

A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE



# SABBAT

THE BLACK HAND

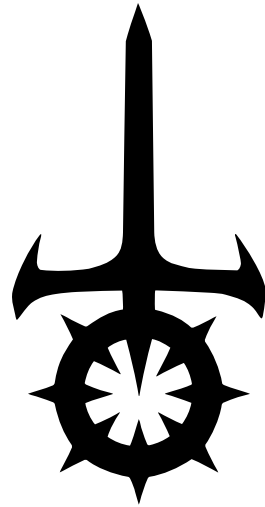
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A Sourcebook for  
*Vampire: The Masquerade*



# VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

## Sabbat: *The Black Hand*

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Some of you call me the Martyr of Caine. It is one of the many appellations I have worn in my thousand years as one of the undead.

I hope those one thousand years convince you of my bona fides. My position is not an empty appeal to my own authority. My voice is the voice of one who has seen firsthand the tumult of ages. I myself lit fires and drank blood in Silchester when the Anarchs rebelled. I myself touched the faces of the Eldest, have worn shackles in its Cathedral.

The world is ever-changing, and the Damned must change with it. The Sabbat must change with it. Centuries ago, our tools were blood and fire. Tonight, many of us continue to wage war with those same weapons. And the mortal world once took up fire against us in return.

Tonight, we have had our backs broken by our sires and grandsires, our hearts pierced by mortal hunters — hunters who themselves know that wooden stakes and torches, while still effective, give way to more effective tools. Swarms of death-spitting homunculi that hover in the sky. Weapons that outpace the rending of life that even the hoary koldun can coax from the ground.

The mortals have once again taken up fire. Our sires and grandsires likewise roar their fire against us. You have read the Book. You know the signs.

Our blood and fire do not hold back the night. From our vantage, fire is inadequate to even illuminate the night for any true duration.

Our dominion will not be realized by calling upon the same blood and fire we wielded against superstitious peasants as they shuddered on their crafts.

Our dominion will not be realized by seizing domain and reclining on its throne, like a pasha, like a Camarilla crow.

We shall realize our dominion not by lingering upon what we are, but by heeding what we must become.

This Damned form — this Cainite form — is but a chrysalis. It is mutable, mere flesh, mere clay. We have left our mortal clay behind, but our journey does not end with these vile bodies.

We must, then, ourselves become the night.

We must become.

For such is the will of Caine.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>	The Path of Death and the Soul	24
How to use this Book	7	Ethics	25
Storyteller Style	7	In Chronicles	25
Theme and Mood	7	Disciplines	25
Build Your Own Medieval Death Cult	8	The Path of Power and the Inner Voice	26
		Ethics	27
		In Chronicles	27
		Disciplines	27
<b>Chapter One:</b>		The Path of the Sun	28
<b>Setting Fire</b>	<b>11</b>	Ethics	30
The Righteous Supremacy of the Blood	11	In Chronicles	30
Beyond Mortal	12	Disciplines	30
Power and Liability	12	Forsaken Paths	31
A Church Militant	13	Path of the Beast	31
Shattered Domains	13	Path of Honorable Accord	31
Endless Conflict	14	Path of Lilith	31
Forging Loyalty	14	The Killing Time: Antagonists	32
Legacy of Brutality	15	Constructing Conflict	32
Feeding the Beast	15	Portraying the Paths	33
		Path of Caine	33
		Path of Cathari	35
		Path of Death and the Soul	37
		Path of Power and the Inner Voice	40
		Flotsam and Jetsam	42
<b>Chapter Two:</b>		The Gifts of Caine: Disciplines	46
<b>Apostates of a Cruel Church</b>	<b>19</b>	Auspex	46
Paths of Enlightenment	19	Animalism	47
The Path of Caine	20	Dominate	47
Ethics	20	Obfuscate	48
In Chronicles	21	Protean	49
Disciplines	21	Oblivion	49
The Path of Cathari	22	Blood Sorcery	49
Ethics	23		
In Chronicles	23		
Disciplines	23		

Ceremonies	52
Thin-Blood Alchemy	53
Ritae: Keys to the Dominion of Caine	55
The Role of Ritual	55
Auctoritas Ritae	56
Creation Rites	57
Ignoblis Ritae	64

**Chapter Three:  
Burn Brightly** **71**

Anatomy of a Death Cult	71
Image Is Everything	72
Strange Bedfellows	72
Antitribu	74
Overwriting the Individual	75
Cultivating Conformity	75
Catechism: Sabbat Objectives	77
Ideological Enmity	77
Path Realities	79
Adopting a Path	79
Changing Paths	79
Leaving Paths	79
Sabbat Titles	80
Pack Patterns	85

**Chapter Four:  
The Gehenna War** **91**

A Brief and Dirty History of the Sabbat	91
Blood and Fire	91
Anarchs Revolt	92
From the Ashes of the Revolt	93
Enlightenment in Blood	93
The Beginning of the End of the World	94
SITREP: The Gehenna War	95
An Empire of Blood	95
Mexico City	97
Brazil: Civil War	98
Russia and the Baltics	100
The Maghreb and Alamut	102
The Domain Next Door	103

**Chapter Five:  
Storyteller Resources** **105**

Setting Element: Sabbat Domains	105
Surge	106
Accord	107
Entente	107
Crusade	108
Story Elements: Chronicle Structures	109
Blood and Fire	109
Hearts and Minds	110
Stoking Revolution	111
Infiltration and Espionage	112
Story Elements: Narrative Structures	115
Rising Action	115
Open Conflict	116
Temptation	117
The Enemy of My Enemy	118
Story Element: Conflict Triangles	120
Rival Sects	120
Playing With Fire:	
The Second Inquisition	120
Thematic Element: Inhumanities	121
Thematic Element:	
The Pack Hunts as One	122
Setting Element: Sabbat Havens	122
Communal Havens	123
Storytelling Technique:	
Paranoia and Red Herrings	124
Thematic Element: the Antediluvians	125
Enemy Unknown	125
Stolen Blood	126

**Index** **127**



# INTRODUCTION

*We are each our own devil, and we make this world our hell.*

— OSCAR WILDE

No sect evokes such fear at its mention, such revulsion at its ideologies, as does the Sabbat. The self-styled Sword of Caine wages a war — a war of ages, a holy war, a Gehenna War — against the legendary progenitors of the clans, the Antediluvians. Citing the *Book of Nod*, the Sabbat seeks to avenge the ancient betrayal of Caine by his wayward childer, seeking nothing less than the destruction of the Antediluvians and the subjugation of the mortal world to a brutal hierarchy with vampires at its apex.

Other sects regard the Sabbat as heretical at best and apocalyptic at worst. Some outright deny the existence of Antediluvians, proclaiming them myth, allegory, or centuries dead. Others regard them as torpid, far-distant, or irrelevant in the modern nights.

That's exactly what drives the fear other sects have of the Sabbat: Not only do they prosecute a fanatical agenda, they do so with little regard for themselves, and with the convictions of an era long past, a time of Long Night.



# How to Use this Book

Here is the most important sentence in this book: The function of the Sabbat in **Vampire: The Masquerade** stories is to threaten the status quo.

The presentation of the Sabbat for the Fifth Edition of **Vampire** is as antagonists. The Sword of Caine is undeniably a monstrous evil that even the Kindred fear, a sect of vampire supremacists who set aside the perspectives of the still-living, believing themselves to be more than mortals.

This manifests as deliberate efforts by the Sabbat to crush individual identity and reshape it to the sect's own apocalyptic ends. Ultimately, Sabbat vampires don't have a choice in many of the actions they take. In giving themselves to the Beast, they've set aside that central riddle of the Kindred condition.

One of the core ironies — or hypocrisies, if you will — of being Sabbat is that it attempts to overthrow oppression through fanatical servility to Caine. As members of the Black Hand, Cainites yield individuality, ambition, autonomy. They are Blood Bound, indoctrinated, completely deindividuated, and instilled with hatreds to which they turn no critical thought.

To be clear, there are no systems or suggestions included herein for portraying the Sabbat as a player's character. This book includes Discipline powers, details for Sabbat rituals, information on the Paths of Enlightenment, etc., with the intention that Storytellers will use them to create compelling stories around opposing the Sabbat.

## Storyteller Style

The Sabbat has endured a crippling collapse. From its abandonment by erstwhile leaders to the ravages of the Gehenna War to the fact that it makes a huge target of itself in the era of the Second Inquisition, the Sabbat has fractured, united only in its common hatred of the Antediluvians and the extremes to which it will go to defy and destroy them.

As a result, Storytellers have enormous leeway to present localized versions of the Sabbat that emphasize their own distinct themes. The Sabbat can appear in chronicles as redneck splatterpunk vampires marauding across remote Texas scrub, or as bloodthirsty sharks moving through the high-life/low-life social circles of European capitals, or as harbingers of monstrous morality in the vaults of the Ancients themselves. The Sabbat takes many forms and provides points of conflict for innumerable stories.

Except under certain circumstances, the Sabbat doesn't claim domain as other Kindred consider the practice. Rather, the Sabbat remains ever-mobile, devouring what a domain has to offer like a swarm of locusts before chasing some cryptic secret or strange stimulus into the Gehenna War's next theater. What is it chasing? Other Kindred can't figure it out, entirely, and that disconnect means they have difficulty relating to and comprehending Sabbat motives.

This book takes a big-picture look at the Sword of Caine, but it's important to note that a big picture doesn't exist in an entire locality anywhere in the world. Which is to say, a complete, local microcosm of the full Sabbat isn't present in any single domain in the world (unless you overrule that, as Storyteller). The Sword of Caine in one domain may literally be the shattered remains of a single infiltrating pack, while a score of Black Hand vampires may vie with Camarilla courts and Anarch seditionists in another domain. The Sabbat exists to provide a scaling antagonist in any domain where you desire to set your chronicle.

## Theme and Mood

The theme of the Sabbat is desperation. Faced with a harrowing and self-destructive reality, the Sabbat seeks any functional method of its rejection, sinking ever deeper into its own depravity as a way to fight back against the vampires' reckoning. Sabbat desperation manifests in fanaticism, fundamentalism, violence, and monstrosity. The ultimate expression of fighting fire with fire — and fire is a powerful symbol both to and for the Sabbat — the



Black Hand willingly chooses to define itself as worse than the enemies it opposes. When faced with the rising of cannibalistic blood gods, the Sword of Caine seeks to strike down those blood gods... and replace them, dragging the world into a Hell of the sect's making.

The mood of the Sabbat is of alienation, of active inhumanity. The Sabbat turns its back on the very notion of Humanity, fanatically believing that the only way to truly realize the potential of the vampire is to give oneself wholly to the aspects of the Cainite condition that are unique to it. The Sword of Caine venerates the Beast, exults in the power of the Blood, and declares diablerie a sacrament. Sabbat vampires feel no compassion for mortals, and they certainly don't pine for their by-gone days of being mortal. In fact, Sabbat vampires don't relate to mortals at all — and that also makes it profoundly difficult for them to relate to other vampires, as well. Cainites are entirely Other, true monsters, the vampires whom other vampires look over their shoulder and dread to see.

## Build Your Own Medieval Death Cult

The Sabbat has many faces but a single guiding philosophy.

One of the most important things to consider about the Black Hand is that it's not a monolith. It's decentralized, even fragmented, to the same degree that the Anarchs are, and since it's actively fighting the Gehenna War, Sabbat rates of final death are even higher than those of other sects. What's true of the Sabbat tonight, even locally, might not survive past the sunrise.

The result is that the Sabbat is a "sect" only in that it has a common cause and a canon of specific rituals that unite it in packs. That aside, the Sabbat is extremely parochial. The nature of those packs, the responsibilities of the packs' spiritual leaders, whether or not those leaders themselves have superiors or if anyone pays them heed — all of these vary radically by location and by manifestation.

One might encounter a pack of Sabbat committing a grandiose diablerie in a baroque Cathedral of Flesh, or one might find a pack reduced to its last two emaciated members desperately working Blood Sorcery in order to poison the frenzied elder about to drink them dry. The Sabbat in your domain might be all that remains after a gore-spattered raid by hunters in this era of the Second Inquisition, or it might be holed up in the cellar of a Buenos Aires veterinary clinic, trying to bring back a fallen pack-mate from torpor.

Remember, there's nothing preventing players from knowing the information presented in this book. Where the mystery and personality emerge is in how you use the Black Hand as a storytelling tool. Challenge the status quo.

If it helps, think of the Sabbat as something other than a sect entirely, a disparate mob of blood-war revolutionaries with regional strengths, activities, and methods of tearing down Ancient tyranny. ■

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### CONSENT AND RESPECTFUL PLAY

Vampire deals with mature themes and story elements that some may find uncomfortable or that remind them of personal traumas. This can be especially true of the Sabbat, which deals overtly with violence, situations intended to harm the individual's sense of self, and relationships with authority and personal boundaries.

It's worth calling out that these are story elements and themes. They are specifically not a license to traumatize players or abuse the trust between players. While the characters in a chronicle in which the Sabbat plays a part may well experience dire circumstances, by no means should such situations or techniques be visited upon the participants of the game.

For more information on consent and respectful play, see Appendix III of **Vampire: The Masquerade**, pp. 421-425.

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# Sabbat Lexicon

**Auctoritas Ritae:** The recognized canon of the Sabbat, a set of high rituals prescribed for all Sabbat to heed

**Black Hand, the:** The Sabbat

**Brothers and Sisters in Caine:** The Sabbat

**Cainite:** A vampire; one of the progeny of Caine. Used among Sabbat to the exclusion of “Kindred,” which the Black Hand derides as a soft appellation

**Cold War:** Intrigue, spycraft, and other subtle movements against the servants of the Antediluvians, usually waged to destabilize domains where non-Sabbat sects claim dominance

**Gehenna War:** The Eternal Struggle in its most urgent form, the resistance against the rising of the Antediluvians and their servitors

**Hot War:** Active fighting against the Antediluvians in the Gehenna War

**Ignoblis Ritae:** The local or pack-specific rites created by individual packs or domains to establish community or sanctify behavior

**Pack:** A Sabbat coterie, almost always reinforced with the ritus of the Vaulderie

**Pack Priest:** The spiritual and tactical leader of a Sabbat pack

**Path of Enlightenment:** A mental, emotional, and spiritual conditioning that supplants Humanity, usually with the intent of heightening the priorities of vampiric supremacy

**Ritae:** Rituals forming the Sabbat catechism; singular ritus or rite

**Sabbat:** The Sabbat is a singular it when referring to the sect; its members are a plural they. But “Sabbat” can also refer to members — one can be a Sabbat of the Sabbat, not that such a phrase would be spoken frequently.

**Shovelhead:** A fledgling Sabbat vampire, generally Embraced en masse to serve as front-line fodder in an immediate conflict. May or may not have been dumped into a mass grave after being clubbed over the head with an actual shovel.

**Sword of Caine, the:** The Sabbat

**Thin-blooded:** Vampires of especially high generation, whose Blood carries little to no indication of their lineage. “The Time of Thin Blood,” when these vampires are present, is one of the omens of Gehenna presaged in the *Book of Nod*.

**Vaulderie:** A Sabbat ritus that shatters Blood Bonds and reinforces loyalty among pack members

**Vinculum:** A specific type of Blood Bond that exists among members of a pack, subverting singular Blood Bonds (plural: vincula)



# Chapter One:

# SETTING FIRE



*The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others.*

— CHINUA ACHEBE, *THINGS FALL APART*

From its origins as a medieval death cult to its modern incarnation as a fanatical shock-force on the front lines of the Gehenna War, the Sabbat is more than the bloody scourge the other sects describe it to be.

To wit, few Kindred outside of Sabbat domains have even met a Sabbat Cainite, and the sect's reputation is as much the propaganda of its rivals as it is an accurate summation. One will seldom see Camarilla and Anarch rivals sweep previous grievances under the rug so quickly as when it is rumored that the Sabbat has an interest in the domain.

At the same time, much of what the other sects know about the Sabbat is entirely accurate. The savvy Kindred is able to distinguish the Sword of Caine's own extreme ideology from the horror stories the other sects repeat to discourage their members from looking any deeper. For the Camarilla, steering Kindred away from the Black Hand is a matter of caution and safety. For the Anarchs, it's a matter of realizing that Sabbat extremism is a form of control and an unrelenting oppression.

For the Sabbat, however, it all comes down to unapologetically being a vampire.

## The Righteous Supremacy of the Blood

The mindset that distinguishes the Sabbat from other sects to a stark degree is the belief that becoming a vampire fundamentally changes a person to such an extent that old notions of Humanity are no longer germane. From the Sabbat perspective, Humanity is at best a burden and at worst a prison, keeping vampires chained to bygone identity. It is a waste of the Blood to pretend that one is still mortal or must cling to human affectations.

To the Sabbat way of thinking, the vampire is a creature above mere mortals, and must therefore rewrite their psyche with a purpose that allows the vampire to assume their supreme place. Indeed, "creature" is a word chosen deliberately — it implies that one is created, that becoming a vampire is apotheosis. Of course, whom that creator may be varies wildly among Sabbat, but the paramount message is that vampires fulfill a higher purpose,

a calling, a metaphysical need, or a blood-soaked divine right.

In practice, Cainites are effectively the creatures of their sires. What remains tonight of the Sabbat is a vicious echelon of remorseless vampires who see nothing wrong in creating hordes of lesser chattel to hurl at their enemies. Very often these lesser vampires create their own broods, the better to form their own cadres to be directed against those same foes. The result is a sect that Embraces with abandon, but with an extremely short time to final death. Not all Sabbat meet their end so quickly, but the odds of survival grow increasingly poor the higher one's generation is. And as to thin-blooded Sabbat — who knows how many of them even exist? Or how many survive for any appreciable length of time?

## Beyond Mortal

Without a doubt, Sabbat followers of these ideologies, these Paths of Enlightenment, strike fear into mortals (and many Kindred...) in their lack of abil-

ity to empathize with Humanity. Paragons of these Paths may be individually unnerving, repulsive, or wholly alien. The elusive elders of the sect liken these attempts to codify the moral elements of their undead existence to faiths or devotions, while at least one modern Sabbat fledgling of philosophical bent has described them as operating systems.

To outside perspectives, this reveals the monstrosity of the Sabbat, but to the Sabbat itself, it's at least being honest — it's the "Kindred" who lurk within mortal cohorts or who pretend to grandiose schemes with mortal puppets who are the true atrocities, squandering the curse of Caine and wallowing among the kine.

## Power and Liability

Indeed, if the Camarilla is quick to exercise its connections as a way to solve problems, and the Anarchs rely on their own abilities, the Sabbat solves problems as a vampire "should." Sabbat vampires use Disciplines. That is, if a Camarilla Kindred silences a Masquerade breach by calling in a favor to smother the story and an Anarch silences a Masquerade breach by browbeating the observer into silence, a Sabbat Cainite resolves the breach by driving witnesses mad with terror-inducing Presence or by tracking them with predatory Animalism and silencing them permanently.

This lack of subtlety has had a side effect that the Black Hand willfully ignores: Hunters in this era of the Second Inquisition have the least trouble following the trail of the Sabbat, and have had the most success in reducing the sect's ranks (at least in locales other than the front lines of the Gehenna War itself). Proud Sabbat try to spin this as a badge of honor, that the Camarilla and Anarchs deal with the era of the Second Inquisition by running and hiding rather than standing and fighting. That said, it's hard to argue with how effective numerous vampire-hunting organizations have been in breaking the Sabbat's domains and reducing its numbers.



# Soldiers in the Gehenna War

At the center of its conviction is the Sabbat's veneration of whom the sect believes to be its Dark Father: Caine, the First Vampire. From Caine's insidious childer spawned the clans as they are known tonight, and it is these hated Antediluvians against whom the Sabbat devotes its efforts.

According to the various catechisms of the Black Hand, Caine's original progeny betrayed the purity of the Dark Father's Embrace in pursuit of their own degenerate desires. Their endless selfish rivalries became what is known as the Eternal Struggle, spawning centuries of conflict, dooming countless vampires to Final Death in internecine struggles or forcing them to cower among mortals and masquerade as their masters.

The Sabbat hates these Antediluvians, seeking to become closer to the Dark Father and destroy his despicable childer. To other sects, clans may be esteemed lineages or indicators of prowess — to the Sabbat, they are the by-blows of Antediluvian sin, and many Cainites describe themselves as antitribu, apostates against the very idea of clans, despite the aptitudes they may confer.

## A Church Militant

No surprise, then, that perhaps more than the other sects, the Sabbat heeds the Beckoning, and indeed plunges itself headlong into the occulted conflicts of the Gehenna War. Other Kindred may resist the Beckoning, but the Sabbat is drawn to it, and even those who do not themselves hear it follow enthralled sires and zealous pack leaders.

Little news comes back from the war front, however, and even the deathless champions of the Sword of Caine surely find themselves tested in its crucibles. What better way to martyr oneself and exult in the glories of Caine than to strike at the heart of the chthonic Third Generation itself?

And the Sabbat knows an additional secret that has so far eluded the other sects: The Gehenna War affects much more territory than what the Camarilla and Anarchs suspect. It isn't confined to the cradle of civilization, where the original and most ancient vampires held sway. The intervening millennia have caused a great diaspora of peoples and the vampires who hide among them. Therefore, the Antediluvians have likewise traveled enormous distances, making the Gehenna War a worldwide theatre.

## Shattered Domains

In correlation, the Sabbat itself holds little domain in a conventional sense. Whereas it once claimed and contested territories like the Anarchs and Camarilla, tonight Sabbat domains often have a strange-feeling absence of Cainites in them. Since so many obey the Beckoning, domains of the Black Hand are often underpopulated, at least in terms of vampiric presence.

This isn't always the case, however, and no few domains experience huge surges and Mass Embraces as the front-line commanders of the Gehenna Crusade demand fresh conscripts to plunge into battle with the Antediluvians. It is again important to recognize the success the Second Inquisition has had in curtailing Sabbat influence.

Despite all of its Embraces, the Sabbat appears to be a very small sect, owing largely to its high rate of final death. Among the massive Cainite casualties of the Gehenna War, the ruthless precision of the Second Inquisition, and the abhorrence other sects have for the Black Hand, the Sabbat's enemies are many and its individual members' nights are numbered from the moment of their Embrace.



# Rebels in the Eternal Struggle

In centuries past, the Sabbat seemed to be at the forefront of the War of Ages, having formed after the vaunted diablerie of certain Antediluvians. Against the fiery backdrop of the original Anarch Revolt, the Sabbat hauled itself out of the ashes. It built around itself an identity of freedom from elder manipulations. In the intervening centuries, however, the Sword of Caine has taken a monstrous path in order to ensure its own freedom.

To hear the sect tell it, the Sabbat seeks to emancipate itself from the prison of living, to abandon the frail mortal coil and exult the Cainite condition. The reality is that the sect doesn't do this in a manner that would uplift the world around it. To a fervent Cainite, the best outcome would be a world of eternal night, with mortal thralls forced into servitude or herded like cattle to slake the thirsts of their undead lords.

## Endless Conflict

This extreme outlook means that the Sabbat cannot help but forever find itself at war — at war with the mortals from whom the other sects hide, at war with the Antediluvians and their ruinous Gehenna, at war with the other sects for supremacy, and at war with itself over the survival of the sect. To the Black Hand, the world is conflict, and the Sabbat is a righteous rebellion standing fiercely against the forces that would keep it downtrodden. Born in an era of medieval turmoil, the Sabbat fights because fighting is all it knows and has known for the centuries it has existed.

Tonight, the Gehenna War evolves. Even as parts of the Sabbat still fight for the tombs of their hated progenitors, others follow the trails of those who left for distant lands. As noted above, Sabbat domains are in a state of flux and the theatre of war expands. The Black Hand needs its warfront domains to continue providing grist for its innumera-

ble conflicts, but at the same time, it needs redoubts to which to fall back and enjoy what blood-streaked freedom it can say to have won for itself.

## Forging Loyalty

Ensuring loyalty among those cruelly invited into the sect is no mean feat. To this end, the Sabbat employs a variety of rituals, individuality-breaking psychological techniques, and a host of horrors to force all Brothers and Sisters in Caine to rely upon one another. Rarely does one see an individual Sabbat, for the sect's vampires run in "packs," and their goals and souls are cultivated by spiritual leaders known as Pack Priests.

And this is ever more reason for the other sects' hatred of the Sabbat. With its own shrinking domains and perpetual surveillance by Second Inquisition agencies, the Sabbat also press-gangs other vampires into its ranks. Whether abducting existing Kindred and dropping them onto the front lines of the Gehenna War, or performing hit-and-run raids that precisely target the favored feeding candidates and personal entourages of rival sects, the Sabbat is desperate for soldiers and resorts to any means necessary to bolster its ranks.

Ironic, then, that at the center of the Sabbat's freedom and loyalty lies the Blood Bond. The Black Hand knows a special rite, the *Vaulderie*, that can destroy existing Blood Bonds, such as those to a domineering sire or a forlorn lover. But observing this rite forges a new Blood Bond in its place, among the vampires of the pack performing it, replacing one regnant with numerous others in mutuality.



## Rapturously Violent

All of this adds up to a sect that is steeped in violence. A fledgling Sabbat's first night may find them bludgeoned with a shovel, hastily Embraced, and dumped into a mass grave. Those with the bestial drive to claw their way out of the charnel pit are generally considered to have earned the right to call themselves Sabbat — and are often quickly thrown into the Gehenna War, conscripted into crusade against one of the other sects, or sent into the wilds to cause what havoc they can among whatever border threat the Sabbat perceives as encroaching upon its domain. Not every Sabbat becomes one of the Damned like this, but certainly enough do that the story makes its way into the popular perception, especially among other sects.

## Legacy of Brutality

The horrific result is undeniable: The Black Hand luxuriates in cruelty. Given that it seeks to suborn human compassion, this cruelty can take many forms, such as the wanton destruction of a street gang unleashed or the consummate viciousness of a sculptor who works in the medium of pain.

Methodology, frequency, and intensity may vary, but ultimately, every Sabbat sees their compassion and therefore Humanity broken under tides of incessant violence. Such is the legacy of the Beast; such is the original sin of the Dark Father. Understanding is the first step toward adopting a Path of Enlightenment.

## Feeding the Beast

The Sabbat is a sect forever fighting something or someone, and that constant siege mentality shapes its members' transition from mortal to Cainite. The Sabbat way is not usually one of esoteric ruses and centuries-spanning schemes. It prefers overt Disciplines and brutal force — Cainites prefer to dive into the maw of their foes, slashing and burning the whole way down. Where overt violence

would fail, the Black Hand blackmails, misdirects, or tempts, but all toward a predetermined conclusion.

Usually the enemy is some sort of ideological antagonist, such as the pawn of a hated Antediluvian or an adversary from a despised sect. Sometimes, though, the enemy is other Sabbat, perhaps a pack of glory-seeking shovelheads or a rival elder. The Sabbat has long abandoned subtler means of mitigating differences between ostensible comrades.

It is a dangerous release, this Sabbat willingness to entertain vampiric methods as a primary means of resolving conflicts. Many find it liberating, a way to ride the wave of frenzy and yoke themselves to the inexorable momentum of the Beast. In most cases, though, violence begets violence, and those who win their spoils amid blood and fire usually see them crumble away as the next conflict sees them dragged into a much-deserved hell.







## Cultic Legion

More than any other sect, the Sabbat is driven by a common purpose. A far cry from the neofeudal exceptionalism of the Camarilla and the revolutionary egalitarianism of the Anarchs, the Sabbat is united by its constant siege mentality against the despised Antediluvians. Whether compared to insatiably hungry sharks or the Biblical Legion of Gerasene demons, the Sabbat acts with existential zeal toward its goal. It is no surprise to find the Black Hand unifying in hatred of its myriad enemies, given its convictions.

At least on the surface that appears to be the case. Dig deeper, though, and the sect reveals itself as a hive of conflicting approaches. Fostered by the various Paths of Enlightenment, the sect's common purpose meanders viciously among its numerous methodologies.

Some Sabbat believe that the Black Hand itself can have no consistent, doctrinaire ideology, that the very nature of the Sabbat is a chaotic swarm of spiritual philosophies that by definition cannot become orthodox. Others insist that the Sabbat is itself an experiment in finding which of its Beast-venerating Paths is most effective, efficient, or shuddersome. Still others couldn't care less, and heed the pack as it incites them down a fundamentalist course of blood and fire.

Despite the multiplicity of Paths, though, a sense of oneness, of conformity — of shared desperation — finds a strident home. Most of the sect practices a body of prescribed — and profane — rituals, the better to reinforce trust and dependency. As well, various cults of personality emerge around hierophants of the Paths, so devoted are they to the righteousness of the sect itself. These harbingers of spiritual purity represent the worst tendencies of the Sabbat: self-defeating violence in the name of a self-declared authority, all directed against a universally hated external enemy. ■

The cloying smell of spilled drinks, long dried. Dark outside but the bar hadn't opened yet. The barback let us in because he couldn't not.

"They don't do it how we do. They're different." The Kindred next to me exhaled a ribbon of smoke. Smoking was one of the only times she pretended to breathe.

I had known her forever. Since the dawn of time. Since 2004 at least, since before Siberia closed, the original one at the 50th Street subway station, where I'd met her. She had been under the night longer than I had.

"What do you mean?" I croaked. Better for me to stay behind the curtain to the storeroom. You never know who might be in the place before they were supposed to be. Like us. "They still take it from the veins, yeah?"

Long pause.

"They don't... they don't hunt. There's no back-and-forth. They don't... seduce people and leave them with a fumed head the next morning, wondering what happened." A theatrical roll of her hand at the wrist.

Another pause. "How do they do it, then?"

"They don't hunt, they slaughter. You ever see a pack of hyenas take down a buffalo? Like on one of those nature shows? Or at Michael's studio, that time those wild dogs killed his goats. Just piling on, pulling them apart, all those cracking sounds, and spattering. Nothing left but scraps."

That wasn't how I'd learned to do it. "Like, they just let it control them like that? How do they...? What lets them hold onto... onto themselves?"

Long pause again. Exhaling smoke.

"I don't think they give a shit."





REDEMPTION  
METHODIST  
CHURCH

207... AVE

GAFF

MK  
2021

*Chapter Two:*

# APOSTATES *of a* CRUEL CHURCH

*Men will never be free until the last king is strangled  
with the entrails of the last priest.*

– DENIS DIDEROT, *POÉSIES DIVERSES*

In the Final Nights, the Sabbat seems at once an unpredictable hive of clashing orthodoxies and a terrible, relentless monoculture. The apocalyptic Gehenna War has crippled its former leadership structure and robbed it of its most potent elders. The most venerable and respected among the Lasombra – once extremely influential in the sect, if not always its heart for centuries – have moved to abandon the Sabbat as a lost cause. Almost the entirety of the Black Hand’s former domains have been seized by rival sects, even as mortal hunters and agencies associated with the era of the Second Inquisition harry the Sword of Caine at all turns. Tonight, the Sabbat is smaller than it has been since its foundation, fighting a desperate war against enemy sects, mortal hunters, and the Antediluvians themselves..

All of which means tonight’s Sabbat has nothing left to lose.

This chapter includes a number of tools Storytellers can use to introduce the Sabbat into their troupe’s chronicles. From the Paths of Enlightenment to sect rites to Discipline powers and ready-to-frenzy antagonists, if you’re looking to get your hands dirty, this is the chapter for you.

## Paths of Enlightenment

By codifying the Cainites’ relationships with their Beasts, Paths of Enlightenment define the Sabbat, both as a sect and as individual members. Paths shape how Sabbat vampires interact with the world, how they fight the Gehenna War, how they wield the gifts of Caine to forge the world into their preferred image.

Sabbat packs form around the idea of Path observance. In the vast majority of cases, pack members all follow the same Path, ministered by each pack’s Priest. This helps not only in focusing pack efforts, but in the cultic subjugation of the individual, which shapes the other sects’ perception of the Sabbat as a hive consciousness.

Cainites primarily identify themselves by devotion to their Path. While other sects may elevate their clans as foundations of identity, points of pride, or proof of sectarian entitlement, the Sabbat has no use for such, and even subverts the very idea of clan. For more information on the Sabbat’s notions of *antitribu*, see p. 74.



# THE PATH OF CAINE

*Noddists, Devourers*



The premise of the Path of Caine is to cultivate and refine the power inherent in the Blood so that individual vampires can realize their full potential. In the zealous parlance of the Path, anything one can do to “bring themselves closer to Caine” is diablerie, which is a tacit reverence for the act of diablerie. The Blood is all to the Noddists, who rarely pass up a chance to partake of puissant vitae, whether it’s of profound resonance, potent generation, or some other, stranger property. Indeed, followers of this Path may become distracted by opportunities to lower their generation or bring greater potency to their Blood.

A desired emulation of the First Vampire is what distinguishes this Path from other Sabbat ideology. In the parables of Caine, the Dark Father had mastered the Beast, not to deny it, but in an understanding that his Curse was the eternal conflict between his lower and higher selves. The Beast is a servant, not to be feared, but to be respected and even nourished, for as the Beast grows in might, so grows the strength of the master required to direct it as desired.

## Ethics

- Lower one’s generation and concentrate the power of one’s Blood to become closer to Caine and exult in the potency it yields.
- Partake of all blood, the better to understand the power contained in it and to build wisdom from its nuances.
- Brook no failure from one’s leaders – be prepared to commit diablerie upon them if their shortcomings hold the pack back.

## In Chronicles

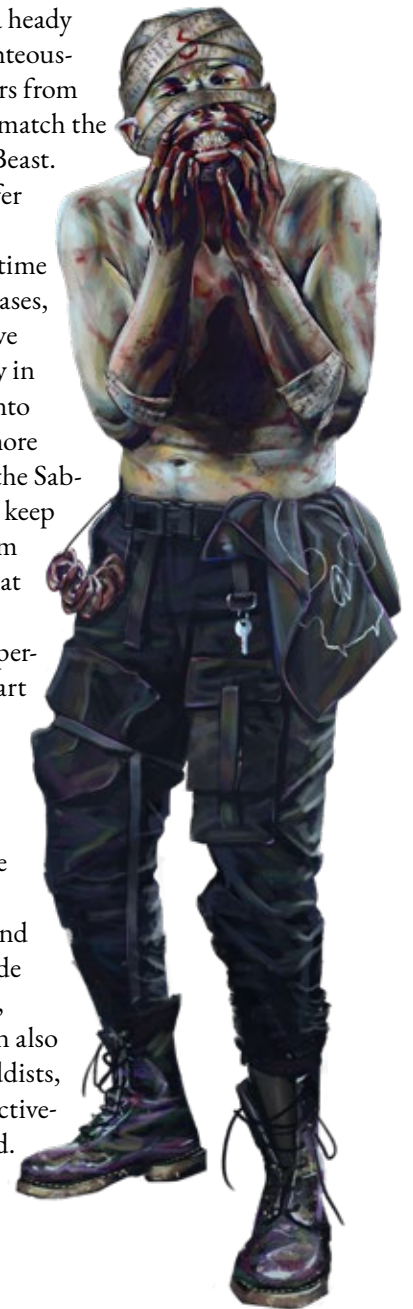
Followers of the Path of Caine are relentless opponents, pursuing their adversaries to eliminate them but also to take the power that is inherently theirs. Noddists not only consume the heartsblood of fallen Cainite enemies, they take trophies to demonstrate their growing puissance.

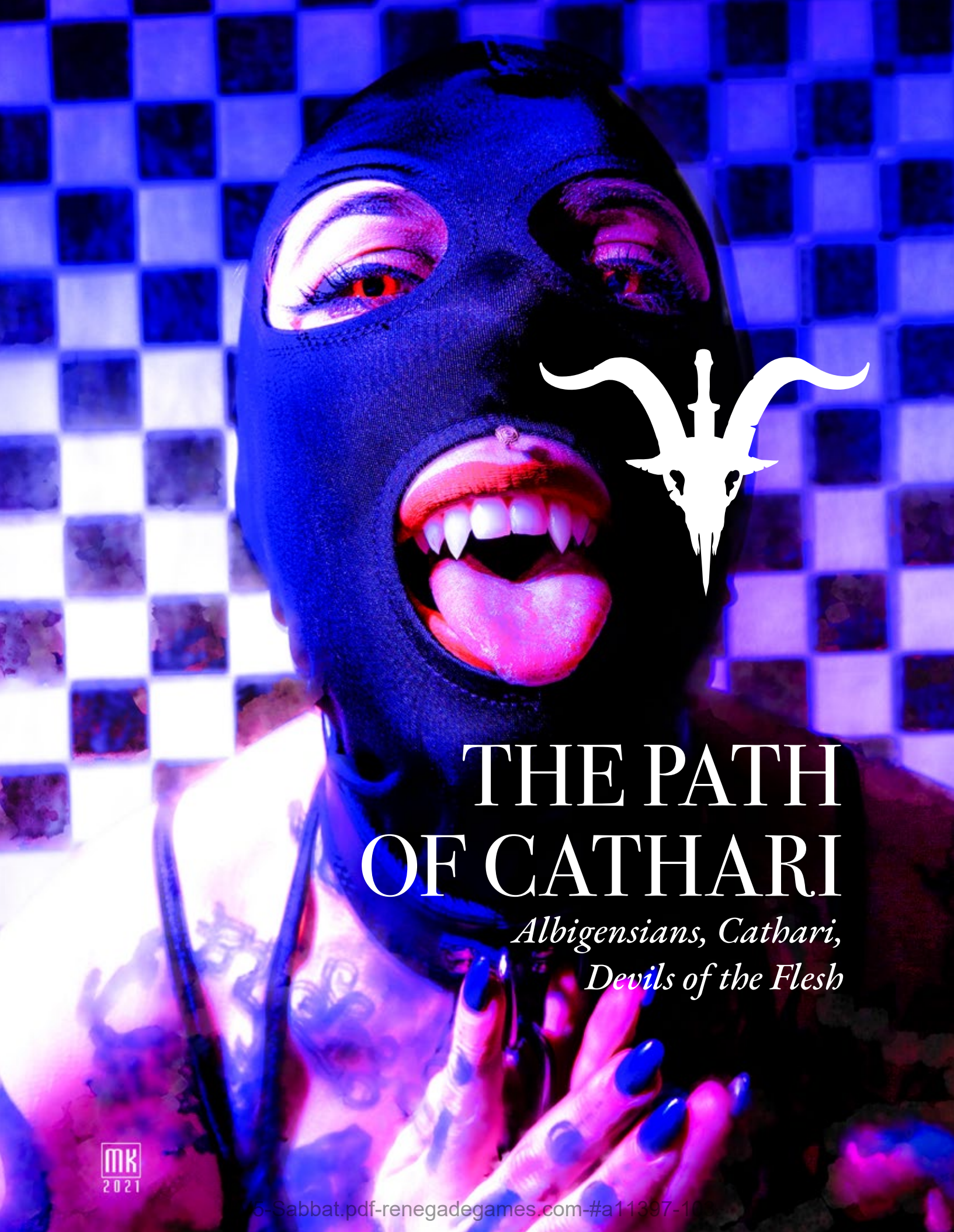
Parcel to refining one’s Blood is using it to further the Dark Father’s ends. Especially after availing themselves of potent vitae, Noddists often become eager to prove its value, and even overconfident. On the field of battle or in the sepulcher of an elder, followers of this Path seek to challenge themselves and prove to others their newfound might. This has absolutely made the difference in conflicts at the forefront of the Gehenna War, but in less overt circumstances, Noddists may find themselves overextended after the thrill of a heady feeding subsides. Only their righteousness prevents this Path’s followers from being impulsive, as they seek to match the Dark Father’s ownership of his Beast.

Notably, Noddists don’t suffer sunk costs. If one particular approach isn’t yielding results, it’s time to change tactics, and in many cases, that change of tactics may involve double-crossing an erstwhile ally in hopes of turning their failings into personal gain. This makes the more fervent Noddists unpopular in the Sabbat, because if one always has to keep an eye on one’s allies to stop them from opportunistic diablerie, that makes it hard to fight the actual enemy. From the Path of Caine perspective, though, if you’re not part of the solution, you’re dinner.

## Disciplines

Many followers of this Path have uncanny mastery of Blood Sorcery, with a number of powers and rituals virtually unknown outside the Sword of Caine. Animalism, Obfuscate, Potence, and Protean also see frequent use among the Noddists, because of their frightening effectiveness when hunting other undead.





# THE PATH OF CATHARI

*Albigensians, Cathari,  
Devils of the Flesh*

MK  
2021

The premise of the Path of Cathari is for its followers to heed the Beast as it drives them to luxuriate in what they are so they leave no atrocity unperformed. Its followers may come across as callow and hedonistic, indulging base urges, and surely, Cainites on this path do revel in their wicked nature. At its center, however, is a philosophy of a dualistic world in which vampires are one of its expressions of darkness. The Damned are, well, Damned, and it thus serves them to act like it.

In the Sabbat, this Path has the most numerous followers of all of the Paths. It is the easiest for a vampire whose Humanity has been destroyed by shovelheading to adopt; it at once justifies and encourages the horrors they have suffered. Its higher echelons and spiritual epiphanies often elude these Cainites, however. For those who are true paragons of the Path, the philosophy proposes a hierarchy of sins as elaborate as any Solomonic goety. Even though the ruck and run of the Albigensians may seem like caterwauling demons, every vileness serves a purpose, whether or not the individual purveyors of sin understand it. The Devils of the Flesh do not starve the Beast; they bathe it in excess.

## Ethics

- Experience every vice being Damned affords, from instilling fear in others to performing acts of cruelty to ceding control to the Beast.
- One's role as a creature outside mortal morality is predestined. Accept it and fulfill one's purpose, and lead others into damnation or destruction.
- Indulge every temptation; give oneself wholly to the wiles of the Beast.

## In Chronicles

Followers of the Path of Cathari are not subtle (unless operating in a role of spying or infiltration), and the ritae they host as well as the unives they lead are punctuated by glorious vulgarity. From a hedonistic orgy where Cainites gorge on drugged vessels to blood-soaked rituals held in desecrated

holy places conducted in open mockery of any number of faiths, Albigensians enjoy events profaning themselves and the mortals who ultimately suffer in their wake. They will gleefully play to stereotypes of worldly evil, presenting themselves as covens of shrieking witches, lustful degenerates, Devil's Night vandals, and so on.

As a sect, the Sabbat has little reservation about using the Albigensians as fodder for its various violent ends. The Albigensians are generally aware of this, and don't readily disagree with it – they can always make more, and whether they survive or meet final death in any endeavor is already a matter of predestination. The Path's philosophy implies a place and a purpose to every vampire's actions, making every base act or self-destructive impulse meaningful. And of course, a zealot assured of their place in Hell is terrifying to those who run afoul of them, making them effective shock troops against unsuspecting mortals unknowingly in the path of the Gehenna War.

Away from the war front, Albigensians are great tempters, dealers, and fixers who relish the opportunity to debase the virtuous (or even the non-virtuous...). The Sabbat isn't normally heavily invested in intricate schemes and webs of debts, but, ironically, the iniquitous Albigensians often have any number of mortals and even Kindred who owe them favors for various delights provided in the past. Followers of this Path may even give themselves the flush of life to better enjoy a fleshly interlude, particularly if they can splash about in someone else's misery afterward.

## Disciplines

Many followers of this path excel at the physical Disciplines, the better to perform monstrous feats that set them apart from frail mortals. As well, due to their nature as hedonists, infiltrators, and tempters, Cathari find ample opportunity to use Auspex, Obfuscate, and Presence.





# THE PATH OF DEATH AND THE SOUL

*Necronomists, Reapers*



The premise of the Path of Death and the Soul is to study, understand, and master death so that destroyed enemies remain dead. As the Sabbat understands it, the hated Antediluvians “have power over life and death” according to the *Book of Nod*, raising the question of whether or not, should the Sabbat destroy one of the Third Generation, that vampire will stay dead. Those who follow this Path intend that they should do so, at whatever cost to themselves. In the Gehenna War, they are often strategists and engineers; away from the war front, they research and develop new ways to express the gifts of Caine.

The Path of Death and the Soul is likely the most esoteric or academic of the Sabbat Paths of Enlightenment, concerned as it is with outward manifestations of the Kindred condition. As such, it is also the most precarious of the Paths for actually managing one’s Beast, which the Necronomists handle by trying to keep the Beast at arm’s length, unlike other Sabbat. This makes them no less terrifying, of course – a Necronomist is perhaps most at ease when surrounded by mortals begging for their lives, because it means that, as a predator, he’s doing what he’s good at. Followers of the Path of Death and the Soul are also the most likely to have Embraced their childer traditionally, preferring a more discriminating choice of progeny than a Mass Embrace yields.

## Ethics

- Leave no survivors at the conclusion of violent conflict.
- Investigate the relics and remains of death – personal, historical, occult – in order to discern the details of how the conflict ended and its existential outcomes.
- Hasten death’s arrival, from humblest insect to the much-lamented flower of human life.

## In Chronicles

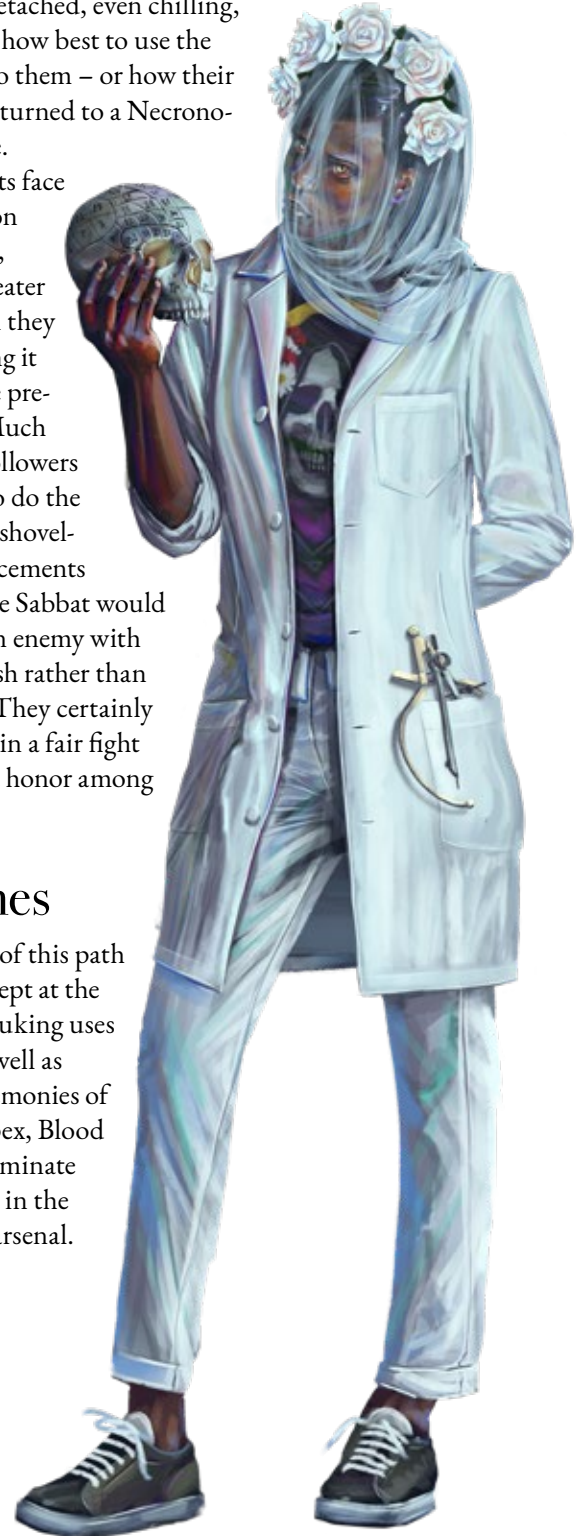
Followers of the Path of Death and the Soul are systematic thinkers, and give great consideration to the

outcomes of their plans. They act with calculated precision, leaving as little to chance as possible, from knowing exactly who they’re sending into a conflict to projecting how many Cainites a tiny domain may sustain three decades after claiming it. Interactions with them are detached, even chilling, as they consider how best to use the people talking to them – or how their deaths could be turned to a Necronomist’s advantage.

Necronomists face the opposition on their own terms, choosing the theater of conflict when they can, and avoiding it altogether as the preferred option. Much better to send followers of other Paths to do the dirty work, and shovel-head more replacements afterward. These Sabbat would rather destroy an enemy with a decisive ambush rather than an open battle. They certainly have no interest in a fair fight or any imagined honor among foes.

## Disciplines

Many followers of this path are especially adept at the binding and rebuking uses of Oblivion, as well as developing Ceremonies of their own. Auspex, Blood Sorcery, and Dominate also have a place in the Necronomists’ arsenal.



# THE PATH OF POWER AND THE INNER VOICE

*Unifiers, Uhlans*



MK  
2021

legames

The premise of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice is, unsurprisingly, the acquisition of might, by which they can impose their personal will upon the world around them. They seek to accumulate power and subjugate their lessers in a journey to become the apex predator. Indeed, even the Beast itself is held in subjugation by the most accomplished Unifiers, like a snarling hound at the end of a master's chain.

That isn't by accident. For the Unifiers, the Beast is a tool, and knowing when to loose it or when to let it pull them is part of mastering it. More than the other Paths, Unifiers court frenzy, trusting their ability to dominate the Beast, "riding the wave" at the edge of self-control and leaving someone else to clean up afterward. After all, what is the inchoate rage of a frenzy if not one more weapon at the disposal of the Damned?

## Ethics

- Reward success and excoriate failure, including one's own.
- The world around the Cainite exists to be exploited to their benefit: The enlightened Cainite bends it to their will.
- Force those who are beneath one's own position into servitude using all the means at one's command.

## In Chronicles

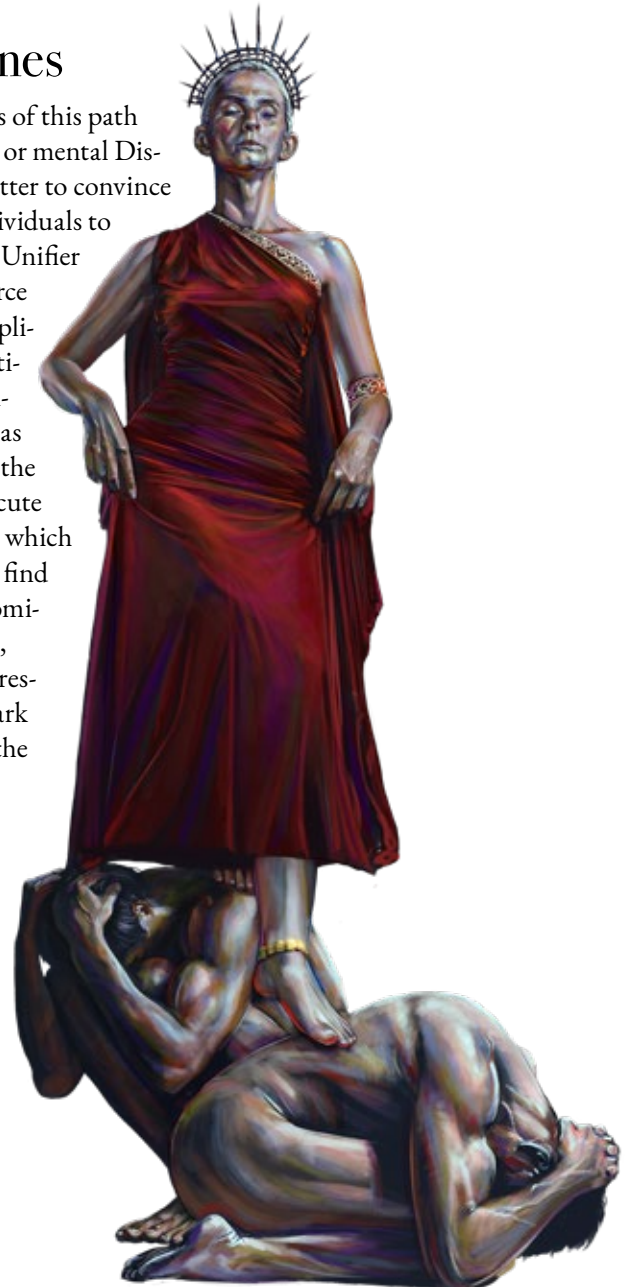
Followers of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice are implacable foes, and whether they stand against individual enemies or structures that must be torn down, they are the most apt Sabbat at waging war and laying sieges. A pack of Unifiers is a team of specialists, from front-line fighters to stalking elders to destabilizing rival domains with campaigns of terror and propaganda. Given its power-accumulating focus, this Path also lends itself to bullying, domineering priests and followers, as Cainites exert their will through force of personality.

Unifiers form extremely tight-knit packs that rely on the strength of the other Cainites for maxi-

imum success. Priests walk a fine line in these packs, as they need to remain the pack's authority at the same time they foster the thirst for might among the rest of the vampires in the pack. A well-disciplined pack is a single-minded entity, with each member anticipating the needs of their vicious fellows. A dysfunctional pack is a bunch of me-first opportunists looking to fuck over everyone else in the pursuit of their own gain, heedless of the cost in blood or strategic advantage. Packs like these need new Priests, because they've probably murdered and committed diablerie upon the previous one.

## Disciplines

Many followers of this path focus on social or mental Disciplines, the better to convince less willful individuals to perform as the Unifier desires or to force them into compliance. They cultivate their physical Disciplines as a close second, the better to prosecute the conflicts in which they inevitably find themselves. Dominate, Fortitude, Potence, and Presence are hallmark Disciplines of the Unifiers.





# THE PATH OF THE SUN

*Prometheans, Kindling*



There will come a time  
when the Curse of the  
One Above will not be  
talented further.

**T**hin-blooded Cainites don't usually last long in the Sabbat. Either their vitae is too weak to see them through the Creation Rites (see p. 57) or the power differential they experience against more potent-blooded vampires puts them at a quickly fatal disadvantage, especially at the forefront of the Gehenna War.

That hasn't stopped a certain – growing – subset of thin-blooded Sabbat from testing the limits of the curse of Caine, however. In the evolving orthodoxy of the Path of the Sun, thin-blooded Cainites (and Caitiff) are the only vampires truly free from the taint of the Antediluvians. Noddist literature makes no small reference to the thin-blooded, plainly stating that, when thin-bloods are present, “in this time [...] Gehenna will soon be upon you.” And with the Gehenna War raging nightly, few Sabbat would argue that event has yet to come.

It is the Time of Thin Blood.

With no discernible clan lineage, thin-bloods endure none of the overt influence of the Damned's hated progenitors. As fervent early adopters of this emerging Path, they see themselves as the true heralds of the Sabbat, the “new dawn” of a “race of Cainites” who have inherited no mark of the Third Generation's treachery.

To that end, the traditional anathema of the undead, sunlight, has a diminished effect on thin-blooded Cainites. Followers of this Path see it as part of their mandate to turn this to their advantage, as they are able to meet the Dark Father's threats during hours that normally see Cainites as having succumbed to the daysleep. Its followers are often easily recognized by the burn-scars and disfigurements they wear as badges of defiance and sufferance in Caine's name.

The Path of the Sun is an imperfect Path. It is very much unproven, more of an emergent outlook among those fighting at the forefront of the Gehenna War, and practiced almost exclusively among the very youngest Sabbat. Indeed, it has only very recently come into being with enough rigor for certain Priests to consider it an actual Path at all.

Since the Beast is less inchoate among thin-blooded Cainites, it likely won't serve well for more

potent-Blooded vampires in the long term, but that's not the point – the point is that thin-blooded followers of the Path see themselves as potentially on the cusp of being demigods, and the Path is as transformative as any of the more established Paths of Enlightenment. As yet, it has no codified tenets; the thin-bloods of the Sabbat are still defining what it means to be a harbinger of the Sabbat's future rather than eidolons of its past. Some even forgo the Sabbat-venerated practice of diablerie, unwilling to sully themselves with the tainted blood of Antediluvian lineages, a radical new perspective for the Sword of Caine.

While Priests of the more established Paths may deride the Path of the Sun as “not a real Path,” they would very likely be shocked to see the rate at which the Path has spread among those they consider lesser, the by-blows and collateral shovelhead damage the Black Hand leaves in its wake. And not every adherent is a thin-blood: Some would be considered Caitiff in other sects, while yet others are of more potent vitae who see the Path of the Sun as a way to violently atone for the foulness in their own sires' Blood.



## Ethics

The ethics of the Path of the Sun are evolving, changing nightly. Unlike the other, more established Paths, the Path of the Sun strays closer to being a quasi-religion than a true frame of mind. As it stands, the Paths' ethics are inadequate to sustain a Cainite's relationship with the Beast for an extended period of time, which is the second-greatest threat to the Path's long-term viability. The first threat, of course, is the fact that the final death rate for thin-blooded vampires in the Sabbat is critically high.

- Let neither one's mortal nor Cainite heritage limit one's potential.
- Destroy Cainites but never consume them, leaving oneself untainted.
- Do not allow other would-be Prometheans to serve the polluted bloodlines of the Antediluvians.

## In Chronicles

Whether as infiltrators, radicalizers, front-line fanatics, or daylight assassins, Path of the Sun Cainites are very much a sign of the times.

Prometheans have a lot to prove, and may be found at the forefront in many Gehenna War theaters, willingly throwing themselves at threats beyond their individual capacity, to see how they

fare as legion. They are eager to act against enemies during the forbidden hours of daylight, bundled up in hoodies, face masks, and other protection, and have been known to lure hunters into rivals' havens before night comes.

Followers of this Path are also likely to come into conflict with other Sabbat, who denigrate the Path of the Sun as mindless bravado or even heresy. In response, they are relentless proselytizers, and seek to convert their fellow Sabbat – as well as on-the-outs Anarchs and disillusioned Camarilla fledglings who find themselves pushed into the margins of their home domains.

## Disciplines

The Path of the Sun finds especially frequent use of the Alchemy with which the duskborn have affinity.



## Forsaken Paths

The Sabbat's spiritual journey is a significant, even defining aspect of sect membership. That said, not all of the Paths of Enlightenment followed tonight emerged contemporaneously. Further, not all Paths are equally functional or viable in the modern nights.

Ideas never die, however, and for all the Paths that are inadequate to serve a Cainite's needs, some remain in regional practice. Whether relics of nights past, colloquial traditions, or philosophical aberrations at odds with Sabbat dogma, some of the more marginal Paths haven't vanished entirely. And not every Path follower is Sabbat....

### Path of the Beast

Followers of the Path of the Beast do not treat the Beast as a separate entity, but as their true selves. The Path of the Beast considers the mind a vestigial trait standing in the way of the Beast: The monster within replaces the conscious sense of self. Cainites who follow this Path tend to become powerful – and bestial – very quickly. It has fallen out of common practice due to its general inability to prevent Cainites from Wassail over the long term. Regional packs that follow it can still be found worldwide, both at the front of the Gehenna War and in especially violent domains.

### Path of Honorable Accord

Rumored to have been practiced even before the foundation of the Sabbat, regional variations that amount to a "Path of Honorable Accord" emerge from any number of cultural traditions. It has been variously characterized as a spectrum including a bloody-minded chivalric perspective practiced by "paladins of Caine" to a rigid asceticism by which the Cainite forgoes any personal comforts to mortify themselves into oneness with the Beast.

The Path has fallen out of common practice among the Black Hand because its precepts of-

ten bring it into conflict with the general Sabbat outlook on mortal society. Some Cainites believe that more than one tyrannical Camarilla Prince has followed the Path of Honorable Accord, as great age puts great distance between them and a tenuous Humanity. This may be speculation, and surely some number of these anecdotal elders would have heard the Beckoning, forcing this Path further into the margins as an insufficiently modern perspective, as it seems to be more philosophy than Path.

### Path of Lilith

According to the *Book of Nod*, Lilith offered Caine succor when he was cast out of the land of Nod. Followers of the Path of Lilith venerate "the Dark Mother," and some even impute to her the creation of vampires, or mingle the origin of the vampire species to the shared parentage of Lilith and Caine. Veneration of Lilith often exalts her as a cultivator rather than a destroyer, but at the same time acknowledges that she is the "mother of monsters," perhaps even spawning some of the other supernatural creatures with whom vampires share the night. Historically, followers of the Path of Lilith had often been accused of heresy in the Caine-centric Sabbat, but the long and complicated relationship between the Path and the Black Hand persists to this night, where her cults can be found.





## The Killing Time: Antagonists

To the outside observer, a Sabbat pack acts with frightening coordination, displaying behavior easily mistaken for a shared consciousness among its members. Packmates may speak few words and even fewer sentences to one another, while animalistic howls, tic-like signs, and blood-spattered symbology take their place.

It is a testament to the effectiveness of the Paths that all of this stems from a likeness of mind, a singular way of aligning goals and methods, rather than some Blood-borne telepathy. However, while each Path has the same internal and external goals – leashing the mind to the Beast and creating a warrior-creature built to fight the Antediluvian pawns, respectively – they each go about them in different ways.

### Constructing Conflict

While it is impossible to describe every possible circumstance for encountering the Sabbat, the most common ones can be divided into the contexts of vanguard, siege, and dominion. These aren't terms the Sabbat uses, but rather storytelling shorthand to help you plan story beats for your chronicle.

- Vanguard situations are those in which players' characters encounter lone Sabbat vampires or packs conducting solitary forays into hostile sect territory, with the purpose to scout, undermine, or otherwise probe the terrain, whether in preparation for a Crusade or in some form of support for the Gehenna War.
- In a siege, hot war is already underway and those subject to the assault face the spearhead of the crusading force as well as packs dedicated to terror or sabotage.
- The rarest of the situations is dominion, in which the players' characters find themselves in Sabbat domains, and these situations are

the ones most likely to see encounters with the higher echelons of the sect.

Each Path either fulfills a different role or approaches a shared one from different angles. Here, examples are given for each Path as well as each situation, together with sample antagonists for all of the above. Note that in large-scale sieges or domains, encounters with Cainites of different Paths and packs become increasingly likely, so do not feel constrained by the Path-specific avenues of approach detailed here. These are springboards, not cages.

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#### ROLL YOUR OWN

The antagonists described here will give numerous sessions and stories worth of conflict, but many Storytellers enjoy putting a personal touch on the antagonists who make unlife so difficult for their players' coteries. By all means, do this!

Populate a pack and name its members, giving it a focus and a unique identity. See the Storyteller Resources chapter beginning on p. 105 for more tools to use for this.

Create your own antagonists by defining only their relevant Traits – use these example antagonists as models. Storyteller characters don't have the same interactions with the world that players' characters do, so don't feel like you need to build them as a player would a character, or with all of the same traits a player's character has.

Vampire stories are unlikely to concern themselves with fluctuations in the moral state of Sabbat antagonists. Don't bother keeping track of their Humanity scores; they don't have any, and Paths don't have a trait value governing them. Humanity continues to have paramount importance for players' characters, however, especially to contrast them against the monstrosity of the Sabbat.

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## Portraying the Paths

When you as the Storyteller engage with the players as a Sabbat vampire, a useful acting tool is to think of them as creatures, not people. The setting chapters seek to enforce this, likening sect members to sharks and emphasizing the alien nature of their thought.

The process of adopting a Path means having one's mind torn apart, scoured clean through trauma. It means having the remains rebuilt from the ground up, clinging step by step to a new frame of self utterly devoid of mortal, human connection. No few Sabbat vampires spend years just learning to speak again, and once able they do so only to lull their prey into a false sense of normalcy.

This does not mean that their emotional compass, while skewed, is absent. An adherent of the Path of Caine who declines a chance at diablerie will feel shame equal to a humane individual betraying a close friend, and a follower of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice will grieve at submitting to a lesser in a way akin to a non-Sabbat causing the death of an innocent. Sabbat vampires still feel, and still bear the consequences of their choices. It's just that the stimuli for their emotional responses are different than those of Kindred who maintain the illusion of Humanity.

Lean into this to provide these adversaries with motivation and passions, and let it fuel the characterization of these monsters. After all, just because they've chosen to become something other than a person doesn't mean they lack personality.



### Path of Caine

Big-game hunters of the Damned, the Noddists are the honed edge of the Sword of Caine. They conduct their plans with single-minded focus, a murderous efficiency. Their zealous trajectory toward the Dark Father means the sect must constantly keep their attention upon outside prey, lest packs turn upon themselves. Unconcerned by trappings of status, they equip themselves to blend in, strike hard, and

vanish, as much to nullify hostile retaliation as to avoid any ambitious brethren thirsting for newly invigorated heartsblood.

**VANGUARD:** The most common encounter with Devourers as vanguard finds them scouting hostile (or “prey”) domains for potential targets. This task usually falls to the youngest members of the pack, to avoid losing potent Blood or esoteric knowledge should they fall. Eschewing mortal agents, Noddists often employ Blood Sorcery and animal spies to narrow down their search. The glimpse of an owl or a strange pair of eyes looking back through the mirror is often the only advance warning the mark gets. Weak vampires are fair game to the scout, while stronger rivals are noted and left for the pack as a whole, come siege.

**SIEGE:** During a siege, the Noddist pack takes to the streets, acting on the information collected by vanguard scouts. Resembling nothing so much as gruesome and disheveled militia – replacing firearms with heavy machetes for lopping off limbs – packs following the Path of Caine strike at havens with a precision and ruthlessness that put mortal SWAT teams to shame. Similarly, Noddist packs eagerly plunder or even heist rare texts or relics of suspected vampiric origin, either through force or in muted silence.

**DOMINION:** In domains conquered by the Sabbat, the Path of Caine can be almost invisible. Devourers' lack of interest in mortals other than as sustenance and their tendency to fall to inter- or intra-pack rivalries means that each Noddist is often occupied with their own security or plotting their next raid. Their havens protected to the point of paranoia either resemble actual vaults or are sorcerous bastions that would put any Tremere to shame. In domains in accord or entente, followers of the Path of Caine often become their own worst enemy.

**USE OF GHOULS:** Considering mortals beneath them, many Noddists instead experience a kinship with other top predators. Their familiarity with



their own Beasts make them excellent practitioners of Animalism, enabling them to endow their feral servants with abilities rarely seen in animal retainers outside the Sabbat. Large dogs such as Rottweilers or German Shepherds are common, as are birds of prey such as owls. In a few cases, Devourers have raided zoos to subject even more exotic beasts of prey to the thrall of the Blood. Often endowed with an unnerving ability to spot and track other vampires, these animals are not to be underestimated.

**PORTRAYAL:** Avoid being seen until you strike. If forced into a conversation, speak in short, clipped sentences, your curtness rivalled only by your stillness. Survey everything and everyone, categorizing them either as prey or predator. Nothing else matters. When you have what you need, attack or flee without warning.

## Blood-Hound

A massive dog made even fiercer by vitae and supernatural conditioning, the Blood-hound serves its master by tracking Kindred prey, as well as their daylight guardian. Loyal unto death, the Blood-hound nevertheless possesses enough cunning and self-preservation to avoid direct confrontation unless its master is threatened.

**General Difficulty:** 3/2

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 1, Mental 2

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 3

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Awareness (Spotting Kindred) 6, Survival (Tracking Kindred) 6, Stealth 6

**Disciplines:** Potence 1

**Notes:** Blood-hound bites do +2 damage, as their teeth and jaws are supernaturally strong.

## Path of Caine Tracker

This vampire is tasked with surveying and documenting vampire activity in a prey domain, whether as a rite of passage or as a punishment for failure. Using avian spies to avoid detection, they approach only what they perceive as weak or weakened prey. Desperate to gain recognition among their peers, they might eschew prudence if the opportunity presents itself.

**General Difficulty:** 4/3

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 6, Social 2, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Melee (Kukri) 8, Awareness 6, Disciplines 6

**Disciplines:** Animalism 2, Obfuscate 2, Potence 2

**Notes:** Young and reckless, this vampire runs the risk of picking fights they cannot win when cornered. At the risk of defeat they will frenzy and fight to final death. Their kukri does +3 damage.

## Path of Caine Slayer

This is not their first siege. Murder incarnate, this Cainite stalks the streets, sewers and rooftops in their unerring hunt for Kindred to consume. Adorned with trophies of their past kills, their hunt is sacrament and holy purpose in one.

**General Difficulty:** 6/4

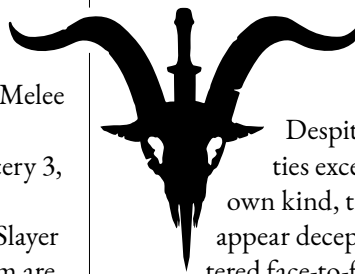
**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 8, Social 3, Mental 5

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 8, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl (Grapple) 10, Melee (Scimitar) 10, Stealth 10, Disciplines 8

**Disciplines:** Celerity 4, Potence 3, Blood Sorcery 3, Obfuscate 2

**Notes:** A terrifying enemy in themselves, the Slayer leads a pack of Devourer comrades, all of whom are at least the equal to the Tracker (above). The Slayer is armed with a reinforced scimitar conferring +4 damage. They are among the most dangerous vampires to face, and any direct encounter is likely to result in one-sided carnage. Coterie members are advised to apply cunning, wits, and above all, caution.



## Path of Cathari

Despite being perpetrators of atrocities exceptional even among their own kind, the Devils of the Flesh can appear deceptively relatable when encountered face-to-face. The vices they rely on to sate their Beast often spring from the worst parts of their mortal heritage, and they are also the most likely of all Sabbat to surround themselves with the still-living: victims, toys, or plain prey (not that the distinction matters much to the Cathari.) More

than other Cainites, they are social creatures, and despite their inhumanity they play that game with relish and devilish skill.

**VANGUARD:** Far ahead of other incursions, the Cathari are usually present in a domain months if not years ahead of the rest of the vanguard. Their ability to not only present themselves as but even attract humane vampires is invaluable, and they usually set up shop as cult leaders, revolutionary firebrands, or just “that weird woman on Crocker Street”, all the while radicalizing those caught in their orbit. Often paying lip service to the Anarch cause, their true allegiance only becomes apparent as their hangers-ons go missing or are “reborn” as newly converted members of the Path.

**SIEGE:** Having sown the seeds of terror, come siege the Devils reap. Their infiltration bears fruit as they dismantle the mortal support mechanisms of the toppling domain. Informants are found dead by their own hand. Trusted allies are caught in “political violence.” Mortals beloved by Camarilla Primogen may be flayed alive, degraded for amusement, or anything in between, the atrocities posted and re-posted on YouTube. No wicked thirst is left unquenched as the dominoes set in place by the Devils of the Flesh aren’t simply toppled, but burnt to ash and spat upon for good measure.

**DOMINION:** Despite being the most numerous, the Albigensians seldom reach positions of power with the Sabbat. Their chosen Path demands too much instant gratification to allow for the kind of careful scheming conducive to those efforts. Instead, the Cathari gleefully ply their trade as terrors of the night. This single Path is likely responsible for most of the vampire-related plights of mortals in domains conquered by the Black Hand. Their havens range from spattered flesh-pits to reeking abattoirs, though they are usually temporary, if for no other reason than the Cathari being veritable magnets for Second Inquisition agencies.

**USE OF GHOULS:** Mortals not used and discarded by the Catharites frequently become ghouls. The Devils’ liberal use of Blood Bonds and Presence, not to mention the addictive qualities of the Blood in itself, quickly turn these wretches into loyal but unstable disciples willing to perform any depravity in the service of their beloved masters. In a siege they may find themselves acting as bait, cover, or diversions, drawing the attention away from the pinpoint terror acts of their domitors.

**PORTRAYAL:** Lick your lips. Assess everyone for signs of their vices, and for their use in satiating yours. Toy with your prey and act the languid cat, a purring predator hiding claws like daggers. You might never reach the top, but your ability to drag anyone down is infallible.

## Honeytrap

Easy prey and choice vessel in one convenient package; few vampires can resist the lure of this victim. The ghoul’s blood seethes with a potent mixture of inhibition-suppressing psychoactives and energizing stimulants, providing an unexpected kick to anyone who feeds on them. Kindred long dead have even found priapic anguish after a turnabout-liaison with the Honeytrap. While the Honeytrap can be used to draw out and identify potential vampires, their real use is to weaken selected Kindred, making them susceptible to whatever plans the Cathari have for them.

**General Difficulty:** 3/2

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

**Secondary Attributes:** Health: 5, Willpower: 4

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Subterfuge (Entrapment) 6, Larceny (Pickpocket) 5

**Disciplines:** Presence 1

**Notes:** Sating one Hunger or more causes an intense rush as well as loss of inhibition in the feeding vampire. Treat the effect as a combination of meth and hallucinogens (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 310). They must also take a Compulsion. These effects last for the rest of the scene, though the Cathari Cainites usually make their move before that.

## Path of Cathari Radicalizer

The Radicalizer is all about “The Movement.” Skirting the edges of an Anarch domain they attract vampires with a grudge: those who have lost something, or at least believe themselves to have lost something. The Radicalizer promises a reckoning and encourages the disenfranchised licks to act against their oppressors, to hurt them or those they care about. It’s all in the name of “The Movement” or “Your Rights as a Kindred.” Every lick deserves to be what Caine intended them to be, and damn anyone who tries to defang us!

**General Difficulty:** 4/3

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

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 7

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Persuasion 8, Insight (Sore Spot) 8, Subterfuge (Fake Humanity) 8, Disciplines 6

**Disciplines:** Auspex 3, Presence 4, Protean 2

**Notes:** The Radicalizer is always interested in conversation, and is adept at masking the monster behind their facade of passion and sympathy. They will not engage in a physical fight unless cornered, but are adept at most kinds of social conflict.

## The Vampyre

Many Cathari revel in their bestial inner nature, but the Vampyre basks in superficial stereotypes instead. Adapting every popular trait from movies and literature, this Devil of the Flesh takes pride in being an affront to subtlety, as well as any attempt to hide from mortals. Their haven is a decrepit manor (bats included), their wardrobe a selection of tattered demalio capes, their cellar hosts nightly blood sacrifices to Satan. Strangely, it works. While their fellow Cainites are struck down with hot lead and fire, nobody wants to risk looking stupid by raiding what is obviously a wannabe vampire mansion.

**General Difficulty:** 5/3

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 4, Social 7, Mental 5

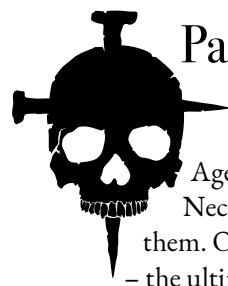
**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 8



**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Performance (Acting like a vampire would act) 8, Occult 8, Disciplines 7

**Disciplines:** Dominate 4, Protean 4, Animalism 3

**Notes:** The Vampyre might come off as goofy at first, but they play the stereotype as if the director were seeking an X rating, and behind the doors of their haven they act out everything films only imply (which provides ample reason to change their cape nightly).



## Path of Death and the Soul

Agents of entropy, the work of the Necronomists literally precedes them. Originating as students of death – the ultimate end of all life – the Path has hence taken on a broader role for the Black Hand as what might be best described as an occult research and development function. To the Reap-

ers, study and execution are one and the same, and their work touches a prospective target domain long before they set foot there. Those who meet them can be sure that while they might not be the subject of the experiment, they're certainly part of the equation.

**VANGUARD:** Agents of Necronomists carefully prepare hostile domains prior to siege. With the help of Cathari infiltrators, Necronomists condition ghouls in key positions in the enemy sect. Profane rituals antagonize spectres and death-speakers strike bargains with post-life entities far worse, which await the call to mayhem. Packs of agents provocateur disseminate sorcerous Blood-pathogens among choice mortals, infection vectors calculated to reach full bloom when the rites auspice their greatest effectiveness.

**SIEGE:** Once the Blood starts to flow, the Reapers are content to observe, allowing their plans to play out while collating learnings from the results. They are not so detached as to avoid first-hand observations, however, but make sure to do so as a pack, or otherwise surround themselves with loyal security.

**DOMINION:** Death and the Soul Packs usually make their havens where subjects are plentiful but rarely missed. Slapdash laboratories crowd into urban concrete shelters or sprawl across multiple floors of a condemned school building, the surrounding area resisting any attempt at gentrification while the number of transients steadily drops. When the area finally resembles nothing so much as a decaying movie set, the pack moves on, usually as part of the next Crusade.

**USE OF GHOULS:** Necronomists use expertly tailored ghouls, conditioned and crafted for specific purposes. Some become living weapons of germ warfare, slitting their wrists at water reservoirs to taint entire populaces, while others serve as anchors to voracious spectres, walking nexi of poltergeist activity. Most are disposable, but in rare cases Reapers have kept useful servants around for years and even

decades, unwilling to let the meticulous work put into them go to waste.

**PORTRAYAL:** Speak in icy monotones and as if somewhat distracted. Cock your head and pause to do mental arithmetic, calculating the most efficient way to cause everything around you to just stop. Absently kill things: a fly, a lit candle, a conversation that strays from the subject. When you sense that your time is being wasted, leave and let your stratagem unfold behind you.

## Sleeper

The sleeper has worked for many years as an obedient retainer, under Blood Bond to a trusting domitor. They know the ins and outs of their master's affairs: who they meet, who they fear, and on whom they feed. They're unquestionably loyal, at least until the night when five cockroaches form a curious sigil on their bedroom floor. Then they will remember their true domitor and regnant. They will open the lead box and spike the drink of their false master's favorite vessel. And wait.

**General Difficulty:** 3/2

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

**Secondary Attributes:** Health: 5, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Subterfuge (Bonded Devotion) 6, Etiquette 6

**Disciplines:** Obfuscate 1

**Notes:** Conditioned into a false identity, the Sleeper genuinely believes their own cover until post-hypnotically triggered. Only then do they risk revealing their true agenda.

## Path of Death and the Soul Piper

Some jobs require personal attention. The Piper scours the streets and alleys of the prey city, one ear forever tuned to the susurrus of the dead. They whisper to the victims, the ghosts and spectres of those who suffered and died at the hands of their secret undead masters. The Piper promises retribution, in the exchange for service. Soon, they will have an army.





**General Difficulty:** 4/3

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 3, Mental 6

**Secondary Attributes:** Health: 6, Willpower: 7  
Exceptional Dice Pools: Persuasion (Agitate) 7, Awareness (Ghostly phenomenon) 8, Occult 8, Disciplines 6

**Disciplines:** Auspex 3, Fortitude 1, Oblivion 4

**Notes:** The Piper is an accomplished user of Oblivion Ceremonies and knows at least four. They also have three spectres at their beck and call, each owing them a single service (See **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 377).

## Path of Death and the Soul Lifecrafter

Nothing kills quite as effectively as life. The Lifecrafter has dedicated their undead existence to honing life in all its forms to perform this single function. Their workshop set up in a dilapidated sewing factory, the looms now stretch, sew and knit living hides instead, and the coloring vats bubble with fetid bacterial cultures. Whether coaxing mortality out of microbes or assembling monstrous assemblies of flesh, sinew, and bone, the Necronomist is aware that while death is the final goal, the ends sometimes justifies the means.

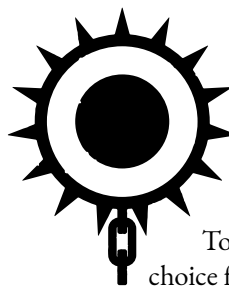
**General Difficulty:** 5/3

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 5, Mental 8

**Secondary Attributes:** Health: 6, Willpower: 8  
Exceptional Dice Pools: Crafting (Living flesh) 9, Science (Microbiology) 9, Medicine 9, Disciplines 8  
Disciplines: Dominate 4, Protean 4, Animalism 2, Auspex 2

**Notes:** The Lifecrafter is rarely encountered outside of their workshop, and upon those rare occasions they're always accompanied by a number of their creations, the man-sized hidden under heavy cloaks and the minute dormant in vials, ready at a moment's notice. Treat the ghoul creations as szlachta (see the **Vampire: The Masquerade Companion**, p. 22) while the enhanced microbes can have any number of effects, even on Kindred. Effects can approach Scorpion's Touch (**Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 273) or poison (**Vampire: The**

**Masquerade**, p. 310) but can also have more insidious long-term effects, to be devised by the Storyteller.



## Path of Power and the Inner Voice

To rule or be ruled is the only choice for the Unifiers, who rely on an unquestionable hierarchy to shackle their minds to the Beast. Unifier packs usually evolve around an iron-wrought internal pecking order but work as a unit in their overarching ambition to lord over packs of "lesser" Paths. As such, if encountered at all they are usually found at the reins of a Crusade, as Uhlan packs would rather face final death than settle for less.

**VANGUARD:** Followers of this Path rarely engage in the base work of probing enemy domains. When they do, it's usually to prove their superiority over other packs or individual Cainites, aiming to garner status by outperforming rivals or, failing that, sabotage their efforts. This is another cause for attrition among this Path, but also ensures that the packs that do stick around are a cut above the rest, in the cruelest and most practical sense.

**SIEGE:** When battle is joined Unifiers take on the highest-profile targets. In contrast to the stealthy and pragmatic approach preferred by the Noddists, Uhlan strikes are intimidating shows of force. The Masquerade buckles as they spring into action, whether assaulting a Prince's Centro high-rise in Madrid or descending on an Anarch Baron's Juárez compound. More conquerors than destroyers, they subject their beaten foes to unthinkable humiliations and only when their victim acknowledges their superiority and submit may they find the release of the final death.

**DOMINION:** Followers of this Path take great pleasure in conquest, and can spend many months repurposing the assets and networks of the taken domain in an ultimate expression of a “hostile takeover.” The result is something like a black reflection of the Ivory tower, with the pack Priest acting as Bishop and their subordinate Uhlans extensions of their will, luxuriating in their temporary power and bringing what is left of the vampiric power structure of the domain to heel. This rarely lasts as the resources are ravaged, and the internal tensions of the entente force another Crusade.

**USE OF GHOULS:** The lowest rung of the Unifier ladder, ghouls to vampires following this Path know the meaning of servitude. Often minions of conquered foes, the twin vises of Dominate and Presence, not to mention plain violence, ensure that what’s left is utterly broken to the will of their new lords. They’re still expected to appear a cut above other servants, though, and eagerly subject other ghouls to abuse given a chance.

**PORTRAYAL:** Dominate any situation, acting the natural superior no matter the arena. Anyone deferring to you receives an equal mixture of contempt and approval, and anyone questioning your authority must break against your will. Should you be bested, immediately submit, accepting your place in the hierarchy. For now.

## Broken Servant

This ghoul has lost everything. They used to be valued, trusted, and comfortable. Above all they were important. Their new master has torn the scales from their eyes. They now know that they’re filth, fit only to yield their wretched life in one pure act of submission. They will pull the pin the moment they enter Elysium.

**General Difficulty:** 2

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

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Etiquette (Elysium) 6, Subterfuge (I’m fine!) 6

**Disciplines:** Fortitude 1

**Notes:** Armed with a M67 fragmentation grenade, the ghoul will attempt to cause as much damage as possible, moving toward the highest gathering of Kindred or retainers in Elysium. The blast does a base 12 points of damage, -1 per meter from the center of detonation. (Aggravated to mortals but not vampires. Well-supplied domitors may have instead provided an incendiary grenade, doing a base 8 fire damage.) The remains of the Broken Servant haven’t yet stained the ground before the waiting Uhlans pack strikes, having expended the hapless ghoul.

## Path of Power and the Inner Voice Knight

They used to call themselves “Paladin,” but the looks they got made them change their moniker. Immaculately dressed in dark suit and tie and with an affected “European” accent, they would fit right in at a Jason Bourne villain audition or as the ninth Reservoir Dog. Now they’re part of a pack operation on hostile territory. Their mission: whatever other packs are doing but better, more vicious, and with greater style.

**General Difficulty:** 4/3

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



**Secondary Attributes:** Health: 7, Willpower 7  
**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Firearms (Submachine gun) 6, Intimidation 8, Investigation (Sabbat packs) 6 Disciplines 6

**Disciplines:** Dominate 3, Fortitude 3, Auspex 2  
**Notes:** Armed with a compact submachine gun (+3 Damage). The Knight and their pack have a tendency to butt in and disrupt the actions of other Sabbat, and a savvy Storyteller can use them to bail out player characters in a losing conflict with another Cainite party. This should only be a temporary reprieve, as the Uhlan pack will quickly attempt to take over where the other pack left off.

## Bishop

The Bishop has it good. Set up in a 19th-century neo-Georgian town house belonging to a flunkie of the previous administration (the four high-rise floors belonging to the previous “Prince” are still being sanitized) they now communicate only with and through their chosen Prisci – competent members of their pack who also have the self-preservation instincts to know their place. But with the increased presence of unmarked vans and rumors of another pack of Unifiers muscling in, a new Crusade will soon be required.

**General Difficulty:** 5/4

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 6, Social 6, Mental 6

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 8, Willpower 9  
**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Melee (Cavalry saber) 9, Intimidation 9, Politics (Ruthless) 8, Disciplines 8  
**Disciplines:** Dominate 5, Potence 5, Presence 3  
**Notes:** Never caught alone, the Bishop always has their pack within reach. (Treat as Knight, above.) They are armed with a cavalry saber (+3 damage), a memento from their mortal days, itself an anomaly within the Black Hand.

## Flotsam and Jetsam

Facing the Black Hand means facing more than its members. The sect is surrounded by tools and detritus, creatures used and left discarded in the

service of the Damned. Below are some examples of this half-life and the castoffs it creates.

## “Sabbat” and Hangarounds

Very often, when vampires of other sects get wind of a Sabbat presence, these are the kinds of vampires responsible. They might be shovelheads too humane to tread a Path and left behind, if not simply malcontents labelling themselves “Sabbat” for imagined street cred. These fools usually pay the price for their presumption, struck down by wetworkers loyal to the domain rulers or by mortal vampire hunters with their ear to the ground. In the rare cases that they eventually come face to face with the real thing, these “Sabbat” are usually the first to flee.

**General Difficulty:** 3

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

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 4  
**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 6, Streetwise 6, Disciplines 5

**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Potence 2, Presence 1  
**Notes:** While a pack of “Sabbat” is not to be trifled with, the main danger posed by these vampires is the attention they draw to themselves.

## Path of the Sun Heliophile

The Heliophile knows they are chosen. Embracing the sombrous existence of their thin-blood nature, they skirt the edges of vampire and mortal existence, belonging in neither but believing themselves superior to both. They hide their sun-inflicted burns under designer clothing and sport sunglasses day and night, both as an irreverent accessory and to hide the one blemish no blood will ever mend: eyes bloodshot and pitted from daylight and insomnia. The Heliophile burns the candle at both ends, and neither day nor night brings rest.

**General Difficulty:** 3/2

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

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5  
**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Firearms 5, Stealth 5, Disciplines 4

**Disciplines:** Fortitude 2, Thin-Blood Alchemy 3

**Notes:** Thin-bloods treading the Path of the Sun usually work closely in large packs, though their methods are far more subtle than those of other Sabbat. Prometheans take pride in their ability to blend in and to rise above the crude vampiric stereotypes of the “cadavers” and hangarounds of Kindred clans or Cainite Paths. They are quick to proselytize to other thin-bloods, whether low-ranking Sabbat or marginal members of other sects, and the Path encourages a camaraderie that seems almost human – at least until they descend on a target’s haven like piranhas in Oakleys, minutes past dawn.

## Unbirthed

Thin-bloods rarely last in the Black Hand. Too weak initially to survive the fierce crucible of Crusades, Path rivalries and the ongoing Gehenna War, they’re always among the first undead casualties. Nevertheless, Necronomist practitioners have managed to weaponize the phenomena. By performing a charnel ritual atop a mass grave, tearing a sacrificial fledgling asunder in the process, the buried are brought to a semblance of unlife as the vitae infuses their bodies. When the sun sets the crazed half-living cadavers dig themselves out, their decaying minds ravaged by Hunger, and descend upon anything living in the area. Lacking most self-preservation instincts, they rampage heedlessly until sunrise.

**General Difficulty:** 3

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 1, Mental 2

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 3

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 6

**Disciplines:** Potence 2

**Notes:** Effectively thin-bloods, these poor creatures are Embraced well past their neurological expiration, but some retain traces of memory and personal traits. Depending on circumstances of the ritual they can lie dormant and preserved for months or even years before some accursed circumstance causes them to rise. The sorcery that animates their



already dead bodies also accelerates the destruction of their cadaver once slain by the sun or violence.

## Shackled

Walking vortices of spiritual ruin, the Shackled are ghouls subjected to horrifying rituals that make them into walking spectral anchors. Their entire bodies scarred, branded, and tattooed with potent sigils, they are constantly surrounded by vengeful spectres, the ghosts feeding off the ghouls’ life force as they mercilessly wreak havoc on the world around them. These ambulatory weapons of localized destruction are thankfully short-lived, as they age rapidly once their ghostly host is unleashed.

**General Difficulty:** 4/2

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 2(6), Social 3(1), Mental 4(2)

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 8

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl (Spectral Blow): 8, Athletics (Spectral Throw) 8, Intimidation (Spectral Manifestation) 8

**Disciplines:** Equivalent of Potence 3 and Fortitude 3

**Notes:** The Shackled are usually dressed from head to toe to conceal their scarred bodies, whether in their own shrouds-to-be or whatever can keep them temporarily unnoticed as part of a catastrophe in the making. Conditioned to the point of mindlessness, they will make their way to the target location before unleashing the spectres bound within them. Traits in parentheses, exceptional dice pools, and Discipline equivalents activate at this point. Once

loosed, the spectres will attack anyone and everything around them with invisible talons or poltergeist phenomena, but will prioritize protecting the Shackled as they are their anchor to this world. (Disciplines represent these powers, but especially strong spectres can also use the full statistics from **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 377.) The Shackled ages visibly from this point on, dying from accelerated old age in roughly an hour, unless they're killed (or rent asunder by unbound ghost-furies) first.

### Fleshweld Ghouls

Things are not like they used to be. While the Sabbat made ample use of grotesque monstrosities in centuries past, time has made these "siege weapons" practically obsolete. Where a multi-jawed, three-meter, spiderlimbed juggernaut made sense when assaulting a noble's manse, modern technology is



distinctly effective in turning them into offal. They may literally be seen a mile away, being the very definition of indiscreet.

To address this problem, Sabbat Necromancers have been busy. Using methods derived from Tzimisce fleshcrafting and the remains of a now-defunct vampire bloodline, they have brought forth fleshweld ghouls. Each group, or clutch, of these consists of a number of highly conditioned ghouls, able to merge their bodies into a single monstrosity reminiscent of the medieval *vozhd*. The transformation is quick but not reversible, and the clutch usually waits until it's right upon its prey to maximize the element of terror and surprise. Once merged, the fleshweld monstrosity tears through its victims like a red hurricane, its continued existence hinging on consuming mortal flesh and vampire vitae.

### CLUTCH GHOUL

Each fleshweld clutch numbers three to a dozen members. Clutch ghouls are no longer thinking people so much as instruments molded to a single purpose. They usually appear completely inconspicuous, their task being to get as close as possible to their target before transforming, and thus are well-suited to infiltration or “flash mob”-style mayhem. Individual ghouls of a fleshweld clutch are eerily similar to each other, though certain groups are tailored to provide specific raw materials to the fleshweld form, in which one member provides the bulk of flesh, another the whipcord muscles, and so on. In all cases, clutch members share a certain impatience, aching for the final union that will provide the climax and meaning to their abused existence.

**General Difficulty:** 3/2

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

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 5

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 6, Stealth (Hide in plain sight) 7, Subterfuge 5

**Disciplines:** Protean 2

**Notes:** Clutch ghouls share a dim awareness of each other within the group, and instinctively know where the others are or if one of them is hurt, as well as when the time has come to merge. Transforming

into the fleshwelded form takes three turns, during which the ghouls strip naked and agglomerate in what a casual observer might mistake for a violent orgy. They are notably vulnerable and are unable to dodge or otherwise resist physical attacks while fleshwelding, and any damage sustained in this form is carried over to the fleshwelded form. On their own each ghoul is able to manifest parts of the fleshwelded form as Feral Weapons, paying the cost by sustaining aggravated damage as per p. 234 of **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

### FLESHWELDED FORM

Towering over men, the fleshwelded form is the rapturous zenith of the clutch. Driven by an insatiable hunger for flesh and vitae alike, it burns through the reserves of its physique at an alarming rate, expiring in minutes if it is unable to sate its ravening hunger. Most fleshwelded forms resemble many-limbed giants, their heads lolling in all directions or fused into multi-jawed leering visages, but larger clutches have been known to form stranger and utterly alien amalgams of flesh, bone, and teeth.

Traits below are for a “smaller” form, consisting of a four- to six-member clutch.

**General Difficulty:** 5/3

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 9, Social 0, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 12, Willpower 5

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 12, Intimidation 10

**Disciplines:** Potence 3, Fortitude 2, Protean 2

**Notes:** While active, the fleshwelded form can use Discipline powers without paying the cost in aggravated damage. However, due to its grotesque supernatural metabolism it sustains one level of aggravated damage every turn. This loss is alleviated for five turns if it consumes the equivalent of a human-sized victim in flesh, or gorges on five Hunger-levels of vitae. (It can employ Brutal Feed for this purpose, as per p. 264 of **Vampire: The Masquerade**.) Their behavior cannot be changed nor can their actions controlled by mental Disciplines. If members of the clutch are dead or otherwise absent before the transformation, reduce all dice pools by one to three (depending on clutch size) and Health by three for each missing, er, “participant.”

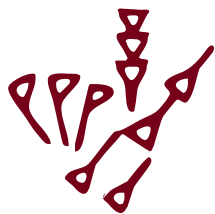
## The Gifts of Caine: Disciplines

The gifts of Caine take on a unique cast when wielded by members of the Black Hand, for no sect so readily invokes the power of the Blood as does the Sabbat. Where lesser Kindred shy away from what they deem an “overreliance” on Disciplines, Cainites actively prefer to engage them, seeing in them the advantages deliberately bestowed by the Dark Father.

*While I appreciate this line of thinking, those versed in the Book of Nod will be the first to acknowledge that these are not the gifts of Caine but rather the endowments of Lilith, who gave comfort to Caine after his banishment from the land of Nod, and taught him mastery of his rude form.*

*-V.*

Note that some of the systems for these Disciplines will see use only if employed by a player’s character. For example, the Stains the vampire acquires when using Reclamation of Vitae (see p. 50) don’t affect Sabbat vampires, because Paths don’t have values that are tracked the way Humanity is.



## Auspex

### Level 2

#### UNERRING PURSUIT

**Amalgam:** Dominate 1

Locking eyes with a subject, the vampire coaxes forth a supernatural bond between themselves and the victim. For a number of nights, the user is able to view glimpses of the target and their environment whenever the target sees themselves on a reflective surface. The target is generally unaware of the being so observed, but witnesses the presence of their pursuer as someone standing just behind them in their own reflection. While not exclusive to the Sabbat, this power is frequently used to track quarry, whether vampires marked as prey or mortal witnesses requiring silencing.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Auspex

**System:** The user locks eyes with the target, if only for a split second, and rolls Resolve + Auspex. On a win, the effect lasts for one night, plus one for each success in the margin. (If used against a vampire, the Difficulty of the roll is 3.)

While the power is active the user can concentrate for a turn to gain a view of the last position of the target from the perspective of the target’s own reflection. Essentially, they view a mental impression of the most recent moment the victim saw themselves, intentionally or unintentionally, in a mirror or mirror-like surface (including polished chrome, shopping windows, or even someone’s sunglasses). Note that Obfuscate provides no protection from this power, as it relies on the victim’s self-perception.

The user can recognize the surroundings of the target with an Intelligence + Streetwise (for urban areas) or Intelligence + Survival (for rural areas), the Difficulty depending on circumstances, such as being indoors, but should range from 2 to 4. The target can get a glimpse of their pursuer in their own reflection on a Wits + Awareness test at Difficulty 4, and only on a critical win will recognize

their face, or recall it from where the individual saw them if they don't know them personally.

**Duration:** One night plus one for each success (or in the margin, in the case of a vampire target)

## Animalism

### Level 3

#### SCENT OF PREY

The mind-numbing fear of realizing one's role as prey is unique, and vampires versed in sensing the Beast can learn to recognize it in those who experience it. This power allows a vampire to become aware of any mortal in an area projecting the distinct note of fear produced by prey animals having come face to face with their predator, allowing them to quickly track and silence those who would threaten their clandestine presence.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Animalism

**System:** The vampire sniffs the air and rolls Resolve + Animalism. Each success on the roll allows them to sense and track the position of a mortal who has witnessed what a Camarilla Kindred would call a "Masquerade violation." (The user senses the closest mortal first if there are more than one and order matters.) The effect lasts for one scene, or one night on a critical win. The power is ineffective on mortals who are familiar enough with vampires to sublimate the note of fear, such as ghouls, vampire retainers, or dedicated hunters.

**Duration:** One scene or night

## Dominate

### Level 4

#### TABULA RASA

Less memory manipulation than eradication, this callous power does away with subtlety and wipes every trace of memory from a victim, leaving them a pliant effigy of themselves. While they retain most of their learned skills, they forget everything else – their experiences, friends, family, wants and wishes

– in most cases, forever. Use of this power outside the Sabbat is rare, as even the most ruthless of the undead find it excessive. The Black Hand isn't above taking this shortcut to ensure that a captive servant is made ready for conditioning or that a promising child is remade to their tastes.

**Cost:** Two Rouse Checks

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Dominate vs. Composure + Resolve

**System:** The user Rouses their Blood, holds the gaze of their victim, and must then engage in an extended conflict of Resolve + Dominate versus the victim's Composure + Resolve, accumulating ten successes during an entire scene. The process must not be disturbed, and the victim must be restrained or otherwise submit during the act, as any break in concentration requires the conflict to be restarted (and another two Rouse Checks), as does a critical win on the part of the victim.

Once the process is complete, the victim is left a confused, slack-jawed shell. They lose memories of their name, history, and most of their old personality. They lose Convictions, Touchstones, and Ambition, and most of their Backgrounds become moot, as they forget how to access them. (These, together with other Advantages, are left to the Storyteller's discretion – a Contact may remember them if they cross paths again, for example.) Attributes, Skills, and Disciplines remain, however. The memory loss is permanent, though on occasion a victim has regained some of their past when faced with a traumatic event involving a past Touchstone. (Test Resolve + Composure at Difficulty 5, for example when a former Touchstone is threatened, hurt, or killed while in their presence, at the Storyteller's discretion.)

A wiped victim is usually fed whatever lies are needed to keep them loyal, or quickly subjected to Path indoctrination. Use of this power is exceedingly cruel, and should merit Stains in most chronicles.

**Duration:** Permanent



## Obfuscate

### Level 3

#### **MASK OF ISOLATION**

**Amalgam:** Dominate 1

**Prerequisite:** Mask of a Thousand Faces

Subtle but effective, this power forces the effect of Mask of a Thousand Faces on an unwitting subject. The victim will no longer be seen for who they are, even by those closest to them. Often employed over a longer period of time, the power is used by those who want to break their subject subtly but utterly, cutting them off from means and society to the point that they'll do anything to escape such a fate.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Obfuscate vs. Charisma + Insight

**System:** The user locks eyes with the victim and must then succeed at a Manipulation + Obfuscate

vs. Charisma + Insight test. On a win, the effect lasts for one night, plus one for each success in the margin. While under its effect, the victim is treated as employing Mask of a Thousand Faces, and is unable to be recognized by anyone. (The user can try to persuade friends and family with a Composure + Persuade test, but even when presenting proofs, the apprehension caused by this particular power will make it hard to convince them.)

If the subject is ever made aware of the power being used on them the effect ends, and the power cannot be employed on someone aware of its effects: It relies on the unconscious ignorance of the victim to remain active. As use of the power isn't overt, it can be reapplied repeatedly though, so long as the user doesn't reveal their intent.

In most chronicles, use of this power to break someone should merit Stains.

**Duration:** One night plus one additional night for each success in the margin



## Protean

### Level 3

#### VISCERAL ABSORPTION

**Amalgam:** Blood Sorcery 2

A seldom-seen but unmistakably effective way to clean up a mess, this power turns the body of the vampire semi-permeable while drawing inert blood and viscera in the vicinity inside them, feeding their Beast and sating their Hunger. Other bodily remains, bereft of blood, crumble to ash or vanish in greasy smoke. While the vampire using the power draws blood and gore to themselves, the surrounding area is left remarkably clean, and the Sabbat able to employ this ability use it as a way to cover their tracks with great effect.

**Cost:** 1 Rouse Check

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Protean

**System:** Use of this power requires at least one dead body in the area of effect, roughly an area extending 5 meters in all directions from the user. The vampire rolls Strength + Protean, and is able to absorb the blood and eradicate the remains of one body per success rolled. The state of the body is of no significance so long as it is fresh, and even “somebody” whose remains are little more than a red smear will be consumed.

The user sates one Hunger per body affected, but cannot sate more Hunger per use than their Blood Sorcery rating, nor can they reduce it below one through this power. Using this power takes one turn per body absorbed. It should also be noted that, while efficient in getting rid of evidence, the power is extremely overt while in use, as the user becomes a literal vortex of blood and viscera. Vampire remains aren't affected by this power.

**Duration:** One turn per body

## Oblivion

### Level 4

#### UMBROUS CLUTCH

The user creates a temporary gate out of the victim's own shadow, causing them to fall through Oblivion and into the waiting arms of the user. The victim will appear to fall into their own shadow, only to reappear falling out of the one cast by the user. The brief journey through the end of everything is usually enough to traumatize the victim into submission, though one must be prepared if the quarry responds violently in fear.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check, Gain one Stain

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Oblivion vs. Dexterity + Wits

**System:** In order to use this power, the vampire needs clear sight of both the victim and their shadow. The vampire's player or Storyteller then rolls Wits + Oblivion vs. Dexterity + Wits to maneuver the victim's shadow beneath them, creating a supernatural rift into which they appear to fall. At the Storyteller's discretion, a stationary victim not paying attention can be automatically caught.

A victim caught by this power will then reappear, falling out of the shadow cast by the user. (As with similar powers, the power does not work if the caster is without a shadow.) An unprepared mortal victim will be terrified and likely catatonic, while a vampire must test for fury or fear frenzy, Storyteller's choice, at Difficulty 4.

**Duration:** Instant

## Blood Sorcery

### Level 3

#### TRANSITIVE BOND

The user is able to extend the Blood Bonding properties of their vitae, enabling it to retain its ensnaring properties when stored, or even when present in the body of a ghoul. Anyone drinking the stored vitae or from the ghoul will be affected just as if they'd imbibed it directly from the user's wrist. Developed by the Tremere in a failed attempt to

alleviate their Bane, the power has resurfaced in the Sabbat, where the Discipline is less limited by clan lineage, and has been used to great effect in some of their longer schemes.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pool:** None

**System:** The user activates this power when calling upon their Blood, either for storing or when giving it to a ghoul. Each use empowers three Rouse Checks' worth of Blood. Anyone ensnared by the Transitive Bond will be unaware of its effect until they lay eyes on their eventual Regnant, but they might become restless and catch glimpses of them in dream-like visions during daysleep. The Blood Bond otherwise functions as described in **Vampire: The Masquerade**, pp. 233-234).

**The Masquerade**, pp. 233-234).

**Duration:** N/A

## Level 5

### RECLAMATION OF VITAE

No matter the distance, Blood calls to Blood. Working on that principle, this power allows a vampire to reclaim Blood that has been yielded to create ghouls, reclaiming that which has been given. Regardless of where they are, ghouls of the vampire will find the life-giving vitae in their veins rebelling within them, returning through mystical means to its source, while their bodies suffer catastrophic damage. Sabbat elders have been known to keep ghouls for this express purpose, an emergency reserve available anywhere at any time, at the trifling cost of a few mortal lives.

**Cost:** One or more Stains (when called to return)

**Dice Pool:** None

**System:** The user concentrates for a turn and chooses which of their servants are to repay their Blood-debt. The ghouls do not need to be present, and distance doesn't matter. The vampire sates two Hunger for each ghoul, while the ghoul suffers five levels of aggravated damage as their body ages irregularly and rapidly, the undead Blood inside them feeling as if it were attempting to violently vacate them.

While the power does not require the vampire to Rouse the Blood it should, if ever learned by some-

one outside the Sabbat, merit Stains to employ.

**Duration:** N/A

# Rituals

## Level 1

### BEELZEBEATIT

This ritual causes lower-order living creatures to find the ritual area repellent. Animals avoid the area, vermin scuttle away from it, and even plants may take on a pitiful appearance. Used as a low-level precaution against Animalism spies, this ritual also prevents infestations of the sorts of creatures who would be drawn to gore, carrion, and the other sorts of remains the Sabbat often leaves in its wake.

**Ingredients:** Vinegar or alcohol

**Process:** The ritualist sprinkles the vinegar or alcohol on the floor and turns counterclockwise, visually circumscribing the area in which the lesser creatures are to be expelled.

**System:** If the ritual is successful, living creatures of animal intellect and below hastily vacate the area of about a hundred meters square. Thereafter, nothing prevents a directed or controlled creature from returning (but such things may be visible, and stand out due to their active expulsion), but such creatures won't do it of their own volition unless enraged or no other option to traverse it exists. The effects last for one scene or one night, whichever comes first.

## Level 3

### COMMUNAL VIGOR

Based on sanguinary properties similar to the Vaulderie, this Ritual allows a Pack Priest to share their Blood Potency with their pack, while strengthening their own ability to keep those packmates in line.

**Ingredients:** One fingernail of the Pack Priest

**Process:** The Priest tears a nail from their finger and breaks it into pieces, one for each member of the Pack. They place their own portion of the torn nail in the Vaulderie chalice, while the other members place theirs under their tongue. If the Ritual

is successful, the pieces of nail dissolve into the Vaulderie blood consumed.

**System:** In addition to the effects of the Vaulderie, the members of the Pack have their Blood Potency raised to the same level as the officiating Priest. Additionally, the Priest gains three dice on any Dominate or Presence tests against other members of the Pack. The effects last for one night.

### **GALVANIC RUINATION**

This Ritual violently disrupts electrical currents in the area, shorting out or fusing all wiring in the vicinity. Used to kill alarms, surveillance, and artificial lighting, the element of stealth is often short-lived, as collateral damage in the form of fires usually follows. Many Sabbat packs consider this less a flaw than a feature, though.

**Ingredient:** A copper coin

**Process:** The caster smears their Blood on the coin, drops it to the ground and grinds their foot on it, as if they were extinguishing a cigarette. If the Ritual is successful, the coin shatters like porcelain as a Blood-borne current ravages the electrical systems of the surrounding area.

**System:** The Ritual instantly wrecks wiring in the vicinity to the extent that all electrical equipment ceases to function. This includes isolated circuits such as cars on batteries and any backup generators running or starting up within a minute of the casting. The area affected is equivalent to a large warehouse or a three-story building, though it can be extended at casting by adding a level of Difficulty for each additional building or building-equivalent. On a critical win the outage is relatively discreet, but will otherwise cause at least one fire, together with random bursts of static electricity raising hell with speakers, car alarms, and other loud electrical objects.

## *Level 5*

### **SIMULACRUM GATE**

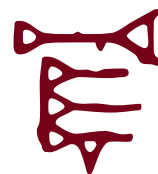
A time-consuming and elaborate Ritual, this colossal undertaking allows the construction of a distance-defying portal allowing multiple vampires

to cross vast distances in mere moments. While only one instance is known so far, Blood-sorcerers of the Sabbat suspect that it is only a matter of time before they may construct more as means to perform devastating hit-and-run attacks in the heart of rival sects' domains.

**Ingredients:** Anything required to build a copy of the target destination, including but not limited to sand, mortar, concrete, metal, and dirt. One vampire sacrifice and a number of mortal ones equal to the number of travellers.

**Process:** In order to function, the gate needs to be an exact copy of the target location, whether a building, cellar, attic, or some other location equipped with a physical structure that can be designated as a portal. This requires spies to spend weeks documenting the target location, smuggling examples of materials and taking countless pictures or making sketches of the place. Meanwhile, the replica is built (the more remote, the more secure), and the area consecrated with blood – vast amounts of it. Preparing the portal requires at least one mortal sacrifice per intended traveler, their remains to be scattered about the simulacrum edifice. The final activation calls for a vampire sacrifice. If a suitable victim isn't on hand, the lot probably falls to the vampire present who's the least able to resist being forced into the role, though ritualists have proposed Embracing a mortal sacrifice for this purpose.

**System:** If the Ritual Test is successful, the gate allows the desired number of vampires passage outward, and an equal number – not necessarily the same individuals – to return. Until that number has been matched, the gate remains open indefinitely, though nothing reveals the target location as such. Mortals cannot use the gate; to them it appears as nothing more than a repulsive monument.



## Ceremonies

### Level 2

#### **BLINDING THE ALLOY EYE**

**Prerequisite:** Shadow Cast

Striking a pact with a death-spirit, the caster buys themselves a short time of immunity to surveillance, as the otherworldly entity scrambles cameras around the vampire.

**Ingredient:** A small piece of aluminum mesh

**Process:** The user spends a scene in isolation, contacting the spectre and bonding it to the aluminum mesh. The mesh is then placed in a light-proof container, to be taken out when the effect is to be activated. Once removed and attached to a visible piece of flesh or garment of the caster, the effect is initiated.

**System:** Do not make a Ritual roll until the effect is activated. If possible, the result of the test should be kept secret from the player. If successful, cameras around the caster will end up scrambling their image, though they will pick up everything else normally. The effect lasts for a full scene, or until the mesh is removed.

### Level 3

#### **HARROWHAUNT**

Some places seem haunted, raising the hackles of mortal and vampire alike. A place Harrowhaunted is in a different league. Places subjected to this Ceremony convey a sense of such miasmic dread that most breathing creatures find it hard to, well, breathe, let alone stay. Sabbat vampires often use this to discourage unwanted visitors from lingering in the proximity of their communal havens. While it won't scare away encroaching vampires, most mortals will unconsciously take the long road around it, or make up excuses for why they'll check up on the rumors surrounding the place "tomorrow... probably."

**Prerequisite:** Aura of Decay

**Ingredient:** Mortals subjected to abject terror and suffering. The more the merrier.

**Process:** It starts with a "party." A number of mortals are confined to the place and inflicted with

terror and torture that ends with their death. But this is no mercy. The broken remains of their souls, scarcely more than fear-urges and sublime revulsion, are bound to the place, their bones buried in the ground, and made to share their torment with anyone who enters uninvited.

**System:** Mortals entering the vicinity (anything up to a two-story building) are beset by an irrational terror, requiring a Composure + Resolve test each turn to remain. If they fail they will indulge any excuse to leave, or run shrieking on a total failure. Vampires are less affected, but each scene spent in the location requires a test for fear frenzy.

### Level 4

#### **BEFOUL VESSEL**

While many of the entropic effects of Oblivion are restricted to mortals, this Ceremony allows the wielder to infect the blood of a vessel, making an otherwise healthy-appearing mortal into pure poison to the children of Caine.

**Prerequisite:** Necrotic Touch

**Ingredient:** The vampire's saliva

**Process:** The vampire needs only introduce a drop of their spittle to the skin of their victim, either by feeding on them or by smearing it upon them through physical contact.

**System:** A victim befouled in this way shows no symptoms, and is unaware of the harm done to them or the danger they pose to the undead. Anyone feeding on them will likewise be unaware of the effects apart from a rancid strangeness to their Blood. (Generous Storytellers can allow a Wits + Survival test at Difficulty 3 to notice that something is amiss, allowing the player to abort their feeding.) Once the feeding is done, the effect occurs: The feeding vampire gains Hunger instead of sating it, on a 1-for-1 basis. (A vampire who would've sated three Hunger would gain three Hunger.) This will likely risk hunger frenzy (see **Vampire: The Masquerade** p. 220).

No matter if they are fed on or not, the infected mortal dies in their sleep the following night, the only clue to their fate a patch of – mildew? – and acrid night-sweat.

# Thin-Blood Alchemy

## Level 1

### PORTABLE SHADE

Portable Shade, or even more irreverently, “suntan lotion,” is a formula developed by Cainites on the Path of the Sun to augment a thin-blood’s already substantial resistance to sunlight to near mortal levels. While it doesn’t render the subject completely immune, it extends the time they can endure daylight while masking immediate burns sustained by the sun.

**Activation Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Ingredients:** Blood of the Alchemist, sanguinic mortal blood, fresh plant leaves. Some alchemists also use various off-the-shelf sunblock ointments in the mix, though it is unknown whether they contribute significantly to the formula.

**Dice Pools:** Stamina + Alchemy

**System:** Make a Stamina + Alchemy test when ingesting the formula. The user is able to endure sunlight without taking damage for a number of hours equal to the number of successes on the test. At sunset, make another test with the same pool, this time with a Difficulty equal to the number of hours spent in daylight. A failure causes the user to sustain a level of aggravated damage, while a total failure has them sustain two, as the accumulated sunlight boils the Blood in their veins.

**Duration:** A number of hours equal to a Stamina + Alchemy test, or the next sunset, whichever comes first.

## Level 3

### ON-DEMAND SUNBURN

A dread tool of the Path of the Sun, On-Demand Sunburn traps sunlight in the very body of its user, enabling them to unleash it as a destructive force through their own skin, searing themselves and their prey in a sizzling embrace. While the damage done by a single user is not enough to incinerate a vampire, a group of self-immolating Heliophiles can spell doom for fledglings and elders alike.

**Ingredients:** Blood of the Alchemist, choleric

mortal blood, gold shavings, mercury, as well as assorted halogens (usually chlorine or bromide). The formula also needs to be subjected to sunlight for several hours before use, and alchemists employing *athanor corporis* usually “juice up” on Portable Shade (see above) for this.

**Activation Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pools:** None

**System:** On activation, the alchemist becomes an unliving battery of sunlight with a single charge seething in their veins. They can unleash this charge at will, inflicting aggravated damage upon themselves and another vampire whom they’ve successfully achieved skin contact with, as their own skin smolders and blackens. The user takes two levels of aggravated damage, while the victim suffers an amount equal to their Bane Severity, as if exposed to daylight for a full turn. If the victim has the means to reduce the damage (such as through Fortitude) they can do so. If the formula isn’t activated before then, the power automatically activates at the first sunset after ingestion, causing two levels of aggravated damage to the user.

**Duration:** Until unleashed or next sunset, whichever comes first.





Marina:

I've looked at the photographs you've sent me and they have proven interesting, but not in the way you had originally supposed.

The graffiti is almost certainly that: mundane spray paint-taggings. I assure you there are no hidden symbols or arcane sigils hidden among them, at least in the way the sorceries of my order are performed.

I called in a favor owed to me by a contact in warmer climes. She says that nothing about the tags indicates ceremony used in speaking with the departed.

I wonder if they're maybe using the graffiti to be deliberately misleading.

The most remarkable feature to me appears to be a standard selection of storefront signs. I have placed the photos in sequence according to the panoramic shot you sent me. Looking at the storefront signs, each one of them has a burnt-out letter or two. Not uncharacteristic for the neighborhood, but going back and forth, sequentially from one side of the street to the other in reverse of the vantage you've sent me, the missing letters say something:

TOO FLITES DOWN NO LITE TAPTAP STOPTAP X

I believe they're using the burned-out letters of the store signs to leave each other messages. It looks like a grille cipher, but adapted to worldly diegetics.

X marks the spot? Both of the photos you've sent me are impenetrably blurry by the streetlight. I'd guess it's either the massage parlor or the pharmacy, whatever they're indicating.

Be careful.

- Pradeep

# Ritae: Keys to the Dominion of Caine

The Sabbat is more than a fanatical cult of vampires, but ritual has become the core of their identity as an organization. Ritual and observance define the vampires of the Sabbat and bind them to each other, to their packs, and to the empty throne of Caine. The ties of Blood and clan are not easily replaced, and only Pack Priests truly understand how the power of the ritual forged the Sword of Caine into the instrument of destruction and terror it is in these final nights.

Among the Sabbat, ritual can take many forms. Ritual can be a formalized but parochial observance of a Path of Enlightenment. Ritual can be a specific verbal greeting among packmates or a secret gesture that identifies every member of the Black Hand in Kiev to one another or a symbolic steganography that identifies secure temporary havens and servile ghouls. Ritual may be formal, such as the Auctoritas Ritae, or vernacular, such as the Ignoblis Ritae.

This chapter includes systems for many of the Sabbat's ritual observances. To make the Sabbat uniquely their own, Storytellers are encouraged to use these as springboards for the unique treatment of ritual in their chronicles. Without ritual, the Sabbat is nothing more than a pack of purposeless, crazed murderers.

WITHIN US ARE THE UNFULFILLED DESIRES OF OUR SIBES AND GRANDSIBES. WE ARE THEIR TOOLS AND THEY SHAPED US FOR THEIR PURPOSE. WE CHOOSE TO SHAPE OURSELVES INTO SOMETHING THAT FULFILLS OUR OWN ENDS. IN PURSUIT OF TRANSFORMATION WE DO NOT STOP AT THE FLESH. FOR WHEN WE MINGLE OUR BLOOD, WE FREE OUR SOULS.

## The Role of Ritual

The Auctoritas Ritae are universally recognized within the Sabbat as the rituals that unite them as a Sect. Bonds between individual packs are often formed during these rites. The Vaulderie is perhaps the most infamous of these ritae, but other sects' fear of the Creation Rites makes a statement to the shadow of terror they cast – which is part of the point.

A Cainite Priest will often modify the details of these ritae to suit their pack's specific spiritual and ideological beliefs and each Path of Enlightenment more frequently observes rites that exemplify the core tenets of its doctrines. Sabbat on the Path of Caine or Cathari, for instance, will often speak in tongues during their Ritae, lost in the rapture of intimate communion with Caine. Or so they say, at least.

The Ignoblis Ritae are more informal practices often developed among individual packs as tests of courage, loyalty, faith, and dedication to one another. While young or modern packs may have only one or two such distinct ritae, packs that claim extended pedigrees may observe a prodigious number of rituals that commemorate everything from obscure vampiric "saints" to remembrances of deceased packmates.

One noteworthy distinction is the matter of Ignoblis Ritae that develop around how packs satisfy their need for blood. These hunting ritae come in many forms but like most things are shaped by the Paths of Enlightenment that guide the pack and its Priest and in game terms can stand in for individual predator styles (see p. 65). Every pack finds a way to hunt together that best suits their needs and beliefs – and savvy coteries might be able to discern such identifiers among their victims.





## Auctoritas Ritae

All Cainites within the Sabbat recognize these grand rites – they represent a catechism that unites all Cainites under the Dark Father’s dominion. This common body of ritual is remarkable for the Sabbat, which is otherwise a morass of conflicting beliefs and methodologies and the monsters who uphold them. In this way, the ritae are a potent tool for the Sabbat, in that they help forge such disparate vampires into a singularly minded Sword of Caine.

The performance of these Auctoritas Ritae brings together Sabbat under what is effectively a spiritual calendar. Nomadic packs and warbands may congregate to perform ritae together and then disperse once their obligations have been completed, or the entirety of a domain in entente may come together to observe it. The exact nature of this spiritual procession varies among the Sabbat of a given locale, and any number of rumors attribute an order to the observances. Some say they’re performed according to the timing of lunar cycles that have a subtle purchase on the tidal humors of Cainite Blood, while others mark “holy nights” based on events that have themselves been lost in the wake of the Gehenna War.

## The Vaulderie

The Vaulderie is the most infamous of the Sabbat’s rituals and the secret that allowed the sect to emerge from the original Anarch Revolt as such a powerful and cohesive force. The Vaulderie is part Blood Sorcery, part artifice, and arguably the heart of the Sabbat.

To perform the Vaulderie, packs ritually spill their Blood into a common vessel and then imbibe the mixed result under the guidance of their Priest. Within the Vaulderie “chalice,” the pack’s vitae is imbued with a power that allows them to simultaneously sever their past Blood Bonds and form new ones among each other. Here, the observance varies wildly, with some packs favoring ostentatious chalices and Latin chants while others prefer a bear’s skull or a “lucky whiskey bottle” as the vessel

and a few lines of doggerel or a street prayer as its invocation.

Although initially weaker than singular Blood Bonds, these bonds among the pack, known as *vincula*, can grow over time and can make individual Sabbat resilient to betraying their packmates, as their personal loyalty to their pack is girded by the supernatural power of the Blood.

Between the Vaulderie and their personal Paths of the Enlightenment, the Sabbat have a well-deserved reputation for fanaticism. Their willingness to accept final death in service to their cause is why the Sword of Caine is often called a death cult. In most cases, only those vampires Embraced into the Sabbat or who have proven their loyalty beyond doubt are allowed to contribute their vitae during the Vaulderie. Shovelheads often must imbibe from the ritual chalice even if they may not yet contribute to it.

The Vaulderie is not only the Sabbat’s pledge of loyalty, it’s also its own reward as many Cainites experience genuine ecstasy in supping from their comrades’ commingled Blood. Refusing to partake of the Vaulderie is usually considered a brazen act of treason against Caine and the pack, with consequences as dire as the pack and Priest choose to inflict. Sabbat captives who have gone for prolonged periods without the Vaulderie may even experience cruel symptoms of withdrawal.

### IN STORIES

The Vaulderie is an extremely powerful rite in terms of storytelling, in that it erases any question as to who the coterie might be dealing with. The players’ coterie may discover a rival coterie to be a Sabbat pack as they witness its Cainites sharing Blood from a styrofoam cooler poured down the barrel of a hunting rifle. Players may also be forced to participate in a Vaulderie if their situation is so dire that they’ve found themselves Sabbat captives.

It’s also an opportunity to seed fear and doubt: Does a single Vaulderie break the Blood Bond? Or does it take three consecutive observances for *vincula* to form? The truth varies by the story the troupe is telling, but this powerful aspect of Sabbat

identity should always leave the coterie questioning how they've been affected by it, even if they haven't partaken directly. And once they've seen one Vaulderie happen, they may well question if any other Kindred in their domain might have participated.

## Creation Rites

The act of creating a new vampire has special significance to the Sabbat, as its supremacist beliefs have elevated the Embrace to a high honor. The Creation Rites are a hellish series of torments designed to simultaneously strip a fledgling of their humanity, condition them to rely on their Beast for survival and, most importantly, prepare them to take their first steps on to one of the Sabbat's Paths of Enlightenment.

The most common aspect of this ritae involves violently Embracing a group of potential recruits and then burying them as the last of their mortality seeps away. Those who can claw their way out of the grave are then subdued and indoctrinated into the Sabbat. These so-called shovelheads further sink into a downward spiral of humanity as they frenziedly fang and claw on the frontlines of the Gehenna War.

As with most ritae, the details vary by pack and location. A Creation Rite may be a morbid procession of somber pomp, or it might be a "shovel-party" bacchanal, in which Cainite onlookers drink intoxicated bystanders dry and toss a few into the pit to see who digs themselves out.

How one comports oneself during their Creation Rites has some impact on a Cainite's new unlife in the Sabbat. Most

frenzy or otherwise succumb to the horror – that's the point after all. Indulging in other indignities, though, might earn one a particularly odious nickname, which also helps break down individuality and build dependency on the pack and sect. Pity the poor shovelhead nicknamed Smear Body. Well, don't pity them too much, since they're probably frenzying.

### IN STORIES

Creation Rites have a tremendous value to Sabbat and Path identity, and they make a clear statement about the chronicle when they make an appearance. Creation Rites force an immediate call to action if the players' coterie discovers the rite in action, urg-

### SABBAT NAMES

From the moment of the Embrace through the Creation Rites, the fledgling Cainite quickly learns that their mortal life is done. Setting aside the horrors of becoming undead, the recruit loses their old name – in that their new packmates often quickly bestow upon them some unpleasant nickname intended to bully them into compliance and break down any lingering sense of self. Names like Tatterface, Fucko, Scatterguts, Chunks, and You With the Missing Eye have all found use, as much out of overt cruelty as the need to refer to a specific fledgling. Don't like your new nickname? Welcome to a beatdown and an even worse epithet.

Provided they survive long enough to become True Sabbat, the nickname is often discarded, to be replaced by some other appellation. These new names emerge as a combination of the pack's identity, the Path of Enlightenment the pack follows, and some amount of pack reputation. These aren't usually imaginative (because what Sabbat has time for that?) but can be descriptive or even florid.

A pack's names might literally be numerals – all of the odd numbers from 9 through 17, say – or they might be designed to evoke fear in those who hear their names spoken. The sect has no shortage of Cainites naming themselves after the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, mythological demons, crimes of which they are especially fond, or even the places where they were murdered and dragged screaming and deathless into the Black Hand. The point is to break any continuity with the person they were before.

In some cases, the new Sabbat is able to choose their own name, but even in these cases, they usually follow the pack. Appearances aside, if the pack members all have mortal sins as their Cainite names, being the odd vampire out creates dissonance and sets them aside, apart, as not one of the pack.

ing them to act against the pack performing it and the berserk fledglings hauling themselves out of the grave.

As a more subtle function, though, the aftermath of a Creation Rite is very often the first clue that a Sabbat pack is present in a rival sect's domain. A yawning charnel pit is worrisome enough when discovered in the potter's field, but what about when one turns up in the well-manicured green space in the middle of the Rack? Or behind the Prince's estate?

## Monomacy

The blood duel or sýmbel is a tradition older than the Anarch Revolt, but the Sabbat has formalized the practice of such trials by ordeal into the very fabric of its apocalyptic dogma. When a dispute between Sabbat cannot be settled by their Priest, one of the aggrieved may invoke Monomacy, by which the matter will be settled in combat or some other contest of skill.

What makes the ritus of Monomacy remarkable is the stakes involved in invoking it. Specific terms may vary, but the winner of Monomacy commits diablerie upon the loser. It's a brutal way to come to terms, but among fundamentalist Black Hand it is also seen as proof of Caine's favor, a monstrous divine right.

Of the Auctoritas Ritae, Monomacy is the only ritus that any Sabbat can demand. Although most disputes are settled through a Priest's arbitration, titles and leadership roles are often only decided by the rite of Monomacy. Not every dispute needs to be resolved via Monomacy – a challenge to the role of Pack Priest need not end in diablerie if the current Priest stands down to make way for the challenger. When the stakes are higher, such as on the Gehenna War front or when a domain's Sabbat lose faith in their Bishop, a formal duel and righteous subsequent diablerie are just ends. Leaders anointed by Monomacy most often find their authority unchallenged afterward and may find it easier to unite rival packs and factions against common external enemies. Thus transitions in leadership in the Sabbat often result in bloody raids against other

domains with the misfortune of being within striking range.

Sabbat vampires who witness Monomacy are by custom unable to participate, though given the stakes, all kinds of scumbag cheating may well happen, such as among Sabbat with low morale or in desperate straits. It takes a lot to convince Sabbat to profane one of their esteemed rituals, but it happens, especially if outside influence is brought to bear.

## IN STORIES

Witnessing a Monomacy can make very clear indications as to Sabbat leadership or the change of such. Indeed, the incursion of the Sabbat into the coterie's home domain may begin with Monomacy and the coterie's awareness of it happening on a penthouse deck as the pack makes a rooftop assault to kick off a story or session.

The celebration of diablerie after a Monomacy duel (probably...) creates a stark contrast to the values players' characters hold dear. It's one thing to hear that "All Sabbat are diablerists," but it's quite another to witness the finality of such soul-sucking at the MC clubhouse when the "allied" biker gang reveals itself for what it is. Especially after the fact, when the new gang leader proudly displays her black-stained aura.

In extreme cases, players' characters may actually participate in a Monomacy, willing or otherwise, if some situation occurs by which the Sabbat have cause to challenge them. A duel for the right to claim their stretch of rowhouses as domain might be the excuse a Sabbat uses to tempt the coterie into disaster – and you just know they're not going to bear the loss honorably if their pack doesn't win the duel.

## Blood Feast

For the ritus of the Blood Feast, the assembled Sabbat gorge upon a great number of mortal vessels who have been kidnapped for the purposes of slaking the Cainites' thirsts. It is at once an expression of excess and supremacy, an ample demonstration of what the relationship between vampire and mortal



should be, from the Sabbat perspective. Undeniably, it's one of the most brutal practices of the Black Hand.

Realization of the Blood Feast varies, most importantly by how many Cainites are expected to participate, and therefore how many victims will be required. Mortal vessels may be ritually bled and butchered by a Priest in mockery of a formal dinner, or the event might be a degenerate free-for-all, with victims bound or trapped, effectively “on tap” for whomever chooses to exsanguinate them at their leisure.

Blood Feasts often precede momentous occasions for the sect, such as the ascension of a vicious warlord or spiritual leader, or in preparation for a suicide mission into a suspected Methuselah's den. “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,” is a

perverse part of the reasoning behind this rite, from the Bible's book of Isaiah.

### IN STORIES

The most obvious call to action for a Blood Feast is to somehow stop it, and if that's not possible, perhaps even to recover some number of the victims. A Blood Feast is a true test of morality, for even if the players' coterie isn't a bunch of do-gooders, chronicle Tenets, personal Convictions, and the self-preservation functions of the Masquerade may urge characters to prevent innocents from meeting grim ends.

Some victims might even be procured for nights before the Rite's culmination, and those close to them might notice that they've gone missing – often to little avail. Indeed, the Devils of the Flesh delight



in targeting the Herds and Touchstones of known enemies when they seek victims to add to the Blood Feast's offering.

The Sabbat also greatly enjoys temptation, whether in the form of a Cathari offering forbidden delights that would never be allowed under the tyranny of the Traditions, or in the form of the providence of the Black Hand, seeking to meet the needs of its Cainites. The Camarilla would have young Kindred starve! The Sabbat, on the other hand, invites all of the Children of Caine to partake of the mortal bounty – and such is the foundation of many efforts to turn young vampires away from the domain's dominant sect.

### **Festival of the Dead**

The Festival of the Dead, sometimes called *Festivo dello Estinto*, commemorates the Sabbat's fallen comrades and for some packs, the original sacrifices of the Anarch Revolt. Tonight it also doubles as an occasion to reflect on the dangers of the first and Second Inquisition and the terrible losses that both have inflicted on the Children of Caine. Beyond remembrance, many Cainites also see the Festivo as an auspicious time to settle unfinished business and to initiate revenge against non-Sabbat.

This rite often coincides with similar local or cultural holidays themed upon remembrance for the dead. It is generally a solemn affair, even when observed by raucous packs, accompanied by various accouterments such as incense, candles, grave shrouds, and any religious iconography the pack may have appropriated or to which they may even feel a genuine attachment... or revulsion. Packs may go over the top in grand gothic fashion, convening in a cemetery (and harrowing any mortal onlookers), or they may revisit the places where packmates have fallen, such as a skid row bolthole or a high-rise penthouse, generally heedless of anyone who might think they have a more just claim to the location.

### IN STORIES

The Festival of the Dead may be used narratively to place a lull in the intensity of action against the Sabbat, as rampaging Cainites inexplicably “go missing” while commemorating their own departed. It may also serve as an opportunity to reverse the roles of the pattern of conflict that may have been established for the chronicle thus far, giving the players’ coterie a chance to go on the attack while the Sabbat is on the defensive, owing to the spiritual observance.

By contrast, Storytellers may wish to have the Sabbat go hard during the Festivo. Bolstered by the atmosphere of remembrance, bedecked with personal affectations of the fallen, Cainites observe the Festivo dello Estinto with indomitable will and the desire to succeed where their past efforts failed – and resulted in the final deaths of packmates.

### Fire Dance

All vampires rightly fear fire, as its flames are a potent bane to them. The Fire Dance not only forces Cainites to face their fear of it, but it shows their bravery to their packmates, instilling respect among them.

The Fire Dance is a simple rite. The pack ignites a bonfire or other great flame and the assembled Sabbat goad each other to dance and jump through the flames. Even Priests demonstrate their mettle before the flame and a failed vault through the flames can easily lead to a challenge of Monomacy or even final death.

Pack philosophy often informs a greater symbolism for the rite. For example, a pack that follows the teachings of Death and the Soul might regard the fire as the veil between this world and the next, while for a pack of howling Albigenians, the fire marks a sublime relationship between pleasure and pain.

Fire Dances are often held in conjunction with other ritae, such as a Blood Feast (see above) or Wild Hunt (see below), especially when dealing with fire might be a part of what happens following those rites. A Fire Dance is almost always a rowdy affair, with Sabbat vampires shrieking and taunting each

other to hurl themselves through the conflagration – and occasionally screaming in pain as someone burns to a cinder. The rite can take place anywhere, from a city zoo to a construction site to an abandoned ranch in the middle of nowhere.

### IN STORIES

Fire dances are overt expressions of Sabbat presence and have a variety of uses, from framing action-oriented scenes to foreshadowing momentous events, with the Fire Dance itself as a rally or celebration. Forcing outside participation is also extremely popular among the Sabbat, who readily promise a captive’s freedom if they can make it through the flames – whom they then trip into the flames, or simply murder if the victim does manage to survive the Fire Dance.

Fire Dances also scale well. The rite might be a small, intense “spike” of danger with only a few Sabbat performing it as the coterie watches from a distance. Or it might be a full-blown revel, with every local Sabbat and a few dozen more from neighboring domains roaring and jeering and “accidentally” bullying each other into the flames... where perhaps the proceedings might hide a little surreptitious liaison with members of the enemy sect.

### Blood Bath

When Sabbat claim titles or positions of power beyond their pack, such as Bishop, the grand ritae of the Blood Bath honors the attainment of rank. In its simplest expression, the Blood Bath is a ritual anointing of the claimant, whether with a small, symbolic smear of blood on the brow to a full-throated dousing-in-blood akin to a classical taurobolium.

Although Sabbat titles and ranks have become informal against the backdrop of the Gehenna War and in the era of the Second Inquisition, waging a war requires a unified chain of command and soldiers that know their place. The Blood Bath has emerged as somewhat of a practical necessity given the decentralization of the Sword of Caine, and the high turnover among even its highest ranks.

The specifics of the rite are very personal expressions of the elevated Cainite’s outlook, agenda,

and Path. A new leader may be skylad as trusted packmates pour freshly collected blood over them, or a “field promotion” may hastily suffice, in which the old leader has recently met their end and the new leader might streak themselves with the spilled vitae of that predecessor, as circumstances may necessitate.

In most cases, mortal blood is preferred, but animal sacrifices will suffice. For grandiose Blood Baths the Blood of a Kindred luminary adds gravity to the rite – all the more so if said Blood is collected after committing diablerie upon that august individual. At the Blood Bath’s conclusion, those in attendance drink from the pooled vitae and pledge loyalty to Sabbat (though ambitious leaders may solicit pledges of loyalty to themselves, which some Cainites react to as apostasy).

#### IN STORIES

Coterie are unlikely to participate in a Blood Bath or even observe one, but they are significant in that they make a significant declaration as to Sabbat leadership, and can thus make the players’ characters aware of high-value targets. In an especially gruesome twist, the coterie might find itself targeted for capture and diablerie after their vitae is to be used as part of the sacrament of the Blood Bath.

Blood Baths with inadequate security might well be observed via drones or cameras – and whether that surveillance footage makes it into the hands of the players’ characters or fervent vampire-hunters will have huge consequences for a chronicle.

### War Party

As the Gehenna War rages, this rite in particular has acquired a newfound prominence within the Sabbat. The War Party celebrates the pursuit and destruction of great enemies of the Black Hand, and the Gehenna War all but ensures every enemy is a great enemy of the Sabbat. A pack or warband invokes this Rite when they are confident a high-value target is within striking distance and with its invocation the pack commits to nothing short of devouring the subject’s soul.

The grandest War Parties take on a certain ele-

ment of religious mysteries: Within the Blood of elders and other minions of the masters of Gehenna are the secrets of their creators. If these blood gods have a fatal flaw, those closest to them will have glimpsed it.

#### IN STORIES

It’s hard to overlook a War Party, as it’s one of the most overt rites in the Sabbat catechism. As the bonfires cast sinister shadows and the howls of the Cainites ring through the alleys, any Kindred nearby will know not only that the Sabbat has arrived but is actively seeking immediate war and diablerie. As an invitation to immediate action, it’s now or never if the coterie discovers a War Party in progress.

The Sabbat isn’t foolish, however, and packs will perform reconnaissance on their intended target beforehand. Intrepid coterie may be able to determine whom the Sabbat intends to drink dry, how they plan to approach it, and even when. What they do with that information is of course up to them.

### Wild Hunt

The Wild Hunt is a demand for vengeance, and Priests invoke this rite when an enemy of the Black Hand has taken an action that demands symbolic and final retribution. Technically, anyone might be the subject of a Wild Hunt, but Pack Priests tend to reserve this vengeful fate for a particularly hated foe or the unthinkable: if a member of their pack has turned traitor.

The Wild Hunt is the closest thing the Sabbat has to a Blood Hunt, and the prize is always the heartsblood of the doomed. Any pack present at the rite’s invocation can participate in the Wild Hunt, but word of such things spreads quickly among Cainites, and the Brothers and Sisters in Caine often eagerly support Wild Hunts and take up the cause themselves. So long as the subject meets vengeance, the rite is successful.

That vengeance is paramount, and the Wild Hunt concludes when the victim is destroyed and some proof of the act is brought back to the officiant. Of course, what constitutes proof varies wildly.



Rigorous Priests may demand the corroboration of a Necronomist who can confirm that the subject's soul has been consumed, while less formal Priests may be satisfied by fresh black streaks in the claimant's aura.

### IN STORIES

The subject of a Wild Hunt may be responsible for the destruction or capture of their pack, but it's not unheard of for a turncoat to seek refuge among the Kindred of a rival sect under a false identity or stolen face. Sabbat who have recently partaken of the Vaulderie with the traitor usually consider it a matter of pack duty to bring the target of a Wild Hunt to their deserved end. Such a fugitive may be a contact of the coterie, or may offer them something substantive for protection. If there's enough of their individual identity left, they may even be fleeing the Sabbat in order to seek allegiance to another sect.

Of course, if the coterie or one of its members proves to be a particularly infamous thorn in the Sabbat's side, they may well find themselves declared as the prey of a Wild Hunt, in which case they will likely have no peace until the matter is settled or they're consumed by vengeful Cainites.

### Lapsing Auctoritas Ritae

In nights past, the Sabbat observed as many as 13 Auctoritas Ritae, but the rapid splintering and decentralization of the sect has forced many of these "universal" High Rites into extremely colloquial interpretations. As such, what were once Auctoritas Ritae have fallen into the status of Ignoblis Ritae (see p. 64), assuming local packs observe them at all.

This is a dangerous development for the Sabbat. On the one hand, it's a sign of the erosion of its customs, and if the Black Hand loses the tools by which it directs its fanatics against the Antediluvians, the whole sect may crumble. On the other hand, it's a testament to Sabbat adaptivity – who knows what new horrors might emerge from the ashes of the old as the Sabbat's new blasphemous cultus?

### THE BINDING

The most apt case of universal rite yielding to emergent locality, the Binding is an oath of loyalty to the sect and all Brothers and Sisters in Caine. Modern expressions of the Binding are very regional, in most cases extending no further than individual packs.

Some packs observe as much as possible of the original wording, where they can remember it, as well as the high formality of the rite. For most packs, though, especially young packs, a quick but functional pack rally suffices. Priests often supplement their chants or slogans with more physical rituals, such as:

- "We hereby commit our Blood and bodies to the Dark Father and all of our Brothers and Sisters in Caine."
- "Woe to they who are about to be vanquished in the name of Caine. We are the Sword of the Dark Father."
- "Fuck all of y'all; here we come. On three – ONE, TWO, THREE!"

### GAMES OF INSTINCT

Similarly yielding to demonstrate the aptitudes and proclivities of individual packs, Games of Instinct are exhibitions of "sport" that allow vampires to mitigate stress and cooperate in some gratuitously cruel solidarity-building activity.

- **Demolition Derby:** Packs set cars on fire with captive passengers and crash them into pack-mates' cars, and the last Cainite to leave their car "wins."
- **Boarding Party:** The pack violently and forcibly commandeers a boat, tractor-trailer, or aircraft. Sometimes they even use it to go somewhere afterward, but killing the "crew" is usually the point of the game.
- **Dog Tagging:** The pack hunts a Lupine with intent of tagging its ear and turning it loose. Likely apocryphal, the activity usually takes the form terrorizing whatever location in which the pack thinks werewolves might be found.



- **Pandering:** While intruding upon other sects' domains, the pack seizes upon a "runt" or other outsider of Kindred society, making no secret of their pursuit of the victim with the specific intent of terrorizing them. This game almost always ends in diablerie as the pack culls the weak Kindred from the domain.

### SERMONS OF CAINE

As the name implies, the rite involves a prepared sermon by the Pack Priest, often with direct reference to the *Book of Nod* and the parables the Priest chooses to highlight. The parochial nature in which Priests now conduct "services" – some packs have no access to the *Book of Nod*, even in verbal form, and Priests may or may not be able to deliver an accurate quotation – has made the Sabbat's message inarguably vernacular.

### PALLA GRANDE

The Palla Grande was often expressed as a high-paganry "Dance of the Dead" in mockery of Camarilla court formality. As Sabbat numbers have dwindled and Sabbat domains have been largely abandoned, it has fallen out of use.

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### INTO THE OUTSIDE

Certain ritae have found vitality outside the Sabbat, having been absorbed into the cultural practice of other factions. Kindred society has no few soothsayers or demagogues who profiteer in the name of Caine, or who are genuine believers in philosophies that owe much to the orthodoxy of Sabbat spirituality. Some of these are blatant, such as the so-called "Church of Caine" seemingly having appropriated one version of the Sermons of Caine. Others are more insidious but less overt. And the truth may not be so clearly cut – for example, the Church of Caine claims a history that predates the Black Hand itself...

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## Ignoblis Ritae

The lesser ritae observed by the Sword of Caine are informal rituals that vary greatly by pack identity, but often have similar themes depending on the pack's history, geographic location, and especially which Path of Enlightenment guides them. Packs consist of vampires who share the same beliefs, and even those that have differing perspectives within their ranks tend to echo the doctrine established by their Pack Priest.

Lesser ritae are almost never performed with other packs, as they express the values, experiences, and traditions of each pack itself.

### The Path of Caine



Packs led by a Devourer often look to parables from the *Book of Nod* when establishing their Ignoblis Ritae. Rites and sermons that espouse vampiric superiority over mortals, Lupines and other creatures of the night are common. Noddist priests often incorporate a blade in the pack's Ignoblis Ritae and use it to take Blood, with the blade symbolizing Caine's will over all vampires.

While Caine is traditionally considered a patriarchal figure, many Devourers would disagree with such a rigid interpretation. Few in the Sabbat ascribe a fixed gender to Caine, the child of Adam who sacrificed hope, happiness, forgiveness and their own brother in pursuit of limitless freedom. Caine is no longer a man, but the Dark Father of all vampires.

**Symbols:** Masonic tools, wheat, stones, rhombus, effigies joined at the hand

### COMMON RITAE

Achieving altered states of consciousness is a frequent tool for Noddist Ritae. While they are not above using drug-laced blood, Path of Caine Priests also use pain, stress positions, blood deprivation, and even Blood Sorcery to help their packmates find their way. Modified sweat lodges, cilices, and

prolonged suspension by hooks may also be employed by Devourers. All of the curses of Caine must be overcome through steadfast perseverance, unwavering faith and ultimately by complete submission to the Dark Father's will.

### CONTRITION RITAE

Devourers prefer to teach even with their punishments. While major transgressions that would demand final death are often settled through Monomacy, diablerie, or dismemberment, lesser crimes are often punished by echoing Caine's trials in the land of Nod. Heated brands and crushing stones are common corrective implements among the Devourers.

### HUNTING RITAE

Diablerie is an especially meaningful sacrament for those on the Path of Caine. Although the *Book of Nod* occasionally warns against drinking the heartsblood, Devourers often believe that covenant was broken when the Antediluvians rebelled against Caine's will.

Noddists seek the Blood of other vampires when they hunt, especially that of the thin-blooded, whom they see as heralds of the Antediluvians. Such victims also have the benefit of not being missed by the powers that be, though when a true vampire falls into the clutches of the Noddists it is usually the Priest who ultimately decides whom among the Pack deserves the reward of devouring their prey's soul. Although only one may take the soul, trophies taken from a notable victim lend an additional gravity when the pack performs the Vaulderie or other communal ritae.

### The Path of Cathari



The Cathari are hedonists without compare. Their unlives revolve around pushing the limits of excess and flaunting their depravity to mortal and Cainite alike.

While to many they may seem crass and simple, beneath their wanton lusts lies a complex belief in their divine role as tempters and destroyers. Certainly, Albigenian Priests are able to illuminate



others as to the Manichean complexities of the Path of Cathari, but “lay members” often prefer to keep their secrets to themselves, sharing only their vulgarities with herds and harems.

**Symbols:** “Occult” paraphernalia, blood drops, dollar signs, rams, goetic sigils

### COMMON RITAE

Cathari packs favor ecstatic rituals that tease out their Beasts and allow them to indulge their earthly vices. Unlike many other Sabbat, they regularly include unwitting mortals in Ignoblis Ritae and though these participants rarely survive, some may find themselves marked for the Embrace if they show enough enthusiasm for the higher function of temptation.

Cathari ritae are the most stereotypically “occult” among the Sabbat and usually incorporate black candles, circles of spilled salt, and blood-drawn sigils. Cathari ritae are typically dramatic and display the supernatural nature of the Cainites at the same time as they evoke base indulgence. Drinking from a mortal who’s just snorted cocaine off the bathroom sink? Sure, that’s a “ritual”; pass them around.

### CONTRITION RITAE

Forgiveness isn’t something in which Cathari see much value and Albigensian Priests go out of their way to devise painful methods of absolution for those among their pack who fall short in loyalty or even depravity. These largely serve the purpose of “corrective” browbeating and humiliation, however. For the most part, Cathari regard guilt as a useless emotion, making rituals of contrition few.

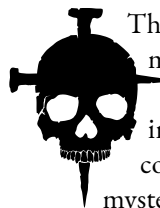
### HUNTING RITAE

Many Cathari take outsized pleasure in breaking the Masquerade, but when hunting they may hide their monstrous nature from their victims as long as possible. After the slaughter it’s often the first to “break character” and reveal themselves who is left to clean up the mess as an expression of postmeal thanks-giving.

When the pack does feed in earnest, they toy with their victims and will even hold out the temptation of escape for the most entertaining mortals. More than one Cathari ghoul started their servitude as a “last girl or boy” who survived the horror of a hunting party.

Devils of the flesh are especially keen to feed on, corrupt, or make ghouls of hunters in this era of the Second Inquisition. It’s a thrill to corrupt those who would overtly act against them, and some take pride in despoiling the self-styled agents of the divine. Needless to say, the feeding rituals of Cathari packs are often noticed quickly by mortal authorities.

## The Path of Death and the Soul



The Path of Death and the Soul commands a pack to transcend the limits of death and unravel the secrets of immortality. To its followers, the Beast coexists before and beyond the door of mystery. Many Necronomist ritae demonstrate the fragility of life and celebrate the permanency of death. To Reaper, there’s no such thing as a “meaningless killing” – every death is a lesson, a statement, or a declaration of supremacy.

**Symbols:** Skulls, hearts, pulled teeth, keys, a woman holding a key, rivers

### COMMON RITAE

Practical and scholarly Priests among the Reapers perform their Ritae with precision and many adhere to processional calendars of auspicious nights even when isolated from other Sabbat packs. Necronomists Priests often seek places rich in the power or symbolism of death to conduct their ritae, making graveyards, morgues, and even slaughterhouses dangerous places to linger on nights of astrological importance. Corpses, ghosts, and the walking dead are regular fixtures of their ritae, as either observers or sacrifices.

### CONTRITION RITAE

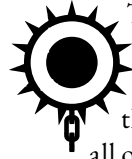
Reapers have no time for disloyalty and are quick to punish any packmate who displays cowardice

or sympathy for the enemy. Their understandings of faith are often remarkably academic and Priests often engage in esoteric or metaphysical lines of questioning when administering methods of spiritual correction. Ritual re-burial, daysleep with the remains of one's victims, and even being forced to carry a growing reliquary all have functions of contrition.

### HUNTING RITAE

Reapers understand they must feed on life, but it is death they wish to command. Packs on this path have desecrated burial sites, hospitals, and battlefields to feast on the blood of the recently deceased or the soon to expire. A few Reapers even claim they can draw sustenance from ghosts and subsist on blood stolen from dreams.

## The Path of Power and the Inner Voice



The Path of Power and the Inner Voice attracts Cainites of singular focus and ambition. Although they recognize that the Black Hand must triumph over all other concerns, they also believe that the Blood of Caine has given them the power and the right to enact their will upon the world. Ignoblis Ritae for this Path thus often takes the form of tests of mettle, trials of endurance, and unifying competitions.

Packs that follow this Path understand that power creates authority and that only the powerful can command their respect and loyalty. While this might sound like a recipe for endless brinkmanship and infighting within a pack of vampires, the opposite is most often the case. Uhlans frequently test and gauge each other for weakness, but they rarely allow such trials to exceed their control.



Between their common purpose and the observance of Ritae, contests of dominance and leadership in such packs are usually decided without combat. The strong give way to the weak, and the weak have the chance to grow strong. When no mediation is possible then an Ignoblis variant of Monomacy may settle the affair, though few Unifier Priests would allow such contests to result in Final Death.

Unsurprisingly, turnover can be high for Priests of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice. Weak Priests do not last long in Uhlan Packs, and when one falls it's not uncommon for the pack to destroy several replacements before someone suitable takes the reins.

**Symbols:** Wolves, dogs, rods and scepters, riding crops, spiked collars

#### **COMMON RITAE**

Uhlans are ever aware of their status in the pack and their Priests will often test and challenge them to prove themselves worthy of greater responsibility. Often these Ritae will take the form of tests of will or cunning against a supernatural enemy, such as successfully shadowing an Anarch gang or gaining a Camarilla vampire's trust. When it comes to mortals, Uhlans think of them as cattle or tools, and occasionally use them in their ritae for those purposes, such as sharing a victim to open a ritual of trial by ordeal.

#### **CONTRITION RITAE**

Those on the Path of Power and the Inner Voice do not believe in poetic justice and usually dispatch transgressors with the most efficient means at hands. Packmates who can be corrected often perform menial tasks and distasteful duties until they again prove themselves worthy in the pack's eyes. (See "Cleaner" on p. 88.) Since mortals are held in such low regard by Uhlans, managing and caring for the pack's ghouls or herd is often reserved for packmates who have lost face. Through service to the pack, they may regain the right to pursue their own ambitions again.

#### **HUNTING RITAE**

Unlike many other packs, Uhlan packs often see the value in keeping a larder of blood dolls and other pliable mortals. When they must travel, such packs will often slaughter their human cattle with a Blood Feast as few have the resources or inclination to see to their transportation. Usually the lowliest member of the pack is given the task of maintaining the pack's access to this blood supply. New recruits may receive the dubious honor of being ritually consecrated as the pack's "Rector," a responsibility they might find difficulty eluding until they've proven themselves to the rest of the pack. ■



Let me tell you something, there's this one bunch of licks that comes creeping into town every few months and I can't figure out what they're up to but I can damn well tell you that it's no good.

Mostly I keep to myself, mostly, because I don't want to stir up nothin'. You can have your prince or baron or grand high padishah, but that's none of my business on account of I mostly keep to myself.

But these licks, these licks ain't that. Only reason I know they're like us if you take my meaning is that I saw 'em once, and they knocked this old guy down - he was just keeping to hisself, and I watched the juice come out of him and pour itself into them. It was the damndest thing, no biting, no nothing, just whomp and old grandpa's on his ass and then next thing he's a fountain and they're all sounding like a dog outside on a hot day that's been let in to have a drink.

After that, though, after that it's worse because clean as it was the way they ended this old man, they opened him up, broke him up like a pomegranate for whatever of the stuff was still inside and their boss lady dipped a finger into his guts and wrote some kind of devil-language on all their heads.

Made no damn sense! All clean to make a meal like that and then dirty the tablecloth afterward, if you take my meaning. One of 'em saw me, hell if I know how because I was working the trick, but he looked right through it and he says to me, he says

CLICKCLICKCLICKLCLICKCLICKCLICKCLICKLCLICKCLICK

Not even talking but obviously meaning something he wants understood but then I figured it wasn't me he was talking to and I bugged out of there, you can be damn well sure. Sounded like a frog in the summer, or maybe one of those weird bugs they get in the trees in the South.

Every couple of months I know they come back, but I don't watch them anymore. I don't want anything ta do with that. I make sure to know when they get here and then I go stay down near Papa's for a few weeks, give 'em time to do what they're doing and go back to wherever.

I figure if someone knows they're here, they might think I told someone they're here, and they might come lookin'.

I don't want anything ta do with that. Mostly I keep to myself.



## *Chapter Three:*

# BURN BRIGHTLY



*No man remains quite what he was when he recognizes himself.*

– THOMAS MANN

In the Final Nights, the Sabbat is at once an unpredictable hive of clashing orthodoxies and a terrible, relentless monolith. The apocalyptic Gehenna War has crippled its former leadership structure and robbed it of its most potent elders. Almost the entirety of the Black Hand's former domains have been seized by rival sects, even as the Second Inquisition harries the Sword of Caine at all turns. Tonight, the Sabbat is smaller than it has been since its foundation, fighting a desperate war against enemy sects, mortal hunters, and the Antediluvians themselves.

All of which means tonight's Sabbat has nothing left to lose.

### Anatomy of a Death Cult

As the Gehenna War rages, after the ruinous events of the Second Inquisition have rendered the sect desperate, what's left of the Sabbat generally operates into two informal modalities: the waging of holy war, and a scorched-earth campaign of subversion. Or as many Cainites would describe it, hot war and cold war.

The Cainites in ongoing, active conflict – the hot war – generally comprise the larger of the two factions and consists of those Sabbat who have chosen to fling themselves into the violence at the active front of the Gehenna War. Mostly, these Sabbat have abandoned the sect's domains of the last five centuries to travel to the Middle East, Russia, South America, or other Gehenna hotspots around the world in a last-ditch effort to defeat the Antediluvians before they can arise and claim the full measure of their power. Their situation is dire and their cause perhaps doomed, but if nothing else, at least they will face final death gloriously in the service of Caine.

The Cainites prosecuting the cold war are those Sabbat who operate away from the war front, which is almost always in domains claimed by Kindred of other sects. These Cainites focus on infiltrating and undermining the most powerful pawns of the Antediluvians: the Camarilla, the Ashirra, and the Anarchs. By weakening the domains of the rival sects, the Sword of Caine aims to deprive the Antediluvians of their most useful tools.

From the outside, the distinction is largely moot. The Black Hand is the Black Hand, and its vampires



want to diablerize you and destroy your haven so don't give them an inch or they'll burn down the whole fucking mile.

Known to those within, though, is that the Sabbat is a decentralized resistance effort, and subject to rivalries among not only the Paths of Enlightenment but also the way it fights the Gehenna War. Packs may move back and forth to and from the front, and may switch modalities any number of times, and it's all incomprehensible to anyone not of the sect, which is why the Sabbat seems to have a hive mentality to outside onlookers. No one else reliably knows how to divine what they're doing or how they're fighting the war. That's part of what makes them so fearful, so alien – their unsympathetic urges and unpredictable strategies make them wholly other.



**Analysis:** Subject has been observed at security checkpoints in Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Italy, Spain, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru, all within the past 17 months.

## Image Is Everything

Those fighting the hot war often envision themselves as an army, while those prosecuting the cold war see themselves more as a subversive revolutionary movement, and neither modality heeds a central authority. In both cases, the pack model still prevails, and Pack Priests may defer to the wisdom of Bishops and Archbishops (and often be dependent on their materiel support), or may operate on their own independently.

Consequently, most packs function autonomously, whether as hot-war kill squads or cold-war sabotage cells, and many are essentially personality cults built around the Pack Priest's vision for how best to pursue their Path of Enlightenment and the Gehenna War. Whether blood-starved and tracking

an elder to their haven in the Carpathians or selling guns to Anarchs in Chicago, it's all working toward the same end.

When Cainites from outside the sect contemplate the dangers of the Sabbat, it's often the cold war they imagine and fear. The hot war happens in isolated locales, with Black Hand Cainites bringing hell to remote points of undead interest where the Masquerade doesn't matter and even less does any Kindred's claim to domain.

The cold war, then, can be everywhere and nowhere. Its tendrils can dig into the foundations of the sturdiest of Camarilla edifices and sinister Anarch backwaters. Its techniques range from Masquerade-smashing violence in Detroit to temptation and degradation in Milan to esoteric magical practices that baffle and frighten even the most erudite Tremere.

## Strange Bedfellows

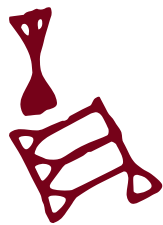
Of course, while tension and rivalry may emerge between the hot- and cold-war Cainites, both are part of the same fanatical sect, and some overlap is to be expected. Most notably, when the architect of a cold-war destabilization effort is ready to topple an enemy domain, a Priest or Bishop will declare that the time has come for a Crusade. In this context, "Crusade" refers to an all-out attack that is preceded by a massive surge on shovelhead parties to provide as many shock troops as possible for the final battle (see "Sabbat Domains" on p. 105).

If the Crusade succeeds, those neonates who survive and earn the status of True Sabbat rarely stay in the conquered territory. Most pursue the momentum and strike out for the front lines of the Gehenna War, but some few remain and adopt cold-war tactics, or target some other domain to undermine.

As regards the hot war, its tactics are fairly straightforward – kill the enemy and consume their heartsblood! Away from overt sites of conflict, though, it's impossible to predict the tactics a cold-war cell might use to undermine a Camarilla or

Anarch domain. Each pack is unique, a function of the personalities of its members and the Paths they follow.

- A pack devoted to the Path of Caine infiltrates Warsaw in secret to scout out those Cainites of the most desirable Blood and target them for diablerie, while a fellow pack seeks out and recovers artifacts dating back to the First City that hot war allies use to bring low the Prince of Vilnius.
- A pack devoted to the Path of Cathari tears through New York City in an orgy of mindless violence, with no goal except satiating their most decadent desires, and their bloody games shatter the Masquerade – so much the better. A fellow pack infiltrates the city to radicalize its malcontents, at once to recruit new ranks and harry the repair of the Masquerade.
- A pack whose members follow the Path of Power and the Inner Voice might use techniques either subtle or gross. Such a pack might infiltrate the domain with the goal of usurping its existing power structures... or it might roar into town on a fleet of motorcycles, looking for mortals it can shovelhead in order to bolster its own numbers.
- A pack that follows the Path of Death and the Soul, its presence unobserved in the Panteón de Dolores, lays a trap, and the reason all of those graves have mysteriously been exhumed becomes frighteningly clear.



# Antitribu

*What clan do I belong to? The clan that's about to drink you dry.*

– CHOPSHOP, FOLLOWER OF THE PATH OF CATHARI

From the Sabbat perspective, clan is an explicit legacy of the influence of the Antediluvians. Without Antediluvians, there are no clans, and Sabbat vampires aim to negate their connections to their despised progenitors.

With more nuance, different Antediluvians would have yielded different clans, which perhaps would not have yielded the Eternal Struggle that makes the Gehenna War necessary, but that's moot. The Black Hand fosters an environment in which an individual's clan is rarely acknowledged and never celebrated. Even for the visibly obvious Sabbat Nosferatu, other Sabbat *just don't care* about the distinction.

Where members of other sects may consider themselves in terms of clan, Sabbat members almost always consider themselves vampires first, Sabbat second, and followers of their own particular Path third. Clan almost never matters to their self-image. Thus, the philosophy of *antitribu*, or “anti-clans.” On those rare occasions when lineage comes into question, Sabbat append the word *antitribu* when they name clans, acknowledging the limited extent of its importance. For example, Archbishop Lucita of Madrid is Lasombra *antitribu* and Sascha Vykos, the martyr of Caine, is Tzimisce *antitribu*.

This attitude aids the suppression of individual identity among Sabbat and helps the sect build a notion of collective accomplishment. Brothers and sisters in Caine, the Sabbat has no need for internal social constructs that sow division. The idea of *antitribu* is also part of what makes the Sword of Caine so alien to Kindred outside the sect. They find the Sabbat “hive” unrelatable, with little sense of self and none of lineage.

Of course, Sabbat will eagerly exploit rivals' banes (whether inside the sect or without) or credit aptitude with certain Disciplines over others. As much as they would prefer it not to be true, these are undeniable properties of the Blood.

In social situations involving the Sabbat and other sects, Cainites make no effort to hide the derision they have for clans, lineage, and any sort of expressed pride or identity that accompanies them. They spit on the suggestion of fealty to such wretched origins; they curse the despicable “families” that emerged from founders who turned their backs on the Dark Father. Black Hand converts from other sects may react with especial vitriol, to make a point of having turned away from what they once were – often as much to convince themselves of the correctness of their choice as any actual antipathy for clans – until an adopted Path relieves them of any lingering doubt, of course.

Unsurprisingly, this often makes it difficult for Sabbat vampires to hide among other sects. The cultural differences are often so great that would-be Black Hand infiltrators simply don't understand the weight of clans on the society of the Ivory Tower. The Anarchs are generally less concerned with clan lineage, and the Anarchs are especially at risk of harboring Sabbat in their midst. Obviously, that's one of the reasons the sect is so vulnerable to the Black Hand, compared to the lineage-obsessed Camarilla.

Which isn't to say that it's immediately obvious that an interloper is Sabbat (especially among creatures of such strange predilections as vampires). Rather, the subtle cues and prompts that other sects' Kindred respond to in certain ways are absent among Sabbat, creating an almost uncanny valley when matters of clan arise.

## Overwriting the Individual

From the moment an individual joins the Sabbat, the sect devotes effort to minimizing that sense of “individual.” The sect is all, the Gehenna War needs fighting, destroying the Antediluvians is the only thing that matters. Insulated from the politics that characterize many other sects, Sabbat vampires lack context. The social interactions upon which other sects are built are very different for the Sabbat, which exists in a constant state of war on the world. Other vampires don’t relate to them, let alone mortals.

“Shovelheading” is often the first step in this process, for the majority of Cainites who come to the sect in that manner. The first in a series of ongoing traumas, shovelheading frames the vampire’s existence as a matter of ongoing tests of survival, a survival threatened by ancient blood gods who must be destroyed before they consume everyone.

Even those who are Embraced traditionally don’t have an easy time of it. These neonates are subsequently bullied into submission, repeatedly told that, despite any status their sire may have, they’re nothing without the sect. They are their sire’s chattel; their sire is the Sabbat’s in turn. This usually becomes abundantly clear the more the fledgling progresses along the Path their Sire has chosen for them.

Regardless of how they become vampires, Sabbat don’t dwell on the matter of clan. Harnessing one’s mind to the Beast or merging the two into a single whole, which is the function of the Paths, takes precedence over any recitation of who’s sire’s sire did what when. The Sword of Caine has more immediate needs than such pompous self-aggrandizing.

## Cultivating Conformity

As a result, the Sabbat resembles little so much as a regional cult. Paths very quickly fulfill their own prophecy in this regard: If a leader fails, it’s because they just didn’t have what it takes, thereby justifying their diablerie. If the pack tore down its leader and

replaced them, it’s because they were predestined by the quality of their Blood.

With adaptable local titles and hierarchies, rank-and-file Cainites quickly learn to seek authoritative direction. Most often this comes from the Pack Priest, each Sabbat coterie’s spiritual leader in matters related to both Paths of Enlightenment and nightly affairs.

Higher-ranking Sabbat also carry authority, instructing the Pack Priests on matters of sect policy. That hierarchy is mysterious and unknown in many cases, however, and any authority outside the domain or region might even be fabricated. Look to the Bishop or Archbishop to guide the Priest, and beyond that, who can say with any confidence?

Also serving to unite the sect in its common fanaticism are the ritae. Part sectarian rallies, part hazing rituals, the ritae exist to focus Sabbat attention on the matters sect leaders find valuable. Ritae include pledges of loyalty to Caine and the Black Hand – and to one’s own pack. Ritae also include opportunities for wild Cainites to demonstrate their prowess, dare themselves to take risks, and celebrate their status as vampires. (For more information on Sabbat Ritae, see p. 55)

Chillingly, it all works. The combination of accelerationism and righteous crusade provides what certain vampires need to give them purpose and a wicked face for the enemy. In centuries-long holy war, the cause is everything, and the individual is nothing more than a tool to accomplish it.’



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### POSTHUMANISM AND THE SWORD OF CAINE

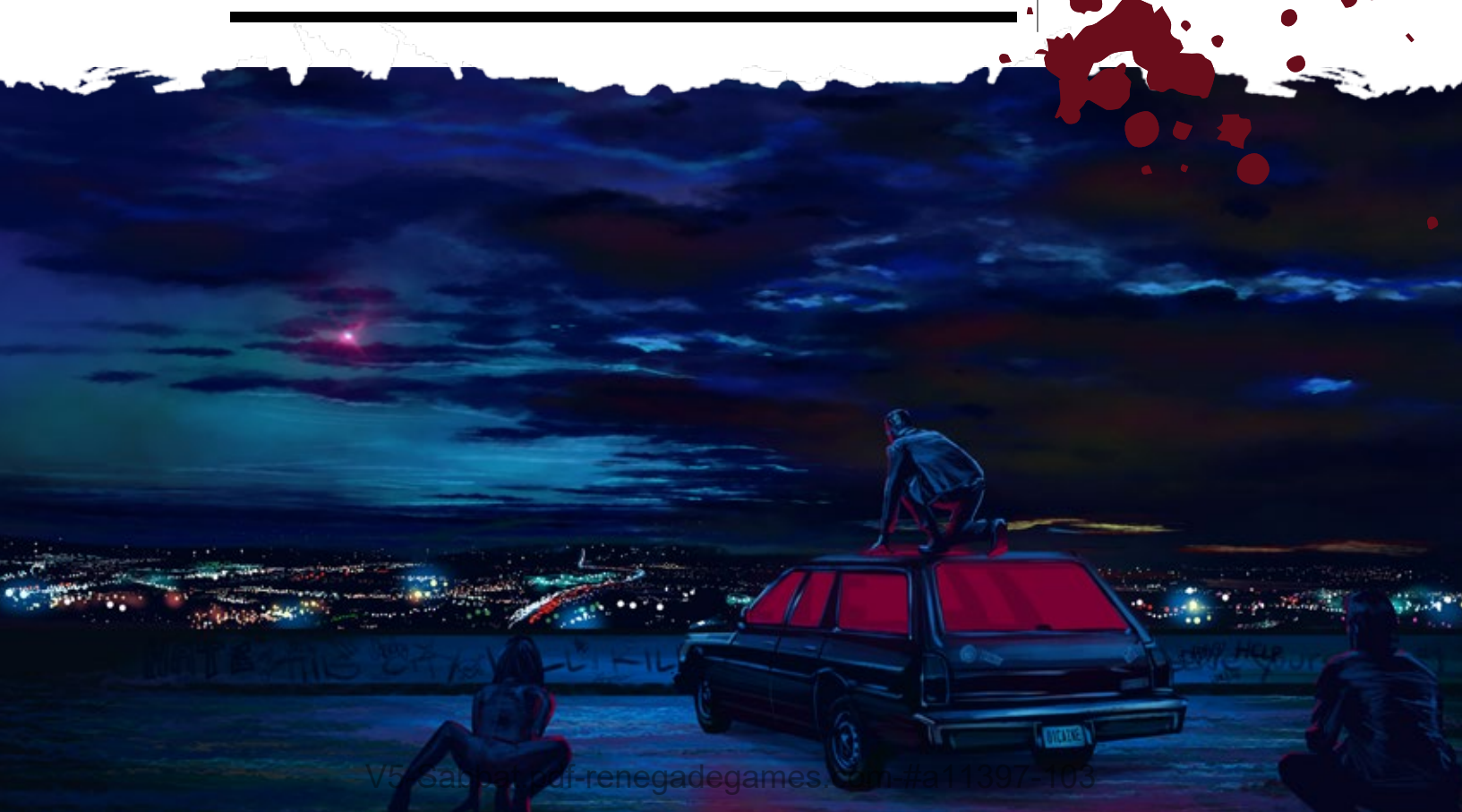
Another reason for the sect's indifference to clan affiliation arises from its elevation of Caine from "semi-mythical patriarch" to the status of "conquering blood-god," and when younger Sabbat identify as members of the Black Hand, it's the hand of Caine to which they refer. The four most recognized Paths that dominate the sect at present disagree on numerous philosophical points, but they are united in their beliefs about the absolute inferiority of mortals to the childer of Caine.

To say a Sabbat looks at the kine as a farmer looks at his cows is inaccurate, because at least the farmers must tend to their herds and see that the cattle live and remain healthy until it's time for the slaughter. It is more accurate to compare the Sabbat to a shiver of sharks making its way through a prosperous reef. If the sharks grow hungry – and sharks are always hungry – they simply choose adequate prey, devour the edible bits, and let the savaged remains sink to the bottom.

In this context, Sabbat philosophy is inherently posthuman. The Embrace is the mechanism by which prey are elevated into apex predators. Such an elevation does nothing to affect the predator-prey relationship save to reassign which of the two roles that a new inductee will play.

For this reason, what appears as wanton cruelty toward the kine is an essential part of Sabbat existence. When two rival packs agree to have a spot of fun by playing rugby with some mortal's severed head as the ball, it's not an example of Cainites acting the part of monstrous edgelords. Well, it's not just that. It is also a reification of a central part of Sabbat philosophy: the idea that mortals simply don't matter at all except for when they provide some transitory benefit to their betters.

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## Catechism: Sabbat Objectives

To those vampires outside the Sabbat, the sect is as mystifying as it is terrifying. The Black Hand has never been particularly interested in compromise with other sects. Thus, most Camarilla and Anarch Kindred might be forgiven for wondering about the Sabbat's agenda. "What do they really want?"

To oversimplify, what the Sabbat wants is freedom: complete and total freedom.

This obsessive desire for total personal freedom at the expense of every other possible consideration starts (and arguably ends) with the Antediluvians. Sabbat dogma holds that not only are the Antediluvians real, they are gods in every way that matters. Worse, they are not loving deities, but rather cannibal blood gods who see all lesser Cainites as food and nothing more. That this means the Antediluvians look upon the Sabbat in exactly the same way that much of the sect regards mortals is an irony best left unacknowledged. In any case, if the Antediluvians rise and cannot be stopped, they will exterminate all Cainites, if not all life, from this world. When one is tasked with killing an entire pantheon of gods, anything less than total devotion and total ruthlessness is a luxury.

This pathological fear and hatred of the Antediluvians trickles down into every other aspect of a Sabbat's existence. The danger posed by the Antediluvians is so great and so transparently obvious that, in the mind of a Sabbat, refusing to take up arms against isn't cowardice, it's complicity. No, the refusal of the Camarilla, the Anarchs, and all vampires outside the Sabbat to act against the Third Generation can at best be complicity in ignorance or alliance in malice, a willful desire to aid the Antediluvians. Whether through Anarch apathy or so many Camarilla vampires' stratagem of pretending the Antediluvians don't exist, thus do these "Kindred" make pawns of themselves.



## Ideological Enmity

It's complicated. In general "the Sabbat," as a whole, doesn't say or do anything specific. Made up as it is of a variety of nigh-fanatical outlooks, "the Sabbat" is more of a container of zealotry than it is a formal sect with consistent dogma.

In general, however, almost all Sabbat share certain perspectives.

Overall, the Cainites of the Sabbat seek the subordination or destruction of the Camarilla because its fundamental nature is that of a controlling, authoritarian force bent on hiding the depravities of the Antediluvians. Therefore, fundamentally an enemy.

The Black Hand's relationship with the Anarchs is more complex. In many Anarchs, they find a sympathetic take on the neofeudal tyranny of the

Camarilla, even if their respective perceptions of the Ivory Tower's motivations differ. Few Anarchs see the world in the eschatological context the Sabbat does, however.

These differences are somewhat fluid: The Sabbat sees fallow ground for recruitment among the Anarchs, and no few disillusioned Sabbat adopt an Anarch outlook when the constant cultic violence of the Black Hand exacts its toll on them. Obviously, no formal census exists, but anecdotal numbers bear out the "estranged siblings" outlook on Sabbat-Anarch relations. No few Anarchs in LA were previously Sabbat who got the fuck out of Tijuana when the Black Hand threw itself into the Gehenna War; the Anarchs of Tangier have seen firsthand the servants of the Ancients and many have converted to the Black Hand on the spot.

In this context, the Black Hand wishes to destroy rival sects for their own good. At the very least, their leadership must be ripped out, root and stem. Only then will younger Kindred recognize the rightness of the Sabbat's cause, and the urgent reality of the Gehenna War.

With that basic principle understood, the rest of the Sabbat's agenda becomes clear. The Masquerade must eventually be torn down because it is a shield for the Antediluvians. Rival sects must be torn down because they are instruments of the Antediluvians. Every system of control used by both Kindred and kine must be torn down because, directly or indirectly, they all support the perfidious Ancients.

The enemy is everywhere, and its tools and weapons are always at the ready. Only when all else is ash will the Antediluvians stand naked, defenseless, and ripe for their earned destruction.

Caine and Abel were brothers. Caine killed his brother, most likely as a sacrifice to God. And God rewarded Caine for that bountiful sacrifice by transforming him into a higher being with god like powers of his own. God then set him to rule over the kine and to prey upon the faithful so that they would be more fervent in their devotion to God out of their fear of Caine's hunger. Caine then created three children, as was his right as patriarch of the vampire kind. But the Second Generation disobeyed Caine's edict and created children of their own, the Third Generation. The Third Generation, Embraced as they were in an act of disobedience, became jealous of Caine's perfected state and sought to emulate it by destroying and consuming their sires, a crime for which Caine punished the Third Generation and all of their descendants. By destroying the false gods of the Third Generation, the Black Hand of Caine will prove their devotion and their worthiness of the Dark Father's blessings. Thereafter they will be rewarded by becoming perfected themselves as Caine was and is.

# Path Realities

## Adopting a Path

The Priest responsible for the vampire's understanding of their Path brings them into a group of Cainites also following that Path: the pack. Packs are devoted not only to one specific Path of Enlightenment, but also to some larger purpose, as mandated by a Bishop, Archbishop, or other leading figure. Some are soldiers in the Gehenna War, some are body-snatchers responsible for bolstering the sect's ranks, some undermine the other sects' claims to domain, and so on, according to the Sabbat's interests in the region the pack calls its own.

Whatever the case, the pack's function is complemented by its Path; the outlook shapes how the pack undertakes its responsibilities. (Of course, for some packs, they are their own authority, and the devil take any Black Hand bigshot who tries to order them around. Or Sabbat influence in the area has collapsed, leaving a pack without any leadership other than its own ambition.)

Which is to say, the pack is the Path and the Path is the pack. Cainites who share packs are of like mind, even disturbingly so, as the sect's reputation as a hive consciousness has grown. While this isn't literally true, none could argue that pack unity isn't the Sabbat's greatest strength. Few who stumble into the domain of fanatical Albigensian would doubt their commitment to their foul purposes, for example.

The Path of Enlightenment replaces Humanity for the Sabbat. It shapes the way the Beast holds sway over the Cainite, unlike Humanity, which is a way of denying the Beast or keeping it in check. To the Sabbat way of thinking, the Beast is part of being a vampire, a relationship with oneself that must be cultivated, not subjugated. Every vampire upholding a Path of Enlightenment is a student of its ways and, for better or worse, tethered to the Beast. Where goes the Beast, goes the Cainite.

To outside perspectives, this is an alien way of thinking, and this comes across in how oth-

ers relate to the Sabbat. For mortals and vampires who preserve their Humanity, Sabbat vampires are impossible to relate to. One might as well attempt to empathize with a shark.

To the Sabbat mind, though, empathizing with prey makes little sense. At best they're cattle. At worst, they're pretending to be cattle so they don't accidentally feel the power they've been granted.

Each Path has a distinct worldview and a sense for the vampire's place in it. What they all have in common, though, is an understanding that the Beast resides within each vampire. Each Path, then, could be described as a way for each vampire to bind themselves to their Beast. It colors every aspect of the Cainite's outlook, from the way they interact with each other to the way they see themselves, as well as the regard they have for anything "less" than a bloodthirsty childe of the Dark Father.

## Changing Paths

It is possible, though exceedingly rare, for Sabbat to change their Path of Enlightenment after having been inculcated into one. The risk is obvious: The Cainite must again be broken down to the brink of wassail and then have one of the epiphanies of the new Path anchor them to self-control. It's a process few accomplished vampires would court, but for those who see more potential in another Path, changing the nature of one's monstrosity may offer them a chance at apotheosis.

## Leaving Paths

The notion of leaving Paths entirely provokes revulsion from the Sabbat. After all, no True Sabbat would turn their back on the sect to adopt such a feeble attitude of cowering among mortals and pretending to hold their values dear. Does the wolf secretly yearn to live as a swine? Risible.

Doing so is, not to put too fine a point on it, excruciating. Not only do all of the perils for changing Paths apply, but the re-adoption of mortal mores often proves irreconcilable for Cainites, who have spent massive amounts of emotional and psychic



effort to suborn them in the first place. It is exceedingly likely that most attempts (of which there are likely an exceedingly small number in the first place) simply fail, leaving the Cainite a wight or... worse.

To be sure, the Sabbat has very little interest in “rehabilitating” Path members, as Paths are a defining characteristic of sect allegiance. Other sects are themselves often too paranoid about turncoats, deep-cover spies, hidden double-agents, and other perils of attempting to repatriate one-time Sabbat to place any faith in deprogramming. There’s no silver-bullet methodology or proven curriculum by which to make one’s way back from the terrors of the Paths.

Which isn’t to say it can’t happen, just that it’s a lonely and dangerous road. Those who do succeed are themselves anomalies, individual cases. Leaving a Path and returning to the morality of Humanity may happen with the assistance of a mentor or while seeking atonement through Golconda – but whatever form it takes, each journey is unique, and uncertain to succeed.

Speculation among the Sword of Caine is rampant as regards the exodus of Lasombra from the sect. Some argue that many Lasombra upheld “Humanity-adjacent” Paths such as the Path of Honorable Accord, which weren’t really in line with Sabbat attitudes anyway, so their self-aggrandized “dark chivalries” didn’t actually have far to travel in order to realign with Humanity. Other Cainites, as with so many Sabbat perspectives, see the talons of the Antediluvians at work, suggesting that Lasombra leadership of the sect was a centuries-long ruse orchestrated by the Ancients to leave the Sword of Caine abandoned as the Gehenna War gained momentum. Surely such hysteria is ill-founded – surely – but desperate times yield desperate explanations from those casting about for something to believe in.

## Sabbat Titles

In the modern nights, the Sabbat has splintered, with conflicts scattered worldwide and a decentralized approach to the Eternal Struggle. What is

true on pain of death in one Black Hand territory might be entirely unheard of in another. Even those concepts that are universal to the sect are subject to regional and individual interpretation, such as ritae and Paths of Enlightenment. Included in these locational variations are the leadership structures and titles of the Sword of Caine.

As with its membership, the Sabbat has hollowed out the middle of its hierarchy somewhat. It has a few high-ranking titles and literally no mid-tier titles that outrank its lowest tiers. Some of this is simply practical reality: In a sect as decentralized and fractious as the Sabbat, there’s no such thing as middle managers and there’s no real orthodoxy for a middle rank to sustain. The highest ranks decide what they will and the rank and file either fight those battles or they don’t. With the Black Hand’s small size and extremely high rate of final death, what happens on the war front is the shape of the sect. On overview, the sect consists of a number of elders, a remarkable paucity of ancillae, and a massive proportion of fledglings among the shovel-heads.

## Regent

The nature of many vampire institutions implies a top-down organization. From neofeudal Camarilla Princes to streetwise Anarch Barons, the individual figure evokes a supreme authority for that domain, or at least a no-bullshit, buck-stops-here attitude, even if the reality is much more nuanced. However, this is actually true of the hollowed-out hierarchy of the Sabbat, to an extent. Unlike the other major sects, the Black Hand has a single, sectwide leader, known as the Regent.

In practice, it’s not that simple, because among the Damned what ever is? Indeed, it is currently unknown who the Regent of the Sabbat is, or where they may be found.

In fact, many suspect that the Sabbat has no current Regent, that the guerrilla nature of the Gehenna War is best fought without a ponderous top-down hierarchy. Others opine that the absence of a single commanding figure illustrates the hive mentality of the Sword of Caine, or that it’s not a

unified sect fighting a deluded crusade but rather a confederation of wild-eyed, malevolent cults. Especially among young Sabbat, the lack of a Regent is all they've ever known – which argues that the Sabbat doesn't need a Regent, Pope, Vizier, or anything resembling such.

Whatever the case, if there is a Regent tonight, no one's telling who it is, and the Sabbat has plenty of momentum without them.

## Archbishop and Bishop

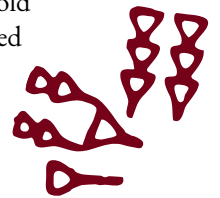
Although the Sabbat cares little for the notion of domain the way other sects do, it nonetheless sees a value in maintaining various territories for the sake of recruitment and for strategic fallback points. As well, each city claimed and held is one that the toadies of the other sects can't have for their own, which is its own reward.

Archbishops' and Bishops' primary responsibility is maintaining domains to best serve the Gehenna War effort. This takes a variety of forms, from providing materiel to maintaining knowledge repositories about what front-line fighters and scouts have found to providing safe haven for sabotage packs waging hit-and-run tactics on the war front or against rival domains. In this sense, domains claimed by Bishops and Archbishops may be "fall-back domains" or places where convocations of Necronomists research new rites to immobilize the pawns of the Antediluvians. For example, the fleshweld ghouls (see p. 44) were developed in a Necronomist's Carpathian Bishopric, and the one-time Archbishop of Mexico City assisted in the creation of what are tonight known as the Shackled (see p. 43).

Some amount of spiritual leadership resides with Bishops and Archbishops, if not outright authority. Indeed, what Cainite culture exists in a city often takes on a timber informed by that Bishop or Archbishop's Path. Authoritarian violence may characterize the domain of a Bishop who observes the Path of Power and the Inner Voice while a city's sprawling cemeteries and opulent mausoleums may be points of macabre reverence for a Necronomist Archbishop. Unsurprisingly, these locales may be-

come almost schools of thought for Sabbat of those Paths, and not always simpatico domains for those of other perspectives.

As with many Sabbat distinctions, the difference between the roles can be quarreled over bloodily, but a Bishop usually holds a single domain and an Archbishop holds multiple domains or one particularly important domain. In this sense, the role is conceptually similar to that of Prince or Baron: the most eminent Cainite in the domain who is regarded as its figurehead. Concomitant with the claim of the domain, of course, is the ability to hold it, and with no few external enemies and keen-eyed followers of various power-hungry Paths, those Cainites who have the ability to maintain praxis often prove to be terrifyingly competent.



### NOTABLE BISHOPS AND ARCHBISHOPS

**Lucita de Aragón (Path of Night):** Madrid is a Camarilla court. Or, rather, Madrid is a contested domain that would otherwise be a Camarilla court but for the presence of Archbishop Lucita de Aragón, whose pack is said to be a hundred strong, and who still wears her living name in mockery of Camarilla pride and mortal fear. Complicating matters, certain noteworthy Kindred claim that Lucita has met the final death – but if that's true, who are her packmates following? The Path of Night appears to be a variant of the Path of Cathari, and Lucita its preeminent adherent.

**The Doctor (Path of Power and the Inner Voice):** Once the Bishop of Atlanta, Julius Sutphen was one of the earliest Sabbat to rally to the Gehenna War. As part of a triumvirate of Bishops holding the domain of Belgrade, The Doctor is instrumental to moving Cainites through that domain to the war front using his medical credentials. Since taking up his title in Belgrade, he has also become regarded as a wise voice among followers of the Path of Power and the Inner Voice.

**Cicatríz (Path of Caine):** The Bishop of Tijuana is an accomplished commander in the Gehenna War, with an undead career of having personally discov-



ered an elder's tomb. Artifacts found in that grave have exposed the resting places of subsequent elders from the pre-Columbian era. Under Cicatriz's leadership, the Tijuana domain has become renowned for its Monomacy duels, almost an "officer's school" from which Pack Priests emerge as exemplars of the Path of Caine, their Blood made more puissant by diablerie.

### Pack Priest

It often surprises outsiders to learn about the existential side of the Sabbat, to realize that the sect isn't just about monstrosity and violence and brutality against mortals. Certainly, this is true of the Sabbat, but the Black Hand has philosophical reasons for doing what it does, and methods for dealing with the Curse of Caine guided by devotion to the Paths of Enlightenment. Foremost in realizing this charge is the role of the Pack Priest.

In most packs, all of the Cainites belonging to

that pack follow the same Path of Enlightenment. A Priest serves as both the spiritual and tactical leader of individual Sabbat packs according to that Path's precepts. They are the voice that brings the Beast to heel, the officiant of rites that bind the pack together, and the sergeant who ministers to the pack's need for direction. Whether as a firebrand, inciting their packmates to feats of battlefield violence, or as a mentor, inspiring their packmates to rise and fight another night, the Priest's duty is the cornerstone of the Sabbat.

Priests appear in immense variety, often heavily influenced by their locale, in how they perform their function. Some Priests take their titles literally, treating their Paths and guidance as a religious leader would. Some take on an aspect of witches, coaxing a shrieking coven against their foes. They may be hard-bitten veterans of undead war, knowing how critical a Path is to preventing one's fellows from becoming ravening Wights. They may use

holy icons or cultural symbols to motivate their packs, or they may rely on old-fashioned blood-and-fire oratory.

#### NOTABLE PRIESTS

**Mokhtar Sahnoun (Path of Caine):** Let the other packs bellow and brawl – Mokhtar’s pack knows the value of logistics. With his sights set on the turbulent city of Marseille, Mokhtar has been quietly streaming a number of packs into the south of France. So far Mokhtar’s intention seems not to be a violent coup of praxis, but to deny Marseille as a point of ingress to non-Sabbat who would move through Western Europe. This is profoundly dangerous territory for Cainites, as France’s DGSE considers Marseille to have been purged of vampiric presence, but the city has too much strategic value for that to long be true, and Mokhtar’s pack may well have an insurmountable first-mover advantage.

**Tadarida (Path of Death and the Soul):** A Necromist who specializes in the effects of Cainite vitae on living tissue, Tadarida and her pack often join other Sabbat packs into both hot- and cold-war situations. Her pack usually precedes a more substantial assault, confounding rival vampires by killing, kidnapping, or making stranger things happen to ghouls in their employ. In particular, Tadarida’s pack possesses a blood agent that can cause seizures in ghouls and mastery of a Ceremony that can age a ghoul to a brittle husk in minutes.

**Ballerino (Path of Cathari):** Ballerino and his troupe promise forbidden delectations to those who receive invitations to their pleasure-circus. Whether courting mortals, who mysteriously gain sexually transmitted diseases that pass through their blood to vampires who feed on them, or Kindred, who surrender to a torpor borne of languor after a



night of sensual bliss, Ballerino's pack masterfully ensnares its victims in traps of their own lust.

## True Sabbat, Brothers and Sisters in Caine

The title of True Sabbat belongs to all Cainites who have served their packs in some capacity and been thereafter honored with the rite acknowledging them as a member of the sect. It confers no actual rank, therefore, but its power is in the concept of belonging. True Sabbat are no longer probationary, and they're definitely a cut above tomorrow night's shovelheads, even if they are themselves last night's shovelheads. As shredded Humanity inexorably falls away, to be supplanted by a Path of Enlightenment, having the camaraderie of one's fellow accursed night-creatures is one of the inhuman "comforts" they come to appreciate. Monstrosity loves company, and damnation positively revels in it.

## Other Titles

In nights prior, the Sabbat had a much more substantial hierarchy of very formalized roles. Since the Second Inquisition has been so effective against the sect, and since the Gehenna War demands so much Cainite attention, however, many Cainites who had claimed these titles have gone missing leaving titles vacant and unfilled.

Some few members of the Sword of Caine are still known to use the following titles. Whether or not the now much more decentralized sect chooses to later appoint others to these titles, or if the Sabbat's new purpose means the sect has shed them entirely remains as yet unknown.

## CARDINALS

With the outbreak of the Gehenna War, those calling themselves Cardinals have ostensibly become the warlords of the Sword of Caine, counting among them various specialists from a number of different Paths and regional factions. A number of unconfirmed Cainites have also assumed the title of Cardinal, and these may or may not have formally been accorded these roles by Sabbat luminaries. In fact, it is probable that the ranks of the Cardinals have yielded to a bloody junta, with the more sublime duties of the title falling by the wayside as the war effort pushes the Damned into open conflict.

Those few Cardinals who remain and are recognized occasionally organize regional congregations of their Paths of Enlightenment. These may take a number of forms, from "mobile domains" of Path fundamentalists to training camps hastily established on the periphery of a Methuselah's supposed resting place, in preparation for a strike. Cardinal Scarab's pack marauding its way across Florida pre-



sents itself as a religious revival, for example, even though Cardinal Scarab herself has fewer than ten years under the night.

### PRISCUS

Every army needs its specialists and the Sabbat is no exception. While the majority of the sect is devoted to the war effort, the Prisci have emerged as a different aspect of the Black Hand. From spymasters organizing the infiltration of other sects to reconnaissance experts sneaking past the front lines to influential councilors with access to the Archbishops, the Prisci are often the minds backing the arm wielding the Sword of Caine. On their own terms Prisci are accomplished Cainites, and the title broadly signifies a recognized expertise. They may align themselves with a particular domain and advise its Bishops, or they may roam, bringing their talents and assets wherever they believe they are needed.

The Prisci are very often the primary sources of information and intelligence the sect gathers, and realize the sects's hatred for the Antediluvians in indirect ways. It may be a Priscus' efforts to form and supply a pack that discovers the crypt of a torpid elder beneath the Rio Negro outside Manaus or turns over a Camarilla fugitive to the wary Anarchs in Tangier, the better to keep the sects at each other's throats. The Tarantella Stylites of Argentina, a pack of scouts and spies, are led by a Priscus whose name none can remember after meeting her, only her title.

Prisci rarely have any specific responsibility or accountability, and typically no real geographical anchor, which sometimes results in the front-line soldiers fighting the Gehenna War having little respect for them. Truth be told, without the various specializations of the Prisci, the Sabbat would almost certainly be less effective, much more of a blunt instrument. While other positions of authority project a brutal Sabbat influence outward, the Prisci claw information and other resources inward.

### PALADIN OR TEMPLAR

At one time, these titles belonged to the personal retinues of esteemed Sabbat. Tonight, the title has

greatly fallen out of use, as the sect holds too few domains to recognize these titles sectwide anymore. Enterprising Sabbat occasionally claim this title for themselves, whether as a pack identity ("The Southside Templars") or as a personal moniker ("Euryale, Death's Paladin"). In almost every case, this is done by Sabbat who had been Embraced before the Beckoning and the Gehenna War, to demand respect and bolster a reputation of seniority. Such habits are inconsistently effective, especially among the droves of new Sabbat who don't have any idea what a Paladin is supposed to be.

### DUCTUS

The responsibilities of pack leadership were once split between the Pack Priest, who tended to the spiritual needs of the pack, and the ductus, who was its tactical leader. With the urgency of the Gehenna War, however, which is itself a holy war, the distinction became one of little value. Tonight, ductus is used almost as derisive parlance for a Pack Priest of little spiritual rigor, though a few veteran pack leaders still use it to present a connotation of rank or experience.

## Pack Patterns

Members of successful Sabbat Packs fulfill a variety of roles and responsibilities, each according to their skills, abilities, or place in the internal pecking order. While not formalized to the extent of sect titles, these roles share enough similarities across different Packs and Paths for a pattern to be established.

The distribution of these roles varies significantly, depending on pack size, its Path, and its function if part of a larger force. Small packs often have members who serve multiple roles, while the Priest usually enjoys their choice or has their hands full with Priestly duties.

Packs that fail to take advantage of their members' affinities are usually short-lived, torn asunder by conflicting predilections, or disintegrating from sloppy logistics, but those that do emerge as well-oiled infernal machines.

## Warrior

The Sabbat stereotype, the warrior gets shit done. For a sect perpetually at war, warriors are the backbone of whatever operation the Pack undertakes. While pack members in other roles can surely hold their own in a fight, the warriors aim to triumph.

Being so common, the warrior role also displays the most variety. Apart from the Path of Death and the Soul, where some Packs eschew direct conflict or delegate violence to their creations, the Paths contribute to a cavalcade of savagery. From crazed Cathari ravagers, to silent Noddist assassins, to posturing Uhlan brutes, each warrior brings a distinct type of viciousness to the fray. For most vampires outside the Sabbat, they are the first and last thing they see of the sect.

### IN STORIES:

When encountered, Sabbat in warrior roles are either on the warpath or set as guards of other Pack members or their haven. In either case they fight as fanatics – and probably to the final death, if there's something to be gained by it.

## Liaison

In the rare times that violence isn't the answer, many packs have someone to fall back on to do the talking. This isn't a role that just anyone can perform, as many Paths leave their adherents so detached from the world outside the Black Hand that they have a hard time not simply brutalizing every stranger, let alone establishing rapport.

Those Sabbat who do possess a gift for discourse can be ruthlessly proficient in the social arena. Unhampered by notions of reciprocity or empathy, they are masterful manipulators and liars, able to play Kindred and mortal alike like the devil does the fiddle.

Cathari and Unifier packs are most likely to have Cainites of this specialty among their ranks, with the former being expert tempters and the latter exhibiting commanding demeanors that leave little room for dissent.

### IN STORIES:

Liaisons are fighters like all Sabbat, but if encountered alone will usually not resort to violence if they believe they can bluff, fast talk, or seduce their way out of the situation. If they cannot gain the upper hand they will stall for time or try to escape if no backup is available.

## Scout

Effective Packs often spend months or years carefully surveying their upcoming theater of operation. From mapping out the lines of opposition in a hostile domain to disentangling influence networks to pinpointing enemy havens, the scout's responsibility can see them lurking behind enemy lines for months at a time.

Socially apt scouts may go undercover, posing as local Unbound or Anarchs, trading in gossip or just skirting the edges. Others stick to the shadows, on nightly stakeouts of prime hunting grounds, alert for any signs of Kindred activity, perched like gargoyles over points of interest. Those with a penchant for the arcane use more esoteric means, and scouts who also possess qualities of a liaison make for perfect radicalizers.

While this role often ends up as the duty of those at the bottom rung of the pack, it nevertheless demands a certain amount of trustworthiness, as the Cainite is expected to operate without regular observance of the *Vaulderie*. This can result in scouts feeling alienated from their packs, and going rogue or abandoning their duties entirely. Sometimes these deserters end up as autarkis or even defect if anyone can be bothered to bring them in from the cold, as it were.

### IN STORIES:

Often young, scouts are eager to prove themselves, and they rarely have their Pack to fall back on. This makes them prone to taking on bigger foes than they can handle if the opportunity presents itself. Scouts don't often run unless they can escape with something of value, as a scout who can't scout is likely torn apart by an unappreciative pack.







## Cleaner

Inevitably, things get messy and it's someone's job to take care of it. That's the cleaner. Duties range from scrubbing the scene of a massacre before the mortal authorities arrive to hunting the victim of a botched feeding to their home (and burning it down for good measure) to rounding up witnesses to a Rite that got out of hand.

Usually left to the youngest shovelheads of the pack, cleaner duty can also serve as hazing or as punishment. Some packs even rotate the duty, and no few Cathari are known to make debased sport of it.

Despite the ignominy of the task, packs blessed with a clever cleaner are not only able to cover their

tracks, but redirect them toward the opposition. This role is less common among Devourers and Unifiers, as both usually bully ghouls or as-yet-unproven recruits to deal with these inconveniences.

### IN STORIES:

If encountered, the cleaner has no time for this bullshit. If they risk being spotted by other vampires they are likely to lay low, cunningly waiting for an opportunity to pin the present mess on whomever's careless enough to step in it.

## Scholar

A rare few Sabbat vampires make themselves useful not through their ability to engage with others (living or dead) but their aptitude for research and learning. Depending on the goals of the Pack they

can be dedicated strategists relaying information to and coordinating an assault on an Elysium gathering, translators holed up in reeking bunkers poring over pre-Akkadian architectural designs, or Blood Sorcerers on call for wardings in hostile territory.

Rarely encountered on active duty, the scholar's role has myriad incarnations, from de-facto leader to a ridiculed Poindexter savant. Some Necronomist Packs consist of nothing but scholars, though they usually share other roles as well.

#### IN STORIES:

Kindred encountering Sabbat are more likely to run into the creations of scholars than the scholars themselves, either in the form of the rest of the pack acting on their intelligence or by falling into any number of traps or stratagems, supernatural or otherwise. If cornered, scholars tend to have machinations in place that yield them a quick final death, taking as many enemies as they can with them.

### Procurer

From pimps and fixers to smugglers and engineers, dedicated procurers are the closest thing the Sabbat has to logistics. Examples include honey-tongued Cathari dealers, snatch-and-grab Noddist plunderers, and despotic Unifier gang lieutenants. Only the Reapers can afford to ignore this job, and they often rely on servants or creations for most of their needs.

Since a procurer's "goods" are just as likely to need to breathe as sit quietly on store shelves, many procurers are also adept at dealing with mortals, as most packs understand the value of a being behind a locked door before the screaming starts.

#### IN STORIES:

Dealing with vessels and vendors, procurers are often in a position to make unlife difficult for Kindred wanting to minimize mortal involvement. If confronted, they have no problems sacrificing erstwhile goods to gain the upper hand, and being streetwise by necessity, they're usually one step ahead of anyone who decides to ignore collateral damage. ■





*Chapter Four:*

# THE GEHENNA WAR



*Satan's successes are the greatest when he appears  
with the name of God on his lips.*

— MAHATMA GANDHI

## A Brief and Dirty History of the Sabbat

**S**o far as anyone can remember, the Sabbat emerged from the fires of the (first) Inquisition. Thus, the grand irony of Second Inquisition-era hunters being the most successful against the Sabbat, of all the sects.

Prior to the Sabbat as a recognized sect, esbats of vampires — little more than localized cults, really — had adopted their own ways of dealing with the Beast. Before, or perhaps in parallel to the mutual understanding of *humanitas*, these dire broods did what they could to temper the urges of the Beast and codify an understanding of what vampires had become upon receiving the Embrace.

None of these early *esbats* had any sympathy for the mortals upon whom they fed. If nothing

else has remained consistent about the Black Hand throughout the intervening centuries, this vicious fact has.

## Blood and Fire

Early in the 13th century, the Catholic Church began the Albigensian Crusade with the goal of destroying a mortal heresy. But in the course of exterminating what is tonight a barely remembered mortal religious movement, the Church uncovered the truth of vampirism. Of course, legends of blood-sucking undead creatures had long been a part of every culture's folklore, but the reality of an entire hidden conspiracy of such creatures who secretly preyed upon flocks from the shadows was something else entirely.

The Church responded with the creation of the Inquisition — the “First” Inquisition, in light of modern developments — which the Pontiff charged

with rooting out and destroying vampires and other supernatural monsters wherever they might be found. And for a time, the Inquisition was very good at its job.

So good, in fact, that the Cainite elders of Europe were soon in a panic as a reactionary terror engulfed Europe and even the oldest and most powerful Kindred were dragged from their resting place

to meet the torch or the sun. In their desperation to survive, many elders sent out their own offspring to meet final death in their stead, using Blood Bonds and super-

natural powers to compel their own childer to fight the Inquisitors while the sires vanished into the shadows. Some elders even engaged in mass Embraces to protect them against the Inquisition, a precursor to the shovelhead tactics of the modern Sabbat. Neonate vampires of all clans met final death while their sires fled, hid, or called upon their mortal influences to survive.



## Anarchs Revolt

By the end of the 14th century, young vampires, incensed at their callous mistreatment and fearful of being sacrificed to the Inquisition, rebelled against their sires. These Anarchs, as they had been termed by the fearful elders, rebuked the self-serving customs of their sires. In what became known as the Anarch Revolt, childer destroyed their sires, drank themselves delirious on the heartsblood of elders, and plunged many domains into upheaval. Whatever local order had passed for Kindred society prior to the Inquisition teetered in the balance as the Anarchs rejected the ways of their sires. As domains burned, it may have been inquisitors or Anarchs who had hurled the torches — or both.

*The prevailing myth is that the Anarch Revolt is largely a European development, but that is not the case. Certainly, the Anarchs had thrown Europe into turmoil, but domains as far-flung as Kyiv, domains that had belonged to the Seljuks and before, and even the kingdom of Alodia, all witnessed a contemporaneous revolt.*

Elder attitudes regarding the Anarchs to be a mere annoyance changed precipitously when the foundations of the Blood Bond itself came under fire. Its precise origins have been lost, but the prevailing wisdom suggests that Blood Sorcery proved the foundation for Vaulderie, a ritual by which Kindred could shatter Blood Bonds. Whether it originated with the Tzimisce koldun of the Carpathian domains, in the sorcerous alembics of the Tremere, or from high Alamut no longer matters. Almost overnight, the merciless cudgel upon which sires could rely to bludgeon wayward childer into submission had vanished.

Like the inquisitors' fires, the Vaulderie spread from domain to domain, among the furtive esbats and the unbound Anarch alike. Now free of their supernatural enslavement to their sires and tied to

one another by unshakeable bonds of loyalty, the latest generation of Anarchs swiftly became an even more immediate threat to vampiric society.

Not long afterward, a spate of tales regarding destroyed Antediluvians rallied the Anarchs across Europe, the Levant, and northern Africa. Rebellious childer claimed to have destroyed numerous Ancients, with the Lasombra and Tzimisce Antediluvians purportedly the first to fall. At the time, though impossible to corroborate, the apparent destruction of the numerous Antediluvians elevated the status of the Anarchs even as it marked them as kinslayers in the eyes of a burgeoning conspiracy of elders who planned to bring the entire insurgency to heel.

## From the Ashes of the Revolt

Despite its rising momentum, the Anarch Revolt ultimately faltered. A network of influential elders orchestrated a counter-rebellion, unsurprisingly using the very advantages under their sway that the Revolt had cast into stark relief. According to some sources, the elders even stoked the fires of the Inquisition itself, using it to burn down the havens of Anarch packs that had emancipated themselves via *Vaulderie*.

The organizers of the counter-revolution formalized their conspiracy as an aristocracy of the night, a potent *camarilla* against rebellious fledglings and the medieval ritualism of the *esbats*. The conflict officially ended with the ratification of the Convention of Thorns in 1493. Most of the Anarch leaders present signed onto the peace treaty and acknowledged the primacy of the *Camarilla*.

*If those terms - officially, ratification, convention, primacy - sound weighted, well, there's a reason for that. When you name yourself overtly after the conspiracy you assembled to exorcise the righteous....*

But not all. The next night, Anarchs rampaged against the city of Silchester as part of an intentional violation of the *Masquerade*. Marauding Anarchs and *esbats* were joined by Kindred who had been marked for death for their transgressions.

The mortal survivors of Silchester described the attacking vampires as “sabbats of devils and witches,” and the Cainites who participated seized upon that description to christen their new movement: the Sabbath. The notoriety — even infamy — of the bloodbath after the Convention of Thorns saw vampires from domains beyond count reject the old order of this “new” *Camarilla* and declare for what they were. And where the cowards of the *Camarilla* would hide behind their *Masquerade* and the veneer of false Humanity, the Sabbath would become the monsters that all Cainites were meant to be.

## Enlightenment in Blood

What had originally begun as parochial cults of monstrous self-worship eventually emerged as something much more fearsome: a set of wholly vampiric outlooks that their undead followers observed with a nigh-fanatical zeal — because their survival depended on it.

Given the domineering *Camarilla*’s choice to exalt lineage as the primary expression of a vampire’s character, the Sabbath instead rallied to these Paths of Enlightenment as its own declaration of virtue. One’s clan and lineage meant nothing to monsters attempting to build a world of eternal night in which mortals would rightly fear their blood-drinking masters.

As the conflict between Path-driven packs and traditional domains stretched into the 16th century, Sabbath packs took up the cause not only against the *Camarilla* proper, but against that central tenet of Kindred society, the very notion of clans.

Indeed, not only did the Sabbath reject clans, but the founders of the clans, the Antediluvians themselves. By the mid-16th century, the Sabbath — albeit as a decentralized confederation of *esbats* — had declared itself the champion of a pogrom against

those who had strayed from the virtues of Caine, the Dark Father.

From the Camarilla courts of Europe into the domains of the Ashirra and beyond, through the desperately defended mountain territories of the lands past the mountains, fire lit the night skies and elder heartsblood flowed again through the veins of insurgents. The rites of the packs and esbats stirring them to fervor, that most ancient of wars had new zealots prosecuting it.

## The Beginning of the End of the World

From out of this crucible of the inquisitors' fires and through the terrifying evolution of the Paths of Enlightenment, the Sabbat has ever been at the forefront of conflicts beyond counting. Intervening centuries saw petty gains here and Sabbat domains established there, but little to merit what the Sabbat tonight would consider accomplishment.

*I contend that the glorious Black Hand in fact made great gains during these neglected centuries, but that we squandered the resources they yielded. There is no shame in eschewing the illusion of empire, however. Let the Camarilla Princes and Anarch Barons dance to each other's orchestras. Those lesser, worldly claims will wither. Ours is not to sit on thrones and extract tithes - ours is the dominion of the Dark Father.*

That all changed as Gehenna dawned. As first the elders and then their ancilla progeny heard the Beckoning, and readily heeded its entreaty. Unlike the Kindred of other sects, who resisted as much as they

might, largely out of greed and complacency, the Sabbat found new purpose heralded by the ominous rise of the Ancients.

The Gehenna War exacts a high cost, however. Domains that had been claimed by the Sabbat, from the Old World to the New, fell, or were actively abandoned as the Black Hand rallied to its apocalyptic call. Mexico City, Detroit, Madrid, and even New York had once been considered "Sabbat domain," as had any number of other territories, but all of that burned away like so much chaff as the sect's actual purpose hauled itself from its millennial tombs, threatening to devour the entirety of the Damned.

Those who consider the situation wisely describe the Sabbat as having a sort of "hollowing-out" since the Gehenna War ignited. Many Sabbat elders and ancillae heard the Beckoning and took up arms against the Antediluvians, while others demonstrated a fundamental cowardice by taking shelter among other sects, leaving a great many young Cainites without the structure that had existed in the Sabbat prior. Those few elders who hadn't heeded the Beckoning turned the rest of the sect toward the inevitable conflict — and many of them subsequently vanished, whether as casualties or into other fates remains unknown.

Tonight, the Sabbat situation is one of desperation, but a desperation that many of the sect either do not perceive or are unwilling to acknowledge. Spread out over three geographically disparate war fronts and two different theaters of retreat, the Sabbat has had to radically redefine its methods and tactics on the fly. No longer content to "hold domain," the Sword of Caine has become an active, guerrilla force. And even though its holdings are fewer and its Cainites probably less in number, the Sabbat has spread out its influence over a greater area than ever it has before.



# SITREP: The Gehenna War

*Walking between life and death is the least of our dark gifts. We are the gods of this world and we have left it in the hands of the least worthy for far too long.*

— OZYMANDIAS, PRIEST OF THE PATH OF POWER AND THE INNER VOICE

The Gehenna War is the latest incarnation of the 500-year war the Sabbat has waged against the pawns of the Antediluvians. While the Camarilla is often still the primary target of the Sabbat's efforts, the Sword of Caine sees all who forsake the Vaulderie as potential tools in the service of the masters of Gehenna. The Anarchs were long regarded as potential converts to the cause, but in the modern nights they've shown their true colors as shortsighted opportunists, eager to supplant the Ivory Tower but not willing to make the sacrifices necessary for true freedom.

Now that the Black Hand has taken the fight directly to the sleeping Ancients, the veil has parted. Many in the Sabbat believe the Camarilla and Ashirra had long been secretly united in service to the Antediluvians, but that the losses of the Gehenna War forced that union to the fore. As the Gehenna War continues, many Sabbat in its central conflict zone believe the seemingly aloof and unconcerned Ashirra to be less a sect of Muslim vampires and more akin to a devoted cult of ancestor-worshippers.

For generations the Ashirra sat idly as the Camarilla and Sabbat clawed at each other through mortal pawns in Ashirra domains in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans. It was only when the Black Hand began to unearth the secrets of the ancestors that the Beckoning first claimed the elders and Ashirra Kindred decided to intervene and risk their own Blood.

## An Empire of Blood

Since the first compilation of the *Book of Nod*, what is tonight known as the Middle East has long been supposed as the origin point of the Cainites. When the Gehenna War went hot, little doubt existed among the Brothers and Sisters in Caine where they should seek the Blood of the eldest vampires.

It quickly became clear to the Sword of Caine that not all Noddist texts could be trusted as a map to unearth the Antediluvians, and that servants of these secret masters had the resources and time to bury their secrets wherever they wished. Almost as soon as it had started, the Gehenna War spread to distant locations across the Earth as the Sabbat pursued the clues wrested from the consumed souls of countless elders.

While the *Book of Nod* remains a sacred collection of documents to many within the Sabbat, the realities of the Gehenna War have led to various manuscripts being regarded as having different degrees of authenticity. A few Sabbat even suspect that the scholars who compiled the original text may have been under the sway of the Antediluvians and that some of the clues within subsequent texts may actually be clever traps and bait versions designed to shield the masters of Gehenna from the Sword of Caine's wrath.

## An Eternal Struggle

Although diablerie and murder are the Sabbat's preferred tactics in waging the Gehenna War, packs still recognize the need for subtlety in pursuit of their greater goals. Centuries of fighting elder influ-



ence has taught the Black Hand that spilling blood alone won't see them to victory and freedom. The Ancients are masters of deception and misdirection.

The Camarilla wasn't just a tool to prepare the world for Antediluvian conquest, it was an easy target for their enemies, a stalking horse that would not only reveal threats to them, but occupy and exhaust them until it was too late. While the Sabbat and Camarilla clashed over insignificant scraps of territory in Boston and Berlin, the night of Gehenna inched ever closer.

By refusing to accept and repeat this tired cycle, the Sabbat has changed the rules of the game and the masters of Gehenna have scrambled to move their pieces to follow suit. They have pulled the puppet strings taut and the elders have jumped to attention. The Camarilla has all but ruined its precious Masquerade in its death throes and the moribund Ashirra suddenly finds common cause with its historic rival, while the emboldened Anarchs have

already chipped away at their anachronistic foundations, position themselves to swallow both rivals whole.

Even hunters have a role to play in this last act of creation. Many Sabbat, notably among the remaining elders of the sect, regard the return of the Burning Times as a failsafe created by the Antediluvians. This particular line of conspiracy thinking posits that the Antediluvians have actually orchestrated the Second Inquisition through their Camarilla pawns to make use of mortal power in their efforts to hold the Sabbat at bay long enough to complete their preparations. Histrionic, to be sure, but understandable, given the paranoia that prosecuting centuries of the Eternal Struggle wreaks on Sabbat identity. Younger minds than theirs buy into stranger things.

## The Moonlit Jasmine Field

In the terms of eschatology and Sabbat faith, the Gehenna War is the Sword of Caine's last chance to make sure the chains of Blood they broke so long ago are never reforged. Complacency and dull thinking had led them to the edge of ruin by wasting centuries in pointless territorial war against the straw-men of the Camarilla and in courtship of wayward Anarchs.

Perhaps Gehenna is inevitable and the promise of creating a world based on Caine's vision of open vampiric rule will never come to pass. But as Caine would take no compromise or half measures, neither will the Sabbat who proudly proclaim his name as Cainites.

When it can, the Black Hand feasts on blood that flows back millennia, kindling dead memories in hopes of glimpsing a god's weakness, no longer concerned with titles and petty differences in doctrine. In addition to fighting the catspaws of the Ancients, the Sword of Caine seeks to pierce the sublime threshold that separates them from the masters of Gehenna, and ultimately claim apotheosis.

The Gehenna War is the Sabbat's redemption and sacrifice in the face of the impossible. One way or another, they will be free.



# Mexico City

Camarilla Kindred, hear me when I laud you as proud and deserving alcaldes laying claim to domains that shall be the glittering jewels in the crown.

Twenty-one million mortal vessels! Savor the prestige of dominion over twenty-one million mortal vessels.

Why on earth would the locusts of the Black Hand abandon such a prize? To say nothing of the roistering Anarchs, claiming what they will, clashing shamefully with the scions of our esteemed lineages. A revolt to be thrown down before it tarnishes that nighted crown.

Their folly is our fortune.

## Opportunity!

That's a word we don't hear enough as Kindred. Opportunity! We don't hear it because it's not often granted to us. The Camarilla won't give us an opportunity. And we won't wait for it because it's never coming from them. That's what makes us Anarchs.

But the Sabbat has given us an opportunity here. They run off to fight their war, their Gehenna War, and look at what they leave behind. Opportunity.

You want to set yourself up in luxury? Now's your opportunity. You want silk sheets and fancy cars and vessels so hot they'll make your dick hard even though you're dead? You do it. You say, "Polanco is mine. All of Miguel Hidalgo is mine." You take it, you back it up, you have that opportunity.

I have that opportunity, too. You want El Pedregal? You gotta take it from me. Hell, I might come take Polanco, too, while you're drinking that hot young blood. Point is, the opportunity's there.

Black Hand can go fight old dead things for a thousand years if they want. Me, I'm going to take this opportunity.

Look sharp, people.

Fresh intel this morning. Something weird to start your day.

Those persons of interest who Gutierrez and Marzouk have been keeping an eye on? Mexico City PD turned up positive on all of them.

Yeah, I know, good job, high-fives all around. That's not the weird part, Marzouk actually getting something done.

Weird part is that the positive IDs on them all match descriptions of known deceased. Even you should know that's fishy, Hines, and you're the worst goddamn detective I've worked with in all my thirty years.

Anyway, I'm going to turn it over to Agent Blunt of— Special Affairs Division, is it? Podium's yours, Agent Blunt.

how quickly the flies plunge themselves into the spider's web

beware, little flies, for the silk-spun bundles spread throughout the web hold the remains of guests the spider welcomed before you

the silk conceals fleshweld  
the silk conceals shackled  
silk stocking  
silk stalking  
we spin silk  
we dead

sticky strands suspend the spires of an ivory tower above the shadowed streets of those who would set themselves apart by stealing a circlet and singing sovereignty

how many pits seal slumbering stalkers — a score or more

each strand of the web, invisible, but carefully laid

just because the fly does not see the spider does not mean the web is forsaken

## Brazil: Civil War

Yeah, I used to run with the Sabbat. Well, not exactly with. Hauled my ass out of the Creation Rites, but got knocked into the dirtnap pretty quick afterward. When I woke up, everything was different. I just laid low and hung around at the edges. Gotta be careful. Still, things are changing fast, and the nail that stands up gets hammered down. What year is it? I guess I've been undead undead undead for maybe 50 years or so.

Whole place used to be a battleground between the Sabbat and Camarilla. Rio, São Paulo, Brasilia, you name it. Ever since the Sabbat gave up that shadow war, trying to play against the Ivory Tower on its own terms, the Camarilla has moved in with a vengeance.

Don't think of it as lost domain, though. That shit's a sucker's game. That's how you get stasis, endlessly thinking about how to push that pretend territory line further out, or who's trying to push yours back.

Look at what matters: This is one of the original cradles of civilization. You'd shit blood for a week if you knew how many elders have gone to ground here. How all those Camarilla courts filling in the vacuum are just more tools of the Eternal Struggle.

That's what the Sabbat's here for. Fuck them all up, burn it all down. Don't try to hold the castle - yield the castle, and then when the enemy runs up their own flag, they spring the trap.

Should be simple, right? The ol' bait-and-switch. Mouse takes the cheese and you zap them with the current.

Turns out it's not so easy down here.

While the Priests and Bishops were setting the trap, no one paid any attention to- look, no one was cleaning up after all the fallback actions or from the mass-grave time bombs the Black Hand left in its retreats.

Let me be honest: It's crawling with thin-bloods here. Usually these fucks stay dormant in their graves or end up getting themselves torn apart by Being oblivious to what's going on, but it's different here now. They're running some Cult of the Sun or some nonsense and they're putting the Bite on "Brothers and Sisters" they're supposed to be working with to fuck over the Grandmarilla and to kick the Anarchs into line.

Don't get all worked up, I don't want any part of any of it.

But to hear them tell it, *they're* tired of being fucked over. They're tired of being abandoned or being the canaries in the coal mine, and they know just what kind of Blood is down here for the taking and they don't care who they take it from.

It's bad, man. Lines've been drawn. Gauntlets've been thrown. You got vampires with death magics beyond the ken, and while you're trying to put them down, here come about fifty ravaging Sun-worshippers taking your kill from you or dumping BOPE and C Op Esp into the hunting grounds, fucking up the process.

Can't make any sense of it. They want the same things every Lick does, they want it the same way we want it. Some Sabbat even try to work with them, or at least with those who realize they're Brothers and Sisters, too. But there

seem to be a lot of them – a whole lot of them – who don't want to do it any way other than their way, and they don't think twice if you get in their way. You're a price that can be paid, whoever you are, Sabbat or whatever else.

Ants, man. Fire ants will take down a dog. One ant doesn't matter. Enough of them, though, and it's done. Never mind the cities – once you get off the high-level maps? The in-between places? It's all thin-bloods. Some places they outnumber the kine, I swear to God. Turn entire towns into factory farms. Broods of 'em. Families.

Bishops don't want to touch them, though. Don't want to crusade against their own.

I figure there's some comfortable fucking Bishops out there who gave up a lot in the past couple of decades and don't want to lose what they've built back up, that's what I say.

And that makes it what it is down here. There's no "Sabbat." There's no

"Sword of Caine." There's the big shots on one end, who don't want to risk their stake. On the other end are a million and one of these Sun Cult fire ants – they keep making more when you can't see them. Then there's the foot-soldiers, the glorious "True Sabbat!" The ones who are supposed to be doing all the dirty work and setting the fires and tearing down the towers, but really they're getting pinched between the fire ants and the pulpit.

And they are fucking tired of getting pinched.

I don't give a fuck who the fire ants say they are, I just keep my head down and move on. But I know what they'd do to me. Happened all up and down the coast just a few weeks ago.

Kill or be killed, that's what the Sabbat is. Killing their own, whether it's for the Dark Father or Here Comes the Sun. Makes it real hard for a Lick like me to get by.



## Russia and the Baltics

To the Undisputed Baron of Whatever You're Calling the Domain Tonight:

Been following up on that request for more info on Licks Unknown we talked about a few months ago.

Sorry this took so long. Mistakes were made. Let me explain.

Contacts in Kyiv, Tallinn, and Riga were watching the same thing we were. Spikes in "itinerant Kindred" populations through late summer all the way through autumn, and with those spikes an uptick in domain violence. No reason to sugarcoat it; Riga got hairy for a while, not that I give a shit when some Camarilla court gets gutted. That's nice smoke to see.

Back to the point, though.

We thought they were fellow Anarchs following mortal patterns of refugee migration. That was mistake number one. They weren't. Those Licks were migrating, all right, but not how we assumed they were.

A few fellow veterans from the Yugoslav disintegration confirmed some of the iconography of that era still being used that we saw moving through airports and other transpo centers. Black hands, fire symbols, variations on folk-magic symbology.

And numbers would swell between security checkpoints. Eight moving up through Bucharest, twelve observed in Moldova as part of the same group, twenty-plus by the time they got to Odessa, but still the same group.

Sabbat, filling ranks.

And you know as well as I that they don't just "pick up" Kindred here and there. If there were twenty by Odessa, who knows how many they're leaving behind them, still buried, ash, or sleepers?

Usually that means somebody's about to wake up for the night facing a crusade. Nobody's an expert on this shit, but Sabbat don't Embrace for love or loneliness. They Embrace to ram-page.

Mistake number two: not a crusade, despite all evidence to the contrary.

By this point, we were biting our nails. Who's the target?

The alternative media following in the path of this is a nightmare to cover up. We can keep it out of the newspapers

and off the news shows, but the shares on social networking sites and video archives are graphic and... well, weird. I've been killing people and drinking their blood for decades, and even before that I did a few ugly favors for a few ugly - but well-placed - Balkan "influencers," and this is shit even I don't want to see. And you know as well as I do that the more distinct it gets, the more hunters' eyes it attracts.

Then it hits me: it is a migratory pattern, but not a mortal one and not a crusade. It's a retreat. Whatever's happening in the Middle East, wherever these Black Hand shitbags are chasing the elders who have heard the Beckoning, all of the sudden they're running from something, moving up through Eastern Europe to do it, and into Russia.

Remember, though, my Baltic contacts confirm similar movement through their regions. So I put the pins in my murder-board, and the lines are getting fatter the more they move east, the more they pick up membership. And the vector is starting to converge.

I have fewer contacts the further east things go, and everything dries up for me beyond an imaginary angle you could draw connecting St. Petersburg, Novgorod, and Donetsk.

Full disclosure, I've lost track of them, probably fifty-strong by this point, and I'm sure this wasn't a one-off. I'm sure other groups are moving as well, but I was too busy watching this particular pack to keep an eye open for others.

Mistake number three. It's not a retreat, it's a pursuit.

They're chasing something. They're chasing something into what looks like it'll probably end up being Siberia.

Or, way worse, it's already there and they're converging on it.

I'm guessing they found something big. Big and old. Big and old and hateful.

We need to figure out what to do next. Because I'm not going to sit around and wait for whatever this is to pour hellfire on us.



## The Maghreb and Alamut

*I cannot but faithfully report what the rafiqs have seen, as you have charged me, strange as some of it may seem: Alamut is lost.*

*It is in the clutches of an Ancient who was Ancient when the children of Caine were young, a killer of killers.*

*It is in the clutches of a witch with three eyes whose vitae enthalls those who partake of it in but a single draught.*

*It is in the clutches of a cult that reveres yet dreads the rising of those who have been judged.*

*I myself have witnessed a single night at the foot of the mountain that spanned forty nights, so great is the sorcery that girds the fastness above.*

*Our rafiqs cannot approach; something forbids them. But I was among them when the mountaintop vanished into darkness and the laughing of dead and breathless voices rattled through the foothills. The next morning, the village was empty, a dead thing in the shadow of the devils' mountain.*

*I sought traces of blood, wondering that Ur-Shulgi's reavers must feed, and even they cannot be so precise as to spill not a drop. But not a drop did I find. The village was abandoned. I feared to see, though, the ceiling of the muezzin's house, for sooty black footprints marred its ceiling, as if some blasphemous dance had been performed thereupon.*

*I confess, these awful things frighten me. I do not understand them. I do not know what they mean or even how they might be accomplished. These are the things that would frighten folk of a more superstitious time, yet here they are before us.*

*The way they fight defies the term. How can one stand against a foe who tarnishes them, invisibly, from within? Until all that is left is a husk, dried and folded upon itself? I had learned to expect fire, but found instead a place where thought itself had become strange.*

*Not just Alamut bears these burdens. Our ghuls range far and wide, even in those places where we cannot. In the parlance of others of the Blood, these*

*are the nights of the Second Inquisition, a return of the Burning Times.*

*They have seen the glint of the hunters' weapons, for they are a prominent force in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, and Kindred tread carefully for fear of earning the hunters' attentions. Unsurprisingly, the same funding and technology that enforces apartheid and occupation has been co-opted by these hunters to track and destroy their undead foes. Drones, facial recognition, IR imaging and AI-driven data collection make unlife difficult for those of the Blood to operate in the era of the Second Inquisition. Even Fatima will not brave it. I must assume that this is true for the Black Hand as well, for the fires of the Second Inquisition would burn them as readily as we.*

*The revered scions among the Ashirra with whom I have corresponded insist that Egypt gives the blood god of Alamut no succor. And yet, strangely, I see the rituals of the Sabbath in frightening parallel to those performed by the Church of Caine, which now has a foothold in Cairo. Twenty years prior one would not have heard these sermons of Caine there. Have the scions of the Ashirra capitulated to the priests of the Black Hand?*

*A single drop of blood on parchment will spread, finding minute channels in the surface and rolling in rivulets where it finds that resistance quickly yields.*

*We have known Alamut has been lost — it is the drop of blood from which the growing stain emanates. And everywhere we look, the spread is revealed. This is a war not only of blood and fire but also of the killing of minds.*

## The Domain Next Door

**W**ell, hell. I survived a Sabbat incursion. Once. That makes me the resident expert, I guess, since everyone else is either smoke on the wind or screaming about a Biblical reckoning and drinking the souls of the Kindred next to them. So I'll share what I got, but it ain't much.

Most of them are new. They lived, they died, and now they're birthed by fire into a secret war against things they never knew existed and the only way to stop those imaginary Ancient dead things way over on that side of the world is to set everything they can find on fire over here.

There. That's their basic training. If they think something wants to kill them or enslave them, they try to kill it first. And they think everything wants to kill or enslave them.

It feels like there are swarms of them, but I don't think that's actually true. There were maybe ten of them, back when my thing happened, maybe? Ten at a time, that is, or close to that. Hell, it might have been only a handful. They don't exactly get up when you knock them down, they make more. And they didn't seem too particular about who they turned. Just grabbed people off the street, screaming, or dragged them out of their apartments.

Last I dealt with them, they didn't go after the high-profile targets. They didn't swarm the Prince's mansion, They didn't touch Elysium. High-profile doesn't mean high-value for their purposes, I don't think. They're after value. Bang-for-the-buck sort of thing.

They didn't need to take down any Primogen or whatever. They just picked the low-hanging fruit. Anybody without some kind of

capital-letters title attached to their name, Black Hand went after 'em, drank 'em, left the ashes someplace someone in their coterie would find the mess.

I'm guessing it was a hearts-and-minds sort of premise. Show 'em that nobody with a title cares about 'em. Show 'em that the august personages are protecting their own assets and doing what the secret masters tell them to do. Kindred who want to dance to elder tunes can try to weather the storm and they'll take them out drinking.

I heard they made some Licks offers. "Come join us where you're not fodder." Didn't pass the smell test. Vampires who want to join 'em in tearing it all down, they bring 'em back to whatever witch-house where they all sleep and they work some kind of hex to make you think about secret masters and hear elder tunes.

If you're on the fence about them, you die.

One thing I noticed, they seemed to stay away from cops. Makes sense, but I'm not a blood-drenched killer maniac, so who knows what they're actually thinking? I figured Sabbat would seek out the cops, but I guess they're smart enough to know it's not worth it. Nobody wants the added attention, and you'll either end up killing them or dragging two decades' worth of Gulf War surplus into the city.

Little victories, I guess.

How do you fight them? Hell, I don't know. I didn't survive by standing up to 'em.





*Chapter Five:*

# STORYTELLER RESOURCES



*To a zealot every one of his own sect is a saint, while the most upright of a different sect are to him children of perdition.*

— HENRY HOME, LORD KAMES

In addition to the setting-focused materials presented throughout this book, Storytellers can avail themselves of certain techniques and tools to heighten the experience the Sabbat brings to a chronicle. Feel free to use as many of these in your chronicle as you choose, whether you want a subtle, off-screen element of suspense or an ever-increasing tension that culminates in a bloody conflagration.

Remember that a little goes a long way. The Sabbat is presented as an antagonist, and the more players know about antagonists, the less fearsome they become, especially in a horror game in which fear of the unknown is a central theme. The following information is to help provide context to the Sabbat, to aid Storytellers in planning setting elements and constructing narratives for their chronicles.

Storytellers should avoid heaping exposition on players. The more the Sabbat emerges as a collection of strange details, horrifying motivations, and un-

predictable timing, the more effective they'll be in their function as antagonists. Let them be motley, harrowing foes who strike unexpectedly rather than bad guys who show just because it's time for some action.

## Setting Element: Sabbat Domains

It is important to remember that very few Sabbat put down roots in any domain, no matter the state of those domains. For the majority of the Sabbat, movement to the war front or chasing down enemies is the sum of being a vampire. Certainly, this makes for a difficult unlife, and many Cainites meet their end on the move, crossing dangerous territory, or in the conflicts of the actual Gehenna War. And that's reflected in much of the mythology of the

Sabbat, from its own self-image to the harrowing reputation it has among the other sects. Whether a relentless scourge or a biblical plague of locusts, the Sabbat is always on the move in some capacity.

War comes down to logistics, however, and even a relentless scourge needs to supply itself, with recruits, blood, or other assets. Sabbat domains tend to exist in one of three states, based on what the sect needs from them at any given moment. Indeed, understanding that is key to understanding how the Sword of Caine sees the world: little more than a resource from which to extract materiel for the war against the hated Antediluvians. The number of Sabbat domains also isn't static; domains turn over very quickly. The Sword of Caine is more than happy to take domains from its rivals, or to wear them down through endless conflict and attrition.

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### STRONGHOLDS AND DOMAIN

Consider that in the modern nights, very few domains might be considered solely Sabbat territory. In almost every case, a “Sabbat domain” is the Sabbat portion of a contested domain, or even a deliberately short-lived occupation of some other sect's territory, such as a surge to shovelhead new recruits. The Sabbat chews up domain and spits it out, staying only long enough to take what it wants. After that, it's on the move, following where the Gehenna War takes it.

For a Storyteller's worldbuilding, this grants a great flexibility. A city may well be acknowledged as a Prince's domain or an eminent Barony at the same time it has a Bishop and their retinue occupying it, or that a specialized pack has a permanent presence in the city as Cainites search for Noddist lore.

Storytellers are encouraged to add Sabbat presence to the cities where their chronicles take place as they desire. We don't want to declare “your city” a Sabbat-only city, since the Sabbat is presented as an antagonist faction.

That said, Sabbat strongholds, even of a (probably semi-) permanent nature can exist across the world. A remote village besieged as a redoubt, a warfront camp with mortals imprisoned as cattle, or a historical site befouled by practitioners of Oblivion all have a sense of location that allows the Sabbat to fight its existential war.

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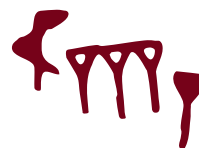
## Surge

Domains in surge see the Sabbat rapidly bolstering its numbers with increased shovelheading efforts. These domains see a massive but brief uptick in violence, which can't help but bleed over into mortal awareness, and just as quickly ceases. These recruitment campaigns are effectively reigns of terror for the domains in which surges occur, with packs marauding and murdering with wanton abandon, effectively kidnapping and brutally brainwashing conscripts into the cultic sect, and gorging on the victims whose blood is required to sustain a rampaging brood of new vampires.

Practical — perhaps cynical — elements in surging domains usually explain away surges behind media campaigns decrying civil unrest, political instability, or other mortal trends, the better to avoid unwelcome attention from the Second Inquisition and other entities savvy to the movements of supernatural entities. In an era of omnipresent surveillance and Internet-connected cameras in every pocket, however, these traditional methods are becoming less and less reliable, and the Masquerade strains to its limit.

It is telling that the stereotypical Sabbat domain propagandized by other sects is one in constant, horrifying, gore-spattered surge. In truth, surge happens only in intense “spikes” of a domain's existence — though those are certainly among its most memorable times.

In relatively recent history, notable Sabbat surges have occurred in Mexico City, Kiev, Budapest, Sarajevo, and Kansas City.



## Accord

Domains in accord have exceptionally low Cainite populations, as most of the vampires Embraced during the surge have moved on to the fronts of the hot conflicts of the Gehenna War. Cities in accord have vampire populations notably below even the average of Kindred-to-mortal ratios. Sabbat presence in these cities exists mostly for the purposes of supporting the war effort or complicating claims of praxis by neighbors who might turn acquisitive eyes toward them. Few Camarilla luminaries would suffer qualms about seizing inadequately defended Sabbat territory, and many Anarch Barons have become so by “liberating” Sabbat domains in accord.

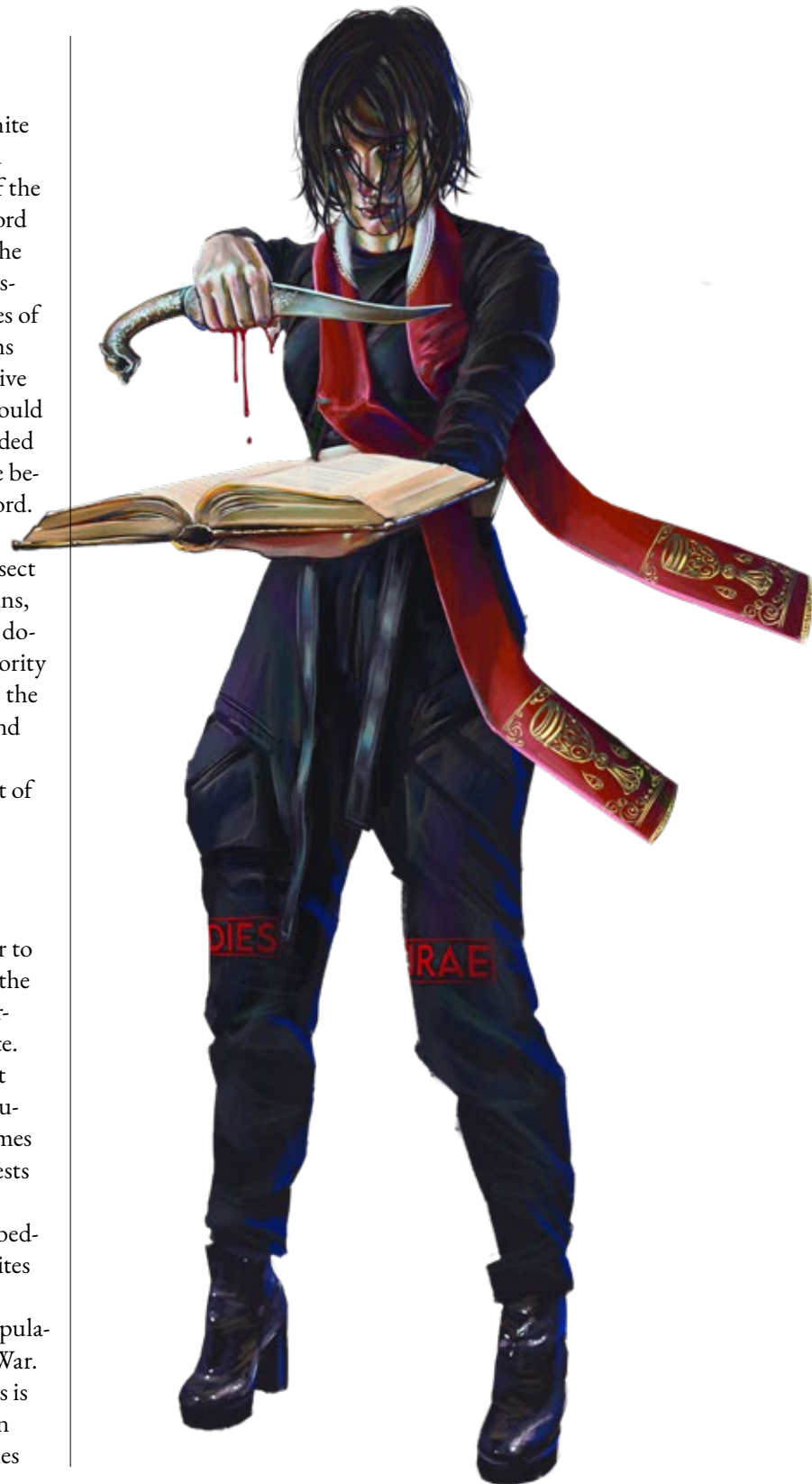
In accord, the Sabbat vampires in a given domain are usually high-ranking figures in the sect hierarchy. In practice, for certain remote domains, this can mean literally one eminent Cainite per domain, or even a single figurehead claiming authority over multiple proximate domains. For example, the Bishop of Vilnius or the Archbishop of Lima and Cusco, or Archbishop Lucita of Madrid.

The majority of Sabbat domains spend most of their time in accord.

## Entente

Entente domains are probably the most familiar to Kindred of other sects: Numerous vampires of the ascendant sect are present, each with some interest or personal holding in which they participate. That’s where such similarity ends, as prominent Sabbat rarely have subtle and deeply rooted influence in a domain’s engines of industry. It all comes back to the blood for most Sabbat, whose interests lie in mortal herds and chattel for when a surge begins. Rare are the Sabbat minions deeply embedded in corporate boardrooms, but Sabbat Cainites themselves have eyes on the cargo dispatches, airports, and docks, and anywhere transient populations can be easily recruited into the Gehenna War.

For a new Cainite in an entente domain, this is where a great deal of Black Hand indoctrination occurs. For every sociopathic Sabbat who relishes





abusing the mortals and probationary sect members beneath them, there's a lot of brainwashing, deprivation, and just plain shit-eating during entente that quickly dispels the illusions of reigning in Hell. Sect hierarchy in domains in entente quickly reveals itself for the wicked and degrading deprogramming it is. Imagine being the "mighty Cainite" responsible for cleaning out the carnage from a pack haven after a night hosting a particularly debased ritus.

Entente sometimes indicates defense against some threatening entity, whether a counter-action by minions of an Antediluvian, a praxis seizure by a rival sect, or even a skirmish against a ravaging Lupine. For most Sabbat, though, especially those shovelheaded in the midst of the Gehenna War, entente feels unbearably idle, putting Paths of Enlightenment to the test as a restless Beast threatens its master's self-control. The horrible truth is that Sabbat domains in Entente tend to tear themselves apart unless galvanized into another Crusade. For example, the Camarilla was able to wrest the domain of New York away from a fractious Sabbat just a few decades nigh.

## Crusade

A crusade is when the Sabbat undertakes an effort to oust an existing sect presence in a domain. Crusades are events, not domain states themselves. They're how the sect takes extant domains away from others, generally moving into a state of entente after the praxis seizure. This most often occurs after a surge in a nearby domain, but in poorly kept domains, Sabbat have been known to stage surges from within the domain that's the target of the crusade.

In most cases, a domain under crusade is logistically important to a Gehenna War hotspot. Whether near to the rumored haven of a Methuselah or Antediluvian, or possessed of resources valuable to the war effort, such domains are at parlous risk of violence and misery. After all, if the Sabbat is willing to devote time and vitae to usurp a domain, it's obviously important to the war effort, and therefore worth the investment to attempt to wrest away.

# Story Elements: Chronicle Structures

This section explores how the Sabbat prosecutes its holy war and, most importantly, the ways in which players' characters might run afoul of them.

Notably, Storytellers should feel free to combine any of the following approaches, or of course devise their own. A full-scale siege may be preceded by a tense period of undead spycraft, or the macabre discovery of not-yet-active mass graves could tip off the chronicle's Kindred to an impending Sabbat effort to terrorize the local vampires before it picks up momentum. Remember that a chronicle consists of a number of stories, and one story of a given type can lead into another story type in the greater sequence of the chronicle.

## Blood and Fire

The most obvious way players' characters might discover Sabbat activity is to find themselves in the middle of open conflict. For the most part, the Sabbat isn't subtle, and when a Crusade comes to the domain (see p. 108), it's likely to involve all of the city's Kindred and then some. Similarly, if the Sabbat is in surge in the domain (see p. 106), the local Kindred will likely find a slew of enemies besetting them without having to look too far.

The ideological differences between the sects underscore the conflict and define its motivations. The Sabbat is the enemy because it is the Sabbat, and it represents a perversion or a subjugation or a burning-down of the veneer of civilization to which the Kindred cling. There's no ambiguity here: The Sabbat will readily admit to that position as it wickedly commences slitting throats and setting fires.

### IN CHRONICLES

Blood and fire conflicts can suit any number of chronicles, from a high-action running battle across the cityscape to the climax of a story arc pursuing a

hated rival who's attempting to overthrow the city to plunge it into ruin or claim it for themselves. From a single, unprepared pack overzealously declaring war on a domain to a well-coordinated siege waged by a dozen-plus veteran packs, the hallmark of Blood and Fire is ultraviolence and the many ways in which it can manifest, and how abruptly.

To the Sabbat, violence is a tool. It's a proving ground for the survival of the most vicious, and it's the cudgel that keeps the sect's myriad enemies beaten down. Blood and fire are both means and end to the Sabbat.

## Getting Involved

**THE POWDER KEG EXPLODES:** The chronicle's home domain is proximate to the Gehenna War front, and the Sabbat wants to wrest the city from the dominant sect in order to use it as a redoubt to which it can fall back if the war front becomes too hot itself. Throwing waves of shovelheads against prominent Kindred targets, the Sabbat aims to collapse the domain from the top down, hoping to break the morale of the rest of the domain's vampires by showing them how ill-equipped the would-be elites are to stand against the Sword of Caine.

**HEADHUNTERS:** With the city under siege, numerous street-level packs vie for glory, observing an Ignoblis Ritus (see p. 64) they call "Taking Trophies." Starting with the domain's most vulnerable Kindred and coteries, the competing Sabbat packs are trying to kill their way up the domain's vampiric pecking order, collecting grisly proof of their kills as they do so. Depending upon their own accomplishment and status, and how the Storyteller intends to pace the story, the players' coterie may find itself targeted early on, or may uncover the ruinous remains of less prestigious coteries that reveal the presence of the Cainite invaders. Consider, too, the dawning horror when the coterie destroys one pack and only then learns that there are other packs out there, observing the same ritus and pursuing the same goals.

**THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY:** Especially among young packs, glory-seeking is part of the Sabbat experience, and any given Kindred or coterie can be prey to two or more packs competing to be the executors of their destruction. Given the temperament of the Black Hand, there's no guarantee that these rival pursuers won't turn against each other in order to claim the kill. There's room here for a quick-witted coterie to turn competing packs against one another, or to have them expend their efforts gaining advantage over the other. Then again, it's also possible that the coterie fucks it all up and ends up the simultaneous hostage of rival packs looking to exploit them for the greatest gain.

## Hearts and Minds

By contrast to Blood and Fire, above, the ways of Hearts and Minds attempts to break down the Sabbat's opposition by brutalizing those who stand against them. The Sword of Caine doesn't necessarily need to eliminate all opposition — instead it can force rival sect members to surrender, flee, or even convert to its cause. Winning hearts and minds, from the Sabbat perspective, is often a question of initiating self-fulfilling prophecy, and it does so by demonstrating that other sects' methodologies are insufficient.

Following the destruction (and surely diablerie) of high-profile enemies, the Sabbat makes a mockery of the domain's Traditions. What was once an erudite salon, Elysium becomes a Grand Guignol of Auctoritas Ritae. The opulent havens of prestigious Kindred become communal pleasure dens for raucous packs to use until they become too hot, and then abandon, discarding all the trappings of the debauch. Black Hand kidnappers pit disenfranchised childer against their sires, an Accounting of the Accounting. The Masquerade itself tautens to its breaking point, drawing hunter attention to which the Sabbat itself seems heedless until it's too late and then the whole domain suffers for the Cainites' indiscretions — which the Sabbat uses as an object lesson in why there's no sustainable coexistence with mortals by cowering in their shadows.

## IN CHRONICLES

The violence of the Sabbat need not always signify an action-oriented chronicle, as with Blood and Fire, above. True to the horror themes of **Vampire**, violence can take the form of brutal assault, terrorizing executions, and the animalistic pursuit of marked targets instead of a tactical exercise. It can be used as a narrative descriptor, such as a fugitive Primogen's humiliation and execution, or a set piece in metaphor, such as with a Bishop officiating a Blood Feast in a one-time abattoir.

Combat itself becomes staccato and punchy, a theater of injury and suffering rather than strategy and technique. Fights last three turns or fewer (see "Three Turns and Out" on p. 130 of **Vampire: The Masquerade**), and most damage comes in the form of victimhood, whether at the hands of a brute squad or as a participant in a ritual that leaves the Kindred mauled.

## Getting Involved

**JOIN OR DIE:** As the siege overtakes the city, surviving Kindred resist against a backdrop of terrorizing ritae. They experience the breaking of holdings they once held dear, the suffering or death of Touchstones important to them. The Sabbat intends to shatter the will of Kindred who would stand against them or, even better, shred the Humanity of rival Kindred and introduce them to their own Paths of Enlightenment, bringing prestigious veterans into the Dark Father's favor. In a story or chronicle with this focus, the test of the relationships among coterie-mates will be as compelling a conflict as the external Black Hand foes, if not more so.

**THE RESISTANCE:** With the Sabbat indulging in a reign of terror, savvy vampires will recognize the Sabbat for what it's attempting to do and go down fighting, and perhaps organize ample resistance. Turning the premise of "spiky" violence against the Black Hand, the coterie joins or forms an opposing force, ambushing Cainites, sabotaging Ritae, and baiting mortal hunters. Of course, in response, the Sabbat ratchets up its campaign of brutality — the monstrosity will continue until

morale improves — and for some vampires, the question of whether to endure the misery and fight back or retreat to a domain that's not in the throes of torment arises. Or do the players' characters resist by becoming greater monsters than the Sword of Caine itself?

**KILLING FLOORS:** Especially in surge or during a Crusade, the Sabbat needs blood, and a lot of it. While much of the vampire fantasy revolves around the hunt itself, meeting needs in such a manner in volume can be inefficient for the Black Hand. As such, Cainite procurers gather victims to slake undead thirsts, whether for formalized ritae like a Blood Feast, or just as dehumanized wartime materiel. Unsurprisingly, it's often easiest to procure such vessels from society's most disadvantaged communities: a moral quandary for an individual upholding Humanity, but a matter of no concern at all for a Path follower. The players' coterie can discover such a cache — literally mortals collectively imprisoned to await exsanguination — while investigating Sabbat activity, or during an active pursuit of Sabbat foes. From a derelict meatpacking plant where an unscrupulous coyote abandons his cargo to a dimly-lit truck-trailer shantytown peopled with itinerants and addicts to an hourly hotel adjacent to the finance district where sex workers have their passports confiscated by the complicit madam, these “juice farms” can have many appearances. This can be discovered as a preface to the violence, yielding an opportunity to do the right thing, or they can turn up mid-action or in the aftermath, as a coterie pursues a rampaging pack.



## Stoking Revolution

The Sabbat has been a revolutionary sect for centuries, and arguably more successful at it than the Anarch Movement itself. With its message of throwing down elder tyranny and breaking apart the ossified claims of domain and privilege, Sabbat rhetoric in fact sounds a lot like Anarch rhetoric, at least until the apocalyptic quasi-religious element makes its appearance.

Eroding a sect's ideological base in a domain starts small and grows across a span of years if not decades. Tonight some wild-eyed lick no one has seen before starts “just asking questions” about a local eminence's rise to power, and in five years it's the Night of the Long Knives for everyone of Eighth Generation or below.

Sabbat seducers often initiate their conversion efforts among outliers in a domain's social structure. They start with a loner Anarch or a sick-of-it-all autarkis who gets them access to a bygone coterie, then a prestigious salon or gentrified chantry, and before the local Kindred know it, the young ones



are seditionists and heretics to the last. To hear the established elites tell it, of course.

### IN CHRONICLES

While the propaganda image of the Cainite rebel is as a blood-streaked arsonist, Sabbat proselytizers are capable of much more nuance than open, fiery revolt suggests. Many Cainites are great tempters, particularly those whose Paths promise the satisfaction of pleasure or power. Political rabble-rousers find audiences for their dissidence in even the most traditional domains: One may always find a sympathetic ear among the young, whether they're disillusioned childer of grasping sires or unruly Anarchs who want more decisive action than the Movement offers.

The preferred method for Sabbat rebels is generally to find common ground first, building on the sense of injustice the potential sympathizer feels. Honeyed words and the exposure of privileged hypocrisy go farther than open calls for wanton destruction and diablerie — at least at first. Skilled dissenters can quickly encourage impressionable Kindred to throw down their idols, and have them chanting Sabbat slogans without knowing that they're championing the ideals of the Black Hand. Only then comes the opportunity to pledge allegiance to the Dark Father and explore the dark mysteries of a Path — after the potential recruit has already made themselves a public enemy of their erstwhile sect's order.

## Getting Involved

**YOUNG RADICALS:** Down by the docks, at the tawdry end of the Rack, and in the immigrant neighborhoods, someone's stirring up the neonates again. These things happen in cycles, and usually all it takes is the Sheriff cracking a few skulls or the Baron making a few empty concessions to get the whelps to pipe down. It's different this time, though. Word has made it back up the chain that they're drinking blood out of weird chalices and that one of those neonates, whose sire was just crowing about her ironclad Blood Bond over him at Elysium last month, staked her and drank her dry. Now

that there's a real threat, all of a sudden the ancillae and elders want to get to the bottom of it.

**THE (DIS)LOYAL OPPOSITION:** Kindred long under the night know that the Sabbat operates like a weed, pushing itself up through the cracks in the neighborhood domains where the sidewalks actually have cracks. Consider their unease, then, when one of their own begins with casual references to what can only be considered heresy, casting aspersions on clan lineages, and even calling for the ouster of the Baron herself! And they're not just playing it to shock their fellows: It turns out they have plenty of admirers and even followers among the riffraff. And now they're talking about rounding up certain mortals into camps so they don't have to bother with individual hunts. When did this happen?

**FORBIDDEN AMARANTH:** The greatest of Kindred crimes is suddenly en vogue, surely the sign of degenerate times. What originally appeared to be an epidemic of idiotic neonates testing the boundaries of what they had newly become suddenly became an authoritative answer to individuals' problems among all ranks of Kindred society. Within a few short months, the Kindred population of the domain had dwindled by half, with long-standing domains suddenly masterless and the cruel détente of Harpies becoming a single, engorged grande dame. At the root of it all — depending on who you ask — is either that dirtbag preacher all the young licks once seemed ironically enamored of, or that wretched Primogen, forever surrounding herself in shadow. They're both reciting poetry about "the Finger of God's own hate" and "taking in Caine's own bloody sacrament." Something is very, very wrong in the domain, and nothing may now be able to stem the tide of heartsblood.

## Infiltration and Espionage

Before the surges and sieges, before lighting any fires or dragging any elders under its fangs, the Sabbat knows it needs information. Or, rather, various lo-



calized segments of the sect need information about the domains in which they hide or neighbor.

Given the decentralization of the Black Hand, information gleaned from spies isn't guaranteed to circulate through the entire sect. Indeed, it's wholly possible that, especially in large or strategically important domains, different Sabbat spies have infiltrated the city, are unaware of each other's presence, and are giving different information to different superiors, who themselves may or may not know of the others' agents' presence.

This fact has created an emergent role among the Sabbat, that of the messenger-spy pack. Cainites and their packs who specialize in collecting and distrib-

uting information are rapidly becoming some of the sect's most prized assets. Knowing the movements of other sects has helped the Sabbat counter-manuever and maintain entente in domains like Madrid, and has allowed the Sabbat to gain Baltic redoubts as it creeps into the territory of longstanding Ivory Tower domains such as Riga. As such, delivering critical information will find a Cainite welcomed by Sabbat strategists — and eliminating these messenger-spies is a prestigious accomplishment for Kindred of other sects.

Storytellers can decide how heavily to play the tropes of espionage, from a tradecraft-heavy "spy thriller" heavily influenced by John Le Carre to a

tale of street loyalties and opportunistic betrayal. The sects can loom large as ideological institutions or can fade into the background as the strength of relationships between the focal vampires comes into question.

### IN CHRONICLES

Among the undead, information is always a commodity. Even in domains without external threats, the Eternal Struggle ensures that some Kindred is always acting against another. Sabbat spies complicate this, in that they may be collecting information for the Sword of Caine to strike against the domain, or they may be waging campaigns of muckraking and disinformation, using those internal struggles to keep the domain weak, heightening its Kindred's conflicts among each other.

Any vampire might be an informant, or an active agent. The Brujah union delegate knows who the Toreador Harpy is trying to smuggle into town on that Lufthansa flight, and kicks that information up to the Archbishop of Miami. The Kindred nightclub promoter in St. Louis survived a hunter raid and has since taken refuge in Kansas City, buying protection among the Cainites there with that information on SAD activity. The Sheriff of South London's flunky is secretly a Noddist, feeding information to a Pack Priest in Marseille.

Of course, as mentioned elsewhere, the fear of Sabbat spies is a greater threat than Sabbat spies themselves — who are nothing to dismiss lightly. In a strange way, this heightened state of anxiety helps the Sabbat, as the other sects are so fearful that they're rife with infiltrators, they devote much of their effort to investigating every whisper or rumor, bogging them down with suspicion and recrimination. At the same time, once an actual Sabbat spy gains attention, it's probably just a matter of time before they're actually discovered, or before they decide to go out in a blaze of bloody glory.

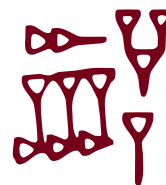
This is a double-edged sword for coterie's of players' characters. A series of stories in a chronicle might well be devoted to rooting out and ultimately destroying Sabbat infiltrators, while an equal number of subsequent stories might be spent exonerat-

ing themselves when a prestigious rival — herself a Sabbat catspaw? — accuses them of Black Hand sympathies. The infinite dance of suspicion and acquittal can make for a remarkably suspenseful chronicle.

### Getting Involved

**THE BOON-BUYERS:** A coterie looking to make a splash in the domain has been buying up the prestation debts of various Kindred, and have proven remarkably resourceful in doing so. It all happened too quickly for anyone to notice, but now the domain's social elite is on tenterhooks, having traded each other's dirty laundry for short-term gains. The coterie buying up all of the boons is in fact a Sabbat pack — which the players' coterie realizes as it discovers them preparing for a Mass Embrace. The pack's plan is to reveal all of the boons it has acquired at Elysium, to set the local Kindred against each other with the revelation of all the malicious schemes and personal vendettas individual vampires have been waging, and then to raze the domain with shovelheads once the local vampires have already turned against each other in grievance.

**REDOUBLING THE TRIPLE:** Someone close to the coterie turns out to be a Sabbat informant. As the coterie follows them to meet with their contact, though, they recognize the contact as a highly-placed Kindred from a neighboring domain. Which means either that the coterie's ally is a double-agent, or the ally's contact is the double-agent, or the ally's contact is a re-doubled agent... turns out it's not so clear-cut as a single smoking gun.



# Story Elements: Narrative Structures

As antagonists, the Sabbat will cross the players' paths in a variety of ways. The most obvious is of course open conflict, but as a versatile foil, the Sabbat is more than just the blood and fire its rivals portray it to be. The Sabbat will ever be the antagonist, but that antagonism is the substance of a great deal of narrative depth.

## Rising Action

The Sabbat may act insidiously or it may announce its arrival in a domain with a full crusade. However the Black Hand becomes involved in a domain, players' characters should have the opportunity to expose their efforts and perhaps even stop them before all hell breaks loose.

The Sword of Caine may shovelhead shock troops in the coterie's home domain. Rumors make it to connected vampires' whisper networks and contacts push vital news into the possession of vampires who might be able to do something about the impending arrival of the Black Hand. Domains experience a steadily rising paranoia, fearful of the enemy on the doorstep, and new or unfamiliar Kindred feel an unsubtle weight of suspicion. Elysium becomes a tense affair, as loyalties come into question and longstanding grudges are openly relitigated in front of the assembled domain.

The Sabbat might also be staging a hearts-and-minds operation (see above), attempting to woo young, disadvantaged Kindred against the injustice of the Camarilla or an Anarch presence that isn't as egalitarian as it pretends to be. The War of Ages may heat up, stoked by the Black Hand in an effort to destabilize Kindred factions that would otherwise exist in a state of mutual awareness.

An emboldened Sabbat may perform ritae in a coterie's home domain, roiling its members into righteous fervor and terrorizing the mortal populace while someone at the right place at the right

time witnesses the whole thing. Do they attempt to break it up? Or do they pass on what they know to more capable vampires?

Violence, the hallmark of the Sabbat, happens in staccato bursts, whether the discovery of horrific treatment of mortals to the now-empty but tale-telling site of a Mass Embrace and its grisly remains. Small but gruesome skirmishes occur, perhaps among the domain's residents and intruding Sabbat, or between factions of vampires long on poor terms, with the tension in the domain boiling over. In any event, blood will flow, and that flow will steadily increase.

## Storytelling Rising Action

Unless the chronicle begins in medias res, a good story structure provides for a readily increasing tension as the players' characters learn that the Sabbat is present or soon will be. A logical narrative progression begins with the parties unknown, progressing toward a realization that the Sabbat is active in the domain as the evidence of the sect's presence mounts. As the action rises, conflicts emerge, and the players' coterie may interact with individual vampires from an interloping pack, and may discover the predominant Path of Enlightenment practiced by the pack. A longstanding member of the domain might turn or remain an occulted double-agent, which the players' characters can be instrumental in discovering. Some indication of the Black Hand's agenda likely emerges as well, rewarding the players with knowledge for their investigations and allowing the players to plan how to (or if to...) foil the pack's plans. Some kind of overt conflict also occurs, to whet the players' appetites for the showdown to come, and these early conflicts need not be only physical violence. It's important that the players see the Sabbat not only as foes to be beaten down, but as intelligent if alien rivals who can be negotiated with socially and contended with mentally.

Savor the rising action. It's where the tone for the whole conflict is established, and it rewards player ingenuity and problem-solving, as well as letting a skilled Storyteller manage a web of secrets.



The Sabbat isn't a one-note sect; there's much about exactly what face of the Sabbat the coterie will encounter that can surface during the rising tension.

### Example Developments

- The Sabbat seeks to topple an at-risk Prince, Baron, or other authority figure, or otherwise destabilize the domain, either to claim its resources, or show the weakness of a rival sect
- A sleeper cell, unknown to be Sabbat, about whom suspicion grows and grows until the domain's Kindred are forced to take action
- Sabbat spies who are testing the domain and looking to compel new conscripts into the Gehenna War

### PATHS FROM THE OUTSIDE

How much do non-Sabbat know about the Sabbat's Paths of Enlightenment?

This is an excellent question, and one for which you'll want to make some decisions based on the type of chronicle you wish to run. Overall, assume that Kindred outside the sect actually know very little about the Sabbat, let alone that Paths of Enlightenment even exist as a concept. Kindred wise in the ways of the Sabbat may know that Paths of Enlightenment exist, some characteristics of them, and may even know some of them by name.

Kindred who have faced Cainites in conflict before might even know some of the attitudes of the Paths, such as "Shovelheading the entire bordello? This seems like it might be a cult of Cathari" or "These symbols and ashes mean they ritually diablerized the elder. We're probably dealing with the Path of Caine." Then again, such information might be imperfect, partial, or outright incorrect — "These symbols and ashes mean they diablerized the elder. We're probably dealing with the Path of Night's Power." After all, the Sabbat isn't especially effusive when sharing details about its cultic practices with outsiders, and gaining information about the enemy can be one of the primary activities of the chronicle.

As a Storyteller, decide beforehand how much information about the sect you'd like to reveal when the troupe considers the chronicle Tenets and you're working on your chronicle's themes. You might wish to reveal the sect's dogma as part of the chronicle's dawning horror, or you might wish to plunge the coterie into hot war with antagonists they can very quickly learn how to oppose and exploit.

### Open Conflict

In open conflict, the Sabbat is not only revealed, but acts in its primary idiom: catastrophic violence.

Stories that feature the Gehenna War likely have a great deal of physical conflict among vampires, as the Cainites of the Black Hand attempt to destroy the Antediluvians and anyone they see as the

minions of those despised Ancients. This can easily include Kindred of any other sect, as the Sabbat isn't particular about collateral damage. And Black Hand vampires need not be the immediate participants of an open Gehenna War conflict. Kindred may be breaking up blood cults, sabotaging havens, or smuggling would-be vessels away from the front lines so that the Sword of Caine starves. Whether performing guerilla raids across the Eurasian taiga or battling to keep Black Hand zealots from breaking into the haven of a potent-Blooded autarkis, open conflict can happen anywhere, and is tied to the direct goals of the sect or individual packs.

Open conflict with the Sabbat can also be related to domain clashes and not the core conflict of the Gehenna War. Crusades to seize domain from established sects transpire nightly. Even something as small-scale as routing a single pack in an otherwise stable domain can provide a horrific violent spike in a domain usually known for its intrigues and devastating social repartee.

The Sabbat need not always be the attacker. Sabbat may find themselves pincered between a Gehenna War front and the diligent coterie that has tracked it into the Iberian badlands. They may need to hold a safe house in New York while an allied pack makes its way up from Miami.

## Storytelling Open Conflict

Open conflict is where the shit hits the fan. It's where the highest traditional "action" plays out, for players who enjoy that aspect of the game, with combat and Disciplines and all of the overt manifestations of vampires kicking each other's asses in interesting locations. Skilled Storytellers can weave open conflict in and out of other interactions with the Sabbat, managing a thrilling pace that alternates between cold and hot war.

Inevitably, the Sabbat *wants something*. It doesn't fight for the sake of fighting — the Black Hand is earnest about taking the fight to the Antediluvians, and minor turf wars are meaningless unless they help that effort. That said, it may not always be obvious what the sect wants, and figuring that out helps add context to an open conflict. Sabbat aren't

ravening Wights; they choose their battles with purpose.

## Example Developments

- The Sabbat raids the domain, dragging away or performing diablerie on vulnerable Kindred who don't have the connections or skills to protect them
- A Sabbat war pack rampages through the domain, working itself up into a frenzy of blood and fire on the way to the Gehenna War front or a prized diablerie and "converting" new recruits to take with it
- A veteran pack returning from the Gehenna War front, its bloodlust kindled by the conflict, goes berserk in a domain
- Cainites aggravate an old grudge between factions of the domain's Kindred, then join the fray as "the corruption of the Antediluvians" pushes tensions between Kindred to a breaking point

## Temptation

Kindred dealing with the Sabbat can be surprised how lucid and even enticing the Black Hand can be. At the core of Sabbat philosophy is freedom: freedom from elder oppression, freedom from the Eternal Struggle, freedom from exploitation and anachronistic power dynamics — freedom from mortal notions of guilt and Humanity. "It's not a death cult, it's a *revolutionary army*." That can all be quite appealing to young Kindred Embraced into neofeudal servitude or a coterie on the outs with the gangland politics of the prevailing Anarch power.

Until one sees the brutality of the Sabbat or looks at its philosophy directly, it all sounds good. And that can make for a unique social dynamic in a domain with its own troubles. The instability in LA, the purge of London, and the upheaval in Berlin— these all distress the Kindred dwelling there, so it's no surprise to find (especially young) vampires willing to listen to the alternatives.

The Sword of Caine's honeyed words aren't borne out by the truth of its domains and the Gehenna War, however. By the time a neonate has been

inveigled to join the Black Hand, the truth comes out, the brainwashing begins, the abuse is underway and the tide of murderous violence has already caught them in its undertow.

There's an ineluctable draw, however, to the promise the Sabbat makes when recruiting, or when undermining domains, as the other vampire sees it. A Kindred teetering on the brink between the devil they know and a promise of righteous liberty experiences an internal and external conflict that can prove to be the most profound personal clash. And the Paths of Enlightenment, which variously suborn or indulge the Beast may prove a respite — horrifically, an illusory one — from a perceived eternity hiding from the Beast.

## Storytelling Temptation

Temptation is an opportunity for storytelling contrasts. Sabbat will readily lie to convince other vampires to join their sect, giving a great opportunity for social conflict, subterfuge, and fact-finding. Of course, simply being seen in conversation with the Black Hand can dig a social grave for players' characters that may take a while to dig themselves out of.

The players' characters themselves need not be the ones tempted by the Sabbat, as well. Perhaps a comrade is being courted by the Sabbat, or a mortal Touchstone is Embraced into the sect and must be "rescued" for any chance at redemption. Or maybe a high-ranking Kindred in the domain has bought into the Gehenna War fervor, leaving a power vacuum and freeing up a previously claimed sphere of influence.

As a Storyteller, be sure to handle temptation carefully. A philosophical conversation between a Path of Cathari Cainite and a player's character about how similar their outlooks are should be played to convey a dawning revulsion (which may have been preceded by piquant sympathy...). You're not actually trying to drive players into the antagonists' sect.

## Example Developments

- A Sabbat defector (perhaps a shovelhead who had no choice in their Embrace or a disillusioned former convert) seeks to leave the sect upon realizing the horror of the Sabbat crusade, but can the coterie trust them? Does enough of their Humanity remain upon which to build a redemption?
- An insidious Sabbat diplomat wants assistance "just this one time" in a scheme that seems to offer everyone something they want
- A Kindred encounters a mortal family member, now themselves a Cainite of the Sabbat, and personal tragedy ensues in a catastrophic "homecoming"

## The Enemy of My Enemy

Politics makes strange bedfellows and Kindred politics are no different. The situation may arise in which the coterie simply has to cooperate with a Sabbat pack in order to oppose an even greater threat. A berserk Lupine may be threatening the coterie's hunting ground, chased there by a nomadic pack, or a domineering Archon may be investigating the presence of Black Hand packs so overzealously that an Anarch coterie is caught in the crossfire. Or the Sabbat is hunting down a puissant deserter and the coterie sees an opportunity to resolve two problems with one swift response, using the one to get to the other before delivering the coup de grace.

Consider, too, that sects aren't monolithic, and the Eternal Struggle might have a third component in the domain, such as the tense three-way "understanding" in Tangier. Nobody likes it, but nobody's foolish enough to upset the delicate balance, and so the agreement holds for one more night... until it doesn't.

Given the Sabbat's fanaticism, it's a question of when, not if, the Black Hand will turn on the coterie, but a great deal can happen in that interstitial period.

## Storytelling the Enemy of My Enemy

The function of this conflict is to cause players to question their priorities. When faced with Sabbat presence and something that's an actual existential threat, what do the players do? Conflict is always more interesting when it requires decision-making rather than predefined opposition. (See Conflict Triangles, below.)

As with temptation, then intent is not to send the coterie into the arms of the Sabbat. The most probable outcome of a brief alliance is the Sabbat turning on the players' characters when they're depleted after a significant conflict, anyway, so the tension engendered by this particular narrative development builds on a sense of suspense and paranoia. Is the third party really the greater threat? What does the Sabbat pack think?

## Example Developments

- Sabbat being hunted by a Second Inquisition agency put a devil's deal on the table: Aid the Black Hand, side with the hunters, or suffer the lesser (?) evil of not taking either side and bearing the consequences
- A tattered Sabbat pack thrashes into the city and is easily dealt with — but what was the pack running from?
- A sleeper cell, unknown to be Sabbat, keeps attracting suspicion until the domain's Kindred are forced to take action





## Story Element: Conflict Triangles

*The talent of the strategist is to identify the decisive point and to concentrate everything on it, removing forces from secondary fronts and ignoring lesser objectives.*

— CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ

At some point, a Storyteller might want a chronicle with a conflict more complex than just “the coterie vs. the Sabbat,” and chronicles that position factions in a multifaceted conflict have rich potential. Conflict is always more interesting when it involves having to make a choice, or even figure out who among an array of possible antagonists is the truest foe, and whether or not a deal of opportunity can be brokered.

As a Storyteller, setting up a conflict triangle will require that the players make hard choices, deciding on alliances to make and whether to honor them. (Of course, their “allies” might renege on agreements, as well...) These decisions can and should test individual players’ Convictions, and initiate the sorts of moral quandaries that good **Vampire** stories thrive upon. In a world where all choices have consequences, having to choose which monsters to support or ignore is its own measure of a Kindred’s self.

### Rival Sects

Sectarian conflict is core to **Vampire**. Perhaps a Camarilla court and an Anarch domain are close enough together for a clever Sabbat pack to stage hit-and-run raids against one domain while posing as vampires from the other. Provoke enough conflict, and the Camarilla and Anarch domains might go to war, leaving the Black Hand to target the winning sect once the other has been defeated.

Such deceptions can work both ways, of course. Perhaps an Anarch coterie sees an opportunity to undermine a Camarilla domain near the Sabbat’s Gehenna War front, staging false-flag operations intended to push the Camarilla and Cainites into open conflict, with the coterie ready to seize territory while its rivals are tearing each other to pieces.

Or perhaps the chronicle’s domain features the Hecata as an X-factor who might offer alliance to an Anarch domain that’s being threatened by a Sabbat Crusade. But what do the Devil-Kindred want in exchange? And are they making the same offer of allyship to the Sword of Caine?

### Playing With Fire: The Second Inquisition

But the most dangerous and risky triangle is one involving the Sabbat, mortal vampire hunters, and one or more of the other sects. Many vampires regardless of affiliation believe that this new era of Inquisition was the result of the Camarilla trying to use mortal hunters against their enemies and botching the job. In the aftermath, every sect now stokes a growing fear in this renewed time of Inquisition.

This is where a devil’s deal comes together. If mortal hunters have become alerted to the presence of vampires in the coterie’s locale, it might behoove Kindred of various allegiances to set aside their differences long enough to deal with the matter. Alternatively, in an Anarch or Camarilla domain, perhaps the local vampires have been engaged in a successful effort to conceal themselves from hunters, but now those efforts are at risk due to the emergence of Sabbat packs that have entered the domain with total — and gory — disregard for the Masquerade.

In such chronicles, the players’ coterie might try to direct the hunters into conflict with the Sabbat or bait the Sabbat into attacking the hunters. Or perhaps it’s a Sabbat feint in the first place, drawing hunters to the domain and surreptitiously retreating, to deplete the resources (and vampires...) of the local sect.

The dangers are terribly high either way, but unless one of the enemy groups is removed from the board, the players risk being caught in the middle between both their most dangerous enemies. Whether the hunters in question are a small outfit of clued-in mortals or a well-equipped and -funded department of a political authority, all it takes is one overzealous Sabbat to shred the Masquerade and bring the world's unwelcome attention to the domain, as the Kindred of Vienna can attest.

## Thematic Element: Inhumanities

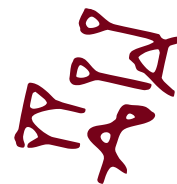
The Sabbat deliberately chooses alienation from both mortals and Kindred of other sects. Although they still appear humanoid in profile (mostly), Sabbat vampires should stand out as distinctly Other when players' characters come in contact with them, to varying degrees. Some examples:

- Sabbat vampires move in strange tandem, as if anticipating each other's movements, and the pack behaves less like a group of people navigating the actual environment and more like a pack of wolves or shiver of sharks. They loom and cluster, but strangely avoid actual contact with one another, eluding each other's spatial presence in a near-liquid expression of moving out of each other's way the moment before the next one of them occupies the space another one did less than a second ago. They may appropriate the gestures of other creatures, such as a cat's languid stretching or simian grooming.
- Individual physical features depart dramatically from mortal human norms. A Sabbat vampire might have no whites to their eyes, or two rows of teeth, or their joints may snap in and out of location as they walk. Overall, they still have normal silhouettes, but something disturbing has had its way with individual aspects of their physical presence. A pack may share a single unsettling characteristic, making for a collective

horror, or the pack may be a motley assembly of individual quirks.

- How the Sabbat vampires relate to and communicate with one another don't conform to mortal or Kindred norms. Packs often chitter, croak, bark, or howl to one another in place of words. They may streak each other with blood to demonstrate affection or visualize their pecking order. They may close their eyes and sense their surroundings by smell or sound, avoiding stumbling over each other with non-tactile cues.
- Cainites exhibit some mortal behaviors to an extreme while others are absent, like talking over each other heedless of the interruption or remaining utterly silent in deference to superior packmates.
- Perhaps giving rise to archaic myths about vampires, Sabbat may fixate on some physical action at a given location, such as endlessly fidgeting with a door handle, plucking flies from the air, or tempting harm by passing their hand over a candle's flame repeatedly. They may smash out a single pane of glass from every window or yank on a packmate's jacket lapels or tear paper into strips and pass it through that packmate's candle flame. Whatever they do, convey the impression that, however small, the action means something to them, and the coterie is simply unable to discern what.

Naturally, those Sabbat with more social focus are better able for what passes as normal (at least among societies of undead nocturnal blood-drinkers), but for the bulk of the sect, observable difference is what helps make the Sabbat memorable and fearsome. Lean into it.



## Thematic Element: The Pack Hunts as One

Given the deindividuation of the Sabbat and the fact that many of its Cainites are either behind enemy lines or in deep cover within hostile domains, individual feeding is both inefficient and at high risk of drawing undesired attention. As such, Storytellers should adopt a single Predator Type to suit the stalking habits of the entire pack. The pack itself hunts as a single entity, affecting the methods of that Predator Type — which should be readily observable to a savvy coterie clued in to the feeding practices of vampires.

In terms of story functions, this serves a number of purposes. First, it allows the players' coterie to either observe the hunt in action, or to piece together clues in its aftermath that tip them off to the fact that a group of vampires is not only present in the domain, but hunting in a way that may well feel antithetical to their own preferences. Second, it grants the pack an additional sense of (group) identity, highlighting their deindividuation. Third, it provides an opportunity to emphasize certain esoteric beliefs of the Sabbat through the correlation of Predator Type and the pack's distinct collective personality.

More information on Predator Types is available on pp. 175-178 of **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

## Setting Element: Sabbat Havens

Forever on the move, the Sabbat in general has little use for established havens. In fact, Cainites rarely bother to devote much effort to maintaining havens at all, other than domains in entente or accord (see p. 107). This is as much a matter of practicality as in

an overt denial of mortal materialism — when the cult demands that one mobilize to oppose wakening blood-gods, affectations and personal property are more burden than boon.

More than anything else, the havens of Black Hand Cainites almost always have an air of haste, of being temporary. In practice, Sabbat simply *take* havens — if they find someplace they want to stay, they stay there, and if they're able to sate their hunger while claiming a place to bed down for the night, more's the better. Whether terrorizing urban gentrifiers and settling in their condominium, lying low in a hotel room on a floor that's being too-slowly renovated, or gorging on low-grade animal vitae in a farmhouse on a moor on the way to the Gehenna War front, Sabbat tend to regard havens as if they were disposable.

Naturally, this affects how players' characters might encounter a Sabbat haven:

- In a domain in entente, the coterie investigates the Bishop's haven, a once-opulent penthouse in a strange state of abandonment and squalor. A thick layer of dust obscures much of the living space, while the bedroom looks like it's been inhabited by feral animals, with blood spattering many of the room's surfaces and monogrammed towels hastily duct-taped over the windows to serve as improvised blackout curtains. Pictures of the penthouse's now-dead original residents still stand on shelves and hang on the walls.
- The run-down bodega off the beaten path has turned into a veritable spider's web, and every now and then, a mortal fly stumbles into the store. The windows are partially boarded over, but not enough to say definitively that the bodega is closed; the flickering fluorescent light gives an antiseptic effect that belies the piled-up filth and spoiled foodstuffs. As a bonus, every now and then, the shelves supply an alchemical ingredient, such as rat poison, cleaning powder, or fresh maggots burrowing through what must once have been fruit. The tear-off calendar on the counter shows that the last time anyone paid attention to it was nine days ago.



- A corrugated metal building on a lonely stretch of highway looks like it was very quickly thrown together and just as quickly neglected. There's all kinds of weird shit in the place that doesn't make any sense: two-thirds of a grubby Piper Cub assembled in the last century, a bunch of concrete garden knick-knacks sharing a vaguely religious motif, a plastic kiddie pool that looks like it had snakes or lizards in it at one point, a still-plugged-in CD player with a lonely new-wave song infinitely repeating. Things that nobody would want to take with them if they're on the run but that obviously have some meaning to them while they're here. Wait a minute, are they in here?

## Communal Havens

The social dynamics of the Sabbat mean that most Cainites spend the vast majority of their time with their pack. That the pack functions as a protective mechanism as much as it does a spiritual unit translates into the Sabbat practice of communal havens. Why spend effort traveling to and from each other's crash space when the pack could sink into daysleep together each night and kill the fuck out of anyone who comes knocking, thinking they've found the place "a vampire" might go to ground? In fact, though no hard data exists, it's probable that most Sabbat havens are communal havens.

This can be especially terrifying for non-Sabbat coteries to discover. Especially among more individualized cultures and societies that value expressions

of clan aesthetics, a haven is an extremely personal thing. Communal havens destroy that notion, and on top of that are immediately dangerous because they're nests of bloodthirsty fanatics who probably didn't invite the Kindred into their home....

Ways in which a coterie might discover a pack haven:

- Pursuing a threat they don't know is a Sabbat pack, the coterie discovers evidence of squatters in the offices of a derelict downtown rec center. Heavy filing cabinets block most of the doors, cheap drywall has person-shaped holes in it, and a number of mummy-style sleeping bags are wadded up all over the place, some of them with remarkable amounts of strange-smelling dirt in them. The building is obviously abandoned, but while they're searching, they hear a basketball bouncing in the court down the hall, as if someone is playing.
- The coterie has followed shambolic vagrants to what appears to be a church-run shelter. With a taste for the affected and the blasphemous, a Sabbat pack has taken over the church. Religious trappings have been deliberately broken, inverted, or profaned — blood collected in a sacramental bowl has a layer of scum congealed across the top and red-brown handprints stain sheaves of printed religious literature. Reveling in the mockery of the vicar's role, the Priest and her Pack treat the holy place with all the reverence of a bus stop full of drunk kine in the middle of the night. And where did the people the coterie was following go?
- Everyone knows not to go to the park, especially after dark. Urban legend has spun dangerous fantasies about it since half of the neighborhood kids' parents were kids themselves. A murderer lives in the shed. Gangs do their initiations past the bike path. An alligator escaped the zoo and took over the duck pond. The playground is full of broken glass and the equipment is rusty and jagged. Police found a body out there, just past the picnic tables where the trees start to get thick. Any of these, honestly, would be prefer-

able to the truth: that there's a pack of monsters out there that sleep beneath the dirt when the sun comes up and they throw the bones of their victims where the copses of trees are the densest.

## Storytelling Technique: Paranoia and Red Herrings

Part of the utility of the Sabbat comes in the fact that the fear of the Sabbat is often as effective as the actual, confrontational presence of the Sabbat. By dropping hints that point toward a Sabbat presence rather than evidential proof of an actual Sabbat presence, the Storyteller can impart thrilling, suspenseful elements to the chronicle that can realize in whatever manner they choose, from political potboiler to blood in the streets.

This needn't always be a situation of overt defecation from one sect to another. Fear is a powerful emotion, and stoking it in the Kindred of a non-Sabbat domain goes a long way toward realizing the Sabbat's role as foils to the players' characters. It also helps realize the Sabbat's narrative promise, that the Black Hand engenders a dread that far outstrips the actual size and influence of the sect itself.

Using a system or story element that's usually associated with the Sabbat can provoke significant questions in a chronicle. Indeed, it can stand in for the Black Hand itself, for when a Storyteller doesn't actually want to have a Sabbat conflict as part of the chronicle, but wants to introduce an air of uncertainty that may result in a circular firing squad among the domain's power elite or street-level operators.

For example, the coterie may discover that a highly influential Lasombra Kindred in a Camarilla court follows a Path of Enlightenment — are they sympathetic to the Sabbat? Or have they simply lacked the rigor to leave the Path behind and uphold the virtues of Humanity? Or perhaps a Kindred

knows a particularly useful Discipline power or ritual of Sabbat origin. How'd they learn that? Whose blood did they drink or what favor do they owe to explain their facility with it? Perhaps the Sabbat has actually come and gone from the domain, having little interest in it, but having left a "time bomb" of Unbirthed (see p. 43) as a havoc-wreaking fuck-you to the city's power structure out of spite.

Don't overdo this. If every rumor is a red herring, the coterie will soon grow disinterested in seeking actual information. But a healthy dose of situational doubt can discourage a group of headstrong vampires from acting first and thinking later, especially if a few early missteps bear sensible consequences.

## Thematic Element: the Antediluvians

*They will rule with iron talons  
They will wrench  
the hearts of all still alive  
And the full sum of the  
earth's living will come  
and live in the Last City,  
called Gehenna.*

— THE BOOK OF NOD

Gehenna is the final act of the Eternal Struggle and the Sword of Caine is determined to see the Antediluvians destroyed before they consume their lineages. Now that Gehenna has come the Sabbat is focused on unravelling the secrets of the Antediluvians as never before.

Who or what are the Antediluvians? It is the question at the very core of the Sabbat, but also

one that all but went unasked for centuries. The Dark Father's grandchildren are believed to be the progenitors of the vampire clans, Third-Generation vampires cursed by Caine for the murder of their own creators.

The term Antediluvian itself means "before the Flood," referring to the Biblical flooding of the world, which is itself enigmatic, as surely the Ancients predate Christianity themselves. Still, this may be a matter of perception.

Although it is traditionally believed that 13 Antediluvians founded 13 clans as recounted in the *Book of Nod*, some scholars believe a few of the Clans may have been started by the same progenitor. Radicals among those scholars hasten to point out that at no point does the *Book of Nod* declare that only 13 clans exist — but that's a matter for another night.

## Enemy Unknown

*Mortal once, but now they have moved beyond even immortality. They have acquired the properties of the Aeons through which they passed. Time has clad them in impenetrable armor, but they were mortal once.*

— SOURCE UNKNOWN

This brings up the difficult question of identifying an Antediluvian. Precious few of the Damned have met an Antediluvian and survived to tell of it. Given the time period from which they purportedly hail, are they cursed neolithic humans? Are they mythological entities, on the order of gods, demi-gods, or the like? Are they even anthropomorphic at all? Or are they themselves the curse that runs through their despised lineages — is [Malkav] the Blood-borne demiurge that rouses "Malkavians" to rise each night?

Even assuming the Sabbat have discerned the Antediluvians' weaknesses, how do packs know when they've found one? This is a question that has vexed the Sabbat throughout the Gehenna War as many have claimed the destruction of one Antediluvian or another only to be later proven false, a "mere" Methuselah or a lesser simulacrum.



The Sabbat's veneration and exercise of diablerie has shed some light on this question as they have devoured their way through entire lineages and a handful of Cainites have even caught glimpses of these clan founders from the Blood of their direct progeny. Indeed, more than one Malkavian mystic has claimed the differences in their Blood that makes others perceive them as racked by prophetic vision is actually their founder's literal presence upon their soul. Innumerable accounts persist, such as nigh-folkloric tales of [Gangrel?] burrowing through the crust of the Earth or of [Tzimisce] becoming a mycological eruption of flesh.

That the Antediluvians have transcended their mortal frames may well be certain. Just as Sabbat have shed their mortal identities, the Antediluvians have no need to take on human guises. They may have been mortal once — perhaps? — but the power of the Dark Father's Blood and the passage of

inestimable epochs has surely refined and transmuted them.

This is itself part of the riddle the Sabbat seeks to answer with its cannibal crusade. To understand what trials the Antediluvians endured to attain their divinity, to stand where their feet once stood, to feel their moments of victory and defeat. All this to know the Antediluvians as they once were, to conjure and contain them in a vessel that can be destroyed or perhaps to consume their power for themselves.

## Stolen Blood

What of those vampires, such as the master of House Tremere or the Giovanni family, who never knew Caine but stole their power from others more ancient? Are these usurpers truly Antediluvians in the same manner as those monsters that have existed since before the flood? Can it even be certain they killed the Antediluvians from whom they stole their claim to the Third Generation?

These more recent "Antediluvians" may just be pawns of the true masters of Gehenna who have allowed them to steal a portion of their power as a way to enslave them. The heterodoxy that the Antediluvians cannot be destroyed by the common methods of dismemberment or diablerie has gained purchase within the Sabbat and casts doubt on the fabled but accepted triumphs of certain clans over their progenitors.

While this new dogma was difficult for many Sabbat to accept at the start of the Gehenna War, the Beckoning was interpreted by many as confirmation that none of the Antediluvians have yet to be dispatched. Can the last generation "with mastery over life and death" even be destroyed should they wish against it? The power of true Antediluvians may simply be too great to end under fang or claw, and even fire and sunlight might not be enough to finish them. Understanding the nature of these ancients will be critical to the Sabbat's victory, or the root of its demise. ■

# INDEX



- Accord, 107, *See* Domains  
 Africa, 93, 95  
 Albigensians, 23, 36, 61, *See* Cathari  
 Anarchs, 12-13, 77-78, 92-96  
 Animalism, 12, 21, 47  
 Antediluvians, 6, 65, 71, 74, 77, 93, 95, 125, 126  
 antitribu, 13, 74  
 Archbishop, 72, 79, 81  
 Ashirra, 95, 102  
 Auctoritas Ritae, 55, 56, 63  
 Auspex, 23, 25, 46  
 Ballerino, 83, *See* Priest  
 Beast, 15, 21, 23, 25, 27, 31, 79  
 Beckoning, 13, 31, 94, 95, 126  
 Beelzebeatit, 50  
 Befoul Vessel, 52  
 Binding, the, 63  
 Bishop, 42, 81, *See* Titles  
 Black Hand, 9, 13-16, 95-96  
 Blinding the Alloy Eye, 52  
 Blood and Fire, 91, 109-110, *See* Chronicle Structures  
 Blood Bath, 61-62  
 Blood Bond, 14, 38, 56, 92  
 Blood Bonding, 49  
 Blood Feast, 58-59  
 Blood Potency, 50, 51  
 Blood Sorcery, 25, 49, 56, 92  
 Blood-hound, 34  
 Boarding Party, 63, *See* Games of Instinct  
 Book of Nod, 6, 25, 64, 65, 95, 125  
 Brazil, 98  
 Broken Servant, 41  
 Brothers and Sisters in Caine, 14, 62, 63, 84, *See* Cainites  
 Caine, 7, 13, 21-29, 46, 55-63, 78, 126  
     Cainite, 8, 57, 63, 81, 107-108,  
     Cainites, 15, 23, 27, 29-30, 31, 56, 61-62, 71-72, 77, 121-122  
 Camarilla, 7, 12, 71, 77, 81, 93, 95-100, 120  
 Cardinal, 84, *See* Titles  
 Cathari, 23, 35-37, 65-66  
 Cathedral of Flesh, 8  
 Catholic Church, 91  
 Ceremonies, 52  
 Changing Paths, 79, *See* Paths of Enlightenment  
 Chronicle Structures, 109  
 Cicatriz, 81-82  
 Cleaner, 88, *See* Pack Patterns  
 Cold War, 71-72  
 Common Ritae, 64-68, *See* Ritae  
 Communal Havens, 123, *See* Setting Elements  
 Communal Vigor, 50  
 Conflict Triangles, 120  
 consent, 8  
 Contrition Ritae, 65-68, *See* Ritae  
 Convention of Thorns, 93  
 Convictions, 47, 59, 120  
 Creation Rites, 57  
 Crusades, 32, 72, 108, 109, 111  
 Cult, 16, 116, 122  
 Damned, 15, 23, 125  
 Dark Father, 13, 21, 56, 94, 126, *See* Caine  
 Dark Mother, 31, *See* Lilith  
 Death and the Soul, 25, 37-40, 66-67  
 Demolition Derby, 63, *See* Games of Instinct  
 Devils of the Flesh, *See* Cathari  
 Devourers, 33, 64, 88  
 diablerie, 8, 21, 58, 62, 65, 110, 112, 117  
 Disciplines, 46  
 Dog Tagging, 63, *See* Games of Instinct  
 Domains, 13-14, 33, 71, 92, 94, 105-108  
 Dominate, 25, 47  
 dominion, 32, 33, 36, 38, 40  
 Ductus, 85, *See* Titles  
 Eastern Europe, 101  
 Enemy of My Enemy, 118, *See* Narrative Structures  
 Egypt, 102  
 elders, 12, 19, 27, 50, 71, 80, 82, 92-96  
 Embraces, 12, 13, 57, 92  
 Entente, 107-108, *See* Domains  
 esbats, 91-94  
 Eternal Struggle, 13, 14, 74, 80, 114, 117, 118, 125, *See* Gehenna War  
 Festival of the Dead, 60-61  
     Festivo dello Estinto, 61  
 Final Death, 8, 13, 92  
 Fire Dance, 61  
 fleshcrafting, 45  
 fleshweld ghouls, 44-45  
 Forsaken Paths, 31  
 Fortitude, 27  
 France, 83  
 Galvanic Ruination, 51  
 Games of Instinct, 63  
 Gehenna War, 13-15, 91-96, 107-108, 116-117,  
 ghouls, 36, 38, 41, 43-45, 50  
 Hangarounds, 42  
 Harrowhaunt, 52



- Hearts and Minds, 110, *See* Chronicle Structures
- Hecata, 120
- Heliophile, 42
- Honeytrap, 36
- Hot War, 32, 71-72
- Humanity, 11, 32, 79, 80, 110, 111, 117-118
- Hunger, 35, 43, 45, 49, 50, 52
- Hunting Rites, 55, 65-68. *See* Rites
- Ignobis Rites, 55, 64-68
- Infiltration and Espionage, 112, *See* Chronicle Structures
- Inhumanities, 121, *See* Thematic Elements
- Inquisition, 91, 92, *See* Inquisition
- Israel, 102
- Ivory Tower, 41, 74, 95, 113
- Julius Sutphen, 81, *See* The Doctor
- Kindred, 9
- Knight, 41
- koldun, 92
- Lasombra, 19, 80, 93
- Leaving Paths, 79
- Liaison, 86, *See* Pack Patterns
- Lifecrafter, 40
- Lilith, 31
- Lucita de Aragón, 74, 81
- Maghreb, 102
- Mask of Isolation, 48
- Mass Embrace, 13, 114-115, *See* Embrace
- Masquerade, the, 40, 59, 66, 72, 78, 93, 106, 120-122
- Methuselah, 59, 84, 125
- Mexico, 94, 97, 106
- Mokhtar Sahnoun, 83, *See* Priest
- Monomacy, 58, 61, 65, 68, 82
- Narrative Structures, 115
- Necronomist, 25, 37-40, 66-67, 81
- nickname, 57
- Noddists, 21, 33-35, 64-65
- Nosferatu, 74
- On-Demand Sunburn, 53
- Obfuscate, 21, 23, 48
- Oblivion, 25, 49, 52
- occult, 25, 37, 66
- Open Conflict, 109, 116-117, 120, *See* Narrative Structures
- Pack, 85-89, 109-114, 121-124
  - Pack Patterns, 85
  - Pack Priest, 50, 58, 64, 82, 85, 114
  - The Pack Hunts as One, 122, *See* Thematic Elements
- Paladin, 85
- Palestine, 102
- Palla Grande, 64
- Pandering, 64, *See* Games of Instinct
- Paranoia and Red Herrings, 124, *See* Storytelling Technique
- Paths of Enlightenment, 19-42
  - Path of Caine, 20-21, 33-35, 64-65, 81
  - Path of Cathari, 22-23, 35-37, 65-66
  - Path of Death and the Soul, 24-25, 37-40, 66-67, 83
  - Path of Enlightenment, 12, 15, 19, 55, 57, 79, 116
  - Path of Honorable Accord, 31, 80
  - Path of Lilith, 31
  - Path of Power and the Inner Voice, 26-27, 40-42, 67-68
  - Path of the Sun, 28-30, 42, 98
  - Path Realities, 79
  - Paths from the Outside, 116, *See* Narrative Structures
- Piper, 38
- Playing With Fire, 120, *See* Conflict
- Triangles and The Second Inquisition
- Portable Shade, 53
- Posthumanism, 76
- Potence, 21, 27
- Presence, 23
- Priscus, 85
- Procurer, 89, *See* Pack Patterns
- Protean, 21, 49

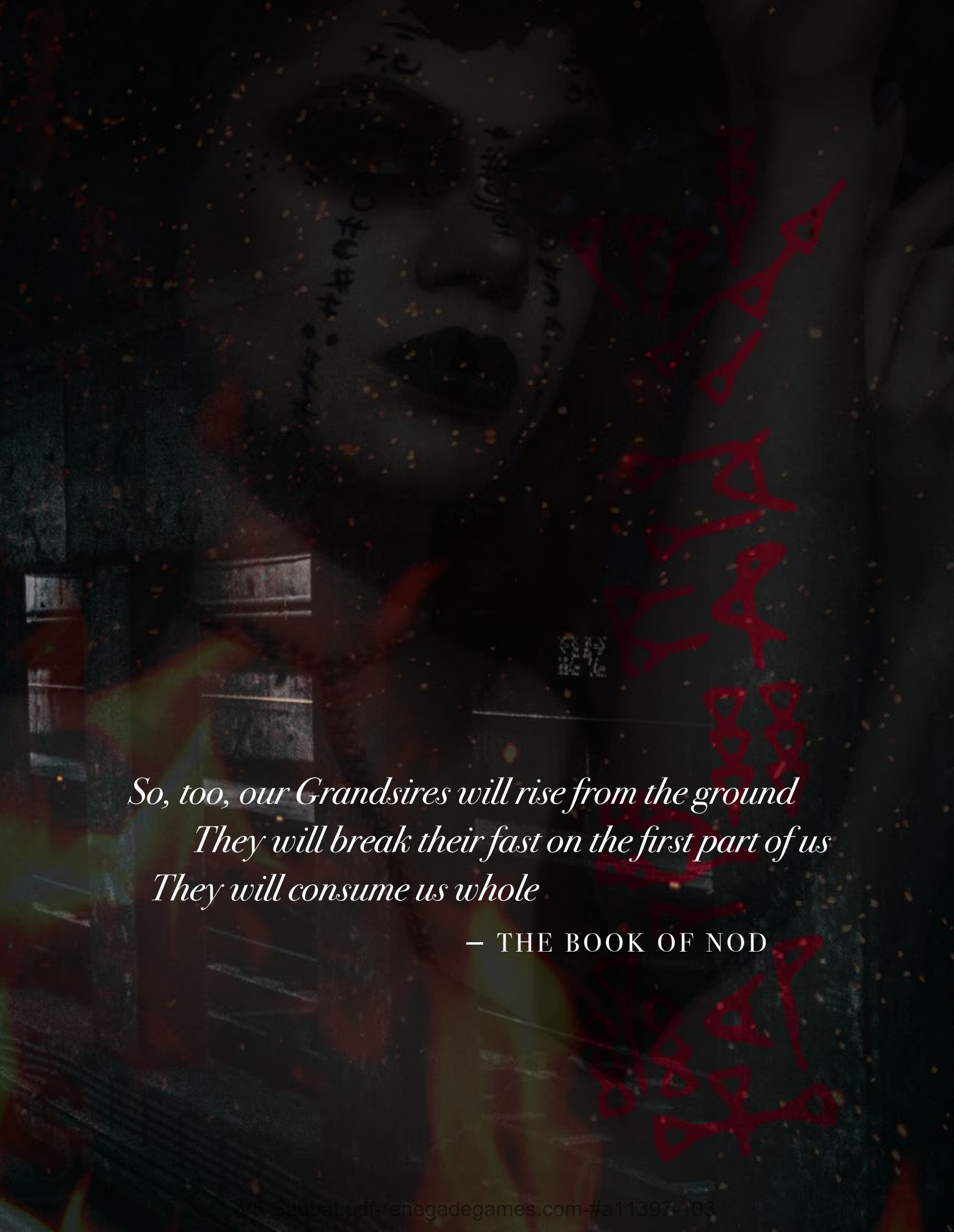


Radicalizer, 37  
 Reapers, 25, 37-40, 66-67  
 Reclamation of Vitae, 50  
 Regent, 80  
 Rising Action, 115, *See* Narrative Structures  
 Ritae, 55-68  
 Rival Sects, 120, *See* Conflict  
 Triangles  
 Russia, 71, 100  
 Sabbat, 7-8, 11-16, 19, 55-58, 74, 91-94, 105-108, 109-114, 115-119, 122-123 *See* Black Hand, The, *See* Brothers and Sisters in Caine, *See* Cainites  
 Sabbat Havens, 122-123, *See* Setting Elements  
 Scent of Prey, 47  
 Scholar, 88-89, *See* Pack Patterns  
 Scout, 86, *See* Pack Patterns  
 Second Inquisition, 7, 60, 61, 66, 71, 91, 102, 120  
 Sermons of Caine, 64  
 Setting Element, 105, 122  
 Shackled, 43-44, 81  
 Shovelhead, 56, 72, 75, 106, 115  
 Simulacrum Gate, 51  
 SITREP, 95  
 Slayer, 35  
 Sleeper, 38  
 South America, 71  
 spectre, 38, 40, 43, 44, 52  
 Stains, 46-48, 50  
 Stoking Revolution, 111, *See* Chronicle Structures  
 Stolen Blood, 126, *See* Thematic Elements, *See* Thematic Elements  
 Storytelling Technique, 124  
 Surge, 106, *See* Domains  
 Sword of Caine, 7, 13, 21, 33, 56, 71, 76, 80, 95  
 szlachta, 40  
 Tabula Rasa, 47  
 Tadarida, 83, *See* Priest  
 Templar, 85, *See* Titles  
 Temptation, 117-119, *See* Narrative Structures  
 Tenets, 59, 116  
 The Doctor, 81, *See* Julius Sutphen

Thematic Elements, 121, 122  
 Thin-blooded, 12, 29  
 Third Generation, 13, 25, 29, 77-78, 125-126  
 Tijuana, 78, 81-82  
 Titles, 58, 61, 80, 84  
 Touchstone, 47, 60, 110  
 Tracker, 35  
 Traditions, 60, 110  
 Transitive Bond, 49  
 Tremere, 49, 92, 126  
 Tzimisce, 45, 74, 92, 93, 126  
 Uhlan, 40-42, 67-68  
 Umbrous Clutch, 49  
 Unbirthed, 43  
 Unerring Pursuit, 46  
 Unifiers, 27, 40-42  
 Vampyre, 37  
 Vaulderie, 14, 50, 55, 56, 92  
 vincula, 9, 56, *See* also vinculum  
 Visceral Absorption, 49  
 vozhd, 45  
 War of Ages, 14, 115  
 War Party, 62  
 Warrior, 86, *See* Pack Patterns  
 Wassail, 31, 79  
 Western Europe, 83  
 Wight, 80, 82, 117  
 Wild Hunt, 61, 62, 63





The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wall or a large piece of paper. In the center, there is a large, faint, and somewhat obscured face, likely a portrait of a historical figure. To the right of the face, there are several red, glowing symbols that resemble stylized, inverted triangles or a specific form of runic script. The overall lighting is dim, with some highlights on the left side, possibly from a window or a light source. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

*So, too, our Grandsires will rise from the ground  
They will break their fast on the first part of us  
They will consume us whole*

– THE BOOK OF NOD



*I gave a cry of anguish at this terrible curse  
and tore at my flesh.*

*I wept blood.*

*I caught the tears in a cup and drank them.*

— THE BOOK OF NOD

# SABBAT



## THE BLACK HAND

*Brothers and Sisters in Caine, united under  
the banner of the Dark Father*

An antagonists' guide to the cultic fanatics of the Sabbat, this book contains:

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WORLD OF  
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