drive men to insanity by their sheer existence, but in the sense that Heaven justly punishes those who meddle with matters forbidden by natural law. Only the evil, the perverse and the foolish pry into such areas and continue to pry after the magnitude of their error

Incomplete Statements

The ellipses that end many of these explanations, leaving sentences trailing off unresolved, themselves reflect a Victorian convention and an important element of the psychology of horror. Past what can (or must) be said are the things which need not, ought not or cannot be spoken or written. Some knowledge given to Gothic heroes does not allow itself to take expression, and for a society which believes in (or at least hopes for) the power of reason this is itself a terrible thing.

becomes apparent. Make no mistake, at some point in the story the character always realizes that he is tampering with things that should be left alone and has the opportunity to turn back. Jekyll could reject Hyde, Moreau could abandon his scheme, and Jonathan Harker could turn back from the coach that would take him to Castle Dracula. If they don't ... well, then they have no room to complain when the inevitable doom finds them. Later Victorian horror modifies this element to some extent, in stories where science and rational thought offer potential solutions to most inexplicable horrors. Even so, certain areas no proper Victorian gentleman would think of exploring, whether social, physical or spiritual.

Vampires have already gone where no sane and upright Victorian would go, simply by virtue of being vampires. Some characters may blame themselves for their current nature as undead. Did they seek out their sires in some foolish desire for occult knowledge, or out of pride in their ability as investigators, or in a search for vengeance for some loved one? They can now carry the horror of knowing that they deliberately courted their fate by prying into matters which they should have left alone. Do they wish to try to endure their new existence in comparative sanity? Then they had better leave the darker recesses of nature well alone. Even many of the Sabbat Paths acknowledge that some subjects — such as the Infernal — should be left untouched. What happens when the Tzimisce seeks knowledge hidden in the depths of the human nervous system, or the Tremere needs occult grimoires which deal with unspeakable matters? What of the Malkavian and Toreador who twist human minds for some ideal of beauty better left untouched, or the Ventrue and Lasombra forcing the kine into patterns of behavior better left unexamined while trying to find the perfect society? Is the coterie prepared to dare the forbidden, and will they pay the price?

• **Religion, Salvation and Crutch.** In the Victorian Gothic, the new rational, scientific citizen believes in a rational but essentially passive God. A proper, civilized person is a good Christian and adheres to the regular structures of the church, especially where it supports the social order. Only a hysterical or psychotic individual

gets *overly* involved in religion, however. Only foreigners (who go around crossing themselves all the time in a most un-English fashion and are probably Catholics anyhow) would attend church on days other than Sunday or make a public display of themselves. Equally, a gentleman can be an atheist or have other strange beliefs, such as spiritualism or paganism, but t a whiff of the improper still attaches to this sort of nonconformist attitude. Those who are overenthusiastic about religion or who have strange — that is, non-Church of England — beliefs are usually among the villains in a Gothic novel, or at least tend to obstruct the heroes in their good works. Even those who have a normal and proper level of belief must deal with the fact that the church is a shelter for ritual, lack of rationality and old-fashioned taboos. It is a necessary backdrop and upholder to civilized society and a shelter for those who need it, but inescapably linked to the dark ages of unreason.

The corrupt who hide behind the shelter of the church (especially the Catholic church) are yet another example of the church's flaws and inconsistencies. The light of reason and science should expose such sinners and bring them to punishment. The fact that criminals can conceal themselves in the upper recesses of the church — perverse bishops, sorcerous abbesses, black-mailing clerics, monks practicing necromancy — only serves to indicate the need for Victorian rationalism and propriety.

Of course, Cainites may well be some of the corrupt individuals hiding in lofty positions in the church, avoiding those individuals with True Faith and helping create this archetype of Victorian Gothic. Alternatively, they may be embraced from among the Victorian populace and share the general attitude that church is a part of normal civil life, somewhere to go to on Sunday and politely forget about otherwise. In such a case, they will probably discard it with the rest of their mortal lives. (Some vampires who maintain mortal identities may even choose to attend a bland, faithless Evensong on Sunday evenings, assuming that the church in question lacks any aura of True Faith.) Maybe the Malkavian was selected from a group of enthusiastic Catholic nuns led astray by a dark abbess in the hidden vaults of a convent?

Perhaps the Tremere was a fervent atheist who attracted his sire by his rational rejection of religious dogma and his search for deeper truths?

Protagonists and Antagonists

In a Gothic story, as in many other forms of fiction, the plot consists of forces in conflict moving to a final resolution. These forces are usually embodied by characters, of whom the most important are the protagonist(s) and antagonist(s). While the term "protagonist" is often understood as referring simply to the main character, the Storyteller may find it useful to think of the protagonist as someone who is fighting *for* something, while the antagonist is fighting *against* it. The antagonist is the opponent of the protagonist and is usually a person but can also be a nonhuman force or even an aspect of the protagonist — for example, her tendency toward evil and self-destruction. Usually the reader sympathizes with the protagonist. Feelings toward the antagonist may include admiration for his good qualities, regret for what he wastes or hatred for his evil actions, but rarely sympathy.

In a chronicle, of course, the players' characters are the protagonists. The antagonists may be other vampires, an entire vampiric sect, other supernatural entities

or their own repressed emotions and desires. Protagonists are not required to sympathize with their antagonists. Respect for the antagonist's abilities is good, and fear of its strength is even better. Horror at the antagonist's nature is best of all, whether the antagonist is external or internal.

It's easy to take this for granted and then lose track of the point. The characters really are the protagonists of the chronicle, or should be. Even if the story includes a lot about characters the Storyteller portrays, the focus should be on the events and people as the characters experience them. If the story doesn't allow room for the characters to do more than watch as all the interesting things happen to or are done by others, then something is wrong with it as a game. If the story gives particular weight to the characters' reactions to outside events, make the reactions interesting and above all significant. What the characters think and do should always matter in the chronicle.

The Gothic can address the hidden ideas and emotions within individuals and find an outlet for them. By personalizing them as a living antagonist or by making them evident as the protagonist's own feelings, the Storyteller permits the player to understand these hid-



Grand Guignol

The Theatre of the Grand Guignol was one of several offshoots from the Naturalist movement in Parisian theater that began in the late 1880s. It developed from short plays at the Theatre Libre about the mess and squalor of lowlife among Paris' underclasses into what could be classed as "sordid realism," with dark, anticlerical mystery fables and grisly social documentaries of modern Paris. Thievery, prostitution, alcoholism, sexual dependence and humiliation, jealousy, brutality, incest, child abuse and vengeance were all common themes.

In the spring of 1897, the Theatre of the Grand Guignol opened at 20 rue Chaptal. The building had been erected as a convent and chapel in 1786 and since served as a blacksmith's workshop, a Dominican priest's pulpit for attacks on extramarital sex and an artist's studio, and still had its old wooden angels and pseudo-Gothic architecture. The theater itself was named after "Guignol," the popular Punch and Judy puppet character. It was to be a "Grand" (large) "Guignol" (puppet) show, since the intended audiences were to be adults, and the mad behavior and violence in a normal children's puppet show would be magnified for the pleasure of their parents. Its performances alternated short comedies and farces with realistic and grotesque horror plays. A typical bill would consist of a slapstick curtain raiser, a light drama, a comedy, the horror play and a farce.

In 1898, Grand Guignol (under Max Maurey's management) became "pure theater," a place where every social taboo of good taste was cracked and shattered. It was constructed to lure the French public that slaked its bloodlust and fascination with the morbid by devouring unlikely tabloid articles, freak shows and wax museums featuring chambers of horrors and sensational crimes. Spectators watched live realistic and gory enactments of mutilation, rape, torture and murder. The average evening's bill became two light comedies (or farces) and two horror plays. Horror was immediately and physically shocking, even sickening. Suspense replaced social and cultural sophistication.

Many of the Grand Guignol's best and most gruesome effects came from stage trickery. The managers spent whole days just orchestrating the sound design and lighting effects of a production. Scenic atmosphere was as important as acting and plot. The single most celebrated secret involved patented blood recipes. A dark, sticky stage blood signified old wounds, while a lighter, dripping fluid denoted new ones. The standard blood formula was a mixture of carmine and glycerin, combined and heated daily in a cauldron, which flowed like blood but which also coagulated after a few minutes to form scabs or scars. Daggers with retractable blades spurted blood, dying victims revealed throat and facial wounds by tracing blood-soaked fingers over the imagined area, lunatics chewed on soap and blood capsules. Animal eyeballs were purchased from taxidermists, not only for visual realism (when a character's eyes were gouged out) but also for the organs' ability to bounce when they hit the stage floor.

The horror plays were quite short, generally only one or two acts, and centered on a particular theme, possibly with subthemes. They were often plagiarized from other sources, ranging from famous short stories or novels (such as Poe's "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether") to "true crimes" reported in the newspapers. Themes included helplessness, infanticide, insanity, mutilation, mysterious death, suffering of the innocent, suicide, surgery and vengeance.

The Theatre of the Grand Guignol presents a splendid location for scenes of chronicles or even a possible base for an entire chronicle. While it occurs slightly after the defined period of the game, Storytellers may wish to create unknown predecessors to this theater or simply move it back by a decade or two. Characters might even become involved in its creation and help to make it what it is! Aesthetes may wish to explore naturalist theater by directing plays there or be among the regular attendees. Secretive Cainites might lurk in the shadows and cellars. Many Cainites may find it an excellent hunting ground or adopt regular actors as part of their herd. As for the constantly heated cauldron of stage blood, well

Grand Guignol is also relevant as a type of horror. Here naturalist horror is presented in gory, stomach-turning detail, with tragic endings for everyone and with innocents being brutally murdered as well as villains facing appalling ends. It is also worth noting the alternation between horror and farce, thus deepening the moods of both. Storytellers can flip between moments of light farce and sickening horror. For example, the session could alternate between the attacks of a clumsy group of incompetent vampire-hunters attempting to prove that vampires exist and the investigation of a Tzimisce and his personal group of fleshcrafted child assassins. The swinging of the pendulum of mood provides additional weight for both humor and horror.

den concepts better. The strong imagery of horror and abuse in Gothic novels provides a perspective on truths through realistic fear rather than through mystical revelation. The antagonist is ultimately what the protagonist could become if he gave way to his secret desires and private wishes. The antagonist lurks in all the characters, unacknowledged and feared. A Brujah's frenetic rampages of destruction, a Toreador's impulse to destroy what is beautiful so that nobody else can have it, a Tremere's desire for the secrets of demonology which can be his in return for a tiny down payment of a soul, a Ventrue's secret urge to betray his liege, a Salubri's hunger for pain

This dark side to the personality is horrible in Gothic stories not only because of what it is but also because of how it enslaves a person. No matter what sect a vampire belongs to or how he defines his allegiances, he must at some point confront his twisted inner face and either master it or perish in the attempt. Whatever it is he least wants to be, that's waiting there for him.

Structure: From Beginning to End

Each horror story has a graduation of menace, both apparent and genuine. A Victorian ghost story tends to begin with the protagonist entering a situation which appears to be normal save for a single and minor particular, such as his child claiming to hear a voice calling at night or a governess seeing the figure of a strange man in the middle distance. A story about an artifact will start with a character, or an acquaintance of the characters, coming into possession of the artifact and a first example of its powers. Simultaneously, in the background should be evidence of its malign effects (such as a newspaper article about murders or deaths), but this should not yet be connected to the item.

A chronicle involving an evil place commences either with the characters arriving there ignorantly and somehow awakening its malignancy or being sent there deliberately. Jonathan Harker on his way to Castle Dracula is aware that he is going to an unnatural place, though even then he does not realize the true horror that the future will bring. A plotline that pivots on an evil cult or doctrine of some sort may begin with a conscious awareness that something is wrong with the organization and a choice to investigate it, or an innocent involvement with a member of the group that somehow betrays an unnatural doctrine or inexplicable event.

As the chronicle progresses, several unnatural circumstances become apparent. While each of them might be separately explained as due to natural causes, when put together they provide clear indications that something is badly wrong.

It is at this point that the full history of the place, the events before the characters' arrival, the item's background or the members of the hidden group become available for the first time. Some investigation is usually necessary, though local elders may drop cryptic hints, books in the library of the manor house may conveniently be found open at suitable places, or witnesses and previous victims may provide vital testimony. Once the characters have some idea about what they are dealing with, they should make a first attempt to resolve the problem — and, by all canons of Victorian horror, they should fail.

This failure is not necessarily due to any fault of theirs in preparation or commission. It is usually because they were missing some vital fact about the ghost or the history of the place, or were unwilling to take some crucial step or make a particular sacrifice. Another manifestation of the ghost, or action by the cult, or malignant effect from the item, will occur at this point, both to emphasize its unnatural nature and to raise the level of danger. Something or someone important to the characters should be directly endangered by this.

At the climax of the story, the characters finally confront the problem one last time. This may involve giving a ghost what it wants and persuading it to leave, or forcibly expelling it from the place. It may require disposing of the item for once and for all, having someone formally claim it as their own or returning it to its previous owners. It may be necessary to slay the masters of the evil place, enact a cleansing ritual or assert authority as the new rulers and claim direction and ownership. For a cult, it might involve slaying or imprisoning the prime organizer, destroying their holy place or talisman or breaking their connection with the malign force which empowers them. Finally — if things have gone badly wrong — the climax may involve discarding the object or fleeing the place and vowing never to return.

As a coda to the storyline, characters should be able to look back at the results of their actions. This can be done from a position of safety, such as from a communal haven, a gentlemen's smoking room, a polite restaurant or the serene quiet of a pleasant graveyard. It should be possible to review events, make a reasonable identification of the source of the problem and observe that it has clearly been resolved. (If matters went wrong, it should be clear that the problem was not resolved and still persists.) Victims will have recovered or be clearly on the road to recovery. The new owner of a cursed item or place will have obviously begun to suffer from its effects. Virtue will have been rewarded, and vice will have been punished. For Storytellers wishing to drop hints in that direction, this is a good moment to make a single brief

reference to the possibility of a future haunting, threat or recurrence of a cursed item, but this will be a single false note in a generally self-congratulatory moment.

Tales of Artifacts

Mystical artifacts often provide plot lynchpins in Victorian horror stories. They range from artifacts with power in their own right to items which have supernatural guardians due to their real or symbolic value but no inherent power. Plenty of items have no actual power or supernatural associations but are widely *believed* to bring fortune or misfortune, or have other strange powers. Any of these provide useful motivations for plot, complications to plot or red herrings and distractions for hapless Kindred.

When creating a mystical artifact for a chronicle, the Storyteller may wish to take some or all of the following questions into account. If she can provide both a public and secret history for the item, the characters can investigate its provenance and slowly discover the horrific truth about its origins and nature. If people are hunting for it, they make suitable allies or enemies for the characters. If a curse is attached, the characters must find some way of evading its malign grasp.

Artifact Creation Guidelines

- What is the nature of the artifact?
- What long-term effects does it have on its owner and environment?
- Who originally created it, or what circumstances caused it to come into existence?
- What do most people know about it?
- What do educated occultists know about it?
- Who currently seeks it in order to use its special powers?
- Who currently seeks it in order to destroy it?
- Can it be destroyed, and if so, how?
- What would the church's reaction be if they heard about it?

An item of real mystical significance has a genuine feeling of the occult and uncanny to it. While the crassly materialistic or the determinedly scientific might be able to ignore this and describe more sensitive people's reactions as "a load of twaddle," most people will notice *something*. Innocent young men and women instinctively recoil from it or at least avoid touching it with their bare hands, driven by some impulse which they can barely articulate even to themselves. Little children run

away and hide behind their parents, only able to mutter about the "bad thing" if asked. (Alternatively, for the Storyteller who likes to involve themes of innocence and helplessness, the little children play with the malignant item, smiling in ignorance as they call the curse down on themselves.)

Elderly men of God feel the cursed aura around the item and pray for guidance, refuse to allow the artifact anywhere near their churches or feel themselves obliged to take appropriate action — which could be dangerous for nearby Kindred. Scientists doubtless wish to apply modern rational thinking to the situation, attempt to scan the item with distilled essence of radium or some similar solution. (Actually, scientists may be helpful when dealing with a cursed item; though their logical manner of thought may be a hindrance when attempting to convince them of its dubious nature, they can be a great deal of use in establishing the item's provenance and history or in tracking previous users.) Officials or representatives of the law seek to store it at the local police station or in a bank vault while attempting to locate its legal owner. Poor fools. Little do they realize the doom that they have brought on themselves merely by touching the accursed thing, nor can they comprehend that no purely mortal locks and bars can halt the occult forces that swirl around it.

Possessors and Reactions

Tales of artifacts can end up with most of the characters yearning and dissatisfied. If the item in question remains in the game, then only one character can ultimately own it, and the other characters may resent this added boost to his powers — and the potential for roleplay and interaction from owning such a cursed item. As coteries can be together for a long time, these resentments may fester and grow over the centuries. While this in itself is not necessarily disruptive to the game, bitterness of this sort between the *players* can destroy a chronicle and leave permanent bad feelings behind it. The Storyteller should ideally use the character interaction to add potential roleplay threads while simultaneously making sure that the players are comfortable with the situation.

Whether the enchantment on the item is useful or dangerous, or even if it is useful but carries a dangerous price, as is common in Victorian horror, the characters are likely to disagree over what to do with it, how important it is and whose fault the whole mess was in the first place. These aspects can all provide enjoyable roleplay, especially the last — which is common in most **Vampire** games, in any case.

Old arguments may worsen as the characters disagree over their new problem. In turn, this sometimes

leads to the resolution of old wounds which have been left too long unhealed. When characters are finally forced to confront each other over issues that have been left unsettled, the result may sometimes be beneficial. The two most arrogant members of the coterie may finally resolve a long-running argument, or the followers of separate Paths in the pack may ultimately agree to disagree on questions of leadership. Old friendships may also be strengthened and unrecognized ties finally acknowledged as the group is forced to work together to save one of their own from corruption or destruction. ("It's taken me two hundred years, di Astolat, but I'm finally forced to admit that you might not have been totally in error") Characters may exhibit virtues that they never realized they possessed and demonstrate surprising selflessness — or selfishness — when confronted with the temptation of power or the peril of an old ally.

If the item is clearly dangerous, then it must be disposed of. Coteries should eventually remember that a weakness in one of them poses an eventual threat to all of them. Camarilla vampires may owe each other prestation debts, which could be paid by ridding their friends of mysterious cursed Masquerade-breaking artifacts. They may even feel compelled by simple Humanity to protect the kine from items which cause epidemics or mass murders. Sabbat packs are bound by the Vaulderie to assist each other. Sabbat should also remember that the Sword of Caine took up its mission in an ultimate quest for freedom and that no Cainite who is enslaved to some cursed item can ever be truly free.

If the item apparently conveys significant advantages to its possessor — or at least apparently conveys advantages which outweigh such prices as regular murders or demonic hauntings — the rest of the coterie may need to learn to coexist with it. This requires the players accepting that one of them owns an artifact which gives him a significant advantage over the others.

The Storyteller may need to help resolve the situation if resentment begins to fester between the players or if intercharacter dissent starts to tear the coterie and the chronicle apart. He may wish to talk to the players separately and determine whether their annoyance stems from a lack of power on their characters' parts, or a feeling that the owner of the artifact is abusing her power or gloating over an assumed superiority. If the former, he can adjust the chronicle so that they are allowed to demonstrate their characters' particular strengths or allow them opportunities for advancement in their chosen areas. If the latter, it may be time for a talk with the artifact's owner. She may not realize how annoyed the other players are and may be willing to tone down her use of the artifact or be happy to explore the negative

consequences of using it. (They always have negative consequences.)

If all else fails, the Storyteller may need to remove the item from the campaign. Where possible, this should be tied to the chronicle that already exists, so that the artifact's entry and exit both seem a logical part of the narrative, implying that the item's owner was only fated to hold it for a short period of time in any case. One way of doing this is for a NPC (an elder, a thief or even a foolish witch-hunter) to steal or requisition the artifact and then to meet a grisly fate from the associated curse. The player of the item's owner may feel comforted if she is given the chance to develop herself in some other way — a prestation debt, an opportunity to make new allies or establish a new haven, perhaps a new skill or Lore.

Alternatively, the other characters may plot to remove the artifact from the owner without her consent. This is the situation most likely to breed interplayer conflict, as the player whose vampire owns the artifact will doubtless be averse to having her character weakened. In such a case, the Storyteller should emphasize the *intercharacter* roleplay and disagreement, while helping the *players* work together to create a chronicle that they can all enjoy.

All artifacts should come with a significant price, often one that makes ownership, in the end, not worth it. (This is entirely in keeping with Victorian horror.) Extract every last ounce of possible drama from the situation, thus providing some solace for the character who is losing her chance at the powerful artifact. As the main figure in the drama, she can enjoy a moment in the spotlight as the heroic (or antiheroic) protagonist facing temptation, power and loss. Ultimately, the Storyteller must try to persuade the players to take a mature point of view (however immature their characters may be) and to create the chronicle together in a way that will give everyone opportunities for roleplay.

Example Artifacts

Bloodspot Dice

While passing through Paris, I obtained a most curious piece from one of the small shops on the Left Bank, which I trust will make an amusing tale for my nephews, though I fear that the subject matter is perhaps a touch risqué for their sister. It is, to be short, a pair of dice, which at first sight appear to be of the normal ivory and set with ebony, but which (or so I was assured by the shopkeeper) would, upon scientific analysis, prove to be made of human bone!

Forgive me, my dear brother, for this somewhat gruesome exposition. The marchand — an elderly man bowed with the weight of his years, his white hair straggling and lank around his bony face — whispered the story of these dice as though he feared to be overheard. They were, or so he claimed, made from the bones of one of Germany's greatest murderers, a vicious and brutal specimen who claimed at least a hundred lives. The man was hanged, of course, but apparently he had sired a son who was a degenerate gambler, and who had little affection for his father. Driven to extremity by reason of his imminent pauperhood, this son visited his father's grave by night, and he cut out certain bones from the corpse's spine. These were polished and pressed to create the dice which now repose in a small velvet-lined box on the desk beside me.

Of course (for so such stories always go) this most unfilial offspring did not profit from the use of such ill-aspected dice. Indeed, or so the marchand would have it, he flung himself into the sea at Monte Carlo after a particularly fortunate bout of gambling. It was not clear why he should do so, though later gossip suggested that he feared being found guilty of a set of local murders — which, it must be admitted, ceased on his suicide. While deploring such continental superstitions, I trust that this story, suitably expurgated of the coarser details, may provide amusement for my nephews! I shall enclose the dice together with this letter upon the next post, and trust that the parcel shall find you well

These dice are, unsurprisingly, cursed. They bring incredible luck to the possessor at first, as every roll he makes while wagering on them will win, however great the odds. Each time he makes such a winning roll, one of the spots on the dice will tint dark red, the color of dried blood, barely distinguishable from the black of the other spots. Once all 42 (21 on each die) spots are tinged red, the dice will stop automatically winning.

Of course, the gambler could stop at that point and use a different pair of dice. His luck on other dice will be just as good — or bad — as ever. Many owners of the dice would prefer to maintain the luck that they have previously enjoyed, however. The answer is simple. It comes to each owner in half-remembered dreams, drowsy and soaked in scarlet showers sufficient to raise a Cainite's hunger. All that he has to do is to slit someone's throat and bathe the dice in the fresh-running blood. Then the dice will be lucky again. The spots will return to black, and the dice will once again function as they should.

Just one life, in return for a pair of dice that will certainly win any game in which the owner plays. It's an excellent bargain for a desperate gambler. Until, of

course, the spots are all tinged red again, and the dice start to lose again ... and when it comes to it, after the first death, is a second murder really that much worse?

The Malady Den

Mamma says that I must write to say thank you for the pretty doll which you sent me, Cousin Andrew. I hope that you are very well and that you are enjoying yourself at school. My older brother Peter is reading this over my shoulder although Nanny says that it is rude to do so but he says that it is allowed for big brothers to do so, and he says that nobody ever enjoys themselves at school and that nor will I. I will be nice to him because he is still upset about his friend Matthew.

I am using this pen which he gave me and so I do not mind him saying rude things like that. Peter got it for himself, and I am not sure but I think that he got it from old Mr. Busenby who used to live down in the village but who died from something which Nanny will not tell me but which made them bury him outside the churchyard. Peter used to go to Mr. Busenby's house to read to him because Mr. Busenby had bad eyes and did not go out in the sunlight. I think that this is the pen Mr. Busenby used to write to all of his friends with, and it is a proper grown up fountain pen which I am allowed to write with as long as I am careful with the inkwell and take care not to spill.

Peter has been very sad lately because his friend Matthew who he wrote to so often has died of the cholera. This is very sad because Mamma had it too. But at least Mamma is better, and the doctor was telling Father when he thought we could not bear him that it was a miracle. I do not know why they are so surprised because they always tell us that miracles will happen if we pray, and Peter was praying all the time when he was not writing to Matthew.

Peter and I both have the measles now. It is very annoying because we are not allowed to go down to the village to play with the other children, and Peter was not able to go back to his school at the beginning of term. Peter does not mind but Father is very annoyed. This letter will have to be put in the oven before it is sent to you. Please write back and tell me what you are doing as it is very boring here.

This pen appears to be a normal fountain pen of high quality, steel-nibbed, its body made from ebony and capped with gold. It behaves quite normally under most circumstances. If its current owner writes a letter to someone whom he loves or strongly cares about (a family member or close friend will suffice) and describes an acquaintance's current illness, the acquaintance will recover miraculously. The same illness, to the same degree, will affect the target on reception of the letter. This applies however well the letter may be fumigated or heated, as this is a metaphysical contagion, not a physical one. The disease need not necessarily be fatal — a common cold or a case of the measles would be transferred just as readily as cholera, diphtheria, consumption or bubonic plague. If the recipient is much weaker than the newly cured donor, the disease may prove lethal. Alternatively, if the recipient is noticeably stronger, or if top-notch medical care is available, both may survive. The recipient may infect others as though he had caught the disease normally.

The pen originally belonged to Mr. Busenby, an elderly gentleman who had served as an army doctor. Mr. Busenby's sole hobby was writing to his friends elsewhere in Britain and describing his failing health. As his bitterness at his own illnesses grew, his resentment at his friends' continued health also rose, and more than once he found himself wishing that he could send them his diseases as easily as he sent his letters. In a final spasm of fury one night, he took an overdose of laudanum and used the pen to scribble his suicide note.

The fountain pen can easily be disposed of, if anybody realizes that it is the cause of current problems in the chronicle. It can be crushed, burned or broken without inflicting any unpleasant effects on the owner. If a character does realize its properties, however, he might have qualms about disposing of so clearly and eminently *useful* an object

The End of the Matter

After prolonged exposure to an object of magical power, the most usual question for characters in a Victorian horror story is, "How do we get rid of it?" Despite the fabulous worth of the Moonstone in Wilkie Collins' book of the same name, most of the main characters would far rather have its monetary value in their banks than the stone itself in their possession. The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God was hunted by deadly assassins less than 24 hours after it was stolen. In M. R. James' story "A Warning to the Curious," the man who managed to find the third magical crown which protected England from invasion was desperate to return it, as he knew the crown's dead guardian was on his tracks. Reasons for

ridging oneself of a magical or accursed object may range from the object's curse — an urge to commit bloody murder, fatal misfortune to those whom the owner loves, a fatal leprosy — to a wish to free oneself from those pursuing the item, who will stop at nothing less than death to reclaim it.

Getting rid of an artifact often requires a sacrifice of some sort. This may range from simply rejecting the temptations which it offers (wealth, power, lust) to actually cutting off a body part, joining the church, enacting a full exorcism, destroying the item or worse. The more powerful the item, the greater the sacrifice needed to be rid of it, and the greater the dangers to which the characters will be exposed in the process.

Perhaps the only way for a patrician vampire to rid himself of the strange African war drum that his traveling friend brought him from the Dark Continent is to return it to a member of the tribe which originally owned it. It's unlikely that any of them are currently in London. A trip abroad may be required. Alternatively, perhaps some of the tribe are in London, but they have come explicitly to find and punish the transgressor of tribal taboo and will require significant persuasion to accept drum and apologies. Consider a thaumaturgist who has acquired a cursed book of lore which is stealing his emotions with every word of it that he reads and transcribes, reducing him to an ambitious automaton lacking in Humanity and rapidly dragging him down toward the Beast. He can certainly free himself by burning the book, but will he be able to bring himself to destroy such a priceless source of knowledge? If the rest of his coterie decide to "help" him by destroying the book without his consent, the cure will work, but will he ever forgive them?

On a darker note, an artistic vampire may find herself encumbered with a portrait that summons forth a demon who fulfills her darker desires, however bloodthirsty and macabre these may be. Pleasant enough for the owner when it is merely a matter of an annoying rival falling down the stairs of his house and breaking an arm, but rather more awkward — and a significant risk to the Masquerade — if mortals in her way are torn to bloody shreds in back alleys, or if the demon acts on a moment's anger and assails her friends. How is she to rid herself of an artifact this powerful and this evil? A full-scale exorcism might free her of it but would probably expose her to significant amounts of True Faith, if it is powerful enough. Burning the painting might inflict similar flames on her own body. Simply selling it or giving it away will not be sufficient to break the link between the demon and herself. An appropriate solution might be to repaint the canvas with her own blood, face the demon and duel

it to the death or give the painting to a friend who accepts it with full knowledge of its nature. In any case, a sacrifice is necessary.

An artifact in Victorian horror will only very rarely require an evil deed to break the link between owner and item. Victorian horror simply does not tend to work that way. While it may be necessary to hand the item over to the foul fiend who created it, a hero finds some way of summoning the demon and protecting himself from the creature with the help of lore, rational science or innate goodness of heart, rather than from on top of a pile of sacrificed babies. Kindred who attempt to free themselves by means of evil actions or the callous sacrifice of others may succeed in severing their connection with the artifact, but they should certainly pay some other price. Maybe the dark power who is behind the artifact's creation takes notice of their actions and attempts to ensnare or manipulate them in the future. Perhaps their callous activities cause a loss of Humanity or draw the attention of the authorities. Other supernatural creatures may be intrigued by the scent of blood or by the odor of living evil. A price will be paid — later.

Even once the item is gone, is it truly lost forever? Breaking or burning the artifact probably puts it beyond all hope of return, but trading it to someone else, locking it away in an underground safe or throwing it into the depths of the ocean merely means that it is gone *for the moment*. Players should not be cheated of a sense of accomplishment, but the Storyteller may feel justified in having the artifact make its appearance again at some later point. For the moment, the characters can be reassured that the artifact's evil effects are at an end and that they are as cleansed as Kindred can reasonably be. The curse is lifted, the malignancy is past, and the artifact is definitely gone for good. (Or for as long as the seas retain their depth, a certain family line continues or a certain bank safe remains closed A certain amount of doubt helps season the ending of a horror story.)

Given that chronicles can stretch over centuries, the "later" appearance of a previously featured artifact can be much later. It can, in fact, be hundreds of years later, after the original plot strand has been long forgotten by the characters and is merely a dusty note in the chronicle notes. The *players* (if not the *characters*) may actually enjoy the opportunity to slap their foreheads as they realize that their past has returned to haunt them. They may enjoy explaining their past history and associated traumas to relevant NPCs or researching how the artifact returned from wherever it was disposed of. Storytellers will need a good reason for the artifact to have surfaced again — possibilities include an enemy of the characters searching it out, the item's link having reac-

tivated after thrice a hundred years or some manipulative elder wanting to see how the characters will deal with it.

An artifact probably shouldn't make a third appearance, however. Twice is quite enough, and characters will probably take very extreme measures in disposing of it the second time.

Tales of Ghosts

Ghosts walk through the haunted corridors of the Victorian horror story. Sometimes they are clearly recognizable ghosts, with skeletal faces, dust-choked mouths, half-transparent bodies and burning eyes lambent with an eternal hate and bitterness. At other times they can be recognized only by the discerning or the observant, visible as a retreating back round the end of a corridor, a shadow at the top of a flight of stairs or a singing voice overheard in the next bedroom. Occasionally a ghost appears to be a normal, living human and will spend time in conversation with the protagonist before the final, ghastly realization and the climax of the story.

A Note to the Curious

This is not a treatment of **Wraith** for **Victorian Age: Vampire** but a discussion of ghosts as they appear in Victorian horror. The Storyteller is urged to go for flavor rather than precise mechanics and to disregard previous concepts of ghosts in the *World of Darkness*. The Guilds, Arcanoi and Spectres of **Wraith** do not necessarily fit with the themes and style of Victorian ghost stories. While the Storyteller is free to pick and choose as he wishes, this section provides game concepts and plot ideas from the literature of the period and does not necessarily correlate with the Underworld, the Veil or any other such material.

Victorian ghosts generally come in one of two forms: the recognizably human or posthuman (as well as post-humous), and the clearly nonhuman. Clearly human ghosts might even be mistaken for living human beings under certain circumstances, such as poor lighting, a temporary lack of supernatural effects or an urgent need on the ghost's part to communicate with the living. It is only afterward that onlookers notice the lack of tracks in snow or in a dusty corridor, the locked door through which their visitor surely must have passed or the absence of birdsong.

Such a ghost usually retains a great deal of its original nature and appears due to a need to settle some problem

from its previous life. This may be in order to protect a dearly beloved family member, demand justice for a horrendous crime or ensure that a will is discovered and that descendants receive their just inheritance. If very young children appear as ghosts, they may even be unaware that they have died and play innocently in the garden or the room that they used to love. (In such a case, Kindred valuing their Humanity should arrange for them to be humanely exorcised by the elderly local priest or confronted with their parents or nurses or grandparents, who will bid them a tearful farewell and send them onward.)

Other ghosts were human and living *once* but now clearly show the ravages of death upon their corpse-like frames. Their eyes are filled with shadows which, on closer inspection, prove to be cobwebs or sunken empty sockets. Spiders crawl under the fabric of their clothing and are left behind in the dust when they pass. Their faces have sunken in like a skull, and the hands are cold and bony. They leave odd stains on the upholstery of chairs where they have sat, or drifts of dust accumulate in their wake. Sometimes they are solid enough to attack their targets, leaving the marks of skeletal fingers behind on the throats of their prey. Sometimes they merely have the power to terrify, though this in itself can be enough to stop the heart of the fearful or the guilty.

Such clearly dead specters are roused from their graves for important reasons, usually ones involving fear, pain, loss and death. Has one's long-hoarded gold been located via a trail of clues which he left, together with the demon who was assigned to guard it? The long-dead hoarder wants to observe the results. Perhaps a nephew is being hunted down by a cold-blooded relation intent on inheriting the family estate. In that case, the would-be inheritor had better not visit certain parts of the estate by night, and certainly not alone. He might meet someone he did not expect to see.

It is also possible to awaken a ghost's interest by closely mirroring an event or emotion from her previous life. If her second to last act was to push her abusive husband out of the window, followed by throwing herself after him, then a ghost might be briefly called from her grave by similar circumstances. If presented with an abusive man, she might even repeat the action. ("I seemed to feel a great force thrusting against me," the Ventrue explained, "and forcing me out through the window, and only by Caine's grace did I escape falling on the spiked railings below") The shadowy ghost of an elderly man might respond to children in peril, leading them through the wood to safety, in memory of his own grandchildren. Alternatively, the ghost of an ancient sorcerer might lurk in the depths of the cellars where his

laboratory once stood and force those who enter the place to reenact his own experiments with shattered bottles and empty phials. When his victims are found lying at the center of the cellar — and always in the same place — their faces are twisted in expressions of unutterable horror, and the stains of sulfur and mercury mark their fingers.

Nonhuman ghosts may once have been human but are now no more than shreds of the people they once were. The creature that remains is a distillation of pure emotion, cloaked in appropriate symbolism or with a body pulled together out of cobwebs and dust and dry linen. He may attempt to follow the classic pattern of his misdeeds during life in a desperate blind search for purpose, or he may hunt for vengeance on those who killed him, stole his property or trespass on what he remembers as his home. The creature has no real intelligence behind his actions, however; at best he has an animal hunger or sense of direction, and at worst he prowls according to some blind, insane logic sufficient to drive any hiding observer to terrified hysterics. Nothing human is left in him; he will not listen to the terrified pleas of victims, however innocent they may be, and he will pursue them for whatever transgression they have committed. Perhaps his human prey drew the map of a maze and by doing so plotted a chart which gave the maze's creator the opportunity to hunt them down. Possibly one of the characters saw something which should not have been seen — some appalling rite of a hidden society — and the specter of the long-dead founder of the society seeks her blood and breath in recompense. Maybe she got off at the wrong station from the train and replied to the voice which called out to her, and now has a follower who will not be gainsaid.

Alternatively, a nonhuman "ghost" may turn out to be an abhorrent creature from outside the natural laws of time and space, dubbed a "ghost" as the closest convenient term, but in truth something far less human and never remotely normal. This can include the spirits of inhuman creatures, such as werewolves, bloody animalistic creatures which stalk their ancestral forests, driven by the urge to hunt as they did while living. It can also include half-formed ghostly concepts created by obsessive painters and small brown starving spirits which lurk around the edges of sites of pagan worship.

The very presence of a ghost is a sign that something is fundamentally wrong with the world, something as opposed to the laws of nature as vampires themselves. In Victorian horror, however, ghosts do not attack or involve themselves in mortal affairs without some form of provocation or trespass. This may be — and probably will be — entirely innocent on the trespasser's part. It may be

something as simple as a vampire wandering through an old church and exclaiming that he would like to meet the previous Lord of the Manor, a notorious evil-liver and malignant sorcerer. (He may get his wish, Heaven help him.) It might involve a theft of the ghost's property, wandering into the ghost's old sanctum sanctorum or simply calling out to a dimly glimpsed figure in the distance by the churchyard wall. Innocent as these actions may be, the character involved is rarely *totally* ignorant. The chalice he took has a strange clamminess to it, the room in question is cold as the grave and stinks of mould, and the watcher by the churchyard has a figure strangely suggestive of shrouds and skeletons. Almost always some warning comes — but since this is horror, the warning is often ignored, and only remembered too late.

Be Gone from This Place

Once the characters have a ghost on their hands, what should they do about it? Unless they are insane, thrill-seekers or dangerously ignorant, they will have some sort of reason to pry into the ghost's affairs. This reason, and the size of their need to have it gone, will

affect the degree to which the characters are willing to go in attempting to rid themselves of the troublesome specter.

The situation may or may not be resolvable. On at least a few occasions the events which caused the ghost are sunk deeply into the stones of the building, or the bones of the land, and the spirit will be near-impossible to cast out. In such cases, the ghosts are the nonhuman or scarcely human sort, surviving only as blind murderous vengeance or hateful guardians. They have long since lost any human emotions or patterns of thought and can no longer be communicated with. The only plausible solution may be to destroy the location utterly, dynamiting a house or digging up a glen where a murder took place and building a church there instead. Such major alterations to the landscape or to the building in question may be unfeasible if the area belongs to someone else (such as a royal castle) or is too large or important to affect. In such a case, the Kindred may simply have to note the situation and deal with it, and hope that in a few centuries the ghost's malice may have decreased. Just as water wears away stone, so time may erode the emotions which keep the specter tied to the place.

Haunted Landscapes

It is even possible for a landscape or a city to be haunted: not by any defined ghosts, but by shadows of the past or echoes of abnormality. The "fair folk," as they are called, can leave a ghastly impress behind them: though they have no ghosts, having no souls, leave an echo of unnaturalness on the forests where they have trodden. No actual bodily specters appear, but strange white figures follow the paths of the moon between the old standing stones, and small creatures who look like children from a distance practice their craft with flint knives on those who walk abroad at midnight.

A landscape can also be haunted by the ghosts of art. Insane painters, sculptors and poets people the world around them with the unnatural products of their fertile imaginations, giving birth to something impossible which still manages to exist and thrive in the normal world. Such imaginings are spectral and ghostly, visible only to those who are sensitive to the spirit world or whose artistic imagination or insanity make them vulnerable. They lead their prey into a mystical world of symbolism and dreams. Immoral and debauched characters, or those who indulge in absinthe and opium, are particularly vulnerable to such temptations.

In that place, if intruders choose (they must choose it) to follow the pathways more deeply into the chaos and illogic of the ghostly dreams, they find that not only are they expected, they have always been expected. The more deeply they journey, the more natural everything seems to be; surely the roofs of the houses always peaked and curved like insane precipices, and hooded robed figures walked the streets in slow procession, and strangers waited at dawn for the King Who Would Reign In Blood. Images from the Book of Nod take form out of the mists for scholars of that text, while other characters find echoes from their own personal studies or Paths being given physical form in the world around them.

Prophesied portents greet them, and they can observe their own hierarchies of sins and virtues practiced in the streets of the twilight city. At the start of the haunting, or nightmare, the characters will have been traveling in the real city, but as it continues, whether over the space of a night, a month or a year, they gradually come to walk more and more in the haunted city of imaginary streets and impossible places. At some point, they finally have a choice between the ghostly insanity of art and the rational truth of existence. Those who accept reality and law will be able to break free of the trappings of unreality and the shadowy madness of art. Those who do not may be lost forever.

Ghost Statistics

Many ghosts do not require a full range of statistics or skills. If the revenant specter of Lord Callowhill seeks to crush the profaners of his bedchamber with his bare hands and then throw their mangled bodies from the window, only his physical statistics are necessary. If the spirit of an ancient witch constantly offers infernal temptations to those who enter her old stillroom, placing poisons near their hands and making them burn with lust and fury, then she is not the sort of ghost to manifest physically in a way that can be assaulted with bare hands. If a child's ghost can be heard crying in the old nursery every night in winter, it would be drastically inappropriate to the Victorian horror story for the child to be dealt with via combat.

The ghost in a Victorian horror story serves as catalyst and plot device for the protagonist's actions, rather than as a definite antagonist. While this may equate to being the antagonist in a fight, it is not necessarily the case. If the ghost's situation must be resolved through appeals to its emotions, deciphering the past or presenting it with reasons to leave, then detailed statistics may well not be required. If the ghost is a mindless shrieking emptiness which travels through the local wood at sunset, forbidden rest because she removed the boundary markers a hundred years ago and cheated two children out of their property, she doesn't need any statistics other than the effect of her shrieks on unprotected characters. The Storyteller should save himself effort and simply note what is required for the ghost's required effect on the chronicle.

Most chronicles will involve the characters finding some way to lay the ghost to rest. In a Victorian ghost story, this usually involves either finding the ghost's grievance and resolving it, or forcibly expelling the ghost from the area.

Vampires may require all their Humanity in order to understand a ghost's grievance and to find it in themselves to resolve it. A Sabbat Cainite with a high Path rating may have difficulty understanding the emotions which have caused the ghost's appearance in the first place — or providing genuine empathy, if such a thing is needed. In either case, Kindred bound by Victorian morality may find it difficult to accept the truth behind whatever raised the ghost. Can social decorum face the

nature of the wrong and the settlement which is required? Are more humane characters prepared to murder or steal in order to satisfy a ghost's need for vengeance? This shouldn't be a free ride for monsters or paragons.

Storytellers should design ghosts to force characters to examine unwanted parts of themselves as well as undesirable external factors. Given Victorian morality, will vampires actually be able to understand the bitterness and grief which drives the ghost of a sixpenny whore to slit the throats of patrons? Will they be able to find some words or expiation to comfort her and convince her to stop her murders? If a Sabbat pack has been charged with banishing a child's ghost so that their Thaumaturgical superior can work in peace, will they be able to sympathize with the fact that the boy ran away from boarding school because he was bullied, or merely view it as part of life? Can they convince him to "return home" and go to his final rest?

Alternatively, the ghost may be driven from the place by religious authority, scientific rationalism or simply destroying everything in sight remotely connected to the ghost and razing the area. The first option requires a sincere priest with True Faith — probably Church of England rather than Catholic, though it may depend on what part of Europe the characters are in — and a full ceremony of exorcism, bell, book, and candle or similar extreme demonstration. (Note that the local authorities never believe in ghosts and always view requests to hold such ceremonies as a sign of eccentricity on the characters' part, at best, and as a demonstration of rampant insanity at worst.)

The second option is linked to the Victorian image of science providing the answers to life's problems, and even such matters as hauntings being merely an example of natural laws not yet understood, rather than rampant impossibilities. Eccentric scientists may be able to suggest solutions such as electronic crucifixes, X-Rays, controlled emissions from lately discovered elements produced by slow distillation from pitchblende Of course, these won't work. Still, the choice of such methods may fit well in chronicles where the characters are involving themselves in the March of Progress and seek forward-looking rational solutions rather than supernatural mumbo-jumbo. (Any little additional problems, such as incomprehensible sores and radiation poisoning, the awkwardness of moving the scientist's equipment or explaining it to the superstitious locals are opportunities for roleplay!)

The scientist can be useful in applying scientific logic and rational thought to mystical *principles*. Just as vampiric thaumaturgists have recognized such things as the Law of Similarity, so a trained scientific mind may be able to identify

overarching patterns of mystical energy or apply his trained researcher's mind to investigating the background of the haunting. Even if the process of such investigation may have a deleterious effect on his sanity and moral stability, his innate logic and rationality can be of great benefit.

Finally, totally destroying everything remotely connected with the ghost will usually banish it. This will probably result in the ghost attempting to prevent the destruction, if it is at all physically inclined. (A murderous specter may try to strangle characters, while a desperate poltergeist may throw furniture around, and a harmless weeping suicide will scream pitifully in the background.) This is probably safe if done during daylight hours ... safe from the haunting, that is, though not from the perils day itself always presents for vampires. Burning any physical remains, smashing relevant stonework and donating ancient manuscripts to the church are all potentially good ideas in this situation.

Ending the Haunting

Once a haunting is banished, the Storyteller will need to make it clear to the characters that the place is now cleansed of evil and unnatural influences. (Save for the vampires themselves, but that's a different problem.) Birds sing at dawn in a place which has been purged of the unnatural, and the dawn will have a new and lustrous gleam. Normal animals, such as local dogs and cats and horses, no longer object (as they once did) to crossing the threshold of the property. Innocent children happily play on the grass which they previously shunned. Nursing mothers no longer feel the urge to suggest that their families move elsewhere. The local priest no longer has a nervous tic or feels the need to warn visitors that minions of Satan haunt the place. The Kindred themselves may find themselves feeling more comfortable as they walk abroad by night. Camarilla vampires will observe the natural patterns of humanity resuming their usual flow. Sabbat practitioners of the Path of Harmony or the Feral Heart may find comfort in seeing nature restored to its proper balance around them, while followers of other Paths will take pleasure in the renewed patterns of familiar enemies, insults and challenges. Moonlight falls like a benediction over the old graves in the churchyard, or on the site of the haunting, and a gentle wind blows in the forest like a whisper of peace.

Tales of Places Gone Wrong

What makes a place fundamentally *wrong*? It may be instantly obvious, or it may take a while for investigators to discover. It may be a matter of openly practiced

injustice and anarchy — both equally abhorrent, surely, to the civilized soul — or something hidden and obscene, observed behind closed doors and kept private within the family. It may be the result of generations of dark behavior, or it may be due to the imprint of a single action that was so grotesque, so utterly and profoundly evil, that the area is metaphysically scarred. A single person's actions may have been enough to foul the proverbial well, or an entire village may have contributed to the place's malignancy.

Will the characters feel a duty to lance the metaphysical wound and cleanse the area, or will they exult in the corruption of the place? It could be argued by those who rate Humanity as unimportant, or who follow the more inhuman Paths of the Sabbat, that such an area should be left to fester or even exploited and used in all its maleficent glory. Why should vampires seek to make the world any easier for the mortals who live in it? Why should they take a personal interest in the well-being, physical or spiritual or emotional, of the kine? Why — and this may be a very important question to followers of such Paths as Night or Power and the Inner Voice — should they not exploit the power which could be theirs?

A number of very good reasons exist why Kindred should want to cleanse such an area, or at least render it powerless. The Masquerade mandates the concealment of evidence of vampiric activity. If the area in question was polluted by a vampire, the characters may feel obliged to "tidy matters up." To some extent, this can be extended to concealing evidence of other supernatural forces as well. The kine are more easily controlled when they don't suspect unnatural influence in their daily lives, and the step from believing in ghosts or mages or werewolves to believing in vampires is very easy for them to take.

On a more humane or self-interested level, some Kindred may prefer their kine healthy and undisturbed. Camarilla vampires may even wish to settle the matter and cleanse the place for reasons of their own Humanity. Cainites following the Path of Harmony or even the Feral Heart might perceive the defiled area as a scar upon nature and feel a certain obligation to setting matters right.

In addition, both Camarilla and Sabbat neonates and ancillae have certain obligations to elders and colleagues in their respective sects. Perhaps a prestation debt requires payment, and the elder in question indicates that she will be satisfied if this "minor kine inconvenience" is dealt with. (She doubtless has her own motives; perhaps an industrial company she owns intends to expand in that direction, she desires the "haunted" manor house as a new lair, or maybe other supernatural factions are leaning on *her* ...) Maybe the Sabbat bishop knows that the entire area is under the protection of a Camarilla elder and intends the party to act



as a scouting force and test his strength. It could even be that some Giovanni or Tremere representative owes a debt to other supernatural forces, and they have demanded that the area be cleansed. The whole situation might be a plot against the investigating coterie, staged and set by an enterprising intriguer who is sure that the situation will destroy them The characters may never discover the true identity of their patrons, still less their motives.

The malice of the place may be impersonal or personal. Both options have points to recommend them. A personal malice, directed particularly at the place's current victims — that is, the characters — can play on the nerves very well and can be tailored to the characters' flaws. It can lack a certain grandeur of scale and can seem petty if not handled carefully. A more abstract and general malice can terrify characters by its casual lack of concern for anything else around it. If a character is the target of direct evil, this at least suggests some interest in him and respect for his abilities. If, however, he is in the path of something as merciless and uncaring as a tidal wave and as implacable as fire, that has a flavor of terror entirely its own. In fact, impersonal malice may be more horrifying to most vampires, as they should be quite used to personal malice after a few years as undead.

In Victorian literature, moral and spiritual warping is accompanied by physical and behavioral stigma: ultimately, it is impossible for a place which is as truly wrong as the ones discussed here to look normal to more than a brief glance. It will not be difficult for characters with a keen perception of their surroundings, such as intelligent Kindred, to realize that something is out of balance. The unperceptive, the materialistic and the forces of authority will fail to notice anything until far too late. Blind as they are to any higher reality, they are easy prey for the forces of true evil, as helpless victims or as targets for further corruption. Not only will they not perceive the truth, they will refuse to believe it even if it is aggressively presented to them, or will see only the grossest, most material aspects of the situation. They will search for scientific, *rational* explanations for the situation. Just as Queen Victoria is supposed to have refused to believe that lesbians could exist, so the forces of law, order and rationality will generally try to find an answer that obeys the natural laws of the universe. A pity that some things go beyond nature and trespass in the realm of the unnatural

The Smaller Darkesses

Ferns cluster thickly around the ruined opening to the old cellar at the bottom of the garden, hiding it from sight. The dark lake is free of swans or even ducks, and no fish swim

in those shadowy depths. The house itself is set back from the roads, surrounded by thick hedges (though even those show signs of neglect, beginning to squirm loose from the iron strictures of civilization) and empty fields. The rooms are crusted with dust, and the ceilings and crevices are painted over with cobwebs. (Or perhaps they are clean and tidy in a way which strikes the viewer as fundamentally *wrong*, too neat, too free from dust, and the scent of lavender polish covers a deeper smell that is far too familiar to vampires.) The buildings in the village are decaying at the edges; the thatch rots on the roof, the slate tiles have gaps, and weeds grow over the edges of the roads. The people who live in those buildings smile when they should not smile, and they do not speak about some things to outsiders.

Both place and people are corrupt. It's the House of Usher, which is rotted from within, just like the family which inhabits it, and which is mad to the soul of its timber. It's the little glen in the middle of the forest where dancing creatures with only the crudest resemblance to humanity come to worship around the pale stone at the center. It's the child who found an old book and now follows its instructions painstakingly in the cliffside valley where old half-carved marble statues watch her with heavy-lidded eyes and the summer heat pools in the valley like a fever. It's the ruins of a tiny village in the middle of the Sussex Downs that still remembers the Black Death and where the bones of forgotten corpses fill the disused well. It is *unnature*, fostered and growing like a cancer.

The place is always at one extreme or at the other. Either it is too dirty, or it is too clean. Either it is isolated in its corruption, far away from the safe sanity of normal life, out of reach of help, or it squats in the middle of an ordinary town or city, even more abhorrent when compared to the everyday life around it. Either the inhabitants show too much emotion, or too little and too late. But it is never normal.

Once the protagonist has entered the place, he knows that something is wrong. Dogs refuse to go in, and if forced to do so put their ears back, howl mournfully, cower and refuse to go outside, or yap furiously at things which are outside and which their handlers cannot see. Cats flinch and try to escape, clawing their owners and struggling frantically, or exult in the dark malice of the place, purring and licking blood from their fur. Horses panic and try to bolt, or shiver and sweat if they are forced to remain. Newfangled automobiles break down. Innocent children avoid the area instinctively. Birds do not sing, though perhaps crows or magpies haunt the dark trees and peck at things in the shadows.

And so the vampires enter the zone of danger, perhaps not even realizing that they have crossed the boundary until the full horror of the place strikes them.

Perhaps they would have been warned if they had investigated a little sooner? Perhaps they should have listened to the yokel farmer who warned them that nobody lives up at the old house, or maybe the gossip of the old women in the village square would have suggested that something was wrong down by the lake? Maybe an inquiry into police or hospital records would have pinpointed that street corner, or this decrepit pub, as a nexus for death and foulness? But part of the horror is that the realization is always too late. Even if they were prepared to some extent, something would still come as a surprise. Understanding is never in time and is never sufficient. The natural cannot comprehend the unnatural, which is why the unnatural leaves such lasting scars. Even the Cainites, unnatural creatures as they are, still retain enough of humanity and the natural order to be threatened.

The place is always full of symbols, even if they are noticed too late. The clocks are ticking toward a midnight that cannot be stopped, or are frozen just as the place itself is a calcified fragment of unchanging evil. The moss and ivy on the walls demonstrate decay, age and slow putrefaction. Alternatively, the room that is clean and polished is somehow sterile and bare of natural life, just as the white stone at the center of the clearing lacks any marks of wind or rain or grass, any *normal* traces of life. The crows wait in ranks along the roof of the house, but the pigeons and sparrows avoid it. Deadly nightshade grows in the vegetable garden, and spiders spin their webs in the deserted nursery.

Many sorts of wrongs might cause such defilement. If the Storyteller has a coterie with a long and detailed history, she might even wish to link the corruption of the place to a past action of one of their enemies or make it the eventual result of some long-forgotten choice of theirs. Remember that ghoul who was cast off and left to return to his home when he was no longer necessary, half-mad with the need for *vita*? What precisely did he do to his family that caused the village to burn down the house and shun the place for the next five generations? What about the child who was in the wrong place at the wrong time and who was casually disposed of, her body flung down the nearest well? Who or what crawls out of the well at night in a mass of white linen and tumbled dark hair, with a face too ghastly to be tolerated by any sane mind?

The important fact is that the action or actions must have been unnatural in the first place. Abnormality breeds abnormality. It must have been a wasteful murder, an incestuous passion, a nightmarish slow descent into insanity, an offense against nature. When the mother tries to hide her unfaithfulness by flinging her living baby into the pigpen, that is against the natural order. When a father forces himself on his own daughter for years on

end, it brings forth a scream of innocent pain that weaves itself into the walls of the house and clings to it for generations. When two children play with fire in the lonely cave and giggle as they watch their eviscerated pets mewl in agony, they foster something that soaks into the stone and makes the place foul. When a whole community rises up against a scapegoat and spends its hatred and anger in a bitter act of cruelty, that hatred leaves a stain. Humans can mark the world with their emotions and actions in a way that nature can never quite recover from — if unassisted.

Other supernatural forces may also be involved. Witches and warlocks prowl the night, and some even assert an older mystical heritage than the child of Caine, claiming deeper secrets and greater power. Whether or not this is true, they are capable of commanding powers forbidden to normal men and women — powers that can scar the earth and leave echoes in forests. Their rituals and summonings may have called powers which are too potent or too terrible to walk upon the earth without damaging the natural order of things. What entities might be hidden behind the crude mask of comic or gentle rustic deities? Maybe three magi attempted to summon the satyr-god Pan ten years ago, trying to draw back the veil which separates flesh from spirit — and what came through caused one to go mad, the second to kill himself and the third to withdraw from the world into the seclusion of religion. The entity itself still haunts the place and teaches the children of the local village to sing old hymns and shed blood at the dark of the moon. Its child, bred from earth and horseflesh and a human woman, wanders the moor and lays its seed in the ground. One does not even have to be an educated or competent mage to call up something which cannot then be put down. The unnatural needs an invitation, but after that

Werewolves and other strange and unholy shapeshifters can also leave marks behind them. After all, they are unnatural creatures themselves, and the mere sight of them is enough to drive most mortals insane. If the origin of vampires is Caine, what could be the ancestor of skinchangers? The ground where they have practiced their rites is often afflicted by strange energies which can burn or warp a vampire's body, and becomes territory for vengeful spirits of the green wilds. Cases have also occurred when they slaughtered humans and destroyed new factories or industrial equipment — such locations are often found afterward to be the hunting-grounds of creatures that seem to be the living essence of pollution or corruption. Some of them even seem able to summon such entities down to infest a village, spreading their warped behavior and dragging the humans there down into bestiality and other perversions.

The "Little People of the Hills" are also a potential source of horror. Despite the faked photographs of little butterfly-winged people that so conveniently fooled Arthur

Conan Doyle, most researchers who have studied the subject in any depth know that something exists, something far worse than children's fairy tales would have us believe. Little brown and gray people with the eyes of snakes dance in the moonlight in isolated parts of Cornwall and Wales, and when a woman is found weeping and injured near a certain crossroads, the villagers shun her and the daughter born to her in nine months. Something hides in the cellar of the old house, something with wide-open jaws and a lust for the blood of children. Pale men and women, as proud and cruel as the haughtiest of the Sabbat, are known to ride on certain roads at certain times, and those who meet them are never seen again. As the ancient Greeks named the Furies as "The Kindly Ones" in the hopes of appeasing them, so folklore celebrates the "Fair Folk." Once their miasma fouls a place, how can it ever be wiped clean?

Characters can leave small areas of metaphysical pollution alone. They can avoid them, or visit them briefly and then choose to ignore them. It's not as if it's hard for a vampire to forget that such corruption exists, is it? It should be simple for her to put it out of her head and to ignore the nightmares, or to forget the nearby kine who may be at threat. It's only a limited area, and doubtless only a few people will suffer. Kine are dying every day, so what are a few more? It's not as if the place could spread, after all — surely it can't spread. It's not as if something is there which will remember her name. It's not as if such deep-seated malice and wrongness could be a vague foreshadowing of what the Antediluvians truly are

Malo House

The villagers do not go up to Malo House any more. Ten years ago, the governess took the young girl of the two children whom she had been tutoring and left the place early one morning, never to return. The housekeeper followed with the servants the next day, and the household was disbanded in London. Nobody asked what had happened to the little boy. Everyone assumed that he had been sent off to boarding school somewhere. But after the third village child was found strangled underneath the old apple tree in the grounds, the villagers chopped the tree down and shunned the place.

The body of the little boy, Mark, is still hidden in the attic of the house, though it is nothing more than a skeleton by now, and ivy grows through the broken window and between his bones. The governess, Miss Jess Mallas, was psychotic. After a year of alternately flirting with and threatening Mark, she grew convinced that the boy was haunted by the evil spirits of two past servants, the previous governess and a manservant, and she strangled him "to save him" before telling the housekeeper that he had run away. Something of his pain and uncertainty has steeped the

house and grounds. Ivy and bushes come alive at night to crawl around pale necks, and the trees constantly rock and sway as though in a high wind. All that remains of Mark is a consciousness that he must kill other people in order to save them, children in particular, and that he needs to find the two servants who died and kill them too, because they were evil. Everyone is evil. Miss Mallas said so, and she should know.

The Greater Evils

However great their sophistication or their progress toward inhumanity, characters must be horrified when they realize just how far nature can be twisted from its true form. Even a Tzimisce who revels in finding new shapes for flesh or a Toreador antitribu who delights in torture and pain can find something appalling in the areas of darkness which grow and spread, sprung from human seeds. Communities or locations that have become twisted, and which maintain what can be called a stable — or growing — ecosystem of corruption, are truly frightening things. They grow and thrive, spreading their taint into the world around them.

As mentioned previously, Kindred may choose to go, or be driven by obligation or direct command, to investigate or deal with such a place for a number of different reasons. One of the main differences between a large area of corruption and a comparatively small one is the difficulty in leaving. Even with the fastest carriages, or with all the powers a vampire may command, it might take hours to pass the boundaries of an isolated section of the Highlands, or it might be near-impossible to leave an isolated island. Perhaps the mists surround the ruined city, and every alley turns back on itself to lead toward the banqueting hall where the masked throng still dance and smile with dead lips. Maybe the unholy engines created by the insane scientist who rules this maze of factories now move of their own volition, and will shift walls and raise gates to keep the coterie isolated and trapped.

The truest horror of a large outpost of unnature such as this is, how can such a place exist in the world? Even the Sabbat, who pride themselves on their monstrous natures and on the fact that they have moved past the feeble limitations of humanity, can be made to tremble by such areas growing and prospering. Just as wise Sabbat shun the Path of Evil Revelations, they may also wish to be sensibly afraid of the creatures which may prosper at the heart of these places of darkness. As for the Camarilla, their objections may range from the humane to the practical, but few sane members of the sect wish to see abominations thriving and putting out *fleurs du mal* in their own back garden.

What are the qualities of a large place which exemplifies such corruption? The keynotes are size, health and quality of twistedness. The size of the place may range

from a large village to an isolated island, to hundreds of miles of moorland that bears the scars of unholy mingling between human and demons, to the depths of an abandoned forest. It is larger and less escapable than the small outposts of horror discussed above. The place is also healthy, in that it is nourished on its own twisted qualities, and shows no sign of degenerating into empathy and a merciful death. Indeed, it may even be expanding, physically, emotionally or spiritually. As to the quality of horror and the unnatural, that is as perverse, as strange and as fundamentally alien to human nature as the examples discussed in smaller horrors.

In this Victorian age of wonders, the kine themselves are capable of constructing their own horrors on a large scale. Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Valley of Fear* describes how a valley of miners in the Gilverton Mountains is controlled by the "Eminent Order of Freemen," a semi-Masonic union which conceals the Scowlers, a society of murderers. The entire valley knows and fears the Scowlers, who control the public offices and mail and take what they want in terms of public monies and private favors. Public works are neglected, assessments and taxes are huge, the accounts are suitably covered up by bribed auditors, and the everyday decent citizen is terrified into holding his tongue for fear of worse. This is, by every good Victorian standard, a horrific place. The social contract has been broken, the ordinary man cannot live in peace and earn his bread by honest labor, and the law is set aside by bribery and intimidation. The valley itself shows outward signs of corruption: slag pits, dark mines, coal smoke constantly in the air, oppressive fog, and workers drinking and gambling and counterfeiting rather than doing their daily civic duty.

Kindred can easily metaphysically poison an area, ghoul-ing servitors to ensure that their grip on the inhabitants remains unbroken and arranging their own schemes in the carefully prepared environment. After all, times come when vampires with sociological or arcane theories simply cannot hope to realize their ambitions without a full-scale experiment. This may require a village, an island or even a town, and generations or even centuries to study the full implications of certain projects.

Such long-term manipulations of the world have gone on in secret as long as manipulators and opportunity have existed. They merely take on new forms and motives now, combining the Victorian enthusiasm for rationalism and experimentation with new ideas about spiritual synthesis and the ancient drive for power over one's neighbors and environment. Both newly starting experimenters and well established overlords use the new language to speak of their aims and means. It isn't a sadistic urge to watch the kine grow more and more perverse over the years as they struggle with an imposed power structure, incestu-

ous family relationships and bloody rituals at midnight; it's a noble attempt to recreate certain aspects of the Book of Nod. It's not merely a strange forest of humans Demented into behaving like wild animals, forcibly regressed to their base instincts like some perverse Garden of Eden; it's an attempt to discover something novel about the baser animal motivations.

A Tzimisce might wish to explore his personal concepts of crossbreeding fleshcrafted ghouls. Naturally he will require an isolated environment, a good supply of experimental stock and the opportunity to watch the evolution of his specimens from generation to generation. A Ventrue could have theories about the ideal management of a properly ordered society and establish himself in a small town or a tiny port in order to work through his visions. These might involve systematic Blood Bonding of ghouls, creating new political structures or Dominating the townspeople into amnesia every time he feels like trying out a new method of keeping public order. A Toreador might keep a private house deep in the countryside where she preserves a flock of artists, chained to the walls so that they are unable to leave, fed on the blood of children in an attempt to improve their talents, buried under the rosebushes should they fail to please. Even reformers can grow obsessive and cruel, such as a Brujah who exorcises his frenzies on the bodies of the latest council members who failed to please him.

Other supernatural beings can also have a pernicious effect on nature, especially if they breed or swarm — as some of them seem inclined to do. The werewolves apparently live in tribal groups and seem most at ease when infiltrated across a large area in small family clumps, gathering at some central location for their perverse and bloody celebrations of the life force. Their ceremonies can create pools of darkness that form strange runic networks across the countryside, attracting lunar spirits of madness and perverse entities which lure the kine into savagely immoral behavior. Fortunately they avoid the cities, though a well educated vampire could imagine a truly nightmarish scenario if some of them should manage to play on the current interest in the ancient pagan religions. Perhaps some artifact or ruin from recorded history exists, inexplicable even to the most rational or thorough archaeologists, which hides unthinkable secrets.

Magi can infiltrate a town with their covens and cabals — just ask the Tremere how feasible such an operation might be. They can preach their arcane doctrines in the universities and from the pulpits, or in the drawing-rooms of occultists and spiritualists. They can teach children to chant the dark hymns of summoning and binding, initiate virgins in their hidden cults and offer elixirs of life or poison to the old and desperate. On the other hand, the supernatural beings that sorcerers can summon could be there, or the twisted creatures referred to in folklore as fairies, or even the kindly dead which spiritualists claim that they can contact. Who

would *know* if such invisible beings had corrupted an area, save by observing the visible signs of corruption in the kine? The Giovanni keep their own counsel about the motives and abilities of the dead, which in itself is enough to worry any sensible vampire.

Rondel Island

An island off the coast of Wales is pleasantly warm in the summer and never more than lightly snowy in the winter. Swallows make their nests in the roofs of the houses, giving the place its name — Rondel, from the French *hirondelle*, meaning swallow. The people there form a simple farming community, go to church every Sunday in their best clothing and smile politely and bow their heads to their social superiors. At night, the fathers of each household lie with their daughters, and in summer men and boys alike scatter their seed in the furrows of the fields. At the summer and winter solstices, the older women gather in the cliffs at the north of the island, tear apart the youngest child in the village and give the fragments of the broken body to the sea.

Paganism never left this island, and the succession of priests who attend the small chapel have been either corrupted or kept in deliberate ignorance. The current vicar, the Reverend Idris, is in his seventies and nearly deaf. The children learn about the Bible at his knee, then run home to their mothers to be taught how to burn cages of birds at Samhain and to give their seed and blood to the earth and sea. Slowly this community is growing more and more inbred, though a few new people arrive from the mainland every generation. In a few decades, genetic defects will begin to show, an outward sign of inner corruption.

Cleansing and Consequences

As with hauntings, the focus of a scenario involving a corrupt location is likely to be cleansing it or, possibly, mastering it, depending on the vampires' objectives. The most important part of such a task for the protagonists is usually to remove the original locus of corruption. They must drive the master vampire from the area or destroy him, wipe out the Lupines or force the magi to recant their incantations and banish their summoned demons.

Once this is done, the Kindred may either finish cleansing the place by allowing normal nature to enter it once again, or they may take control of it themselves. Allowing normality back in may require such actions as providing a proper burial for the unhallowed dead, replanting an area which had been drained of all life by strange sorceries or blood magic or bringing in ordinary humans to resettle a deserted village. Once the locus of abnormality is gone, nature reasserts her laws and resumes her regular paths. If, however, the vampires wish to control the corrup-

tion and maintain it as a personal source of power or a stronghold, they must take steps to establish themselves as the dominant power in the area. They may even wish to deepen the place's aura of decay, leading the population into further inhuman acts, performing rituals which lay permanent whiplashes of unnatural darkness on hapless Nature's flesh. This may raise a Sabbat vampire's Conviction and Self-Control while lowering Conscience and Instinct, depending on the situation, and will certainly lower Humanity for Camarilla vampires.

If the place's decay has purely mortal origins, the characters must involve themselves with the mortals in order to resolve the situation. This makes for interesting play, as it forces the characters to explore what is left of their own humanity. They must understand the situation in order to identify the problem, and they must build constructively on their instincts and their memories of being mortal in order to resolve the problem and to create a stable new order for the place. It is of little use to kill the man at the top of an organization that rules by fear if one of his subordinates will simply take his place and continue with the same methods.

It may be impossible to return the place or the people to total health. Mind-controlled slaves, fleshcrafted beastmen and long-term ghouls cannot return to normal life immediately. They may never be able to do so. The land itself may have received scars from physical or spiritual pollution which will take centuries to heal. The trees are withered and dry, the fields are sere and barren, void of all nourishment, and the lake is as dark and empty as winter ice. Concrete and brick abutments lie like scabs on the land's surface, and heaps of refuse mar the once-fertile fields.

In some cases, the characters may decide that a merciful death is the kindest option for physically twisted or spiritually mutilated denizens. In such a situation, they must then live with the consequences of that choice, which should be reflected in effects on Humanity or Path scores. Storytellers should make such tragedies rare — potentially one per chronicle, if that many, as producing such a morally painful choice repeatedly removes its power.

Tales of Secret Faiths

Just as the Victorians applied imagination and vigor to scientific research, so they also devoted huge amounts of energy to investigating foreign religions, or trying to rediscover their own "mythic heritage." This was an era of high doctrinal weirdness and innovation, often combined in the same secret cult. Some eccentrics sought traces of the mythic past which they were sure had existed, trying to find continuous teachings which could be traced back to Ancient Masters. Others delved into

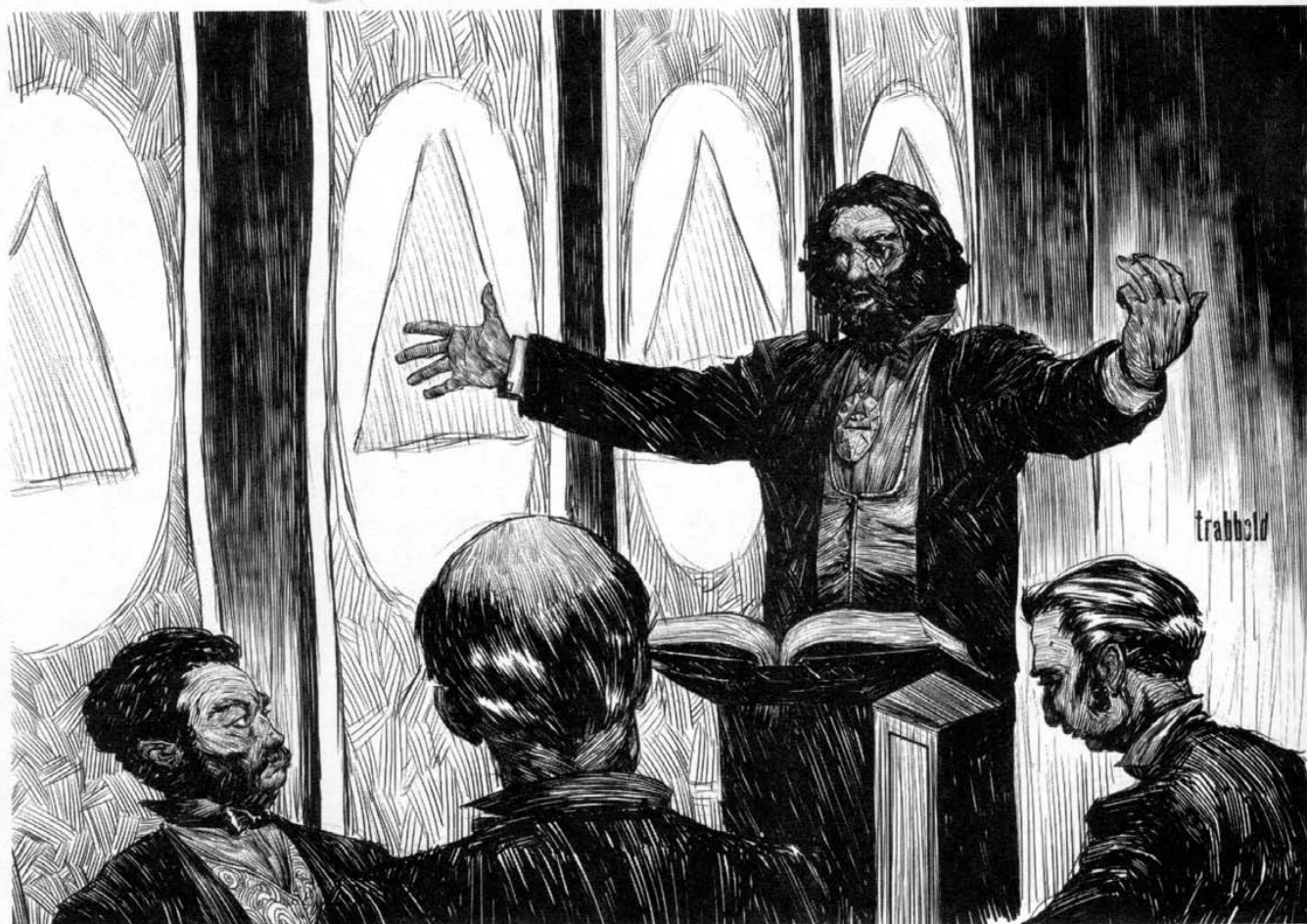
concepts of Druidism, covens, blood sacrifices, skylad rituals and other material so well illustrated by Beardsley, whether or not it was genuinely accurate. Rationalists sought ways to combine new forms of science and schools of thought with their current beliefs, hoping to refine traditional religion into a deeper understanding of the universe and God. Students of foreign cultures and religions sought in them, with varying degrees of competence or courtesy, truths as yet unrevealed to Europeans.

Any major metropolis in Europe, and certainly London, is humming with an underworld of occult researchers, mystic seekers, would-be pagans (if they could find the Authentick Tradition), rationalists, cultists, scholars and practitioners of foreign religions based on half-understood cultural concepts and mistranslated scriptures. This is more than just a convenient source of ghouls for the Tremere in the chronicle. It's a thriving subculture, composed of hundreds of different interacting tiny cults or groups each with its own vision of Truth, driven by the impetus which is forcing Victorian explorers into the Dark Continent, industrializing the countryside and making revolutionary new advances in laboratories across Europe.

This section does not discuss the potential of ghouls or cults to the vampiric powermonger. Instead, it offers ideas and concepts for the adversaries and perils which such misguided or egotistical research can produce. In their pursuit of enlightenment and power, however they define them, the kine can become as dangerous as many Kindred. Characters may well not believe this; their own Disciplines and Thaumaturgy may have convinced them that they are the masters of the Earth, the rulers of the night and the powers that control society.

Victorian horror can involve finding that such assumptions are mistaken.

Actually stopping a cult can be far harder than characters expect. Investigators must first identify the cult and establish its purposes and beliefs. Since the practitioners will probably have secrecy as a driving principle, this will be difficult. Exposing the cult to authorities has its own hazards. Some cults will have an agent in the local judiciary or nobility, while others will be so appalling that the constabulary will simply refuse to believe that such a thing could exist. ("I'm dreadfully sorry, sir, but are you saying that Mrs. Magham down the road is actually engaged in sacrificing babies to a heathen Hindoo deity? Do I have that right?") Even if the characters do manage to dispose of the cult members, either personally or through agents, it is hard to be sure that every last root and branch is destroyed. What one man once invents, another can discover again, and powers who have been contacted are all too eager to hear further prayers. Trying to take control of the cult may be more perilous yet, to the character's very soul and sanity.



Powers of the Past

Building on the same reason which guides the construction of the laboratories of the future, competent scholars and ignorant would-be pagans alike attempt to trace the “mythic heritage” and “classical traditions” which they believe have been passed down through the centuries from the dawn of time. While such scholae [not sure what this word is supposed to be] and lineages may exist, very few seekers will ever find them, much less be accepted into them. This means that many of the would-be “inheritors of the ancient ways” are applying a devotion worthy of a better cause to trying to piece together logically some sort of rational framework from old stories of witchcraft, folk myths, granny legends and half-understood studies of archaeology.

While some of these researchers may stumble on genuine continuous pagan traditions or classical practices, either through their competence at research (if the Storyteller wishes a continuous pagan tradition to exist) or simple good fortune, most of them will be thrown back on their own resources. To the true seeker after power and enlightenment, a mere lack of evidence or doubtful source is no reason to slow down an attempted practice

or ritual. They will gladly dress themselves in white robes, meet in lonely stone circles, sacrifice black bulls or white lambs, smear themselves with blood and dance naked in the morning dew, and swear their loyalty to ancient gods and goddesses. Dangerous as this fanaticism is, something is more dangerous yet, and that is if these seekers are *answered*.

As any good authority on the supernatural (though probably not many Kindred) will know, some entities will hear misguided prayers and will offer power while wearing an appropriate mask. Such powers will lead their deceived victims into further morasses of blood and violence and unrestrained sexuality. They will undermine the roots of Victorian stability, like worms in the solid foundations, spreading their deceptive tentacles further with each new convert. Although such cults tend to be small, they are nonetheless pernicious. They stand against the rationalism and scientific progress of the new age, even if their originators began by attempting to link past and present and future together in a golden chain of tradition. They preach wanton bloodshed and libidinous superstition, and they risk ignorantly serving greater powers of true evil. As both Camarilla and Sabbat know,

one may control the Beast or live with it, but one does not let it control you, and that is what many of these would-be pagan kine wish to do.

Example: Weland's Thirteen

Thirteen elderly would-be sorcerers, druids, smiths and scholars (no women allowed) have formed what they consider to be a classical coven following the old Celtic traditions, paying due honor to Weland Smith, Master of the Forge and Lord of the Autumn. Their accumulated scholarship is wide, if undirected and biased, and they are searching for more documentation to support their particular theories about ancient Druidic Masters. The members of this group are scattered across Oxford, Cambridge, London and Edinburgh but are capable of contacting each other quickly by telegram if necessary. They can command some small pieces of hedge sorcery. More urgently, a number of them are practicing professors and lecturers, and their biased, illogical delusions are beginning to leak into their courses and lectures, presenting a continuing pollution which risks leading young students away from rational thought and honest common sense.

Wisdom from Foreign Lands

It may be an application of the principle that foreign mysticism always sounds more interesting than the home-grown variety, or it may be an outgrowth of genuine interest in foreign cultures, but the result is that serious researchers and would-be magicians alike are investigating the Mysterious East. In practice, this is anything that's not Europe or America, though an exception may be made for particularly out-of-the-way districts of Russia with interesting folklore. The exotic foreign wisdom which results from all this feverish research is distilled into new doctrines, injected where possible (and often where not) into current philosophical beliefs or into denominations which are Christian only in name and practiced by the ignorant. Since very few genuinely wise teachers of esoteric doctrines or Eastern faiths are going to become involved with seekers of this nature, the Storyteller can be fairly sure that such characters will be misguided, erroneous, dangerous and quite convinced that they're on the right track.

India is one of the most convenient sources for such pseudo-enlightening research, given the British Empire's presence. The popular fascination for things "Hindoo" can hide mystic researches among the most unlikely of dabblers; who would have thought that the nice middle-aged widow of Colonel Jenkins is pursuing certain half-understood lines of worship involving Shiva the Destroyer? Consider the growing numbers of foreign

workers around the docks in London, or in other major ports; who knows how many followers of strange faiths lurk among them, willing to pass along fragments of dangerous knowledge? Equally, a fondness for Chinoiserie is enough to conceal a professor's fondness for arcane Chinese mystical secrets, opium and absolute power.

The horror of this sort of obsession or cult plays on the fact that any Victorian Englishman — or, to be fair, any Victorian from any civilized Western country — knows that he hails from a land which is the apex of civilization and rationality. Meddling with foreign strangeness is simply asking for trouble. Deliberately allowing yourself to be corrupted by weird foreign practices is a betrayal of self, of manhood and of nation. Letting the alien darkness in ultimately means loss of personal identity and purpose. The possibility of revenge exists also. Foreign powers do not care to be mocked by petty sorcerers, and important knowledge may have unforeseen consequences in the hands of the ignorant. A single researcher who repeats a misunderstood chant or who calls on strange gods may open a path for unnatural darkness to enter the civilized world. As the hapless new slave of something stranger and more cruel than any Cainite, he will hold wide the door for ancient things to enter and to sate their hunger.

The Masquerade becomes doubly important at this juncture. Even though vampires are creatures of the supernatural, far from rational thought and honest common sense, those qualities serve their interests by persuading the kine to stay away from such foreign dabblings and mystical cults. Humans who do not believe in the supernatural in any way do not give it openings into their lives and do not open doors through which stranger things may enter. Or at least they don't in their waking and conscious souls.

Mary Maiden Mansion

As many famous educationalists would be glad to inform their readers, educating women is a dangerous thing. This small country house goes a long way to prove their hypothesis. Founded by Miss Margaret Redhill, the only daughter of Professor Redhill, the eminent Indian historian, it provides shelter to single pregnant women and works to find them decent upright employment after they have given birth. In the cellars, Miss Redhill has adapted certain ghastly facets of her father's research and worships a goddess who she variously names Kali, Kuan-Yin and the Virgin Mary, celebrating the births which take place upstairs in bloody sacrifice. Some of the servants share this abominable set of beliefs, and each child born at the house is secretly anointed into the faith. Miss Redhill is an enthusiastic Orientalist and frequently

entertains learned Chinese and Hindu gentlemen, keen to hear the pearls of wisdom which might drop from their lips, the better to weave them into her new philosophy.

Our Own Dear Church

Both of the above concepts can be used in strange sects which have their roots (if nothing else) in Christianity. Imagine the horror of a true Victorian in finding what he believed to be one of the stable points of society — the Church, the Law, the Queen — perverted at the base, distorted into something which is unnatural but still recognizable. Here the players have the horror of recognizing a perversion of something important and beloved yet still being able to see the original in it, just as a man might recognize his innocent daughter's features in a harlot's raddled face. Cainites should be intimately familiar with this kind of horror: they see the world they loved change and transform around them, and though some changes may be welcome, others are certain to shock Kindred sensibilities.

The people who pursue esoteric Christian movements are generally intelligent, sometimes ferociously so, and searching for something outside the established church. Some of them may be genuine believers in the Christian faith, even possessing True Faith, but ardently looking for the secrets which they believe are hidden from public view, or for the "true origins" of the church. Others would claim that they are Christian, but what they truly seek is a justification for their concept of Christianity, something that will allow them to claim that they are and always have been in the right. A few are neither ardent believers nor self-deluders but merely seek in the roots of the church for something that they can accept as truth and have faith in. These can be the most dangerous, as they are not blinded by their own preconceptions, and their research can uncover potentially explosive matters, both temporal and spiritual.

Certain tracks are more commonly followed than others. The "Quest for the Historical Jesus" is popular among armchair historians and genuine professors alike and carries a certain cachet due to its apparent affiliation with the general Victorian principles of rationality, truth and bringing light to matters that were previously concealed. This course of research is also notable for truly astonishing divagations from the truth; researchers can grow so absorbed in the history that they forget all about Christ. If they discover some genuinely esoteric wisdom, the possible consequences of this could be extremely dangerous.

Theological scholars may prefer such matters as Gnosticism — though bear in mind that this was half a century before the Nag Hammadi discoveries, unless

your characters get there first — or other interesting heresies which have occurred along the path of Christianity. (**The Cainite Heresy** provides excellent background material on a number of heresies which were current at the time and which could provide philosophical and occult corruption for seekers who lose their way.)

Other possibilities include offshoots from Freemasonry which have developed into full theologies and histories of their own and have carried along a few devoted believers. Such practitioners would be obscured, to some extent, by the larger society of Freemasonry to which they belonged — fellow Masons might have no idea of the darker practices taking place in their midst. Lone professors or studious spinsters might stumble across the archives of lost monastic orders or secret priesthoods, and investigate their practices with closer attention than safety or sanity warrant.

The Victorian social order had a place for everything and everything in its place. If a part of the church was hidden, then a reason existed for that concealment. It is not proper for people to look into secret places; they are far too likely to find out why the matter was kept secret and to live to regret it. (Yes, this does conflict with the other Victorian imperative to discover the laws of nature and penetrate the great mysteries of life. Society itself is rarely totally rational.) Characters who spend their time trying to uncover the mysteries behind the Christian church, or looking for a dark truth which should not exist, are courting their own damnation. Let the characters be aware that even if they are already damned, deeper reaches of Hell yet exist for them to plumb — and if they seek, they will surely find.

The True Johannines

A small Catholic theological college houses a private order, unknown to most of the teachers and students. This tiny group holds certain theories about "the disciple who Jesus loved" who, according to some sources, "waits for him to come again." They've traced historical patterns and religious movements and believe that they have identified the immortal disciple John, brother of James, and think that they know his current location. Their research suggests that he follows the steps of a divine plan that includes the subordination of women, the oppression of unbelievers and the coming of holy fire to cleanse the Earth. Besides practicing these precepts on their own, they intend to go to meet him soon and to offer their services. Whether the "John" whom they have identified is a lunatic, a mage, a Cainite or an infernal agent is left to the Storyteller to decide.

The Continuing Presence

Victorian horror stories often star professional (or semiprofessional) investigators of the strange. John Silence wanders through villages of witches who change to cats by night, and old schools which practice strange “offerings” of strangulation and sacrifice. Solar Pons, one of the many detectives to follow in the footsteps of Sherlock Holmes, finds himself looking into cases of blood-drinking vines and mysterious hauntings. Even Sherlock Holmes investigates cases of reported hauntings, vampires and other apparent instances of the supernatural. (Given the *World of Darkness*, the rational explanation might not always have been the correct one, either.)

The Investigator in Victoriana

In the Victorian ghost story, a moderately professional investigator is either the protagonist, an assistant/mentor to the protagonist or a bumbling hindrance who makes the wrong assumptions, shows up at the wrong time and nearly gets everyone killed in his eagerness to prove himself right. The latter category includes metaphysical investigators as well as strictly rational ones, both wrong in their own particular ways. Would-be mediums, psychic “prodigies” and aspiring mages can foul up a situation or make matters worse just as much as common-sense policemen or logical consulting detectives.

Protagonist investigators tend to be dynamic, vigorous and either intelligent, courageous or both. It is possible to have the brave but shallow type who regularly plunges headfirst into perilous situations and is saved only by the innate nobility of his heart and a lot of luck. One rarely encounters an intelligent coward, however, as protagonists are generally the heroic sort. Investigators have useful skills, abilities, contacts and items (occult lore, unusual Japanese martial arts for self-defense, disguises, informers across London, sharp eyes which read a man’s character with a single glance, newspaper archives of unusual incidents, the ability to recognize the mud from a particular industrial district and so forth). Each frequently has a friend or colleague who has complementary skills or contacts and can make up for minor flaws in his character, such as overweening pride or drug addiction.

Investigators who assist the protagonist of the story in his problems are usually mysterious figures, never fully

revealing their methods or their motivations. They either end the story with a full exposition of their deductive processes, after a successful conclusion to the matter in hand, or slip away quietly with an elliptical quip. As such, they are frequently intensely annoying, even if they do manage to save the protagonist’s life, sanity and marital prospects. Occasionally such an investigator pays a dark and mysterious price for his knowledge, being found weltering in his own blood in unspeakable circumstances or vanishing with the beautiful daughter of a foreign genius to repay an old vow. They may from time to time employ methods that no true Victorian hero would study and lore that no proper gentleman or gentlewoman should ever know.

Bumbling hindrances are perennially useful. They illuminate the protagonist’s genius by contrast and demonstrate approaches not to take when dealing with the problem at hand. They tend to approach the current situation from precisely the wrong direction, advocating metaphysical solutions in the case of human fraud or attempting rationality when the answer is genuinely supernatural. Unfortunately, bumbler often have rank or official position, which means that they are hard to dispose of. They may be high-ranking members of the police, government officials sent out specifically to investigate the situation, rich dilettantes with more money than intelligence or foreign agents working for their own country’s secret service. Bumpers occasionally help by providing some simple yet obvious insight which greater brains have missed or by compiling evidence and witness statements on mysterious occurrences. They are far more often a nuisance to protagonists, however.

Professional Relations

Characters of this type can make excellent foils, adversaries, assistants or allies to Kindred protagonists. Players may even choose to have their own characters take such a role in society and establish themselves as consulting detectives, psychic investigators, occult connoisseurs or scientific researchers willing to assist others suffering from strange events. This offers a wide range of potential allies and advantages to the player and an equally wide range of possible plot threads and adventure lead-ins to the Storyteller.

Some Kindred might even see a position as a “consulting detective” of the sort so thoroughly popularized by Arthur Conan Doyle as a convenient role in society. Such characters can maintain contact with the highly placed, accepting commissions from them, while simultaneously having a web of contacts through the underbelly of society. Brujah might see possibilities of reform, while Ventrue and Lasombra smile at the thought of society

secrets and blackmail material; Toreador may find the whole concept unspeakably aesthetic, and Gangrel might be intrigued by the image of themselves as tireless hunters of crime. Tremere and Giovanni are more likely to be investigators who specialize in hauntings and the occult, moving through the tangled mazes of Victorian mysticism with a knowing smile and a cutting wit.

Investigators are also effective as continuing Storyteller characters throughout the campaign. They can compete with the characters as fellow professionals if the vampires work in the same field or possibly cooperate on questions of national importance. If the player characters are experts in a particular field, then the investigator might even come to count on them as allies to be consulted in cases dealing with that field. ("Professor Jeffers, how good to see you. I would be most grateful if you could give me your opinion on this remarkable Sanskrit inscription.") The expertise does not have to be scholarly or sorcerous; the Kindred may be a rumor-monger in the stews, a society gossip, a crime boss on the docks or even a reclusive professor of mathematics with an unpublished treatise on the trinomial theorem.

The Storyteller may wish to consider letting a friendly relationship develop between the investigator and the vampire, as the investigator comes to count on the vampire's expertise and the vampire gains a useful ally and potential tool. This renders matters all the more painful and delicate when the investigator strays close to a potential breach of the Masquerade. While the vampire has greater access to his ally or friend and may find it easier to see that the matter is kept securely under wraps, he also runs the risk of losing more if it is necessary to alter the investigator's memories, cripple him, kill him or whatever else is required. A relationship is never quite the same once a vampire has been forced to use Dominate or similar disciplines. Bribery and threats can also alienate an ally or destroy a friendship.

A simple acquaintance with investigators may be feasible, where they know the vampire by name or reputation but have no personal link to him, and vice versa. Here a curious or logical investigator or — worse still — one trained in occult matters can be extremely dangerous. If the Kindred are looking into a matter of importance, an investigator may complicate the problem by entering at the wrong moment and seeing things that he shouldn't. Likewise, he may run into danger due to overly reckless methods and inaccurate assumptions, or simply be a risk to the Masquerade owing to his new understanding of the paranormal. (Simple removal of the investigator may not be an option if he is a public figure or if his death cannot be simply camouflaged as collateral damage of the situation.) Perhaps a Blood Bond can be created, under cover of a drug addiction. Maybe blackmail material can be used to exert pressure in the proper circles, or a juicy investigation can be arranged as a trap for the overly well informed investigator, resulting in his death or public embarrassment.

Finally, one will always find investigators who come to the wrong conclusions, persistently, coherently and with a plausible air of logic and accuracy that often leads to them being hailed as correct. This may include monomaniacal scientists and debunkers of genuine supernatural activity, occultists convinced that mystical influence is involved every time they turn a street corner, conspiracy theorists searching for the truth behind Jack the Ripper, members of the church desperately in search of divine influence and young ex-policemen trying to establish themselves as expert consultants in the field. Such investigators can make excellent long-term allies — or, rather, cat's-paws, agents and disinformers — and help establish current levels of superstition or rationality.

Vampires should always be careful, however. Once in a while, such foolish individuals might, by the grace of God or the malignity of Satan, get it right.





Chapter Five: Victorian Characters

Like every era of rapid change, the Victorian age is a time of intense contradictions, very often within a single divided soul. This chapter lays out additional possibilities for Victorian Age: Vampire characters, from individuals forced into the midst of the struggles of the age to those who watch from the sidelines in tranquility ... or at least try to.

The Misbegotten

The thirteen major clans all claim descent from Antediluvian founders. While most vampires belong to one of them, not all do, nor does a distinct identity in the form of blood-borne aptitudes and vulnerabilities depend on a known founder of the Third Generation. Breeding begets oddity. Illicit Embraces coupled with arcane rituals, manipulation and secret agendas have resulted in strange, distinctive bloodlines. These Misbegotten in turn pass their new traits on to new childer, and the distinctions of bastardy become stronger with each new generation.

The Misbegotten aren't a new occurrence within Kindred society. Their genesis isn't contemporary to these Victorian nights; many of them have been around for centuries. Like the clans of Kindred that claim an Antediluvian progenitor, they find that the mist-enshrouded evenings of the late half of the 19th century presents them with both new possibilities and new dangers.

The clanless Caitiff have no single founder at all and carry no clear legacy. They are merely abandoned childer of the existing clans. As such, they are the nadir of vampiric society. Precisely because they start outside the accepted community of vampires, if they are clever and resourceful, the Orphans have a chance, however slim, among the faceless throng of Industrial Europe and the New World. The sheer size of the cities works for them, as does society's strict class structure. Among the kine of New York and Philadelphia, an Orphan's chance to make her fortune and remake her history looms large. Just as a mortal woman can throw a bastard in Boston and arrive in San Francisco a war widow, so can an Orphan change her fortunes and burst into the New York night with a fabricated history and a mysterious, darkly continental-sounding title, and few Kindred would be wiser. She needs style, cunning and flexibility, but the Orphans have proven their adaptability more than once. Who notices the occasional disappearance of an impoverished workhouse boy or a tenement prostitute? Who's going to believe a blighter who claims to have been attacked by a fanged, clawed monster? Fantastical explanations for evil have given way to the practical and scientific because, after all, this is an age of industry and enlightenment. People might speak in hushed, frightened whispers about Springheel Jack, but they don't believe in him. They *believe* in Red Jack, the butcher of Whitechapel.

The Daughters of Cacophony fit comfortably in this age. The vagabond lifestyle of the performer or street orator is easily married to the nocturnal nature of the undead. No one questions the diva who sleeps during the day and arrives in her dressing room moments before the overture. In fact, it is expected. It isn't unusual for a small group of loyal retainers to gather around her, all the better for the undetected movement and help ghoulish underlings provide to the undead. The more dire, dread and unusual consequences of a Daughter's song may be explained away by the maladies of the age: melancholia fueled by boredom and stilled with laudanum can easily disguise the dangerous aftermath of a Daughter's power.

Other Kindred might disdain the Daughters, for they move the most easily among the kine. While a Toreador might play with its food, a Daughter will play *for* her food, then delicately slaughter it as a late supper. She might sweep onto the glittering London stage or the ethereally prestigious boards of opera houses from Paris to Vienna. A Daughter might lift her voice to the Gothic arches of the famed Salzburg Abbey or the high rosetta windows of



Notre Dame. She might stand at the Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park to give voice to her opinions with lucid eloquence. She may be the guest of honor at musicales performed to a few notable guests in intimate, elegant salons. She might find herself in the American West, performing Verdi's *La Traviata* for rough miners, who for an just an evening will sit motionless, enraptured by her skill. A Daughter's voice is a passport of sorts, a finely engraved invitation into the halls of notoriety and adoration and a beautifully memorable *carte de visite* to those she leaves behind enraptured.

Kindred fear these witches of melody and rhetoric because their gift can so literally damage any vampire within earshot of their voices, without a single touch. Yet their gift is so entrancing, it's nearly impossible to ignore. One may see the strands of the web hanging and the spider sitting in wait, but the sweet strains of melody or the hypnotic words of enticement which seduce the victim to lie down willingly in the web's sticky strands are a gift of love and a sermon before dying.

The Gargoyles are the perfect physical and social illustration of "old" versus "new." Slaves to the little-trusted Tremere, the Gargoyles are a subjugated race among Kindred, but a few of them have taken up revolutionary thoughts as well. The question for freedom is a dangerous, heady game, one that few Gargoyles win, but those who have won inspire others to try. If their status of servant isn't bad enough, the entirety of their visage is a mythical anachronism. They find themselves traversing a twilight mortal world of science and reason while everything about their existence, starting with the very skin covering their bones, is the medieval world manifest. Their obvious supernatural appearance can't possibly be explained. In times past the kine who saw the visage of a Gargoyle named it "demon" and ran to their priests in fear and dread. In these Victorian nights, kine may fear, but they search for a reasonable explanation to support their ingenious, methodical counterattack. Ancient kine and modern kine alike might react with fear, but the Victorian disbelieves the superstition apparent before her eyes while still searching for a way to deal with it swiftly.

The Kiasyd are quite at peace with the times. Their natural gentility and their artless manners are reflected in the social attitudes of contemporary middle and upper classes. These Kindred are the keepers of knowledge, the hoarders of artifacts and historians of ancient mysteries, and they now find themselves in an era where the study of old mysteries has been reinvigorated by new enthusiasm and newer, more revolutionary theories and methods. If the world is an enigma to these reticent Kindred, they still traverse it with cautious ease, an aloof clarity and an

utter sense of detachment. They are coolly logical, unfailingly well mannered and ruthlessly though clinically competitive with each other. They stand in relation to other intellectual Kindred as Mycroft Holmes does to his more worldly brother Sherlock: the composed dissector of enigmas, content to lock himself away from the world at large, in contrast to those who passionately immerse themselves in the world.

Victorian Kiasyd have better tools than they ever dreamed of in past ages with which to cache and catalog the wealth of knowledge they collect. That's good, because the Scarlets, more than any other Kindred, realize that their survival is tied to mortal intellectual advancement. They've catalogued it, haven't they? They know how the kine have affected their own environment thus far, and they realize that all histories are interconnected somehow. They amuse themselves by making quaint wagers and engaging in frosty discourse over the direction in which the cattle will take their planet. Industrial marvels instill in them both a sense of terror and a sense of wonder, being objects dangerous to the Kiasyd in their own persons thanks to an inherited vulnerability to iron and embodying the forces for change which hold Kiasyd attention.

Although the dread Salubri prefer solitude (and considering their status as pariahs, that's not surprising), the Victorian nights prove somewhat kinder and more welcoming to them than bygone eras. Mystical societies are fashionable, and so is dabbling in other occult practices. The Theosophical movement is in full bloom, opening new bridges of thought between the disciplines of dialectic, philosophy, sophistry, occultism and religion. Many of the creative thinkers, writers and artists of the day are openly dabbling in occult practices with no loss of respectability or reputation whatsoever. The reading of Tarot cards, tea leaves and hazelnuts is a tea-time pastime, and an evening's séance is as popular as a poetry reading or a musicale in the finest of salons, much to the amusement of the lords and ladies who move through them. In such a mystic-friendly atmosphere, the enigmatic Salubri find acceptance, even rarified devotion. Among the Kindred, the Salubri may still need to hide their faces, may still have to shield themselves from the fearsome appellation of "Soul-Eater," but among the kine, they have found a kinder and gentler exile. Among the kine they are named "Spiritualist" and "Mesmerist." (They cannot risk breaking the Masquerade, but their facility with the occult affords them the ability to hide in plain sight.) Fear exists, yes, but also respect, admiration and adoration.

The horrid Samedi are increasing their numbers carefully, and they too find unique opportunities for

advancement. These skull-visaged terrors are prized, if feared, by other Kindred as assassins and for their facility with the darker aspects of voodoo, or Voo-Doo. Vampires with enemies to blight seek their favors, if not their council. More, as with the Salubri, the Samedi find Victorian kine to be a thoroughly acceptable blend of reason with superstition. Kine have indeed learned to manipulate the world of daytime, but they haven't yet conquered their superstition about the night. (That's not to say they are helpless: mortal tools of self-preservation have progressed far beyond the sticks and torches, pitchforks and pyres of nights past.)

These mortals may fear death, may try to avoid it, but they have also become fascinated with it. Victorians are preoccupied, indeed obsessed, with death and its rituals.

They take loving parlor photographs of deceased relatives as they lie in the repose of oblivion. One can buy postcards of soldiers lying dead on Civil War battlefields and of executed criminals with open, staring eyes. Greeting cards feature dead children arranged in heartrending poses. Perambulations to the cemetery, where headstones are washed and picnic lunches taken among the monuments, are weekly rituals. The pallor of death is widely considered ethereally beautiful. Along with this obsession with the recently departed exists the phobia that one might be interred before the spark of life is extinguished. Intricate mechanical devices such as the "Batson's Belfry" are erected over new-made graves so that those buried alive can alert passersby to their plight and be rescued. The Samedi find this obsession a fertile ground for recruitment.

CAITIFF

They have no sire, they have few champions, they have no standing. Abandoned by their sires, they don't usually last long. They know little about what they are and even less of survival. The laws of the Kindred are never taught to them. What they learn of the Masquerade, they learn on their own. The simple act of acquiring the sustenance of vitae is the most dangerous thing of all to them, because while feeding is instinctive, feeding undetected is not.

Known Caitiff have little standing. They might gain a measure of respect for their abilities, if, in this age of self-made men, they can prove themselves useful. Still, prejudice against Kindred of no specific lineage is very strong. A Kindred who remains honest about her clanless standing has standing barely above that of a ghoul, like a downstairs maid, without recourse or redress against slight or abuse. She will be relegated to the menial tasks that the lords and ladies of distinctive clan lineage disdain. If she is inventive and successful in these tasks, if she shows that she can serve with loyalty, she might attain some small favor in the eyes of the Kindred oligarchy, but she will likely never be allowed to forget her place. After all, even a favor owed can prove lethal, if your betters resent owing it.

Nicknames: Orphans, Charity Childer

Appearance: An Orphan may look like anyone at all, depending entirely on what her sire was up to when

he Embraced her and on her own preferences. Her physical features reflect those of her unknown sire. The only rule of appearance among the clanless is that they have no rules.

Haven: Resourcefulness is the key. An Orphan can literally make her haven anywhere, or at least try to. Her choices are usually determined by the social role she's adopted. If she's pretending to lineage she doesn't have, and if she has the money to spare, she might remain in her own rooms or might absorb the apartments and the identity of one of her victims. Those who prefer the sanctuary of crowds might hide among the lower recesses of a city's tenements, madhouses, brothels or workhouses, seeking the safety of anonymity.

Background: An Orphan can literally have been anyone during her breathing life. Her Embrace, was, after all, a cruel joke perpetrated upon an ill-prepared, unsuspecting mortal. Was her Embrace a callous parting tip to a prostitute, the bad joke played on a raving lunatic, or was it subtly malicious revenge on the daughter of an old enemy? No limitations exist except those that players and Storytellers agree upon for a particular chronicle.

Character Creation: Her flexibility is what allows an Orphan to survive. Her background possibilities are limitless, so it stands to reason that she should be able to pick from a wide array of skills without being truly outstanding in any one thing. This depends largely on

who the Orphan is in life and how clever she is in playing the part she's created for herself. Mental and Physical Attributes are helpful — Orphans are likely to need them — but Social Attributes are useful in carrying out the delicate necessity of pretending to be someone she is not. It helps to have a good deal of Wits, Streetwise, Subterfuge, Awareness and Alertness.

Clan Disciplines: Pick any three as "clan" disciplines for purposes of experience points, as described below under "Weakness." (Default to Fortitude, Potence and Presence.)

Weakness: Orphans may choose from any of the Disciplines at character creation, but advancement is costly. Raising Disciplines costs 6 x Current Rating in experience points. Further, known Caitiff have difficulty "making friends." This social stigma causes the Orphan in question to make any Social check at a difficulty of +2,

unless interacting with other Orphans. Conversely, if the

Orphan is choosing to purvey a ruse identity, she will make a Subterfuge difficulty check at +2, which if successful will negate

this "aloofness" with that particular

Kindred or group of Kindred. This check needs to be made every time the disguised Orphan encounters a new group she wishes to impress.

Organization: The Orphans have no organized redress or authority.

Quote (kneeling over the drawn body of the rent-boy she's just slaughtered,

with hot, fresh blood smeared over her bruised, bitten lips and drooling down her chin onto the white linen of his shirt): *Sweet Jesus, what have I done?*

Stereotypes

Camarilla: *Damn, do they have to be so falsely cheerful with us? If I hate their arrogance, I positively loathe their hypocrisy. Oh, they smile in our faces, but sneer patronizingly at our "poor orphaned state" behind their hands. Have I not proved myself worthy of much notice? Do they acknowledge this? I have done my duty, but do they praise me for it? I have faithfully performed every stinking service they've deemed too mean with which to sully their fine, kid gloves, but do they thank me? And if I am their lapdog, to be fed scraps and kenneled until they need my teeth, won't they just be surprised to find those fine, sharp teeth buried to the gums in their unsuspecting throats?*

— Freddy Gage, Charity Childe to Alfred Covington Lord Blaisdel, the Minister [Minister?] of York

Sabbat: *They take us in, if they don't debase or murder us, to be soldiers in their Grand Army against the oppressors of old blood, but they don't give us any more standing than those they name as slaves of the Old Ones. We still die, and they still go on as before, happily smiling in congratulation to one another in councils we are never meant to witness, that they of pure 'anti' lineage, aren't the first to fall in the fray.*

— Ettore Gianesco, Orphan of Siena

The View from Without

The Camarilla

I did not let dogs at the table in life and do not propose to let these dogs of Kindred at my table now. They have no style, no etiquette, no grace and no prospect of proving useful to me. Let the servants watch the silver until we clear these rabble away.

— Artemis Wylde-Whitney, Esquire, Toredor courtier, London

The Sabbat

They can be adequate fodder for the cannons, I suppose, if the proper motivation is applied. Better them than us.

— John Stanley, Lasombra Bishop, New York



VICTORIAN AGE VAMPIRE

DAUGHTERS OF CACOPHONY

The Kindred of the Voice are at the height of their accomplishment and popularity. Opera is the highest form of Victorian entertainment, popular among the working classes as well as their social betters. Popular music of the day has ceased merely to evoke feelings in the listener and has started to carry stories of intrigue, beauty, lost love, treachery and betrayal. A Daughter's voice can grant her entrance from one side of the world to the other, across the evening scene of continents and countries. The soliloquies of Shakespeare, Ibsen, Cheykov and Otway, the ideas of Milton and Emerson and the revolutionary words of Marxists and Fenians all gain power when someone speaks them well. Skillful use of the voice changes the minds and hearts of its audience through intonation, intensity, melody and imagery. Victorian Daughters of Cacophony can perform in all these ways, for audiences and victims all too willing to fall under their mysterious spell.

Actresses, opera singers and the like often exist in vagabond ways. Eccentricity, reticence and even a little decadence aren't only accepted among those of artistic bent, it's expected. It's not unusual for them to stay out all night and to be "indisposed" during the day.

Not all Daughters are women. They Embrace men as well, who round out the Daughters' interest to include politics, oration, rhetoric and warfare as well as the artistic endeavor of music. Divas and tenors, castrati and cantors, strolling players, peripa-

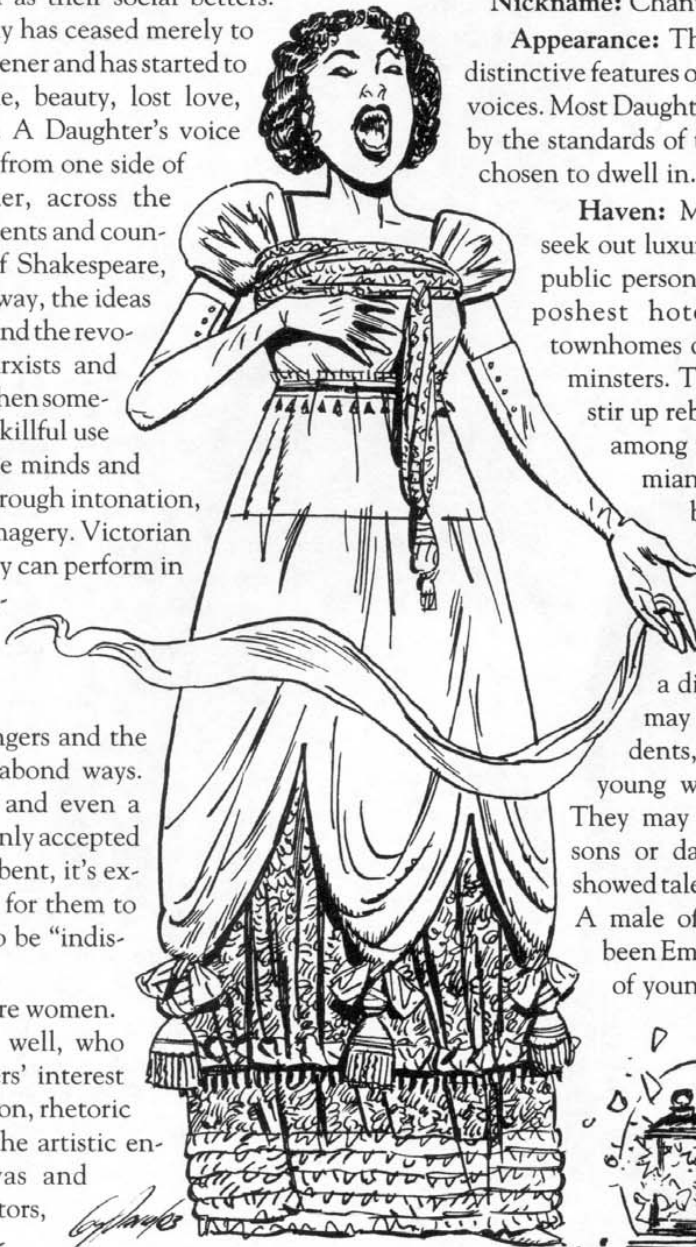
tetic actors, snake oil salesmen and cheapjacks, anyone with an affecting voice can be gifted with a Daughter's Embrace.

Nickname: Chanteuse

Appearance: The Daughters don't have any distinctive features other than their awe-inspiring voices. Most Daughters are polite and well spoken by the standards of the class and culture they've chosen to dwell in.

Haven: Most Daughters instinctively seek out luxurious havens, whatever their public personas: the inner recesses of the poshest hotels, curtained rail cars, townhomes or apartments in fashionable minsters. Those who use their voices to stir up rebellious sentiment might live among the boardinghouses of bohemian districts or in comfortable, book-lined apartments where young minds gather to plot revolution and resistance.

Background: Daughters of Cacophony possessed a distinctive voice in life. They may have lived as professors, students, barristers, poets or charming young women with musical talent. They may have been the illegitimate sons or daughters of courtesans who showed talent with pianoforte or in song. A male of the bloodline might have been Embraced from among the ranks of young castrati, now twice cursed to be forever young and undeveloped. The Embrace can be gifted to a particularly colorful cheapjack, costermonger or packman by a sire



impressed by his skill at using voice to manipulate kine.

Character Creation: Social Attributes are primary, as are (depending on the character's individual history) Acting, Music and Oratory. Strong grounding in Perception helps to combat the bloodline's weakness of becoming distracted by music or oratory.

Common Natures include Questor (for those pursuing meaning and insight through their art), Artiste (for those for whom the art itself is the point) and Futurist (for those dreaming of changing the world through their art). Outsiders are also common among the Scolds. Daughters' Nature and Demeanor tend to one of two extremes: the same, as their outer behavior truly reflects their inner passions, or diametrically opposite, as they conceal their true aims.

Many Daughters have multiple dots in Fame and Herd thanks to their plentiful contacts with mortal society.

Clan Disciplines: Fortitude, Melpominee, Presence

Weaknesses: Daughters of Cacophony, like the Toreador who so raptly enjoy their gifts, are distracted by their art, but while a Toreador will become entranced by anything beautiful, a Daughter will become entranced by the power of music or words. They are so attracted to it,

they hear the strains of it constantly, and it can become a fatal distraction. They suffer a +1 difficulty penalty on Perception checks while an interesting voice is within earshot and can never have more than three dots in Alertness.

Bloodline Prestige: Rumor says that Daughters impress one another with their tallies of Kindred driven mad or destroyed thanks to the rival Daughters' music. Certainly they compete to maintain the most lavish and expansive mortal retinues.

Organization: The Daughters have no organization, though sometimes two or more Daughters may find themselves in company, invited to the same salon or favored in patronage by the same Prince. During these rare "visits," they find opportunity to lift their voices together in beautiful and terrible melody, or to act different parts in a fine work of the day. They use their unique abilities with words to persuade, cajole or terrorize, and it's a wise Prince who uses these meetings for her own ends. Daughters willingly listen to the counsel of the older, more gifted members of the bloodline, better to learn how to use Melpominee effectively.

Quote (as she walks out of the small room which now contains a few babbling, staring, kine, a slight, enigmatic smile playing across her lips): "Dear me."

Stereotypes

Camarilla: *Like tone-deaf dilettantes, they hear the song but never the music, the parts but never the whole. They revere our talent, but they think we are harmless, a beautiful, terrible curiosity. They may be surprised one day, for their ignorance and complacency may be their undoing and our sanctuary.*

— Antoinette Dubois, 10th Generation Chanteuse of Paris

The Sabbat: *Barbarians, mostly.*

— Miss Dubois

Δ View from Without

The Camarilla

Absolutely lovely. It draws forth the bloody tears from me even now. Let us pray that such talent never serves unfortunate ends, as I would hate to have to destroy it.

— Artemis Wylde-Whitney, Esquire, Toreador courtier, London

The Sabbat

Gossamer girls with lilting voices? Meals in skirts, nothing more.

— Axel Von Anders, Brujah *antitribu* of Munich

Inconnu

Dinner? This evening after the performance? Alas, it is with regret that I must decline, for I am engaged in minor matters of commerce, Miss Clementine, but please convey my sincerest regrets to the enchanting mistress who sent this invitation.

— Alessandro D'Amati, Monitor of Milan

GARGOYLES

The Tremere created the Gargoyles to guard the persons and property of the masters of Thaumaturgy, and the Tremere are more than adequate to the task of keeping their Guardian vassals servile by subtly feeding the Guardians' self-doubts and fears. The Tremere plant enough self-criticism in them about their appearance and intelligence to make their slaves believe that their place is with the Tremere, and it's hard to overcome such a belief. Escaped Victorian Gargoyles are uncommon. They find the world baffling and dangerous. Their monstrous looks do not allow them to pass through the throng of kine easily, and if recaptured they will inevitably be destroyed by their creators.

While travel from Europe to the Americas is not impossible (see Chapter 6, p. 164), the logistics are not easy. Those few Gargoyles who do make the crossing find themselves in a world even more alien than the one they left.

In both the Old World and the New, a fugitive Gargoyle must find places to hide and most avoid the company of any Kindred except other escaped Gargoyles. It's unusual but not altogether unprecedented for a Camarilla Prince to take in a fugitive Gargoyle or two as a bodyguards or assassins. The Prince would do it carefully and only for Gargoyles with important, useful abilities, for the Magicians have a long and unforgiving memory when slighted.

Enslaved Gargoyles are difficult to play: they cannot act on their own and lack even rudimentary standing in Kindred society. A Gargoyle yearning for freedom but not yet escaped might be a tragic figure with torments fascinating for the player portraying him, but little potential exists for interaction with anyone else.

Nicknames: Guardians

Appearance: The Guardians have the gruesome visage of the stone guardians from whom they take their name. The peculiar magic that creates them brings forth marked disfigurement in the form of unsightly protrusions, stonelike skins

and vestigial horns. Their great, curved wings are horned like a demon's. Guardians always have an Appearance rating of 0, though they may retain some single feature from their living appearance, if it was sufficiently striking. Jewel-like eyes of indescribable beauty and clarity in a repulsive visage of a stone devil are the most common sort of this feature. See the Humanity's Window Merit (p. 155).

Advancement in their bloodline's Discipline of Visceritika intensifies a Guardian's ugliness but never erases the one human feature.



Haven: Enslaved Gargoyles reside in Tremere chantries. Free Gargoyles shelter where they can, in any place that allows them ease of access and where few prying eyes look. In the Old World, catacombs, ruined castles and subway tunnels all serve, while in the New World caves and railroad tunnels are the most common havens.

Background: Almost all Gargoyles come from one of three origins: bred from captive vampires by the Tremere to serve as a bodyguard or assassin, escaped and looking for sanctuary, or Embraced by an existing Gargoyle as a companion, good luck charm or other object of significance to the sire.

Character Creation: Physical attributes are a Guardian's primary weapons. Talents are also important to a Guardian's *raison d'être*, so, they too will be strong. Appearance is always 0. Guardians begin a Victorian chronicle with a Flight rating of 1. No Gargoyle can be of older generation than the generation of the vampire from which he was created, unless they gain generation through diablerie. (This is highly unlikely, as they are too bound to a "chain of command" to be easy diablerists.) No Gargoyle can have been created or Embraced before 1167, when the Tremere made the first Guardians. Logical Natures and Demeanors for free Gargoyles include Outsider and Fatalist. Gargoyles may have unusually

high Humanity and Self-Control ratings as a result of their commitment to duty.

Disciplines: Fortitude, Potence, Visceritika, Flight

Weaknesses: Guardians are easily Dominated by other Kindred. They make all Willpower checks against mind-affecting Disciplines at +2 difficulty. Gargoyles created by the Tremere lose all memory of their earlier existence, and Gargoyles Embraced by others of their kind suffer widespread and deep-ranging memory loss as well.

Organization: Guardians have no formal organization, but freed bond servants do seek out others of their kind. Although free Gargoyles are uncommon, within this small sphere, it's not unusual for them to congregate in secret. Here they can share knowledge, share the use of Disciplines, teach martial techniques and impart survival secrets. This is easiest for Guardians with mountainous havens or for those who make their havens in catacombs and underground tunnels.

Bloodline Prestige: Guardians earn each other's respect through faithful service and successful acts of heroism and protection. Free Gargoyles retain these goals and add to them honor for successful interference with Tremere schemes.

Quote (looking out the casement and up into the night sky): *It looks endless, doesn't it? I've a mind to try it.*

Stereotypes

The Camarilla: *The primogen is a danger, Highness. She does not respect you. Even now, I can tell that she smiles to you and plots against you in secret. It is a feeling. Tell me that I may save you from her intrigues, Sire? If so, the deed will be done this eve.*

— Cedric, Guardian of Prince Angus, Edinburgh, Scotland

Animals, stupid animals, we are still these. We merely serve a different Master of Hounds.

— Malachai, Free Guardian, Freehold of Ironbridge, the Midlands, England

The Sabbat: *They embrace all we seek to leave behind us. See how they treat their revenants, and while we are Kindred, they will treat us no better.*

— Malachai

A View from Without

The Camarilla

These monsters are a danger to us. Once they have set their stony faces against you, you have no hope. Run and hide. Beware walking alone in the night, for they can swoop down and you'll never be the wiser, in no more time than it takes for a grain of sand to stain the bottom of the hourglass.

— Geoffrey Talleboise, Ventrue, Avignon

The Sabbat

Strong they are, but stupid, and their presence is unbalancing to us, for they were created by the Magicians and we all know the worth of their bond. Their love for the Elders of perdition is no help to us, either.

— Bela Kardoza, Brujah antitribu, Budapest

KIASYD

No Kindred, not even the Sabbat with whom these Misbegotten align themselves, know the true origin of the Kiasyd. They're reticent to the point of shyness anyway, and it's hardly seemly to let just anyone and everyone know all about one's family tree. The Scarlets — the nickname compares them to Oxford and Cambridge dons, who favor red robes of office — don't really like to socialize, but they do realize the importance of staying abreast of the times. They look for rare books and manuscripts, ancient tomes and the latest fiction, anything that catches their fancy and whets their appetite for enlightenment.

Nickname: Scarlets

Appearance: The Kiasyd have luminously white complexions, with the texture of flawless alabaster. In moonlight, they actually glow a faint icy blue for the rest of the evening after feeding; they try not to let other Kindred see this. They are tall, sometimes reaching as high as seven and half feet, although six to six and a half feet is more common. Their eyes are completely black without any visible white at all; they usually hide these disturbing features behind heavily tinted glasses and generally appreciate current fads for such spectacles among fashionable mortals.

Most Kiasyd dress in the style of gentry, without flash or fashion but with all the craftsmanship they can afford.

Havens: Kiasyd nest in any secluded place that can house their vast collections of weird knickknacks, books and scrolls. Some Kiasyd like to den in the lower recesses of libraries and schools, but those are brave indeed, risking uninvited interruptions. Kiasyd seek servants who wish to live solitary, scholarly lives.

Kiasyd consider it poor manners to make their havens near one another. As they gain prestige within their bloodline through the sheer size of their artful gathering of books and things, no two Kiasyd will willingly make their havens in the same area. Two or more may share the same city, if that city has obvious, separated districts, but

that's the extent of the Kiasyd's tolerance toward any of their brethren encroaching upon their jealously guarded territories.

Background: Kiasyd sires choose mortals who are intelligent and introspective, whatever their class. The self-taught member of the working class is as desirable a potential neonate as a highly educated and learned professor. Scholars, librarians, professors, museum curators and solitary theoreticians in mathematics, history and archaeology make excellent choices for a Kiasyd's mortal background.

Character Creation: Mental Attributes are primary, as are Knowledges or Skills. Mentors, Resources and Generation are logical Backgrounds, and Kiasyd do cultivate a very few, special Contacts, including rare book dealers, elderly solicitors, brokers at auction houses, archaeologists and other seekers of rare tomes and trinkets. Allies are rare, for the Kiasyd remain too solitary to have "friends" on a level anywhere near their childer or their specialized ghouls. Futurist and Conservative are the most common Natures and Demeanors.

Disciplines: Dominate, Mytherceria, Obtenebration

Weaknesses: Cold iron is the bloodline's weakness. Cold iron is pure iron, untempered by any Industrial Age manufacturing process. It does not include alloys of iron, such as Damascus steel. The Bessemer process of turning iron ore into steel has made the Victorian nights easier on the bloodline, if not altogether comfortable, for many transports of the day were still derived directly from the metal. The higher the content of pure iron, the more difficulty the Kiasyd character has in controlling his aversion to it.

Kiasyd suffer a +1 difficulty penalty to efforts at resisting frenzy when cold iron is closer than one yard per dot of Stamina the character possesses. Touching cold iron calls for an immediate Frenzy check, with the +1 difficulty applied.

Organization: Most Kiasyd respect Sabbat rites as Anglicans of grace and little real piety do the churches they attend only at Yuletide, High Mass or Easter. Kiasyd attend Esbat, share in the Vaulderie (usually wiping the lip of the chalice with a good pocket handkerchief before drinking from it) and make ready to leave at the end of the service. A pack's Scarlet-in-residence may share an enigmatic story or two but won't stay at these gatherings for long.

Once every fifty years, all available Kiasyd meet formally at the Great Symposium. Invitations go out up to five years in advance of the event, to give the invitee ample time to RSVP. Absence from these gatherings is a

mark of disfavor and an abject slight to the chosen host. Only the sincerest and most dire excuses absolve the transgressor of the sin of nonattendance. The participants vote on titles of honor by secret ballot; all coolly covet these honors, which include rights of access to others' collections and the highest honor of all, the privilege of hosting the next Grand Symposium.

Bloodline Prestige: Kiasyd gain prestige by the vastness and completeness of their archives. It's not unusual for those attending a Great Symposium to carry with them vast inventories of their caches, that they might compare and diffidently gloat or reservedly lament over their successes and failures.

Quote (reverently caressing the fine leather binding of a first edition copy of Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass*): *See these illustrations? Tenniel in his prime. And we may learn something from one who goes into the places of her imagination seeking knowledge and finds herself the alien element in an unfamiliar world. Dash it, be careful with that.*



Stereotypes

Camarilla: *I use them when I must and otherwise ignore them.*

— The Honorable Roderick Phillips March, Collectio Emeritus, Genus Vampiricus, Species Kiasydum, Stoke-upon-Kent

Sabbat: *The Beast is a useful tool, but is such an unbearable lack of civility necessary? As individuals, they are parvenu and their coteries are little more than mere gatherings of plebes.*

— Roderick Phillips March

The View from Without

The Camarilla

'Ey, oo's that gent? No, not 'im. 'IM! The togger what's comin' outter 'er Ladyship Felicity's knockin' shop. 'Zit the moon, or is that blogger a bit blue? 'N, Ta, why's 'e carryin' a bloody book? Didn't know gents came down 'aymarket to bloomin' read!

— Peter Cleary, Brujah thug and fine-wirer, Bristol

The Sabbat

Simply put, the gentlemen know too much. Left alone, I believe they might prove to be a fatal error in judgment.

— Inachus Christos Baptiste, Lasombra Monsignor, Athens

SALUBRI

Hunted for centuries, the Salubri now sometimes dare to hope that they may be able to reenter at least the mortal world. Kindred revile them as “Soul-Thieves” thanks to a relentless propaganda campaign initiated by the Tremere. Malicious falsehoods about their genesis and their “crimes” abound. Even ancient allies loathe them, thanks to rumors that long ago took on a life of their own. The vast majority of vampires couldn’t begin to explain what the Salubri might ever have done wrong in particular; they know merely that the third eye can steal souls and that the Salubri have strange notions about what spiritual health involves, regardless of what the owner of a soul may want for it.

This is a new age. New mystical societies foster a marriage between empiricism and metaphysics, seeing them as compatible rather than antithetical. Because of this, the Salubri have allies among the kine who revere their special gifts rather than fear them. The world is ready for healers and sages and is willing to overlook a lot of peculiarity for the sake of wisdom in the midst of chaos.

Nickname: Soul-Thieves

Appearance: The Prophets can look like any Victorian. They tend to affect the dress of the lower classes while in public, the better to lose themselves among the throng. Since the bloodline chooses its singular childer carefully, members of the Salubri can be young or old, male or female, and come from any

ethnic background available in a diverse world that’s smaller since the advent of Industrial Age travel.

Salubri develop their defining physical feature, the dreaded third eye, upon mastering the second level of Obeah. When closed, the third eye resembles a healed scar, though Salubri prefer not to take chances and conceal it under hats and scarves whenever possible. When open, the third eye marks the Salubri as one of the soul-stealing fiends of vampiric legend, a thing for other vampires to flee or destroy. Rumor ascribes many powers to the eye beyond simple soul-stealing, and Storytellers and players should feel free to add to this body of legend. A secret means of communication? The stigmata of a pact with the devil? The visible mark of diablerie? Someone in Cainite society believes all of these and more, and whenever other vampires spot a Salubri, all the stories come out for discussion.

Haven: One may well find a Salubri living under the protection of the head of the local Theosophical Society, as such a person would revere the enlightened Mesmerist. (See Chapter One, p. 25.) These kine might revere the Salubri as a prophet, gifted psychic or medium, and many would willingly donate both blood and service. More traditional Salubri find shelter in isolated villages, far away from the domains of hostile



Kindred; with the relentless advance of the railroad and the telegraph, however, such places are rapidly disappearing. The Salubri, with their inherent understanding of the workings of mortals, realize that their integration into the cities is unavoidable and turn their thoughts toward ways of accomplishing this without compromising their safety.

Background: Salubri very rarely create childer. When they do, they choose them carefully, seeing it as the culmination of work of their unlives. Salubri choose mortals they believe to be of exceptional value to humanity. This doesn't mean that these individuals are *humane*, merely that they have given something to humanity that the Salubri find worthwhile. Such a mortal might, for instance, be a physician of great skill who tirelessly researches the cure to some ill-understood malady but experiments coldly, gruesomely and unfeelingly upon the lower classes, believing that the end justifies the means.

Character Creation: It's unlikely Salubri will have physical attributes as primary. They don't choose to Embrace childer with violent tendencies. Prophets also frown on dishonesty or chicanery, so social skills such as Manipulation are also deemphasized. Mental Attributes are primary. Mesmerist characters tend to have Natures and Demeanors that align with views toward humanity. Salubri must begin play with at least three dots in Generation, and many also have one more dot's worth of Herd. Salubri may have Contacts, Allies and Retainers from among the kine.

Disciplines: Auspex, Fortitude, Obeah

Weaknesses: Prophets do not feed from those who will not give their blood to them willingly. Should a willing vessel decide, during the act, that he is not as willing as he thought, the Salubri loses one Willpower for continuing to feed. At the Storyteller's discretion, a Salubri who feeds from any unwilling vessel may need to make a Humanity check, and loses one level if it fails.

Organization: Isolated and scattered, the Salubri have no real organization. In addition, their pursuit of Golconda carries with it the necessity to travel far across the globe in search of enlightenment. The Salubri's unlives would be lonely indeed if not for a marked attempt among those of the bloodline to remain connected to one another in whatever fashion available to them. Even allowing for the convenience of Industrial Age communications devices, such as telegraphs and Mr. Bell's interesting new apparatus, the Salubri prefer to write long, conversant letters. In addition, all Mesmerists usually maintain journals, which are passed on from sire to childer throughout the centuries.

Quote: *The pain of the ages is not obvious on your face, young one, but it is there, I know. I can hear it in the echoes set by your silences, I can smell it on your hands and in your clothes. Seek forgiveness for your sins and they shall be forgiven, if your heart attains purity. Do not listen to the false ones, the liars and the whisperers. I seek not to collect your soul, only to aid you in cleansing it. Only through the redemption of forgiveness can a child of Caine know the eternal peace that eludes most.*

Stereotypes

Camarilla and Sabbat: *They are piteously wrong, wrong about everything, and a danger to all Kindred.*
— Eurayle Gelasia Mylonas, Penitent Prophet, Thessolaniki

The View from Without

The Camarilla

Good heavens. I knew that Monsieur Noir was something unusual, but never suspected ... surely someone will attend to him now that he's been exposed.

— Lady Elisabeth Winton, Ventrue, Manchester

The Sabbat

The Pariahs spit in the face of our father, Caine, with their ceaseless prattle of "redemption," and their only wish appears to be a desire to be slaughtered like sheep. To spare them is to truck with blasphemy. Grant them their wish.

— Lavinia Carew, Lasombra Ductus, London

SAMEDI

Mysterious even to other vampires, the Samedi are secretive practitioners of voodoo (or as many Victorians in Britain and America would have it, Voo-Doo). Certainly the history of the Samedi is intimately bound up with the spread of slaves and their religions, which came together in the synthesis that is voodoo, and until recently the Samedi did not Embrace white people.

As trade and travel bring distant lands closer, the Samedi become more diversified. As far as the Samedi are concerned, this is in part highly just and entertaining payback for generations of wrongs inflicted on their ancestors. It's fine to have the power to gift the daughter of a French or English former sugar plantation owner in Barbados with the visage of death for an eternity, and to visit the Embrace upon a former Confederate overseer or a European-born slave trader. In America the Samedi concentrate in the slums of large Northern cities and ghettos in former slave states, while in Europe they cluster wherever poverty and outcast status provide sanctuary — mostly in Italy so far, but they're moving into France and England as well.

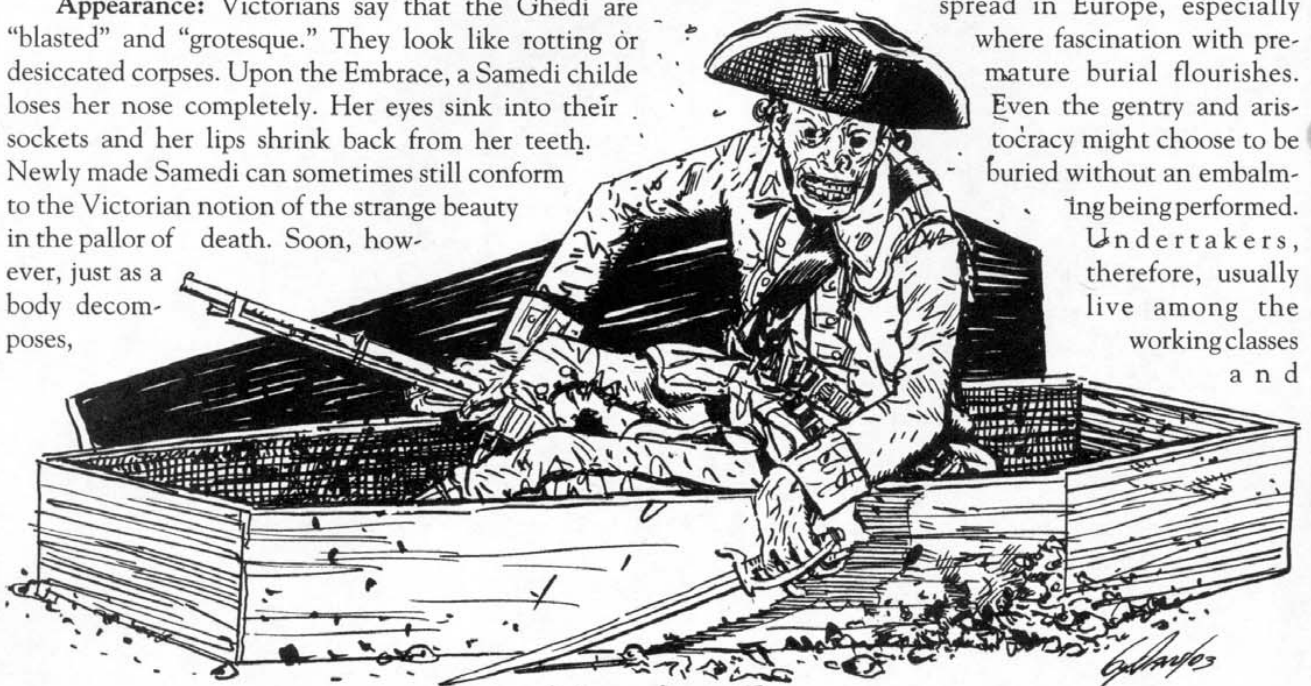
Nickname: Loa

Appearance: Victorians say that the Ghedi are "blasted" and "grotesque." They look like rotting or desiccated corpses. Upon the Embrace, a Samedi child loses her nose completely. Her eyes sink into their sockets and her lips shrink back from her teeth. Newly made Samedi can sometimes still conform to the Victorian notion of the strange beauty in the pallor of death. Soon, however, just as a body decomposes,

the Ghedi will lose this pallor and her flesh will rot, although this takes longer than it would in the typical states of mortal death. A Ghedi's outward appearance degenerates through the same forensic stages that a mortal's body does, acquiring the look and smell of petrified carrion. Over centuries, their bodies can dry, and they may come to resemble mummified corpses without their wrappings.

Haven: The Ghedi cannot blend easily in with the kine, thanks to their appearance and stench. Victorians may be interested in death, but they are frightened by monsters. The intermediate levels of Obfuscate do allow them a measure of interaction with Kindred and kine alike, by visual and olfactory chicanery, but not until the third level can they actually present a face to the world other than the ghastly one that is their truth. This setback limits their choice of haven until the appropriate level of Obfuscate develops.

Victorian undertakers practice a necessary but ignoble calling. It is *not* a profession for the gentry. While a measure of scientific understanding is necessary to practice it, embalming is not widespread in Europe, especially where fascination with premature burial flourishes. Even the gentry and aristocracy might choose to be buried without an embalming being performed. Undertakers, therefore, usually live among the working classes and



even the criminal element. This class ostracization makes it easier for the Ghedi to make their havens near and sometimes in the basement workshops of an undertaker's abode. It also affords a chance to keep their ear to the ground of the underworld and to move, if not with ease, with practiced, purposeful care among these classes.

Other choices of havens might include cemeteries (obviously), mausolea (ditto) and even "Chamber of Horrors" and "Ripley's Believe It or Not!" type museums. All the Samedi really needs is a place to sleep and kine too frightened of an ultimately lifelike "exhibit" to examine it very closely; the museum's eccentric owner or fascinated custodian might be made a loyal retainer. Finally, some Ghedi make their homes among the immigrant ghettos of their city, a tendency that might cause them to choose a port city rather than a landlocked one.

Background: Victorian Ghedi draw their childer from among the ranks of the underclasses and the professions that deal with death and the dead. A member of this bloodline might be an Embraced mortician who gets more than altruistic satisfaction from his work, a scholar who studies ancient burial rituals with zeal, someone of any class suffering from suicidal depression or a violent criminal.

Quote: *I see that you are interested in the states of le Morte. I shall aid you in your studies.*

Character Creation: The bloodline's facility with the application of the distinctive discipline Thanatosis necessitates a fascination with the study of the stages of death. Mental attributes will therefore be primary, as will Knowledges. Samedi often choose Natures and Demeanors from among such archetypes as Bon Vivant (those who know the shallowness of life and unlife and don't care), Fatalist (those who see all going into dark anyway), Deviant (the freaks of society) and Monster (society's terrifying, supernatural nemesis), but any that fits an individual character's concept is acceptable.

Disciplines: Necromancy, Obfuscate, Thanatosis

Weakness: A Ghedi's monstrous visage and repulsive odors permanently reduce her Appearance to 0.

Organization: Ghedi who inhabit the same city meet occasionally in graveyards and the basement recesses of undertakers' workshops. Here they share secrets, air grievances, plan shared revenge, practice their religious rites and exchange information relevant to their collective safety.

Stereotypes

Camarilla: *They are as cruel and self-absorbed as the Masters what laid open the flesh of our backs when we worked their sugar fields, cooked their puddings or built their canals, and didn't do it fast or well enough for their likin'. They'll seek our charms, our curses and our vengeance, and they won't know, all the while, that we can gather the same charms against them and seek the Baron's aid in besting 'em.*

— Tanginé of Swan's Rest, Des Allemande Parish, Louisiana, daughter of Josette, Mambo of Capetown, Jamaica

Sabbat: *Like us, they know how to keep their secrets. We must avoid fighting them at all costs, because, unless we prepare, unless we have the darkest aspects of the Baron's favor on our side, we'll lose.*

— Abebe, Portsmouth, daughter of Mandisa, Mambo Brigitte of Bridgetown, Barbados

The View from Without

The Camarilla

Look like fly-blown crappers, they do, left up to swing a fortnight before the cuttin' down, and the buggers smell like the middin' on an 'ot day. That's sayin' much, comin' from me, as it does.

— Bully Billy Four Fingers, Nosferatu, Brighton

The Sabbat

Masterfully twisted, I believe they put our most monstrous machinations to shame! Though I must admit discomfort at the thought of placing my lips on a chalice from which one has imbibed.

— Angelo Bienvenido Aznar y Castille, Malkavian antitribu, Archbishop of Madrid

Character Traits

Game mechanics are a means to the end of roleplaying. They matter because they shape the process of play, but they are not fundamentally the point. To help you use them to build and play characters most effectively in **Victorian Age: Vampire**, this section of the chapter looks at the Victorian environments the mechanics reflect, how they differ from the modern-day and how they differ for the living and the undead. Remember that characters do not instantly grasp all the implications of their new abilities, since it takes time to discover what they can do and shed expectations based on a life now past.

The Sounds of the Time

When describing your character's actions, keep in mind that she doesn't think of herself as "kicking the crap out of someone." She is "engaging in fisticuffs," "purveying acts of pugilism," or "brawling in an unseemly, unladylike way." When your Victorian gentleman, who also happens to be Kindred, goes to a brothel or Hell-Fire club to get him some, he is "knockin' a dollymop," and if your character likes to "give oaths," as the Victorians called curse words, use period curses and replace "I kick his fucking head in" with "I crop his bleedin' block off."

Slang used badly can interfere with players' ability to concentrate on the game or maintain a good sense of their characters' personality, particularly if it's slang that has nothing at all to do with Victorian usage. Monty Python and Mary Poppins do not belong to the **Victorian Age: Vampire** milieu. On the other hand, slang used well can enhance the mood for everyone, and it's worth cooperating and exercising a little patience and forgiveness as players practice.

Period literature provides excellent examples, and the library and World Wide Web contain plenty of commentaries on how Victorian usage in various classes evolved over time. A little bit of homework can help you add a fresh dimension to your portrayal of your character.

Resist the impulse to engage in deliberately bad French. Some British speakers of the Victorian era did, but as an expression of contempt which you don't need to adopt for yourself even when playing a character who has that attitude. "A thousand Wogs, a hundred Frogs equals one Englishman" summed up their thoughts on the matter; you can remember that they were wrong.

Your Character in a Changing World

The Victorian world seems strange and scary in important ways to almost everyone in it, whether they admit it or

not. Even those responsible for key social, technical and political innovations discover unexpected consequences, and everyone else learns of new possibilities only as the torrent of change descends. Older vampires find it all terribly baffling; most try either to hide away from it all or to Embrace childer capable of functioning in the 19th century and therefore acting as interpreters for their sires. Old applications of familiar knowledge may no longer matter, and characters who wish to understand what they can know and do now must constantly practice. It's very easy indeed to under- or overestimate the risks new challenges pose, and likewise to over- or underestimate one's own ability to keep harm at bay.

Abilities in Depth

Victorian Age: Vampire abilities generally work the same way as their modern counterparts even though the details have changed greatly. An accountant still relies on Intelligence + Finance to balance the books despite the many differences in accounting practice, and firing a gun still requires Dexterity + Firearms whether the pistol fires black powder or 21st-century ammunition.

See below for discussion of specific differences in the meaning of abilities where it may affect roleplaying and mechanics, along with the differences noted in **Victorian Age: Vampire** itself. Also keep the following principles in mind.

- **Secondary Abilities.** Secondary Abilities are esoteric and specific. They are added as separate abilities to your character sheet, not as subsets of an existing broader category. They refer to small but highly distinctive bodies of knowledge and practice which don't tidily fit with the broader existing abilities.

- **Specialties.** Specialties are subsets of existing Attributes and Abilities. The mechanics are simple: characters who possess four or more dots in an Ability can specialize in some specific aspect of it. Torture-minded physicians with Medicine 4 can take Vivisection as a specialty and receive a one-die bonus when it's time to cut up living prisoners.

Specialties are almost always less cumbersome than Secondary Abilities. Specialties allow for fine-tuning of concepts without adding new rules or suggesting that characters who haven't taken a whole new category of knowledge or practice can't do it at all. The more separate Abilities you include in your chronicle, the more potential blind spots and gaps in characters' expertise you create. Secondary Abilities do have a place, for really exotic and distinct bodies of lore, but think carefully before multiplying them. Most, if not all, matters

often shunted onto Secondary Abilities can in fact be described as new specialties for existing Abilities.

Whatever the case, it's most important for the players and Storytellers to make sure they share the same understanding. More problems for play come from conflicting assumptions than from any specific choice.

Talents in Depth

Talents are intuitive pursuits, honed through practice and experience. Your character has some innate aptitude, developed to varying degrees over time thanks to regular practice. Someone who is tone-deaf and someone who has

never tried singing both begin without any dots in Performance, but the latter has the prospect of improving much more quickly than the former. (It is possible, with sufficient determination, to overcome the absence of key features generally important for a talent, but it's hard and unusual, and the Storyteller is entirely justified in placing obstacles in the way of the character's progress.)

In almost all cases, talents reflect potential your character had in life, though possibly the potential went unrecognized. Vampires seldom develop fundamentally new aptitudes except of supernatural varieties directly associated with the Curse of Caine and their legacy in the blood.

Wickets, Ditches and Creases

No exploration of Victorian sporting is complete without at least trying to understand cricket's complicated rules. These are a few of the essentials.

- **Ball:** Very much like a baseball, the cricket ball has a cork core wrapped with twine and covered in leather.

- **Batsman:** The player who bats. Two batsmen of the same team take up positions on the field, one at each wicket.

- **Bat:** A flat, paddle-shaped bat with a wicker handle.

- **Bowler:** The player who pitches the ball. Bowling is done in an underhanded or overhanded method, without the elbow being bent. The bowler stands in the center of the field.

- **Bowling Crease:** A white line, eight feet and eight inches long, over which the wicket is centered.

- **Fielders:** The remaining nine players of the bowler and wicket keeper's team, who take up specific positions on the field, there for the express purpose of fielding the ball when in play.

- **Inning:** A round of play. Victorian cricket has two full innings of play.

- **Over:** One series of six to eight tries in which the bowler attempts to knock the bails from the wickets.

- **Pitch:** The cricket field, measuring about 450 feet by 500 feet.

- **Popping Crease:** A four-foot white line, drawn in front of and parallel to the bowling crease.

- **Umpires:** Cricket officials who make decisions about the rules as play commences. The umpires pronounce balls either dead or still in play, foul players and declare the legality or illegality of runs.

- **Wicket:** Comparable to a base in baseball, the wicket is composed of three upright sticks, called stumps, which are approximately 27 inches high. Balanced in slots on top of the stumps are the bails, two wooden crosspieces each four inches in length. Two wickets are placed 66 feet apart in a straight line in the center of the pitch (cricket field).

- **Wicket Keeper:** The player of the bowler's team who stands behind the batsman in play, and opposite the bowler. He attempts to catch the ball when the bowler throws it.

The bowler tries to knock the bails off of the wickets with the ball. The batsmen of the opposing team tries to protect the bails by batting the ball away from the wickets.

The bowler steps up to bowl, throwing the ball at the wicket of the batsman currently at bat. He has six to eight tries per over to knock the bails off of the wicket; an inning has an average of 50 overs. If the bowler can't hit the bails, the batsman continues to bat. (This can literally go on for hours.) If the bowler does hit the bails, or if the batsman hits a pop-fly, it's pronounced an out and the batsman is retired.

If the batsman successfully hits the ball away from the wicket, he and the other batsman run to each other's opposing wickets, attempting to exchange places. If they succeed, it is a run, and they could continue to score runs up to six. (If the ball is hit out of the park, it's pronounced a six.) The bowler's team can stop the run with an out by fielding the ball and getting it back to the wicket, trapping the running batsman between wickets midrun.

Athletics

Victorian sporting events differ from those of ages past, and they differ vastly from country to country. From the cross-class cricket to the aristocratic pastime of fox hunting, from cross-country horse races in Britain and America to steeplechase races like the Grand National, athletics are more organized. "To the death" bare knuckles brawling of the lower classes in Britain, Ireland and America is giving way to skill-based, regulation-oriented Marquis of Queensbury Rules pugilism. What was once a sport for plebes is now also a sport for gentlemen.

Football (what Americans then and now call soccer) rules the day among the middle and working classes. Rugby is just starting to gain popularity, with organized leagues sprouting up across the British Isles, especially in Ireland. Baseball is America's most popular sport, commanding the attention of all classes.

Some sports generally do take place at night, such as indoor boxing competitions, and vampires may compete alongside mortals if they're so inclined. Other activities such as hunting generally take place during the day, but night events are unusual rather than unheard of. Finally, athletically minded vampires can play their own versions of popular games ... sometimes very much unlike prevailing standards, as when the Sabbath adapt cricket for a Game of Instinct rite, with kine as balls who are run to ground between the wickets.

The Sport of the Gentry: Fox Hunting

Hunting in sporting fashion is the prerogative of the upper classes, both country gentry and urban aristocracy come to the country for recreation. The basic rules of hunting are simple: the hunter dons the traditional red jacket (called the "pink"), mounts a horse and follows the hounds pursuing a fox. Fox hunting usually begins very early in the morning. Local working men plug up all the fox holes in the area so that foxes, who are nocturnal, lack dens to return to at daybreak. The participants in the hunt itself comprise the "field" and gather around 11 am (thereby ruling out all but the most impressively tough vampires). The Master of the Foxhounds, usually a local gentleman favored with the privilege of hosting the hunt, assembles everyone on the "meet" or gathering grounds; when everyone's at last present, he turns loose fifty or more snarling, baying hounds to flush out a fox caught out of its home. The cry of "Tally-ho" signifies the first sighting of the fox, and the Master redirects the hounds toward it. The hunters ride off after the hounds, and the chase proceeds until the hounds run the fox to ground. Tradition lets them devour all but the "brush" or tail, "mask" or head and "pads" or paws; these pieces become trophies for the hunters who displayed good

horsemanship or otherwise performed in an exemplary manner. In addition, the Master daubs the fox's blood on the face of the first person to reach the carcass.

The Master and lesser hunt officials such as the Huntsman and the Whippers-In (who keep the dogs in line) wear black boots with brown tops, unlike the pure black boots of hunt participants.

Vampires obviously cannot participate in any standard hunt. From time to time an aristocrat conceives a passion for nocturnal hunting, organized much the same as a daytime hunt. Vampires may sometimes inspire this passion and can in any event exploit it, though it never catches on in a lasting way. In addition, vampires can and do conduct their own all-vampire hunts. Among the lords of the Sabbath and (when nobody's looking) some of the more callous lords of the Camarilla, the most entertaining hunts feature mortal prey.

Boxing

Before the Marquis of Queensbury rules, boxing was the brutal, bare-knuckled, undisciplined, "no holds barred" sport of the lower classes. Even under the rules developed by John Broughton in 1838, the sport accounted for many casualties, until these rules were modified in 1853 as the Revised London Prize Ring rules. Then, in 1857, rules devised by popular boxer John Graham Chambers and sponsored by an aristocratic lover of the sport, John Sholto Douglas, the 8th Marquis of Queensbury, refined the pastime into one that gentlemen could enjoy as well as rabble.

The Marquis of Queensbury rules emphasize boxing skill rather than wrestling and agility over strength. Gloves have replaced bare knuckles, and prohibited moves include wrestling holds, grappling, attacking opponents when downed and "to the death" beatings. The Queensbury rules divide matches into three rounds, with one-minute intervals of rest between them. A boxer who remains down, either prone or with one or both knees touching the mat, ten seconds after being knocked down loses the match. The ring itself is also standardized as a roped-in square 24 feet on each side.

Very quickly, "Marquess of Queensbury rules" becomes a popular metaphor for any guidelines regulating activities that may be brutal and harsh and yet subject to some standard of fair play.

Expression, Intimidation, Leadership

Victorian practice ties these talents together with a few common linguistic tools.

Prosody and Versification

Victorian language has a specific cadence. Poetry and prose are both metered in a system of cadence known

as accentual-syllabic, which places emphasis based on the number of syllables in a verse or statement. The results often sound strange to modern ears and lack “natural” rhythm. Victorian language is flowery, formal and sometimes obtuse, but it has rules of its own. Victorian aesthetics place a high value on choosing just the right elaborate and ornate expression.

Alliteration repeats the first sound of a word throughout a passage, as in tongue twisters like “Theopholus Thistle, the thrifty thistle sifter, while sifting a sieve full of unsifted thistles, thrust three thousand thistles through the thick of his thumb.” Thanks in part to the very poetic style of the King James Bible, alliteration features prominently in sermons and fervent sermonlike exhortations.

Blank verse, unrhymed lines of iambic pentameter, occur often in Shakespeare and are therefore beautiful to Victorian listeners in nearly all social classes. Shakespeare is by general acclaim the perfect practitioner of English, so if he liked a device it must be a good one.

Consonance is the repetition of a similar consonant in a line or succeeding lines of verse. Shakespeare also employed a great deal of consonance, and it suits Victorian notions of building complex structures with the harmony of parts like finely crafted machinery.

Onomatopoeia literally meaning “name poetry.” It imitates natural sounds, such as the duck “quacked,” or the pig “oinked.”

Victorian literature makes heavy use of allegory and allusion, and even the uneducated masses could follow many such references thanks to their reiteration. The complex web of references favored by orators and writers ties together much of Victorian life, so that the garden and kitchen seem by association intimately related to the course of the empire and the salvation or damnation of the world. Very little in the world as interpreted and presented this way is merely itself: it signifies other things, great and small, and in turn has implications for the meaning and condition of other things.

This is also the era of what later observers would call “Bowdlerization,” the removal of smutty and otherwise offensive material from existing literature. The practice takes its name from late 18th-century philanthropist Thomas Bowdler, who wished to let the world appreciate the beauties of Shakespeare’s work untrammelled by the vulgarities he felt sure had been inserted at others’ demand. The prevailing renditions of Shakespeare’s tragedies give them happy endings and clear-cut morals, so that Shakespeare’s otherwise wonderful work cannot infect the masses with unwholesome ideas about whether virtue is rewarded. Simultaneously, Charles Dickens and his successors write brutally detailed indictments of social failures. It is not an age in which any one idea has

popular support without challenge or even outright contradiction.

Language persuades kine, disguises intentions, presents the speaker in any light he wishes to be seen. Vampires have a lot of time with which to polish their rhetoric, and lower-class Kindred have much time to educate themselves in the effective use of language in the hopes of disguising their pasts.

Classical Imitation

Victorians like to imitate classical Greeks and Romans in prose and speech. Lectures and novels alike imitate classical forms (or their creators think they do, and are thereby unintentionally innovative while pursuing imitation). Every educated gentleman has a foundation in Latin and Greek, and imitating the rhetorical and oratorical styles of the ancients gives one the air of educational superiority, if not dash. While the actual *study* of the specifics of rhetoric has lost much of its appeal — every Victorian gentleman studies the Greek and Roman classics, but imitating them is good enough, one doesn’t really have to understand why they work — interest in imitating the language style of classical geniuses like Homer and Euripides persists throughout the period.

Victorian vampires generally share this enthusiasm. Classical forms give weight and the air of tradition to harebrained schemes and wild inventions, and provide a sound foundation for conveying the benefits and costs of a scheme in reassuring terms.

The Language of Revolution

Revolutionaries and anarchists want to bring about violent, immediate social change. Rhetoric aimed at the masses uses active imagery — struggle and war, in particular — and revolutionary speakers aim to provide targets for envy and wrath, guilty perpetrators and their minions whom the revolutionary brotherhood can overthrow. This language needn’t be banal or stupid, and indeed some of the finest speeches, essays and novels of the era argue the need for and possibility of drastic social change. By later standards, even rhetoric intended for the masses is quite sophisticated, using Biblical and historical allusions along with well crafted symbolism and imagery in ways that, the historical record shows, actually do persuade audiences to take up new causes.

Streetwise and Subterfuge

Criminals often develop a complex vocabulary all their own, both to allow them to make distinctions that matter in criminal activities and to conceal the substance of their conversations from others. Victorian criminal argot is overwhelmingly rich, and whole books

on the subject exist. This is just an introductory sampling.

Pickpocketing of various sorts is known as hoisting, buzzing, dipping and cly-faking, with the money retrieved referred to as chink, crouter, fadge, gen or deaner. Blagging is the less surreptitious art of smash-and-grab theft, in which the thief knocks down his victim and grabs whatever he can wrestle loose. This is the domain of the bladger or violent thief, who relies on his chiv (knife) and barker or iron (gun) as well as his own cleverness.

Cracksmen, safe crackers, use various styles of lockpicks known as betties and dubs to gain entry to safes, and different targets for safe cracking have their own names. Deadlurks are break-ins made at currently vacant premises, while area-diving is the art of entering the lower recesses of currently occupied homes. The cracksmen usually needs a lookout accomplice for the latter sort of caper (as *all* criminal jobs are often called by Victorian criminals), known as a crow.

Dragsmen steal from carriages, carrying off valuables including fawnies or rings and ream-sweg, really fine goods like jewelry, in addition to prosaic money and other, less distinctive loot.

Broadsmen practice fraud using dishonest card tricks. Their accomplices, bonnets and buttoners, lure in gullible prey, and the broadsmen manipulate their broads and flats (the cards themselves) to cheat the gulpy or gullible in unwinnable bets. Con artists refer to this sort of racket as gammoning the public.

The madams who run brothels are often called abbesses, their pimps Haymarket Hectors. The girls whose services they sell are variously known as dollymops, ladybirds and Judies. The venereal diseases which are constant risks in these establishments are collectively known as the glim and the French pox (in England, at least; some Continental victims of venereal diseases refer to the English pox, and worldwide practice ascribes responsibility for it to someone conveniently nearby and disliked).

The policemen who try to catch all these sundry offenders are known to their targets as coppers, Miltonians, Blue Bottles, crushers and pigs. (Yes, really; "pig" did not originate in the 1960s, but more than a century earlier.) The handcuffs they use are commonly referred to as derbies (pronounced "darbies"). The magistrates before whom apprehended criminals appear are called beaks, the prison uniforms in which convicts must dress the Devil's Claws or broad arrows.

Gambling

"Spreading the boards," playing card games for monetary stakes, is popular among all classes. These are some of the most common games of the era.

- **All-Fours:** a new game, much like high-low-jack poker in modern America.
- **Commerce:** an older poker variant favored by those less interested in flashy excitement.
- **Ecarte:** one of the most enduring popular games, dating back to the late 18th century, in which the players bet after each receiving five cards from a deck missing 2s and 6s.
- **Faro:** another new game, in which the players bet on the order in which cards will emerge from the faro box, a spring-loaded machine holding a shuffled deck.
- **Whist:** a century-old classic of the respectable drawing room. Four players participate, partnered in pairs. The dealer passes out 13 cards to each player and determines the trump suit. The leading player puts down a card of whatever suit she chooses, and subsequent players must follow suit or play a card of the trump suit, or discard. The player who lays down the highest card of the suit led or the highest card of the trump suit "takes the trick," winning the round, and leads for the next trick. Partners win a point for each trick taken, and games customarily last until one pair accumulates five points. Rubbers consist of three games, best two out of three prevailing.
- **Vingt-et-un:** French and therefore considered particularly genteel, this is much like modern blackjack.

Skills in Depth

Skills combine aptitude with required learning; remember that characters who attempt to use a skill without training in it suffer a +1 difficulty penalty. Efforts to learn most of these abilities benefit from an experienced teacher, and wherever the ability calls for technological expertise or possibly illicit activities, teachers don't always come to hand easily. Here vampires often have an advantage in that they can offer special rewards to those who help them ... if, of course, they choose to honor their commitments.



Animal Ken

Even as trains cross the landscape and inventors try to improve automobile reliability and performance, more people move about in animal-powered transportation than self-propelled vehicles. Vampires scare horses, obviously. (Some vampire legends tell that the best way to find a vampire is to traverse a cemetery with an unmated white stallion ridden by a naked virgin, and when the horse stamps and shies away, one has found the underground haven of a buried vampire.) Vampires need to travel, and some mastery with animals is necessary to the Victorian undead. If she wants to be able to travel without scaring her mode of transportation, and therefore giving herself away, she'll need some mastery of Animal Ken. A small dose of vitae given three nights in a row calms the savage beast as well.

Additionally, many leisure activities depend on kinship with animals, like fox hunting, and most of the aristocracy are mad about their dogs. An absence of animals would seem odd to the prying eyes of mortals, even with a plausible explanation. Pets are much less common among the urban lower classes, both for lack of

space and lack of food, and here it's possible to go months or years without encountering any animals other than vermin and those trained for cock-fighting and other blood sports.

Craft

Industrialization calls for precision-crafted parts, often in quantities far beyond the capability of any individual or small business to produce. The trained human eye can make out precision tolerances of a few hundredths of an inch, but Victorian machinery often needs tolerances much smaller than that. New tools to make tools (and tools to make the tools that make the tools ...) appear every year, repeatedly changing standard practice in many fields. Simultaneously, traditional customs live on in rural areas and in activities where individual craftsmanship remains important to customers. A blacksmith may work on hand-crafted ironmongery for manors or complex engine components, but seldom both; within every profession are ever-sharper splits between those who ally themselves (willingly or out of a sense of unavoidable necessity) with the factory system and those who stick to traditional methods.

Factories have replaced individual craftsmen altogether in many areas. The tradeoffs involved in this process are complex (and hotly debated). It is simultaneously true that the people who used to make, for instance, woolen and cotton clothes are mostly worse off, losing their independence and becoming factory workers. The customers for the new goods have clothes which lack individuality but which may well be more durable and reliable, particularly at the very low end. Likewise, professions once taught in master-apprentice relationships have become available through trade schools and universities, from dentistry to law.

The trend toward anonymous homogeneity makes it easier for Kindred to blend in with the crowd, while standardization makes it harder for them to find niches where they can work around their individual quirks.

Drive

This is not a widespread ability, but it does exist. Steam-driven conveyances date back to 1801, and within the **Victorian Age: Vampire** milieu inventors like Karl Benz are making internal combustion engines suitably sized and arranged for automobiles. Their creations are still all unique hand-crafted works — the factory system won't reach automobiles until early in the 20th century — and very expensive.

Nor are automobiles popular. Champions of rural privilege join with anti-industrial aesthetes and people who just find the things too damnably noisy and unpredictable to impose regulations. The Red Flag Act was the first of such laws, passed in 1836 and subsequently extended in Britain and imitated elsewhere. It limits cars to speeds of four miles per hour and requires that they be preceded by a servant displaying a red flag in the day and a red lantern at night. Speed freaks disregard these restrictions, of course, careening along at a dozen miles an hour and more, but harsh enforcement of automobile laws makes many drivers interested in driving only on private property of their own or held by like-minded enthusiasts.

Victorian automobiles are intimidating things, belching smoke and sparks erratically. A vampire encountering one for the first time must make a Röttschrek check at difficulty 8. Each subsequent encounter reduces the difficulty by 1 (even when a roll ends in failure or botch), and the vampire overcomes any lingering instinctive fear when the difficulty reaches 2. No further checks are needed after that, except at standard difficulty for cars which are actually on fire.

In the Victorian era, Drive covers two broad categories of activity, each suitable as a specialization: the operation of mechanical vehicles and the skilled han-

dling of conveyances drawn by two or more animals. In Victorian usage, "carriages" transport people and "wagons" (or "waggons") and "carts" carry goods, which may or may not include people. Larger teams of animals take more skill to control, as do difficult circumstances like London streets. A successful wagoneer almost always knows Repair and Animal Handling in addition to Drive, and needs both Strength and Dexterity.

- Novice: You can handle a wagon, cart or cabriolet drawn by a single draft or carriage horse. As a novice motorcar driver, you can drive a car on a good road in decent weather but need help starting it and keeping it running.
- Practiced: You can drive any conveyance drawn by two horses. You can drive a motorcar and start it without assistance.
- Competent: You can handle a team of up to four horses. You drive your motor car well in reasonably good conditions and can make minor adjustments and tune-ups as necessary.
- Expert: You can drive an animal-drawn vehicle of up to six horses, or two oxen or other variety of similar heavy animal conveyance. As an expert motorcar driver, you can drive in various weather conditions and effect many necessary and difficult repairs.
- Master: You can drive any make of animal-drawn vehicle with style. You handle your car with expertise and panache, strip it down and take it apart, and race over hill and dale with it, Red Flag Act be damned!

Possessed By: Cabbies, Servant Drivers, Aristocratic Drivers, Wealthy Commoner Drivers, Wagoneers
Specialties: Carriages, Heavy Conveyances, Motorcars

Etiquette

By Victorian standards, virtually the whole of society in the Final Nights is unspeakably vulgar and just plain chaotic. Victorian society depends greatly on everyone (or at least nearly everyone) knowing how to recognize members of her own social stratum and how to interact in reliable manner with those above or below her. The idle rich naturally have much more time to invest in nuances, but the basic ideas of decorum circulate even among the desperately poor. For people who lack privacy, security and hope, manners can provide a

touch of dignity, a way of reassuring themselves that they do remain human despite all.

For vampires, of course, etiquette also serves to keep their inevitable social conflicts tempered. Drawn by the Curse to compete for supremacy over each other, vampires rely on their own codes of conduct and the standards of the surrounding society alike to keep every disagreement from turning into a fight. Victorian etiquette provides the means for the loser in an exchange to withdraw relatively gracefully and with minimal loss of face, and therefore even vampires accustomed to older standards find the prevailing doctrines of etiquette well worth mastering.

Outside observers, both in Victorian times and later, often misunderstand a key feature of popular etiquette. Victorian practice makes a sharp distinction between what is fit for public discussion and what isn't, but it does not go on to say that if it ought not be discussed publicly it ought not be discussed at all. Victorian writers produced much erotica along with the uplifting essays and insightful novels, and Victorian readers bought it all. They just didn't make quite the same kind of fuss over the latest juicy yarns in the new issue of *The Pearl* that they did over stories in *The Strand* or well-phrased letters to *The Times of London*. The tale of Queen Victoria telling one of her daughters to "grab the bedposts and think of England" is just that, a tale; it was her husband Albert who was the prude, raised as he was on much more thoroughly repressed Prussian terms. Victorian life properly includes a very rich and expansive private life which is nobody else's business.

The full practice of etiquette touches on almost every other ability and some vampiric disciplines. Etiquette guides the socially acceptable use of Expression and Performance, of Ride and Academics, even of Presence and Chimerstry. (A socially adept Ravnos can forestall a multitude of Masquerade breaches with a few illusions that make it possible for observers to gloss over the whole strange affair without fuss, or thrust an enemy into a dense mess of social errors that raise embarrassing questions.) Etiquette also includes the ability to learn unfamiliar customs, by observation and instruction.

Much of middle- and upper-class social life revolves around the dance, and navigating successfully through the potential pitfalls requires experience and care. The very dance steps chosen make a statement: modern dances like the waltz put pairs of individuals in direct touching contact, while line dances like the quadrille and reel keep the opposite sex in a group and at a remove. In a society accustomed (as discussed above under "Expression, Intimidation, Leadership") to seeing significance



and implication in even small things, small public contacts hint at more intimate contacts in private.

Formal dining is also very important for everyone able to afford the costs of hosting company, including a cook and appropriate dishes. Mixed in with casual and light conversation, much business takes place over dinner and after-dinner drinks; so does a great deal of personal negotiation. Vampires are at a distinct disadvantage here and must either come up with some very plausible excuse or face a certain skepticism from the members of their social circle about just how “sound” they are in social matters.

Formal calls provide a peaceful arena for social clashes. The visitor may display new clothes and shape the conversation; the host may show off new acquisitions. A formal call can, of course, be genuinely good-natured, but it often isn't. A tremendous variety of artifices come into play in conjunction with calls. For instance, a good living can be made by painters who create unfinished works for sale to ladies who often receive callers. When the bell at the streetside gate announces a visitor, the lady has just enough time to set a chore or other activity aside and sit in front of the painting, daubing a few strokes as a servant presents the caller. Then her caller can admire her talent and she can be modest, as though she didn't really intend to show off this, her latest creation in progress. Likewise a whole complex system of symbolism is associated with the calling cards a visitor gives to a servant to pass to the host or leaves when the host is out: face-up and face-down presentation may carry meanings, along with the presence or absence of touches of perfume, degree of formality in typography, titles claimed and much else.

Formal titles matter tremendously in Victorian society. Many countries follow English precedents to varying degree, so rankings like the following apply widely. The more levels of nobility one character is above another, the more the superior is not only entitled but expected to behave authoritatively. Christian charity and regard for mutual humanity are all well and good, but social order depends on everyone knowing his place and avoiding the temptation to slide up or down except through approved channels.

Her Majesty the Queen is of course the highest-ranking individual in the land, followed by her sons and immediate male family, then her female relatives. In order, next come marquises, earls, viscounts and bishops. Within each rank of secular noble, those who hold office for the crown take precedence over their peers who do not. Following them come barons, commoners who hold high office in the government, otherwise untitled individuals directly employed by the Queen and the sons of nobles. Sons are ranked by order of birth and positions of their fathers, so that the sons of a marquis outrank the sons of a viscount or baron. Below them are the knights, those of the orders like the Order of the Garter and the Order of St. George and then those with titles unrelated to the orders, and commoners holding lesser offices in the government. Last of all are the esquires, baronets, commissioner military officers and gentlemen granted the right to bear arms.

Keeping track of one's place in the peerage may require a lot of work for characters in the midst of social life. Keeping track of others' places requires even more work, and a good market exists for official guides like

Subtle Meanings

Rather than attempt to spell out every detail of nuanced and inferred communication, Storytellers and players may wish to use this optional rule. When a character attempts to convey a covert message through behavioral clues that rely on a knowledge of etiquette, roll Wits + Etiquette, difficulty 6. One success allows the character to embed a very simple message like “I hate you” or “I lust for you.” Each additional success allows one straightforward sentence's worth of additional information like “I can meet you tomorrow” and “you must not let my mother realize we're meeting.” Make an Intelligence + Etiquette roll, difficulty 6, for the character receiving the message. Every success lets the character correctly understand two success' worth of information sent by the other character. Failure means the sender or recipient provides nothing at all, while a botch gives the Storyteller the opportunity to pass along an amusingly unintended message.

The embedded messages do not have to be entirely or at all true; this system conveys lies as effectively as truths.

Characters may also scan the environment for signs that others are engaging in this sort of covert exchange. Make a Perception + Etiquette roll, difficulty 7, once per hour, with each success letting the character spot one such exchange (if any are going on, and at most gatherings they are, often). Failure leads to the character missing any instances, and a botch leads to the character diagnosing one or more hidden exchanges where in fact they aren't happening.

Burke's Guide to the Peerage, updated annually and based on thorough research.

Presentation at court is one of the greatest honors available to members of society and involves immensely complicated details. For instance, a woman is expected to wear a gown which bares her shoulders, regardless of the temperature, and a train exactly three feet long. She is expected to wear feathers at the back of her hair which rise high enough for Her Majesty to see but not higher than the queen's own head. The woman being presented must carry her train in a particular position over her left arm and let it down at just the right moment for attendants to spread in just the right way. Her calling card must follow the correct forms for her name and any titles she may carry. After the lord-in-waiting reads it out to the queen, the woman curtsies and kisses the queen's outstretched hand; if she belongs to the peerage, the queen reciprocates by kissing her on the forehead. This concludes the audience, and the woman exits by backing out of the royal drawing room ... without tripping over her own train. Equally detailed rules govern the admission of men in and out of the peerage, modified by all sorts of circumstances. Consult reference books for the full panoply if players really want to describe it all in the course of the game.

Performance

Acting

The Victorian theater encompasses everything from revivals of classical drama to Shakespeare (with varying degrees of alteration) to vaudeville. Traditionally a morally suspect occupation, the best actors now enjoy not just fame but respectability. In addition, acting as a specialty encompasses performance of other sorts, including the wildly popular Wild West shows staged by cowboys-turned-entrepreneurs like Buffalo Bill Hickock and Wild Bill Cody. Edison's kinoscope and many baroquely named rivals offer short films to the public, though for the moment movies have not yet become much more than filmed stage performances or outdoor scenes from one camera in a fixed position.

Music

This is the height of the Romantic era in classic music. Popular composers and works often performed in the years covered by **Victorian Age: Vampire** include Peter Tchaikovsky (*Swan Lake*, "1812 Overture"), Antonin Dvorak (*New World Symphony*), Johannes Brahms (*Symphony No. 4 in E Minor*), Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov (*Scheherazade*) and Gustav Mahler (*Symphony No. 1*). Romantic music is just that: large, sweeping, nationalistic and pastoral. Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture", for instance, combines

folk tunes, nationalistic anthems and broad, sweet passages to invoke its intended images.

Operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan reign in England, and, the Doyle Carte Company has produced the first "musical," *H.M.S. Pinafore*, a comic story about the lives of those serving on one of the navy's less impressive ships. Gilbert writes often-satirical lyrics and Sullivan sets them to very intricate music, including the "patter song," which takes operatic recitative and speeds it up to make it at once highly entertaining and a genuine test of a singer's skill.

Fortune Telling

Fortune telling is one form, or rather one set of forms, of occult practice popular among all classes. Divination methods come and go in popularity, as subject to fads as any other part of intellectual life, and new ones constantly appear as real and fake occultists try to distinguish themselves from rivals. Methods with relatively constant, enduring acceptance include palmistry, astrology, divination with standard playing cards and specialized decks like the tarot deck, dream interpretation and mediumship. Mechanical fortune-tellers, machines which produce previously printed fortunes according to various semirandom systems, are gaining popularity as a cheap and entertaining source of possibly mystic messages along boardwalks, penny arcades and the like.

How much any of these methods actually works depends on the Storyteller's preferences for the chronicle. If the characters are to be surrounded by portents on all sides, genuine mystic results may occur frequently. If the characters are to be the one supernatural element in the otherwise natural world, then almost all fortune-telling should be wittingly or unwittingly false.

Knowledges in Depth

Knowledges depend on systematic instruction. Stereotypes to the contrary, such instruction is often fairly readily available to characters who aren't actually on the brink of total poverty.

Compulsory elementary education has been established in Britain and America, and other countries are following suit. In Great Britain, school attendance is mandatory up to age 10. Free public school is supported by local taxes. Although formal public education ends by age 10, a graduate of such a school would be completely literate. He will have a working understanding of mathematics and will know at least a smattering of Latin and Greek. He will be familiar with the great works of literature. A player character with one dot in Academics has this type of knowledge.

An upper-class person's education is somewhat different. It almost always continues past the age of 10. Elementary education takes place in the home, first by governesses and then by tutors. After the age of 10, the upper-class student generally attends a private boarding school or preparatory school, from which he almost always proceeds to the university.

In the Oxford-Cambridge tradition, each student specializes in a particular discipline from the moment he enters a university. Formal lecture classes are not mandatory, although attendance at chapel is. Students instead attend small study groups overseen by a professor, who teaches by the Socratic model: the dons (professors) rapidly fire questions at their students and expect the flummoxed pupils to answer them quickly and accurately, and be able to defend their answers logically. The main thrust of a professor's work is to prepare students for the examinations in their given disciplines. By contrast, the newer Prussian model consists of scheduled lectures in which professors hold forth on known empirical facts. The Prussian system also emphasizes breadth as well as depth of knowledge, expecting students to take general studies courses before settling down to master a specialization. This approach enjoys favor among classes often excluded from the older system and among industrialists who see it as producing the sorts of minds necessary to advance the industrial revolution.

British and European education relies strongly on tests and classifications to determine students' futures. Tests administered at several steps classify school children as O level (ordinary) or A level (advanced). O-level students are directed to trade school, if they receive further education at all, while the universities recruit from those with satisfactory A levels.

Victorian education is primarily but not exclusively for men. Oxford and Cambridge each have women's colleges, and so does the United States. Acceptance of the fact of educated and professionally trained women proceeds slowly and erratically.

Investigation

Until recently, police didn't gather evidence, they just rounded up the usual suspects and shook down witnesses for information. Police cleaned up physical evidence quickly, so as to not upset the sensibilities of passersby. Now police procedure gives ever-greater weight to evidence, with new tools for analyzing it and correlating the results with data from other cases. Controversy rages in law enforcement and the courts over the validity of techniques like fingerprints and the Bertillion system of measuring body parts and proportions. The complexities and uncertainties of criminal investigation make it

difficult to tell for sure just how well any one technique works overall, and each success or failure looms large in the ongoing debate.

Vampires have no skin oil and therefore don't leave fingerprints unless their fingers are stained with something else. In the current state of official confusion, a vampire accused of a crime for which fingerprint evidence should be present but isn't might serve as an example for a skeptical magistrate arguing that fingerprints shouldn't be given legal sanction or might rouse a sympathetic magistrate to claims that the vampire has done something to tamper with the evidence. Individual prejudices matter greatly at this stage.

Medicine

Medicine is changing as fast as industry, and like industry depends on ever-improving tools as well as fresh ideas. Most medical breakthroughs come from researchers trying to make sense of phenomena they couldn't isolate or observe before. Pasteur and Lister's work on germs and sanitation is at last generally accepted, so that doctors operating in unsanitary conditions at least feel a little guilty about it. Anesthetics remain relatively primitive, though recognized widely as valuable after their battlefield use in the wars of the 19th century.

Vampiric scholars take part in this medical revolution. New theories attempting to put vampirism on a scientific footing flourish wherever there are vampires less than entirely comfortable with "biblical superstition" and otherwise supernatural explanations. Growing knowledge about disease also helps vampires understand some of the risks to themselves and others from various feeding practices.

Science

The late 19th century is a time of growing specialization. Two hundred years ago, the "Renaissance man" scholar could know something about every field of scientific and technical knowledge in the Europe of his time. That's no longer possible. No single individual can master even the basics of the life sciences and the study of the Earth and the skies and engineering and everything else that Victorians study. The Prussian system (see above, this page) not only recognizes this but actively encourages specialization as the path to further insight. Scientific jargon and the rigid forms of scientific presentation in journals and theses increasingly isolate scientists from the population at large; advocates of this change encourage the masses to put their trust in the experts and let the experts carry on with the important business of understanding the world. The masses need

only heed the advice the experts give them in light of superior understanding.

Backgrounds in Depth

Chapter One of this book covers the use of Backgrounds in conjunction with the activities of secret societies. This section considers the differences between **Victorian Age: Vampire** Backgrounds and their Final Nights equivalents for other purposes.

Victorian vampires depend more on the assistance of mortals than later vampires do. Precious few all-night stores exist, and those only in the largest cities, and it's more time-consuming, more expensive and riskier to travel a great deal in the Victorian era. Someone must go during daylight hours to procure clothes, furniture, books and other goods; even if the vampire arranges deliveries via correspondence, someone must be on hand to receive the deliveries as they come, and few wagoners work nights even for special bonus pay. All the Backgrounds that cover interactions with living men and women therefore take on special importance in the Victorian age.

The Importance of Coterie

Few solitary vampires can develop all the Backgrounds they'd like. Coterie let vampires pursue their respective interests for mutual advantage, just as (as modernist vampires point out happily and reactionary elders note scornfully) the division of labor in factories increases productive efficiency. One character who has a few well placed Allies can supply her coterie-mates with the goods that mortals have to supply, and her comrades with Resources can pay for the acquisitions.

This works well as long as the members of the coterie continue to get along. If any one member of a highly interdependent coterie is destroyed or forced away, on the other hand, everyone will suffer until they can make other arrangements.

Allies

Human associates are simply indispensable for most vampires, and Allies covers those associates who serve willingly without the forced dependence of the Blood Bond. They may or may not know just what the vampire they're allied with is; for some people, the vampire is a secret mystic master or just the unfortunate victim of a rare disease or tragic curse. ("Ah, yes, it just goes to show that sometimes one should leave the jeweled eyes in the heathen idol right where they were. Did the damned witch doctor say when you'd again be able to face the sun?")

Contacts

In addition to all their other uses, Contacts come in handy for vampires trying to follow rapidly changing fields of knowledge and practice. Vampires have only twelve hours a day, averaged over the course of a year, minus the time spent in extra slumber because of low Humanity, with which to lead their waking existence. Only the cleverest vampires can keep up with everything happening in a field like engineering or manufacture, or chemistry or medicine. Contacts can't provide the comprehensive personal mastery a vampire might like to have but can at least answer specific questions as they arise.

Herd

This background offers a level of safety that Victorian vampires welcome. Most vampires aren't fortunate enough to live in cities large enough that the occasional corpse created by feeding goes unnoticed and with plenty of opportunities for anonymous interactions. Even within the metropolis, the inhabitants of a neighborhood generally know each other and will notice erratic behavior or signs of mysterious weakness. The Herd creates no such problems. Whether they consciously realize they're providing blood for a vampire or not, they do not object to their circumstances and the vampire who "owns" them can count on their availability. In this age of widespread interest in the occult and foreign lore of all kinds, vampires can easily pass as gurus whose teachings include states of ecstasy and altered consciousness, among other cover stories.

Influence

No matter how much vampires might wish to, and no matter how much they tell each other and their victims that they do, they don't rule the world. Influence is just that: influence, not total control. The larger the institutions to which a vampire has ties, the harder it is for any single will to direct the group; the others in it, above and below the vampire trying to give orders, have their own agendas, and what actually happens in the end is the sum of all those agendas mixed together and tossed into the surrounding world. In the Victorian age, with the reduced travel remarked on earlier, Influence often runs more deeply than in the Final Nights. Vampires have more time to develop their power in smaller social situations.

At the Storyteller's discretion, players may add a dot beyond the level required for the geographical scope of their characters' Influence to reflect this more thorough domination of the scene.

Mentor

This is a more common background for Victorian vampires than for later ones, again because of reduced travel. It's more likely that the new vampire stays somewhere relatively close to his sire and other older vampires who might provide assistance. In an era of great social complexity and detailed etiquette, the neonate should know before he's ready for release, and more even after formal release takes place.

In turn, the Mentor may well call upon his pupil for information about the modern world. The younger vampire acts as interpreter and guide for an elder with centuries (or more than centuries) of experience living in a simpler, more slowly moving world.

Resources

The notion of fixed and nonnegotiable prices does not prevail throughout the Victorian world. Haggling remains common among all classes (even if aristocrats often assign a favored servant to haggle for them). So does barter, particularly among the urban poor and people of all classes in rural areas. In practice, the limits on what a character can afford are a little flexible, and have characters two separate ways to buy above their means.

• **The Slow, Reliable Way.** Make an extended roll with the character's Resources, difficulty 7. It takes a year of game time in which the character saves and plans for the first roll, and the time doubles for each subsequent roll: two years for the second, four years for the third, eight years for the fourth and so on. This extended roll requires twice as many successes as the item in question costs in dots (two successes for •, four successes for ••, six successes for •••, etc.). A failure at any point requires the character to start over, and a botch reduces the character's Resources rating by one dot for a period as long as it took to prepare for the botched roll.

When the slow, reliable way succeeds, the character manages to acquire something normally beyond her means through essentially legitimate channels. It's hers now.

• **The Fast, Risky Way.** Characters often want things right now, or at least more quickly than the span of years that the slow, reliable way requires. The fast, risky way gives them an alternative. Make an extended roll with the character's Resources, difficulty 5 + 1 for each level of difference between the item's cost and the character's dots in Resources (6 for something that costs one more dot of Resources than the character has, 7 for something that costs two more dots, etc.). Roll once per week of game time. Failure requires the character to start over, and a botch means that the character can't resume

that effort and can't make another try for the same sort of item for Cost x 2 weeks. If the extended roll succeeds, the character is limited to a single dot of discretionary Resources for anything not considered with the basics of food, shelter and the like for Cost x 2 weeks.

In addition, the character accumulates obligations to loan sharks, fixers and others of shady nature. For each dot of cost that the character can't normally pay, she must accept two social obligations or one legal obligation. A social obligation puts the character at some risk of disgrace or humiliation but not in legal jeopardy, such as not reporting a cheater at a casino or providing the rendezvous spot for a couple having an affair. A legal obligation requires the character to do something that would earn real, even if generally minor, trouble with the law: committing perjury to support an alibi, letting a criminal store stolen property in her home. The Storyteller decides how to allocate the obligations accrued by a purchase, though these obligations can never be strong enough to coerce the character into assault, murder and other really serious crimes.

No character should have to pay back more than one such obligation per game session. The Storyteller can pace the demands as seems good for the interests of the chronicle, though few such obligations are handed down from crooked father to dishonest son and therefore should be resolved before too many years go by.

Example: Roberta Whirter is one of many lower-class vampires in London, driven into the city for want of opportunities on the farm when alive and not faring very much better now that she's Kindred. After seeing a middle-class woman doing well for herself as a chauffeur and hansom driver for couples taking romantic little trips, Roberta decides to try going into that line of work herself. Unfortunately, the roadster she has her eye on has a Cost of 5, and she has Resources 2, so each roll her player makes uses 2 dice and difficulty 8. The player rolls at the end of the first week of Roberta's efforts to acquire a roadster and has no successes. Fortunately, she has no accumulated successes to lose at this point.

The following rolls gain one success the second week, one the third week and two the fourth week. At the end of her first month, therefore, she has 4 successes total. One more will do it ... and fortunately the roll for the fifth week produces one more success. Five successes satisfy the requirements of Cost 5, and so Roberta has managed to wheedle and deal her way into ownership of the roadster of her dreams. She'd best hope that no unexpected demands on her money come along in the near future, since she's effectively at Resources 1 when it comes to discretionary spending for the next ten weeks. She also owes a total of six social obligations or four legal ones, or some combination thereof, such as two legal and two social or

one legal and four social, to the “gentlemen” who helped her lay hands on the money she needed.

Characters may also arrange to *borrow* items they can't normally afford. This requires two separate steps. First, the would-be borrower still needs some money: half the regular cost of an item, rounded up, and if this is still beyond the character's means, one or the other ways of obtaining extra Resources must come into play. Second, the character must make an acceptable social impression on someone who already owns the item. The Storyteller may choose to roleplay this out without resort to dice rolls, or require as many successes on a Manipulation + Etiquette roll, difficulty 6, as the item normally costs.

The borrowing character must have a clear purpose for the loan: a specific project for which she'll be using some tools, a trip to take with a borrowed carriage and so on. Failing to return the item in the period agreed upon puts the character at risk for charges of theft and other complications, and the more expensive the item, the more aggrieved its owner generally becomes when it is missing.

Retainers

Retainers are the basic mark of standing for many Victorian vampires. Those without any are unreliable and unsophisticated, and possibly even a menace to other vampires nearby because they'll need to keep putting themselves into risky situations. Retainers make vampiric existence more comfortable and more predictable, both qualities of great importance to Victorians. Retainers grant the blessed boon of stability to their masters' nights. Threatening another vampire's Retainers is a potent demonstration of ill will; actually harming another's Retainers is tantamount to a declaration of war, given the many necessary functions Retainers perform.

Disciplines in Depth

In terms of mechanics, what dice to roll under what circumstances and the rest of the rules, **Victorian Age: Vampire** disciplines work just as they do in **Vampire: The Masquerade**. What changes is how vampires think about their powers and how they apply them. This section notes some of these differences but is not an exhaustive list. Players and Storytellers should work together to personalize the meaning of characters' disciplines, since these powers are so intimately tied to the characters' deepest selves.

Animalism and Protean

The Victorian world abounds in nearby animals: herd animals on the farm, horses wherever wagons and

carriages go, pets and vermin throughout the city. The ability to speak to and command animals gives a vampire a great deal of power — a horse who stumbles at the wrong time, for instance, can wreck a carriage and its passengers without leaving any sign that the incident was more than an unfortunate accident.

Manipulating others' bestial natures may involve the vampire doing it in the hottest religious and philosophical arguments of the time. Is humanity merely another animal species? So Mr. Darwin says, and the evidence mounts in support. But here is the vampire, a being whose very existence testifies to God's wrath. What does it all mean? Shapeshifting likewise calls into question what distinguishes humanity from the beasts a master of Protean imitates. What is left that's truly human when all that is solid man melts into fog? Only the dogmatic have ready, certain answers, and vampires who had that confidence in life may find themselves inclined to fresh doubts thanks to their postmortem experiences.

Auspex

Auspex comes in handy for any vampire exploiting popular interest in spiritualism without being another complete fraud. Aura reading provides information that the vampire can apparently discover in the tea leaves or other divinatory tools. At the Storyteller's discretion, some of what a vampire perceives via Heightened Senses may present itself to her awareness in divination as well: subtle cues in body language, faint body odors and the like are interpreted subconsciously and the final results delivered in a formal framework the vampire finds familiar and comfortable.

Celerity

A vampire with Celerity is as fast or faster than the common transportation methods available to the average Victorian. The vampire who has higher levels of the Discipline is likely as fast as steam-driven vehicles. Genteel Lady Adelaide, with three dots of Celerity, does not routinely step out of her townhouse and take off at trainlike speeds, her presentation train fluttering behind her. She does proceed in the confidence that she can escape from most tight situations if necessary and that with proper traveling clothes she can cover long distances ahead of virtually anyone she might wish to escape or overtake.

Dementation

Victorian understanding of insanity differs wildly from later views. Dementation itself doesn't rely on the scientific thought of the moment. Its effects work the



same way and mean much the same despite the very different context, because they deal with matters of the soul in terms older than Victorian as well as modern science.

Dominate

Victorians don't know about brainwashing, but they do have experience with the Svengali-type magician, the man who mesmerizes his subjects, causing them to do whatever he chooses, all for the scary, fascinated enjoyment of his audience. Mesmerism has a sexual element too; it imparts its practitioner with an enigmatic, vital charisma. Victorians find the "freedom" of being a mesmerist's subject highly sensual, and it doesn't tax their moral code. Victorian vampires will think of this discipline along these lines and use it accordingly, not only as a way to control their subjects but as a way of garnering fearsome respect from them. They use it to cover their tracks, too, but in ways that make whoever observes them employing it, be they Kindred or kine, think twice about ever looking into their eyes again.

A Victorian Kindred with Dominate often uses the popular imagery of mysticism as a trigger for the suggestions she's planted. Dream symbolism, and especially Tarot symbolism, is both useful and intimidating. Take, for example, the Ten of Swords in a Tarot deck. This is one of the worst divination cards. Its interpretation is "ruin, sadness, misfortune, affliction" and the like. The imagery of the card itself is horrid; while variations abound, the common image is of ten swords piercing a prone body, with chrysanthemums, the betrayers of Caesar and the Infernal Lord of the Flies commonly depicted around it. The Kindred with Dominate uses her discipline to focus the attention of her subject on the image of the card, knowing full well that her victim's medium will impart to her its meaning. She sends her victim the image of the card in a letter or other missive. The victim finds it among the things on her boudoir table, and she commands the vampire implanted earlier flood back. The victim carries them out not just because she must but in hopes of evading or mitigating the dreadful fortune now laid out for her.

Fortitude

The protection Fortitude provides creates some risk for vampires moving among the laboring classes. Everyone who does physical labor picks up a collection of cuts, bruises, calluses and the like. Vampires with high Fortitude don't, unless they set out to mutilate themselves deliberately, and the Fortitude that makes this desirable also makes it hard to do. Among the upper classes, where pristine appearance is an asset because it shows one doesn't have to engage in hard work oneself, Fortitude is a positive boon to the socially inclined vampire.

Necromancy and Thanatosis

Victorians are obsessed with death. They fear it, but they see a great deal of beauty in the peace and repose it offers and in the visage it presents. Victorians take picnics among the headstones at the cemetery, they place great importance on the beautification of graves, and they are terrified of being interred before they are actually dead. Kine who can afford it erect alarms over the graves of the newly dead against just such a mistaken burial. The ability to command the dead is in this context a powerful and awe-inspiring ability. The actual condition of animated corpses, on the other hand, is particularly repugnant to those who fear and idolize death, and the incautious necromancer may face hostile rejection for bringing unwanted truths to others' attention.

Obfuscate and Obtenebration

Victorian nights offer more darkness and concealment than modern ones do. London is wrapped not just in fog but in coal smoke and accompanying smog, filling the air with soot. There's nothing quite like it in the industrialized nations of the 21st century; it takes much less work for a vampire wanting shadows to hide in or command to find them.

Vicissitude

Victorians have a peculiar fascination with the grotesque. This is an age of ubiquitous freak shows. A handful of specimens like John Merrick, the Elephant Man, become distinguished members of high society; the rest slake popular curiosity for the next appalling spectacle. A skilled practitioner of Vicissitude can hide relatively easily among humanity if she's willing to identify herself as yet another freak. The actual act of transformation seems more startling and even terrifying to observers who don't have the benefits of another century's worth of cinematic special effects — Victorians who see a vampire sprout new limbs and twist another's flesh lack the psychological escape that frantic thoughts like "it's just a model" and "that's computer graphics" can provide.

Victorian Merits and Flaws

Some of the merits and flaws presented in *Vampire: The Masquerade* don't make sense in the Victorian era, and some call for modification. This section notes suggested additions and changes.

Note: This material is *optional*. The Storyteller has the final say over what's acceptable for a particular chronicle, and "it's in the book" is not a sufficient refutation of a Storyteller's decision not to use some (or any) of the entries here.

Physical

Humanity's Window (3 Point Merit)

Though otherwise monstrous in appearance, you retain one striking feature from your mortal life. Beautiful eyes are the feature most commonly preserved this way, but Humanity's Window can encompass any aspect of what you once had, such as a wonderful voice or sensitive fingers.

This merit adds one die to the character's dice pool for social interactions with others encountering the character for the first time. It can be purchased only by characters of Appearance 0, such as Nosferatu and Gargoyles.

Pox (3 point Flaw)

You are diseased. While the disease cannot kill you, smallpox, pneumonia or consumption (tuberculosis) was introduced into the system of vitae running through your body during a chance feeding. Lack of fresh, untainted vitae nightly will cause 1 blood point for every night you are not able to feed, up to a fortnight's time. If at the fortnight's end you are still unable to feed, you lose 1 point of Stamina. Should your blood pool reduce to zero, you fall into torpor.

Pox has a social stigma as well. Your visage takes on the characteristic of the disease you've contracted. Smallpox left pocklike scars on the faces of its victims, while consumption wasted away their energy. Appearance is reduced by 1. These physical flaws are countered only by feeding upon fresh, disease-free vitae, as above.

Mental

Literacy (2 Point Merit)

You are able to read and write without the benefit of having been formally schooled. Either you are self-

taught (very difficult), or an ally, acquaintance, mentor or even a family member, when you were living, taught you to decipher the letters and words and to form them on paper. The level of literacy this merit covers is more functional than nuanced. You might have little grasp of actual grammar and syntax, but you can understand written passages and create your own.

Natural Cypher (2 Point Merit)

You have a natural flair for mathematical aptitude. You may have little to no formal schooling in mathematics, but when presented with a problem that involves numbers or logic, you are able to tackle it with great facility. Add three dice to your dice pool when employing this Merit against logic problems, mathematical problems and games that require mathematical aptitude.

Social

Downey (2 Points/ Level Merit)

“Downey” is Victorian slang for a practiced liar and deceiver. Each level of this merit, up to a maximum of three levels, adds one die to the character’s dice pool for social tests involving deceit and manipulation.

Gulpy (2 Points/ Level Flaw)

A gulpy vampire is one who is gullible and easily duped. Kindred with this flaw can become the victims of cons and jokes and are less able to resist conspiratorial and other manipulation. Each level, to a maximum of three levels, reduces the hapless vampire’s dice pool by one die for rolls to resist manipulation and trickery.

Subjects of the Twilight: Templates

All vampires are individuals, just as all living people are. Vampires also belong to the society of their times and take part in trends of various sorts. Some combinations of personality and history occur more frequently than others. The templates here describe some common types of vampires in the Twilight Era. Each one sketches out some features of that sort of person’s past and provides recommendations for some traits. None of the templates suggests a Nature or Demeanor, for instance. If you choose to draw on one of these templates for your character, you must make the rest of the decisions.

Players who want to work with templates are always free to use part of a template while ignoring the rest. They’re here to provide inspiration and open up possibilities, not to

lock you into fixed choices. As always, the Storyteller has the final say as to whether players should use templates for a particular chronicle and if so to what extent the templates may be modified to suit specific circumstances.

Battered-down Laborer

Life began hard and got worse. Born into poverty, you grew up malnourished and neglected, surrounded by squalor and desperation. You lived to adulthood, which put you ahead of some of your brothers and sisters, but then maturity was no treat, either. You worked all your life for distant owners who couldn’t have cared less about you and for brutal foremen who saw you as one more cog in their machines, and less desirable than simple brass fittings at that. Finally you felt the end coming and showed a fit of temper at just the right (or wrong) moment. The stranger came to you in the night and showed you a world you had never dreamed of. It still has bosses, sure, and you still have duties and restrictions, but it’s not the same. You can claim to be whatever you want, and who will tell you otherwise? Maybe something better is in store after all.

Recommended Clans: Brujah, Malkavian, Nosferatu
Attribute Prioritization: Physical, Mental, Social
Ability Prioritization: Talents, Skills, Knowledges
Recommended Backgrounds: Contacts, Mentor

Cabbie

You made your living on the move, learning all the highways and byways of an ever-changing city, where people would want to go and how to get them there. It wasn’t always comfortable in extremes of heat and cold, wet and dry, but you managed, and much can be said for the satisfaction of not being cooped up in an office or on an assembly line all day. You made yourself useful to all sorts of people, including the little cabal that always called on your services at night. After you suffered some nasty accidents, they offered you a way to escape the mortal humdrum in favor of travel and adventures of sorts you’d never thought possible outside cheap fiction. Now you still serve them, with your increased insight and stamina, and find it all very satisfactory.

Recommended Clans: Assamite, Gangrel, Giovanni, Nosferatu

Attribute Prioritization: Physical, Mental, Social
Ability Prioritization: Talents, Skills, Knowledges
Recommended Backgrounds: Allies, Contacts, Mentor

Consulting Investigator

You were always fascinated by the world’s mysteries and dedicated your life to understanding the hearts and minds of those around you. Not for you the vain superstitions of past ages or the pathetic follies of the modern day. Reason



was your guide and science your tool. You unraveled the mysteries of human behavior, particularly criminal and other duplicitous actions. You achieved moderate fame for your work, along with a certain amount of enmity from those whose misdeeds you exposed. Then came the first meeting with the man whose condition fell outside everything you knew as possible, except that he was tangibly and demonstrably real. You nearly broke under the strain of it, but you rallied. You asked for the opportunity to study this new phenomenon; he's brought you into the most intimate contact with it. Some night, you are confident, you will unravel this puzzle as well.

Recommended Clans: Brujah, Followers of Set, Malkavian, Nosferatu, Ravnos, Tremere, Tzimisce

Attribute Prioritization: Mental, Social, Physical

Ability Prioritization: Knowledges, Skills, Talents

Recommended Backgrounds: Contacts, Influence, Mentor, Resources

Devout Poor

Life began hard and got worse. The priests spoke to you of the rewards waiting for the virtuous, and you

believed them. You always tried to bear up under the terrible burdens of life for the sake of proving yourself worthy of God's grace. You always hoped for mercy in this life as well as the next, but it was never forthcoming in any way you could tell. In the midst of such moral darkness and physical pain, hope burned in you like a single lamp, sustaining you when it would have been easy to succumb to vice and despair. Something in you touched the heart of a vampire, though you still don't really know what motivated your sire. Suffice it to say that one of these unloving creatures made you like them, and perhaps there is no Heaven at all anymore, at least not for you. How could God have allowed this to happen? Or is it in fact His will that you prey on those who are as you once were? You must know.

Recommended Clans: Assamite (vizier), Brujah, Nosferatu

Attribute Prioritization: Mental, Physical, Social

Ability Prioritization: Skills, Knowledges, Talents

Recommended Backgrounds: Allies, Contacts, Influence

Expert Criminal

Honest labor fascinated you. You could watch it all day. You certainly never wanted to perform it yourself, and you set about making sure that you didn't have to. By the time you hit adulthood you were already a terror of the local underworld, and once you ended up the protégé of one of the better thugs in the district, you were set. You inherited some rackets and invented others. Gradually you faded from view, except in the eyes of other criminals, who both feared and admired you. One night your assumptions about how secure your position was came crashing to the ground with the powerful stranger who dared you to beat her on your own turf. It was a long time since you had had a challenge like that ... and you failed miserably. That was the beginning of the association that ended up with you becoming a vampire. Now the sky's the limits for your ambition.

Recommended Clans: Followers of Set, Giovanni, Malkavian, Nosferatu

Attribute Prioritization: Social, Mental, Physical

Ability Prioritization: Skills, Talents, Knowledges

Recommended Backgrounds: Allies, Contacts, Herd, Resources

Idle Rich

You were born to wealth and power, and to the knowledge that you would never have to work to maintain it. Your ancestors labored hard to earn their money, but now professionals take care of it for you, leaving you free to pursue your own interests. You could and did travel the world, indulging in all your whims, free to make the life that suited you. You had to submit to no law except your own desires. Then you discovered that some of the people who swirled around you in the social elite had power of sorts you'd never imagined. You wanted it for your own, and after a long and delicate dance of negotiations you left life behind. Maybe it wasn't such a good idea. Now you're at the bottom of a whole new social ladder and must earn your way up it just as your ancestors did for you.

Recommended Clans: Followers of Set, Lasombra, Toreador, Tremere, Ventru

Attribute Prioritization: Social, Physical, Mental

Ability Prioritization: Talents, Skills, Knowledges

Recommended Backgrounds: Fame, Influence, Resources, Retainers

Man of Science

You were always fascinated by the world's mysteries and dedicated your life to understanding it all. Not for you the vain superstitions of past ages or the pathetic

follies of the modern day. Reason was your guide and science your tools. You achieved moderate fame for your insights in your chosen field, along with moderate scorn for daring to challenge deluded verities. Then came the first meeting with the man whose condition fell outside everything you knew as possible, except that he was tangibly and demonstrably real. You nearly broke under the strain of it, but you rallied. You asked for the opportunity to study this new phenomenon; he's brought you into the most intimate contact with it. Some night, you are confident, you will unravel this puzzle as well.

Recommended Clans: Brujah, Lasombra, Malkavian, Toreador, Tremere

Attribute Prioritization: Mental, Physical, Social

Ability Prioritization: Knowledges, Skills, Talents

Recommended Backgrounds: Contacts, Fame, Influence, Resources

Notorious Artist

You've always been filled with the passion to create, and also to attract attention. Your talent is genuine, but since inspiration never comes continuously, you also became the master of the well executed con. In a society where patrons are desperate to appear cultured, it's almost depressingly easy to feed them a plausible lie and throw around a little misdirection until your muse starts answering again. For years you pulled off this duplicitous little jig, but it was starting to wear thin. That was when you noticed yourself having more and more conversations with the stranger who seemed to see your soul for all its good and bad and yet wasn't repulsed by any of it. When offered the chance to escape the dull and dreary routine of life for an eternity of invention, what could you do but escape? Only, the stranger somehow neglected to mention so much

Recommended Clans: Followers of Set, Lasombra, Malkavian, Toreador, Tremere, Ventru

Attribute Prioritization: Social, Mental, Physical

Ability Prioritization: Abilities, Knowledges, Talents

Recommended Backgrounds: Contacts, Fame, Herd, Resources

Petty Criminal

What's yours was yours, and what others had was yours, too. The world never gives anybody anything without strings attached, you noticed early on, and you chose to take what you hadn't been given. It's hard work being a criminal, much harder work than most people realize, but it beat being a cog in the mills by far. You would never quite be your own boss, though you made

yourself valuable to various of the crime bosses where you lived. Then came the fight that you couldn't win, against the stranger with powers you'd never imagined. He made you one of his own ... and turned you loose against your old allies and rivals. This is great.

Recommended Clans: Brujah, Followers of Set, Lasombra, Ravnos

Attribute Prioritization: Physical, Social, Mental

Ability Prioritization: Talents, Skills, Knowledges

Recommended Backgrounds: Contacts, Influence, Mentor, Resources

Prosperous Merchant

You lived neither at the top of the social ladder nor down in the muck, but comfortably in the middle. Yes, you always had to work hard, but you earned the rewards of it: enough wealth to avoid desperation and not nearly enough to turn into a wastrel fop like the aristocrats who were your customers. You did your part for the motherland and basked in the glories. Only old age and the prospect of death dimmed your satisfaction with your circumstances. One night one of your more reliable customers began to speak with you about ways of cheating death. There would, she said, always be the need for men and women just like you to supply the needs of an unseen population. Now you continue very much as before, with the prospect of eternal stability ahead. It's worth the sundry inconveniences of your new condition.

Recommended Clans: Gangrel, Malkavian, Tremere

Attribute Prioritization: Social, Mental, Physical

Ability Prioritization: Skills, Knowledges, Talents

Recommended Backgrounds: Contacts, Influence, Resources

Spiritualist

You've always known that an unseen world is out there. It haunted your dreams. Its inhabitants spoke to you in silent corners and in the midst of the unhearing throng. You have always sought to understand it and how you might come into fuller communion with it. Long ago you discovered the first clues to the existence of a whole society of beings halfway beyond the veil of death. Step by step you learned more about them and finally confronted them with your knowledge. Calmly, they asked you what you wanted, and you told them that you sought only to know more of the realms of spirit. They've given you your wish, and in return you apply your knowledge for their benefit.

Recommended Clans: Assamite (sorcerer), Giovanni, Lasombra, Malkavian, Tremere

Attribute Prioritization: Mental, Social, Physical

Ability Prioritization: Knowledges, Talents, Skills

Recommended Backgrounds: Contacts, Herd, Influence, Mentor, Resources

Struggling Merchant

You lived neither at the top of the social ladder nor down in the muck, but precariously in the middle. You always had to work hard and never enjoyed either the reliable misery of poverty or the comfortable success given to the upper classes. You did your part for the motherland, though she never seemed to notice as you'd hope. Old age and the prospect of satisfaction plunged you into despair. One night one of your more reliable customers began to speak with you about ways of cheating death. There would, she said, always be the need for men and women just like you to supply the needs of an unseen population. Now you continue very much as before, except without the constant fears and with the prospect of eternal stability ahead. It's worth everything you gave up and much more; you'd do anything to protect this new existence.

Recommended Clans: Gangrel, Malkavian, Tremere

Attribute Prioritization: Social, Mental, Physical

Ability Prioritization: Skills, Knowledges, Talents

Recommended Backgrounds: Contacts, Influence, Resources

Zealous Reformer

In your life you did what you could to improve the world around you, whether through single-minded dedication to a particular cause or wide-ranging participation in many efforts at social redress. Blessed with a modicum of wealth and opportunity by your family, you always felt that you had to show yourself worthy of your inheritance. The passion attracted the attention of one your city's vampires, whether out of admiration, wistful nostalgia, envy or something else altogether. Now you're wondering just what you can do with this *new* inheritance.

Recommended Clans: Brujah, Malkavian, Ravnos

Recommended Paths: Humanity

Attribute Prioritization: Social, Mental, Physical

Ability Prioritization: Talents, Knowledges, Skills

Recommended Backgrounds: Allies, Contacts, Fame, Influence, Resources



Chapter Six: The Practical Arts

Invention is the most important product of man's creative brain. The ultimate purpose is the complete mastery of mind over the material world, the harnessing of human nature to human needs.

- Nikola Tesla

I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.

- Thomas Alva Edison



In the nineteenth century as in the twentieth, a time of sweeping changes began at about midcentury, building upon itself until the last twenty years saw daily life transformed in ways that the previous generation could not have imagined. In both centuries, some of the new marvels of the age were the result of the discoveries and inventions of the first fifty years finally coming to fruition, while others sprang from drawing boards and laboratories into widespread use with breathtaking speed.

For the wealthier strata of society, these new developments made possible a whole new range of extravagances and one-upsmanship. For the middle class, the rise of mass-production techniques and mechanized manufacturing meant more affordable shoes, clothing and household items, available in greater variety and with more uniform quality, while at the same time bringing some “luxury” items within reach. Even the lower classes felt some of the benefits, but it was also they who provided the labor that drove this new economic engine forward, working grueling hours for minimal pay in mills and factories built with little regard for their workers’ health and safety.

For the Kindred living in those times, these changes brought new opportunities and extended capabilities, along with new threats. They also brought a new factor into the maneuverings of vampire society, in that those of younger generations, and especially the newly Embraced, are more likely to have an appreciation of the possibilities of the new technology and to have the understanding of it needed to use it to their advantage.

Transportation

As with many of the technologies that flower during the Victorian age, the advances in transportation that characterize the era represent the convergence of many separate developments of the preceding century or so. The growth of metallurgical understanding, the invention of vulcanized rubber and refinements in steam engines allowing the chief source of mobile motive power to become more powerful and more dependable while at the same time less bulky and heavy, all took place independently. Together, they set the stage for innovations that would enable people and products to be moved greater distances in less time than at any previous point in history.

Horse Power

When most people think of “transportation” in the 1880s and 1890s, the more technological means of getting from place to place tend to take center stage. Despite progress, however, travel on horseback, or in horse-drawn conveyances, remains the dominant means of moving about in rural areas, and cabs and carriages pulled by one or more horses are still common amid the increasingly choked traffic of the cities.

Earlier in the century, the work of John Loudon McAdam transformed many of the roads of Britain from muddy, rutted tracks to hard-surfaced, relatively smooth beds of packed gravel, with some thought given to the drainage of rainwater. These new “macadamized” roads provided surer footing for horses and superior surfaces for the wheels of the vehicles drawn by them, making travel both safer and faster for people and animals alike. (Many of McAdam’s road-building innovations — some of

which he adapted from examinations of the incredibly durable roads built by the Romans — are still used in the Final Nights.) Improvements in design made the carriages of the cities' well-to-do more comfortable and smoother-riding, and the introduction of rubber tires around 1880 eliminated much of the noise associated with the rolling of wheels over cobblestone streets, so much so that regulations soon required harness bells and the like so that cabs and carriages could still be heard as they approached.

The implications for Kindred should be obvious. Being able to move freely about the countryside by night, without the threat of your carriage sinking up to its axles in mud, stranding you and your belongings in the middle of nowhere, and possibly past daybreak, is a very important benefit. Riding across London in an enclosed brougham in smooth, unencumbered privacy appeals to mortal and vampire alike, though possibly for somewhat differing reasons. The advantages afforded by quiet, rubber-tired wheels likely need no explanation.

Railways

Though it had its birth in the early years of the 19th century, it took several decades for railway travel to reach its maturity. In the beginning, locomotives were noisy, dirty, underpowered contraptions, belching smoke and expelling soot that would often settle on the passengers riding in the open, unsheltered cars pulled by them. By the 1880s, those early engines had evolved into sophisticated steam-powered behemoths that could haul large numbers of passengers or tons of freight across the countryside at speeds up to eighty miles an hour. The systems of tracks on which they ran have been both expanded and improved, with steel rails replacing iron (or iron-capped wood!) and railway networks ranging throughout the entirety of Britain, as well as spidering over almost all of continental Europe and reaching from coast to coast in the United States. Thanks to the British and other colonial powers, rail systems have also been established across India and in several regions of Africa.

Passenger accommodations have improved dramatically as well, with the introduction of fully enclosed, heated coaches, dining cars and, for longer trips, sleeping cars. In the 1870s, Pullman sleeping cars, already successful in America, were brought to Britain, offering a new level of comfort and luxury to those travelers able to afford it.

The ability to traverse long distances in relatively short periods is of obvious benefit to Kindred needing to travel, even if they might have needs different from those of mortal passengers. To avoid exposure to sunlight, not

to mention scrutiny by other travelers, vampires might travel as "freight" in carefully sealed crates or chests, often accompanied by bonded ghouls or other trusted servants journeying as ordinary passengers. While this is hardly the height of style or comfort, it represents a vast improvement over spending twice as many nights (or more) traveling overland by coach.

Strange Travelers

The Victorian railroads are less thoroughly regulated than in later times. Each railroad sets most of its own policies, and the individual officials aboard each train have substantial latitude in enforcing these rules. Passengers can and do routinely request (and pay for) special services, from a particular berth to not being disturbed during routine cleaning to moving unusually large and heavy boxes without opening them.

For the truly wealthy, a level of luxury exists above and beyond that of Mr. Pullman's hotels-on-rails: the private railway car. Such cars can be built to order by Pullman or other companies, with décor and amenities of their owners' choosing. ("Heavy brocade curtains, capable of blocking out all light in the daytime hours? Certainly, sir, of course, sir." The wealthy are often known for their eccentricities, after all. Or perhaps the new owner is a dabbler in the burgeoning art of photography?)

Once delivered, these rail-borne land yachts can be attached to commercial trains by arrangement between their owners and the railway companies. They are staffed not by the trains' crews but by their owners' own employees, and their occupants can thus journey in complete privacy. Ownership of a private railcar represents the ultimate in stylish, comfortable land travel, for the living and vampires alike.

Steamships

Prior to the advent of steam power, crossing an ocean was a long, often tedious and occasionally dangerous undertaking. The passage from Liverpool to New York aboard a sailing ship took a *minimum* of three weeks, and the trip was often several times longer, depending on the vagaries of wind and weather. Ships were built mostly for the transport of cargo and had only limited, if any, berths for passengers. What accommodations they did have commonly offered little in the way of privacy.

For Kindred wishing to make the journey, this all presented obvious difficulties. Faced with such a lengthy voyage, a vampire choosing to remain active had to

somehow feed discreetly while among the small, closed group of people aboard the ship. Preventing discovery by putting on living semblance by other supernatural means only exacerbated the problem by requiring the expenditure of blood and thereby requiring feeding that much more frequently. A passenger avoiding exposure to sunlight also could not help but attract unwanted attention. The alternative, making the trip in a state of voluntary torpor, carried its own set of complications.

While experiments with steam-powered watercraft began in the early 19th century, it took time for the technology to advance to the point where it could realistically be used to propel a ship across an ocean. By the late 1830s, the first Atlantic crossings entirely under steam power had been made, and from that point onward the days of sail were numbered. Soon steam-driven vessels would ply all the world's seas, shaving first days and then weeks off the time needed to travel from port to port and ending their dependence on the seasonal variations of the winds. Steam power also greatly reduced the dangers inherent in ocean travel by enabling vessels in many cases to sail *away* from storms, rather than being swept into them.

Steamships became gradually larger and faster, until by 1880 the fastest of them could make the Liverpool to New York trip in about a week. The business of carrying passengers grew from the minor sideline it had been for most sailing vessels into the primary purpose of many of the new steamers, with the launch of the first true ocean liners. While it will still be a few decades before these grew into the opulent floating palaces (at least for the first-class passengers) of the early 20th century, the accommodations provided are already far beyond anything seen before, with private staterooms, (limited) recreational facilities and other amenities.

Ocean travel now presents far less of an obstacle to Kindred, as the passage between many ports now takes less time than even high-generation neonates can go between feedings. It is not thought unusual for a passenger to remain secluded in his stateroom, "stricken with seasickness," with meals brought to him by a traveling companion or servant. Over longer journeys, the increased privacy makes discreetly feeding from a blood-bonded ghoul or other companion a simple matter. Now the greatest risks are in port at each end of the journey: ambitious vampires looking for leverage over their rivals constantly fight for information about and authority over harbor activities. At night the ports of major cities swarm with vampires in search of the next big break, and during the day their mortal agents, lackeys, hangers-on and hapless prey likewise snoop and sneak.

Other Vehicular Innovations

While improved roads, the expanding rail networks and the appearance of steamships make travel much simpler and easier for Kindred and mortal alike, these are not the only advances in transportation to make themselves felt in the Victorian age. Many of these developments are beyond the scope of this overview, but two deserve special mention because of their impact on Victorian society and their implications for future eras.

Bicycles

The preceding decades saw the appearance of the high-wheeled, difficult-to-ride and generally dangerous "ordinary" or "penny-farthing" bicycles. The so-called "safety" bicycle, with two equal-sized wheels, a frame resembling those of modern bikes and pedals coupled by a chain or shaft to the rear wheel, was not developed until the 1870s. By 1890, a number of additional improvements, including the dramatically smoother ride made possible by John B. Dunlop's invention of pneumatic (air-filled) tires, set the stage for the explosion of the bicycle's popularity.

Mass-production manufacturing makes cycling affordable for all but the poorest classes, and it's only a small exaggeration to say that in the cities of Britain and America, "everyone" is riding in the 1890s, both for recreation and transportation. From the daily commute of workers to and from work to the changes in women's fashions (long skirts, bustles and other soon-to-be-outmoded modes of dress being impractical for cycling), the impact is already felt across all levels of society.

So, does this mean that many vampires of the 1890s are likely to take to the streets on two-wheelers? Well, perhaps not. It's here mostly for the flavor of mortal society. Bicycling at night is substantially more complicated and less reliable than daytime riding. But in the right circumstances, a desperate vampire, a handy bicycle and a few dots of Potence or Celerity could combine to produce wonders.

Automobiles

These self-propelled "horseless carriages" were much more of a curiosity than a common sight through most of the Victorian era. Residents of major cities were the most likely to have ever seen one, and few individuals other than the quite well-off could consider owning one. They were noisy, undependable and largely looked upon as dangerous nuisances by those sharing the streets with them. While many autos of the period were capable of speeds up to 25 or 30 miles per hour, the city of London quickly imposed a speed limit of 14 miles per hour in the interest of the safety of horses, bicyclists and pedestrians, and in many places, a man on foot, waving a warning

flag(!), was required to precede a motorcar by a specified number of yards, to warn other traffic that the car was coming.

Victorian Kindred of a bent to acquire status symbols, or those taking an active interest in the mechanical arts, might be inclined to purchase one of these early autos, though such vehicles are not quite yet perfected to the point of being practical transportation.

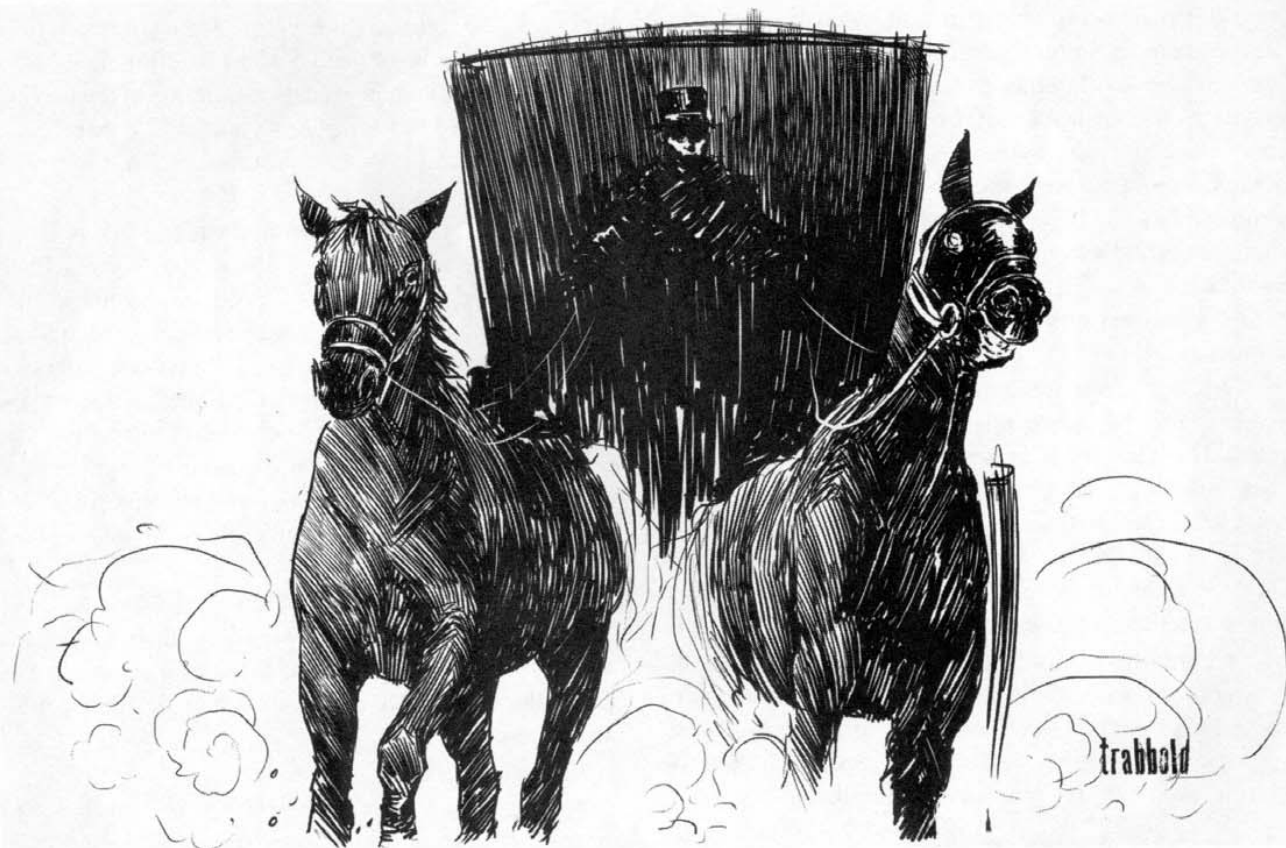
Cut to the Chase

People chase each other for all sorts of reasons: police chase criminals, hunters chase their prey, people running late chase their cabs and trains. These rules let players and Storytellers figure out what happens once a chase begins with a minimum of fuss and with as much room as possible for the characters' choices and aptitudes to affect the outcome.

These rules do not provide all the detail that a tactical wargame would, even though they incorporate actual historical information about acceleration, speed and handling. In the end it all comes down to standard rolls for performance and control in the midst of the chase, using Dexterity + Drive for carriages, wagons, automobiles and other vehicles and Dexterity + Athletics for characters on foot.

Players and Storytellers may wonder whether chase scenes are actually appropriate for Victorian melodramatic and Gothic storytelling. The answer is yes, with the caveat that Gothic chases aren't like the vehicular stunt work in the tradition of films like *Bullitt* and *The French Connection*. Gothic literature abounds with chases in atmospheric nighttime settings: the hero after a villain absconding in the fog, the race to deliver crucial information to the victims of a curse or haunting before it's too late, the desperate pursuit of the con artist who's been impersonating the vanished duke before the conman can escape overseas. The element of mystery is usually strong, with one or more participants unknown to the others and time running out.

When describing a chase scene, the Storyteller should play up the qualities that make full understanding of the situation difficult. Between the streetlights, the night is very dark. The fog is always thickest and most muffling just when clear lines of sight and sound would be most welcome. Dark curtains or wooden shutters make it impossible for pursuers to tell whether the fleeing kidnapper still has his victim along with him; perhaps the chase is all in vain! Up ahead, the manor whose inhabitants the characters hope to save is already in flames, and perhaps rescue cannot come in time. The physical



act of chase goes together with the intellectual or spiritual pursuit of knowledge and opportunity to act constructively despite all resistance.

The Qualities of a Vehicle

Every participant in a chase has a *speed rating*. People and vehicles with higher speed ratings go faster but have more difficulty maneuvering in limited space. Each kind of vehicle (including foot power, both mortal and supernaturally enhanced) also has a *handling rating*. The higher the handling rating, the fewer problems the driver has maintaining control even at high speeds. The *range* is just what it sounds like, how far the vehicle can go without needing fuel or, in the case of animals, food, water and rest. The *armor rating* measures the vehicle's ability to withstand damage itself and to protect its passengers. The *passenger rating* is the number of people a vehicle can carry. The *resources rating* is the level of Resources needed to acquire a typical example of that type of vehicle.

- **Speed.** Speed 1 is normal human walking speed, 7–10 yards a turn or 3–5 miles an hour. Each additional point of Speed adds up to 10 yards per turn or 5 mph. A vehicle or supernaturally fast person covers 10–20 yards per turn or 5–10 mph at Speed 2, 20–30 yards per turn or 10–15 mph at Speed 3 and so on.

- **Acceleration.** No animal or vehicle can go from standing still to top speed instantaneously, and some accelerate much faster than others. The chart below lists speed as a series of numbers, such as 1, 3 for people or 1, 3, 5 for a typical town car of the 1890s. The car moves at speed 1 the first turn it's moving, speed 3 the second turn and its maximum rate of speed 5 on the third turn. Some vehicles have a high top speed but are slow to get underway and have speed rating which increase slowly, such as 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12 for typical passenger trains. The fewer speed numbers, the faster the vehicle is underway.

When braking, reverse the process: a vehicle can safely count back two steps along its series of speed numbers each turn. A person can go from 3 to 1 in one turn, and the car can go from 5 to 1 in that turn, too. The train takes eleven turns to go from zero to its top speed of about 60 mph and five turns to brake safely, going from 12 to 8 on the first turn, 8 to 6 on the second, 6 to 4 on the third, 4 to 2 on the fourth and finally 2 to 1.

- **Handling.** Handling is an abstract quality, combining physical capability for stopping and turning with the perception and presence of mind necessary to respond to rapidly changing circumstances. The higher the Handling, the better control in the midst of a chase.

- **Range.** This is the distance in miles that a vehicle can go on a full load of whatever fuel it runs on.

- **Armor.** Each point of armor adds one die of lethal soak to each passenger in the vehicle. When a second number appears in brackets, it's the number of successes a personal weapon must achieve to penetrate the vehicle at all.

- **Passengers.** All vehicles can carry their driver, and most can carry at least one person more. This is the number of passengers that the vehicle can carry without impairing its reliability. Subtract one from the Handling rating for each additional passenger above the car's rating.

- **Cost.** This is the number of dots in the Resources background a character must have to acquire the vehicle without fuss or difficulty. See Chapter Five, p. 152, for rules on characters buying beyond their means.

The Mechanics of Pursuit

Each turn, each driver (or runner and anyone else moving independently) does her best to move fast but safely. Roll Dexterity + Drive for characters operating a vehicle, Dexterity + Ride for characters riding horses and other animals or Dexterity + Athletics for characters on foot. The difficulty for each of this roll is $6 + (\text{Speed} - \text{Handling})$, with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 9. A normal person sprinting flat out has Speed 3 and Handling 3, so the difficulty is $6 + (3 - 3)$, or just plain 6. A typical town car has Speed 5 and Handling 4, so if it's going as fast as it's made to go, the difficulty of the driving roll is $6 + (5 - 4) = 6 + 1 = 7$. It's harder to control a car adequately under those circumstances than it is to just run.

The players of the pursuer and the pursued both try to accumulate successes on their respective rolls. Each turn, they add their current Speed as automatic successes. The pursued adds his successes to the chase total, while the pursuer subtracts hers. The chase total begins equal to the pursued character's top Speed, reflecting his head start. If the chase total reaches zero, the pursuer has caught up with the pursued and can pull alongside if he has space. If the chase total reaches $2 \times (\text{pursuer's Speed} + \text{pursued's Speed})$, the pursued has managed a clean getaway and the chase ends.

Specific circumstances can modify the starting chase total. Every ten yards' distance equals a "distance" of one point. Use the generic figure for occasions when the Storyteller doesn't have a detailed map or other conditions in mind.

Example: Roberta Whirter is getting into her car when a young thug makes a successful grab for the satchel she's carrying. It doesn't contain anything of direct monetary

Vehicle Table

Vehicle	Speed	Handling	Range	Armor	Passengers	Cost
Human	1, 3	3	30	0	1	x
Horse	1, 3, 7	5	50*	0	2	••
1-horse carriage	1, 3, 6	4	50*	1	4	••••
2-horse carriage	1, 3, 6	5	50*	2	6	••••
Wagon	1, 2, 5	4	50*	1	6 + cargo	••••
Coach and four	1, 3, 7	5	50*	2	6	•••••
Steam car	1,3, 4	2	20	1	2	••••••
Automobile	1,3, 5	3	50	2	2	••••••
Old train	1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12	10+	300	5 [8]	400	•••••••
Modern train	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 20	18+	500	5 [10]	750	••••••••
Sailboat	1, 3, 5	4+	N/A	3 [5]	6	••••
Cargo ship	1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 4, 5	3+	5,000	5 [10]	20	•••••••
Steamship	1, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	4+	5,000	5 [10]	300 (or more)	••••••••

*Range increases when the driver goes less than flat out: 60 miles at Speed 6, 75 miles at Speed 5, 100 miles at Speed 4 or less.

+: Add 1 to Handling if the vehicle carries less than half its maximum passenger load; add 2 if the passenger load is less than 10% of maximum.

Notes: Each dot of Celerity adds its value to a vampire's or ghoul's Speed: +1 for Celerity 1, plus another 2 points of Speed for Celerity 2, plus another 3 points for Celerity 3, etc. The total is therefore: Celerity 1 adds +1, Celerity 2 adds +3, Celerity 3 adds +6, Celerity 4 adds +10 and Celerity 5 adds +15.

Each dot of Potence adds 1 point of Speed: Potence 1 adds +1, Potence 2 adds +2, etc.

value, but he doesn't know that, and she doesn't want her records on the patrons of her chauffeuring business in anyone's hands but hers. So while he runs off, she gets into the car and fires it up to set off in pursuit. (Under other circumstances she'd just burn the blood to boost her physical attributes, but she's still recovering from recent injuries and knows she can't match him on foot.) She has Dexterity 3 and Drive 3, while the thug has Dexterity 3 and Athletics 3.

Turn 1: The chase total begins at 3, the thug's maximum speed. The thug was walking past Roberta and now starts to run. He goes from Speed 1 to 3. The ST rolls six dice with difficulty 6 + (Speed 3 - Handling 3), or 6. The thug earns three successes and gains two automatically for his speed. Since Roberta is spending this turn starting his car, she can't offset his gains, and the chase total ends at 8.

Turn 2. The thug remains at Speed 3, his maximum. This roll and subsequent ones will be at difficulty 6 + (Speed 3 - Handling 3), or 6. This turn he earns three successes and gains three automatically. The chase total rises to 14. Roberta gets underway, accelerating from Speed 0 to Speed 1. This turn's roll is at difficulty 6 + (Speed 1 - Handling 4), or 3.

She earns three successes and gains one automatically for speed, and the chase total falls by 5, to 9.

Turn 3: The thug presses on. He earns four successes this turn and gains three for speed, so the chase total rises to 16. Roberta accelerates from Speed 1 to 3. Her difficulty this turn is 6 + (Speed 3 - Handling 4), or 5, and she earns four successes as well, plus three automatic successes for speed. Her successes reduce the chase total right back to 9.

Turn 4: The thug continues to run. This turn he earns only three successes plus his three automatic ones. The chase total rises to 15. Roberta pushes her car up to its maximum safe speed of 5. The difficulty for her roll on this and subsequent turns is 6 + (Speed 5 - Handling 4), or 7. This turn she earns two successes plus the five automatic successes for speed, and the chase total falls to 8. Her automobile's advantages begin to display themselves.

Turn 5: The thug sees no alternative preferable to continuing to run away as fast as he can. He does well this turn, earning four successes and gaining three for his speed. The chase total climbs back up to 15. Roberta presses on as

well. She again earns two successes and gains five for speed, and the chase total returns to 8.

Turn 6: Both continue. The thug doesn't do as well this turn, only earning two successes in addition to his automatic three. The chase total climbs only to 13. Roberta is lucky and earns four successes plus her automatic five, and the chase total plummets to 4. The thug can feel the steam on the back of his neck.

Turn 7. The chase continues, Roberta now grinning much more than the thug. Once again he only earns two successes plus his automatic three. The chase total rises to 9. Roberta exerts herself (and her player spends a point of Willpower). She earns three successes, plus her five for speed and the 1 for Willpower, and the chase total reaches 0. She's caught up with the thug and can run him over next turn.

Maneuvering during the Chase

Relative speed differences make it harder to shoot, jump onto or otherwise affect the other participants in a chase. Subtract the faster participant's speed from the slower to find this difference — if the pursuer is at Speed 5 and the pursued is at Speed 3, for instance, the difference is 2. Half the difference, rounded up, applies as a difficulty penalty to long-range actions such as firing a gun and throwing a knife at the other participant. The full difference applies as a penalty to direct actions such as jumping from one carriage onto another (along with the usual restrictions on distance and the like).

Treat a fall to the ground from a vehicle as equivalent to falling 10 feet for every point of Speed. (See *Vampire*, p. 227 for the details.) If someone is falling because an attacker successfully grabbed him and threw him out of the vehicle, add the attacker's successes to the dice pool for damage just as if it were a directly struck blow.

Agile pursuers and objects of pursuit have the advantage when maneuvering in tight spaces. Carriages, wagons and cars all need 10 feet plus 10 feet for each point of Speed to turn safely. Every 10 feet less than that minimum subtracts 2 from the effective Handling for that turn. A failure on the Drive roll for the turn forces the vehicle down to Speed 1 again. A botch brings the vehicle to a complete halt and inflicts one die of bashing damage per rolled 1 on its passengers.

Vehicle Damage

Vehicles have "health levels" analogous to those of mortals and vampires. Damage reduces the vehicle's structural integrity until it collapses, blows up or otherwise ceases to function.

Structural Level	Dice Penalty	Description
Scraped	0	Noticeably nicked and bashed but not impaired in performance.
Dented	-1	Minor structural damage. Reduce Handling by 1.
Battered	-1	Significant structural damage. Reduce top Speed by 1.
Smashed	-2	Serious structural damage. Reduce Handling and Speed by 2.
Breached	-3	Structurally unsound, liable to collapse at any moment. Reducing Handling and Speed by 3.
Wrecked	-4	Only marginally operable. Reduce Handling and Speed by 4.
Broken Down		The vehicle cannot move under its own power.
Demolished		The vehicle has ceased to exist as a unified entity, and its parts lie strewn over the landscape. Vehicles capable of exploding do.

The dice penalty applies to the driver's efforts at handling the vehicle and to attacks launched by passengers at anyone outside it. The driver may spend 1 Willpower to negate this penalty for one full turn.

Repairs take suitable parts and time. Fixing Smashed damage takes new parts, and fixing Breached and worse damage requires the full facilities of the sort of shop where the vehicle was made. All these efforts require a roll of Dexterity + Crafts, difficulty 6. Success restores the vehicle to full working condition. The time required depends on the severity of the damage, as follows. The time may be spread across multiple nights if necessary.

Structural Level	Repair Time
Scraped	30 minutes
Dented	1 hour
Battered	2 hours
Smashed	6 hours
Breached	12 Hours
Wrecked	24 hours
Broken Down	48 hours
Demolished	168 hours

Being Driven on the Chase

In many circumstances, the characters don't drive themselves in a chase. They hop onto a convenient cab and promise the driver a shilling to overtake that bounder

up ahead, hire a train for their chase and otherwise rely on the services of others.

Unless some specific reason exists to do otherwise in a particular scene, the Storyteller should let the player of the character who hires their driver make the rolls for the chase. A typical driver of any kind has Dexterity 3 and Drive 3 (or 3 dots in whatever the appropriate ability for this occasion is). This is slightly above average, but prevailing unemployment means that even quite skilled individuals must go looking for work and are therefore available for hiring.

Characters may try to hire someone better than average. If circumstances allow for a selection of possible drivers, such as a row of cabs all waiting for fares outside the theater, one or more characters may look for the best one. Roll Perception + Etiquette, difficulty 7; every two successes on the single best roll adds one to the driver's dice pool for the duration of the chase. This requires one minute for each roll to check the immediate vicinity. Longer-term research earns better results, when time isn't quite so urgent: roll Perception + Etiquette, difficulty 7, with each success on the single best roll adding one to the driver's dice pool. This requires one hour for land vehicles or one full night for sea craft. Each additional unit of time (minute, hour or night depending on the nature of the roll) spent in the search adds one die to the searcher's dice pool.

The available drivers, even the very best ones, are mortals, so no matter how many successes a character earns in searching for a good one, the driver's dice pool cannot go higher than 9, for Dexterity 4 and Drive 5. Bypassing the first available driver in a queue is a significant breach of etiquette and imposes a +2 difficulty penalty on the character's social dice pools for the rest of the scene.

Long-term Chases

The discussion so far covers turn-by-turn chases, each turn reflecting a few seconds' worth of action. Because Speed is tied to actual movement rates, however, precisely the same rules work for chases on longer terms. If the "turns" of a chase are more than a few minutes each, disregard acceleration, since everyone has time to go as fast as they can and want to by the start of the second turn. The chase total grows and shrinks in precisely the same way, even if it reflects longer distances.

Many Victorian stories feature a desperate train chase with the heroes in a hired or commandeered special train trying to overtake the regular run, or steaming out in pursuit of an enemy who's already set to sea. Use these rules for those chases as well as for the ones through city streets and country lanes.

Communications

For those not wishing to travel long distances but merely to communicate over them, the Victorian era also represents the blossoming of several previously immature technologies as well as the dawn of some new ones. Whether across the city or to the other side of the globe, it became possible to send messages quickly between most points of the civilized world. For both mortals and Kindred, this is a big improvement over needing to wait days, weeks or even months for a letter to be delivered to a distant destination and then facing a similar wait for a reply to arrive.

The Telegraph

Experimentation with telegraphlike devices began in the late 1700s, but none of the early prototypes was practical for widespread adoption or long-distance use. Among other drawbacks, they required twenty-six wires, one for each letter of the alphabet, connecting the sender with the receiver. Stringing such sets of cables over intercity, never mind transcontinental, distances would have been far too costly and difficult.

The solution came in the 1840s, in the form of Samuel Morse's now-familiar "dot-dash-dot" code, which allowed a single wire to connect distant operators' equipment. With this crucial last piece of the puzzle in place, telegraphy soon exploded into widespread use. Wire networks were quickly strung up to carry messages far and wide, often following the same routes as the railways. In 1866, the first successful transatlantic cable was completed, enabling rapid communications between Britain and North America for the first time. More undersea cables quickly followed, along with ambitious overland cable projects, and by 1872 it was possible to send a message from London to Melbourne, Australia. Within twenty years, few places in the civilized world were beyond the reach of the telegraph network.

Telegraphy is not without its complications, however. To send a message, one must visit a telegraph office. (In the U.S., the telegraph system was initially operated by a number of regional private companies, though by 1880 Western Union had consolidated many of them into a network handling 80% of traffic, largely by striking mutually beneficial agreements with the railroads along whose tracks the lines ran. In Britain and British territories, the General Post Office took over running the system in 1870.) The sender writes out her message on a form and pays a fee based on the number of words in it and the distance it's being sent. The operator then converts it into Morse code and sends it; another operator at the

destination transcribes it back into readable text, and a telegram with the resulting message is delivered to the recipient at the address the sender directed. Messages going very long distances might go through one or more relay stations along the way, and even over short distances communicating this way has no privacy: at least one person reads it at each stop along the way.

Individuals needing to transmit "sensitive" information, such as businessmen, diplomats, international spies and Kindred, needed some means of communicating privately via telegram. Obviously coded messages would be likely to attract attention and, especially in times of political or international tension, might focus official scrutiny on both sender and receiver. Instead, individuals and organizations in need of private communications often devised systems of code phrases, bits of innocuous-seeming text that would carry some prearranged meaning when inserted into an ordinary-looking message. The development, analysis and cracking of such codes employs some of the finest analytical minds of the day.

The Telephone

In 1873, a young Canadian inventor named Alexander Graham Bell began experimenting with a means to carry multiple telegraph messages simultaneously over the same wire. His ideas for a so-called "harmonic telegraph" never quite worked out. They did, however, lead to the far more significant development that was to make his name famous the world over.

The speed with which the telephone went from invention to commercial service put the telegraph system to shame. From Bell's initial patent application in early 1876, it took only a little more than a year for the inventor and his two business partners to form the first Bell Telephone Company. By 1878, 10,755 Bell phones were in service in the U.S. By 1880, that number would grow to 133,000.

Initially, service was limited to calling other telephone customers connected to the same exchange, typically meaning within one's own city or general area. Calls are connected by operators sitting at switchboards, manually plugging in cables to connect the calling party to the line they wished to call. The dial system would not be introduced for several decades; for now, callers speak to the operator and say whom they wish to speak to.

In 1885, long-distance telephone service is born with the creation of American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T) by the chief operating officer of American Bell, Theodore Vail. Under Vail's direction, the Bell System had been brought to completion, with licensed local companies providing local service, Western Electric

(acquired from Western Union) manufacturing equipment, and AT&T interconnecting the local companies so that any customer, anywhere on the system, could now call any other customer, regardless of location. With technological improvements and the further expansion of the network into new areas, growth would continue. In 1892 Bell controls 240,000 telephones.

In Britain, the adoption of the telephone is not nearly as meteoric. The Telephone Company Ltd. was formed in 1878 to market Bell's invention and the service to operate it, followed quickly by a number of competitors, including, in 1881, the Post Office. By 1884 only 13,000 telephones are in use throughout Britain, and those mostly in the offices of the government, major businesses and the homes of the well-heeled. Thanks to the loosening that year of restrictions previously imposed by the Post Office, all that begins to change. Trunk lines enabling intercity calls become much more abundant, and, more importantly for the popularization of telephone use, the first "public call offices" or pay phones were introduced, allowing *anyone* to make a three-minute call for as little as tuppence (a little under 1p).

From that point, the growth of telephone service and the telephone network in Britain accelerates. Submarine cables link England to France in 1891, enabling calls between the Continent and England. Trunk lines extend to Glasgow, Belfast and Dublin in 1895 and spread out from each of those hubs to the smaller towns of their respective regions.

Wireless Telegraphy

Wireless telegraphy is one of the earliest applications of *wireless*, or what would later come to be known as radio, technology. In 1896, Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi demonstrates his system of "telegraphy without wires" for the British Post Office, after his own government fails to show any interest. After successfully transmitting over a distance of 300 yards, Marconi receives both permission to continue his experiments and financial backing, leading to the formation of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company the following year. By 1899, Marconi succeeds in sending signals across the English Channel.

While historically actual applications for radio technology did not come into use until after the period which is the focus of this book, it would not be difficult to imagine private parties making certain developments just a few years earlier, possibly covertly and with the aid of Kindred patrons. Players and Storytellers thinking along these lines are encouraged to read up on such pioneers as Heinrich Rudolf Hertz and Nikola Tesla, in addition to Marconi.

Other Developments

Dozens of other technologies either made great strides or first came into their own during the Victorian age, but most of them are beyond the scope of this book, not to mention unlikely to appear in a roleplaying game. However, a few more deserve some mention, either due to their high visibility or their potential influence on your game.

Heating and Lighting

Heat might not be much of an issue for vampires themselves, but it certainly is for any living servants or associates that might live or work in their abode. The necessity also exists for keeping up appearances, particularly in the town or city. Sooner or later, outsiders will notice the absence of smoke from chimneys, the absence of coal deliveries and the like.

While many older homes of the 1880s and 1890s, especially those in outlying areas, still rely on wood-burning fireplaces, more modern means of heating are now available. Coal-burning stoves have become common, and, especially in the cities, many homes and other buildings have been fitted with steam heat systems. Cast-iron radiators are located throughout the house, supplied with steam via pipes connecting them to a coal-fired boiler usually located in the basement. Even those Kindred not particularly interested in progress welcome the ability to heat their domiciles without being exposed to the dangers of open flame.

Lighting also makes significant advances during this period. Gas lighting, which made its first appearance in the form of street lighting in London in the early years of the 19th century, has come into common use in many public buildings and increasingly common use in private homes as well. While not completely without the dangers of flame, gas lamps are at least far less hazardous than earlier light sources such as candles, oil lamps and kerosene lighting. Safe and practical flameless light would not appear until the advent of incandescent electric lighting. Several spectacular public demonstrations of electrical lighting occur at exhibitions and in chosen urban neighborhoods in the 1880s, but these don't lead immediately to wider application. Electrification of private homes begins in the 1890s and takes decades more to spread to rural areas.

Photography

Photography originated in the 1820s with large, unwieldy, not-terribly-portable equipment that required hours-long exposures to produce an image. The following decades brought rapid improvements, both in the

practicality of camera equipment and the quality and stability of the photographs it produced, until, by the 1880s, something resembling modern photography has emerged. Cameras are still heavy and delicate affairs, and the emulsion-coated glass plates used to capture images are bulky and fragile, but the plates are now being mass-produced. Photography has made the transition from being the domain of a small number of technically savvy experts to something that anyone having the inclination and moderate resources can dabble in.

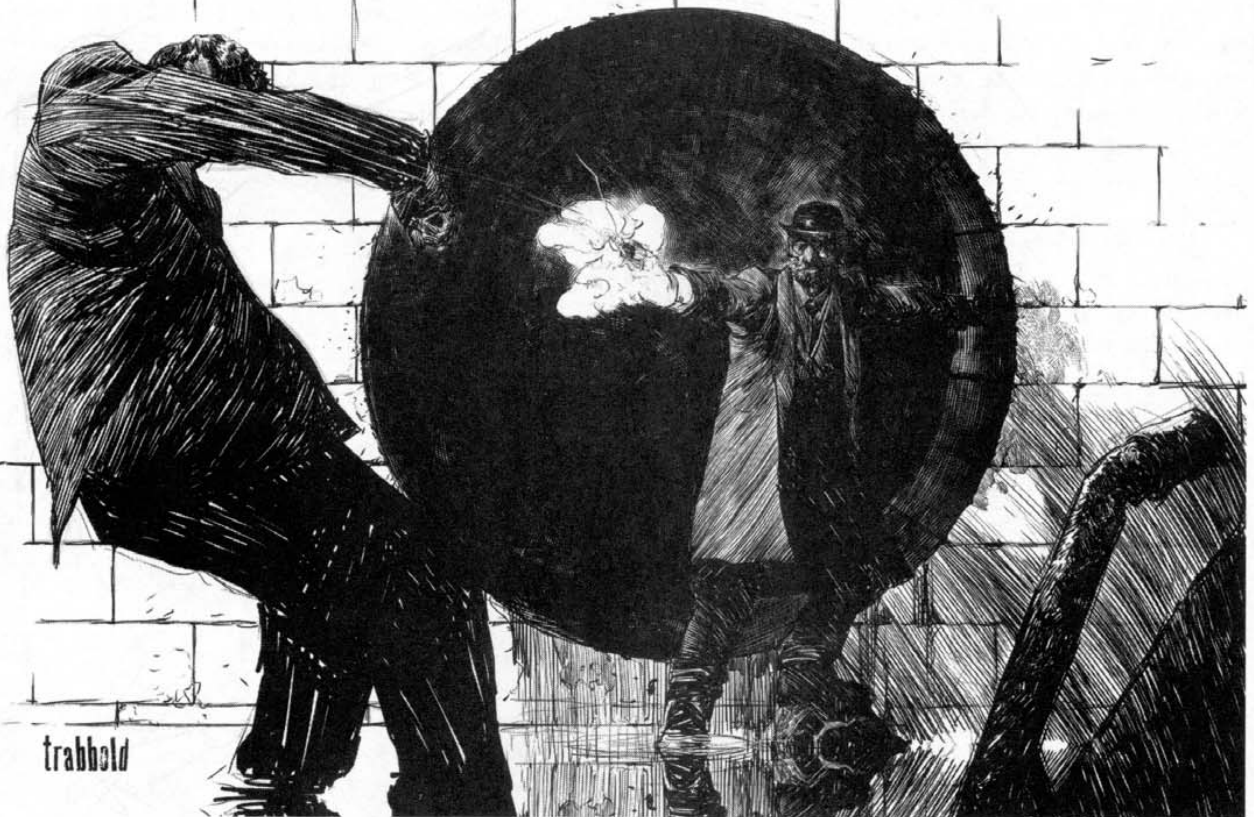
One more breakthrough brings picture-taking to the masses in a form that is both affordable and did not require extensive technical knowledge. In the U.S., George Eastman comes up with the idea of applying a dry emulsion not to rigid glass plates but to a flexible roll of clear celluloid. In 1888 Eastman begins selling his Kodak No. 1 camera preloaded with roll film. These cameras are sealed and are returned to the company for processing once the film is used up, much like the "single-use" cameras available in the 21st century. The camera, loaded with a fresh roll of film, is returned to the customer along with his prints.

Do many of the Kindred feel the urge to become shutterbugs? Probably not. The advent of the common, inexpensive camera presents a new danger for vampires, however, in the form of photographic evidence of their activities becoming far more likely. While the outlandish tales given by a hysterical eyewitness or two might be easily dismissed by authorities, a snapshot could provide a far more convincing reason to begin an official inquiry

Implements of Destruction

Firearms improve primarily in two key qualities: range and rate of fire. Some improvements are in the capability of ammunition in a particular caliber to deal out more damage, particularly with explosive and other specialized rounds, but the bullets of the Twilight Era can kill people dead just as thoroughly as bullets of later eras if they hit solidly. Players accustomed to playing gun-toting characters of the Final Nights must adjust their expectations as to how far and how often their **Victorian Age: Vampire** characters can shoot, without also expecting targets to be able to shrug off the resulting wounds.

A few words on the subject of gun control are in order here. One word in particular: "None." The idea that the government can or should restrict citizens' and subjects' ownership of guns in any way hasn't entered



political discourse by the end of the Twilight Era. Disarmament is a penalty inflicted on the losers in a war, and it ends once the terms of reparation are met. The major restrictions on private ownership of guns are therefore practical: one's ability to buy the gun and ammunition in the first place, to protect it from theft, to carry it when one would like to use it and so on. The London Metropolitan Police are unarmed, but not due to an ideological commitment to disarmament; they simply don't find guns helpful for most of their work.

Players in the early 21st century no doubt have all sorts of views as to whether and in what ways gun control is now desirable. Keep in mind two key points. First, the world of the late 19th century differs from yours in many ways. Second, whatever your personal judgments, this is the way it was then. Characters of political inclination may become involved in the slowly growing debate over public safety, but in some ways *no* modern position matches historical ones. It means something different to stand for or against a policy in light of another century's experience (complex, often poorly documented experience at that) than it does to hold a view in hope or fear of what might happen.

Nobody who considered legal restrictions on firearms envisioned the myriad uses to which their descendants would put guns. In this as in other social matters, players should avoid the urge to make their characters miraculously prescient in just the way that leads to the character sharing her player's particular concerns.

Guns are not the only weapons carried freely in this era. Ex-military officers and aristocrats can and do carry swords — generally a sword cane except on ceremonial occasions, but the swords the gentlemen wear at balls and formal gatherings are often functional weapons attached to men who can use them lethally. Knives are ubiquitous among all classes, serving as universal tools and utensils. (This may be the only cutlery the poor have.)

The open display of any weaponry in general public circumstances can attract the attention of police and bystanders even when it's the character's legal right. Police have broad authority to arrest people who seem likely to incite public disturbances, and private guards have nearly unlimited authority to refuse admittance to their territory to anyone they disapprove of. No matter how legal it is, a character carrying an elephant gun or

cavalry saber down High Street in the middle of the night can expect to have to answer questions about it.

Victorian firearms come in the following categories.

- **Pistols.** These handguns fire solid bullets in various calibers, or diameters, and in general, the bigger the caliber, the more damage the bullet does. Old-fashioned double-action pistols require the shooter to cock the firing hammer manually before pulling the trigger to release the hammer and fire the bullet. By the 1880s these are all nearly antiques, but they do remain in circulation for those who can't afford anything better. Single-shot pistols cock the hammer and release it in one continuous action and can be fired about as fast as the shooter can pull the trigger.

- **Rifles.** These are all long guns, intended to shoot bigger bullets across longer distances. They deal substantially more damage than pistols and also deliver substantially more recoil, requiring cushioning against the shoulder or other firm resting point to avoid knocking the shooter down.

- **Shotguns.** These long guns fire shells loaded with small pellets of various sizes. The smallest can injure only birds and small game, while larger sizes can do serious

damage to people as well. Some have a single barrel, others two barrels which can be fired separately or together.

- **Gatling Gun.** This is the world's first machine gun. A set of rapidly turning barrels pull in ammunition mounted on a belt and fire it off, each barrel in turn. The damage done by this sort of weapon in wars of the 19th century is nearly incalculable, and general staffs have yet to come to terms with just how deadly it makes battlefields. Tactics such as massed charge that barely worked against rows of men with rifles lead only to slaughter when the defenders have Gatling guns.

The Fine Art of Research

Roleplaying in a historical setting presents unique challenges to Storytellers and players alike. When playing in a purely fictional setting, the history, technology, social conditions and any other elements relevant to game play can be equally fictional. It's best, of course, if

Firearms

Type	Damage	Range	Rounds	Concealment	Cost
Pistol, Light					
Derringer	4	10	2	V	••
Army revolver	5	25	6	C	••
.44 single-action	5	25	6	V	••
Pistol, Heavy					
Colt "Peacemaker"	6	30	6	C	••
Hvy. Army revolver	6	35	6	C	••
Rifle					
Lever-action	7	150	12	N	••
Single-shot bolt action	9	200	1	N	•••
Shotgun					
12 gauge	9	35	2	L	••
Single lever-action	9	35	1	L	••
Special					
Gatling gun	9	225	50	N	••••

Damage: Dice rolled when an attack succeeds.

Range: The practical range of the weapon; up to twice this distance is possible but counts as a long-range shot (difficulty 8).

Concealment: V = can be hidden in a vest; C = can be hidden in a coat; L = can be hidden under a long coat; N = cannot be hidden.

they form a coherent, sensible whole, but beyond that the “reality” of the setting can be arbitrarily decided upon by the Storyteller, often (and usually ideally) with some contributions by the players.

In “historical” games, however, part of the assumption is that the setting will be based on “real” history, albeit with whatever fantastic or ahistorical elements that form the basis of the game grafted in. (“Real” Victorian England is not known to have been inhabited by vampires hiding amid human society, for instance, but in the interest of having a game, we recommend that you choose to ignore that.) Much of the success or failure of such a game hinges on the degree to which this assumption is maintained and, more importantly, that players and Storyteller agree beforehand how much historical accuracy to expect from all involved. Having half of one’s players expecting a meticulously researched, immersive trip into the past while the other half are looking forward to a romp through a historical pastiche is a sure-fire way to have your chronicle collapse after two or three sessions, if it even gets that far.

So, assuming that you and your players are in agreement as to what to expect (and also assuming that you’re all not planning on running something that more resembles *Time Bandits* than *The History Channel*), where do you begin?

Research, Research, Research

Well, yes, you probably already guessed that. What sources should you consult, how much should you trust them, and what should you do when they disagree?

As a starting point, a great deal of relevant information is available on the Internet, though, like most things found online, it is of greatly varying quality and accuracy. Web sites exist that are devoted to many different aspects of Victorian life, from clothing to cooking to more esoteric pursuits. The same is true for many other times and places across history, to varying extents. Some good general-history sites can also be found, which can be useful both as places to begin and in helping to put the period of your game in context with what came both before and after.

The Internet has its limitations as an information source, however. It’s difficult to tell how trustworthy a given Web site may be, even if it puts on an appearance of scholarliness and its author has a long trail of letters after his name. *Anyone* can put together a site featuring his pet theories and misconceptions and pass it off as Truth. If you want to be more certain of your source material, a trip to your local library is in order.

Most college or public libraries will have at least a reasonable history section, and many university or major-city libraries have extensive collections of historical

materials. Though being published on paper as opposed to electronically is not a sure sign of a source’s veracity, it is at least a lot easier to determine the author’s credentials and often to find other sources that reference or critique his work. Books will also include bibliographies much more often than Web sites will, allowing you to look at what *their* source materials were and judge them accordingly.

But This Other Book Says ...

While doing your research, one problem you will likely run into is one source contradicting another. This can happen, even when both sources are otherwise reliable, for any number of reasons. Often, one source will be more recent than the other, and it’s possible that new discoveries have led to a reinterpretation of a historical event or artifact. The earlier author was “right” based on the research current at the time, but the prevailing opinion among historians has since shifted. In some cases the phenomena in question are complex enough that a variety of claims can *all* be true, as long as you remember that none of them is universal.

Faith and doubt in Victorian England is a classic example of this. It’s simultaneously true that unprecedented doubt existed in religious tradition and of all spiritual claims — it’s an era of prominent atheists and materials — and that people had unprecedented belief in mystical truths of many kinds. In some cases these trends mingled in one person, as in the case of Harry Houdini, at once a corrosive skeptic and critic of fraudulent mediums and an earnest seeker of genuine communications from beyond the grave. People are seldom equally skeptical or credulous of all claims, after all, and their views change over time in response to new experiences, the dimming of old memories that used to lead them to favor other views and simple changes of heart. Doubt and belief both flourished, and a character with an extreme of either approach is part of a trend.

In other instances, one source will simply be better researched, or perhaps one author was better qualified to form an interpretation of the historical evidence than the other. It can be difficult to choose which of two otherwise-reputable books represents the superior scholarship with regard to a particular point, especially if they are contemporaries or nearly so. One solution is to consult additional works to see which conclusion prevails, but a trap to be avoided while doing this is to be sure to look at the additional sources’ bibliographies and avoid using a work that cites one of the books you’re choosing between as a source.

Enough Is Enough

Good research can be the difference between a successful historically based game and one that disinte-

grates quickly. Too many anachronisms and inaccuracies can break the mood of a game or strain players' willing suspension of disbelief beyond the breaking point. Too little knowledge of the era on the part of the Storyteller can make a game flat and colorless, and what is the point of setting a game in a historical period if not to evoke the atmosphere and mystique of times past?

But you can do too much research. Does it really matter to your players that you know the correct number of brass buttons on a London bobby's coat, based on what year it is in your game? Or the exact whereabouts of various members of the royal family based on the date and historical accounts of their movements? Probably not — but some Storytellers (and players) of historical games become a little too obsessed with Getting Everything Right, at the expense of the fun of playing. That's missing the entire point, isn't it?

In the end, it's not total historical veracity you should be aiming for. For one thing, you'll never attain it, because it's impossible without the use of a time machine. What's *really* needed is a sense of *verisimilitude*. Your game's setting needs to *feel* right, even if it isn't worked out down to every minute (and irrelevant) detail. As Storyteller, you don't have to know everything about the period you're playing in, you just have to know it well enough to paint an accurate picture of daily life (or unlife) for your players and to be able to "fake it" convincingly when some minor detail comes up that you're not familiar with. If you and your players can believe in the "reality" of your setting, then it's Good Enough, and you can get on with the far more important business of having a good time playing in it.

Sources

Here are a few places to get started. The URLs given were accurate as of when this list was written, but are, of course, subject to change. If an address doesn't work, try searching for the Web site's name and other information, which often remain constant from one host to the next.

Web Sites

- **Glossary of Carriages.** <<http://www.bbno.freemove.co.uk/glossary.htm>> Don't know a *brougham* from a *cabriolet* from a *gig*, but want to have it right when you're describing what sort of conveyance your character is stepping out of in front of his posh gentlemen's club? Visit here and you'll know. Includes photos and drawings of a number of different designs.

- **History and Heritage of Civil Engineering.** <http://www.asce.org/history/hp_main.html> Far more interesting than the title makes it sound, this site, operated by the American Society of Civil Engineers, is a fascinating

multimedia survey of famous and significant achievements in architecture, bridge-building and other facets of large-scale engineering, with each section presented in scrollable timeline format. The timelines, which show important world events in parallel to the dates of various engineering feats, are cross-linked to articles on specific projects, and each of a long list of important engineers is profiled as well.

- **The Internet History Sourcebooks Project.** <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/>> This large, scholarly general-history site is edited and developed by Dr. Paul Halsall of the History Department at Fordham University and features materials from a wide range of contributors.

- **Victorian Resources Online: An Annotated List of Scholarly Websites.** <<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/~bpn2f/victorian/bibliog.html>> This is a huge collection of links to sites concerned with the Victorian era, broken down into different categories and with each linked site described as to its contents.

- **The Victorian Web.** <<http://65.107.211.206/victorian/index.html>> As the site's subtitle says, "Literature, history, and culture in the age of Victoria." This site has all of that and more, with extensive sections on politics, religion, science, technology and pretty much every other aspect of Victorian life, most of which also include links to articles on significant persons in that field. Funded and operated by the University Scholars Program at the National University of Singapore of all places.

Books

- **The Norton History of Technology**, by Donald Cardwell. (W. W. Norton & Co., 1995. 565 pp. ISBN 0-393-31192-9) The history of technological advancement, starting from the very beginning and continuing up through the 1990s, with attention given not just to inventions and inventors but also to historical context and the impact of new developments on society. Well written and nontechnical, but not exactly light reading, either. A valuable resource for roleplayers wanting to know more about the technology of any given era.

- **The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers**, by Tom Standage. (Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1999. 227 pp. ISBN 0425171698) A lively, colorful account of the rise of the telegraph system, likening its transforming effects on Victorian society to those of the Internet on our modern world, and then some. If you want to play characters on the cutting edge of their era's technology and science, this should be an indispensable reference.

VICTORIAN AGE COMPANION

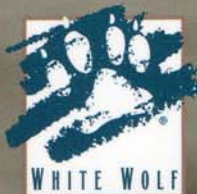
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