



T H E

L A S T

S U P P E R



FOR ADULTS ONLY

GIOVANNI CHRONICLES:

T H E

L A S T

S U P P E R

*The party was getting under way,
Stiffly, slowly.
The way they drank was unholy.
They hovered round the glass-filled tray
Ravenously,
Like birds of prey.
White, intense;
With mask-like faces
Frozen in rigid, gay grimaces.
They chattered and laughed
Stony-eyed:
Impatient:
Hasty:
Preoccupied.
They drank swiftly, as though they might
Drop dead before they were perfectly tight.
— Joseph Moncure March, "The Wild Party"*

by Daniel Greenberg and Teeuwynn

Credits:

Written By: Daniel Greenberg
Additional Material By: Teeuwynn Woodruff
Edited By: Jennifer Clarke Wilkes
Developed By: Andrew Greenberg
Art Director: Richard Thomas
Layout and Typesetting: Kathleen Ryan
Art: Tom Berg, Darryl Elliot, Lief Jones, and Drew Tucker
Cover Design: Lawrence Snelly

White Wolf, Inc. Executives

Mark Rein•Hagen and Stewart Wieck, Owners
Stephan Wieck, President
Wes Harris, Vice President of Licensing and Contracts
Michael Krause, Vice President of Sales and Marketing
Richard Thomas, Vice President of Production and Design
Ken Cliffe, Director of Development and Editing
Benjamin T. Monk, Jr., Contoller
Rebecca Schaefer, Warehouse Manager
Call (404) 292-1819

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780 PARK NORTH BOULEVARD
SUITE 100
CLARKSTON, GEORGIA 30021

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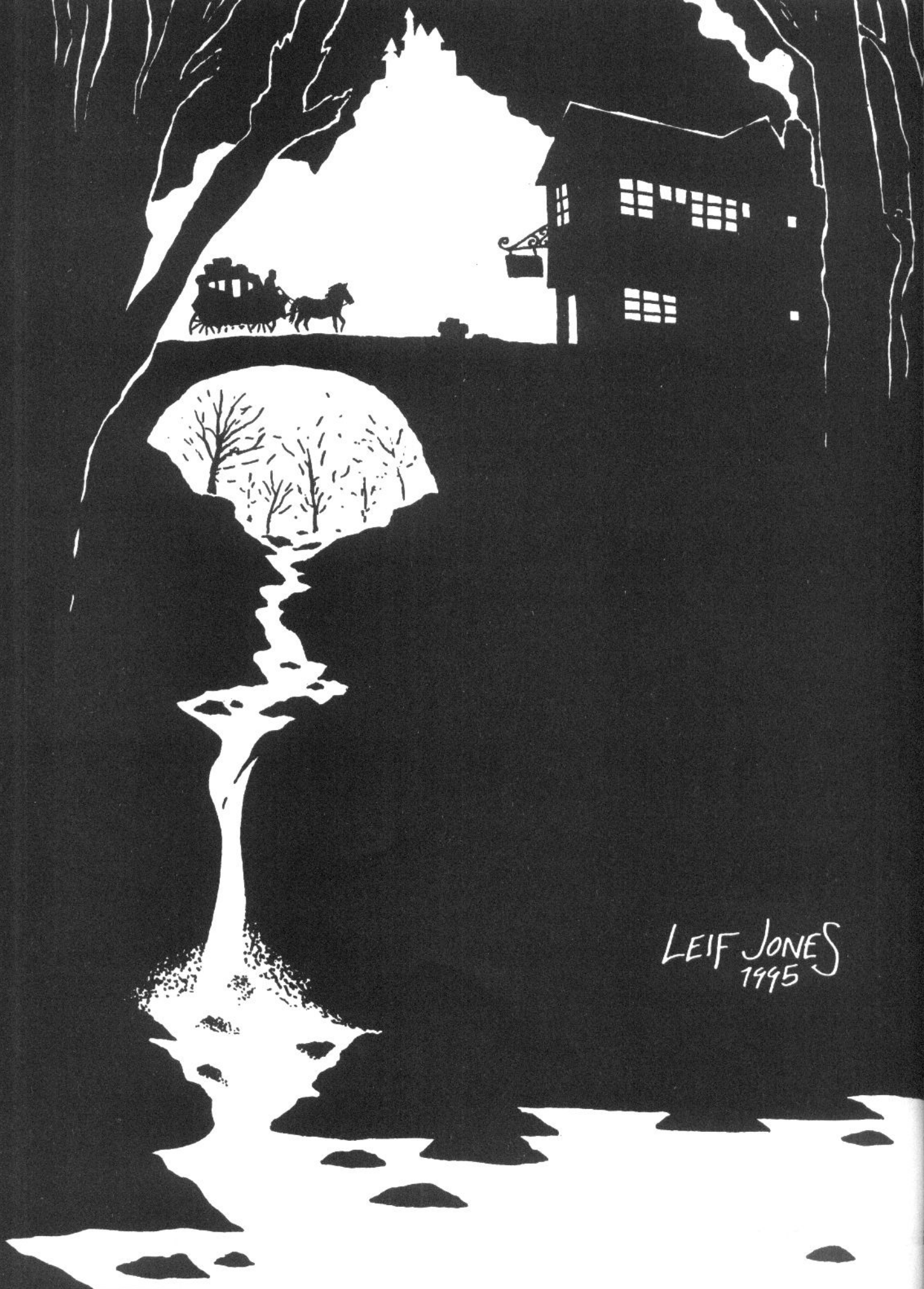
Because of the mature themes involved, reader discretion is advised. PRINTED IN CANADA

Word from Black Dog Game Factory

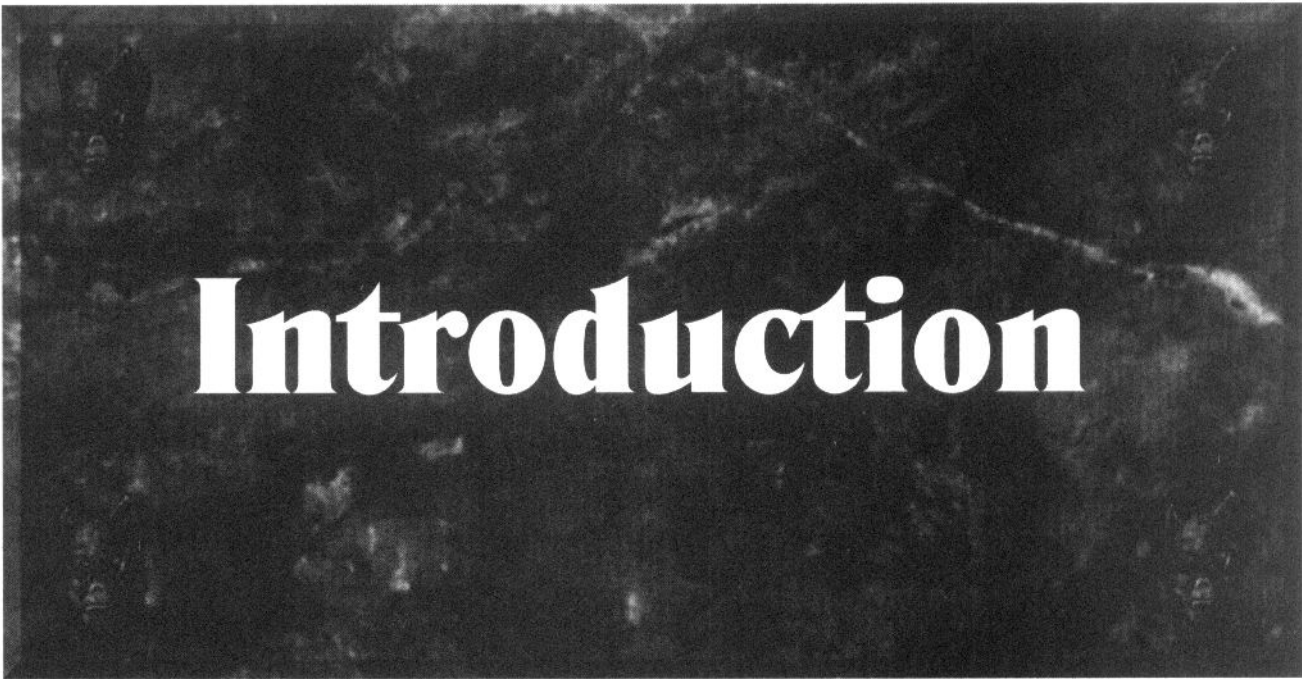
This book is the second from Black Dog, White Wolf's mature readers line. In this case we do not expect the book to offend as much as we hope it will invigorate. The worry here is not that someone will be offended by the words or illustrations; rather that the players and Storytellers will have a chance to go further into character than they've ever gone before. Submerge yourself in your role. Use all those nasty tricks from acting school. Remember, it's only a game — but what a game it can be.

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LEIF JONES
1995



Introduction

*This is my last supper, please come and eat with me,
I want all my old friends to dine here by the sea.
This is my last supper, how come it's come so soon?
Where are the merry makers? Where are the red balloons?
Do you think it's ending? Did you think it was good?
Then drink and be merry, we still have lots of food...*
— Jacques Brel, "My Last Supper"

The Giovanni Chronicles

The Last Supper, the first book in the Giovanni Chronicles, begins in the Middle Ages. The characters begin as the lowest of pawns, bred for slaughter. If they survive, grow and take advantage of their precarious position, they can become powers in a game much greater than any they have ever known.

Each book in the Giovanni Chronicles is a complete story that can be enjoyed even if the players have not have not played through the previous stories. Together, these books form an interlocking chronicle that sweeps through history and recreates some of the most tumultuous periods in human and Kindred lore.

Creating Medieval Characters

The players create medieval characters using the instructions in the Appendix. Inform them that their characters will begin play as mortals, and will have their Preludes during the actual play of the game. They may choose their clan from the ranks of the (as yet unfounded) Camarilla. They may not choose the Giovanni clan, which does not yet exist, or the Cappadocian clan, which will abruptly cease to exist during **The Last Supper**.

Like most other mortals, the characters know little of vampires, but would most likely believe that they exist — along with chimera and sea serpents. The players may assign their freebie points to their characters now, but they may not use such bolstered Traits until after their characters are Embraced.

The following information is for the Storyteller only. Turn to the Appendix for further instructions on creating the characters for this game. That information may be photocopied along with the medieval character sheet and given to the players. The characters should be from different clans, but this is not crucial. For example, if there are two Tremere, then make sure the Tremere conspirator Embraces both of them during the attack scene.

Make sure you've read the whole book and are familiar with the whole story arc before running the game. The plot can take many twists and turns as the story progresses, and the players can take a wide range of actions. Staying on top of the plotline is crucial to running the game well.

Dark History

The date is April 4, 1444. It is a time of chaos and death. The New World has not yet been discovered, and the Old World is awash in blood. The Crusades have come to a disastrous end for Christendom. The final Christian stronghold in the holy lands fell 150 years ago, and subsequent Crusades have been utter failures. Suffering deep humiliation, Christendom turns inward. Like a trapped animal desperately gnawing on its own flesh, it unleashes a torrent of new Inquisitions, attempting to purge itself of unwanted elements.

The Italian Renaissance has not reached the dark heart of Europe, and the Protestant Reformation is still almost a century away. As the Holy Roman Empire declines, the Turkish Empire ascends. The Moslem religious wars meet with triumph, and solidify the Turks' power base in the holy lands. In 1453, less than a decade after this story occurs, the Turks will topple the Eastern Orthodox Church and capture Constantinople, the holiest city in Christendom. They will be indirectly aided by the calculated indifference of a Western papacy eager to see the fall of its only rival for authority over the Christian world. From the newly seized holy city, the Turks will threaten all of Europe: a land devastated by the Hundred Years' War, the Wars of the Roses and the Black Death.

But that is still 10 years away. For now, in 1444, Western Europe is a fool's paradise, and the people enjoy a false sense of security. But in Central and Eastern Europe, tension and fear are part of daily life. Just south of the setting for this story is Wallachia, the center of the bloody no-man's land between the Moslem and Christian worlds, where Vlad Dracul, Prince of Wallachia and father of Vlad Tepes, struggles with conflicting demands and impossible loyalties. The more he fails at his hopeless task, the more he must watch his people suffer the wrath of two warring factions of God's soldiers.

In the vampiric world, the anarchs are on the move, breaking old shackles and asserting their right to rule their own destinies. Elders who have ruled for centuries grow uneasy as they feel their reins of control begin to go slack. The Tzimisce and Lasombra Antediluvians have been destroyed by the anarchs.

The Inquisition has taken a deadly toll on the Kindred, as many powerful elders have fallen to human hunters. The elders also feel the sting of the ceaseless holy wars, many of which other elders have spurred on. More than a few Kindred have had their holdings overrun by mortal soldiers in the service of other vampires, sometimes from their own clan.

As a result, their cries for greater organization, coordination and protection have grown loud. The first meeting of the two dozen elders who will form the Camarilla occurred 50 years before this story begins, and in the intervening years they have presented their case well. But many elders resist the notion, preferring the perils of autonomy over surrendering authority to a group. What the founders of the future Camarilla need is a decisive event which will bring elders together to enforce a new set of rules.

Partial Timeline of Kindred History

- 1394 Pre-Camarilla: First inter-clan meeting to deal with the anarchs
- 1395 Tyler's attack: anarch revolt begins
- 1405 Lasombra dies at the hands of his child
- 1413 Tzimisce Antediluvian is attacked by anarchs
- 1420 Anarch movement solidifies: Vinculum comes into common use
- 1444 Giovanni dinner party
- 1450 Camarilla officially forms
- 1486 Malleus Maleficarum distributed and Inquisition reinvigorated

Story Background

Book One of the Giovanni Chronicles is the tale of the diablerie of Cappadocius. Though it starts with the dinner that seals his fate, the real story begins long before that, even before the birth of Cappadocius. It begins with the confluence of forces that fight for the destiny of mankind and all life on Earth. It is rooted in the mysteries of vampirism and the relation of the human and Kindred to the universe.



Life and Death

The processes of both life and death are mutable. The mysteries that regulate the arrival of fresh incarnate souls on Earth and the exit of souls from the realms of waking consciousness are not governed by inflexible cosmic laws. Knowledgeable entities, from mages to wraiths to vampires, have learned to peer into the mysterious realms of life and death, manipulating their processes to their own advantage.

In the dimly remembered days of prehistory, the Antediluvians were consumed with the mystery of their own existence. With all the time in the world to ponder their place in creation, many of them sought to commune with primal powers and gain esoteric knowledge beyond all but the wisest mortals. Due to the inherently vicious nature of the Jyhad, they kept many of these secrets from their progeny.

One of the most tenacious seekers among the 13 Antediluvians was Cappadocius. Said to have been a rebel priest in his mortal life, his conversion to the ranks of the undead only intensified his quest to unearth the secrets of life, death and what lay beyond. Indeed, his childer said Caine himself sought out their ancestor because of the single-minded determination with which he pursued these questions, and entrusted Cappadocius with a duty unlike any he gave his other grandchilder, though none speculated as to what this onus was.

Because of Cappadocius' unique passion, the Book of Nod refers to his lineage as the Clan of Death (though this is often mistakenly interpreted as referring to the Giovanni). He sent out his progeny, led by his son Japheth, to comb the world for esoteric wisdom from every source. Japheth returned with fascinating information.

Lilith

Due to the veil of secrecy between the Antediluvians and their progeny, many Kindred elders assumed that their vampiric powers were bestowed by God as part of the curse of Caine. The scholars of the *Book of Nod* believed that Caine's power emanated not from the curse of Jehovah, but from the love of Lilith. Cappadocius suspected that Lilith herself held the secrets he sought. In his search, Cappadocius found ancient texts that revealed Caine's former bride to be not simply a lesser god, but an equal of Jehovah. They described Jehovah as the half of God that dwells in light, and Lilith the half of God that dwells in darkness. Both halves bring souls to the living world and both deliver them to the next. Together, Jehovah and Lilith make up a God who is greater than both halves and incomplete without one or the other, though the dual sides do not always act in concert.

Necromancy

Cappadocius reached out from torpor to contact necromancers, who he heard held the secrets of the lands of the dead. Many of his progeny, including Japheth, warned against the idea, since the fanatical death-worshippers were unreliable and dangerous. But Cappadocius was determined to open their crypts and gain access to their hidden knowledge. Shortly after the beginning of the second millennium A.D. he had his childer kidnap Augustus Giovanni, the head of a Venetian family of wealthy merchants and necromancers. They drained the necromancer's blood and replaced it with some drawn from Cappadocius. Augustus Embraced his family in turn and became third in command of the Cappadocians, right after Cappadocius' own son Japheth.

Cappadocius' action caused friction between the Giovanni and the elder Cappadocians, who feared that the insular Venetian necromancers would never take orders properly. Cappadocius visited his Methuselahs in their dreamless sleep, telling them that the exciting new lore the Giovanni brought more than made up for the problems they caused.

Apotheosis

The necromancers also upset the elder Cappadocians with their views on life and death. They did not view humans and vampires and spirits as separate beings, but as a single race in the process of becoming something new. They believed that this evolution could be controlled by clever beings, who stood to gain so much power that they would evolve into gods. The Giovanni hoped that if they mastered the mysteries of death, they would gain total power over life and death and everything in between. The Giovanni are not simply being melodramatic when they refer to their "god-like feeling" that accompanies power over death.

Cappadocius told his childer that this was the time of the Anointing, an elaborate ritual he said would unite him with the unified powers of dark and light, thus giving him infinite authority. He intended to use his apotheosis to freeze the mutable process of life and death in stasis, giving all living beings the gift of full immortality. No soul could ever be destroyed or whisked away from Earth. Cappadocius believed that with death forever locked away, all creatures would live a perfect, unending existence under his benevolent care. With full control over life and death, Cappadocius would then sit in judgment on all the souls.

The Giovanni

But the Giovanni family had a very different agenda. They too believed that comprehending the mysteries of death would make them divine, but they saw the power as something for themselves alone, not as a gift to the world. The Cappadocians were nothing but a stepping stone to their goal.

Since the vampiric state is so much closer to death than human existence, they chose to become undead. They picked Cappadocius to give them the gift of unlife with all the cold-blooded efficiency of merchants selecting a large and vulnerable company to take over from within.

Once the insular necromancers incorporated themselves into the Cappadocians, Augustus Giovanni made a great show of personal loyalty to his new masters, but set his son and childer, Claudius, about the task of destroying Cappadocius.

The Ventrue

Up till then, the Ventrue and Cappadocians had worked together throughout history to consolidate temporal and material power. The Cappadocians appreciated the Ventrue's distate for chaos and rebellion, while the Blue Bloods liked the Death Clan's desire for order. The pragmatic Ventrue deplored the driving concerns of the other clans (art, revolution, animal lore, madness) as fatuous excess.

In the last few hundred years, however, the Cappadocians had become consumed with their mystical quests and had neglected many of their joint enterprises with the Ventrue. The Ventrue had considerable difficulty working with the Cappadocians through most of the Middle Ages, blaming the change on Japheth. They enthusiastically approved of the Cappadocian merger with the Giovanni, believing that an alliance with the greatest shipping house in Italy would restore a healthy dose of sound business sense and reestablish a materialistic and stable ethos within the Cappadocian clan.

Claudius found an unlikely ally in Lady Jadviga Almanov of Bohemia, a Ventrue elder who admired the business sense of the Giovanni family. To improve the chances that Cappadocian interests would shift back to issues of stability, Jadviga proposed to the Ventrue council of elders that she destroy Japheth. It would teach the Cappadocians a lesson, she argued, and solidify Giovanni power within the Death Clan, for Cappadocius would surely replace Japheth with Augustus Giovanni. The council approved, and Jadviga cautiously approached Claudius Giovanni with the plan. She was pleasantly surprised at his eagerness to betray his own clan.

Jadviga and Claudius hatched their plot together but kept dark secrets from one another. Jadviga did not reveal the Ventrue council's involvement in the scheme. She looked on Claudius as a useful dupe who would be forever grateful to her and therefore forever in her debt. If he decided not to grant her boons, she could threaten to reveal the conspiracy to Cappadocius, who would likely destroy both Claudius and his father out of anger. This revelation would not hurt the Ventrue alliance with the Cappadocians, since Jadviga told Claudius that she was acting alone, giving her clan plausible deniability in case the plot went awry.

But Claudius Giovanni was no dupe, and kept even bigger secrets. He realized that the Ventrue were not trustworthy and intended to beat the master businessmen at their own game. Like Jadviga, Claudius pretended he was acting alone in betraying his clan. He did not tell her that Augustus Giovanni knew of the plot to destroy his rival, for his family would also need protection if the scheme were discovered. He also hid the fact that Augustus was not about to settle for second rank in the Cappadocians, but intended to commit the ultimate crime of diablerie, consuming the clan founder. The Ventrue plot simply made it easier for him to launch his patricidal attack. The Giovanni knew that after such an audacious act the Ventrue could never blackmail them.

In this atmosphere of mutual deceit the two conspirators sealed their pact in blood.

The Conspiracy of Isaac

To increase their chance of success, Jadviga and Claudius decided to form the Conspiracy of Isaac, inviting 11 other Kindred elders to assist with the attack. They promised their ancient co-conspirators a share of Japeth's vitæ, as well as other, even darker rewards.

At this point the clans comprised the Brujah, the Gangrel, the Malkavians, the Nosferatu, the Toreador, the Tremere (who had by then virtually destroyed the Salubri and diablerized Saulot), the Ventrue, the Lasombra, the Assamites (who had not yet been stripped of their ability to commit diablerie), the Tzimisce, the Followers of Set, the Ravnos and the Cappadocians.

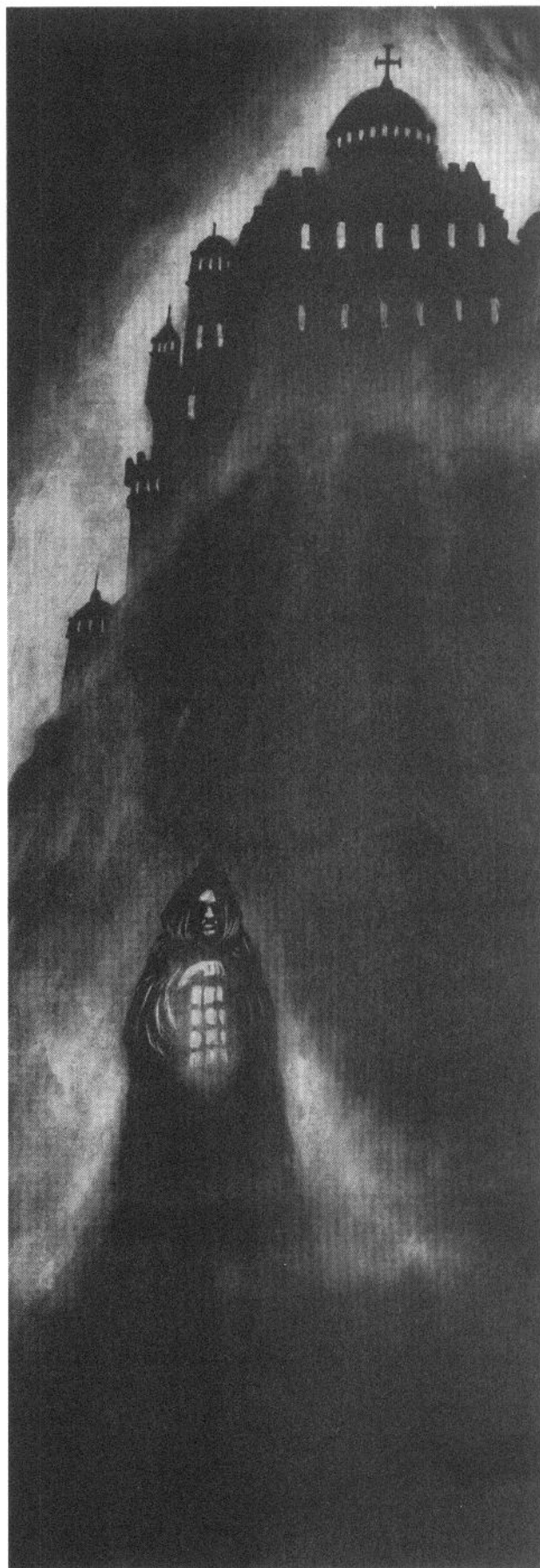
The conspirators were all aristocratic, debauched vampires with jaded notions of pleasure. As a special gift to seal their membership in the conspiracy, Claudius promised to feed each of them a mortal carefully selected to please her individual palate. The Giovanni family searched far and wide, and spared no expense to provide these human aperitifs.

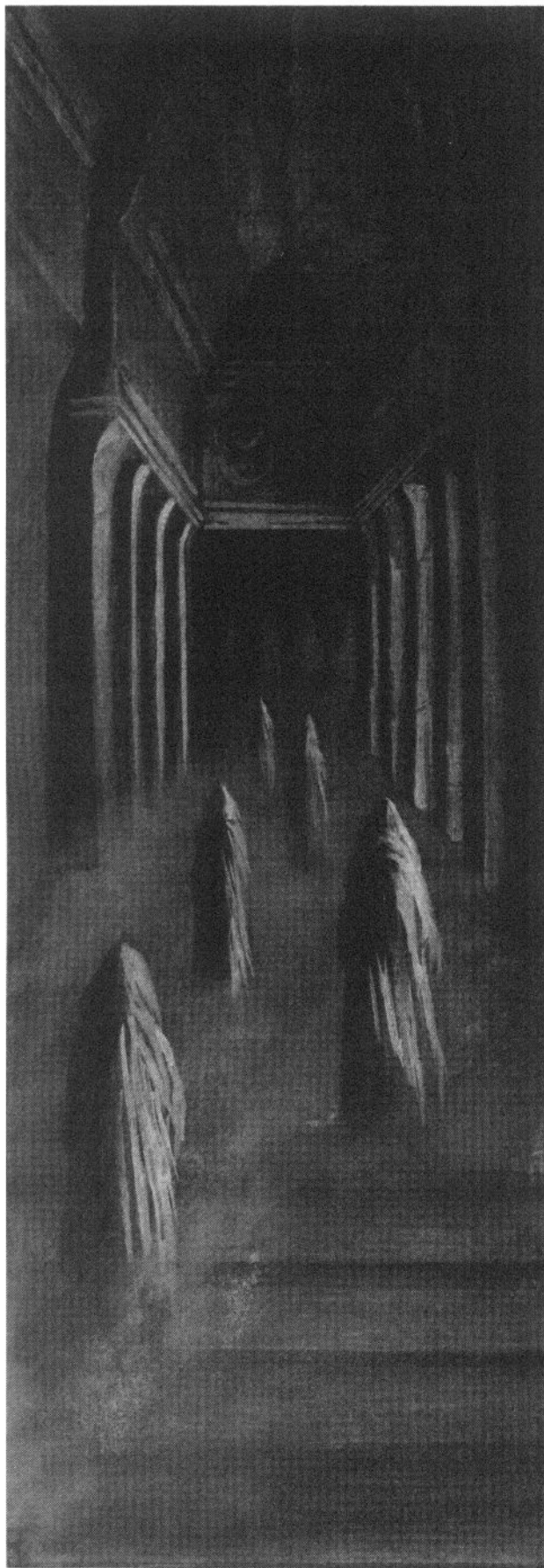
That's where the characters come in. They have been invited to Claudius Giovanni's manse "for dinner." The vampires plan to Dominate them into staying and torment them with their impending fate, then feed on the misery and suffering they stir in the mortals as much as on their blood.

The Founders

Another group further complicates the situation. A large number of Kindred, led by the Ventrue Hardestadt, seek to unify the clans against all enemies, external and internal. They call themselves the Founders, because they seek to found an inter-clan council that would be more powerful than any single clan.

This pre-Camarilla group has heard rumors of the conspiracy against Japheth Cappadocius, and seeks to nip it in the bud. The Founders have put together a posse to





rein in any wayward clan members who would dare to conspire against their elders. Saving Japheth is entirely a secondary concern for them, though they would like to gain the undying loyalty of the Cappadocians. Their primary interests lie in catching the conspirators and exploiting the situation for their own gain. They believe that this will make undecided Methuselabs and elders unify when they see such an extensive conspiracy against another Methuselah.

The Founders are not above exploiting the paralyzing fear of destruction that is unique to immortals and preying on that peculiar paranoia as a means to power. They seek to use the conspirators as dupes to inflame elder dread of Kindred anarchy. The Founders see unification as a means to greater personal power, and do not believe they are in any real danger from so small a conspiracy. None of them believe that it has a hope of succeeding, and none of them have even considered that it could result in the destruction of an Antediluvian. They are in for a frightening surprise.

The Ventrue leadership first secretly sanctioned Jadviga's attack on Japheth Cappadocius. Then they authorized Hardestadt's counterattack on the conspirators, knowing that a successful counterattack will ensnare Jadviga Almanov. The council believes that the Ventrue win no matter what happens. If Jadviga succeeds in killing Japheth, the Ventrue still meet their goal of teaching Cappadocius a lesson and helping the Giovanni rise in the Death Clan. If Jadviga is stopped, the Ventrue will disavow her, and point to Hardestadt's bringing down a member of his own clan to save Japheth. The Cappadocians will then owe the Ventrue a life boon.

Hardestadt and the Founders also believe that they win no matter what happens. If they don't stop the conspirators from killing Japheth, the elders will truly fear the power of lawless progeny and will want to organize. If they stop the conspiracy, they conclusively demonstrate why inter-clan Justicars are essential to stability. Either way they come a step closer to cementing the formation of the Camarilla. That goal is easily worth the betrayal and loss of one Ventrue operative. Of course, they do not tell Jadviga Almanov that she will be destroyed no matter what happens.

Durga Syn

There is one final player in this dark and dangerous game. The mysterious Ravnos gypsy Durga Syn has been monitoring all the players in this deadly little game, and plans to step in after the Founders launch their preemptive strike on the conspirators. She has foreseen that the Giovanni-Cappadocian clash will unleash destructive forces that will reverberate for half a millennium.

She does not know how to ensure the safety of life (and unlfe) on Earth, but she has prophesied that the characters are at the heart of a solution. They are in a unique position

to stop the Earth-shaking plans of both the Giovanni and the Cappadocians, so she intervenes to have them kept alive. Because she is unsure of the outcome, she is unable to tell the Founders exactly why the characters should be spared. Nevertheless, she will take steps to protect the characters, and arm them as best she can for the gathering storm.

Story Synopsis

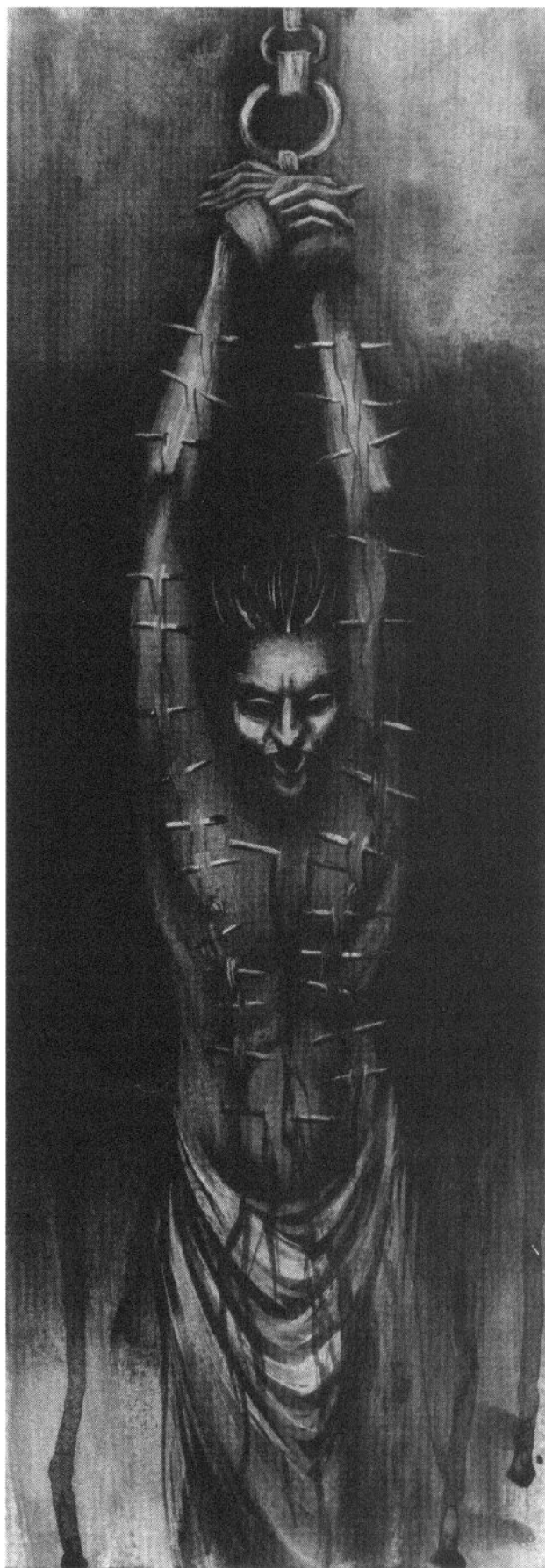
Act I begins with the characters preparing for a banquet given by the powerful and feared nobleman, Lord Claudius Giovanni. They have each received exclusive invitations to a lavish dinner far above their station, and they assemble at a nearby inn to await a carriage to the Giovanni manse. (There are 13 in the group, regardless of how many players there are. The Storyteller should play the rest of the characters.)

The chosen kine meet their hosts, who are actually elders of the 13 vampire clans and conspirators against Giovanni's elder "brother," Japheth Cappadocius. Each elder takes a personal interest in one of the members of the dinner party, and the hosts get to know their human meals. After a harrowing experience, the characters are told they are to be sacrificed to the unwholesome appetites of their hosts. They were selected for having blood of exquisite taste and quality.

But before the characters are completely drained and killed, the Giovanni manse is attacked by the Founders. To defend themselves, Giovanni and his coterie Embrace the sacrificial lambs, leaving them to stave off the attack and buy the coterie more time to flee. When the Founders arrive, the characters must decide whether they are to fight, surrender, or try to escape.

In Act II, the surviving characters are subjected to a harsh interrogation and must justify their continued existence to the Founders, who are eager to destroy them. Fortunately, they are defended by Durga Syn, who suggests that they be used as spies against the conspirators. She persuades the bloodthirsty Founders to spare them, and the characters are charged with infiltrating the conspiracy. They also meet the Cappadocians.

The conspirators, on meeting the characters again, are eager to kill them, but seek to avoid bloody strife that has no profit. So they offer the characters a chance to join the plot against Japheth Cappadocius, explaining that they are involved in far more than a naked power grab. The conspirators insist that Japheth has discovered forbidden texts from the era before the Flood, and that it can make Cappadocius an all-powerful god. They offer compelling evidence that the Death Clan plans to kill death itself, locking the Earth in an undying Hell that Cappadocius believes is Heaven. They challenge the characters to go to Cappadocius and learn for themselves.



Now that the characters are vampires, they are grudgingly admitted into the exclusive fraternity of Kindred, and are welcomed by Japheth Cappadocius in his austere monastery. Japheth freely confirms that his Sire plans to ascend to godhood and create Heaven on Earth. He offers the characters a role in that Heaven. The characters even meet a disembodied astral projection of the Antediluvian. The Founders warn them later that Giovanni wants to bring death to all creatures on Earth.

At this point the characters have to decide which side to take. In Act III, they must choose between Giovanni and death in life, or Cappadocius and life beyond death: destroy God or become God.

If the characters side with the Founders against the conspirators, they must counterattack Claudius' group during the attack on Japheth. In that case, Augustus takes advantage of the confusion to diablerize Cappadocius. The characters are to blame for the diablerie. If the characters defend the Cappadocians from the Conspirators, their actions give away the Antediluvian. If they side with Giovanni, they take part in the raid on the Cappadocian monastery, and are directly responsible for abetting the horror of diablerie on an Antediluvian.

Cappadocius will die, either as a result of the characters' actions or in spite of them. But his death is not like that of Saulot at the hands of the Tremere. Saulot died in a state of tranquility, and found a transcendent peace. Cappadocius does not.

After the climactic battle comes the painful dénouement, in which the characters learn that they caused the diablerie of Cappadocius. The players don't know that they cannot avoid this outcome, and the Storyteller must keep this secret throughout the game — longer if she intends to run the following chapters of the Giovanni Chronicles to maximum effect. Good roleplayers could still convincingly have their characters act on terror and guilt if they know the truth, but why not let them put their roleplaying skills to better use?

What the characters also do not know in advance is that a Maelstrom occurs at the time of Cappadocius' termination, and whisks his soul away. If the characters take advantage of every resource, they can prevent Augustus Giovanni from gaining control of the soul, making him an incomplete Antediluvian.

After the death of Cappadocius at the hands of the Giovanni, the small cell of remaining Cappadocians go underground to plot their revenge. They do not believe that the rest of the vampires will help them exact justice, and have little faith in the burgeoning Camarilla.

Live-Action

This story is designed to work well as a live-action game as well as a tabletop storytelling game. Some adjustments must be made in the story for live-action play, and those are spelled out in sidebars throughout the text.

The most important change is in the number of players. The game works best with 12 characters — the number of "lambs" that Giovanni invites to the slaughter (not counting Marianna, the Giovanni sacrifice). They should all be from different clans, with no character selecting a Giovanni. However, the game can work with even more players. Just assume that Claudius was being generous, and gave more than one "lamb" to some of his fellow conspirators.

How to Use This Book

The Last Supper starts with tight control over the destinies of the player characters, and casts them in the role of desperate victims in the hands of powerful, malevolent creatures who trifle with lesser beings for their debauched amusement. This provides some of the flavor of life for most people during the Middle Ages, and gives both the players and characters powerful motivations and strong emotional involvement in the outcome.

The Storyteller needs to make sure Act I moves quickly, because players grow restless during long stretches of monologue. There is plenty of Storyteller information in this section, and it is comparatively easy to run. Feel free to improvise on the material, and allow the characters lots of room to act up, mouth off and be provocative to their hosts. And feel free to let them face the consequences of their actions, as their vampiric hosts knock them out or Dominate them to restore decorum. The vampires hold all the power, and can do as they please.

In Act II, the characters get a taste of freedom, but are pulled between all the major power groups: pawns in a larger game. Nonetheless, they have a chance to make their own way in the world, including settling some scores. The Storyteller must be careful that the game does not lose momentum here — the characters must always have a sense of where they can go next. This is seldom a problem with experienced roleplayers, but novices may need prodding. Keep the help minimal and the hints subtle. This section is more challenging for the Storyteller, since it adds more opportunity for player choices. It is important to keep thinking one step ahead of the players here.



By Act III, the characters have a large amount of freedom. There is no single scripted path and predetermined ending for this story. Rather, the players and Storyteller must find their way through together. The major possibilities are spelled out, along with some alternate choices. This calls for maximum Storyteller flexibility, and challenges your creative resources. If done properly, though, the game is completely wound up and ready to spin on its own. When this goes right, the Storyteller can sit back and watch the game run itself.

A good game is a skillful blend of the tactical and the interpersonal, combining creative use of Attributes and Disciplines with imaginative characterizations and interactions. Some games tip too far to one side or another: little more than a slugfest, or a meandering session of improvisational theatre where little gets accomplished. Neither style is wrong, but a blend of both tends to make for a more satisfying experience.

Motivations of the Main Antagonists

Acting as Storyteller for a preprogrammed game in which players are kept to a single plot track is relatively simple, since the characters simply fail or die when they leave the sanctioned path. But in the Giovanni Chronicles, in which the players decide the direction of the story and

can navigate through a multitude of plot twists and turns, the Storyteller's job is considerably more complex. You must keep a firm grasp on the game environment while allowing players to take the plot in a variety of directions. The best way to do this is to have your Storytelling style become less plot driven, and more character driven.

Since you don't know ahead of time which direction the players' characters will take, you must be prepared to have the characters you play react to just about anything. By carefully considering the motivations of the major antagonists, you will be able to quickly ascertain their reactions to a rapidly changing set of circumstances. Even if the precise reaction is not immediately obvious, a range of options will suggest themselves, all fitting a character's central motivation. The more the Storyteller takes into account the complex urges that impel these powerful characters, the more she can allow the players to influence the direction of the story.

Cappadocius

Cappadocius the Antediluvian is striving to rise above his vampiric status and grow to a state far beyond human and Kindred. In the apocalyptic fervor of the day, he passionately believes that he can literally consume God, and thereby become God. He seeks nothing less. These beliefs are not simply the crackpot ravings of a power-mad undead. They are rooted in wisdom he has gained from secret research and private meditation.

Other Antagonists

This book provides the Traits for most of the characters the Storyteller will have to play. Others should be taken from the **Vampire** rulebook, generally by using the Traits given for a police officer. Just turn Firearms into Melee and Drive into Ride.

In recent centuries, the Antediluvian has infiltrated the Holy Mother Church and gained unprecedented access to the forbidden texts hidden within the Vatican's vaults. While searching for the hidden lore of Caine, his legion of scholars discovered a treasure trove of suppressed wisdom from other faiths. Separate Zoroastrian and Gnostic texts confirmed wisdom embedded within the Christian faith: that consuming the "body" of God literally transforms one into divinity.

The Giovanni

Claudius Giovanni is out for personal power for his family. He is willing to betray all his allies to get it, starting with his new "brother," Japheth Cappadocius, his grandsire Cappadocius, and his allies in the Conspiracy of Isaac. He makes very reasonable-sounding appeals to the characters about the dangers of Cappadocius' research.

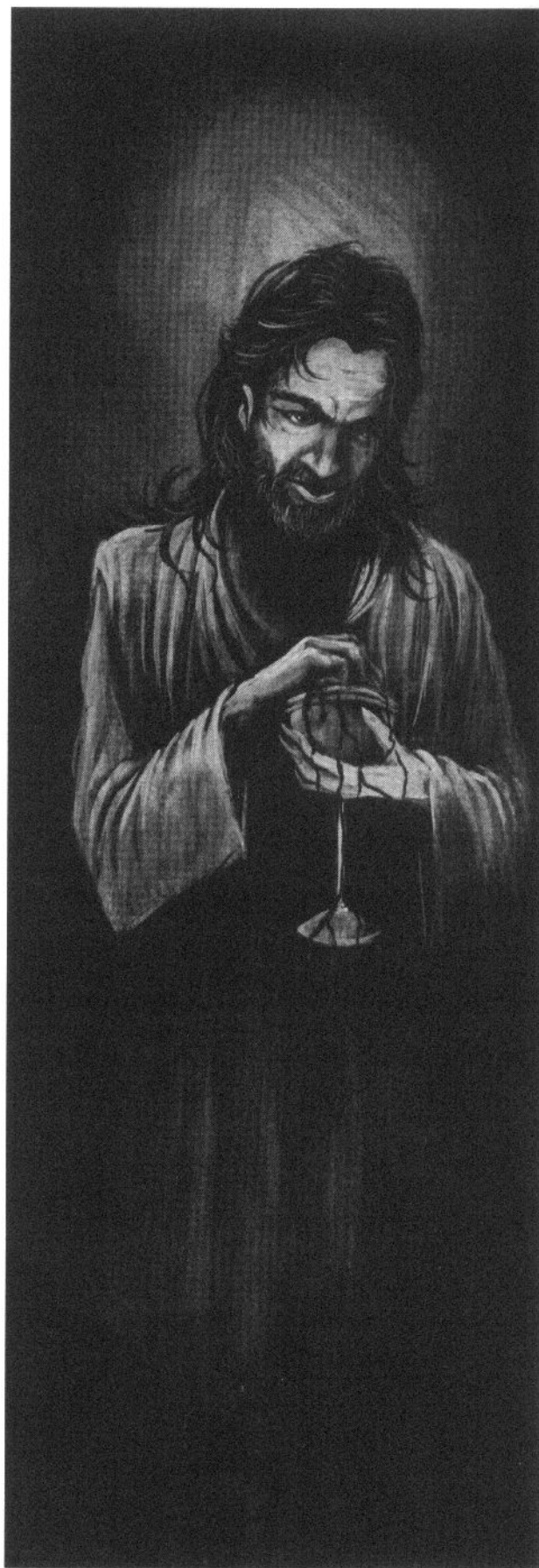
Augustus Giovanni seeks to destroy the wall between the worlds of the living and the dead, to gain power over both. He will stop at nothing to gain this prize.

The Founders

In the ages when vampires were strong and humanity weak, the clans engaged in open warfare against one another for rule over the Earth. But as humanity gained power and numbers, the Kindred found themselves on the losing end of many battles. Though they still despised one another and nursed centuries-old wounds, they sought to band together in a common need and against a common enemy. This was the foundation of what was to become the Camarilla.

Durga Syn

The Gypsy is the X-factor in this drama. Since she makes decisions based on strange portents, her actions are usually unpredictable. She is seeking to protect humanity, however.



Advanced Roleplaying

The cycle of the Giovanni Chronicles has several features unique to storytelling games. The characters may choose sides in the war between the Giovanni and the Cappadocians. Their allegiance is not predetermined by the story, but may be freely chosen in each of the books that make up the cycle. They can change allegiances from one book to the next. (Doing so successfully is critical to the optimal resolution of the War of the Ages.)

As a result, the characters' actions can have a profound impact on the course of this story and the history of your World of Darkness. The chronicle adapts itself to fit their choices.

To make this work, it is best if the players do not know that their characters have a free choice in making their allegiances. They can then make decisions from a more "pure" set of role-playing referents. Otherwise, the players may feel inclined to exploit their unique position in a way that their characters normally would not. While it will not ruin the game, this risks tainting the characters' motivations with the players' knowledge.

The downside to this is that the players may assume that their characters' course of action is prescribed. This could cause them to spend time and effort searching for a path that does not exist instead of blazing a new trail through uncharted, virgin territory.

This is a fine line which Storyteller and players must walk together for a successful game.

Theme

The Last Supper is a complex story, and yet it is only the beginning of a vast chronicle spanning centuries and reaching pivotal events in Kindred annals. Throughout the Giovanni Chronicles the characters must make important choices, creating new situations that require more choices, and so on down through time. The characters must learn to understand the ramifications of their actions within the sweeping flow of history. Every person has a unique part to play, for if we all play the same notes there can be no music.

Why Black Dog?

Black Dog Games is dedicated to going beyond the "bleeding edge" in roleplaying game design. Although to some a "mature" label means smut and gore, for the Giovanni Chronicles, this means advanced game play that cannot be appreciated or performed by immature players. It means more player options and new tools for experienced Storytellers, with no artificial limits or constraints on ideas. Players should be encouraged to delve deeply into their characters' minds and personas, and identify with them as strongly as any method actor. Players who cannot handle this intense level of characterization should not play this game.

The themes of **The Last Supper** are personal responsibility and the need to do what is necessary, not always what is convenient. If we do not move against the tide, we are swallowed up in it. It is no simple matter, yet in order for change and renewal to continue, some individuals must be willing to move against the prevailing current. Otherwise, stultification and decay set in, and entropy wins the day. Those who turn against the tide and make their own way stand out to each other, and to history.

Mood

The mood of **The Last Supper** is one of grandeur and decay. The story should evoke a number of operatic, even religious emotions. Awe, wonder, despair, corruption and more are all lurking within **The Last Supper**.

Players should feel as if they are drawn into a perverse passion play, one in which they take on key roles, but they do not know whether they are the heroes or the villains of the piece. They should be aware that their characters are taking part in an historical drama, one which may affect Kindred and kine alike. Yet their characters, caught up in the moment, are only as aware as any other person of their potential for greatness or ignominy.



LEIF
Jones
1995

Act I: The Art of Fine Dining

*There's no way to describe how you feel
When you're talking to your meal!*
— Stephen Sondheim, "Hello, Little Girl"

In this first of three Acts, the characters meet one another and visit the Giovanni manse. Their delightful time turns ugly as their initially genteel and polite hosts quickly turn vicious. After harrowing cocktail conversation, they sit down to dinner and hear their deaths described in lurid detail by their hosts, who are conspirators against the rest of the vampires. The characters are saved from a grisly fate by a very timely invasion by the Founders, but are Embraced and ordered to fight while the conspirators escape.

Scene 1: In the Company of Strangers

To eat is to appropriate by destruction.
— Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*

The Gathering The Common Room

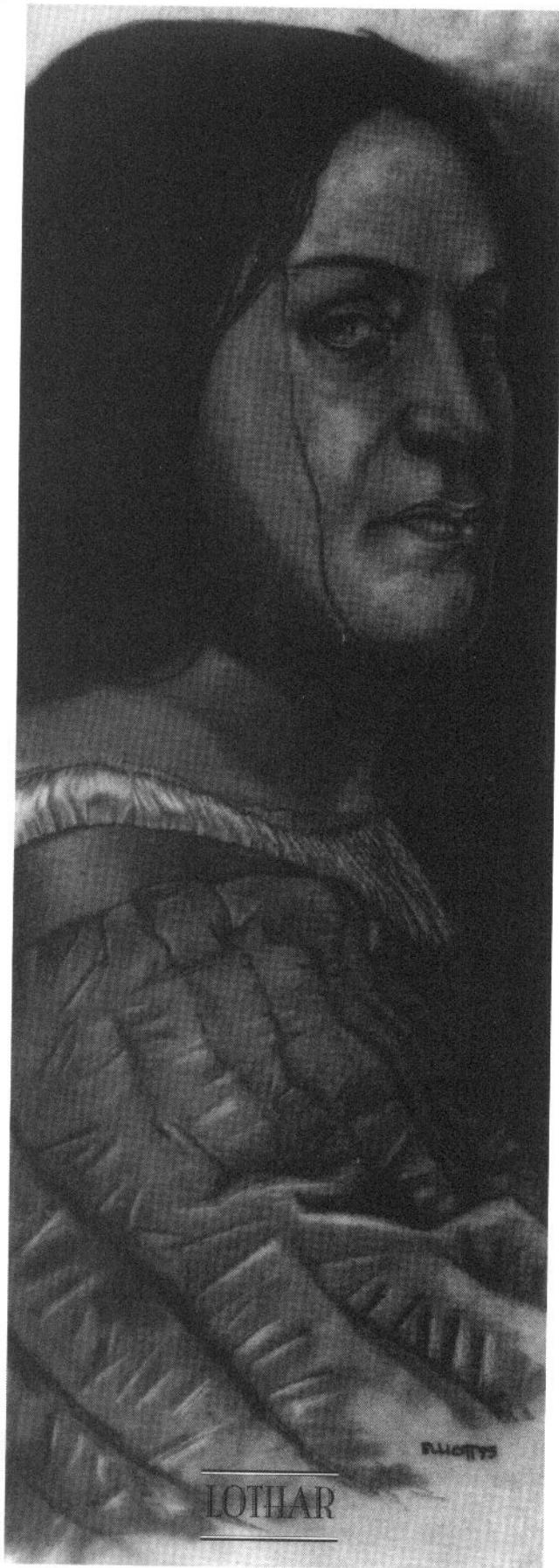
A roaring hearth fire banishes the night's chill and gloom from the spacious common room in the Red Lamb Inn in the Carpathian wilderness near the Giovanni Manse. Each of the guests of Lord Giovanni is announced as he

arrives. The only other people at the inn are the innkeeper and his servants, a young soldier, an old beggar woman and a monk.

The adventure begins with the characters arriving late on the night of April 3. Let the players describe their characters to one another, and engage in some free-form storytelling. Experienced players will jump right in and define their characters in conversation. Less experienced players may need encouragement.

This scene is an entirely gratuitous bit of roleplaying designed to establish the scene, bond the characters and introduce a few contacts. It will also give the characters a sense of the nearby land so that when they flee the Giovanni manse they will know where the inn is and not feel entirely isolated. This is the first meeting of a group that will be together throughout history, so give them a chance to get to know another.

There are 13 guests in all: the players' characters and enough Storyteller-run characters to round out the rest of the baker's dozen. If you wish, you may have the players' characters arrive first and have time to get to know one another before the rest show up. Since these other characters will not survive the dinner party and are far less important to the story, you do not need to have to spend a lot of time characterizing them, unless you wish to elicit maximum horror and sense of loss when they die. The only one important to the ongoing story is Marianna, the sacrifice for Lord Giovanni.



The Innkeeper

The innkeeper, Sigismund, gets the conversation rolling by asking questions about the characters' homes, their professions, their recent pilgrimages, etc., as he serves them.

He brings them food, saying, "Beggin' yer forgiveness for this simple stew. It's nothin' like what Lord Giovanni serves, ye lucky devils. But it will fill ye until tomorrow."

If asked about Giovanni, Sigismund says, "Ar, that Lord Giovanni. Tch tch. I wouldn't say a word against him. But he's an odd one." If a character spends a lot of time winning his trust, Sigismund will add, "I don't want to speak ill of Lord Giovanni, but since he's come here, the wasting sickness has come with him. Some in these parts do say it's the evil eye. Him and all his foreign friends. He even has Turks to visit."

The Soldier

The young soldier, Paul, is an earnest young man eager to tell his story to any who will listen. He is fresh from crusader János Hunyady's battles against the Turks, where he was crippled by a deep wound in the leg. He has heard that Lord Giovanni is hiring a large number of household soldiers to defend his manse. Household defense is one of the few jobs a partly crippled soldier can perform, so he is eager to be accepted into the ranks of Lord Giovanni's guard.

Paul humbly entreats the characters to put in a good word for him with Lord Giovanni, so that he may get the job and secure his future. "I have no learning, nor skills at farming, nor a trade. I know no other life than soldiering, and I cannot travel on long marches. I am told Lord Giovanni is hiring many men. If he will not have me, I know not where to turn."

Paul's part in the story is to get hired by Giovanni, preferably with the characters' help, and then join with them or be horribly killed by the Founders. The cycle of culpability and direct reward and punishment for actions begins early.

The Monk

Brother Clement is a middle-aged man with a wild mane of hair and rough robe. He individually approaches each of the 13 guests, starting with any holy person in the group. He spits on the floor every time he, or anyone else, mentions Giovanni's name.

"Listen to me, brother/sister. An evil has entered Christendom from the lands to the south. An ill wind from the land of the heathen. Know ye the wind I mean?"

"It is the wind of the devil. Tell me. What know ye of your host?"

Whatever the character says, Clement will dismiss it.

"Tomorrow ye enter into the abode of evil! Shun it! Reject it! Cast it out! Go ye not! Claudius Giovanni (*spit*) is the very Devil incarnate!"

The characters may well choose to have nothing to do with Brother Clement. If they do talk to him, though, and ask him for specifics, he weaves a wild tale of diabolical sacrifices in the Giovanni manor where the Devil is raised by a mockery of the Last Supper. He's completely wrong on most details except for the Last Supper reference.

If any character actually decides not to go to the manor, Brother Clement will be proud and congratulate her. But if she refuses to board the coach the next day, Lothar will have her kidnapped and secretly brought to the manse as soon as the coach leaves.

Brother Clement's part in the story is to act as a portent of doom, revealing the evil in the manse. He later attacks the characters in the name of divine retribution.

The Old Woman

The old woman sits by herself in a dark corner of the inn, with a small begging cup on the table. She does not trouble the characters, but watches them all evening. If the characters give her money, she will thank them and offer them fresh-picked wildflowers in return. If asked, she says her name is Synovea, and adds that her home was burned and her village destroyed in the Turkish-Christian fighting. Sigismund gives her Christian charity in the form of a small cup of soup and a warm place to sleep, but she may not beg in the inn and must let others have the places near the fire. He is adamant that she not be allowed to sit near the fire. "I'll have every beggar and refugee this side of Palestine upon me head," he'll complain.

The old woman is really Durga Syn, a powerful Ravnos. She is here to spy on Lothar and the sacrifices, and learn more about the terrors to come. She has Dominated Sigismund to make sure he keeps her far from the hearth fire.

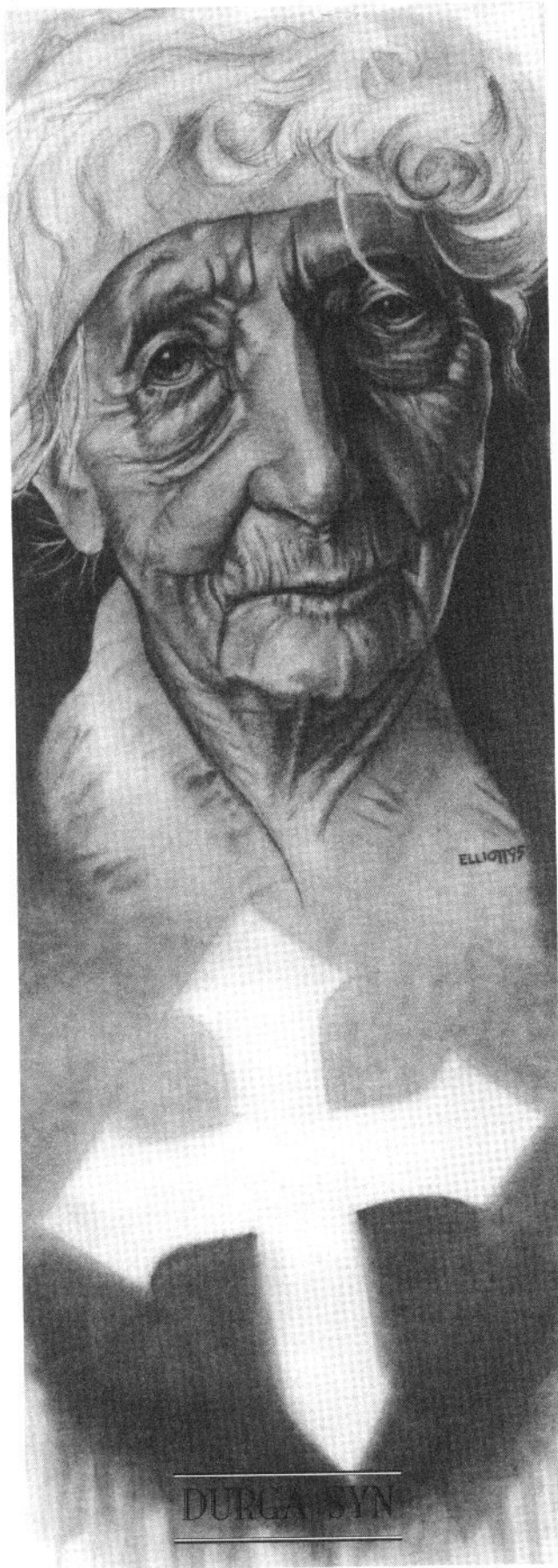
Lothar Enters

Before the characters finish the food, they are visited by Lothar, Giovanni's haughty steward. He is accompanied by Roderigo, the head coachman, and two armed soldiers wearing the Giovanni crest.

Lothar is a slightly built, well-dressed man whose aristocratic features are marred by a deep scar that runs down the right side of his face from his hairline to his chin. Roderigo is a tall, ruddy-faced young man who wears coachman's leathers and a large wooden cross around his neck.

Lothar introduces himself. "I am Sir Lothar, steward to Lord Giovanni. I am he who selected the 13 of you from among all the great masses of folk to meet the Lord. This is Roderigo. He is the coachman, whose duty it is to bring you to the Lord's manse on the morrow."





He then walks over to each character and welcomes her. "Welcome to Lord Giovanni's holdings. I am pleased you have graced us with your company. I hope your stay is an agreeable and memorable one."

As he says this, Lothar takes each character's hand and holds it for entirely too long to be appropriate, stroking it and caressing it. As he speaks, he lifts each hand to his nose, almost as if sniffing for something. He is — blood quality. He is ensuring that each person's blood is still as good as it was the last time he scented it. Act out this bit with relish, taking each player's hand in turn and lingering over it, sometimes licking a palm, and inhaling deep wafts. That will intensify Lothar's creepiness, and the unsettling nature of the scene.

When he finishes the greetings, Lothar says, "It is good that you are all assembled. Our lord is eagerly anticipating the joy of serving you tomorrow. You are most fortunate to have captured his attention. This is a day your loved ones will long remember." If asked why even serfs have been invited, he angrily snaps: "Are you questioning the wisdom of your betters?" He then recovers his composure, saying, "Even members of the lower orders may find favor with the lord of the manse."

Have the characters make Perception + Awareness rolls (difficulty 6) or make the rolls in secret for them. If any character scores three successes, he remembers seeing Lothar in his village once before. On four or more successes, he recalls Lothar inquiring about him. If questioned, Lothar will acknowledge that he did visit the character's village to find him, but will not reveal why he chose the character. The most he'll say is a wicked "Because you are a being of rare taste. You have savory inner qualities of which you know nothing."

Lothar will continue this pattern, answering questions with polite non-answers and occasional slips of viciousness. If pressed for real answers, he says, "Kindly direct any further questions to my master at dinner. He will entertain your curiosity with far more patience than I can."

Paul's Hiring

The characters may intercede at this point on Paul's behalf, which Lothar tries to brush off. If they persist, he agrees to recommend the young man to Claudius Giovanni, and takes Paul with him when he leaves that evening. Paul collects a small bundle of his worldly goods and profusely thanks the characters who helped him before he leaves.

Paul will remind the characters if they forget to ask. If the characters do not bother to help him, or only put forth a half-hearted effort, the soldier is not hired at this time. Instead, he sits alone, dejected, as he watches the upper-crust revelers enjoy themselves. He shakes his head at the characters' recalcitrance, and says, "I have seen cruel Turks impale a man from arse to mouth for no reason but to affright their foes, but never have I seen cruelty as senseless as this." He will later apply for the position without their intercession.

Roderigo

Roderigo keeps to himself, but if approached is affable and charming. He knows the fate of the characters and pities them. Roderigo would like to see them survive, but as a secret ally of the Founders, he will do nothing to help — for now. If any character makes an effort to strike up a friendship with him, or does anything to prove herself noble and trustworthy, it will motivate him to intervene on the characters' behalf after the Founders have attacked and subdued the party.

The Accusation

When Lothar enters the room, Brother Clement visibly seethes with anger. Part way through the scene, he has had enough. He stands up on his bench and shouts: "Evil! Evil incarnate! Lothar is but a toady and bootlick to the Devil, Claudius Giovanni!" He spits. "I warn you good people! Your very souls are in danger! Flee this accursed place!"

Lothar glares at the monk. "Get out!" he scowls.

"Your Hell-born wizardry cannot compel a man of God!" Clement shouts back. "I expose your evil to all the world!"

Lothar snorts derisively, and mutters, "I need no Hell-born wizardry, fool." He motions to his guards, who grab the monk and wrestle him to the ground. They drag him kicking, screaming and biting from the common room.

Should the characters intercede on the monk's behalf, Lothar will rage against them for being fools. A character who insists that the monk not be manhandled will be

warned that such attitudes will cause her to lose her invitation. If she persists, Lothar tells her she is no longer invited to the manse and will be sent home first thing in the morning. Then, as soon as that character is alone, Lothar has her kidnapped and dragged unconscious to the manor. She will revive facedown at the dinner table in Scene 3.

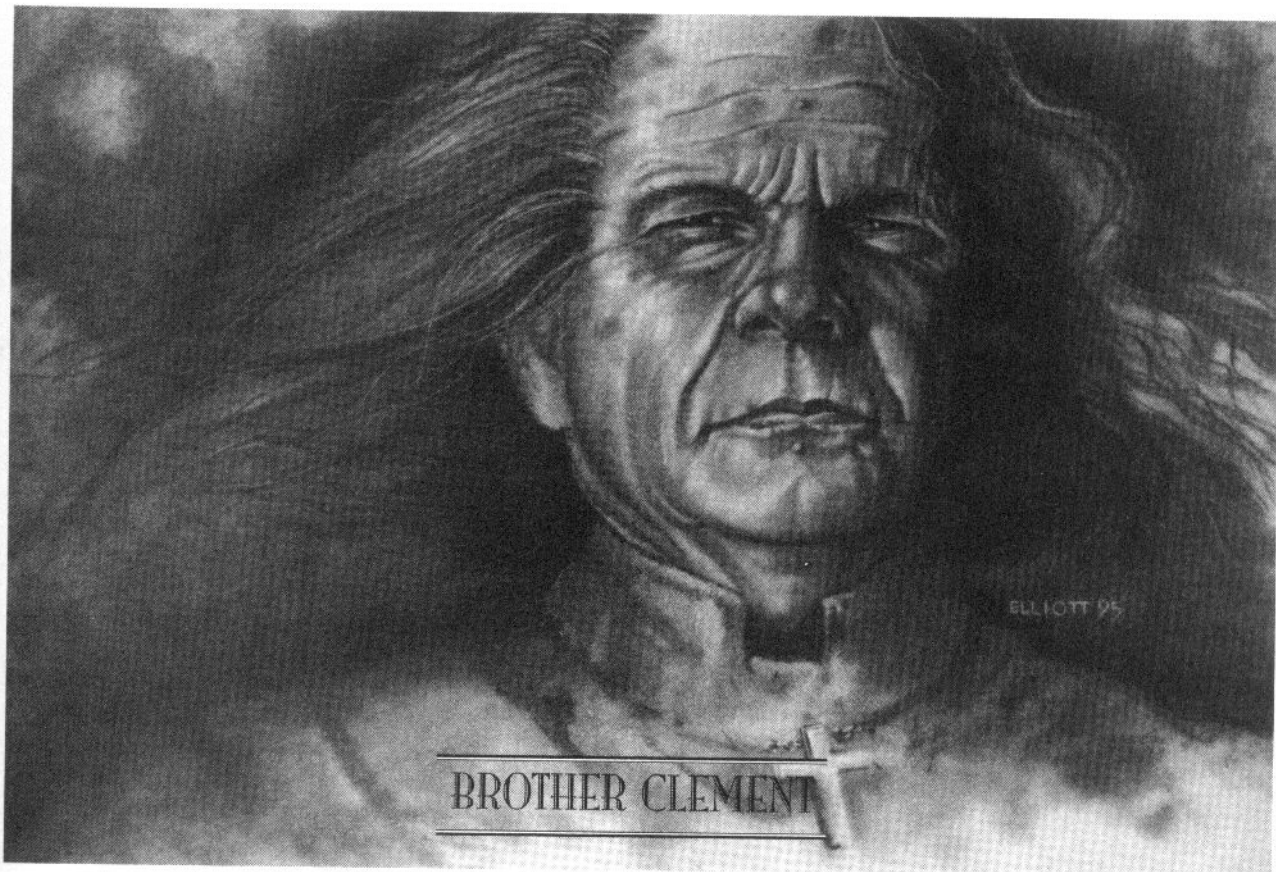
The soldiers hog-tie and gag Clement, and leave him in the barn. Lothar demands an apology from the innkeeper, who does so profusely. If the characters complain, Lothar scowls and says, "Lord Giovanni is master in these lands. The monk has transgressed. Only his position in the holy orders keeps him from the lash." If untied, Clement will run back into the inn, and begin his tirade again. Lothar will again have him tied and ejected.

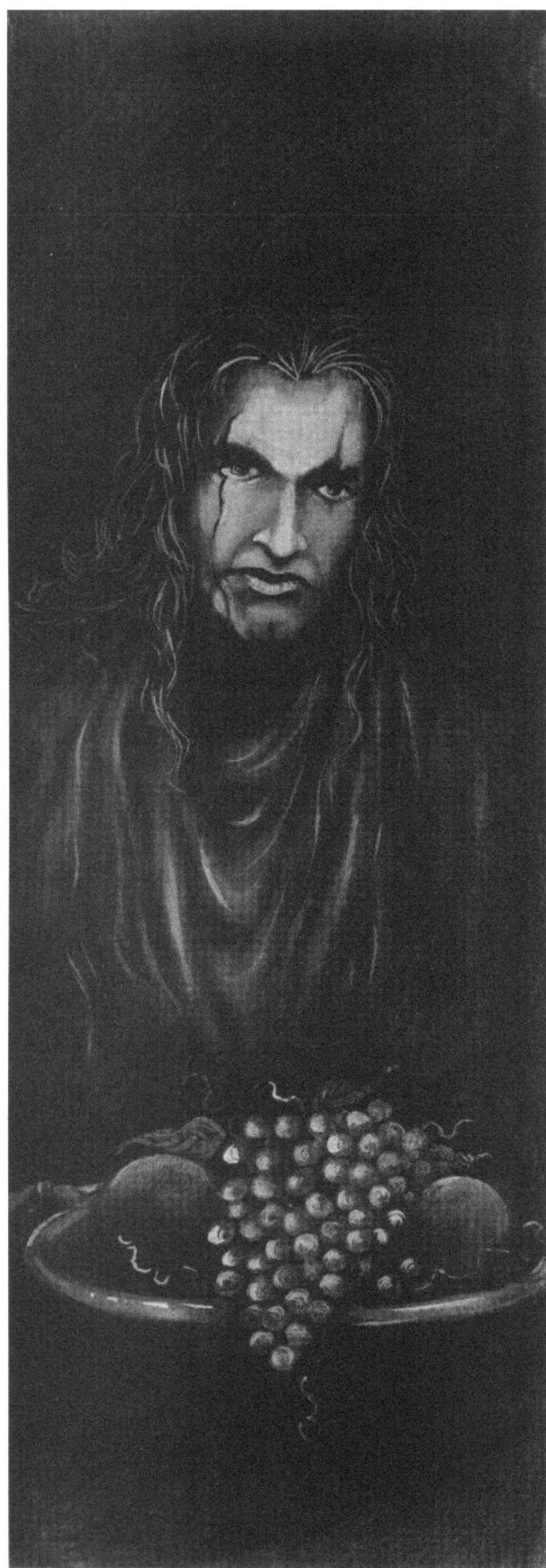
This incident is a source of potential conflict between the characters and their host.

Wrapping up Scene 1

Once the players have had a chance to get to know one another and make any plans they wish, finish the scene with a toast by Lothar. "I drink to all of you: some of the finest specimens it has ever been my pleasure to find. To your robust good health." He drains his glass and says, "Be ready for the coach tomorrow afternoon. Roderigo will transport you. If you need anything, inform him." He departs.

Unless a player has something else she wants to do or say, go on to Scene 2.





Escaping

If any of the characters try to escape from the inn or spy on Giovanni's manse, Lothar will hunt them down and knock them out. He will have them bound and brought to the manse, where they will not recover consciousness until dinnertime the next night. If they try to escape or spy during the day, a band of Giovanni ghoulish soldiers will capture them.

Live-Action Notes:

This scene works very well in live-action. Make a big show of each character's introduction, with the Storyteller playing the coachman and announcing each in a loud voice. This helps the players learn the characters' names and personalities quickly. The Storyteller playing Lothar needs to make his character decidedly unlikable; Roderigo must be distant but likable; and the person playing Sigismund must be friendly, though a little slow. Paul, Brother Clement and the old woman can be set at different stations, where the guests can go to talk to them.

Antagonists

Lothar

Faithful steward to Claudius Giovanni, Lothar is a supercilious ghoul who holds all of humanity in contempt. He treats his fellow mortals with utter disdain, and likens dealing with them to carrying on a conversation with swine. Lothar has some *Auspex* and can distinguish the quality and flavors of human blood with just a single sniff, just as a connoisseur of fine vintages can distinguish much in the bouquet of wine. He travels extensively to find the finest blood for his master, and he was the one who originally sniffed out the player characters as having the very best.

Born: 1278 A.D.

Apparent Age: Late 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intrigue 2, Scrounging 5

Skills: Debate 1, Etiquette 4, Melee 4, Ride 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Heraldry 4, History 2, Kindred Lore 2, Occult 3, Theology 1

Disciplines: *Auspex* 1, Celerity 1, Potence 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Resources 2

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

Humanity: 5

Willpower: 7

Image: A slightly built, well-dressed man with a deep scar from his hairline to his chin.

Roleplaying Hints: You are arrogant to those beneath you, and beneath your master's station. However, you treat your master and those of higher rank than yourself with exquisitely precise respectfulness. Your face often betrays your cruelty, and a sneer is seldom far from your lips.

Roderigo

Coachman to Claudius Giovanni, who made the young Italian a ghou. Roderigo has been bribed by the Founders into serving them, and, unbeknownst to Claudius, has been feeding information on the conspiracy to them while he feeds off the blood of the Giovanni.

Born: 1378 A.D.

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intrigue 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Training 3, Etiquette 2, Melee 3, Ride 4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Heraldry 2, Kindred Lore 2, Occult 2, Theology 3

Disciplines: Potence 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Resources 1

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

Humanity: 7

Willpower: 8

Image: A tall, ruddy-faced young man wearing coachman's leathers and a large wooden cross around his neck.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a gentle man, one who finds horses far more honorable souls than most men. You respect those few people who show compassion and concern for others, and you attempt to extend kindness to others as well.

Durga Syn (Synovea)

She knows that Cappadocius is planning his apotheosis, and that Claudius plots diablerie against Cappadocius to gain necromantic power. She does not know which fate would be worse, but is closely monitoring the situation.

She was born Synovea, but took the name Durga Syn when her Embrace turned her into an ugly hag. She has sworn to reclaim her birth name if she overcomes the curse, but sometimes uses it as an alias.

Clan: Ravnos

Generation: 5th

Embraced: 932 (born 857)

Apparent Age: Mid-70s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 6

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Fortune Telling 4, Instruction 3, Leadership 3, Sense Deception 5, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Cooking 3, Debate 4, Disguise 3, Herbalism 6, Lip Reading 3, Meditation 3, Melee 2, Ride 2, Sleight of Hand 7, Stealth 6

Knowledges: Astrology 4, Faerie Lore 5, Gypsy Lore 5, Kindred Lore 6, Lupine Lore 4, Naturalist 3, Spirit Lore 4

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 3, Chimerstry 5, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2, Necromancy 2, Obfuscate 4, Presence 2, Thaumaturgy 6 (Weather Control 5, Lure of Flames 3, Elemental Mastery 2)

Backgrounds: Age 3, Allies 6, Contacts 5, Elder Status 3, Influence 2, Status 3

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

Humanity: 8

Willpower: 9

Image: A twisted, bent old woman with thin hair and pinched features.

Roleplaying Hints: You usually pretend that you are senile, perhaps even doddering, and your appearance often lulls even those who should know better into believing that this is true. Whenever you choose, though, you speak brilliantly. You are always mysterious, and no one is ever certain where they stand with you. You still occasionally use archaic language when you speak, perhaps because you long for days of yore.

Notes: See **Who's Who Among Vampires: Children of the Inquisition** for more information on Durga Syn.

Paul

The crippled soldier is exactly what he says he is.

Born: 1421

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 1

Skills: Melee 2, Ride 1, Survival 2

Knowledges: Politics 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 1

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

Humanity: 8

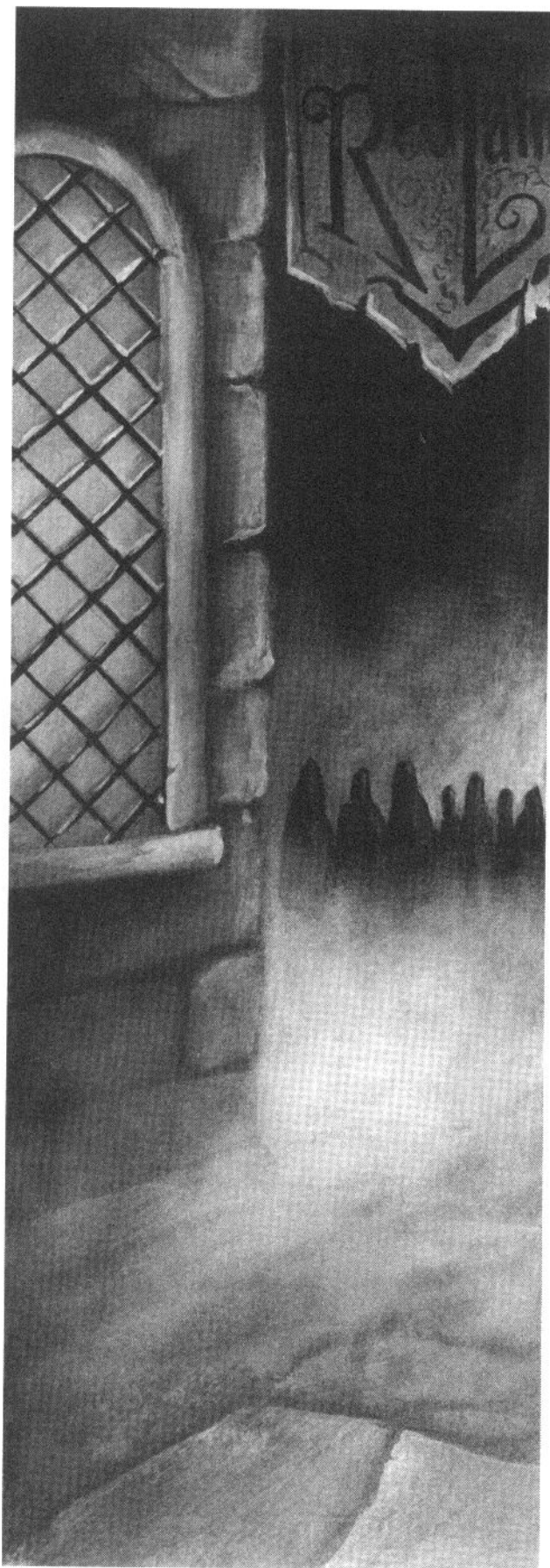
Willpower: 3

Image: A young man just beginning to show the worry plaguing his life.

Roleplaying Hints: You live to serve, and only friendships mean more to you than service.

Sigismund and Brother Clement

These characters have little direct influence on the story and their physical characteristics are not important. Sigismund is a Lumpenprole innkeeper with a good heart and a deep fear and mistrust of Lord Giovanni. His trust can be won with persistence. Brother Clement should be considered your normal, run-of-the-mill fanatic.



Scene 2: Cocktail Conversation

One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.

— Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

The Coach Trip

The next day the guests assemble, and in the early afternoon, Roderigo and an assistant come to the Red Lamb Inn to transport all 13 guests to the Giovanni manse in two crowded coaches. The carriages are ornate, with gilded trim, but the expensive look is marred by heavy shutters fastened over the windows. "For protection in case of brigand attack," the coachman explains, as he unbolts and forces open the shutters to let in light and air.

Once the group is loaded into the coaches, he says "I will take great pains to ensure that the journey is as comfortable as possible." True to his word, Roderigo carefully sees to their comfort during the long ride, slowing the carriage over rough patches of road.

During the trip, a Wits + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) reveals three crucified bodies in the woods. If the characters inquire about it, Roderigo says, "Lord Giovanni is a stern master." If they persist, he adds, "Those people plotted against Lord Giovanni. Probably tried to avoid paying their rents."

After three hours, they arrive at the Giovanni holdings. It is twilight, just before sunset.

Casa Giovanni

The characters arrive at Lord Giovanni's manse just as the last blaze of sunlight fades into flickering embers. It is a massive, craggy manor house with an overgrown garden to the right and a graveyard to the left. The house is well fortified, with a single stout door and very few narrow windows, all protected by inner shutters. Four lightly armed sentries stand guard on the parapets. They wave to the coaches as they rumble up.

A soldier opens the massive oaken door, and Roderigo leads the 13 guests into the forbidding manor. They enter a long, narrow hallway, lit by tapers encased in strong, iron, cage-like housings. The candles provide only very dim light, and cast long, flickering shadows upon walls and faces. The soldier remains at his post and slams the door shut, closing Roderigo and the characters in with the gloom.

As the guests move down the darkened hall, they see that the right and left walls are fitted with arrow slots designed to catch invaders in a deadly crossfire. Evil gargoyle faces line the walls, leering stone-faced at the guests; they



appear to twitch ever so slightly in the flickering candlelight. (Storyteller note: these gargoyles are not supernatural, they are just carved stone. But why let the players know that?)

At the end of the long hallway, the guests find themselves facing another stout door. Roderigo pauses at the door, then raps loudly upon it. The door does not open. There is silence in the stale air of the shadowy hall. Roderigo raps again. Still no response. At this point the Storyteller may ask what the characters do. Although it is likely they will (and can) do nothing but wait, asking will build suspense and heighten the sense of being trapped in a dark and claustrophobic space.

After several minutes, the door creaks open as it is unlocked by a second soldier, accompanied by Lothar. The two men are standing in a large reception hall, also dimly lit by tapers, and furnished with oddly delicate furniture. Two successes on an Intelligence + Etiquette roll (difficulty 6) reveal that it is of Italian design. Three successes pinpoint it as a style that is the height of fashion in Venice.

Lothar glares at Roderigo and, without a word of greeting, sternly says, "You are early."

Roderigo doffs his hat, and says "A thousand pardons, Steward Lothar."

Lothar strikes Roderigo across the face with a riding crop. It draws blood, which Roderigo wipes from his face. "Bear keenly in mind the source of that blood," Lothar snaps.

It is possible that one of the characters will stick up for Roderigo against this appalling treatment. If so, Roderigo

will be even more favorably disposed toward him and all the characters in general. Any intercession will not change Lothar's mind, however. He will scowl at the character for the rest of the scene, and take great delight in his torment during the upcoming scene.

"Now enter," Lothar says, gesturing to Roderigo and the guests. Once they are in the room, Lothar stops Roderigo. "As punishment, you will not partake of tonight's bounty. You will eat nothing but scraps. Now go," Lothar commands, pointing his blood-spattered riding crop toward the door. Roderigo turns and walks back down the hallway. The soldier then slams and locks the inner door.

Lothar stares after Roderigo for a moment and then turns to the guests and says, "Welcome to Lord Giovanni's manse. I have preparations to finish. Wait here." He departs, leaving the 13 guests with the soldier.

The characters are on their own for a few minutes, but are not allowed to really do anything. They are unable to leave the room, and stand in awkward silence. If they try to leave, the soldier will demand they return. If one successfully sneaks off, he will be caught by one of the ghouls, hog-tied, and not seen again until the dinner sequence. It should be made clear to the players that the guests are completely locked in. If the characters peer into the gloomy room, they can make out two more soldiers armed with crossbows standing on an upper balcony. This builds even more suspense and dread.



The Hosts

Five minutes later Lothar returns, smiling broadly. "Come with me. I shall introduce you to your hosts." He leads the guests through the house. Walking through several more elegantly furnished rooms staffed with soldiers, the characters hear music ahead.

Lothar opens two ornate doors to a great dining hall, also dimly lit by a few ensconced tapers. Inside, 13 people sit around a large table, with an empty chair next to each.

Music

The Last Supper features two types of music. Giovanni has musicians Dominated into playing music of the Italian Renaissance on the most up-to-date instruments. If you wish enhance the mood of the dinner party, you can play this in the background. Since recordings of authentic 15th-century chamber music are often hard to find, you can get the same effect by playing anything by Montaverdi or Palestrina. Cappadocius has his followers sing unaccompanied Gregorian chants. The Storyteller may wish to begin playing chants to set the mood. One recent favorite called "Chant: The Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos" appeared on pop charts and should therefore be very easy to find.

They are a strange collection of men and women: well-dressed and slovenly, highly attractive and appallingly ugly, locals and foreigners alike. A short, paunchy, finely dressed man sits at the head of the table. Five servants (two butlers and three maids) stand motionless against the far wall.

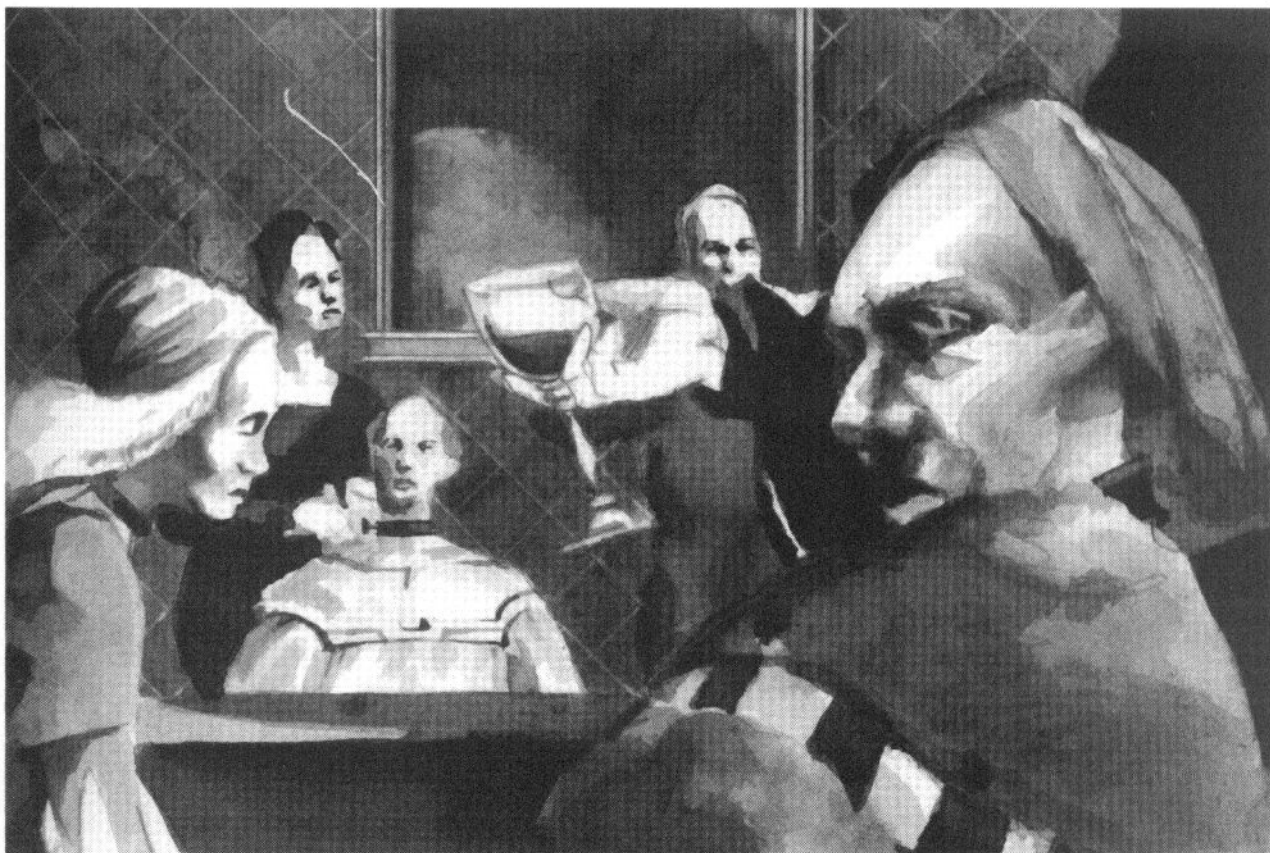
Lothar doffs his hat and bows low before the assembled hosts, saying, "Lord Giovanni, lords and ladies, it is with surpassing pride that I present to you the fruits of my long search. Here are 13 of the purest samples in the land!"

The man at the head of the table rises. "Dear friends, I am Claudius Giovanni. Welcome to *la bella casa* Giovanni! You are my guests, and while you are here, my home is your home. Come, come! Join us."

As the characters step forward, the servants offer them glasses of wine. Giovanni says, "Let us toast the most memorable meal of your lives." As the characters lift their goblets, he continues: "Here's to the finer things in life."

After the characters drink, Giovanni introduces the other 12 nobles. (Use the handy reference list provided, which summarizes each conspirator's name and appearance. Do not mention their clans.) The hosts rise and advance to greet their guests.

"We would know you better. Conversation is like fine wine. It enhances the appetite. Let us converse while we anticipate our dinner," Giovanni says.



The Conspirators

Claudius Giovanni: Short, stout man with elegantly tailored clothes and skull pendant. Giovanni.

Marchettus the Bold: Tall, broad-shouldered man with a thick red beard and battered but well-oiled leather armor. Brujah.

Lady Dimitra: Tall, sinewy woman wearing a traveling cloak and man's breeches. Gangrel.

Matron Violetta: Hideous woman, partly hidden under a thick gray leper's cloak and hood, wearing a full face mask with ragged eye-holes and a smelly wet spot in front of her mouth. Leprous scabs can be seen around her eyes. Nosferatu.

Lady Theophana: Slender, tall woman-child, about 16 years old, with waist-length blonde hair and torn, soiled, silken gown. Decayed floral arrangement in her hair. Malkavian.

Sire Wenceslas: Stern-faced old man dressed in royal purple tunic, leggings and feathered cap. Dripping with elegant, expensive jewelry. Toreador.

Lord Casmir: Portly man with a large white beard, wearing black robe with silver trim. Tremere.

Lady Jadviga Almanov: Heavysset woman with dark red hair and a completely black dress. Ventru.

Lord Leopold Valdemar: Bald middle-aged man dressed like a prosperous merchant in brocaded velvet. Lasombra.

Lord Mieczyslav (pronounced MEE-cha-slav): Handsome young man wearing a simple black monk's robe with white surplice. Tzimisce.

Lord Bajazet Al-Nasir: Dark-skinned man with angular, chiseled features, in fine, silk Turkish robes. Assamite.

Lady Amisa: Swarthy woman draped in silks of foreign design and an elaborate gold headpiece. Follower of Set.

Gabrin: Short young man dressed as a Gypsy, with lots of flashy gold jewelry and a coarse tunic and leggings. Ravnos.



Predators and prey may now mingle and talk. These conversations can overlap, with the Storyteller switching between the Kindred he is playing. This scene works particularly well in live-action, because the Storyteller does not have to switch roles and the conversations can join one another.

The Harrowing

The vampires are interested in studying the guests, and play sadistic parlor games with them. They approach hungrily, like Casanovas relishing a calculated seduction. The Kindred casually talk to their prey, tantalizing themselves and building their anticipation, bringing their appetites to a peak. The idea is that the longer they restrain themselves, the greater their pleasure will be upon finally feasting.

The hosts quickly choose favorites — guests for whose blood they most hunger. Their decision is not based on actual blood taste, of which they have no evidence, but rather on personality and behavior. So the Kindred try to find out all they can about their prey, in a corrupt social ritual that perversely combines measures of flirtation, cocktail conversation and wine tasting.

As the vampires begin to pair up with their prey, they interact with them based on mutual interest. It is likely that the characters have some relation to the clan chosen by their player, but this is not necessary. The vampire of the

appropriate clan will seek them out all the same. Note that the elders are not seeking compatible humans as potential progeny, but in hopes that the blood of a similar person will taste sweeter.

The vignettes that follow describe the particulars of the harrowing used by each vampire to torment her prey. They may be played out one by one with all the players present, but for additional mystery and suspense, the Storyteller may wish to sequester each player, so no one has an inkling of what's in store.

Each vignette ends when dinner is ready. Run them in turn, but do not resolve them all are completed. Leave each player in suspense about the final outcome while you run the next. After all have been resolved, a servant comes to collect each vampire and guest for dinner.

For best results, plan the vignettes ahead of time and tailor each vignette to each character. The better you plan, the more flexible you can be with player input, and the more fun you can have in each vignette.

Optional vignettes detail the efforts of some vampires to compete for the attention of the same characters. Some get greedy and seek to sample the merchandise ahead of time. You can portion out these additional vignettes as you see fit to add color to the encounters.

If any character tries to stop the harrowing or complains to Lord Giovanni, the necromancer just laughs and tells her to behave herself. This gives the characters a taste of the viciousness to come.

Clan Vignettes

Use the vignettes that correspond to the clans of the characters and ignore the rest. Non-player characters will return to the dinner table shaken and upset at the end of the scene.

Brujah: Marchettus the Bold

At the start of the conversation, Marchettus seeks to determine if the character has the heart of a revolutionary. "I think all kings need to be fed the entrails of their ministers and the testicles of their heirs, and then have their hearts cut out. They are canker sores on the arse of the world, don't you think?" If the character disagrees, Marchettus launches into a long diatribe likening kings to parasites. If the character shows any sign of sympathy, Marchettus engages him in conversation about rebellion and techniques for the destruction of the established order. Note that this sort of conversation is blasphemous to the medieval mind: though many people held such attitudes, it is an act of breathtaking heresy to freely voice them, especially in the company of nobles. You may wish to remind the player of this.

In the midst of the conversation, Marchettus looks around the room and scowls, saying, "Look at this pack of false-hearted fops! Their pretension and insincerity leave a foul stench that lingers in the room like flatus. Let's inflict

some damage on this gaudy, gilded trash." His eyes twinkle with wicked intent as he leads the character off to other rooms to smash delicate vases, carve rude sayings into furniture, etc.

If the character refuses to vandalize the place, Marchettus taunts him: "Coward. Don't you detest these elitist swine? Don't you think they deserve it?" He is willing to forestall this destruction for a good conversation about rebellion, but if the character does not comply, Marchettus will go off on his own. Before dinner, the soldiers will approach the character and bring him to Lord Giovanni. Marchettus accuses the character of vandalism and says "I tried to stop him, but he was adamant."

Giovanni pretends to believe Marchettus, and says to the character, "Why should I not tear your heart out where you stand and feast on your life's blood?" The character must beg for his life. Regardless of what he says, though, Giovanni declines to kill him. "I'll wait till after dinner to decide," he says coldly.

If the character goes along with Marchettus, he must make two standard Stealth successes to avoid being heard by the guards and getting caught; otherwise, the above conversation with Giovanni will occur. If he's not caught, Marchettus begins to gain respect for him — but not enough to keep from wanting to drink his blood.

The harrowing ends when a servant walks in on them, ignoring the destruction, and intones "Dinner is served."





Gangrel: Lady Dimitra

At the start of the conversation, the Gangrel tries to find out if the character loves the outdoors. "Nothing do I love more than galloping through a wood in full pursuit of game. Do you like hunting? Do you savor the chase and the kill?" If the character shows any interest, she talks about the joys of the rugged, outdoor life.

Partway through the conversation, Lady Dimitra says, "These narrow walls and cramped ceilings are poor surroundings after the endless expanse of the wilds. What say you we climb the roof of this place and howl at the moon?"

If the character refuses, Lady Dimitra overpowers and muffles her, then carries her swiftly to the roof. There the Gangrel chases the character over the sloping roofs of the manse, growling and laughing. If the character does not try to evade, Lady Dimitra will cuff her until she runs. The more the character tries to flee, the happier the Gangrel is, and the less damage she will inflict.

Regardless, Lady Dimitra will not cause serious harm. She enjoys watching the character's misery. If necessary, she will move quickly to prevent the character from plummeting to her death. If the character enjoys the chase, the Gangrel will begin to have respect for her. Not enough to resist draining her blood later, but enough to begin to trust her in Act II.

The harrowing ends with a servant popping up from a narrow window in front of the character, saying "Dinner is served." Lady Dimitra says, "Come along," and leaps into the window. If the character tries to escape the manse, the Gangrel runs her down and drags her back inside.

Malkavian: Lady Theophana

Lady Theophana's actions depend on the Malkavian-to-be character. If he is described as already being deranged, Lady Theophana will draw him aside and attempt to trigger the Derangement. For example, if the character has a phobia, she will trigger the phobic reaction by creating a frightening situation. She will do the same with delusions, split personalities or whatever the character suffers from. Once the character's Derangement takes over, Lady Theophana laughs hysterically until Giovanni's servants come to collect them for dinner. The character must find a way to pull himself back together before the meal.

If the character does not yet have a Derangement, Lady Theophana will try to create one in him. She stares, bug-eyed, into the character's eyes, saying, "You are a fraud, aren't you, my friend? You are an utterly false, black-hearted villain. I can see how you counterfeit to appear true of heart, but you do not fool me." She then hits him with her Dementation Discipline. The victim goes unconscious and has nightmares of blood, death and an eternal agonizing afterlife, until he is awakened for dinner.

Nosferatu: Matron Violetta

The Nosferatu seeks out her quarry on the basis of similar attitudes, and tries to find common ground with the character by establishing whether she is a loner or an outcast. When she reaches the Nosferatu-to-be, she says, "All these lovely people with their lovely perfumes and lovely clothes are an abomination. Their prettiness is wretched and ugly in my eyes. Wouldn't you agree?"

"They're all in disguise, every one of them. None of them are willing to appear as they really are. All of them know that their true selves are horrors, but they will not admit it."

If the character agrees, Matron Violetta leads her away from the crowd to a side room. If not, she Dominates the character into going. Either way, she continues the conversation.

Once she has privacy, she says, "I would tear out my eyes and peel off my skin to keep from looking like those preening dandies. Wouldn't you?" The character will likely decline. Matron Violetta remains undaunted, and presses forward. "Beauty is a mask. A deadly mask. Your soul boils with ugly sores and deep, festering wounds. Why hide them from the world?"

She closes in and grips the character's face. "Don't hide your disease. It is too lovely to disguise under a flawless face. Wear your vile inner self on the outside!" Using the Thaumaturgy power of Disfigurement (Corruption), she smears her hand over the character's face, which melts under her touch and then solidifies in a horribly distorted manner.

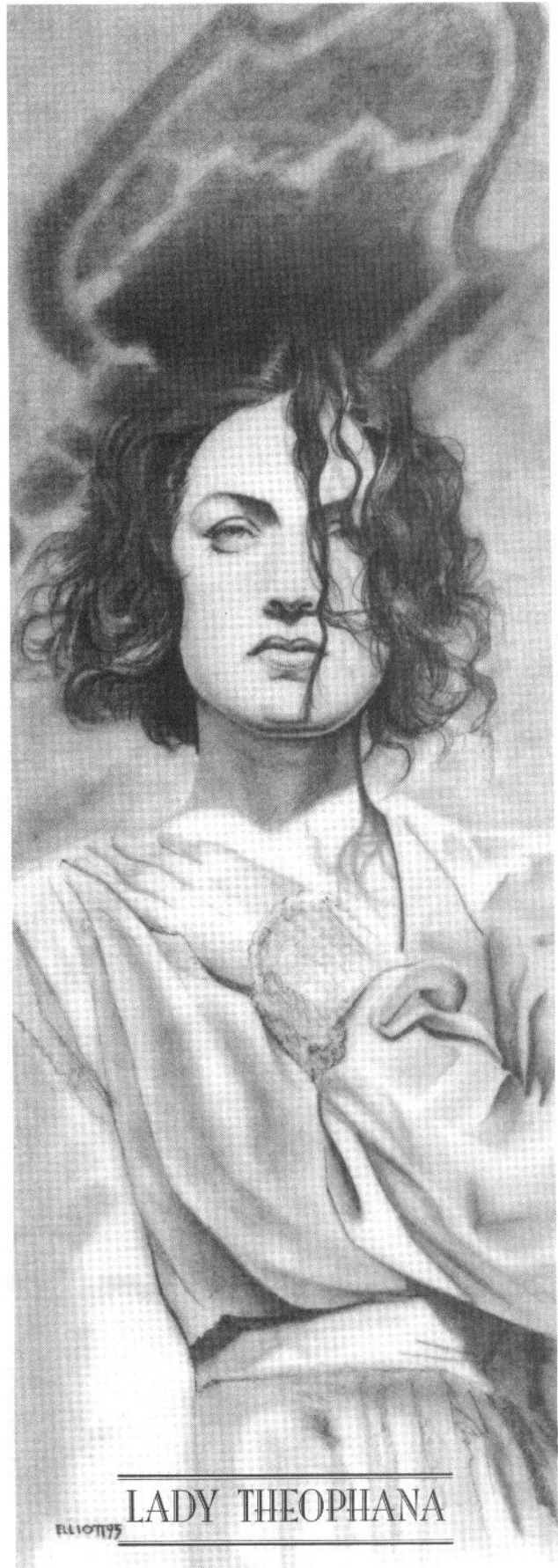
The vampire holds up a mirror, to taunt her guest with her new looks. If the character runs away screaming, the Nosferatu will leave her disfigured throughout dinner. But if she stays, Matron Violetta continues to make the character's face more and more grotesque. Several times she makes the character very attractive, and then takes great delight in turning her hideous again.

Finally, a servant enters and says, "Dinner is served." Matron Violetta restores the character's original features and escorts her, arm in arm, to dinner. "I hope you now understand how fleeting and transitory beauty is. And how worthless."

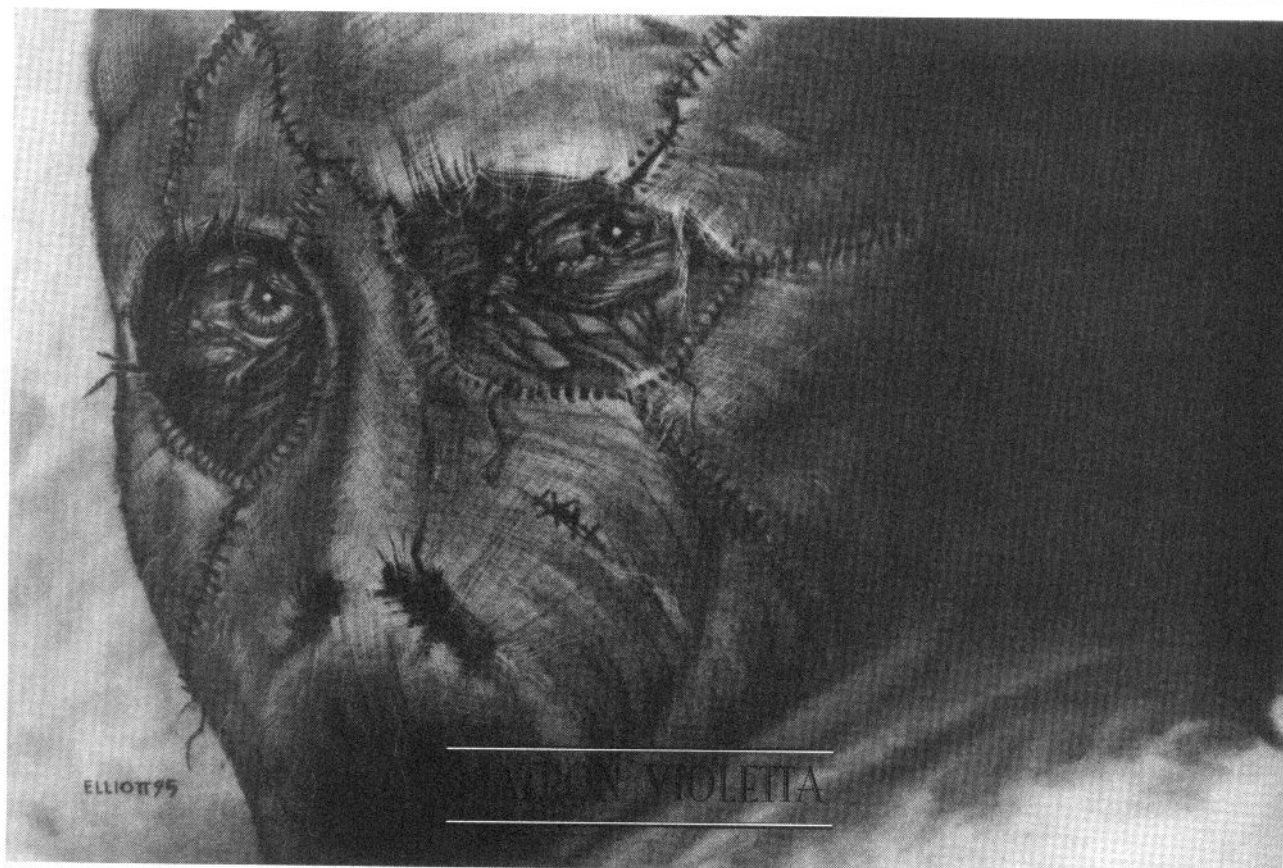
Toreador: Sire Wenceslas

The Toreador character attracts Sire Wenceslas, who draws him aside, casually chatting about art. His approach is a combination of domineering mentoring and sexual come-on, regardless of his quarry's gender.

Wenceslas cups the character's face in his hands and says, "You are most lovely. You have special qualities that call to me. Are you an artist?" He attempts to persuade the character to admit to and show off artistic talents. "Well, show me what you can do. Come, dazzle me! Sing for your supper."



LADY THEOPHANA



He gives the character a chance to perform, providing any artistic supplies needed, like paint and canvas, stone and sculptors tools, or any necessary musical instrument. If the character refuses, Sire Wenceslas uses Entrancement (Presence) to compel him.

Unless the character is brilliant, Wenceslas is unimpressed and berates the character mercilessly. "You call that great? You haven't the right to call yourself an artist. You are a disgrace. A pretender in the halls of the Muses!" Then he again cups the character's face and draws him closer. "But I could make you GREAT!" he says in an intense whisper. "Would you like that?"

Regardless of the character's answer, Wenceslas commands him to begin again. While the character is performing, Wenceslas smashes the wine goblet in his hand. He then cuts the character with the jagged shards. For example, he may throw the glass beneath the bare feet of a dancing character or slash his legs, or cut the neck and lips of one who is singing. If the character is painting, he replaces the brush with a handful of broken crystal, so the character ends up finger painting in his own blood and bits of glass.

Wenceslas laughs and raves "More! MORE! Commitment! Commitment and pain! That's what makes great art! Embrace your pain! It glorifies the Creator! God created the Earth in pain. Mothers issue forth their get in pain. And you must bring forth your art from the depths of pain and anguish! I could make you GREAT, but first I must make your suffering even greater!"

If the character objects to this treatment, Wenceslas uses Entrancement to keep him going. But if the character actually allows himself to be cut, Wenceslas has renewed respect for him.

Eventually Giovanni's servants end the art session with a call to dinner. They impassively bandage the character before any serious blood loss sets in, but he is weakened for the rest of the scene.

Tremere: Lord Casmir

It is likely that the Tremere-to-be has some affinity for, or interest in, magic. Remember that such interests were very common in the Middle Ages, if not always expressed openly.

Lord Casmir stares intently into the character's eyes, and says in a loud whisper, "Art thou knowing? Art thou wise in the ways of the other world? Dost thou follow the left-hand path?"

He soon clarifies this. "Dost thou ken magic? Dost know of the powers Thaumaturgical?"

The character may agree enthusiastically, or she may profess ignorance. Lord Casmir continues. "Dost thou seek knowledge of the forbidden arts? The black road? I can show thee the way ..."

If the character is not interested, Lord Casmir hits her with the Thaumaturgy power of Cripple (Corruption). While the character is paralyzed from the waist down, Lord

Casmir says, "That is the price of thine ignorance, thy pathetic, sniveling ignorance. Wallow in it like a swine!" He gloats over the helpless character until dinner.

If the character expresses interest in Lord Casmir's offer, the vampire says, "The black arts are perverse and corrupting. I will show thee. Walk across the room and turn left." When the character attempts to do so, Lord Casmir uses the Contradict power (Corruption) to make her turn right.

Next, Lord Casmir holds up a large bowl of water and says, "Do not plunge thy head into this bowl." He then compels the character to do so until she nearly drowns, but pulls her out at the last minute.

Lord Casmir then leads the character up through the mansion to one of the upper windows and opens the casement. He places her on the narrow ledge and laughs. "If thou wouldst know of the Mysteries, you must trust me!" If the character refuses to go or tries to flee, he Cripples her until dinner. If the character trusts him, he has her stare down into certain death until dinner, saying, "I could compel thee to jump at any time. Thy life is but a flickering candle flame in my hands."

Leave Lord Casmir and the character there and run all the other vignettes, then return to this scene. The vampire says, "Now it is thy time to leap into the yawning-" A servant appears behind him, saying "Dinner is served." Lord Casmir smiles and says, "Perhaps thou mayst leap after dinner."

As an optional encounter, Lord Casmir and the character may see Lady Dimitra savagely chasing the Gangrel-to-be across the rooftops. He shakes his head in disgust. "Coarse, savage simpletons. No imagination."

Ventruue: Lady Jadviga Almanov

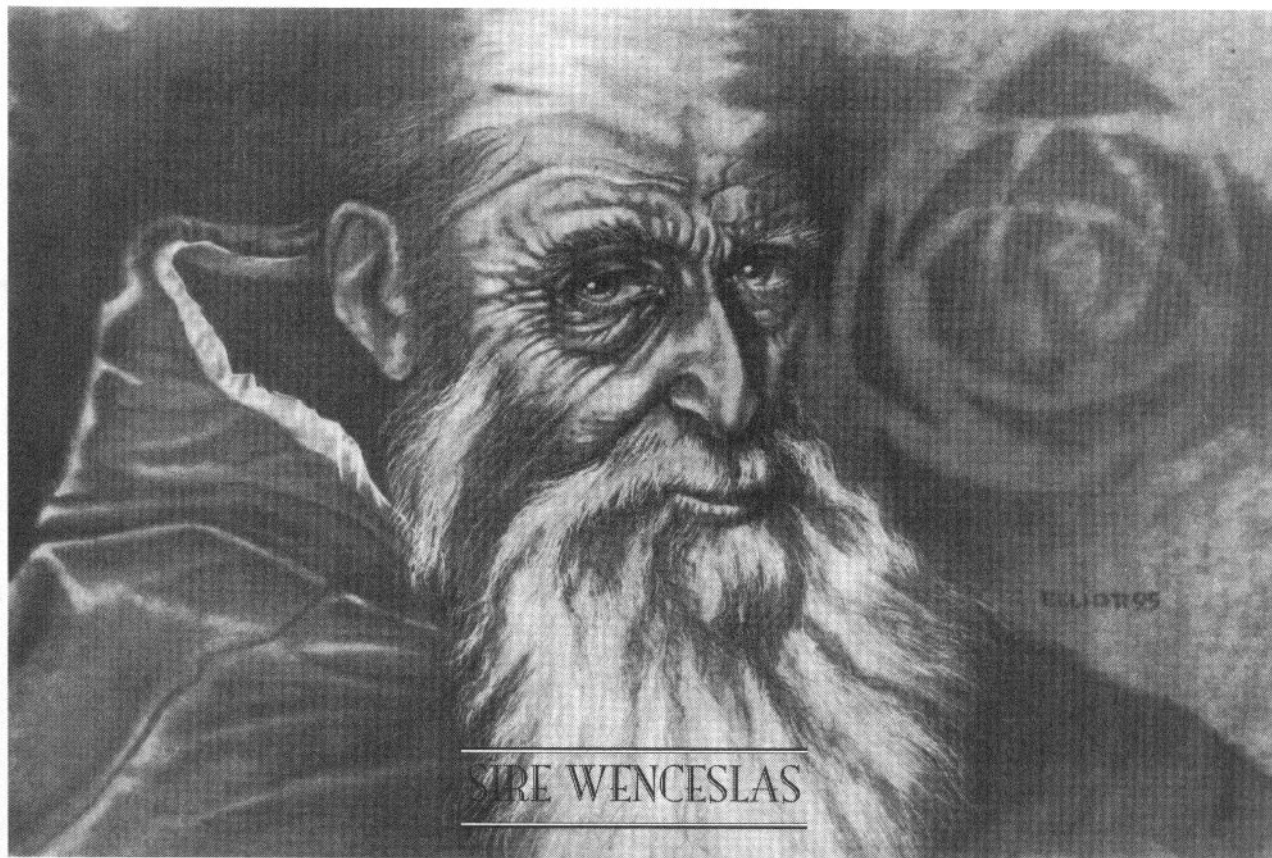
Lady Jadviga offers the character expensive brandy. "I import it from the Orient. Quite delicious and rare. Leaders deserve only the best. Don't you agree?"

She continues, "You seem like a man among men (or woman among women). A leader. Are you of good breeding?"

After the character answers, she says, "High birth and genteel breeding are not the most telling virtues, though they are important. Inner nobility and the will to command others are far more important. I have met many an ineffectual, useless noble and more than a few fine leaders who were born of mean station. Which are you?"

The character must make a case for his own worth as a leader. "We shall soon see," Jadviga says. She fetches a young servant of the opposite gender from the character, and commands the servant to kneel. Jadviga then hands the character a whip and says, "Show me you are fit to command others."

If the character refuses to beat the servant, Lady Jadviga becomes enraged. "Then you are one of the sheep, and not a lion at all!" She Dominates the character into accepting the servant's punishment, and will not stop until he is injured.





LADY JADVIGA ALMANOV

If the character accepts, the servant looks at him piteously, silently imploring the character not to do this thing. Lady Jadviga shouts "More! More!" as the servant moans in pain, as blood seeps through her thick blouse. Eventually the servant slumps into a miserable heap, bleeding profusely. The vampire becomes highly aroused at the sight. Finally, after a good 20 minutes, the servant falls unconscious. Nevertheless, Lady Jadviga insists that the character deal out seven more blows.

At the end of the beating, the servant lies very still, as if dead. (The character must make a Perception + Medicine roll (difficulty 7) to know for sure that he has not murdered the servant.) Lady Jadviga then hands the character a bit of bread. "Dip it in the blood, and taste. A commander of men must not fear the spilling of blood."

If the character refuses, or stops the beating at any time, Lady Jadviga commands the servant to flog the character instead. If the character changes his mind at this point, she refuses to give him a second chance, saying, "In this vale of tears one must flog or be flogged. Compassion is weakness that must be beaten out of you."

Almanov has him beaten.

The character will have to make up to three Conscience rolls during this sequence to avoid losing Humanity — once if he beats the servant, once when the servant passes out and once for consuming the blood.

Once this is over, a servant comes to fetch them for dinner. Lady Jadviga either respects the character's sadism and compromised virtues, or loathes him for cowardice. Either way, she will enjoy the taste of him.

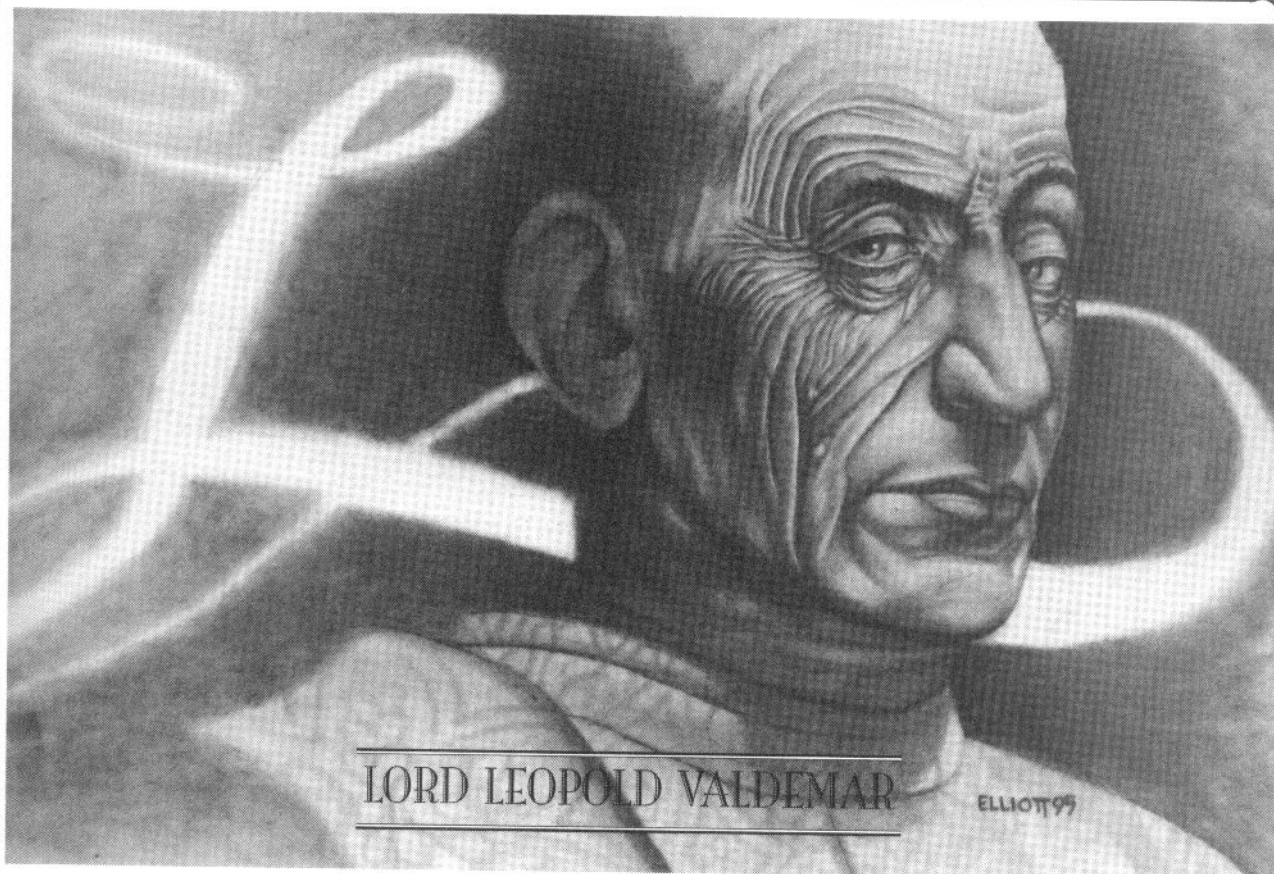
Lasombra: Lord Leopold Valdemar

Lord Valdemar corners the character somewhere away from the others, using his body to block the character's return to the party. He begins questioning the character, asking a series of seemingly irrelevant questions. "What makes the sun rise? What do you think of Aristotle? Why do birds sing? Is it better to be feared or abhorred? What is life?"

The player may answer these in any way she likes, but she must make a Wits + Stealth roll (difficulty 7) to notice that the shadows are slowly creeping up around her. Valdemar refuses to let her leave the area, and as his questioning continues, the shadows move over the character's feet, up her legs and over her chest, finally covering her completely and leaving her unable to see anything.

During this process, Valdemar's questions become more Zen-like. "Is light more than the absence of dark? Who is your shadow? Why is darkness?"

If the character becomes flustered during this process and gives less-than-satisfactory answers to the questions, Valdemar uses Arms of the Abyss (Obtenebration) to hold the character in the darkness and walks off. She will not be released until dinner is ready.



Tzimisce: Lord Mieczyslav

(MEE-cha-slav)

Lord Mieczyslav takes the character aside and says, "Tell me how you believe your enemies should be treated." If the character doesn't understand, or asks for clarification of this odd request, Mieczyslav adds, "If you have your enemy at your mercy, what do you believe should be done with him?"

The vampire is trying to determine if the character believes in forgiveness. If the character shows any hint of forbearance, he snaps: "Mercy is a trick that great men invented to keep the weak from interfering. No truly great man is merciful. Enemies must be crushed. Potential enemies must be kept wounded and weak. Don't you agree?"

If the player defined his future Tzimisce character as already corrupt, he will likely agree with Lord Mieczyslav's bloodthirstiness, and suggest tortures.

Whatever the response, the vampire leads the character down into the wine cellars. In one dank, cold room, a naked man is chained up against the wall, his body covered with old and new wounds. Torture devices surround him.

"This is a spy for my enemies. Show me how you would deal with him."

If the character tries to avoid torturing the stranger, Lord Mieczyslav uses Dominate to force him. The only way the character can stop the process is to discuss dealing with

enemies, perhaps arguing something Machiavellian like "great men need to be feared, but must avoid being hated." The only thing Mieczyslav likes more than inflicting pain is arguing, and he will allow the torture to stop for as long as the character can keep his interest. Roleplay it out. In the end, Mieczyslav leaves the stranger alive.

If the character tortures the stranger, the man begs for mercy, crying out that he is innocent. He insists that he is a simple peasant who was captured by the guards for the sport of the powerful. "They are demons!" he insists. "They are not living men!" The character must make a Conscience roll to avoid losing Humanity.

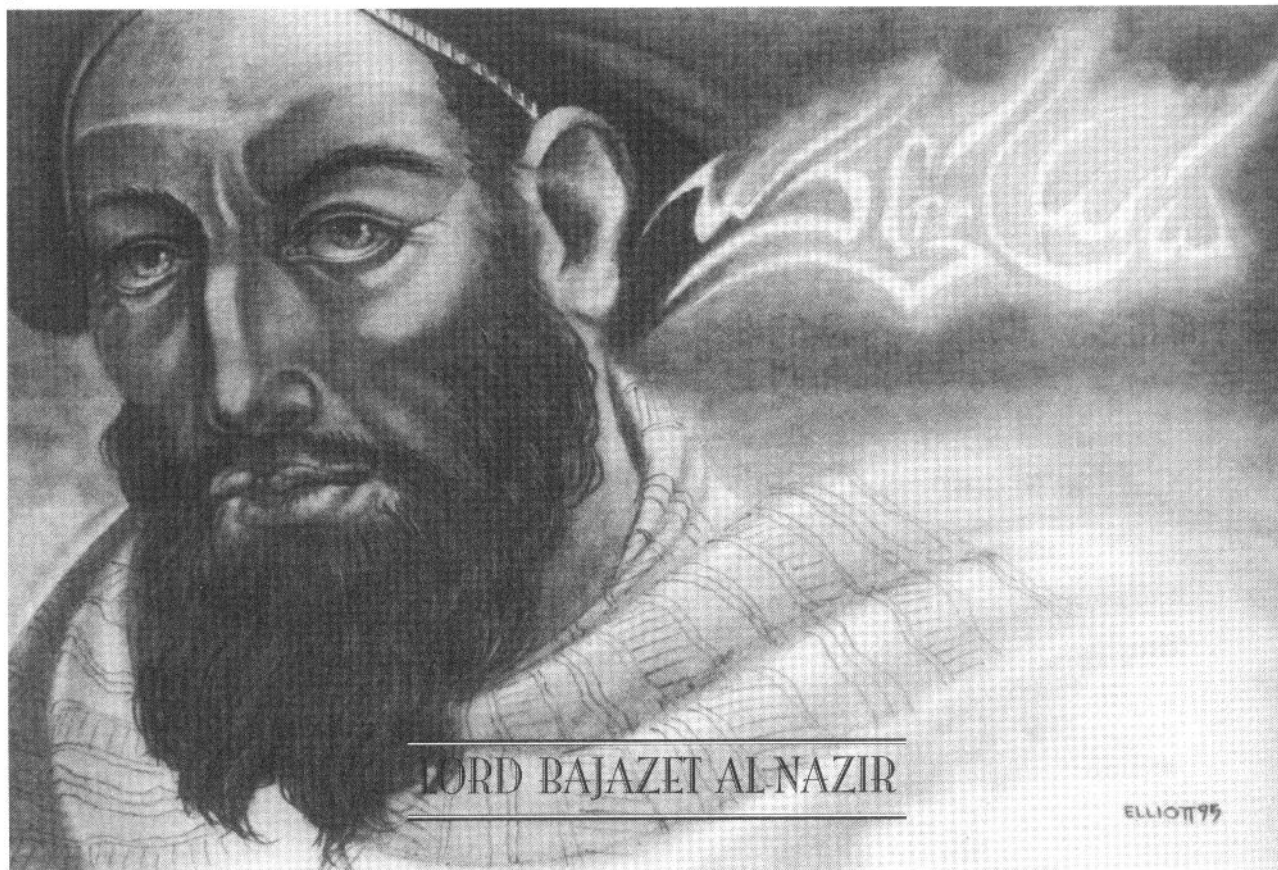
The stranger is in fact a spy for the Founders. He will appear in Act II when the characters are interrogated. If the character kills him now, he will later be held accountable for the death by the Founders.

Assamite: Lord Bajazet Al-Nasir

Lord Bajazet Al-Nasir walks slow circles around his quarry as he talks, and asks her, "Do you like death?" The character may not know how to answer this.

Al-Nasir continues, "Have you made your peace with her? Can you kill without fear? Could you die without fear?" The character must come up with a quick answer. Stalling will just draw Al-Nasir's wrath.

If the character answers in the negative, the vampire says, "Then there is only one way to assist you in reaching that greatest of goals. We must play the game of death." If



LORD BAJAZET AL-NAZIR

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the character answers by saying yes, Al-Nasir says, "Then let us play the game of death. And I hope, for your sake, that you spoke the truth."

The assassin continues, "Our game shall be in two parts. First, you must hunt me. I shall enjoy this little celebration, and stay in only the public rooms. You must come close enough to me to kill me without my seeing you. If I see you, you must leave my sight immediately and try again."

"We shall play for 15 minutes. If you can reach me in any way within that time, you have won, and the game stops. If you fail, it is my turn to hunt you. You are not restricted to the public areas, but may travel as far as you can. I have only five minutes to reach you unseen. If I come close enough to kill you within that five minutes—" he smiles "—then kill you I shall."

He turns over a massive hourglass, and the sands begin running. "Now go!"

The sand will continue to run if the character asks questions. Al-Nasir will restate the rules, but will not clarify them further. If the character complains to Lord Giovanni or one of his staff members, the necromancer and his associates will not stop the game, but merely laugh at the character's plight.

The Assamite then wanders from room to room, watching other harrowings and mingling with the soldiers and servants. It is all but impossible to sneak up on Al-Nasir, but there is a simple way to win. If the character has

a servant or another character help her, she can deliver a message to the assassin saying, "I have just poisoned you," or "The bearer of this note has stabbed you in the back." She could even leave a package in a room labeled: "This is a cannon which has killed you."

Any imaginative solution will please the assassin enough to call off the game, and spend the rest of the pre-dinner time laughing with the character.

However, if the character fails, Al-Nasir quickly finds her. He pulls a small hourglass from his robe and says "You have five minutes to live. Now go."

No matter what the hapless character does or where she goes, Al-Nasir will catch her in a minute or two, by Obfuscating. If the character creates an uproar by insisting that she is about to die, Al-Nasir uses Cloak the Gathering (Obfuscate) to spirit her away. He chokes her to unconsciousness, but does not kill her. She will wake up at dinner, facedown at the table.

The Followers of Set: Lady Amisa

Lady Amisa wants to corrupt her prey before she feasts on him. She wants to make him abandon his connection to life and goodness. If he is already corrupt, she will tempt him with the ultimate perversity: his own death wish.

Lounging on velvet cushions, she offers her prey wine, and strikes up a conversation about that which is good and holy. She uses Entrancement (Presence) to ensure that the

character tells the truth. She says, "I do so abhor trivial conversation at these celebrations. The hour has grown too late for talking falsely. Don't you agree?"

She waits for agreement, then asks, "What do you find good and worthwhile?" The character can choose from a range of answers, from religion to kindness to greed. Lady Amisa listens carefully, asking questions designed to draw out more information about her prey. "What do you mean by that?" "What about love for another?" "What about survival?" "For what price would you compromise each one?"

Once she has established what is valuable to her prey, Lady Amisa says "Let us put that to the test." Rising from her pillows, she leads the character down into the basement to one of the lowest rooms in the manse. It is pitch black, save for the meager light from a small, flickering candle on a table. The character can barely make out large shapes in the dark of the room.

If the character has previously expressed reverence for life, Lady Amisa draws forth from the darkness a cat and a mallet. She hands the mallet to the character, and says "Would you care to bludgeon the cat?" She does not use Presence to compel obedience. If the character declines, she offers him a gold coin. If he continues to refuse, she offers him a bag of gold coins.

If he refuses the gold, she snaps her fingers, and a very attractive servant of the opposite gender from the character steps forward. "This servant is adept at pleasure. You may have the use of his/her charms. Forever. Just for striking the cat."

If the character still resists, Lady Amisa smiles, saying, "You tantalize me. I have never beheld one who is so formidable a challenge. I give you one final offer. I have recently inherited a duchy in Austria. I care not for the climate, and will soon give it away. You may have it, the land, the treasury and the title of duke. In return for one cat."

If the character still refuses, she scowls. "Foolish mortal," she whispers. "Your purity disgusts me. Your regard for other life has cost you your own." She grabs the character and drags him to a coffin. Sealing him in, she throws the coffin into a dank hole in the center of the room. The character can hear heavy clods of earth landing on the lid. He character remains buried alive for another 20 minutes and must make a Self-Control roll (difficulty 6) to avoid gaining a claustrophobia-related Derangement. Finally servants dig him out, saying, "Dinner is served. The honor of your company is requested."

If at any point the character agrees to kill the cat, Lady Amisa gives him the prize — the gold, the servant or the promise of the duchy. She is not sincere, and will not let him keep or use the gift.

Lady Amisa then increases the stakes. She drags a coffin out of the darkness. A servant lies inside, bound and gagged. She hands the character a shovel and says, "Bury him alive." If the character objects, she says, "Why do you hesitate? He's no more than a cat, after all." If the character still refuses, she asks, "What would you require? What is your price?" Lady Amisa will agree to just about any price other than her own death, since she is not sincere about





keeping any promise. If the character continues to refuse, Lady Amisa forces the character into the coffin and buries him, as described above.

If the character agrees to bury the servant alive, Lady Amisa laughs while he drops the coffin into the hole in the floor. When he is finished, she caresses him, saying, "You have tasted a hint of death twice this evening. You must hunger for the real thing. The main course. You must be ready for your own death. Would you like to know what it is like?" If the character refuses, she uses *Obsession* (*Serpentis*) to give him a fixation on dying, and then buries him alive. He stays there until the servant comes for him. The *Obsession* wears off once he has been buried alive.

If the character actually agrees to taste death, she buries him alive with his cooperation. She is developing respect for him, and digs him up for dinner herself, rather than having a servant do it. She tenderly takes him by the arm and leads him upstairs, saying "You look exquisite with the shadow of death upon you!"

Ravnos: Gabrin

Gabrin glides in circles around his prey, smiling crookedly at her while casually flipping a small eating dagger back and forth between his hands. If the character is of Gypsy heritage, Gabrin begins the harrowing by asking about her family, her *kumpania*, and her heritage. He listens carefully to her answers, but does not respond to any of the character's questions about his own Romani background.

Gabrin speaks quite glibly as he maneuvers the character into a small, enclosed courtyard, saying, "Don't call me Lord Gabrin. I do not need titles to give my life meaning. Do you think titles give life meaning?" If the character answers in the negative, Gabrin laughs heartily and bites her sensuously on the mouth. If the character answers in the affirmative, he brings his dagger smartly down against her lip. Either way, Gabrin draws blood.

"And what do you think of the mysterious substance dribbling down your chin, my friend? Do you think of it as your most intimate, most sacred possession? Do you?" Gabrin wipes some of the blood from the character's chin as he speaks, rubbing his fingers back and forth until they are wet and sticky with the substance. If the character is a Gypsy, she should find this act extremely shocking.

Regardless of the character's response to his question, Gabrin continues to contemplate the blood smearing his fingers. "We Gypsies don't believe any mortal can own anything. We...humans...merely borrow from the Earth's bounty. No one has a superior claim to anything. Do you feel you need your blood? Well, what if I feel that I need your blood? What if we *all* have need of your life's fluid?"

As the character responds to Gabrin's words, the Ravnos uses *Horrid Reality* (*Chimistry*) to create images of ravening animals appearing over the walls, out of the ground and down from the sky. Lions, snakes, hawks, wolves, rats and more surround the character, all slavering for her blood. As Gabrin laughs, the animals begin, one at a time, to peck, nip and otherwise attack the character in a growing blood frenzy.

Just as the character feels she is going to lose consciousness, that the last of her precious flesh and blood are being torn from her, she hears the voice of a servant standing directly over her. "Dinner is served," the maid says, offering a hand to help the dazed character from the ground.

The character is not actually physically injured, although she has difficulty believing that she is actually undamaged. For days, perhaps even months, she will have sudden flashbacks in which she believes her flesh and blood have been torn away, and that she is about to die.

Optional Vignettes

The following vignettes are not clan-dependent. Use them as you see fit to further enrich and complicate the clan vignettes.

Competition for Affection

Choose a conspirator of the same clan as the character, and another who is of a clan not chosen by any of the players. Those two vampires both decide that all but one of the sacrificial lambs that Lothar has selected are sadly lacking in spirit. Unfortunately, they both focus on the same character. The Kindred compete for his affection, and each tries to charm that character into choosing her for a patron.

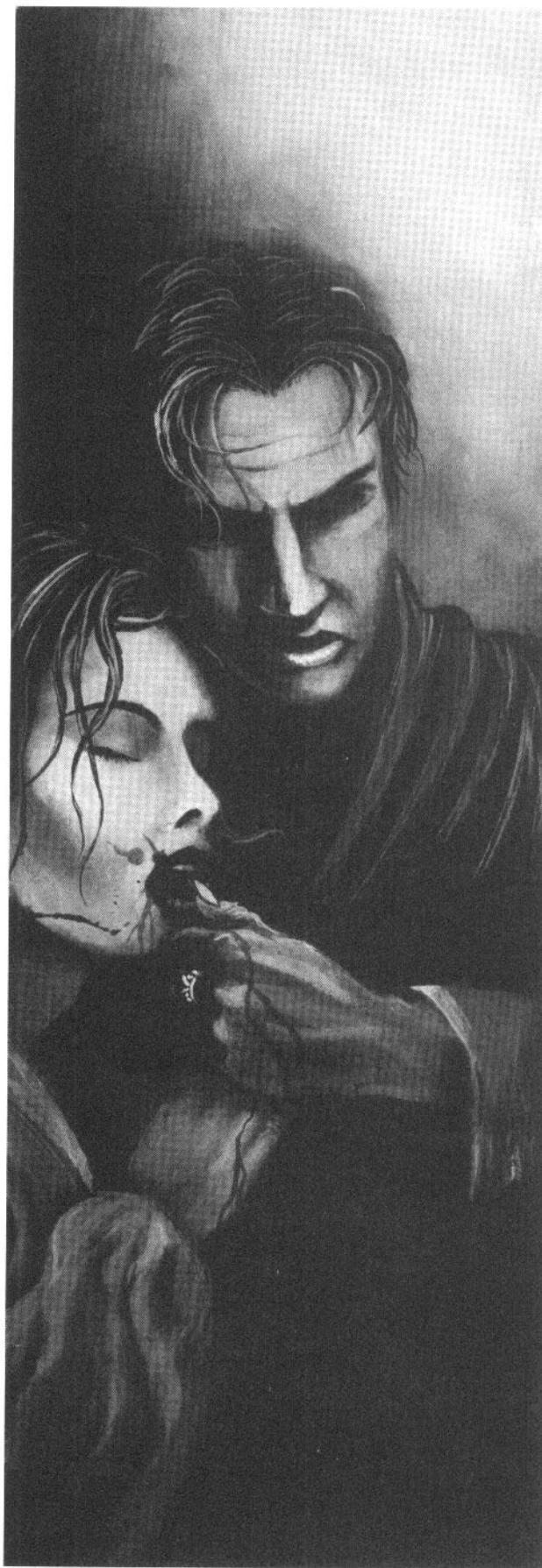
Trouble flashes between the two, and they make veiled threats. The character can try to defuse the tension by picking one, or by taking control and saying that he will decide later, based on how well they both behave.

If the character does not stop them, the vampires come to blows. Lord Giovanni quickly breaks up the fight, but the violence casts a pall over the evening. Three successes on a Perception + Brawl roll (difficulty 6) means the characters see that the fighting hosts moved with nearly impossible agility. The character being fought over sees this on one success.

The character might end up selecting the elder who is not of his own clan-to-be. After all, the player does not know the clans of the conspirators. This doesn't matter, however, because the elder of the proper clan will end up Embracing the character when the Founders attack.

The Overly Ardent Suitor

One vampire gets carried away with enthusiasm for her chosen sacrifice, and suggests a tryst. (The vampire and prey may be of either gender.) She seduces her chosen guest and suggests that they discreetly retire upstairs. If the character refuses, she offers bribes and riches. If the character continues to resist, she Dominates him and leads him up to an opulent bedroom. While they are removing their clothes, Lord Giovanni bursts in and stops the proceedings. He gently reproves the vampire, and apologizes to the character. He then escorts the two back to the dining hall. (This would be a good time for the fight in the "Competition for Affection" vignette to begin.)



Customized Harrowing

If a character has a unique history, a strange quirk or an interesting background, the Storyteller is encouraged to change details of the harrowing to fit the circumstances, or even create a custom-tailored harrowing to fit the character.

Also, if one of the unused vignettes sounds more interesting than the one designated to a player's clan, feel free to use it if it appeals to you more.

Wrapping Up Scene 2

Most of the harrowings end with the vampire and his victim summoned to dinner by a servant. In each case, the servant does not seem to notice or care about the horrifying scene. By this point, some characters may be unconscious: they are dragged to the table by servants and placed in their chairs with their heads on the table. Scene 2 ends when all the harrowings are over and all the characters are seated (conscious or unconscious) at the elegant dining table.

Scene 3: Dinner is Served

Dining-out is a vice, a dissipation of spirit punished by remorse.

— Cyril Connolly, *The Unquiet Grave*

Summoned to Lord Giovanni's Table

The table in the dimly lit dining hall is laid with expensive crockery in a manner befitting a prince. The room is abuzz with excitement. The hosts are very animated following the harrowings, and chatter eagerly with one another. If they were favorably impressed by qualities displayed by their victims, they also talk to the characters. The Kindred revel in the fun they have had thus far, and eagerly anticipate the revels and feasting still to come. Lothar scurries about the chamber, fussing over the settings and making sure everything is in order.

Bloody Mess Hall

As the hosts and victims assemble, the musicians play Claudius' theme. Lord Giovanni enters to a great chorus of cheers from the 12 lords and ladies. He takes his place at the head of the table, next to Marianna, a young woman from the traveling party.

(Marianna is the prey Lothar chose for Giovanni's dinner. She'll be drained first, and left for dead. But after the attack, Giovanni will give her blood to fight for him. She'll survive the Founders' attack, and go on to be the only Giovanni who was not born into the family, and a

major pain for the necromancers to boot. She will not join the coterie, but she may help it later.)

The hosts take their seats next, each seated next to his or her prey. Unconscious characters begin to wake up now. Any attempts to flee or fight (now or later) will be met with quick response, and the character Dominated into behaving properly. The Storyteller must keep track of who is Dominated, because the character who bides his time and resists the temptation to fight will have free will later in the story, when the Founders attack.

Lothar leads three servants pushing huge, steaming carts heaped high with platters of delicious-smelling food. Roast duck, suckling pig, haunches of beef and legs of lamb all produce a mouth-watering aroma that fills every corner of the room.

Toastmaster Claudius

Lady Jadviga rises and calls out above the clamor, "A toast! A toast to the brilliant one who brought us together for such a delightful evening! A toast to the leader who knew how to add flavor to our dining. A toast to the one clever enough to attack his own kin for our benefit! To Claudius Giovanni, and to the destruction of Japheth, son of Cappadocius!" A great cheer arises from the crowd. "Speech!" they cry.

Claudius rises, and motions for silence. The festive crowd takes its time in quieting, but soon the roar subsides.

"Welcome, welcome, my true friends," he begins. "Another year has passed and the Conspiracy of Isaac now stands on the threshold of victory. Your unflagging devotion to our cause has brought us to the brink of seizing Cappadocian power and wealth! I am in awe. Tonight I intend to reward that fidelity. Which brings us to our guests."

He gestures toward each of the characters. "Welcome, you who are new to our ranks. Let us talk about sustenance. Let us talk about the draught of life that sustains us.

"The smell of fine food entices and excites the palate, and makes the consumption all the more gratifying. Can you smell it? Does not the growing anticipation make the meal more and more desirable? This is the difference between the boorish peasant who devours his barley like a beast and the refined palate requiring cultivated sustenance. Anticipation. The circumstances of the meal are as important as the food itself. Consumption is a holy act, and each drop should be memorable.

"Only the finest food should be selected. The food should be tenderized. Prepared. The eater must have a relationship with his meal. Then when you bite a shred of flesh from your food, it's worth the blood you shed. Wouldn't our guests agree?" He looks pointedly at each character and awaits their reply. He will allow them to answer, and even give their opinions, before continuing. The more they say, the greater the impact from the imminent revelation that they are dinner.

Lord Giovanni glances toward the kitchen, and Lothar ushers in two servants dragging a large and noisy sheep to the table by a silken leash. The sheep pulls stubbornly against the servants. "He has spirit," says their host. "How unlike his breed. Well, my guests, here is your dinner." Take a moment for character reactions.

He takes a large ax from a servant, and holds it out to the guests. "Who among you shall have the honor of the kill?" (None of the non-player guests volunteer. It's up to the players' characters.)

"Come, come, did you want a temperate, bloodless dinner? Eating is destruction! Eating is death! And death is holy, as our Savior reminds us. Come!"

If no one volunteers, Claudius raises the ax over his head. "Then if none among you offer to create our dinner—" he swings the ax, smashing the head from the sheep in one blow, and spattering the assembled guests with blood. He looks up. "—then you shall become dinner." He continues with the speech below in "Revelations in Blood."

If any character volunteers, Lord Giovanni hands her the ax. She must inflict four Health Levels of damage to kill the sheep; any less causes it to scream piteously. A botch results in a bloody mess with the sheep running around and spurting blood.

When the sheep is dead, Claudius scoops an elegant goblet under the spurting neck and fills it. "Taste your kill!" He hands the goblet to the character who killed the sheep. If the character drinks, Lord Giovanni smiles a devilish leer. If any character refuses to drink, Claudius abruptly drenches him in the blood, shouting, "Wretched ingrate! How dare you! If you will not eat my dinner, then you shall become my dinner!" He continues with the speech below in "Revelations in Blood."

If all the characters drink, Lord Giovanni smiles evilly. "You are now one with your prey!" he says. "That connection is all there is! The relationship between predator and prey creates the flavor! The link between death and life creates the flavor!"

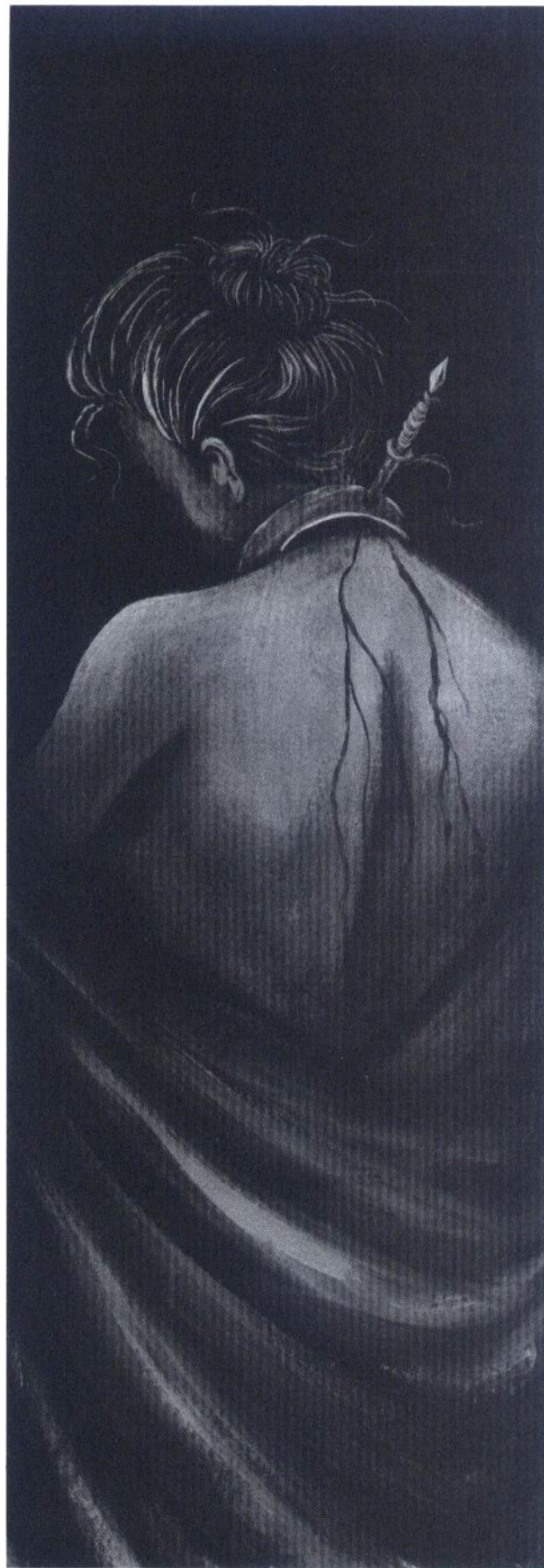
He puts his hand on the shoulder of the character who killed the sheep, saying, "And now I am hungry!" In one fast move, his fingernails rake along the character's neck, cutting ragged slashes in the skin. Blood begins to drip.

If the characters try to resist or run now or at any time, the rebellious ones are Dominated or otherwise forced into cooperating.

Revelations in Blood

"It is time we told you, our guests, our secret. *You* are *our* lambs. You are as food to us. You are not here to be served. You are here to be *served* to us!" He laughs heartily, and the other hosts titter politely. "You guests don't understand yet? You are to be our meal!" Pause for dramatic effect.





"We have tenderized you before dinner, and now you are ready to be eaten." He gazes into the eyes of the woman at his side (the guest Lothar chose for him) and says, "Marianna, ascend to the table." As if in a trance, Marianna steps up, shedding her gown as she glides, hypnotized, onto a huge, empty platter at the head of the table.

"The circumstances of the feeding impart a great flavor to the blood. How tawdry to violently attack our food before the kill. When prey is startled, its blood fills with a bitter acid that, in large amounts, is most distasteful. And yet to dull the victim into a submissive stupor creates a sluggishness of the blood. The blank-eyed prey whose soul has been crushed makes for a boring meal, one without spice."

Lord Giovanni clamps a metal collar around Marianna's neck. The collar has a single hole in it.

"So what is the solution to this epicurean dilemma? I thought to myself: a mere drop of the acid. A mere tinge of poison. Ergo: not shock, but a mild, sustained dread followed by sweet surrender. It excites the blood of the prey as it stimulates the soul of the predator. As terror builds without total panic, a drop of this savory zest is added to blood."

Lord Giovanni thrusts a jeweled dagger into the hole in Marianna's metal collar. As her crimson blood begins to flow, he inserts a keg tap into the hole. The flow stops. He neatly dabs the spilled blood off her neck with his embroidered linen napkin.

"Also, you must wait until the appetite comes over you, but before the ravening hunger overwhelms you. Eating when full dulls the mind and senses. The eater must be prepared, and the eaten must be prepared as well. We are ready. Our food is ready! My friends, let us eat!"

Claudius turns the tap, and blood flows smoothly from the woman's neck into his goblet. He swirls the blood and smells it, deliriously happy. He then raises the goblet to the guests, and drinks a heady draught. When he lowers the cup, his eyes bulge with the rapture of a fanatic, and a huge smile spreads across his blood-soaked lips. The guests cheer, saying "It's our turn!" and "Enough anticipation!"

Paul's Dilemma

"Wait!" shouts Claudius. "Before we gorge ourselves, we must test the loyalty of our newest household soldier." Two guards enter, escorting the limping Paul, who is wearing the regalia of Giovanni's soldiers. The lord says, "Now, soldier, the time has come for you to prove your loyalty to us. Are you truly a hardened crusader wounded in battle, or a farm boy who fell on his own pitchfork? Come, my faithful Roman legionnaire. Pierce the side of our sacrificial lamb." He hands Paul his jeweled dagger, and points to one of the characters. (Pick one at random.) Paul blanches.

This vignette can go one of two ways. If the characters interceded on Paul's behalf, he summons all his courage and refuses, saying quietly, 'Milord, I cannot. Such wickedness is against God.'

The hosts laugh uproariously, but Claudius is not amused. He roars, "I do not believe you fought with the great crusader Hunyady, crippled coward! Pierce him or die!"

Paul again refuses. Marchettus rises, walks over to the terrified soldier, and in one blow spins Paul's head around. The soldier's legs buckle, but Marchettus holds him up and beats him until the young man's face is a mass of blood. Finally Marchettus lets him crumple into a heap on the floor and strides back to his seat.

Lord Giovanni says, "Oh, I nearly forgot to tell you. Soldier Paul wishes to thank you for interceding on his behalf to join my troops." The other Kindred laugh appreciatively. (Paul is not dead, but the characters do not know that. He will live and could become a loyal helper to the characters, possibly even a ghoul.)

If the characters did not intercede on Paul's behalf, he pauses. Claudius says, "Go on. After all, what did they ever do for you? Interceding on your behalf would have cost them nothing, yet they could not bestir themselves to do even that. You owe them nothing, and you owe me everything."

Paul nods. He attaches a collar to the character's neck, then inserts the dagger and tap. Lord Giovanni applauds, saying, "Welcome to our ranks, crippled soldier. You have a master and home for your entire life."

Tapping the Vein

The servants clamp metal collars onto the rest of the characters' necks, and affix keg taps into the hole in each collar. When a tap is turned, blood flows. By this time, most of the characters will have been Dominated. If any submit willingly, make a note of this.

The vampires excitedly move from character to character, turning the taps and sampling the different vintages. They animatedly compare tastes, and even the most reserved among them becomes gleeful and aroused. They reel like drunkards, talk too loudly, and wave their arms like madmen. They tap the neck of a low-born character, taste the blood, and say, "It's a naïve domestic vintage without any breeding, but I think you'll be amused by its presumption!" and then laugh.

During the drinking session, the vampires toast "To the eternal destruction and damnation of Japheth Cappadocius," and "To the continuing, blessed ignorance of Hardestadt and his motley mob!" Claudius says, "My friends, we must be bold! We must take great risks! How else will we win anything worth the winning?"

During the evening, if any of the characters ask what is to become of them, Lord Giovanni replies, "Why, you will die, of course. In a few months we shall send word to your

provincial homes that you were set upon by brigands. Or monsters. Or TURKS! Your loved ones—"he pauses to look at a character who is an outcast, poor or mad—"if any, shall grieve and resolve never to set foot out of their muck-encrusted hovels." If there is a wealthy character, he looks at her and says, "Excuse me. Your muck-encrusted palaces.")

If the characters try to reason with Lord Giovanni to let them go, he says, "The superior being never yields to the lesser." If the characters plead with him, he merely laughs patronizingly. If they call him a monster, he responds, "I am more refined and cultivated than you could ever have hoped to be...even when you were alive!" He laughs evilly.

The Warning

By this time, the characters are starting to feel dizzy, weak and cold from blood loss. Just when things look the bleakest, a loud crash shakes the whole manor. All the hosts freeze in mid-revel, panic on their bloodstained visages.

Suddenly an alarm goes up. Guards shout, footsteps clatter and warning bells jangle. Another crash from the southern wall shakes the building.

A sentry comes running in. "My lord! My lord! We are under attack! A century of men at arms! Hardestadt's troops! We are overwhelmed!"

The hosts leap up from their meal.

Claudius rages, "The Founders! Damn their eyes!"

Lord Mieczyslaw shouts, "We're trapped!"

Matron Violetta scowls: "Someone has betrayed us!"

Al-Nazir cries, "It must have been that Malkavian madwoman Theophana! We should tear out her deceitful heart!"

"Impossible!" shouts Sire Wenceslas. "You are just saying that to throw us off the track, Assamite! It must have been you! I have never trusted you!"

Lord Leopold Valdemar says, "More likely the Lady Jadviga is behind it! Scheming Ventrue always put clan before allies!"

Lady Jadviga retorts, "You are an addled-pated old Lick, Leopold. I hate Hardestadt and have often attacked his holdings. I say we stay and prove that we are doing nothing to merit an attack!"

"Stay?" Gabrin says with a laugh. "And entrust my fate to that madman Hardestadt? Never!"

Lady Dimitra shouts, "Giovanni betrayed us! We were fools to believe he would attack his fellow Cappadocians!"

Claudius bellows: "Silence! I forbid this infighting! Follow me NOW or we are all dead!"

"There's nowhere to go!" Marchettus shouts. "Let's fight them!"

"This is not the place! We can go to the reliquary! They cannot follow us there!"

"Yes," says Lady Theophana. "We can go."

"Come!" Claudius insists. "I have a way out through the crypts below! Come quickly!"

"But they will follow us!" Lord Casmir says coldly. "Your soldiers will fall like the pathetic mortals they are!"

Giovanni thinks. "Aye. They will. We must slow Hardestadt. Ah! Embrace your prey! They are drained and will quickly Change. That will slow our pursuers and buy us time to escape before our childer are destroyed in the onslaught."

"What if one survives?" Lady Amisa asks.

"Ha!" Giovanni snorts. "I remind the gentle lady that our attackers are the fanatical Founders. Hardestadt would never suffer one to live! Now do it! It's the only way!"

The Panicked Embrace

Each vampire quickly drains the remaining blood from and then feeds a measure of his own blood to the character he spent the evening tormenting. This will cause each character to become a vampire of the clan the player chose before the game. Some of the vampires disdain giving their precious vitae to unworthy vessels, but they grudgingly agree.

When they finish, they command the characters: "Fight the invading troops to the death!" and flee. All characters who have been Dominated are compelled to fight. But those who did not resist can do as they please. However, Claudius will not allow them to join with the hosts in their flight, and will Dominate anyone who tries into staying and fighting.

Dominated characters cannot see how the hosts escape, but the others can. On a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7), they see the vampires flee into a secret passage in a storage room in the basement. After the hosts leave, a Dominated servant closes the passage, pours oil on the boxes stored in the room, and sets them on fire. He locks the door to the room and leaves.

The characters are now vampires. They each have two Blood Points and cannot yet use Disciplines. In addition, the Nosferatu spends the first few turns writhing on the floor in agony as the Change sets in. When she gets back up, she will be horrendously ugly but not under anyone's Domination.

The Attack: Eat or be Eaten

As the hosts disappear, sounds of melee approach. Soon the door splinters and a group of armored troops pour in. Their leader is a giant of a man with gleaming fangs. The troops all wear the standard of a single red rose, and many of them also have bared fangs. The second-in-command is familiar. He's Roderigo.

The leader bellows to his troops: "Destroy them, my hearties, but leave at least one alive for torture!"

Roderigo shouts, "Surrender, you traitorous dogs! My Lord Hardestadt will spare you if you surrender now!"

The characters can try to defend themselves from the onslaught. If Paul did not get his job with the aid of the characters, he is still conscious and fights to repel the invaders. But his bad leg prevents him from dodging properly, and the characters watch in horror as he is struck down, his organs spilling over the marble floor.

If the characters try to flee, they are easy targets for troops who lie in ambush along all escape routes. The characters see the other guests, now turned to vampires, die all around them. During the fighting, they hear Roderigo say to the troops, "Try to keep as many alive as possible."

Any characters who are not Dominated may try to talk their way out of the fight. Roderigo seems very sympathetic. He accepts surrenders without Hardestadt's approval, and then pleads their case to Hardestadt in the midst of the battle. On Roderigo's recommendation, Hardestadt accepts their surrenders, especially if the characters promise to reveal what they know of Giovanni and the conspirators.

Surrendered characters will be chained immediately. Hardestadt says "We shall talk further when we reach my castle." Award an extra experience point to the unDominated characters who implore that the other guests be spared as well. Hardestadt will decide to spare them on the characters' recommendation. (He'll end up sparing them anyway, but this gives the players a stronger sense of involvement.)

The Storyteller should be try not to destroy the characters, but make sure they are rendered unconscious. Still, if someone meets the Final Death, too bad. They can come back as one of the other victims.

Wrapping Up Act I

Once the characters are pacified, Roderigo insists that they be kept alive, and Hardestadt ultimately decides not to destroy the new vampires. Instead he has Roderigo and his men chain them and take them back to his lair for questioning. The remaining guests (the non-player characters) are completely destroyed, except Marianna, who cannot be found. Most of Giovanni's household staff and soldiers are also killed. If Paul got his job with the characters' help, he is beaten but alive.

The curtain falls on Act I with the characters unconscious or surrendered.

The Conspirators

Claudius Giovanni

Clan: Giovanni

Generation: 5th

Embrace: 1035 (born 988)

Apparent Age: Late 40s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Hagglng 5, Intrigue 6, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Public Speaking 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 5, Melee 4, Ride 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 4, Finance 4, Kindred Lore 3, Law 5, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Politics 4

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Dominate 5, Necromancy 5, Obfuscate 3, Potence 2

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Elder Status 2, Herd 6, Influence 6, Military Force 3, Resources 6, Retainers 4

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

Humanity: 4

Willpower: 8

Derangement: Obsessed with power.

Image: A short, stout man draped in elegantly tailored clothes and wearing a large skull pendant.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a hearty, powerful man who knows that he will soon have more power than others could ever dream of. You enjoy your own witty *bon mots*, and you constantly grandstand in front of others. You have no pity or respect for those who cannot take care of themselves.

Marchettus the Bold

Clan: Brujah

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1234 (born 1198)

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 2, Intimidation 4, Throwing 4

Skills: Blind Fighting 3, Etiquette 2, Fast-Draw 4, Melee 4, Ride 5, Stealth 3, Torture 4, Traps 3

Knowledges: Clan Knowledge 3, Kindred Lore 2, Military Science 5

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



Knowledges: Area Knowledge 1, Gypsy Lore 3, Kindred Lore 2, Lupine Lore 3

Disciplines: Animalism 6, Celerity 2, Fortitude 2, Protean 4

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Elder Status 1, Herd 3

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Humanity: 4

Willpower: 9

Notes: Her extra level of Animalism makes her extremely attractive to animals.

Image: A tall, sinewy woman wearing a traveling cloak and man's breeches.

Roleplaying Hints: Like most Gangrel, you adore fresh air and loathe the squalid buildings most people insist on spending time within. You talk rapturously of the joys of the kill, tracking, herbalism and other such matters, but you have no patience with any subject not relating to the wilds. You often growl, purr and interject other animal noises into your conversation.

Lady Theophana

Clan: Malkavian

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1173 (born 1157)

Apparent Age: Mid-teens

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 5, Mimicry 5, Poetic Expression 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Dancing 3, Debate 3, Etiquette 5, Herbalism 3, Melee 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Art History 4, Kindred Lore 2, Literature 4, Theology 3

Disciplines: Auspex 6, Dementation 5, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 3

Backgrounds: Age 2, Contacts 5, Elder Generation 4, Elder Status 1, Resources 3

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

Humanity: 3

Willpower: 7

Derangement: Obsession (insanity), among others

Notes: Her extra level of Auspex lets her communicate telepathically.

Image: A slender, tall woman-child, with waist-length blonde hair. She wears a torn, soiled, silken gown and a decayed floral arrangement in her hair.

Roleplaying Hints: You long to delve into the minds of all those around you, picking them apart in the search for the sweetmeats of madness that lie within. You do and say anything to extract these morsels, laughing gleefully at the delightful insanity your antics releases onto the all-too-sane world.

Matron Violetta

Clan: Nosferatu

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1078 (born ?)

Apparent Age: 70 or older

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

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

Skills: Blind Fighting 2, Etiquette 4, Melee 4, Stealth 7, Traps 5

Knowledges: City Secrets (Vienna) 4, Kindred Lore 3, Sewer Lore 5

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 6, Potence 2, Thaumaturgy 4 (Path of Corruption 4)

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Elder Status 1, Influence 4, Resources 3

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Humanity: 4

Willpower: 8

Notes: Her extra level of Obfuscate allows her to make her mind invisible to telepaths.

Image: A frighteningly ugly woman whose face is only partly hidden under a thick gray leper's cloak and hood. However, she wears a full face mask with ragged eye-holes and a smelly wet spot in front of her mouth. Hideous, leprous scabs can be seen around her eyes.

Roleplaying Hints: Your rough, slightly muffled voice disgusts most listeners. Perhaps they are imagining pustules breaking within their own mouths, perpetually leaking foul fluids onto their tongues and lips. You loathe this attitude and all the falsities exterior beauty allows. You believe true purity of the soul is only attainable when such unhealthy frivolities are stripped away.

Sire Wenceslas

Clan: Toreador

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1032 (born 969)

Apparent Age: Early 60s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 3, Artistic Expression 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Style 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Dancing 5, Debate 4, Etiquette 5, Falconry 5, Melee 3, Music 6, Ride 2, Stealth 4



Knowledges: Architecture 4, Art History 5, Kindred Lore 2, Literature 5

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Dominate 2, Fortitude 1, Presence 6

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Elder Status 1, Resources 5, Retainers 6

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Humanity: 4

Willpower: 8

Derangement: Pedophilia

Notes: His sixth level of Presence means he can create feelings similar to the Blood Bond in people while he is near them.

Image: A stern-faced old man dressed in a royal purple tunic, leggings and feathered cap, and wearing copious amounts of elegant, expensive jewelry.

Roleplaying Hints: You constantly press those with whom you speak, bullying and flattering in turn. You particularly enjoy the company of young children. Their physical and spiritual purity excites your interest and aesthetic appetites in a way no other beauty does. However, you search for true artistry in all things, demanding it of others. You deal harshly with all those who disappoint you.

Lord Casmir

Clan: Tremere

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1097 (born 1037)

Apparent Age: About 60

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Instruction 5, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Debate 6, Etiquette 3, Melee 2, Ride 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Alchemy 5, Biology 3, Kindred Lore 4, Faerie Lore 2, Metallurgy 4, Naturalist 5, Occult 6

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 4, Thaumaturgy 5 (Lure of Flames 4, Weather Control 3, Movement of the Mind 2)

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Elder Status 1, Resources 4, Retainers 3

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

Humanity: 6

Willpower: 7

Image: A portly man with a large white beard, wearing a black robe with silver trim.

Roleplaying Hints: Your eyes and voice radiate an extraordinary intensity, one others seldom expect from a man of your comfortable build. You adore the complex

paths of black magic, especially the infinitely corrupting sacrifices and other tortures required in such rites. You have no patience for those who do not share your interest in corruption and power, yet you jealously guard your knowledge of the dark paths from all save your Blood Bound progeny.

Lady Jadviga Almanov of Bohemia

Clan: Ventrue

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1223 (born 1186)

Apparent Age: Late 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Diplomacy 2, Dodge 4, Intimidation 2, Sense Deception 3

Skills: Dancing 4, Debate 3, Etiquette 3, Falconry 3, Fast-Talk 5, Lip Reading 2, Melee 2, Ride 4, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Alchemy 2, Clan Knowledge 4, Kindred Lore 2, Law 4, Metallurgy 2, Occult 3, Politics 5

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

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Elder Status 1, Influence 4, Resources 4, Status 3

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

Humanity: 5

Willpower: 8

Image: A heavyset woman with dark red hair who always dresses in long, black gowns.

Roleplaying Hints: You respect power wielded with authority, and you feel that you have both the skill and the temerity to rise to a position of true leadership in the Ventrue. As your current mission shows, you are not unwilling to take risks to achieve your goals, and you have little respect for others not willing to do the same.

Lord Leopold Valdemar

Clan: Lasombra

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1113 (born 1074)

Apparent Age: about 40

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 6, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Interrogation 3, Intrigue 6, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 3, Melee 3, Ride 2, Stealth 5, Torture 4, Traps 3

Knowledges: Finance 4, Kindred Lore 2, Literature 3, Occult 3

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 2, Obtenebration 7, Potence 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Elder Status 1, Influence 6, Resources 5, Retainers 6

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Humanity: 3

Willpower: 7

Notes: His extra levels of Obtenebration allow him to use the darkness to suck blood from others and give his own shadow substance.

Image: A bald, middle-aged man dressed like a prosperous merchant in brocaded velvet.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a hearty fellow, who does many things to excess — even things that would give other Kindred “nightmares” for months on end. You seldom, if ever, give credence to the idea that limits should be applied to your behavior.

Lord Mieczyslaw

Clan: Tzimisce

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1066 (born 1042)

Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 6, Wits 5

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

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

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Falconry 3, Herbalism 3, Melee 3, Ride 2, Stealth 3, Torture 6

Knowledges: Kindred Lore 3, Law 4, Medicine 5, Naturalist 4, Occult 5

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 4, Dominate 3, Presence 1, Vicissitude 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Elder Status 1, Resources 5, Status 3

Humanity: 2

Willpower: 8

Derangement: Compulsion (torture)

Image: A handsome young man with high cheekbones, wearing a simple black monk's robe with white surplice.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a blunt-spoken man who believes in one thing, and one thing only. Power. Compromise is not in your vocabulary. The weak must be kept that way, and the strong have an obligation to remind their lessers of their lowly position in the world. You particularly enjoy using torture to make your points, and often get carried away with such activities. Even in simple conversation you often find yourself wishing to push one long nail into the soft flesh of a servant, or otherwise exercise your immense power.

Lord Bajazet Al-Nasir

Clan: Assamite

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1011 (born 976)

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 6, Athletics 1, Brawl 5, Dodge 6, Scan 4, Subterfuge 3, Throwing 5

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Blind Fighting 4, Etiquette 2, Fast-Draw 3, Melee 5, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Kindred Lore 2, Theology 3, Toxicology 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Celerity 2, Dominate 1, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 4, Presence 2, Quietus 6

Backgrounds: Clan Prestige 4, Contacts 5, Elder Status 1

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

Humanity: 4

Willpower: 9

Image: A dark-skinned man with angular, chiseled features, dressed in fine, silk Turkish robes.

Roleplaying Hints: You speak softly yet quite animatedly when in conversation with others. Your movements are always quick and silent. You enjoy your dance with death, and respect only those who can face death with cleverness and panache.

Lady Amisa

Clan: Followers of Set

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1073 (born 1049)

Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 5, Brawling 1, Dodge 2, Interrogation 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Masquerade 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Blind Fighting 2, Etiquette 2, Fast-Draw 4, Hypnotism 3, Ride 1, Stealth 5

Knowledges: Kindred Lore 3, Naturalist 3, Theology 2, Toxicology 5

Disciplines: Dominate 3, Obfuscate 4, Presence 2, Serpents 6

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Elder Status 1, Herd 4, Resources 4, Retainers 5

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Humanity: 3

Willpower: 9

Notes: With her extra level of Serpents, Amisa can tempt people to act out their darkest fantasies merely by talking to them about it.

Image: A small, swarthy woman draped in silks of foreign design and an elaborate gold headpiece.

Roleplaying Hints: You often remind others of the spider or the snake, fascinating and extremely dangerous. Even in your most casual conversations you instinctively search for moral weaknesses in others. You enjoy leading others onto the well-worn paths of corruption, a task which is so often all too easy to accomplish. You especially enjoy laying bare the corruption of the "holy" monks and priests who infest this area of the world.

Gabrin

Clan: Ravnos

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1195 (born 1167)

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Leadership 2, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3, Throwing 6

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Dancing 3, Etiquette 2, Fast-Talk 6, Gambling 3, Melee 2, Sleight of Hand 3, Stealth 5

Knowledges: Gypsy Lore 4, Kindred Lore 2

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Chimerstry 5, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Herd 3, Resources 3, Retainers 5

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

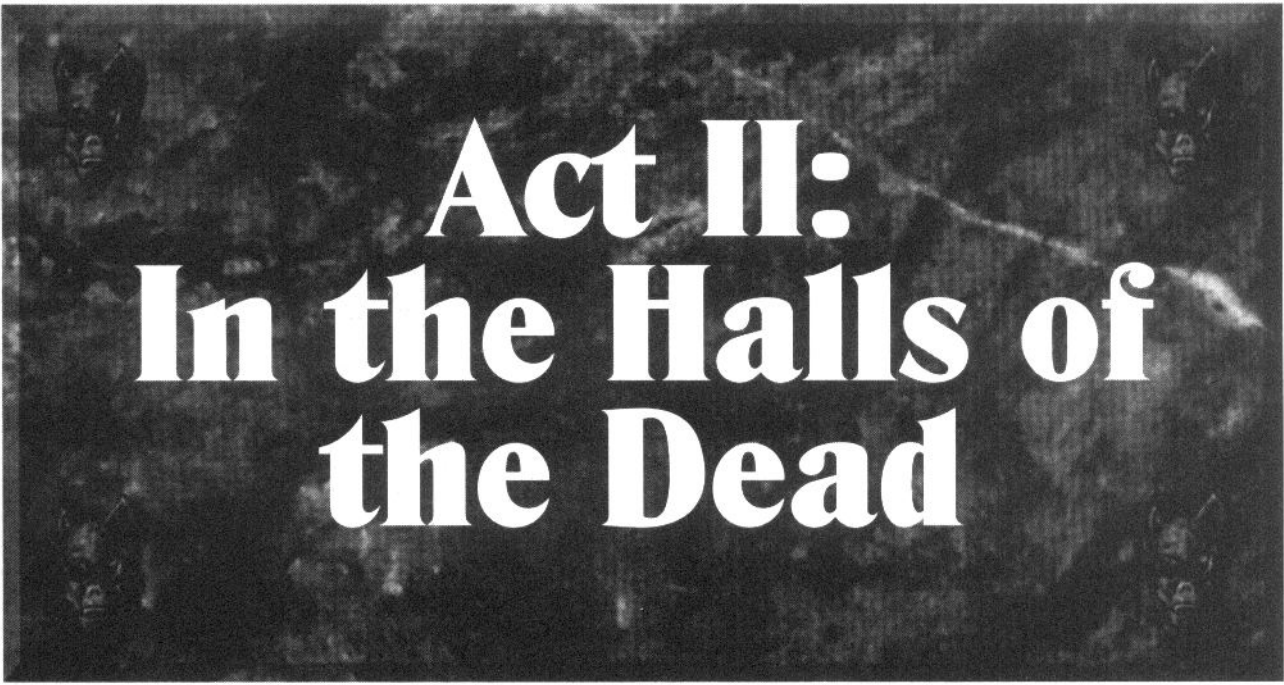
Humanity: 7

Willpower: 7

Image: A short young man dressed as a Gypsy, wearing lots of flashy gold jewelry and a coarse tunic and leggings.

Roleplaying Hints: Your manner is smooth and welcoming, and you almost always have a ready smile on your face — even when carving someone's heart out. You care little for non-Gypsy conventions of clothing or manners, and thus stand out almost everywhere you go.





Act II: In the Halls of the Dead

*The smile that breaks so gently belies a troubled head,
Like a voice that holds the secrets of a life you might have led.
Eyes with pale indifference in danger and in grace
But the glance that knows the death-knell left its shadow on your face.
In the deep, enduring darkness as your loyal friends go down
Touched by the violent crown til their hunter's hunted down.*
— Donagh Long, "The Shadow"

In this second of three Acts, the characters are interrogated, almost killed, and saved by a very timely intervention by the mysterious Ravnos, Durga Syn. She requires that the characters spy on their former masters. They visit the secret lair of their sires, and also visit the mysterious Cappadocius to speak to him, deliver a message and possibly warn him of his childer's treachery.

Scene 1: The Interrogation

Cruelty would be delicious if one could only find some sort of cruelty that didn't really hurt.

— George Bernard Shaw, *Heartbreak House*

Journey in Chains

Once Hardestadt and his fellow Founders have searched the rest of the manse and determined that the other conspirators have fled, the Ventrue elder orders his minions to chain the characters (most of whom are probably unconscious at this juncture) and bring them along for questioning. After all, Hardestadt wishes leisure to make the most of his little interrogation, and he has a nearby castle prepared for just such activity.

Roderigo places the characters in one of the same large, shuttered carriages he used to bring them to the castle in Act I, Scene 1. This time he closes the heavy shutters. It is clear that the carriage is specially crafted to allow not even a shred of daylight to penetrate within. Roderigo says, "I regret that this journey will not be as comfortable as the first." The characters remain shackled for the lengthy, very rough journey, which takes the rest of the night and all of the next day to complete.

As an added precaution, Hardestadt places three of his strongest, heavily Dominated ghoulish soldiers in the carriage. Each is instructed to run the others through should any begin to behave against orders (for example, attempting to unchain a prisoner).

As yet another precaution, the soldiers are also provided with "bleeding sticks:" five-foot-long metal rods ending in sharply honed knives. The soldiers are to drain the captives — just enough to keep them groggy, yet not enough to bleed them dry. Each of the soldiers has experience in this area (on humans and vampires alike), and they are expert at judging just how much to bleed a prisoner to keep him quiescent and alive. They carefully save the

blood in stoppered jugs. If any characters managed to retain their free will in the last scene and surrendered to Hardestadt, they will not be bled unless they cause trouble. If all else fails, the guards can open a window and flood the carriage with deadly sunlight.

Should any of the characters be awake for the journey, they may attempt to talk to the guards. The men are quite taciturn, however, and will say nothing to the new Kindred save that they faithfully serve Hardestadt. If the characters press too hard with questions, the soldiers will more vigorously apply their bleeding sticks to the offending prisoners.

The journey is bumpy and hot, but most of the characters will be asleep or still in shock at their sudden Embrace and its result. Early the following evening the carriages arrive at their destination, Castle Deverick.

Castle Deverick

Castle Deverick is a small, twisted fortress clinging tenaciously to a steep hillside. Hardestadt uses this castle as his headquarters when away from his native Germany. It is the ancestral home of the Devericks, of whom the current family head is Baron Rudolph Deverick, a bleary-eyed, dissipated mortal completely Dominated by Hardestadt.

When the darkened carriages pull up to the castle's rear portal, the still-disoriented characters are dragged out of their cramped quarters and escorted briskly inside by a dozen guards with brightly blazing torches. The characters do not know if it is night or day (it is evening).

Should any of the characters attempt to make a break for freedom, the guards will quickly swing their torches at them. If a character somehow manages to escape the circle of guards, one or two of Hardestadt's Kindred compatriots should easily find and recapture the runaways (most probably the Gangrel Milov Petrenkov and the Nosferatu Josef von Bauren).

Once the characters are inside the castle, they are quickly escorted down a narrow, winding stairway leading to the deepest reaches of the structure. Monitored by Hardestadt and the Tremere Mistress Fanchon, the guards place the characters in a large, airless cell strewn with moldering straw and near-petrified feces. Once chained to the wall, the characters are left to ponder their fate until the following evening.

Any characters still unconscious at this point, from the events at the Giovanni manse or from being bled excessively by overzealous guards, will wake up shortly after dawn. Although the cell is on the lowest level of the castle, there is a small slit of a window high up in the wall across from the characters, running the length of the cell. (The cell is on the outermost wall of the castle.)

As the morning progresses a slim beam of sunlight knifes through the room's dusty air. Although at first the beam lands far above the characters' heads, as noon approaches it slowly inches down the wall, in a malevolent

wave, towards them. Although they are not particularly endangered by the beam, this should be very disturbing to the characters, and they may need to make Courage rolls. The sunbeam will fade and disappear shortly before noon, stopping its progress a good five feet from the cell's floor. Of course, taller characters will have been forced to slump down uncomfortably in their bonds for an hour or two, but they can easily avoid harm (although the players have no idea where exactly the beam will stop).

The characters are free to talk in whispers throughout the long, long day. Should they speak any louder, or make any other sounds, the guards will yell for them to be quiet, "or else we'll take the fire to you, you Hell-damned bloodsuckers!" If the characters persist in their noise several guards will enter the cell armed with torches. They will immediately shove a torch into the belly of the loudest character, charring her for one Health Level of aggravated damage.

A Long Day's Night

After the long day finally ends and the moon has risen over Castle Deverick, Hardestadt and his fellow Founders again confront the hapless characters. Slamming the door open to announce his arrival, Hardestadt strides smugly into the cell to examine his prisoners. He bows ironically, saying, "Well, well, well. Behold the grand conspirators. You will not live to plot against your betters again. The punishment for your crime against the Traditions of Caine is a slow, agonizing death by sunlight. But if you truthfully answer my questions, I can offer you a quick and painless death instead. A truly admirable offer, and one I suggest you accept."

Hardestadt's speech will likely baffle the characters, since they are not conspirators and know nothing of the Traditions of Caine. If any of the characters attempts to assert her innocence Hardestadt roars with laughter, even as he slaps her across the face with the back of his glove, a heavy gauntlet encrusted with razor-sharp metal spikes. "You conspirators are such pathetically amusing little liars!" he finishes with a chuckle.

Walking down the line, Hardestadt solicitously comments on each character's predicament. "My, but those oozing pustules must take some getting used to — but you wear them well, really you do.... Oh dear, were my guards just a trifle overzealous when they drained your blood? Perhaps you should have stood up to greet the sun this past morning and had done with it?" And so on.

After he has dispensed with initial pleasantries (cruelly slashing any character who talks back to him across the face or neck with the back of his spiked glove), Hardestadt selects the first victim for his interrogation. Hardestadt, with the other Founders following along curiously, will take the character to a nearby torture chamber for interrogation.

The Storyteller may either conduct each interrogation in full view of the players not participating in the scene, or separately, away from the others. If she chooses



the latter option, it is more likely to increase tension among the nervous players (and their characters), but she must then be certain that each interrogation does not drag on for too long lest the waiting players grow restless or bored. A third possibility is to have players whose characters have finished their interrogations take on the roles of the other Founders, and help interrogate the rest of the characters, as described below.

Advanced Interrogation Techniques

If the Storyteller wishes, and feels her players are up to the challenge, she may have them take on the roles of Founders over the course of the interrogation. By doing this, the players will participate far more actively in a scene in which their own characters are essentially at the mercy of others. While playing an active part is always more interesting than sitting around waiting for others to decide your fate, here the players will have to play individuals who want to harm or destroy their own characters. Not all players are willing or able to actively roleplay such a contradictory part when it is their own characters' fate that hangs in the balance.

If the Storyteller goes with this option, she should have Hardestadt choose as his first victim the character whose player she believes is the most mature roleplayer in her troupe. She should then roleplay out the interrogation

scene in private with the player. Once Hardestadt has finished his initial interrogation of the character, the Storyteller should assign one of the other Founder characters to that player, and explain quickly what the character is like. The Founder is to help Hardestadt in his interrogations. The Storyteller should then have Hardestadt collect the next best roleplayer's character for interrogation, and so on.

The interrogations should get more and more interesting as other players take on the Founder roles. When selecting the order, the Storyteller should be sure to place anyone who she feels is not an experienced roleplayer in the middle. That way, the player can get a good feel for what the others are doing with their temporary Founder characters, but also gets a chance to participate as a Founder herself.

Once the initial interrogations are over, and the Founders are arguing with each other and Durga Syn, the Storyteller may again want to have the players take on the role of some or all of the Founders (save Hardestadt). However, this part of the scene calls for even more advanced roleplaying as the players are called upon to debate their characters' fates. The Storyteller should be certain to hand each player a card or piece of paper with his Founder's debating style and initial goal (Blood Bonding or death in most cases) on it. Use the handy Players' Notes on page 62. The Storyteller should also inform the players that they must follow her instructions if she passes them a note

during the scene. This way she can still steer the overall course of the debate should the action begin to get away from her.

Live-Action Notes

This scene makes an excellent live-action piece. Simply conduct the initial interrogations in separate areas, and then have your group come together for the final debate between the Founders and Durga Syn. In order to keep the action going, the Storyteller may wish to have a different Narrator in charge of each individual interrogation, so that there is no lag time while players wait for the Storyteller portraying Hardestadt to get around to them.

The final debate scene can get quite interesting when each role (including that of the characters) is being portrayed simultaneously. However, the Storyteller should be certain that all Narrators know what the final outcome of the debate will be. Of course, the poor player characters will have to sweat out the argument over their fate....

Individual Interrogations

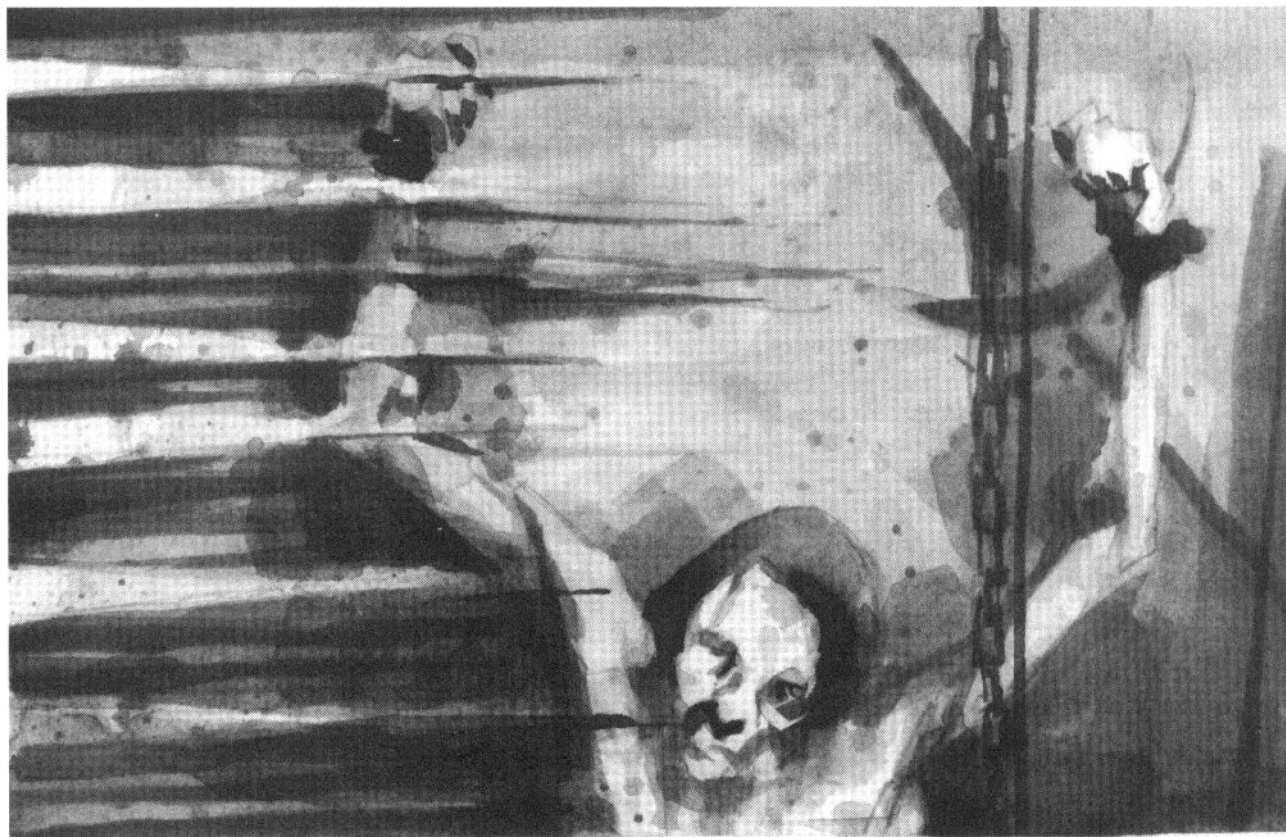
During each intimate, individual interrogation, Hardestadt will make an effort to determine his subjects' inner terrors. In order to do so, he will judiciously utilize a variety of torture implements, all of which are displayed within the claustrophobic confines of the torture chamber. Also in the chamber, sitting on a small stool in the corner, is a wizened old woman in heavy skirts and shawls. This is

Durga Syn, the ancient Ravnos who as Synovea observed the characters while they were still naïve mortals waiting to be taken to the Giovanni manse. She sits quietly throughout, observing all with her preternaturally bright eyes.

During the interrogations, Hardestadt vacillates between a quiet, almost tender questioning style and an all-out roar. Although his roar is frightening, he inflicts the most pain on his victims when he is whispering sensually. Other Founders may assist with the interrogation (particularly if the players are taking on their roles), but Hardestadt is always the chief interrogator.

While interrogating his victims, Hardestadt will demand over and over again to know the details of the conspirators' plot and the identities of their fellow conspirators. The characters can actually provide Hardestadt with some names (if they manage to remember anything from the hellish dinner party); however, they know nothing of the conspirators' plot — save that there is one — and can tell their interrogator little or nothing on this score. They may remember that Giovanni and company conspired against someone called Japheth Cappadocius, and wanted Hardestadt to remain ignorant of something unspecified.

If a character makes up a story about the details of the "plot," Durga Syn will casually toss a pair of dice onto the stone floor, which come up snake eyes, indicating the lie. Hardestadt will immediately fly into a rage at the character's effrontery, applying an even greater torture as punishment for lying.



Tzimisce Pain

If there is a Tzimisce character in the group, he was required by Lord Mieczyslaw to torture a man during his harrowing. Hardestadt now brings in the man that the character was required to torment, saying, "You tortured one of my spies, witless fool!" He asks the man, "Is this the vicious dog who harmed you?" The man says "Yes." If the character only tortured him when he was Dominated, the man will add: "He had to be forced to do so." Hardestadt will dismiss him. However, if the character hurt the man of his own free will, Hardestadt allows the man to torture the character.

If the character killed the man, Hardestadt says, "You tortured one of my spies to death. Would that I could call up his spirit for vengeance. I shall take delight in your interrogation." And he does so.

If there is not a Tzimisce in the group, this same idea can be used for any of the other characters who was called upon to injure a servant in some way.

Group Interrogation

At the finish of the individual interrogations, Hardestadt will have all the characters brought into the torture chamber and chained to the walls. If they have continued to insist on their innocence, he gruffly asks Durga Syn: "Old one, what do you make of this rabble which has provided such poor entertainment this night?"

Durga Syn carefully approaches each character in turn, clucking and muttering to herself in a language none of the characters understands. When she reaches the first character she asks "if the little babe knows aught of the details of a conspiracy against the Cappadocian? Tell old Durga Syn true now, tell her true, my dove." Once the character has answered (probably in the negative), Durga Syn suddenly lashes out with one twisted fingernail, deeply scratching the character's hand or cheek. She then scoops a few drops of blood onto her nail, sniffs, and then dabs a drop or two of the fluid onto her tongue.

After she repeats this ritual with every character, Durga Syn turns to Hardestadt and says: "Well, my young giant, it seems none of your little chicks is a rooster! They are blank slates, *tabulae rasae*, knowing nothing of our world. Why, they don't even have the sense to recognize that they have been hatched anew — let alone what to do with their new wings!"

Hardestadt disgustedly tosses a bloody riding crop to the ground before casually reaching out and drawing a nearby servant to him for a quick feeding. As the servant collapses at Hardestadt's feet, the Ventrue sighs wearily. "Then let's have done with it. Off to the roof with them I say! Sunrise is only a few short hours away, and we have much yet to accomplish this evening."

"But Milord Hardestadt," Mistress Fanchon interrupts smoothly, "I do not believe in wasting resources, even ones as...trifling...as these. I would be happy to Blood Bond each of these to myself so that they may do us no harm. They could then serve us, helping to track down their errant sires who have knowingly broken the Traditions of Caine."

Hardestadt laughs loudly at Mistress Fanchon's suggestion, and several of the other Founders join him. "Do you think this night's exertions have knocked the brains from my body, Mistress Fanchon? No, no, you shall not Blood Bond these neonates to yourself, Tremere. If their masters come calling for them they could betray us!"

"They are powerful though, Hardestadt. They would make most excellent slaves," Josef comments, picking absently at a particularly pustulant wart.

"They are ignorant and could unmask us all," Rafael says, his voice dripping with disdain. Then he softens, points to the youngest or most attractive male and says, "Although I could be persuaded to take this one for a slave."

"Perhaps I could take a few and Blood Bond them to me! They would be my children, my own dear hearts!" Camilla chimes in rapturously. "Then I could eat of their flesh, drink of their marrow, and you shall both be satisfied!" She finishes gaily.

After a slight pause, the debate begins anew with Hardestadt, Rafael and Milov arguing for the characters' deaths. Mistress Fanchon and Josef von Bauren favor Blood Bonding the neonates, while Adana de Sforza remains undecided and Camilla leaps from one side to the other of the debate.

The Storyteller should conduct this argument for as long as the tension builds (it will undoubtedly go on longer if the players are taking on the Founders' roles). The characters can interject comments, but none of the Founders will take their prisoners' feelings into account on this or any other matter.

Ancient Intervention

Just as the debate is reaching a head, and tempers are really flaring, Durga Syn speaks with a quiet authority that temporarily silences the room. It goes like this:

Founder 1: "You are a blind fool!"

Founder 2: "You are the fool!"

Founder 1: "I say you are the fool!"

Durga Syn: "Fools all!"

Pause.

"Do not interrupt us, ancient mother," Mistress Fanchon warns.

"I warn you not to overreach, Gypsy," Hardestadt says. "You are here at our forbearance."

Durga Syn continues undaunted. "You waste even the middling opportunities and precious resources God hath set before you. Do you not see that cowering before you are the perfect spies?"



"But they are unknown and undoubtedly weak! They could turn on us at any time, old one!" Hardestadt scoffs.

"And risk facing the wrath of this newly minted assemblage of the legions of all the Kindred? They would have to be madder than the conspirators, who are barely strong enough to stand against you when in hiding."

After a brief pause, Hardestadt continues in a more reflective vein. "But why would the conspirators even trust these pathetic creatures? Were I the traitor Claudius Giovanni, I would strike them down ere they crossed my threshold."

"What if he does? If they die, they die, and you lose nothing you would not lose in killing them yourself," Durga Syn replies.

"You are mad as a Malkavian!"

"Mayhap I am madder yet. But I have foreseen that these unworthy fledglings have an important role to play in our tangled schemes. Behold, an egg newly laid at dawn!" Durga Syn brings forth a large hen's egg with a flourish.

Walking once more down the line of prisoners, Durga Syn passes the egg over each character's head and bids them kiss it. Taking up a small bowl, the Methuselah cracks the egg open and pours out the contents. Even Hardestadt looks faintly surprised to see blood spilling from the innocent egg. "I am not unskilled in the arts of my people, and I can tell you that this is a sign that these chicks are meant to play a part in this long and bloody drama. Just what that part is, has yet to be seen. But they must be allowed to play it!"

Hardestadt and the other Founders look long and hard at the curdled blood and egg shells in Durga Syn's bowl. Finally Hardestadt speaks. "Your Gypsy divinations have not been wrong yet, but I do not fully trust you. Still, the hour grows early, and I weary of this. You had best be right about so crucial a matter, ancient one. So be it. We shall allow the craven neonates their lives, so that they may serve as dogs tracking down those who would break the Traditions of Caine."

Hardestadt turns to the still-chained characters and fixes each of them with his chilling gaze as he speaks. "This evening, the fifth day of April, 1444, I declare Giovanni and his fellow conspirators anathema! Never more will the other children of Caine give them succor. They shall be hunted to the ends of the Earth, and where they are found they shall be slain in fire for their sacrilege!" He smashes his armored fist into his mailed hand.

"And you shall be our dogs! You shall hunt down your fathers and mothers, destroying those who unlawfully gave birth to you. And if you do not, you shall join your begetters as anathema, and no devil or god known to Kindred or kine shall save you from my wrath!"

He turns on his heel and stalks from the room. His retinue follow him. When they are gone, Durga Syn smiles and says, "May you justify my faith in you. Return and tell me of your efforts." She then leaves as well. The room is empty.

A moment later, Roderigo enters with two servants. He says "Well done, lads and lasses." He begins to unchain them. "I'm rather glad he spared you. I feared when I delivered you to that hellish place that I should never see you again. Now, let's get you cleaned up."

The servants bring buckets of warm water and fresh clothing into the cell, and help the characters clean themselves. They are covered in blood and dirt — unfit company indeed. Roderigo binds any remaining wounds and gives the characters new clothes to wear. The clothes are fit for tradespeople. Nobles in the party will have to dress down for now, and peasants dress up.

When the characters are clothed, Roderigo leads them through the catacombs of the castle to a room with a long table. He feeds them human blood from great casks to slake their ravening Hunger. During this process, he will answer questions. If the characters do not ask questions, he begins by saying, "I must tell you what you have become. You no longer live. You are now among the ranks of the Damned. You are the walking dead. You have the powers of Hell at your command, and, unless you are destroyed, you will continue forever. According to some, you have forsaken your soul and cannot reach salvation. According to others...well...the Kindred have many rumors..."

He answers all the standard questions about vampires, including information on torpor, stakes, Blood Bonding, sunlight, ghouls, the clans and creating progeny. He knows nothing of Gehenna or Golconda, or any esoteric wisdom from the *Book of Nod*. Note that the Camarilla does not exist yet. He'll say that Hardestadt seeks to create a confederation of all vampires, to protect against inter-clan fighting and resist the Inquisition. If asked about himself, he answers, "I am not undead, and I pray God never to be one. But I serve them, and live on their blood, which gives me the strength of the Devil himself. I am content that the blood does not poison my soul, and that my Savior keeps me yet."

This is also the point when the characters begin to realize the strength of their new powers. If the players have not already assigned points to their Disciplines, they should do so now.

After Roderigo finishes telling the characters what it is to walk the Earth as one of the Kindred, he invites them to sleep through the approaching day in a large, underground common room filled with cots. He makes sure the characters are tucked in and says, "We can talk more tomorrow evening. Sleep now, and I pray it be the untroubled sleep of the angels."

Any character who tries to sneak out will have to face ghoulish guards who rouse the Founders.

Durga Syn's Egg

Theatrical Storytellers can easily add drama to Durga Syn's mysterious prophesies by taking a little bit of time before the gaming session to create a "bloody egg" of their own. When Durga Syn passes the egg over the characters' heads, the Storyteller takes an egg from a small basket she places on the table, passing it over her players' heads and cracking it open just as Durga Syn finishes her prophesying. As the bloody fluid spills out into the bowl, the Storyteller can enjoy her players' shock. Of course, this effect works even better when this scene is done as a live-action event.

In order to make the "bloody egg," the Storyteller needs to obtain a few large eggs and some red dye, fake blood or tomato juice. Carefully poke a hole in the large end of the egg wide enough to allow you to pierce in the yolk and pour a large amount of red food color (the kind used to dye Easter eggs) into the egg. Once you have squirted in a fair amount, place a bit of white tape over the hole, painting the tape with typewriter correcting fluid if necessary to hide your handiwork.

If you want to go all out on this trick, you must remove at least the egg whites (and perhaps the yolk as well) from the egg. You can do this by poking a tiny hole in the small end of the egg with a needle. Make a slightly larger hole in the wide end and, holding the egg over a sink or bowl, blow into the small hole. This forces the white out the larger hole at the opposite end. Once you have some space inside, put a scrap of white tape over the small hole and turn the egg over. Wiping the large end clean, take an oral syringe or eye dropper and fill it with tomato juice or fake blood (you may have to carefully widen the hole to do this). Carefully drip or squeeze the "blood" into the egg until it is full, then cover the hole with white tape and use typewriter correction fluid to cover the tape.

You'll probably have to practice this several times before you get it right, and be certain to check the effect of a prepared egg before "show time." If possible, only bring one prepared egg in the basket. That way if one of the characters wants to break open another egg and catch Durga Syn (and you!) at her trick they won't be able to do so. If you make certain to have the large end of the prepared egg facing you during the game, you should be able to tell which one to grab.

The Founders

The following Founders are the Kindred who capture the characters at the Giovanni manse, and then participate in their interrogation at Castle Deverick. Although other Founders are working to establish a vampiric organization, these are the ones placed in charge of stopping the conspiracy against Japheth Cappadocius.

Each Founder's debating style and initial position on the characters' fates is also given. If the Storyteller chooses to have the players take on the roles of some of the Founders during the interrogation, be sure to give each player a card with their Founder's initial position and debating style written on it.

Hardestadt

Clan: Ventrue

Generation: 5th

Embrace: 947 (born 904)

Apparent Age: Early 40s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Intimidation 6, Leadership 5, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Etiquette 3, Melee 6, Ride 5, Security 2, Stealth 3, Torture 3

Knowledges: History 2, Kindred Lore 4, Law 4, Linguistics 4, Literature 5, Occult 2, Politics 6

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 4, Dominate 5, Fortitude 4, Potence 4, Presence 5, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Allies 7, Contacts 6, Elder Status 5, Herd 5, Influence 4, Military Force 4, Resources 6, Retainers 7

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Humanity: 2

Willpower: 9

Image: A tall, strapping man with dark hair and intense eyes.

Roleplaying Hints: You are an arrogant man who accords others the respect due their station in life. Of course, almost all others are far beneath your vaunted status, and you treat them accordingly. Your manner tends to vacillate from one extreme to another, from quiet politeness to raging insults, from tender questions to vicious threats.

Adana de Sforza

Clan: Brujah

Generation: 5th

Embrace: 1093 (born 1068)

Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 6, Carousing 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 5, Seduction 3, Streetwise 3, Style 4

Skills: Blind Fighting 2, Dancing 3, Melee 5, Music 2, Ride 2, Stealth 3, Torture 2

Knowledges: Clan Knowledge 3, Kindred Lore 2, Politics 4

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

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Elder Status 1, Herd 3, Influence 3, Military Force 2, Resources 4, Retainers 5

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Humanity: 4

Willpower: 8

Image: A petite, blonde woman with narrow blue eyes and sharp features.

Roleplaying Hints: Change is necessary in all things, and you are most decidedly a force for change in the world. However, you do not believe change need be blind. You often test others by offering up radical statements of all kinds, listening to their reactions with interest. Sometimes you will even go so far as to subtly encourage them to take a position with which you disagree, just so that you can appear the dissenter.

Milov Petrenkov

Clan: Gangrel

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 974 (born 948)

Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 6, Brawl 7, Dodge 4, Intimidation 2, Mimicry 2, Scan 3, Swimming 2

Skills: Animal Ken 6, Animal Training 4, Blind Fighting 2, Herbalism 2, Melee 3, Survival 6

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Carpathian Mountains) 4, Kindred Lore 2, Linguistics 5, Lupine Lore 3

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 1, Celerity 5, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 3, Potence 2, Presence 3, Protean 6

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Elder Status 1, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Humanity: 4

Willpower: 7

Notes: His sixth level of Protean allows him to make his skin as hard as marble, halving the damage he takes in combat.

Image: A slim, dark young man with shaggy brown hair and wide, innocent brown eyes.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a very quiet person—the very image of contained power. Your large eyes take in every movement and sound, and you often recognize far more than others give you credit for. Your world is divided neatly: you are one of the hunters, a vampire, and all other creatures are your rightful prey.

Camilla Banes

Clan: Malkavian

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1063 (born 1029)

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 6, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 6, Intimidation 2, Intrigue 3, Mimicry 2, Subterfuge 3, Ventriloquism 4

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Debate 2, Dancing 2, Etiquette 2, Melee 1, Ride 3, Sleight of Hand 4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Alchemy 2, Occult 3, Faerie Lore 3, Kindred Lore 6, Literature 3, Naturalist 1, Toxicology 3

Disciplines: Auspex 6, Celerity 2, Dominate 5, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 5, Presence 4, Protean 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Elder Status 1, Herd 3, Retainers 2, Status 2

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

Humanity: 5

Willpower: 8

Derangements: Perfectionism, dual personalities (one mothering, the other sadistic).

Notes: Her sixth level of Auspex allows her small glimpses of the future.

Image: An exceedingly tall, rosy-cheeked woman with glittering, dreamy eyes.

Roleplaying Hints: You are by turns beatifically nurturing and violently cruel. A constant stream of images pours through your head: some of you brushing out your children's hair and playing gently with them, others of you taking that same brush and smashing it again and again into their bloody bodies. Both images fill you with horror and glee. This distracting drama often causes you to make strange, seemingly non-sensical statements to others.

Josef von Bauren

Clan: Nosferatu

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1006 (born 943)

Apparent Age: Early 60s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 2, Diplomacy 3, Empathy 3, Leadership 2, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Blind Fighting 4, Debate 3, Meditation 3, Melee 4, Stealth 6

Knowledges: Kindred Lore 3, Occult 3, Sewer Lore 4

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Celerity 1, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 6, Potence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 4, Elder Status 2, Influence 5, Resources 3

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

Humanity: 5

Willpower: 8

Notes: His extra level of Obfuscate lets him hide large inanimate objects.

Image: A stooped, wizened man, no more than four-foot-nine in height with huge, suppurating warts covering most of his skin.

Roleplaying Hints: You never speak in haste, always weighing options before speaking your mind at crucial moments in debates. Your words always carry weight. Above all else, you hate wasting resources, be they gold, Kindred or kine.

Rafael de Corazon

Clan: Toreador

Generation: 5th

Embrace: 1182 (born 1154)

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 7

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Diplomacy 4, Dodge 3, Intrigue 3, Public Speaking 4, Subterfuge 2, Seduction 4, Style 6

Skills: Dancing 2, Etiquette 4, Fast Talk 3, Melee 3, Singing 6, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Art History 7, Kindred Lore 2, Linguistics 2, Literature 3, Occult 4, Politics 1, Theology 3

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

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Elder Status 1, Influence 6, Resources 4, Retainers 5, Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 5, Courage 3

Humanity: 5

Willpower: 9

Derangement: Obsessive vanity

Notes: For more information on Rafael de Corazon, see **Who's Who Among Vampires: Children of the Inquisition**.

Image: A gorgeous, medium-boned man with a mellifluous voice.

Roleplaying Hints: Although your beauty is radiant enough to make other Kindred forget the lost sun, your manner is cold and calculating. However, you are eloquent and adept at influencing others when you so desire. You surround yourself with lesser beauty, but as you are exceedingly vain you loathe the few things and people more beautiful than yourself.

Mistress Fanchon

Clan: Tremere

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1223 (born 1186)

Apparent Age: Late 30s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Diplomacy 2, Dodge 2, Instruction 1, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Dancing 2, Etiquette 2, Falconry 3, Melee 1, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Alchemy 6, Astronomy 5, Kindred Lore 3, History 4, Naturalist 2, Theology 3

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Thaumaturgy 6 (Movement of the Mind 5, Lure of Flames 5, Weather Control 3)

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

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

Humanity: 5

Willpower: 9

Image: A handsome, middle-aged woman with very long, dark hair and bright green eyes.

Roleplaying Hints: You shower the world with your golden words and clever rhetoric. Your words form an oft-mesmerizing shield, which few are skilled enough to penetrate. In contrast to your sparkling conversation, your movements are languid. You aim for control in all things, and you usually succeed.

Player Notes

These can be copied onto index cards for the players' use if they are taking on the roles of Founders in the debate.

Hardestadt: A tall, strapping man with dark hair and intense eyes. Ventrue. Hardestadt believes the characters should be put to death at sunrise. He usually attempts to use his strength of will and conviction to bluster through a debate.

Adana de Sforza: A petite, blonde woman with narrow blue eyes and sharp features. Brujah. Adana has mixed feelings on the characters' fates. She appreciates the desire to rebel, but believes the conspirators have performed poorly. Adana prefers to throw a number of verbal gambits into the debate ring and see who seizes which of her ideas. Once she has determined how most of her fellow debaters feel, she usually chooses the opposing stance.

Camilla Banes: An exceedingly tall, rosy-cheeked woman with glittering, dreamy eyes. Malkavian. Camilla continually fluctuates between a desire to slowly strip the characters' flesh from their yet-living bones, and the wish to Blood Bond them all to her bosom where she can treat them as her children. Camilla has no debating style *per se*, instead conducting her own internal conflict.

Josef von Bauren: A stooped, wizened man, no more than four-foot-nine in height, with huge, suppurating warts covering most of his skin. Nosferatu. Josef would like to Blood Bond the characters if there is a way to do so that will not jeopardize the possibility of a unified vampiric group (the future Camarilla). Josef is a quiet man who always waits until a crucial point in the debate to speak his mind, nudging the argument towards his desired outcome.

Milov Petrenkov: A slim young man with shaggy brown hair and wide, innocent brown eyes. Gangrel. Milov strongly prefers to release the neonates this evening, then hunt them down and kill them in the time-honored fashion. He is a blunt-spoken young man, who expresses himself most elegantly through his body language.

Rafael de Corazon: A gorgeous, medium-boned man with a mellifluous voice. Toreador. Rafael is in favor of killing the characters and having done with them. He believes they are too dangerous to allow to roam about free. The likelihood that they are unwitting dupes is of no concern to him. Rafael speaks eloquently and wittily in debate, using his gorgeous looks to devastating advantage on anyone swayed by such considerations.

Mistress Fanchon: A handsome, middle-aged woman with very long, dark hair and bright green eyes. Tremere. Mistress Fanchon believes that the characters should all be Blood Bound, in particular to her. After all, as a Tremere she is an expert. Mistress Fanchon uses a circular and convoluted debating style, attempting to confuse her opponent with all manner of verbal trickery.



Scene 2: We Are the Revolution

The first duty of a revolutionary is to get away with it.

— Abbie Hoffman, attributed

Marching Orders

The following evening, Roderigo summons the characters and brings them to Hardestadt, who waits for them in a room filled with military maps marked with trade routes and vampiric boundaries.

The Ventrue tells the neonates his plans for them. “You are puny, immature and naïve. However, there is little we can do about these most unattractive qualities. I shall therefore aid you immeasurably in your hunt for the conspirators. Listen closely, for I become...choleric...when I am forced to repeat myself.

“Claudius and his Conspiracy of Isaac meet in any number of places, huddling together to plot and scheme like the scofflaws and vagabonds they are. They think they are safe in their little havens, because they are so adept at scurrying away like rats when their betters come calling,” Hardestadt continues. “Yet, like rats, they seldom fear their own.”

Hardestadt pauses to look at the characters and take a sip of blood from the nearest servant before continuing. “Therefore, you shall present yourselves to the anathema at the Inn of the Lion, where my sources say they often cower after being routed from more comfortable nests.

“Do not attempt a frontal assault on the anathema, for you have no hope of destroying them. Instead, sue for peace. Present yourselves to them, and beg they take you back. Tell the vile traitors that you escaped from my clutches by overcoming Roderigo. Bring him with you as proof and say he is Dominated by you, but do not let them kill him for betraying them. Tell the conspirators that you found them by asking Roderigo to take you to all the places where he had seen them.

“Watch and learn all you can. Find out when they intend to attack Japheth and tell me. And if you can, destroy them, one by one. This will remove the burden your unlawful sires placed upon you at the moment of your rebirths.”

If the characters ask Hardestadt why he and the other Founders do not merely raid the inn and destroy their foes, he snaps: “Fools! Do you think I could not catch them if I wished? Do you think Claudius and his fellow rats have escape routes I cannot block? I allowed them to slink away, tails between their legs. It is not enough to wreak righteous

retribution upon them. I must prove their guilt, and demonstrate the need to band together against such renegade Kindred. But I have said too much. All you need know is that I must catch them bloody-handed trying to kill their Cainite betters."

If they ask why he attacked the conspirators at the Giovanni manse, when they were clearly not "killing their Cainite betters," Hardestadt rages, "I need not explain myself to you." But then he scowls and adds, "Sometimes my spy is not very well informed. Sometimes I think she is — but no matter. This is not for your ears."

Rafael's Admonition

Once Hardestadt tells the characters how to reach the inn where he believes the conspirators may be hiding, he tells Roderigo to take them away. "Deliver these serpent childer of the anathema unto the bosom of their family." Before Roderigo can do so, however, Rafael steps up and whispers in the Ventrue lord's ear. After a moment, Hardestadt grunts, nods and leans back against an ancient rack, boredom on his craggy face.

Rafael smiles beatifically at the characters and begins to address them. The Toreador tells them about the Masquerade, an idea of Rafael's that almost all Kindred now uphold. He admonishes the characters in his soft, beautiful voice to keep the Masquerade at all costs. "Humans fear what they don't understand, and they will now fear you. Priests...priests, who are supposed to be the embodiment of Christian love and charity, will spit upon you. They will consign you to the fires of Hell merely for existing. Even if you were the noblest soul since our Savior they would destroy you, even as the Romans destroyed Him. So take care, younglings. If it was only your survival that hung in the balance, then I am certain Hardestadt would not care if you flaunted your natures."

Rafael pauses as Hardestadt snorts derisively. He then finishes his little speech: "However, it is the survival of all the Kindred that depends on you. We all must uphold the Masquerade, lest we all fall to the Inquisition's flames. No Kindred, not even the anathema, will applaud you for bringing the Inquisition down on them."

The Founders now give the characters an opportunity to feed from the servants, something which may feel awkward, since they have never fed from living vessels before. Should any of the characters grow too entranced by her bloodlust, the Founders will make certain to stop the feeding before she wastes a good servant.

A Final Assignment

As the characters are preparing to leave, Hardestadt approaches them once more. The other Founders are conversing animatedly a little apart from Hardestadt and the party. While servants place traveling cloaks on the characters' shoulders, Hardestadt tells them that they should be

certain that one of the first conspirators they slay is Lady Jadviga Almanov. He insists that Lady Jadviga is a very dangerous woman, and that the characters very well may not succeed in their task should they not soon destroy her.

As Hardestadt well knows, Lady Jadviga is the agent who has been leaking information (including the location of the inn) to the Ventrue. However, Hardestadt now feels that she has given him as much information as he needs to destroy the conspirators. He does not want to share the glory that bringing the anathema to ground will bring him among the Ventrue, especially since Lady Jadviga is due to receive the greatest share of that glory. After all, she is the one risking herself nightly, while Hardestadt has so far merely served as a clean-up man. Thus, he feels it would be best if Lady Jadviga suffered an unfortunate death "due to her own incompetence," allowing him to win the day despite Lady Jadviga's appalling mistake.

Once Hardestadt finishes his instructions, the characters are free to head off into the early evening air. The Founders provide the characters with horses and a carriage, driven by Roderigo. He says, "Well met, my lads and lasses; shall we go?"

The Welcome

As the coach rumbles through the night, the party finds the way blocked by a fallen tree just a quarter-mile from the inn. As Roderigo stops the carriage, six brigands leap from the woods, brandishing swords. "Stand and deliver!" they shout, charging toward the carriage.

The brigands should be no match for the well-fed and healed neonates, and will likely fall quickly. If any characters stealthily went ahead on point, they could easily have found the ambush before the carriage reached it. If they search the brigand camp, they find dozens of oil-soaked torches and stakes.

On interrogation, the brigands admit they were hired by a stranger to attack the carriage. The stranger told them to use the torches and burn or impale any travelers, but they feared the fire would alert the ambush and ruin any silks in the treasure. The brigands describe the man who hired them as a nobleman with a scar along the right side of his face. They did not follow his orders because he would not pay them in advance.

The characters must decide what to do with any living brigands. They can bring them to the local sheriff, release them or simply kill them. If they take the brigands to the inn, though, they can confront Lothar with them.

Hospitality

When the characters finally arrive, they find a large stone structure more reminiscent of a small manse than an inn. However, a large sign reading "Inn of the Lion, established 1378" assures the party that this is indeed their destination.

A vaguely unstable-looking wooden barn stands against the inn's western wall. Several stablehands move listlessly back and forth between a nearby well and the barn. The characters may leave their horses with the stablehands when they enter the inn.

The inn's interior is poorly lit by small fires burning in immense fireplaces on either side of the gigantic hallway serving as the common room. A number of large, dark trestle tables rest on the fresh reeds and straw scattered across the broad stones of the floor. Small tallow candles burn fitfully on a few of the tables.

The only persons immediately visible inside are a young serving girl spreading new straw on the floor, and an elderly man working at a desk placed so as to take full advantage of the weak light filtering through the high windows. The old man is Geppen, the innkeeper, and the young girl is his granddaughter, Megan. Geppen's widowed son, Alban, also helps run the inn, but he is currently on a trip to pick up supplies in the nearby town.

As soon as the characters enter, Geppen looks up, then quickly glances at one of the empty tables before turning back to his work without greeting the characters. Both he and Megan are thoroughly conditioned to the orders of Lord Giovanni and the rest of the conspirators. Geppen is Dominated by Claudius himself. If the characters attempt to talk to Geppen he will ignore them.

Megan will also ignore any of the characters' conversational gambits, although she will accept candy or any

other treat offered. She is a sweet-faced girl with dark blonde hair and large brown eyes, and currently a favorite of Sire Wenceslas. He has already drained her blood several times, and is currently toying with the idea of making her one of his ghouls, so that she might entertain him in this pretty 10-year-old form for a long time to come.

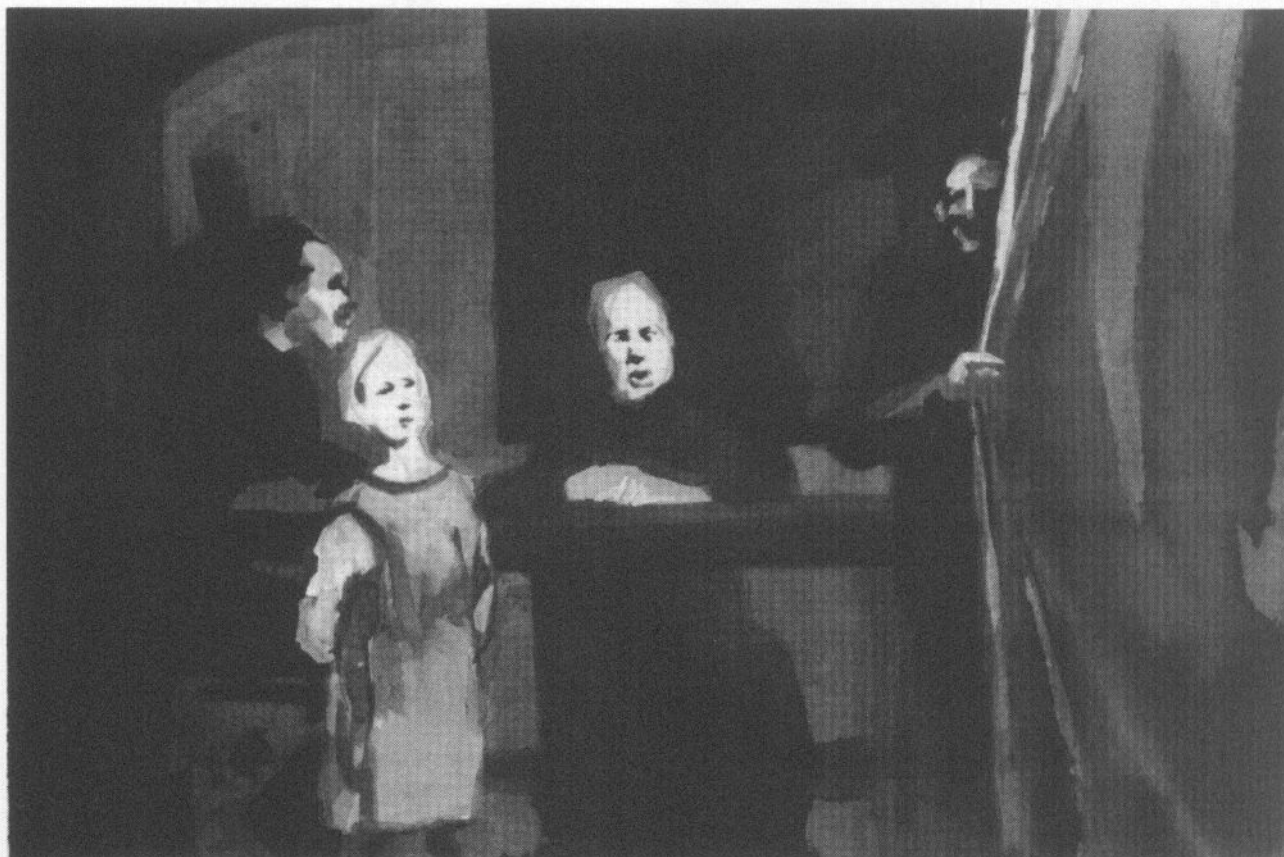
The Lord Appears

Unless one of the characters attempts to see Obfuscated beings, they find themselves "alone" in the common room with the two kine for a few minutes. Once Claudius believes the tension has mounted sufficiently he will unmask himself, seated calmly at one of the long trestle tables in the center of the room. One by one the other conspirators show themselves: those Obfuscating appear seated at various tables while the rest step out from behind curtains, or wherever else they secreted themselves.

Chuckling maliciously, Claudius asks the neonates to "Please take seats, that we may discuss like civilized folk whatever business you have with the Conspiracy of Isaac."

Claudius and the rest of the conspirators will brook no poor behavior on the part of the characters. Should the characters be rash enough to attack the conspirators, the anathema should have little trouble beating their progeny into submission.

Once the characters sit down at the table, Claudius will ask them how they have fared since last the two groups met. As the characters talk, their particular sires move



close to their new progeny, treating them with remarkable solicitude. Since the characters are now Kindred, and indeed are their childer, Claudius and his fellow conspirators wish to cajole them into helping them in their plot against Cappadocius. The characters should notice the radical difference in the way the elders treat them now that they are Kindred.

The conversation between the members of the Conspiracy of Isaac and the characters may run along a number of lines. However, unbeknownst to the characters, the conspirators had a hasty conference when Lothar returned after the bandit skirmish to report that the characters were headed towards the inn. At that time the vampires decided that they would use the characters' timely arrival to their advantage.

The Plot

Claudius does not deny plotting to destroy Japheth Cappadocius. He explains that he recently decided that the best way to attack Japheth and his hangers-on is to arrange a meeting with the powerful Cappadocian at a time and place of Claudius' choosing. Once there, he believes he can get Japheth to drop his guard long enough for to be successfully attacked and destroyed. Claudius considers giving the characters the opportunity to deliver his missive to Japheth to be the perfect test of loyalty. If the characters prove untrustworthy, little is lost since Japheth is unlikely to believe the word of neonate outsiders — coerced by the Founders — over the word of a member of his own clan (even Claudius).

When the characters ask of Japheth's crime, the conspirators sadly tell the neonates that Japheth Cappadocius is lost to a terrible madness. Claudius, a high-ranking member of the Cappadocian clan himself, now feels it is his duty to destroy Japheth before his sickness destroys the rest. "That is why I have agreed to be the 13th in our unholy cabal, and plot against Japheth. I know I shall become anathema to some, but Japheth must be stopped. He literally believes he can become God on Earth. His madness must be checked before it can do great harm."

If the characters ask for details, Claudius says, "His mind continually grasps for things beyond our ken, for concepts God does not mean us to contemplate. I believe it is for his hubris that God has punished him. I am afraid that Japheth's blasphemous ideas have progressed to such a point that he believes the Cappadocians can rise o'er our Lord God himself to rule the heavens," he finishes breathlessly.

"We few here tonight are but a small number of the Kindred who understand that at times you must stand against the tide in order to do what is best for all. Our eyes are open. God is on our side, and we shall not fail."

The Appeal for Loyalty

The conspirators attempt to secure the characters' loyalty with a number of other ploys as well. Each character's sire will speak to him of the importance of the childe-sire bond in the world of the Kindred. Claudius nods sagely during these lectures and admonitions, murmuring, "Even the so-called Founders must agree that this bond is sacrosanct. If they truly hold the Traditions of Caine dear, how could they begrudge any childe his duty, his right, to serve his sire?"

If these arguments do not seem to sway the characters towards the conspirators' viewpoint, Claudius will speak to them of power and greed. He holds forth a carrot to the neonates: "Once we have excised the disease, Japheth, from the Cappadocian clan, I shall wield great power among Kindred and kine alike. My family contains powerful vampires, skilled necromancers, and the shrewdest businessmen in Venice. Any who bask within my favor shall surely reap great reward. No one, certainly not the so-called Founders, shall be able to do my favored ones harm."

Giovanni pauses before continuing: "I should like to count you among my favored ones. Of course, those upon whom I and my family frown shall undoubtedly perish in unimaginable pain and ignominy. I am certain you have heard whispered tales of the powers that necromancy grants the skilled practitioner? Of how she can twist the soul and anchor it forever, bleeding and screaming, to this mortal coil? Folk tales are so often true! We can do that, and more, to any who earn our wrath." Giovanni's eyes narrow as he speaks, until they are no more than slits. Fire dances in his pupils as he finishes in a low growl: "You have dominion over your own immortal souls. Choose wisely, childer. Your time of trials is nigh, and I would not have you found wanting."

The Message

Once the conspirators have finished their arguments, Claudius asks the characters to take a message to Japheth at the Cappadocian monastery. The note asks Japheth to meet with a contrite and heart-sore Claudius, who claims to be in the throes of a crisis of conscience. Conducting his family's business dealings no longer excites him; color and meaning have left his life. Knowing how wise Japheth is in matters spiritual, Claudius craves audience with his clan brother to speak at length about his immortal soul.

If the characters readily agree, Claudius will smile on them and offer them a small token of his affections (a golden watch, or a flagon of sweet blood). If they refuse the mission, the conspirators will quickly become hostile, reminding the characters that their unives are still very fragile things. However, the characters likely will accept, whether in hopes of earning their sires' favor, or to gain Claudius' confidence.

The Return of Paul

If the characters helped Paul get his soldiering job, he did not die at the Giovanni manse. He is beaten but alive, and the Storyteller can reintroduce him at her convenience and in a manner that is natural to the story.

For example, if the characters go back to the Red Lamb Inn, or even to Giovanni's manor, they can find him trying to heal. A dose of vampiric blood would cure his wounds, and even help his crippled leg. He trusts the characters more than any other person, and will willingly serve them as a ghoul.

Once the characters agree to take the message to Japheth, Claudius gives them directions to the Monastery of St. Timothy, half a night's journey distant. If Claudius is pleased with the characters' attitude, he asks if they would like to spend the day at the inn before traveling to the monastery. The characters are free to accept or refuse this offer as they see fit.

Stealth Attack

It is possible that the characters will succeed in a stealth attack on a single conspirator. If they do, and they get away with it, reduce the number of conspirators by that one. However, if they attack Jadviga or Claudius, the vampire is able to escape without dying.

Hardestadt

If they accept Lord Giovanni's offer, the characters can return to Hardestadt with the message or go on to Cappadocius. If they go to Hardestadt, he is positively gleeful. He rubs his armored hands together, saying, "This shall be the proof to the Cappadocian clan that they must join us. It will be proof to all!" He dispatches them to take the message to Cappadocius.

Scene 3: Visitation

Every time that I think of the crucifixion of Christ, I commit the sin of envy.

— Simone Weil, *Waiting on God*

Brother Clement's Ambush

When the characters draw within an hour's ride of the monastery, they are attacked by Brother Clement and six holy templars. They have set a pit trap in the road that catches the carriage wheel, which must be lifted out to continue the journey.



When the carriage rumbles to a stop, the templars begin firing lighted arrows into the coach. As the characters spill out, the templars hurl "Goliath slayers:" rags dipped in holy water and wrapped around stones. They swing these over their heads like sling bolts, and release them toward the vampires. If they score a hit, the damage is aggravated.

Brother Clement screams, "I warned ye! I told ye to shun the lands of the dead! Now ye have partaken of their evil! Ye would not heed the voice of the righteous! And now ye are damned!"

The templars are fanatic, and fight to the death. Their blood courses with holy water and anyone who attempts to feed from them will suffer one Health Level of damage for every Blood Point taken. If the characters manage to take one of them alive for questioning, he can be forced to reveal that they work for the Inquisition and received their training in Rome. He does not know that the Monastery of St. Timothy is run by vampires.

It is quite possible many of the vampires will be badly injured by this encounter. If they are all subdued, they awaken in the monastery, their wounds bound, and are taken to Japheth.

The Clan of Death

The Monastery of St. Timothy sits amidst a beautiful garden that looks lush even at night. All the colorful buds are silver and white in the moonlight. The air is heady with the scent of healing herbs and flowers. Solemn in the midst of the flora, the modest building is silent at night, except for the sound of crickets, and dark save for a few candles. As the characters approach the still monastery, they hear deep voices raised in reverent chant.

There are a dozen monks in the inner courtyard engaged in nocturnal prayer. If the characters ask to see Japheth, a young monk will beckon them to follow him. He leads them into the monastery and down stone stairs to the catacombs below. The characters pass rows of coffin slots in the walls.

They reach the lowest level of the monastery and are ushered into a room that is lit with a warm glow that does not seem to originate from any single point. There are no tapers or fire. In the center of the room is an altar on a raised dais. At the far end are three chairs. The chair in the center is empty, as is that to its left. Seated in the chair on the right is a very tall, thin man in a monk's robe and tonsure.

The tall man rises and says, "I am Japheth Cappadocius, foremost son of the great Cappadocius, abbot of the monastery of the martyred St. Timothy." If the characters are wounded, he has his monks bind their wounds.

If the characters announce the plot against Japheth's life and reveal the matters they witnessed, Japheth says, "Those are grave charges. I warn you, the Lord's penalties for false witness are severe. I shall commune with my

The Templars

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Leadership 1, Throwing 2

Skills: Etiquette 1, Falconry 3, Melee 3, Ride 3, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Knowledges: Linguistics 1, Occult 1, Theology 2

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

Humanity: 8

Willpower: 5

Notes: Slings have a difficulty of 7 to hit, a base damage pool of 1, a range in yards of the character's Strength multiplied by four, and can be used every turn. The holy water means their damage is aggravated against vampires. The templars are also armed with swords and wear armor, which gives them three extra soak dice but reduces their effective Dexterity by 1.

father." If the characters deliver Claudius's message, Japheth does not look pleased. He frowns and says, "I must seek wisdom. I shall commune with my father." His eyes roll upwards, and the glow in the room grows brighter. Japheth orders the characters to bring Claudius to him a week hence, then tells them that his father wishes to speak with them directly.

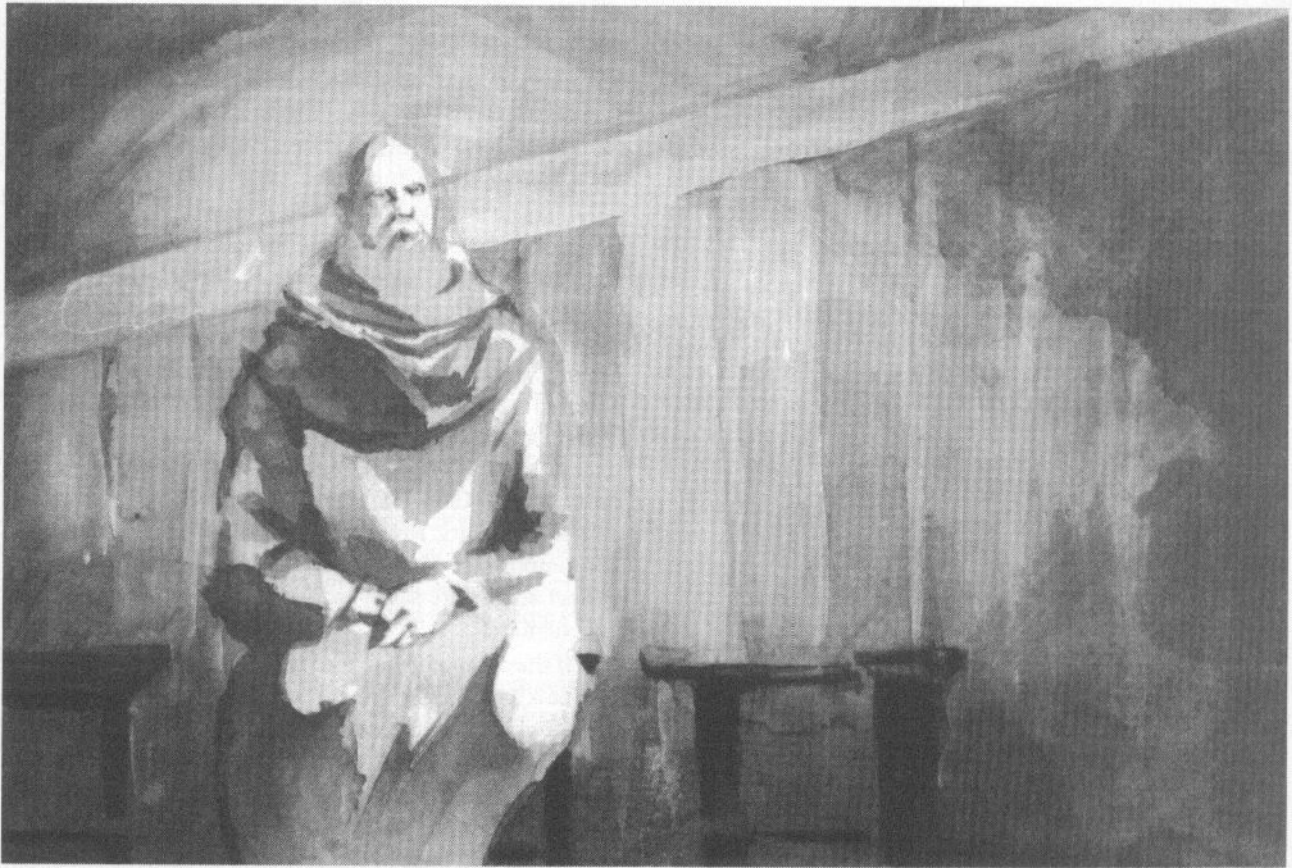
Clan Founder

A glow emanates from the center chair. A man with a long beard and hair appears as a luminous, translucent presence. He is wearing a white monk's robe and a beatific smile. While he seems to be sitting down, characters can make a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 8) to notice that he is floating less than an inch above the chair. He speaks in a strong but gentle voice.

"Welcome, my children. I am he who was once Cappadocius. I am Son of all Kindred. Unburden your hearts unto me."

After they tell their tale (whichever one they have chosen), Cappadocius says, "To understand these things requires a wisdom beyond that which you possess. You need the teachings of the *Book of Nod*. To possess wisdom is to have life beyond life; to lack it is to perish even in life. Do you wish this wisdom?"

If they say no, Cappadocius replies, "Many turn from the Word. It is the most difficult path. Go forth from here." He fades away. Japheth will escort them from the monastery. Go on to Act III.



However, if the characters earnestly ask to hear his advice, Cappadocius says, "This then do: return to those very templars who attacked you. Forgive them and bless them. When you have done as I say, return to me, and you shall become wise." Go to "Return to the Ambush."

If the characters did not kill any of the templars, Cappadocius instead says, "As you showed mercy unto your enemies, you have proved worthy of wisdom. You shall learn." Use The Lesson section below.

Return to the Ambush

When the characters return to the ambush site, they find it as they left it, with dead bodies scattered everywhere. If the characters do not forgive and bless the dead, nothing happens, and Cappadocius will know it. If the characters make an earnest effort to bless and forgive them, the dead begin to stir. Their wounds close, and they arise. They all appear to have been struck mute by the experience, and do not take up arms again. If the characters bring them to the monastery, the monks will take them to help with their rehabilitation. If the characters leave them, the monks will go get them. Either way, the characters will see the templars and Brother Clement working at the monastery in their visit a week later. What they will never realize is that the templars have become zombies.

The Lesson

When the characters return (or if they did not kill the templars), Cappadocius receives them and says, "Because you have harkened, you shall hear." He sits them at his feet and begins:

"There is an old Malkavian tale. 'When I made a sacrifice of plants and fed upon them, I rose above them to become lord over plants, and like unto a god. When I made a sacrifice of animals and fed upon them, I rose above them to become lord over animals, and like unto a god. When I made a sacrifice of men, and fed upon them, I rose above them, to become lord over men, and like unto a god.' The Malkavians know more of these vital matters than the other clans. They understand that spirit has risen from plants to animals to man to Kindred. We are not accursed by God. We are blessed with life everlasting.

"You know that our Saviour did say 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.' and 'Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.' But did ye also know that the Gospel of St. Luke says of our Saviour, 'And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' Blood for sweat, as ye have blood for sweat. What make ye of these portents?"



If the characters conclude that perhaps the Saviour was a vampire, Cappadocius corrects them. "Our Saviour was far more than man or Kindred. But we Kindred are a step on the path. We are not Damned. We are a step closer to God through Caine. God's redemption is even for such as us. But we needs must have our own sacrificial lamb of God, to redeem the blood of all Kindred."

If the characters ask if he intends to be that martyr, Cappadocius says, "Our Saviour said, 'I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' I shall come to Him, believe in Him, consume Him and become Him. As Kindred feed on man, I shall make a sacrifice of God and feed upon Him, to rise above Kindred. I shall become Lord over all. Just as I had to die to become Kindred, so must I die to become God. I must die to my current state, as I once died to humanity. My "death" must be a crucifixion — my consumption of God must be a sacrament. It must be a perfect act, a pure act of sacrifice for the good of all, even my enemies."

If the characters ask who those enemies are, or if there is to be a Judas in Claudius Giovanni, Cappadocius says, "I do that which God intends." Japheth looks pained throughout this discussion.

Cappadocius finishes, "We are the clan of life after death, life beyond death. Death not as an end, but as a beginning, and I am to become the ferryman of souls. Let them that have ears hear. Let them that have minds understand. And let them that have souls know. Amen. I bid thee farewell." He fades away.

Japheth is visibly shaken by the event. If the characters ask him about it, he is not very forthcoming, but will allow that he heard more of his father's plans than he ever heard before. "Be exceedingly glad," he says. "My father rarely appears before us, almost never to other clans, and never to fledglings. Ye are truly blessed."

If the characters ask further questions about the merger with the Giovanni, Japheth will stop short of saying his father was wrong, but makes it clear that he finds it disturbing. "We need to focus on matters of the spirit, not of usury and greed. The moneychangers have entered the temple. We have taken tax collectors into our bosom." If the characters point out that Jesus accepted tax collectors, Japheth scowls and does not reply, rhetorically beaten. Should they ask if he intends to drive the moneychangers from the temple, metaphorically speaking, Japheth says, "I shall do as my father bids."

Wrapping Up Act II

The characters can return to Claudius to announce that Cappadocius will have audience with them. If they do, Giovanni will take them with him. They can also return to Hardestadt, and tell him. They have a week to make their plans.

Home Away from Home

The characters are strangers in a land that is now far stranger than it was in their mortal lives. They have no home, and no friends. They may try to return to their old homes for another look at their loved ones. This is dangerous, since anything more than a glance from afar invites the kind of questions that can lead to the Inquisition. Also, straying too far from the monastery can cause the characters to miss Giovanni's attack. That would bring about the default ending, causing a massive Blood Hunt called on the characters and a highly unsatisfying end to the game (and characters).

A larger problem looms, and that is how to remain safe during the dangerous hours of daylight. The characters can barricade themselves in the carriage, but that is risky. They

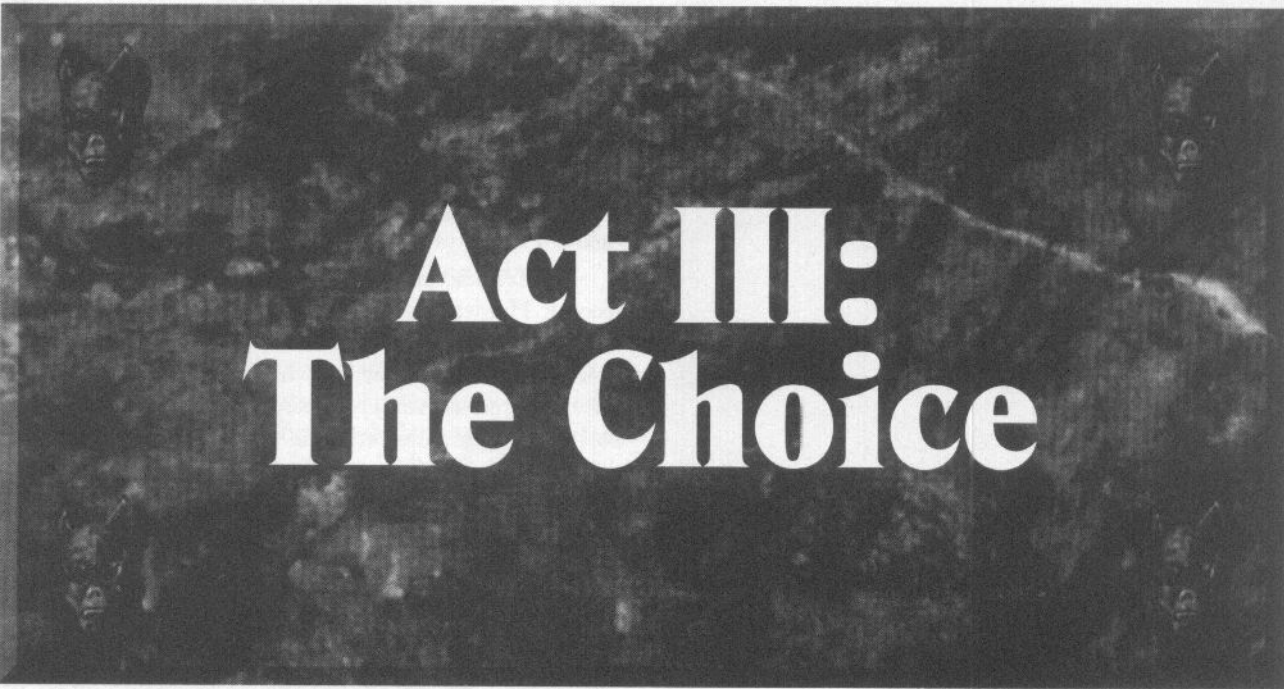
can go into torpor. The best solution is to find a small settlement with lots of underground storage rooms, and no Inquisitors about. Roderigo can look after them, and any other ghouls they create can help as well. If they return to the Red Lamb Inn they will possibly find Paul, as explained in Act II, Scene 2, and he will be loyal to them without any coercion.

The Decision

Act II ends with the characters on their own and with the freedom to make some big choices. They must decide which side they support, and they must make this decision without clear direction from the Storyteller. They know that the decision is important, but they are probably unclear on which is the choice sanctioned by this story. Of course, if they are sure they know what the "correct" choice is, that's even more amusing. If they are on their toes, they have realized that there is no one right answer.

The path to ultimate victory is not clearly spelled out from the story, because there is no such thing: just actions and consequences. This may leave some players floundering, but others will be excited and energized by all the possibilities.





Act III: The Choice

Round and round the spirit tumbles,
With half a chance it still believes
That cities fall but minds don't follow
And goodness hides up someone's sleeve ...
And what will be our secret beacon?
With only time to only try
To search our hearts for what's been taken,
While leaders eye their conquered sky.
And stomachs roll while church bells toll the crime.
The rose is crushed, the dove flies past, it's time.
It's time, time, time, time.
— Ferron, "Phantom Center"

In this final Act the characters must make a fateful choice and live forever with their decision. They have a chance to revisit all the warring factions and must choose between seriously divided loyalties or no loyalties at all. Some results are preordained, but the paths to those endings make all the difference in the world. In the end, Cappadocius will die, but the way he dies will have repercussions in the World of Darkness right up to the 20th century — and possibly beyond.

Scene 1: Immortals in a World of Slaves

*When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something.*

— Robert Browning, "Bishop Blougram's Apology"

Shrewd characters will realize that information is power and will attempt to get as much as possible in the week until the meeting. They can do this by interviewing the three main groups.



Visit the Founders

After the meeting at the monastery, the characters could go directly to the Founders to ask advice. Hardestadt will tell them to go to Claudius and deliver the message of Cappadocius' acceptance of the meeting, and then return to plot an ambush at the monastery to catch the conspirators.

If the characters go to Giovanni first and the Founders second, Hardestadt finds out and erupts in anger. He furiously questions the characters' trustworthiness, saying that they should have come to him for instructions first. If the characters ask what he would have instructed them to do, he grudgingly allows that he would have had them take the message to Giovanni, just as they did. This shows Hardestadt's mania for control.

The Founders are still suspicious and disdainful of the characters because of their inauspicious begetting. If the characters persist in earnestly seeking guidance, wisdom and lore, however, the Founders will be flattered into providing it.

General Information from all Founders

Once the characters have gained a measure of trust, the Founders speak from the heart about their goals. They speak first of something akin to altruism: unifying the clans out of mutual self-interest and self-preservation. Unified clans can react to the mounting threat of humans, who are shockingly populous despite the recent Black Death and Crusades. Claudius Giovanni must be exposed and stopped because he threatens this union.

If the characters keep up their interest, the Founders explain motivations that go a level deeper. They talk with cruel eyes about punishing their enemies. They gloat about crushing self-willed elders and wayward anarchs and of destroying entire lineages of their mortal enemies. Claudius Giovanni must be exposed and stopped because his destruction will be thrilling.

After that, a third motivation appears: naked lust for power. The Founders want to rule, and they see the proposed federation as a means to get the clans to play by their rules, under their jurisdiction, and support their efforts to crush dissenters. Claudius Giovanni must be exposed and stopped because he is also trying to make a grab for power.

At the conclusion of these talks, the Founders trust the characters more. Sharing their secrets has forged tentative bonds, and will make it easier for the characters to get the Founders to accept their advice later.

If the characters ask about the conspirator's fears that Cappadocius is out to bring heaven to earth, the Founders will scoff. They say that such rumors cannot be countenanced.

Personal Motivations of Individual Founders

Hardestadt

The leader of the Founders continues to stress the need to kill Jadviga. He asks if it has been done yet, and if not, when it will be. Otherwise, he is too busy to bother with the characters, apart from laying plans for the ambush.

Adana de Sforza

Adana is glad the characters survived. She possesses a Brujah's affinity for their struggle against impossible odds and will tell them much. She reveals that the Founders fear Claudius Giovanni ascending to Japheth's place in the Cappadocian clan because the necromancers are rumored to have dark aspirations to bring death to every living person. With the backing of a clan's second-in-command, they may gain the power to carry out that threat.

Camilla Banes

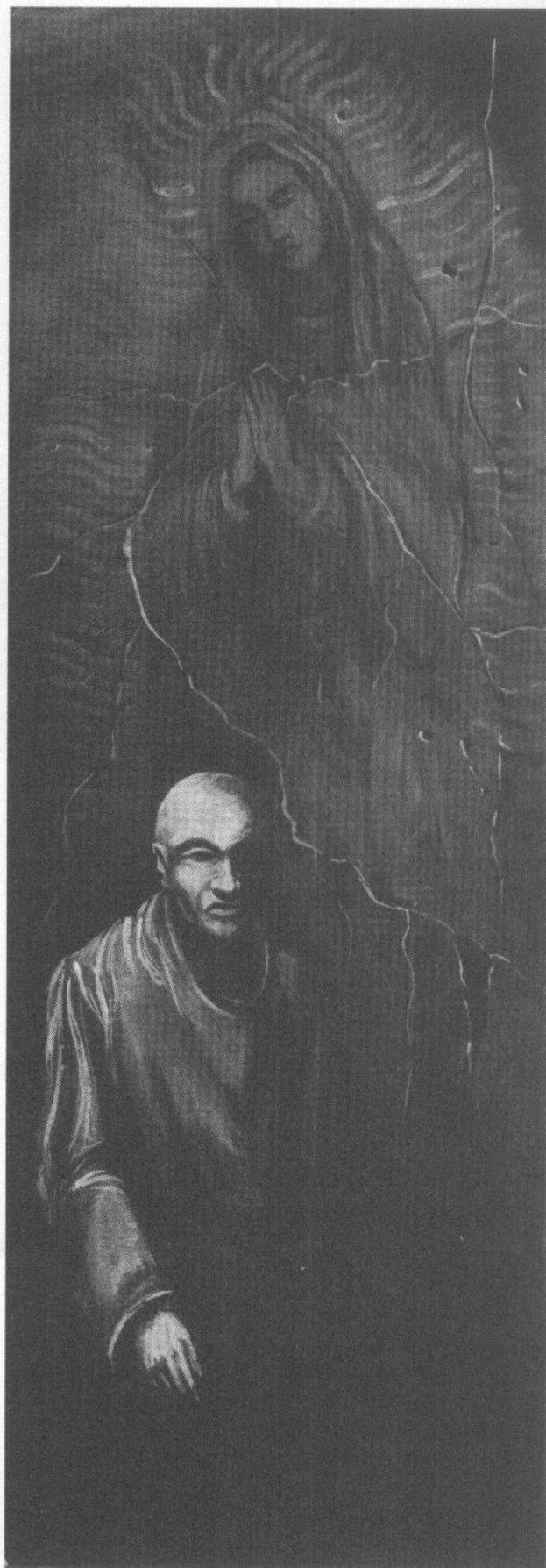
The Malkavian is difficult to talk to, because she consistently switches between gentle mothering and violent hate. But if the characters endure her for awhile, she'll say, "The voices tell me that a soul storm draws near. The day we tear out Claudius's withered heart, the heavens will open and a Maelstrom will deluge us. You must get yourselves to safety, my precious darlings. You must bundle up your souls with a unraveled cloak of purity, hold fast to the white-hot heart of the storm, and wear stout boots of courage — or you will lose your footing and fall into Hell where you belong, you spiteful wretches!"

Josef von Bauren

The diminutive Nosferatu has little interest in talking to the characters: "Ye were born bastards and bastards ye shall be as long as we suffer ye to live." But if they persist, he will warm to them and share his lore. He confirms that the Founders fear Claudius' necromantic powers. "The Giovanni seek to destroy the wall between the worlds of the living and the dead. This will give them the power of each realm in the other. If Claudius brings the infernal realms into this world, all will be lost. He must be stopped at all costs. This Camarilla be hanged. The important thing is to stop these foul abominations."

Milov Petrenkov

The Gangrel does not like to talk to any but other Gangrel or well-traveled characters. He will say, though, that as the time draws nearer for the meeting, animals become more and more skittish, as before an earthquake. He doesn't know what to make of it, but fears it, since he saw something similar during the millennial frenzies of the year 1000 A.D., when spirits walked and a Maelstrom of dark forces lashed the Earth.



Rafael de Corazon

The influential Toreador feels the characters are beneath him. An attractive young male character can get him to talk, though.

He insists that all Kindred must sever their close ties to mortals and that the Giovanni made a severe mistake in revealing their newfound vampiric state to their entire extended family. Such an egregious violation of the newly formed Masquerade is unforgivable to him. The Masquerade is his life's work, and he enforces it with relish. He does not care about necromancy, the Cappadocians or their religion, despite his religious background. All he wants is to punish the Giovanni and prevent their further rise to power.

Rafael is not afraid to reveal that he feels the rest of the Founders are not his equal in status. He does not serve Hardestadt but travels with him as long as it serves his purpose. A character who wins his trust can also learn that the Ventrue are secretly eager to see the Giovanni join the Cappadocians and even move up in its ranks. Rafael speculates that the Ventrue are very likely in league with the conspirators as well as the Founders, playing both sides against the other to ensure a win regardless of the outcome. Rafael suspects that the Ventrue would like to both results: they want to see Claudius Giovanni as second-in-command of the Cappadocians with the Clan of Death active in the world of commerce, and they want to see Claudius' conspiracy used to rally Methuselahs to form the Camarilla.

Mistress Fanchon

At first the Tremere does not want to talk to the characters except to tell them that they had better play their part properly, or die. If they ask her about Maelstroms she looks startled, but will not reveal what she knows. If they ask about the other Founders and the organization they wish to start, though, she becomes quite talkative.

She thinks it's a good idea, if for no other reason than to prevent the very means by which her clan gained power. The human wizards called the Tremere committed diablerie upon Saulot and created their own lineage of Blood Bound Kindred. Now they must make sure no one else can duplicate such an event.

Visit the Conspirators

When the characters visit Claudius, he gratefully accepts the news that Cappadocius will meet with him and requests that the characters accompany him to the monastery in a week's time. If the characters went to visit him first and the Founders second, they must invent an excuse to leave to see Hardestadt.

The characters may also decide to ask questions to try to gain insight into the motivations of the conspirators. In this case, Claudius tries to win them over to his Conspiracy. "Though you were misbegotten, you may yet grow

into real progeny, and be recognized by us." The conspirators will be just as forthcoming as the Founders, eager to expound upon their secret cause and gain support — or at least pawns they can use and discard.

The conspirators explain that if Claudius can kill Japheth, he will become second-in-command of the Cappadocians and use that power to advance his family. "He has always wanted to become the speaker for his clan, and he does not care if he gains it through betrayal." The conspirators will reap rewards of Methuselah blood, riches and the eternal gratitude of one of the world's most powerful Kindred.

Cappadocius

They also reveal that they fear Cappadocius' research into Cainite mysteries. His obsession with ascending to godhead and the world he envisions is frightening to the vampires. "If he makes all mortals immortal, on what shall we feed? Vampires are the Damned. We have been cast out of Heaven. God has turned his back on us, and we shall return the insult in kind."

The Founders

All the conspirators have a hatred of the Founders and their attempts to organize the Kindred. Asking about the Founders unleashes a torrent of bile. "Such vile communitarian impulses must be crushed. How dare they try to tell us who we can and cannot kill?" "How dare they say we cannot terrorize mortals when we desire?" "I am not my brother's keeper! Caine would not wish us to acknowledge obligation or responsibility to anyone!"

If the characters point out that the result of that logic is that any of the conspirators could betray one another in a moment, they all look uncomfortable. "Well, as long as we have a common cause, we need not fear one another," they say uneasily, and change the subject. "But that Hardestadt is just a powermonger seeking to hide his own weakness behind large numbers of others!"

Maelstroms

If the characters inquire about Maelstroms, Claudius demands to know where they heard of such a thing. A plausible excuse will get them off the hook. Otherwise, Claudius is very suspicious of them and questions them relentlessly. If they say that they overheard a Founder mention it during their captivity, he will be satisfied. So long as the characters steadfastly act calm, and do not betray a hint of wrongdoing in their acquisition, he will say, "Such matters are over your head. Stay far from them, if you value the blood in your undying veins."

The other conspirators are all unfamiliar with the term, except for Lady Theophana, who absently says, "The voices say that all Hell breaks loose in the Maelstrom: the dead rise, and all our sires roam at will. All are weak. All are powerful. All can fall. All can rise, and...what were we talking about again? Hmmm. No, I know nothing about any Maelstrom."



Lord Giovanni Speaks

If the characters ask Claudius about necromancy, the rise of the Giovanni, and separating the wall between the living and the dead, he grows serious and asks where the characters have heard such talk. He admits to being a necromancer but denies wanting to bring death to all life. "Our power comes from dying mortals. How would we gain new power if they were all dead?" he reasons. Since the characters have proven themselves resourceful enough to find this crucial information, Claudius raises his estimation of them and decides to try to convince them of his intentions.

"I admit we Giovanni rose to prominence through guile. Who hasn't? Before we were Kindred, we summoned the souls of vampires and learned their ways. That made us clever enough to know what to offer the Cappadocians to secure a place in their clan. We bring esoteric knowledge of the afterworld. We can help them gather souls. We may have a different purpose for the use of those wandering spirits, but our means are the same. Cappadocius gives us a place at the table, and we take a higher place. What ambitious person would not? Japheth's soul will make a lovely addition to the collection."

If asked what the Giovanni will do with the spirits, Claudius enigmatically says, "I'm sure we'll find some purpose."

If the characters say that they think sundering the wall between the living and the dead is a great idea, Giovanni will be intrigued. "It would be a source of great power, wouldn't it?" he asks with a wicked smile.

The characters may ask the conspirators about necromancy when Claudius is not around. The elders say that they have heard rumors that the Giovanni are plotting a cataclysmic demise of all life, but insist that such rumors are false. They don't know why, but they are sure there is no truth to them. "What good would that do? If everyone were dead, how could you have servants, slaves, pawns and *vitæ*? No, such things are but an attempt to demonize necromancers."

Delaying the Attack

If the characters attempt to delay the meeting with Japheth beyond a week, they will be argued down by the conspirators, and Claudius will find new messengers. He will make the connection with the Cappadocians without the help of the characters, who will be marginalized in the final confrontation and have less influence. As in all storytelling games, this requirement is flexible as well. If the characters come up with a brilliant stratagem and make a persuasive case, the time can be delayed — but not by much.

Lady Jadviga

If the characters tell Jadviga that Hardestadt took pains to secure her death, she will be enraged, but thanks the characters for telling her.

"That dung-hearted villain! He wants the glory for himself! If he gets rid of me the Ventrue will reward only him! He seeks to kill me for doing my duty!" She is so angry that she is willing to reveal the truth about her mission being sanctioned by the Ventrue to make the Cappadocians more useful.

If the characters ask about the original attack, she sheepishly admits that she deliberately leaked false information to embarrass Hardestadt. "I told him that we would perform a ritual at the Giovanni manse that would kill Japheth. He barged in and could not catch us. That humiliated him before the clan. Now he seeks to kill me, and use you to get information for the assassination. Well I am not so easily disposed of!"

She rewards the characters with blood, and a boon. She is even capable of getting a Giovanni's blood, if the characters ask for it (as per Durga Syn's instructions, below).

Visit Durga Syn

Finding Durga Syn makes a lot of sense, since she was the only person who ever really helped the characters out. If they ask for her at Hardestadt's castle, the Founders report that she stays at in a Gypsy village two hours to the south. If they summon her, she will arrive six hours later. If they visit her village, she invites them into a hut, asks them of their progress, and answers their questions. She asks why the characters wish such information, but will provide them with answers if they make it clear that they want to make wise decisions.

The Prophecy of the Bloody Egg

Durga Syn has little more information on the prophecy, other than to say that the fact that the characters have not been destroyed by now in a sea of enemies is some proof of its veracity. She admits she downplayed the power of the prophecy to the Founders. She allows that the only time she has seen greater portents were for a vampire yet to come; one who will become a vampire by his own hand and bargain with demons to deliver all the Kindred from damnation.

She then turns the question around and asks them what they would desire the prophecy to be and what outcome they would like to see.

Maelstroms

She says a Maelstrom is a backlash of souls from the lands of the dead. She does not know what to do about it. "That's something known only to those who walk the paths of the dead, like the Cappadocians and the Giovanni."

Cappadocius and Apotheosis

The Gypsy says that Cappadocius is a "most dangerous Antediluvian, since he is tampering with forces beyond the grasp of mortals and Kindred. But his research shows

promise, since the *Book of Nod* fragments he recovered were written by Irad, son of Caine, and explain how to lift God's curse from the Kindred. The results of such a ritual are unknown, though Cappadocius believes that he will bring Heaven to Earth, where mortals and Kindred alike live eternally in God's bliss. It may destroy us all. Or both."

Giovanni and Necromancy

Durga Syn reveals that the Giovanni have indeed been "summoning and hoarding the spirits of vampires and mortals alike. And the spirits of creatures beyond your ken. On that day, spoken of in whispers even among Kindred, when the Antediluvians rise up to eat their progeny, the necromancers could be more powerful still. Even Hardestadt does not understand this. But I say the Giovanni must be watched. And stopped. They must especially be kept from making mischief with Japheth's captured soul."

Stopping Claudius Giovanni

If the characters declare that they wish to stop Giovanni from capturing Japheth's soul, she says, "Make sure you know the dangers, and agree with a clear heart. Interfering with the necromancers will earn you powerful enemies!"

If the characters insist, she says, "You must keep them pulling Japheth's soul from his body. This is what you must do. You must find the vessel in which Claudius seeks to capture Japheth's soul, and cover it with the blood of a Giovanni to ensure that it cannot trap the fleeing soul."

If they ask where they can find a Giovanni, Durga Syn says, "I do not know. Then again, Claudius himself is Giovanni..." She smiles mysteriously.

Visit the Cappadocians

If the characters return to the Cappadocians, Japheth is disturbed to see them. If they explain the plot against Cappadocius, he is even more upset.

"My father will not accept any of this. He will allow his new grandchilde to come here, regardless of Claudius' intention. I am forbidden to intervene. I may only forgive," he says, trying to disguise his distaste.

Marianna

If the characters ask about Marianna, Japheth looks startled. If the characters convince him they are not out to kill her or bring her back to Claudius, he will arrange a meeting with her in the monastery garden. Japheth says that she has taken a vow of silence in an attempt to purify herself of the vampiric curse upon her. If the characters ask Japheth what a woman is doing in a monastery, he tells them to get their minds out of the gutter. Marianna will not speak to the characters, but she agrees to give up a measure of her blood, which she has only occasionally fortified with just a bit of animal blood. She looks weak and pale from her fasting; almost ethereal. She has little interest in communicating with her kin.

Maelstroms

In response to questions about Maelstroms, Japheth says "A Maelstrom of great power is coming to the dead lands, so strong that it will be felt on Earth as well as the other realm. Only those whose souls are protected can resist the raging spirit winds. Only those whose feet are protected can gain purchase enough to walk in that land."

If the characters strongly indicate that they wish to keep Japheth alive, he adds, "I cannot go against my father's wishes and fight any who would attack me. But I can always aid those in need, and you have need of these." He opens an austere wooden box, and draws out shrouds and ragged cloth boots.

"Mayhap these will help you survive in the Maelstrom, as they helped Noah." Once they have the shrouds and boots he sends them away.

Other Options

Assassinate

If the characters attack and try to destroy any of the important figures, like Japheth or Claudius, they survive and become sworn enemies of the characters. The plot goes on. (However, an attack on Claudius could yield his blood, for Durga Syn's spell.)

If they kill secondary characters, those characters stay dead — though killing Hardestadt, Rafael or Durga Syn should be nearly impossible.

Fight Lothar

If the characters have not killed Lothar, the ghoul continues to follow them, trying to catch them red-handed. He has a retinue of six ghouls. Lothar cannot hide himself well, and is spotted on a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 6). The characters can revenge themselves on him, misdirect him or try to trick him into furthering their own schemes. However, if he is not stopped, he might learn of their plotting. The stakes are very high. Getting caught betraying any of the groups is death. Only the most brilliant of acting can stay the hands of the aggrieved parties.

Create Progeny

If the characters begin creating progeny for protection, they will attract the attention of both the Inquisition and Hardestadt. Hardestadt will get to them first. Even in the days before the formal Camarilla, this reckless disregard for the Traditions is punished with the swiftest possible sanctions. This may even give Hardestadt the proof he is looking for — evidence that anarchs will turn to selfish breeding if allowed to live freely.

Hang Out with Mortals

If the characters return to the Red Lamb Inn, they may find Paul (as described at the end of Act II). They also hear a lot of gossip.

"The land is crawling with outland foreigners and God doesn't like it."

"The end of the world is at hand!"

"Lord Giovanni has been cruelly attacked by foreign invaders and is in exile until he can return and wipe the grins off the faces of the outlander army."

"Lord Giovanni has lost his estate gambling."

"The monks of St. Timothy's are hiding a sinful red-haired woman in their private quarters for their pleasure."

"Monsters walk the land by day as well as night now."

"The Inquisition is coming and we'll all be safe."

"The Inquisition is coming and we'll all perish as heretics."

"The Pope has forsaken the Crusades!"

Decision Time

Eventually the characters will have to pick sides and plunge in. They are in too deeply to wait out the consequences. Doing nothing is deadly. Once the characters decide who they support, they must take action quickly. Their only hope of survival is to bring matters to a swift and decisive resolution. They have little to lose except their newfound immortality. The more they risk, the more they can win.

Choose No Sides

Since the characters now have the freedom to travel, they have the option to try to escape the entire burgeoning crisis. Though most of their options are bad, flight is the worst. Neither the Founders nor the conspirators trust them, and both will hunt them down and destroy them if they try to simply run away.

Indecisive characters may not pick a side, and decide to make play it by ear when they get there. This could be dangerous, because it might prevent them from getting vital clues.

Support the Founders

The Founders arrange to be at the monastery in hiding before the characters can arrive. They will hide in the caves in back of the grotto.

Hardestadt orders the characters to bring the conspirators to the meeting as planned. When Claudius makes his move to attack Japheth, the Founders will have all the proof they need of conspiracy, and leap to the attack. They invite the characters to join in the fray to get revenge on their sires.

Support Claudius

If the characters support the conspirators, and do not go back to Cappadocius, Claudius takes them to the monastery and tells them to fight the Founders if they show up.

The Founders will attack when Claudius attacks Japheth. The Founders curse the characters for traitorous dogs and leap on them as well.

Support Cappadocius

If the characters support Cappadocius, and seek to defend Japheth, Japheth says that he does not want them to fight in his name — his sire has forbidden it. The game could take some interesting twists if they become Cappadocian zealots, because Japheth and Cappadocius will resurrect Claudius and Augustus if the characters try to kill them.

Scene 2: The Offering

A lot of people say to me, "Why did you kill Christ?" "I dunno. It was one of those parties, got out of hand, you know."

— Lenny Bruce, *The Essential Lenny Bruce*

Launch the Scene

One way or another, the characters, the Cappadocians, the Founders and the conspirators all end up in the garden of the monastery for the climax. If the characters backed Hardestadt, they know the Founders are lying in wait for the conspirators. If they managed to keep Claudius believing they were loyal to him, he brings them with him. If not, they can lurk in the garden with the Founders. If they have alienated both, they will have to convince the Cappadocians to let them stay there, in sight or out of sight, whichever they prefer. The monks give sanctu-

ary to all and won't turn the characters away. However the characters have to get there on their own and sneak in.

The following section details events that happens without the characters' influence. Reveal as much of it as they see and hear.

The Garden in God's Hand

The monastery's inner garden is surprisingly large for a courtyard sanctuary. Shielded from the elements, it lies cradled between the monastery's high walls and three large, upthrusting rocks on its north side. The monks believe the vaguely humanoid rocks are a sign that this spot is blessed, and they call them the Trinity.

The garden is surrounded on three sides by gray stone walls. Only the rock formations delineate its northernmost side. That winding "wall" includes several hidden grottos, a small cavern complex (the cave opening is located beside the smallest member of the Trinity) and a natural spring.

The monks have collected a number of thorn- and spine-covered plants, planting them in the garden to remind them of the pain all people must suffer before they can reach the perfection of God's eternal embrace. Roses also cover the garden's grounds.

The garden's largest grotto is cradled gently by a semicircle of rock. The monks chipped away at the rough stone for centuries until they had carved benches and seats into the rock face. Three rocky seats stand out as particularly impressive, with the largest flanked by the two smaller. The grotto is large enough to accommodate over three dozen individuals comfortably, and the monks sometimes use this space for open-air worship services.



In this largest grotto, Japheth and several monks (his childer and ghouls) await Claudius Giovanni. Marianna is with them, clad in a monk's robes. (Some of the resurrected templars may also keep a midnight vigil.) Japheth sits on the rock seat to the right of the center seat, which is empty. A hard-faced old vampire with a deformed right arm sits in the left-hand seat. This is Augustus Giovanni, Claudius' father and sire.

Nearer God's Heart in a Garden

Claudius and the other Conspirators of Isaac boldly enter the garden and "meekly" confront Japheth. If the characters are siding with Claudius (or pretending to), he has them take a dove as a peace offering to Japheth. (The dove is in fact the vessel intended by Augustus to trap Japheth's soul.) If the characters are there as faithful followers of the Cappadocians, he will give them the dove to offer to Japheth, but sneer at them as they do so. If the characters have lost Claudius' trust, but are in the garden, he ignores them and has a ghoul present the dove (Lothar, if he's still alive).

Japheth rises and accepts the dove. Augustus remains seated. Japheth gestures to the dove deliverer to stand aside. (The characters can remain close at hand, however — closer than the monks.) Japheth beckons to Claudius to come forward.

Claudius strides up, a mock penitent smile on his arrogant face. His pack of conspirators stay at a respectful distance. He kneels before Japheth. "Forgive me, brother, for I have sinned against you."

"Aye, that you have, brother," says Japheth. Long pause. "But my sire forgives all, as does my Sire in heaven. And so I forgive you."

Claudius rises, making a show of flicking dirt off the knees of his silken hose.

Japheth clasps Claudius' with one hand, holding the necromancer at arm's length. He holds the dove with the other in front of his chest, almost protectively.

"Go forth," Japheth says, "and sin no more."

"What's this? No kiss for your brother?" Claudius taunts. "No kiss of peace and forgiveness?"

Japheth releases Claudius's arm. Claudius moves in toward Japheth's chest. Suddenly, Japheth catches Claudius' head in his hands, saying "Hear me well, 'brother.' I am he who sits at the right hand of our Father. I obey his will and his word. Remember well the fate of those who forsake his path!"

Sighing, he releases the necromancer. "Come, Claudius. I await your kiss of peace. Let us know each other's souls and have done with it."

Claudius grabs Japheth and pulls him near in a single violent motion. The dove is caught in between. It falls, its neck broken, as Claudius plunges his fangs into Japheth's thin and pallid chest, shredding the monk's robe and sending a cascade of blood flying. The blood leaks from Claudius' thick, greedy lips and spills down in bright red gobbets across Japheth's once-pristine robes. Japheth's mouth tightens in a grimace, but his body remains impassive, arms flung wide to accept his brother's "kiss." Only Japheth's his fists, and the

blood running in rivulets down his chin from his own fangs biting into his mouth, betray even a hint of unwillingness.

All the monks but one sink to the ground and intone a prayer. (The "monk" still standing is Marianna.) The Founders burst from the caves and charge up to the center of the grotto, shouting "Death to the betrayers! Death to the necromancer! Death to the conspiracy!" Hardestadt smiles broadly. He has what they need. He's caught Claudius in the very act of disobeying one of the founding Traditions of Caine.

Japheth gasps, "Stand ye back! Let no blood be shed in the name of the Cappadocians!" as he convulses. Claudius continues to drink.

The Founders sweep down upon the conspirators, who quickly form a protective ring around Japheth so that Claudius can finish his dread deed. The battle is joined. A chill wind kicks up, and howls through the garden. A storm is brewing. Founders and conspirators clash as the wind moans, but Hardestadt can't quite reach Japheth. He shouts, "Childe! Coward! Pacifist! Defend yourself!"

The characters may join the fight at any time on either, neither or both sides. If they have offended people in both camps, they may be attacked by members of both groups.

The Battle

If Jadviga and Hardestadt are both alive at the start of the scene, they will fight each other with a vengeance that transcends the rest of the battle. Without help from the

Handling the Climax

The Last Supper began with a linear storyline to ease players into the action and make sure they have all the exposition and background material that they need. The climax stretches the Storyteller's improvisational and creative powers. You must use everything you know of the antagonists to craft responses to the characters' words and actions — responses that can barely be predicted by this story.

The Storyteller will have a real chance to shine in this scene. The scripted responses answer all the questions necessary for the plot, but they cannot possibly cover every range of conversation. Use the antagonists' motivations to create new dialogue. If you get stuck, remember that they can usually tell the characters to get lost. And when really in doubt, fake it!

Live-Action Notes

At this point the story begins to get less coordinated and more chaotic. Make sure that all the Narrators know their parts well, and are prepared to improvise quickly. Keep up the lines of communication between Narrators, especially if the characters split up. They need to know what's going on in the rest of the game to make the best decisions in a split second. If you have set things up properly, the game should run itself. Sit back and enjoy the ride.

characters, Hardestadt will not be able to stop Claudius from diablerizing Japheth.

Mortal monks run out into the garden, their bare heads gleaming in the moonlight. They implore their guests: "Cease your violence in this most holy and serene of places!" However, the monks do not interfere physically in the battle, even if they are attacked.

Intervention One

If the characters help Japheth, they may actually be able to interfere with Claudius' feeding. Japheth will force them aside, saying, "This shall not be done." A bewildered Claudius resumes the diablerie.

If the characters try to attack Augustus instead of Claudius, they find their attacks go right through him. He is a ghostly presence and not a flesh-and-blood vampire.

If the characters have found a way to get Giovanni blood onto the dove, nothing happens when Japheth finally expires. This is because the vessel is not intended to house Japheth's soul, but Cappadocius'.

It is possible that with effective tactics, the characters may be able to get Claudius away from Japheth. In this case, Japheth will live, but will not be able to stop Augustus from making his move when Cappadocius appears (below).

Antediluvian Blood

When he finishes committing diablerie upon Japheth, a triumphant Claudius, bloated with blood and power, exults to the raging heavens as winds whip around him. Lightning crashes and he cries out mockingly "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day!"

At that point Cappadocius arrives.

The Antediluvian appears in front of the center rock seat, next to Augustus. Though he glows as in Act II, observant characters who make a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) notice that he is not as transparent as before. In addition, those who earlier saw him floating can make a Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 7) to notice that he appears to be solidly in contact with the chair. He looks very angry and bursting with power. Fierce winds roar down the rock face, and drive everyone back from him.

"Claudius Giovanni, what have you done?" he calls, his voice booming even above the roaring wind.

Claudius freezes in the midst of the growing tempest, a look of guilt and shock on his face. He looks fearfully toward Augustus.

Augustus says, "He did as I bade, Sire. He has taken the place of your own son. As I shall take your place! I want your blood, Father!"

"My blood is not mine to give. It belongs to God."

"Then I hope he forgives me for spilling it."

"His forgiveness is for all. Even the likes of you."

"Sanctimonious sot! I will destroy you!" Augustus charges forward, but finds it hard to move, as if the wind or the radiance of Cappadocius prevents him.

"Think on what you do, my son," Cappadocius says. "Grandsire Caine himself has spoken to me and told me: become an eternal sacrifice, that all may have life eternal. I am to create Heaven on Earth, delivering us all from God's curse, and delivering mortals from the grave."

"Heaven on Earth? Never!" With great exertion, Augustus reaches his sire.

"You cannot stop me. I have given myself freely, and my soul shall continue even if this form is extinguished."

"Then I shall have your soul as well as your power!"

As Augustus leaps at his sire, he too begins to glow. He bares his fangs and drinks from the translucent chest of the Antediluvian. Cappadocius closes his eyes and gently cradles the necromancer's head to his bosom. Rivulets of blood leak from around Augustus' mouth as he gasps: "Ahh! His blood burns!"

Hardestadt howls, "No! Blasphemy! It must not be!" He tries to attack Augustus, but he cannot get past the whirling winds that swirl around the pair and scream like lost souls.

Intervention Two

If the characters try to intervene at any time during the confrontation, they must first get past the Maelstrom. The swirling winds that are its physical manifestation keep tangible objects and the effects of Disciplines from coming near the pair.

However, if the characters have been given the shrouds and boots, they can enter the spiritual dimension of the Maelstrom. Suddenly the winds become visible as groaning spirits, hurtling through the air in a frenzy. They cry in pain as they streak past. The shrouds allow the characters to see where the streams of disconsolate spirits converge and diverge. With the boots, the characters can literally walk between streams of spirits, enter the spiritual realm, and approach Augustus and Cappadocius. They must succeed on both a Courage and a Self-Control roll to arrive before the diablerie ends. They do not have time to get there before it begins.

After they successfully navigate the Maelstrom, the characters are in the spirit world with Cappadocius and Augustus, and can interact with and even harm them. If they attack Cappadocius, Augustus fights them, saying "He's my kill!" They may even try to diablerize Cappadocius themselves. Despite the fact that Augustus has already drained a great deal of vitæ, Cappadocius still has 50 Blood Points left. If they do so, though, the blood burns them. While it causes no damage, the characters must make a Humanity roll for every Blood Point they take. Other than the Humanity loss, Cappadocius' blood acts no differently from any vampire's.

If the characters attack Augustus and defeat him, Cappadocius shakes his head sadly and says, "If a man smites your cheek, offer him the other to smite. Only then

can I bring Heaven to Earth and life everlasting to all." He resurrects Augustus, who completes the diablerie.

Augustus hisses, "I shall remember your interference. When we bring the dead lands to Earth, your souls shall be first to be pulled shrieking into the abyss!"

Antediluvian Soul

When Augustus finishes the diablerie, Cappadocius' body melts away to nothing. (Characters with shrouds see it reduce to a small spark, which flies toward Claudius.)

Light radiates from Augustus' eyes, ears, nose and mouth, as if a great light filled his head. He reels like a drunkard. He manages to cry out "Claudius! His soul flies! Get the dove! Catch it!" before he vanishes.

Intervention Three

Characters with shrouds see the tiny spark become engulfed in the Maelstrom and pulled inexorably toward the broken dove. At this point one of three things can happen.

If the characters have already placed the blood of any Giovanni on the dove, they see the spark reach it, turn, then fly in a direction counter to the Maelstrom. It ascends the stone wall and into the heavens.

If the characters have not yet placed Giovanni blood on the dove, they have three turns to do so before Cappadocius' soul reaches it and is trapped. If they manage, making their way through the Maelstrom by brute force or guile, then the spark turns and leaves, as described above.

Forcing their way through the Maelstrom requires that the character make Strength + Athletics rolls (difficulty 8) and accumulate eight successes. Each point of Potence adds one automatic success to these rolls. Working their way through the souls is easier but may take longer. It requires Wits + Survival rolls (difficulty 6) and 12 accumulated successes.

If the characters fail to put blood on the dove in three turns, they see the still-standing braving the Maelstrom. The monk's face is hidden under a heavy hood. The monk approaches the dove, slices his hand and pours his blood onto the dove. This is Marianna, wearing a shroud she obtained from Japheth, placing her own Giovanni blood onto the dove to stop the soul transference.

The Soul Escapes

As Cappadocius' soul-spark disappears into the sky, the heavens finally open, and rain pours down on the garden. Claudius Giovanni looks in horror at the bloody dove. "Come back!" he cries to the soul.

The screaming winds slow as the rains come. Those with shrouds see the spirits sail away into the night. The Maelstrom is gone.



If the characters were responsible for keeping Cappadocius' soul free, they should have the opportunity to raise their Humanity after the story ends.

The Aftermath

The Founders

If the characters fought against Hardestadt, the Founders continue to battle the characters until one group is destroyed or flees. If the characters flee, they can live to fight another day. If they gain the upper hand, the Founders will break and run, so the most important members will remain to carry on their work.

The Conspirators

If the characters did not fight against Hardestadt, the Founders have beaten the conspirators, most of whom have fled. A few are prisoners (at the Storyteller's discretion), along with Claudius Giovanni.

Hardestadt is fuming. "Diablerie! Diablerie most foul! Claudius Giovanni, I should disembowel you where you stand!" The Founders argue over what to do with him. If the characters fought against the conspirators, they also have a say in the outcome. Whatever the result, Hardestadt will not allow Claudius to be killed, but he does take him into custody.

Marianna

Marianna tries to sneak away in the confusion, but the characters can spot her if they make three successes on a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 6). If the characters try to talk to her, they must do so quickly. She still has her vow of silence and will not speak, but she will write notes, which literate characters can read. She writes that she is dedicating her unlife to the destruction of the Giovanni, and that she has little need for her "brothers and sisters in shame." If she put the blood on the dove, she will explain how she was able to stop the soul from being caught. If they ask her where the soul went, she says she does not know.

If the characters impress her with their nobility and honor, she will agree to meet them at a later date to discuss future plans. Otherwise she leaves abruptly.

The Cappadocians

The Cappadocians, their ghouls and the human monks are wailing and grieving. If the characters kept Japheth alive, he cries, "Would that I were dead ere I lived to see such a night."

Jadviga

Unless the characters specifically targeted Jadviga for extermination, she is still alive and free.

Wrapping Up Scene 2

The characters can stay to console the Cappadocians, leave to celebrate with the victors, or go their own way.

Major Players

Japheth

Clan: Cappadocian

Generation: 4th

Embrace: 7225 B.C. (born 7248 B.C.)

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Physical: Strength 7, Dexterity 9, Stamina 8

Social: Charisma 7, Manipulation 6, Appearance 8

Mental: Perception 8, Intelligence 9, Wits 8

Talents: Alertness 7, Athletics 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 9, Empathy 7, Intimidation 6, Leadership 5

Skills: Animal Ken 7, Etiquette 8, Melee 5, Music 6, Ride 5, Stealth 5

Knowledges: Investigation 5, Kindred Lore 6, Law 7, Linguistics 9, Occult 8, Politics 6

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Auspex 8, Celerity 5, Chimerstry 3, Dominate 8, Fortitude 4, Necromancy 6, Obeah 4, Obfuscate 6, Obtenebration 6, Potence 6, Presence 7, Protean 5, Serpents 2, Thaumaturgy 9 (Weather Control 5, Elemental Mastery 5, Movement of the Mind 3, Lure of Flames 1)

Backgrounds: Allies 9, Contacts 8, Elder Status 6, Herd 8, Influence 4, Resources 6, Retainers 9

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

Humanity: 9

Willpower: 10

Notes: Japheth has a plethora of powers, many of which are unique to him. He will not use them in most situations, but the Storyteller should feel free to give him any Traits he needs.

Image: Though he is a short, slight man, those who meet him are usually struck dumb by the aura of peace that surrounds him. During this story, however, he is exceptionally nervous, and his fears are beginning to affect those around him.

Roleplaying Hints: You have spent thousands upon thousands of years seeking self-knowledge, but now you have no idea what is to come. In any case, you follow your father's requests without question.

Augustus Giovanni

Clan: Cappadocian

Generation: 4th

Embrace: 1005 (born 945)

Apparent Age: About 60

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 7, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 8, Wits 6

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 7, Leadership 8, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 6

Skills: Etiquette 8, Melee 4, Music 2, Ride 4, Security 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Law 6, Linguistics 5, Occult 9, Politics 6

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Celerity 3, Dominate 6, Fortitude 3, Necromancy 9, Obfuscate 3, Potence 6, Presence 5, Thaumaturgy 3 (Movement of the Mind 3, Lure of Flames 2)

Backgrounds: Allies 6, Contacts 7, Elder Status 5, Herd 8, Influence 7, Military Force 6, Resources 8, Retainers 9

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Humanity: 2

Willpower: 10

Notes: Augustus' extra level of Dominate allows him to Dominate anyone he touches or who touches him. His extra levels of Necromancy allow him to create zombies, battle spirits, exchange people's souls and place spirits in the bodies of the dead. These Traits are accurate before he commits diablerie upon Cappadocius. Afterward...

Image: A craggy man whose intense eyes seem to leap around in their sockets.

Roleplaying Hints: You are completely caught up in what is to come, fighting with all your might to keep your excitement hidden. Nothing must get in your way.

Cappadocius

To provide Traits for Cappadocius would be ridiculous. No one in this story could affect him without his permission.

Scene 3: The Still After the Storm

The world dies over and over again, but the skeleton always gets up and walks.

— Henry Miller, *The Wisdom of the Heart*

Loose Ends

There are a lot of loose ends, and not all will get wrapped up tidily. Cappadocius is destroyed. Or is he more than dead? The Giovanni own the Cappadocian bloodline. What will they do with it? The threat to all clans is clear. How will they respond?

The Conspirators

If the characters helped the conspirators rout the Founders, and did not interfere with either diablerie, Claudius invites them to return with him to the Inn for a celebration. He is now fourth generation, but still bewildered over the loss of Cappadocius' soul. If the characters learned that it was Marianna's doing and tell him this, he charges them with finding and destroying her.

The Founders

If the characters sided with or helped the Founders (or can make the Founders think they did), they are invited to a planning meeting the following night.

The Founders are furious. Some direct their fury at the characters, who they feel have no right to live, because their interference doomed Cappadocius. But other Founders think the neonates have proven themselves.

Interrogation

If the characters did not interfere in Giovanni's capture, Hardestadt and the Founders grill the necromancer. He does not give them answers.

"We will never accept your clan!" Hardestadt says. "You shall be renegade always, and we shall hunt you to the ends of the Earth!"

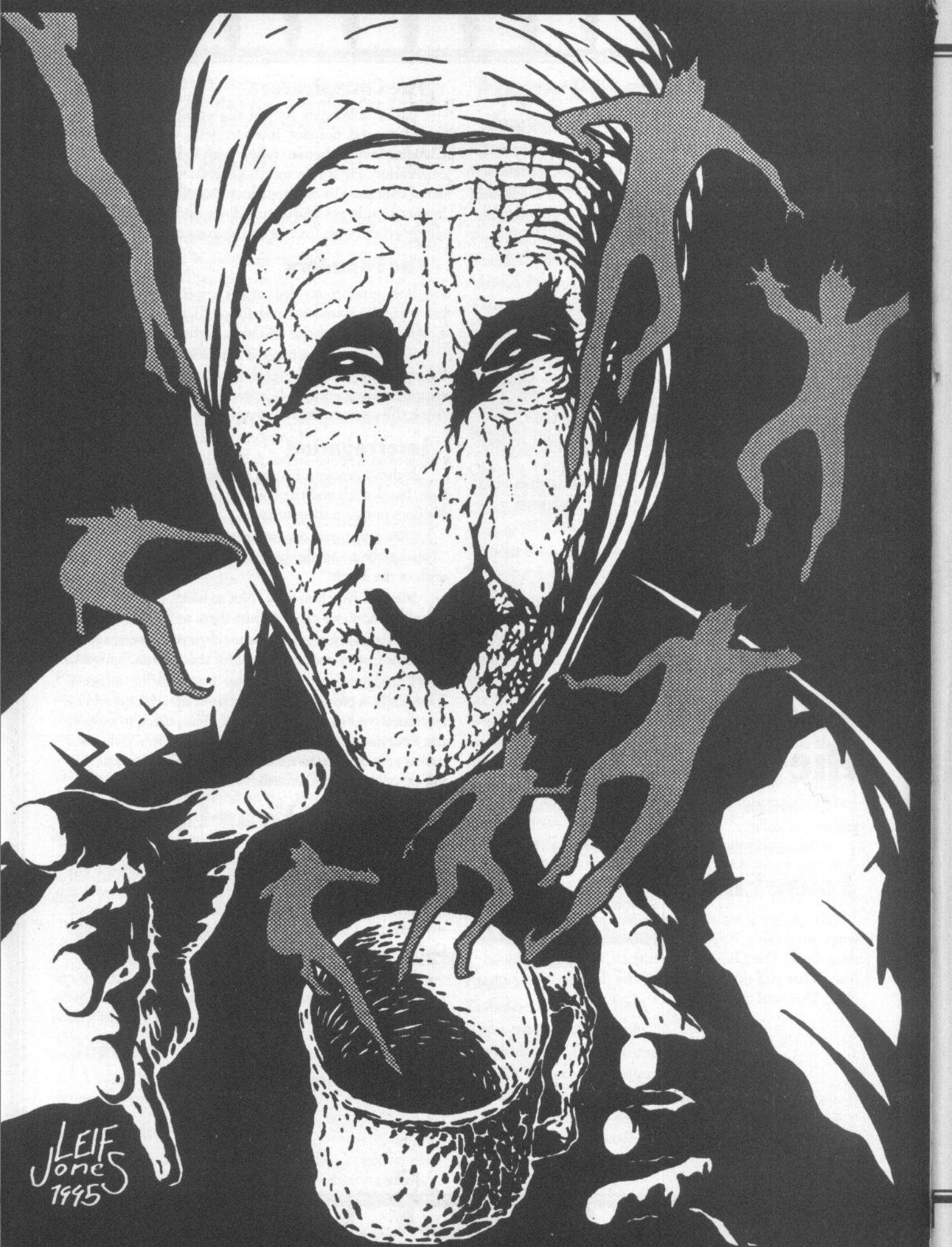
Mistress Fanchon says, "Not so hasty. If they rule the bloodline now, we can't dismiss them so easily."

Hardestadt fumes, "We should never have accepted you either, after your Amaranth of that moron Saulot!"

Throughout it all, Claudius insists he be released. Eventually, a group of Giovanni show up and demand he be turned over to them unharmed. They agree to support the Founders in return. Hardestadt turns him over, and makes preparations to summon all clan elders for the first full meeting of the Camarilla.

The Final Wrap-Up

The Conspiracy of Isaac is broken, but in losing the battle the Giovanni won the war, and control the Cappadocians. This is the start of the chain of events that makes the Giovanni such an outsider clan. For Hardestadt to make the Camarilla work, he may have to invite the Giovanni into its ranks.



Appendix: Beginning the Game

Creating Medieval Characters

All the material in this Appendix is for players and may be freely copied and given to them.

The Last Supper offers a unique opportunity to **Vampire** players. Your character will begin the game mortal, and will be Embraced during play. You may pick your clan now and even assign freebie points. However, you must not use Disciplines or the benefits of the freebie points until after your character is Embraced.

This story gives you the chance to play period characters in an historical World of Darkness setting. You may create a mortal character from any medieval background you choose. Sample character backgrounds include: peasant, noble, clergy (nun, priest, or zealous lay person eager to drum up men and resources for another Crusade), crusader (Christian or Moslem), weary deserter from the Hundred Years' War, foreign mercenary, Gypsy, prosperous trader, trailblazing merchant, itinerant peddler, Jewish moneylender (Christians are prohibited from lending money at interest during this time), innkeeper, scholar, courtesan, troubadour, revolutionary, doctor/barber.

Having players know one another at the start of a game is a good way to build bonds between characters quickly, and is generally a good idea. It should only be discouraged (or forbidden) if real-world pals decide to make their characters buddies so they can snub the others. Hopefully you're totally unfamiliar with this sort of problem.

If everyone is in agreement, your character may know one or more of the other characters before the game begins, or they may begin the game as strangers to one another. The only common feature is that all the characters have to begin the game in Northern Romania, at the foot of the Carpathian mountains, and they all must speak Italian. If your character is not a native of the area, you must create a rationale for them her there. She may be a sightseeing noble, a traveling merchant or scholar, a runaway serf or even a refugee fleeing the lands to the south, where Turks are successfully besieging Christian cities.

As you would with any **Vampire** character, keep in mind the link between your character and your clan (or in this case, clan-to-be). You are not required to make an obvious connection, but some connection helps. This still leaves a wide range. For example, a character of Clan Brujah may be anything from a rebellious peasant youth to a firebrand cleric in the still-nascent Reformation. A Nosferatu can be anything from an unwanted immigrant fleeing the wars to a leper from the holy lands. A Malkavian might be the village idiot or a painfully inbred member of a royal family. A Ventrue can include a noblewoman, a silk merchant and an enterprising poacher.

New Traits

Players can use the standard **Vampire** character sheets during character creation, but they should make a few minor changes to the Abilities section. First of all, the Drive Skill should become Ride and Firearms should be Melee. Under Knowledges, Theology replaces Computer. Also, characters need to spend one point in Linguistics in order to be able to read and write their native language.

Advanced Roleplaying

You know that your character is destined to become a vampire during the story, but he does not. You are required to keep this information separate from your character and not have him act on this basis. This can be a real challenge: for example, your character would know nothing of the politics or clans of vampires.

Playing Medieval Characters

The world was a very different place in 1444. Customs, manners and personal habits were quite different from today, though the fears and hopes were much the same. The players do not need to be Medieval Studies majors to do a credible job of roleplaying people of this era if they keep a few key elements in mind.

Inflexible Social Positions: Upward social mobility was not common in the Middle Ages. Some merchants gained great wealth, and the clergy or military service sometimes offered enterprising youths a chance for advancement, but these were the exception. Most people lived their lives in service to an acknowledged master and behaved respectfully even if they hated him. Deferential behavior toward one's acknowledged "betters" was common and considered vital to survival.

Unless a player chooses five dots of Influence for her character, the vampires in **The Last Supper** will be of a higher social class. For the characters to behave any way but respectfully (and perhaps with a bit of awe) would be a shocking breach of protocol.

Nevertheless, there is a strong undercurrent of rebellious, anti-authority thinking among some in the underclass. This attitude, encouraged by the Brujah and some Lupines and mages, erupted in peasant uprisings and sometimes brought down kings. Characters with this sort of background would be the exception to the general rule of submission.

Rigid Sex Roles: Though there were notable exceptions, women had few opportunities to gain economic power or education and hence had very low status. Female characters chosen from the general population would be expected to be demure, reserved and submissive. This limits the pool of female character backgrounds somewhat. However, audacious mistresses, domineering wives and



bold widows were often able to buck the system and behave independently. Creative players can put together fascinating female characters, from the rare (but very real) female warriors to rebellious peasants to educated women disguised as high-ranking clergymen. (In the Middle Ages, gossip of female priests and even female Popes was rampant.)

Fear of Travel: Most people in the Middle Ages did very little traveling. Setting out on the road was often considered a perilous venture. For the characters, the trip to the Giovanni manse may be one of the longest trips, if not the longest, in their lifetimes.

Deeply Ingrained Superstitions: Modern humanity has a strong skepticism of the supernatural world. Much of this was cultivated by vampires seeking to remain hidden among humanity. But in the Middle Ages, everyone knew that evil spirits in many guises roamed freely over the land. Due to the slow ebbing of magic and the incipient Masquerade, many people had little or no first-hand experience of the supernatural, but most people believed in it strongly.

Though reason and scientific thinking are on the rise during the period in which **The Last Supper** is set, the strong technocratic forces actively seeking to debunk the supernatural have not yet succeeded. Emotions run stronger, passions are more easily inflamed, and blatant contradictions are not always considered improper, or even strange. People do not subject everything they experience to reasoned, critical analysis — and they do believe in monsters.

Starting the Game

Several weeks ago you received a visit from a richly dressed messenger. He brought you a perfumed invitation to a sumptuous dinner at the manse of Lord Claudius Giovanni. Giovanni is from a wealthy Italian trading family and is as feared as he is respected. Such an invitation is a high honor, and one not lightly turned down, even when it is from one as mysterious and distrusted as Lord Giovanni.

You get to decide whether your character reacted with shock, gratitude or terror, but your character chose to go. Those from the lower social orders may conceivably be terrified at the prospect of being called upon to dine with the great and powerful, and may aspire to nothing more than getting home with their heads intact.

When an ornate carriage arrived for you, you packed your possessions (anything from your tunic without the holes to trunks full of brocaded silks), said farewell to your bewildered friends and family (furiously jealous husbands, suspicious abbots, etc.) and set off on what may likely be the longest trip you have ever taken — into the dark wilds of the Carpathian woods.

After a fortnight of jarring travel through rough roads, mud and pouring rain, you arrive late at night at the Red Lamb, a cozy inn where most of the travelers are also on the road to the Giovanni manse. The dinner at the manse is to be held the following evening, and you are to stay at the inn for the night.

The game now begins.



The first installment in the long-awaited Giovanni Chronicle, *The Last Supper* takes the characters to the subterranean lair/mansion of Claudius Giovanni, where the food they eat will be the last to ever touch their lips.

The characters become caught in the war between the clans of the Camarilla and those trying to form the Giovanni. Their actions during the Renaissance will shape the modern World of Darkness — and determine if they will ever see another night.

- Intense roleplaying, as the characters deal with the trauma of becoming vampires while dealing with the horror around them;
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