

Convention of Thorns

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LIVEFORM





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Introduction

What is this document?

The text you have in your hands (or on your screen!) is the Design Document for the larp event *Convention of Thorns*. It contains both practical information, guidelines on how to play the event and a lot of relevant information on the setting, the *World of Darkness* created by White Wolf.





What is this larp about?

A historical event in a fictional world

In its essence, *Convention of Thorns* is a larp about one of the most important events in *Vampire: The Masquerade* history. Of course, since it takes place in the fictional *World of Darkness* setting, this isn't a real-world historical event. It's bound up in real-world history, however, and the scope of the event is just as grand as if it had been real. Players are encouraged to look at the bigger picture and think to themselves: "If Vampires were real, how would this meeting have affected the world as we know it?"

The grandiose made personal

It's also a larp about power-hungry individuals with twisted agendas, the ideologically pure and the practical-minded. It's about giving a sense of what happens when you put too many cooks in one kitchen and even the basic recipe is up for debate. It's about personal horror, personal ambition and personal loyalties. *Convention of Thorns* aims to make the grand politics of the Vampire world feel personal to both the characters and the participants. Choices have costs, and those costs aren't just abstract numbers or words, but real, (in)human costs, to be paid in blood and souls.

Not just politicians with fangs

This is a political larp, but it's not a larp about politicians. This isn't like the first meeting of the United Nations in 1946, or the Nicea Council in 325. It's not just a meeting of statesmen with agendas to pursue, and communities to represent. It's a web of intrigue, hierarchies and relations, all twisted up into a perverse Gordian knot. Its members are not humans with human emotions, strengths and weaknesses. No, they're something so much more - and so much less. They're Vampires...

Intense, brutal and beautiful

Convention of Thorns is an attempt at giving an insight into a different world. It's a world of great beauty, decadence and power, where the fate of nations hangs in the balance, and where the decisions made will mean the lives or deaths of thousands and millions. This gathering represents a concentration of powerful individuals such as the world has never known.

It's also a place where emotions run high, lusts are carnal, visceral and perverted, and where darkness isn't just creeping in the corners, but is on full display. Some of the things that go on here are horrible, and it's not a horror inflicted by the outside - it's a horror coming from within.

Welcome to the larp *Convention of Thorns*.





This is a Nordic larp

Play to lose

One of the central ideals of many Nordic larps - including *Convention of Thorns* - is the **Play to lose** ideal. **Play to lose** means that even though the characters may be trying to win, the participants can still actively try to lose; whatever that might mean in the given context. Thus, a power-hungry Ancilla who would do anything to gain favor with her Sire might well want to keep her Sire's secrets safe, but the participant playing the character can still choose to spill the secrets "by accident".

Play to lose is not a rule, but a guideline for making interesting play for the enjoyment of all.

Mechanics are there to help, not to hinder

A larp like this one is about social interaction: backroom deals, broken loyalties and dark desires. The game mechanics are there to help create worthwhile and meaningful experiences - not to stop people from playing. This means that most mechanics are very loosely defined, and they serve as an inspiration and a way of giving players alibi to have powerful scenes together. This means that many of the rules are not "rules" as such, but intentions and inspirations for players.

Co-creation and cooperative storytelling

Convention of Thorns isn't a video game you can beat, or a contest you can win. It's a story, told together by nearly two hundred participants in joyful, chaotic unity. This means that it's important to share the spotlight, involve other players in the action and spread the interesting moments around. The stronger the character, the bigger the heavier the burden for involving others. A movie or a book can have just a few main characters. In a larp, everyone is the main character in their own story, and no one should feel like "just an extra". Even when we play against each other, we play together.

360° aesthetic - to a point!

This isn't a historically correct larp (it has vampires in it, for one thing!), but as far as possible, we try to maintain a 360° illusion. It doesn't matter if your costume fits the 14th or the 17th century, but it does matter that you're not wearing sneakers and a t-shirt. It also means that props and scenography are there to highlight the visual feel, so as to create as good an illusion as possible. With that in mind, we're also focusing on making the central play areas be interesting instead of trying to make everything look believable. There are still modern toilets on the premises, and while we do our best to make everything seem more 1493 than 2016, it's best not to look the gift horse in the mouth. ;-)





Setting

Anno Domini 1493 - but not 1493 as we know it!

The larp is set in England in the year 1493 AD. This is the time where Columbus has just “discovered” America (though that name won’t be used before later), the Muslims Moors have just been driven from Spain in the final parts of the Reconquista and Jews have been expelled from the Spanish kingdom of Aragon. In Europe, the Holy Roman Empire sits atop a chaotic jumble of German principalities, duchies and free cities. Denmark rules the North, and the Ottoman Empire is still growing in influence and power. This is the time of the Renaissance, with its poets, scholars, sculptors, painters and thinkers. But it’s also not exactly the world as we know it, because Vampires are real and exist in the shadows. And that changes everything.

Historical-ish, not historical

Convention of Thorns is a larp that uses history as a background, but isn’t focused on history. This isn’t a larp where it’s important whether the clothes you wear fit the 1400s, the 1500s or the 1600s. It’s not a larp where you’ll be in trouble if you forget that Constantinople is now named Istanbul, and that the powerful Medici family is led by Lorenzo, not Cosimo. It’s a larp about power, personalities and principles, not a larp about historical facts and figures. This isn’t to say that some historical knowledge won’t make the experience more enjoyable - but to make it clear that this isn’t a historical larp.

The world is defined by the participants

Unlike other media, larp happens in the moment and only in the moment. There’s no good way of going back and saying “Ah, but I forgot to say this” or “I wanted to do something else.” without disrupting play. This is not a movie, nor is it a theater play. It’s a larp - created by the participants together, using the power of imagination, collective storytelling and co-creation.

This means that mistakes will happen. Facts will be distorted. Rules will be forgotten (or bent). Misunderstandings will lead to unexpected situations. No matter how tightly we plan it, this is a Nordic style larp with all the strengths and weaknesses that brings with it.

In the end, there may be those who say “But according to my knowledge of World of Darkness this couldn’t have happened.” or “This was wrong in this and this way.”

That’s unavoidable. We larp because we want to play “What if?” as a group. And when the group is 180 people pretending to be vampires, even fiction will be twisted. Don’t worry. That’s ok. ☺

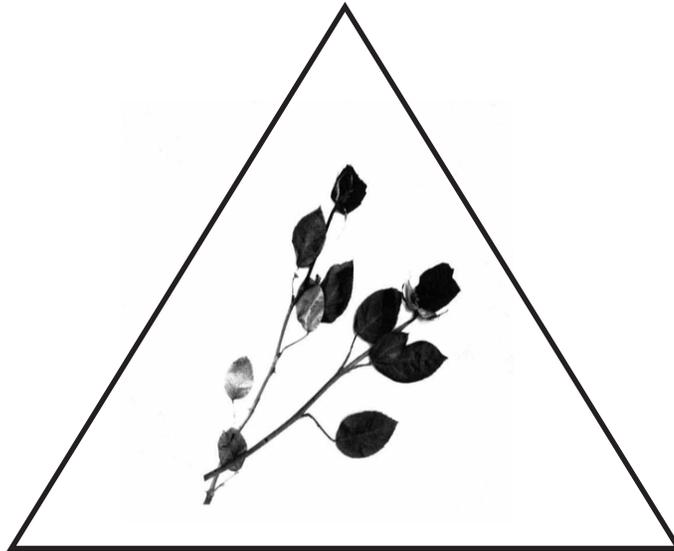




Design Principles

It feels real

- Believable world
- Visually stunning
- Minimal mechanics



Vampire Grand History

- Shaping Vampire politics for hundreds of years
- A feeling of making a difference
- Historical inspiration brought alive

You're the monster

- Both Master & Servant
- Inhuman Vampires
- Long-term scheming



1. Player guidelines





Help! I'm new to Vampire (1)

So you're new to Vampire: the Masquerade?

Not everyone has played *Vampire: The Masquerade* for decades, and there are a few basic things that every player should ideally know about the setting. Here are some of the most crucial and most fundamental things to know about *Vampire: The Masquerade* as a new player.

The World of Darkness

The World of Darkness is a world entirely like our own - except that it is populated by vampires, werewolves, changelings, and other creatures of legend. During the renaissance of the World of Darkness, it is generally taken for granted by vampires that things such as werewolves and magic exists. That does not mean that vampires know much about these phenomena however - and if any being is more unsettled and disturbed by the unknown than mortals, it is a vampire.

The Curse of Caine

Vampirism is a condition that every single character in the larp will be struggling with or relishing in - often a little bit of both. In *Vampire: The Masquerade*, Vampires are immortal and their appearance is unchanging from the moment their mortality ends. They are not affected by crosses, garlic, running water, or silver - though a stake through the heart can paralyze them indefinitely. Vampires sleep through the day in a secure location known as a Haven, and this day-sleep is a confusing mess of half-remembered memories - something akin to a mortal fever dream.

Vampires do not have bodily functions, but they can fake it with some effort, and young vampires often engage in meaningless rituals such as eating solid food or intercourse to feel just a little bit more human than they are. This backfires more often than not as it is both painful and unnecessary to ingest anything but blood, and the physical act of love becomes a very messy affair when all of the bodies fluids are replaced by sticky, clotting blood. Vampires are hurt tremendously by fire and sunlight - it can kill them extremely quickly, and the mere threat of exposure generally makes the Blood induce panic. They have to feed on the blood of mortals, or they will starve and soon resort to gorging themselves on random passerby's in a panicked attempt to sate their bloodlust.





Help! I'm new to Vampire (2)

The other manifestations of the Curse

Vampires are also cursed in other ways. For one, their mental state and mystic growth are very much tied to the kind of blood they ingest. Blood strong in emotion and life yield far more gains than blood from numb or dead victims, and animal blood can produce undesirable effects, especially long term. There is also a strange tendency in vampires towards creative sterility. It does happen, sometimes, that vampires create something truly new - but that is a rare and momentous occasion indeed. And even the new things they do create are pale imitations of mortal genius. There are many vampire artists, but there are no vampire masterworks. Vampires also struggle with keeping the hunger and desires of the Blood under control - every thought and impulse being subtly influenced by the alien will. In some, this manifests as predatory and aggressive tendencies, with certain vampires always two seconds from violence, while others might betray even family and loved ones for a chance at some particularly enticing victim, regret present only afterwards with the Blood sated. Both things are usually disastrous in social situations. For the purposes of the larp, these reactions are rarely violent - though the threat is always there. Vampires are most commonly known as Kindred among fellow vampires, but Cainite is another - rather archaic - term.

It's not all a curse, of course. Some would say that existing - theoretically - forever is quite a boon. Vampires are also able to manipulate their blood to produce certain clearly supernatural results, such as the domination of mortal minds or the calling forth of unholy strength.

Loss of Humanity & Monstrosity

Vampires are not human beings with fangs. They are, at heart, mere parasites. Everything they are and everything they do is a twisted parody of humanity. Some might think them romantic and exciting, but in truth vampires are rarely anything but monsters. Their whole existence is one of forcing themselves upon unwilling mortals - either through violence or through lies and subterfuge. As a result, few vampires survive for very long - if it can even be called surviving - without coming to terms with the fact that everything they do is monstrous and inhuman.

The loss of humanity is a palpable thing for vampires, they feel themselves slowly losing what made them human, until one day there is nothing more to lose. Many young vampires attempt to relight the spark of something real - something beautiful - that they once felt as mortals. They throw themselves into self-destructive cycles of debauchery and decadence just to feel something - anything other than the eternal hollowness of being what they are. It starts innocently enough, but over the centuries even the most innocent of pursuits turn into perversities of the highest order. It's no wonder then that many of the older vampires - and quite a few young - are truly broken on some fundamental level.





Help! I'm new to Vampire (3)

Embrace, Age & Final Death

The Embrace is the act of turning a mortal into a vampire. In practical terms, a vampire drains a mortal entirely of blood and then feeds the empty body a bit of their own blood. The former mortal will die, and then they will rise again as a new vampire - a so-called Fledgling. The creator of the new vampire is now called the Sire, while the new vampire is their Childe. The plural form of Childe is Childer. There are no real developmental steps for a vampire, because they never really change their biological makeup. In spite of this, the youngest vampires who are not Fledglings are generally known as Neonates, while the slightly older vampires are known as Ancillae and many of the oldest still active are known as Elders. Any vampire older than a millennium is generally referred to as a Methuselah. When a vampire is finally slain or otherwise meets their demise, it is referred to as the Final Death - and the vampire either quickly rots away to dust or leaves behind a bloodless corpse, depending on their true age.

See page 32 to page 35 for more information about the different age groups.

Clans & Coteries

A Clan is something as simple as the bloodline of vampire you're Embraced into - your Clan is always the same as the Clan of your Sire, and any Childer you create will have the same Clan in turn. Clans also come with their own internal culture, rituals, and norms - and some of them take these internal matters far more seriously than others. For most, the Clan is merely a sort of extended family, rather than a tightly knit group of personal allies.

As for a tightly knit group of personal allies, that would be a Coterie. A Coterie is a group of vampires - often, but not always, from different Clans - working together towards some sort of common goal or towards their shared social or political advancement. A Coterie can be temporary or it can be far more long-term than that. All Coteries, however, are personal matters. Your Clan might be distant family, chosen by your Sire - but your Coterie are the allies you chose yourself.

See page 55 to page 67 for more information about the different Clans.





Help! I'm new to Vampire (4)

Domains & Titles

Strictly speaking, a Domain is a geographical area under the control of a single powerful vampire - though few Domains are truly inhabited by only a single vampire. As such, Domain is usually the word used in an area for the vampire society and establishment of the area. Like mortal fiefs and kingdoms, Domains usually have a ruler - and the Kindred usually know this ruler as the Prince of the Domain. Officially, this Prince is the single powerful vampire that is said to rule the Domain.

The unlife of a vampire is a pretty bum deal, when all is said and done. Eternity can feel somewhat hollow and unfulfilling for a creature that is slowly losing its humanity and can do nothing about it. Many throw themselves into games of intrigue and power relations - and not just because of the crippling ennui. Vampires feel an urge to dominate and control everyone around them. It is a rare vampire who can stomach the thought of being beneath others in the social hierarchy. As a result, there exists many titles - both formal and informal - denoting the exact importance of each vampire in the grand scheme of things. And in many Domains the Prince is only the official wielder of power.

See page 50 to page 52 for more information about Domains and their titles.

Blood Bonds

Vampire blood is addictive - those who drink it become dependant on it, just like vampires are dependant on the blood of mortals. That's not to say that you simply develop a taste for vampire blood after having tasted it - though that's certainly also the case. Rather, you become addicted to the blood of a specific vampire, and through some mystical tie of blood you feel compelled to serve this vampire and remain in their good graces. This is called the Blood Bond.

When a mortal is the victim of a Blood Bond their own minds force obedience towards the vampire in question, all for the promise of more vampire blood. The blood keeps them alive as long as they partake of it at least once a month, and it keeps them the age they were when they began drinking - in much the same as a vampire is kept at the age they were at death. They usually believe that they are serving willingly, but in truth it is forced by the power of the blood - and not truly their consent. These unfortunate individuals are known as ghouls, and they are kept as servants by vampires. For vampires it is much the same way, which has made Blood Bonds a popular way to demand obedience from those below you in the hierarchy. The one bound in a tie of service to another vampire obsess over the vampire in question - much of their time is spent worrying about the thoughts of the one who provided the blood. Blood Bonds are not perfect however, and they can snap under immense emotional pressure - and when they do it's seldom a quiet affair.





Help! I'm new to Vampire (5)

The Vaulderie

The Vaulderie is a comparatively new ritual that bears some similarity to the Blood Bond, but in fact works along entirely different lines and breaks any Blood Bonds already in existence among its practitioners. It was developed by members of the Anarch Revolt (see "The Anarch Revolt" on page 48) to fight the power of the Elders - a power that was usually enforced via involuntary Blood Bonds.

The Vaulderie can only be engaged in willingly by each participant, and works by mixing the blood of each participant into a container whereupon each drink from the mixture in turn. This creates a sort of solidarity between each participant in the ritual - weaker yet than the Blood Bond, but far more persistent. Most so-called Anarch Packs make use of this ritual to create a sense of shared struggle.

Generations & The Diablerie

Not all vampires are equally powerful, in the same vein as mortals their strength fluctuates from individual to individual. Unlike mortals (with the exception of ghouls, to an extent), vampires are sustained by the power of vampiric blood. The potency of said blood influences the strength of the vampire in question - and especially their potential strength. This potency of blood is determined by how many steps removed from the source of vampirism - generally considered to be the biblical Caine - the vampire in question is. These steps are called Generations, such that a vampire seven times removed from Caine would be of the seventh Generation.

Once you are Embraced, there is no way to change your Generation save one - and it is considered the greatest of all sins in European vampiric society. It is known as the Diablerie or the Amaranth. The procedure is surprisingly straightforward, but its true ramifications are horrifying beyond all belief. It is performed by drinking until the vampire you are drinking from is devoid of blood - and then continuing rather than halting, drinking the very essence of the vampire in question.

Some say that this allows you to drink the very soul of a vampire - or whatever remains in its place - and while it does indeed lower your Generation and empower the potency of your blood, it is said to have unfortunate side effects as well. The Anarchs are known for employing Diablerie in their fight against their Elders - often spurning the stigma as mere propaganda meant to keep them in their place.





Help! I'm new to Vampire (6)

The Economy of Favors

To vampires, resources usually come very easily. Their internal economy is therefore rarely based on something as crass as coin or gold. Vampires deal in favors, often poetically referred to as Boons. Owing a favor to someone is one of the few things considered truly sacred by many vampires, and the vampire socialites known as Harpies make a point out of knowing who exactly owes whom what - and to always have as many Kindred as possible owing them favors.

Burning Times & Anarch Revolt

In the vampiric history of *Vampire: The Masquerade*, this larp takes place in what is usually called the Burning Times. More specifically, it takes place during the so-called First Anarch Revolt. The Burning Times is the vampiric term for the time of the Inquisition, because the Holy Inquisition in the World of Darkness did not just hunt down heretics and witches - they also hunted vampires and other creatures of darkness. As a result, the Burning Times were a time of chaos and confusion, undoing much of the vampiric "Golden Age" of the so-called Dark Ages. Vampires had grown unaccustomed to hide among humanity - they'd been ruling openly in so many fiefs, and they'd grown complacent.

When the Inquisitors struck they struck with fire, and many vampires were killed. When the Elders finally learned to hide, they usually did so by sacrificing the young Neonates and Ancillae - making the mortals believe that they had killed the vampire who plagued them and leaving them in peace. This sat poorly with many of the young, who already had many reasons to resent the Elders. It was a powderkeg that was bound to explode at some point, and when it did it became what is now known as the Anarch Revolt. Anarchs are comparatively young vampires who refuse to be pawns in the games of their Elders, and who have risen up to rid themselves of their oppressors.

That's not to say that the Anarchs are particularly heroic - young vampires are just as much vampires as old vampires. They've already killed many of the Elders whom the Inquisition did not get the first time around, for while the Elders are powerful, no single Elder can stand against ten Neonates. And there are many.

See page 43 to page 49 for more information about vampiric history.





Help! I'm a VtM veteran (I)

So, you're a veteran VtM player, and need to forget?

Some of us have been playing *Vampire: The Masquerade* for years or even decades, and we have some very clear ideas about what kind of game it is. However, while trying to create an awesome play-space and setting for the larp to explore themes of personal horror in, we've had to scale down on certain aspects of canon, or outright change others - all in the service of a better game. This means that certain things which are considered self-evident in some *Vampire: The Masquerade* games and campaigns might not necessarily be true in *Convention of Thorns*. Here are some of the most important things to know for veteran *Vampire: The Masquerade* players.

The Design Document is Paramount

Above all else, the information you find in the Design Document and your character trumps all other information. If something is different in the Design Document from how it's usually portrayed in the canon, it's the version in the Design Document that is "true" for the purposes of the game - even if individual characters might disagree and have different viewpoints. Some examples of this are exactly how successful the Anarch Revolt has been (more on that later), the biographies of canon characters, and the nature of Mithras' rule (our versions often explicitly contradict established canon). We have players who have played thousands of different *Vampire: The Masquerade* larps. It's important to remember that just because something worked this or that way in most of the other *Vampire: The Masquerade* larps you've played, this is not those other larps. This is *Convention of Thorns*.

Canon Characters & Historical Characters

Canon characters are chiefly defined by their writers and their players - and especially the latter. The person playing Hardestadt or Tyler might not fit your ideas of how that character would act in a certain situation - and it's almost certain to happen at least once. But remember that it's THEIR CHARACTER and the way they choose to portray them is up to them. It's more important for us that Hardestadt and Tyler are present and are awesome than them acting 100% in accordance with every little bit of established lore in existence. This is a what-if scenario after all. Consequently, to those of you playing canon characters - you are allowed to bring your own spin to the characters. Please feel free! If you're playing a canon character and your game develops drastically different from how it did in the canon version of events, it's completely fine to act in ways that might otherwise be considered strange for the character in question - and it's alright if you don't know exactly what your character has done through their 500+ year history. Only what is written in the character description is important to the game, and as noted above, our version of events might be drastically different from the canon version of events.



Help! I'm a VtM veteran (2)

The Anarch Revolt: How Successful?

One of the biggest and most obvious changes we've made to the setting for this game is exactly how successful and threatening the First Anarch Revolt is. In our version of events, the Anarch Revolt is all but completely victorious - the Clans Tzimisce, Lasombra, and Brujah have lost almost all of their Elders, and the survivors among the old are powerless to stand against the tide. Many influential Elders in the other Clans have also felt the wrath of the Neonates and Ancillae. Elders were slaughtered left and right, and now they are in a desperate position. The Convention of Thorns is not simply a formality where the young arrive to surrender - it's what stands between these Elders and Final Death. It's their one shot at taming the youth - but how will they achieve it? Will they?

Elders, Ancilla, Neonates & Power

As a result of the above change, the situation with power, influence, and age category is also somewhat different from your standard Vampire: The Masquerade game. Many Elders are terrified, and in the areas affected by the Revolt more and more of their influence and their power is slowly being taken away from them by the young. In Anarch-controlled Domains, and many of the Contested Domains, it is the young who rule the nights and the Elders who cower in fear.

The Anarchs did not come to the Convention of Thorns to surrender. And the young of all the other Clans - even those who are not all that rebellious - have gotten ideas of their own. This is a time where a lot of the power is shifting over into the hands of Neonates and young Ancillae. Simply because the Elders are so much more pressured than they would otherwise be. If you're at the game as a Neonate you're rarely a confused and powerless pawn. If you're at the game as an Elder, don't expect it to be all that much of a power fantasy.

The Potency of the Blood Bond

We've made the Blood Bond significantly less absolute. It's still an incredibly powerful thing, and it binds you very tightly to the character you're drinking from - but it's not entirely unbreakable. Under heavy or sustained abuse, whether emotional or of another kind, the Blood Bond can snap. When it does, it usually snaps very suddenly and violently. We believe this will make the game of those engaging in the Blood Bond much more interesting and faceted - and especially the game of the Tremere Clan as a whole, as that particular aspect of the setting will be more fraught with paranoia.



Help! I'm a VtM veteran (3)

Frenzy , Rötshreck & The Blood

The Frenzy and Rötshreck conditions still exist, but they're less exclusive. Both conditions are now considered (rather extreme) expressions of the Blood, and the way this eldritch parasite influences the emotions and drives of the character. These impulses will rarely result in outright violence at the larp - rather, we're focusing on social loss of control. Sudden explosions of desire or betrayal, threatening attitudes, and raised voices rather than outright violence. "Thinking with your fangs" would be the modern expression many players can relate to. This is to preserve the identity of the game as a game of interpersonal relationships, rather than a combat larp. Rötshreck reactions will most likely not be a factor at the game, as characters are unlikely to be confronted with open fire or the sun.

Clan Weaknesses

We're de-emphasizing Clan Weaknesses. They still exist in some of the Clans to some extent, but they're not as front-and-center as the common experience of being a vampire is. Some of them - like the Clan Weakness of the Ravnos or the Ventrue - are entirely absent. Some of them differ subtly or overtly from their canon versions. Some - just as the Clan Weakness of Nosferatu - remain largely unchanged from its canon form. What all of them have in common is that they're somewhat less formally acknowledged, and considered quirks of the bloodlines more so than anything else. This is a design choice for this particular *Convention of Thorns* larp, as some Weaknesses simply do not translate well to our live-action setting.

Humanity & Paths

Humanity and the loss of it is an immensely important theme of this larp, so you might wonder how exactly we're dealing with Humanity and Paths. Just like with many other things, we're generally trying to have as few concrete rules about these things as possible. We do not have a system for tracking Humanity, nor is there a mechanical difference between being on the Path of Humanity and another Path. The way individual characters deal with their hunger is a deeply personal issue. It's an important issue, too, and so the game will have a lot of focus on it from a thematic perspective. We've made it far more informal than it is in canon, though. Philosophers and intellectuals among the Kindred might speak of "Paths" in a high-minded sense, but to the common vampire these things are not quite as structured. They're grasping their way through their loss of Humanity, and there are very few easy or straightforward answers. Some might have learned that it's better to sate the hunger than to deny it - and they might be wrong. They'd certainly be considered monstrous. Others might put incredible emphasis on the lost ideals of yesteryear - trusting ideology to keep the hunger at bay and to guard their minds. There are many responses, but it's not an organized catalogue.





Help! I'm a VtM veteran (4)

Disciplines & Blood Sorcery

The only mechanical Disciplines in the game will be the ones found here in the Design Document.

- Potence
- Fortitude
- Obfuscate
- Dominate
- Presence
- Auspex

You will be able to use the Blood Sorcery of the Tremere, Tzimisce, Giovanni, or Assamite Clans if you are a member of those Clans with knowledge of said Blood Sorcery. These won't be mechanical Disciplines, though, but rather will be usable through free-form rituals planned or spontaneously performed by players.

The only requirement is that all Blood Sorcery should include (fake) blood in some manner.



2. Larp structure





Overall Structure

Vampires & Politics

Convention of Thorns is a larp about politics, but it's not structured like the political meetings we're used to in modern democracies. As anyone who's familiar with political events ranging from the small to the large, usually there's a lot of sitting and talking and listening, and then some measure of socializing and informal deal-making.

To make vampire politics of the 15th century interesting, we're skipping the formal part almost entirely. There are no long debate sessions where a hundred people listen to one person talking, or endless sitting at tables and taking notes.

Parties & Voting

Politics at *Convention of Thorns* are not like human politics. Instead of meetings and speeches, there are parties and shady corridor deals. During the larp, there are four major voting sessions. To illustrate the power hierarchies among vampires, these votes are anything but secret, though. All voting at the larp is done with the feet - characters simply stand behind the candidate they support, so everyone can see who stands with who; who has remained loyal and who has betrayed a trust. The reason we vote this way is both because it is much faster than ballot voting, but also because it makes power relations visible to everyone - and that leads to more drama and intrigue.

However, politics at larp work best if it's clear what's at stake. For this reason, the votes that are to be taken, have all been agreed upon beforehand - both in the fiction and in reality. If we wanted to simulate how the actual (fictional) *Convention of Thorns* might have been, it would probably make for a very long-winded larp! So we're ramping up the drama, to make it interesting for everyone. For this reason, we have introduced the concept of **Councils**, which are detailed on p10, along with the individual vote rounds (see **Voting**, p11). The four votes that are to be cast are the following:

End of Phase I: The vote at the end of Phase I is about which clans should have leadership over which Councils. What that means is described in **Councils**, p10 and **Voting**, p11.

End of Phase II: At the end of the second Phase, the Councils vote on which wording to use for their respective drafts on Traditions. More info about this can be found in **Councils**, p10 and **Voting**, p11.

End of Phase III: The third Phase ends with the Clans voting internally about whether the Clan in question will support the newly-formulated Traditions or not. See details in **Councils**, p10 and **Voting**, p11.

End of Phase IV: As the larp is about to end, the final voting is done. This is an individual vote, where each vampire at the *Convention* decides who to stand with. This is where vampire history is made. It's described in **Councils**, p10 and **Voting** on p11.





Schedule

Days & Phases

To make the schedule of *Convention of Thorns* simple to understand, we have divided the schedule into four Phases. They do not correspond directly with Thursday, Friday and Saturday, since the main play hours happen during the evenings and nights. You can read more on the following pages.

Phase I: Exploration (Thursday 00.00 - Friday 03.00)

The vampires have arrived at the castle, and everyone tries to learn the lay of the land. The focus is on finding out who is influential and who isn't, and setting the stage for later conflicts. In this phase, usage of Disciplines are limited to *Weak* and all injuries sustained in fights heal fast. See **Rules & Mechanics**, p24 for details. Phase I ends with a vote on which clans will lead which Councils. See **Councils**, p10 for details.

Workshops & Day Play (Friday 12.30 - 14.00 & Friday 15.00 - 17.00)

See **Workshops & Day Play**, p12 for details.

Phase II: Confrontation (Friday 18.15 - Saturday 00.00)

As the diplomatic work begins in earnest, disagreements arise and turn into conflicts. Differences in opinion become important as alliances form and shift at a moments notice. In this phase, powers are still *Weak*, and all injuries sustained in fights heal quickly. **Rules & Mechanics**, p24 for details. Phase II ends with Councils voting on wording. See **Councils**, p10 for details.

Phase III: Escalation (Saturday 00.00 - Saturday 03.00)

As the night deepens, power struggles become more open and the level of desperate decadence rises. Securing position and influence becomes a matter of life and (un)death. In this phase, powers can be used to a *Strong* level, and all injuries sustained in fights last out the Phase. See **Rules & Mechanics**, p24 for details. Phase III ends with the Clans voting internally on whether to support the wording or not - on a Clan level. Individuals may disagree See **Councils**, p10 for details.

Workshops & Day Play (Saturday 12.30 - 14.00 & Saturday 15.00 - 17.00)

See **Workshops & Day Play**, p12 for details.

Phase IV: Choice (Saturday 18.15 - Saturday 22.30)

During the final hours of the Convention, events balance on a knife's edge. Will this be the moment that unites the Kindred or the one that rips them apart? In this phase, powers can be used at *Exceptional* level, and injuries sustained in fights can be fatal. See **Rules & Mechanics**, p24 for details. Phase IV ends with a vote, where each vampire chooses to either support the newly formulated Traditions or rebel against them.





Workshops & Day Play (1)

Briefings & Pre-larp workshops

One of the things that Nordic larps are known for, is the use of workshops before the larp, to get participants solidly on the same page and in agreement on what type of larp they will be playing. *Convention of Thorns* is no exception. During the pre-larp workshops, participants will get a chance to talk over critical aspects of the larp with those they will be playing closely with.

This also gives us a chance to practice using Disciplines, getting last-minute questions answered and in general getting ready to step into the darkness for a few days.

These briefings and pre-larp workshops take place on Thursday from 19.15 - 23.00.

Between the Phases

Between the Phases (which take place in the main playing area of the location), we will be using parts of the castle for additional workshops and something we call “Day Play”. This can manifest itself in several different ways; as flashback scenes played out with minimal props and scenography under the direction of one of our Storytellers, as frozen moments orchestrated by the workshop groups or even as potential “flash forward” scenes that give the participants a glimpse into the characters’ futures.

Some of the time between the Phases will be used for this Day Play. Some of it will be used for off-game calibration and alignment of play styles, coordination of practical matters and scene requests. If you want your character to engage with an old enemy, but seem to be lacking one, using the time here to “find” an old enemy is time well spent. If you feel the need to just rest your head a bit and smile and laugh for a while, that’s also possible. In some larps this time is called “the Meta Hour”, but we just call it extra workshop time.

Every workshop group will have a director, who is responsible for making the most of the time.

These activities take place on Friday and Saturday from 12.30 - 14.00 and 15.-00 - 17.00, respectively.





Workshops & Day Play (2)

Workshop: Examples

During the Pre-larp workshop time on Thursday, participants will both receive briefings and have time for actual workshops.

Briefings include information on how to play in a castle, guides on how to deal with different playing styles, emotional safety rules, how to use the NPCs, etc. Each briefing is run by an organizer for a smaller group of players (so it's not the full cast in one group). All players will get to hear all briefings.

Workshops include talking with your clan about how play will be, talking with those from your Domain and talking in Coteries. Getting a common understanding of moods, play styles, hierarchies, relations, rituals, etc. all happens during these workshops. Each workshop is run by a workshop leader.

During the larp itself, there will also be workshop time. These are used for play calibration (agreeing on what to do now and helping each other find the play desired), coordination of planned scenes (which some players like, though others prefer not to have them), offgame sharing of information that is critical (hard to predict, but good to set time aside for) and questions (of which there are always some). It's time used for talking about the larp in a structured way in smaller groups.

Day Play: Examples

Day Play is a bit different. It's basically freeform larp using minimalist scenography and support characters that are not tied to particular players, under the guidance of a Director (Storyteller/Game Master). During Day Play, we will play out scenes that are interesting to the characters and players, but are hard to fit into the general larp. These can be flashbacks, possible future scenes, surreal scenes, and so on. Examples include:

- The Embrace of a character whose Sire is not present at the larp.
- An inner conflict within one of the characters, with other players playing different voices in her head.
- A scene where a character visits the grave of his great-great-grandson.
- The first time a character killed a human being during a hunt, and the emotions that caused.
- Encounters with the Inquisition.
- One possible future for the character, based on the decisions being made during these days.
- Bittersweet memories from a character's mortal life to highlight the change in normality.
- Rage and longing in a character's surreal unliving dreams.
- And many, many more...



Councils

Function

To ensure that the decision-making process goes (relatively) smoothly, the Convention consists of a number of Councils, that each have a limited scope of decision-making power. During the first **Phase**, a vote is cast that gives Council leadership. Having leadership over a Council means taking care that the formalities are in order (see **Voting**, p11)

There are seven Councils at *Convention of Thorns*. Each clan is allowed to send one member to each Council, and an extra member if they have leadership over the Council in question. Membership of Councils is marked by Council badges. These can be switched around within a clan, but no vampire without the appropriate badge will be let into a Council chamber, and when the Council has to vote on something, only those with badges can vote.

The Tradition Councils

Six of the Councils deal with the wording and meaning of the Traditions - ancient vampiric laws laid down long ago, and followed by most. Those who have called for the Convention to happen wish to have the assembled clans agree on formalizing the six Traditions, and agreeing to abide by them. There is no guarantee that all clans will back the final document, though. Be that as it may, each Tradition Council is responsible for settling on content and language for one of the Traditions.

The First Tradition: The Legacy deals with the origin of Vampires.

The Second Tradition: Destruction deals with how vampires in conflict behave towards each other.

The Third Tradition: Progeny deals with who may sire new Kindred.

The Fourth Tradition: Accounting deals with who is responsible for a vampire's offspring.

The Fifth Tradition: Domain deals with the spheres of influence of individual vampires.

The Sixth Tradition: The Silence of Blood deals with keeping Kindred society secret from mortals.

The Council of Sheriffs

The seventh Council deals with security at the Convention. A gathering of vampires this size happens only very rarely, and everyone knows that the risk of things blowing up and turning violent are present at every turn. To keep the peace, it has been decided that each Council will send a representative to the Council of Sheriffs, who will be in charge of settling disputes at the Convention. This doesn't mean that duels and verbal fights won't happen, but that they will happen under the watchful eye of Sheriffs. That is the theory, at least. The Council of Sheriffs does not vote on wording like the other Councils, but is in charge of security and peacekeeping at the Convention itself.





Voting

The purpose of the voting

In the vampire lore of the *World of Darkness*, many vampires follow six rules called “The Traditions”, which have been around in some form or the other for thousands of years. In our larp, the main goal of the Convention initiators is to get these six rules formalized, and get as many vampire clans as possible to agree on them. During the larp, alternate wordings and content for the Traditions will be created, and at the end every vampire will have to decide on her own what she thinks of this.

The first vote

The first vote is about establishing leadership in the Councils (see p11). Each Council will have a leader, who is responsible for formalities being in order. This means things like making sure proposals are written down, Council members carry the proper Council symbols, etc. The Council leader also decides the outcome of any tied votes in the Council. There are seven Councils in total.

The second vote

The second vote takes place in the Councils, and is about which specific wording to use from each Council. Words have power, and this is the future being decided. The Council leader must make sure that all different suggestions are put forward at the time of voting - at the end of Phase II. The wording voted for, is then the official suggestion of that Council for the Traditions.

The third vote

The third vote happens inside the clans, as they vote for whether they will support the new set of Traditions (thereby joining the group of clans that choose to band together on this) or whether their clan will choose to stand outside the newly-minted community and face the consequences. No matter what the clan decides internally, individual vampires are free to ignore the desires of their brethren during the final vote.

The fourth vote

The fourth vote is made on an individual basis. It happens at the very end of the larp. Here, each and every vampire must choose to stand with others who share the same views on the Traditions. “Historically”, the two major groups were the pro-Tradition grouping called the Camarilla and the anti-Tradition vampire, who would later band together to form the rebellious Sabbat clans. There is no guarantee that it will happen this way at the larp, though, as different factions may emerge. Whether it ends peacefully or not also remains to be seen.





Day I (Thu 15 - Fri 03)

Thursday

- Before 15.00 If you arrive by car, please be here by this time at the latest
- 15.30 - 16.00 The busses arrive from Berlin
- 16.00 - 17.30 Check-In at the hotels, participants get in costume
- 17.30 - 19.00 Dinner (at the hotels)
- 19.00 - 19.15 Introduction to the larp
- 19.15 - 20.00 Briefings
- 20.00 - 23.00 Pre-larp Workshops (including snack breaks)
- 23.00 - 23.45 45 min to get everything ready
- 23.45 - 00.00 Everyone gathers for the Opening Scene (The Grand Buffet)

Friday

- 00.00 - 03.00 Phase I*
- 03.00 Phase I ends with the vote, and the larp stops for the night

** Plentiful food is available in the Food Room during all Phases, including vegetarian and vegan options*





Day II (Fri 03 - Sat 03)

Friday

- 03.00 - 03.30 Everyone goes to the hotels
- 03.30 - 10.00 Sleeping break
- 10.00 - 11.45 Breakfast (at the hotels)
- 11.45 - 12.15 Everyone gathers at the castle
- 12.15 - 12.30 Introduction to the day
- 12.30 - 14.00 Workshops & Day Play
- 14.00 - 15.00 Lunch (at the hotels)
- 15.00 - 17.00 Workshops & Day Play, plus time for getting into costumes.
- 17.00 - 18.00 Dinner (at the hotels)
- 18.00 - 18.15 Everyone gathers for Phase II
- 18.15 - 00.00 Phase II*. The Phase ends with the vote, but the larp continues.

Saturday

- 00.00 - 03.00 Phase III*
- 03.00 Phase III ends with the vote, and the larp stops for the night

** Plentiful food is available in the Food Room during all Phases, including vegetarian and vegan options*





Day III (Sat 03 - Sun 10)

Saturday

- 03.00 - 03.30 Everyone goes to the hotels
- 03.30 - 10.00 Sleeping break
- 10.00 - 11.45 Breakfast (at the hotels)
- 11.45 - 12.15 Everyone gathers at the castle
- 12.15 - 12.30 Introduction to the day
- 12.30 - 14.00 Workshops & Day Play
- 14.00 - 15.00 Lunch (at the hotels)
- 15.00 - 17.00 Workshops & Day Play, plus time for getting into costumes.
- 17.00 - 18.00 Dinner (at the hotels)
- 18.00 - 18.15 Everyone gathers for Phase IV
- 18.15 - 22.30 Phase IV*
- 22.30 - 23.00 Everyone gathers for the Final Scene, and the larp ends
- 23.00 - 00.00 Structured debrief

Sunday

- 00.00 - 04.00 Afterparty
- 04.00 - 09.00 Sleeping break
- 09.00 - 10.00 Breakfast & Goodbyes (at the hotels)
- 10.00 The busses leave for Berlin, and the organizers start packing down

** Plentiful food is available in the Food Room during all Phases, including vegetarian and vegan options*



3. Practical Info





A list of important facts

Questions & Answers

The practical side of *Convention of Thorns* is still under development. This means that for now, we'll be updating the practical side of the Design Document whenever we get in new questions and answer them. That means that until things are set completely in stone, this will be a Q&A chapter.

If you have questions, feel more than free to mail us; either to Ole (ole@rollespilsakademiet.dk) or Claus (claus.raasted@gmail.com). They can help you with your questions. And then they'll put them in the DD on these pages, so others can see the answers!

Some of the important stuff in bullet points (from April 10)

- The larp is held 100% in English. You do not need to know any Polish to play. ☺
- Participants live in hotels. The hotels are located on the castle grounds about 100-200 m away.
- The price of the food and lodging is included in the price of the larp.
- It is possible to arrive a day early, if you contact us about it (mail boruta.szymon@gmail.com).
- Rooms are 2-4 person rooms, and we will do our best to put you with people you know, if you prefer.
- Meals are planned so they are outside of main play hours. Snacks will be available during play.
- Vegan food is available for all meals. Most of the rest of the food will be vegetarian.
- Characters are written by organizers, but there is plenty of room to give input as a participant.
- Some players will play "historical" characters (Hardestadt, Tyler, etc.).
- Playing a historical character means getting extra responsibility.
- The more powerful a character is, the more player responsibility goes along with it.
- A lot of the characters at the larp will be Elders.
- Methusalehs are player characters just like everyone else. There just aren't that many of them!
- Neonates will be interesting to play, even though they are at the bottom of the hierarchy. There's a reason why they're at the Convention, after all!
- Ancillae characters are an excellent mix of freedom and influence.
- World of Darkness knowledge is helpful, but in no way critical to playing (or enjoying) the larp.
- The larp is a Nordic style larp, and is very different from many other *Vampire: the Masquerade* larps. Just so you know!
- Players will be given a casting form to fill out, stating their wishes about character age/clan/etc.
- Players who want to play in a group with players they know will be able to do so (as far as possible).
- The bus from Berlin costs 60€ for a return ticket. A one-way ticket costs the same. ☺



4. How to play the larp





Playing a Neonate

Introduction

The Neonates are the young Kindred, those at the bottom of the food chain. They are often of higher generations - far removed from the blood of Caine - and therefore less powerful than those above them in the hierarchy. Neonates are still vampires, however, and even the meekest of them have fangs. Were it not for the Neonates the Anarch Revolt (see p39) would not have transpired.

Passion of youth and still-beating heart

Neonates are new vampires - comparatively so at least. Even the oldest Neonates - the ones who have seen more than a hundred years of unlife - are closer to their humanity than Ancillae and Elders. Indeed, this is often what makes them seem so meek and easily-cowed by the more hardened Kindred.

- Passionate outbursts of torment, anguish, joy, and awe come so much easier to Neonates. They are the ones most likely to find themselves enmeshed in deep feelings and violent mood swings.
- Rage and wrath are the constant companions of Neonates. When the Neonates are angry they burn like candles lit at both ends - and when they hate they will move mountains to bury their foe.
- Many Neonates still remember how it was to be loved. Neonates are far more likely than others to pursue romance - they have seldom felt the sting of betrayal to the same extent as the Elders.

Between conformity and rebellion

The Anarch Revolt has risen against the rule of the Elders - and already so much has been won. The Elders whisper of Neonates toppling truly ancient orders and grinding it all to dust beneath the feet. Such power, from mere youth? Yet not all Neonates side with the rebellion - some cast in their lot with the old order.

- The Burning Times resulted in many Neonates being left for the pyres of the Inquisition. This rift is what originally resulted in the Anarch Revolt - and it is a rift that is unlikely to heal anytime soon.
- Some Neonates see this as the time to strike. While the Elders have grown more and more powerful the Neonates have suffered in silence. It must all be crushed and rebuilt - that is justice.
- Other Neonates believe that the best approach is to play the old game. Some feel that this is the best way to uphold order and stability - and others simply wait for their turn to rule as Elders.



Playing an Ancilla

Introduction

The Ancillae are caught between the inexperience and powerlessness of the Neonates and the influence and responsibility of the Elders - they are not truly Elders yet, but not truly Neonates either. The Ancillae constitute the leadership of the Anarch Revolt (see p39) and also the most important agents of the entrenched elite. Some of them even sit at tables reserved for those self-same elites.

Creeping realization of death and damnation

When one is merely a Neonate one can almost play at being a natural being. A foolish fledgling vampire might believe that they've cheated death. But the Ancillae have existed for a long time without a pulse, and they know better. Sure you're never going to die - because you're already dead.

- Most Kindred know on an intellectual level that they are in fact dead corpses given an unholy vital spark. That they died at their Embrace. Many only really start to accept it when they are Ancillae.
- The Ancillae have seen much - not as much as the Elders, but far more than the young. In all of this, undeath all blends together - but the scenes from life burn with an everlasting intensity.
- Face despair head on - it is the only way to deal with this existence. Many Ancillae rebel against the slow slide towards inhumanity and numbness - they have to cut deeper, but they WILL bleed.

Serve in the court or lead the paupers

Ancillae have some real experience - and many have clawed their way to some real power as well. Often this means that they function as some sort of middle-management between the Elders and their other agents - be they Neonate or mortal. But some Ancillae are not content to merely serve.

- With distinction in service comes greater power and greater influence. One could easily throw in one's lot with the unwashed masses - but this would be like throwing your chance at power away.
- Why serve when you can lead? The Anarch Revolt is the perfect opportunity for the Ancillae to step up and direct the Neonates. What can be more potent than an army of angry young vampires?
- Recognition comes with boldness. Sure, it is generally preferable to do things within the norms - but one must be ready to grasp at power before one can wield it. For many Ancillae, now is the time.



Playing an Elder

Introduction

The Elders are entrenched - they are the old elite, the ones who make the rules and define the society of the Kindred on a grand scale. For so long they've sat on their thrones, content in the knowledge that nothing could threaten their power. With the Burning Times of The Inquisition (see p37) brought on by the mortals and the rebellion of younger vampires in the Anarch Revolt (see p39) this pride has been shaken.

Soon nothing human will remain

So much has faded with age, and it is still fading away. Every single Elder was once a mere human being - but unlike the young Neonates or even the Ancillae, few of them truly remember what it was like. Only the faintest after-image of human passions and emotions truly remain. All the more precious.

- Embers are far more intense than open flames, some say. And some Elders swear that they still feel the deep urgings of a very humanlike psyche. Even if it is twisted and perverse in comparison.
- Half-remembered centuries, but clearly remembered days of humanity. One of the few truly human things the Elders still cling to are their memories of breathing and living. Everything else fades away.
- Loss and hollowness. Some Elders truly and deeply despair over their condition - but nothing can be shown to others. Least of all their social inferiors. Pride and loneliness is a dangerous combination.

A game of authority and power

As an Elder one occupies a very influential position in Kindred society - and often in mortal society as well. Perhaps not as the Duke or Queen - but often as the being who controls their advisors. Elders are often deeply embedded in centuries-old feuds with others of their kind.

- It is good and right that the elite should rule. The Elders are the most experienced and skilled of the Kindred - and they know how to wield power wisely. That, at least, is the opinion of many Elders.
- The young are becoming a true danger. Childer are slaying their Sires and stealing their power for themselves. This is a travesty - but to some Elders it is also a wake-up call. Something must be done.
- Not all Elders care about the political game between the Kindred - some merely want for stability. Either because they would want to focus their efforts on mortals or because they've grown tired.





Playing a Methuselah

Introduction

The Methuselaha are truly ancient - beyond the understanding of most other vampires. The youngest Methuselaha have existed for at least a millennium, and some were Embraced by the Antediluvians (see p35) themselves. They've seen Europe before feudalism. They've seen Rome before it fell. Their mindsets are entirely alien. Those who have seen them rarely remain unchanged. At least that is what is said, because very few meet a Methuselah openly and "live" to tell the tale.

Gaze into its eyes and nothingness stares back

They were once human, and when they became vampires tiny shreds of humanity still survived within them. But the Methuselaha are not human. Their mindsets are entirely inhuman and alien. Warmth and passion has been extinguished. Not even hatred remains. Or so it is said.

- Monsters, with no illusions to the contrary. That is what these ancient vampires are. Even their bodies have given up the ruse. At this point they are little more than walking corpses.
- But they are cunning. And they do remember, somewhere in the deep recesses of their minds, scenes from their life. Even if they do not remember how it is to breathe or bleed their own blood.
- But why would these beings do anything? Indeed, why do they take the actions they do? No one can possibly know. Methuselaha can not be so easily quantified as lesser beings can.

Does it plot or is this merely its existence?

When the Methuselaha act openly, the world recoils in response. By their wills empires fall and royal families become extinct. The Methuselaha act very rarely, as a result. But the Methuselaha influence everything. And everyone is potentially in their employ without knowing it. Even those who don't believe they are still to be found walking amongst the other Kindred.

- Influence on a grand scale, all achieved through minimal action. That's how the Methuselaha work. The right person in the right place at the right time. They've had centuries to learn their craft.
- Unfathomable power. That is what the Methuselaha represent. They are not truly Antediluvians - but some are the Childer of Antediluvians. The depth of their raw capability is truly astounding.
- In truth, few people know just how much it is that individual Methuselaha control. But this hardly stops the rumors from spreading. Is everything the Elders are doing spurred by their manipulations?

5. Rules & Mechanics





Game Mechanics

Power Levels: None/Weak/Strong/Exceptional

Most of the interaction at the larp can be handled without the use of rules or game mechanics. Talking to someone doesn't require a special skill, nor does betraying a friend. However, since vampires have supernatural powers that we want to simulate, we operate with a number of vampiric powers (called **Disciplines**). Each character has a certain **Power Level** in each of these Disciplines, that allows the vampire to do things normal mortals cannot.

Power Levels come in four levels: **None/Weak/Strong/Exceptional**. The stronger the Power Level, the more the vampire can accomplish. The Disciplines are explained on p26, but it is important to note that Power Levels are also dependent on the Phases of the larp, as described below.

Phase I & II

During the first two Phases, Power Levels are *Weak*. This means that while characters may use powers (to influence each other, to win fights, etc.) the results are rather mild. Using the **Dominare** power to control another vampire yields only a single command to be followed, using **Fortitudo** to resist pain will still not be able to completely ignore it, etc. Similarly, injuries sustained (via combat or otherwise) are quickly healed using vampiric powers, and do not hinder play. Even vampires who have Disciplines at *Strong* or *Exceptional* levels can only use them at the *Weak* level during these two Phases.

Phase III

During the third Phase, Power Levels are *Strong*. Wrestling another vampire to the ground using **Potentia** causes the weaker character to crash to be knocked down, using **Auspex** to read the mind of another vampire makes the other reveal feelings and thoughts, etc. During this phase, injuries are not fatal, but can be serious, and will be a nuisance for the rest of the Phase. Broken arms, a blind eye, etc. Vampires with *Exceptional* level powers can still only use them at Strong levels. Of course, if you have a Discipline at *Weak* level, it doesn't suddenly become *Strong* just because it's Phase III.

Phase IV

During the fourth Phase, Power Levels are *Exceptional*. A powerful vampire using **Obfuscate** can stand in the middle of a crowded room without being noticed, and a vampire with the appropriate power level can use her **Presence** to sway even the most stubborn argument. Combat during this Phase ends with the loser lying on the floor with massive injuries, and the victor having the opportunity to kill her off right then and there. During this Phase, **Final Death** and **Diablerie** are both possible.





Disciplines

How Disciplines function in the larp

Disciplines are a way of describing the powers that all vampires possess, to a lesser or greater degree. The idea of Disciplines comes from the *Vampire: the Masquerade* storytelling game, and have existed for as long as the *World of Darkness* universe. The way we use them for the larp is unique to *Convention of Thorns*, though, so veteran players should note that it be unfamiliar to them. Basically, characters with certain Disciplines are able to accomplish things in the larp that the players can not do on their own. Convincing someone by good arguments or social pressure doesn't require any special unnatural powers, but using inhuman charm to do it is hard for our mortal players. To simulate vampire abilities, we use a simple and intuitive system of rules.

Each character has a **Power Level** in each Discipline; **None/Weak/Strong/Exceptional**. A higher Power Level makes the vampire able to do more impressive actions. It should be noted that the Power Levels are also dependent on the **Phases** of the larp, as explained on **Schedule**, p9. This is to ensure that powerful vampires are not able to completely crush their lesser opponents early in the larp, and also to make sure that no player spends the entire larp under somebody else's command, or the like. With all that in mind, here is a list of Disciplines and what they can be used for. During the Briefings just before the larp starts, we will explain in detail how Disciplines work and show how to use them. In general, having a Discipline of the same Power Level as the vampire trying to use it on you means you can ignore it. The two Disciplines effectively cancel each other out, in larp terms.

Auspex: The power of sensing motives, powers and thoughts of others. A vampire using Auspex can use it to probe into the minds of others, using the “**Really, really**” mechanic to discreetly ask questions. See p27

Dominate: The power to control others, and make them bend to your will. A vampire using Dominate can issue commands that must be obeyed by lesser vampires, using the “**Really, really**” mechanic. See p27

Fortitude: The power of physical toughness, immunity to pain, torture, and so on. A vampire using Fortitude may ignore the most brutal of punishmen, using the “**Really, really**” mechanic. See p27.

Obfuscate: The power to fade into the background, or simply stand unnoticed in plain sight. A vampire using Obfuscate can make other vampires ignore her, using the “**Ignore me**” mechanic. See p27.

Potence: The power of sheer strength and brute force, and the ability to win contests of strength. A vampire using Potence can escape from capture or use an iron grip, using the “**Really, really**” mechanic. See p27.

Presence: The power to inspire awe, loyalty and attraction in others, by sheer charisma. A vampire using Presence can persuade, seduce or charm others using the “**Really, really**” mechanic. See p27.

** All mechanics will be demonstrated during Briefings.*





Discipline Mechanics

Simple and flexible mechanics

For *Convention of Thorns*, the use of Disciplines is done in such a way as to give participants the most flexibility, while being as non-intrusive as possible. If someone tries to use a Discipline on you that you yourself have at the same Power Level (or stronger), you can ignore it (or play along if you want to keep your powers hidden). Don't despair if someone ignores your Discipline use. Be afraid instead.

“Really, really”

The first and most versatile mechanic is the “Really, really” mechanic. Whenever a character lays a hand on another character and says something that uses the words “really, really” in a sentence, it's to let the other players (but not necessarily characters!) know that a Discipline is being used. Here are some examples:

- Dominate (“You really, really should leave now.”)
- Presence (“You really, really need to listen to me.”)
- Auspex (“You really, really want to tell me what's going on.”)
- Potence (“You really, really don't want to run away right now.”)

In each case, it's up to the victim (the character the Discipline is being used on) to figure out exactly how to play this out, but the general idea should be clear. Since there are three Power Levels (see p25), the way of showing your Power Level is by adding an extra Really for Strong and two extra for Exceptional. This means that if someone says “I really, really, really want you to tell me what happened.” that's a Vampire using a Discipline at Strong power level.

And yes, we know that this means that those who have powers at Exceptional level will be saying “You really, really, really, really like me” when using the Discipline at that level. However, this will only occur during the final Phase, and only for a very limited amount of players, so we're ok with it being a little less than elegant in that case. Also, “really, really, really, really” should warn others that here's a Vampire who's powerful in the extreme!

“Ignore me”

Another mechanic is the “Ignore me” mechanic, used by Vampires using the Obfuscate Discipline. This is shown by a Vampire crossing her arms and touching both her shoulders. A Vampire using the Obfuscate Discipline on Weak power level, must do so in the shadows and without moving. Using the Discipline on Strong power level gives the ability to stand in the open, and still being ignored. A Vampire with Exceptional power level in Obfuscate can freely walk around rooms while remaining unnoticed (while still keeping the arms crossed and hands touching shoulders).



Discipline Examples

Inspiration & Guidelines

There are six Vampiric Disciplines that are used at Convention of Thorns. Below is an attempt to give some guidelines as to what can be accomplished on what Power Level, using the Discipline in question. Remember that these are just guidelines, and that - in the end - it's the victim player who decides what will happen in the given scene. Here are some examples of Discipline use:

Auspex

Weak: Getting to know the victim's mood ("I *really, really* think you should tell me how you feel.")

Strong: Learning the victim's desires ("I *really, really, really* think you should tell me what you want right now.")

Exceptional: Uncovering the victim's secrets ("I *really, really, really, really* want to know what happened.")

Presence

Weak: Making someone like you better ("You *really, really* like me, don't you?")

Strong: Causing a conflict between friends ("I *really, really, really* believe that makes you mad, doesn't it?")

Exceptional: Turning an enemy into a friend ("I *really, really, really, really* value our new-found friendship.")

Potence

Weak: Keeping someone from leaving a room ("I *really, really* can't let you pass.")

Strong: Establishing physical dominance ("You *really, really, really* don't want to wrestle me.")

Exceptional: Having the victim at your mercy ("You *really, really, really, really* can't move a muscle now.")

Fortitude

Weak: Ignoring pain and hardship ("You *really, really* think I can't take a little beating?")

Strong: Being tortured without breaking ("I *really, really, really* won't break, no matter what you do.")

Exceptional: Rising after a fight, almost unharmed ("That *really, really, really, really* didn't do much, did it?")

Obfuscate

Weak: Remaining unseen in the shadows (works when standing still in a shadowy place)

Strong: Remaining unseen in a lit room (works when standing still in a room filled with light)

Exceptional: Walking around unseen anywhere (works anywhere)

Dominate

Weak: Influencing another to act ("I *really, really* believe you should come with me.")

Strong: Commanding someone ("I *really, really, really* must not be hindered in entering this room.")

Exceptional: Controlling the victim ("I *really, really, really, really* order you to do this for me.")





Combat

Fighting is done by dueling

Convention of Thorns is not a battle-oriented larp. However, some discussion/grievances/schemes require for two vampires to fight it out. This is done by dueling. Duelists are welcome to use weapons or not, as this will have no influence on the outcome of the duel. When we call it a duel instead of a fight, it's because a duel is always carried out with both parties facing each other and aware that a fight is supposed to happen (unlike an ambush, for example!).

Each player will in his or her role be given a number of Dueling Points. This number ranges from 1-10, and is influenced by many things; the Vampire's age, combat experience, power level in fighting Disciplines (Potence and Fortitude), etc. It does not make a difference whether weapons are used or not.

- Having 1 Dueling Point is roughly equal to being a powerful human fighter.
- Having 5 Dueling Points of 5 means that you are an inhumanly skilled warrior.
- Having 10 Dueling Points means that you could take on a hundred mortals and win.

How to duel

NB: The duel mechanic will be workshopped at the larp. The two vampires face each other in a clearly defined combat space. The challenging vampire then does something to threaten the other vampire (baring fangs, hissing, drawing weapons, cursing, taunting, etc). This is to show that a challenge is being made, and costs *1 Dueling Point*. The other vampire then does one of three things:

- **Escalates** - building the tension by answering in some way (snarling back, returning insults, showing off weapons/fangs/claws, doing provocative stances, etc). This costs *1 Dueling Point*.
- **Backs down** - either by surrendering verbally, going to ground in a submissive post, etc.
- **Signals fighting readiness** - by saying the words "Let's fight!". Initiative goes to the other.

This insult/show-of-force/spending Dueling Points phase continues as long as each vampire matches the other (and has the Dueling Points to spend!). This means that fights between stronger vampires take a lot of time to build, and make it obvious to onlookers that powerful beings are present. In either case, the players act out an improvised fight leading to the vampire that spent the most Dueling Points winning. Vampires do not have to spend all their Dueling Points; the reasons for doing so are left to the imagination of the vampire. **All Dueling Points are regained after each duel.**

Players are welcome to carry latex/foam weapons for *Convention of Thorns*. The weapons must be either of professional quality or inspected by the organizers for safety and visual standard. Costume rental also includes a latex weapon that fits the time period.



6. World of Darkness





Vampires are real

A dear Childe has many names

They call themselves many things. They are vampires, and Kindred, and Cainites. Many of them look just like mortals, and walk among humanity unseen. You would not know it just from looking down the street - but vampires are real.

In the *World of Darkness*, vampires actually exist. And they're not limited to half-remembered nightmares stalking the margins of society. They've always been waging their secret wars using mortals as pawns. During the Convention of Thorns they control and direct many nobles and church officials. Just like they always whispered sweet words to the chiefs of tribes - or the petty kings of antiquity.

That's not to say that vampires are ruling overtly - and in truth few know of their existence. The Kindred are subtle creatures, and many prefer to do their bidding from the comforts of the shadows. But even then, they inhabit the same world as the mortals do. The Kindred walk among the living every single night. They are just as much part of the *World of Darkness* as human beings are. In fact, every single one of them was once a human. The monstrosity they represent is the monstrosity of humanity given perverse immortality - nothing more and nothing less.



The first vampires

Caine

The biblical Caine - the first murderer - is considered to be the first and most powerful vampire. He was cursed by God to walk the earth as the first of that cursed line. He constitutes the First Generation, and is the one from whom all other Kindred are descended - at least if one believes all the tales.

Cainite is another common name for the Kindred. It is, however, one which is slowly being phased out after the formation of the Camarilla in 1486. The old myths and ties to the past must give way to new ways of organizing the Kindred, and this includes the preoccupation with Caine.

Of course, as with any good myth, some young vampires believe it's all just made up to control them.

The Second Generation

The first and only Childer of Caine were known as the Second Generation. Some accounts agree on the names of Zillah, Irad and Enoch, though the last name is frequently referred to as Enki. Little, if anything, is known about the direct progeny of Caine - for all of them are gone. According to the old tales, every single one of them was slain by their Childer - the Antediluvians.

The 13 Antediluvians

Antediluvian literally means "before the flood" - in this case the flood that God sent to wipe the earth clean, the flood that Noah and his family built an ark to survive. While Antediluvian could technically refer to every single Kindred who was created before that fateful event, it usually refers to the Third Generation - the mythical founders of the thirteen modern Clans. This means that each and every vampire existing today is in some ways a direct descendant of the Antediluvians.

The thirteen Antideluvians were embraced in the first city of humanity by the Second Generation. They soon usurped their sires - laying low the Childer of Caine himself. They are said to be immeasurably powerful, and beyond all other monsters in their utter depravity. Many have told of their influence in all things - but few can say whether these maddened prophets are simply guessing at dark possibilities or have some insight that others lack.





Rome & Carthage

Much more than mortal enemies

Few societies have not felt the touch of the Kindred. Even Rome, that shining beacon that gave birth to so much of western civilization knew the influence of the vampires. In Rome, Clan Ventrue held much power - it was in many ways the high point and golden age of a Clan with a long and illustrious history.

But Rome did not stand unopposed - Carthage rose to rival its prominence. And in Carthage it was Clan Brujah that held sway. This resulted in an era of struggle between the two Clans, and gave birth to much of the modern enmity that still exists between the Brujah and the Ventrue.

To many Brujah, Carthage takes on the characteristics of a promised land. It is said among them that mortals walked knowingly side by side with the Kindred of the city, and that they willingly served their Kindred masters. To hear them speak of it, Carthage flowed with blood, and was marked by peaceful co-existence between mortals and their Damned Lords.

If you trust the Ventrue - and few people do - Carthage willingly invited demons into its midst.

But in the end it was Rome that triumphed - and the dream of the Brujah were dashed in Carthage. In Rome it was the Ventrue known as Camilla that held the greatest political sway, and it was her actions while leading Rome that would later give inspiration to the formation of the Camarilla.





Recent centuries

The Dark Ages

For the Kindred, the Dark Ages was a time of plenty. This meant that it was also a time where many new vampires were Embraced, and there was little oversight. In those days the only real law that existed was the law of strength - those who could take took what they wanted, and those who had no recourse simply had to accept it.

For some it was a heroic age - the Ventrue and Lasombra saw many of their most notable members make their mark here. It was an age of great social mobility for Kindred - even as mortals felt the exact opposite; the vast multitudes being chained to low station by their birth. It was, however, also an age where the distinction between being a member of a **High Clan** or a **Low Clan** (see "High Clans & Low Clans" on page 54) mattered much more than one's specific bloodline - or even one's deeds in some places.

The Dark Ages were a high point in Kindred history. But golden ages like those can not last forever. During the Dark Ages many Kindred threw caution to the wind and moved freely among mortals - trusting that their supernatural powers would safeguard them from any and all consequences.

They would soon learn how wrong they were.

The Inquisition

As the Kindred slowly strengthened their stranglehold on mortal society they grew bolder and bolder. Many of them gave up entirely on even the vaguest notion of secrecy and displayed the full splendour of their powers openly to the mortals. Many came to learn that vampires walked among them - and many came to understand just how deeply they had sunk their fangs into the veins of power. This could not stand for long. Soon enough the mortals organized themselves - and when they came they came with faith and fire. In the days of the Inquisition robed monks hunted not just heretics and witches - but also the progeny of Caine.

At first this did little but amuse many of the Kindred. But the amusement quickly faded as more and more Kindred were laid low by those who now hunted their kind - and more and more Havens found themselves torched. Most Kindred found themselves overwhelmed - and not even powerful Elders could stand against the tide. It soon became a common sight to see whole cities rooted out, with every single vampire put to the torch.

The Burning Times had arrived - and the pyres were lit in every street. This was a time of much confusion, and few Kindredscan truly say what happened and when. It is clear, however, that it was during this time that the first idle mutterings of a grand alliance of Kindred were heard - the first words of what would one day become the Camarilla.





The 1450 speech

A vision for the future

As early as 1394 prominent Elders such as the Ventrue Hardestadt called for conventions and meetings to address the existential issues facing the Kindred - such as the Burning Times. Little came of it, for the Kindred have always been hard to control - and almost impossible to rule. The Elders had grown used to autonomy in the nights of the Dark Ages, and the Neonates and Ancillae saw little reason to tow the line of any one particular would-be ruler.

For decades nothing would be done - each domain and Kindred waged their own private war against the agents of Rome and many would continue to fall. It is even speculated that some Clans - the Lasombra chief among them - attempted to wield the Inquisitors as a weapon to settle their own disputes.

At a meeting in 1450 this all changed, however. The Toreador Ancilla known as Rafael de Corazon made an impassioned speech to the assembled Elders urging them to reconsider their ways. He admonished them for their foolish pride and belief in their own superiority - for their naive belief that they could survive an open confrontation with all humanity. With this bold act he managed to turn the heads of even the most cynical of the Ventrue and Tremere.

The aim of the loose confederation that would one day become the Camarilla was clear - the upholding of the Sixth Tradition, the Silence of the Blood. The Traditions had allegedly existed since the time of Caine, but they had been largely ignored during the time leading up to the Inquisition. That was to end with the formation of the Camarilla in the late 15th century.

It would, however, still be some time until the formalization of this organization.





The Anarch Revolt

Rebellion among the ranks

Not all Kindred were swayed by the talk of secrecy and subtlety. Many of the Neonates and younger Ancillae started speaking rather loudly of how the Elders simply watched as they sent more and more of their progeny to die at the torches and blades of the Inquisition. When these Neonates and Ancillae demanded action from their Elders - a veritable warhost against the forces of Rome - it fell only upon deaf ears. By far a majority of the Elders had thrown in their lot with those who wished to hide and stalk in the shadows.

This infuriated the young Kindred, and soon they rose in open revolt against their Elders. At first few of the Elders took much note, but when a Brujah Ancilla known as Patricia came to be disgusted by the perceived inaction of the Elders this too changed. Patricia took the name Tyler, and laid siege to Castle Hardestadt - the holding of the powerful Elder bearing the same family name.

This lent great enthusiasm to the young rebels.

The Spanish incident

Throughout Spain hundreds of Brujah Neonates rose against their sires. Believing that the systems of blood lineage and feudal power that had dominated Kindred society were just tools of older vampires to maintain control and use the younger vampires as they pleased. These rebels called themselves Anarchs as a declaration of their rebellion against the laws supposedly left by Caine.

At first this was regarded chiefly as a Brujah problem - even though many of the first rebels had not been Brujah. And indeed, many Brujah Elders lost much influence and power in Spain - which had long been a stronghold of Brujah influence. But soon the ideas of rebellion spread - first to many of the young Lasombra in Italy, and then to the Tzimisce in Eastern Europe.

This had left the Elders shaken. And when the rumors spoke of the Lasombra and Tzimisce having found and killed their own mythical Antediluvians and progenitors - it left Elders everywhere horrified. In a few decades what had once been immeasurably powerful Kindred were laid low by the Childer of their Childer of their Childer - how could any Elder truly feel safe after that?





The Conventions

The Convention of 1486

The threat from the Inquisition was now worsened by the threat from the Anarchs, and this more than anything else influenced the Elders decision to increase their efforts. In 1486 Hardestadt - by many believed to have been destroyed by Tyler during the Anarch Revolt- called for a convention to establish a new order. At this Convention of 1486 the final foundations for what was to be the Camarilla were finally laid.

Another important thing happened in 1486. The Justicars gained power. While the office of Justicar - a sort of self-appointed Clan judge - had already existed before, they were given far more authority at this meeting - and they were also given a network of agents. This is how the first Archons came to be. It was also at this convention where the Inner Circle was formally established, and where the official aim and purpose of the Camarilla was made clear - to uphold the Silence of the Blood and the other Traditions.

The Convention of Thorns

Only seven years have passed since then, but much has happened. Hardestadt and the rest of the Inner Circle has called for a convention with the Anarchs and various independent forces - chief among them the Assamite Clan - to be held at the grandiose and castle-like Abbey of Thorns. It is here that the Inner Circle hopes to sway a majority of the Clans to their side, and to finally end both the Burning Times and the Anarch Revolt.

The stage is set, and the future of Kindred society will be decided at this convention.



Domains & Titles (1)

Traditional Domains

A Domain is any physical territory wherein a Kindred power structure is in place. Strictly speaking, a Domain is a place where a single Kindred rules and imposes their will upon the mortal world. Most Domains have more Kindred than one present, however, and as a result require some amount of organization. The traditional form that a Kindred Domain takes is that of a Principality - a quasi-feudal government presided over by a powerful Kindred - a so-called Prince.

Princes

The Prince of a Domain is, in theory, the highest governing authority of the Domain. In most instances this is also de-facto the case - but not in all cases. Princes can easily be weak puppets simply keeping the seat warm for the real powers behind the throne. The title of Prince is considered very prestigious however, and in most Domains only the most ruthless Elder can hold it for long. In the end, the only true authority a Prince has is the power they can put behind their threats.

Not all Princes are tyrants though - even though the majority are. Some Princes, especially those lacking in personal strength, make their way through diplomacy and careful administration of the power balance in the Domain. It is traditionally the Prince who selects the Seneschal and the Sheriff.

Seneschals

While the Prince is the highest authority in the Domain, the Seneschal is the one concerned with its night-to-night dealings. It is the Seneschal who keeps the Domain running, and the Seneschal who carries out the edicts of the Prince. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Seneschal is usually a very powerful figure - in some Domains everyone knows that true power lies with the Seneschal, not the Prince.

Sheriffs

The Sheriff is the Kindred entrusted with the safeguarding of the Domain from outside intrusion and internal scheming in equal proportions. The ideal Sheriff is fanatically loyal to the ruling Prince - but few such Sheriffs actually exist. Sheriffs are expected to be at the height of physical prowess - and to have a nose for plots and schemes. After all, they are the safeguard against such things.





Domains & Titles (2)

Traditional Domains (continued)

Hounds

Usually Neonates or young Ancillae, the Hounds of a Domain are the personal assistants of the local Sheriff. They range in competence from packs of thugs to highly trained and cunning operators. Hounds are expected to help the Sheriff with anything that might be required - be it application of physical force or spying. The position of Hound is usually a first-stop for most ambitious younglings.

Scourges

The terror that turns blood to ice - that is the terror that a proper Scourge should inflict upon their quarry. Where the Sheriff is a professional warrior and right-hand man of the Prince, the Scourge is like a wild dog - a thug let loose upon foes the Prince will not parley with and who should expect no mercy. Few people like the local Scourge, but it is a talentless Scourge who is not feared immensely.

Harpys

To be a Harpy is to hold the most nebulous and unstable position among the greats of Kindred society. A Harpy is a socialite and a trendsetter - a Harpy is a knower of people and gossipmonger. The Harpy knows exactly who owes who what - who pays back their favors and who are untrustworthy. A wrong word from the Harpy can end any Kindred, and a good one can lift them up.





Domains & Titles (3)

Anarch Domains

When the Neonates and young Ancillae first revolted they brought great changes with them. Overnight, ancient institutions were overturned as fire reigned in the streets of cities and Domains were left Prince-less. It was a strike at the heart of everything that was once taken as granted. Perhaps the age-old institutions were not quite as set-in-stone as it seemed.

Indeed, the Anarch Revolt has changed everything. It is especially so in those Domains where it has been successful enough to oust the Elders from power and institute a new form of rule - one divorced from the feudal realities of the traditional Principality. In many such Domains, formal titles are a thing of the past. But in others, the Anarch Kindred have quickly found that some amount of organization is necessary to combat their depredations. For this reason they have the title of Baron.

Baron

The Kindred who holds the title of Baron occupies a place that seems entirely oxymoronic to most vampires in establishment cities. The only way many can make sense of this title is to think of it as a Prince among the Anarchs - which is of course nonsense. Nevertheless, the Baron usually does fulfill many of the same roles that a Prince does in a more traditional Domain - if somewhat more bound by the whims and wishes of others. Rare is the Anarch who suffers those they perceive to be tyrants.

The Baron is in essence an administrator. From night-to-night the Baron occupies a position as judge - and often jury and executioner as well. But the Baron is often supported much more passionately by his peers than the average Prince - specifically because the Anarchs tend to think of them as their peer. The Baron does not rule through force or coercion, but through diplomacy and compromise. That is the archetype, at least - and there are more than a few Barons who are Princes sans the title.

7. Clans





High Clans & Low Clans

A relic of the Dark Ages

In the Dark Ages, the Clans were roughly organized into two large subcategories. These were the High Clans and the Low Clans. The upper echelons and lower rungs of Kindred society, respectively. This distinction served to distinguish those who were thought of as part of the vampiric gentry - the Ventrue and Toreador among others - from the scum such as Nosferatu and Ravnos.

To an extent it still does - but it is considered a somewhat archaic and outdated concept by most Ancillae, and certainly most Neonates. It has even fallen out of favor with quite a few Elders. Add to this that quite a few members of the Anarch Revolt (see p39) consider the very idea of High Clans and Low Clans to be an example of Elder propaganda meant to keep the Neonates in check.

Furthermore, the clear line between the “powerful” High Clans and the “powerless” Low Clans was never a physical reality - there were many Kindred counted as members of Low Clans who held great power during the Dark Ages. Just as there were many Kindred of so-called High Clans who were embarrassments to their unhallowed bloodlines. This was true then, and it is certainly true now.

An idea of the past

For these and many other reasons, it is clear to most that the idea of High Clans and Low Clans is an outdated concept that will soon disappear - as many other social distinctions has in the past. But what will replace it? Many say that the Clans will start to focus more on individual identity - that it will be more important for a Brujah to be a member of the Brujah rather than the High Clans.

As always, though, there are those who disagree. Whether they be conservative Elders who wish for a return to the order of the Dark Ages - or firebrand Anarchs who preach of an end to all ties of blood and vassalage. One thing is certain, however - how the Clans view themselves and their place in Kindred society will change drastically after the Convention of Thorns.



Clan Overview

The High Clans



Ventruë: Highest of the High Clans. Authoritative lords and astute politicians. Consumed by a need for power and control in all things. Heirs of bygone Rome - they wield power with great finesse and ruthless efficiency.



Lasombra: Proud nobles and unconquerable men of cloth. Second only to the Ventruë in their all-consuming lust for domination and prestige. They have infiltrated all of aristocracy and the Catholic church.



Toreador: Paragons of refinement and privilege - these kindred are obsessed with high society. Debauched hedonists and visionary artists in equal measure - they wield culture as others would a dagger.



Tzimisce: Cruel sadists and enigmatic flesh-shapers. No one rules by fear as effectively or as efficiently as a Tzimisce. Almost all of Eastern Europe is their domain - and such it has been for ages untold.



Brujah: Warrior-scholars and brooding thinkers. Noted for their devotion to radical philosophies. Heirs of Carthage, where Kindred walked freely among mortals - they are the would-be architects of tomorrow.

The Low Clans



Tremere: Secretive warlocks and dangerous sorcerers. While the Tremere were once looked down upon as usurers, it is now counted as invaluable to have one at your court to deal with matters arcane.



Malkavian: Wild-eyed prophets and wielders of piercing insight. The Malkavians have always preyed on those society labels as fools and madmen. Their gaze reveal a terrifying understanding of reality.



Gangrel: Animalistic predators and protean survivalists. In the past they mainly embraced pagans, but the stock has grown thin. Gangrel care little for civilization - and they will not be subjugated.



Nosferatu: Monstrous and nightmarish creatures. Many have taken to Christianity with great zeal. They're never respected - but they're useful to other Kindred as information brokers, spies, and warriors.



Ravnos: Outcasts and charlatans among the Kindred. Many have fallen to their trickeries. They travel with the Roma; the Ravnos are a parasitic plague stealing blood and identity from them in equal measure.



Assamite: Banu Haqim - Known derogatively as "Assamites", this clan is currently in disfavour in Europe due to their strong ties to the Moors. Those still in Europe are peerless assassins, though, and feared in equal measure.



Giovanni: Ambitious necromancers and ruthless cutthroats. The Giovanni have gone down the same path as the Tremere once traveled - usurping the Cappadocian Clan. Their boldness is beyond measure.



Clan Ventrue

The Warlords / The Patricians

The Ventrue - known commonly as the Warlords or Patricians - exalt in their position as rulers, leaders, and tyrants in equal measure. The best among them fully live up to the idealized vampire-as-Lord archetype, and they are well-known for their ruthless efficiency and keen sense of power-politics. The Ventrue have always taken on the guise of authority - though not always as Kings and Queens on the throne. The Ventrue are often too smart to conflate obvious power with actual influence, even if they will not suffer disrespect. Not even the tiniest sliver. In spite of this, few Ventrue see great promise in leading from the shadows - their pride will not allow them to do such a thing for long. The Ventrue hide in plain sight, and wear their authority proudly and openly. They do not ask - they request, and their requests WILL be honoured. They make their power known through structures - and they are known for upholding those self-same structures with great zeal. As always, there are the black sheep who fall outside of the norm. But the Ventrue as a whole are characterised by their immutable authority. Unlike their Lasombra counterparts, the Ventrue have grasped material power and done away with talks of legitimacy and Divine Right.

What does it mean to be a Ventrue? To be a Ventrue means that you're either the one on the throne - or the one actually ruling in spite of not being on it. It means having a sense for power and authority. It means being pitiless in your application of force when someone dares to oppose you. It means not being able to rest until everything you've laid your eyes upon is yours and only yours.. It means putting so much of yourself in power and influence that you soon fail to interact with others without keeping these things in mind. It means never being able to let go. It means never being questioned again - even if you have to remove those who do so. It means ruling by force and by authority.

Homelands of the Ventrue

While the Ventrue are easily found in all Domains of the Kindred, they are still chiefly present in Central Europe - especially in realms of Teutonic roots, where they also have their greatest influence. The average Ventrue, if such a thing can be said to exist, is therefore of Germanic or even Frankish descent. More than almost any other Clan, though, the Ventrue are found everywhere - or at least everywhere in Europe. Every land has its Kindred, and if one thing is true for the Clan as a whole it is that they are Lords Over the Damned. Whatever that might entail.

Internal Conflicts in the Ventrue

The Ventrue are not altogether keen on rebellion. Some Neonate and even Ancilla Ventrue have joined the Anarch Movement - but they are in a minority. The Ventrue work in more subtle ways towards their goals, and most young Ventrue see the open rebellion of the Anarchs as vulgar and unrefined. That does not mean there are no internal conflicts in the Clan, however. As mortal power structures change and transform, so to do the Ventrue. They've been Patricians in the Roman Empire and Lords in the nights of the Dark Ages. In ages past they styled themselves as great Chiefs and Tribal Elders. Now a new shift of paradigm has emerged - the schism between commerce and nobility of blood. While many older Ventrue cling to their ideals of feudalism and chivalry, the younger members of the Clan are more intent on following the path of mercantilism. The excesses of the Dark Ages and the harsh response of the Inquisition have spurred on these forces.





Clan Lasombra

The Magisters

Once the hegemonic masterminds behind the Catholic Church and countless kingdoms throughout the Dark Ages, Clan Lasombra has started to slip from its position as a Clan of Princes. Ever since the Burning Times swept through Europe, the Lasombra have been losing ground. Even so, in their own minds, they will always be the Queens and Kings of Kindred society, both on land and sea. They are commonly known as the Magisters, in acknowledgment of their great authority.

The Lasombra Clan has always favored direct power in face-to-face interactions. They meet their mortal thralls directly and enslave them to their will, showing their iron resolve in subjugating those who resist them. On a grander scale, however, the Lasombra lead from the shadows - they enmesh themselves into the church and royalty, slowly and deliberately pulling strings. This is in part due to the sense of legitimacy that church and royalty lends the Lasombra - and in part due to the fact that mere material power is seen as something beneath them, something better suited to the hated Ventrue. Vain and prideful, exulting in their role as damned in the eyes of God, many of them cast aside the vestiges of humanity and revel in what it means to be a vampire.

What does it mean to be a Lasombra? Being a Lasombra means always challenging those who believe themselves superior to you. Being a Lasombra means wanting their worship, their fear, and their absolute devotion. Being a Lasombra means abusing your sway over the mortal cattle for your own gratification - all the while suffering no dishonor to your name. It means seeping into every crevice of mortal power - a force unseen and unknown. Without your dominance over others, you are nothing. Without being above them - what are you really? It means ruling by ancient Divine Right.

Homelands of the Lasombra

Even under these grim circumstances, Clan Lasombra holds on to an impressive amount of power. In Italy and parts of the Iberian Peninsula, they are the undisputed rulers of the Kindred world and their shadowy tendrils of power stretches across North Africa as well as France. Some of their power is still concentrated in the hegemony of the Catholic Church with many Lasombra exercising their lust for power and blood within the monastic orders or among less scrupulous clergy. The Clan of the Shadows are also active among the seafaring peoples of the Mediterranean, hunting their prey in the ports of Europe or upon the seafaring vessels themselves.

Internal Conflicts in the Lasombra

Lasombra is a Clan in upheaval. Many of its Elders have fallen to the young Lasombra Anarchs. Their ancient system of internal justice, the Court of Blood, has been weakened. The Clan has not handled the Burning Times well - seeking safety among the mortals is an insult to everything the Lasombra believe in, so they have been forced to seek other ways to survive. Among the young there now exists two opposing viewpoints. The Damned, those who think that Kindred should embrace their monstrous nature and split from humanity entirely. And the Tyrants, who think that the Clan should use this chance to assume leadership over all Kindred, succeeding through sheer force of will instead of the weakness and hesitation of the Ventrue and Toreador. Might makes right - and according to them, no one is as powerful and mighty as the Lasombra.





Clan Toreador

The Artisans

The Toreador are without a doubt one of the most prominent High Clans. Ask most Toreador and they would say that they excel well above the Ventrue and Lasombra in refinement - and the Brujah in passion. This self-same passion is without equal the most important virtue for the Clan. Their passion for art and aesthetics as well as their twisted love for the beauty of the living world is what gives the Clan its strength and inspiration. In essence, the Toreador are a Clan longing for something else, something different. This is the prime motivation of the Clan of the Rose, the Artisans.

Their eternal search for this spark - something truly real and truly satisfying - is what motivates them, what gives them their drive. They will never find it. That's how it has always been and will always be. They are searching for something higher, greater, stronger - something unachievable. They are lacking something that makes the mortal artists shine, even though they might be even greater in their techniques. They lack that strange something that seems to come so naturally to the mortals. Somehow, the works they create just do not - last - quite the same way as mortal artworks do.

What does it mean to be a Toreador? Being a Toreador means being passionate and full of emotions - to a much greater extent than most other Kindred. You are close to the mortal world in many ways, but far away in others. You long for something that you will never find. You are broken in some fundamental way that will never truly be healed - and unlike mortal artists, you can not truly create in a satisfying way. Your works are beautiful, but they are pale reminders of the passions of life. Not all Toreador are artists - but it is a black sheep indeed who is not somehow involved with the art world.

Homelands of the Toreador

Although the Toreador live in almost every major city throughout Europe, they thrive in France, through and through. The Court of Love in Paris was once a pillar of Kindred society in Europe, but has unfortunately, as many other courts at the time, fallen to disarray and rebellion. The Toreador fight to keep up their traditions and hedonistic way of life even through these turbulent times. Wherever there is beauty and power, one finds the Toreador.

Internal Conflicts in the Toreador

If the Toreador had no internal conflicts, they would without doubt rule Kindred society. But the Clan of the Rose is all about internal conflict. Every meeting is about competition. Every political cause is a passive-aggressive contest against your peers - no less vicious than a physical duel. Every matter is grounds for conflict. Every word, sentence or even the slightest wave of your hand plays a part in the social struggle - a struggle truly vital to the health of the Clan.

Without friction, there can be no passion. And without passion, the Toreador are nothing. As a result, the Clan is much less unified than most other Clans - but some of its members have a great deal of individual influence. Many young Toreador have joined the Anarch Revolt, but the Toreador as a whole are usually not considered to be in revolt. Because when a Toreador does something, it's a Toreador doing something - it's not all of Toreador doing something.





Clan Tzimisce

The Shapers / The Fiends

Leaders, rulers and warlords. Rightful Princes and Regents of all they survey - at least in their own minds. They are the Lords of their Domains, and few Kindred have such a close connection to their lands as these proud fleshcrafting vampires. Never will anyone face such hospitality or such cruelty as when visiting the Shapers. Few Clans value tradition and history as much as they do. Neither flesh nor land nor soul is above the control the Clan Tzimisce, they are the voivodes and the proud supreme rulers of Eastern Europe. Or at least they used to be. Times are hard for the Fiends.

For untold centuries they had ruled supreme as tyrants and despots over the lands of mortal and Kindred society alike - but now everything is changing. During the Burning Times, the ancient lands of tradition and power burnt as fiercely as any other. And when the Anarch Revolt started it shook the Tzimisce Clan to its foundations. Now little remain of what once was.

What does it mean to be a Tzimisce? To be a Tzimisce means to straddle the line between refinement and monstrosity. It means having the power to remake not just minds - but the very flesh of others. It means being of ancient blood and ancient traditions - ways of being that are threatened by young ideas and new ideologies. You are the scion of a Clan of traditionalists and rebels, Princes and Anarchs alike. You are a Kindred caught in the conflicts between change and tradition.

Homelands of the Tzimisce

The Clan of Shapers hail from the sacred lands of Eastern Europe, the earth and spirits of the land itself have always had a close connection to the Clan. They traditionally believe that a true leader of any land has a bond to both the earth and those that live by it. Because of this the Tzimisce have historically been rooted to both the soil and beliefs of their Domains. They believe in mighty spirits and in laws of hospitality and tradition far older than any mortal kingdom. These last centuries a fierce war has been fought both within and outside the traditional borders of the Clan. Tzimisce have made their home in the mountains of the east for as long as the ancient Clan holds records, and things are not likely to change. Some few of them reside outside of Eastern Europe - but they are indeed few and far between.

Internal Conflicts in the Tzimisce

No Clan fights as proudly as Clan Tzimisce. Generation-long wars are still fought on sacred ground for reasons long forgotten. No Clan holds grudges like Clan Tzimisce does. And for this reason they've long known infighting and internal conflict. But during this last century everything has changed. War still ravages the land - but now it is without laws and rules. Childer rage against their Sires and ancient traditions are broken and torn apart by the Anarch Revolt. Few Clans are as fiercely divided as are the Tzimisce - for they are in many ways one of the main forces of the revolt in question. Some of the most important names of the Anarch Revolt carry the blood of the Tzimisce. Lugo the Blood-Breaker, Myca Vykos, and Velya the Flayer all hail from the blood of this noble Clan. Few of the old and proud Elders still walk the nights - for they have almost all fallen to the torch of the young ones. Clan Tzimisce is a Clan in flux - a Clan of young ones who have successfully slain most of their oppressors and forced the rest into hiding or retreat.





Clan Brujah

The Zealots

Champions of ideological passions and bearers of a powerful and unpredictable fury. Clan Brujah is known to Kindred both as philosophers and ferocious warriors. Through the many nights of Kindred existence the Brujah have been a Clan of overwhelming fervor and dedication. As they have spent so long deliberating over the vampiric condition, the rest of Kindred society has looked upon the Brujah as the custodians of the inner hunger. There is a good reason they are known as the Zealots.

Since ancient times began, Clan Brujah has been in the midst of mortal civilization - directing or ruling mankind as Kings or Gods in their own way. They always have an opinion in the matter of mortal culture and societal structure. Especially in Ancient Greece and Carthage - where the Brujah were known for discussing ideals and learning ethics from orators and philosophers. In these times of changing the rebellious hearts of the youthful Brujah threaten to remake the Clan into something else entirely. The young tire of idle and useless philosophy.

What does it mean to be a Brujah? To be a Brujah means always being on the edge of exploding into violent anger. To be a Brujah means battling with your inner fury whilst still retaining an ideological ideal of how society should function - or how it should not. It's about raging against the injustices of the Kindred world - all the while enslaving others with your blood and manipulating mortal societies from behind the scenes. It's about being so assured of the righteousness of your cause that you have no reason to stop and consider it. Not even for a moment.

Homelands of the Brujah

The Brujah are found everywhere - because every people in the world knows the passion and wrath inherent in rebellion, and the all-encompassing zeal of giving oneself fully to a cause. The Brujah follow these trends of rebellion wherever they might spring forth. Brujah have a predisposition towards city-states and republics - owing in large part to their love of the radical and the experimental. The Brujah have long held an overwhelming presence in the Iberian Peninsula, but the Anarch Revolt and the resulting slaying of the Brujah Elders have weakened that grasp.

Internal Conflicts in the Brujah

In the days of the Anarch Revolt, Clan Brujah has fought an immense battle between their Elders and the young. When Tyler - a Brujah Ancilla - took up arms against the Elders of Castle Hardestadt and won, it lent great enthusiasm to the young rebels of Clan Brujah. They did not approve the Elders sending them to the front lines of the war against the Inquisition - sacrificing the young to save their own hides.

Clan Brujah today is a Clan with most of its Elders dead. They are in many ways what sparked the Anarch Revolt to begin with. It remains to be seen whether they will go the whole way, or whether their lust for creation will overwhelm their lust for destruction. The young are furious, the old are on retreat - as it should be among the Brujah, some might say.





Clan Tremere

The Usurpers / The Warlocks

The Tremere are an oddity among the Kindred, in more ways than one. And for that, they are dangerous. While all other Clans - with the exception of the Giovanni - date to time immemorial, the Tremere is a new Clan, born not of some mythical Antediluvian, but of mortal magic and stolen Blood. The Tremere are the masters of Kindred Blood Magic, and their founders still walk the night. They have fought the Tzimisce to a standstill and borne the onslaught of the greatest order of Mages in all of Europe, and while they may still be considered usurpers and a Low Clan, they are rising. Their Pyramid and their occult secrets will win them the day, of that they have no doubt. Many have taken to calling them the Warlocks, even while other Kindred would sneer at them and call them the Usurpers.

The internal structure of the Tremere, called the Pyramid, is incredibly strict; they are easily the most organized of all the Clans. Each Domain with Tremere presence has a Chantry lead by a leader called a Regent, who answers to a Lord, and so on up the hierarchy until you reach Tremere himself, with each level having seven ranks. There is no question of who has authority between any two Tremere. It is this Pyramid which gives Clan Tremere its power.

What does it mean to be Tremere? It means having secret knowledge and power, and it means being part of a great and mighty conspiracy. It means harnessing your blood to its fullest potential with Blood Magic more potent than any other. To be a Tremere means sneering at fools and cowards who speaks of hubris, contrition and morality. It means fighting your way to the top by your wits and your ambition, and it means enforced loyalty to your superiors - however chafing it might be to a blood-thirsty monster such as the Kindred. To be Tremere means to be on the winning side. To be a Tremere means always watching your back around your peers.

Homelands of the Tremere

Clan Tremere started its unlife spread across Chantries in Eastern Europe. In the centuries since then, however, the Tremere have spread across Central Europe. There is a small Chantry of Tremere in most large European cities, but their presence is virtually unknown outside of Europe, and although they have recently moved their primary chantry to Vienna, they remain strongest in Transylvania, despite the best efforts of the Tzimisce.

Internal Conflicts in the Tremere

To the outside, Tremere seems like a united monolith bound by incomprehensible secrets and symbols. From the inside, however, things are not so united. While the entire clan supports the new Camarilla project, every Tremere seeks to get one over their superior and take their place. Sometimes, that means currying favor with superiors. At other times, it means boiling the blood of academic rivals. The Tremere balk at nothing where their ambition is concerned.

The greatest internal conflict in the order is the conflict between the mainstream of the Clan and those loyal to Goratrix, Tremere's outcast apprentice. This House of Goratrix operates secretly, in the shadows, a conspiracy within the Clan. As supporters of the Anarchs, they are a threat to the Clan and must be corrected - or else destroyed.





Clan Malkavian

The Afflicted

While all vampires are affected by the emotions running through the blood they feed on, the Malkavians are helplessly lost to it. The very first time they feed, it is said that they become so overwhelmed by the emotions of their victim and the horrifying trauma that it comes to define them. Unlike others, Malkavians can never shrug away what they have done. Some dark force within their Blood magnifies the torment of their victim and seeds it within their own minds. Their urges and conflicting emotions keep piling up until they no longer can be considered sane. They might turn their hunger inwards, trying to bring their lust for blood to bear upon themselves, harming their bodies. They might come to understand - or imagine - things about themselves and the world that they feel compelled to act on, often ruining their own unlives and the lives of others. The manifestations are many, but all are equally horrifying. For this reason the Malkavian are known as the Afflicted.

The Burning Times have been particularly harsh towards the Kindred of Clan Malkavian. Unable to hide their afflictions among mortals, they have been labeled demons, witch-touched and spawns of Satan. But though Malkavians may be victims, there is nothing harmless or excusable about them - not when they psychologically abuse others with horrible accusations and impossible claims. Not when their curse empower them to commit perverted acts towards undeserving and deserving alike. The Malkavians do not huddle helplessly in a corner.

What does it mean to be a Malkavian? Malkavians are often aware of their madness but can do little to control it. Some try to fight it, they can feel their control waxing and waning as the years pass by. To be a Malkavian means to seek kinship in mortals suffering from mental anguish - and only adding to their troubles. To be a Malkavian means being the wild card - no one knows what to expect of the members of this Clan. There's probably no secret vision, no hidden meaning behind it all - but many Malkavians believe that there is. It is much more worthy to do as they do if it is for a purpose, no matter how inscrutable it might be to others.

Homelands of the Malkavian

Malkavians can be found everywhere and nowhere, scattered and lost. They often carve out solitary existences, dependent on their herd for sustenance and unable to find solace anywhere. However, they have a clear tendency to cluster in the major urban areas, more so than almost any other Clan, because of their predatory and abusive urges towards humans with similar afflictions. They hunt among those that no one will miss, the madmen and rambling women of the city streets. After all, they consider them kin - and those already marginalized by society and haunted by their own mental anguish can do little to ward them off.

Internal Conflicts in the Malkavian

As the Age of Reason enveloped Europe, the old sayings, prophecies and visions were not reliable enough for the establishment. The trust that the ancients placed in the Malkavians was not shared by the younger Elders and Ancillae, and so, Clan Malkavian were struck from their seat as advisors and prophets and down into the gutters. Due to this, many have joined the Anarchs. This group believes that their destiny is there, maybe not because of shared ideology or because they believe in the Anarch cause, but because it is the only group that accepts them and would take their help. Others argue the opposite - that only the purging of all Anarchs and the destruction of these rebellious attitudes would restore them to their old glory, and that they owe the Elders their allegiance.





Clan Gangrel

The Animals

The Gangrel are considered the most feral and predatory of the Kindred, and because of their reclusive natures, animalistic tendencies and loose organization they are seen as the least social of the all the clans. Gangrel are territorial and most of them prefer solitude to society. In the Gangrel clan, storytelling and being able to hold a crowd is considered a valuable trait. Since most of the Clans legends and myths are told orally, the spoken word holds a lot of power. In spite of this great oral tradition, the other Clans know the Gangrel chiefly by the name of the Animals.

The traditional Gangrel way of Embracing new Kindred is harsh and challenging for the new Childe. It is the first of many hardships a new Gangrel will have to go through. The Gangrel believe that this way only the strongest will join this independent and fierce Clan. Once a Childe has been Embraced the Sire leaves its creation to survive alone for one night. If werewolves, mortals or nature itself does not defeat the Childe, it has proven itself to be worthy of proper training.

What does it mean to be a Gangrel? To be a Gangrel means that you are close to the predator inside of you. The hunger for blood and power. To be a Gangrel means teetering on the brink between man and beast - always likely to fall into true savagery. More than any other Kindred, you're in touch with the thrill of the hunt and the pulse of the untamed places of the world. But you are dead, and you are not natural - indeed, you're something far from natural. More monster than beast.

Homelands of the Gangrel

You can find Gangrel in most parts of the world. Gangrel traditionally stay out of the cities and hold territories at the outskirts of Kindred Domains. It is well known that one does not enter Gangrel territory without an invitation. Even though Gangrel are known to be wanderers and close to the wilderness, some enjoy the scheming and backstabbing that is the foundation of Kindred existence in most Domains - considering it another kind of hunt or perhaps rebelling against the archetype of their Clan. As a result, some few Gangrel do move into cities - but it is the exception rather than the rule.

Internal Conflicts in the Gangrel

The Gangrel have no real internal organization, the older and more powerful you are the more respect you get. The Clan rarely meets, but when it does it is called a "Gathering". Once begun, these Gatherings involve many different rites to decide leadership for the meeting and change of hierarchy in the Clan. There are also incidents of ritual combat - deciding who has superiority in conflicts. While savage, these fights rarely result in the weaker combatants destruction.

Internal conflict is natural in the Gangrel. But external conflict is another matter entirely. As a Low Clan, Gangrel are not normally seen on the stage of power, nor do they traditionally take sides in the scheming and deceiving politics of the Kindred. The ongoing power struggles of the High Clans do not affect Gangrels as much as some of the other clans. Nonetheless, all Gangrel know that they play a vital part in the game of power in Kindred society. Times are changing and soon even Gangrels will be forced to take an active part in the great War of Princes.





Clan Nosferatu

The Lepers

No other Clan is as marred by their curse of undeath as the Nosferatu. The Nosferatu curse is known widely among all Kindred - because of their hideousness. No other Kindred wish to be among the Damaged. Because of their deformed looks and ugly appearance they have never had the ability to walk among humans. As far back as their ancestry goes, Clan Nosferatu has lived in the shadows of mortal society. And in Kindred society they've long been known as the Lepers.

On the grand stage of Kindred society, Clan Nosferatu is hidden well and often overlooked. Perhaps this occurs because no High Clans look well upon their faces of repulsiveness, or maybe Clan Nosferatu just found their strength in the shadows and elected to stay among them. But even though they're often overlooked and rarely given the credence they deserve - the Nosferatu are always there, watching.

What does it mean to be a Nosferatu? To be a Nosferatu means being an abomination to the Kindred world, but still having an impact on society, that no one wants you to have. It means being an outcast in society - turned from the eye of an allegedly merciful God. It means holding and ruling the information, and having an effect on the world from the outside.

Homelands of the Nosferatu

You can find Nosferatu in every outskirt of almost every city in the world. They've spread across almost all cultures, but the Clan is still known to be found primarily with the beggars and the outcasts of society. They are not to co-exist with humans, so they normally inhabit places far from the prying eyes of mortals - crypts, caves, and other dark places of the world. The Nosferatu do not hold strongholds of influence, but rather are spread as a parasitic plague upon the lowlives of all societies.

Internal Conflicts in the Nosferatu

God is gracious and the lineage of Nosferatu has long sought redemption from the Lord. Embracing Christianity has been as familiar to the Clan as living in obscurity. Living in the catacombs of the houses of God has been a honor amongst the Nosferatu for decades, but nowadays things are changing. The young of Clan Nosferatu have grasped the potential of in standing in the dim of Kindred society - catching secrets and information.

For the Nosferatu are also a Clan of spymasters and information brokers. They are the keepers of information, and they sell it at a dear price. As a Low Clan they do not normally stand on the stage of power, but the whole paradigm of High and Low Clans is soon to be a thing of the past. It is an open question how the Nosferatu will respond. Especially since so many of the older members cling to their ideas of redemption and God - while the younger ones are often much more practical.



Clan Ravnos

The Charlatans

No other Clan has managed to garner such a disreputable reputation as the Clan of the Ravnos. Liars, charlatans, and cheats - they are considered a black mark upon Kindred society and are traditionally shunned wherever they go. Most Ravnos know of nothing but subsistence on the dredges of Kindred and human society in equal measure. Almost like the Nosferatu, the Ravnos prowl the outskirts of mortal settlements for the blood of those who will not be missed. But where other Clans might focus on individual outcasts - beggars and brigands - the Ravnos have their eyes set on entire groups of the oppressed. For their ways, they are called the Charlatans among Kindred.

The Ravnos ply their trade by stealing blood and servitude from those who have little in the way of recourse in civilized society - mostly from Roma, but also from other such minority groups. Whether they take with raw power or trick with honeyed words, the Ravnos are not truly of the groups they seek to subvert - even though some might delude themselves into believing otherwise. The Ravnos might be persecuted among the Kindred - but they are no friends of the subjugated mortals. They are just another predator.

What does it mean to be a Ravnos? To be a Ravnos means to be on the bottom rung of Kindred society - getting by on wits and ruthless cunning. To be a Ravnos means turning every negative into a positive, cost what it may for others. To be a Ravnos means to be looked down upon by your social betters while taking whatever you can from those even further beneath you. You are an outcast oppressing other outcasts - not just to survive, but to thrive. You might be a pauper in the halls of the Prince of the Domain, but you are a regent among the desperate in the slums.

Homelands of the Ravnos

Outcasts among the Kindred, the Ravnos are a scourge upon far less powerful and far less deserving outcasts in mortal communities. They make their influence known largely among the Roma - and quite a few of them are Embraced from that self-same population group. The Ravnos are not Roma however - they are a parasitic plague upon them, as are all vampires who cast their sight on mortals. They are found wherever the Roma have been found - and a few of them have found other persecuted populations to feed upon. For all these reasons, you usually find Ravnos in the slums and ghettos of large trading cities everywhere.

Internal Conflicts in the Ravnos

For a Clan of tricksters and cheats, the Ravnos have a surprising amount of social cohesion - much more than most outside of the Clan would believe. There is a strange sort of solidarity among the Ravnos, a solidarity among outcasts - that in no way extends to the mortal outcasts they assist each other in taking advantage of. Ravnos are known to be far more lenient to members of their own Clan than members of other Clans, and as a result, outright conflicts are rare. Add to this the largely informal nature of the Clan and you're left with excellent conditions for large-scale schisms and disagreements to be rare, if not entirely unheard of. When there are internal conflicts in the Ravnos Clan it usually comes down to individual antipathy and dislike between two members - not rivalry or competition between competing sects. Ravnos rarely gather in such sects.





Clan Assamite

The Children of Haqim / The Assassins

The Assamites are one thing above anything else. They are strangers. They are alien. Called Assamites only by others, they know themselves as the Banu Haqim - the Children of Haqim. Their ways are rarely known and often misunderstood by Kindred of European descent, because they are a Clan inextricably linked with the Middle East, and to a lesser degree the Balkans under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Turks. The predisposition of Banu Haqim towards the blood of other Kindred do not help quiet the xenophobia. This, coupled with the cultural differences, have led to Banu Haqim being perceived as little else but blood-hungering predators - a somewhat ironic accusation for any Kindred to make. It is not a view the Banu Haqim generally share, for the vampires of the Middle East are just as practiced in the arts of self-delusion as any other vampire. If you ask the so-called Assamites, they are nothing quite as barbaric as the other Kindred - they are something closer to righteous judges of their kind.

What does it mean to be an Assamite? To be an Assamite means struggling against the thirst for the blood of other predators. To be an Assamite means dealing with the great gulf between what you think of yourself and the impression of other Kindred - in the Balkans and the Middle East you consider yourself noble, but here you are placed among the Low Clans. You are from a place that never truly felt the same thing as Europe did during the Burning Times. You are the inheritor of a great legacy - even while others might not accept its legitimacy. You are civilized among barbarians.

Homelands of the Assamites

In Europe, the Banu Haqim are almost never found outside the lands under Ottoman sovereignty. The Inquisition never truly touched the lands that they inhabit, and as a result they've not felt quite the same sting of the mortal herds as the Europeans. They've made a habit out of grooming stable herds - usually from specific mortal families, sometimes their own. The Crusades did manage to introduce some manner of instability into this age-old system, and especially the Ventrue are hated for having taken parts in these skirmishes under the cover of the night. Most Banu Haqim are centered around the desert fortress of Alamut - a true stronghold of the Clan. Today it is possible to find Assamites - usually calling themselves Assamite rather than Banu Haqim - outside of the traditional areas the Clans inhabit. But these exceptions are still incredibly rare.

Internal Conflicts in the Assamites

The Banu Haqim inhabit a strange limbo between the young and the old Kindred in the Anarch Revolt. For while the Clan itself is not in open revolt, it has largely joined the side of the Anarchs. This is a case of the Elders of the Banu Haqim agreeing to aid rebellion in the ranks of the European Kindred - while keeping a tight enough rein on their own Childer to guard against internal rebellion. But this tight rein has weakened somewhat in the last few decades. More and more of the Elder Banu Haqim are calling for a peace treaty with the established Domains of Europe, fearing that the fortress of Alamut might soon be discovered by the Nosferatu spymasters. There are also those among the Elders who wish to continue the struggle no matter the cost - but these hot-headed warriors are mostly found among the young of the Clan. Perhaps soon the Banu Haqim will see an internal rebellion, like the one of the Brujah, Lasombra, and Tzimisce? They've certainly been introduced to the thought after having fought side by side with the Anarchs.





Clan Giovanni

The Necromancers

The Giovanni Clan is the least respected Clan, if they could even be called a Clan. As the Convention of Thorns approaches, they have only existed as a separate entity for fifty years. Augustus Giovanni, inspired by the rebellion of the Lasombra and Tzimisce Clans against their Elders and Antediluvians, took it one step further and did not only Diablerize his Sire, Cappadocius, but declared the Giovanni branch in the Cappadocian Clan an entity in its own right. The only way they could be sure to be acknowledged was to completely annihilate the Cappadocian Clan and take their place among the others. They have come a long way and few Cappadocians remain, but their task is not yet complete. Meanwhile, they have waged a low-intensity war against the future Founders of the Camarilla, who took a personal interest in trying to stop the Diablerie and the destruction of the Cappadocians. The Giovanni Clan have continued their mortal legacy of mixing necromantic perversions with financial wealth. As immortal Kindred, they have taken to it with renewed fervor, using their thralls for increasingly destructive and twisted experiments. The Clan is one of the few who have, thanks to their small size and recent rise to power, kept all their members loyal to their founder and the few Elders of the Clan.

What does it mean to be Giovanni? Being Giovanni means that you are a part of a large, extended family where everyone works to further the goals of the Clan, albeit in their own greedy, lustful ways. It means that you care nothing for the potentials of mortals outside their use to you in your rituals or in your horror-filled hunting. It means that every other Clan is an enemy until proven otherwise and you are willing to step over corpses - countless corpses - to carve your own niche in the Kindred world. It means being entirely ruthless, and learning to come to terms with that fact.

Homelands of the Giovanni

The Giovanni family made their homes in Venice and becoming vampires did not change this in any significant way. That is where Augustus Giovanni holds court and they rule the city with an iron fist. However, that is also the only place where they hold power. Everywhere else, the Giovanni are treated as enemies and usurpers for the most part, or, in a few select cities, just barely accepted and acknowledged. These latter cities tend to be spread around Italy or the Balkans.

Internal Conflicts in the Giovanni

The Clan is unique in its loyalty to its founder and its very small size. It is not yet big enough to truly be outside the possibility for control and Claudius Giovanni, the eldest Childe of Augustus, manages the checks and balances of the Clans daily power struggles with meticulous interest. This means that most of the Clans conflicts are external, but they do not lack internal disagreements altogether. The main dividing line is between the political and the necromantic sides of the Clan. It is only natural that some Giovanni are more interested in grasping power in the vast arena of Kindred society, becoming a Clan to be feared and respected among all the others, while other Giovanni find that they have become distracted and weak through trying to play on a field dominated by Elders of immense power. No, they say, let us focus on what made us unique, our power over death and the soul. Political power games will only drag us down and greed will topple the tower we have built. Claudius is intent on the political path while a few others, such as Ambrogino Giovanni, have focused entirely on the necromantic pursuits of the Clan.



8. Themes





How the themes affect the larp

Ideas for character opinions

In this chapter are a list of themes. Each theme has a page of its own, and the idea behind having them laid out this way is to give easy reference points and interaction possibilities for the characters of the larp. Characters may not have strong opinions (or even knowledge!) on all of the themes listed here, but there is a good chance that many of these will become relevant during play. This chapter is meant to provide some guidelines and inspiration on how to tackle the topics that are relevant to the Kindred of the time and setting, even though we ourselves live centuries later and are not vampires.

Ways for creating interesting play

Convention of Thorns is of course about more than the themes listed in this chapter, but these are some of the main things that the characters will get into discussions about. And even though some opinions sit more easily with some types of characters (there's little chance that the Ventrue Elder is an Anarch, for instance!), there is a lot of freedom to choose. It is perfectly possible to play the larp without having read this chapter at all, but it gives a short briefing on some of the important issues of the day - and ideas on how to play on them.

Opinions can provide the most unlikely allies

The sheer number of themes and the different positions available mean that no matter who interacts with who, they will have some shared opinions and some where they are in conflict. This will make for some interesting and unexpected alliances of thought, which will lead to interesting and nuanced play. Our hope is that this will make it easy to make the characters three-dimensional and make the larp come alive. After all, this means that even the most disliked characters will find allies somewhere and even the most saintly and well-liked will find those who disagree on something. Just as it should be.

Formal structure of the theme descriptions

- **Introduction** This gives a very quick sketch of the theme in relation to the vampiric condition. This is meant to give players who are unfamiliar with the setting a short glimpse into it and how the theme fits in it.
- **Positions.** This gives 2-3 opposing viewpoints that can be adopted by the characters for the larp. This is not to say that there are only 2-3 viewpoints on each theme, but that these are easy to understand and easy to play on.



Vampires

Introduction

The Kindred are not like the teeming masses of humanity - even though every single one of us was once a human being. The Kindred are powerful, eternal, and appear unchanging until the moment we are destroyed. Those of us who were embraced when we were young will stay young forever. And all of us will exist forever - at least in theory.

Since the time that Caine slew Abel, the Kindred have been the constant companions of humanity. Ruling over them from atop mighty towers or hunting the unwelcome dredges at the very margins of society. Before the Burning Times of the Inquisition many of us felt comfortable in flaunting our immortality and power for all to see. And what we showed the world was human cruelty crystallized and given eternal life.

We have different approaches to our unlife. Some of us welcome it as a boon - while others curse it like the plague. Ask ten different vampires what unlife means to them and you will likely get ten different answers. Even so, there are some opinions which are more common than others.

Positions

You will exist forever, rejoice. Why must you huddle in your Haven and pretend like you a lesser being? You are eternal, forever young, and powerful beyond the reckoning of most mortals. Your unlife is not a curse - it is a blessing! While the very walls of your city of birth crumbles beneath your feet you yet exist - and while Kingdoms are toppled and new orders established you stay behind the curtain and direct it all. It is good to be eternal.

A curse upon the world, and upon yourself. Unlife is a cruel perversity at the best of times, and a constant vexing battle against ennui, cruelty, and treachery. The vampiric condition is not a gift, it is a curse beyond the ken of most who would accept it upon themselves. Whether you were forced into it or originally choose it, you've come to resent it deeply all the same. What good is eternity if it comes with the degradation of all that was good in life?

You are not the victim, you are the monster. The Kindred are not beautiful gentry. The Kindred are not the height of society given eternal life. The Kindred are parasites and monstrous mockeries of humanity. The ones who rejoice in their condition might be naive - but doubly so are the ones who curse the world for their misfortune. Kindred are not unfortunate souls - they are predators and blood-thieves. They are not mortals with fangs - they are monsters.





Mortals

Introduction

Humanity is everywhere. They always have been, and they always will be. A herd to be led, a buffet or an army to fight for you. The options are numerous as the humans themselves. It is certain though, we need them. For simple things like sustenance, or to carry out our wills.

Humans have played their part as pawns of our schemes for millennia, and are, in a way, the only thing we all have in common. We all used to be part of the huddled masses who never saw what went on behind the veil of secrecy woven by the Kindred over the aeons. But now we've risen above. Or have we? Are we just a small step closer to something greater than us? Surely not.

They are moving into a new era. Some turn to God for their salvation, others gang up to lead petty bands into squabbles that will never make a dent on history - and some turn towards the Kindred. How we receive them will shape the coming age. How we receive them will determine our part in history.

Positions

- **Sheep to the slaughter.** Mortals are nothing but pieces of our puzzle. Tools to be used and discarded. The fact that there are so many of them is exactly why they are so easy to use. You lose an army? They'll breed you a new one in a matter of years. Your domain gets a bit too crowded? Send them next doors to increase your land. All they need is some half-arsed reason to follow your orders. It's almost too easy.
- **The enemy at the gates.** Thousands upon thousands of them. Living on our doorsteps. Only a fool would ignore that. Tread carefully when you move around in their world. For make no mistake, this is their world. Even the strongest of us couldn't withstand the tide should they ever rise against us. Only the most arrogant of the Kindred close their eyes to the danger that the masses of humanity pose.
- **The long game of influence.** Here a little notch, there a little poke. The smallest pebble can make the biggest ripple in the water. Alter the direction of the society you hide in ever so slightly, and they will never suspect that they have been manipulated for generations. There's no need for great action here and now. After all, time stopped being a factor a long time ago, didn't it?





The Embrace

Introduction

The Embrace is the only known way of turning a mortal into one of the Kindred - giving eternal existence to someone who was once to fade from this world. The Embrace is a deceptively simple action - one must simply drain the blood of a mortal and inject it with our own Kindred vitae. Simple, if somewhat bloody.

But it is not really that simple, of course. For one must remember what one is creating. When we Sire more of our kind, we have to think deeply of what we are adding to this world and why we are doing it. It is not an action undertaken lightly, as it without fail takes a huge toll on the mind of the would-be Sire. It is not an easy thing for the Kindred to willingly give blood - it takes an enormous force of will.

Yet without the Embrace, vampirism would hardly have spread so far. There are many different reasons that Kindred Embrace new Childer - but obviously many of them do. And all this in spite of the Third Tradition - the Tradition of Progeny - that forbids the creation of new Childer without the permission of our Elders.

Positions

- **This crimson kiss will raise you above the commons.** The Embrace is a thing of dark sacredness. It is the destruction of a mere mortal and the twisted birth of another Kindred. It is the most important moment in the eternity of a thinking being. It is the moment where we stop being of the teeming masses and become truly apart from them. The Embrace is a great gift - and those who are given the Embrace should be thankful that their Sire has deigned to grant it.
- **This is not a gift, it is a theft of humanity.** The Embrace is a sin against all that is natural and holy - it takes from this world a healthy mortal soul and replaces it with some hollow thing that mimics the Man. It infuses the Beast into our bodies, and gives us the curse that we must bear forevermore. It is perhaps fitting that this is the birth of a new vampire, for the Embrace truly encapsulates all that it is to be Kindred. A violation not just against the body - but the soul.
- **Blessing or curse - the Embrace should be rare.** Whether the Embrace is something to be celebrated or something to be lamented is not important - the important thing is that it should be a rare recourse. There were far too many Kindred in the Dark Ages, and look where it got us. When the night is teeming with the unliving they will grow bold and invite the torches and pyres of humanity - it is what has caused these Burning Times to begin with. We must be careful.





The Amaranth

Introduction

The Amaranth - or Diablerie - is the act of draining a fellow Kindred of Vitae - and to keep drinking until there is nothing left. Not even the soul of the Kindred in question. It is considered by many to be the highest offense possible between vampires - and known Diablerists are often slain on sight.

And yet it happens. Some would even say that it happens often. This might seem strange to some - but it often seems just a tiny bit less strange when one considers that drinking the soul of a more powerful Kindred grants you some amount of their power for yourself. Usurping the blood and vital spirit of a Kindred closer to Caine than yourself will make your blood thicker. And with thicker blood comes greater powers.

Some whisper that performing Diablerie severely damages the soul of the Diablerist in question. Others, of course, make the case that the reason for the strong aversion to the practice is nothing more or less than the fears of the Elders made manifest. They fear to be replaced by their Childer - and perhaps they should.

Positions

- **Herein lies the path to greatness.** The Amaranth is the only way for those at the bottom of the hierarchy to climb - the only way for a Neonate or Ancillae to become an equal of the Elders above. It is also a very handy way of increasing your own power tremendously - in exchange for something as easily given as the unlife of a hated foe. Why would one not make use of the Diablerie? Those on the top fear it precisely because it is effective.
- **Greater perversity has never been seen.** The Amaranth is a monstrosity and grotesquery among monstrosities and grotesqueries - the very annihilation of a Kindred soul is an unspeakable thing. Even the most jaded and cynical of our kind would think twice before employing it as a weapon - lest of all before making it a general strategy and approach to unlife. The Amaranth tears at the soul, and soon enough naught but hollow nothingness shall remain.
- **It is within our nature - if a rather barbaric.** The Amaranth is a tool - nothing more and nothing less. Some of our kind worry far too much about metaphysical issues such as the sacredness of a supposed Kindred soul. The idea that the Amaranth should tear apart important aspects of ourselves is laughable - it is merely another function of the vampiric condition. But it is brutish, and barbaric - no one denies this charge. Then again, many things we do are.





Humanity & The Beast

Introduction

The unlives of the Kindred are spent balancing on a knife's' edge between the nature of a predator of the night and the humanity that they once held as mortals. Many Neonates and even Ancillae cling to this bygone sense of self as tightly as a drowning man might to a piece of floating wood.

The reason for this is simple. Even though some Kindred might play on refinement and high culture, the truth is that they are all predators. Some believe that every single one of them will one day succumb to this inhumanity. Something they poetically call the Beast - the apex predator hiding within every Kindred, eschewing questions of morality and sense.

The young Kindred - those of scant few years - are often disturbed by their first meeting with this new companion. No matter what you do, how pure your intentions are, it will find a way to steer you off the course. And when it arrives at your doorstep, it arrives with blood, and fury, and unrestrained brutality.

Positions

- **The Beast is me, I am the Beast.** Why fight a never-ending battle you can never win? The Beast is our nature, the core of our being. People have tried to deny this, but it's always the ones accepting their nature who stand, and the rest who bend the knee in the face of opposition. Embrace the fact that we are the apex predators, only then will we be able to be everything we were clearly meant to be.
- **Our morals and ethics do not die with our bodies.** We must reign in the Beast. The second we give into the Beast, is the second we become one. Conscience doesn't die just because we do. We are burdened to forever strive to maintain what humanity we have left. Quell the roaring bloodlust, subdue the animalistic instinct lest we become nothing but monsters. It is a never-ending battle, but it is one that is worth fighting.
- **Man and Beast in tight communion.** Nothing and no one controls our fate. Whatever our condition brings of instincts are just that; instincts. And instincts can be controlled. Urges can be quenched. But sometimes one must release the terror. With the utmost discipline, the Beast can become a watchdog rather than a rabid hound with little sense and purpose. After all, hasn't both Kine and Kindred history shown that WE shape the world, not the beasts?



Blood & Addiction

Introduction

The blood makes the vampire - it is what they all thirst for. It is what their unlives are spent hunting. Some try to deny this fact, they put on airs of affluence and gentility - but in truth they all thirst for the taste of sweet Vitae. It is what sets them apart from mere mortals - it is what gives them their power. But it is also an addiction.

As much as the Kindred are beyond the petty physiological needs of mortals - their all-consuming desire for blood proves a much greater hindrance than the mere mortal need for food and drink. A vampire who can not steal or otherwise conquer blood will descend into a maddened state of frenzied hunger - tearing everything apart until the yearning is sated. It is a terrible thing to behold.

But it is also pathetic - the high and mighty Lord laid low by their own insatiable need for the blood of baseborn mortals. A vampire who can not hunt is hardly a vampire at all - and it reflects badly on a Kindred to go hungry and unsatisfied. During the Convention of Thorns there will be plenty - it is the rules of courtesy after all. But the perspective of each of us towards the blood speaks volumes of our temperament.

Positions

- **Blood is power, and it is the sweetest wine.** The blood of mortals is the right of every Kindred - and the Kindred who is too weak or too indecisive to take her share is not a proper Kindred at all. Not only is blood sweet and alluring - it is also the key to the powers that manifest themselves in our veins. To drink of humanity is as natural a thing as a thing can be natural for the Kindred - give in to your nature and drink. Or starve - and lose all semblance of threat.
- **We are slaves of the blood and nothing else.** Every single Kindred is a violator of mortal bodies - we must be to survive, if you can even call it survival. Some might pretend to ignore it or even hide it behind flowery descriptions of hedonism and debauchery - but the simple truth is that vampires are addicted to the blood of mortals. Kindred might be the shadowy regents behind every throne - but we are also mere parasites. We are little better than leeches, in the end.
- **This addiction is a thing to be overcome.** It is true that the hold of blood upon us is a leash rather than a boon - but it is not one that we must necessarily chafe under. With discipline and personal strength of will one can move beyond the gluttony of lesser Kindred and reach temperance. It is a dangerous path of self-denial, but little that we Kindred do is not dangerous. One must balance between starvation and overconsumption to truly be above our nature.





Love & Lust

Introduction

Love is the greatest reward, the greatest danger, the purpose and the journey. Love is a tool to manipulate and a weapon to hurt. Love is comfort and the only thing that drives you forth, love is what destroyed you, love is what you kill for and love is what you will die for.

Eternal life offers a myriad of possibilities. Power, money, fame, notoriety. But the one thing it will always be is lonely. To trust someone to spend eternity with you is to let yourself be vulnerable, and who can afford that in this world of the night? Yet Kindred seem to be on a never-ending journey to find that one person to grant their undying trust. That one person to love.

Love is rare, but lust is everywhere. The dark passion of the Kindred serve as a sort of hollow mockery of the genuine trust and vulnerability that love requires. For vampires can not be vulnerable - lest they open themselves up to a dagger in the back. The Kindred can not give - they must own and possess. They must have the bodies of their lovers. It is better to love the lust - and have the leap without the fall.

Positions

- **Love is a dagger pointed at the heart.** It is so easy, just the right words, the right hitch in your voice and the right look in your eyes and they line up to give you their souls. So much can be done with so little, a Lord will give you his realm, a warrior will give her sword - and the Kindred will face the sun, all for love. Those foolish enough to believe that love can truly bloom among the Kindred are targets and nothing else. Our world is one of passionate flings at best.
- **To love is to live again fully and wholly.** I felt it stirring in my chest, that greatest joy, and for as long as I saw his face I truly Lived again. Our lives are long and eternal, but they do not have to be bleak. Love was what made life worth living in the first place, why should death be any different? It takes the greatest of courage to open oneself up and truly trust someone else in this world of intrigue - but it promises the greatest of all blessings.
- **This passion is a mortal thing, unsuited for our kind.** We are dead and our hearts are dead with us. Why should we waste our time on the trivial hobbies of the living? In this existence very few things matter, love is an unwelcome distraction at best. At worst it is a great liability. And when you feel the heartstrings tug it is merely the echo of your once-living heart attempting to trick you. Do not be deceived. You are dead, and love died with you.





Faith & The Unholy

Introduction

If you believe some, the Kindred should more aptly be known as the Cainites - for they are the progeny of Caine. Caine who murdered Abel, and became the first murderer. Caine who spurned the Lord and was given the curse of twisted immortality. Caine is an unholy creature - and his progeny are unholy creatures.

Yet it is not quite that simple. Even though many vampires do in fact accept this version of the story, there are many who cling to a sense of piety and an understanding that God in his eternal benevolence still has a place even for sinners such as themselves. These Kindred still say their prayers, and hope against all of commonly accepted facts that something else than hell awaits them when they meet their final death.

The relationship between the Kindred and the faith in the Lord is a complex one - undoubtedly more complex in the Burning Times of the Inquisition, where the pyres of holy men burn vampires in droves. The question of faith is not one easily answered - what does faith mean to the unholy?

Positions

- **Turn your back on the promise of heaven.** The Kindred are unholy. They are the spawn of the first murderer. Or perhaps they are simply cursed in another way entirely. Nonetheless, the priests and other holy men are right to bring the torch to the Kindred. And since heaven has abandoned us - why should we not abandon heaven? The foolish wish for our sins to remain uncounted is naive babbling - God does exist, and God hates us.
- **The Lord will forgive even this wretched sinner.** Religion has always given succor to those in need of it - and many Kindred do feel the pressures of their world weighing heavily on their necks. There are those among us who take refuge in the grace of the Lord - and why should we not? The Lord is ever merciful, and surely even the most wretched and damned creatures of this world will know mercy. The Lord does exist - and the Lord has mercy even for us.
- **There can be no God.** The church is lying. The fine men in their priestly robes are lying. The Kindred are evidence of this. How can a loving and benevolent God exist in a world like this - which gives sustenance to such monstrous beings? The average Elder and even Ancillae has seen some terrifying displays of inhumanity through their unlife - and even Neonates see so much more than they did before. God is a lie - but the Kindred need no God.





Time & Ruination

Introduction

Time is no longer an issue for the Kindred - at least that it was most fledglings hear when they are first told of the immortality they now possess as vampires. The reality of the situation - as many other realities - is of course much more complicated than that. The Kindred will exist until they are destroyed, that much is true. But even if they should dodge the pyres of the Inquisitors all that they build will not necessarily last.

Over the course of history, Kindred have tried to create remarkable things. Utopian societies, empires, cities. And every time they have crumbled into dust. Some speculate that it is simply the result of the teeth of time, that these things are inevitable. Others believe it has to do with the nature of the Kindred.

But no matter how many times Kindred try and fail, there is always one who will come up with the new great vision. A vision, that will surely make her the greatest Kindred ever to walk the unhallowed streets of the Kine cities. And no matter how many times such a visionary rises - all they have made will crumble.

Positions

- **Look upon my works ye mighty.** Kindred are blessed with longevity beyond what even the most long-lived mortal can hope for. Humanity might go on, but individual human beings will always die and leave the world to their heirs. What is to stop us from spending our unlives creating magnificent things while the flock of mortals spend it dying and breeding? I have the vision, and I will fulfill it. I do not have to trust my great-grandchild to do such for me.
- **In the end it will all turn to dust.** It does not matter how much you create - and it does not matter what you create. Be it art, or empires, or cities. It never quite lasts the same way that mortal works last. You might live on, but you will see everything you spent decades or even centuries accomplishing be swallowed by the tides of time. Rome was great - and so was Carthage. But Rome and Carthage are gone. Like everything we build - sooner or later it will fall.
- **All stones crumble, but ideas are forever.** Rome and Carthage might be gone, but Rome yet lives on in the culture of Europe - the Holy Roman Empire and the influence of the Christian church. It is true that nothing will quite last forever, but what I build will reverberate through history - and I will see the aftershocks echo in eternity alongside me. Only foolish Kindred believe that Rome is truly dead while all evidence to the contrary exist around them.

9. Known Kindred





Known Kindred

The following pages contain a list of the most famous and infamous Kindred at this stage of history, and why it is that they are so well-known. Not everyone has met them in person - in fact, the majority has never seen them face-to-face - but almost everyone knows at least this about them. Whether you'll be able to pick one of them out in a crowd or not, you'll most likely know these things about them when you hear their names mentioned.





Not present at the Convention

Lugoj the Blood-Breaker, Tzimisce Elder

Commander of the Eastern European Anarch Revolt
Diablerist of the fabled Antediluvian Tzimisce
Creator of the Vaulderie

Hated in strongholds of establishment power and seen as both a hero and a liberator among the young, Lugoj has much claim to fame. It was he who first taught the Anarchs how to break Blood Bonds using the Vaulderie - in fact it was he who along with several other practitioners of blood magic first perfected the procedure. He is also known to have Diablerized Tzimisce himself.

Gratiano de Veronese, Lasombra Elder

Commander of the Italian Anarch Revolt
Diablerist of the fabled Antediluvian Lasombra

Like Lugoj in the East, Gratiano leads the Anarch Revolt in Italian realms. An able strategist, peerless warrior, and brilliant politician, Gratiano is said to be a true godsend to the Anarch cause among his proponents. Others tell far less flattering stories - he is known to have been so greedy upon seeing the body of Lasombra open before him that he physically pushed others out of the way to have at it.

Mithras, Ventrue Methuselah

Monarch of the Albion Dominion
Prince of London

Unique among the Methuselah for his disinterest in ruling through proxies and pawns, Mithras has long been the self-appointed Monarch of the Albion Dominion - a Dominion of all the Domains of the British Isles. While most Kindred of the British Isles bend their knee to him, not all of them do - and he has had tremendous problems keeping rebellious Ireland under his control thanks to Eva the Red.

Helena, Toreador Methuselah

Most Renowned of the Toreador

Rumored to be the very same Helena who started the Trojan War, Helena is without a doubt the most enduring cultural icon of the Toreador. Few have truly met her, and many know this to be the case - yet there is no lack of Toreador claiming to have once spotted her. There are also many among the Artisans who claim to be descended from her by the Blood, often with no base in truth.





Present at the Convention (1)

Father Samuel, Toreador Ancilla

Prince of Thorns

Although not truly known on the world-stage of Kindred politics, Father Samuel is the host of the Convention of Thorns. As such, everyone present has heard his name, and everyone understands that it is under his hospitality that this meeting takes place. He is known to be a gracious host, with a mind set on pleasing those in his care. He retains a group of ghouléd monks to serve his guests.

Tyler, Brujah Ancilla

Infamous Anarch

While the feared Tyler is not truly the first Anarch, it is still a title she bears among the terrified Elders of the old order. Her decision to attack Castle Hardestadt was what truly sparked the rebellion. Many people thought she had Diablerized Hardestadt. Hardestadt remaining as active as ever has lowered her renown somewhat among the Anarchs. She could still easily lead them - if she wished to do so.

Melinda Galbraith, Toreador Ancilla

Infamous Anarch

A Toreador Elder-hunter with a passion rivaling even the most ideological of Brujah and cruelty that would unsettle the most unempathic Tzimisce. She deeply terrifies Kindred who have existed for much longer than herself. She is also close to unique among the Toreador in that it is not merely her claim that she is descended from Helena - it is in fact true, and few dare oppose her on this.

Myca Vykos, Tzimisce Elder

Infamous Anarch

A Tzimisce who has been with the Revolt since its earliest days, he is without a doubt one of the most infamous Kindred in all of Eastern Europe. A close personal friend and confidante of Lugo the Blood-Breaker, he is considered a sort of unofficial second-in-command of the Eastern European Anarch front. He is known to be entirely unimpressed by the self-importance of most Elders.





Present at the Convention (2)

Hardestadt, Ventrue Elder

Justicar of the Young Camarilla
Prince of Lübeck

Perhaps the most prominent Ventrue active during the time of the Convention of Thorns, Hardestadt is in many ways the one who called the meeting. He is known to be planning an end to the Anarch Revolt and Burning Times - a new order, the so-called Camarilla. Believed to have been slain by Tyler in her attack upon Castle Hardestadt, his continued existence has hurt her reputation.

Adana Sforza, Brujah Elder

Justicar of the Young Camarilla

Almost considered something akin to a force of nature, Adana Sforza is by far one of the most acknowledged and influential Brujah active during the time of the Convention of Thorns - rivaling even her Clan-mate Tyler in recognition and her Coterie-mate Hardestadt in political power. She is known for her indomitable willpower - and for being one of the few Elders many Anarchs respect.

Mistress Fanchon, Tremere Ancilla

Justicar of the Young Camarilla

Detested by the Anarchs almost as much as she is lauded by her peers in establishment Domains, Fanchon is the public face of the Tremere, and one of the closest allies of Hardestadt. It is known that she was instrumental in leading the Tremere as a whole to side against the Anarchs - and rumors are that she is the architect of the Young Camarilla even more so than Hardestadt himself.

Rafael Corazon, Toreador Ancilla

Justicar of the Young Camarilla
Harpy of Paris

He was instrumental in influencing the Elders to adopt secrecy in the face of the Burning Times. At the so-called Speech of 1450, he addressed many Elders and ridiculed their arrogant belief that they could fight the Inquisition head on. Beloved by most, the Anarchs nevertheless blame him for the old sacrificing the young in favor of hiding, and he is perhaps the single most hated Ancilla among them.



Present at the Convention (3)

Eva the Red, Elder Brujah

Prince of Dublin

Eva the Red, Eva of Leinster, or simply Aoife Ní Diarmait is known to be the authoritative Prince of Dublin. A truly keen political mind, she is perhaps the only true opposition to the Methuselah Mithras in his attempts at incorporating Ireland into his Albion Dominion. She is also rumored to be one of the foremost warriors and generals of Ireland - something that she has retained from her living days.

Claudius Giovanni, Giovanni Elder

Advisor to Augustus Giovanni

While Augustus Giovanni is the hated usurper who truly created the despised Giovanni Clan - if they can even be called a Clan - his Childe and son Claudius is the public face of their inter-Clan operations. Claudius speaks for the Giovanni, and it is not an enviable position to be in, for few would want to represent such a hated faction. Claudius, for his part, does a remarkable job of it, most say.

