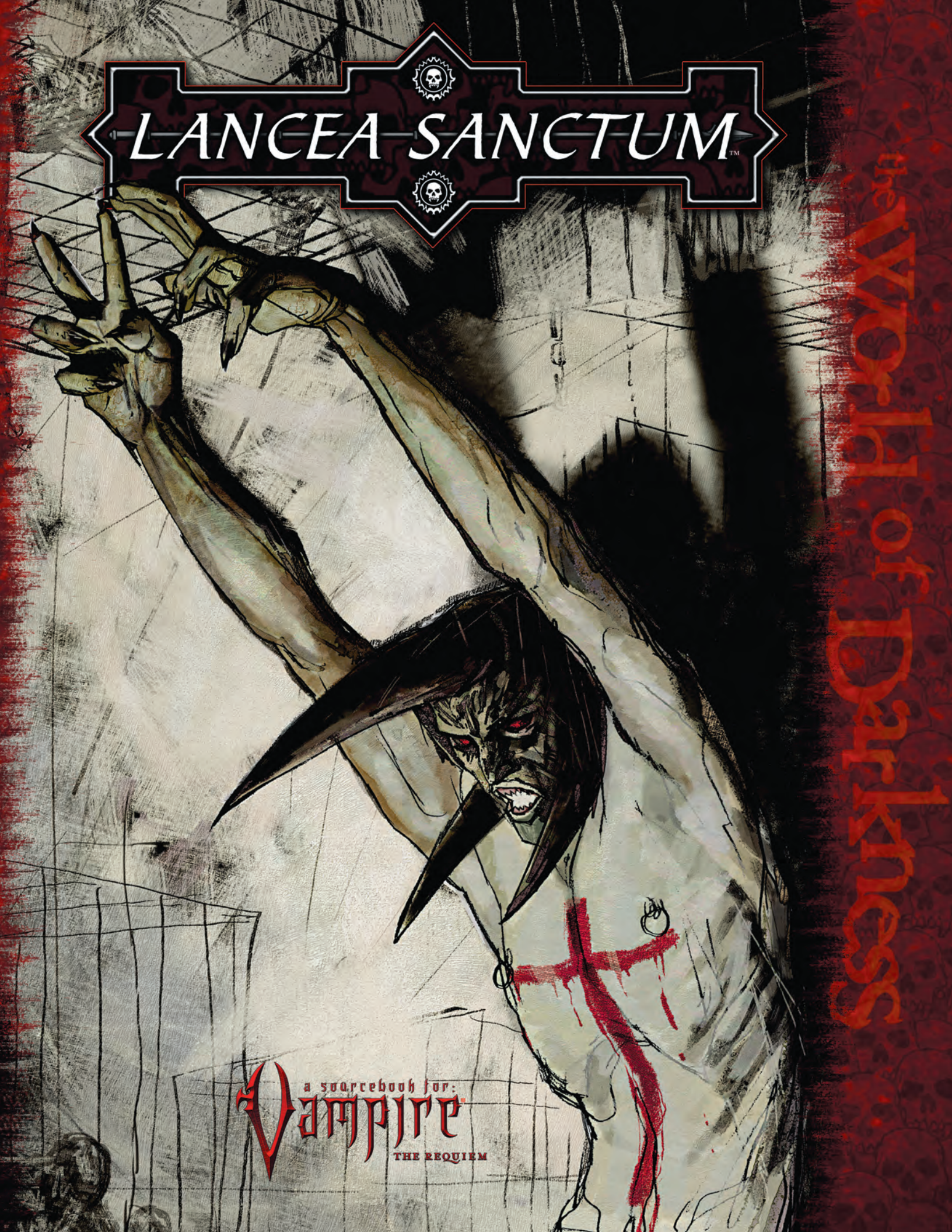
LANCEA SANCTUM™



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THE REQUIEM

The World of Darkness™

Prologue: Faithful Service

by Greg Stolze

October

"Have you ever read Van Tynenberg's treatise on the myth of St. George and the Dragon?" asked Bishop Solomon Birch.

"What?" asked Ludmilla Marana. She blinked hard. "You're trying to trick me. Fuck you, Birch! Fuck you!"

"Van Tynenberg was a mortal who believed that when England's patron saint slew the dragon, he struck with no normal weapon but with the vaunted Spear of Destiny." He took a step closer to Marana.

"You move again and I'll shoot!" Marana held not one, but two shotguns. In her right hand was a double-barreled Remington that dated from around 1920. It had lovely bronze-work ivy along the base of the barrels, and the stock was rather fancifully carved to resemble a perching eagle. She'd lost count of how many animals, people, vampires and other miscellaneous entities she'd dispatched with it. That gun was aimed at Birch.

In the left she held this year's Franchi semiautomatic combat shotgun. It was not lovely, not fanciful, and it lacked any sort of colorful history. She was pointing it at Vance Byers, the vampire who'd brought her out of her haven this evening, and she'd brought the Franchi with the vague thought that this could be a trial run.

Byers was simply cowering. He'd died in the seventies, when he was in his thirties, and he still had the sideburns to show it. Naturally, when one has sideburns that just won't go away, it only makes sense to wear faded jeans, harness boots and a differently faded jeans jacket. The vintage "Disco Sucks!" T-shirt was the crowning touch.

October

"Baptized in the sacred blood, the spear that pierced Christ's side was the only weapon whose purity could counteract the corruption radiating from the wyrm's scales. Swords rusted in their wielders' grasp, arrows warped and shattered, but the Spear of Longinus struck true and slew the monster." Solomon was aiming a Skorpion VZ61 machine pistol at Marana. He didn't usually like guns — he found they were mostly good for making mortals pay attention, and he had other ways to get attention — but Ludmilla Marana had a habit of fighting from long range and she was one of the few locals that Solomon wasn't sure he could close on.

Plus, she liked guns, and Solomon wanted her attention.

"This Van Tynenberg — I assume he was Sanctified?" Marana was an official in the Ordo Dracul — "Order of the Dragon" in English, a secretive conspiracy of mystically inclined Kindred who defended their practices fiercely.

"Not at all." Solomon was the local leader of the Lancea Sanctum or "Sanctuary of the Lance," a different secretive conspiracy of mystically inclined Kindred who defended their practices fiercely. "He was mortal. But even he was smart enough to know what happens when a Dragon crosses the Holy Spear. Now. Are you going to relinquish Mr. Byers to me?"

"This dumb smelly hippie isn't worth your reputation, Solomon."

"Yet apparently you think he's worth violating the Prince's Tranquility."

Marana bristled. The Tranquility was a ban, enforced throughout Chicago, on both the creation of

new vampires and the destruction of old ones. It was based on Lancea philosophy (specifically, Solomon Birch's ultraconservative version thereof) but was enforced on all Kindred equally. The Ordo Dracul had been against it, to no avail.

"He's not one of yours. He's one of ours."

"Well now. Mr. Byers? Is that an accurate assessment?"

"Please, I…" he weighed his chances. "I… uh…"

"You told me you wished to convert. That you wanted to come into the Sanctum and make a fresh start."

"Er…" Byers stared at Ludmilla's gun, as if hypnotized.

"Have you changed your mind?" Solomon asked, and abruptly he shifted his aim from her to him.

"Hey!"

Marana laughed. "Jesus, it's not every day I meet someone crazier than me!" She pointed her other gun to Byers, a cheerful smirk on her face…

…and in a blur, the machine-pistol swept back at her, light blazing from its barrel.

"I really find blasphemy distasteful," Solomon said, but the sound of gunshots drowned him out.

What it all came down to was: Vance Byers had joined the Ordo Dracul not long after his death. He'd dwelt in Cincinnati and studied hard, obtaining the title "Scholar of the Dedicated Hunger." Now, for reasons that were murky to both Solomon and

Ludmilla, he had forsaken the Order for the Sanctum and had moved to Chicago, a city well known (at least by the admittedly low standards vampires had for "knowing" things about other places) for its noisy Lancea Sanctum faction, and for the Prince's ban on the destruction of Kindred.

What it really came down to was: Vance Byers knew secrets, and the Order didn't want to share.

Solomon was running as he emptied his clip into Marana, tracing a stitchery of lightly bleeding holes across her dark-green leather jacket. He wanted to annoy her, maybe do more damage than she could carelessly heal. He'd already picked out the cover he wanted. The site for this increasingly heated spiritual/philosophical debate was a little-used train yard and Solomon was rushing towards a rusted boxcar. Its corner would give him cover if she returned fire, while putting him closer to her — close enough that he could soon get to hitting range, which was where he really did his best work.

All that assuming, of course, that Marana didn't move, which she almost certainly would, but he was prepared for a bit of pursuit. He was not, however, prepared for a vampire to appear before him, as if coalescing from the dust and darkness — a vampire swinging a fire axe.

Solomon had an instant in which he viscerally regretted his forward momentum, and then he folded over the axe as it sank into his belly, deep enough to scrape his spine. His gun clattered away onto the rails.

"I've wanted to do that for a long time," said the vampire with the axe. Solomon had seen him around, he thought he was Quebecois, Jacques something perhaps?

Solomon heard the booming of shotguns as Jacques (Maurice?) said, "Now let's see if I can make you run." He bared his fangs and hissed, a sound rich with coiled malevolence. Backed by the ill-starred power of Kindred blood, it was a face to terrify even as hardened a monster as Bishop Birch. But though he flinched, Birch knew this was just a trick, an illusion, and he drew on his deep faith in the rightness of his cause to overcome it.

He also drew on his relief at seeing a bat flutter down above his enemy (Henri? That didn't sound right) and silently transform into a swarthy man in a black jumpsuit.

"No, but you can make me hit." Solomon shook a metal bar out of his sleeve and swung it into the side of his enemy's knee, using the follow through of its weight to pull himself off the blade, his blood instinctively surging to the hole to close it.

The two of them shuffled back and forth. The axe-man gripped his weapon, one hand high, one low. Solomon gave his metal club a quick twist and it came apart, becoming two hollow handles attached by a length of chain, the fine barbed links concealed inside. Solomon shook them out and it looked like nothing so much as a razor-wire jump rope.

The Birch-chopping lumberjack blinked and Solomon grinned, thinking Just look at the strange, twinkly weapon, and then his timely companion reached claw-tipped hands over the Canadian's shoul-

ders and ripped the tendons linking shoulders to chest. Solomon looped his chain and yanked hard, sending the axe spinning off into the night. Solomon's clawed co-congregant (whose name was Xerxes) had the Order fighter's arms pinned and as Solomon shouldered into him to get the chain in where it could really tangle and slice, he finally remembered a name.

"Feel lucky, Pierre?"

"Let him go," Marana called.

Solomon turned and, as he did, casually looped his chain around Pierre's neck. Ludmilla Marana was aiming the Franchi at the three of them, but mainly at Solomon. Solomon worked the hole in his belly smaller, knowing that Ludmilla was doing the same to the wounds he could see in her upper torso — it looked like a little entry by the shoulder and a big exit wound in front. Her jacket was ruined, but the ragged flesh-ends of her blasted breast were wiggling to reconnect.

"But he ruined my jacket," Birch said, "And it's Hugo Boss. Besides, shouldn't I be the one threatening on behalf of a covenant-mate?"

"I'm not too proud to say 'ouch'," Marana said. "We can both walk away from this and call it a misunderstanding, no ill will, nothing permanent. Just let Pierre go, give me Byers…"

"And call off the sniper that you haven't been able to find?"

"If your gunman could hit me, he'd have done it."

"She, actually. Look at your, ahem, groin."

Marana's eyes flicked down and she saw the red dot of a laser spotting scope. More, in the drifting tendrils of gunfire, she saw where it was coming from and…

…in a blur of movement, she had Solomon's second aide covered.

"She should have killed me when she had the chance."

"We believe in the Tranquility, Ludmilla, but not so much that we won't make this fight even if you break it." Xerxes said this — Solomon wouldn't.

"Mr. Byers," the Bishop said. "Now seems a propitious time to clearly declare your allegiance. Choose wisely and you can make this fight four on two. Decide badly, and it's three on three."

"I'm… I'm in the Sanctum." Vance Byers could best be described as a pool of mangled flesh, gunpowder burns and bloodied denim. But unlike his clothes, his flesh would soon look just fine.

"There it is, Marana. Be a good sport and walk away, hm?"

A deep, bad craziness glinted in Ludmilla's moonlit eye, but then it cleared and she abruptly pointed her gun up towards the sky. "Take him then. Find out just how smart it is to hug a traitor. When he betrays you guys for the Circle, I'll even help you hunt him. But if Sanctified start displaying our Coils, this will go to a serious level." There was a green blur and she was gone.

"Apparently, she's trusting us to let you go," Xerxes said in Pierre's ear.

"She knows I'm trustworthy," Solomon said. "Release him." He locked eyes with the badly hurt mystic and said, "Here's how you do it: Run away." The command was backed with the potent force of Solomon's own blood and will, and Pierre was in no shape to disobey.

For a moment, the Sanctified looked down at Byers.

"Where'd you learn to fight with that chain?" Xerxes asked.

"I just make it up as I go along."

"Nice."

"Yeah. It's a pain to clean, though."

Finally, Solomon reached down to help Byers to his feet. "Be worth it," the Bishop of Chicago told his newest congregant.

January

The next time Vance Byers caught Solomon's attention, it was, in its own way, even more unpleasant.

Bishop Birch was conducting a midnight mass at the Temple of the Dark Crusader and expounding upon the finer points of his theological beliefs.

"The question arose: If we are meant to be tormentors of humanity, driving them to the path of righteousness, why (as he put it) hide our darkness under a bushel? Why not," Solomon intoned, "Do away with this troublesome Masquerade and let mankind know who truly rules the night? A tempting thought, to be sure, yet one in violation of our deeper design. For if we were to provide that fearsome break, that indisputable proof of our reality — aside from the wrath of the other covenants, and aside from any specious mewling about humanity destroying us — we would be diminished in our purpose." He took a deep breath during his dramatic pause. Then, behind his ceremonial golden mask, he frowned. "Kindred en masse, known to mankind en masse, would be a terrifying phenomenon, but one that could be known and one against which, inevitably, the mortals would feel bound together. Now, hidden, we meet our prey face to face, one on one, and each victim is isolated not only by the terror of our presence, but by his isolation from his fellows…" He paused again, and then said "…and Mr. Byers, what do you possibly have to say which is more important?"

This time, the silence after his words was unbroken by the low muttering that had caught his attention and distressed him.

January

The vampire crowd parted like the Red Sea as Kindred edged away from the Bishop and the target of his ire.

"Um…" Byers said, looking like a kid caught talking in class.

"Come here!" Birch thundered. He didn't bother using any supernatural compulsion. He didn't need it. Vance shuffled up to the altar.

"With whom were you speaking?"

Vance cleared his throat and looked around nervously, but didn't speak.

"Ah. Honor." Solomon raked his eyes over the congregation. "With whom did he speak?"

A dozen fingers pointed. Solomon beckoned with a finger tipped by a glittering metal claw.

"Georgia," he said as she approached. "I'm surprised and disappointed. What were you two talking about? Gossip? Stock tips? The great deal you got on a new Ford Focus?"

"We were…" Vance began, but Solomon whipped his talon over to point as he said, "I didn't ask you."

"Um, we were… talking about spiritual matters," Georgia mumbled, shifting from foot to foot.

"Spiritual matters. I see." Solomon relaxed his demeanor and took his mask off. His face, while grave, was not unkind. "I imagine you were comparing our Theban theories with his Ordo Dracul learning?"

"Well…"

"I know what an avid student you are. When it's all new and exciting, it can be easy to focus merely on metaphysics, on what the power of the blood can do, rather than concentrating on the issue of what it means, but I assure you my dear, that's ultimately what's more important." He actually smiled. "And you know better than to talk in church, don't you?"

She hung her head. "I'm sorry, Bishop."

"I know you are. Just do better, okay?"

She nodded, with her eyes still low, so she didn't even see the metal gauntlet sweeping down until it crashed onto the top of her head, the cruel claws combing through her hair to lay bare the bones of her scalp. She squealed like a human and collapsed at Solomon's feet.

"Now now," he admonished. "Remember that you're dead. You can do better. No crying! Tears are not for us, we are creatures of blood! Draw on the blood, Georgia, draw the blood to your wounds!"

She whimpered, but he saw the injuries closing.

"Good. Now leave the Temple and think about what you did." He turned to Vance.

"Maybe I've been unclear," he said. "There is no place for your Order philosophy in this Temple. None. Don't discuss it. Don't explain it. For the sake of your future, I would encourage you to do all that you can to forget and ignore it. Do you understand?"

"Yeah. I mean, uh, yes sir."

"Look me in the eyes."

Wincing, Vance did.

"Tell me the truth. Are you teaching the Order's 'Coils of the Dragon' to members of the Lancea Sanctum?"

"No, Bishop."

Solomon tilted his head. "Very well then." With a flick of bloodstained fingers, Birch made a gesture of dismissal. Vance backed away to his seat, never taking his eyes off the Bishop.

"Now," Solomon Birch said. "Where was I? Perhaps I'll just start the sermon over."

April

"You've been a member of our covenant for what, half a year now? Not so very long."

Vance Byers looked around red-draped richness of Solomon Birch's private chapel. It wasn't the echoing darkness of the Temple, but a chamber in Birch's own haven. He'd met the Bishop's private herd of humans, the Brigman family, and they'd shown him down to this small but exquisitely appointed basement chamber. They couldn't accompany him inside: The chapel door was an airlock, and inside the nitrogen-saturated atmosphere was too oxygen starved to support a flame, or a human life.

"Six months, yes."

"Why do you suppose I've called you here?"

"Is it about Theban Sorcery?"

Solomon raised an eyebrow. "In a sense, I suppose you could say it is. Please, sit." He gestured at a handsomely carved wooden chair and pulled up its mate.

"I'm very eager to start my studies."

"Indeed. You know, some might suspect that you joined us merely to learn our 'magic tricks'."

"Oh no Bishop, I just want to, y'know, express my faith materially."

"Tell me the truth until you leave my presence," Solomon commanded, eyes wide and imperious. "Are your intentions purely spiritual?"

Vance's mouth writhed and tics wracked his face, but he said, "Yes. Really. I joined the Lancea Sanctum from spiritual motives."

"Hmm." Solomon reached into his pocket and removed a small object. "Do you know what this is?"

Vance looked at the tan shell, discarded by a growing cicada. "It's a… a chrysalis."

"We use it for one of our rituals," Solomon said. "When I heard some of our younger congregants discussing 'chrysalis' I assumed they were learning that rite." He stared at it and his lips moved while he spoke in a whisper too low for Byers to catch. The insect casing dissolved into smoke and ash. "But they weren't discussing Theban practices, were they? They were talking about Ordo witchery." He sat back and slipped his hands into his pockets, face neutral, tone bemused. "You've been teaching Coils to the Sanctified. Haven't you?"

"No Bishop, I swear I haven't, I swear it on the Holy Spear!" Vance said, but he stopped as a swarm of beetles crawled from his lying mouth.

"Interesting." There was a loud bang, followed by a crunching sound. "You can resist my naked will. That bespeaks inner strength — a hidden strength, if I may comment — but a strength nonetheless, that will help you greatly if you turn yourself towards a higher purpose."

Vance didn't answer. The bang had been the sudden release of a compressed gas cylinder driving a wooden stake through a large and convenient hole in Byers' chair back and then into his heart. Solomon had triggered the blast with a tiny radio controller in his pocket. The chair was positioned just so.

"You must learn," Solomon said, producing an X-acto knife from behind his small altar, "That will-

power is a deficiency when turned to resisting the truth." He set to work removing Vance's nose. "Perhaps I wasn't clear enough. When I said you were not to teach the Coils, that was not a 'wink and nod' prohibition." Deftly, he cut open Vance's pants and set to work on his genitals. "When I said there was no place for it 'in the Temple' I did not mean the physical enclosure, but in the hearts of all who follow the Spear." He began trimming Byers' ears off and raised his voice, saying, "I hope I am clear now. You are not to teach your Draculan blasphemy to anyone. At all. If you do it again, I will not stop with just the fleshy parts, but will prune your arms and legs before handing you to Ludmilla with my apologies. I hate," he said, leaning close enough that his breath stirred the hairs of Vance's sideburns, "Absolutely hate having to apologize to heretics. And Vance, that bitch is crazy." He stood back, rummaged for a box of Clorox wipes, and started cleaning his hands and his knife. The excised pieces were placed in a bronze bowl and set aside, out of Vance's frozen field of vision.

"I'll just disconnect this piece in back," Solomon said, "And position you here so that you can look on these ikons and meditate. I have high hopes for you, Vance, really I do. But you have to understand that this is not a social club. This is the Lancea Sanctum and it is for the rest of your Requiem."

LANCEA SANCTUM™

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Vampire® created by Mark Rein•Hagen

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Introduction: Rejoice, For Thou Art Damned!

Ipse Longinus Id Dixit.
("Longinus himself has spoken it.")

— Traditional Lancea Sanctum idiom

Awake! Awake! Clothe yourself with strength, you arm of the Lord. Awake, as in days gone by, as in generations of old. Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced that monster through?

— Isaiah 51:9

Vampires are damned from the moment of their Embrace, dragged howling into the nightmarish world of the Danse Macabre in which blood, sanity and power become more important than anything else ever known or dreamt. The experience tears away the flimsy veneer that is the world of the living and exposes the fledgling Damned to the horrors of the World of Darkness that seethe beneath it. The neonate learns to eke out a Requiem to replace the mortal life now forever beyond her grasp.

In time, the neonate may seek the company of other undead as an anchor against the surging current of madness and the monstrous urges that threaten to devour the last shred of compassion still lingering in her unbeating heart. Some join covenants espousing broken political ideals barely fit for the short-lived kine, let alone the undead. Others gather and put their fate in perverse philosophies and desultory ritual, believing that their blasphemous practices hold the truth they crave. A third part of the Damned are not easily led astray, but recognize the truth of the *Testament of Longinus* and accept what they have become, understanding that even in damnation there is purpose.

Those who join the Lancea Sanctum venerate their accursed state, bearing the terrible weight of Longinus' sins in penitential obedience to him and to God, the Creator. The Sanctified — as they call themselves — do not shy from their divine duty to uphold the example of Longinus, to abide by his laws, and to serve for eternity as he prescribed. In their minds, the Sanctified have chosen the only proper road among many and so place themselves above all other vampires in the eyes of God, damned though they may be.

The Sanctified do not delude themselves with silly fictions about redemption or salvation. Nor do they see any point in power for its own sake. For them, the Requiem is about demonstrating to God that they are worthy of His divine purpose. They bear the worst of the Requiem with equal amounts of defiant superiority and obsequious humility, showing to all the power of their faith even as they grovel in shame and confess the imperfect state of their devotion. They exalt their accursed state, knowing better than any that this is all part of God's plan and that to resist or to seek a way out is to spit in the face of His Creation. The Damned were placed upon the earth to prey upon the kine, and they have been singularly allotted divine sorceries so that they may fulfill this sacred purpose. Unlike their heathen cousins scattered throughout the other covenants, the Sanctified will soon no longer be haunted by the important questions. They know who they are, they know why they exist, and they know how to spend their Requiems. It is now only for them to do so and never fall from that difficult path.

The Sanctified

The Lancea Sanctum claims it was founded by Longinus, the Roman centurion who fulfilled an ancient prophecy by thrusting the Spear of Destiny into the side of Christ on the Cross, revealing the Lord's divinity even as it damned Longinus. More important to the Sanctified is that the cruel act exposed the lifelong sinner to the true nature of the Damned. Longinus realized at that moment, and later through the intercession of angelic messengers, that while he and others like him might forever be denied the blessing of God and the salvation He offered through His son, Jesus, the Damned were not God's enemies. Unlike Lucifer and his host, they are not cast into the pits of Hell to spend eternity locked away from the earthly and heavenly realms. Instead, they are given free reign in the world of the living to carry out their divine purpose. The Damned are to be an example to the kine of the price of sin: they are to prey upon mortals so that the kine will understand that life is brief and only a shadow of the glorious Heaven that awaits. And they are to accept their damnation with pious devotion, knowing that it is God's Will, despite the weight of the burden. Those who are able to do this truly are Sanctified.

The covenant borrows heavily from the early Christian church, adopting many of its institutions and practices, such as canonical offices, monasticism, certain theological arguments, and its ritualistic mien so important to the Lancea Sanctum's identity tonight. The covenant is the de facto Church of Longinus, and on account of its association with the Roman Apostolic Church and alliances with other covenants like the Invictus, it has become a force in domains the world over. It offers its members a sense of being special, even chosen, filling a void in an often-lonely Requiem. Its catechisms and rites provide spiritual fortification and play to a vampire's desire to be morally at peace with his frequently inhuman actions. Every member is not just Sanctified, but a Priest who stands as a model of propriety for his fellow Damned — at least as the Lancea Sanctum defines what is right and what is wrong. It is the covenant's place to spread the *Testament of Longinus* and the awesome truths it contains, by word if they can, and by more forceful means if they must. It is not the place of the Sanctified to question the word of the Dark Prophet or the Will of God, but simply to obey and to know that they are doing nothing more than playing the role appointed them in the greater scheme of Creation.

Many vampires find it difficult to not associate with or to form meaningful relationships with mortals. Not so for the priests of Longinus: They know that they are not just undead

humans. They have been changed by the Embrace, their living blood transubstantiated into the sacramental Vitae of Longinus. They are righteous predators, and to them the kine are nothing more than earthly vessels set before them so that they may slake the accursed hunger they share with Longinus. This is not just an act of feeding, but a holy celebration of their biblical inheritance. For the Sanctified, everything they do takes on sacred importance, from the garb they don to the manner in which they spend the last minutes before dawn. Symbols and words bear special meaning to them, and the actions of every one of the Damned, whether Sanctified or not, is regarded in light of their unshakeable convictions. Rarely does a moment pass when a Sanctified does not translate his experiences into a religious context so that he might take measure of his own righteousness as much as cast scorn upon another's impiety.

Besides just being exemplars of vampiric religiosity, the Sanctified also see it as their mission to save other vampires from the horror of ignorance by means of conversion. They preach on the street corner almost as much as from the pulpit, seeking to bring others to their faith. They promise answers to neonates still casting about for direction, providing them a sense of community found nowhere else. Those who belong to the Lancea Sanctum do not judge a fellow Kindred by her age, but only by the strength of her faith, and for many neonates this sounds like a pretty good deal. To the ancillae they offer companionship, easy access to power — titles and prerogatives the covenant has at the ready are never lacking — and a feeling that they need no longer struggle with their identities as vampires. It is a powerful draw for one of the Damned facing the first serious struggle with his dwindling morality to be told that he can cease fighting and accept what he is without remorse or fear.

Even elders have been known to seek membership in the covenant. The long passage of time has stripped away all earthly concerns and they are left with only the desire to protect their eternal soul. The Sanctified offer these ancients the chance to focus all their energy on that one task, providing them the tools to do so. Just as important, these elders are unwilling to accept the commandments and customs of their peers, let alone those younger than themselves; they have not survived the ages to now just obey the words of any vampire claiming authority. The Lancea Sanctum's origins are ancient, however; the Spear of Destiny was forged before the Great Flood and Longinus looked into Christ's dying eyes. Instead of demeaning themselves, the eldest Sanctified are truly exalted as members of the covenant, for their faith and for the unassailable strength of their convictions.

From an objective observer's point of view, the Lancea Sanctum represents some of the good and all of the bad that has been part and parcel of the Catholic Church in all of its incarnations. To the Sanctified, the covenant is a source of religious fervor, theological profundity, penitential zeal, fearsome inquisition, rapturous enlightenment, unbearable guilt, holy purpose, Machiavellian scheming, spiritual comfort, ecclesiastical corruption, inspirational martyrdom, shameful deviancies and intellectual brilliance. Its presence is a beacon that calls to downtrodden and lost Kindred, promising an end to the loneliness of the Requiem. It is also a forbidding and immense structure capable of swallowing the unrepentant whole and crushing those who stand against it with the fury of the true believer. Where it exists, it makes itself known: its inquisitors, clergy, evangelists and hierarchs crusading in one fashion or another in the name of Longinus and God before him. They may not convince every one of the Damned to join their ranks tonight, but they have eternity to accomplish it and they have every intention of succeeding.

Theme

The Lancea Sanctum brings many themes to a **Vampire: The Requiem** chronicle, including faith, hubris, hypocrisy, redemption, salvation and moral rectitude, not to mention the quest for answers to the proverbial Big Questions. More than any of these things, however, the theme of damnation defines the covenant and truly sets it apart from other covenants. Although all vampires are Damned, only the guardians of the Spear of Destiny venerate their damnation. They not only accept this fate, but in their acceptance they find an inner strength, no longer concerned about human concepts of good or bad, or whether they will find their way into Heaven. They are not monsters, however. The course of the Sanctified is far narrower than the Devil-may-care philosophy that some outsiders ascribe to the covenant. These are no cavorting fiends of Belial's Brood. Damnation has its own demands, for it is a sacred duty to bear the Curse, even as it is a terrible doom. What does it mean to be truly Damned, to know incontrovertibly that the gates of Heaven are forever closed to you? More importantly, what kinds of vampires are able to find unholy rapture in this destiny? If they are not bound by human morality and essentially feel they have nothing to lose as a consequence of their actions, why do the Sanctified willingly submit themselves to onerous rules of conduct and a strict authoritarian hierarchy instead of relishing their relative freedom? This book provides insight into these questions so that Storytellers and players alike can answer them and, therefore, understand what it means to be one of the scions of Longinus.

Mood

Listen to *Ave Maria* alone on a dark winter's night, the snow falling as if it were the silent hand of God wiping the world clean. Stand silently at the intersection of nave and transept in an old, monolithic cathedral and gaze up in trembling awe at the breathtaking heights, at the glazed figures, and feel the crushing weight of the emptiness in that vast and surreal space as the bloodied Christ weeps before you. Imagine yourself on a stroll one dusty summer's eve, the sound of night bugs humming in the air, but not loud enough to drown out the sounds terror leaking out of the casement window beneath the church rectory. Awe, magnificence, violation, unholy fear, blasphemous secrets, unearthly inspiration, burning shame, introspective and

spiritual enlightenment, and even calming wisdom and rare acceptance; all are elements crucial to setting the right mood for a story or chronicle focusing on the Lancea Sanctum.

Crumbling old gothic churches, heavy tomes of apocryphal scripture, shabby vestments with telltale sanguinary stains, grotesque iron symbols of faith, vows of silence or abstinence from feeding, tower bells ringing to warn of the rising sun, tongueless thralls scurrying to prepare for a midnight mass, and wrenching confessions given to a priest who hungers for the penitent's blood. Secretive exorcisms, public flagellation, backwoods fire-and-brimstone sermons, omens and signs of Longinus' favor or disfavor, theological dissertations, and internal jockeying for temporal power among the Sanctified. The mood of a Sanctified-centered story is dominated by the presence of God and the terrible dead of Longinus, even if only in the most removed sense. The worst aspects of religion take center stage. Even if there is some good, it is mostly drowned out by a pressing mood redolent of Old Testament hardship and Anglican conservatism.

The Home of the Lance

Many Kindred confuse the name of this covenant with its true intent. The name "Lancea Sanctum" does not, in fact, mean that the covenant believes itself to be the weapon itself. Rather, the name of the covenant means "sanctuary of the lance." The Lancea Sanctum is the Church of Longinus, not his weapon; the covenant is the reliquary for this potent instrument, not the instrument itself. Kindred of the covenant do not see themselves as instruments of divine justice, retribution or anything of the ilk. Rather, they consider themselves inheritors of Longinus' sin and knowledge, the vessel of a divine secret: that God is forever testing the mortals… and those monsters who were once mortal themselves.

Of course, much of this distinction is wasted on those outside the covenant (and even a few misguided fanatics in it). Those who would discredit the covenant by making aggrandized claims of its own self-importance have leapt to an incorrect assumption. Nevertheless, it is an assumption that pervades the society of the Damned….

A Bygone Era

Despite the covenant's refusal to accept it, the time of the Lancea Sanctum's ascendancy is long past. While the covenant certainly claims power here and rises to supremacy there, its message feels fundamentally dated and often inflexible. These nights are cynical and often faithless, two immediate strikes against the Sanctified's power base.

Still, this doesn't mean the Lancea Sanctum is doomed to failure. Rather, this position works for members seeking to be dramatic underdogs who still have the fire of conviction. Indeed, many people (Kindred and their players, even) perceive the Lancea Sanctum to be stronger than it truly is. They see the efficacy of its rituals and hear the strength of the Sanctified sermons… and they buy into the myth. They fail to see its imperfect message, its misleading philosophy and the deleterious effects of its impositions of guilt and original sin. It is an organization of the Damned, and as such suffers from many of the shortcomings that plague the undead.

The Sanctified have adapted surprisingly well to these frequent circumstances. Domains often have members of the Lancea Sanctum among their Primogen even when the princedom eludes them. Elders of the covenant often find themselves holding the tenurial domains of Regents, or serve as Prisci, given their spiritual and wise inclinations. A Sanctified Hound is a tenacious foe and a Sanctified Harpy soon alleviates the reputation of frivolity that often accompanies that title. Even the untitled members of the covenant can radically change the timbre of a domain's attitude, for if its Kindred are devout, it will no doubt avoid certain improprieties that often plague other, "less disciplined" domains.

Can the Lancea Sanctum survive? Certainly, as you've seen time and again (and will continue to) in **Vampire** material. But can it again claim the power it once held in the nights of a less impious age? The forecast is against the covenant. Then again, despair is a sin, and the righteous fervor of the covenant may prove to be an advantage in their battle for survival and supremacy.

Parishes and Domains

Among the Sanctified, the word *domain* is often interchangeable with the word parish. "Domain," of course, refers to the limits of a given vampire's influence, or the collective influential boundaries represented by a city. Each city domain includes innumerable smaller domains, all subject to a Prince's praxis or a Regent's tenure.

"Parish," however, refers to only the regions the Lancea Sanctum considers its spiritual territory. In most cases, this is synonymous with the domain, as the Sanctified want to bring the message of Longinus to all the Kindred of the region. In other cases, a parish might explicitly exclude portions of the domain, such as in a city where the Lancea Sanctum has "given up" trying to convert the pagans of the Circle of the Crone and leaves them to their own devices (or damnation), no longer willing to extend God's auspices to them. It may extend beyond the borders of the domain, as Sanctified evangelists try to establish a realm of influence that exceeds the accepted reach of Kindred power.

To other covenants, the use of parish and domain is a muddled, ambiguous mess of overlapping territorial claims. To the Lancea Sanctum, it is certainly that, too, but toward a purpose — it allows the Sanctified to claim some degree of influence over areas in which they would otherwise have no pretense of influence. Certainly, the downtown neighborhood belongs to the Prince, but is the Prince not also subject to the will of God, and therefore part of the parish?

This ambiguity is part of the fun of using the Lancea Sanctum, and it allows a Storyteller or enterprising player to add another layer of political complexity to the chronicle. Temporal divisions of power constitute only one of a domain's numerous spheres of influence, which can work to a Kindred's detriment — or her advantage.

How to Use This Book

Longinus' most enlightened servants do not doubt their place in Creation, and so this book presents the Sanctified as the most exalted covenant of all, sticking primarily to the orthodox views held by most covenant members to describe their society, their philosophies, and their place among the rest of the Damned. These self-righteous prejudices color everything, but this absolutism gives Storytellers and players alike the best opportunity to understand the alien mindset of these most inhuman of vampires in order to portray them in all their bloody resplendence.

Chapter One reveals the accepted history of the Lancea Sanctum, from its blasphemous beginnings at Golgotha and its difficult first years in the Holy Land to its foul blossoming in fourth-century Europe and its tremendous growth and expansion across the globe that continues still. Included is a look at how the importance of heresy, schism and various religious movements changed the course of covenant history to make it what it is tonight.

Chapter Two examines what it means to be Sanctified, exploring the philosophy and practices of the most righteous of the Damned. Included is discussion of the covenant's hierarchy and commonly recognized holy offices, as well as an introduction to the covenant's most important sacramental rites. Finally, this chapter looks at the roles played by the different clans, the political realities and stratagems of the Sanctified, and the special relationships the scions of Longinus have with their fellow Damned and other monsters.

Chapter Three focuses on the functions of different Kindred in the Lancea Sanctum. Broken down by age group, it scrutinizes what it is that the Sanctified find appealing about their covenant, the most common roles and responsibilities they assume, the manner in which they conduct their affairs with other age divisions, and how all these things change over the course of the Requiem.

Chapter Four introduces the most common factions and bloodlines, taking a look at the part these various denominations play and how their presence affects the covenant. Storytellers should find enough here to provide any chronicle with a wealth of ideas, with the entire range of the political and religious spectrum given meaningful attention.

Chapter Five deals with those preternatural Disciplines unique to or most associated with Sanctified. These miraculous powers — Theban Sorcery in particular — are essential to the covenant's survival, and their use has made a significant impact on not only how it conducts itself, but on how the Lancea Sanctum is perceived by outsiders.

The Appendix is a go-to resource, providing templates for a variety of the more commonly encountered Sanctified, from zealous postulant and mendicant pilgrim to penitential priest and doubting bishop. When a stock character is needed and time is of the essence, this is where Storytellers can turn to find what they seek.

Lexicon

Some of the following terms are central to the history and theology of the Lancea Sanctum in general. Strange, specialized and highly localized terms are not included here, as such terms may not be accepted in many domains (or chronicles). Many of these terms are used by Kindred in and out of the covenant. The more power the covenant holds in a domain, the more likely non-Sanctified are to be exposed to these terms. Though not every Kindred or every parish makes use of this vocabulary, many of these words and phrases can be used and appreciated even by vampires in faithless cities and domains.

Words and phrases that refer to the Lancea Sanctum, but are not likely to be accepted or approved of by the Sanctified, are not included here. This simple lexicon is a supplement to those found on p. 84-87 of **Vampire: The Requiem**.

Abecedarian: An apprentice or student recently brought into the covenant and undergoing formal education.

Amoniel: The angel who visited the Monachus and revealed the hiding places of the covenant's first Theban Sorcery rituals. Amoniel has since been associated with other visions leading to the discovery or mastery of Theban Sorcery rituals.

Anointed, the: Any titled Sanctified officer, with responsibilities and authorities in the covenant.

Anointing: A ceremony in which a Sanctified vampire is granted title in the Lancea Sanctum and thereby joins "the Anointed."

Apostolica: Official covenant rites and ceremonies.

Archbishop: A Sanctified Prince, generally. An Archbishop is often supported by a Bishop, as political responsibilities keep many Archbishops occupied.

Bishop: The Sanctified authority in a parish or domain, which may or may not also be the region's Prince.

Black Abbey, the: A Christian monastery, located somewhere in Europe, converted to a Sanctified church. For a time, it was the home of the Spear of Destiny. The Monachus met Final Death there.

Black Saints: Traditionally, the Five Martyrs. In practice, any Kindred granted sainthood by the covenant.

Cardinal: A Sanctified Kindred who is both the Archbishop and the Bishop of a domain.

Catechism, the: A small and simple booklet briefly explaining the teachings of Longinus and the beliefs of the Sanctified in a manner meant to be accessible to modern neonates. Not to be confused with *The Sanguineous Catechism*, written by the Monachus.

Centurion, the: Another name for Longinus.

congregation: Technically, the covenant's membership in the domain. In practice, those Kindred with low or limited status and no title, who participate only in ceremonial covenant worship.

crack: To reveal or identify the use and power of a Theban Sorcery ritual, as in "*It took me three months to crack that miracle*." (*slang*; see *free up* and *solve*)

Creation Rite, the: A ceremony ritually recognizing a recently Embraced vampire and punishing the sire. The specific rites of the ceremony vary from parish to parish.

Creed: A sub-sect of the Lancea Sanctum, usually based on the teachings or writings of a Sanctified vampire with progressive or alternative interpretations of the Testament of Longinus. Many are small, limited to just one or two parishes.

Crusader: An elite warrior of the covenant.

Dammitic Creed: A major Creed of the covenant that interprets *The Testament* through the eyes of vampires who were Jewish in life.

Dark Apostle: Any of the first missionaries of the covenant, dispatched from the Black Abbey to carry the teachings of Longinus to the Kindred of the world.

Dark Messiah, the: Logninus, father of the Lancea Sanctum. (also *Dark Prophet*)

Dark Prophet, the: Longinus, father of the Lancea Sanctum. (also *Dark Messiah*)

deacon: A lay vampire given special authority by Sanctified leadership. Sometimes, also, Sanctified Primogen.

Ecclesia: Unofficial rites, prayers, and ceremonies of Sanctified coteries or local parishes not widely adopted by the covenant at large.

Five Martyrs: The five disciples of the Monachus. Each was martyred and became, collectively, the Black Saints.

free up: To reveal or identify the use and power of a Theban Sorcery ritual, as in "*I freed up the Sinner's Blessing we found inscribed in Mexico City*." (*slang*; see *crack* and *solve*)

Hardliner: Any member of a strictly traditionalist (often also literal or fundamentalist) faction of philosophically rigid Sanctified. Sometimes also the faction itself.

Iblic Creed: A major Creed of the covenant that interprets *The Testament* through the eyes of vampires who were Muslims in life.

Icarians: A bloodline of dynastic, Sanctified Ventrue once responsible for the so-called Icarian Heresy, a series of usurpations throughout European domains from the fourteenth and into the eighteenth century. The Icarians believe they have a divine right to rule Sanctified parishes.

Inquisitor: An investigator and punisher of heresies, betrayal, disobedience, and crimes against the covenant. Though an Inquisitor may or may not be among the Anointed, these agents traditionally answer only to a Bishop or Archbishop.

lay priests: Lay vampires who perform minor rites without formal anointment by the covenant. In most domains, there is no difference between this role and a Priest, however. In practice, a "lay priest" is simply a Priest who is not among the Anointed.

Legate: An agent of the Bishop or Archbishop tasked with traveling on missions outside the safety of the city.

Longinus: The Roman soldier who pierced the side of Christ on the Cross with the Spear of Destiny and was subsequently damned by God to an eternity of undeath as a vampire. Father and iconic figurehead of the Lancea Sanctum, who dictated the lessons, insight, and scripture that would become the Testament of Longinus.

Mendicant: Any member of a very loose faction of religious wanderers and hermits seeking enlightenment through travel and worldly experiences. Sometimes also the faction itself. Many mendicants are not a part of a larger faction.

Messengers: A faction of aggressive Sanctified proselytizers regarded as fanatical converters.

Miracle of Saint Daniel, the: The venerated revenge of Saint Daniel, who massacred the Romans responsible for the butchery of the Theban Legion. Celebrated on September 22nd.

Monachal Creed: A sub-sect of the Lancea Sanctum traditionalists who revere the old ways and the writings of the Monachus contained in *The Sanguineous Catechism*.

Monachus, the: The "first childe" of Longinus (though the actual means of his Embrace are unclear). The scribe who took the dictation that would become the Testament of Longinus, the Monachus was also a theologian and writer himself.

Mortifiers of the Flesh: The mystical manifestation of a flagellant religious movement begun the Middle Ages. The Mortifiers of the Flesh believe in spiritual betterment and penitence through physical pain.

Neo-Reformist: Any member of a progressive, revisionist faction of Sanctified intent on changing or "updating" the Lancea Sanctum. Sometimes also the faction itself.

Nepheshim: A faction (and possibly a bloodline) of Sanctified mendicants that travels the world in search of worldly inspirations and spiritual insight.

Osites: A very old bloodline of Sanctified death-scholars known for interacting with corpses in pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.

Ostiary: "Keeper of the Door." A typically secular position with the duty of monitoring vampiric traffic into and out of the domain or parish. The Ostiary reports to the Lancea Sanctum.

pagan: In general, any Kindred who practices a religion not derived from *The Testament of Longinus*. In practice, this often means specifically members of the Circle of the Crone.

paladin: A combatant or crusader who fights in the name of the covenant, whether officially or not. Also, a warrior who swears loyalty to one of the Anointed.

parish: A Sanctified unit of territory and the region of authority of a Bishop, Priest, or other covenant leader. A parish may or may not correspond to secular political or cultural boundaries in the domain.

Priest: A Sanctified vampire responsible for the spiritual teaching and guidance of other Kindred. Individual Priests may

have many additional responsibilities, as well. This is a broad and widely varied title, often informally applied to Sanctified vampires. Many Priests are not anointed by the covenant.

Proselyte: A revered and celebrated vampire, typically a neonate, demonstrating the grace of the covenant and tasked with converting local Kindred.

Proselytizer: Any member of an extroverted or missionary faction dedicated to the expansion and promotion of the covenant above all else. Sometimes also the faction itself. Not to be confused with a Proselyte, which is only coincidentally related.

ritualist: A Kindred who performs the miraculous rituals of Theban Sorcery. More generally, any practitioner of occult rites.

Rule of Golgotha, the: The name for the rules of behavior described in the book of the Testament with the same name. (Also called "The Rule")

Rule, the: The Rule of Golgotha, as recorded in the book of *The Testament of Longinus* of the same name.

Saint Adira: A Sanctified martyr and disciple of the Monachus crucified and burned by the Camarilla in ancient Rome.

Saint Daniel: A Sanctified vampire who traveled with the Theban Legion. Also considered the first master of Theban Sorcery. (see Miracle of Saint Daniel)

Saint Gilad: A Sanctified martyr and disciple of the Monachus crucified and burned by the Camarilla in ancient Rome.

Saint Maron: A Sanctified martyr and the last of the five disciples of the Monachus. Destroyed by barbarians and, purportedly, a werewolf witch.

Saint Pazit: A Sanctified martyr and disciple of the Monachus, she sacrificed herself to secure the safe escape of the Spear of Destiny.

Saint: An ancient vampire of great renown and respect who is held up as a hero of the covenant. In the Lancea Sanctum, undead Saints may achieve the position without meeting Final Death and, so, may or may not be martyrs.

***Sanguineous Catechism, the*:** A text written by the Monachus, containing the canons of the Lancea Sanctum.

Second Estate, the: The Lancea Sanctum. From the "three estates" of medieval Europe. In vampire society, the Invictus is the First Estate (the aristocracy) and the Lancea Sanctum is considered the Second Estate (the church). All other vampires, presumably, are the Third Estate.

solve: To reveal or identify the use and power of a Theban Sorcery ritual, as in "*We have yet to solve the miracle found in that Italian tomb*." (*traditional*; see *crack* and *free up*)

Spear of Destiny, the: A holy and ancient weapon passed down since the early days of the world. It eventually found it way into the hands of the Roman centurion who prodded Christ on the Cross and was subsequently damned to exist as a vampire. Also known as the Holy Lance and the Sacred Spear. (see *Longinus*)

***Testament of Longinus, the*:** The collection of meditations, lessons, and scripture that tells the tale of the life and Requiem of Longinus. The bible of the Lancea Sanctum.

Theban Legion, the: A Roman legion made up entirely of Christians from the region of Thebias and martyred when Emperor Maximian ordered the legion first decimated, and then destroyed, for refusing to make a sacrifice to the Roman gods.

Theban Sorcery: The dark, miraculous magic of the Lancea Sanctum, revealed to the Sanctified by the angel Amoniel.

Thebes: The city of Egypt where the Theban Legion of the Romans originated, also known as Thebias. It was here that the Monachus was visited by Amoniel and shown the rites of Theban Sorcery in a cavern beneath the city's necropolis.

Traitor, the: Leader of a group of conspiratorial vampire Satanists, formed of Sanctified traitors, who stormed and burned the Black Abbey in August of 947 AD and destroyed the Monachus.

Unifier: Any member of a faction that seeks to unite or solidify the disparate sub-groups of the covenant to form a stronger, more tolerant whole. Sometimes also the faction itself.

Vahishtael: The angel who visited Longinus and explained the role of the Kindred in God's plan.

The Books of the Testament of Longinus

The Malediction of Longinus: A history of Longinus' life, from birth through damnation.

The Torments of Longinus: The story of Longinus' Requiem, including the Embrace of the Monachus and the foundation of the Black Abbey.

The Rule of Golgotha: A collection of laws and precepts describing the proper behavior and morality of Sanctified vampires, collectively referred to as the Rule.

The Sanguinaria: The tale of the first Dark Apostles, including the Five Martyrs.

***The Book of Eschaton*:** Cryptic verses of prophecy foretold by Longinus.

Chapter One:

The History of the Lancea Sanctum

Seeing that Christ was dead,
the soldiers did not break his legs.

One of the soldiers, however,
pierced his side with a spear,
and blood and water flowed out.

A drop of Christ's blood fell
upon the soldier's lips,
and he wiped it away
with his hand.

Yet the next day,
he slept past the sunrise,
and roused from his slumber
only at nightfall

And after tasting Christ's blood,
he thirsted for more.

I know.
I know because
I am that soldier.

- The Testament of Longinus

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water. And he that saw it has given witness, and his testimony is true. He knows what he speaks is true, and he testifies so that you might also believe.

— John 19:33-35

In the oldest nights, the Damned did not know their place. Brought into darkness seemingly without purpose, they were as nothing more than feral wretches, driven solely by a ravenous bloodlust and a fear of those things that could bring a swift end to the cacophony that was their existence. Ignorant, bestial and truly alone, they could claim no semblance of community, no rules or laws to govern themselves and no understanding of their divine importance. Faith, if they knew it at all, was naught but a broken thing left with them from their mortal days, unsuited for such as they had become and unable to offer meaningful guidance to them through the emptiness of damnation. Because God had not yet offered salvation to the Canaille to illuminate their path to Heaven, He was unready to reveal to the Damned their special place in Creation. Until the time came for that revelation, there was no Requiem for our predecessors, only a loathsome and desolate dirge punctuated with violence and madness. Even as the Almighty graced them in their damnation, they remained blind to their sacred place.

At the time of Christ lived a man who indulged sin of every kind. Born the bastard child of a Roman prostitute in Jerusalem, his was a life of debauchery and cruelty. Still young, Longinus gambled away his mother's meager earnings and struck her when she complained, publicly declaring her a dog fit only for mounting. Sodden with wine he later raped her and bragged of the exploit to his equally depraved companions, asking "for who among you has had his pleasure with so comely a whore as my ripe mother?" He brawled with any who earned his ire, leaving a shopkeeper crippled and his own cousin bereft of a hand. It is said that there was nothing too wanton for the tastes of Longinus. Although his actions earned him the enmity of his neighbors, he came to the attention of a particularly foul commander in the legion garrison who offered him a job serving Rome as payment for a lost bet. Longinus was unfit for soldiering, however. Prone to violence and venality, he frequently disobeyed orders and abused his power on the streets, enjoying the fear he was able to instill on the citizens he was supposed to protect. To his dismay, he soon discovered there was a price to pay for his behavior. He received frequent reprimands and spent a majority of his time assigned to menial tasks intended to both punish him and keep him from corrupting his fellow legionnaires. When he was charged with murdering a supposed friend who had recently surpassed him in rank, he was brought before the city's procurator. His should have been a swift trial followed by a swifter and serious punishment, but the Hand of God intervened and dissuaded Pontius Pilate from making such a judgment.

A month prior to his arrest, Longinus had been instrumental in locating a young man wanted for robbing and molesting the favored servant of Pilate's wife, Claudia. When the procurator's wife discovered Longinus' situation, she persuaded her husband to dismiss the charges against him and to allow him to serve their household in reward for his service to the family. Longinus did not learn from his close brush with death, however. Installed at Pilate's house, he conspired to have his superior accused of lusting after Claudia and within two years found himself given the title of centurion and command of Pilate's personal guard. None of this was luck, of course. Longinus' crimes marked him for a long-preordained role. Only one so sinful was fit to serve as the agent of destiny necessary to complete part of God's plan. When the moment was right, it would be Longinus' place to commit an act of such blasphemy and portent that the seal of ignorance that had lain for so long upon the Damned would be shattered and, for the first time, their place in God's Creation would be revealed to them.

The Spear of Destiny

If it was by virtue of free choice that Longinus committed his sins and so became the chosen agent of God, it was by dint of predestination that the instrument of his final mortal sin was unveiled. Longinus' role in the slaying of Christ and the revelation of his divinity was determined only in his lifetime, but the weapon he would use to open Christ's side had been set upon the earth long before, waiting the ages to fulfill its sole purpose. Before the Great Flood had been loosed upon the children of Adam, the guilty lance had been made by a smith to appease a wicked king named Lamech, hoping the gift would save the life of his only son, found guilty of speaking against the monarch. The point of the lance was forged of an unnatural stone that had fallen from the heavens when the sun was black, and it was of a hardness unprecedented in its time. The king accepted the spear-tip with the fire of greed burning in his raw eyes, for never before had he seen a weapon so fit for a ruler of the land between the rivers. Testing its weight in his hands, he let the lance taste its first blood, piercing the guiltless heart of its maker. With the lance King Lamech rode against his enemies and purged his city of dissidents, proclaiming dominion over all. No army could stop his assault upon the peoples of his day; only forty days and nights of rains were able to halt his limitless cruelty. For many ages the lance was lost to the world, the memory of its existence washed away with all else that pained the souls of men before the Flood. An artifact of such purport could not remain hidden forever, of course. When God was ready for it to play its intended role, destiny saw that the lance found its way into the hands of the man chosen to bear it.

Ultimately, the Spear of Destiny found its way into the hands of a Galician merchant named Phaecus, who came into possession of the artifact by way of trade with a Tyrean ship captain. The wooden shaft of the weapon did not survive the years, but the tip remained unmarred by the passage of time and circumstance, protected by God's Hand. When Pilate took Phaecus to task on charges of avoiding bonding taxes on the wares he wished to sell in Jerusalem, the canny merchant understood the game and paid a handsome bribe to the procurator to avoid an even more onerous fine. He made even fatter the offer by giving to the eager Pilate a handful of trinkets that the judge might find fitting as gifts for his wife and household. Among these baubles was the point of the lance, something that Phaecus deemed more a curiosity than a thing to earn him a profit. When Pilate distributed the items as a sign of his graciousness at the next festival feast, he rewarded Longinus with the unusual blade, saying only that it was an ancient weapon that once adorned the spear of a king. This tale was, so he believed, merely the product of the exaggerated imagination common to merchants like Phaecus; he could not know how true these words were. Although meant to be a ceremonial gift only — the blade was not of a design in fashion at the time — Longinus' sense of pride would not allow him to put it in some chest until the next feast. He had it affixed anew to a sturdy length of fire-hardened wood and bore it always as a symbol of the stature he held in the procurator's house.

When the man mockingly vilified as the "King of the Jews" was pronounced guilty of crimes against Rome and sentenced to death by crucifixion by Pilate, Longinus took no part in the contentious proceedings. Increasingly afflicted with a painful swelling of the eye that caused his vision to weaken notably, he had taken to doing as little as was necessary to carry out the duties of his station, and so was glad to make the punishment of Jesus the responsibility of others. Aside from enjoying a few jokes at the Nazarene's expense, he had little interest in seeing another troublesome Jew put to death anyway. Certainly he had heard the tales of the carpenter's son and of the strange things he preached, but this seemed no different from the numerous other charlatans and agitators who had come and gone over the years. He did not quite understand the significance the Jewish leaders gave to the Nazarene, guessing only that it had something to do with the particularly absurd things he preached on the street: how women and the poor were equal to wealthy and successful men in God's eyes, and especially how every man, woman, and child was promised eternal salvation in some Olympian paradise. While his subordinates tormented and humiliated the miscreant Jew, forcing him to bear his own cross like an animal down the avenue toward Gethsemane as citizens harassed him and enjoyed his agonies, Longinus paid no heed. Instead, he supped on platters of pork and grapes, and flagons of expensive wine from Pilate's private stock, in the comfort of a serving girl.

For any procurator of Jerusalem it was important to ensure that the peace was maintained in order to please Rome. Recent troubles among some Jewish quarters worried Pilate, so

he listened closely to the advice of the Pharisees when they cautioned him of the possibility of outrage if the body of the Nazarene and the thieves sentenced with him still hung openly from crosses when the sun rose on the morning after the crucifixions, the Jewish Sabbath. Pilate sent word to Longinus to have the bodies taken down after sunset, when most of the curious would have already had their fill of the spectacle, ordering him to hasten their deaths if necessary. When he came to the hill, few onlookers remained, aside from a few grieving family members and friends, kept from disturbing the bodies of the victims by a single soldier on duty. Longinus ordered the soldier to break the legs of the three men with a club so that death would come more quickly, unwilling to wait longer for them to die. After meting out this last cruelty to the two thieves, the soldier proclaimed that the Jew was already dead, and so withheld his blow. Atop his horse, Longinus moved close to the Nazarene to be sure, unwilling to trust the word of a subordinate, and put his ear to the ashen and bloodied face of the Jew. To his dismay, he could still hear a shallow breath, despite the fact that his punishment had been especially barbaric; nails were used in place of the usual ropes to secure the convict to the cross.

Cursing, he thought to order the soldier to finish the job, but at that moment Jesus of Nazareth opened his eyes the smallest bit and gazed upon Longinus with a look that was as unexpected as it was devastating. Fixing his wounded eyes upon the sinful centurion with a strength of purpose that belied his long suffering, and without any need for words, the dying man imparted to Longinus something terrible for which he was unprepared. There, in the eyes of a Jew, Longinus saw a compassion and understanding that was beyond mortal comprehension. In that moment, he doubted his own convictions and feared that the stories of this man's divinity may not have been entirely wrong. Shocked from what he saw, Longinus was overcome by an almost irresistible urge to flee as quickly as possible, to hide from the painful truth revealed in those knowing eyes. Like a frightened animal he cast about for means of escape, but was confronted by the faces of the mourners who remained, begging for mercy to be shown to the Nazarene. Forgetting the soldier and too prideful to allow the other onlookers to see the cowardice that now consumed his black soul and caused his hands to tremble, Longinus raised his lance and without pause thrust it with all his might into the side of his tormentor, desperate to put out the light that seemed to emanate from Jesus' eyes. Accompanied by the gasps and cries of those watching, a gout of blood and other humors spurted from the wound, splashing Longinus' face, and the Jew's eyes went dim as his last breath passed his broken lips.

The death of Christ in this manner had been destined since before the Great Flood. With His mortal fall came the elevation of all mankind. The sacrifice of God's Son was the key that unlocked the Gates of Heaven for all those descended from Noah. Christ's divinity was also revealed by the act of Longinus and the cruelty of the Spear of Destiny, for as the blood of Jesus fell into his sickly eyes he found his sight restored to a clarity that surpassed that of a mortal man; nothing could escape his perception now. God wished him to see things as they truly were, for Longinus had not completed his service to the Almighty.

He had only just begun, and clarity was necessary for his mission.

No longer blinded to God's plan, Longinus was struck as if by thunder, for the full meaning of what had just transpired came clear. By his action he had willingly chosen to remove himself from the Illumination of God, to flee from the promise the Light offered him and to instead set himself apart from those Jesus had come to save. As the Son of God ceased to be a man, so too did he, for he never again drew another mortal breath. For him there was no hope of redemption and no promise of salvation. Longinus would never pass through the Gates of Heaven and would never find peace. As much as the Children of Noah were saved, he was Damned for all eternity. Longinus could not help but voice the truth he now knew. He proclaimed Christ's divinity to those still horrorstruck at what he had done, and then seeing their expressions and feeling the full weight of his guilt bear down on him, he spurred his horse to action and fled Golgotha.

As with many people of his time, Longinus was no stranger to tales of jinn, ghosts, giants and other fantastical entities. Even so, the differences between the stories told and the truth of the matter is wide, and for a time Longinus did not completely comprehend the precise nature of his damnation. The number of vampires in Jerusalem was small compared to the numbers tonight, and in the time of the Camarilla one's lineage was given great importance. Being little more than an uneducated bastard who sought to feed from the same herd his elders perceived as theirs, Longinus was forced to make his own way, to struggle with the thirst for blood that forever haunted him, and to learn to survive in the shadows of humanity as best he could. All that once held meaning for him — wine, women, food, money — were now as dust, replaced by an emptiness that threatened to savage his sanity. The only thing that saved him from descending into madness was the surety that God sought something more from him. If his work was completed, he might as well be allowed to burn in the morning light or destroyed by those fearful of his predations. He should be allowed to burn in Hell with the enemies of God, forever removed from the earthly realm and unable to experience even for a moment the pleasures of God's Creation. Instead, as much as his existence was difficult, he found himself possessed of strange new powers beyond the ken of mortals — powers that enabled him to do the miraculous and only made it easier for him to prey upon man. Surely, he still had some purpose to fulfill, some divine task that God wished him to undertake that would be better served if he were more able to survive the rigors of damnation.

The Course of Damnation

In the 33rd year after the Crucifixion and the Damnation of Longinus, the former centurion paid a visit to the tomb of Christ. He had not dared to approach so holy a place since he was cast down by God, for in his pursuit of blood he had discovered that

he was unable to drink from those who had accepted the Son of God as their Savior. The Light of God was so strong in some that he was unable to even come near them, but was instead seared by pain and forced to find refuge in the darkness. Eventually, however, curiosity and an unbearable desire to discover his purpose drove him to risk all. He came to the crypt when no one was present and the moon was hidden behind heavy clouds, the better to mask his approach. He entered the chamber to see for himself if indeed the body of Jesus was gone, for stories had circulated that he had risen from the dead three nights after the Crucifixion and ascended into Heaven. The lack of a powerful force keeping him at bay seemed to support this story, and when inside he knew it to be true.

However, as he turned to leave, his hopes for further knowledge seemingly dashed, a brilliant light appeared, blinding him and sending him hurrying into the darkest corner in order to avoid its fire. Within the light stood a figure of unsurpassed beauty. He declared himself the Archangel Vahishtael, and told Longinus that he had come to reveal to him the divine purpose of the Damned. Although denied salvation and damned to a difficult existence, it was their place to show mankind the price of sin. They were to make men understand that the world was only a brief, brutal, and pitiful presage to the glory of Heaven. And it was for them to take the blood of man, as Longinus had taken it from Jesus, in order to show them both their mortality and the divine salvation that awaited them in the next life. Vahishtael ended by telling Longinus that it was his mission to pass on this message to all the Damned, to make them know what God demanded of them. With that, the archangel was gone and once more Longinus was left in darkness, only this time he was no longer lost. He had been shown the divine road set for the Damned and was determined to show it to others like him.

Longinus set himself to his holy task at a time when proselytizing anything resembling Christianity met with swift and severe punishment in Rome. Even among the Damned this tendency was popular, for most of the civilized Damned were drawn from the Roman class and took pleasure in the plight of the early Christians, who they saw as even more deserving of contempt than the restless Jews. Longinus' words were received with amusement at first, but his persistence in seeking to persuade others to see things his way was soon met with outright repudiation. He was threatened with destruction and most assumed he was destroyed during the Jewish revolt that soon shook the city to its foundations.

Despite his failures, Longinus did not abandon his mission. Instead, he concluded that he had two obstacles to overcome if he were to succeed. First, he had no classical education and had difficulty conveying his message to those who spent their spare moments reading classical literature and debating complex philosophy. Second, so long as he alone sought to spread the word, he would find it hard to convince others that his message was worthy of serious consideration.

As the Christian faith came to flourish, even if still given no official recognition and marred by a stigma that continued to bring persecution, a number of men made themselves known by their writings on the theologically revolutionary faith. One came to capture Longinus' attention, a scholar whose eloquent discourses with fellow believers seemed to touch on the very things that had continued to vex Longinus about his own understanding of God and his mission. Pretending to be just another curious believer, he held his own private conversations with the scholar, using these opportunities to not only fortify his own religious comprehension, but to also discover everything he could about the man.

One night, Longinus came to him and told him all that had happened and all that had been revealed by God and the archangel. The man listened raptly, his acceptance of these truths in no doubt. Before the sun rose, Longinus offered him a choice: to die the death of a mortal and be welcomed into Heaven or to bear the burden of damnation and join him in spreading the message of God's purpose. The Embrace was a sacred thing, even as it was a damning one. When sunlight spilled over the city walls, Longinus and his childe found haven and slept the sleep of the Damned.

For a score of years, the sire taught his progeny all that he could. In return, the childe educated Longinus in all things he knew. When this period was over, Longinus released his childe from his patronage and bade him go forth and spread the word among the Damned. He gave to his childe the only possession he valued, the hallowed lance that he had kept since that fateful night nearly two centuries before, so that his childe would feel its weight in his hand. With a final blessing that anointed his childe his rightful heir and disciple, Longinus departed the city and never again saw what he had wrought. He would walk the road set for him alone, truly damned among the Damned.

The Embrace Quandary

One point of contention hotly debated among theologians of the Lancea Sanctum is the actual relationship between Longinus and his childe (or childer). While the accepted history of the covenant makes Longinus the sire of at least one Kindred, some among the Sanctified doubt that this is truly the case. If Longinus was made Kindred by divine curse instead of Embrace, what would that make his clan? Would God choose a clan for such a Kindred? Can such a Kindred Embrace of his own choice, and if so, to what clan would those childer belong?

On the other hand, if Longinus has no ability to Embrace, that condition automatically exempts him from the Second Tradition, which is an unlikely position for such an icon of the vampiric condition.

No one knows the answer, and theories vary wildly throughout the covenant. Orthodox belief is that Longinus did indeed sire, even if the specifics of that Embrace elude the Lancea Sanctum. Other theories include the supposition that any of Longinus' childer would have been adopted, perhaps with him acting

as a sort of Avus to them, or that Longinus had disciples instead of literal childer, and that the familiar term was used to signify the intimacy of those relationships. Some Kindred even draw parallels between Dracula, himself known to have been unable to sire childer, and Longinus, as both are believed to have been cursed by God in some fashion. Naturally, this last comparison raises a few eyebrows among the Sanctified, but even the most hard-line member of the covenant must accept certain similarities between the origin stories.

A Covenant is Born

Each great religion has a book of its own, one of divine inspiration that defines the faith as distinct from every other, a book that grants all who read it the essential truths as revealed to its holy author. The Lancea Sanctum has its book too, written after the departure of Longinus, when the Monachus, as his first childe was later known, put down as scripture the words spoken by his sire. He penned the most important ideas and lessons so that should his own mission fail, others would be able to continue his work, sure that the things they preached remained true and not corruptions stemming from the fog of eternity. *The Testament of Longinus* was the result of this work, a collection of five manuscripts detailing not only the role of the Damned, but also providing some insight into the person of Longinus the Dark Prophet and an examination of what might lay in store for those who accepted his revelations.

Although the tome as it is now known did not exist in full for centuries, the formative parts were completed by the early third century, when Longinus' childe began his ministry. He explained that while forever denied the Light of God, the Damned are at the same time Sanctified by virtue of their place in Creation and, more importantly, their acceptance of that place. It is God's will that the Damned willfully acknowledge their fate and carry themselves accordingly. As they are no longer mortal, the concerns of mortals are no longer theirs. Rather, they are dark angels whose acts glorify God even as they terrify the living. Against doubters the childe of Longinus proved a capable orator and soon a small group of believers had gathered to his side, convinced of the truth of his startling revelation. Together the Monachus and his five disciples — revered tonight as the Five Martyrs — forged a covenant, swearing the tenets of their new faith upon the Spear of Destiny, which they had been entrusted to keep safe. In 232 the Lancea Sanctum celebrated its first midnight mass in a cavern near Jerusalem once used by priests of much older faiths. From that night forward, the scions of Longinus dedicated themselves to the road of damnation and sought to bring *The Testament of Longinus* to all Kindred.

The first great challenge to the covenant came swiftly. The Sanctified took to their new faith with a fervor that caused great concern among the city's other Damned. In Jerusalem, as in most cities, the Camarilla was staunchly pro-Roman and so viewed Christians and their upstart religion as a danger that should be stamped out. They supported the numerous acts of persecution perpetrated by Rome on the Christians

and even allowed the Jews to vent their dissatisfaction with their Roman masters upon the followers of Jesus; better that than another Jewish uprising that might do real damage to their traditional power. In their cold eyes, the Lancea Sanctum was just a vampiric perversion of Christianity, and therefore a direct threat to the Camarilla.

Although some converts were made, the Sanctified met with far more opposition and in 241 they were finally forced to flee the city or face certain destruction. Their own beliefs had contributed to this rout, for they cleaved to the words of Longinus that forbade the wanton destruction of other Damned, leaving them at a distinct disadvantage when confronted with Camarilla vampires far less concerned with such things. The eldest of the city's Damned, led by a figure named Nephele, declared the covenant outlawed and ordered the Monachus and his followers to be exiled or destroyed. Two of the Sanctified went to ask for clemency and convey upon the misguided elders the error of their ways. For this, St. Adira and St. Gilad were set upon crosses and left to face the rising sun as a sign of the Camarilla's conviction. Unable to face their persecutors with so few numbers, and sure that any further delay could mean the destruction of the covenant, the Sanctified departed Jerusalem. So began the exodus of the Lancea Sanctum.

Three years after leaving the Holy Land, the surviving Sanctified arrived in Thebes, once the most sacred city of the Egyptians, now a place of magnificent temples abandoned by the Pharaohs. The place was not filled with ghosts alone, however. For nearly a century small bands of Christians fleeing persecution from Rome had been coming here, occupying some of the temples and smaller structures and breathing a semblance of life back to the wide avenues on both sides of the Nile. Following suit, the Monachus and his three remaining disciples installed themselves below an ancient temple in the great Necropolis, sustaining their hunger on the blood of the Christian community above and further developing the rituals and ceremonies still practiced tonight among the Sanctified.

Of all its achievements during the covenant's stay in Thebes, the most important was the discovery of a hidden chamber located in the labyrinthine depths of the temple it used as its haven and church. Protected from interlopers by traps that would bring sure death to any mortal, the cavernous hall was closed forever to those who still clung to life. For the Sanctified, however, its secrets were revealed in all their terrible glory. The angel Amoniel appeared before the Monachus and led him and his disciples down into the underbelly of the earth. The apparition showed them a door that had been invisible to their eyes before, one that opened into a vast cavern of marvelous beauty. Scribed on the massive walls were murals and hieroglyphs that spelled out things meant only for the Lancea Sanctum: dreadful miracles, secret knowledge of damnation, and powers entrusted only to those who bore the Spear of Destiny. God had led the covenant out of Jerusalem and to this place so that these secrets might be known to them and used to protect them from all obstacles that challenged their faith. Amoniel gave them the key to understanding the divine glyphs and entrusted them to keep this knowledge from all who would deny God His place. The Sanctified devoted themselves to this holy task, leaving only to feed, eager to show Longinus and the Almighty their worthiness.

When the all-Christian legion garrisoned at Thebes was ordered to march on Gaul under the command of Emperor Maximian in 286, St. Daniel felt compelled to join the campaign despite the obvious dangers. St. Daniel was beginning to have doubts about his faith, in part because he struggled to master the sorceries revealed to him and his fellow followers of Longinus. Amoniel came to him and told him that if he went with the Theban Legion a miracle would occur that would erase any lingering concerns. Traveling with the army, St. Daniel was protected from harm by Mauritius, the Coptic captain in charge of the legion who was made the saint's ghoul. In Gaul, the emperor's troops set upon the rebellious Burgundians and a terrible battle ensued.

On the first day of the fighting Mauritius' personal tent was overrun by enemy forces and St. Daniel would have been destroyed, but Amoniel appeared to him in his dreams and told him to awaken and trust in his faith. He did so and found that the magics he had previously been unable to master now came easily to him. He summoned a great cloud of darkness that protected him from the sun and with an awesome display of miracle drove back the assault. That night he laid a blessing upon the spear of Mauritius, bestowing upon it the power of the Spear of Destiny, a blessing that enabled the captain to lead his forces to victory alongside the other legions.

When the conflict ended and the rebellion was no more, the emperor ordered his legions to make a sacrifice to the Roman gods as thanks for their aid in battle. However, having witnessed their captains' divine fury against the enemy and recognizing the miracles of St. Daniel, the Theban Legion were unwilling to bow down to any god but the Almighty, and so they refused their emperor. Even when a number of them were summarily executed before their comrades, the surviving legionnaires continued to stand firm in their objection to pagan sacrifice.

When St. Daniel arose that evening, he was shocked to discover the atrocity of the emperor. Every last man of the Theban Legion was butchered for his piety, their blood turning the hills red and filling St. Daniel with frenzy. He went among the Romans that night and wreaked holy havoc, showing them the power of Theban Sorcery and the fury of the Lancea Sanctum. It is said that among the Roman legions were other Kindred, and these returned to tell of what they saw to other Damned, who trembled in fear at the telling. The night of the massacre and St. Daniel's subsequent retribution is remembered each September 22 as the Miracle of St. Daniel and celebrated in many dioceses with solemn prayer and often a ritual reenactment.

Although Theban Sorcery was powerful, it was not a panacea for all the dangers the covenant would continue to face. Along with the Roman occupation came the Camarilla, whose members made it their mission to cleanse the vicinity of the nascent

Lancea Sanctum. The use of Theban Sorcery against these heathen Damned did help the covenant avoid complete destruction, but survival was not without its costs. St. Pazit sacrificed herself in order to protect the Spear of Destiny from capture, and it was only by virtue of their faith that the Monachus and his remaining disciple were able to sail north without further incident. For nearly 50 years the pair traveled from city to city in Northern Africa and Southern Europe, preaching *The Testament of Longinus* and seeking a place where they would be undisturbed by the forces of the Camarilla. St. Maron was nearly destroyed while ministering to the Damned of Alexandria, so strong was the reaction of the local Damned to the message of the Sanctified. The last of the Five Martyrs, he finally departed the earthly realm in 329 when savaged by barbarians — a Lupine witch said to be among them — in the Italian foothills.

In 335, having lost each of his pious companions to adversity, the Monachus came upon a simple monastery in a desolate land where the snows and rains were heavy. Driven by hunger as much as faith, the first childe of Longinus set upon the house of God like a ravenous demon, sating his thirst on the blood of the monks, for their faith was too weak to stave off his attacks. After 12 nights of such feasting, he approached the last of the men, and proclaimed to him the *Testament*, holding aloft the Sacred Lance and revealing himself as the heir of Longinus. The man, the most learned of his community, was allowed to taste of the damnation of the Monachus and became his ghoul and first Vicar of the covenant. The monastery was consecrated to the Lancea Sanctum with the Spear of Destiny spilling the blood of three mortals and the *Testament* being read in its entirety. For a time the two dwelt alone in the Black Abbey, but soon other Damned came to set their eyes upon the childe of Longinus, touch the Sacred Lance, and hear the truth of the *Testament*. They came by Providence alone, led by signs and drawn by the piety of the Monachus and the sanctity of the holy relic. The Lancea Sanctum was now planted in the rich blood of Europe and from this soil it would grow and spread across the world.

Conflict and Power

The centuries that followed were not absent of struggle and danger for the Sanctified, but despite sometimes devastating losses, the Lancea Sanctum would continue to expand its power and establish itself and its teachings as unprecedented in influence among the Damned. Central to its success were two things that have shaped the covenant in every way and are essential to its identity. The first was the great theological work of the Monachus and other Sanctified scholars. The Monachus reworked and expanded the *Testament*'s five books for more than three centuries in order to present Longinus and the revelations of Vahishtael as truthfully as possible. *The Rule of Golgotha* was especially important, as it defined for the Sanctified the precise manner in which they were to conduct themselves as the Damned and servants of God. The Rule contains a number of canons that address the specifics of the Requiem, and clearly sets the Sanctified apart from those Damned who refuse to accept the covenant's dogma. One of its tenets, similar to the ideas put forth by the mortal St. Benedict, is that the Lancea Sanctum is not just a faith, but a community of vampires dedicated to holy works. The Sanctified must be obedient to the most pious among their number, and it is this abbot's responsibility to watch over her fellow Damned and counsel them with the words of Longinus. (In later years, Bishop replaced the title of Abbot, as the size of congregations grew.) The introduction and formalization of the Monachal Creed was also instrumental, for it established a clear and easily understood declaration of faith that quelled confusion and served to make identification of unorthodoxy simpler.

The second element in the covenant's success seems oddly a terrible setback. The Black Abbey had come to be a place of great importance among the Damned, and while only a relatively small number had ever visited its holy grounds and witnessed the Spear of Destiny, many more were aware of its significance to the Lancea Sanctum. Other congregations of Sanctified had surfaced throughout Christendom, seizing power as the Camarilla crumbled under its own anachronistic weight. Even where it could not lay claim to political authority, it was not without power. The rising Invictus, populated with Kindred used to exercising dominance over their peers, saw a benefit to an alliance with the Lancea Sanctum and found in its beliefs numerous arguments that supported their rule. As it strove to proclaim itself the First Estate of the Damned, the Lancea Sanctum became the indisputable Second Estate, providing spiritual support to the Invictus in order to secure its own hold on power and better fight off any of the numerous pagan sects that fought for the cold hearts and disquiet minds of the Damned. The Monachus did not declare himself the official leader of the Lancea Sanctum, but he was regarded as such wherever there were Sanctified. While this worked to unify the covenant, it also made the Black Abbey and its priesthood increasing targets of those who wished to tear down or supplant the Second Estate.

On a particularly ominous August night in 947 the Lancea Sanctum received a lesson that would shake it to its foundations. One of the Monachus's closest apostles and a cabal of vile traitors had organized a conspiracy. The group had secretly renounced God and Longinus, and had instead given their loyalty to the Ruler of Hell. With the name of the Adversary on their treasonous lips, they stole into the tabernacle to steal the Spear of Destiny and deliver it to their infernal master. The Sanctified, fearsome in their righteousness, beset them, but the traitors' perfidy was discovered too late. The brood of Luciferians put the sacred fane of Longinus to the torch, and the fires of the Abyss rose swiftly. A great battle raged in the nave of the Black Abbey even as flames enveloped it, but it seemed the diabolical forces would prevail. The Traitor called upon the might of his infernal lord and brought down the Monachus, committing the foul Amaranth, as is the way of true sinners.

When the Traitor and his surviving comrades closed the doors of the Black Abbey behind them, consigning the Sanctified to a fiery doom, they had all but succeeded in their plan.

But to their outrage, they could not find the Sacred Lance. Savoring that part of victory they could claim, they left only after the last of the monastery had fallen to ash along with the most holy of the Lancea Sanctum. What became of the Spear of Destiny has never been determined. Some claim that the Vicar was able to take it and some of the Monachus's original writings out of the conflagration before he could be discovered, perhaps at the sacrificial behest of the Monachus. Others put a more miraculous spin on the fate of the Sacred Lance, suggesting that God or Longinus directly intervened, pulling the relic from the fire. Still others suggest something darker. Since the Vicar had been privy to the secrets of the monastery since its construction long before the Monachus's arrival, he may have known of secret passages that he later used to secret out the Spear of Destiny. If so, was he also part of the conspiracy, his mortal mind bent to the purpose of the Devil, causing him to open the passage so the Traitor could more easily launch his diabolical assault? Whatever may have been the case, there is no verifiable report of the Spear of Destiny surfacing, either in Sanctified or Adversarial hands.

The Many Spears of Destiny

The Lancea Sanctum possessed the blade of the Spear of Destiny since Longinus passed it to his childe, and from that time until the Night of One Hundred Martyrs. The Monachus discarded the shaft of the relic during his travels after leaving Thebes, so that the blade — the truly sacred part of the weapon — was easier to transport without drawing unwanted attention. However, if this is true, how did the pole end up embedded in a column in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and the blade find its way to the Treasure Room of the Hofburg Palace in Vienna, where it still rests in glass? Simple: They didn't.

From the earliest nights after the Crucifixion, devout Christians in Jerusalem revered a lance believed to be the Spear of Destiny. Until the early seventh century it supposedly remained there, an artifact that did for the Christians what the real relic did for the early Sanctified: it gave them something to rally around and enabled them to actually touch the weapon that spilled the blood of the Christ, bridging the gulf between the spiritual and the physical. The object fell into the hands of pagans with the occupation of the Persians, after which the tip and the shaft were separated. According to Church legend, the blade was taken to Constantinople and the Church of St. Sophia. In 1244 Baldwin had it placed in an icon and presented it to King Louis of France, who put the treasure with what was believed to be the true Crown of Thorns in the Biblioteque Nationale in Paris. The lance pole apparently remained in Jerusalem longer, where it was put on display at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Some stories say it also went to Constantinople, where the Sultan later gave it to Pope Innocent VIII in exchange for his imprisoned brother. This is the shaft supposedly placed within one of the columns of St. Peter's.

Things become more complicated in that the blade now in Vienna — often referred to as the Lance of St. Maurice — was supposed to have been used in 1273 for the Emperor's coronation ceremony. St. Maurice is the Catholic Church's name for the captain of the Theban Legion, St. Daniel's ghoul, martyred in 286. Christians believe the faithful of Caesarea gave the weapon to St. Maurice as a symbol of fellowship, but how it came to Vienna after the slaughter is unknown.

Other tales place the Sacred Lance in the hands of the Saxon King Heinrich when he defeated the Magyars and at his son's christening as Holy Roman Emperor. The defeat of the Mongolians in the Battle of Leck and the victory of Constantine at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge are also attributed in part to the Spear of Destiny. A full score of legends of how the relic fell into the hands of Justinian, whose touch poisoned it and instilled it with a dark power, continue to circulate. Adolph Hitler was said to have been drawn to this darkness, and he is rumored to have carried it in order to improve his prospects for battle. One story says that General Patton was aware of this and was terrified of the Spear of Destiny, fearing that it would fulfill its destiny with atomic force.

Despite the tales, mortal man has been deceived. The various lances in the stories and now resting in museums and churches have been thoroughly examined by the Damned, and none have been shown to be anything more than artifacts possessed of some residual spiritual emanations, the consequence of the great faith given them over the long years. Of course, this does not stop some Sanctified from still pursuing the Lance stories to their ends, hoping to be able to touch the potent relic and perhaps use it to begin a crusade capable of toppling the other covenants and forever establishing the Lancea Sanctum as the only authority among the Damned. Although the vast majority of the trails are dead ends, none can refute the fact that the real Spear of Destiny is out there somewhere, waiting for the right moment in history to be reclaimed by the heirs of Longinus.

In the aftermath of the Night of One Hundred Martyrs, there was great instability, of course. As word spread of the destruction of the Black Abbey and the Monachus, some lost their faith, having tied it too closely to these icons. Most did not abandon the covenant, however. The earliest visitors to the Black Abbey had come as unbelievers and skeptics and left as pious missionaries, carrying their own personal testament of what they had experienced there along with the *Testament of Longinus* back to their domains. Their zeal and piety were unassailable, and even the great loss at the hands of the Traitor and his conspirators could not diminish their purpose.

The Rule had always made plain that the highest spiritual authority among the Damned lay with the Bishop of the domain, not with the Monachus. Such being the case, instead of being left leaderless and without direction, the most devout of the Sanctified reaffirmed the Rule and looked within to protect and nourish the Lancea Sanctum. Although contact between Sanctified in different domains never ceased entirely, each congregation now saw itself as a monastery of sorts, an independent community that need look no further than its own house for spiritual and political guidance. Where a question of faith should arise, the Bishop would be the final arbiter, with the *Testament* and her own religious convictions as her authority. This change saved the Lancea Sanctum from dissolution and provided it a structure that was far more resistant to attack in the future. No longer could enemies of the covenant strike at a single place or figure; from this point forward, the church had as many heads as there were Sanctified, and that was no small number.

As with all faiths that experience widespread acceptance, diffusion, corruption and outright heresy are a constant and expected threat to orthodoxy. This is especially the case with the Lancea Sanctum, given its decentralized organization. In every domain *The Testament of Longinus* is interpreted differently, sometimes because of ignorance, sometimes because of personal motives of the Bishop or other scriptural scholar, and most often due to an honest inquiry and examination of the theological underpinnings and ramifications of its corpus. In most places, these interpretations do not radically deviate from the norm, though it does happen at times. Rarely indeed will a dangerously unorthodox view become not only adopted by one congregation, but spread beyond the domain and become the creed of Sanctified elsewhere. Such is the case of the most troublesome of all the covenant's schisms, the Icarian Heresy.

In the fourteenth century, even as the Great Schism tore the Catholic Church apart, the Lancea Sanctum found itself facing its own unrelated crisis. In 1388 the eldest Sanctified in Naples, revered by his congregation as the first vampire to seek out the Black Abbey and later become anointed by the Monachus, was slain by a power-hungry Daeva. Archbishop Icarius had punished the Succubus for her flagrant disregard for the Traditions. In return she sent her agents to seize the sleeping Ventrue by day and bring his helpless body to her. Paralyzed with a stake through his heart, the archbishop could do nothing as the Daeva drained him of his ancient Vitae and left him as a true corpse. She proclaimed herself Prince and quickly sought to consolidate her power, but she was unprepared for the outrage that her act inspired in the Sanctified.

Three nights after the Amaranth of Icarius, the Lancea Sanctum rose up and tore down the new Prince and her supporters, declaring the city theirs by divine right. The archbishop's progeny assumed leadership and, by virtue of their descent from Icarius, proclaimed that it was their sacred duty to ensure that the domain was never again stolen from their grip. Within a hundred years the fervor that brought Icarius' childer to power spread beyond Naples. The Icarian bloodline grew and as it did, its members traveled from the holy city in order to replicate their founders' usurpation of power elsewhere. Surprisingly canny politicians and proselytizers, the

Icarians largely succeeded in their campaign and by 1500 more than a dozen cities in Italy and neighboring lands had yielded to their dynastic ambitions. In these places the Lancea Sanctum was now subject to the authority of the Icarian bloodline, whose members were deemed the only Sanctified worthy of speaking for the covenant.

Not every domain gave into this unorthodoxy, of course. While the Mediterranean came under its sway, the bulk of Europe did not and denounced the Icarians and their creed as heresy. For two more centuries the Icarian Heresy remained a very serious threat to those Sanctified who would not accept its dynastic tenets. Only in the early eighteenth century did the zeal of the Icarians truly die down, with the last known attempt by a scion of Icarius to seize power in the Lancea Sanctum occurring in Avignon in 1724.

The danger of the Icarian Heresy as well as others — in Spain during this time, the Banu Shaitan promulgated their own divergent flavor of faith and adopted the Moorish-influenced Iblic Creed — brought with it the rise of the Lancea Sanctum's Inquisitors. Taking their cue from the Catholic Church's response to heresy in its ranks, the Sanctified created their own inquisition dedicated to rooting out and destroying any threats to their spiritual survival. Early Inquisitors were rarely appointed, taking canon law into their own righteous hands in order to protect the covenant. In some cases this created hysteria and some of these self-made Inquisitors had to be destroyed, so far did they go in seeking heretics. This overkill led to the practice continued tonight, where it was the sole privilege of the Bishop to name Inquisitors and bestow upon them the authority to carry out their necessary investigations.

When Charles Emerson declared the Westminster Creed at the height of the mortal faith's Great Awakening, Inquisitors played a prominent role in successfully limiting its influence to the British Isles. Not every unorthodox practice saw an inquisition, however. In Jerusalem the Acharit Hayami sect met with little opposition when they formally affirmed their faith in the uniquely Jewish Dammatic Creed, one better suited to their cultural traditions than the widely accepted Monachal Creed.

The Catholic Inquisition

The 600-year campaign to purge the Church of unorthodoxy, best remembered tonight for its brutal excesses and ignorant fanaticism, did not go unnoticed by the Damned. Certainly, the fires of the Inquisition left many parts of Christendom untouched, but in those areas that were most affected, the Damned faced a very real danger. The inquisitors were not searching for vampires, of course, but their unprecedented thoroughness and their undeniable zealotry were more than enough to pose a threat to those Kindred unwilling to take the threat seriously.

Stories of a Mekhet ancilla here or a Nosferatu neonate there whose Requiems were cut short by the unwanted attentions of a Church inquisitor, unaware until the end of the true nature of his victim, are not uncommon among the elders. These stories serve as valuable lessons to younger Damned who have yet to truly understand the serious trouble posed by kine of blind passion and faith. On the whole, the Damned did not suffer terribly from the Inquisition, but in some places its reign of terror is not forgotten even tonight.

In such domains, the Damned continue to regard the Catholic Church with extra caution and usually give it a wide berth. The Lancea Sanctum recalls the Inquisition with more respect than most covenants; the Sanctified understand the danger of heresy and while they may not share the Church's beliefs or interests, and certainly do not wish the Inquisition to rear its ugly head ever again, they cannot argue its effectiveness. If not for Torquemada and the crusade against heresy that he marshaled, the Lancea Sanctum might have been unable to preserve the doctrinal unity and political power that it can still largely claim to possess.

The New World

Initially, the Lancea Sanctum had no particular interest in the Americas. From the perspective of most of the Sanctified, there was little purpose in risking a swift end to their Requiems by abandoning the security of their Old World domains and voyaging into the unknown wilds. Unlike their mortal counterparts, they had no compelling need to convert the native peoples, and the promise of gold or other financial gains did not outweigh the very real dangers. Furthermore, to those who imagined creating vast broods of their own supported by the blood of Americans, the *Testament* expressly forbade them from procreation, despite frequent abuses by certain Kindred. In sum, there was simply nothing driving the Lancea Sanctum any more than any other covenant to stake a claim in the New World.

Individual Damned, including some notable Sanctified, did choose to explore the barbaric landscape, however. To these adventurous few, it was the promise of herds of kine ignorant of the existence of vampires that motivated them as well as an insatiable urge to simply discover new things, perhaps as a way to combat ennui and world-weariness. In the New World they could establish their own domains and feed from an unspoiled population with little fear of organized retribution. Word from Columbus and his peers about the primitive beliefs of the so-called Indians they encountered only reinforced the dogma among these Damned that the risk was indeed worth the reward. By the late 1600s the first Kindred had crossed the Atlantic and walked among the exotic people of these strange new lands, availing themselves of all they could.

Arguably the first Sanctified to make a name for herself in the New World was Sister Almudena Marina Garcia, the childe of an Old World Inquisitor. Only a neonate when she arrived in Mexico in 1712, she had an immediate impact. Soon after her arrival, Garcia wrote to her sire in Iberia that she had heard

tales among the locals of a figure that she came to believe was Longinus. According to her telling, this person was clearly one of the Damned, and had already been on the continent for more than five hundred years, if the folktales were to be believed. The stories she recounted told how Longinus had passed through the region, working dark miracles before continuing his journey northward. She even claimed to have in her possession proof of Longinus' presence: a Roman coin dating to the time of Tiberius and struck in Judea, supposedly left behind by the Dark Prophet. The news passed from Sanctified to Sanctified and ignited for the first time in the Lancea Sanctum a significant religious interest in the New World.

Within a century the Sanctified were at least as well represented in the New World — in particular in its northernmost settled regions due to the belief that this is where Longinus had been going — as any other covenant. As the Spanish pushed into what is now the southern United States, the Lancea Sanctum was there, albeit in small numbers. Some of the most renowned missions served as havens for those Sanctified willing to expose themselves to the myriad terrors of the wilderness that seemed to have no end. Still, it was not until the mid-1800s that the Sanctified would make their real impact on the New World.

Throughout North America, by the early nineteenth century the Damned had already established themselves in the multitude of towns and cities that continued to spread across the land. In most of these places, the Lancea Sanctum was of little real consequence, its Old World attitudes meeting apathy from Kindred uninterested what they felt were ideas unfit for Requiems shaped by the new ideas prevalent in the vibrant American domains. Its members served their fellow Damned primarily as spiritual advisers, taking what influence they could in this fashion, careful not to alienate the other covenants that held greater political power. These Sanctified were not necessarily disrespected, but their covenant's sway in the Old World was an obstacle to their advancement here. Some of the Damned, the Carthians in particular, were overtly fearful of seeing the Americas become the spitting image of Western Europe, where the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum historically held the lion's share of authority. The Carthians and others wished to build new Kindred societies modeled more on the philosophies that had led to the revolutions of the previous two centuries, and the Lancea Sanctum was an obvious hindrance to such plans.

Strangely, what saved the Lancea Sanctum from playing no more than a peripheral role in North America was the action of a simple neonate. Inspired by the ideas of the Great Awakening and the revivals of New York's Charles Finney, a pragmatic Mekhet named Adolphus Pym organized what amounted to the first vampire religious revival on an abandoned farm in the American Midwest in 1836. Taking his cue from the kine preachers he had heard and adopting the mien of the consummate showman, he delivered his sermon with all the fire and brimstone he could. Given his substantial supernatural gifts, as well as his own innate talent and unshakeable faith in the righteousness of his beliefs, Pym's revival proved far more successful than he had hoped. The few who were lucky enough to attend the first revival were so moved by the evangelist's passion and fury that word of the reverend and his mission spread.

By 1839 one of his revivals near Philadelphia is supposed to have drawn more than two hundred Damned, eager to witness the spectacle and experience the kind of spiritual rejuvenation and enlightenment that Pym was offering. His achievement encouraged other Sanctified to emulate him and by the end of the American Civil War, smaller-scale Lancea Sanctum revivals were not an uncommon occurrence. At first, neonates were most susceptible to the charismatic message of the evangelists and the soulful appeal of their message, but ancillae also soon found themselves drawn to these unorthodox events and listened in increasing numbers to the dramatic preachers, finding in *The Testament of Longinus* the truth they had been hoping to find. Only the eldest remained unfazed by the Evangelical Movement, to whom the revival's flagrant reliance upon stage tricks seemed crass and artificial. The few true elders who existed in North America had spent most of their Requiems in the Old World.

To those not Sanctified, these sermons were nothing new. At least in the Old World they could respect the solemn piety and tradition of the Sanctified, however misplaced or overdone in their opinions. In their minds the evangelists deserved no such respect. They were merely entertainers and rabble-rousers, little better than the unbound wearing a façade of religiosity.

No matter the private views of certain influential Damned, the Evangelical Movement was a watershed for the Lancea Sanctum. Converts to the covenant were numerous and by the turn of the century the Sanctified could boast nearly as many members as any other covenant. The Lancea Sanctum did not wear the same face that it did in the Old World, however. Certainly some domains of the Sanctified clung to the orthodox traditions and creeds established on the other side of the Atlantic, but these places were in the minority. Instead, all manner of deviations took root as Sanctified adopted practices and beliefs popular with the locals. Rather than seeking to eradicate unusual rituals or divergent interpretations of canon, the American Lancea Sanctum incorporated them. What they sacrificed in purity of faith they gained twofold in converts, giving them the strength necessary to assert their authority throughout the continent. No longer could the Lancea Sanctum be sidelined or relegated to effectively ceremonial power. The revivals had brought real gains to the covenant where traditional approaches had failed.

The widespread unorthodoxy of the covenant in North America did not go unchecked forever. In the 1940s a wave of localized conservatisms occurred, with the intent to save the Lancea Sanctum from what individual dioceses saw as a very real threat. They believed that the majority of American Kindred who called themselves Sanctified were in fact nothing more than up-jumped "protestants" whose false claim to know the *Testament* was an insult to Longinus and God. Two members of Clan Nosferatu struck their first blow by convening a Synod in the Northeast and proclaiming themselves ecclesiastical judges

invested with the authority of the Black Abbey to eliminate heresy and bring the faith back to its Monachal roots. Of course, how they could make such claims greatly troubled the Sanctified they summoned to their court, but against such obvious age, theological wisdom, and certain martial prowess, few dared to interrogate them on these questions.

Terrifying in aspect, the Syndics made quite an impression on the Sanctified. Although their inquisitions did result in the destruction of some Damned, for the most part it served their purposes by simply putting the fear of divine retribution into those they judged. They forced those who came before them to learn and recite the Monachal Creed and be reborn, as it were, into the Lancea Sanctum. When the Synod was ended, the pair moved elsewhere and setup a second Synod, and then a third and a fourth. For two decades they held court, bringing the Lancea Sanctum back to its orthodox origins.

As suddenly as they came, they were gone, their work apparently complete. After 1966 they were not heard from again, at least not in North America. Some are unable to accept so neat a conclusion and more than a few rumors have suggested that the Syndics were destroyed while traveling between domains, taken down by diabolical vampires, or instead slipped into torpor and continue to sleep beneath the American soil.

The Lancea Sanctum Tonight

The American Inquisition was successful in stemming the most egregious heresies from spreading too widely among the faithful, but it was by no means entirely victorious in stamping out unorthodoxy. In fact, in the aftermath of the Synods, many Sanctified disavowed whatever oaths they felt obliged to swear to the Syndics. The Pentecostal "White Sunday Movement" — a sect eschewing ritualism that arose around the time of the Great Depression and has since became prominent in the American South and Midwest — was only limited in its reach, but certainly survived the Nosferatu elders. Other less popular deviations also remained, even if many of their followers chose to cleave more closely to orthodox doctrine.

Such deviations grew not only in America, but in Europe and elsewhere also. The *Exotheist Manifesto* — a document elevating each Sanctified as his or her own Bishop, in essence — gained numerous adherents and there was no guarantee in a given domain that the faith would be preached or practiced in the same manner as in a neighboring city. The Icarians secured at least one city in the Americas they could call their own, while phenomena like the eschatological Crimson Cavalry and other small, radical groups rose up, testament to the variety of creeds and causes the Sanctified cannot agree upon.

Some argue that this diversification was precisely what the Monachus had hoped for when he laid the foundations for the covenant, a religion that he intended to be independent of an overarching hierarchy and that required no authority under God and Longinus but the word of the local Bishop. For better or for worse, this is largely how the Lancea Sanctum has survived into the modern nights.

North America

The continent has become as much home to the Lancea Sanctum tonight as any part of the Old World. The covenant dominates more than a few prominent cities, and in many of these the Sanctified have succeeded in establishing working theocracies. In such places, the word of the Archbishop or Cardinal is law and those Damned who dare to openly flout *The Testament of Longinus* or work to undermine the Lancea Sanctum's catholic power will find their Requiems uncomfortable at best.

Of course, domains entirely under the sway of Sanctified obedient to the traditional Monachal Creed are rare. Much more common are cities that can claim a few flavors of faith, as it were. The Bishop may adhere to the Monachal Creed, but it's quite possible that two-thirds of the covenant's congregation follows some divergent sect. It is quite usual in these situations for the Bishop to include these less-than-orthodox Sanctified in the ceremonies, practices, responsibilities and privileges of those who cleave to her own persuasion. Wise prelates understand the value of inclusiveness: Not only is the covenant strengthened by numbers, but it is far easier to bring wayward believers back to the true faith — at least as the leadership sees it — if they are favorably inclined toward the hierarchy. So long as at least lip service is paid to the Lancea Sanctum's authority figures, little significant trouble arises.

This does not mean that every splinter group is openly welcomed, however. Whether for reasons of personality, theological incompatibility or even political gain, sometimes the various creeds and sects within a domain find it impossible to find common ground. Ordinarily, adversaries keep these schisms hidden from those outside the covenant, or at least make an effort to do so. At times, even a pretense of camaraderie proves untenable, however. Where this occurs, the split can be quite public and the Danse Macabre that takes place between the opposing factions can be more complex and downright lethal than any of the other political and social maneuverings going on in the city.

For obvious reasons, the larger the city the more likely this kind of infighting is, but not necessarily. In even the largest domains the Lancea Sanctum can come together despite any differences, especially if a charismatic individual who has mastered the Danse Macabre is its leader. Such leaders can easily turn internal feuds and disagreements into a righteous fire cannily directed at more traditional enemies like heretics, blasphemers, and other covenants, as well as enemies of circumstance, like diablerists, Lupines or mortal witch-hunters.

As elsewhere, the Sanctified gather in the greatest numbers in American, Canadian, and Mexican cities with large populations, especially those with a thriving nightlife and a high crime rate. Unlike the other covenants, the Lancea Sanctum is also drawn to (or perhaps partly responsible for?) cities and towns whose histories are especially bound to mainstream religious institutions. Areas with a strong association with religious movements, from Puritanism and Catholicism to Evangelism and Pentecostalism naturally hold great interest for the covenant. Exceptions are common, however, and a Sanctified who must flee his domain and seek shelter in another would be wise not to make any assumptions about the Lancea Sanctum's presence in his new city or its openness to Sanctified outsiders, especially if that city's version of Longinus' faith differs markedly from the one practiced in his original domain.

As a general rule, the Monachal Creed has its strongest hold over the cities of Mexico and the American Southwest, as well as the continent's northeastern reaches. Many of the first Sanctified in North America adhered to this most orthodox denomination and where they set foot it tends to have great influence. The Anglican-inspired Westminster Creed is more popular along the Atlantic Coast as well as the Midwest and Central Canada. In the so-called Bible Belt states, the spiritual White Robes of the Tollison Creed claim an estimable following; this sect is also commonplace in smaller cities and towns of a rural character, places where cults of personality flourish easily. The West Coast and Northwest are the least homogenous when it comes to religious persuasion, with few creeds being able to lay claim to majorities in any domain. Of course, this is a simplified overview. Other divergent creeds, many of local origin, exist throughout the continent, with few cities not being home to at least a few sectarian individualists.

The vast majority of Sanctified, whether snake-handling preachers in the Texas Panhandle, solemn theologians in Montreal, or half-mad flagellants in Monterrey, spend their entire Requiem in the city of their Embrace, likely never stepping foot beyond the blood-rich heart of the domain again. This is no different than most other Kindred, of course. The power of faith can be strong, however, and at times it calls the believer to risk all in order to bring *The Testament of Longinus* to those still condemned to ignorance. Perhaps more than among the members of any other covenant, members of the Lancea Sanctum are sometimes overcome with the urge to voluntarily undertake travel outside the safety of their domain.

In the manner of the first Sanctified to bring the *Testament* to the New World, the Damned who hear the Call usually set forth on their journey in pairs — often sire and childe, or mentor and disciple. Only the most foolish or spiritually fortified believer sets off as a missionary alone, but those who do, generally receive great respect from the Lancea Sanctum for their exceptional devotion and piety. A few such itinerants have actually earned themselves some celebrity, with small cults of adoring Sanctified cropping up and paying reverence to a particular missionary in borderline heretical fashion.

Pilgrimages are less common here than in the Old World, as few places have such great historical and religious significance as to cause the Sanctified to put themselves at risk just to see or touch an artifact or edifice. However, nearly as popular in North America is the continued practice of traveling revivals. Most common in the American South and Midwest, these religious road shows are rarely regarded as a good thing by the Lancea Sanctum of a more traditional or cautious bent.

Usually attracting younger neonates as well as the simply curious, the fire-and-brimstone preachers come off as more entertainment than message. Often such performances can bring unwanted attention from the kine, and sometimes they stir such passion in the audience that frenzy results. This can lead to all sorts of other trouble. For these reasons, few ranking Sanctified look forward to the arrival of these religious carnivals and do what they can to keep them from setting up shop in town and upsetting the balance of religious power. Of course, given the intricacies of the Danse Macabre, inviting a Sanctified revival into Elysium may actually score a Bishop a success depending on how she plays her cards.

Central and South America

In part due to the tendency of the earliest Sanctified in the Americas to migrate northward from Mexico — because they followed the Spanish and because of the popular tale of Longinus traveling in that direction — and in part because of the racial biases its members harbored for the indigenous people they encountered, the Lancea Sanctum never became a dominant force in Central or South America. Despite the clear influence of the Catholic Church on mortal civilization throughout the continent, the Damned who did populate the exotic cities of these still relatively wild lands were predominantly more interested in politics than piety. This is not to say that the Sanctified did not establish a presence, of course. The followers of Longinus do have their place in most of the major cities tonight, but few have the clout to seize absolute power. Instead, the covenant serves more as a model of morality and capitalizes on its role as spiritual adviser. While few cities here have a Sanctified Prince, many of the Princes who do hold court have at least one member of the Lancea Sanctum close by. It is by this kind of alliance, similar to the one with the Invictus that brought the covenant to power in Europe, that the Lancea Sanctum exerts its greatest influence in the southern Americas.

The Monachal Creed is particularly strong here and only rarely bows to the authority of another denomination. Its greatest competitors are not the other traditionally strong sectarian creeds of the Old World, but rather the various homegrown cults that draw heavily upon the older, native beliefs of the locals. Elements of superstition, animal worship, gruesome ritual sacrifice, and self-deification are not unusual and create a highly unorthodox blend of faith and fear that marks the Lancea Sanctum as notably unlike its incarnations elsewhere. The veneration of local saints — Sanctified who have been martyred here — is particularly commonplace, with most domains laying claim to at least one such revered figure.

The covenant also distinguishes itself by the great importance it places in religious festivals and reenactments. Highly ceremonial processions through moonlit graveyards overgrown with blood-watered plants that recreate important events in the covenant's history — especially local history — and similar solemn affairs meant to pay homage to Longinus and his martyrs are part and parcel of the South American Lancea Sanctum. Elaborate raiment, distinctly native headdress, various relics and icons, and hideous litanies of damnation make these events powerful affirmations of faith and spiritual fortitude for the Sanctified.

The covenant also makes use of ancient temples and tombs for these and other rites. In most cases, these places are removed from the city where the Damned dwell, making the pilgrimage to participate in the religious gathering as much a show of pious devotion as any recitation of faith. Away from prying eyes and safe from breach of the Masquerade, the Sanctified are free to sing dark litanies to both Longinus and things that would be less acceptable to their fellow faithful unfamiliar with the pagan jungles and the blood gods that still lurk in the deepest shadows of the overgrown ruins.

Europe

The powerful influence of the Black Abbey, the establishment of the Lancea Sanctum in other cities throughout the continent, and the theological and actual battles fought in the name of Longinus left a lasting mark on the cities here that has not diminished in its importance. European Sanctified can claim possession of some of the oldest copies of *The Testament of Longinus* as well as volumes of other works on the subject of the Dark Prophet and the fine points of the faith. This has given the Lancea Sanctum a tremendous foundation that enables it to withstand the assault of heretical ideas and outright attack, whereas the covenant might more easily fall to such things in other parts of the world.

The greatest share of the covenant's elders also reside here, and while their own recollection of the past may be corrupted by the inescapable fog of eternity, their presence lends a weight to the Lancea Sanctum that serves it well. Few of these ancients desire any longer to claim functional authority for themselves. By and large they prefer to allow well-suited ancillae and "lesser elders" to take on such demanding roles. However, their wisdom, subtle guidance and profound insight into matters spiritual as well as practical make them formidable assets to the covenant.

Some few of these vaunted Kindred even claim to have visited the Black Abbey and to have personally knelt in prayer with the Monachus before the Traitor struck him down. At least one boasts that she was among the chosen few to participate in the very first midnight mass held on European soil and as such, was one of the only Sanctified to have been allowed to lick blood from the Spear of Destiny as part of the service.

Because of its long history as the stronghold of the covenant, the existence and veneration of religious relics is particularly notable in Europe. Especially in the southern parts of the continent, few congregations of the Lancea Sanctum do not possess at least one treasured relic imbued with special spiritual power that they bring out for special ceremonies. Most common, of course, are spears or lances said to have been blessed by the Monachus in ritual fashion or used to smite enemies of the faith during its struggles. Many masses — not just in Europe — feature a spear, no less prominent than the crucifix is to Christianity. Certain articles of clothing com-

mon to a Roman centurion are also common, with helmets, breastplates, and sandals enjoying general popularity. Smaller items — jewelry once worn by martyrs, styli used to pen scripture, and tokens from the Black Abbey — are usually protected by encasement in precious metal as reliquaries.

Unusual is the lack of organic relics like bones, very common among mortal religions. Given the nature of vampire physiology, however, anyone claiming to have such an item would be viewed with a great deal of skepticism. The closest thing that might ordinarily be encountered are phials said to contain the blood of various important Sanctified, including Longinus himself. Of course, in most cases the substance is no longer liquid, and since no pious believer would dare to break the seal on so precious a relic, the faithful may never know the truth of the matter. The greatest relic of all, the Spear of Destiny, is occasionally reported, but no Bishop is known to actually suggest it is in his possession. Relics and other treasures are usually kept in ornate tabernacles and only taken out when they are to be used for a ceremony.

If the Lancea Sanctum guards anything, it is the tabernacle and the sacred artifacts within first and foremost.

Second only to North America in terms of the heterogeneous nature of the covenant, Europe is awash with divergent creeds, variant catechisms, and heretical cults. Even so, the Monachal and Westminster Creeds are still able to claim a position of overwhelming dominance, with the latter primarily extant in Western Europe and in the British Isles in particular. Consequently, the covenant is highly medieval in both its structure and practices here, more so than perhaps anywhere else. Masses, for example, are usually quite long, often beginning at midnight and not ending until just before dawn.

Elsewhere, and particularly in America, any service lasting longer than two hours is likely to cause attendance to drop precipitously. Joining these major creeds are dozens of others, with larger cities often having at least one or two within the larger fold of the Lancea Sanctum. Unless they exhibit outright hostility to the Bishop, real trouble for those who ascribe to these smaller denominations is rare, though theological debates can grow quite heated. The only real danger to the peace is those persuasions that cling to ideas still considered highly heretical by the majority of Sanctified.

In Mediterranean Europe, the Icarian Heresy maintains significant influence to this night. It harbors little goodwill toward most other sects, despising the Monachals the most on account of their historical acrimony. The Livian Heresy is another relatively popular corruption of orthodoxy that has its greatest presence in Europe. Centered primarily on Italy and Greece, it has its supporters even in France and the Netherlands, even if only in isolated numbers.

Of especial interest to European Sanctified is the location of the Black Abbey and the Spear of Destiny, of course. There is no definitive evidence of either, but the quest is no less popular. A number of Sanctified sponsor small archeological expeditions (usually via their influence over universities and museums) throughout the continent in pursuit of both, hoping to be the one to finally recover such an important tie to their past and perhaps unlock some awesome power that might allow the Lancea Sanctum to prove its pedigree in the eyes of doubters. Others who do not possess the influence necessary to launch their own investigations instead peruse field reports from expeditions for anything that might hint at a breakthrough.

Tonight at least a dozen Bishops claim that their domains are closest to the ruins of the Black Abbey in order to inspire pride and devotion in their congregations, despite universal lack of evidence to back up these lofty claims. Reports of the Lance also crop up with some regularity, but few give these much credence given the long history of hoaxes and empty assertions. Still, the very fact that the Black Abbey once stood somewhere in Europe, along with the possibility that the Spear of Destiny is still somewhere in the region lends an aura of special sanctity upon the covenant here and provides spiritual strength to its devoted members.

Africa

The Lancea Sanctum has a strong influence in Africa, both in the northern and sub-Saharan regions. Egypt is its greatest power base, with the Icarian sect having significant religious authority here and in most parts of the continent. Only in the dense, tropical region of West Africa do the Icarians grudgingly cede power to the Westminster Creed and, to a lesser extent, those who cleave to the orthodox teachings of the Monachus. Where the Icarians hold sway, the covenant has a decidedly Egyptian flavor. Theban Sorcery is given particular prominence, and elaborate Egyptian motifs — rather than traditional, more Catholic ones — with extensive hieroglyphic and demotic elements decorate Lancea Sanctum churches and havens. This even carries over into the actual practices, with Coptic and older Egyptian tongues being used for at least some liturgical recitations. Depictions of the angel Amoniel are also prominent, with certain radical sub-sects revering this figure almost as much as Longinus.

The dynastic nature of the Icarian creed plays an important role and tends to promote a very real personality cult around those descended from St. Icarius. The bloodline enjoys almost pharaoh-like status within the covenant, and often among those Damned who are not Sanctified who submit to the power of the lineage, even if they don't subscribe to its religious precepts. This, almost more than its dynastic nature, is one of the reasons others elsewhere detest the denomination. For the orthodox, it is only for God and his prophets to hold such divine esteem, and the Icarians do not qualify as either.

It might seem like the Icarian congregations would return the favor and do all they could to eliminate Monachalism and closely related sects from their domains, but in practice they do not. These African Sanctified believe that their orthodox brethren are simply misguided, and unable to see the truth as they do. They reserve their true hatred for the seemingly indestructible heretical cults that rise each time they are snuffed out. Unlike in South America, where local tradition and belief blends with Sanctified tradition to create a

new flavor of the faith, the native superstitions and customs are routinely culled whenever they are found. This is particularly true south of the Sahara, where these primitive practices are most prevalent.

In the heart of the Dark Continent, "savage" gods of old still hold great power and those Damned who openly elect to pay tribute to these deities can expect little mercy from the Lancea Sanctum. In the jungles, across the Serengeti and up and down the coast, the Inquisition is alive and well. Accusations of heresy are not only common, but are an accepted part of the Danse Macabre, with political and spiritual rivals calling for, and often seeing, the brutal interrogation and even destruction of their foes. Where tribal cults are able to make significant headway, they are often met with merciless purges in the name of Longinus, and crusaders adorn themselves with masks meant to represent Amoniel at his most righteous and bloodthirsty.

The Banu Shaitan has a small voice in Africa and is mostly found in the north. Suffering frequent harassment from the Icarians (though to a distinctly lesser degree than the tribal cults), this sect long ago concluded that its survival depended on making as little noise as possible. Consequently, the Icarians have allowed the Iblic Creed to be practiced, but only so long as it does not proselytize, hold public (for vampires) ceremonies, or seek in any way to undermine the Icarians' hold on power. For the most part this truce has held, but in the past two decades, signs that it has begun to crack have become visible. A growing sense of righteous superiority — attributed to Middle Eastern writings — has permeated the Banu Shaitanand, and infrequent rebellion against silence has occurred. These incidents have met with swift retaliation, and there is no indication that anything more will come of them. Even so, some worry that the Banu Shaitan might exploit the growing unrest among kine Muslims and send fanatical agents against the Icarians when they are at their weakest, in daylight. The Icarians are watchful for this possibility, and should it happen, wholesale religious bloodshed would surely follow.

In those places where the Icarian sect has little or no authority, the Lancea Sanctum manifests much as in Europe, with only minor differences. Oddly, these Sanctified are much more tolerant of local beliefs than their Icarian cousins. They still view native superstitions and mythology as heretical, but they usually prefer to stamp out such troublesome ideas with unceasing repetition of scripture, ritual services, and sermons that highlight the truth as they see it. Only if this fails in a way that brings real, direct danger to the covenant do they respond with the kind of force that is the nightly recourse of the Icarians.

It is only in a few such cities that the covenant has enough potency to hold both political and spiritual authority. For the most part, the Lancea Sanctum prefers to leave the difficult job of running the domain to those Damned who, often by virtue of their mortal tribal membership, are seen as most suited to the task. The covenant respects caste distinctions outside its doors, and even within to a lesser degree, elevating those born to more important tribes above those in less auspicious ones. Only where an already consequential Sanctified is also blessed with identification in the most prominent mortal tribe is she likely to sit as Prince as well as clerical prelate. These Archbishops are as revered as they are rare, and it is not uncommon for them to be known far beyond the borders of their own domain, and to even be objects of pilgrimage by exceedingly fervent Sanctified. Truly, the Lancea Sanctum has found a unique home on the Dark Continent.

The Middle East

The Lancea Sanctum may have had its most important successes in Europe, but it is the cradle of civilization that remains for them the true Holy Land. It is here that Longinus lived and became one of the Damned, here that he came upon the Spear of Destiny and with it struck Christ, and here that the Archangel Vahishtael revealed to him the divine role of the Kindred. For those Sanctified who call this place home, the formal founding of the covenant and its later achievements and experiences pale in comparison to these fantastic occurrences, without which there would not only be no covenant, but the Damned would remain as ignorant brutes with no concept of their true importance.

Here, amidst enduring reminders of the ancient past, the Lancea Sanctum is strong, even if not always dominant. The covenant competes for control with the Invictus, the Circle of the Crone and other, less familiar covenants in the region, but where it has not gained the upper hand it is nonetheless irrefutably a significant player. Few Princes in the Levant would be so foolish as to deny the Lancea Sanctum's leaders a place at the table, as it were, as doing so would only invite disaster. Even those Damned who do not belong to the covenant at least pay lip service to *The Testament of Longinus* and the spiritual authority it claims in order to avoid having the Sanctified seek revenge. While overt inquisitions are rare, harassment of blasphemers is not, and given its influence the Lancea Sanctum is able to make one's Requiem a nightly hell if it so desires.

As might be expected, the unique religious atmosphere in the region has had a great effect upon the covenant. The Iblic and Dammatic Creeds — inspired by the Islamic and Jewish faiths, respectively — join the Monachal Creed as the primary denominations in the Middle East. In most domains, an uneasy peace exists among the three. In some places, the triumvirate agrees to allow the election of one Bishop from each covenant to share power equally with the others. Where this occurs, none of the three is also Prince, but defers that title to another.

An almost distinctly local phenomenon is that of the vampire hermit. Properly called Anchorites by older Sanctified, these individuals remove themselves from almost any figurative or literal association with others. In the fashion of St. Anthony, they most often make their havens in ancient caves far from the larger cities and often in places nearly devoid of human life. Such isolation is purportedly very conducive to greater spiritual enlightenment and closeness to God, but for

most Damned, the risks are unthinkable. How the Anchorites survive the pangs of hunger that surely torment them every waking moment, and how they resist the worst ravages of madness being alone for so long, only the saints can know for sure. Many believe that these frightening ascetics have at least one companion — a ghoul that provides for them — or that they command special powers manifested through a true miracle of faith. Whatever the case, on the rarest of occasions when an Anchorite chooses to reenter society, even if only briefly, his appearance causes quite a stir.

Relics, veneration of saints, miracles and apocalyptic beliefs are woven deeply into the religious landscape of the Damned in the Middle East. Many of the Sanctified here also believe that Longinus remains in the area. Some believe that it is his presence or direct intervention that enables the hermits to survive as they do. Literally dozens of apocryphal tales circulate about his reappearance at this or that place and time, usually to strike against an enemy of the covenant or to provide help to one of the Sanctified. Astonishing miracles are, of course, a common element in these fabulous stories. Obviously, Longinus has not openly announced himself since he left the Monachus' presence so long ago, but as no evidence exists to suggest he is gone forever, the stories continue to propagate. The majority of fables place the Dark Prophet in modern Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq, but they certainly have no monopoly on Longinus sightings. Nearly every place the Lancea Sanctum has a presence, at least one such legend enjoys popularity.

Asia

Evidence suggests that *The Testament of Longinus* did not pass to the Damned beyond Persia any earlier than the fourteenth century, when St. Odoric embarked upon a missionary journey to bring the Sanctified faith to the East. Little is known of his precise travels or the degree of success he encountered, but stories of his visit and a folio attributed to his hand were revealed to Patriarch Paulus upon his arrival in Singapore during the missionary efforts of the eighteenth century. Stories also continue to circulate that a trio of elders of European extraction have been in the Eastern Himalayas for more than five centuries, ensconced in an ancient monastery and practicing rites too similar to Theban Sorcery to be dismissed as simple coincidence. Truly, the revelations of Longinus know no borders, and even the most inaccessible reaches of the globe cannot remain untouched by the righteous truth.

Where European colonial powers had the greatest influence — India, coastal China, Japan, and Southeast Asia — so too has the Lancea Sanctum. A mix of creeds competed for the Eastern Damned, but despite their efforts none survived the experience. Instead, wherever the covenant did take root it sacrificed a great deal to do so. The tenets and practices were for the most part preserved, but the strong cultural and religious influences of the region permeated nearly every other aspect of the faith. The emphasis on personal discipline, moral rectitude and philosophical introspection overshadowed the traditional focus on penance, submission, and evangelism as

well as the West's strong reliance upon ceremony. Of course, not every domain adopted precisely the same creed as others in Asia. A dozen prominent flavors of Lancea Sanctum faith now dominate, each mirroring the local values or traditions. Attempts at enforcing stricter orthodoxy failed repeatedly, and tonight only a few Bishops of the East ascribe to a decidedly Western creed.

The most notable schism between the covenant in the West and the East is the adoption in the East of a third important angelic visitation. According to scripture, the angel Marael appeared to many of the Princes of the region, sometime between the 2nd and 6th centuries. The angel wielded the Spear of Destiny, fresh with blood, and told his startled listeners they would see the Spear again, dark with the blood of God the next time, and that they were to heed the words of those who bore it for it would "open the heavens and bring down a storm of blood and enlightenment on those who are lost in the darkness." The appearance of the angel varies, but his words are always the same. Some Western Sanctified speculate that Marael may have simply been Vahishtael, but others discount that, either refuting the stories in their entirety or suggesting that the Almighty may have indeed sent one of his other servants to prepare the way for the *Testament* in so foreign a land.

The Lancea Sanctum tends to have the greatest political power and social influence in the large coastal cities. Many cities further inland have never boasted a significant Lancea Sanctum presence. In these places the covenant, when it does exist, is more often only one of a handful of religiously oriented covenants, and rarely the dominant one.

In almost no domain does the covenant take an aggressive approach to power, however. Instead, it prefers to ally itself with at least one other traditionally formidable covenant — whether one of Western origins, like the Invictus, or one of local manufacture. Its members act as advisors on moral and spiritual as well as political and even martial matters, a role accepted given the generally more holistic view of governance common among the Damned here. In some cities, the Lancea Sanctum is actually subsumed into another covenant, sacrificing some of its independent authority, but in turn giving it far greater power in areas it typically does not tread. For this reason, Sanctified visiting from the West may have a very difficult time distinguishing whether the Lancea Sanctum even exists in an Eastern city on cursory investigation.

Asceticism is common here, and membership in the Lancea Sanctum can be far more difficult to accomplish than in the West. Prospective initiates may be required to fast, overcome an opponent or personal weakness, or master a certain precept or Discipline before being acknowledged into the covenant and allowed to participate in its often closed ceremonies. Theban Sorcery is particularly guarded, and its use is ordinarily forbidden except in those instances deemed appropriate by Sanctified teachers. To do otherwise is considered sinful and a misuse of sacred power.

Outside of India, Inquisitors are rare. Heresy does exist, but it is usually isolated and is most often ignored rather than actively quashed. It is the axiom of many Sanctified here that even *The Testament of Longinus* contains only a grain of knowledge and that it is not their place to decide who and who does not truly understand God's Will. The best they can do is strive to follow the example of Longinus and hope that they do not stray too far.

Chapter Two:
Unlife in the Lancea Sanctum

It was then
that I came upon
that dark monastery
and did secretly look
on the monks inside.
They who were meant
to be servants of the Lord,
who had sworn themselves
to service for years
numbering only as long
as a man would live,
had grown doubtful and idle and
within them found sin.

So were they shown
that the fearsome hunger
of Death might creep out
of the night and bite
through claims of piety.
So were they all bled
and slain and devoured
by the lion of the Lord.

All save one.

— The Testament of Longinus

"Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of his victims."

— Numbers 23:24

Principia Theologica

The Lancea Sanctum is unique among world religions, and not simply because all of its adherents are vampires. Almost every member of the Lancea Sanctum belonged to a mortal faith prior to the Embrace, which abruptly initiated each Sanctified into a new religion based on blood, death and the twisted notion of damnation as a mandate of purpose. True, the core religious beliefs of the covenant derive from writings attributed to Longinus and his first disciple, the Monachus, and acceptance of the truth of these writings is a prerequisite to membership in a Longinian congregation. In implementation, however, each worshiper is free to celebrate these forbidden truths with rituals derived from Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, or many other mortal faiths, or even reject all of these traditions in favor of rites totally alien to human religions.

In the first centuries of its existence, the theological underpinnings of the Sanctified faith were quite Catholic in outlook, as those among the Sanctified Embraced during ages past adapted their mortal beliefs to their new predatory natures. Over time, the Lancea Sanctum broadened its horizons to absorb the ritual practices of non-Catholics, as waves of those of other faiths — Protestants, Muslims and Jews — joined the Damned. Tonight, the Lancea Sanctum is truly a big tent religion (albeit one whose opinion-makers are often traditional, powerful Catholics), and while a majority of the covenant's members adopt the trappings of Catholicism, a cardinal wearing a Priest's cassock must often tolerate snake-handling revivals, nightly prayers to Longinus made toward Mecca, and even vampiric students of the Kabbalah within his domain. This isn't to say that the Lancea Sanctum considers all forms of worship to be equal, but the difference between an acceptable doctrinal difference and a heresy is rarely made clear until after the inquisitors have arrived.

Principles Applied

The Lancea Sanctum recognizes almost as many holy rites as there are Sanctified to enact them. Each denomination celebrates its own unique rituals and observances, but some rites are universal in nature. The names and descriptions of the various rites also vary from creed to creed. The nomenclature most commonly used for the rites, however, is that established by the Monachal Creed (see p. 59), which is both the oldest and most widespread of all the denominations. An individual rite is usually referred to as such, though the Latin *ritus* is occasionally used, especially by Monachals. When the plural of the word is used, however, the Latin *ritae* and the English "rites" are often used interchangeably.

Rites are divided into two types: *Apostolica* and *Ecclesia*. *Apostolica* are official covenant ceremonies, while *Ecclesia* are unofficial rituals or even simple prayers. The chief distinction is that a Sanctified Priest must officiate over *Apostolica*. Lay members may officiate over *Ecclesia*, and in fact, even non-Sanctified may be permitted to officiate over some of the minor ones, in much the same way mortals might invite an honored guest to say the blessing over a meal.

It is important to understand the idea of *ritae* in the context of the rest of the covenant's belief, so we have defined them here. A larger section addresses a wide and specific cross-section of rites, including rites common to all Sanctified, as well as those rites unique to individual creeds and even individual coteries, in Chapter Two.

The Testament of Longinus

The theology of the Lancea Sanctum begins with the writings attributed to Longinus and the Monachus. There are a total of five books, collectively known as *The Testament of Longinus*, attributed to the two vampires. The individual books are: *The Malediction of Longinus*, *The Torments of Longinus*, *The Rule of Golgotha*, *The Sanguinaria*, and *The Book of Eschaton*. The books are relatively short, and the *Testament of Longinus* as a whole is probably near the length of a modern novella. While all of the *Testament* is considered to be the word of Longinus, the perspective of the books changes frequently. Some sections are written by Longinus in either the first person or third person, others are dictated to the Monachus by Longinus, and still others do not clearly identify the author or narrator.

The Malediction of Longinus

Malediction details the life of the man who would become Longinus, from his birth to a Roman prostitute named Livia, to the Crucifixion and his damnation. Longinus' birth name is never revealed, as Longinus viewed his curse as a complete negation of his mortal nature. Instead, he is referred to variously as "the bastard childe," "he who would become Longinus," "the soldier," and "the Devil's scion," among many other appellations in the text. The *Malediction* also implies that Longinus was not merely a Roman soldier in the wrong place at the wrong time, but rather predestined to strike Jesus due to an exceptionally debauched and sinful life. The book asserts that Longinus, prior to his Embrace, violated each of the Seven Deadly Sins in particularly egregious ways. For example, the book claims he drunkenly raped his own mother because he found her "comely" and later murdered a friend who had been promoted above him in the Roman Legions, violations of the sins of Lust and Envy, respectively.

In the climactic event of his mortal life, Longinus was ordered to ascertain whether Jesus Christ was dead or not, and he prodded the Messiah with a spear because he was too lazy to fetch a ladder, an act of Sloth. Then, when the blood of Christ dripped

down from the spear onto his hands, he went to wipe it off but then became entranced with how pure the blood looked and how sweet it smelled, and to the horror of those standing nearby, he licked it off his hands out of Gluttony. *Malediction* ends with the archangel Vahishtael confronting Longinus outside Jesus' tomb and describing to him the nature of the Curse. Curiously, Vahishtael is not found elsewhere in either Jewish or Christian writings, but Zoroastrianism does recognize a being named Asha Vahishta who was one of the Amesha Spentas (angelic beings who served the highest god, Ahura Mazda). The significance of this figure and his possible connection with a pre-Christian religion baffle Sanctified scholars to this very night.

St. Longinus the Centurion

The mortal Catholic Church also acknowledges the existence of a man referred to as Longinus. According to Christian folklore and the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Longinus was a Centurion who oversaw the Crucifixion, exclaimed at the moment of Jesus' death that He was truly the Son of God, and thereafter converted to Christianity. Mortal accounts differ as to whether this Longinus is the same man who struck Jesus, but the Centurion, like the vampire, apparently took the name Longinus due to his connection with the spear. The mortal Longinus is believed to have taken the shaft of the spear with him when he left Jerusalem, and he was eventually martyred in Cappodocia and later canonized as the patron saint of soldiers. A famous statue of St. Longinus stands in St. Peter's Basilica, and according to legend, the shaft of the spear is contained within it. Most members of the Lancea Sanctum consider this mortal saint to be distinct from (and irrelevant to) the vampire Longinus, but not all do, creating a bit of a canonical schism that Storytellers or Sanctified characters may wish to explore.

The Torments of Longinus

Torments describes the unlife of Longinus, whose new name was taken from a Latinization of the Greek word for "spear." The book details Longinus' efforts to come to grips with his new state, his eventual Embrace of the monk who came to be known as the Monachus, and establishment of the early Black Church. A somewhat depressing text evocative of the Old Testament book of *Lamentations*, *Torments* addresses what happened to Longinus after he became a vampire, and how he came to realize that he could assuage his endless hunger with the blood of any mortal save that of Christians. By the end of the second century, however, Longinus discovered that he could even feed from most Christians, though the truly devout were able to repel him through some miraculous (and not fully understood) aura of sanctity. Longinus attributed this development to growing apostasy in the early Church following the deaths of Peter, Paul and the other Apostles.

The last few chapters of *Torments* deal with his discovery somewhere in Europe of a monastery whose monks had fallen into all manner of sinful activities. Longinus, enraged by the impiety of the monks, slew all of them in a variety of painful ways appropriate to their sins. This section of *Torments* is lurid and rather gory, with several chapters devoted to the various painful demises of the monks. The last surviving monk was an elderly scholar who had resisted the sinful urges of the others. Upon encountering Longinus after the death of his brothers, the monk (known to history only as "the Monachus") calmly acknowledged Longinus' vampiric state and concluded that the slaughter of the other monks was divine judgment for their transgressions. Longinus and the Monachus, who never displayed fear of the great predator, spent many long nights discussing Christ's divinity, the role of vampires in God's plan, and the true nature of Good and Evil. Eventually, Longinus concluded that the monk was a worthy disciple and offered him a choice between death and the Embrace. After some hesitation, the monk concluded Longinus' arrival was ordained by God, and even though the Embrace meant damnation, choosing death was tantamount to suicide and therefore also a mortal sin. Thus, the Monachus accepted the Embrace, reasoning that God would not have completely denied him an opportunity for salvation and that undeath must carry with it the possibility of some kind of redemption.

After Embracing the Monachus, Longinus and his new childe went out into the world and collected the first Dark Apostles, a group of vampires Embraced for their violation of various sins. The number of the Dark Apostles is unclear, as there are conflicting accounts even within the text of *Torments*, but most of the Sanctified accept between seven and nineteen. At least a third of the Dark Apostles were women. Each was given a choice between death and damnation, and each chose to walk as Longinus did. The Dark Apostles founded an abbey, called the Black Abbey, as their base of operations for their efforts to spread the Gospel of Longinus across Europe.

Apocrypha

Significant gaps in *Torments* occur between the Crucifixion and the Embrace of the Monachus in which several centuries of Longinus' unlife is not chronicled. These gaps have led to considerable speculation as to exactly what Longinus had been doing during this period, and several unsubstantiated texts have appeared over the centuries purporting to fill in the missing years. These apocryphal texts feature Longinus engaging in improbable activities like warring against (or alternately making peace with) the Lupines, personally delivering the Holy Grail to Gaul, journeying to the Far East to study from the ancient vampires of Tibet, and even traveling to the New World to Embrace members of native tribes. None of these texts are considered canonical or even marginally persuasive by the mainstream Lancea Sanctum.

The Rule of Golgotha

The Rule contains laws and precepts intended to govern vampiric society and morality, to the extent that such a thing can ever truly govern the Damned. *The Rule* is the shortest of the five books, but also the most important to the covenant's beliefs, as Monachus expanded upon this book in his later work, the *Sanguineous Catechism*. *The Rule* is also the section of *The Testament of Longinus* most likely to be quoted by members of other covenants. In particular, certain members of the Invictus sometimes interpret sections of this book to support their "divine right" political theories.

The Sanguinaria

The Sanguinaria is a complicated and awkwardly written book, and many Sanctified theologians speculate that it was originally intended to be two separate books and then somewhat artlessly combined into a single text. Much of the book addresses the fates of some of the first Dark Apostles, who, after their training by Longinus and the Monachus, were sent out into the world as missionaries to preach the philosophy of the Lancea Sanctum to the rest of the Damned. The Dark Apostles rarely found willing listeners, and five of the Dark Apostles identified in the text were martyred and posthumously became known as the Black Saints. One of these martyrs was the Ventrue Icarius, whose childer went on to become the leaders of the Icarian Heresy, though that schism came much later and is not addressed within the text. Interspersed between the accounts of the various Dark Apostles and their ultimate fates are completely unrelated sections which appear to be philosophical treatises on the nature of vampirism and damnation, as well as proverbs and sayings attributed to Longinus and the Monachus.

The Book of Eschaton

Finally, *Eschaton* contains a number of prophecies spoken by Longinus to guide his descendants and prepare them for the judgment of God. Unfortunately, Longinus chose to mask his visions in cryptic verses that defy easy analysis, and *Eschaton* has produced more schisms than accurate predictions of historical events. However, many Sanctified scholars fervently point to specific passages of *Eschaton* to show that Longinus predicted everything from the rise of Charlemagne to the Protestant Reformation to the assassination of JFK. *Eschaton* is most important to the core body of Lancea Sanctum faith for its predictions regarding the ultimate fate of the Damned. While vampires, obviously, can be meet Final Death, they are deathless unless slain, and thus potentially able to endure until the Day of Judgment. The final chapters of *Eschaton* suggest that a vampire who fulfills the role for which God has chosen her and survives until the End of Days may seek absolution for all her sins. If her contrition is genuine, God will grant her absolution, thereby proving that His Infinite Grace is available to even the most corrupt and debased creatures. The vampire, now truly Sanctified, will ascend to Heaven as a reward for her acceptance of the burden of vampirism. The book cautions, however, that absolution will not be available to those who deny their vampiric natures. Those who believe that Humanity can be retained through personal willpower alone are guilty of the sin of Pride and will not be welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Sanguineous Catechism

The Sanguineous Catechism was purportedly written by the Monachus himself, apparently several centuries after *The Testament of Longinus*. The text clearly acknowledges that Longinus is no longer actively involved with the Black Abbey, but his final fate (whether torpor, Final Death or something else) is never explained. Consequently, the place of the Catechism in Sanctified theology has always been problematic. While the Monachus may have been the first childe of Longinus, he was not cursed directly by God nor was he visited by the Archangel Vahishtael. Indeed, many speculate that he wasn't even Longinus' true childe. As such, the Catechism, while profoundly influential to the Lancea Sanctum, is not generally considered to be divinely inspired, and while virtually all Sanctified Priests rely on it to some extent, many parts are routinely rewritten or abandoned according to local custom and personal beliefs.

The Catechism begins with a preamble containing the Monachal Creed, which sums up the Dark Faith, or at least the Faith as the Monachus saw it. After this preamble, the Catechism is broken up into 13 chapters referred to as "canons," each containing an extended explication of one aspect of vampiric existence. Some of the later sections, especially those pertaining to how vampirism should be adapted to monastic life, have not stood the test of time very well and have little relevance to modern Sanctified. The first nine, however, are relied upon almost verbatim to the present night even by factions that are profoundly non-Catholic and even non-Christian in outlook. Many of these canons are so integral to the Lancea Sanctum that a vampire who rejects them cannot truly be considered a member of the covenant.

"The First Canon, regarding the purpose of our damnation"

The Catechism's first chapter addresses the purpose of vampirism as a part of God's plan. In order to understand this purpose, a Sanctified must first accept the fundamental nature of the world, which exists solely as a prison to punish the descendants of Adam and Eve for the Fall. The Catechism accepts wholeheartedly the Catholic doctrine of Original Sin, which states that all mankind is stained with the sin of Adam and Eve and is incapable of being inherently "good" absent divine intervention. The First Mortals were expelled from Paradise for their sin, and thus, the world in which they and their descendants came to live must rightly be considered their "jail" — a place of pain and torment from which death is the only release. Continuing this analogy, vampires are, if not mankind's jailors, then at least trustees, mortals raised above their fellow men to guard over them and help maintain the prison that is the world.

Prior to a vampire's Embrace, she is no more or less Damned than any other mortal. The act of the Embrace, however, cuts the neonate off from God's Grace entirely, for such divine

intercession can only interfere with the vampire's duties: feeding on the kine and helping to make their world into the purgatory it was always meant to be. Vampires were created by God and set among the kine like wolves among the sheep, whose only hope is to place all of their faith in God. According to the Lancea Sanctum, this divine purpose is reflected in the fact that the Damned, for all their power, cannot feed on the truly devout. Exactly which hallmarks distinguish "the truly devout" remains controversial to this night — can the Kindred truly not feed upon them? Does she feel no thirst when confronted with them? Does she not see them at all? Hypotheses and apocryphal stories abound.

If one of the Damned truly seeks to enter the Kindgom of Heaven, then to get there, she must walk the path set for her by God. She must play the part of the vampire, one of the Damned, an undead predator of the human race. By accepting this nature, the vampire fulfills a divinely appointed role, even as Judas Iscariot, through the foulest of betrayals, performed a part without which the Passion could not have occurred. The vampire's purpose is to drive the kine to reject the material world in pursuit of the spiritual, for it is only through the intercession of God that mortals may live without fear of the Damned.

"The Second Canon, regarding the inalienable wisdom of the Masquerade"

Many vampires who accept God's commandment that the Damned prey upon humanity are nevertheless baffled by the necessity of doing so discreetly. If God truly created the Damned to rule over a Hell on Earth, then surely it would be easier for the vampires to do so openly by totally dominating the kine. The Second Canon answers this question. While the Damned are innately superior to the kine and are set over them by divine right, the vampires themselves must also guard against the sin of hubris. If the vampires openly set themselves up as lords of humanity, some of the Damned would inevitably place their own self-aggrandizement above their divine purpose, and the vampires' role in separating the wheat from the chaff would be frustrated.

To prevent that possibility, God placed weaknesses upon the vampires that make their discretion essential. Vampires have difficulty in siring new childer, thereby preventing them from achieving numerical superiority over the kine. Vampires function poorly during the day and suffer greatly from both fire and sunlight, two potent advantages for a mortal hunter aware of his quarry's nature. Most importantly, the vampire's true nature as a distorted corruption of humanity is plainly visible in his reflection, and while an astute and strong-willed vampire can usually prevent discovery by way of the Lost Visage, the wily hunter can still identify the vampire and catch him unawares if he realizes that one of the Damned is nearby.

All of these weaknesses were set in place by God, not so that Humanity could destroy the Damned, but so that the Damned would be forced to strike at Humanity from the shadows. To the Monachus, God's reason for this strategy was clear. Yes, vampires exist to punish the mortals for their sin, but if the

vampires ruled openly, then the mortals would hate and fear their vampiric overlords. Instead, God wishes the mortals to hate and fear the very world around them, a World of Darkness in which faith in God is the only shield against misery. Above all else, mortals hate and fear what they do not understand. They must never truly understand the Damned. They must know only that hunters lurk in the darkness, waiting to devour.

In practice, the Second Canon causes most Sanctified to elevate the Masquerade from a necessity for survival to the level of heavenly mandate. Sanctified who breach the Masquerade have sinned mightily, and are often shunned by their peers unless they confess their sins and submit to a punishment meted out by a Bishop or other spiritual authority. Often, such a punishment is in addition to (and usually in excess of) any punishments meted out by the local Prince, and in domains ruled by the Sanctified, members of rival covenants learn to prize the Masquerade as much as the local Archbishop, for they face the lash as well for any mistakes. Minor breaches are usually punished with, while more serious breaches often carry local traditional punishments that could make an Inquisitor blanch.

"The Third Canon, regarding the shameful necessity of the Embrace"

God, in His infinite wisdom, chose to give the Damned the power to spread their curse, but He placed limitations on their procreative powers. All vampires realize that the act of the Embrace diminishes some aspect of the self. The Third Canon claims that it does more, by actively consuming part of the sire's soul to enact the childe's damnation. All vampires are limited in how often they can sire and how many childer they can create over time. The Monachus reasoned from these facts that God did not intend for the Damned to be incapable of increasing their numbers, but simply that vampires must choose their childer wisely. Furthermore, a vampire could be counted upon to choose wisely only when she had achieved a degree of enlightenment and understanding of God's purpose for her. Naturally, this places most Sanctified in a recursively exclusive situation: Only a "wise" vampire is free to sire, but knowing that one is not ready to Embrace is the greatest sign of wisdom. In any case, while the Catechism views the Embrace as evil, it is also considered a necessary one. If the Lancea Sanctum never allowed its members to sire childer, then the covenant would surely become hopelessly outnumbered by the apostate vampires who held to no such proscription. Thus, the Embrace, instead of being abolished, is merely heavily regulated. The Catechism bluntly acknowledges the hypocrisy of this position, but argues that the moral blame for each Embrace falls squarely on the individual sire, rather than the vampiric society as a whole that allowed it.

Having established the Embrace as a necessary evil, the Third Canon places four limitations on the act. First, no Sanctified should ever sire outside the religious strictures of the domain in which he resides. Generally, this means that any Embrace must take place as part of a Creation Rite, however that rite is observed in the sire's domain. As a practical matter, this often gives figureheads of the Lancea Sanctum within each domain veto power over a local Sanctified's choice for an Embrace, since the Bishop or Archbishop can always refuse to perform the rite. On the other hand, in some domains, particularly those where the Lancea Sanctum is at a political disadvantage, the local bishop will grudgingly perform the Creation Rite if the sire has been given permission to sire by the local Prince. Naturally, Bishops have no *temporal* power to allow their parishioners to sire absent the Prince's permission, though saying that it never happens is more than a bit naïve. The Church has historically been a sanctuary in addition to its other roles, after all.

The second limitation comes into play before the Creation Rite can even begin. As Longinus gave the Monachus a choice between death and the Embrace, so must each sire allow his putative childe to choose damnation for herself. Prior to the Embrace, the childe must have all the relevant aspects of vampiric existence explained to her by a Sanctified (usually the prospective sire). Most often, this is a token gesture. In some domains, however, a Priest or other respected figure makes the effort. She is then given a choice: Either she accepts the Embrace or she will be killed. When the Monachus was given this option, he chose the Embrace, believing that the second option was tantamount to suicide and that he was damned either way. However, the Catechism itself attaches no stigma to either choice. Indeed, it acknowledges that for some individuals, particularly for moral persons who do not believe that they could maintain their humanity post-Embrace, death may actually be the correct moral choice. Thus, when a would-be sire chooses his childe, he must realize that he will be forced to slay her if she rejects the Embrace, and over the centuries, a number of mortals have done just that. In many domains, the Sanctified accord much status to those who choose death over the Embrace, and while their lives are not spared, the local bishop will often grant minor last requests, such as looking after the doomed mortal's family or ensuring that certain areas or persons are declared off-limits to the Kindred.

The third limitation comes from the nature of the Creation Rite itself. Regardless of the circumstances of the Embrace, both the Sanctified who has sired and his childe must participate in such a rite (and usually other local customs as well) before the childe will be considered a true member of the covenant, much as a mortal must be baptized to signify his acceptance of the Lord. The exact nature of the Creation Rite varies from domain to domain, but almost uniformly, it is extremely painful for the sire, who must purify himself before the Embrace. One common purification ceremony requires that both the sire and the still-mortal childe must be scourged with a whip a number of times equal to their respective ages. Of course, mortals typically will not survive a lashing at the hands of a vampire. Consequently, the sire often chooses to take the childe's lashes for himself and usually loses considerable face if he fails to do so. Other local purification ceremonies may require the sire to walk across hot coals to reach the childe; to allow himself to be crucified and left to hang for three nights prior to the Embrace; or, after draining the childe of blood, to feed the childe the first drops of vitae from one of the sire's eyes, which the sire must pluck out with his own hand. A

Sanctified who has Embraced outside the Creation Rites or over the childe's objections has offended one of the core precepts of the covenant and faces serious punishment if his sin is discovered, possibly including excommunication from the Lancea Sanctum. Ironically, the actual Embrace itself is rarely part of a Creation Rite. The Priest and sometimes the whole congregation are necessary for rituals of purification beforehand and rituals of acceptance afterward, but the actual Embrace is a stain on the sire's soul that no right-thinking Sanctified wishes to witness. Occasionally, some vampires will be asked to assist the sire just in case the childe frenzies after the Embrace, but this is considered an unpleasant afterthought.

The fourth limitation is a proscription of Embracing "the pure." The text does not define "pure," but this ambiguous term is usually thought to refer to two groups. First, the Damned should not seek to Embrace mortals of demonstrable divine favor, as if it were an easy thing to Embrace a mortal with the power to sear a vampire with the strength of his belief. As a practical matter, however, few mortals have the faith necessary to deter a vampire, and by definition, if it is possible to Embrace a particular mortal, then that mortal must not pure. All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God, after all, and except for the rare few who warrant divine protection, there is no difference between a sequestered, virginal nun and a serial rapist where the Embrace is concerned. More commonly, this limitation is interpreted to forbid the Embrace of those considered to be "without sin" by the church. In the Monachus's time, this typically means Catholic children who have not yet been through a Confirmation ceremony, but Protestant faiths also recognize that children below a certain "age of accountability" are not responsible for their sins and will automatically go to Heaven if they die. The Embrace of a child prior to this point damned the child at a time when he was still free from sin, metaphysically speaking, and was considered deeply immoral by the Monachus. In modern times, however, the exact age of accountability varies according to the mortal denomination, and in any case, the Lancea Sanctum generally discourages the Embrace of any child because of the potential breach of the Masquerade as much as for the child's perceived "purity" or notions of mortal cruelty. For similar reasons, the Third Canon also forbids the Embrace of the mentally handicapped or the insane.

"The Fourth Canon, regarding the abomination of the Amaranth"

Somewhat surprisingly, considering the horror with which diablerie is generally viewed by the Kindred community, the Catechism mainly sets forth only pragmatic objections to the act. According to the Monachus, diablerie is a sin because by consuming the soul of another vampire, the diablerist prevents the victim from either being judged by God or seeking absolution from the Returned Jesus Christ during the Second Coming. Strangely, though, most of his discussion of the act condemns it for its effect on the diablerist rather than the victim. When one commits diablerie, he degrades his own soul, thereby inhibiting his ability to function in a moral manner. He increases the potency of his blood, a benefit which would have come anyway within a short time (for vampires), but in exchange, he hastens his descent into torpor, a period of time possibly lasting for centuries during which he cannot fulfill his divine role.

In some places, the Fourth Canon even comes close to suggesting that diablerie would be morally acceptable if it were limited to vampires who were not Sanctified and carried no negative effects on the diablerist. Ultimately, however, the Monachus concludes that the Amaranth, on the whole, is a sin and a distraction from moral unlife, and that those who engage in it suffer from corrupted souls and should be put down for the benefit of the entire race. The Monachus does not advocate Final Death for the diablerist, however, though he does say that killing a diablerist will not weigh on the killer's soul. Instead, the Monachus asserts that diablerists should be placed permanently into torpor to ensure that they are preserved until the Day of Judgment, so that God Himself may decide their fate. One seaside domain provides an example of how this works in practice. There, convicted diablerists are drained of blood, tortured into frenzy, sealed into blocks of concrete, and finally dropped into the ocean to spend an eternity in darkness and rage while awaiting the Second Coming.

"The Fifth Canon, regarding the revelation of the Testament of Longinus"

The fifth chapter of the Catechism places upon the Lancea Sanctum the burden of spreading its teachings to all Kindred. Prior to the damnation of Longinus and his subsequent revelation of God's holy plan for all of the Damned, most vampires wandered the world as solitary beasts. While many did fulfill their purpose of testing the faith of the kine, it was more through circumstance than any comprehension of their role. Many others choose instead to set themselves up as masters over the kine, using the power of the Blood to lord over mortals and lead them away from piety. Even worse, many vampires actually hated their own undead condition and shamefully sought to maintain their *humanitas* by feeding only on animals or criminals. Such deluded Kindred occasionally even turned on their fellow Damned out of a naïve desire to protect the kine from their natural predators in violation of God's order.

To rectify this, *The Testament of Longinus* commands that the Lancea Sanctum pursue evangelism, asserting the proper role of the vampire to all who will listen, and, where necessary, bringing Final Death to the heretics and apostates who will not. In the earliest nights of the covenant, the Sanctum relied exclusively on persuasion to achieve its evangelical goals, as it lacked the raw power to force conversion. Over time, the covenant's numbers grew until its political significance could not be ignored by other Kindred, and by coincidence, both its religious precepts and attitude toward temporal power made the Lancea Sanctum quite compatible with the Invictus, its simultaneous ally and rival in the Middle Ages.

Tonight, centuries of experience in spreading the word of Longinus have made the covenant highly efficient at winning converts. In domains totally under the sway of the covenant,

Archbishops brazenly forbid the practice of any other faiths within the city, while requiring all vampires to participate in Sanctified rituals and ceremonies. In parishes attended by a Bishop but not totally dominated by the Sanctified, the Bishop subtly (or blatantly) favors Sanctified over non-Sanctified unless it is impossible to ignore a particular non-Sanctified's power. Members of other covenants quickly realize that their fortunes will improve greatly if they convert, or at least feign conversion. In cities ruled by another covenant, the Bishop may support the status quo if the ruler's policies are compatible with holy law (all the while seeking to swell the ranks of his supporters with new converts), or he may constantly strive to overthrow the existing authority if the dominant paradigm is impious or corrupt.

The covenant has many recruitment tools at its disposal. First and foremost is simply the belief structure of the covenant itself. For a member of the Lancea Sanctum, the Sanctified faith steels the vampire's soul against the strain of undead existence, and a Kindred will find that she can do many things in support of her faith that would shatter the Humanity of non-Sanctified. More pragmatically, membership in the covenant has many material advantages. In a Sanctified domain, political advancement is easier. Members of the Lancea Sanctum, as a rule, stick together more than many of the other covenants, especially those like the Invictus or the Ordo Dracul, which often stress individual achievement at the expense of fellow covenant members. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, membership in the Lancea Sanctum carries with it the right to participate in the sacraments, many of which involve the drinking of copious amounts of Vitae, and the covenant is adroit winning converts with ceremonies like the Gran Ballo, during which church leaders provide Vitae for members, eliminating their need for a hunt.

Finally, the Fifth Canon addresses the religious significance of *The Testament of Longinus* itself, stating that the wisdom contained within its five books is truly the word of Longinus, who stabbed the Savior's side. The chapter ends with the statement that the *Testament* is the inerrant word of God as delivered by His earthly agent, Longinus. As such, it is divinely inspired and, as with the Holy Bible, "let no man add to or take away from this Word." Ironically, this passage is more important to Sanctified theologians for what it implies about the Catechism than for what it says about the *Testament*. After all, nothing in the Catechism states that the Catechism itself is divinely inspired, and thus, the Monachus can be said to have implied consent to later readers amending the Catechism to fit their own beliefs so long as they recognize the inerrancy of the *Testament*. Whether the Monachus intended it or not, this passage of the Fifth Canon paved the way for numerous mortal faiths to later fit under the umbrella of the Lancea Sanctum's mandate.

"The Sixth Canon, regarding the efficaciousness of the sacred rites"

In this chapter, the Monachus discusses the various rites to be practiced by followers of the faith. Most of the specific rituals mentioned in this chapter are still practiced to the present night by Sanctified around the world, though many of the names are changed. Some of the rituals, however, are practiced only by followers of the Monachal Creed, while members of the other creeds practice rituals not contained in the Sixth Canon. This variation is in keeping with the spirit of the Sixth Canon, which states that the purpose of the holy sacraments is not to fulfill some talismanic repetition of ceremony to demonstrate the Sanctified's belief. No, the Lancea Sanctum leaves such paganism to the Circle of the Crone. Instead, the *Apostolica* and *Ecclesia* are purely symbolic opportunities for the Sanctified to join together, whether *en masse*, in coteries or individually to demonstrate their piety and devotion to their holy purpose.

"The Seventh Canon, regarding the miraculous arts of our Theban brethren"

The Seventh Canon discusses the history and role of Theban Sorcery within the covenant. The chapter's chief theological role is to refute those who suggest that Theban Sorcery is a kind of witchcraft comparable to the Acolytes' blasphemous art of Crúac. The Monachus expounds at length on the differences between the two, and particularly on the unholy effect that Crúac has on its practitioners, which demonstrates conclusively (to the Monachus, at least) that it is of unwholesome origin.

"The Eighth Canon, regarding our congress with the Canaille"

In this section, the Monachus discusses how a Sanctified should function within the mortal world. Aside from the need for the Masquerade, all Sanctified should be circumspect in their dealings with the kine, for it is not the wolf's way to lie down with the sheep. The kine are not friends, companions or lovers. Neither are they toys or puppets to be abused for the sake of entertainment or sport. They are food, and the survival of the Kindred race depends on the vitality of the herd. To that end, the Eighth Canon requires the Sanctified to walk a fine line in relations with the kine. A vampire who comes to truly care for a mortal as he would another of the Damned has failed in his purpose as defined by God. Concern for a ghoul is tolerated, as such a creature represents an investment of the regnant's time and blood, but a vampire who endangers himself for the benefit of a mortal borders on aberrant and should go henceforth to his confessor. On the other hand, for the Damned to flourish, the kine must do likewise, and the wise Sanctified will seek to make his domain one in which his herd can prosper and grow, even if they will take no pleasure from doing so.

In practice, the Sanctified should pursue policies that will increase the growth of cities and of mortal population. They should work to create feeding grounds within the city where the Damned may slake their thirst easily and without fear of discovery, but they must do so without making the kine so frightened that they flee the domain. Above all, however, a Sanctified must never forget that every mortal he meets is a potential vessel. Emotional attachment to any mortal is unhealthy and, to the Monachus's mind, irrational. Even the concern a farmer has for livestock is more than a Sanctified should have for the kine, for the farmer has a personal investment in raising the cow. The wolf owes the sheep nothing save for a quick death, for it is not in the wolf's nature to toy with his prey.

"The Ninth Canon, regarding the recognition of wisdom within our ranks"

In this, the last of the commonly accepted canons, the Monachus establishes the hierarchy to be followed by the Lancea Sanctum, or more accurately, the lack of any hierarchy. Within in any Sanctified parish, the Sanctified are bound by faith to follow the wisest of their number, "he who most perfectly manifests his Damnation." In theory, this means that within a parish, authority over the covenant is vested within the most powerful Sanctified present who can command the loyalty of his fellows. In practice, of course, it often translates into charisma, popularity or even demagogy. Thus, by design, the Lancea Sanctum has no centralized authority, and within any parish the Sanctified are free to pursue their own understanding of their vampiric condition, so long as they do not lapse into apostasy. Of course, detractors often complain that this passage opened the door for many of the heresies that have plagued the Lancea Sanctum throughout history by implying that local bishops could rewrite the Catechism to suit their personal whims. Supporters, in turn, point out that the Monachus's alternative was to set himself up as a universal figurehead, which would have tied the future of the covenant to his cycle of torpor and triggered a schism every time he awoke with altered memories. Worse, had the Monachus established a dogmatic view of the faith, it would have left the covenant dangerously ill-equipped to respond to changes in mortal religious practices such as the Reformation.

The Other Canons

The preceding nine canons are almost universally accepted by Sanctified, regardless of creed, although many of the details are wildly reinterpreted from parish to parish. The Lancea Sanctum as a whole places little emphasis on the remaining four canons (briefly discussed below), all of which address Lancea Sanctum theology from an extremely medieval and Catholic mindset. This isn't universal, however — in some domains, the old ways still thrive. As Europe, the cradle of the Lancea Sanctum, has grown from a region dominated by Catholicism to one that recognizes many different faiths, so has the Lancea Sanctum grown from a cloistered monastic lifestyle into a dynamic religion capable of incorporating the mortal beliefs of almost any vampire, in large part because of the Monachus's foresight in drafting the Ninth Canon, though it seems unlikely that he could have predicted all the ways in which the covenant's faith would grow.

The Tenth Canon discusses the theological implications of the vampire's thirst for Vitae. The chapter suggests that the act of drinking blood serves as a form of transubstantiation,

converting the blood taken from another into the vital energy that fuels the vampire. The Tenth Canon is still observed by the Monachal Creed, but has little relevance to the other creeds. Also, many of its assumptions about the nature of blood have been called into question by modern science.

The Eleventh Canon concerns itself with certain procedures for how a vampiric monastery should be operated without endangering the Masquerade. This chapter is completely irrelevant to modern Sanctified except for a tiny handful of monastic orders, primarily located in Europe, and a few bizarre communes that exist inexplicably away from the scrutiny of cities.

The Twelfth Canon expounds upon the nature of martyrdom for the Sanctified, as well as affirming the propriety of recognizing the sacrifice of the Lancea Sanctum's saints on their feast days. As with the Tenth Canon, this passage is observed almost exclusively by Monachal Sanctified, and except for a handful of important holy nights recognized mainly out of the desire for festive occasions, most of the other creeds reject any veneration of the saints as a vestige of the covenant's Catholic roots.

Finally, the Thirteenth Canon is simply subtitled "regarding Undeath," and is the most difficult part of the Catechism for readers to comprehend. The chapter, which is mystical in nature and seems almost out of place in the Catechism, concerns itself with the relationship between the Damned, who are neither living nor dead, and the final state of death that awaits all of God's creatures. Its elusive metaphysical conceptions flirt with paganism and address the meaning and means of achieving undeath. Tonight, such ideas are more commonly associated with the Ordo Dracul than the Lancea Sanctum, even though the former covenant did not even exist at the time the Catechism was written. The Thirteenth Canon is controversial even within the Monachal Creed, and some critics have actually raised the possibility that the Monachus wrote this last section after a bout of torpor, so different is it in tone from the rest of the work. Others posit that it truly belongs to the Apocrypha, and might not have been written by the Monachus at all. On the other hand, many Sanctified from different creeds have concluded that it is legitimate, and that, more importantly, it may hold the key to secret knowledge that could more fully explain the Requiem. Such scholars often devote themselves to searching for the lost Black Abbey in hopes that more writings hidden there may help them to unlock these mysteries.

Storyteller's Option: The Power of Belief

So how do they do it? How does any Sanctified maintain any semblance of Humanity while following a religion based on refusing to view any mortal in any way except for food? The answer is complicated. The struggle against the Beast is much harder for the Sanctified than nonbelievers. For example, if a Sanctified endangers the Masquerade, his faith demands that he do whatever he can to correct his mistake, even if it means killing dozens of witnesses, which is sure to tax his Humanity to the breaking point. On the other hand, the Catechism effectively makes it a sin for a Sanctified to exhibit wanton cruelty to mortals, who are to be considered food rather than toys. For most Sanctified, the struggle to retain Humanity is the same as it is for any vampire, except that the Sanctified must also try to avoid situations in which his sense of Humanity and his religious views come into conflict. For the most dedicated of Sanctified, however, the intensity of the believer's faith can actually bolster his sense of morality, allowing him to steel himself to perform inhumane actions without suffering degradation.

Over the course of the chronicle, situations will almost certainly arise in which a character's Humanity conflicts with his religious faith. At the Storyteller's discretion, if the Sanctified loses a dot of Humanity on a degeneration roll, the player may actually receive a two-dice bonus to be added to the subsequent Derangement roll. We reiterate: This happens only at the Storyteller's discretion, and certainly not all the time. It's completely inappropriate if the Sanctified in question is acting like a wanton monster. It is more appropriate if the degeneration related particularly to the vampiric condition, or as a direct result of the Kindred's faith. For example, a Sanctified who murders a mortal to keep a secret probably shouldn't receive any faith-based bonus, but one who killed a vessel in the throes of a feeding passion might.

However, while being a member of the Lancea Sanctum occasionally makes it somewhat easier for a Sanctified to pursue his religious beliefs without his Beast spiraling out of control, such intense beliefs do limit his freedom to act. Additionally, sometimes the Sanctified's dogmatic adherence to their notions of higher power skew their perceptions of the modern world. Storytellers, consider this downside if you choose to exercise the bonus dice offered by a character's strength of faith. If a Sanctified who has employed this bonus performs actions that violate the tenets of Humanity in a purely secular context, then he actually suffers a two-dice *penalty* to his Humanity roll to avoid a derangement in cases where such might apply. For example, if the character above exercised the two-dice bonus to avoid derangement after killing her vessel while feeding, she might suffer a two-dice penalty to avoid a derangement after Humanity loss when she learns that her haste in fleeing the site caused a car accident in which a driver was killed.

Storytellers, take note. This isn't intended to be a point-counterpoint affair. Don't feel the need to arbitrarily punish a character just because the bonus previously came into play. The intent here is to create a balanced rule that simulates an extremely focused religious outlook that applies to some aspects of the Requiem at the expense of others.

If you do choose to introduce this option into play, we encourage you to use all of the trappings

of the faith it's designed to represent. A character who employs the two-dice bonus probably prays with increased frequency or intensity to represent that bonus. A character who acquires a derangement in this matter should probably work with the Storyteller to color it in a suitably "religious" manner — perhaps a delusional obsession leads the character to believe she's a saint, or a character's manic depression is tied to his frequency of attending Mass, for example.

The Creeds

The Sanguineous Catechism was the first recapitulation of the teachings of Longinus, and even tonight, Sanctified are occasionally referred to as "Longinians" regardless of whether they follow the Monachus's original draft or not. Over the course of the last several centuries, however, the original draft of the Sanguineous Catechism has become increasingly associated with a traditionalist view of the Lancea Sanctum, which relies strongly on the theology, structure and trappings of the Catholic Church. Over time, changes in the pre-Embrace religious views of neonate Sanctified, particularly after the Reformation, lessened the sway that Catholicism held over the covenant. While all modern Sanctified pay at least some reverence to the Catechism, non-Catholic groups within the covenant usually have their interpretations of specific canons, and such sub-units of the covenant are usually called creeds or denominations.

The most prominent example of this flexible approach lies in the preamble. The second verse of the Monachal Creed identifies Jesus Christ as God's son "conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary to redeem Man from Sin through his death and resurrection." While this version of the Creed is by far the most common, Sanctified who were Muslim in life typically employ a modified version known as the Iblic Creed which identifies Jesus as "a holy prophet" who was actually a precursor to Mohammed. Similarly, the Jewish Sanctified of the Acharit Hayami denomination use the Dammitic Creed, which leaves out the second verse entirely and modifies the third to indicate that Longinus was cursed solely because of his own sinful nature. Finally, Sanctified of Protestant backgrounds, especially in the American South and Midwest, use a variety of homespun creeds that de-emphasize the role of the Virgin Mary in a conceptual rebuke of the covenant's Catholic origins. While there are possibly scores of distinct creeds around the world, the most prominent are listed below.

The Monachal Creed

By far the most widely followed creed, the Monachal Creed claims more than half of all Sanctified worldwide as adherents. This creed, which for centuries was the only creed, follows the Sanguineous Catechism in its original and most traditional form, and Monachal *ritae* are extremely similar to Catholic services in tone and regalia. Religious leaders are generally referred to as Priests, though Bishops, Archbishops and Cardinals also share many of the same responsibilities. In many parishes, rites are still observed in Latin. Common ritae include vampiric analogs to Catholic baptism services, confirmations, and confessional rites. The creed even includes the Last Rites, though they are usually performed not on the Sanctified but on prospective childer prior to the Embrace as the creation Rite. Regular services include a communion ceremony quite similar to that of the Catholic Church, though, naturally, these employ Vitae. Indeed, in a very real sense, many Monachal followers are "more Catholic" than the Catholic Church, since several interpretations of the body of canon predate the reforms of Vatican II.

The Monachal Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary to redeem Man from Sin through his death and resurrection.

I believe that Longinus, by piercing the Savior's side as he hung from the Cross, did reveal the divinity of Christ through fulfillment of the prophecies and that, while Longinus was rightly Damned for his blasphemy, his damnation was itself part of God's Holy Plan.

I believe that those so Damned are the agents of God's will, chosen to receive the Embrace that we may test the faithful and reveal the divinity within each of them.

I believe that for my sins I am damned to Hell and yet through damnation I may find my purpose in God's Holy Plan.

Sex, Love and Dogma

Ironically, the Lancea Sanctum is in many ways more progressive than the mortal religions it parallels. For example, Catholicism requires celibacy from its priests, bars women from any position of influence within the hierarchy, and opposes homosexuality. Generally, the Lancea Sanctum eschews such parochialism. In the covenant's sacred writings, female vampires are shown to be fully equal to male vampires in both devotion and raw power, and some of the Disciples are believed to have been female. Likewise, issues of sexuality have no place in the Lancea Sanctum, which cares nothing for how one of the Damned goes about seducing his or her vessels. However, while the Lancea Sanctum as a whole is not concerned with mortal gender and orientation issues, individual denominations (and in some cases, individual domains) may have specific teachings that affect their consideration. For example, while the Monachal Creed makes no prohibitions against female or homosexual Priests, or against sexual relations between Priests and mortals (for example, in the course of seducing a vessel), it forbids Priests from engaging in

romantic relationships with other vampires. Some of the other creeds have their own unique takes on sexuality, which will be addressed below. As a rule, though, the Sanctified consider themselves to be Damned, and the idea that someone might be "even more Damned" for being gay, or indeed for violating any sexual taboo, strikes most of them as overwrought.

The Westminster Creed

The Westminster Creed was written in the eighteenth century by a British member of the Lancea Sanctum named Charles Emerson as a response to the Protestant Reformation. Anglican in life, Emerson fully accepted the Sanguineous Catechism, but wished to strip Sanctified faith of the oppressive ritualism that he believed made it difficult to win new converts in non-Catholic regions. The Westminster Creed eliminates the last four canons, significantly rewrites the Sixth Canon, and makes minor changes to the rest of the text to eliminate overt signs of Catholicism, but in principle accepts all of the major tenets of the covenant's faith. This includes much of the hierarchy — Bishops and Archbishops still rule in Westminster domains, though Priests are often referred to as Reverends or Vicars. In practice, the revision resulted in only two major changes. First, Priests are not forbidden to form long-term relationships with other vampires, though such relationships remain rare due to the vampiric condition. Second, the *Apostolica* and *Ecclesia* were substantially rewritten to eliminate much of what Emerson called "excessive ceremonialism." Most of the traditional rites remain, but the pomp and circumstance of the Monachal rites are replaced with a more staid and somewhat passionless approach, reminiscent of a more "vernacular" Presbyterian or Methodist service. Westminster services almost never run over an hour in length.

A secondary effect of Emerson's changes is that it makes the Sanctified faith into a religion that other covenants could appreciate as an addition to their own sectarian beliefs (with the usual, expected exception of the Circle of the Crone, though the exclusion is often mutual). As such, services for adherents to the Westminster Creed are usually open to members of other covenants, though participation in the rites, and of course, tutelage in Theban Sorcery, is reserved exclusively for those who convert fully to the Lancea Sanctum. While Emerson's hopes that his creed could lead to a merging of the Invictus with the Lancea Sanctum in his home domain have not yet come to fruition, the creed has become popular in Great Britain (and many of its former possessions) and the Eastern United States.

However, the Westminster Creed's coziness with outside covenants has led to more than one vampire accusing the creed of fomenting apostasy. Such critics argue that the Westminster Creed merely promotes a form of "cafeteria vampirism," in which worshipers become more concerned with gaining power in temporal, cross-covenant factions than in spreading *The Testament*

of Longinus. Indeed, the Westminster Creed itself argues that the Sanctified should be content to leave worldly affairs to other Kindred if they are capable of governing in a moral manner. The duty of the Sanctified in such a domain is to serve as the conscience of the Prince. Detractors ask in reply: "Who will serve as the conscience of the Priest?"

The Tollison Creed

A distinctly American phenomenon, the Tollison Creed was drafted in the 1920s by Virgil "Junior" Tollison, a former Pentecostal minister from the American South Embraced into the Requiem. While Tollison adapted readily enough to vampirism and the faith of the Lancea Sanctum, he rejected both the lassitude of the Westminster Creed and the oppressive ritualism of the Monachal Creed, in part out of theology and in part because of personal bigotries against Catholicism dating back to his mortal life. Instead, Tollison began preaching his own brand of Sanctified faith, one influenced by his Pentecostal heritage.

While Protestantism claims that the Bible is the sole source of religious insight, Pentecostalism claims that individuals may gain personal insight outside the Bible by being "filled with the Holy Spirit." Some denominations go even further, claiming that one filled with the Holy Spirit can perform miracles such as faith healing, speaking in tongues, and snake handling or other dangerous feats. Tollison reasoned that if God sent the Holy Spirit to aid the Apostles of Christ in spreading the Gospel, then he must have sent a similar spirit to guide the Damned in their mission, perhaps even the angel Vahishtael.

Initially, the rest of the Lancea Sanctum didn't even notice Tollison's small cult, which became known as the "White Sunday Movement" because of the white robes the members wore during services. By the time the Kindred as a whole did become aware of the young movement, parishes of the American Lancea Sanctum were shocked to realize just how quickly it had grown. By 1970, the White Sunday Movement had spread across the American South and Midwest, and the Lancea Sanctum presence in several major cities in the Southwest was primarily made up of "White Robes." This phenomenal growth was chiefly a result of the denomination's inclusiveness. In Tollison's view, the Monachals placed too much emphasis on tradition and academic understanding of the sacred texts, while the Westminsters were simply apostate and venal, and both creeds were hopelessly compromised by their historical connections with imperious dogma. Consequently, he specifically targeted for conversion those vampires who were less educated, less wealthy, and less inclined to respect traditional vampiric authority figures. Tonight, certain domains acknowledge (grudgingly or wholeheartedly) the Tollison Creed as an acceptable denomination of the Lancea Sanctum, though conservative Bishops and Archbishops often still harass White Robes who enter their domains.

As for the Tollison Creed itself, the denomination eschews ritualism even more than the Westminster Creed. In fact, only two *ritae* are unique to the denomination. The first is Rite of the Serpent, which typically involves restraining a mortal, injecting her with snake venom, and feeding on her as she goes into shock in order to trigger religious visions. The second ritual is known as the Fire Dance, and involves the believers, ecstatic in religious frenzy, leaping through a bonfire to demonstrate their belief that God protects them and will not let them be harmed until their appointed time. (Needless to say, individual believers often find that their faith was not as strong as they had hoped.) Instead of *ritae*, the Creed focuses on how members should act in their nightly Requiem, primarily relying on *The Testament of Longinus* as viewed through the lens of Tollison's conservative interpretation.

Believers are expected to conduct themselves and dress simply, as overt pageantry is a distraction from one's holy purpose. Longinus' injunction to feed only on the pure is interpreted to regulate feeding fairly restrictively, and in keeping with the Creed's arch views regarding sexuality. For example, believers must never feed on a member of the opposite sex, from someone who is intoxicated or on recreational drugs at the time, from a child, or from a married mortal seduced by the vampire. As a practical matter, these restrictions make individual hunting more difficult for believers, which causes them to rely more heavily on group feeding activities. Some critics point out that the increased reliance on fellow believers for Vitae also tends to give the Movement many of the aspects of a cult, though believers vigorously reject this slur on their faith. The denomination also rejects the hierarchy used by the mainstream Lancea Sanctum, as well as the clergy-laity dichotomy. Instead, all members of a White Robe congregation are referred to as Brother or Sister, regardless of rank, and those few who achieve the position of Archbishop usually refer to themselves by the more secular title of Prince, instead. Finally, while the Tollison Creed says nothing derogatory about women, homosexuals or minorities, many members of those groups complain of feeling uncomfortable around White Robes, who are primarily straight, white men, usually of conservative, lower-class backgrounds.

Other Major Creeds

The Monachal, Westminster and Tollison Creeds collectively dominate the Lancea Sanctum in both Europe and the United States. However, a number of smaller creeds have made an impact on the covenant and remain vital denominations even tonight. The Iblic Creed, drafted in 1420 during the *Reconquista*, governs the faith of the sect known as the Banu Shaitan, and seeks to reconcile traditional Lancea Sanctum dogma with with Islamic theology. Individual Ibn-Shaitan must follow an inverted interpretation of the Five Pillars of Islam, which claims that Allah chose all vampires to challenge the faith of mortal man. The denomination as a whole finally made peace with its Christianized rivals in the nineteenth century, and was fully, if reluctantly, accepted into the greater Lancea Sanctum in most domains where it existed. Understandably, most members remain in Islamic-controlled areas and have a minimal presence in Europe and the Americas. This is beginning to change, however, as Muslims continue to develop significant populations in the Western

world. These are exceptions, though, and most of the denomination can be found in predominantly Islamic nations from North Africa and the Middle East to as far as Indonesia and the Philippines.

The Dammitic Creed, whose name is derived from the joining of two Hebrew characters that mean "life" and "death" and symbolizes the vampire's existence between the two states, was founded in the 18th century. The Dammitic Creed rejects sweeping portions of *The Testament of Longinus*, including those portions pertaining to the divinity of Christ, and the faction might have been condemned as a heresy if the Lancea Sanctum itself had a formal or centralized body politic. Indeed, in exceptionally conservative parishes, the Dammitic Creed is heresy in all practical applications. On the other hand, followers of the Dammitic Creed include some of the best Theban Sorcerers in the world, and they are often willing to teach their secrets to members of other denominations in exchange for favors or consideration. The theological focus of the group lies in studying both numerologies and the *Book of Eschaton* for clues to future events, and those truly familiar with the sect claim that it has very strong apocalyptic beliefs. Likely the smallest of the major denominations, the radical Acharit Hayami (Hebrew for "The End of Days") is a Judaic subfaction of Dammitic Sanctified that limits its membership to male Jewish vampires who were both Hasidic Jews and students of the Kabbalah in life. As a result of this extreme selectivity, the sect has few members worldwide, most of whom probably reside in the modern borders of the Holy Land. In fact, the Acharit Hayami is not necessarily opposed to the Apocalypse; its members just want to make sure that it happens in a time and manner of their choosing.

Finally, the Exotheists represent a highly modern denomination, though they would almost certainly object to the words "denomination," "creed," or even "religion." According to the Exotheist Manifesto, the earliest incarnation of which is suspected to have been written in Paris in 1924 by an unidentified Kindred using the pseudonym "Maladeus," vampires err in attempting to follow religious strictures of any sort. *The Testament of Longinus*, to the Exotheists, is not a religious tract, but a philosophical treatise, and by using it as a roadmap for applying mortal superstition to vampiric existence, the Lancea Sanctum brings the world's ultimate predator down to the level of his food. That is not to say that Exotheism is the vampiric equivalent to atheism or agnosticism; many Exotheists are quite devout, or at least were prior to the Embrace. The point of the Creed is that vampires, if they wish to establish a religion based on the writings of Longinus and the Monachus, should create one with its own unique rituals instead of bastardizations of Catholic or other services. Thus, all Exotheists establish their own unique rites, and even when an Exotheist "assembly" performs sacrament, it is usually unrecognizable to members of more traditional Creeds. These unique *ritae* also vary from parish to parish, and in practice, Exothesism is often less an organized Creed than a catch-all term for all Sanctified who invent their own dogma from scratch. To the extent that the Exotheists hold any political power as a Creed, it is often within domains dominated by the Carthians, who sometimes view Exotheists as the religious wing of their own movement. Needless to say, Exotheists frequently face opposition from Inquisitors in traditional domains, charged with everything from heterodoxy to actual heresy.

Heresies

Despite its reputation among the other covenants as conservative and reactionary, the Lancea Sanctum is remarkably tolerant of divergent approaches to celebrating the truths of its religion. This patience is not infinite, however; there are many views on *The Testament of Longinus* that the Sanctified will not countenance. Generally, a creed crosses the line into heresy when it rejects some core principle of Sanctified faith, when it deifies some figure from the local covenant's history or folklore (including Longinus, who despite his impact on vampiric culture is no more intrinsically important than any other vampire), or when it challenges the infallibility of *The Testament of Longinus* in a particularly offensive way. The history of the Lancea Sanctum is replete with heretical movements that have later fallen by the wayside… or been pushed aside by local covenant orthodoxy.

Below are two examples of heresies that challenge the Sanctified tonight, and the history chapter includes information on another heresy upheld by the Icarians (see p. 38). Storytellers, use these or ignore them as you wish. They are included for the sake of showing how an internal schism can significantly fracture the Lancea Sanctum. We make an effort to give these heresies a universal applicability — we provide as few geographical details and exclusive situations as possible that might prevent them from applying to your chronicle, should you choose to include them.

The Livian Heresy

Perhaps the most persistent and widespread of all Sanctified heresies still extant, the Livian heresy takes its name from Livia, who is identified in *Malediction* as a Roman harlot who gave birth to Longinus. Supporters of the heresy point out that, while Longinus did not feel the need to give his own birth name in *Malediction*, he did feel compelled to identify his mother and talk about her at some length. Livians also point to interpretations of the passages surrounding Longinus' conception and birth (interpretations rejected by mainstream Sanctified) that suggest that it may have been contemporaneous with that of Jesus. In fact, while Livia quite clearly was not a virgin when she conceived Longinus, one verse of *Malediction* can be interpreted to mean that Longinus did not have a mortal father. According to the Livians, all of this means that the mother of Longinus is much more important to the creation of the Lancea Sanctum than is commonly believed. Such heretics argue that Livia actually performed a role similar to that of Mary, and that both Christianity and the Lancea Sanctum rely on the simultaneous existence of both Madonna and Whore, each giving birth to sons who would meet at the Cross in fulfillment of prophecy. As such, according to followers of the Heresy, Livia deserves veneration as the "Mother of Vampires."

Indeed, the most pernicious adherents of the Livian heresy go beyond merely elevating Livia above Longinus to suggesting that both Livia and Mary are aspects of a single archetypal goddess figure. Some such heretics go so far as to attempt to reconcile the beliefs of the Lancea Sanctum with certain tenets of the Circle of the Crone. Thus, the Livian heresy is actually a double heresy: Faithful members of both covenants look on Livians with horror for their efforts to combine "the true faith" with a "false religion." As if this were not bad enough, Livians who formerly followed the Crone and Livians who formerly followed Longinus occasionally teach each other Crúac and Theban Sorcery, revealing the most important mysteries of each religion to members of its chief spiritual rival. One of the few things that can induce Sanctified and Acolytes to put aside their differences is the possibility of Livian heretics active in their domain.

The Crimson Cavalry

A recent phenomenon within the Lancea Sanctum, the Crimson Cavalry combines Sanctified theology with survivalist mentality. It may yet add domestic terrorism to the mixture, and thus challenge the Masquerade as nothing has in centuries. In the 1950s, a cell of Sanctified discovered the Christian Identity Movement: a racist, apocalyptic offshoot of fundamentalist Christianity that claims that Aryan-descended whites represent God's true "chosen people," who will fight for Him against the "lesser races" during Armageddon. Entranced by the implications of Christian Identity, these Kindred quickly adapted a skewed understanding of *The Testament of Longinus* to this mortal theology, concocting a witch's brew of racism, anti-Semitism and radical Tollisonism. According to the founding members of the heresy, only whites were worthy of the Embrace, which was not a curse on the vampire himself, but on the "mud people" upon whom vampires were meant to prey.

The group styled itself the Crimson Cavalry, an oblique reference to the Book of Revelations: "And there went out another horse that was red; and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword." The cult's dogma, distilled from a canon of unwritten sermons, has four points. First, the End Times are approaching, and the "True Church of Longinus," which consists of white, Christian Kindred, must prepare for the coming Holy War against "mud people," which includes non-whites, non-Christians, gays and liberals among the kine, as well as a variety of disfavored clans and bloodlines among the Kindred. Second, human suffering must be maximized, which is the purpose for which God created the Kindred. To that end, all political and social orders must be brought down and replaced with total anarchy. Third, the practice of Theban Sorcery must be stamped out, since it is merely a form of "papist witchcraft" that distracts the Faithful from their holy work. Finally, the prophecies contained in the *Book of Eschaton* must be fulfilled, since, according to the heretics, they are not predictions of future events leading up to the End Times, but rather a road map for things that must be made to happen before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The Crimson Cavalry is a highly secretive organization, even within the context of Kindred and Lancea Sanctum society. Many of the current members are descended directly from the heresy's founders. Thus far, the Cavalry's focus has been on training for its Holy War rather than actually going out to fight it. The vampiric membership is broken up into cells spread across the American Midwest. These insular cells use mortal hate groups and survivalist groups as fronts, directing them to perform hate crimes in an effort to heighten tensions among the kine without actually drawing attention directly to themselves. The vampiric members also work to undermine domains and parishes held by other factions, including mainstream Lancea Sanctum domains, so that they can identify and eventually assassinate Theban Sorcery masters in preparation for the final conflict. Leaders of this heresy typically believe that their numbers are not great enough yet for open warfare against the "mongrels," and more importantly, that the signs have not yet been fulfilled, but one night, the trumpet will sound and the last seal will be broken, at least in his eyes. On that day, the Crimson Cavalry will set the world to burn.

Titles and Offices

The Lancea Sanctum takes its hierarchy very seriously. This is no loose confederation of roles and positions, no haphazard definition of duties. The great chain of being inside the covenant is hard and fast, chiseled in stone and engraved in iron. When a vampire is elected to a new position and thus Anointed, she is expected to maximize her potential within that role. In theory, nothing comes before the covenant: not personal politics, not the desires of the coterie, and certainly not individual opinion. The covenant — and one's position in it — is paramount to all other things. In reality, however, this doesn't always hold true. Kindred may pretend at devotion, but secretly hope that a position in the covenant will grant them temporal power. Some Kindred play at this for decades, but other, more pious Sanctified often catch the scent of their insincerity. In the holy order of the Dark Prophet, such insincerity is met with righteous and bloody retribution.

Despite the rigid hierarchy, the covenant doesn't close any doors on a vampire with regard to her upward mobility. This isn't a monarchy — vampires are not Embraced into a role, they must work their fingers to the rotten bone to achieve even the smallest rank. Diligence, commitment, and penitence are inroads to an official position with the covenant (and a healthy sense of predatory competition doesn't hurt a Kindred's chances, either).

Of course, such commitment can take a vampire only so far. A sense of propriety remains within the covenant, one predominantly based upon age. It does little for the health of the covenant when an ancilla easily surpasses an elder in position, even if she deserved the promotion. The same goes for a neonate exceeding the position of an ancilla. Such a motion may outstrip an older vampire of her perceived dignity and due, and from such frustration the seeds of dissention are born. The last thing the covenant needs is an enraged elder crossing the field of battle and joining the ranks of the Invictus, or worse, the occult Ordo Dracul. This isn't to say a younger vampire will never surpass those older than him, but it's certainly the exception to the rule.

The Lancea Sanctum, much like the Catholic Church, divides its members into two subgroups: the laity and the clergy. The vast majority of the covenant's members are lay members who believe in the fundamental precepts of Sanctified theology, but who do not immerse themselves in the deeper mysteries of the religion, do not deny their base urges with self-imposed vows, and, most importantly, do not hold the true reins of power within the Lancea Sanctum. Occasionally, some lay members are able to exert considerable control over local clergy. Generally, however, this occurs simply because the lay member has so much personal power that her opinions simply cannot be ignored. True power within the covenant belongs to the clergy, whose members have taken special religious orders to show their devotion to the covenant, as well as intensive training in Theban Sorcery or other elements of Sanctified mysticism. Naturally, the religious vows undertaken by newly ordained Priests also contain vows of loyalty to their superiors within the Lancea Sanctum.

We denote individual titles with a series of dots. These dots represent the minimum number of Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) Merit dots a Kindred must have to hold the title in question. In doing this, we seek not to suggest that a character who has this many dots in Covenant Status automatically gains the title, but rather that the position is of such esteem that none without that esteem could hope to hold it reliably in the estimation of the covenant's local members. Storytellers, you have a bit of leeway with this — Status remains a tricky thing because of its social implications that just can't be represented by game systems well. It's quite possible to have a character with four dots of Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) but no title at all. It's also possible that a Lancea Sanctum character in a domain where she's the only Sanctified proclaims herself Bishop — and who's going to refute her? As always, the Storyteller is the final arbiter, and may need to look at Status with an eye for how he wants it to affect his stories. See p. 102 of **Vampire: The Requiem** for more information on how to use Status in stories.

Functions of the Hierarchy

Outsiders often believe that the Lancea Sanctum recognizes four ranks: Priest, Bishop, Archbishop, and Cardinal. This is inaccurate. Every member of the covenant who has taken vows is considered a Priest, which is merely a Sanctified authorized to conduct sacraments. A Bishop is a Priest who has been recognized by his covenant as the most respected and powerful Priest within a particular domain. An Archbishop is a Bishop who exercises penultimate influence over all the Kindred of a domain, regardless of covenant, in a manner comparable to a Prince.

While all of these titles are traditionally associated with the Catholic Church and, by extension, the Monachal view of the Lancea Sanctum, the other creeds use them as well,

both out of a sense of tradition and a desire to show solidarity across creed lines in the face of opposition from other covenants. There are exceptions, however — members of the Ibn-Shaitan sect, for example, typically refer to Priests as imams, while Bishops and Archbishops are generally called ayatollahs or caliphs depending on the history of the region. Likewise, members of the Dammitic Creed often refer to a Priest as rebbe. While individual rebbes may hold special status based on age and wisdom, there are no special terms for a higher-ranking member. A few Protestant parishes eschew titles entirely, referring to all members as Brother or Sister regardless of status. Such parishes also reject the clergy-laity dichotomy, though those who actively preach the Gospel of Longinus are accorded more status than those who merely worship.

While the hierarchy of the Lancea Sanctum is much more rigid than the other covenants, it is far more fluid than its mortal counterpart. Mortal clerics attend seminary, become ordained, and are then directed to serve in a particular location by the church hierarchy, whether as a local parish priest, as a missionary, or in some other capacity. Mortal priests then rise through the ranks, largely on the basis of skill, political acumen and connections, to become bishops and perhaps even a higher rank. In all cases, however, the church hierarchy governs advancement. A Sanctified cleric, on the other hand, begins his religious Requiem largely self-taught, usually serving in some lay capacity, before being ordained by a wholly local Bishop or Archbishop. The most powerful Priest in a city may claim the position of Bishop for himself, though the covenant as a whole will likely not recognize him as a Bishop until he is Anointed in a ceremony presided over by a Bishop or at least a fellow Priest. Similarly, a Bishop who claims praxis over all the Kindred of the domain may declare himself an Archbishop, but Sanctified of the parish-domain will not recognize his status unless he is Anointed by another Bishop or Priest whose own status is able to confer such esteem (or more commonly, by an agent of a previously recognized Archbishop or Prince). In any case, recognition of an Archbishop's status is typically a formality; the local members of the Lancea Sanctum will not needlessly antagonize a powerful Kindred of their own covenant who has just claimed a domain in the lancea Sanctum's name out of petty or arbitrary reasons. The key there is "needlessly" — few Sanctified care for aggrandized would-be tyrants, even among their own kind.

Vestments of the Lancea Sanctum

The Lancea Sanctum is a heavily ritualized covenant. Its reliance on ceremony and formality are unparalleled in the Danse Macabre. Some of that formality has weakened in modern nights, but still remains strong in many cities. Traditional Sanctified leaders make use of certain sacramental clothing, or vestments. These vestments vary by domain, though there is an "accepted set" of ritual clothing, the color varying by Anointed position. The liturgical colors of the covenant are red, blue, violet, and black. Inquisitors wear black, Priests wear blue and black, Bishops wear black and violet, Archbishops wear red and black, and Cardinals wear only red.

Most vestments are worn only during *Apostolica*. The primary vestments (though individual Sanctified favor many others) are used throughout the covenant. First is the *kethonet*, a simple white linen tunic worn by all officiates in the covenant. Next comes the *chasuble*, a square piece of cloth with a hole cut for the head, usually bearing a single color shadowed with brocade. Over that goes the *birretum*, a rough dark cloak (usually red or black) with a deep hood. A *sestace* — a band of silk over a yard long — is wrapped around one of the forearms during the ritual, used to wipe blood from mouth and cup. Finally, many (though not all) ritual leaders wear a *ritus personae*, a mask (often made of stone, porcelain, or even glass) some of which look like the plague masks of the Middle Ages.

In addition to such vestments, a Priest may be identified by a signet ring with which he is sometimes presented, particularly in affluent parishes, during his Anointing. Traditionally, Anointed Priests receive a ring set with an onyx, Bishops receive one with an emerald, and Archbishops receive one with a sapphire. Cardinals wear rings set with large rubies.

Archbishop (••••+)

Within the ranks of the Sanctified, the Archbishop is arguably the most important figure. While technically inferior to a Cardinal, it's crucial to remember that Cardinals (see below) are also exceedingly rare. Hence, the authority of the Archbishop is the most common and enforceable in a given domain. Note also that not every domain has an Archbishop — in cities where a single Sanctified Kindred claims the office and responsibilities of Prince, he typically takes the title of Archbishop instead of its more secular counterpart.

Archbishops are responsible for the covenant's movement within a city. An Archbishop is the foremost spiritual counselor in a domain, and his responsibility is practically endless. His principal duty is monitoring the offices beneath him and the Traditions, stamping out weakness and inefficiency while rewarding suitable and effective service. Any tasks that need to be done are delegated to the council of Bishops beneath him. Through the Bishops, he exerts his vision of apostolic authority — determining which *ritae* are conducted and when, deciding which heretics need to be subdued, choosing Sanctified for appropriate promotion within the ranks. An Archbishop must have his eyes on both the "big picture" of a domain and the minutiae within that domain (which is often referred to as a parish almost interchangeably). If the Traditions aren't being followed, the Archbishop determines the course of action to ensure that transgressors are punished. If another covenant is monopolizing city resources and attempting to undermine the concerns of the Sanctified, the Archbishop works with his covenant to deal with the insurgency and take back the covenant's righteous spoils. If a Bishop is putting her needs before the needs of the Lancea Sanctum, then the Archbishop finds out how best to change her way of thinking — or which auspicious Priest is looking for a blood-soaked promotion.

Many Archbishops are elders, in whatever context that takes for a given domain, but several ancillae exist in the position.

In a rare few cases, an Archbishop of a city takes direction from the Cardinal of a given region, but Cardinals are few, and infrequently backed by any mandate that an Archbishop may not ignore, given the decentralized nature of the covenant, so the majority of Archbishops act upon their own chosen authority.

When an Archbishop claims praxis over a domain, he usually appoints a subordinate of his own to act as Bishop and oversee the religious affairs of the domain's Sanctified population. For most Archbishops, this is merely a formal recognition of other Bishops who have already been acknowledged with that title, though it's not unheard of for a new Archbishop to "stock the pond" with those sympathetic to his causes. Certainly, domains have fractured shortly after a new Archbishop's Anointing if that Archbishop proves to be a loose canon or violates the sense of entitlement powerful extant Bishops might have.

Few Archbishops are willing to get their hands dirty and perform menial tasks for the covenant (such as performing minor *ritae* or gauging the devotion of the local coteries), but some comport themselves accordingly in an effort to see the covenant's operation from the ground up. Usually such "hands-on" Archbishops are overly concerned (occasionally to the point of madness) with the spiritual sanctity of a city's Kindred. If the Lancea Sanctum has enough adherents in the domain, or if the Archbishop wishes to keep potential rivals preoccupied, he might appoint multiple Bishops and divide parishes among them in much the same way a more secular Prince might divide his city into tenurial domains among Regents (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 35). Priests might then be appointed directly by the Archbishop or by an individual Bishop subject to the Archbishop's veto. Alternately, the Archbishop might also choose not to appoint a Bishop, opting instead to leave the ministration of his domain's religious needs to one or more Priests. Ultimately, the Sanctified hierarchy within any parish-domain is determined by the political needs of the most powerful Lancea Sanctum members within it, just as the political hierarchy of any domain is established according to the whims of its rulers regardless of covenant.

Bishop (•••+)

While an Archbishop tends to be the central authority in a given city, the Bishops really have a greater level of personal power. While the Archbishop may be responsible for the overarching scheme of the covenant in a domain, this duty more commonly falls to the Bishop (due to the relative rarity of Archbishops), who also deals directly with the Priests and those participating in the *ritae*. Bishops, responsible for the spiritual strength of the covenant, spend time at street level far more than any Archbishop. A Bishop is the frontispiece — the true face — of Sanctified authority. Indeed, Bishops are the Sanctified who make and carry out critical decisions for the covenant. Moreover, when rituals are held, especially the important *Apostolica*, a Bishop is the arbiter of such ceremonies, shepherding the congregation through the sacred rites of the Lancea Sanctum.

The number of Bishops in a city sometimes depends on the size of that city. Most cities warrant only a single Bishop, where large congregations of Sanctified see perhaps five (usually operating beneath an Archbishop). Generally speaking, the number of Bishops varies between one and three, with one being the most typical.

Numerous Bishops in a single domain under an Archbishop sit in council (called a Synod) and advise the Archbishop on matters that, in their minds, require attention. They have no direct power over the Archbishop — their words of advice are unenforceable. Some Bishops, however, manage a degree of leverage over their superior if they can earn the ear of the Cardinal or uncover something in the Archbishop's past worthy of blackmail. A wise Archbishop pays attention to what the Synod tells him: Being closer to the Priests and local Sanctified, the Bishops see where the weaknesses in the covenant lie. They know whose faith is waning, what enemies wait just outside the gates, and what political machinations erode the covenant's foundation.

Much of this presupposes that the Bishops consistently agree, which they do not — and that's something that a shrewd Archbishop strives for, not against. On the practical side, it's important to have Bishops of varying strengths to complement one another's weaknesses. One Bishop may be a sharp-tongued politico, another may be a vigilant military hawk, and yet another could be a sanctimonious spiritual leader. It's rare to find one Bishop with all those supposed qualities, and so several Bishops are chosen whose assets cover the spectrum. An Archbishop has a secondary, and less publicized reason to have a Synod of disparate Bishops, as well. If all Bishops in a city are cut from the same cloth, they are likely to agree on more issues than not. Agreeable Bishops make a unified force. Such a unified force can damage an Archbishop's reputation, undermining his authority from within. The Bishops in this way can collect aggregate power over their superior by virtue of the Archbishop's general ignorance. The Bishops are his connection to the vampire *polis*. Without them, he is lost. Hence, creating some dissention among the *Synod* actually helps the Archbishop. Not only does it create an atmosphere of competing ideas, but it also guarantees that the decisions of the Synod do not overpower those of the Archbishop.

Further, not every Synod answers to a single Archbishop. In those domains that have enough Sanctified to warrant a Synod, it may well be that no Archbishop exists. A member of another covenant may well have claimed the city's praxis, or the Synod may serve the role of the domain's ultimate authority. In these cases, one or more of the standing Bishops may have their hearts set on claiming the domain as an Archbishopric, but by no means does the existence of multiple Bishops guarantee the presence of an Archbishop.

Most Bishops are ancillae or elders, again based upon the given domain's application of those titles. They are directly responsible for the Priests of a city, and are almost certainly Anointed (which becomes more likely based on their proximity to the local covenant's top tiers of hierarchy).

Cardinal (•••••+)

A Cardinal is responsible for the affairs of the Lancea Sanctum in certain very large domains, but the problem is, not every domain has a Cardinal. In fact, the position of Cardinal is something of an outdated curiosity — while technically a proper title, the role is an amalgamation of the two roles beneath it, Bishop and Archbishop. A particularly ambitious (and potentially obsessive or possessive) Archbishop that decides her grip isn't strong enough on the flock may opt to take over the role of one of her Bishops, as well. That Archbishop not only oversees the citywide goings-on, but also handles more minute details like leading *ritae* and training Priests. If the Archbishop can prove her ability to handle such a momentous act of plate-spinning and political juggling, then she may be Anointed to the role of Cardinal. (Provided, of course, that the domain has an appropriate vacancy. If no such vacancy exists, she'll either be forced to wait for one, or be content to handle double responsibility for half the reward.)

On top of her responsibilities as Archbishop and Bishop of a specific city, she also makes sweeping policy decisions in regards to the covenant's actions in her domain. Her declarations and demands are usually broad. A Cardinal may deem it necessary to begin recruiting among other covenants in the domain in an effort to bolster the Sanctified's own ranks while weakening the defenses of rivals. She may decide that the covenant isn't doing enough for the spiritual good of the Lancea Sanctum, and call up a dozen antiquated and unforeseen *Apostolica* for the covenant to practice. A more zealous Cardinal might even go through venerable archives, dust off a list of unpunished heretics, and send the covenant as a whole in a blood hunt crusade against the weathered list of transgressors. Her commands trickle down to the other Sanctified in the domain, who then make those demands reality for all Kindred in the city.

The position of Cardinal comes with several inherent problems. One is a lack of distinctions of authority. Cardinals are so overextended that if enough other Bishops (if any are present) disagree with her commandments, they may pay them lip service but do little to actually observe her decisions. Such overextension is one of the other key problems a Cardinal faces. Most Cardinals are hammered so thin that their value as viable leaders is dangerously reduced. Many burn out or lose their minds. Some, however, seem to be meant for the role. It's hard to say if such Cardinals are cunning multi-taskers or deranged geniuses. What does matter is that they take to the role like a maggot to meat, filling their Requiems with the multifarious duties of the office.

Cardinals come from all types. Hell-bound warlords, austere ascetics, social predators and even obsessive lurkers. While in the privacy of his own chamber, an opposing Kindred might

dismiss a Cardinal as a distracted figurehead, a smart vampire keeps such sacrilege out of the public sphere. Many Cardinals may be distracted and spread too thin, it's true — but they still have the power to snap their bony fingers and have any vampire dragged to her Final Death. Their influence, when they can find it, goes far and wide indeed.

Storyteller's Option: Heresies and the Curia Cruentus

We include the following hierarchical system as an option because it implies a far grander scale than is normally assumed to exist in **Vampire: The Requiem**. While most of our material assumes that vampire concerns function solely on a local level, some Storytellers and troupes enjoy a more overarching, conspiratorial tone. Alternatively, with a little title changing, the Curia Cruentus can be reworked to function on the local level itself, with Priests taking the titles of Cardinals and the organization existing on the local scale only.

The office of Cardinal is somewhat mysterious to outsiders, who might view a Cardinal as simply "a Sanctified more powerful than an Archbishop," assuming they know anything at all about the existence of Cardinals. While accurate, this only tells half the story. Usually, a Cardinal is an Archbishop who has been selected for membership in a cabal within the Lancea Sanctum known as the Curia Cruentus (or "Court of Blood"), a group of powerful Sanctified elders and Archbishops from around the world. The Curia is as much a social club as it is a political body, and officially, it claims no real power within the covenant. Of course, any collection of closely allied, centuries-old Archbishops has vast power, but the Curia's ideology is based on a strict interpretation of the Sanguineous Catechism, which forbids interference in the affairs of other domains. Thus, the group largely limits its goals to mutual support and eradication of any heresies that might threaten the covenant as a whole. Furthermore, the Curia's view on what constitutes heresy is much more relaxed than the mortal Pope. The Masquerade makes a violent crusade against Sanctified heretics impractical, to say the least. Opposition to heresy is further undermined by the tendency of the Cardinals to enter torpor for great lengths of time and then awaken with significantly distorted memories. Thus, at any given time, two of the eldest and most respected members of the Curia might disagree vehemently on the meaning of a doctrine they co-wrote centuries earlier.

The Cardinals appointed by the Curia are all elders who have achieved the status of Archbishop and have demonstrated fidelity to Sanctified religious precepts, or at least, Sanctified religious precepts as interpreted by the Curia. Currently, fewer than 50 cardinals serve in the Curia, most from Europe, though North and South America have a growing presence. Curia members maintain frequent contact, and most also meet once a year to discuss issues facing the covenant. For the past several years, this meeting has been held in Switzerland to coincide with the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum. While conspiracy theorists obsess over the implications of this detail, the Curia actually has little to no interest in the Forum. Rather, it simply takes advantage of the fact that every year a major city in a predominantly Catholic European nation temporarily becomes one of the most secure locations on the planet. Each annual meeting begins with the election of the Pontifex Maximus, whose duties include presiding over the meetings of the Curia and, for the next year, coordinating the flow of information and resources between the various Cardinals. The Pontifex's most important but least often used power is the right to declare heresy. Only the Pontifex can call for the resources of the entire Curia to be marshaled against a particular heretic movement, though his demand must be supported by a majority vote of the other Cardinals present at the annual meeting.

While all members of the Curia are Cardinals, and virtually every prominent Cardinal is in the Curia, there are exceptions. Most notably, a number of individual Archbishops around the world have claimed the mantle of Cardinal for themselves either out of enormous personal power, hubris, or both. Divorced from the resources of the Curia's network, however, a Cardinal is simply an Archbishop with notions of grandeur or ambition. Then again, centuries-old vampiric elders are often justified in their megalomania, and while a few unsanctioned Cardinals have met with mysterious "accidents" shortly after announcing their new title, the Curia generally ignores most such pretenders.

Inquisitor (•+)

The term inquisitor has different meanings in different domains. Publicly, an Inquisitor is appointed to root out and destroy heresies within the parish. This is usually limited to heretical movements within the local Sanctified community, but sometimes, it can also include assaults on members of rival covenants, especially in Old World domains where the Lancea Sanctum often completely dominates a city. In the New World, most domains contain members of all the major covenants, and except for a tiny handful of cities with exceptionally powerful Archbishops, Inquisitors lack the authority to pursue or punish a vampire solely for membership in a non-Sanctified covenant.

Being named an Inquisitor in the Lancea Sanctum is a high honor, despite the position's deference to the priesthood. An Inquisitor's job is to roust the turncoats and heretics from within the ranks, culling such treacherous dogs before they can do real damage. Those chosen to become Inquisitor are, for that reason, highly trusted individuals (as it would do no good to elect a secret heretic to this elite office).

Let it be said: Inquisitors are frightening. They are meant to be. The whispers that the Inquisitors are the "secret police" of the Lancea Sanctum are not only accepted, but encouraged. For the most part, an Inquisitor doesn't want to be anybody's friend. They are meant to portray a façade of fearful superiority. Inquisitors exist to test the spiritual fortitude and loyalty of the local Sanctified. Inquisitors deliberately cause fear because fear is a powerful deterrent. Fear keeps the loyal in line, but can also reveal treachery.

Inquisitors must possess a bevy of skills. They must be proficient tacticians, knowing how best to run their prey into a trap. They must have strong martial ability — an Inquisitor who gets his ass kicked up and down an alleyway does not promote a positive image of the covenant's strength. Martial skills aside, many Inquisitors are also versed in the fine art of torture. Causing pain — very specific, focused pain — in an individual is one potentially useful method of gaining control over him. By proxy, it allows an Inquisitor to find the information he desires, be it a list of names, the location of a specific haven, or a full-bore confession. Finally, an Inquisitor has to be a proficient detective. Having a sharp mind and keen eye lets the Inquisitor get to the heart of any rot and corruption present within the covenant. A poorly performed investigation only hurts the chances of finding and tracking sedition from within.

While many Inquisitors do relish the power intrinsic to the position and alternately enjoy bringing fear to the masses, such icy demeanor and sadism isn't required for the position. In fact, many Inquisitors actively oppose such ugly tactics, believing that such methodology inspires spiritual service through fear instead of genuine faith. Moreover, the axiom about attracting more flies with honey than vinegar holds merit. Some Inquisitors are chosen because they are specifically not frightening, because they appear to the local Sanctified as "everybody's confidantes." Having numerous allies within a given domain allows an Inquisitor access to information that torture might never reveal. It is for this reason that many Inquisitors actively choose an image that is different than that of the "secret police."

A parish of reasonable size, with more than a handful of observant Sanctified, usually has a single Inquisitor though larger cities may have several, or even a dedicated coterie of Inquisitors. The ranks of the Inquisitors are almost uniformly made up of young ancillae. In cities of requisite size, Inquisitors are sometimes led by an "Inquisitor General" (also known as *Praedicator Veridicus*), who is a Priest specifically trained to marshal Inquisitor efforts.

Inquisitors are often a point of contention between young Sanctified and members of other covenants. The title is beholden to none but the Lancea Sanctum — it has no parent "Inquisition" to whom it answers, and no authority other than the Kindred who appointed the Inquisitor. In response to this, the powers of the Inquisitor are greatly diminished from what they have been historically, but the very idea of a jackbooted brute whose sole purpose is to destroy heresy *as he sees it* is one that fills many Kindred with a justified dread.

Priest (•+)

Below the Bishops rank the Priests. A Priest is not a grand religious leader like a Bishop or an Archbishop — while the Bishops do deal with the Sanctified at the ground level, they lack the degree of personal attention that the covenant members may require. Priests, on the other hand, serve very much as counselors to individual Kindred and coteries. While the Bishops are responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of a city's Sanctified as a whole, the Priests handle the devotion of each and every vampire. They shake hands, give pious counsel, officiate lesser *Apostolica* or even *Ecclesia*, and deliver sermons and liturgies. Many Priests are also responsible in recommending neonates and ancillae for Anointing into new roles in the covenant. Priests also coordinate with Inquisitors to sniff out heresy and treachery, reporting their findings to the Bishops above them. It's well known (though rarely spoken) that while a Priest offers soothing words to a neonate in the darkest hours of night, he's also determining whether that neonate will be a future asset — or an unfortunate liability.

As such, a good Priest is savvy in many spheres. He needs to be a social creature, able to interact with Kindred of all stripes. He needs to be a spiritual advisor, versed in the *Testament of Longinus* and all the facets of the Lancea Sanctum's religious principles. He also needs to be a detective, rooting out sedition and subversion with the help of the Inquisitors, willing to redeem those heretics who can be brought back to the light, and destroy those whose loyalty is irreparable. Of course, many Priests don't actually have all the above qualities. One Priest may be a pillar of the covenant spiritually, but socially be little more than a sinister loner with eerie eyes. Another Priest might be a strong leader and communicator, but have little idea how best to bring a vampire's devotion to a new level. Different Priests have different strengths, but the Priests with abilities across the board may one day end up as Bishops. The number of Priests in a city varies. A rough rule of thumb is that there are at least two Priests per Bishop — so, five Bishops would loosely equate to ten Priests. Many Priests become part of coteries, taking on the religious responsibilities within that given group of Kindred, but it's not a requirement. Some Priests are lone agents, tending to the congregation member by member.

Most Priests are ancillae — an exceptional few are neonates who have shown enormous potential. They are usually aged 10 to 50 years, occasionally more. Some Priests never seek a higher station in the covenant as they enjoy having such a "hands-on" influence in the spiritual unlives of their peers. However, Priests who are particularly capable won't be allowed to remain in such a low position, and the covenant will do whatever is necessary to "encourage" a Priest to ascend to the next rank.

All Priests, regardless of rank, are expected to take vows of loyalty to the Lancea Sanctum, as well as specific religious vows that vary from domain to domain. Most commonly, these vows might require the Priest to feed only on certain types of vessels, on certain nights or at certain times, and/or to spend

a certain amount of time at an Elysium under the control of the covenant so that those seeking to give confession can find him easily. In some domains, Priests are expected to wear certain identifiable clothing, although this is somewhat rare. Most often, Priests wear a ring set with a gemstone that identifies their status within the Lancea Sanctum. As noted above, some denominations place restrictions on the sexual activities of their Priests. Vows of poverty are also common, although they are easily overcome simply by placing "poor bishops" in charge of vast wealth technically owned by the covenant. However, many Priests do take vows of poverty seriously and will not attempt to acquire wealth.

Variant Names, Same Functions

The duties of each office within the Lancea Sanctum are the same or similar in most domains around the globe. The names, however, are not universal. Region, language and hosting domain play a part in determining titles. Feel free to use variant titles, stick with the ones given, or create your own.

Cardinal: Vicar, Pontiff, Pontifex

Archbishop: Episkopos, Exarch, Father/Mother Superior

Bishop: Presbyter, Monsignor, Shepherd

Priest: Pastor, Father/Mother, Predicant

Minor Offices

The above roles are considered to be the "major offices" of the Lancea Sanctum, and are ubiquitous throughout the covenant (at least where populations of Sanctified can sustain the hierarchy). The covenant also has a limited number of lesser offices. These minor positions are not found in every city, and their numbers have dwindled over the last century. Additionally, some are colloquial, or bear different names in different domains and parishes. Still, some traditional Sanctified leaders still call for such roles to be filled tonight, because every committed member helps the covenant glorify the ways of the Dark Prophet.

Ostiary (No Covenant Status Required)

The Ostiary, or "Keeper of the Door," is a martial position in the larger cities where the Lancea Sanctum is legitimately dominant. The role concerns itself not with offensive maneuvers against enemies, but defense against outside influence. The Ostiary and his coterie keep a vigilant watch over routes of ingress into the city — airports, train stations, highways, even underground tunnels. If anyone who could threaten the covenant's hold on the region comes into the city, they are sent packing — sometimes with their heads in a bag. Of course, some outsiders slip through the cracks, but the Ostiary does his level best to track down these exceptions and determine the level of threat they present, if any. Usually, an Ostiary is a young (but promising) ancilla promoted to the position. He reports directly to either the Sheriff or a single Bishop who directs the Ostiary in protecting the routes into the city.

Parish Archivist (No Covenant Status Required)

Hard information on the covenant's history is difficult to find. The Lancea Sanctum keeps only certain things as written documents — rules, doctrines, sacred concordats, *The Testament of Longinus*. The occasional Sanctified would keep a journal regarding duty to the covenant. For the most part, written information is scarce, but what little of it exists is the responsibility of a Parish Archivist. Archivists keep all that data in secret locations, spread out over various satellite sites, as one central location invites a sweeping destruction of all the covenant's records.

Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on perspective), very few Parish Archivists are modern enough to use advantageous technology to keep records. Most of the covenant's sacred data is scrawled on parchment or in moldering logbooks. Some Archivists copy information over to new pages, but paper grows old and falls apart. One of the covenant's poorly kept secrets is that they're altogether uncertain as to how much historical information may have been lost to the simple degradation of materials.

Legate (••+)

A Legate isn't a formally recognized position of the covenant. A Cardinal, Archbishop or Bishop establishes it, and it isn't permanent. A Legate is named when the necessity presents itself. The position isn't precisely defined, either. A Legate, by definition, is a traveler. The job of the legate is to leave the safety of the city and to go somewhere else at the request of the Archbishop. Of course, the Legate's function doesn't end there, but traveling is the basic purpose. The Legate may need to transport items, information, even Kindred. A Legate may need to be a spy, or a diplomat, or an official representative of a city's authority. The Legate may have to go into a rival domain or hostile territory to receive a message, steal an object, even assassinate an enemy of the covenant. Legates serving in this capacity may be sent to deliver messages and gifts to their superiors' allies in another domain, to warn the local Sanctified of criminals who have fled the Legate's domain under a blood hunt, or to bring news of a dangerous new heresy encountered in another parish.

A Legate also occasionally performs functions similar to the Herald in the traditional, trans-covenant domain structure. In such cases the Legate speaks for the Cardinal, Bishop or Archbishop, delivering messages and even performing *ritae* on occasions when her master is indisposed.

The most important duty of a Legate is serving as her master's hand in the performance of *ritae*, especially the Rite of Anointing. By Sanctified tradition in many parishes, a Bishop or Archbishop must be Anointed by someone of equal or higher rank for the rite to satisfy its meaning. However,

most Bishops and Archbishops are understandably reluctant to leave their domains and journey to foreign parishes simply to perform religious rites. Fortunately, tradition permits a Bishop or Archbishop to allow a Legate to perform such an Anointing in his stead. A Legate, particularly if she is a skilled diplomat, can often develop strong ties with those Sanctified she has Anointed, even though they subsequently become higher than her in rank. At the very least, a Legate will almost always be welcome in a domain whose Archbishop she personally anointed. Thus, a skilled Legate can develop ties to powerful Sanctified in any number of domains, ties which give the Legate power in her own right, even if it isn't typically accessible locally. Such a Legate can sometimes arrange safe passage to a new domain, provide favorable introductions to an outside Archbishop, and sometimes even arrange for a temporary haven for a Kindred on the run (so long as it's not from the Legate's superior). Naturally, these duties of the Legate rarely come into play, given the isolated, localized and even xenophobic nature of the Requiem, but only the naïve assume such things never happen. After all, even the local Bishops had to come from somewhere.

The position of Legate is so nebulously described, no vampire really knows what he's getting into when an Archbishop or Bishop names him Legate. While a position of dubious honor and deed, any Kindred assuming the position can at least feel confident that he has earned the trust of his betters… or their ire. A vampire who provides such nameless utility to covenant leaders is sure to also garner enough influence to potentially enhance his reputation. While being an Archbishop's Girl or Guy Friday seems demeaning at the time, it could pay off in spades later down the line.

Crusader (•+)

Similar in more secular parlance to a medieval knight, a Crusader is not a leader among the Sanctified, nor is he a mere soldier. The Crusaders are also not considered Inquisitors. More or less, a Crusader is a member of the "elite" warriors of the Lancea Sanctum. Renowned for their martial ability, they are fierce combatants, feared assassins, and cold killers. Crusaders are perhaps overly indoctrinated into the covenant, set upon rigid schedules of prayer and *ritae*, nigh fanatically enthusiastic to do anything (including meet Final Death) for the covenant. Crusaders are also expected to keep up their martial training (and this can include any kind of fighting, be it with melee weapons, firearms, or abstract tactics). They are not viewed as individual Kindred. They are seen as predatory weapons meant to be wielded for the glory and grace of the Dark Prophet. Many Sanctified see this position as outdated and bullish, though other older Sanctified feel that when the time comes, they'd rather have the protection than be without it.

Saint (••••+)

Saint is an unofficial honorific among the Sanctified, but for all its informality, it's considered one of the holiest and most spiritually significant roles in the covenant. Almost without exception,

elders are the only Kindred eligible to be Saints — and only those elders who exhibit pious and penitent perfection with regard to the acts of Longinus are chosen for the role. Of course, that presents something of a problematic situation. Who can truly Anoint an elder to this role but another elder? Some Sanctified postulate that the role of Saint is little more than a back-scratching gentlemen's club of alienated elders (though rarely does anyone voice such a complaint too loudly for fear of having her skin flayed from her body and sent to her in neat little envelopes). Others are certain that the Saints form the highest echelon of the covenant proper, and every thought, action, and movement of these creatures is a sacred event. Many elders are Anointed as Saints after awakening from torpor, just before falling back into dreamless sleep. In other domains, the "canonization" of sainthood is an honor bestowed posthumously. Also, many of these Saints have their own "Saint's nights" that count as *Apostolica*. They may demand some kind of service and ceremony on that particular night (which may or may not be their remembered night of being Embraced centuries or millennia prior), and such service is expected to be performed to the letter. A few particularly bizarre saints gladly walk among the neonates of the Lancea Sanctum, offering inscrutable lessons in piety and faith.

Lay Positions

Three significant lay offices observed by the Lancea Sanctum deserve attention. We distinguish the lay positions here by not capitalizing them, though this may vary from domain to domain.

A deacon (•+) is a lay member given special authority by a Priest, Bishop or Archbishop. The exact nature of this authority varies from parish to parish. In some domains, a deacon is little more than a flunky to the local Bishop. In other domains, especially those under Sanctified dominance, the term deacon might replace that of Primogen, at least with regard to Primogen who do not hold a formal priestly office. For example, a Primogen named John Doe who served in the court of an archbishop might be called Father Doe if he were a Priest, or Brother John if he were a deacon.

A paladin (•+) is a lay member who swears an oath of personal loyalty to a member of the clergy. Paladins most often serve as bodyguards to clergy members or to Legates who must travel more than the typical Priest. A paladin specializes in combat and self-defense techniques, and while a member of the laity (and thus not a Crusader; see above), she must demonstrate faithfulness to both her charge and to the Lancea Sanctum as a whole. This loyalty is occasionally augmented by the Vinculum, but most members of the covenant eschew this because it removes the element of free will. In the case of especially high-ranking clergy, paladins often voluntarily submit to Vinculums to their charges. Serving as paladin to a Cardinal, for example, carries both prestige within the covenant and temporal power in the city. In some cases, the Sheriff in a domain governed by an Archbishop or Cardinal is a trusted paladin.

Finally, lay priests (•+) are individuals who study Sanctified theology and perform minor rites for their coteries and even larger groups of vampires, but who have not been ordained by the Lancea Sanctum hierarchy. Such individuals are authorized to perform only *Ecclesia*, and any who presume to preside over sacraments such as the *Apostolica* are often punished severely by church officials. Bishops and Archbishops often choose their deacons from local lay priests, and those who demonstrate particular devotion (and occasionally personal loyalty to the bishop) are ordained as true Priests. Until a lay priest is ordained and Anointed, he has no more religious authority over his fellows than a particularly upstanding mortal parishioner who is called upon to say grace over an evening meal.

Clan Roles in the Lancea Sanctum

A clan is one thing; its members are another. Individuals are able to have any role in the covenant that their hearts desire — provided they're willing to sweat blood and sacrifice their Requiems for the good of the covenant. The Lancea Sanctum joins all its adherents, regardless of clan or bloodline, into a common religion. However, each lineage brings unique characteristics to the covenant. Often, a Sanctified belonging to a specific clan will naturally fall into specific roles within the covenant. Just as often, however, clan members will find unusual and unexpected ways to serve God. In many cases, members of specific clans or bloodlines have actively set out to find such a unique niche, such as by forming a monastic order, a fraternal organization, or some other comparable group in which blood kin can join with their fellows.

The Lancea Sanctum restricts no roles or offices by clan or bloodline, and the doors stand (theoretically) wide open. That said, stereotypes exist because of some grain of truth, and the same thing goes for the clans. Certain clans are thought to be good at some things, bad at others, and in some cases a role will be filled due to a prejudicial predilection from a Bishop or Archbishop. That leader may say, "I think we are losing our sway over the impressionable neonates — find me a Daeva to elevate to the priesthood." Or, perhaps, "We require a fierce warrior to fill the shoes of a recently demised Bishop, but one who can be controlled when the need arises. A member of Clan Gangrel may suit the position." Stereotypes, like it or not, lend themselves to judgments both good and bad. Below are explorations of how these stereotypes help to determine a clan's place in the hierarchy of the Lancea Sanctum — and how those stereotypes can be defeated.

Daeva

The Daeva are often the public face of the Lancea Sanctum, and it is for this reason that many Kindred hold a misguided belief that the clan holds a vastly disproportionate place at upper levels of the Sanctified hierarchy. The truth is, their propensity to remain in the limelight (even in a cold, regimented covenant like the Lancea Sanctum) lends the impression that they are quite populous. Generally speaking, the Daeva have little interest in the ideals of the Sanctified. The

clan favors excess and opulence, and often looks to be the paragons of the social elite — ideals that the Sanctified consider inferior to matters of the spirit. The covenant can be an austere, sometimes Spartan institution. The Sanctified have little use for most social maneuvering (in theory, not necessarily in practice).

However, some Daeva see the covenant as a greater social challenge. The Invictus? Child's play. The other three covenants? Upstart cabals with too little power. The real power, in some minds, exists in the hands of the Sanctified. Here, Daeva willing to submit to the covenant's strident strictures will find that they are allowed to exalt their roles as "social predators." That doesn't mean that they can't still manipulate their way up the ranks, either — it just means they have to be better than the rest to do so. Unfortunately, this lends itself to the problem that many Succubi within the covenant's hierarchy are faithless. Such Kindred don't honestly believe in whatever dogma the covenant practices (except for that part about lauding the predatory nature of the Kindred). Unfaithful Daeva work overtime to keep this impiety quiet. Even a highly social elder Daeva will have a hard time keeping her head once the covenant finds out that her beliefs in God and the Dark Prophet's philosophies are little more than self-serving deceit. Of course, some Daeva are able to combine their fierce sociopolitical skills with a very real and zealous dedication to the precepts of the covenant. A Daeva such as this is a powerful force who will climb the ranks in surprisingly short order.

The Succubi are possibly the least numerous of the Sanctified, yet their impact on the covenant is arguably greater than that of the other clans. The type of Daeva most often drawn to the covenant is one who was relatively religious, or at least moral, in life, and who is both shocked and shamed by the compulsive debauchery that accompanies the Daeva Embrace. Such a vampire will be attracted to the covenant's unusually ritualistic format, which allows a religiously inclined Kindred to find a context for her new existence. For example, a newly Embraced Daeva constantly tempted by sin might draw strength from Monachal rituals, which are comfortingly familiar to the Catholic services she attended in life, as well as the philosophy of the Monachal Creed, with its emphasis on God's plan and deference to Sanctified hierarchy. Other less devout Sanctified follow the teachings of Longinus for precisely the opposite reason. That is, the structure of the covenant's ritualism (especially communion and other rituals that involve pain or death), along with the covenant's implicit faith in the Kindred's superiority to the kine, permit a Daeva to pursue his darker, more sadistic impulses without suffering a catastrophic loss of Humanity.

Within the Lancea Sanctum, Daeva most commonly fall into roles that emphasize their social acumen. For example, Daeva Priests (and Bishops and Archbishops) tend to be among the most aggressive and successful evangelists for the Sanctified faith, since their supernatural gifts enable them to electrify audiences. For similar reasons, Daeva with performance skills are highly sought after as church sermonizers, diplomats, musicians and singers. More than one vampire has pointed to the Kindred's use of the word "Requiem" to describe their collective unlives as a sign of the Daeva's impact on the Lancea Sanctum, and vice versa. When a Succubus tenor takes the stage as Longinus in one of the covenant's annual passion plays, his natural skill augmented by his Majesty, the audience can be counted upon to weep bloody tears.

For the most part, Daeva in the Lancea Sanctum aspire to the upper echelons, whatever form that may take in a given parish. Few become Cardinals: Is such a position really worth the work? Do the gains justify the commitment and sacrifice? Usually not. Archbishops and Bishops have most of the same powers (and in some cases, more) as a Cardinal, so the majority of the clan prefers to ascend to those positions and go no higher. A territory dominated by a Sanctified Daeva — especially one whose faith is mostly baseless — is usually somewhat different than other covenant-dominant parishes. While certainly not as "social" as the Invictus, the atmosphere still lends itself to greater political maneuverings as well as the predatory indulgences permitted by the Dark Prophet. Daeva in such position are wise to not go overboard (even an Archbishop can find herself targeted for heresy given the proper circumstances), but still hold more parties and salons than just the Gran Ballo.

The Succubi tend to do poorly in the covenant's minor roles, and avoid such lowly work. While a minor role in the Invictus can have great effect, in the Lancea Sanctum it's a case of being a small fish in a very big pond. Some Daeva settle nicely into the priesthood, accepting that the influence they have on individuals can travel throughout the domain, but anything less is an injustice to the Kindred's own strength of personality. A few Daeva find their twisted social sensibilities well suited to the role of Inquisitor, but most find that the role is an ugly one better suited to the lesser clans (meaning anyone but them). On the other hand, a skilled Daeva can make an excellent "good cop," casually persuading even the most resistant heretic or criminal to confess his sins. Of course, to more hardened Inquisitor or Crusader, Vigor is just as useful as Majesty; the crank on a torturer's rack is often heavy and tends to stick.

One small role outside the standard hierarchy that suits the Daeva is that of Proselytizer (see p. 161). Localized evangelical movements within the covenant are often shepherded by members of this clan, and why not? Who better to evoke the philosophies of Longinus? A Daeva finds little problem with a role geared toward swaying and controlling others, whether such vocalizing is truly honest or vacant populism. Bringing the lost sheep back to the flock by the very nature of her own voice, charisma, and calculating manipulations? The Daeva make excellent Messengers.

Daeva can be found in any denomination, but seem to prefer the pageantry of traditional Monachal rites. Daeva are also influential in Exotheist churches, with the result that many Exotheist rites are even more shocking than their traditional counterparts. Daeva are uncommon in the White Sunday Movement, for whatever reasons local chapters theorize.

Gangrel

Members of Clan Gangrel are a curious fit within the rank and file of the Sanctified. Sadly, many inside the Lancea Sanctum don't know exactly what to make of the Savages, or even what to do with them. Here is a clan whose members are ostensibly at home with their damnation. They don't necessarily celebrate their predatory condition, but they certainly accept and understand it. The Gangrel *know* that they are vampires and hold few illusions regarding their old selves (meaning their mortal lives), and this is one of the core concepts espoused by the Sanctified. On the other hand, the Savages aren't big "joiners." The Gangrel prefer to play out their Requiems on their own terms, and to hell with the acquisitive, greasy politics and manipulations so cherished by the rest of the Kindred. Their propensity to understand the Beast within contributes to this atavistic instinct — as their animalistic side threatens their rational minds, they have few worries about polluting what entanglements are present, because when the Beast hungers, there *are* no entanglements.

It's this conflicting dichotomy that confuses the Lancea Sanctum with regard to its Gangrel members. What can be done with these Savages? Some high-ranking Sanctified dismiss them out of hand, hoping that they'll come to Midnight Mass when able, and otherwise just stay out of covenant business except when called upon. Other covenant leaders (arguably the majority) try to find some place for Gangrel members. The general opinion is that the Gangrel make for wise and loyal devotees (much like a well-trained dog) but don't do well as the public face of the covenant. As such, probably the most common roles found for the Savages in the Lancea Sanctum are among the more martial ranks, such as Inquisitors or Crusaders. The reasons are relatively clear. Inquisitors, by their nature, may need to work together but their Requiems are generally punctuated by loneliness (as not many Kindred are comfortable "hanging out" with a Sanctified Inquisitor). Inquisitors and Crusaders are, by and large, agents of fear. Sanctified Gangrel, even when they're not involved with violent offices, are fearsome predators, so why not just marry the two concepts and have one incredibly frightening covenant skip-tracer? In fact, a Gangrel's predatory instincts and direct forces of personality lend themselves rather well to an Inquisitor's much-needed detection skills or a Crusader's singularity of purpose. A properly trained and sufficiently devout Savage can do wonders when set on the trail of a hidden heretic. A fierce Gangrel warrior stubbornly devoted to the Lancea Sanctum veritably defines the term "holy terror." If a Gangrel isn't chosen to be an Inquisitor or Crusader, he may instead find a suitable role as a soldier or other hardy position such as an Ostiary or Legate. More than any other clan, the Gangrel are adept at surviving outside their chosen domains, and even in the wilds. Consequently, many a Gangrel serves her bishop as messenger to foreign parishes, hoping that she will one night be trusted enough to perform important rituals on her master's behalf as a Legate, thus gaining the status of a Bishop-by-proxy that will elevate her above the status of a common laymember.

Most attitudes within the covenant are respectful but aloof regarding the Savages. While many Savages aren't meant for political maneuvering or charismatic evangelism, others are capable in these areas but are given few opportunities to test such acumen by narrow-thinking covenant leaders. Savvy covenant leaders, however, refuse to make such hasty judgments. Many Savages are capable of transcending presumed stereotypes, and a wise covenant leader recognizes this — and wise covenant members don't underestimate the Gangrel.

While it's true that few Gangrel will ever become prodigal politicos who know how to twist the system into serving their schemes, it's not true that Gangrel can't become leaders in the Lancea Sanctum. Consider a Savage who has examined the metaphysical condition of being a vampire, and who has come to understand the Requiem in ways that most Kindred will never grasp. A Gangrel like this — with the appropriate pushing, prodding, and observation of social etiquette — can function as a more than serviceable spiritual leader. Such a vampire can do wonders preaching her predatory philosophy to an appropriate congregation, revealing the wonders of Sanctified *mystagogy* to the herd. Moreover, a highly spiritualized Gangrel can make an excellent officiate of *Apostolica*, attending to the ceremonies with meticulous detail. These Savages do provide an excellent public face, because they can be shown as true examples of what it means to have acknowledged damnation and accepted the Beast. (On the other hand, covenant leaders need to keep a wary eye on such publican Gangrel — if the Beast within starts to become the Beast *outside*, the Savage may overly frighten a potential congregation.) Hence, some Gangrel will move toward the role of Priest or even Bishop. Only an exceptional minority has ever ascended past Bishop.

A Savage will rarely join the Lancea Sanctum unless his mortal faith was so strong that he is compelled to cling to it in some capacity, and the few who do join rarely seem to rise to positions of leadership. One reason for this is the Gangrel clan weakness. Mastery of Theban Sorcery, while not essential to advancement within the covenant, is often considered a sign of spiritual progress. A Gangrel will often find that his bestial nature prevents him from becoming proficient at Theban Sorcery, and thus, his career prospects dim. Gangrel who do serve the covenant directly most often do so in a lay capacity, as either deacons or paladins. In fact, a significant number of paladins are Gangrel, again since they are often potent warriors.

A significant number of Gangrel are attracted to the Tollison Creed, in part because its rustic nature is more consistent with the pre-Embrace religious experiences of the average Gangrel. More importantly, the White Sunday Movement has a long tradition of common-folk preachers who perform tent revivals for the edification of uncomplicated persons, a Requiem many religious Gangrel find appealing. In fact, certain domains find the Gangrel are the fastest growing clan upholding the Tollison Creed. Gangrel possess a hardiness that allows them to face Fire Dances with confidence, and their command over animals greatly simplifies snake-handling ceremonies. Gangrel also play a strong role in the Banu Shaitan, but can be found to some degree in every creed.

MEKHET

The Shadows make excellent Sanctified. The covenant offers much that appeals to most Mekhet sensibilities. For one, the Lancea Sanctum is a highly regimented religious order, stratified with layers of politics and secrecy. Many Shadows find such hierarchy appealing, knowing first that they can maneuver easily within such parameters, and second that the secrecy of the covenant affords many advantages. Such advantages include hidden power, access to ancient mysteries, or simply the ability to hide and disappear within the covenant's ranks. The Lancea Sanctum is not an organization of passivity — no, the covenant prefers action, and in that action speaks to the spiritual wellbeing all of Kindred. Seeing as how the spirit of the Kindred damnation is undeniably one of darkness, the Shadows see this covenant as a natural ally.

As such, the Mekhet make up a valuable constituency of Kindred in the covenant. Power and prominence are a siren's call to the Shadows, and hence they assume many of the covenant's most auspicious roles. With unyielding grace and dignity, many Mekhet set their sights on the roles of Priest and Bishop, and are usually Anointed into such positions over time. A few Mekhet aim to ascend to the ranks of Archbishop or even Cardinal, if only because such devotion has the potential to yield the most power and darkness. The covenant has some issues with the Mekhet that force the Sanctified to keep a wary eye on the Shadows, however. A Mekhet's true loyalty is always in question. A Shadow may take to the darkness of the covenant quickly, but is such eagerness a sign of the vampire's faith, or simply an indicator that the Kindred feels he can gain more advantage this way? If easy advantage can be found in the politics of another covenant, will the Shadow switch sides? Worse still, a Mekhet's fondness and propensity for obscuration and subterfuge could mean that the vampire is playing the covenants against one another in an effort to maximize his own benefit. While the Lancea Sanctum is consistently glad to have such able vampires among its ranks, the Sanctified know that such "ability" can be a double-edged sword, indeed.

The bottom line is that Mekhet are ubiquitous in the covenant — if there's a vacancy in a position, smart money suggests that the Lancea Sanctum will find candidates among the Shadows to fill the vacuum. Some Mekhet skirt treachery at times, but the right ancilla or elder can steer such a self-interested vampire back to the proper path. Once a Mekhet's faith is firm (at least for a time), the covenant believes her to be the edge it needs.

Without doubt, the Shadows present just as much a mystery to the Lancea Sanctum as they do to everyone else with whom they deal. Cosmopolitans as always, individual Mekhet can be found everywhere within the Lancea Sanctum, regardless of station or creed, whether among the clergy or the laity. Curiously, however, while the Mekhet's numbers within the covenant are competitive with the other clans, the Shadows have disproportionately few members among the highest echelons of the covenant. This suggests no overt snub against the clan, but for some

reason, the Lancea Sanctum as a whole seems not to trust Mekhet. In large part, this may simply be because of the Mekhet's aforementioned "clan of shadows" motif; many Mekhet actively seem to desire being mistrusted by others, and a fairly conservative religious order like the Lancea Sanctum can be expected to react skeptically toward vampires who practice the acumen for misdirection wielded by the Shadows. For their part, Mekhet often seem to eschew the spotlight, preferring to serve as the Bishop's indispensable right hand instead of as the Bishop herself.

Mekhet are most common among the Monachals Creed, the Dammitic Creed and the Exotheists. In fact, the Mekhet are numerous among the Exotheist movement, and many of its iconoclastic thinkers belong to that clan. Mekhet typically find the Westminster Creed to be redundant and insincere, unless going to church is a political necessity, in which case a Mekhet can sing hymns with the best of them. Very few Mekhet join Tollison-Creed denominations.

Nosferatu

As might be suspected, the Haunts fill a broad niche among the Lancea Sanctum. All manner of Nosferatu claim membership in the covenant, from those truly miserable monsters who wear their curse like a hair shirt to the truly horrific terrors of the night who strike fear in mortals and Kindred alike. Haunts of more moderate temperaments find their place in the covenant, as well, including some enlightened philosophers, clever officials and devout ascetics. Many Nosferatu see the Lancea Sanctum as a church in which to excoriate their souls or succeed in spite of their monstrous selves.

It's not a wonderland of pleasant opportunity, however. The Nosferatu, for the most part, know that others fear and constantly keep them at a distance — but how is that different from anywhere else? Regardless of the paranoia directed at the clan as a whole, the Haunts find a lot to like in the Lancea Sanctum. First, the covenant shuns any reliance upon beauty, vanity or baseless social pretenses. A Haunt is eerie or ugly — so what? If he's a devoted believer in God and the acts of the Dark Prophet and ultimately supports the covenant, then most Sanctified couldn't care less, and some even perceive the Nosferatu's unsettling mien as bizarre forms of stigmata. Also, and more importantly, the covenant offers one thing that many Nosferatu actively seek: answers regarding Kindred damnation. The Haunts are doubly damned, cursed by the Requiem and then made monstrous to boot. The Lancea Sanctum claims to have all the answers, and will actually teach the Nosferatu that they needn't be ashamed of their condition, but should instead accept it and act within its boundaries. Desperate Nosferatu (specifically neonates) are hungry for such acceptance, and often join any group that offers sanctity for their accursed state.

Clearly, the Nosferatu can ably fill roles in the Sanctified covenant — specifically as object lessons, penitents and vicious warriors. But can they perform other, more significant functions? Moreover, will the Sanctified allow such disturbing monsters to ascend the ranks and become more than their stereotype suggests? The answer is yes and no.

Like the Gangrel, the Nosferatu face significant difficulties from the outset. Most Haunts encounter a "glass ceiling" that stops them from ever getting higher than the role of Priest in the Sanctified hierarchy. Before hitting this ceiling, however, Nosferatu have little trouble filling the lower and middle ranks of the Lancea Sanctum, and especially among the laity. Overall, the covenant prefers having the Haunts in such middle positions (deacons, Archivists, Priests). It allows the covenant to exploit the advantages of the Nosferatu while keeping the clan's disadvantages from manifesting in positions where they could truly damage the Sanctified's presence. Does that mean that Nosferatu have never ascended past the position of Priest? Of course not; it's simply uncommon. Some Nosferatu — especially of the more urbane and cultured variety — are exceptional enough that promotions into the higher ranks won't be denied.

Of course, the first step in achieving any power over the covenant is serving as a Priest, and few Nosferatu have the necessary charisma to excel in that role. In fact, most of the Nosferatu who have risen to prominence in the covenant, especially within the past century, have all served in non-clerical positions and then moved laterally into a position of clerical authority upon taking vows.

Nevertheless, many Nosferatu are quite pious in their devotion to the Lancea Sanctum, as they seek whatever purpose may exist behind their particularly odious curse. To that end, many Nosferatu serve as lay priests within their coteries, regardless of whether they ever formally take vows. Nosferatu who are especially devout often intentionally avoid leadership positions, sometimes believing themselves too debased to be worthy of such a post. Instead, those Nosferatu convinced of a particular Priest's sanctity may choose to serve her in whatever capacity is needed. For example, Nosferatu make excellent Inquisitors: they are supremely effective brutes, and if Daeva use Majesty to "play the good cop," then Nosferatu can just as efficiently use Nightmare to be the "bad cop." Nosferatu also excel as paladins or even Crusaders, as their disciplines make them a match for most Kindred.

Nosferatu are found in all creeds, but are most prominent among the Monachal Creed and, to a lesser extent, the Tollison Creed. The clan's presence in Westminster churches is negligible in general terms, though certain domains host surprisingly large Westminster congregations of haunts.

Ventrue

Strangely, the Ventrue's association with the temporal power hinders them frequently in their relationships with the Lancea Sanctum. Others consider the clan distracted in pursuit of the worldly sphere — rustic anachronisms with dogs curled at their feet, or even soulless profit-mongers seeking to turn the Word of Longinus into filthy lucre. Of course, while the Ventrue often do have obvious interests in these areas, they are not united as a clan or unavoidably predisposed that way. As such, if a Ventrue wishes to truly become part of the Lancea Sanctum, she will have the chance to make her own way — but not without the appropriate weighing of merit.

Before allowing a Ventrue into the clergy, many covenant leaders will dig deep into his history and lineage to confirm that there are no obvious betrayals, treacheries or unseemly ambitions. If such blemishes do exist (and if the Ventrue is particularly forthright with them), the covenant may well require tests of loyalty to confirm her allegiance with the Sanctified. Such tests are often extreme (sometimes needlessly so), and tend to require the Lord to perform some symbolic task against further indiscretions, whether it means cementing Sanctified influence over mortal institutions or quieting a local figurehead antagonistic toward the covenant.

Ultimately, a Ventrue capable of proving her mettle can become an ideal covenant member indeed. Fiercely possessed of leadership skills, most Ventrue take little time to ascend the ranks. While an occasional personal prejudice against the clan might stop a few Ventrue from attaining key ranks in certain parishes, most manage to push their way (through genuine efficacy, cunning or deceit) to whatever role they believe is rightfully theirs. Quite a few prominent leaders within the Sanctified have been Ventrue; such will always be the case. The Ventrue see themselves as natural leaders, and as Sanctified their perceptions are no different.

A proverb common among young Ventrue states, "There are no Ventrue in middle management." By that, the Lords mean that a Ventrue will either rise to the top of what every organization he joins, or he will remain in its lower echelons, since he only joined for the benefits of membership and doesn't care to rise further. Within the Lancea Sanctum, this dictum holds true in a self-styled fashion, and after the Ventrue who serve as Archbishops and Bishops, the next most powerful representation of the clan is in the laity, rather than the lower level clergy. Of course, the Lords cannot help but pursue leadership roles in the Lancea Sanctum just as they do in everything else. The problem for the Ventrue is that being a leader in a religious organization means walking a fine line between one's own ambitions and the extremes within the congregation. Consequently, a Ventrue whose lust for power outstrips his devotion to the holy cause may still rise to the level of Bishop, but he can lose his supporters in an instant if he betrays the core principles of the Sanctified faith to advance himself further. Ventrue are most likely to rise to positions of authority among the Monachal and Westminster Creeds, the latter of which was arguably founded in part out of a desire to merge Sanctified devotion and temporal pragmatism. Among the more conservative denominations, the best Ventrue leaders are actually those who are *less* ambitious than their clanmates. A Ventrue capable of ruling but not desiring the burden may yet seek power in spite of himself if he thinks he is the only Sanctified qualified for the job. Such leaders often combine humility (to the extent it can exist in a Ventrue) and efficiency in a potent combination.

Younger or less politically adroit Ventrue often serve as paladins, Crusaders, Ostiaries, Archivists or even occasionally Saints. In the martial case, Lords make good bodyguards because of their hardiness and because of lingering notions of chivalry often found among well-bred Ventrue.

One of the lesser-known covenant roles filled by a predominance of Ventrue is that of scout or spy, specifically one who goes deep undercover amid the ranks of rival covenants. It's not well known, and the Sanctified would like to keep it that way. For example, the Ventrue often have an intimate, almost ancestral connection with the Invictus. This connection makes them excellent agents in the war of influences occasionally waged between the covenants in certain domains. The same Ventrue penchant for leadership that allows the Lords to rise in rank within the Lancea Sanctum applies to other covenants, too, and deep-cover diplomats might be found wherever tensions between covenants cause potential conflict.

Another little-known position within the covenant, albeit among the lay faction, is the role of patron or benefactor. While the title is unofficial and carries little actual authority, the role seems tailor-built to suit Sanctified Ventrue. While technically the covenant frowns on such a reliance of money, the reality is that the covenant cannot continue on without its own funding or largesse from its faithful — hence the usage of the largely unsanctioned role of patron. A patron of the Lancea Sanctum is a money-man, channeling funds to fuel the covenant's needs. As a lay member, a Ventrue can often exert considerable influence over the local clergy by acquiring temporal and financial power and then placing it at the Bishop's disposal. Thus, clergy in most domains, regardless of their own clan, appoint Ventrue as deacons or benefactors to satisfy the material needs of the church. A benefactor isn't rebuked when commenting on covenant policy or plans for a parish, and is even allowed to sit in on the occasional meeting of the Synod (though unlikely one that would grant him needless or damaging advantage). The position is a strictly pay-for-play arrangement. If the patron's funds dry up or he stops the flow of money to the covenant's coffers, then so does the little power he possesses.

As a clan, the Ventrue are surprisingly prominent among the laity. A Ventrue of faith may realize that, regardless of her devotion, she either lacks the personal charisma to be an effective minister or else that the realities of religious vows are more than she can bear.

As mentioned before, most Ventrue find comfort (or pious suffering) among the Monachal and Westminster Creeds. Certain bloodlines of Ventrue follow the Dammitic Creed out of tradition or religious upbringing. Relatively few Ventrue involve themselves with the Tollison Creed, and similarly small numbers bother with such things as Exotheism.

Lancea Sanctum Ritae

Among the Kindred, the Lancea Sanctum is the authority of blade, blood, and sanctity — or, at least, that's how it is in the minds of its covenant members. The Sanctified place themselves above all others, taking indefatigable pride in their predatory condition, believing that God's own hand has Damned them thus. Kindred outside the covenant are seen as in desperately need of spiritual learning. Other vampires are

ignorant to the glory of their malediction, and so they wallow in their unfortunate ignorance. The Sanctified revere their state, and they commemorate it constantly with a series of observed rituals: the *ritae* of the Lancea Sanctum.

The purposes of ritual in the covenant are many. First and foremost, rites carry an important religious weight. The Sanctified, for the most part, are devout, and literally believe that not only did a Longinus exist, but also that he pierced the side of Christ and was cursed by a very literal God because of that. From this action came exalted Damnation. While there are certainly some covenant members who don't really believe the "myth" of Longinus, overall the vampires of the Lancea Sanctum do not doubt the purity of their connection to the divine. Rituals allow the Kindred to pay tribute to that connection, to offer themselves through action and sacrifice to God and veneration of the Dark Prophet.

The rituals would be worth doing even for the metaphorical weight of the divine connection between vampire and the deeds of the Dark Prophet. However, the results of most rituals are more than metaphorical. The canonical *ritae* of the covenant, at least, tend to grant some small preternatural benefits to participants. These benefits naturally serve to enhance a vampire's belief in her profound relation to the divine. It's akin to praying for — and actually *receiving* — some small modicum of assistance for your trouble. Practicing the *ritae* of the Lancea Sanctum leaves little room for disbelief.

One of the ancillary benefits given through the usage of ritual is that is establishes a watermark for devotion. Those members who show up only for Midnight Masses — if at all — are silently remembered as being members of the covenant more in name than in deed or belief. Such dismissal of the important *ritae* almost guarantees that the Sanctified in question won't see his Anointing… at least, not until he finds proper piety. However, those Kindred who make the major rituals, and observe all the personal or minor ones, are more likely to be noted as committed to their belief. Committed Kindred go far in the Lancea Sanctum.

The Lancea Sanctum observes two types of ritual. The first, called *Apostolica*, are the canonical rituals authorized and conducted by the covenant at large. The second are more common, personalized rituals meant for individual Kindred or their coteries. These *Ecclesia*, as they're called, are not officially recognized by the covenant, though they are typically encouraged because they indicate strength of faith regardless. Every ceremony in service to the covenant is seen as a good thing. By way of analogy, consider the *Apostolica* like a Mass held in a church and the *Ecclesia* like personal prayer.

Apostolica

The *Apostolica* are proper covenant rituals meant to be performed *en masse* at the appropriate times. These seven rituals are meant to strengthen the fidelity of the Sanctified, granting them bonds of religious fraternity while also conferring to the Kindred the a sense of spiritual reward for such devotion. The origin of each ritual comes in some part from *The Testament of Longinus*. Some grow out of a single line, whereas others are outlined specifically in the text, step by step.

There are technically more than the seven *ritae* listed below. In fact, the covenant has a cavalcade of rituals, holidays, and ceremonies, many of which are *Apostolica*. The covenant formally observes seven, though its local incarnations may have elevated other rites to the level of *Apostolica*. The below rituals, however, are considered to be the most important and commonly practiced within the Lancea Sanctum.

Sidebars and Systems

The descriptions of the *Apostolica* include optional rules sidebars that describe effects that might enhance the rites in game terms. These systems are strictly optional, and the default is that they do not actually occur.

Some Storytellers, however, might wish to give an edge to the Lancea Sanctum. In one troupe's chronicle, the Storyteller may wish to reward Lancea Sanctum dominance with a bit of an extra boost in game terms, while in another, the Storyteller might have decided that the Lancea Sanctum is "right," and these benefits manifest as a form of divine purpose or favor.

Unless otherwise noted, these benefits apply to Kindred who are not members of the Lancea Sanctum as well. Such benefits thereby encourage outside Damned to join the covenant.

Storytellers, think long and hard about whether or not you wish to apply these systemic benefits to the *Apostolica*. Do not make such a decision casually. If you do so, you are giving a tangible, empirical benefit to the Lancea Sanctum that the other covenants might not have. This tips the balance of power a little bit — but that may be the effect you're after.

Midnight Mass

Kindred devoted to the Lancea Sanctum are bound by various obligations to the covenant. Chief among these obligations is attendance of Midnight Mass.

Ultimately, the Sanctified Mass isn't too far removed from a standard Catholic Mass (though this may vary among creeds other than the Monachal and Westminster), but a few prominent differences obviously exist. Among the similarities, however, are the reliance upon a single shepherd of the ceremony (usually a Bishop, though should one not be available, a Priest will do) who leads the congregation through recitation of the liturgy of Longinus. The Kindred parishioners sit in attendance while the officiate reads from *The Testament of Longinus*, sometimes in Greek or Latin, though many Priests and Bishops tonight will read from a translated text, speaking to the congregation in the vernacular. An occasional liturgy will be read in Turkish or Coptic, depending on the orthodoxy or denomination of the Bishop.

The *ritus* offers much pomp and circumstance: smoldering incense, flasks of blood, *rote memorandum* chanting of parts of *The Testament of Longinus*, call-and-response. The congregation recites certain passages of the text with the Bishop, and maintains a contemplative silence for the rest of the rite. The Bishop leading the ceremony is attended by Priests or abecedarians who perform any secondary functions necessary to complete the ritual.

As expected, the ritual diverges from any standard Catholic Mass. For one, while Catholics believe that the Eucharistic wine they drink becomes the blood of Christ during the act — the Sanctified drink actual Vitae. The source of the blood isn't particularly important (though some Bishops demand to have the blood of pious mortals). What matters is that the blood transubstantiates from a mortal Vitae to carry the damnation of the Dark Prophet inside the crucible of the vampire's flesh. When a faithful Sanctified steps upon the dais and takes a swallow from the proffered cup, he believes that the blood literally becomes sanguine evidence of God's own judgment due to the acts of the Dark Prophet. In the Blood, one finds faith.

The liturgical readings differ quite prominently from any Catholic Mass, as well. The *Testament*, while formulated and structured much like the Bible (though significantly shorter), posits quite a dissimilar message. The Bishop reads little of salvation, and instead spends much of the reading exulting the predatory instincts carried down through the Blood. The passages indicate the purity of the Dark Prophet's teachings, and by extension, the covenant's adherence to them.

Many Bishops will use the end of a Midnight Mass to sermonize. Such a sermon is likely to be a lecture against the congregation's own indiscretions, especially if devotion is seen as flagging in any way. The Damned might hear homilies chiding them for excessive viciousness or for needless association with members of other covenants. Some Bishops may choose more positive messages for the congregation, congratulations and thanksgiving for deeds well done, such as ousting rival influence, perhaps, or routing heretics from within the ranks of the covenant itself. In some austere parishes, though, Bishops and Priests are content to let the Midnight Mass speak for itself, with no sermons to accompany readings from the *Testament* or the Catechism.

The conclusion of a Midnight Mass occasionally takes the form of a separate Communion ceremony, in which the Eucharistic Vitae is taken after the Mass and not before. In some such practices of Communion, one or more mortals are gagged and restrained on altars at the front of the church, and the Kindred drink from wounds cut in them by a deacon with a ceremonial knife. In other practices, upon the conclusion of the Priest's sermon, each worshiper walks to the altar, kneels before the Priest to receive the blessing, and then partakes as normal from a chalice or other standard vessel. The frequency with which Communion ceremonies are held varies from domain to domain, but these variant rituals are often performed

more frequently in domains where the covenant isn't dominant or even particularly strong. In such cases, the Communion ceremony is a powerful symbolic tool for non-Sanctified who wish to convert. The Dammitic Creed does not have a Communion ceremony, though it certainly practices its own version of the Midnight Mass otherwise normally.

When finished, Midnight Mass is sometimes followed by other *ritae*, be they *Apostolica* (Anointing is the most common to follow a ceremonial Mass), or *Ecclesia*. Other times, the covenant members are left to their own devices once Mass has concluded.

Midnight Mass almost universally takes place weekly, most often at the stroke of midnight between Saturday and Sunday nights. Vampires of other covenants are technically not allowed to attend, though many Bishops will encourage or permit it in a conversion effort.

System: Midnight Mass

This ritual requires no mechanical system, as it doesn't usually confer any sort of actual supernatural benefit to the congregation. In some instances — during a particularly notable or moving liturgy, perhaps — the Storyteller may warrant the regaining of a single point of Willpower upon the conclusion of the ceremony. If the Storyteller decides that the transubstantiation is true, a parishioner gains a single Vitae when partaking of Communion, even though she takes only the smallest sip during the ceremony.

Anointing

An Anointing is a critical *ritus* for the Lancea Sanctum, offering a ceremony that marks a vampire as having accepted a new and esteemed role among the Sanctified. Whether it's a neonate assuming the role of abecedarian or a Priest accepting the mantle of a Bishop, the act of Anointing is the same.

Anointing often takes place after Midnight Mass — usually the Mass after a covenant member accepts the proffered position. The congregation isn't required to stay for an Anointing, though many do, and, indeed, some Anointings are held in private. The only Sanctified required to be present is the promoted vampire's coterie and the Priest, Bishop or other ranking officiate, usually the one who presided over Midnight Mass. During the most common Anointing ceremony, the promoted vampire has symbolic stigmata carved into each of her palms. Blood suppurates from these wounds and is mixed with scented olive oil, and this infusion is then drawn across the vampire's forehead by the thumb of the appropriate Priest or Bishop. Once this is done, the attendants read from the Catechism and pray. Finally, the elevated vampire kisses a copy of the *Testament*, and that ends the ritual. She now officially assumes whatever role she was offered by the Lancea Sanctum.

Other types of Anointings certainly occur, but almost all leave some sort of distinguishing mark upon the recipient so that others can witness the acknowledgement of her achievements and status.

System: Anointing

The Sanctified acknowledge leaders who have not first been Anointed only grudgingly. The *ritus* serves as proof of her sacred state as gifted by the Dark Prophet himself (at least, by extension through his Church). Once per story, a player may invoke her character's Anointing to serve as a + 2 bonus to any roll to which she applies her character's Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum). A character may not be Anointed if he has no points in the Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) Merit.

Confessional

Sin is an inevitability, even for the most devout members of the Lancea Sanctum. When a Sanctified violates one of the tenets of his faith, he may seek absolution from a local Priest. Unlike the Catholic confessional box, however, there is no expectation of either anonymity or secrecy. The vampire must confess his sins to his Priest face-to-face, and if his crimes are so serious that she cannot grant him absolution, then she is free to expose him to the authorities. Usually, however, a vampire will not seek an absolution that he knows the Priest cannot give. Instead, the vampire will seek absolution for minor sins that would not normally be punished by a temporal authority but that might jeopardize his standing within the covenant. After hearing the confession, the Priest will absolve the vampire of his sins, but will also set some form of penance. The nature of the penance is largely within the discretion of the Priest, and may include almost anything, from requiring the vampire to acquire Vitae for the next communion ceremony to forcing him to accept lashes in front of the entire congregation.

The most potent effect of the rite of confession occurs typically when the Lancea Sanctum is the dominant covenant in the domain. In such domains, a Priest (indeed, any Priest) may hear any Kindred's confession and assign whatever penance she thinks is appropriate, and a higher clerical authority normally cannot assign a harsher punishment later for the same acts. In other words, if a confessing Kindred in a Sanctified domain confesses his sins and persuades the Priest of his sincerity, even the lowliest Anointed Priest can pre-empt higher-ranking Sanctified's power to punish the Kindred in question. Of course, most Priests track the sort of punishments that the local authority might impose, though they are typically less severe (but not always; some Priests are even more punitive than their superiors). Furthermore, few Priests seek to challenge the authority of their superiors, some of whom are not above tangentially spurning or victimizing Priests who

absolve enemies of the covenant in defiance of the covenant's prevailing local policies. In any case, a Priest never has the unfettered authority to grant absolution in a non-Sanctified domain, nor does she have the power to completely absolve someone of siring without permission or committing diablerie, even is she were inclined to do so.

System: Confessional

When a Kindred gives confession to an earnest Priest and completes her penance, the Kindred in question gains three "phantom" experience points to use toward raising her Humanity if the sin she confesses caused her to lose any. These are not real experience points to be recorded on the character sheet — they merely represent the idea that "confession is good for the soul." These experience points apply only to raising Humanity, and must be used the next time the character spends experience points, or they are lost. Confessional grants these "phantom" experience points only once per experience expenditure period; a character may not confess multiple times in order to receive additional experience points (though confessing multiple times or multiple crimes is certainly a good roleplaying method of justifying spending actual experience points).

The Creation Rite

Every parish or domain has some version of the Creation Rite, as it distinguishes actual members of the Lancea Sanctum from those who merely dabble with its ideals or simply observe the covenant's practices prior to making the decision to join. The name is a misnomer, as the actual Embrace of the childe is almost never performed as part of the *ritus*. While the Lancea Sanctum acknowledges that the Embrace is sometimes necessary, it is still a sin. The actual Creation Rite typically consists of two separate ceremonies. The first, known as the Choice, requires the prospective sire to offer his potential childe the opportunity to become a Kindred or not. Naturally, those who choose not to become Kindred usually meet their death, (and if the sire doesn't kill his erstwhile candidate, he's committed a serious breach of the Masquerade). In some cases, the Choice is commuted to the officiating Priest, who recites to the prospective childe a litany of the curses inflicted upon the Damned before giving her a choice between the Embrace and death.

Assuming the mortal chooses the Embrace (which she must sometimes do in front of the Priest or other witnesses), both the mortal and the prospective sire must be subjected to Purification. That is, they both receive some form of ritual punishment, though the punishment is always much harsher for the sire. The most common form of Purification is for both the sire and potential childe to be whipped a number of times, though the sire will typically take the lashes due to the mortal for himself. Another common form of Purification involves the Priest heating a short branding iron, passing it in front of the mortal's face (as if blessing her), and then branding the sire with it. The Purification usually comes with a statement of reverence to God and Longinus, though this is sometimes implicit.

For those Kindred who wish to join the Lancea Sanctum after their Embrace, obviously, their sire need not be present to confirm the Choice. The practice of Purification remains, however, and is almost universally borne by the convert. In some parishes, one of the Sanctified may vouch for the convert, and in so doing bear the pains of Purification, but these parishes are few, as most Lancea Sanctum localities see Purification as proof of the convert's newfound devotion to the covenant.

System: The Creation Rite

A character may not gain any dots in Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) until she has undergone the Creation Rite. This creates its own host of social complications, which a clever Storyteller is encouraged to weave into the story. For example, if a new Kindred arrives in town and claims to have already undergone the Creation Rite in another domain or parish, well, who short of a Legate or clergy member from that outside domain can corroborate? Also, those who leave the Lancea Sanctum and later return to its fold often have to undergo even more severe secondary Creation Rites to acknowledge their straying from the flock by way of penance.

Gran Ballo

The phrase "eat, drink and be merry" isn't the motto of the Lancea Sanctum, nor will it ever be. While eating and drinking make perfect sense (being the ultimate predators and all), the "be merry" part sticks out like a sore thumb. The Sanctified are known for solemn faces, hard-line conservatism, zealous evangelism and austere piety. The covenant is reverent, militaristic, and overtly spiritual. The covenant doesn't support social grandstanding or any kind of wanton excess, and for that reason it doesn't hold a great many gatherings. Still, the Damned are social and political creatures, and require an outlet for that expression — hence the tradition of the Gran Ballo.

The Gran Ballo ("Grand Ball") is a major event for the Lancea Sanctum, a boisterous expression of covenant unity and merrymaking in the image of the predator's cause. Each domain but the most ascetic has one, almost always on November 1 (the Day of the Dead), and every Sanctified of the domain is expected to attend. Costumes and other vibrant displays are highly suggested, and in some parishes required. A few dour Kindred come in the bare minimum of attire, but many of the Sanctified, especially among the clergy, come dressed to the nines, decked out in grandiose outfits. In fact, the more grandiloquent the costume, the greater the social attention — perfect for covenant politicos, but dangerous for novitiates hoping to escape notice.

Music features prominently, whether from a string quartet, an entire orchestra, or a local band. With music comes dancing — rarely are the dances modern, and usually take the form of anachronistic stepping (a Victorian waltz or *Contredanse*, a Renaissance *gagliarda*, even the Charleston). Aside from music and dancing, a Gran Ballo wouldn't be complete without catering, would it? Lay members abduct mortal vessels in the nights prior to the Grand Ball, and reserve them as the Vitae sources for the event. The Sanctified unveil the vessels at the stroke of midnight, and in some parishes the mortals remain alive and awake, bound up for tasting and drinking. Some are held in claustrophobic cages, others strapped to ornate filigree crucifixes. Particularly creative Sanctified have actually made working blood fountains out of the doomed captives, but such complexity is uncommon and sometimes disdained as unnecessarily cruel.

While the attendees feast, other Kindred provide entertainment in the forms of "mystery plays." These plays, usually lasting no more than 20 or 30 minutes, are brief theatrics showcasing some part of *The Testament of Longinus*. Some are grave and serious, others bawdy and vulgar, but all have in common some element of the *Testament*. Of course, they never insult the Dark Prophet or use him as a clowning figure — he is always the perfect being, the consummate predator and philosopher.

This being a religious occasion, the ultimate purpose behind attending isn't the food, music or entertainment. The Gran Ballo is a social event. The affair builds community and reinforces that the Requiem need not always be a dirge or bloody maraud. Deals are made, elders are on display, Bishops and Priests are waiting to be impressed. No better time exists for a vampire to ascend the social ladder. Unfortunately, it goes the other way, too. Make a glaring misstep and a vampire can go tumbling down the hierarchy before she gets the first run in her stockings.

Ultimately, the Gran Ballo is an antiquated affair featuring outmoded activities. It is for this reason that many young Sanctified (neonates and some ancillae) feel rather uncomfortable playing at such anachronistic pomp. Should a domain be populated only with such relatively young Kindred or those of the more modern creeds, the Grand Ball often becomes a wholly different affair — or, at the very least, a less anachronistic one. Modern music is played, the archaic dancing is replaced with something altogether more contemporary, and the general social pressure to perform is somewhat alleviated. Such progressive affairs are relatively rare.

The Grand Ball typically begins during the hour before midnight (at which time the attendees proceed with the "arrival march," showing themselves off to those who are already present). The whole event is naturally held away from the public eye, always at a location meant to be secret from outsiders. On the other hand, some chapters of the Lancea Sanctum open their Gran Ballo to others of the Damned, hoping to impress others with the covenant's grandeur and community. Kindred with ghouls or other retainers often bring them in their entourages, and more than one Gran Ballo has had guests of supernatural ilk other than the Kindred themselves.

System: Gran Ballo

Aside from the benefits gained from the feast itself (in the form of Vitae helping to replenish a diminished pool), the Gran Ballo confers a more subtle gift (or curse) as well. All Kindred attending the *ritus* are considered to be "immediate family" for the next seven nights for the purposes of determining blood ties with one another (see p. 162 of **Vampire: The Requiem**). Blood Ties allows the Kindred to receive a + 2 bonus when attempting to affect each other with certain Disciplines.

Crusade

The phrase, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" casts a relatively accurate reflection of how the Lancea Sanctum regards heretics. Going against the grain isn't merely a matter of opinion. It's an insult directed on everything the covenant holds dear, an assault on God, Longinus and all the Blood between. One who venerates some ancient blood hag or follows a socio-governmental idolatry is considered a passive heretic. For the most part, however, such sideline sacrilege is left to be scowled at, but not much more. After all, if the covenant had to destroy every Kindred who disagreed with their teachings, it would spend centuries playing at the task of such a pogrom.

Other heretics, however, are not so passive. Some break away from the Sanctified herd and preach variations of Longinus' philosophies — bizarre variations that malign what the covenant stands for and seeks to accomplish. Some heretics even go so far to preach against or physically attack the Lancea Sanctum. Any traitor to the cause or heretic who damages the credibility of the covenant is more than a mere obstacle. A vampire preaching such apostasy is committing a crime against God himself. Such a crime cannot be abided, and so the heretic must be destroyed, whether the agitator is a troublesome rogue or one's own dear childe. Enter the long-practiced *ritus* of the Crusade.

A Crusade is called only by a Bishop or one of superior title, as Sanctified of lesser station do not have the proper divine authority to demand the end of a heretic's Requiem. When the call goes out, all Sanctified in the domain are expected (though not required) to assume the mantle of Crusader. Kindred who refuse to take part are looked down upon, suffering a potential loss of esteem in their fellows' eyes, but unless the heretic is of extreme significance, no other punishment is necessary. Kindred who actively stand in the way of the Crusade's progress, however, may find themselves as unlucky casualties of war, or even branded heretics themselves.

A Crusade is usually called after the sun goes down in the evening (a time known in clerical terms as Vespers), and lasts as long as it takes to bring the heretic down. It could take a

single night, or may last years. Many Crusades are still technically "open" tonight, with a rare few remaining unresolved for 50 years or more. The only way for a Crusade to end is when a single vampire or coterie of vampires brings to the Bishop the remains of the apostate heretic. Netting such a prize for the glory of the covenant is an acclaimed honor indeed. Such an act comes with an inbuilt legacy and a significant boost in reputation. It's also a good sign that an Anointing approaches in the coming years, for the rewards of such a prize are long standing.

Crusades are not called often. The barometer of heresy that warrants such protracted and calculated violence has changed with the modern Danse Macabre. Once, it was easier to invoke such domain-wide wrath against a single being, as the world felt far larger. Now, with Kindred bumping elbows against one another in the crowded cities, it becomes harder to initiate a Crusade. Wise Bishops and Archbishops see that a city's Damned population forms a delicate web. Needlessly pulling the strands of that web can cause more trouble than it's worth. As such, the heretical acts that merit the calling of a Crusade are extreme. The murder of a significant covenant member, the wholesale destruction of Sanctified resources, betrayal of a Sanctified cleric or philosophy — all are acts that the Lancea Sanctum have marked as treachery of the highest order. Such ugly attacks on the covenant can be met only with a heavy hand, and that heavy hand may be a Crusade.

System: Crusade

Being the vampire (or coterie of Kindred) to bring in the heretic allows her to replenish her entire Willpower pool, whether she is a member of the Lancea Sanctum or not.

As well, the Kindred or coterie involved in the heretic's destruction gain a temporary dot of Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) that lasts for one month from the night of the heretic's end. During the month that follows, the player may purchase that dot (and only that dot) permanently for half its normal price. Only Kindred who have undergone the Creation Rite are eligible for this bonus. Those outside the covenant might enjoy a certain boost in reputation, but it does not suddenly confer membership in the covenant for them. On the other hand, neophytes in the covenant certainly stand to gain from satisfying the call to Crusade so early in their Sanctified careers, and a Kindred who converts immediately upon destroying the heretic enjoys the full benefit.

Quadragesima

Quadragesima (literally Latin for "40 days" or "40th day") is an imposed period of reflection, prayer, and fasting for the Sanctified. According to some translations of the *Testament*, after Longinus was cursed, he existed in a numb, hungry state

for 40 nights. During these 40 nights, he wandered mad with starvation, eyes and mind lying to him with hallucinations and visions. This was the covenant father's darkest time, but in a way, also the most revealing. For in his visions, he saw the true nature of his Requiem, and found what it meant to be a sanguine fiend of the night. Many of these visions found in the *Testament*, written in a cryptic poetical style, are said to inform much of what would become Longinus' philosophies and the Lancea Sanctum's practices.

To emulate the fasting of Longinus, the covenant offers the *ritus* of Quadragesima (sometimes called only "The Holy Denial" or "The Prophet's Fast"). It begins on the first night of the New Year (January 1) and continues for forty days, until February 9. Abstaining from drinking blood is a critical part of this ritual, but isn't the sum total of it, either. Starving oneself from Vitae for a full five and a half weeks is a sure road to frenzy, not to mention a practical guarantee that some overenthusiastic neonate is going to shatter the Masquerade. The fasting only takes place during the final week of the Denial, from February 3 to February 9. Wise Kindred feed to satiety beforehand so as not to go truly hungry, and hide themselves contemplatively away in their havens for the time, so as not to require any unnecessary uses of their Vitae. Clever enemies know that this is an excellent time to engage faithful Sanctified, if only to deplete their blood supplies and lead them to weakness.

The days prior to February 3 are marked by prayer and reflection, leading up to the abstaining from blood. Prayers are largely personal, with several instances of *Ecclesia* observed by individuals or coteries. Midnight Mass during this period does take on even more pomp and circumstance, however, usually running double the time with readings from the more obscure parts of *The Testament of Longinus*.

Not all Sanctified join in the *ritus* of Quadragesima. Once upon a time, they did. They were required to, actually, bound by dogma (and held fast by threats of further damnation and heresy) to take part in the Denial. As traditionalist and demanding as the Lancea Sanctum is, it can't demand such a sacrifice of its members in the current night, mostly because it just can't keep track of who is partaking and who isn't. Moreover, it's dangerous inviting such weakness into the covenant, even if only for seven nights. The Sanctified party line demands that every covenant member take part in the ritual. The reality, on the other hand, is that most give some lip service to prayer, but not to the actual fasting.

System: Quadragesima

Those Sanctified who faithfully meet the obligations of Quadragesima find that it reinvigorates them, giving them a wellspring of faith upon which to draw when they need it most. After fulfilling the requirements of the *ritus*, the Sanctified character's player may declare that the 9 Again rule applies to any single roll he makes. Again, this 9 Again bonus applies to a *single* roll — if applied to an extended action, it affects only the next roll made for that action, not every roll made for that action. If this bonus isn't taken before the beginning of the next Quadragesima (January 1), it is lost; players may not "bank" 9 Again bonuses earned in this manner. The 9 Again rule is described on p. 134 of the **World of Darkness** rulebook.

Note that the rules for hunger and starvation (see p. 179 of **Vampire: The Requiem**) apply when necessary during Quadragesima.

Ecclesia

In the early nights of the covenant, the only way to truly commune and connect with God and the Dark Prophet was through the appropriate covenant leaders. Priests, Bishops, Archbishops, and Cardinals were the only "official" lines to God and only they allowed the transubstantiation of mortal blood to divine judgment. These figures were the shepherds, and the sheep were not to think for themselves. This is not so much the case tonight in the Danse Macabre, as such strident religiosity has weakened and ultimately given way to more spiritual concerns than concerns of enforced principle. While the guidance of a Priest or other higher-up is still considered duly important, the Lancea Sanctum observes more personalized rituals that allow a vampire or a coterie some small connection with the divine. The Lancea Sanctum does not officially sanction these rituals, but the covenant certainly doesn't frown upon them. Any worship is seen as good worship, provided that a vampire doesn't rely solely upon the rituals to exalt the acts and philosophies of the Dark Prophet. These rituals are known as *Ecclesia* or common *ritae*.

Unlike *Apostolica*, *Ecclesia* have no mechanical game effects on their own. They exist solely to allow personal expression of a character's devotion to God and Longinus, and also to give players a chance to create their own rites and thus take an active hand in creating the setting itself.

Sermons

Virtually every one of the *Apostolica* is accompanied by a sermon, which may consist of a few brief remarks by the Priest or may include a thundering, fire-and-brimstone lecture on how various local Kindred fail to live up to their damnable heritage. Ultimately, the nature of the sermon varies according to the situation. It is considered *Ecclesia* because it is chosen by the Priest or other clergy member as opposed to being canonically mandated by the greater order of the faith or covenant. Monachal sermons resemble medieval Catholic masses, sometimes rendered entirely in Latin with responsive readings from parishioners. Westminster sermons might include hymns from the congregation (usually written by the Priest), the passing of the collection plate, and then a sermonette from the Priest, rarely lasting over 20 minutes. Tollison sermons, by contrast, are fiery exhibitions of the Priest's oratorical skills, accompanied by rousing music in a Gospel style. "There is Power in the

Blood" is by far the most common hymn sung in White Robe services. In fact, the Priest is often accompanied during his sermons by an organist who accentuates his points of emphasis with dramatic chords, as the congregation continually shouts out "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!" in response to the Priest's vivid descriptions of the Hell that awaits all vampires.

Supplications

Supplications are prayers. Nothing fancy here; these are simply personalized entreaties to God and the Dark Prophet. Technically, a vampire (with his coterie or without) can pray however he wants. He can beg for favor, ask for mercy, praise the sanctity of Damnation, even go so far as to utter curses and blasphemy to God and Christ (though should another Sanctified overhear such sacrilege, the vampire may find himself dragged before an Inquisitor). There's no actual benefit to praying other than an individual's strengthened connection to God, Longinus or the Church — whatever the supplicant seeks to achieve.

Minor Exorcism

The mortal world can be an ugly thing — base, vile and naïve. Compassion for it has a habit, though, of remaining and thriving in the dark places of a vampire's heart, feeding on guilt and doubt. The *ritus* of exorcism is meant to metaphorically conjure up that tiny moral mortal voice and snuff it like a candle flame. Any covenant member who reveals himself as pandering to mortal concerns is ripe for an exorcism, and that exorcism may be brought upon him by his coterie, or any Sanctified who feel justified in the act. The Kindred should be willing to submit to the exorcism, however, for he is required to be still for hours while his coterie chants over him and reads from the *Testament*. (Some don't care if the transgressor is willing, and bind and gag him until he is still and silent.) When this is done, the coterie brings a mortal before the vampire, hands him a weapon (or demands he use fang and claw), and he is then to hurt, feed from, or in extreme cases destroy the mortal being. If they have to force his hand, the exorcism is deemed a failure. Their demands can be many — they may demand he carve his name all over her body, or drink from her, violate her, or even kill her. When this is done, they leave him alone with the body (alive or dead) in the hopes that he will reflect upon the frailty of the human condition.

Storytellers, handle the use of exorcism carefully. Remember that a character's Humanity is not how "nice" he is, but rather how well he can deny the beast and pretend that he is human still. In that regard, it is almost certain that certain invocations of exorcism will put a Kindred at odds with his Humanity score. Actions undertaken during an exorcism may well end up costing him Humanity. That's the point, really — the Lancea Sanctum believes its role is to terrify mortals, but if they don't maintain their own Humanity, they will be undone by their own depredations and thus unable to fulfill their role. Exorcism is meant to test this paradoxical dichotomy in a dramatic sense, not to encourage players to turn their characters into gore-streaked psychos.

The Feast of Longinus (*Longinus Epularum*)

Where some Kindred look upon the Quadragesima with distaste for its dangerous antiquity, few frown upon the elective *ritus* that follows. After the Denial comes a single night of indulgence — the Feast of Longinus, called *Longinus Epularum* by the elders, and referred to simply as Feast Night in the vernacular.

Following the Quadragesima period of starvation and exile, the *Testament* shows that Longinus came to exalt the predatory Curse, and this night is the metaphorical expression of that transcendent moment. The Feast takes place on February 10. No Midnight Mass takes place on this night, even if the night falls on the requisite day. It begins after Vespers and continues until the first fingers of dawn streak the sky. The covenant holds no formal gatherings on this night, though some more informal celebrations pop up here and there. Unlike the Gran Ballo, nobody brings vessels to the Sanctified. No, the Kindred of the covenant are meant to embody the beastly predator within and hunt their own food. They're not just expected to hunt, however — they're expected to hunt well and hunt often. In that single span of night, each covenant member is told to pay tribute to the Dark Prophet by taking as much Vitae as she can. If that means gorging, then expending the Vitae on Disciplines or healing wounds, and then going out and finding more, then such is the Requiem of the deathless predator. Such acts are at the core of the Damned as defined by God.

Kindred walk a fine line this night. When the Damned go on an all-night hunt, the Masquerade is in extreme danger. If ever one night exists when the Masquerade suffers some regrettable fractures, it's the Feast Night of the Sanctified. Still, the Kindred are required to maintain some semblance of hiding from mortal eyes — when a pride of lions or pack of wolves hunts, it does so efficiently and under the cover of night and tall grass.

The Blessing of Vitae

This rite is actually little more than the vampiric equivalent of saying a blessing before a meal. Mortal blood becomes the sanguine body of God's own judgment in the veins of a vampire's body, and this is part of the Requiem. Feeding is a sacred act, a matter of pious predation. When a coterie or even an informal assembly of vampires joins together to feed, one member will be called upon to invoke the Blessing. In some cases, particularly devout Sanctified make a point of saying the Blessing before feeding by themselves. A few observant Kindred even go so far as to smear a bit of his own blood across the mortal's brow (whether the vessel lives or not). Naturally, this complicates feeding attempts that involve seducing the vessel. Primarily elders hold this practice in accord, and many neonates aren't even aware of its existence, especially in lax or liberal parishes. A common form of the Blessing is: "O God above who so righteously Damned me, bless this holy Vitae which I claim to fulfill my anointed purpose. Amen."

Rencontre

Religion, being the heated topic it is, offers constant opportunity for argument, both great and small. Small arguments may stem from the pronunciation of an arcane term from *The Testament of Longinus* or a presumed impropriety during Midnight Mass. Most of these small arguments can be solved quickly, and even if they are allowed to continue they amount to little more than a practical grudge. Some arguments take on a larger shape, however. If one vampire is passed up for an Anointing by another, or if a covenant member hears another utter something that she feels was the pinnacle of blasphemy, then an argument not so easily defeated is born. Blood runs hot with such disputes. Kindred make claims that can't be taken back ("Your sympathy with the Crone worshippers makes you weak and feeble") and hurl epithets at one another like stones from a sling ("Heretic!"). Often, the only way to solve such a fiery quarrel is through the *ritus* of Rencontre.

Rencontre is considered *Ecclesia*, and is either forbidden outright by the ranking clergy or sanctioned fully by the local covenant and considered to be a holy act handed down by the Dark Prophet himself. There is no middle ground; the covenant can't "sort of" approve of righteous satisfaction. It is, in many instances, a fight to the Final Death. The Lancea Sanctum would rather remove one of the quarrelers and maintain some semblance of unity than let bad blood poison the sanctity of the covenant. Plus, it evokes one of the unspoken tenets of the Lancea Sanctum: *Competition is pure*. A predator-prey relationship relies upon competition. The stronger and wiser vampire will continue her Requiem in the service to the covenant, whereas the weaker fool ends up as ashes or skulks away, shamed.

The *ritus* of Rencontre, for that very reason, isn't practiced lightly. Hot-blooded novitiates looking to chop one another into fleshy gobbets over a mistaken understanding of territory may well do so, but not under the holy guise of Rencontre. Rencontre is reserved for only the most extreme disputes, such as issues of dogma, position or lineage, or questions of heresy and principle. Such disagreements are worthy of blood spilled and, potentially, unlives prematurely ended. Where Sanctified are allowed the right of Rencontre — from the youngest novitiate to the most primeval elder — they may claim that right because the cause is worthy. Rencontre can be declared at any point, provided two parties agree to initiate such a grueling *ritus*. While this doesn't stop two parties from attempting to hack it out in an off-the-books, secular duel, it does stop such a battle from being recognized by the covenant. The ancient practice of Rencontre has changed little over the centuries, with a short but firm formal code attributed to the duel. The duel itself is to take place far away from mortal eyes so as to keep the Masquerade safe. The battle may occur in the basement of an abandoned tenement, in the dangerous wilds outside a city, or even in the church or basilica where Midnight Mass is held. The dueling Kindred may use weapons, and while it's not formally written, the weapons are almost always of the melee variety. Swords, maces, daggers, axes — all are appropriate tools

used to destroy one's opponent. Kindred are not only allowed to use their Disciplines against one another, they are encouraged to. Disciplines are boons recognized by the deeds of the Dark Prophet, preternatural weapons handed down through the divine curse of the Blood. Neglecting their use is seen as both foolhardy and contrary. The entire process takes as much time as is required, be it six seconds or eight hours.

When all is said and done, the defeated vampire loses the argument, gains shame, and in many cases, forfeits his unlife.

Rencontre has changed over the span of the Danse Macabre. With the evolution of opinions and beliefs also comes transformation of ritual and practice, and Rencontre is occasionally touched by such modernity. Provided both aggrieved Kindred agree to it, anything is allowed, provided it doesn't go against any of the covenant's teachings. For instance, some vampires shun archaic weapons and rely instead upon modern weapons like firearms or even explosives. Some don't even battle in the traditional sense. While top physical ability is an asset to the covenant, it's not the only way to prove dominance. Many Kindred are skilled politicos or manipulators with little interest or ability in the physical arena. Hence, some atypical duels take place in more abstract arenas. Consider two proselytizers who are arguing over a few critical lines of local doctrine. Instead of duking it out in an abandoned construction lot, they may define the challenge as seeing who can bring the Sanctified more converts to the covenant in a given time frame. Two Gangrel Sanctified may be allowed to pit blood-slave animals or human ghouls against one another while they sit on the sidelines, and two Ventrue may boil their argument down to a single night-long chess game. Of course, in the end, the results are really the same. The victor has proved his dominance, and the loser's shame tolls like a bell.

Blanket Party

When a coterie sees one of its own treading on thin ice — meaning, skirting heresy — its members may take his punishment into their own hands before he makes any serious transgressions. The blanket party is only one example of this, though probably the most common, and thus its vulgar name. The coterie conspires to surprise the offender — when the moment allows, they toss a blanket over his head (sometimes moving quickly to bind it with cord, cable, or barbed wire) and beat him with hands or blunt weapons. While beating their straying coteriemate, the group recites mantras and brief prayers from the *Testament*. Older vampires within the covenant frown upon such loutish behavior, but will turn a blind eye if they feel it can sufficiently bring a wayward vampire back to the path of the pious.

As might be expected, the "blanket party" can take many forms, such as by trapping the victim in a steel drum, submerging him in concrete, wrapping him in trash bags and dumping him into the river after the drubbing, etc.

The Fire Dance

The fire dance is most commonly associated with the Tollison Creed, although some Exotheist groups have a similar ritual. For the White Sunday Movement, the fire dance is a celebration of the vampire's status as God's Chosen Predator. Celebrants dance around a bonfire, whipping themselves into a righteous fury and moving progressively closer to the bonfire to demonstrate that God will protect them so long as their faith is pure. For the Exotheists, the Fire Dance represents more of an existential statement than a religious exercise; adherents take turns leaping over the bonfire to show that they do not fear Final Death.

The Serpent Rite

A powerful rite that lies at the core of the Tollison Creed, the Serpent Rite is derived from the practice of snake-handling associated with Holiness churches, a subset of the Pentecostal Church. The practice of snake-handling is derived from Mark 16:17-18: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." The vampires who follow the Tollison Creed bastardize this mortal practice as part of their efforts to achieve enlightenment. Typically, the centerpiece of a Serpent Rite is a mortal tied to an altar around which the congregation gathers. After a vitriolic sermon by the Priest designed to inflame the passions of the assembled vampires, several Sanctified bring forth snakes, usually rattlers, and cause them to bite the mortal. As the mortal goes into shock, the assembled vampires drink from her, and the combination of poison and adrenaline in her blood often causes hallucinations and fugue states in those who drink. While this rite normally makes use of snakes to prepare the vessel, sometimes other poisonous animals are used or the vessel is simply injected with a massive dose of some psychotropic drug.

In many White Robe congregations, the Priest performing the Serpent Rite will accompany it with the discrete use of the Theban Sorcery Ritual Curse of Babel (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 146.) The ritual is essentially used to force someone to speak in tongues, and to improve the ritual's efficacy, the Priest often performs it on himself in the hope that when his congregation hears him speak in tongues, they will be "slain by the spirit." Often, it has just that effect.

Acceptance Rite

Acceptance rites are short ceremonies in which the Priest invokes God or Longinus and gives thanks for His sending a new member to join a coterie. The new member responds by thanking God or Longinus for the privilege of joining the coterie. The prayer is considered to bring both good fortune and a sense of fellowship to the members of the coterie.

The Eulogy

As with mortals, the eulogy is a speech made to commemorate someone who has died. In the case of vampires, there is rarely a corpse to bury, and so when a Sanctified has met the Final Death, it is customary in the covenant for his coterie members to hold this ceremony in his memory. Typically, it is a small affair, limited to the coterie and a few close comrades. Occasionally, when a highly influential member of the covenant has died, the Bishop will require the attendance of the entire covenant at the eulogy service.

The Hajj

Based on the Fifth Pillar of Islam, which carries the same name, the Hajj refers to the duty of every Ibn-Shaitan to make a pilgrimage at least once a century to a holy site important to the sect. Typically, a coterie will make the pilgrimage together, but often an individual vampire will go alone.

The Hunter's Prayer

The Hunter's Prayer is little more than a good luck charm for most Sanctified, and even non-Sanctified who are superstitious and have had difficulties feeding occasionally say the prayer before going out on the hunt. The traditional form of the prayer is: "Heavenly Father, guide my aim as I serve as your Holy Spear, spilling the blood of the wicked in your name. Amen."

Salat

Salat refers to the Second Pillar of Islam, which requires a Muslim to pray five times a day in the direction of Mecca. For followers of the Iblic Creed, the Salat is altered to fit the needs of the undead: Prayers are instead made five times a night.

Sawn

Among mortal Muslims, sawn refers to the practice of fasting during the daylight hours of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. The Iblic Creed modifies the Ramadan Fast to apply to the needs of the Banu Shaitan. An Ibn-Shaitan is required during Ramadan to feed only from a certain type of vessel. While there are some divisions in the creed as to how the selection process should work, the most common interpretation is that once a vampire feeds from a vessel during Ramadan, anyone else he feeds from must be of the same gender, approximate age (give or take a few years), ethnic heritage and occupation.

Creating Apostolica

The covenant's *primary* rites are listed above, but as mentioned, these are not the sum total of the Lancea Sanctum's *Apostolica*, merely those that are recognized as broadly as possible. Like the Roman Catholic Church, every day is infused with some kind of religious ritual celebrating this saint or that sacred moment of history. In the modern Church, who has time for such constant ritualizing? Most of these important rites are not so much lost as relegated to lesser importance, and the same thing goes with the sacred ceremonies of the Sanctified. Exceptionally pious Bishops promote some while others are forgotten entirely. The bottom line is, feel free to create *Apostolica* for use in your chronicle. Follow a few key guidelines, and you'll be on your way to creating the holy rites of the Lancea Sanctum.

First, many of the sacred rites take place on specific nights. If a night didn't have genuine significance once upon a time, the covenant has little problem synthesizing some significance. Second, a rite is intended to be attended by the majority of the covenant members in a given domain, not practiced by a mere few Sanctified in that city. *Apostolica* are holy rites drawn from the teachings of the Dark Prophet, and are not to be neglected. If you're using the optional rules systems, unlike *Ecclesia*, these liturgical rituals grant the practitioners some mechanical benefit in the game: the power of God and his will literally coming through the *ritus* and granting power to the pious. This benefit is rarely neither large, nor permanent. It may grant a temporary point of Willpower, a temporary boost to certain dice pools, even a Vitae that can be used at a later time. It's not suggested that a ritual confer any permanent benefit — and if it does, the ritual should be so exhaustive, difficult, and ancient that it's not only ignored, but also probably lost to the fog of eternity. Fourth and finally, *Apostolica* are not small ceremonies. For the most part, they are imposing affairs, swollen with gravity and grandeur. Most feature ritual implements, clothing, and require long periods of participation.

***Example**: Martin wants to create a new* Apostolica *for his chronicle's home domain. He decides that November 13 is the Feast Day of Heslin the Elder, a torpid ancient in the Lancea Sanctum who, two centuries before, found some of the lost fragments of* The Testament of Longinus *through cunning and devotion. The practice of the ritual, Martin decides, involves the veneration of the elders and the covenant superiors. Participants must hunt that night and bring those above them in age a draught of Vitae in a blessed vessel, and then are required to submit to liturgical lessons by their superior. Martin makes it so that the teaching bolsters a vampire's confidence, and for a week allows that vampire a + 2 dice bonus to all rolls involving Theban Sorcery.*

Creating Ecclesia

What we show in this chapter is only a minute percentage of the *Ecclesia* practiced by the Sanctified. The truth of the matter is, thousands of minor, unsanctioned rituals like these exist throughout the covenant tonight, some broad enough to be practiced by the Damned across the world, others specific enough to be tailor-made for an individual Kindred. The covenant relies heavily on ritual, and its individual members are no different. Feel free to create *Ecclesia* for use in any chronicle that deals with the Lancea Sanctum. The important thing to remember about most of these common rites is that they tend to be relatively low-key in ceremony. In other words, they don't require much preparation or spectacle, and are minor enough that they don't confer any mechanical benefits or supernatural advantages. The *Ecclesia* are ways for individual Kindred or Sanctified coteries to express their devotion to the covenant as well as perform some kind of practical function (punishing a member of their group, rewarding dutiful service to the Lancea Sanctum, hunting for blood, etc.).

***Example**: Chaney knows that his players' characters will soon be part of a violent altercation between covenants — and the coterie knows it, too. He helps them create a minor rite meant to invoke the martial spirit of the Lancea Sanctum. They come up with a small* ritus *called the Liturgy of War, whereupon the Kindred swear an oath of victory over forged weapons (sword, axe, even crowbar) beneath the full moon on a rooftop. Also important to the ritual is the interspersing of prayers taken from the First Canon. The ritual grants no actual bonuses, but allows the Kindred to flex their battle skills and prepare for the coming war.*

Domain Politics

The Sanctified have little doubt that they are the superior beings, because they have a direct connection with God, and they understand the nature of damnation. The Lancea Sanctum teaches that the damnation, while tragic, is also a state of being demanded by God and the Dark Prophet. It's a curse, to be sure, but a sacred burden, like a battered and bleeding Christ bearing the heavy cross. The Kindred of the covenant know that they are condemned to exist as deathless beings outside the light, and they accept it. They also accept the bloodthirsty state of their condition, setting aside the constraints of a mortal life in favor of the true way, a predator's way. That doesn't mean their behavior devolves into mindless brutality, however. No, most Sanctified know that a balance needs to be struck between the monster and the missionary, the beast and the bishop.

How does this outlook affect the politics of the covenant? The Lancea Sanctum is a religious entity, an organization that doubly exalts the Beast Within and the sacred chain of being. Does the covenant see itself as the grand master of the vampire world, crushing all opposition beneath its empire? Or does it instead sit idly by, believing that the spoils of war will come to them simply because they deserve it and wish it so?

Divine Right of Kings

The Lancea Sanctum walks a fine line with regard to its perceived position of superiority among vampires. On one hand, the covenant believes God has quite literally cursed all Kindred. As such, the Lancea Sanctum is the manifestation of his divine will, communicated to the Kindred through the wisdom of Longinus. Those who do not recognize God's authority — and by proxy, the authority of the Sanctified — must be made to kneel. Politically speaking, the Lancea Sanctum believes it must exert its supremacy at every turn, proving its mettle in an effort to gain followers, which in turn creates greater faith and a stronger covenant. All of this is done in service to the teachings given by the Dark Prophet. Rebuking such philosophy goes against the very desires of Heaven.

On the other hand, the covenant is already dominant. It may not be the foremost political force in a given domain, but in the dead hearts and zealous minds of many Sanctified, the covenant doesn't need to be. Just because the Lancea Sanctum isn't the primary governing body doesn't mean it's not already the strongest and most pious institution out there. Who cares if the rest of the world bows its head in reverence? Those who do will know the taste of godliness and purity, and those who refuse are nothing more than rats feasting on their own filth.

Hence, the covenant is split somewhat by this schism of action versus inaction. Some believe Longinus' teachings must be made manifest through conquest, and others claim that God's will is already manifest and the covenant has already conquered the rest of the world by nature of its supreme philosophy. How does this all play out in practice? Bottom line, it depends on the desires of individual Kindred — particularly the figures of authority in the covenants' local chapters.

Natural Law

Some prelates of the Lancea Sanctum believe that natural laws govern the politics of a given domain, meaning that those Kindred who are stronger in mind, body and spirit will dominate those who are weaker. Call it "survival of the fittest" or "natural selection," it all boils down to the more capable Kindred either dominating the weaker ones or culling such debility from the herd. The Lancea Sanctum, of course, has no doubt who the better vampires are (them) and who the weaker ones are (everybody else).

A city or domain under the leadership of a Sanctified espousing such a theory is sure to feature more aggressive action on the part of the Lancea Sanctum. If the covenant doesn't have a dominant interest in the parish, it may well make motions to do so swiftly and mercilessly. This doesn't automatically mean military action — overt violence tends to be a last resort. No, instead the Lancea Sanctum first moves covertly to supplant or advise the current regime of ruling vampires, be they proud Invictus or a band of Carthian progressives.

The covenant uses several tactics to covertly subvert the foundation of a city's current vampiric power base. The first and most obvious point of attack is the blood supply of those involved with the extant praxis (Prince, Prisci, etc.). Such figures often have herds, and the Lancea Sanctum may move to scatter or destroy them. Poisoning, random accidents, even using Disciplines to steal a vampire's herd out from under her — all are viable tactics.

Next comes a war of influence. As much as most Kindred would like to exist outside of temporal needs, it's just not possible. Even an elder with an arsenal of potent Disciplines still needs fundamental worldly resources to gain power. Kindred in power need money and real estate. They also need people on the inside of the legal and judicial systems, as well as mortals serving their needs inside the transportation industry and the local (if not greater) media. It's not enough to demand fealty from Kindred — a vampire has to have the goods to back up her claims. If he can't show proof that he holds a swath of territory across a given domain or that his bank accounts are seemingly endless, well… who's really going to listen to a would-be *aristo* in the poor house with a single-room haven? The Sanctified attack these mortal bases of influence. Crippling such temporal routes to power is like removing the legs of a table — it needs them to stand. Much of this comes down to a hidden battle of mortal agents. The covenant may hire or co-opt lawyers to exploit legal loopholes in hopes of destroying influence — maybe the lawyers have a Regent's haven declared "historical property of the state" or perhaps the lawyers can find a legal anomaly in the bank accounts of the Prince. Venture capitalists of the Sanctified may buy out rival interests with no warning, but then who's to say the rivals' mortal contingent won't be able to find their own legal loopholes to exploit, putting the Sanctified "agents" in jail for misappropriation of funds? Much of this comes down to a multi-tiered chess match, with each warring covenant attempting to undercut and destabilize the other using human pawns. Such is the way of the Danse Macabre, as any experienced Kindred can attest.

But therein lies a problem. The Sanctified aren't as good at dealing with mortals than some of the other covenants. They believe themselves predators, and mortals are the prey. Such a distance from the Canaille distorts the covenant's perceptions of how mortals really act, and how their world really works. That's not to say they are poor manipulators when it comes to temporal power — only that some others (the Invictus and Carthians specifically) do it better. The Sanctified have the advantage in that they're often willing to be more brutal when it comes to handling (or mishandling) mortal pawns. The Invictus, still holding onto some scraps of their antiquated morality, may handle mortals with a kinder touch. The Carthians occasionally employ their own methods of empowerment to their mortal agents, building a sense of ownership (even if those deluded mortals don't realize their sense of enfranchisement is misplaced). The Sanctified recognizes that to make an omelet, eggs get broken, and the same goes for claiming praxis. However, the niggling fact remains — the Invictus and Carthians have an edge in a war of influence, and win it more often than not in comparison to the Sanctified.

(This isn't to denigrate the efforts of the Ordo Dracul and Circle of the Crone. Quite the contrary, in fact — these covenants often play bitter rivals to the Sanctified. In the end, however, the dragons and Acolytes often have the same difficulties relating to mortals that the Sanctified encounter, and thus enter such wars of influence on more even footing.)

The Lancea Sanctum, however, often has an edge with regard to the vampire population. Regardless of whether the war of influence succeeds or fails, the covenant will also take the war to the city's Kindred. The key aspect of this battle is recruitment. The covenant, when deciding to shift a domain's praxis, will mount an aggressive campaign, promulgating the message to local Kindred that they are the supreme authority of all vampires with answers to the Requiem's most pervasive questions. They may offer aid, protection and an open door policy to those Damned who will stand with them. That's the obvious side of the equation — a subtler one exists, as well. While making a very public display of itself, the covenant may send spies and scouts to the other side (or other sides, plural, provided they are fighting a battle against several opponent covenants) in an effort to find any bit of information. Wars are occasionally won on this front alone. If enough vampires change allegiance and align themselves with the Lancea Sanctum, the current political body might no longer be able to sustain itself without that support. It collapses, and the Sanctified seize praxis. Sometimes, though, even these battles are lost.

When that happens, violence is the last resort, and one the covenant finds only partially regrettable (they have named themselves the wielders of a relic weapon for a reason, after all). Such military action doesn't spill out into the streets if the covenant can help it — they don't send armies of shock troops marching down Main Street with Ak-47s and wooden stakes. Even when the war does go more public than the covenant would prefer, it tends to be cloaked under the guise of a

gang war, police action or rioting. Sometimes, however, the Sanctified won't bother attacking the mortal elements of a rival covenant's dominance, and will instead go right for the head — the Damned themselves.

Attempting to end the unlives of prominent Kindred is a difficult and risky maneuver. Some Sanctified leaders, however, believe that their will is superior and that such an effort — while dangerous — will be successful through the grace of the Dark Prophet. The Lancea Sanctum, in this case, might attempt to eliminate the leading members (Princes, sympathetic Regents, Prisci, Sheriffs, any loyal elders) of the opposing covenant or covenants and then simply move into the vacuum created. If the Kindred in the city resist such a move, they find themselves branded as obstacles in the path to righteous glory, and find themselves on the list of the Sanctified's targets. Nothing is easy about this course of action. Sometimes just finding rival Damned is difficult, as they don't go out in public with neon signs on their backs.

However, while the Lancea Sanctum is capable of performing such actions, such overt motions are thankfully rare in the Danse Macabre. Not only does the world favor subtlety, but with Damned populations growing in cosmopolitan cities, it seems easier instead to develop symbiotic relationships (however tense they become) with the other covenants. Drastic action is taken only when the Lancea Sanctum finds that it has little other choice (or, alternatively, if the domain leadership is beholden to older and more violent values).

Validation of Authority

Covenant luminaries who feel that the Lancea Sanctum will achieve dominance over time without exhausting its resources in constant battles represent the other side of the coin. The covenant is the Tortoise to everybody else's Hare — slow and steady wins the race. Why work overtime to obtain what's already been achieved? These Damned believe their covenant to already be the dominant force among Kindred, even if they don't directly control temporal influence or orchestrate all aspects of Kindred politics. According to Sanctified historians, the Lancea Sanctum is the oldest covenant still extant (despite the so-called "beliefs" of the other factions) — they'll be around far longer than the rest of these new-philosophy upstarts.

That's not to say the covenant rests on its laurels. On the contrary, it does what it always does. It offers salvation to the Kindred. It paves the way for other vampires to come to grips with their damnation, and moreover, it shows them how to harness their accursed state and become what God has planned for them. Over time, the Lancea Sanctum believes that most Kindred will come to an appreciation of this condition, and recruitment numbers have proven this (for the most part). With recruitment and vampire conversion comes a boost in numbers, and a boost in numbers means greater strength for the covenant on a whole. Once such strength has been achieved, and a majority of a region's Kindred swayed to the sanctity of the cause… the city's praxis usually ends up in the covenant's possession. How could it not? Unless the dominant rival interests maintain their authority through an overt and exceptional use of force, it's unlikely that they can continue such supremacy without the support of the majority of the vampire population. In this way, the Lancea Sanctum remains relatively non-aggressive, but still exerts its spiritual and moral authority over the Kindred *civitas*.

Does this technique actually work? Not as much as some Sanctified would like, but more than its detractors admit. The advantage of such a method is that patient covenant members can rely on the benefit of a relatively eternal existence to wait out the "staying power" of other covenants. The disadvantage is that it may take 10 years, 50 years, even a century a more. If the covenant needs to bolster its ranks immediately, this methodology won't bear swift results. An urgent demand for strength requires the more uncompromising approach listed above or the morally forbidden practice of Embracing new converts directly into the covenant.

Still, if the covenant has the time and an inclination toward persistence, this technique holds water. Even when it doesn't, some Sanctified find little reason for concern. Spiritually minded Kindred are content with their place in the world, however it pans out politically. Such Kindred know they're on the winning side. Their philosophies are not only sacred, but literally true. Their blood represents God's own power on this Earth. Their salvation-through-damnation is timeless and limitless. Who cares what the rabble-rousers, heretics and fence-sitters think? The Lancea Sanctum, like the mortal Church, knows that it is forever. A mountain needn't take over the world to be the land's tallest feature, does it?

Symbiosis

The political climate of the Danse Macabre is frequently one that requires compromise and cooperation, if only to a limited degree. Without such moderate concessions, the cities would burn as the Kindred raged against one another, and a wholesale extinction of the Damned at the hands of mortals would soon follow. Once upon a time, the Lancea Sanctum would have considered such cooperation to be a stark admission of weakness. Crossing the battlefield to shake the hands of the heathen would have been a laughable notion, but in the Danse Macabre, few other choices are truly available.

Cities are home to a variety of Kindred with different beliefs. Coteries that once might have been composed of nothing but Sanctified vampires now host Kindred of varying principles and allegiances. Domains are rarely claimed by a single theocratic covenant, and instead are guided by the various groups as part of an intricate web of influence. The Lancea Sanctum certainly doesn't prefer this — but rejecting the current conditions doesn't make them go away, and only makes the job of the Sanctified harder. Constantly fighting and struggling does little for the spiritual wellbeing of the Kindred, after all. Most Sanctified accept the concept of compromise with an eye toward the future, meaning future advantage. Kindred with a penchant for self-reliance must sometimes recognize that the choice is to give a little ground now (in hopes of regaining it and more later), or fall behind in the Danse

Macabre. While some Sanctified are certainly willing to accept the latter option, many others are not so quick to accept ruin or even Final Death. Bowing and scraping in front of the Prince now may open the door for a coup later — or, at the least, will allow the covenant to quietly continue practicing its recruitment and *ritae*. When possible, members of the covenant may pursue an advisory position, even in a contested city, in the hopes of turning a sympathetic ear toward the Lancea Sanctum. Some particularly cunning and persuasive Sanctified have managed, over the centuries, to turn an opposing Prince or Priscus toward the covenant, thus changing the entire political climate of a region.

For the most part, it's savvy (or cowardly) young Kindred willing to make accessions in the name of compromise. Older ancillae and elders are less interested in cutting deals and selling the covenant short, and compromises from such staunch conservatives are few and far between. Such older Sanctified may not wage a bloody war, but won't allow the other covenants to walk on their ideals, either. The condition of damnation may not be diminished, especially by lesser beings.

Absolutism of Rule

Should the Lancea Sanctum manage, through whatever methodology, to become an influential political force of the city (even if not the dominant one), it begs the question, "What next?" How does the covenant handle being the empowered majority? What advantages can the covenant use to affect the local society of the Damned, and what disadvantages can enemies exploit?

Social Contract: The Lancea Sanctum, when it gains political power, offers something of an unspoken deal to that city's vampire inhabitants. The covenant offers those Kindred a "social contract." If the group acknowledges the rule or at least the faith of the Lancea Sanctum, the covenant will in turn keep the Kindred safe and secure. Those Kindred may also, for the most part, exist in the level of comfort they're used to. Achieving this requires acknowledging some degree of spiritual superiority belonging to the covenant, accepting covenant judgment in matters that concern it, and acting in obeisance in at least a limited capacity (outwardly, if not in actual belief). If the Damned bow their heads, kneel when told, and show up at the occasional Midnight Mass then they gain acceptance and protection, if not open favor. Conservatives among the covenant insist that this social contract isn't negotiable: Refuse the offer, and it doesn't get made a second time. All protection and security is then null and void, and the Lancea Sanctum makes no promises to those who deny its open door policy. In practice, only hardliners make such rigid distinctions. On the other hand, even liberal or otherwise progressive Sanctified don't enjoy being played for fools, and the rogue who takes sanctuary among their ranks probably won't have a chance to do it again if he abuses Lancea Sanctum hospitality for his own ends.

Out With the Old: What about the vampires still existing in the city who are castoffs from the previous regimes, ruling bodies, or failed attempts to subvert or seize praxis? If erstwhile Prince or Primogen still have their heads and dwell within the boundaries of the city, they may find a new lease on the Requiem within the ranks of the Sanctified. Their autonomy has dwindled, but the covenant makes no judgments in extending the Word of God and Longinus to any Kindred willing to accept it (usually). Spiritually, fallen Kindred are due the chance to accept their fates, and politically, they may still be worth something in the long run. Such elders and prior officers are often given fewer leniencies than younger Kindred, however. The choice offered is certainly more extreme, with the rationale that such hardship is necessary to instill the proper sense of humility. Of course, even those Kindred who do submit aren't given a loose leash. They start from square one. Even the most annuated elder begins her covenant indoctrination as a true novitiate, and even neonates might hold greater roles than her. Then again, it's either humiliation or a less guaranteed Requiem among one of the other covenants or even among the unbound, both of which are sure to have trials of their own. Indeed, some elders choose such ignominious ends, but others see the value in the Church of Longinus, whether piously or with treachery still within their hearts.

Rebellion: Whether the covenant likes it or not, the Lancea Sanctum is sure to face resistance to any influence it might accumulate. Whether the resistance comes from partisans left over from a rivalry or from a nascent contingent of vampires seeking to hinder the Lancea Sanctum, it happens no matter how hard or loose the covenant is with the rules. It's difficult to truly excise an entire strain of thought contrary to prevailing political climes. The best that can be done is for the Lancea Sanctum to discourage any fence-sitters from joining the resistance, or to actively court them for its own favor. Zealots will always resist; it's the "common Kindred" who need to be kept from such foolish endeavors. The covenant keeps the undecided in line with a regimen of promise, respect and reward. Respect enters the picture when the covenant takes extra effort to communicate the beliefs of its Church: respect for God, Longinus and the whole of the Kindred condition. Granted, respect can quickly turn to fear and resentment, usually under draconian leaders who resort to making grim, bloody examples, but wise leaders know that fear bears only so much weight before becoming hatred. On the other hand, the Lancea Sanctum practically delights in showcasing what happens to perfidious heretics. Rewards enter the picture through a system of favor and bounties. Any Kindred who brings in a member of the resistance (proof is only marginally necessary) to an appropriate Priest or Bishop typically receives some kind of reward. This could be a reward of territory, or even a promise of a greater future role should the vampire choose to accept it. Beyond that system, the covenant also relies on its network of spies and scouts (among the most devoted in the Kindred world) to place themselves within the resistance movement in whatever way possible. From there, such intelligence reveals the treacherous vermin in due time.

***Ritae*:** One of the benefits of instituting an established schedule of *Apostolica* is that it reveals the weak spots of a

parish's congregation. Less significant with regard to those Kindred who have long been with the covenant, this "watermark" test is useful specifically to assess new members of the Lancea Sanctum, and more importantly, those non-members who have been recently extended the social contract or who have converted from a previously established power. Even a simple thing like Midnight Mass is an excellent gauge of the faith levels of the city's inhabitants. If someone abstains from the *ritus* frequently, covenant luminaries take note. A local Priest (or a Bishop, if the vampire is important enough) may be dispatched to play either politico or sincere spiritual counselor. The covenant usually makes every good-faith effort possible to turn the wayward Kindred toward the light, hoping to convince her to take seriously the condition of damnation. Should this not work, or should the Kindred in question not really have made herself seem interested in the covenant's ideology, she may well find herself outside the protective benefice of the social contract.

Mortal Influence: As discussed above, a dominant or influential body of Kindred cannot hold political position in a given domain without some kind of sway over local mortal resources. The Sanctified will not maintain praxis or even be able to cultivate any kind of power in the first place without some degree of mortal influence, whether among real estate, business, politics, transportation, or easily overlooked functionaries like park rangers or sewer workers. The stronger the base of mortal influence, the deeper the covenant's power will go. Of course, as was also discussed above, the Sanctified do not excel when dealing with mortals. While many members of the covenant are capable, some Sanctified find it very hard to see humanity as anything but a tribe of blissfully ignorant sustenance.

Replacement Kindred: Sometimes, in taking a particularly aggressive route to political power, the covenant may eliminate more opposition than it intended. This leaves certain aspects of the domain weak enough to be exploited, but it also diminishes one of the Lancea Sanctum's key strategic elements: converted Kindred. When a city's society of the Damned is left in chaos, the covenant moves in and herds the wayward sheep into the fold. What happens when there aren't enough of the Damned left behind to bring into the Church? The Lancea Sanctum must make more, of course. It is possible to take faithful Kindred from other cities and supplant them into an extant domain. The problem with this is, not only is transportation risky and the Predator's Taint at least an initial threat, but the Lancea Sanctum has no guarantee its outside proselytizing efforts will be effective. When this happens, the Lancea Sanctum may go on an active period of Embracing mortals. This violates the Traditions, and the covenant knows it. On the other hand, the covenant also recognizes that it is the supreme spiritual authority, and from time to time such breaches of conduct are necessary to maintain its vital strength. Plus, creating whole new Kindred gives the covenant the advantage that it will have, for the most part, a handful of vampires who are essentially *tabula rasa*. The Lancea Sanctum can instruct these neonates with every important piece of dogma and ritual from the ground up, creating devoted loyalists willing to sacrifice their unlives for the good of the covenant.

Chapter Three:

The Lancea Sanctum And The Danse Macabre

Though they slept
and hunted and fed
in the streets of the city,
I saw that they were truly
like wild animals.

The Damned who stalked
within the walls
snarled and behaved
like predatory beasts,
but they had no thoughts
left above it all.
They thirsted
without purpose.

I hoped I might find
kindred spirits among that lot,
but how could I know
what to tell them
until I had heard
to tell myself?
I thirsted for purpose.

— The Testament of Longinus

"Let us flee to the fortified cities and perish there! For God has doomed us to perish and given us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against him."

— Jeremiah 8:14

Neonates: Wayward Flesh

When a mortal is thrust into the damnation of the dark and ceaseless Requiem, it's like being born again into a more horrible world. Murderous urges supplant the beneficence of humanity as the neonate's mind drowns in a red wash of hunger. The Kindred will never see a sunset or a sunrise without fear, never again taste a home-cooked meal. The curse strips away his old life, and replaces it with little more than bloody starvation and profound confusion.

Thus the way of the Sanctified is so appealing to neonates. The Requiem is like being dropped naked into a cold, dark pit. The covenant offers a means out of that pit: a well-lit path, warm enough to halt the cold, and explored by hundreds of previous Kindred.

The Lancea Sanctum professes to offer sustenance, purpose, and a degree of uncompromising safety — provided the neonate is willing to listen for a while.

Neonates and the Lancea Sanctum

Faith cannot subsist on itself. It needs followers to survive — followers hungry to consume ancient or existent beliefs, desperate to fill those empty spaces. Faith, in its way, is the perfect predator, immaculate in a way the Damned may never be. The Lancea Sanctum knows its faith always hungers and needs to feed. Who better to place beneath its fangs than the most supple among the undead? Who better than the neonates?

It is, of course, a triumph to convert an ancilla or an elder, but bringing such established Kindred into the church has dangers that frequently outweigh rewards. Older vampires have spent their Requiems finding answers of their own, or worse, the answers of others. Sometimes this baggage of principles is hard to strip away, and the grim purity of the Sanctified faith may not truly take root within the dead soil of an elder's doubting heart. Neonates, though, are like newborn children. They are empty vessels waiting — even longing — to be filled with faith. The word of the Dark Prophet and the righteous curse handed down by God Himself provide that faith, and more.

Neonates may be too young to meaningfully comprehend the mysteries and truths that the Lancea Sanctum explores, but setting them on the path early helps them achieve a greater understanding in later nights, as their Requiems play on. In the meantime, young vampires are welcomed into the icy arms of the covenant, given tasks and tests to cement their devotion and loyalty, and kept free of idleness, which is the enemy of faith.

Longinus' Lost Children

In sanguis veritas. "In blood, truth," say the ancillae.

Do neonates understand this? Unlikely. Initially, Vitae is sustenance. The sticky, red, coppery, sweet substance drives a Kindred's hunger, pulls at his stale guts and splashes at the back of his lifeless throat, but little may seem mystical about it. Where once a vampire was mortal and sought the comforts of bread, wine and meat, now his desperate appetite can only be sated by the consumption of blood; but quenching the bloodlust doesn't satisfy the deeper (and perhaps unrecognized) craving to understand the vampiric condition, to provide meaning to a damnation that may seem arbitrary and senseless. For new vampires, the sensual reality of God's curse overwhelms its spiritual reality. Night-to-night existence can create the illusion that undeath is utterly about the flesh, that blood is all. But *within* the blood, there is truth.

Neonates are, for the most part, cast adrift. Yes, they may have sires or sponsors or covenants that inform the basics of their condition — the How (how to feed, how to hide) and the What (what to fear, what a vampire is) — but often these basics are given no context. Rarely does anyone show them a framework of meaning that helps to ameliorate their comprehension of the big question — the Why (why vampires thirst, why vampires exist). The Sanctified have the answers. They do not share all answers lightly, though, and when they do it's only to the devout, to the advocates and champions of the covenant.

For Kindred seeking greater answers, the Sanctified present an endless array of them, all leading to service and magnificence in the name of Longinus. Neonates no longer need to see their Requiem as an endless tautology of thirst and struggle for survival. Within the Lancea Sanctum, a neonate's divine development in undeath is limited only by her faith and willingness to participate.

Recruitment

Many missionary Sanctified witnessing to a neonate (or a coterie of neonates) avoid the harder and more extreme lessons of the covenant to avoid scaring away potential converts. Should a hardliner or zealot be the one proselytizing to a newly Embraced Kindred, however, the message may be one of harsh damnation and glorious unkindness in the Requiem. A sales pitch depends on the seller and a sermon depends on the sermonizer. Of course, just how well a sermon is accepted and understood depends on the listener. A "soft" message of faith — one that bends to accommodate the audience — may be accepted by most, but to neonates whose minds are either openly malleable or are perhaps already zealous in some belief or another, a harder, more "fire-and-brimstone" approach may be necessary. The mystical and alien theology of the vampire church must crack through a shell of worldly, mortal assumptions to reach neonates who have only begun to see through the lies of the World of Darkness.

Why the Lancea Sanctum is Best

The Invictus provides an established path to power for neonates, but while vassalage may smooth the operations of the feudal machine, it may do nothing to better the vampire herself; even political power may not improve the self. The Carthians, in contrast, suppose to grant the neonate personal power without personal insight. The Ordo Dracul makes fascinating promises about the salvation of a neonate's soul, but offers little spiritual support along the strange road they follow. And the Circle of the Crone? Most neonates with mortal memories fresh in their heads shudder at the thought of joining the mutilated ranks of such hoary lunatics. The Lancea Sanctum, however, offers the same draw as the churches many mortals knew in life. For those who seek foundational answers, the Lancea Sanctum allows a comfortable, moderate level of worship and admittance provided a neonate follows the basic tenets of the covenant and attends a minimum of necessary functions. (It is also important for the neonate to recognize and present himself as "Sanctified" in allegiance, to strengthen the image of Lancea Sanctum ubiquity.)

Regardless of the exact message, the covenant attempts to lay hooks into neonates and then cast them back adrift, so that they may return to the Lancea Sanctum by their own will. Thus the covenant becomes a destination, converts become pilgrims, and the arrival at the church becomes a matter of relief and pride for the neonate. A willing convert is better than a forced one.

That's not to say some Sanctified don't favor violent, forceful programming. Some attempt to drive the veneration of Longinus into an empty-headed neonate with a hammer and spike. While this brand of conversion is seen as strong when it's successful, it's sometimes seen as damaging to a neonate's faith. The word of Longinus may enter the soul through a broken body, but it may seep out or be replaced through never-healing fractures. The counter to this belief suggests that scars (tangible or not) remind the convert where true power can be found.

For the most part, it's simply easier to say, "We have the answers. If you seek them, come to us." Many neonates find such a siren's call hard to resist, even if they later refuse to formally join the covenant.

Ancillae, hearing word of a newly Damned childe, may make an active effort to track down a neonate and preach to him immediately. Others favor a less religious approach, and simply find the neonate to offer a hand of mercy in confusing times. Missionary vampires might offer free poaching in a part of her territory, aid in ending a violent altercation, or even just a few earnest words of advice. It's only later that the sermonizing begins. Perhaps a copy of the Catechism is left behind on a neonate's doorstep, or maybe an evangelist casually mentions the teachings of the Dark Prophet. The recruiter hints at a great mystery, and far greater answers, then leaves a trail of breadcrumbs leading back to the church.

Of course, recruitment into the ranks of such a conservative and militaristic covenant isn't always going to come with a soft word and an easy hand. When the Lancea Sanctum seeks to strengthen its ranks, it stops at nothing to produce new converts among the neonate population. Some extreme Sanctified do truly anything to bring in new converts: blackmail, bribery, torture, emotional reprogramming, murder. The key is that the covenant rarely officially approves of such negative tactics, and instead creates or exaggerates unfortunate circumstances to drive the weak or the suffering into the sanctuary of the church. The covenant doesn't want to publicize a terror campaign against the city's neonates.

The Lancea Sanctum is surprisingly adept at the art of misdirection. Vague and ominous threats against a neonate may come from a Sanctified missionary, but be made to appear as acts of violent Crone worshippers through the use of pierced thugs disguised as harassing pagans, scaring neonates into the sanctuary of the churchyard. The covenant works to establish the rest of the vampire world as a neonate's enemy while maintaining the Lancea Sanctum as a safe refuge. The murder of a neonates's loved one and a few obvious cult sigils or Carthian propaganda may give a neonate enough of a push in the right direction — and the right direction is always toward the Lancea Sanctum. Like wolves harrying their prey into a dead end, the covenant eliminates all other options from a targeted neonate's mind, so she has little choice but to run into the arms of the covenant that secretly despoiled her. These are extreme examples, but not necessarily uncommon ones for regions where the covenant is desperate… or poorly monitored.

Should a neonate resist a recruitment effort by the Sanctified, they may allow her to proceed on her way, judging her unready or unworthy for now. Should a neonate cause trouble in her resistance (bringing violence against covenant members or publicly insulting the principles of the Sanctified, for example), she runs the risk of being branded a heretic and burning for her sins. If she has friends in high places, however, she may escape with little more than a few scratches to her reputation and sense of security.

Answers

The Lancea Sanctum needn't rely on heavy-handed recruitment tactics to bring in neonate converts, however. Some covenant members are cruel enough to use the guise of the Sanctified to sadistically inflict suffering on potential converts, but most are genuinely concerned with the condition of Kindred everywhere.

In times of relative peace, when a domain or territory remains safe and unchallenged, the covenant prefers a more passive tactic to bring neonates into the fold. Members of the covenant don't sit on their hands during this time, but neither do they go corner-to-corner, forcibly shoving dogma down

the throats of lost childer. No, the tactic involves pointing a few neonates in the right direction, and waiting at the end of the road.

The Sanctified may come to one or two newly sired neonates within a domain and preach to them. Such preaching is handled gently — lessons of grim damnation have their place, but are not the way to bring converts through the door. The covenant members offer answers, first and foremost. These answers are for the most part sincere, as they are the precepts of the entire Lancea Sanctum. Many one-on-one sermons begin with simple storytelling, with the Sanctified relating the story of Longinus and what resulted when he stabbed the spear into the side of Christ. (Many neonates at this point already have the first hook planted in them: the mention of Christ. Whether a mortal was Christian or not during his mortal life, it's a familiar name, and one that carries with it millennia of spiritual and emotional weight.) From there, the Sanctified continues to offer answers to troubling questions. What are vampires? Why are they Damned? Where do the Disciplines come from? Moreover, the Sanctified explains the covenant's sense of morality and code of conduct. A neonate, often lost and confused, is like a boat cast adrift. The Sanctified provide an anchor.

When the sermon is complete, the Sanctified leaves the neonate alone. It doesn't particularly matter if the neonate comes to the Lancea Sanctum or not, because that neonate will now spread the word to other neonates. He will tell others there is a group that claims to "have all the answers." Even if that single childe never comes to the Sanctified seeking truth, others will. From that, the covenant gains new converts, greater strength, and a deeper well of faithful vampires.

The Catechism

The Testament of Longinus isn't a particularly large text, but many modern neonates are put off by its florid, archaic language and its metaphysical contemplations. As much as the Sanctified would prefer every would-be convert or Midnight Mass attendee to read, comprehend, and accept every message in *the Testament*, that's unlikely to happen. So American Sanctified missionaries created *the Catechism*.

The Catechism is a small book — not to be confused with *The Sanguineous Catechism*, which contains the canons of the covenant written by the Monachus — of no more than 10 or 15 pages, depending on the printing. It is a barebones distillation of the *Testament*, written in informal and modernized language (though elder Sanctified say such translations diminish the seriousness, solemnity and respectability of the message). The key concepts of Longinus' writings are presented in a simple question-and-answer format that exemplifies the core tenets of the Lancea Sanctum without overwhelming neonates with dogma and, cleverly, without breaking the Masquerade. Metaphors and tangible, modern details are used both to appeal to young, materialistic Carthians and independents, and to obscure the subject matter from mortals. Whereas the covenant carefully keeps copies of *The Testament of Longinus*, it allows this desktop-published treatise to mingle secretly with the many mundane religious pamphlets that clutter tattoo parlors and musical venues, in hopes that previously unknown and unaligned vampires may happen upon it.

Missionaries of the Lancea Sanctum use copies of *The Catechism* to hook potential converts and to cut through the anti-religious bullshit that gets spread on the streets of the World of Darkness. An unaligned vampire who finds a copy of *The Catechism* while slinking among his mortal prey may read words he wouldn't take the time to listen to. A neonate who finds a copy on the stoop of his sad and wretched haven may be relieved to know there's a better Requiem for him out there. The Sanctified believe many Kindred want to know the truth about Longinus and the covenant, but are afraid to be seen asking questions.

Excerpts from *The Catechism*

Q: Isn't the Lancea Sanctum just a religious establishment founded by the Invictus to control what Kindred can believe?

A: No. The Invictus had no hand in the formation of the Lancea Sanctum. The Invictus never even appear in the story of Longinus the Centurion! Besides, the Lancea Sanctum doesn't control what Kindred can believe. *The Testament* is a guide for every vampire's Requiem — a true story of faith, personal strength and divine intervention that has lead Kindred of many beliefs to find a new enlightenment.

Q: Won't the Lancea Sanctum require me to become a Priest and serve the church as a soldier?

A: Not every Kindred who believes in *The Testament* chooses to become a Priest and the church doesn't require anyone to do so. You don't have to become a Priest to understand *The Testament* or to join a Sanctified congregation. The Lancea Sanctum welcomes new Priests into the service of the church every night, but the laity is just as valuable to the parish as the clergy. Our primary goal is to strengthen a Kindred's relationship with God and her relationship with herself.

Q: Doesn't the Lancea Sanctum encourage its members to commit murder and destroy Kindred who don't belong to the church?

A: Many of the Sanctified enjoy the company of Kindred outside of the local congregation. The Lancea Sanctum discourages the luring of Kindred of faith from the path set forth in *The Testament*, but the church understands that not everyone is ready to devote themselves to religious pursuits yet. It is a common misconception that *The Testament* encourages unnecessary violence, when in fact Longinus does not require the Sanctified to kill. *The Testament* tells us it is our duty to feed upon the kine without regret or mercy, for the Curse is a mandate from Heaven, but we are not ordered to slaughter our meals.

Safety

The night is unkind to neonates. The Danse Macabre doesn't offer a grace period to new vampires — it's sink or swim, dance or burn. A neonate can meet her Final Death tonight in a thousand different ways, and she begins her Requiem ignorant to most of them. The other covenants don't do much for neonates in this regard, says the Lancea Sanctum. They're expected to kowtow to the social order and don't receive much protection except from their mentors (and often don't have the protection of their mentors, rather needing defense against their sires and other "allied" Kindred).

The Sanctified have seen other covenants fail young vampires in previous nights. The Carthians are too chaotic to offer much aid to neonates — sure, the Carthians offer protection, but can't always back up such a promise. Apprenticeship in the Circle of the Crone is a hard, cruel affair; new Acolytes may fear their covenant brethren more than any unknown monsters. Finally, the Ordo Dracul doesn't go out of its way to offer an open door to anybody, especially neonates, so not a lot of help can be found in that covenant.

The Sanctified, on the other hand, offer protection. In most cases outside the covenant, a neonate faces a fierce trial by fire — it's survival of the fittest all the way. The Lancea Sanctum circumvents such social and supernatural Darwinism, and offers any neonate who joins its ranks unmitigated safety. If danger presents itself against a neonate, the Sanctified circle the wagons to keep their novitiate safe. This is because every neonate who joins its ranks serves to strengthen those ranks. The covenant stands united in every way possible (at least, when presenting itself to other factions). Often, it's enough for the covenant to simply claim its neonates by putting out the word, "She belongs to us, now." Smart vampires know not to wake a sleeping lion, and leave Sanctified neonates well enough alone unless some grudge or feud justifies provoking the ire of all the city's Sanctifieds. When a Sanctified neonate attracts the attention of outside forces, the Lancea Sanctum rallies like a swarm, rushing to the defense of its novitiate.

Nobody guarantees a neonate protection from those within the covenant, but of course she isn't told that. If the covenant finds reason to bring pain to a novitiate, it is a pure and holy directive, meant to keep the newly converted walking on the right path. Those who threaten the Lancea Sanctum are enemies of truth, whether they attack from within or from without. All within its boundaries should be champions of the Damnation, and should seek to enlighten neonates in whatever ways are required.

Sanctity

The Requiem is a sacred condition, according to the Lancea Sanctum. The actions of the Dark Prophet made him the avatar of the vampiric condition. Neonates in the covenant are attracted not just to solving the mystery of damnation, but to the idea that their curse is holy, however twisted that may seem to non-Sanctified. The covenant tells its novitiates not just that "it's good to face what you have become," but that "your Damnation has been sanctioned by God and made clear to you through the writings of the Dark Prophet." A neonate is shown that she is an unaging example of God's will and plan, that the non-Sanctified may gaze upon her and witness the truth of divine judgment. Such sanctity goes beyond mere purpose — it allows a neonate to feel as though she is part of something far bigger than herself, as though she is connected to the divine design of the world. This appeal is particularly effective for those Kindred who were followers of a Judeo-Christian or Islamic belief system in life.

Also intrinsic to this understanding of Kindred damnation is formal instruction on how to properly be Kindred. The covenant takes care to teach its neonates how to act out solemnly their righteous purpose as holy predators. Sanctified sires teach childer how to hunt properly. A neonate taught by a sire not of the covenant may well be taught anew by his Priest in the early nights of his new Requiem as one of God's predators. Sanctified neonates learn how to track mortals, what locations in a city offer the best choice of vessels, where feeding is restricted and who is fair game. Accomplished Sanctified teach neonates how to be subtle and how to be brutal, how to take small tastes of Vitae and how to kill, all without risking the tenuous Masquerade.

The Lancea Sanctum considers the vampiric Disciplines as blessed grants from God, passed down through the transubstantiation of the Blood. Thus, the covenant teaches novitiates how best to use and respect the Disciplines. The covenant begins by teaching a neonate how to employ the physical Disciplines (Celerity, Resilience, Vigor). Later comes training on how to use subtler powers (Auspex, Dominate, Majesty) to hunt, to manipulate weaker vampires, and to impress the mystery of the Dark Prophet onto other wayward Kindred. Particularly worthy neonates may also be trained in the covenant's unique art, called Theban Sorcery. <2>Induction

Regardless of the depth of a neonate's faith — or the grand potential purpose she may seem capable of fulfilling for the covenant — she may not be accepted as a true covenant insider by the Anointed of some domains until she completes a Rite of Induction. These ceremonies are typically simple pledges, promises, or recitations made by the novitiate to an Anointed Kindred authorized to receive new charges in the parish. Parishes overseen by especially arcane Sanctified may lead the supplicant to believe she is swearing an oath to Longinus himself, which the covenant can uphold through secretive and mystical rites — claiming, perhaps, to turn her blood to ash if she ever fails in her sworn duties. Strict parishes may require a neonate to undergo a ceremony very much like the Creation Rite (see p. 81), as a kind of vampiric baptism.

Typically, a neonate requests the performance of an induction ceremony, asking a Priest or other Anointed higher-up to conduct the *ritus* for him. However, notable neonates (those whose devotion stands out from the congregation at large, those who have served the covenant well or those who have somehow or other caught the eye of an ancilla) may be invited or emphatically "encouraged" to undertake the *ritus*.

Only in rare occasions are neonates refused the opportunity to undergo the induction. The Lancea Sanctum can always deny the whelp greater status and titles in the future, but the covenant loses nothing by formalizing its welcome. A neonate's interest in becoming a full-fledged member of the Lancea Sanctum in name *and* station is reason enough to make some use of her.

Those loathsome and uncommon few who are denied welcome must be the worst manner of despicable anarchs who would only hurt the covenant and the congregation if allowed among the rank and file. Some, however, are simply the victims of timeworn grudges aimed at their sires or bloodlines, or are merely vampires who are somehow of greater use outside the bounds of the covenant. Perhaps a paladin intends to follow a rejected neonate to a coterie of Acolytes.

Once a neonate is allowed to participate in an induction ceremony, a Priest — preferably one the neonate is already familiar with — is assigned to perform the rite. Some Priests, eager for new converts, push neonates into "congregational acceptance ceremonies" or other "soft" rites as quickly as possible. Others, less convinced of the worth of neonates, take their time in organizing and ministering an induction service — and "taking time" against the backdrop of eternity can be a long while. Still others choose to conduct the induction ceremony at a time of great covenant showmanship, such as after (or during) a Midnight Mass or Gran Ballo.

The Subtle Pull of the Sanctified

Not all parishes require a ceremonial transition be enacted for Kindred moving from the lay congregation to some perceived inner circle of the covenant, and not all Sanctified vampires undergo such ceremonies in those parishes who claim to require it. The Lancea Sanctum doesn't maintain central seminaries for would-be Priests to graduate from. Sometimes the covenant gradually, subtly promotes a vampire with desirable qualities further into the order using techniques similar to those used to pull in converts. Special cases, urgent missions, or exceptional emergencies may be cited (or concocted) as reasons to tie a Kindred to further responsibilities within the covenant. "We desperately need someone to go and meet this new childe, someone who understands modern youth," the Bishop says, "and bring him to sanctuary before something terrible happens to him." With a gentle brushing of blood or a kiss on each cheek a Bishop may thus bequest the priesthood of the Damned upon a hesitant neonate; it's not terribly unlike a battlefield commission or informal knighting. A character who receives such a promotion may gain one or more free dots in Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum), at the Storyteller's discretion.

Now, however, the neonate has good reason to stay with the Sanctified... and can expect a terrible penalty if he abandons his fellow Priests. An enemy character who once had Covenant Status in the Lancea Sanctum is worse than an adversary — he is a traitor.

The Converted Neonate

Not all of the Lancea Sanctum's predatory flock come to the covenant directly. Some are converted from mortal religions, some are converted from vampiric heresies, and some are brought in from the cold chill of atheism.

A vampire's true conversion to the Lancea Sanctum is said to come in two stages. The first stage is a physical and vocal one. In it, the neonate chooses to stand with the Sanctified as a member of the covenant, and vocally pledges herself to the church. This is a conversion of allegiance more than anything else, suggesting a motive of genuine faith and spiritual promise, but not much commitment or honest devotion. So-called first-stage converts are satisfied with attendance at Midnight Mass, and participation in those blood-soaked rituals they deem unavoidable — they are the fringe churchgoers, the lay congregation. Many neonates find only this first level of conversion and are content with it. Many — perhaps most — converts remain at this stage throughout their Requiems and, for the most part, the Lancea Sanctum accepts such minor servitude even when it does not praise it. A large number of converts maintain this sort of loose membership for decades, only to move deeper into covenant society and their own faith as they become ancillae. For this reason, the covenant can afford to be patient.

However, some neonates seem destined for greater things. These neonates prove early on to be ready and willing to accept a greater commitment to the precepts of Longinus, and also to seek true understanding of his teachings. These are neonates who stay up through the day with their copies of the *Testament*, who recast themselves in the mold of the Centurion and face the mysteries of the Requiem without fear. The Lancea Sanctum encourages such neonates (sometimes with complex patterns of reward and punishment) to seek higher levels of enlightenment and understanding in the covenant by furthering their conversion from covenant ally to covenant agent. Neonates who accept this challenge are said to have entered the "second stage" of conversion.

The second stage of conversion (the only sort considered true conversion by staunch covenant elders and traditionalists) is internal. The neonate leaves behind all vestiges of his previous existence — whether his mortal life or the service to some other covenant — and devotes his flesh and faith to the Lancea Sanctum. From this point on, his Requiem should play as a church song, praising Longinus and God, and echoing in whatever hallowed chambers the covenant names as its cathedrals. This change is a moral one, an honest revelation of faith. It cannot be satisfied with a pledge or a token appearance at mass, but must be demonstrated night after night, proven by the Kindred's actions, for all eternity.

For some, this moral change happens overnight, sparked by a predator's epiphany that alters the Kindred's whole form as surely as sunlight. For others, the religious revelation takes centuries to unfold, like the slow erosion of a mountain. When it does happen, a neonate may find that she instinctually accepts and *knows* the teachings of Longinus to be true, even if she doesn't — can't — yet demonstrate an honest comprehension of them. The converted neonate exalts the predatory nature of vampirism, hails *The Testament of Longinus*, and devotes herself to the needs of the covenant, putting Sanctified ideals above her own.

Conversion to this deeper level isn't considered a blind act. How could it be, when it is accepted fact that God cursed Longinus, and Longinus commanded adherence to his philosophies? This deeper conversion is also believed to be outside the boundaries of "chosen" grace, which is to say the conversion is considered a supernatural *act* the neonate accepts as it happens to her, rather than some religious secret that she learns. It's as if the Dark Messiah has turned his eye toward the shadowy places within the convert and illuminated them with the glory of his insight — as if he has lit her heart alight with the only fire the Damned are meant to know.

Those rare neonates who find themselves converting completely to the ways of Longinus early in their Requiems are considered special. Sometimes they are meant for greater things. Those who stay behind, those who are slow to devote themselves, may be overlooked for favor within the covenant later on, even if they do find their faith some night. These lackluster predators are meant for secular, functionary positions within the covenant in the eyes of many Bishops.

Facets of True Conversion

The "second stage" of conversion has many facets of its own. A matured theological perspective on the Kindred condition hits a neonate on many fronts. First is the moral facet. A converted Kindred must manage a moral migration from the mortal standards she once knew and felt to the moral standards of the Dark Messiah. What would be considered atrocity in mortal circles is now an unshakable fact of existence. Lions, wolves, and raptors do not abide by human morality, and so neither should the Sanctified predator.

The second facet of conversion changes how the vampire views the Requiem. Prior to spiritual transformation, a novitiate may view her Requiem as an insane hell, a grim misfortune, or an inescapable prison of blood. Post-conversion, she may see her deathlessness as a blessed curse, one enriched with the holy mysteries of a divine plan, a holy Damnation. Her insane hell becomes meaningful purgatory, her grim misfortune becomes solemn duty, and the bloody prisoners will be pardoned on Judgment Day.

The third facet of conversion is a rational change. Many neonates, still recalling mortal lives with little or no traces of real mysticism, don't accept spiritual accounts of the vampiric origin story. Longinus, to many Kindred, is more a mythological figure than a historical one. True conversion, however, demands a novitiate accept the acts of Longinus as the literal

cause of the vampiric condition. Similarly, the supernatural elements surrounding Longinus — God, the Crucifixion and holiness of Christ, the miraculous powers of the Blood — all become matters of fact, not allegory. Many Sanctified in modern nights, however, do not claim to accept these elements of the Longinus myth at face value. In modern nights, non-fundamentalist Kindred may even outnumber their more literal brethren. For modern vampires, it's essential to trust in the truth of *The Testament*, but not necessarily the facts of it. And yet, so much of what Longinus and the Monachus described is unchanged in the vampiric world that many vampires see their very existence as evidence of the facts as well as the truth.

The final facet of conversion is perhaps the most important to the security and the success of the Lancea Sanctum as a union of predatory monsters. Outsiders and casual allies see the covenant and its members as a body separate from themselves. A true convert stops seeing herself as something separate from the covenant, and soon sees herself as an integral — and irremovable — component of it. She *is* the Lancea Sanctum; it is made of God's Sanctified predators, not marble or stained glass. Just as important, converts hold that the reverse is true. *They* are a part of the covenant, but the covenant is part of *them*, too. Vampires are not hunting beneath the dark grandeur of the Sanctified. They are the grandeur. They are the Sanctified.

A devoted convert blurs (or confuses) the line between his own well-being and that of the parish or the covenant. He takes anti-Sanctified insults personally, he takes jokes personally. His opinions change with the Bishop's. He feels compelled to defend the covenant in even casual discussions. Even his language changes: "we" comes to mean the Lancea Sanctum and metaphors are drawn almost exclusively from the *Testament*.

The Congregation and the Novitiates

The difference between a simple member of the vampiric congregation and a devoted novitiate seeking status in the covenant is substantial. A churchgoing Kindred who attends Midnight Mass, obeys the Traditions, and pays his respects to Longinus may be allowed to call himself Sanctified, but an inducted member of the covenant is expected to involve herself in all the covenant's important *ritae*, and may be called to serve the church in other ways, whether as a inconspicuous messenger, a casual investigator or as simple muscle. It is the difference between the Kindred laity and the Anointed.

The officers of the Lancea Sanctum know the covenant's congregations are full of half-hearted appeasers, paying the minimum price necessary to stay off the church's list of heretics. In game terms, the Kindred of the wider congregation may maintain Covenant Status in another, non-adversarial covenant such as the Carthians or the Invictus while simultaneously maintaining a respectable standing with the Lancea Sanctum. Kindred of the lay congregation may even earn a dot of Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum), but only for exceptional service or devotion to the covenant. It's not the same as being Anointed.

Inducted vampires may even feel as if they've been ranked beneath even a celebrated member of the lay congregation for a time, but the ceiling of status that keeps fringe churchgoers down is removed for formalized novitiates. The exact role an inducted vampire is expected to fill may not be glamorous or exciting — he may simply haul books for the Bishop — but it grants the novitiate the greater privileges of status within the covenant: the vestments of a holy monster, the protection of the mighty church defenders, and the possibility of miraculous power.

Purification Before Admittance

In some parishes, neonates — or indeed any newcomer to the covenant — may be required to undergo a torturous rite called the Purification before they are admitted into the covenant. The purpose of the Purification is to cleanse a neonate, scrape away any shreds of her mortal life or previous undead blasphemies, and atone for the sin of her Embrace. The Purification, clearly, stems from the ceremonies of the same name that are so often a part of the Creation Rite. The Purification, in fact, began as a sort of symbolic Creation Rite for those neonates whose sires were not Sanctified and so may not have been punished by the Lancea Sanctum for violating the Second Tradition. In the absence of the sinner, the poison offspring of the sin is punished instead.

The Purification rite varies widely from parish to parish, when it is observed at all. Purification is sometimes as simple as a scourging, but may be much more elaborate. It is always an ordeal.

The Purification serves many purposes, some symbolic, some practical, and all serving the will of those administering the rite. The first is to determine the worth of the neonate. If a neonate can't bear the discomfort of Purification, then the young Kindred is (for now) undeserving of the covenant's grace.

The second use for the Purification is to expose a novitiate to the true mysteries and power of the vampiric condition, carving a code of accursed righteousness into her mind and soul while making manifest that the Lancea Sanctum is a serious, bloody endeavor, and it's forever. Those who pass the Purification don't forget it.

In the process of Purification, a neonate is set upon a path of self-reflection meant to reveal some of the truths of the Requiem. The Purification cuts away the scabs of the mortal coil and strips the neonate's soul bare. After the Purification, a neonate understands that she is no longer human, for living creatures would never endure such tortures. Any shining connection she may keep to her mortal life is stamped out like an errant spark.

Outside of the Creation Rite, observances of Purification by ordeal went gradually out of favor in the covenant. As a result, moderation yielded to extremism, and tonight many

parishes either cling fanatically to some interpretation of Purification or do not enact such rites except as part of the Creation Rite.

An Example of Purification: The Three Scrutinies

One of the oldest examples of the Purification dates back to the Dark Ages, when the Sanctified of many European domains ritualistically submitted to gruesome and violent molestations of their undead bodies. This series of linked rites was called the Three Scrutinies. Tonight, this formidable gauntlet is seldom performed in its entirety. Most of the few parishes that recall the Three Scrutinies challenge novitiates with just one of these three ordeals.

The First Scrutiny is the "Examination of the Testament." This is a literal test — spoken, not written — of a neonate's knowledge and understanding of *The Testament of Longinus*. A traditional list of passed-down questions for a Priest to ask of a novitiate does exist, but by no means is this list exhaustive or restrictive. Some Priests ask a series of 10 seemingly simple questions and fiercely scrutinize every pause and hesitation, every phrase and choice in the neonate's answer. Others hammer a novitiate over the course of several nights with hundreds of interrogations on topics religious or personal. Questions range from the broad ("What are the true meanings of the Traditions?") to the precise ("Recite the exact words spoken to the Monachus by the Archangel Vahishtael"), from matters of the mythic record ("Who was the first prey of the Monachus?") to matters of personal crisis ("If I am to feed on your family tonight, with whom should I start?"). Perhaps the trickiest part of this trial is knowing what it is that the interrogating Priest is searching for. Too many neonates assume it is a factual answer or a recitation of scripture.

In game terms, the First Scrutiny can be seen as a test of Intelligence and Manipulation. A character can prepare for this test by getting to know the *Testament* inside and out, and learning what the Anointed expect of novitiates. Literal research of the material might be represented with an Intelligence + Academics roll (while Wits could be used to get a sense of the popular and sanctioned interpretations expected by the Anointed), for the sake of earning a +2 or +3 bonus to dice pools used during the questioning itself. Alternatively, the Storyteller could simply require a player to raise his Academics Skill to represent his studies. Then the novitiate must deliver his answers with respect and reverence, to convince his interrogator of his enlightenment and intelligence. This effort could require a Manipulation + Academics roll, possibly as an extended action (to represent multiple questions) requiring 10 or 15 total successes, and penalized by the Composure of the interrogating Anointed.

The Second Scrutiny is one of intense self-reflection, in which the neonate digs down deep and examines the true nature of her condition and the future of her Requiem. This is no gentle exploration of feelings, however. Quite the opposite: a neonate undergoes a period of subjugation, starvation, and grueling rebirth. A Priest (perhaps accompanied by the neonate's coterie, if they have already passed this part of the trial) takes the novitiate away from all she knows and loves. He binds her using straps or chains. He instructs her to prepare her own prayers, and consider what questions she might ask of Longinus. Then he puts her in a place symbolizing mortal death, from which she must escape. He may bury her in the ground, lock her inside a coffin or mausoleum, or bind her to a weight chair and drop her into a lake or deep cistern. Then he leaves her there for a period of time long enough for her to exhaust her Blood and begin to starve. During this time, she's expected to meditate on her damnation, contemplate the difference between death and undeath, and realize what it is to thirst, to starve, out of view from the greater world.

When finally starving, she's expected to claw her way free of her moorings, but that doesn't always happen. Many Priests accept that a weak and starving child can't always free herself and provide some means of escape, even if it requires the neonate's coterie to dig her up. The problem, of course, is that the neonate is then insane with hunger, and may violate the Third Tradition if Kindred rescuers release her. Even a neonate who cannot escape her ritual funeral may pass the Second Scrutiny by restraining her frenzied hunger well enough to observe the holy laws of Damnation and fulfill her intended role by seeking out human prey.

In game terms, the Second Scrutiny is clearly a test of a vampire's ability to resist frenzy, to maintain clarity of purpose in the face of the Beast. Therefore, it is a test of Resolve + Composure (see "Systems for Frenzy," on p. 178 of **Vampire: The Requiem**). Beyond that, the Storyteller might also allow a character to make a Wits + Resolve roll to examine her own existence, possibly come to a new level of acceptance and gain a +2 bonus on the next degeneration and, if necessary, derangement rolls made as a result of feeding. Finally, the character must attempt an action (possibly extended) to free herself from her symbolic burial, whether that means a Strength + Stamina roll to escape a grave or even a Strength or Dexterity + Larceny action to escape chains.

The Third Scrutiny determines just how well a neonate really understands the previous lessons she's learned, and if she has really accepted her role as a predator of the human flock. A neonate can recite lessons and scripture all she wants, can slake her thirst and fulfill her role as a predator, but can she really separate herself from the human prey she knew in life? Can she truly *accept* the holy role she seeks to adopt? She has to prove it.

How does she prove this? By shedding the last vestments of her mortal life and feeding on someone close to her. The scrutinizing Priest may select an erstwhile friend or loved one as prey, or he may allow the neonate to choose for herself. This trial doesn't require a grisly murder, only a successful and devout hunt — unless the chosen prey recognizes her predator and the Masquerade is threatened. A breach of the Masquerade cannot be tolerated, and so the Third Scrutiny does often require the supplicant to demonstrate her acceptance of the curse over her love of a mortal. Some Priests do what they can to make this test as difficult as it can be for the neonate,

selecting a beloved target or an anniversary night for the hunt, for example, to make her as strong as possible if she passes.

In game terms, the Third Scrutiny tests a vampire's self-control, in the short-term, and her Humanity, in the long-term. A character's immediate reaction to the target selected (possibly determined with a Resolve + Composure action in which failure reveals emotional turmoil) is measured by her superiors. Then the character's approach to the hunt (no matter what method is attempted, see "Feeding" on p. 164 of **Vampire: The Requiem**) and performance during it is measured by her superiors. Finally, over weeks, months or years afterwards, the vampire's moral and psychological reaction to the hunt (as represented by possible degeneration or derangement) is measured as well. Although the Anointed allow rumors to spread that unimpressive predators are unwelcome, the truth is that this final test is used to identify a vampire's personal strengths and weaknesses. Knowing those strength and weaknesses allows the Anointed to aid, support, influence or undermine the scrutinized Kindred as they see necessary.

Some Priests hold a post-Mass celebration when a neonate passes this final rite, but others believe such revelry diminishes the reverence meant to accompany the Purification.

Those novitiates who fail any of the Scrutinies at any point are allowed to attempt them again when their Priest decides the time is right. Once a Scrutiny has been passed, a neonate does not have to pass it again. Only failed tests need be tried again, assuming that multiple tests were even called for.

Evidence of Devotion

Regardless of whether they have truly "converted" to the cause, most neonates remain relatively untested. They are naïve beings, stumbling around in the dark with — the covenant hopes — the light of the Longinus to guide them. This general naïveté stops most neonates from initially achieving any sort of real piety, but while deeply entrenched spiritual yearning may not be the fuel for their devotion, that fiery verve reserved only for the young and foolish *may* be. Like college students with a political cause or young men willing to die for their country (or God, or regime), neonates can make powerful devotees to the Lancea Sanctum.

Admittedly, many don't. Many are just glad to have some small place in the Danse Macabre that doesn't guarantee them a one-way-trip to Final Death — like many "faithful" mortals, the effort stops at what is minimally required. Those who do attach themselves to the principles of the Lancea Sanctum do so with the persistence of a starving leech. Such novitiates attend every Midnight Mass, even if they don't know what's really going on. They offer themselves to their superiors, ready to serve as foot soldiers or altar boys or anything that allows them to flaunt their newfound "faith."

The curious contradiction here is that a neonate's naïveté may prevent him from seeing the nuances of the Danse Macabre and achieving true comprehension of the covenant's ideals, when this naïveté may also be the source of his devotion to the covenant in the first place. Neonates haven't fully witnessed exactly how the complexities of the Lancea Sanctum (and the interplay between other covenants and factions) actually affect them. They remain under the protection of sires, and such innocence affords them the opportunity to throw themselves into the covenant with little excess thought or doubt. The older members of the covenant don't look down upon such neonates, and in fact see them as curiously prized. After all, if such zealotry can eventually be forged into something more meaningful, nothing was wasted. Occasionally, some neonates are left with crises of faith.

As they age (and become ancillae), such novitiates cast away the immature trappings of a zealous and thoughtless devotion, and come to see what they regard (correctly or incorrectly) as the "reality" of the covenant. It's for this reason that some neonates appear more pious and devoted than their ancillae superiors — it's simply a case of intact spiritual gullibility. The Lancea Sanctum handles crises of faith in short order by shepherding these neonates (whether with kindness or cruelty) into deeper levels of devotion. It's during these spiritual crises that many Priests interject themselves into a neonate's Requiem, offering a hand to help guide him toward the true faith of God and the Dark Messiah. Should the guiding hand fail, more extreme efforts (such as those of the sword) might be undertaken. Regardless of methodology, many Priests carefully monitor a neonate's spiritual mindset, waiting for the moment when a crisis of faith looms. Should such doubt rear its head, the officiating Priest will do whatever it takes to steer a hesitant novitiate back to the path.

Are all neonates blind to what's really going on? Are they universally ignorant of the powers of faith? Certainly not. While many (perhaps most) come into the arms of the covenant with little idea of what they should truly believe, many have a strong understanding of what's at work with the faith. An intelligent or already-pious mortal (a Catholic Priest, perhaps, or a theologian) who becomes Kindred and begins his Requiem in the service of the Lancea Sanctum is not one who blindly follows pre-chewed notions of faith. Neonates of this stripe are more likely to replace one dogma with another, regardless of whether honest piety grows from the transition.

Organizing Neonates

As their blood grows more potent and their connection to their mortal lives dwindles, elder Kindred end up as lone predators. Neonates, on the other hand, can't afford such solitary Requiems, and require a support system of fellow Damned to keep them safe and fed. Coteries are keystones of neonate existence. Without them, young vampires are likely to end up on the wrong ends of swords, guns or claws.

The Sanctified not only approve of neonate coteries, they facilitate them. In most cases, a Kindred who comes to the covenant and already has his own coterie to work with is encouraged to continue working with that group. The Lancea Sanctum is too loosely organized, too narrowly represented, and too small in many domains to manage covenant-exclusive coteries, and instead attaches young Priests to packs as

ministers, chaplains, or simple moral influences. This is especially true if a Sanctified neonate has the potential to bring his fellows to the covenant over time.

Should the Lancea Sanctum sniff out substantial dissention within the coterie, however, or note the neonate's attendance to Midnight Mass has been slipping in favor of coterie-specific activities, then the Sanctified must act to rescue the neonate's faltering faith. At first, the covenant simply asks the neonate to re-examine his priorities and focus anew on his covenant responsibilities (and "bring your coterie-mates with you, of course"). Should the neonate resist or otherwise cause a problem, the covenant has several options. One is to let the neonate do as he wishes; if the covenant is strong in its territory, it has little reason to worry much about one errant whelp, provided the neonate still counts himself among the Sanctified. There is time enough to get him back, and in the meantime his status will dwindle. A second option, invoked if the covenant is weak in the domain, or if the neonate is of some importance, is to bring the neonate back into the fold and to limit the influence of his current coterie through tactics either subtle or gross, coaxing or severe. A Sanctified overseer may discredit the neonate's coterie to drive him from his cohorts to the church, or the covenant membership may cooperate to draw the neonate back into the fold, perhaps tugging the rest of the coterie along, too. Often, the Sanctified find that invoking a sense of guilt and fear in the neonate is enough, and harsher tactics become unnecessary.

When possible, the Lancea Sanctum organizes coteries from the body of the covenant membership. Young Sanctified novitiates in the city sometimes consolidate into a coterie at the suggestion of the neonates' superiors. They needn't be unswerving allies. For the most part, the Sanctified believe it enough that the coterie is bound by a common system of belief and, more importantly, by the name of the covenant itself. Five unconnected young Sanctified are not nearly as impressive as a single unit of five vampires who can collectively be called "a coterie of the Lancea Sanctum." In this way, it's as much about perception as it is about actual strength.

In some fanatical domains, Bishops or Archbishops require recently formed Lancea Sanctum coteries to engage in the practice of *Circus Sanguinus* (known as a "circle jerk" in the vulgar tongue of those outside the covenant, but formally meaning "circle of blood"). The notion by design isn't as ignoble as it sometimes is in practice, wherein each member of the coterie bonds himself to the next in a circle of Vinculums. In the rare occasions that the covenant enforces this union of Blood within a coterie, the practice isn't allowed to simply "take place" wherever and whenever. Like all things in the covenant, the event is lent a high level of ceremonial significance. It becomes ritualized, occasionally on the order of *Apostolica*, with the Vinculum itself shepherded by an appropriate Priest or other Sanctified luminary. In some cases, the bonding ritual occurs at the beginning of Midnight Mass for all to see. From this, the coterie members are forged to one

another like the links of a chain, Blood flowing into Blood in a holy union, from which strength grows.

In other domains, a coterie is bound together by *The Testament* itself. Each member of the coterie is given one or more books of *The Testament* to master. Each month, the coterie is then called before an assembly of Anointed Kindred — or even the whole congregation — and asked to recite, analyze, dramatize or sermonize on *The Testament* as a whole. Some coteries are assembled to sing as Benedictine monks would, some compare and contrast lessons from *The Testament* with modern goings-on in the domain and others produce plays, sculpture or paintings. No matter what approach the coterie chooses to take, they are judged as a whole. They must learn to cooperate and complement one another, or they must face disappointment together.

Regardless of how a Sanctified coterie comes together, the covenant supports the group and encourages its members to attend all rituals together, and so, to achieve success together. Some coteries are even given lofty names (such as "The Monachal Sons of Calvary," "The Houston Deacons," or "The Daughters Ascendant") to lend a degree of significance, both to themselves and to the covenant.

Mixed Coteries

It's unrealistic to assume that coteries subscribe to a single priority, or even that all the Kindred of a pack share a common belief system. In many domains, "mixed coteries" made up of representatives from different covenants (and with different degrees of loyalty) are the norm. The Sanctified not only allow their members to participate in such circles, but often encourage them to. A Sanctified neonate who is a part of a mixed coterie serves as a representative of the faith. From that one neonate, the faith may spread to the other coterie members, growing through the neonate's actions or spoken beliefs (this is among the most effective avenues of conversion). It's advantageous for the Lancea Sanctum to be so close to sheep of other covenants, so that even those Kindred who will not devote themselves to the ways of Longinus at least have access to the wisdom and power of the *Testament*. This is simply a ground-level recreation of the counsel esteemed Anointed provide for non-Sanctified Princes; not all vampires must become Priests, but all vampires need a Priest to turn to.

Covenant Status for Neonates

The tests and trials the covenant subjects novitiates to are not mandatory for all members of the covenant. A novitiate can belong to the Lancea Sanctum without being an important part of it, just as common churchgoers are recognized as members of a church without being considered agents of the church. Vampires who pass the Scrutinies or are otherwise ceremonially inducted into the covenant are considered to have some degree of standing in the Sanctified community, and possibly the church hierarchy. Such standing is reflected by dots in the Covenant Status merit. Anointed vampires, of course, must have dots in Covenant Status, for they hold titles and station in the undead church.

It's assumed that any neonate with one or more dots in Covenant Status has undergone a sufficient form of induction, such as Purification, and is noted as a valuable member of the order, rather than just a welcome constituent. Passing such trials always confers at least one point of Covenant Status, though not all vampires with Status in the Lancea Sanctum have passed elaborate and painful trials to earn their station. Specifics, as always, vary both by local custom and the judgments of the local Anointed. Some Kindred gain Covenant Status as a reward from thankful Bishops or as authorization to perform on behalf of the covenant, such as Legates do.

Higher levels of Covenant Status depend on the depth of a neonate's faith, how many allies or admirers she has among the ranks of the ancillae, and how much the local Sanctified need Kindred like her. Few neonates have more than two or three dots in Covenant Status, but these dots are enough to count a young Kindred among the Anointed of the covenant. A common Priest of Longinus may have just one dot of Covenant Status and, as the new boy, be tasked with unglamorous duties, or a new Priest may be given some unique title, such a Priest of the Neonates, if the church believes his charisma or popularity can benefit the Sanctified beyond the limits of his personal experience. Remember that dots of Covenant Status do not directly indicate specific titles, but instead describe a relative level of respect, responsibility, and recognition within the chosen covenant, in the context of the city and the chronicle. Status reflects influence, and Covenant Status simply denotes the theatre where that influence plays.

Vampires with no dots of Covenant Status but who are still considered members of the church (according to interpretation of the Storyteller, depending on the context of a scene or story) are subject to the influence of Kindred with recognized Status in the covenant; the bonus dice afforded by Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) may come into play with the common Midnight Mass attendant, even though the laity have no Status of their own.

Roles of the Neonates

As previously mentioned, neonates aren't required to fully convert to the authority of the covenant. It's enough to get them in the door — time and the brutality of the Requiem are sure to do the rest of the work. Since most neonates don't have a mastery (or even a full acceptance) of Sanctified principles, most tend not to fill unique positions within the faction. Their contributions come in the form of basic adherence to the dogma and disciplines of the covenant, and a welcome swelling of the membership — as their age deepens, it's believed that their faith will do the same.

That's not to say neonates don't fill *important* roles within the covenant. A small minority of "new blood" appears every so often who begin their initiations with enough zeal and tenacity to serve in some Anointed capacity or another. Few of these official positions come with much power (be it worldly or supernatural), but they do come with the potential for power. Neonates holding these positions have the benefit of seeing further down the road than others, knowing that the road is a long one, without foreseeable end. The Sanctified want neonates in these positions, as putting such novitiates at the forefront shows just how strong or popular the covenant is, and helps to bring other young Kindred to the cause. Neonates serve as examples first, and as able bodies second.

Neonate as Foot Soldier

Open confrontation is uncommon among the Damned, for it so often violates the First Tradition. The Lancea Sanctum, in addition to piously championing the Traditions, believes there are superior means of handling enemies than packing SUVs with pistol-bearing minions. Still, violence is sometimes unavoidable, and conflicts once contained in back rooms and dark alleys spill out onto the streets. When this happens, the Sanctified do not shirk from death, but accept combat in the name of Longinus as a grim-but-glorious necessity. Who among the ranks of the Lancea Sanctum are the first to have their Requiems put to risk in battle? Why, the neonates, of course.

The Sanctified do not wish for their neonates to perish. Any member of the covenant meeting Final Death diminishes the strength of the covenant body and destroys a work of holy design. Unfortunately, it's a matter of pragmatism: ancillae are too valuable and elders can never be allowed to put themselves on the front lines. It's not about the many years of unlife and service a neonate may have before her, as much as a matter of the centuries of accumulated insight and experience that would be lost with an older vampire. Both in defense and offense, neonates are the first to face bloody battle. Whether it means protecting the consecrated reliquary of a Sanctified Saint or storming a tenement teeming with heretical ghouls of the Ordo Dracul, neonates are the ones on the front line, the footmen accepting orders from the knights and officers behind and above them.

Whether the neonates themselves agree or not, dying in the service of the Lancea Sanctum is glorious. A neonate who puts his Requiem on the line, surrendering eternity, is seen as a valiant servitor of principles far greater than he or any lone Kindred. The courage to sacrifice and the event of sacrifice itself are holy, and must be revered, remembered, and honored by the covenant. Those serving the covenant understand that defending the standards and tenets of the Dark Messiah is essential to the proliferation of Longinus' word. The success of the Lancea Sanctum in the name of Longinus is the end that justifies any means. It is a prize for which the devout pay any price.

Neonate as Mule

In the simpler nights of the past, when the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum are said to have held absolute rule over their medieval domains, mortal children weren't born for love; offspring were meant to work the farm. Farmers needed more hands, and though children were an investment of time, it was a cheap investment that could pay off for decades. This is not a strange concept to Sanctified elders, and the investment necessary for Damned childer can be substantially more rewarding — only desirable candidates are borne into the Danse Macabre, and many bring valuable talents with them.

Neonates, then, are sometimes viewed as being useful in only one way: as mules. Mules do little more than grunt work. Despite certain romantic connotations of the Requiem, there's always grunt work to be done, much of which can't be (or simply isn't) relegated to ghouls. A neonate mule may be required to do all manner of servant work for the covenant. She may have to keep her head down and just drive the car wherever the Priscus demands. She may be required to purchase a supply of a Daeva Priest's favorite silk handkerchiefs, or scrub the bloody footprints from the foyer floor of a Ventrue Bishop. Sometimes things just need to be carried from one place to another — relics, boxes of *Catechisms* to be handed out, bodies to dump. Some Sanctified with a flair for cruel whimsy invent mindless busywork to keep a neonate from falling idle, or simply to see how well a neonate accepts and performs his duties (even, or especially, when such duties seem beneath a divine predator meant to sow fear in the mortal heart). All such labor is performed for the covenant, of course, and the benefit of the neonate — never for the Anointed taskmaster.

A novitiate in the position of mule walks a curiously fine line. Speaking out of turn in such service is viewed as a sign of disrespect and may draw a scolding, a beating, or worse. However, dumbly providing service gives the impression that the neonate is a thoughtless lump, little more than a back without a brain. In some manner, a neonate seeking to elevate himself past this position needs to distinguish himself without painting himself a loudmouth or a whelp. Arguably, the only way to do this is with humility and subtlety. Perhaps a modest word of advice to a higher-up, or an unpretentious action that aids the covenant? If a neonate comes on too strong, he could be seen as arrogant or over-reaching, as a petty upstart without appreciation for the ageless dignity of his betters, but acting without strength at all makes the Kindred appear cowed and shamefully servile, if his higher-ups notice him at all. A mule must serve well so that it becomes invaluable, but it must also influence its handler into giving up what it wants.

Neonate as Pawn

Neonates are not brought into the Danse Macabre alone, for a connection always exists between sire and childe. A newly Embraced Kindred is, like it or not, regarded as representative of his sire. When a neonate errs, it casts a shadow on the sire. This connection makes each party vulnerable to the actions of the other. The Lancea Sanctum knows how to make this relationship work to its advantage.

First and foremost is recruitment: the Lancea Sanctum does its best to attract the attention of an unwanted neonate and bring her into the fold regardless of the whims of her sire (obviously, the covenant must sometimes make such overtures in secret, if the sire is powerful or dangerous). The Sanctified go out of their way to protect that neonate and grant her benefits and power beyond what her own sire can offer, all in a display of solidarity against her sinful parent. Even if the sire is relatively kind, the Lancea Sanctum might subtly slight his name, showing the childe precisely why she should escape the grisly grip of such an eldritch monster. If that doesn't work, then certain Disciplines can grease the wheels, so to speak. The covenant has no compunctions about modifying the neonate's mind to suit its needs, especially when its needs are to twist a knife in the back of that neonate's sire.

Once the neonate is "hooked," and beguiled, intimidated, or supernaturally convinced to join the covenant, she becomes a pawn of the Lancea Sanctum usable against her creator. The covenant may use her to harm the sire's reputation, to expose sins, to defame his covenant or coterie, or to disrupt some ongoing agenda. A neonate is often the weakest point in the armor of a more important monster.

Pawns may not have much future use for the covenant in the Danse Macabre after their initial play has been completed. Many well-intentioned neonates end up as casualties of the night, pushed too far for and sacrificed for the greater good of the covenant. Many others, however, transition into other roles after the covenant's initial plans for them are finished (though such plans may take decades to unfold). Whether the neonate knows she was a tool or not, she is still likely to be afforded the protection and support of the covenant after her first use. It may be why she became Sanctified in the first place.

That's not to say pawns need to be completely passive. A pawn who shows value beyond her initial use may be elevated to a position affording her greater choice. Pawns, after all, are easily manipulated — why not put someone you can manipulate into a position of real power? If a neonate proves herself intelligent and hard to control, however, the Anointed may find another use for her or slide her into a respectable but toothless spot in the covenant hierarchy. Problem is, few pawns recognize that they are puppets, or how they are puppets. Those

pulling the strings don't want a neonate to know that she is being made to dance — it takes a keenly perceptive novitiate to see she is being covertly influenced. Some members who see this influence will struggle to prove themselves to the covenant, whereas others choose to bide their time and make a move when the opportunity arises. Thus the pawn promoted to a prized seat may transform into a player all her own.

Neonate as Abecedarian

Many neonates have a balance of both common sense and naïveté. Wisdom suggests the novitiate is too good for a bottom-scraping job like a mule, but the naïveté puts the young vampire far below the requirements of more important positions like Apostle or Proselyte. The covenant, rarely without acumen in the ways of directing its own flock, knows precisely what to do with these middling individuals. Realizing that such neonates require more than a little guidance to get them walking down the appropriate path, the Sanctified employ "Abecedarians."

An Abecedarian is something like a ritual apprentice. Seeing unfocused potential, an ancilla of appropriate station takes on one or more neonates as Abecedarians. The occasional ancilla, overwrought and overworked, might take on an entire coterie as Abecedarians, and in rare circumstances, an elder Sanctified may take a neonate under his wing.

The official purpose of an Abecedarian is to provide aid during rituals while learning the ways of the covenant. While one covenant member could theoretically handle all such duties in many domains (carrying urns of blood, laying out sacramental cloth, preparing the altar), Abecedarians remove the need. Not only does this serve a practical function by freeing up the time and hands of a valuable ancilla, but it also ingrains the precise practice of these rituals into the heads of the assisting novitiates.

Another benefit of this role is that the initial duty isn't overwhelming. Neonate Abecedarians aren't required to give all of their time to the covenant, just those important ceremonial hours before, during, and after Midnight Mass and other Sanctified rites. Often, a neonate can complete her duties and then return to her coterie or haven without having to invest all her time in the covenant at this early stage in her association with the Sanctified. Of course, as her experience and faith deepen, the covenant demands a far larger portion of her attention. In the beginning, however, they're content with the occasional service of an Abecedarian.

Different ancillae or elders handle their Abecedarians in different ways. Most Priests assume the role of a minor mentor to their apprentices, making themselves available for guidance. Some take on a more *laissez-faire* approach to an Abecedarian, seeing them as little more than altar boys, but such a dismissive view is discouraged. Some offer words of wisdom regarding survival and advancement in the covenant, but all school their charges on important matters of faith. Some hammer their Abecedarians with a perverse regimen of fanatical indoctrination. One thing is certain — a Priest is unwise to accept an inept or lax neophyte in this role. Should an Abecedarian breach covenant observances or do some untoward damage to the Lancea Sanctum, the Priest bears the brunt of the punishment, at least in a formal capacity (she's sure to punish the transgressor herself, of course). An ancilla's job in this regard is as a mentor, instructor, or disciplinarian, and a neonate's ignorance is seen as a failing of the teacher, not the pupil.

All Abecedarians are expected to be well versed in the readings of the entire text of the *Testament of Longinus*. Each Abecedarian is also given a ritual cruet (used in many of the Sanctified *ritae* to carry blood). The position of Abecedarian is the most common one among novitiates, and most are released from this duty after a few years of service, with the expectation that they pursue greater roles in the glory of the covenant. In more and more domains with Sanctified influence, however, the term Abecedarian has come to be just another formal word for novitiate or neonate. Some Abecedarians, for example, serve as minor representatives and agents of the covenant, as Priests-in-waiting, until they are deemed worthy of Anointment or an official position opens up for them in the parish.

Neonate as Apostle

The angels of God were divine messengers. As such, the position of messenger is an important one within the covenant, considered to be as solemn and respectable a duty as any other.

Many modern Sanctified call the covenant's messengers Apostles, meaning "one who is sent forth." Elder Kindred within the covenant, however, still refer to the position as the *Internuntius* or *Internuncio*, referring to a holy envoy of the early Catholic Church. (Elder Kindred may look upon this position with even more reverence than the common Sanctified, perhaps remembering nights when they themselves served as Internuncio centuries before, when a phone call could not be imagined). Curiously, the term Apostle connotes someone who recruits and spreads the philosophy of the Lancea Sanctum to the masses. This isn't the case. While an Apostle is always welcome (as most are) to bring other Damned into the ranks of the Lancea Sanctum, that is not the function of the position.

Apostles carry significant messages from Kindred to Kindred within the covenant, but also bear "the Message" to non-Sanctified Kindred, often delivering a physical message, whether it's a parchment, a package, or a CD. An Apostle is not the same as a Legate (who is expected to travel outside the city), though a single Sanctified can fill both roles. Apostles are as much heralds as couriers — sometimes the message an Apostle carries is meant for a single Sanctified Kindred, but sometimes it is meant for every vampire in the city.

An Apostle may bring announcements of forthcoming rituals, warnings of impending searches or witch-hunts, requests for audience, or orders to produce alms or cease taboo behaviors. In a few rare instances, coteries of European Apostles have been bidden to protect and carry a torpid elder from one covenant parish to another.

So why is such an important position granted to the lowly neonates? First, let it be said that not just any neonate can enter this position. Only the most capable, clever, and reverent neonates (as judged by the Anointed) are allowed to undertake this blessed obligation. Second, ancillae sometimes choose to fill the position, as well; some simply remain in the role when they age out of their neonate years. An often-overlooked reason why able neonates are gifted with the status of Apostle is the exposure the job gives them to the inner workings of the city at large, and the covenant within. While the role of Apostle is a sacred undertaking, it's also not that difficult to do well. It lends the neonate a sense of importance in the covenant and the city, and is considered to be a steppingstone to other, greater responsibilities. An Apostle who proves herself time and again is destined for a long and powerful career in the covenant. Apostles who do not fare well are destroyed, as messengers so often are.

Neonate as Proselyte

Some Kindred are considered special by the Lancea Sanctum. The Sanctified believe the Blood of such individuals is powerful and somehow more sacred than that of "common" neonates. This isn't considered metaphorical. The chosen are seen as being gifted in the Blood itself, as if the Kindred has been touched by God or Longinus. How is this odd eminence detected? By the superiors and elders of the covenant, of course. If they feel that an individual is somehow marked or otherwise an exceptional Sanctified, they may refer to that vampire as somehow special, or chosen. (This means the childer of prominent Bishops or other politically important neonates may be deemed "chosen," as the title of "Proselyte" creates a political advantage as well as a spiritual one.)

Historically, a Proselyte is a special non-Sanctified vampire chosen from the secular masses and raised up by the covenant to demonstrate that the touch of Longinus reaches beyond the bounds of his followers, that the Dark Prophet may grace even those Damned predators who are not yet followers of the *Testament*. Proselyte, in fact, means "convert." In modern nights, however, the term has come to be used for any neonate singled out by the Lancea Sanctum to play a part as a kind of celebrity recruiter, whether that neonate comes from within the covenant or not. The common thread that runs through each Proselyte is a kind of testimonial attitude: "I didn't think it would work for me, but the Testament has given my Requiem real meaning," or "The plight of those of you dwelling in the darkness saddens me, for now I know the truth of our mission on Earth. I have the light of faith, and I see what you don't see — I see who you really are."

Neonates named as Proselytes are both above and below the status of missionary, considered to be something like "holy childers." Their single task is to go among the unwashed vampire masses and bring others into the fold. And yet, it's more complex than that. Proselytes are meant to show a more zealous face than their brethren among Sanctified missionaries. A missionary goes to the unaffiliated or those in other covenants and sways others to the cause with sermons. A Proselyte is marked, often literally. They wear different clothing (often ritual raiment given by their superiors), and are expected to be exceptionally fastidious. A Proselyte and his retinue don't just go to individual Kindred to preach. They hold evangelical spectacles in Elysium. They go into the salons and convocations of other covenants to reveal *The Testament of Longinus*. They go into the parishes of other Sanctified factions and demonstrate their special nature by braving fires, handling snakes or simply singing hymns and delivering speeches with the fearless (and hopefully infection) verve of faith. Proselytes are meant to appeal to more zealous Kindred, showing them the doctrines of the covenant as a road to holy service. Proselytes are the secret television faith healers of the Damned.

For their servitude, Proselytes are given much latitude in their actions. They are less likely to be punished for minor transgressions, and even greater crimes will be treated with more leniency than any other neonate. Despite appearances to the contrary, Proselytes are not ascetics. They are given access to a bevy of benefits — Vitae, ghouls, the attention of elders. While history suggests that the position used to be a monastic one, tonight in the Danse Macabre, a Proselyte is given as much luxury as the higher-ups can afford.

Of course, being a Proselyte isn't all blood and roses. Being heralded as a true childe of the cause is a sure summons for jealousy and resentment. If a Proselyte escapes penalty for a contravention of Sanctified principle for which other neonates were explicitly punished, that Proselyte may become the target of bitterness and bile from her presumed peers. Neonates may resent her, according her the spite reserved for the over-privileged. An ancilla who was once thought special herself may view a new Proselyte as an uppity neonate with a keen eye toward protracted vengeance. An elder may see a Proselyte as an infant given the keys to the kingdom, and may use her estimable power to crush the child outside the sight of the covenant. While being a Proselyte comes with its own glorious rewards, it can lead an unwary or undefended neonate to new enemies from inside or outside the covenant.

How is a neonate chosen to be a Proselyte? There is no single means of recognizing a Proselyte, but only experienced and magnificently pious vampires are capable of seeing the unique traits inside a Proselyte. The surprising truth about this method is that the chosen one needn't be an adherent to the covenant. Some elders, either from some quirk of their bizarre, ancient minds or out of some finely tuned sense of power, may choose a Proselyte from the neophyte ranks of any covenant or from the unaligned. Nobody knows exactly how a Proselyte is found or chosen, as most elders do not explain themselves. As a result of modern skepticism, however, most Proselytes don't last very long before their popularity — and their power — wanes or dies out.

In practice, many of history's Proselytes have been selected the way a record promoter might select a young singer for stardom: based on appeal first, and capability second. Like the child star, a neonate gives up some of her personal freedoms in exchange for renown and adoration — not to men-

tion the fanatical protection and support of the Lancea Sanctum. In public, the Proselyte may even be able to exert influence over her superiors, lest the "public" sense unrest between the church and its starlet.

The position of Proselyte isn't common tonight. From time to time, one may pop up in a city where a curious Archbishop wants to rouse the heretics and disbelievers. In domains with many Sanctified vampires belonging to several different Creeds, multiple, competing Proselytes have sometimes been paraded about by different Priests hoping to energize their congregations or attract those of other Creeds. In many modern domains, however, Proselytes are seen as over-glorified publicity stunts or just another example of Sanctified fanaticism.

Embraced into the Covenant

The World of Darkness stalked by a swelling population of recently Embraced and mostly ignorant young vampires. The covenant wisely seeks to attract these naïve childer into its ranks in an effort to shape them into pious and penitent exemplars of the Damned, rather than seeking ideal candidates for the covenant among the mortal flock. The Second Tradition is in place to prevent a proliferation of vampires crowding the scene and spoiling the delicate measure of fear the Damned were created to command. Besides that, the modern world is riddled with careless whelps and irreligious monsters sullying their own Requiems with their ignorance of their true design. Why create more vampires when so many already exist tonight who need guidance and piety, who are still unfinished and untaught?

Yet siring new childer offers some advantages to the Sanctified. Yes, it's a breach of the Second Tradition, but the very existence of the covenant's higher-ups demonstrates that, despite its rhetoric, the Lancea Sanctum knows new vampires must be Embraced. The Second Tradition is considered sacred, but Sanctified can atone for their failings and trespasses. The powerful Kindred of the Lancea Sanctum aren't above violating their own commandments to make the covenant (or their own positions) stronger. The ends justify the means, and so goes the contravention of those hallowed traditions.

The key advantage to Embracing a mortal is that he is borne directly into the Lancea Sanctum, that he may be selected for his merits and his piety, that he may serve the Sanctified from his first nights. The sire belongs to the covenant, obviously, and so the childe shall as well. The fledgling vampire can immediately be taught the importance of abiding by the Traditions (and how to respect the great, sinful sacrifice her sire made to show her the true design of the world). She can be shown how to behave, how to venerate the teachings of the Dark Messiah, how to participate in all the rites of the Lancea Sanctum, from the sanctified to the vulgar.

Other neonates — those not Embraced by the Sanctified — are at an instant disadvantage compared to those Kissed by the Sanctified. Not only are their heads likely filled with the fallacious claptrap of some other covenant, but their sires may have fed them lies about the true ways of the world, burying the neonate in shame when she should revere her nature, and enslaving her to the thirst when she should be the master of it. Bringing one of these neonates into the fold of the Sanctified can be difficult. The covenant may have to deal with the sire or wrench the neonate free from the sire's influence. After that, whatever erroneous information her sire fed to her must be replaced with the gospel of Longinus. Neonates Embraced into the covenant make excellent partners to young converts, for they can relate to the new terrors and mysteries of unlife while granting support to a weak or doubtful childe.

A Kindred who is "born Sanctified" is considered more pure, unpolluted by the outside world. She has a clear conduit of information from her reverent sire. From the first night of her Requiem she belongs to the Lancea Sanctum, so her understanding of vampiric history and destiny is fuller than others of her age. This means that — fair or not — a pure neonate is often chosen first for all manner of promotions, boons, or beneficence from the covenant. Eyes fall first upon her to become a leader among novitiates (and a leader of others, further down the line). When the choice is between a more able converted neonate and a less gifted, pure novitiate, many Sanctified select purity. Many Kindred, both inside and outside the covenant's membership, believe this sort of thinking is indicative of Invictus influence over the Sanctified, that it's a sign of weakness in the covenant.

That's not to say a neonate brought into the ranks of the Sanctified from another covenant isn't accepted. Converts make up the vast majority of Sanctified vampires, both in the general congregation and among the Anointed. It's not that vampires who join the covenant are hobbled by the state of their Embrace (it was their sires who violated the Traditions) as much as that those neonates who are Embraced into the covenant are granted advantages, whether formally or not.

A Shameful Sacrifice

The Lancea Sanctum has a complex relationship with the Second Tradition. Kindred who Embrace new vampires cannot be openly rewarded for bringing a valuable asset into the covenant, but neither can the covenant admit any leniency of the sinner or the sin. The choices it makes regarding the Embrace send potent signals to all childer, for even if a neonate is one of the Sanctified, the covenant wants him to fear their judgment if he violates the Traditions.

The attitude that covenant officers display before neonates and laypeople is one of sadness and wrath. Those who violate the Second Tradition have sinned against God and put their souls and the domain at potential risk. Such selfish trespasses may make Priests furious, but the destruction of the sinner does not make him a better agent of God. So the covenant punishes him for his deeds, and asks his new childe to do so as well. The punishment must be carefully balanced to make the neonate afraid to repeat his sire's crime, without the neonate thinking he is unwanted or unwelcome in the covenant himself. So the Sanctified paint sires as the performers of a shameful sacrifice.

A sacrifice can be noble, but not when it violates the Traditions. A sacrifice can be respected, however, even when it

is punished. It must not be celebrated, though, and can never be excused. Instead a sire's shameful sacrifice is painted as something of a selfless, immoral act performed for the benefit of the childe — who is now presumably among the Sanctified. The neonate is now subtly indebted to his sire, who "did this for you, my childe." The sire is then tormented and punished during the Creation Rite, showing his peers what one must endure when the Second Tradition is ignored, and demonstrating the depth of his strength and paradoxically magnificent devotion to the childe, who watches in awe or fear as her sire is burned or flayed… for her.

He Who Is Sin

All neonates are the offspring of sin. Each is proof of a crime against the Traditions. Only Longinus is not.

The Lancea Sanctum displaces guilt for the Embrace from the neonate to the sire, but the distinction does not always stick. Neonates are regarded in some domains as the unwelcome remains of selfish impiety who can only be cleansed through prayer and induction into the covenant. This isn't the widely accepted outlook of the Sanctified, however, because this kind of contempt makes a neonate feel important. The covenant wants young vampires to be afraid and lost, to feel as though they need the Lancea Sanctum to make sense of the Requiem and the world for them — most neonates genuinely *do* need a Priest to help them do that, in the eyes of the Sanctified.

So the covenant emphasizes itself, the Traditions, and the sire over the childe. The childe was sired because *the covenant* needed her. The childe was Embraced because *her sire* failed to respect the Second Tradition. The childe was Embraced because *her sire* is a selfish sinner, who wanted her as a bloody slave. "The world is dark and dangerous, childe, and you are unwelcome in it…. But, good for you, the Lancea Sanctum is here to accept you despite your shroud of sin."

In truth, however, the childe is usually the hinge on which the decision to Embrace turns, even among the Sanctified. A vampire overcome with the memories of mortal lust brought on by the childe emotionally confuses the traumatic rush of the change with sex. A Kindred remembering love decides she cannot live forever without this mortal companion, and so makes her eternal. A Sanctified, in a moment of weakness, believes that he can make a difference in the World of Darkness if this mortal were to become his comrade in damnation.

Relations with Others

Neonates of the Lancea Sanctum have relationships with their elders (from ancillae on up) that differ from the presumed standards of other covenants. The Sanctified are very specific about how such relationships need to break down — and for good reason. Organized devotion within the ranks, specifically regarding formality in how the Damned deal with one another, is the mortar that holds the stone blocks of the church together. Sometimes the entire affair seems a grandiloquent display of balance. To keep the precarious machine of cordial peace between the Damned in motion, the Lancea Sanctum relies on a blend of traditional mortal hierarchies and a formalized, often archaic, standard of respect and authority.

Neonates have their own ways of dealing with their superiors. Just as those above them in the Danse Macabre have uses for the youngest vampires — whether as pawn, assistant or student — neonates have uses for their betters, as well. Neonates need teachers, shepherds and pillars to climb to power. Beyond that, neonates need punishment and structure. But the neonates need mercy most of all, for they are the most ignorant among the covenant's brood, and for them to survive the harsh night they need all the pity and protection the older Sanctified can grant. Those Sanctified monsters above the covenant's neonates are responsible for teaching these willful whelps the truth about Longinus' sacrifice and his Curse, and for turning childer into fearsome and devout monsters — and they have the experience and patience to not mock the young for their inexperience. No vampire can embody the *Testament's* description of an exalted predator without great piety, strength of will, discipline… and practice. Older Sanctified, while delivering punishment, also grant lessons and second chances that a neonate may not get from another covenant. A smart neonate takes advantage of this mercy.

Neonates and Ancillae

The ancillae are usually the direct superiors of neonates. Ancillae are the teachers, parents and counselors, while the neonates remain students, childer and in need of guidance.

Much as it is with mortals, this dichotomy can create complex relationships. Smart neonates fear their superiors, even if there seems little to be afraid of. Such direct authority is a frightening thing, when an ancilla (especially a sire, though not necessarily) holds a novitiate's deathless existence in her unliving hand. Fear may cause a neonate to quietly submit to the whim and will of an ancilla — or cause him to rebel, acting out against such strictures and structure. Quietly submitting may cause the covenant to view the neonate as weak and easily cowed, but outright defiance marks the young Kindred as a rebel and dissident.

Many Sanctified neonates do their best to please the ancillae, some out of sincere devotion to the covenant, others to play upon a superior's ego and gain advantage. Sincere devotion takes a neonate far. Acting as a servile inferior flags the novitiate as an unwilled sycophant — but if his act is good enough, he might appear more faithful and devoted than the sincere neonate.

Finally, some neonates hope to just stay the hell out of the way, avoiding contact with the ancillae as a representation of authority. Or, perhaps more awfully, as the face of what a neonate inevitably becomes. Many elders dominate the covenant from afar, but ancient vampires don't often end up at street level, dealing with novitiates in a hands-on capacity. Ancillae are always there. Within the Lancea Sanctum, however, it's virtually impossible to avoid one's superiors. All-neonate factions of the Sanctified aren't unheard of, but they are quite rare and only seldom survive more than a few years — most are either torn apart without experienced guidance or outgrow their childish fear and develop a taste for real power.

The common bond between an ancilla and a neonate is that of a Priest to his parishioner, or something of a "master-novice" connection. Neonates of the covenant are already a step ahead of those of other covenants (or unaligned childer), but they still have a long way to go. The Sanctified recognize that the principles professed by Longinus are not easily digested over the course of a few nights or weeks. The core principles are simple enough, but as it is with most religions and philosophies, every one answer reveals a dozen new questions. A vampire needs many years to savor and explore the philosophies of the Sanctified, and so God has given her all the years she could need.

Ancilla are chosen to field all of the new questions that a novitiate might have. The covenant is host to a number of seeming contradictions that many neonates chafe against, rather than puzzle out. Neonates always question, and ancillae are in place to make sure that confusion doesn't cause a novitiate to stray from the path of piety. Like a shepherd corralling sheep back to the flock, the ancilla must provide boundaries and answers. Over time, a Priest gives more than just orders to novitiates, but also gives the reasons for such orders, and reveals how those orders will benefit the covenant and fulfill one's holy duty. The neonate's early Requiem is a time of much confusion and personal pain, and the ancilla is intended to be there to get a novitiate through such difficult nights. Of course, each ancilla has his own way of handling this teaching and counseling. An ancilla might be a hard-line finger-breaker who foists the will of the covenant upon novitiates with hammer and nail, an eerie Priest with complex ideas about *The Testament of Longinus* or a loose politico ready to offer a handshake and a knife in the back. Some ancillae appear as (and in fact are) genuinely beneficent monsters, providing neophytes a lamp with which to light the darkness.

The neonate, whether she likes it or not, is dependent upon the "light" of the many ancillae above her. If a neonate finds herself in trouble, to whom can she go? If she has a crisis of faith, who else will set her back on the proper path? If her sins are a weight upon her and she must confess and submit to castigation, who will deliver her penance unto her? Other neonates may be able to offer some guidance, but none can match both the authority and the experience of the Sanctified ancillae.

A neonate may hate, adore or fear the ancillae above her, but she can never escape them, because her need is too great. Wise neonates recognize this and exploit the relationship, doing whatever they can to keep themselves safe and sane while aiming for some kind of promotion within the ranks. The only way toward true grace and excellence leads to the ancillae, whether you are pulled up with their help, slink past them, or fight your way through.

Unwise novitiates go through their fledgling nights fighting against this relationship, and end up either getting lost in the shuffle or meeting Final Death.

Neonates and Elders

In theory, a neonate takes great pride being in the presence of a Sanctified elder. An elder, after all, is closer to God's judgment than most, his blood singing with the strength of the Curse. Plus, sighting an elder is something of a rare thing, and comes with great mystique and reverence.

That's the theory, but the practice is a little bit different. In reality, while a neonate might feel a sense of disconnected pride, the overriding sentiments are ones of alienation and fear. Elders are frightening beings, often so far removed from the mortal mindset that their very existence inspires gut-churning anxiety in all but the most stalwart novitiates. Neonates still recall their mortal lives in a way most elders never will again. A neonate still maintains some semblance of mortal morals and practices, whereas many elders seem strangely inhuman in both outlook and demeanor. For those neonates not repulsed by the inscrutable mindset and practices of the ancients, great and complex relationships can be had between the two seemingly disparate groups. A neonate may seek to learn from his elder, hoping to find some truth in the sizeable span of years between them. The age of an elder intimates a wealth of experience and knowledge, some of which an enterprising (or awestruck) neonate may hope to gain. Even if an elder's memory of history is confused and inaccurate, elders among the Damned are still oceans of information compared to a neonate's puddle of wisdom. Disciplines, rituals, histories, secrets… all are the domain of an elder, a small part of which may be imparted to a neonate. In fact, some elders are more likely to trickle such arcane information down to a neonate than an ancilla, to prevent a closer and already competent underling from developing the power necessary to challenge the master.

Of course, getting into an elder's good graces is a difficult task for any novitiate. Only in the rarest of instances will an ancient Sanctified turn an eye toward a random neonate in the flock. For the most part, a new Kindred must strive and struggle for even a moment's worth of attention from one of his oldest forebears. He must do something to stand out, to set himself apart from the rest of the covenant, without seeming like any other desperate powermonger. Selling out a heretic at great personal cost, uncovering an artifact of great worth to the covenant, and especially displaying exaltation and an advanced mastery of the predatory role may capture the attention of a Sanctified elder.

Sometimes, though, the tables are turned. Capturing the attention of an elder may backfire, and frequently does — the attention of an elder is not always a good thing. An elder may look upon a novitiate and (correctly or not) see an addled child in need of swift punishment, or a pest that should've left well enough alone. Elders are often assumed to see the covenant's novitiates as little more than instruments of the covenant, and a whelp who attracts an elder's attention may simply be bloodied and discarded like any other tool.

Still, elders can appreciate a rapport with a younger Sanctified as a great-grandfather can find solace in time spent with his line's youngest son. Some elders may be attracted to a neonate's youth, while others may see childer as vessels needing to be filled up with enlightenment. Neonates may regret getting the attention they seek, however. Should a neonate's interpretation of the *Testament* not completely satisfy an elder's discerning eye, that neonate may be in for many nights of obtuse eldritch teachings. To speak back to an elder offering guidance is to invite a wealth of suffering, so a neonate caught in such a trap may be wise to sit back and let the elder instruct her. Though, of course, suffering is sometimes the only means of escaping an elder's trap.

Modern neonates seem to have even less respect for the oldest Sanctified, for they've been raised in life on a rhetoric which disparages seniors as senile and out-of-touch. A young Priest may revere the idea of his elders while thinking that orders descended from the highest shadows of the covenant are archaic and stale. Elders, as a category, are sometimes regarded like the constellations: mythically important, but in the modern night, distant and irrelevant. In practice, however, a Sanctified elder virtually never encounters such foolish static — the covenant doesn't put such simpletons in contact with the order's greatest predators.

This isn't to say an elder's lessons are necessarily regarded as worthless, only inaccessible. Ancient lessons are likely to be misunderstood (or unseen for what they are) by young Kindred without long periods of contemplation and centuries of undeath with which to examine it. Why learn such lessons now, then, when they can be looked up when they'll be useful? So many neonates who have heard tales of the ancient vampires seek their miraculous gifts and awesome power for themselves, but so few neonates who see such power truly understand it when they do. The lessons an ancient vampire considers worth imparting may be useless to a young turk until it is recalled, centuries later, and seen for the first time.

Truthfully, most neonates escape the attention of elders totally. Even if a neonate doesn't attempt to remain hidden from his bizarre betters, the elders often have other things to worry about. Yes, such neophytes may one night become worthy adherents of Longinus' mysteries, but elders have greater problems to subvert than the religious instruction of a simple Abecedarian. Should an elder feel a neonate warrants special consideration, he may secretly steer the childer's course through an intervening ancilla and into his own tutelage — and service.

Growing Old, Then Ancient

The transition from neonate to ancilla is gradual, and largely cultural. As a Kindred ages, she is assumed to become more experienced as the decades pass. With that experience often comes respect, deference, or fear, and the Kindred is thereby made more powerful. Nothing is promised, however. There is no celebrated age, even among the Sanctified, at which a neonate becomes an ancilla.

A Kindred respected by her betters and her subordinates is an ancilla, even if her Requiem has been playing over just a few decades. A vampire alleycat with no allies and no temporal power may be considered a neonate by the rest of the domain for the whole of his unlife. An elder may strategically describe an up-and-coming vampire as an ancilla as a kind of subtle social promotion. Few Kindred, however, experience any moment of transition from one state to the next — you are a neonate until you know (or are told, ready or not) you are an ancilla.

Ancillae: The Body of the Faithful

From its first nights, the Lancea Sanctum has been dominated both spiritually and politically by the ancillae, believers for whom the Requiem has progressed beyond its initial and unfocused themes, and who have begun to explore deeper movements and interplays. The darkling strains of the Requiem are more assertive and elaborate with the passage of years, and so the ancillae have a greater sense of themselves and what it means to be one of the Damned. They have established traditions and habits suitable to their unique existence and are, therefore, more sure of their condition and of their purpose. While doubts remain, most vampires who have survived a half-century or more are at least confident enough to accept the mantle of responsibility that comes with being a member of the Lancea Sanctum. They have already seen and experienced a great deal, and are ready to accept the difficult strictures that the covenant requires of its congregation. As such, it is the ancillae who have the greatest influence upon their fellow Sanctified. The neonates are too young to adequately comprehend the solemnity and subtlety necessary for the proper leadership of the faith. The elders are too few and far between to assume the volume of duties the ancillae do — an elder may truly lead, but the ancillae are in direct contact with more of the congregation and more of the city. So it falls upon the shoulders of the ancillae to take up the offices of Priest, Bishop, preacher and centurion, to build in every place the undead make their havens a true Church of the Damned.

Heirs to The Testament of Longinus

Perhaps more than any other single factor, ancillae are drawn to the Lancea Sanctum on account of its august legacy, its insistence that there is a central, celestial design to the Requiem. Those who see the order and poetry of the vampiric condition unfold over a century cannot help but wonder if there isn't some mystic creator behind their damnation. As the World of Darkness unfolds and the existence of arcane and spiritual forces is further revealed, one cannot help but be in awe of its resounding meaning. The Lancea Sanctum offers millennia of accumulated wisdom on these vexing questions, and its continuing power and majesty reveal that it truly understands the spiritual crisis of the Damned, and has found strength therein.

Longinus gave to his disciples an order of divinely inspired customs, and traditions that are inviolate and eternal. It is, therefore, the divine duty of every Sanctified to accept this sacred inheritance and emulate the ways of Longinus, honoring him and God in the process. By recreating the practices first observed in the Black Abbey and by submitting one's self to the Rule, a Sanctified can feel a special closeness to the ancient origins of the Curse that no gulf of time can deny him. The Sanctified ancilla understands that each time he recites a passage from *The Testament of Longinus*, each time he participates in a sacramental rite, and each time he accepts penance for his transgressions against God, he is brought closer to his true grace. Ancillae have accepted their heritage and their divine role and have become what they are supposed to be: unearthly predators and spiritual scions of the Dark Prophet.

Over the doors of many medieval churches is a stone bas-relief depicting the glory of Judgment Day and the hope of salvation it offered to churchgoers. But it also presents the horrors of Hell that awaited the sinner, replete with devils dragging the damned into the flames of the Inferno and devouring their unrepentant souls. This dichotomy instilled in medieval congregants a dreadful fear of what awaited them should they not cleave without misstep to the authority and commandments of the Church, even while simultaneously presenting them with a powerful message of hope. Once inside, these feelings are further exacerbated.

The massive weight of the stones used to build the church's gravity-defying arches seems capable of falling at any moment and crushing the faithful below, yet the architecture is of such heavenly scale and beauty that it imparts an unavoidable sense of the celestial. Similarly, each Sanctified ancilla carries in her still the feeling that she has inherited something both terrible and magnificent. It is impossible, a devout ancilla may believe, to deny that there must be some heavenly plan in the powers and curses of the Blood. By becoming Sanctified, a Kindred can raise up his ceaseless nights upon the earth from a state of petty, bloody struggle for survival and transform eternity into a Requiem that is beautiful in God's eyes.

Attraction

They have been tested and so understand the value of these things, but are not yet so old as to be beyond such dependence.

The trouble for many ancillae is that the night inevitably comes when mastery of the mental and physical self is no longer enough. Particularly for those who were once religiously oriented, but also for many others, the seeming lack of purpose to their existence looms large. When the strange mystery of the vampire's existence becomes almost ordinary, a regular thing, what are you supposed to do with eternity? Eventually, a large number of ancillae feel an impending need to answer that question. The luster of wealth, easy to slowly amass over the decades when so many mortal concerns no longer cost the Kindred money, eventually fades. Mastery of a skill can seem superfluous without a deadline to beat. A vampire can be his own audience for only so long; why become a great violinist if the world can never hear you play? As the endless, repeating nights unfold, many ancillae feel rudderless. They have powers, they have opportunity, but it seems that it all earns the Kindred nothing but another meal of blood.

It is to these Kindred that the Lancea Sanctum shines like a beacon, promising to bring meaning and purpose to the Requiem. Where before the Kindred could hear only a faltering refrain that kept repeating itself, now the ancilla hears an epic score that sweeps her along with an enticing sense of importance and glory. To follow in the footsteps of Longinus, to tremble in the shadow of his fateful majesty, to experience the rapture of his *Testament*, and to obey his commandments come hellish or early fire: *That* is purpose. To attain what can only be attained through undeath, to become what so few have *ever* succeeded in becoming, even with impossible powers and endless years — these are achievements large enough to fill the empty years of night with passion and glory.

Armed thus, all else falls by the wayside. All the political and social intrigues, all the clandestine scrabbling for material resources, all the investments made to further lord over the living become but means to an end, rather than an end unto themselves. Sanctified ancillae feel as if they have taken control of their unlives and infused them with significance. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. The Sanctified who believes his every action serves a divine purpose is a force like no other. He bears the divine curse of the Damned with righteous passion, and woe unto those who stand in his path.

Patience Bears Its Bloody Fruit

Though many of the covenant's ancillae are Kindred who joined a Sanctified congregation in their first nights of damnation, it is surprising to learn that most are not. A large number of the ancilla operating on behalf of the Lancea Sanctum tonight came to the covenant after many decades of undeath. Some were never properly exposed to the teachings of Longinus when they were young, and others simply felt they had no use for God in those first harrowing years enslaved by the Blood. Perhaps most, however, attended public rites and Midnight Mass as neonates, but were not willing to commit to any covenant yet. Bishops who have seen many Sanctified come and go from the covenant claim that the Lancea Sanctum is a popular second choice for many modern Kindred — when the other covenants let neonates down, the Lancea Sanctum looks more appealing.

This is the covenant's soft-sell policy of "educate and wait" in action. Many Kindred must learn firsthand how the risks and distractions of the night can spoil their grace before they can appreciate what the Lancea Sanctum has to offer. There's no shame in that, at least not in the eyes of many Sanctified missionaries. By informing as many Kindred as possible of the covenant's mission and message and being patient, the covenant welcomes many latecomers who are converted not with a bible and a brand, but by the nightly torment of an existence without faith. "You may not see why you need us now," the Sanctified preachers say in New Orleans, "but when you do, we'll be waiting."

Community

Another thing that brings ancillae into the covenant is the nebulous sense of belonging to a community that extends not only beyond coterie but also beyond a single domain — even if the existence of that community must be taken on faith. The Sanctified feel always that they belong to something larger than their parish. Even though their local Bishop or Archbishop is the highest terrestrial authority they need ever recognize (barring the night when Longinus resurfaces), the devout see themselves as a worldwide and timeless community of the faithful, everyone dedicated to the unflinching obedience demanded of true believers.

This is not to say that ancillae suddenly concern themselves with the goings-on in other, unallied parishes, only that a sense of place in the larger family of the Lancea Sanctum is often welcome after what may be decades of solitary predation. It is empowering to know that you are not alone in your beliefs and purpose. Ancillae understand that one's coterie can meet a great many needs, but many Sanctified eventually seek to further involve themselves in a larger society, either to protect themselves from the treacheries that are part and parcel of the Danse Macabre, or to feel important in a way that simple survival cannot provide. No degree of solitude can truly divorce a Sanctified from the swirl of schemes and ambitions of other Kindred, so it's in the best interest of the individual to find a place within some community, however small, if only to benefit from the weight of numbers and the intimidating appearance of unity.

Some ancillae are simply desperate for something greater than companionship and camaraderie and find that their coterie alone can no longer provide all they seek. Coteries can be unraveled by the growing unease of an aging vampire, but most survive (or are made stronger) when a member seeks out new social ties and avenues of personal betterment. The

Lancea Sanctum knows better than to position itself as the destroyer of coteries — a convert is seldom forced to leave his secular allies behind.

Regardless of the specific needs of the individual Kindred, the time arises for many ancillae when filling a night can no longer be mistaken for filling an eternity. When that night comes, the Lancea Sanctum waits with open arms.

The use of rituals to formally demonstrate the new believer's membership in the covenant, and the bestowing of religious responsibilities and privileges go a long way toward further nourishing the sense of belonging a new Sanctified ancilla feels. Because ancillae have substantial amounts of experience under their belts, others usually treat them with additional respect or task them with duties intended both to satiate their desire for purpose and make use of their talents. Just as importantly, ancillae may find opportunities to join the Anointed offices much more quickly than neonate novitiates. Aptitude and capability come from all manner of experience, and the leaders of the Sanctified know that. Ancillae are granted responsibilities and authority not simply to cement them into the covenant (which would undermine the order's power), but because the Lancea Sanctum can always find a way to make use of a skill a new ancilla possesses. A weathered Kindred brings more to the covenant than a neonate, and so the covenant very often gives more back to him in exchange.

The clear hierarchy, the intolerance for disobedience, and the literal fear of God are some of the main reasons each Sanctified feels so attached to the others. Each knows his place in the structure and most have some duty upon which others depend. This interrelationship works not only to maintain orthodoxy and to ensure the completion of necessary functions, but also guarantees that every Sanctified feels both dependent upon and responsible for others. Ancillae of the Lancea Sanctum can earn authority without having to distance themselves socially or spiritually from their brethren (as political power may sometimes require), which is a powerful combination for those whose lust for power and desire for companionship rival one another.

Brother Superior

One of the benefits of the Sanctified community is the backing an ancilla has to act like Brother Fucking Superior. The Sanctified don't pretend to be anything less than they are: exalted predators in the glorious service of the Lord, blessed with supernatural might and station, and the faithful scions of Longinus, to whom God spoke. The Sanctified are second to none in matters of the spirituality of the Damned. Common monsters play at being vampires, but the Sanctified are the champions of their kind. While other covenants dabble and distract themselves, the Sanctified are saving Kindred (and mortal!) society from itself. All Kindred respect and fear the Lancea Sanctum, and

with good reason: They are above you, and you should be above mortal man.

Sanctified ancillae have the power and authority to wear their superiority as a vestment. They are the chosen agents among the common Damned, and they shall watch you and judge you and punish you with the wisdom and severity passed unto them by Longinus through his gospel. You may divide territory and control kine and think yourself the master of your immortal existence, but the Priests of the Lancea Sanctum see your soul and know what awaits you when your Requiem ends. They will continue when you are ash.

Devotion

Ancillae have survived the crucible of their early unlives and chosen their paths. Those who have dedicated their Requiems to the Lancea Sanctum and been welcomed under the aegis of the covenant, whether it was their first calling or not, have set foot upon the road laid out by the Dark Prophet and codified by his childe, the Monachus. They accept the truth of the *Testament of Longinus* and have taken an oath to abide by the Rule of Golgotha in both practice and principle. Those who demonstrate piety and penitence serve as examples to the rest. The most honored may one night even be elevated to sainthood, usually — but not always — after their unfortunate destruction.

Sanctified look to these paragons of virtue as models for their own behavior, and strive to achieve their degree of spiritual rectitude — to fall short is to fail God. Of course, these are merely ideals. Few neonates already possess the aptitude for this kind of deep devotion, which can typically only be developed over a long Requiem spent struggling with moral tests. Only the ancillae and their elders are capable of such an enlightened state. Therefore, it is they who are most sorely pressed to work towards its achievement.

Most ancillae have yet to reach spiritual perfection, or even a close approximation thereof. The Requiem is — and must be — more than just a series of masses and sacraments broken by interludes of fervent prayer and bloody predation. An untold number of regular, earthly distractions also occupy the ancillae. It is all but impossible to banish these inconveniences in order to focus on matters of faith alone. Kindred who seek to refine their personal piety and spiritual strength may involve themselves in the hierarchy of the Lancea Sanctum even after a century of solitary contemplation.

Ancillae cannot escape the social games that play out in Elysium, in the Rack, and everywhere else the Damned congregate. A truly devout participant in the Danse Macabre accepts that and understands that it is a part of the Requiem (though not the point of it). Such an ancilla sees these endeavors as anvils upon which to hammer and refine the steel of his faith into a new Spear of Destiny. If an ancilla is not overwhelmed by such power plays or lured off the holy path, he becomes a more excellent monster, capable of withstanding the distractions and obstacles of the secular life — and perhaps capable of freeing others from themselves.

Fanaticism

Every crowd has its hotheads and incurably self-righteous who, once they adopt a philosophy or cause as their own, stop at nothing to prove they are fighting the good fight. Ancillae who fall under this category see in the Lancea Sanctum the perfect opportunity to be right and to show other Sanctified just how damned right they are. Whether they seize upon the idea of serving as literal paladins of Longinus or transfer their zealotry into less violent efforts, their dedication to the covenant and the central role of faith goes unquestioned.

Certainly, a number of fanatical ancillae do not adhere to every one of Longinus' precepts all the time; some disregard the Rule of Golgotha when it interferes with what they perceive to be a more ardent demonstration of faith. The independence and authority bestowed by the covenant on some ancillae (or taken for themselves) leads many to justify impious actions with pious motives. And let no one call into question the loyalty of such a devoted agent! Fanatics unknowingly confuse the spirit of a philosophy and its scripture, but need never re-examine their positions, for they have faith and do not doubt. The Crimson Cavalry is but one example of this, with the group's neo-Nazi dogma overriding traditional quasi-Catholic Sanctified doctrine.

But the most zealous Sanctified play, without question, a powerful and integral part in the covenant, even when their numbers are small. Their fervor inspires less confident members, whose own faith wavers. The opportunities open to them and the stature their burning piety earns them serves to keep these ancillae within the fold and to lure others to join. Few covenants welcome (or create) zealots as the Lancea Sanctum does.

Roles of the Ancillae

Those Damned who have survived more than half a century find few doors closed to them as members of the Lancea Sanctum. Every ecclesiastical office is theirs for the taking and every part is theirs to play, assuming they have the wits and wherewithal to succeed. Find a place in the covenant, gather the flock, give the word, and so let it be done.

What follows is a breakdown of some major roles ancillae play in the covenant, with a description of each role's importance. Keep in mind that many possible roles for ancillae exist beyond these, and that neonates or elders might fill some of these roles in particular domains; there are no certainties in the Danse Macabre. As the ancillae are a meaty percentage of the covenant's members, however, they cover the greatest ground in terms of contributions to the covenant. While the following roles are important, understand that many Sanctified ancillae do not assume any of them, but instead are simply granted (or adopt) the role of Priest, and minister to their neighborhood or flock as they will, sharing the evangel of Longinus and bettering their chosen Kindred without participating in the complex local machinations of the Lancea Sanctum itself.

Few Sanctified ancillae can escape playing some part, however. Age alone marks an ancilla in the minds of lay neonates and novitiates as deacons of a sort, knowledgeable and experienced Sanctified who can keep consul, share advice and give warnings without necessarily being tasked by the Bishop to do so. Many Kindred seek out such fringe Priests in favor of Sanctified Priests wearing some garb of the covenant. Sanctified fundamentalists, on the other hand, look down on such casual deacons as half-hearted and therefore dangerous, but their numbers (and, often, popularity) make it difficult to intervene without weakening the appearance of covenant solidarity. For the most part, the fire-and-brimstone types simply pursue their own passions and trust in the belief that fringe Priests are doing at least the bare minimum necessary to glorify Longinus and keep the local Kindred in line with the church.

Priest and Politician

Many ancillae serve the Lancea Sanctum as its night-to-night administrators, bureaucrats, and religious functionaries. They might like to pretend that spiritual matters come first, but the leadership of a Sanctified parish is not something that can take a back seat to other concerns. To neglect the covenant and its purpose in favor of personal enlightenment is not only irresponsible, but a surefire way to stumble in the Danse Macabre. A runaway diocese is ripe for corruption and infiltration by other covenants, either of which would be considered disastrous in the extreme. Therefore, a Sanctified ancilla must dedicate himself to the proper guidance of the covenant.

The Holy Administrators

Sanctified of lower station are given mixed responsibilities, blending the spiritual needs of the congregation with the operational needs of the covenant. As the authority and overall responsibility of the station increases, the purview of those responsibilities narrows. Common Priests perform rites and meet with parishioners, but may also be tasked with monitoring the behavior of novitiates or finding supplies for the covenant. At the top of the hierarchal pyramid, one Bishop may oversee spiritual matters almost exclusively, while another Bishop manages the logistics of church operations. Though a logistical leader is still responsible for her own pious behavior and devotion to the covenant, her primary objective must always be the administrative integrity of the parish. A concern for the success of efforts outside her purview is respectable, but no mercy is granted to those who fail because of distraction.

Whether bearing a formal title or not, the burden falls upon every ancilla to uphold the canons and tenets of the faith, to see to the proper application of the Rule, and to provide leadership to others, especially the neonates, who may one night themselves ascend to positions of authority. Each is a Priest in the most general sense, and each is responsible for acting the part. Perhaps most importantly, it is the ancillae, more than any other Sanctified, who represent the covenant and, ultimately, communicate the teachings of Longinus to other Kindred. Even if not actively giving counsel or preaching to the masses, the ancillae must always remember that they are the face of the covenant and their actions must reflect that. If they cannot stand out as models for others, the entire parish suffers. The ancillae should seek every possible way they might best personify the majesty and righteousness of the Lancea Sanctum. Where the Sanctified hold the lion's share of the power, this is relatively easy. However, where the covenant wields lesser political influence, the clergy needs to be more judicious in its use of rhetoric and its show of moral probity. Being excluded from important Kindred gatherings on account of arrogance or another impropriety is not a good way to help the covenant.

One of the most effective ways ancillae can enact their role as evangelists is also the easiest: they can dress the part. Clerical garb, whether ornate vestments and florid raiment or more conservative apparel, is always impressive. Even an ancilla of limited accomplishment can wear something that marks him to lay Kindred as a member of the Lancea Sanctum. Sacred ornaments and jewelry are also commonplace, but their ubiquity among devout Sanctified does little to mark an ancilla as a figure of special status in the covenant.

As priests, ancillae are responsible for participating in (and often leading) at least one regular ritual. The vast variety of ceremonial sacraments and minor rites can be overwhelming, and in all but the smallest congregations multiple ancillae share the burden of overseeing these observances. Some might be very minor, but all are important in some way. One can't simply choose to forego a particular ritual because of some personal conflict or secret motive. It is not the ancilla's rite, but the covenant's.

As much as the ancilla is a priest, he is a politician, and in many domains the two roles are inseparable. Beginning the moment he gains the respect and privilege due an accomplished member of the Lancea Sanctum, an ancilla must understand and appreciate at least the basic state of affairs in the city (and use what skills he has to exploit those affairs). Within every parish political intrigues play out, some involving only a few Sanctified, others involving plots of such complexity that they have repercussions throughout the city. Many of these intrigues are secular, brushing up against the Lancea Sanctum only because of the covenant's presence in the domain, but others originate within the covenant and draw in outsiders. The majority of these are relatively petty schemes concerning who presides over a certain ritual, which sermon shall be delivered at an upcoming mass, or which mortal shall provide the clergy their habiliment, for example. Some are more substantial. An attempt by a cabal of priests to oust and replace the current Confessor to the Primogen is no small matter, for example. It is critical, then, that the covenant's ancillae become as politically astute as possible to protect the covenant and its congregation from the moral erosions of the Danse Macabre.

Counselor

The roles ancillae play as counselors to their fellow Kindred is no less vital than the role of a Priest — and can be just as political. Every Kindred in the city can be served by the wise counsel of a learned Sanctified. A holy confidant can be the closest ally of the most powerful Kindred in the domain, and there is perhaps no greater protection in the Danse Macabre than a reputation for being essential and discreet.

Naturally, not every ancilla qualifies as exceptionally wise or insightful, but the covenant may provide an education deep enough to enable any Anointed Kindred to offer some important advice to those in need. For many it's enough simply for a counselor to listen carefully, present no personal bias (or ulterior motive), and offer a frank alternative perspective. Counselors may supply quotations or recitations from the Testament to demonstrate the familiarity of a problem, and how it might be overcome. The troubles of a modern Kindred can be shown in a new light by relating current woes to ancient parables and morality plays. Sometimes just the serenity of a Sanctified sure in her faith is enough. Often, of course, a counselor suggests that counsel-seekers are too preoccupied with matters of politics and property, for which they prescribe contemplation and predation, which bring clarity of purpose to all the Damned.

Even a fringe Sanctified ancilla with little interest in the betterment of his kind may become the counselor to some local Kindred, using the opening to put forth his own personal views or further his own plans. A canny ancilla can turn someone's confidence to nearly any end, not the least of which is the cultivation of a confederate who might serve well in times of turmoil. This privilege of the trusted Sanctified is considered by some to be the greatest advantage an ancilla can wield in the Danse Macabre. The power to sway the opinion and guide the decision-making of other Kindred — often in secret — is a fearsome power that can stir up a substantial amount of jealousy and mistrust, however. Ancillae who abuse their trusted connection to other Kindred are reviled as selfish by those who cherish and uphold the role of the counselor as something sacred; in exchange, manipulative counselors believe any resource which benefits the covenant benefits all Kindred in time. For these reasons, some Sanctified counselors surreptitiously try to poach others' supplicants.

The Lancea Sanctum is not a church for mortals, or mortal morality, however. A counselor who persuades, intimidates, or otherwise coerces his charge to perform acts that are (to some minds) immoral is not necessarily scolded by the covenant for his actions. Counseling an advice-seeker to kill a mortal only encourages him to behave according to his function, as Longinus wrote. That the death of a particular mortal may benefit the covenant, the counselor, or some other vampire may be beside the point, depending on the circumstances. In domains where the covenant is especially severe, Sanctified overseers have no apologies for Kindred who are used by their counselors or whose entourages of mortal servants are bled. As predators, all Kindred should first regard the living

as animals to be eaten, and second, should be able to rule and protect themselves; getting hurt should make you tougher. Only the lamb cries foul when the wolf seizes what is his, and the Dark Prophet has no mercy for lambs.

At the heart of it, though, it is the fundamental responsibility of Sanctified ancilla to offer advice, guidance and assistance when doing so would prove beneficial to the Kindred and the greater glory of Longinus. Despite all the ways the role of counselor can be abused, most ancillae give counsel because they truly believe it strengthens the covenant's relationship with the wider vampiric world. Most Kindred require some insight they do not personally possess, and the covenant strives to be there for them. Much of the insight other Kindred seek from the covenant is of a spiritual nature, of course, but once counselor and petitioner establish a rapport, a supplicant might ask an ancilla his opinion on nearly anything. Many ancillae make a point of researching the history and related philosophy of subjects important to their charge. The Anointed of the Lancea Sanctum often have a reputation for being well read or educated, and the covenant has access to historical records (both Kindred and kine) that give its members a broad perspective. Thus Sanctified counselors often grow to become political advisors, social strategists, or academic experts.

Confessor

The Lancea Sanctum does not abandon those vampires who fail to be the most perfect predators. It does not give up on those who violate the canons and precepts of the faith. Provided these weaker Kindred strive to better fulfill the role God gave to vampires, provided they recognize their failures, provided they reveal themselves to the Sanctified, Kindred who sin against their earth mission have an opportunity to strengthen themselves, hone their fatal ways, and restore their pious station.

The confessors of the Lancea Sanctum enjoy an autonomy and authority unlike that of Catholic confessors, on which they are only loosely based. Sanctified confessors are entitled to devise their own penance for their supplicants. The greater the crime, the more severe the penance. In very rare cases (though Confessor-Inquisitors were common for a time in Europe, well into the seventeenth century) a confessor may even destroy a vampire she deems dangerous to the covenant, such as one who has, or intends to, grossly violate the Masquerade. Most penance, however, resembles something more akin to personal exercise for the Damned. A confessor may demand the penitent attend a forthcoming ritual, bring the Bishop a gift of fine Vitae, endure atonement by torment, or hunt and kill a human in a particular fashion or location. Of course, some penance amounts to little more than a recitation of scripture or a simple service to the covenant.

In domains where the Lancea Sanctum is strong, it is not uncommon for formal confession to be required of every Kindred in the congregation — if not regularly, then at least on occasion. A Sinner's Ball (once popular in French domains and, for a time, in New Orleans) is little more than a communal confessional rite (see page 80) hosted by the covenant and dressed up as a social function; the specifics vary, of course. Fanatical branches of the covenant regard the role of confessor as something like that of an Inquisitor — she is expected to go out and *get* confessions.

Where the Lancea Sanctum cannot enforce its values so universally over Kindred society, the doors still stand open, so that any vampire can avail herself of the opportunity to purge her soul and be worthy of Longinus' blessing. The sacrament of confession is not something to be taken lightly, and even when given in a less than official capacity, it demands much of the penitent. Not only must she reveal perhaps her darkest secrets to the ancilla receiving to her, but she must also accept a penance devised by the same Priest. Although many penances are routine and require no great tribulation, some are quite onerous, and others take a great deal of time to complete (a Sanctified confessor's view of time is far different from one whose nights are filled with social games and indulgent political plays). Sanctified who cannot perform their penance with humility and fortitude, or who abandon this sacred duty entirely, are scolded, threatened or worse.

What Do Monsters Confess To?

The Lancea Sanctum isn't concerned with impure thoughts. The Sanctified want Kindred to feel lessened when they act below their station as the divine army of fearsome predators of God's beloved humans. Though the thresholds of shame vary with the fundamentalism of each parish, two common threads run through the Sanctified interpretations of sin: To fall short of their exalted role is sinful, and to violate the Traditions is to defy God's will. Here, then, are some examples of behavior that a *Testament*-heeding Kindred might feel compelled to reveal to his confessor:

- Sparing a chosen target after feeling a pang of guilt.
- Socializing with a mortal without intending to feed from him.
- Watching over old loved ones from mortal life.
- Not stopping another vampire from siring a childe.
- Showing mercy to a known diablerist.
- Being witnessed while feeding.
- Eating human food.
- Succumbing to frenzy over earthly matters.
- Doubting the existence of God.

It goes without saying that this role presents countless opportunities for blackmail, betrayal, and subterfuge; such is the Danse Macabre, even among Priests. Should a pardoner be found guilty of disregarding the sanctity of confession by exposing his penitent's sins to the public or an enemy to gain some personal advantage, the indiscreet confessor will have hell to pay. (Unless, of course, those he tells are more powerful than those he tells on.) Unlike a Catholic confessor, a

Sanctified confessor is expected to report to an Anointed superior information on the sins being committed in the parish, but not necessarily who is doing what. The Anointed, as a body, are expected to maintain the privacy of the penitent, but only to a point. Powerful Anointed can certainly survive the minor scandal of reporting the crimes of a nobody neonate to the Sheriff.

The Sanctified do not claim the same purview as mortal priests, but many Kindred forget that and share secrets with a Sanctified confessor, which may be more valuable than the Requiem of the penitent vampire. If, for example, a neonate reveals that he has stolen from the Prince, his crime does not fall into the scope of the Lancea Sanctum's spiritual concerns — theft is a violation of the Commandments, not the canons of the covenant. Whether or not the confessor reveals the thief depends entirely on the particular confessor's loyalties and judgment… and what the thief is worth to the covenant.

Storytelling the Confession

A scene of confession can be a challenge to play out, but the benefits are often worth it. A confessional scene is a moment for one character (and her player) to shine; it's her Oscar scene. This is the chance for the other players to get a good look at what the confessing character thinks, how she sees herself, and why. You, as a player, might choose to prepare a dramatic or frightening reading for your player ahead of time or you may find that exploring an improvised monologue over a minute or two brings your character to life (sic) in a way he never was before. If nothing else, this scene is a great way to earn experience awards for roleplaying.

When describing your confessional scene, make use of the unique elements the Lancea Sanctum provides. A Sanctified confession can take place anywhere, so take advantage of it. Imagine what the confession means to your character — and to the larger story being told — and consider what details either enhance the scene's meaning, or contrast with it. A confession on a rooftop just before dawn or in a room spattered with blood is terrifically moody. Perhaps your character only finally confesses when she is starving or just one bullet away from torpor. She could snap and scream her confession to a hideous Nosferatu elder in the burnt-out ruins of a cathedral, or she could whisper her confession to another player's character in the familiar ground of a shared haven. Make it yours.

For optional game mechanics based on confessional rites, see page 81.

Preacher and Missionary

The Lancea Sanctum would have perished at the hands of the Camarilla if it were not for those Sanctified who took up the task of spreading the word of the *Testament*, despite the risk to themselves. Of all the Kindred, the ancillae have historically had the greatest impact establishing a foundation for the Lancea Sanctum. Their charismatic sermons, their firebrand tirades, their passionate revelations, and their willingness to leave the safety of their parish behind in order to further glorify the word and will of Longinus are why the covenant has achieved the influence it has in so many places. Rarely, if ever, are ancillae commanded to accept these roles, however. Rather, it is implied that all members of the Sanctified shall preach when the time (and the audience) is right, and most far-reaching missionaries take the dangerous task upon themselves. Still, enough do the holy summons to make these roles the stereotypical Sanctified endeavor in many cities, and these stalwart exemplars of the evangel shall reap miraculous rewards for their toil.

Every Sanctified worth her blood accumulates a mental library of scriptural passages, allegorical stories and moral aphorisms during her Requiem. Most ancillae, particularly those who have been members of the Lancea Sanctum for a considerable time, have a substantial arsenal of liturgical tools at the ready. They're no fools and are more than aware of the awesome power an eloquent sermon can have upon the minds of susceptible Damned. Adding a dash of supernatural charisma only further amplifies the persuasive force of these religious speeches, and those who can command this kind of edge are encouraged to use it. Why would the Kindred possess such a talent if it's not to be put to good use, and what could be a better use than rallying others to venerate and emulate the Dark Prophet?

Ancillae with silver tongues are valuable members of the covenant, frequently called upon by their fellow Sanctified to sermonize at masses and other ceremonial functions. Some ancillae stand before their congregation under the darkened moon and exhort the throng with scathing attacks on the sinners among them, flailing them with words of righteousness and sanctimoniously hammering them with guilt. Others prefer to speak of their sacred purpose as Longinus' heirs, calling attention to their state of Damnation as a reason to rejoice, their florid homilies instilling in audiences feelings of certitude and holy rapture. Still others adopt the role of teacher, relying more upon intellectual skills and historical examples than any emotional appeal; their moralizing usually focuses on a singular topic and depends upon the balanced use of logic, levity and linguistic artistry to convey their message.

In some parts of the world, most notably in North America, another flavor of Sanctified preacher thrives: the showman. The evangelical movements that did so much to swell the ranks of the covenant on the continent are technically past, but the success of its wonder-workers continues to motivate some ancillae to adopt this method of sermonizing. Particularly in more rural domains, the evangelicals carry on the tradition of religious revivals that would make a mortal believer blanch. These carnival-like stage shows feature "Miracles of Longinus," the presentation of "true relics," and frightening displays of Theban Sorcery, not to mention the quasi-ritualistic exsanguinations of a few kine to sate the appetites of the ecstatic true believers and demonstrate the devotion of a few Damned. It seems that nothing is off limits at these events. If it brings in the crowds and scores converts, it's in the show.

Set Dressing: The Evangelical Movement

Some evangelists are so talented, and their revivals such spectacles, that they are known by Sanctified of numerous domains. Solomon Fell is perhaps the most famous of these itinerant celebrities. Word of Brother Fell's traveling revival always stirs a fervid level of excitement among the faithful, and even non-believers find it hard to resist the draw of such a spectacle.

Another popular evangelist is simply known as the Parson, and while his approach does not inspire the same intensity of interest as Fell's, he comes off as more substantial because he depends somewhat less upon mere showmanship to rouse those who come to see him. The Parson regales his audience with tests of faith instead of flash and bluster, demonstrating the might of Longinus and the truth of his *Testament* by engaging in all manner of self-abuse. A few who witness his masochistic performances are so stirred by the sight that they spontaneously mimic the act, sometimes with such blind fanaticism that they do not survive the experience unchanged. Traditionalists among the covenant attempted to put a stop to the Parson in the 1970s, claiming he was more Acolyte than Sanctified. His defenders say he makes Sanctified out of Acolytes.

Not every evangelist is so enamored with performance art and hysteria, however. Sister Clair, an ancilla who confines her appearances to the Pacific Coast, is famed for her ethereal voice, said to be a gift from the angel Amoniel. Her hymns produce in listeners a feeling akin to transcendence, and have lifted up even the most craven Damned to beg forgiveness for past indiscretions and throw themselves upon the altar of Longinus in repentant obeisance.

Whether they preach with puritanical zeal and put on extravagant midnight revivals to hypnotize the preternatural senses of the Kindred, or simply meander from town to town thumping the *Testament*, Sanctified missionaries and evangelists know well the danger in which they put themselves. Every road between the cities is a frightening one, replete with dangers of every sort and magnitude. For this reason, most footloose Sanctified travel in small groups led by a charismatic ancillae or elder and accompanied by others of lesser stature.

Each member of a migrant evangelical coterie knows her place and has clearly defined responsibilities that cover practical needs — securing a haven, seeking vessels, covering the group's tracks — as well as those necessary to put on a successful performance. Arriving in a city, these Sanctified may hit the Rack and Elysium to drum up interest in the preacher and test the political waters to find out how their presence might be received by the local powers. More than a few Princes discourage what they often see as vagabond charlatans and rabble-rousers from stirring up trouble in their domain. Itinerant preachers also learn what they can about the Lancea Sanctum in the city, as well as facts and rumors about the domain itself, which can later be incorporated into the show to great effect. They often distribute copies of the *Catechism* and *The Testament of Longinus* (which some Princes and Bishops fear risks breaching the Masquerade) and upon departing a city may accept new disciples into their coterie, so long as it does not jeopardize their ability to maintain the Masquerade and be welcomed elsewhere.

Only a rare breed of Sanctified takes to the road alone. Such ancillae are viewed either as truly exceptional paragons of faith and fortitude or as madmen driven by visions of martyrdom and a desire to meet their maker before the appointed hour. Some are known as the Nepheshim (see p. 154), but most have little connection to that ancient faction and instead wander of their own volition.

Crusader

The Lancea Sanctum is not without its detractors and outright enemies, and must forever be on its guard against such threats. The gravest dangers of all, however, cannot be faced in combat, for they cannot be found at all without vigilance and vigor. They are the corruption of Longinus' church, and the treachery posed by those Sanctified too morally weak to recognize heresy from the true religion. The covenant reveres the Spear of Destiny not just for its symbolism, but for its function.

To defend the covenant, its faithful congregants must sometimes step down from the pulpit and take up their spears in combat against pagan witches and the venal vipers within their own ranks. Neonates fill out the ranks of the covenant's holy crusades, but the ancillae serve as the officers in the army of Longinus. Ancillae have many decades of reasons to fight with true ferocity and the experience to survive such battles.

Combat for ancillae usually involves the defense of the covenant's membership and the protection of its sacred possessions. From escorting a venerable Priest to Midnight Mass or accompanying pilgrims to a holy site, to watching for unwanted trespassers outside a covenant gathering or standing vigil over a Sanctified relic, warriors of the faith have many occasions to come under attack. Certain high-ranking or exceptionally influential members of the covenant have personal bodyguards permanently at their beck and call, both to call attention to their station and to keep them from harm. This is especially true in domains with large wilderness regions, where the possibility of a sudden attack by Lupines or other horrors is not out of the question, and to a lesser degree in larger cities where the covenant does not hold power (or is actively at war), and the safety of ecclesiastic officers is a nightly concern. Missionaries, evangelists, and simple neonates on pilgrimage may find experienced Sanctified ancillae ready and willing to join them on their travels, to provide whatever martial services they might require. Some ancillae, such as Legates, know some routes so well that they are regularly employed to escort any Sanctified traveling that way. Many parishes, meanwhile, claim at least one relic — even if

it is only a gilded bauble of dubious origin — and their safekeeping is no small matter to the local Anointed. Such artifacts very often serve as spiritual touchstones and anchors for the faith of the community. Their destruction, theft, or desecration can shake the local faith in the covenant's strength.

Sometimes the Sanctified are called upon to do more than defend themselves. While not a regular occurrence in comparison to the frequency of such things during the covenant's earliest years, the scions of Longinus must occasionally take the fight to the enemy. Violence is not the preferred method of dousing the fires that threaten them, but it is also not something the covenant's paladins shy from; a predator must eliminate those who seek to steal his territory or his prey. The Sanctified know full well that direct force is sometimes the only means of absolute victory. Each one a testament to the excellence of the covenant, ancillae crusaders lead the charge against impious Damned and their mortal minions without mercy or hesitation. When the time has come for war, only victory can stop a Sanctified paladin. For them, shedding and consuming the blood of the heathen is their sacred reward as staunch warriors of Longinus.

Enemies of the Sanctified claim the covenant's hell-raising holy wars and "glorious cause" threaten the Masquerade, but the terrifying combatants of the Lancea Sanctum know their purpose: the Traditions are the cause. Many, however, privately accept that the Traditions must sometimes be momentarily ignored to secure the total destruction of those who would see them destroyed utterly. Armed with the fire of faith and the blessing of the Dark Messiah, Longinus' crusaders are a terrible sight to behold when they come with their medieval weapons and modern armor. Few among the Damned have the nerve or conviction to stand against them.

Often, Longinian paladins take up the good fight of their own volition. The Lancea Sanctum has no globally organized military arm, and few parishes have more than a handful of dedicated Sanctified warriors. It is not unheard of, however, for local Sanctified to form what amounts to a military order sworn to the full-time defense of the Lancea Sanctum. Such coteries often share a communal haven as a show of solidarity and for protection against the covenant's slithering enemies. In wealthy parishes, Sanctified knights may be outfitted with weapons, cars, security systems, and even elaborate garb for ceremonial observances. A group of militant Sanctified ancillae can alter the whole tenor of the Danse Macabre in a domain. When a group's members are convinced, as some are, that the greatest demonstration of devotion to Longinus is martyrdom, the impact on the domain can be enormous and permanent.

Some members of the covenant take up the sword for Longinus as penance. They accept the risks of violent conflict as a means to purge themselves of their sins and demonstrate their worthiness to God. Such penance is usually limited to a particular mission or a limited period of time, but Sanctified of extreme piety have taken eternal vows to battle until their Requiems end in flames.

Conversion At Gunpoint

Conversion by force is, generally, a waste of time. When the covenant decides that the time for violence has come, it is not because the local population is resisting the invitation to join their ranks… or at least, it is not for that reason alone.

The covenant does not attack those it wants to convert, because the Sanctified do not show mercy. The covenant's enemies are those who must be destroyed because they *cannot* be converted. The swift and terrible elimination of such enemies does attract converts, though, and the Sanctified know it. Violence attracts the violent, and victory attracts followers. A display of magnificent force brings in the weak, who seek protection, and the meek, who want to feel powerful themselves. If nothing else, the destruction of the covenant's enemies prevents them from luring any more would-be converts.

In strange contrast to common notions of war, the Sanctified have found that frank declarations of hostility can swell the ranks of the covenant. As vampires are burnt and decapitated in covenant wars, previously unknown whelps are driven out of hiding to choose sides. While the Lancea Sanctum's crusaders are spearing heretics and gutting werewolves, the congregation is gathering together more tightly than before, behind the fortifications of faith that protect them from the anguish and Final Death outside the churchyard.

Inquisitor

Before the crusaders can wage their wars, the enemy must be found. Nowhere can the Sanctified be truly free from the danger of rot from within: corruption and heresy is as much the product of ignorance as of insolence, and it is impossible for all Sanctified to be religious scholars. Therefore, a number of ancillae are dedicated to the identification and eradication of these threats wherever they fester. While it is certainly important to combat those who wish to harm the covenant, these self-righteous Sanctified believe the invisible enemy to be the most dangerous — let none forget the Traitor at the Black Abbey! Conspiracies have historically posed a greater threat to the covenant than armies.

Most who don the mantle of the Inquisitor assume the responsibilities full-time, watching their fellow parishioners with unblinking eyes for any sign of heresy. The presence of an Inquisitor creates an atmosphere of paranoia and fear, for they traditionally have the authority to investigate any suspicion, and often the right to punish whomever they deem guilty. The accusations of ancillae carry greater weight than those of neonates. An Inquisitor must be able to present an unspoken attitude of stark acceptance — she has seen all of this before. Younger Kindred simply do not have the experience or the

credibility to judge the character of other vampires. Elders make excellent Inquisitors, but the majority of the most ancient Inquisitors took the office as ancillae.

Not many Kindred have the wide range of skills necessary to excel in the role of Inquisitor. In practice, most Inquisitors fill the office for only a short time — sometimes as little as a single investigation — until they are suitably respected and feared to gain more power with less effort. Those Kindred who endure in the role are not like ordinary vampires, and they are the reason why the role of Inquisitor doesn't appear (or, by many accounts, feel) like one that can simply be adopted. Many neonates who seek the office are told frankly that "you cannot *become* an Inquisitor, childe; if you *were* an Inquisitor you would *be* an Inquisitor."

An Inquisitor must have an intuitive grasp of both the Man and the Beast, of how the living and dead minds interact in a vampire. An Inquisitor must exhibit extreme skills of empathy without revealing anything of her true character in return. An Inquisitor must be able to outwit, outmaneuver, and outthink his elders. An Inquisitor must not be moved by pleas for mercy or tales of woe, or surprised by words or deeds. An Inquisitor must be able to master pain; this is more important than the ability to fight. An Inquisitor must be able to avoid combat: she does not defeat her subject, she reveals and eliminates him. An Inquisitor must be able to get information from any vampire — whether he wants to or not, whether he knows he's being interrogated or not.

The mystique of the Inquisitor reaches well beyond the covenant congregation. Invictus leaders, especially, have a reputation for being impressed by Sanctified Inquisitors. It is therefore not uncommon for influential Kindred outside of the covenant to seek an Inquisitor's services in secular pursuits. Those rare Inquisitors who don't see such efforts as a distraction from their purpose have been known to assist Princes, prisci, and others as investigators, interrogators, advisors, and jurors on matters both public and private.

Keepers of Theban Sorcery

Knowledge of, and experience with, Theban Sorcery is as important as knowledge of scripture in some parishes. Ancillae, as agents of the covenant, split the difference between age and accessibility, so it falls to them to both understand the supernatural powers of the Damned and to pass on the means to gain further understanding to the neonates who follow them. In practice, this responsibility extends to all of the vampiric Disciplines the ancillae of the parish may have access to, but the covenant's arcane customs stem mostly from its heritage of Theban Sorcery.

As with most of the covenant's customs, the control of its miraculous magic is handled in any of a hundred ways in a hundred different cities. One principle, however, is so widespread as to be almost universal: the right to learn Theban Sorcery must be granted by those who know it. Simply surviving twenty-one years of undeath or attending Midnight Mass does not warrant a Sanctified the right to learn Theban Sorcery. Those who know a rite must choose to pass it on.

The volume of rituals known to the Sanctified, and the strange array of powers they afford, means that most rites are shared when needed, whether for a particular endeavor or for the safe-keeping of the miracle itself. Ancillae might not even share rituals with each other. The customary response to a Sanctified who asks to be taught is snide but polite: "No, because you do not need it."

In practice, however, most parishes do not typically hoard power from the able. Theban Sorcery is the unique instrument of the Lancea Sanctum, so it must be guarded, but at the same time it is of little use if it is not in the hands of the Sanctified. Simple rites are readily shared in parishes confident in the loyalty of the membership, but even the simplest rituals are reserved for the Anointed in less-secure domains. The Bishop might reserve the right to authorize new practitioners or require all talk of Theban Sorcery to be limited to covenant grounds, but these are artificial limitations on the art. Ultimately, it is the decision of each Sanctified to share or withhold the power of the Lancea Sanctum's dark miracles.

Proficient Theban Sorcerers may also undertake the cataloging and collection of rituals. Such scholarly Sanctified may go to nearby parishes to collect or share knowledge, research forgotten rites, or investigate claims of new power. These keepers of Theban Sorcery are forbidden to hide their findings from the covenant leadership, however, and in many parishes it is forbidden to deny an elder any ritual he seeks to learn. History, however, is rife with tales of ancillae and elders who practiced secret forms of Theban Sorcery.

Relations with Others

The ancillae, as the accomplished adults of the Danse Macabre, are in the thick of it. They are the social strata through which so much of vampiric society is conducted. Many neonates would hear nothing of the elders if were not for the ancillae, who were once the neonates to yesterday's ancillae. Many elders would not survive the modern night without the support of the ancillae, their childer.

Ancillae and Neonates

Every ancillae was a neonate. This colors everything about the relationships between these two groups. The Sanctified ancillae understand the difficulties neonates face and know the truth about the stations they seek. Thus the ancillae are forever treating fledgling Sanctified as vessels to be filled with knowledge, wisdom, and purpose, but also as naïve children who don't know what is best for them. In some manner, virtually every relationship between an ancilla and a neonate reflects this.

It might seem as though Sanctified ancillae view neonates as little more than instruments for covenant use, but that is a grave misinterpretation of the Lancea Sanctum, and possibly of ancillae in general. Even if a neonate shows no aptitude for the clergy, she is a divine heir to the power of Longinus. Every neonate experiences the Requiem, and each, likely or not, has some potential to excel at the part she was Cursed to play. No neonate possesses the same combination of skills, talents, and potential of another, so each must be judged on her own basis. Only the most narrow-minded ancilla does not recognize the fearsome power flowing in the neonates, despite their lack of refinement. Those who accept the *Testament of Longinus*, who do their best to abide by its precepts, and who demonstrate their devotion to the covenant must be allowed the opportunity to prove or damn themselves.

Ancillae should see to it that neonates are given the spiritual education necessary to satisfy their needs and the needs of the covenant. Ancillae interact with novitiates directly, becoming their priests, confessors, mentors, and shepherds. The Requiem is a cruel and arduous existence, and all but the most callous ancillae prefer to spend it in the company of their Sanctified brothers and sisters. Even in the largest domains, the total number of Sanctified is limited. With so few to turn to for companionship, if nothing else, most ancillae see reason to understand those neonates, with whom they share time, hunting grounds, and eternity.

Consider the likelihood that the covenant's ancillae outnumber its neonates in many domains. The difficulty of the Embrace and the covenant's strict observance of the Second Tradition sometimes result in a swollen "middle class," of sorts. Obviously, the Second Tradition is broken with some frequency, even by the Sanctified, but that rarely makes up for the passage of time that turns last night's neonate into tonight's ancilla. This can create a feeling among the ancillae that the neonates are in some sense on probation. Not until they have survived the demands of the Curse and conducted their own Requiem in a fashion worthy of the Longinus — things that cannot be accomplished in just a few decades — will they be truly regarded as equals.

Many ancillae form lasting relationships with neonates. Advising a neonate, or hearing the neonate's confessions, the ancilla becomes closer to him. She learns not only of the fledgling's sins, but also of his fears, ambitions, and regrets. Whether this blossoms into something more substantial outside the confessional becomes the choice of the ancilla, who still holds power over the neonate. She may feel that the neonate would make a good ecclesiastical assistant. A more empathetic ancilla might even adopt the neonate as her protégé, taking pride in what the inexperienced Sanctified might one night become under his capable ministration. However, unless they share a Vinculum, even the most well-intentioned and emotionally generous ancilla may discover his relationship with a neonate plagued with the whisper of paranoia. The Predator's Taint not only colors all Kindred relationships, but a personal relationship between Sanctified can become a matter of concern for others in the covenant. When two neonates become more concerned with their own existence, it can be chastised as errant folly; when an ancilla is involved, status may erode and important duties may go unperformed. The covenant won't allow a neonate to unravel one of its vital members.

An ancilla who is sire to a Sanctified neonate may find it difficult to escape the shame and blame of her sins. Even if the congregation absolves the ancilla after the Creation Rite, she may not absolve herself. As the neonate rises through the ranks of the covenant, the sire may grow defensive; the hackles of a social predator are raised when rivals approach one's social status. Thus, even as the ancilla is helping childer become the vampires the covenant demands, she may be threatened by a neonate of her own creation.

Ancillae and Elders

If the ancillae truly fear anyone or anything other than Longinus and God, it is the eldest members of the Lancea Sanctum, who have passed the tests of time and become the exemplars of the covenant.

No ancillae knows what it requires to survive the Danse Macabre long enough to be an elder, or what glorious might such an ancient predator possesses. It is one thing to listen to an elder speak, to take her counsel, and to see her perform ceremonial rites. It is quite another to understand what goes on in the mind of an ancient. It is the unknown inevitable that makes ancillae fear their elders.

In the Lancea Sanctum, the great power afforded to elders magnifies that fear. The ancillae know enough to be afraid of their elders and have endured long enough to have a great deal to lose — to be taken from them by their revered superiors. The ancillae must simultaneously celebrate the covenant's aged monsters and dread the brilliant machinations they devise to glorify the covenant. An elder must be feared as each ancilla one day hopes to be feared.

The Sanctified never take an elder for granted. The ancillae may be technically responsible for the night-to-night administration and defense of the covenant, but everything they do falls under the lengthy shadow of these eldest Sanctified. Nothing can be assumed to escape their imperious gaze, leaving every Sanctified feeling as if they are forever being watched (or second-guessed). What if an ancilla's misstep causes an elder to intervene? Doubtless, the ancilla's reputation would suffer as a consequence. This leaves the ancillae in a difficult position: they make up the bulk of the priesthood and are expected to provide leadership, but a sword of Damocles hangs over them constantly. What's more, as the most visible representatives of the Lancea Sanctum at covenant functions, the ancillae's job of presenting a unified front — or at least a consistent one — to other Sanctified becomes that much more complicated when the overpowering personality of an elder is added to the equation.

The Requiems of the ancillae are balancing acts. They must be leaders trusted to speak for the covenant, but at the same time they must defer to their revered elders whenever the Sanctified ancients wish to exert their staggering influence in covenant affairs. They must appear strong to the neonates without overstepping the bounds of their station in the eyes of the elders.

Those ancillae who rise to positions of ecclesiastical power above some of the covenant's elders — like one handpicked to replace an elder entering torpor — are particularly uncomfortable. While title gives them the authority to tell the elders what to do, only a reckless or arrogant ancilla would presume that authority supersedes reverence. Such an ancilla may feel impotent, never sure when his authority will be countermanded. When the elders show support for an ancilla leader, the ancilla may be seen as a puppet or a scapegoat. Of course, ancillae often are exactly that: puppets of their elders. Few ancillae do not imagine they are in some way serving the interests of the Sanctified elders; many hope they are. An ancilla's own goals and interests might coincide with those of an elder who is more likely to get what they both want, if the ancilla only plays along. Sanctified ancilla can trust the elders of their covenant more than most Kindred would feel comfortable doing, so one might feel safe just doing as he is told and learning along the way. Of course, trust is always dangerous, but if an elder decides to place a subordinate ancilla at risk to further the goals of the covenant, then that is pious service, too.Several of the covenant's local ancillae may be the progeny of a resident elder. The ancilla's relationship to an elder sire is markedly different from that of a neonate to an ancilla. The guilt borne by many ancillae sires as a result of their defiance of the Second Tradition seems to be absent in the eldest Sanctified, either because time has washed away any lingering shame or because sin takes on a different meaning for Sanctified elder. Some elders may feel their sins are alleviated when they embrace their childer once again and establish new relationships that turn the ancillae from objects of shame into true priests, counselors, missionaries, and soldiers of Longinus. This gives the ancillae opportunities to forge closer and perhaps more beneficial relationships with their sires, and therefore gain more power in the covenant.

This may not mean an ancilla has his sire's ear when he wants it — elders may simply have no interest in the temporal troubles of a young ancilla. Being the childe of an elder does not promise an elder mentor.

Most ancillae who find themselves with an elder mentor choose to remain cautious, asking for nothing that is not offered and always showing the utmost gratitude for the privilege of calling that elder their mentor. Remember, even if they receive nothing more from their sire than the Embrace, a wise ancillae knows that the power of that elder will always reflect upon him to some degree, and that is an invaluable boon.

Elders: The Guiding Hand

Those Sanctified who have walked the earth for centuries, who have mastered the hunt of human prey, who have overcome the erosion of the mind and survived the torments of a hostile night are revered like saints in the Lancea Sanctum.

Only a very few of these exalted figures have been able to endure the terrible strain that the passage of so many lifetimes can place upon their once-mortal psyches. It's difficult for a human mind to manage the transition to a higher role, to hear and truly understand the secret gospel of the Damned, and to persist in excellence for hundreds of years. The Curse continues to transform elders, plaguing their memories, warping their reasoning, and searing their emotions in ways that should destroy them. But a few survive this trauma, slipping into sleep as Longinus vanished into the desert, to awake years later, as Longinus will one day return.

They are majestic creatures whose presence commands obedience and whose capabilities make them all but indomitable, yet they must wage a war against themselves to keep the Beast at bay, to keep their meager mortal frames in line with the holy mission, and to resist the churning pull of the ages. What then can the Lancea Sanctum offer them? Why do they join and why do they remain?

The Pillar of Faith

Some elders believe that the best way to fend off the threats of forgetfulness, ennui, dementia, and insanity is to cleave to a spiritual or intellectual anchor, allowing them to withstand the withering waters of eternity they find themselves pulled ever further under. For many of them, as with mortals, faith provides this anchor — a pillar the elder can tie his mind to — offering a very real sense of spiritual, moral, and mental stability. By clinging to the pillar of faith he can hold firm against the passage of time and not be swept away to a powerless future or Final Death.

The Lancea Sanctum provides a foundation that has lasted for nearly two thousand years and, with the exception of a few cracks and fissures, seems destined to be there for just as many more. This promise of endurance means that no matter how long eternity proves to be, an elder who holds fast to the covenant can feel assured that he will not simply be lost in the fog of eternity that waits to swallow him whole. The Sanctified shall guard his torpid body like a relic, record the deeds of his past nights, and awake him with reverence and respect. The elder may be more influential when he wakes than he was before he fell into torpor.Elders are closer to the covenant's origins than other Sanctified. This gives Sanctified elders a strong sense of covenant ownership. The elders cling to the pillar of faith, and the pillar was built by a succession of elders before them. The Lancea Sanctum is a covenant built on a foundation of respect and reverence for those who came before. Without their early achievements, without their eternal guidance and unwavering devotion to the *Testament of Longinus* to serve as the map to piety, there would not be a Lancea Sanctum tonight. They have provided the younger generations the stability necessary to nurture the covenant, and the moral strength to fight for Longinus against all challenges. Although many of the covenant's elders no longer care to worry themselves with the minutiae required of Sanctified leadership — it is not uncommon, in fact, for them to cede the highest ecclesiastical seats to ancillae — they are the touchstones of piety and perseverance that keep the covenant from crumbling under its own considerable weight. The elders might prefer to spend their nights pursuing other more personal or more far-reaching agendas than mere clerical administration, but their presence is a reassurance to younger Sanctified that tomorrow night the covenant will be no different from tonight. The Lancea Sanctum continues to carry out the work begun by the first elder, and will not cease until God or Longinus commands.

Purpose and Meaning

Neonates struggle to understand *how* to be a vampire — how to hunt, how to hide from the kine, how to deal with other Sanctified. Ancillae want to know *what* to do with their Requiems: what allies to choose, what plans to set in motion, what goals to reach for. Elders no longer concern themselves with these things. For elders, the central question of the Lancea Sanctum has become their own central question: why? Why do vampires exist? Why must they seek Vitae? Why is the Curse what it is?

Certainly, younger Sanctified wonder these same things, but not until a vampire has had his temporal self eroded away as an elder has do these questions begin to take on such all-consuming relevance. Political, social, and economic power are fleeting, and as an elder watches the people and places from which he drew his power crumble to dust, he wonders what remains.

The Lancea Sanctum provides an elder not only with potential answers to questions of faith, but is something of an answer itself. What remains when temporal power is lost? God's holy mission remains. What remains when ghouls and havens are ash? The Lancea Sanctum remains.

Eternity Together

Because Sanctified elders are scarce, and because only other elders can really understand what it means to exist for so long with the thirst for Vitae, loneliness looms for the increasingly rare elder Kindred. Even those elders who scoff at the notion

that they cannot survive the Requiem alone recognize, if only in private, that without some type of suitable companionship they will lose grip on sanity and be ravaged by the Beast. Like all other vampires, elders are predators and are possessed of primal instincts that cause them to pull away from society in order to better survive on their own. However, unless they wish to lose all semblance of their former psyche and devolve into a feral monster, they must form some kind of bond with others of their kind. For elders, the Requiem has played for so long that their time as mortals is nothing more than the faintest echo, a subtle leitmotif that can barely be heard above the din of the modern night. The coteries to which the elders belonged as ancillae are no more; former allies may now be sleeping away the ages or already sent to their Final Deaths. In the absence of a trusted coterie, the covenant allows the elders a place to call home, a community to which they can belong.

Yet even surrounded by his kind, an elder can feel set apart from the events of tonight. Each night, each individual vampire can seem meaningless against the backdrop of countless other nights and vampires past. Being surrounded by Kindred who cannot hope to appreciate an elder's situation cannot fill the cracks eroded in the Kindred by withering time. Even the company of other elders may do little to make the Kindred feel anything but dead. What, then, is the point of belonging?

The Sanctified offer two compelling reasons: power and respect. The Lancea Sanctum reveres elders who have witnessed important moments and vampires of the past. They hunger for the perspective an ancient mind has on the *Testament*. They long to hear tales of the oldest nights of antiquity, of the great Kindred of the past, and of the distant places mentioned in the covenant's histories. They believe an elder is blessed with his endurance as a predator. The elders are akin to church fathers and saints, whose gift to the ancillae and neonates is the manifest faith of Longinus. Therefore, it is the place of every younger Sanctified to adore, to venerate, and to obey the will of the elders.

A parish lucky enough to claim an elder among its faithful is fiercely proud to have one of the night's oldest children in its midst to emulate and to guide the congregation along the arduous path of damnation. For his part, the elder can accept the gifts of the faithful. He seeks meaning: the congregation gives him meaning. He seeks purpose: the congregation sees him as its purpose.

Devotion

The majority of Sanctified elders do not feign devotion but are, in fact, genuinely pious and sincerely believe the covenant's scriptural doctrine. As said, this helps the ancients stave off descent into bestial madness, so doubt does them little good. More to the point, an elder no longer has much reason to pretend; most do not fear the judgment of lesser Kindred any longer.

The strength of an elder's religious convictions is perhaps the most critical influence she can exert over her fellow Sanctified. In domains where the elders possess unshakeable faith,

Sanctified are able to draw strength from that faith to endure all manner of worldly torments, whether physical or spiritual, so convinced are they in the righteousness of the elders. Where the elders display less confidence in their beliefs, the Lancea Sanctum may loses its edge and be more easily broken. The piety and power of a saintly figurehead reflects that of the whole congregation, but also radiates out to all the faithful.

This special relationship between the potency of an elder's faith and the morale of the parish makes all but the most callous or apathetic elders (of which the Lancea Sanctum has few) focus a significant portion of their time and energy on tending to their spiritual enlightenment. It is far better for the covenant to take a few minor hits, so to speak, than to suffer the catastrophe posed by the spiritual dissolution of its guiding elders. Therefore, unless an elder is convinced that she has actually attained an unassailable state of religious transcendence — a likely sign of a delusional break and a minor heresy, for the work of the Damned is never finished — the elder works to further fortify her faith in every way she can. Immersion in complex theological philosophy, enduring gruesome physical punishment, taking up seemingly impossible pilgrimages, and engaging in the unchecked exploration of every aspect of her vampiric nature may augment her spiritual potency and open new paths to those who follow behind. The extreme effort necessary for such purely spiritual quests can leave an elder weak, and is the main reason so many elders step down from, or never accept in the first place, the most time-consuming ecclesiastical stations. They must remain the pillar of faith for the parish, and all other considerations fall to those below.

Pragmatism

Many elders simply see the Lancea Sanctum as the most effective means for them to gain an advantage in the Danse Macabre. While it might come as a shock to the covenant's neonates and ancillae, this sort of pragmatism informs, to one degree or another, the decisions of most elders — even those who seem above such petty things. No elder can safely ignore the Danse Macabre. So long as an elder makes her haven in a city, she is caught up in the vampiric struggle despite any desire to the contrary. Faith (or the faithful) may grant power in the Danse Macabre, but it cannot exempt an elder from it.

Sanctified elders are always weighing how best to use their position as leaders to benefit them and the covenant most as a power in the domain. Not all such elders are pretenders, feigning faith in exchange for power — there are easier ways. Rather, most believe in the mission of the covenant, but do not believe that piety alone keeps the Kindred out of the sunlight. The covenant is power, and if the elders do not use that power, someone else whose ambitions and abilities oppose those of the Lancea Sanctum will. The use of the faithful in this fashion may come across as treacherous, (certainly many devout Sanctified react with alarm to untempered pragmatism holding the reigns of their church) but to assume the covenant does not use its congregation for the survival of its ideology would be naïve in the extreme. Those with the best interests of the covenant at heart, and those with the means to excel in the name of Longinus must perform the Danse Macabre.

Many elders, therefore, choose the Lancea Sanctum not out of true faith or some spiritual emptiness in themselves, but because they believe the Lancea Sanctum is the covenant that will outlast all others.

Roles of the Elders

The elders of the Sanctified cannot be easily categorized. Even if doing so is convenient, it is a vast underestimation of what the elders mean to the covenant. Elders may fill a functional role, such as Cardinal, but also transcend it. Elders may play a part, if only to define what it is for those who come later. Elders may serve, but the covenant serves them, too.

The roles examined here are meant only to exemplify the magnitude and authority elders embody in the Lancea Sanctum. Nearly every elder has a number of roles to play that extend far beyond the confines of their covenant — how can they not, given their undeniable power? — but each elder's position is unique in principle. In practice, however, these are some common ways in which Sanctified elders are seen.

Elder as Ecclesiastic

To be an elder and a member of the Lancea Sanctum is to be one of the Anointed, and therefore an officer of the religious hierarchy. But the distinction between the Anointed elders and their ancillae counterparts is tremendous. Whereas ancillae may be mired in political intrigue and operational struggles from within the covenant or from the outside domain, Sanctified elders rise above such things. For them, it is obedience to the *Testament of Longinus* that takes center stage, not the particulars of where to hold midnight mass, the elevation of deserving postulants, or disputes concerning parish resources. The elder outlook, the result of centuries of wisdom, is that being a pious and penitential vampire who understands his place in God's Creation as a predator damned to suffer the Curse is vastly more consequential than any administrative or social concerns. It is good for the covenant's administrative business to run smoothly and its members to be one unified community under the authority of the bishop, but it is meaningless if the church's patron elder is kept from his religious research and holy ministrations.

A significant number of elders leave not only the actual administration of the covenant to the ancillae, but also forgo or resign from those official seats of authority and leadership that are rightfully theirs. They never do so lightly, but from where they sit the pros don't always stack up with the cons. Whether Bishop or Cardinal, many elders simply come to the conclusion that the responsibilities and aggravations that accompany such lofty positions are not worth the terrestrial rewards that follow. Instead, they prefer to give their blessings to younger aspirants (who may be yet other elders) whose ambitions, talents, and natures are suited to the tasks and their attendant difficulties. This leaves the elders free to pursue

purely spiritual power, to master the Curse, and to understand Theban Sorcery's most miraculous secrets. An elder is, before any title or accolade, still an elder, and the lack of a formal designation doesn't change this one bit. What's more, freedom from a formalized seat allows the elder to more easily conceal his moves in the Danse Macabre — a difficult thing to accomplish when all eyes are upon him.

Of course, plenty of elders do hold one or more formal seats of power in the Lancea Sanctum, but even these tend to delegate many of their tedious duties to underlings eager for the scraps of power that fall from the elder's table. Sometimes, of course, an elder may wish, for whatever reason, to be closely involved with the small details of covenant operations and may carry out all the responsibilities attached to his position. In those very rare domains where an elder Cardinal holds supreme power, for instance, temporal power is never surrendered for mystical pursuits or navel-gazing, but these individuals are rare even among the already scarce population of Sanctified elders.

Elder as Saint

Aside from being the recognized leaders of the covenant, officially or not, the elders are also the Lancea Sanctum's eminent examples of Longinian excellence. The most ancient and majestic vampires are held up as saints, even while they still stalk the earth. Every word they utter, every action they undertake, is analyzed, debated, and mimicked by other Sanctified. They are a physical embodiment of the *Testament* and stand as icons of Longinian virtue and rectitude.

Some Sanctified even claim that saints can never be wrong. They believe that God guides every action of an ancient elder, and regardless of how things may seem in the short term, in the end the saints are unerring. They argue that the young and unworthy simply cannot yet understand the divine righteousness of their blessed elders.

Should a saintly elder deign to become personally involved in the Requiem of a lesser Sanctified — as confessor, mentor, or commander — the acolyte receiving the elder's attentions considers herself the recipient of a great blessing, as Longinus blessed the Monachus. Even the youngest and least pious Sanctified who curse their elders in privacy find it all but impossible to resist trembling in near-rapture from the unexpected mindfulness of one of the most ancient Sanctified.

For these reasons elder members of the Lancea Sanctum prefer to keep their distance from most of the lesser priests and congregants. A few vague words spoken without consideration might wreak unintended havoc among the lower ranks. Should an elder fail to impress, or should he somehow damage his holy image, he could lose his power or appear fallen or corrupted. The risks that come with such a lofty station are simply too great to flirt with, so the most powerful elders choose to keep a safe distance from the congregation, intervening only when the situation demands their unique attention, and their success can match their holy esteem.

No parish is short on rumors about its elders, of course, but this only serves to make the enigmatic Sanctified ancients

even more mystifying — and ultimately terrifying. To understand an elder is to diminish his power, however, and many Sanctified *want* to be overwhelmed by their saints. It is more inspiring to view them as dark, awesome angels of Longinus than as stagnant monsters or archaic masters. A distant, unknowable icon inspires praise and reverence, but a ravenous, half-mad sorcerer engenders only fear.

Elder as Dialectic

The elders of ancient domains are often tasked with attacking untold theological, philosophical, and moral problems that the Sanctified have faced since their formal inception nearly two millennia ago. Scholarly elders attempt to rectify what some see as errors in the *Testament of Longinus*, while others address more flagrant difficulties. In addition to the sacred scriptures, the Lancea Sanctum has amassed an overwhelmingly vast body of precious writings by Sanctified theologians of nights past.

St. Decimian, for example, tackled the very important question of proving Longinus' existence and authored more than forty-nine volumes of notes, thoughts, and arguments in defense of the faith in his *Annotations* — mandatory reading for any serious student of Longinian religion. The hermit St. Leonora contributed a tremendous volume of notes on the legal complexities and ramifications of Sanctified society and the Rule of Golgotha on secular Damned; it has no title, but is called "the Leonora File" tonight. And the Gangrel St. Radczik is acknowledged for his detailed treatise on the investigation and extermination of heresy in his vividly illustrated *Lies of the Damned*. These landmark works, along with too many more to mention, provided the Lancea Sanctum with the intellectual legs it needed to survive bloody and fiery nights of eras now gone.

Beyond their own parish, then, elder scholars may be recognized as authorities on Longinus' words and will. The interpretation and extrapolation of scripture continues still, with nearly anything written by an elder taking on special significance for faithful readers.

Some elders use their special status as scholars and philosophers in order to play a related, albeit markedly different, role. They believe that unless the Sanctified forever challenge the beliefs of the covenant with vigorous and rational examination, it cannot remain strong and will forever be open to attack by others. These canny elders assume the role of Devil's Advocate and muster all the intellectual prowess they can to test their own beliefs as well as those of their fellow Sanctified. To them, blind faith and obedience is not true devotion, for without reasoned insight, belief can be subverted by doubt or shift with the popular culture. By pushing the Damned to question their faith and see the light of reasoning, the covenant develops defenses against those attacks. Heresy is less likely to take root and unwanted fanaticism is curtailed.

Sometimes referred to as "Longinian dialectics," these elders appear to some as almost anti-religious in their approach, seeming to take a sinister satisfaction in crushing the spiritual underpinnings of ancillae and neonates below them. Some act openly blasphemous at times, forging relationships with unbelievers that seem founded on mutual ridicule of Sanctified doctrine. But this may be little more than a clever deception in the Danse Macabre. By nurturing close ties to important Kindred outside the covenant, dialectics are able to set traps intended to eventually snare the target in a trap of contradiction, preferably before an audience. Once the victim finds himself conceding an argument to the dialectic in public, he can be forced to recognize the truth embodied by the Lancea Sanctum and increase the covenant's powerful appearance.

Elder as Grandmaster

Every Sanctified elder member of the covenant, whether martially inclined or not, can appreciate the military potential he has at his fingertips. Although it is not common practice to resort to violence to accomplish its aims, the Lancea Sanctum does hold up the Spear of Destiny as its defining symbol. The Lancea Sanctum is ready to be thrust at its enemies and only the most cautious elders hesitate to use the might of the covenant when nights call for it.

Elders, of course, seldom participate in the actual bloodshed of battle, and instead sit back in the shadows and look out over their holy army as it burns the covenant's enemies to the ground. The most common forms these armies take tonight are small coteries of specialized crusaders, often created at an elder's decree for a specific purpose or a particular enemy. Sometimes individual paladins are sent into the field to carry out violent missions, including assassinations and kidnappings. These holy fighters are under command to take the utmost care not to let their actions threaten the Masquerade, no matter the cost to themselves. This means most military actions end up being more like clandestine skirmishes than true warfare — no less brutal, and usually just as effective. The elders await report of the mission's success and may choose to formally recognize the participating Sanctified afterwards, awarding them recognition for their achievement or honoring them as martyrs fallen in service to the Sacred Lance.

The visceral thrill and intellectual stimulation of a genuine war can fill the emptiness in an elder left cold with the struggle to resist change, but the memory of adrenaline is fleeting. In time, the desire to see the domain shaped by swords and fangs may become more important to a warrior elder than any reason to make peace. Such elders seek out enemies with packs of armed paladins rather than subtle Inquisitors. When they cannot find enemies, they make them out of those who refuse to take the side of the Sanctified: the unaligned, the nomads, and the outcasts. These are the elders who have given the Lancea Sanctum its reputation for fanatical violence.

Though few elders have reason or desire to risk their Requiems in any simple fight, the glory and majesty that comes from a holy crusade can be something else altogether. An elder may truly believe the dark miracle of his faith can save him from harm, and with Theban Sorcery in his service, he

may be right. If nothing else, martyrdom may be the Damned's only chance for redemption.

When an elder does decide to join the fray and lead her own crusade, it is a fearsome thing to behold. Few lesser vampires can withstand the onslaught of the oldest Sanctified, especially one overflowing with bloodlust and a mission to manifest "the wrath of God." Sanctified warrior-elders who survived one bloody battle after another in nights past were sometimes said to "become the Sacred Spear itself." The title of Sacred Spear is still given to some Sanctified crusaders tonight as a gift from the congregation, given in reverence but also out of fear.

Elders who are prone to violence — or thought to be prone to violence — are the most feared ancients of all. Their presence in the covenant creates a palpable tremor of dread through the entire congregation, even while its members are thanking God that the elder is one of their own. Who knows when the elder might turn her sanguinary tendencies upon her own flock for some heresy found hiding within?

Relations with Others

Elders are inclined to keep some distance between themselves and the younger Sanctified. This is not necessarily a physical separation (though elders do maintain very private and inviolate havens) but a psychological gap, an emotional distance. Very little needs to be done on the elder's part to create this distance, for the younger ranks instinctually know to keep their distance from their strange and potent elders. The throng parts before them.

This is not to say elders do not come into contact with the younger vampires of the covenant, however. While some elders avoid unnecessary exposure to the strange neonates of the modern night, many elders continue to be active participants in the Lancea Sanctum. The Sanctified are truly blessed to have so many elders in their ranks.

Neonates

In the eyes of many Sanctified elders, the youngest covenant members are nothing more than fleeting bodies whose greatest contribution to the Lancea Sanctum is simply not belonging to another covenant. They provide a congregation and a means to defend the faith. The elders do not demand much from them in the way of responsibilities — the ancillae can do the demanding. Elders ask no more than adherence to the *Testament of Longinus* and obedience to the local Bishop. Unless a neonate demonstrates uncommon spiritual power or causes great trouble for the local Anointed, he is likely to go unremembered by his elders. An elder cannot be bothered with every imperfect fledgling. Many elders see the world in broad, contemplative strokes tonight; simple neonates are too fine a detail to stand out. They're background noise.

This opinion does not hold for all elders or all situations, of course. Exceptions abound. When a neonate has distinguished herself from the crowd by virtue of her actions (perhaps with remarkable sermonizing or the unanticipated conversion of an important Kindred) she is judged apart from the mass of her peers. When a neonate shows extraordinary courage and zeal in the covenant's crusades she may be held up as a model of piety for other Sanctified to emulate. Whatever the luster of a particular neonate may be, a keen elder cannot overlook a rare gem.

To survive the Danse Macabre, one must exploit every conceivable tool, so elders may take exceptional neonates under wing and groom them for their own ends. Rarely is this relationship flaunted (for long), for too much attention upon a creature so young not only breeds jealousy, but can weaken the spiritual strength and piety of a neonate. A neonate who was once devout and penitential and set an example for the congregation might become filled with conceit and distracted by his own celebrity. Elders should strive to apply only the lightest touch when conducting business with the younger membership, using subtle gestures, specially chosen words in a sermon, or even the use of a persuasive Discipline to coax their special disciples along the path. Unless, of course, it is the elder's intent to test or lure the neonate — some novitiates are subtly groomed for decades for special work within the covenants without even their own knowledge.

The sire-childe relationship is also a powerful connection between elders and neonates. Though some Kindred avoid siring progeny so far into their Requiem, elders are not infallible celibates. When an elder sires a childe, he creates a conduit through which he can (or must) deal with all the neonates of the domain. Sanctified elders, who theoretically Embrace only according to the traditions of the covenant and, therefore, only sire Sanctified childer, have an advantage over secular Kindred in that the role of teacher and mentor can be passed off onto the main covenant body. Still, the childe of a Sanctified elder, even when released into his own custody, is an immortal reminder to others of his sire. Although the neonate's actions are his own responsibility, they do reflect upon his creator, who selected him. Every elder realizes this, and so many maintain close watch upon the conduct of their childer, whether by proxy, — assigning an ancilla, for example, to monitor and evaluate the childe — with her supernatural powers, or in person. Elders may even take a more direct interest, perhaps establishing regular, formalized times for the two to spend together. Such obvious interactions between an elder and a neonate draw all sorts of conclusions from the congregation. Rivals and outsiders may take advantage of regular meetings to locate the elder, or see the childe as the vulnerable spot that can be struck to bring the elder down. An emotionally charged relationship (whether parental, romantic, or something utterly inhumane) between a weak and naïve neonate and a potent elder is like a thin crack in the rigid hierarchy of the covenant; it can even be the pressure point that breaks an entire parish apart.

For the sanctity of the covenant and the safety of himself and his childe, an elder must be precise in his relationships. A neonate may be loyal but show poor judgment in allies; a neonate may be powerful, but lack restraint; a neonate may be eager to please, but quick to betray. Elders must know better than to trust someone simply because he might love them.

Ancillae

A working relationship between the elders and the ancillae of the Lancea Sanctum is more common and, therefore, more formalized. The ancillae make up the bulk of the Anointed in most domains, and so elders cannot direct the covenant without dealing with them. The covenant structures these working relationships to minimize the fear and backbiting between the Sanctified in power. Anicllae need not be looking over their shoulders every night for the elder who looms above (though they certainly might), but the Danse Macabre demands that they maintain regular communication with their elder leaders — a fact which makes some ancillae seem powerful and mysterious, just by proximity to the legendary elders. Elders know this.

Most elder-ancilla interaction takes place privately, with the ancillae reporting to the elder's chambers, for example, for instruction, praise, or punishment. Of course, given the nature of the Danse Macabre, private commendations or rebukes are not likely to stay private for long. This is sometimes intentional. Every elder realizes the effect the rumors have on the rest of the congregation and that is part of the purpose of such audiences in the first place. To address priests publicly could indicate a lack of cunning and decorum on the part of the elder. Ceremonial displays would be quickly forgotten, given the covenant's already ubiquitous use of pomp and ritual. On the other hand, the irresistible lure of privileged gossip may not only linger, but become distorted and even more sensational as it passes from the cold lips of one whispering Sanctified to another.

As long as the dealings between ancillae and elders remain mysterious, they remain powerful. Elders who may not otherwise be able to match the potency of their own legends can appear majestic and masterful without making an appearance at all. They reserve their opinions and dictates for those times when they are necessary or most dramatic, but then do not hesitate to act on their subordinates in a manner of their choosing.

Some Sanctified elders take on an ancilla as a personal aide and protégé. Such ancillae are sometimes ridiculed as the elders' pets behind their backs and must step very cautiously around the peers of his elder mentor, but the relationship brings with it a great many perks, for both Kindred involved. For one thing, elder Sanctified have no interest in wasting their Requiem dealing with what amounts to domestic chores. Ancillae are chosen for their proven skills and discretion, but also to maintain the perceived distance between the elder and the wider world of the domain. Ancillae know positions so close to their elders are often testing grounds for advance-

ment within the Anointed, so even accomplished ancillae may tolerate unthinkable abuses to keep his station.

An ancilla aide may also function as a grounded counselor, for the ancilla hears things an elder may not. Even Sanctified Elders may not be able to trust their peers to speak openly. An ancilla should be too afraid of an elder's unknowable powers to lie and too power-hungry to simply agree with everything — he should want to prove his worth. Of course, ancilla advisors are weaker than elders, which is beneficial when an elder finds that his aide can no longer be trusted.

Among the Kindred of the Lancea Sanctum, elder-ancillae relationships remain primarily practical. Even the sire-childe relationship can be buried between formal titles, rites, and ceremony. This is exactly as the covenant intends. When inevitable clashes occur between the oldest Kindred and their rising replacements, the Sanctified want those conflicts to be matters of faith and fiery devotion to the *Testament* rather than personal vendettas. Certainly, exceptions do occur, but among these elder priests, personal allegiances and emotional unions must be kept secret. And, of course, they are kept secret, for these are the covenant's masters, the greatest of the night's monsters, who hide and hunt among the kine without a slip of the Masquerade.

Yet the Anointed of many parishes fear their highest echelons are riddled with these most base conspiracies. Just how many of the covenant's elders and ancillae keep secrets from the rest of the Sanctified? How many are engaged in private plots beneath the holy image of the church?

Relations with the World of Darkness

If one thing can be said of the Lancea Sanctum's approach to other covenants (and even to other supernatural creatures), it's that although the covenant may have an official position, the actions of individual Sanctified always hinge on personal interpretations of Longinus' words. The version of the *Testament of Longinus* in each Sanctified mind is at least a little different, so even Sanctified whose views on a particular type of outsider are completely opposed to the covenant's as a whole can defend her ways with scriptural justification. As long as the safety of the Lancea Sanctum and the Traditions aren't threatened, other Sanctified typically judge in silence, as it's paramount to their belief to allow every one of the Damned enough room to damn herself if she so chooses.

The Sanctified have many nights — and the patience — to make converts of their enemies, so they have time to entertain numerous allegiances and seemingly uncharacteristic partnerships for the greater good of the covenant. In practice, the Sanctified of some domains are willing to forego the conversion or destruction of Kindred considered to be lost causes — things may change in future nights to recover or redeem such causes, after all. Even hard-nosed members of the Lancea Sanctum accept that uncooperative monsters may be more useful on their feet than in ashes.

Sanctified Violence

The Sanctified wear many cordial masks when dealing with potential allies and followers. When it becomes necessary for the Lancea Sanctum to confront an adversary with violence, however, its tactics seldom vary with its enemies. The covenant's crusaders always wear a mask of doubtless faith.

The Lancea Sanctum carefully balances its interactions with outside factions against its image as a holy army of unshakeable crusaders. Missionaries may be cooperative and tolerant, but a few nights' ride behind them may be a battalion of unquestioning dark paladins. A Priest may be willing to reason with you, but she is just a chaplain on the fringe of a bloodthirsty army extinguishing heathens in the name of God. It's not uncommon for Kindred to regard the Lancea Sanctum as a brutal order of medieval warrior-priests… except for the local parish.

The Sanctified fight with confidence and without remorse. They strike when and where a victory can take on symbolic meaning, where the enemy's losses can echo throughout the domain. They destroy the people their enemies rely on and topple targets that collapse the frameworks of hostile forces.

As combatants, the Sanctified join meditation with force, contemplative strategizing with majestic might, and patience with bravery. The Lancea Sanctum prefers ending conflicts to starting them, though they do sometimes provoke battles they know they can win. It is better to win absolutely than to win now.

The Ordo Dracul

The Lancea Sanctum feels all Kindred should believe and behave as they do, so many Sanctified consider the Ordo Dracul to be among the greatest problems in Kindred society tonight. Strictly traditional Sanctified vampires — especially elder fundamentalists — may see the Dragons as heretics against the curse-lauding word of Longinus, but the "problem" of the Ordo Dracul is commonly regarded as something trickier than a simple adversarial relationship in modern nights. The quandary is this: the work of the Ordo Dracul, the research into the vampiric condition, may be useful to the Lancea Sanctum even though its goals are directly opposed to those of the "Second Estate." The Dragons have the advantage of a perspective straddling the scientific and the supernatural, which the Lancea Sanctum cannot adopt — even if it wanted to — without weakening its own spiritual position. The Dragons may uncover secret truths about the Kindred that could be of great use to the Lancea Sanctum using methods the holier covenant neither understands nor has an interest in learning. Is there a way for the work of the Dragons to be appreciated and put to Sanctified use without promoting or formally approving of their practices?

Absolutely. The Lancea Sanctum has a history of dealing with heretics from within (an Athenian neonate who circulated his own translation of the *Testament* on CD-ROM was brought in by his local Bishop to create flyers to attract neo-

nate atheists to the group) and without (an anthropologist loyal to the Circle of the Crone was summoned to the Cardinal of Kansas City in 1951 to authenticate a Civil War-era ghoul-skull), and, as a result, Sanctified leaders have experience separating the wheat from the chaff in acceptable and deviant belief systems. Those same skills can be put to use dealing with the Dragons and their research. With methods that vary on a case-by-case basis, Sanctified theologians extract and exhibit useful bits of lore and wisdom from the works of Ordo Dracul scientist-philosophers while crushing cast-off Dragon conclusions underfoot. With one hand a Sanctified evangelist can raise up the words of a Dragon while throwing out her meaning with the other hand. This gives the Lancea Sanctum an appearance of cultural flexibility and well-roundedness that appeals to outsiders and the membership alike. More than one Dragon has been converted or appeased in this way.

In some domains, especially those where the two covenants do not vie for temporal control, the Lancea Sanctum can treat the Ordo Dracul with the kind of polite pity individual Sanctified may practice in any domain: Sanctified Priests civilly engage Dragons in social situations or intellectual exchanges while quietly sighing for the loss of another errant Kindred to ignoble, heretical damnation. The Ordo Dracul can be respected for asking many of the right questions even while they are pitied for revering the wrong answers. The gallery of the operating theater was spotted with soft, red Sanctified robes the night of the first public vampire vivisection performed by Dragon physicians in Edinburgh, 1896; the Priests felt it proved the godly resilience and superiority of vampires, while the Dragons thought it would suggest the Curse could be cured like an ailment. Academically minded followers of Longinus may even consider philosophical sparring with a well-reasoning Dragon, the two huddled and arguing over a rescued tome, a welcome exercise of his faith.

All of this presupposes that the Ordo Dracul behaves like a secular society with minor or moderate religious considerations. When the Dragons take on the attitude of a religious — even quasi-religious — institution, they risk becoming a tangible threat to any Sanctified status quo. The Lancea Sanctum doesn't tolerate competition for the faith of the Damned for long. So long as the Sanctified can conceivably regard (or appear to regard) the Dragons as misguided thinkers who have chosen secular pseudo-science over a Requiem of religion, the two covenants can coexist. So long as the Ordo Dracul maintains an insular presence in the domain and does not lure any of the flock from the shepherd, the Priests can go on treating them as lost sheep. So long as the followers of Dracula appear as a society of doubters rather than a religious alternative, the followers of Longinus can go on pitying them.

Sanctified-Dragon Partnership

The dedication Dragons must have for their cause benefits the Sanctified by granting them an excuse to forego any messy pretenses of conversion. It's a shame for a Requiem to be wasted, certainly, but a Dragon worth missing has consciously chosen his path to Hell; a Priest can therefore justify milder attempts at enlightenment, rather than wasting his time with heavy-handed proselytizing. The long silences that punctuate the spontaneous theological debates that unfold under the street's orange sodium lamps are the sounds of a heathen slowly converting; with time and a gentle touch, even a Dragon can be led into church. This civil relationship allows the two covenants to cooperate, even in those domains where both sides are plainly faking their acceptance of the other. The Lancea Sanctum can thus benefit from the efforts of the bespectacled Dragon antiquarians who sift through museum catalogs (possibly rediscovering stolen relics of the vampire church) and the dusty Dragon explorers who dig up mystical sites (and may one night find trace of the Black Abbey).

In exchange, the Dragons may enjoy a degree of "protection" from the Sanctified, insofar as the absence of a conversion campaign by the Church of Longinus implies a level of acceptability — if even the fanatical paladins of Longinus aren't smiting the Dragons, then vampires of other local covenants will appear as extremists if they do.

Strange alliances may form between the two covenants. Clever leaders use each covenant's stereotypes to strengthen each order's power base (assuming such power bases do not overlap). The Lancea Sanctum may choose to demonstrate its ruthless intolerance of heresy only on those Dragons who have recently left or lost favor with the Ordo Dracul, for example. The Dragons may send unsuitable or unwelcome would-be members toward a local Priest. Local leaders may tolerate a neonate with "secret" membership in both covenants as a conduit for unofficial communication, sending him off with a wax-sealed account of Satanists in the city park or the dingy brass key to a seminary library. Such a pawn may then be granted to one covenant by the other as a sacrificial example of the price of disloyalty. In domains where the Lancea Sanctum and the Ordo Dracul are the religious underdogs, they may openly cooperate to slowly erode the ruling covenant's membership over decades, as new vampires are Embraced.

The Circle of the Crone

Across the lands of the World of Darkness, in its most tangled and wooded recesses and its most cold and crowded urban warrens, there may be no more reviled heretics against Longinus than the Acolytes of this witch-coven of Crone-worshippers. They are not simply doubters or weak-spirited, and they do not merely seek a coward's pitiful escape from the Curse or a self-indulgent seat on some throne of the Damned — they actively avoid the Word of Longinus and waste their nights with idleness and idolatry. The witches and fools and the Circle of the Crone actively choose to exist — to perpetuate! — the sad ignorance suffered by those untouched Beasts who prowled the night before God revealed the vampires' destiny to Longinus. These are the pagans in the spiri-

tual wilds, where the church bells of the Lancea Sanctum are barely heard and often cursed with contempt.

Strictly speaking, the Lancea Sanctum has little tolerance for blasphemers and pretend religions. Certainly the Crone-worshippers are the villainous centerpiece in the great and fiery sermons of many Bishops. Without a doubt they are the preferred infidel of warmongering Sanctified crusaders and witch-hunters, for they can be smote without remorse as threats to the Church and the Traditions. It is well known among the swords of the Lancea Sanctum that Acolytes of the Crone are blood addicts, celebrators of the Amaranth, and prolific breeders.

Of course, relationships between individual Sanctified and individual Acolytes come in a great many more varieties than those well known among the swords of either covenant. The Lancea Sanctum finds it useful to propagate the hateful stereotypes of the Circle of the Crone as a means of keeping the gatekeepers vigilant and the wider congregation afraid. When the Circle of the Crone grows too powerful locally or some temporary partnership falls apart, the Sanctified leadership gladly drapes any enemy Acolyte in the cowl of the heathen barbarian.

The Sanctified have learned over the centuries that it is best for them to devote their energies inward, to the solidarity and security of their own covenant. Endless crusades against the Crone and her minions, and endless witch-hunts in search of sinful practitioners of Acolyte blood magic are likely to be just that: endless. The Acolytes are weeds in the garden of the faithful, and while one must be wary of weeds, a wise gardener knows that a small weed may keep out a larger, more troublesome plant. Some weeds, in fact, are quite beautiful and can therefore be plucked last.

Sanctified–Acolyte Partnerships

Partnerships are very rarely made between the Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone. Most ancillae cannot recall even one fleeting treaty between the two covenants. Those few, well-known unions of the foggy past are usually assumed to be allegorical. Only the most dire threats to a domain could drive these two covenants together — and in many parishes, there simply aren't enough werewolves in the world to amass such a threat.

Cooperation between a Sanctified vampire and an Acolyte, however, is much more common. Even whole coteries learn to coexist. Some of these relationships are based on strict interpretations of territory and property, both religious and physical. Others are unspoken peace agreements between the rare few devout vampires in a domain who can at least respect faith when they see it. Most have much more to do with the cooperating Kindred than the opposing dogmas.

A Sanctified Priest may speak out against a well-known Acolyte during Midnight Mass, only to routinely meet at Elysium for theological discussion or a game of chess. A coterie of Sanctified and Acolyte neonates might see itself as devout rebels, celebrating piety outside the stricter bonds of organized religion. An Acolyte and a Priest who've known each other for a century may look past the vestments and blood when each joins a different covenant. The Sanctified, especially in regions of religiously progressive mortals, may concede that there is insight to be learned from Acolytes, much as exercise strengthens a living muscle. The Sanctified certainly accept that Acolytes may have access to facts and secrets the Lancea Sanctum cannot obtain themselves.

The key to Sanctified and Acolyte partnerships is often a tacit agreement to respect invisible boundaries. One should not assume special treatment by the other's congregation. One should not assume the partnership is widely approved or should be. One should not assume that cooperation implies approval or tolerance of the other's dogma. One should not assume the partnership will last forever.

The Invictus

The relationship of the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum is based on synergy — each excels at that which the other would rather not be bothered with. Deference should not be confused with a lack of respect, however. Each covenant believes the other fills an important role, but each believes its own role to be somehow more important. Of course, individual Kindred may find either covenant's role simply more attractive, whether for the archaic beauty of cathedral glass lit up in the dark or the perfect moment that passes as an immortal monster awaits permission to rise from his knees.

Even when these two covenants do not share equal footing in a domain, each traditionally maintains an attitude of allegiance or, at least, non-aggression. Personal quarrels between an Invictus liege and a Sanctified vassal are as common as any other Kindred conflict, but frank hostility between these two ancient orders is extremely uncommon. When the Sanctified wield less influence in a domain, they expand their social networks as far into the ranks of the Carthians, the unaligned, and even the Dragons as possible without upsetting the local Invictus powermongers too greatly. When the Invictus find themselves outmatched in a domain, the Sanctified may play up the role that covenant has played in the solidification of vampire society and temporal power, casting Invictus elders as the heroes in midnight sermons and parables. The long history of cooperation and subtle intrigue between the two covenants causes conflicts tonight to be frequently regarded as flukes caused by local individuals who don't properly understand the dynamic the covenants are supposed to share — or the respect the offending covenant owes to its ancient partner. It's not that the Invictus are self-serving socialites blinded by temporal concerns, it's that *Prince Groevan* is a poor excuse for an Invictus because he doesn't pay proper respect to his Sanctified counselors.

The Night After the Revolution

The night may come, when the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum find they can no longer survive in certain domains by relying on their centuries-

old methods. The undead aristocracy may kneel at the guillotines of revolution, or the Invictus may ally with the wild pagans of the Crone to infiltrate the grassroots rebellion of the Carthians. The Lancea Sanctum doesn't confuse deference with dependence — it won't allow itself to be pulled down by the fall of the Invictus. The Kindred social landscape would therefore look very different following a schism in the two Estates.

The Lancea Sanctum might well enter into partnerships with new political covenants, such as the Carthians, to maintain the visibility of Longinus and the church. In the absence of a political partner, however, many Sanctified have the experience in city politics and internecine hierarchies to excel as governors of the Damned. In more than a few cities, soft Invictus landlords are little more than public-relations officers for the Sanctified. In other, newer cities, the Lancea Sanctum has been well-established for decades without any Invictus support whatsoever.

The night may come when the young revolutionaries overthrow their stagnant ancestor-kings, but few of the followers of Longinus may be willing to let their churches burn in defense of a secular cause. God's curse on the undead is more important than politics. Politicians comes and go, but the Curse is undying. When the fires cool and the smoke clears, the Sanctified seek out the victors and remind them where a vampire's attention truly lies: on the bare throats of their breathing prey.

Sanctified-Invictus Partnerships

Historically, partnerships between members of these two covenants are quite common. No other covenants enjoy such a long tradition of continuing, effective cooperation. The Invictus Prince and his Sanctified Bishop confidant is a stereotype among the Damned — one so easily accepted that even participants in such partnerships sometimes take their roles for granted.

The cursed cousins of these two institutions have also settled into many nontraditional partnerships over the centuries. A Cardinal declares an Invictus ancilla the proper Prince of the city. An Invictus Prince bestows generous grants of territory on a Bishop recently arrived from a neighboring city. An Invictus Sheriff lends secular authority to a Sanctified Inquisitor. A squad of Invictus men-at-arms give teeth to a Priest's accusations against a criminal heretic. Invictus Harpies popularize a faith-healing evangelist.

Though exceptions do exist, tradition, habit, or social pressures push most Sanctified-Invictus partnerships toward an interpretation of the medieval relationship of the Christian church and the aristocracy. These two covenants, like the mortal First and Second Estates of nights past, are the legs holding up the body of Kindred society. Though some vampires say the Invictus are the head and the Sanctified are the heart, such speakers are over-simplifying the situation. In truth, the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum divide responsibilities and powers however local resources suggest such divisions would be most effective. In some domains that means giving the office of Sheriff to the domain's fanatically loyal and unshakeable Sanctified, who have the manpower and the muscle to keep the rabble in line. In other domains it means keeping religious fanatics away from secular authority, to prevent religious tensions from turning into outright violence.

The two covenants, then, might just be seen as two styles of reward and esteem structures offered in parallel as a means of getting the best from Kindred with different personal priorities. The allegiance of the two Estates allows the covenant leadership to stop unwanted feuds and conflicts before they begin — to choose which skirmishes will actually be allowed to take place, and which the allied covenants can win without even fighting.

THE CARTHIAN MOVEMENT

Many Sanctified just don't see the point of the Carthian philosophy; why spend decades, even centuries, adapting mortal ideologies and power structures to the Danse Macabre when tested and workable systems already exist *now*? Beyond that, nothing in the works of Locke, Rousseau and other thinkers so venerated by Carthian ideologues can account for uniquely Kindred concerns like the Beast, the thirst for Vitae, and the predatory duties that come with the curse of undeath. Sanctified philosophers — even those without strong ties to the covenant's traditional Invictus alliances — point to these concerns as reasons why Carthian-dominated domains collapse.

Still, the Carthians aren't typically considered a threat to the Lancea Sanctum power base. As long as they aren't advocating violations of the Traditions, the Lancea Sanctum is often content to let them have their experiments in secular power. Some Lancea Sanctum leaders see the greatest threat from the Carthians to be the unwelcome revelation that many modern Sanctified don't much care which political covenant takes the reigns of secular society, so long as that covenant accepts the word of Longinus. The Lancea Sanctum knows it can enjoy great prosperity by sharing power and, while much of that is owed to the Invictus, the model can work just as well with the First Estate replaced.

In fact, many consider the Carthians prime recruitment material – let them come to us, the Sanctified say, once they've grown disillusioned trying to reinvent the wheel. Like other vampires, the Carthians come to the Sanctified for advice from time to time, and when they do, they don't always get the same advice as an Invictus advice-seeker would. Rather than telling a young Carthian, "Elders are the ones who should rule, given their greater knowledge and experience," it's common for one of the Sanctified to be vague, inviting the Carthian to a ritual or mass so that she can "learn more" about the question. It's a variation on mortal cult tactics, sure – learn a person's insecurities and then suggest your group can help solve them – but it often works, as many Carthians are far less passionate about Carthian philosophy in particular

than they are about finding that indefinable quality they feel is missing from their existence.

The Carthians haven't chosen to devote themselves to a Requiem spent within the Lancea Sanctum, but neither have they chosen to oppose the Sanctified church by joining a religious cult. Longinus did not decree one political system to be innately superior to another, so the Lancea Sanctum accepts undead worshippers from any secular affiliation. Cooperation across party lines reinforces the notion that faith can be the ground underfoot in all Requiems — not just those who salute the Invictus.

Working with the Carthians allows the Lancea Sanctum to renew its standing as a covenant separate from the Invictus, where necessary. Many Kindred confuse membership in the Invictus with an importance in city politics, and thus the division between the First and Second Estates seems to be a division between political and spiritual importance. By untangling itself from the Invictus and gaining ground "behind" both the First Estate and the Carthians, the Lancea Sanctum accentuates its role as a spiritual order rather than a temporal one. Plus, some freedom from the Invictus may allow Sanctified Kindred to obtain positions of power in the city hierarchy normally granted by assumption to an Invictus vampire. If the Lancea Sanctum seeks political power, it may be easier to let the Carthians unseat established Invictus vampires first.

Sanctified-Carthain Partnerships

The local Lancea Sanctum leadership may appoint a representative of the parish to act as liaison (or recruiter) for the Carthians. Whereas a liaison to other factions might be chosen for his religious insight or familiarity with scripture and custom, a delegate to the Carthians is more likely to be chosen for his raw charisma. Sanctified elders know the Carthians rely on appearance to influence their own membership and don't expect to build bridges with needless challenges.

In domains where the Sanctified have grown restless with the covenant's traditional relationship with the Invictus — or in cities where such relationships never existed — the Lancea Sanctum may be eager to find a new partner in politics. The Carthian social apparatus is built to facilitate easy communication and a sense of social belonging among the scattered and secretive members of Kindred society, so it is likewise well-suited to the spreading of Sanctified gospel. Those young revolutionaries huddled around the back table of the all-night coffeehouse, waggling well-worn copies of political tracts, could put *The Testament* on their reading list. The activist speaking out at Elysium can draw on the story of Longinus for powerful metaphors of lone vampires with the wisdom and might to reform Kindred society.

The drive to involve the evangel of Longinus in the formative stages of Carthian governments isn't necessarily subversive, however. (Such skullduggery would traditionally be left to the Invictus, anyway.) Sanctified Priests are genuinely concerned that a movement away from traditional vampiric social structures would endanger the souls of Kindred who mistake the Lancea Sanctum as a political organization. The Lancea Sanctum doesn't want tonight's revolutionaries thinking there'sno room for religion in a radical new vampire state.

The Carthians and the Sanctified therefore have a common goal: to attract and bind together an ever-changing society of young vampires. Not only does an alliance with the Carthians allow *The Testament of Longinus* to reach even Kindred who might not have participated in religion as mortals, it allows the Lancea Sanctum to modernize itself in the eyes of neonates. If the Lancea Sanctum is to simultaneously maintain a demeanor of contemporary relevance and ancient significance, it may need the expertise of the Carthians. Sharing the manpower of the two covenants benefits them both; every Carthian or Sanctified vampire brought into one covenant is also one less enemy for the other.

The Lancea Sanctum believes a Kindred's personal betterment — by playing the role laid out by God — demands a dedication to personal responsibility. Carthian treatises say personal betterment — by filling the roles demanded by society — requires similar personal responsibility. The two covenants can certainly coexist productively. As a Kindred must keep his intellect in balance with his predatory role to avoid devolving into a ravenous beast, so must he keep his ambitions in balance with his civil duties to prevent a new state from devolving into anarchy.

The Unbound

The unbound are simply those Kindred who have yet to make sense of their curse because we have yet to explain it to the best of our ability," wrote a Sanctified elder of New York. In general, it can be said that the Lancea Sanctum regards unaligned vampires as only partially formed people. Some may have no exposure whatsoever to *The Testament of Longinus*, and so cannot yet be fairly judged. Some may have had no contact at all with Kindred society. Some may even be fulfilling God's design without understanding the profound importance of their actions. The lone vampire, lurking in the shadowy stairwells of the city, who encounters mortals only when he sneaks into their pens to carry off a carcass, could be held up as a symbol of fearless predation. Like a noble savage, he could be brought to the parish pews and educated in the true meaning of his simple but admirable ways.

Independent Kindred are common subjects of Sanctified sermons and frequent targets of Sanctified evangelism. In Monachal parables, the unbound are often referred to like those sorry vampires who fed and died before the Damnation of Longinus, with a sad hopefulness that something may yet be done for their souls. More modern views see the unaligned as "predators on the verge of becoming," as that Manhattan sermonizer wrote. Whether they are becoming admirable monsters or blasphemous heathens varies, and is always in question.

The unaligned are the great, roaming flocks the Lancea Sanctum seeks to convert. All other vampires come to the Sanctified tangled in ideologies, loyalties, and ties to other covenants, but the unbound are the sort of cursed masses

Monachus wrote about. Each is a chance for a Sanctified Priest to become a preacher and mentor. Each is a chance for a member of the Lancea Sanctum to do unto another what was done unto him. Each is both a snarling monster in the shadows of undead society and a misguided convert-to-be. It's not unfair to say that the Lancea Sanctum has romanticized the unknown quantities of unaligned vampires.

Sanctified-Unaligned Partnerships

Each unaligned vampire is a unique case, so no two partnerships between independent vampires and the Lancea Sanctum are quite alike. Perhaps the only generalization that can be made is this: The Lancea Sanctum makes examples of the unbound whenever possible. Sometimes this means a fiery execution. Sometimes this means a subtle and slow conversion.

The Lancea Sanctum grants temporary sanctuary to unaligned Kindred just so word of the covenant's generosity might spread through independent circles. Special grants of feeding ground and invitations to no-strings-attached covenant rites may be offered to keep an independent and her contacts within shouting distance of the covenant. A few get away with things even Sanctified Kindred would be jealous of, including trespassing, poaching, and, very rarely, siring. Only when an unbound vampire becomes more trouble than she's worth do the Sanctified eliminate her (and much chance of converting her allies). Of course, an unbound vampire isn't worth much in well-populated domains.

The Lancea Sanctum is only too happy to make special arrangements for the employment of unaligned vampires for odd jobs as inconspicuous subway-riding couriers, unexpected gas-can-carrying assassins or tuxedoed players in some political theatrics at court. The covenant always pays, at least in part, with rewards likely to pull the independent into the fold (such as room for a Haven in Sanctified territory). The Lancea Sanctum, as an organization, is extremely patient and far-sighted — much more so than any lone vampire is likely to be. Sanctified leaders understand Kindred impulses and behavior quite well, possibly better than an unaligned vampire understands herself, and may be willing to grant wealth or some mystical power to an independent if such an investment is likely to be rewarded with valuable converts. Vampires who accept such grants should [are wise to?] know what they're getting into

Werewolves

The world's other great supernatural hunters are intriguing creatures to the scholars and theologians among the Sanctified. The covenant's favored interpretation of the Lupines has changed time and again over the centuries. What little has remained constant (or close to constant) in the covenant's opinion is this: They are not blessed creatures and have no holy role in God's plan.

Werewolves may be admirable creatures, but they are not meant to be the allies of the Sanctified. If they were, God would have revealed them to Longinus. The Lupines' methods and excellence may be appreciated, but a Lupine should never be celebrated. Whereas the Damned are holy predators doing exalted work, werewolves are simply supernatural animals. They may (or may not, suppositions vary) contain a human soul, but they are more animal than human and therefore beneath humans.

In ages past, the Lancea Sanctum has devoted substantial resources to fretting about Lupines, keeping tabs on them and even sometimes protecting a mortal flock from them (so that they may be preyed upon by thepredators God intended). In the modern nights, the Sanctified stay clear of them when possible. Blood spilt and flesh burned in combat against such battle-crazed lunatics is just another costly distraction from God's work.

Because Lupines are not the intended prey of the Damned, Sanctified Kindred are encouraged to avoid drinking the blood of werewolves. It is well known among the Sanctified that Lupine blood is potent, even invigorating, but it is not intended for the Damned. Sanctified who consume Lupine Vitae are considered to have strayed from the path, though the transgression is typically not regarded as terribly serious. It is considered no so much a sin against God, but more like a dalliance, a distraction from one's duty.

Werewolves are not subject to the Tradition of the Masquerade as explained in the Testament, but the Lancea Sanctum finds it wise to hide themselves from them all the same. A Lupine is part human and does not respect the Traditions; why risk exposure and destruction? Werewolves are unlikely to respond to anything but violence, regardless. A hand extended gets bitten off, but a spear thrust out from the dark must be regarded seriously.

Historically, however, the Lancea Sanctum has had non-violent contact with Lupines as the needs of the night have dictated. Such dealings are seldom spoken of, however, because the covenant's elders do not wish to dilute the neonates' fear of the Lupines. Longinus has not instructed the Kindred to eliminate the Lupines, so the Sanctified are not forbidden from occasional, exceptional partnerships with them. Sanctified-Lupine partnerships are generally formed beneath the weight of an impending disaster — such as the appearance of a seemingly unstoppable foe or the impending breakthrough of a mortal investigation into the supernatural — or in pursuit of some shared goal — such as the recovery of stolen artifacts from a cabal of mages.

Most instances of cooperation between Sanctified and werewolves, however, are based on personal histories rather than grandiose plots or covenant mandates. Perhaps a Priest knew a werewolf in life and attended the same church as children. Perhaps a werewolf, who is exempt from the Masquerade, is the Bishop's spy on rural, mortal heretics in exchange for protected territory in the parish.

For the most part, however, the Lancea Sanctum takes no great interest in and serious offense from the world's werewolves. The covenant simply has little reason to trust

unblessed monsters and little time to spend attempting to prevent inevitable bloodshed; the Sanctified are busy enough with each night's solemn duties and worship.

Mages

The Lancea Sanctum has few formal, categorical statements to make about those mortals who pursue magical power. Strictly, officially, mages are regarded as dangerous humans, but humans nonetheless and, therefore, fair prey.

Most mages — if such a thing may be said — are blasphemers, practicing witchcraft forbidden by God. It is sad that some among God's favorites try to cheat their way free of their place in His design, but their sin does not fall within the purview of the Lancea Sanctum. Mortal mages will no doubt pay for their transgressions one day, perhaps beneath the teeth of a Sanctified vampire, but the Damned are not charged with the regulation of mortal pagan witchcraft.

There are those among the Sanctified (though not as many as among the Kindred at large) who interpret mages as something separate from the human flocks, and, therefore, not subject to the Masquerade. They are, by extension, not subject to the Second Tradition either, and so should never be considered for the Embrace. Individual Sanctified make their own mistakes, of course, but the church's official position is that mages do not accept the role of the Sanctified and therefore should never be vampires.

Those Sanctified who believe mages are fair prey, and those who believe they must be regarded differently from their mortal brothers and sisters are not always different vampires. Though the power inherent in a mage's Vitae is not generally understood by the covenant (which is to say, the power was never mentioned by Longinus or the Monachus), Sanctified know the Blood of a mage carries *some* quality that cannot be matched by other Vitae. A partnership between a vampire and a mage might be based on the passage of blood: the vampire feeds from the mage's mystic blood and, in exchange, the mage goes on living for a few more nights. Or so it might seem to the vampire. A mage might get something else altogether out of the experience.

The Sanctified might turn to mages, however, to protect holy sites during daytime in exchange for access to covenant libraries and audiences with elder Kindred. Individual Theban Sorcery ritualists might pursue partnerships with living mages to share occult secrets or uncover new powers. Mages might be asked to educate Inquisitors or Sanctified sorcerers in the investigation of arcane mysteries. And what if the covenant suspected a mage had discovered the Black Abbey?

Chapter Four:
Factions and Bloodlines

Thus we have seen
that the lines
of the Damned
diverge like forks
of blood spilled
into broken earth.
It is as we were told,
that the sins of the sire
run in the flesh
as the Curse
made manifest.
Though we are not borne
of each other in life
we are kin in death.

We are shown our purpose
and our place
when it changes our blood.
We are shown our fathers
when their faces mark our own.
We are shown the Curse
is kept in blood
like a serpent in the sea
but so are we shown
that its offspring can bite
that besides the flesh,
but the shreds of our souls.

— The Sanguineous Catechism

These are blemishes in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

— Jude 1:12

Factions

Politics, for better and for worse, is an unavoidable aspect of the nightly existence of the Damned. When alloyed with the religious fervor of the Sanctified, the already complex networks of Kindred affiliations, alliances and feuds become even more Byzantine.

Over the course of its long history, the Lancea Sanctum has seen more than its share of trickery, deceit, martyrdom, holy war, betrayal and blatant lunges for power, from screaming undead affixed to the towering crosses of Camarilla judgment to the cindering collapse of the Black Abbey into rubble and ash to the newest secret crusades, carried out with shotguns and lighter fluid against the pagan warlocks of coveted domains. The covenant as it exists tonight is the sum total of all of these events, subtly shaped by the desires of regional elders, the predations of the Beast and, above all, the cursed reality of the Kindred condition. In this environment, factions arise, thrive and fall, either through their own folly or through the efforts of others.

The Sanctified, on the whole, make up a powerful covenant. Members possess a strong sense of their place in the Requiem and a long history that helps give the order its identity. No covenant is entirely uniform, however, nor could one survive the ages if it weren't adaptable and dynamic. The Sanctified have survived through a combination of unrelenting devotion to and cooperation (sometimes limited, sometimes difficult) with component factions, where they arise.

Not all factions are formally acknowledged within the covenant. New, localized factions may go unnoticed in neighboring parishes, while some ancient factions that have been a part of the Lancea Sanctum for centuries appear to have died out in most, if not all, of the cities inhabited by the Sanctified. Presented below are several of the major, and some of the minor, factions among the Lancea Sanctum. Note that not every Sanctified vampire is part of a faction. But it's both mortal and Kindred nature to categorize others based on their actions, so a vampire who does not, for example, consider *herself* part of some local body of Unifiers might be considered a Unifier by others who see her stand up in the candlelight of Midnight Mass and preach about solidarity among monsters.

Factions and Identity

The factions presented here are overarching ideas that Storytellers can adapt for use in their own chronicles. As such, names of factions don't represent that faction's identity unilaterally across the covenant — locality determines much of the covenant's individual characterizations. What we consider "Hardliners" in this book, for example, might be called The Order of St. Michael in Charleston and Jovians in Pittsburgh, as each domain has its own unique personality that contributes to the formation of freestanding factions. Consider the factions we present as tools or templates that may be further customized to color your chronicle's home domain. "Proselytizers" and "Unifiers" are merely shorthand for concepts the factions uphold, not universal rosters of membership. We capitalize these terms here as place-holders for local factions or as exemplar of the concept; individual characters may consider themselves to be unifiers without being a part of the Unifiers, of course.

No world-wide covenant sub-cultures exist, so these notions as presented may be misleading. There is no global order of "Sanctified Hardliners" or "Unifiers of the Spear" sewing badges onto their jackets, no hidden layer of "Centurion Neo-Reformists" receiving instructions via satellite from the Lancea Sanctum HQ in Rome. Factions develop because like-minded Sanctified in close proximity agree (or almost agree) on what's right or what's wrong for the parish, even though other faithful Longinians may disagree.

Word of factions is carried by one or more vampires from one city to the next, from one parish to another, transmitted through folded-up Xeroxed manifestos or by speeches and rumor whispered in the civil halls of Elysium. There is no vampire Vatican to decree that "Seattle needs more Hardliners," and many cities don't have formally recognized factions at all; a single Hardliner isn't a "local chapter," and a pair of outspoken reformists probably do not constitute a faction. Brother Sampson and his coterie may have a reputation for encouraging unity in the parish, but they still might not constitute a faction, either. A whole parish may be considered a faction of the covenant by the faithful vampires of a neighboring city or adjacent domain, as a means of respectable separation. ("The Minneapolis parish is a bunch of Neo-Reformist technophiles who think we should all have the *Testament* on our iPods.")

From the General to the Specific

We provide examples of both the general and the specific in this book. First, the Hardliners, the Unifiers and the Neo-Reformists are presented in general terms, as they represent three common but very different wings of the covenant. After that are two demonstrative factions exemplifying Mendicants (in the form of the Nepheshim) and Proselytizers (in the form of the Messengers). Use these as object lessons. You

can use Mendicants such as the Nepheshim, you can select individual details that appeal to you and create the rest on your own, you can build your own faction of Mendicants from scratch or you can leave Mendicants out of your domain entirely. The choice is yours; play only with what interests you.

The broader factions, as presented here, are actually broad categories into which many local, independently-developed factions of the Lancea Sanctum can be filed. Two groups of strictly fundamentalist Sanctified may develop simultaneously in two different cities, with similar practices and outlooks, and may both be considered shining examples of the Hardliner faction even though neither group has anything to do with the formation and assembly of the other. Two very different orders of Hardliners — a strict, Catholic elder faction and a more relaxed, Jewish-descended neonate faction, for example — can exist in the same city or parish.

This is important: *Make these factions your own*. What do these factions look like *in your chronicle?*

Major Factions

The major factions represent mainstream philosophies: they have the most members (which is to say, many Sanctified agree with the assertions of one or more of these popular outlooks) and the greatest amount of influence (due in no small part to their familiar or easily digestible philosophies). Even Kindred without membership in the Lancea Sanctum might consider themselves to be on the side of such popular philosophies, as in the Irish Catholic Carthian who considers himself "something of a hardliner" or the God-fearing unbound vampire who says "I completely agree with what that those reformists are trying to do."

These factions are not monolithic entities and are not engaged in an abstract war to dominate the Sanctified. They are ideological groupings, like various denominations within the same overarching religion. Mainstream factions are the generalizations made of philosophies and behavior that exist beyond the local bodies of the Lancea Sanctum, whether due to the popularity of their ideals, orthodoxy of thought, or the sheer commonality of their ideals. The Hardliners are a major faction not because of national network of fundamentalist politicos, but because a Legate, new to town, can say "That guy's a real hardliner, huh?" and be understood by the locals.

From time to time, the factions have their differences and schisms erupt, but in general, the factions respect each other's existence. The Lancea Sanctum covers such vast ideological ground, from Judaism, Christianity, Islam and more, that it could maintain very little cohesion if the covenant's Hardliners were strangling its Neo-Reformists in the gutter. As many Bishops preach, "It's vital that all the Damned come to sleep in the sunless crypts beneath Longinus' great cathedral; with whom they choose to sleep can wait for another night."

Some factions are more organized than others. Unifiers, for example, tend to develop relatively organized local chapters, possibly little more than a handful of Kindred who gather together to discuss solutions to parish strife. Neo-Reformists, on the other hand, rarely have much in the way of structure aside from a strong emphasis on personal respect and mentor-student relationships, so the handful of Kindred labeled Neo-Reformists by the Bishop might not even know each other very well.

The definition of membership also varies from faction to faction. For example, many Neo-Reformist groups acknowledge any Kindred who speaks in favor of their ways as one of their own, allowing any loudmouthed anarch who counters the fire and brimstone of his fundamentalist elders with sarcastic quips to call himself "a Neo-Reformist." On the other hand, chapters of Hardliners typically allow only those who consistently and publicly demonstrate proper behavior — perhaps through dress, by attending meetings or by lecturing — to be a part of their rehearsed chapter, formally inviting new prospects to meet with like-minded comrades, like a Bible-study group that drinks blood.

Hardliners

Conservatives in a largely conservative covenant, religious zealots among the most pious of Kindred, the Hardliners represent some of the most dangerous aspects of the Sanctified philosophy. These Kindred fully believe in the covenant's dogma that they are the true inheritors of the power and responsibilities of Longinus, the true holders of the Dark Prophet's laws and the only ones among the Sanctified to get it entirely right. They are the true walkers of the path of the Damned and they are willing to show all other Kindred the true path. Where other Sanctified might see their own beliefs as something apart from the covenant's dogma, Hardliners at their most extreme take the evangel of Longinus literally.

As long as there has been a Lancea Sanctum, there have been Hardliners. The earliest followers of the Monachus, who saw the *Testament* not only to be true, but factual, could be considered the first Hardliners. To this night, Hardliner factions are often the oldest in a domain. Some proudly follow the wishes of long-aged vampiric figureheads (even those on a centuries-long sabbatical of torpor), others are made up of neonates and ancillae respectfully fulfilling a parish tradition handed down by their sires.

Though the Lancea Sanctum as a whole has gradually changed to accept more modern and moderate interpretations of *The Testament of Longinus*, Hardliners believe such moderation is wrong. They espouse the belief that God imparted Longinus with a vision of His intent and that deviance from this not only poses a risk to Kindred morality, but to the eternal souls of the Damned. Only through the rules established by God and communicated through Longinus, can Kindred remain civilized and stave off the animalistic savagery that was their lot in the moonlit wilderness of prehistory.

Many Kindred outside the faction, who see nothing in Hardliners but a conservative, stubborn adherence to outdated laws that exclude new ideas, would be surprised to know the idealized cause of the Hardliners is to save the entire Kindred race. Of course, many Hardliners lose sight of that final goal,

but the emotional essence of the faction still hangs on hopeful service. The treacherous, secretive nature of the Kindred means that Hardliners must be strict to the point of tyranny, however, for the modern Damned have become indulgent and lax and few heed the sacred laws and rules of old anymore. When a vampire's mortal worldview of domestic ignorance peels away like wallpaper to reveal a hidden undead society and blood-slicked fangs, it's easy to lose faith. If Hardliners don't keep the Kindred on the holy path, they'll distract themselves from their service to God with social machinations, heretical scientific or occult pursuits and other worldly indulgances.

Some Kindred argue that the Hardliners are responsible for giving the Lancea Sanctum a bad reputation as zealots with one-track minds, but not all of them conform to this stereotype. True, many Hardliners hold beliefs that make even other Sanctified see them as extremists. However, a significant number of true idealists also make up this faction, Kindred who believe the Lancea Sanctum (and Hardliners in particular) represents the only true salvation for the Damned but that salvation itself is more important than a wholly inflexible interpretation of the *Testament*.

These voices of reason are far too often shouted down by those who will brook no deviation from the words of *The Testament of Longinus*. When one of these voices manages to be heard over the rumble of the Hardliner machine, they may end up surprising other Kindred with their combination of strong faith and open minds. These "moderate Hardliners" believe all vampires can and should be converted to the covenant's true path, but that conversion may require concessions to be made for those vampires who have strayed far from the churchyard. The covenant should be ready to accept all the Kindred who wish to learn the Dark Messiah's message, without judging them too early. Moderate Hardliners accept that the cathedral must expand if it is to hold all the undead, but insist that everyone come inside *their* cathedral. Sadly, such idealists are usually a minority, and sometimes not recognized as Hardliners at all — they dwell near the faction's border with the Unifiers.

While some Hardliners join the faction with moore moderate views, the force of tradition and the social momentum of peer pressure carries many off to the extremes of the belief. A few loud Hardliners are even proponents of outright holy war with other covenants — typically the Ordo Dracul or the Circle of the Crone — and espouse a philosophy of conversion by the sword. If it were up to followers of this bent, the Lancea Sanctum would not be caretakers pruning in the garden of Kindred morality but the overseers of vampiric society, cutting down unwanted branches and pulling up weeds by the roots.

Debate with Hardliners is a trying process for members of other factions (to say nothing of members of other covenants). Convinced of their own righteousness and the inferiority of dissenting opinions, stock Hardliner arguments rely on timeworn rhetoric and centuries-old interpretations of holy texts. Some say "Hardliners do not recognize opposing viewpoints, only enemy positions." Hardliners argue with the *Testament* in one hand, slap-

ping the pages that prove them right. They rebut arguments with phrases like "But remember what Longinus wrote," and "You've misunderstood the meaning of that passage."

Of course, the faction does claim its share of gifted debaters. Some are fanged preachers who wave their hands over the congregation like an orchestra conductor. Others are smiling hipster-scholars who speak of fiery destruction and gushing blood with such coolness that Hardliner conclusions seem obvious, even undeniable — as though you've always agreed with them and just didn't realize it.

Hardliners aren't stupid. (They've survived too long to be stupid.) They hold their own beliefs in exceptionally high regard and are convinced that other Sanctified have gone soft and compromised too much, but many can appreciate why other Sanctified can be lured off the difficult path. Contrary to the insults thrown by other Sanctified, Hardliners are capable of interacting with other Kindred without spouting religious rhetoric at every opportunity. Even if the core meaning of Kindred existence can be boiled down to servitude of the Lord, no single night actually *is* the core of Kindred existence reduced down to its essence. Hardliners do have very strong beliefs, and ideological discussions are probably inevitable, but it is a fact of the Requiem that some nights are for prayer and scripture, but others are for tending to the needs of the coterie, the parish or the city. Why focus on the imperfect soul of one benign Dragon when the city is on fire? Why not accompany a well-armed Acolyte of the Crone on a Blood Hunt if it is the will of a pious Prince? Hardliners have all eternity to get through to misguided vampires, and those who won't listen can be punished in Hell, when they can be of no more use to the covenant or the domain.

Hardliners in Office

As much as other Sanctified may consider Hardliners to be dangerous fanatics, they cannot deny their loyalty to the covenant. Some Hardliners use their faction only for power and prestige, but most support the Lancea Sanctum and show fierce loyalty even the Anointed who side with other factions. For this reason, Hardliners often serve as Primogen and Sheriff in Sanctified-controlled cities — positions in which unassailable loyalty and a reputation for conviction are essential. A Hardliner Sheriff backhands bribing scum and stands on the throats of outlaws. A fundamentalist advisor maintains his loyalty and allegiance in the face of secular temptations.

Though they once swung staves of office like war hammers, Hardliners in more modern and moderate domains find it difficult to access secular offices tonight. Other Sanctified may be uncomfortable having inflexible literalists in positions of power, and non-Sanctified Kindred cannot be expected to loyally follow leaders who see them as heretics that must, some night, convert or die. Modern Sanctified favor leaders who can attract the cautious respect of a wider population and get new congregates in the doors (where the covenant can get its hands on them). Hardliners believe such soft-fingered lures are meant for the kine; vampires shouldn't stalk one another as they do their prey. The Sanctified must ring out over the domain like a church bell, say these fundamentalists; they must tower over the impious like a cathedral. Kindred should follow Sanctified leaders not because it is attractive or advantageous to do so (though loyalty may be those things), but because it is the Will of God.

One office to which many Hardliners aspire, but few attain, is that of Inquisitor. Hardliners are firm believers in the authority of Sanctified philosophy and take to the Inquisitor's work with pride and enthusiasm. Plenty of Bishops have named Hardliners to the office, thinking them the ideal body to fill the feared costume of holy judge, only to find themselves with an uncontrollable, headstrong Inquisitor digging up and setting fire to heretics the parish might have use for as unwitting moles or public executions. Tonight, the office of Inquisitor is less about fire and more about smoke; it requires subtlety, finesse and timing. Modern Inquisitors know, however, that Hardliners can be useful in the last nights of an inquisition, when the chains and stakes come out. When the time is right for a fearless thrust at the enemy, Inquisitors wield the Hardliners like a lance.

Hardliners and the Testament

Although Hardliners in different domains may accept different versions of the *Testament* from one another, each individual chapter of the faction accepts only a single translation of the evangel, which must be understood in the one and only way Longinus intended. The books of the *Testament* are not meant to be interpreted. They are meant to be understood and obeyed.

Unfortunately, the *Testament's* commandments and guidelines often mesh poorly with modern sensibilities. The *Testament* is almost 2,000 years old and the modern secularized mindset of mortals doesn't always change to accept the veracity of the ancient text after the Embrace. Many members of the Lancea Sanctum were religious in life, but most of tonight's members come from the moderate spiritual backgrounds of the past century. Most Kindred are not accustomed to taking religion completely literally and, many believe, the realities of the modern Requiem make absolute adherence to *The Testament of Longinus* impossible. Even some Sanctified agree; with other covenants vying with the Lancea Sanctum for membership and power, with mortals so much more dangerous than they were in ancient nights, compromises must be made.

Not so, say the Hardliners, who see such compromises as dangerous — if one compromises one's morality, say the Hardliners, one risks losing himself to the Beast. They cite stories of atavistic vampires of the pre-Roman era and claim that it was only Longinus' Damnation that saved the Kindred from slipping into this state again after the fall of Rome. Compromise set St. Adira and St. Gilad smoldering on the crosses of the Camarilla. Compromise is the unlocked door through which non-believers enter.

Most Hardliners have memorized important passages from the *Testament* and are ready to quote them given reasonable cause. The *Rule of Golgotha* is an especially popular source of quotes for

non-Sanctified vampires. When a secular vampire is confounded or frustrated by the social games that block his way, the Hardliner says "According to the Rule, we must look those who waste our time in the eye, and show them what purpose is." Several Hardliners have gained a reputation for being very knowledgeable scholars of the history and lore of the Damned. As such, other Kindred, even those who are not Sanctified, sometimes find themselves seeking out Hardliners for their knowledge. If nothing else, Hardliners recite what is written, first, and then explain "the true meaning" of it; listeners therefore may find it easy to subtract the fundamentalist propaganda and hear the words themselves.

Stereotypes

Mendicants: Admirably devoted, sadly distant.
Neo-Reformists: Spirited but misguided.
Proselytizers: Noble efforts and low standards.
Unifiers: Worldly and ambitious.

Appearance: Many Hardliners strive to appear as innocuous as possible, for that is the predatory style set forth in the *Testament*. Being more concerned with spiritual matters than social, Hardliners dress simply among their kind as well. In private covenant gatherings, however, they take few pains to conceal their undead natures and celebrate their religious affiliation. Some dress in Catholic vestments, monks' robes or priests' collars, while others don the headdress of an Imam, the robes of a Greek Orthodox priest or some unique combination of religious garb.

Haven: Though many set up their havens in old churches, monasteries and missions if at all possible, the only common feature that defines a Hardliner's haven is an abundance of religious symbols, mortal as well as Kindred. Many Hardliners maintain a shrine to Longinus, containing quotes from sacred texts etched into decorative plaques, spear-shaped wall hangings, and other items of religious significance (such as a crucifix blessed by a renowned Sanctified or a bottle of ash allegedly from a martyr). However, many Hardliners claim only faith is required and that a shrine indicates one needs an external focus for one's beliefs because the piety within is in doubt. Indeed, in some parishes such beliefs form schisms, with accusations of idolatry occasionally used to provoke fear or guilt from fringe Hardliners. Others have simply not been able to acquire religious items, and are likely to be looking for some.

Hardliners typically extend hospitality to other Hardliners and almost always to other Sanctified. Most Hardliners also offer succor to other Kindred (though less often when it comes to the Ordo Dracul or Circle of the Crone), believing it their duty to help even these lesser, wayward brothers and sisters. However, a guest should be prepared to sit and endure finger-waving and sermonizing.

Background: Hardliners tended to hail from conservative backgrounds as mortals, and are usually, but not always, deeply religious in undeath as well. A Hardliner sometimes Embraces a mortal who seems to have a spiritual quality that might mesh well with the Hardliner philosophy. This could be some who searches for enlightenment without quite knowing how and why or a mortal fascinated with the idea of following spiritual guidelines in her existence. The Hardliners Embrace sparingly, however, as they do not wish to flout the Traditions. After all, there is a reason why such laws are in effect, the Hardliners claim. On the other hand, sometimes it is necessary to violate this stricture: A Hardliner who does so rarely tries to rationalize the reason, but admits to breaking the law and usually feels guilty about doing so. The exact reason very from Kindred to Kindred – some Hardliners Embrace mortals with a talent for oratory, while others Embrace spiritual philosophers whom they believe can interpret meaning behind the tenets of the covenant.

Kindred who join the Hardliners often, surprisingly enough, have a very liberal and open-minded background. Given the single-minded fanaticism and perceived isolationism of the faction, this may seem odd, but the Hardliners provide a strict and structured framework as well as justification and reassurance, something that Kindred who have experienced more lax factions or covenants realize that they have been missing. Former Carthians who join the Lancea Sanctum sometimes join the Hardliners, as does the occasional disillusioned Neo-Reformist. While other covenants and factions might dissemble or discuss, the Hardliners present an extremely united front and they rarely, if ever, back down when their beliefs are challenged. As such, Kindred who come from a background of philosophical insecurity might consider the Hardliners a tempting choice.

Organization: Hardliners are often highly organized within their domains. Age is often the determining factor in status, though any Hardliner who holds official position within the Lancea Sanctum has already earned estimable respect. Secular positions (such as Primogen) do not typically afford status within the Hardliners on their own, but anyone who holds a position of power within the city can command some respect by using power to reinforce traditional Sanctified values. Hardliners know the value of City Status. Just how much depends on the city in question. In some cities, a Primogen may simply be seen as a common member of the faction who happens to have important allies, while in another she may be on par with a Bishop.

Hardliners with lower Covenant Status are expected to obey Sanctified with higher Covenant Status quickly and without question, as those with higher Status are considered more enlightened and knowledgeable. This hierarchy is sometimes strictly maintained — common Kindred may not be allowed to speak until spoken to, for example — and gives the faction a slightly militant reputation, but in reality it is simply a severe interpretation of the hierarchy of the Catholic church, exaggerated to keep bloodthirsty predators respectfully in line.

Hardliner hierarchy is typically formalized, with every member having a known place in the power structure of the faction. It's also efficient, since the core belief of the Hardliners is that those who are more enlightened should be obeyed without question — doubts and second guesses aren't to be offered unless asked for. This is not to say that the faction does not have its share of insubordination, backstabbing and power-mongering, but such things are less common among the Hardliners. One of the benefits of such strict formality is the

ability to know who is a rival, who is a servitor and who is liable to seek retribution for such actions. The respect Hardliners have for tradition and established custom extends to their feuds and conflicts. A Hardliner doesn't stab his rival in the back. He looks his enemy in the eye, hisses his grievance through bared fangs and stabs for the heart.

Concepts: Anti-liberal conspiracy theorist, authority on the Rule, celebrity fundamentalist, devil's advocate advisor, gospel singer, hunter of ancient Kindred lore, old-fashioned reverend, parish preacher, Sanctified terrorist, soldier in God's army, visionary conservative.

Quote: *The Testament of Longinus, as determined by the text our esteemed Bishop holds, is quite clear on this subject. I offer you these words as guidance. If you do not follow the true path, you risk your very soul.*

Unifiers

Unifiers take their theme from their stated goals: to promote peace between the factions of the Lancea Sanctum and to unify the covenant's secular and religious aspects. They seek not only to unify the covenant, but also the factions within each individual Kindred. Only by balancing one's material and societal needs with the spiritual responsibilities described in the *Testament* can a vampire become a useful servant of God *on earth*. Kindred should make spiritual pursuits a top priority, to be sure, but those who make it the only priority risk becoming irrelevant in worldly matters, slipping into reclusion like monks locked up in some distant monastery.

Many Sanctified see Unifiers as the consummate moderates, wedged between Hardliner and Neo-Reformist factions. Those who appreciate the efforts of the Unifiers without necessarily supporting them regard them as the peaceful padding that keeps the extremes of covenant belief from developing into schisms. Other Sanctified see them as passive, ineffectual wannabe peacemakers whose rare efforts serve only to keep the covenant stalled in place when it could be making progress. Unifiers tend to see themselves are being above factional conflicts, rather than caught between them.

Contrary to the accusations of some overzealous Sanctified vampires, Unifiers don't seek to strip the covenant of its extremist members for the sake of some bland, middle-of-the-road idealism. Neither do all Unifiers seek to gather the Sanctified of all factions into one flock under their wise and moderate guidance (though certainly some do). Unifiers appreciate, even celebrate, diversity within the covenant. They simply believe that if the parish, domain or city leans too far this way or that, stability will be lost and the church will spin out of control.

Some Unifiers therefore believe extremists should be kept out of key seats in the city and covenant hierarchy, so that the covenant can be guided by moderation. Others say Bishops should be surrounded by advisory councils, so that many different points of view are guaranteed the audience they deserve. Many Unifiers — perhaps most of them — instead strive to act on individual Kindred, tempering inter-factional attitudes at the source and fomenting appreciation for the wisdom that comes from diversity.

The trick, say the Unifiers, is realizing the difficulty of striking a perfect balance within any one Kindred. The vampire nation — and especially the covenant, if it is to lead — must be moderate, even though it will always have its extremes. It is a delicate goal that can never be truly accomplished — only maintained — and the best chance the covenant has to approach success is not to force individual Kindred to subscribe to one narrow image of faith, but to expand and gain support from a wide variety of devout vampires.

Although Hardliners have a greater reputation as arrogant and judgmental Priests, Unifiers believe they know best. Their arrogance is disguised, however, because a Unifier's notion of "knowing best" is so different from that of the Hardliners and the Neo-Reformists. As the archetypal Unifier mantra says: "The greatest wisdom comes with the realization that you do not know anything." Can an earthly mind, even with centuries of pious study and reflection, ever truly understand God? Most Unifiers say "no." Those who think they've solved the riddles of the *Testament* are one step behind the Unifiers on the path towards enlightenment.

Unifiers in Office

Some Sanctified posit that the covenant's first Unifier movements arose in the height of the mortal feudal age, when the Lancea Sanctum had to carefully balance the needs and demands of many different Invictus lords in order to maintain feeding rights, solvent domains and the political power necessary to protect and expand its own flock. As the Kindred expanded further across the globe and vampires from many different religious backgrounds settled together in the new cities of the New World, the popularity of Unifier philosophies exploded. Factions within the covenant needed to be soothed and placated while politics outside the covenant were being redefined by the rise of egalitarian thought among mortals and the Kindred Embraced from their ranks.

Thus, in the modern nights, Unifiers have a reputation as political Sanctified — not just for mediations between the factions, but for actual, feudal politics. Unifiers can be seen by Hardliners and Neo-Reformists alike as a kind of neutral party, and, so, can be trusted to serve the covenant as a whole when filling roles in the city hierarchy. A Unifier who advises the Prince is assumed to speak for the Sanctified, rather than just one faction of the Sanctified. At the same time, many Sanctified — who see a lack of devotion to any one faction as a lack of devotion overall — regard Unifiers as spiritually weak. Even as the Unifier is praised for taking on a vital role for the covenant, he is quietly regarded with pity as a lax Priest.

Unifiers often seek out power within the covenant and the city, but not because they think they can honestly, neutrally represent the covenant (though some Unifiers do think that). The primary motives of the Unifiers are still religious — they believe Kindred should better themselves through a spiritual understanding of the *Testament* — but a seat of power allows Unifiers to impose their mandate of solidarity. A Unifier Archbishop might grant Hardliners the right to break up an Acolyte ceremony to restore the image of Hardliner strength after a surge of Neo-Reformist popularity in the parish. The Unifier then becomes the gram in the scale's political pan that keeps the religious extremists in check.

Unifiers and the Testament

Whereas Hardliners and Neo-Reformists strive to understand, explain and somehow definitively master the knowledge contained in *The Testament of Longinus*, Unifiers believe it is best to cultivate many different understandings throughout the covenant (though not always the individual parish) so that the Sanctified are well-rounded and well-reasoned. Hardliners see this as a position of doubt and evidence of weak faith. Neo-Reformists see it as a non-committal cop-out by a religious weasels who think they can have all their bases covered with God.

Unifier philosophies often hold that God and His will are outside the realm of understanding by earthly minds. Those who have been touched or spoken to by Him directly, such as Longinus, have a level of understanding far beyond any that can be attained through simple contemplation. Still, by pondering the words of Longinus and the insights of those faithful who have come before, an individual Kindred's faith can be incrementally advanced along the infinite track towards God. What really matters, then, is the individual Sanctified's understanding of the Curse and God's will. Unifiers believe that no one, two or twenty ways of interpreting the tale of the Centurion can be right for all the Damned.

The best any Kindred can do is sample as many interpretations of the *Testament* as possible and hope that where they intersect some pillar of wisdom can be erected. Of course, the Lancea Sanctum needs Kindred to keep the individual interpretations alive, so that others can come and feed from them. Thus, the covenant needs its Hardliners and its Neo-Reformists and its Mendicants.

Unifiers often own multiple copies of the *Testament*, containing separate translations or interpretations. Some Unifiers seek out the works of even the most distant or remote Creeds, as well. Certainly there are Unifiers among the Dammitics and the Iblics, just as there are Hardliners and Neo-Reformists in those sects, as well.

Unifiers, even in their moderation, are sometimes accused of heresy for possessing, trading or even praising the works of Sanctified theologians deemed traitorous or insane by the local Anointed. In domains where another faction maintains tyrannical control over the scripture, the pluralism of the Unifiers can be the worst sort of heresy, for it glorifies all other heresies.

Stereotypes

Hardliners: Far too fanatical, but bravely devoted.
Mendicants: Best they don't wander too far.
Neo-Reformists: Misguided, but worthy.
Proselytizers: Admirable, but overzealous.

Appearance: Unifiers strive for a respectable look, one that won't offend anyone. This sometimes means dressing in modern, fashionable clothes and avoiding outrageous hairstyles, tattoos, piercings and other ostentatious flairs. Other times, it means adopting whatever extreme style is popular among the parish's Damned. Many are social chameleons, able to put on a stern demeanor and a severe business suit for the Ventrue Prince, then pull on shredded jeans and army jackets for a meeting with the parish's ragged Unaligned.

Haven: Unifiers may maintain an "office" if they can afford it, somewhere where they can receive visitors (and enjoy the home-court advantage), just as some maintain a "business" cell phone number. (Only the most foolish Unifier sleeps in a haven that's well known to other Kindred, of course.) Many Unifiers offer hospitality to other vampires in their official haven, as a demonstration of amnesty. If local Kindred, Sanctified or not, know to come to the Unifier's "business haven" when the Requiem becomes too much to bear alone, then it's fulfilled its purpose: Weak and vulnerable vampires are literally coming right to the Unifier's door. They can then be tempered with doses of new ideas and inspired to be hospitable to Kindred of other factions, as the Unifier was hospitable to them.

Background: In mortal life, most Unifiers were a part of the middle-most folk of the middle class, or had some other experience dealing with people of greater and lesser station. Some worked in community service, either professionally or on local citizens' boards, while others held simply held down retail jobs or other work that put them in touch with all walks of life. Teachers, academics, middle managers and councilors all make for good Unifiers, too.

Others act as Unifiers only after finally being fed up with social disparity, injustice or strife. Many Sanctified Unifiers that were comfortable inhabiting deeply factional territory in life find that, when dealing with violent and unconscionable monsters, unity is preferable to disparity. Kindred who come to the Lancea Sanctum from other covenants make likely Unifiers, for this reason, especially if they still have friends outside the covenant.

Organization: Unifiers tend to be loosely organized on a citywide basis. Local Unifiers may gather every few weeks to discuss interpretations of the *Testament* and the state of the parish, for example, but have no larger social structure. In cases like these, the Unifiers are little more than (mostly) cooperative peacemakers, organized only enough to keep out of each other's way.

Domains that are home to more than a handful of Unifiers may acknowledge a leader of the group — like a Priscus, though possibly with little meaningful Status. Such a leader (or leaders) might be elected by the local chapter of Unifiers, but more often such positions are recognized organically, as the leading voice or strategist of the faction is deferred to by less vocal or less dedicated followers. In some cases, a quorum of Kindred make decisions for the faction outright. In other cases, self-motivated cells of pro-active Unifiers bring plans (for speeches at court, for petitions to the Bishop, for special all-Kindred-welcome masses, etc.) to a chapter meeting for the approval or dismissal of the whole faction.

Unifiers are often regarded as ideal for diplomatic roles in the larger organization of the covenant. Diplomats serve as ambassadors to other covenants and parishes — possibly even sent with a Legate to meet with the Kindred of another city — when the Lancea Sanctum wants it to be clear that its message, religious or secular, is intended to transcend factional politics and proselytizing. In some cases, these are formal, official duties, complete with local titles and Status. A diplomat might be known as Brother Rudolfo, Voice of the Sanctified, if he is the mouthpiece for the covenant at court or Consul Rudolfo if he is an emissary to other Sanctified, for example. Some titles apply only to a single mission, but others indicate full-time responsibilities. In other cases, Unifiers in these positions use, or are given, no formal titles at all, relying on their personal reputations and an grassroots image of egalitarian faith to get things done.

Concepts: Attendant to visiting Sanctified, Carthian emissary, court theologian, courtly advisor, Covenant diplomat, expert on Sanctified law, mediator, spy.

Quote: *What we desire is the security and prosperity of all Kindred. The Lancea Sanctum is not your enemy. In fact, if you heed my words, it could be your ally.*

Neo-Reformists

Neo-Reformists believe the covenant's dogma must adapt to keep up with a changing world. For the true meaning of the *Testament* to be appreciated by modern Damned, it must be presented in a manner that is relevant and accessible to tonight's Kindred. By looking at the scripture with new eyes and allowing for new ideas, the covenant will be better able to weather an eternity's worth of challenges to the faith.

Whereas more traditional Sanctified believe worshippers should adapt to the unchanging scripture, Neo-Reformists hold that the scripture should be able to accept a diversifying Kindred population. If the covenant's philosophies are allowed to stagnate, the covenant will rot. If the *Testament* is not perpetually reexamined by the Sanctified, the depth of its grandeur will fade. The Damned change, grow and adapt over time despite the Curse; shouldn't the *Testament* do the same? The early followers of Longinus, who had to go on without the Monachus to guide them, sought new answers from the gospel and a new appreciation for it within themselves; shouldn't modern Sanctified do the same?

The alternative doesn't seem to Neo-Reformists like it could be what God and Longinus intended. Mortals cannot be raised to be ready for the truths of the *Testament*, yet the future's Kindred are brought up as mortals. Are the Sanctified supposed to man just one spot in the philosophical landscape and let the mortals wander so far afield that all future neonates, unable to connect with a stale ancient text, are branded heathens?

Common Neo-Reformist thinking regards philosophical inflexibility as a failure of the covenant's spiritual purpose. The Sanctified are meant to bring the testimony of Longinus to all the world's Kindred, to raise up all vampires from a pitiful, faithless existence. Instead, say the Neo-Reformists, the Sanctified have been demanding that all the world's Kindred come to them.

Some Sanctified imagine the relationship between the Hardliners and the Neo-Reformists puts each faction on either side of a traditional interpretation of the *Testament*, so that each philosophy represents a different extremity of covenant philosophy. In contrast, Neo-Reformists see the traditional interpretation of the *Testament* as a philosophical landmark that the Hardliners have put their backs against, like soldiers guarding their king. If Neo-Reformists are to change the popular view of the scripture, they must first cut through the Hardliners, who have been fortifying their position for centuries.

Most Neo-Reformists don't want to define themselves relative to the established position of the Hardliners (who established their own position relative to the evangel ages ago), but measuring the difference between any Neo-Reformist philosophy and the beliefs of the Hardliners is an effective means of clarifying this faction's position for middle-ground Kindred. The degree of difference between a Hardliner and Neo-Reformist depends on the circumstances of each domain, of course. In this domain, Neo-Reformists are fervent protestants striving to erode the Hardliners' political power and membership through well-researched debates and comfortable, modern interpretations of the scripture. In that domain, Neo-Reformists and Hardliners aren't much more than a handful of Sanctified who debate particular passages of scripture in Elysium.

Neo-Reformists In Office

Traditional Sanctified may fear that a Neo-Reformist Bishop has plans to rewrite the *Testament* or redefine the meanings of the parish *ritae*. In liberal domains, a Neo-Reformist might attempt such drastic changes, but in most domains a Neo-Reformist leader must be careful not to attempt too many alterations to the parish at once, lest he provoke a backlash from reactionary Hardliners. In practice, however, Neo-Reformists have a reputation as ineffectual leaders unwilling to reign in the flock and unable to drive the parish in any single direction.

Certainly not all Anointed Neo-Reformists are paralyzed by their own flexibility. To lay Kindred, Neo-Reformists are often seen simply as moderate leaders willing to accept even the most gradual spiritual progress from the Damned and able to excuse the shortcomings of confused or overwhelmed novitiates. To the Sanctified, a Neo-Reformist in power brings with her a new focus on academic endeavors within the parish (such as translations, theological lectures and the creation of new parables and morality plays) and a trickle of new converts attracted by more accessible philosophies.

Some Sanctified (and some Invictus) foresee a night when the Lancea Sanctum's Neo-Reformists will seek out lasting partnerships with the Carthians. In more domains than most Invictus care to admit, that night has already come. Neo-Reformists who gain titles or offices in the city hierarchy may strive to make peace with the leaders of the local Carthian Movement, but more often it's the other way around — when Carthians secure their own allegiances with the Second Estate, they strengthen their positions with bricks stolen from the First.

A Neo-Reformist may be an easy-going, open-minded Priest encouraging novitiates to speculate on the meaning of scripture, or she may be a strict and imposing Priest requiring novitiates to memorize the parish's new, modern translation of the scripture. The notion that all Neo-Reformists are culturally appreciative intellectuals in search of a more sensitive *Testament* is potentially dangerous. Plenty of Neo-Reformists have finalized their revised interpretations of the scripture and now push them on other Sanctified the same way Hardliners push the fundamentalist line.

Neo-Reformists and the Testament

To Neo-Reformists, the *Testament of Longinus* is a guidebook describing a philosophy of existence that lives, grows and adapts even though its followers remain undead. The tales of the Centurion may be rooted in facts, but have almost certainly been exaggerated or embellished to be memorable and timeless. The purpose and meaning of the Damned's role in the world remains unchanged, but the methods and practices necessary to fill that role must change as the world does. So say the Neo-Reformists.

So much of the *Testament* is made up of symbolic lessons and archetypal imagery that it seems clear the manuscript was meant to be inspirationally metaphorical. No Requiem is so rife with morality plays and obvious demonstrations of the tenets in action. Surely Longinus and the Monachus intended it to be read and digested rather than simply obeyed. If a reader an accept that he is meant to examine the lessons contained in the text's parables and digest the meaning of each story, why can't he accept that the whole text can be opened up to interpretation?

Neo-Reformists see the *Testament* as a rich text, full of layered and complex messages. As more Kindred bring their own experiences and insights to the text, more of its meaning is revealed. To think that the meaning of Longinus' divine tale has been fully exhumed is absurd. *The Testament of Longinus* was written to drive and guide the Damned for eternity. Thus far, they've only scratched the surface.

Stereotypes

Hardliners: Slaves to history.

Mendicants: They'll never change anyway.

Proselytizers: Let's fix the roof before we invite anyone else inside.

Unifiers: Nobly working toward an impossible goal.

Appearance: One element common in the appearance of the Neo-Reformists is that they tend to be dressed in relatively modern clothing. Neo-Reformists run the gamut from leather-clad punks to hipster computer-geeks to upper-class dilettantes dressed in expensive couture. Some come to the faction because they see it as the Sanctified counter-culture, and dress like it. Others are attracted to the faction's moderate views, relative to the parish at large, and dress in ordinary (some say bland) modern clothes.

Most Neo-Reformist populations tend towards the young and urbane, both in appearance and in actual measure. In most domains, the Neo-Reformists represent a wider variety of races than other Sanctified factions. It's less common — but not *uncommon* — for Kindred of this faction to make use of religious garb during rites and ceremonies.

Haven: Although many Neo-Reformists maintain their own havens, the Sanctified of this revolutionary faction have a reputation for sharing communal havens. Whether private or shared, a Neo-Reformist's haven is likely to be more modern than a Hardliner's, equipped with distractions like a television (for watching religious documentaries) or an internet connection (for researching theology, philosophy and history). Some Neo-Reformist's havens are cluttered with books, others are tidy and Spartan.

Communal Neo-Reformist havens often begin as a meeting place for revolutionary Sanctified to discuss alternative interpretations of the *Testament* or organize plans for new projects. Over time, if the Neo-Reformists grow closer or more dedicated, they may spend so much time in the workspace that it becomes a haven in practice.

Background: Neo-Reformists tend to come from educated or urban backgrounds in life. Exposure to different religions seems to inspire a monster of faith to reconsider the tenets of his own church later on. Sanctified who were raised in modern, Western cities as mortals, who attended public schools or led largely secular lives, are more likely to fit in among the Neo-Reformists than any other faction.

Kindred who come to the Lancea Sanctum from other covenants — especially over-educated neonates accustomed to questioning tradition — are likely to join in with other Neo-Reformists. Some see the faction as a means of changing the covenant's local identity into the church the convert wished he could join. Others finally join the Sanctified only because they believe local Neo-Reformists have actually made a difference in the dogma. A few side with the Neo-Reformists only to stay clear of the stricter, and often more difficult, Requiem called for by the Hardliners.

From time to time, an aged Sanctified Priest or lay parishioner interested in the philosophy of change espoused by the Neo-Reformists and seeks to join them, or at least learn more about their theology. Only rarely are such Kindred turned down, but young Kindred may be suspicious of elders who suddenly take an interest in changing themselves and the covenant. Sanctified of opposing factions — namely the Hardliners — have posed as curious newcomers in the past, looking for evidence of heresy in the books and computer files of the Neo-Reformists.

In the infamous (and possibly fictional) 1991 case of a Phoenix, Arizona parish, "evidence of heresy" gathered by a Hardliner Inquisitor — exemplified by books on the pagan roots of early Judeo-Christian holidays and observances —

was used as fuel to burn the leader of the heretical sub-faction as "a conspirator with the Crone and a vandal of the truth." Granted, the destroyed Sanctified was a long-time enemy of the Archbishop, but Neo-Reformists who hear the tale may be more likely to see it as a case of religious persecution than as a personal vendetta.

Organization: Neo-Reformist Sanctified are more likely to gather together as study groups than they are to form activist cells. For now, most Neo-Reformists are engaged in exploring the symbolic and spiritual depths of the scripture and refining new interpretations of the *Testament*. The time for wide-spread change is, most likely, a long way off.

Some Neo-Reformist factions meet under the tutelage of a single well-read and well-spoken Sanctified theologian, who leads a kind of bizarre Sunday school of the Damned. Kindred in attendance examine the *Testament* as it applies to the local parish and their own Requiems, and possibly explore the history of covenant scripture and its various interpretations. They gather together in the basement or garage of a mortal church and look at their faith from several, personal perspectives — as Ventrue, for example, or as neonates, women or converts — and strive to compare their conclusions with more objective analyses. Such groups may amount to little more than vampiric book clubs dabbling in comparative religious studies, but they may also lead local Kindred to the personal understanding of the *Testament* they need to become predators worthy of Sanctified praise.

Other Neo-Reformist factions organize themselves around attainable, visible goals, such as the completion of a letter of dissent to the Bishop, describing the faction's dissatisfaction with the parish or its interpretation of the gospel. In recent nights, the Neo-Reformists of some parishes have undertaken efforts to compose whole new translations of the *Testament*. Such efforts require specific talents — with dead languages, with computers, with theology — that demand the faction to organize its members for the sake of productivity. Whether they organize into business-like teams with white-boards, file servers, schedules and meetings or into volunteer groups of underground academics pinging each other via email varies with each parish, or even with each project.

Concepts: Christian rock songwriter, college professor, confused neonate, covenant marketing expert, group therapy leader, handsome demagogue, liberal activist, rabble-rouser, religious executive, young convert.

Quote: *That's all fine and good for the nights of the Roman Empire, but what does it have to do with our Requiems tonight?*

Example Factions

Each of these two factions represents priorities outside of those normally promoted by the Lancea Sanctum in an average city (if such a thing exits). They are presented here by example, to demonstrate how they are exceptions from the Sanctified archetype. Within each of these examples is some information on Mendicants and Proselytizers in general.

Mendicant and Proselytizer factions are less common than those examined previously, but each is still an important part of the covenant's identity. The scarcity of these factions doesn't diminish their potency. Though Mendicants, for example, don't generally enjoy much political clout, when they lower their hoods and tell tales of the world (and the covenant) far outside the lights of the civilized city, they take on a unique importance. Proselytizers, meanwhile, can strongly influence the way the covenant appears to outsiders despite not being a large part of the covenant membership.

Storyteller's Note: While the Lancea Sanctum acknowledges the Nepheshim and the Messengers as important factions, these are simply specific examples of more general factions, the Mendicants and the Proselytizers. Feel free to use these specific factions as they are, as the basis for your own unique factions or not at all. The choice is yours.

Mendicants: The Nepheshim

Mendicant Sanctified undertake harsh Requiems. The Nepheshim range from vampiric drifters to wandering Sanctified prophets. These are the Sanctified who do not retreat to the guarded domains and flourescent nights of the cities, or even to the fast and relative safety of modern trains and airplanes. The Nepheshim wander the earth on foot and act as the Lancea Sanctum's eyes and hands in the lonely places of the world. They are the explorers of the places between domains and parishes.

Loosely translated, "Nepheshim" means "Hungry Ones." What they hunger for, besides the Blood, has gone unanswered for centuries. Freedom? Knowledge? Solitude? As the meaning was lost, the name caught on. Tonight, only a minority of Kindred, even in the Lancea Sanctum, remember what the faction's name means, and so the point goes unexamined. For those who choose to investigate the matter, one answer can be found in the Nepheshim vows.

Name aside, what *is* known is that this group of Wanderers barely has the coherence to be considered a faction at all. With no hierarchy at even a local level, no commonly developed goal and no clear mandate for operation, the Nepheshim are simply a disparate array of Kindred with one calling in common: to wander the world and report what they learn to their covenant's local elders when they next enter an urban environment. In their wanderings they carry news to and from places on the fringes of Kindred society. Though the Wanderers, as they've been nicknamed, serve the Lancea Sanctum and even dedicate every aspect of their unlife to an extreme existence founded on religious principles, the members of this faction are sometimes seen as the least devout of any of the covenant's factions. While some Nepheshim are merely open-minded in a way that strikes some Sanctified as unfaithful, others actually do stray dangerously close to apostasy at times (more so, even, than many of the Anointed would guess). Because the Wanderers are necessarily outsiders, however, most Bishops don't worry too much about mendicant philosophies threatening the foundations of local parishes — eccentric fringe musings come and go as easily as the Nepheshim themselves.

Still, Wanderers are (or seem) numerous and valuable enough that the so-called "mendicant phenomenon" is taken seriously within the covenant. The Nepheshim represent the most successful and trustworthy means the covenant has of understanding the world outside the city parishes. The two reputations the Nepheshim have as insightful, worldly gurus and ferocious, formidable survivors exemplify the Lancea Sanctum's competing stereotypes of pious thinkers and fanatical warriors. The Wanderers, in a way, personify the covenant's outer edges.

Mendicants In General

In most domains, Mendicants can hardly be considered a faction. They have little or, more often, no organization, no political or social ambitions and nothing but personal, spiritual goals. Most often, when the Sanctified mention the Mendicants, they are simply referring to any Kindred in the domain who eschew material possessions, wealth and comfort in the pursuit of a pious Requiem.

Mendicants may become involved in the affairs of the domain at large, and may even be counted among the coteries of non-Mendicants, but they strive to maintain their personal oaths against material corruption at the same time. Mendicants often appear homeless, may even be homeless, and are routinely mistaken for unaligned vampires. They may preach like back-alley lunatics or they be erudite and civil. Some Mendicants manage to stay clean and somewhat presentable, but others refuse to bathe in anything but God's rain. Some Mendicants reject possessions to the point of rejecting technology, dwelling in the dark and abandoned places where even the city has given up its power and possessions. Others are sworn to own only what is donated to them.

In game terms, Mendicant Kindred are forbidden by their beliefs from having any dots in the City Status, Resources, or Retainer Merits. Mendicants cannot have more than two dots in the Haven Merit, and cannot contribute to a shared haven. A Mendicant should avoid more than one or two dots in Covenant Status, even, as it can lead to unwanted responsibilities and material concerns. (The idea is that the experience points that would normally be spent on such traits are now available to be spent on Resolve, Composure and Disciplines.) Kindred who violate these tenets suffer little more than the pity or derision of other Mendicants, and cannot truly be called Mendicants any longer.

Philosophy

The Nepheshim spend their unlives looking for something they can't find in the Requiems of ordinary Kindred. One does not join a Mendicant faction to gain allies, wealth or political power. While the particular desire varies from one individual

to another — this one seeks his private grail, that one seeks the spiritual answers that eluded him in life, the other wants to know what else lurks in the World of Darkness — all Nepheshim enter the faction for reasons that are highly personal. The most devoted claim to seek sacred knowledge to grant greater meaning to the Requiem, while the least devoted may admit they just wanted a respected pretext to escape an eternity at home. While some work toward a goal, others wander to evade the past. Some seek new insights, some flee old pains.

Wandering the Chorbah

The Nepheshim have one duty: to wander what educated elder Sanctified sometimes traditionally call the Chorbah. Chorbah, literally translated, means "desolate places." Knowledgeable Kindred almost certainly agree that any place beyond the reach of settled lights counts as Chorbah. The Nepheshim wander through through woods and mountains, over seas and deserts, into wildernesses and small towns in accordance with their vows. They bring the Word of God and the *Testament of Longinus* to those who have not yet been exposed to it (though their rough ways generally make them third-rate evangelists), and seek out new views on undeath and new interpretations of the Centurion's tale wherever they can be found.

For the Nepheshim, wandering does not simply mean "passing through." Wandering is about experiencing new places and new ideas first-hand, at the ground level. These Mendicants do not wander in cars, by train, or on airplanes — not for long. Of their own volition, they have taken vows to pass the Requiem walking, whenever possible, through the most hostile places known to Kindred.

Some of them do this out of a sense of duty or as a sort of holy pilgrimage. Other vampires join the Nepheshim because they feel Kindred society has nothing left to offer them or because they feel they deserve banishment or exile. Sanctified traditionalists don't approve of vampires who are ashamed of the Curse, but wandering the Chorbah can show a Kindred what it really means to be a predator and help him not only accept his Damnation but master it as some urban vampires never do. Stalking unsuspecting mortals without the benefit of a familiar city and without a large nighttime population to poach quickly hones a vampire's capabilities. Learning to survive without a hierarchy of experienced monsters to provide guidance evokes the first centuries of Longinus, wandering and feeding alone in the darkness.

Most of the Damned won't seriously consider leaving their own city, much less all urban environments altogether. The Nepheshim give up safe havens, relatively easy feeding, living and undead allies and any protection that might be provided by a Prince. And for what? Makeshift havens, scarce Vitae and unmitigated isolation. Is it any wonder most Kindred think they're insane?

History

The Nepheshim are a very old faction. They took to the Chorbah, the desolate wildernesses of the world, on their dark pilgrimage centuries before other covenants were even founded.

Both the Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone have factions of Hungry Ones, though only the Sanctified faction can properly be called Nepheshim (the Acolytes have their own title for their wandering faction). How it is that two of the oldest Kindred covenants both have similar factions is unknown. Some Acolytes have suggested that the Hungry Ones began as a pagan tradition partially absorbed by the Camarilla and then, later by the Sanctified. Other Kindred posit that the Nepheshim were once a loose covenant of their own that, without the solidarity of the newer covenants, dissolved into its component Kindred and were subsumed. What all stories of the Nepheshim have in common, is that they endure as a reminder of nights long past. Other than that, the truth may never be known.

No faction of the Sanctified has less (obvious, political) power than the Nepheshim. The faction survives into the modern nights because of its history as an ancient Kindred culture, and because it is so easy for the Nepheshim to slip through the cracks of vampire society. The Nepheshim as a whole are among the least orthodox of all the Sanctified factions, and elders in a number of domains have questioned the faction's right to exist, possibly in an effort to purge or assimilate them.

Either change is unlikely to happen. The Nepheshim have little political power, few allies and minimal influence in the material world, but they have the weight of history behind them, empowered by the iconic image of Longinus as a wandering vampire in search of his own salvation. The Nepheshim have long been a family for the covenant's mystics, outcasts, visionaries and eremites. While some Hardliners resent Mendicant heterodoxy, and some Neo-Reformists regard it as an outdated oddity, they have to recognize that the Nepheshim are among the oldest of all the covenant's factions.

Many Kindred in and out of the Lancea Sanctum find the Nepheshim fascinating. For some, this is due to a romanticized notion of the eternally wandering vampire, resolute and independent, walking away from the comforts and protections, schemes and betrayals of the city to explore the larger world. For others, the fascination stems from the way individual members of the Nepheshim are respected, almost uniformly, as wise, tough and enigmatic figures capable of surviving for centuries with archaic customs and without modern aid. What Kindred, feeling trapped by an eternity of familiar streets and rivals, hasn't fantasized about striking out on his own? What Kindred, hearing stories of destroyed neonates and vanished, sleeping elders, hasn't doubted the limits of immortality?

Hazards of the Road

Few Kindred meet Final Death with the same frequency as members of the Nepheshim, particularly those who have been wandering only a few years. The Chorbah takes its toll on those who explore it. The vows of the Nepheshim put them squarely in harm's way, far from roofs and cellars to protect against the sunlight, on a regular basis and many Kindred who take up a Mendicant's Requiem meet Final Death in the first year. Some never grasp the intricacies of feeding outside an

urban environment and succumb to hunger and wretched torpor in some dismal crack in the dirt. Others are sent screaming to Final Death by the myriad threats that exist for the Kindred outside their urban domain havens — nomads, witch-hunters, werewolves and worse. Still others find their spirits or their nerves unable to cope with the solitude of the desolate places, but are unwilling to walk unwelcome into another filthy and sinful city, and so find a distant tranquil hilltop from which to watch a final sunrise.

The attrition rate for Nepheshim is highest in the first year, during which time many are destroyed but most simply give up and return home. After the first year, the numbers of failed Nepheshim drop off sharply. Those Wanderers who have survived the Chorbah for more than 25 years earn a reputation for hardiness, cleverness and formidability.

Feeding

The Nepheshim feed on animals, when they can, and whatever mortals they can find. Because they never stay in one place for long, the Nepheshim worry less than most Kindred about depleting the areas they wander. When they do drink from human vessels, they strive to space their meals out enough to avoid suspicious mortal investigators. Nepheshim rarely drink vessels dry for reasons associated with their Nepheshim vows, and to avoid leaving the kind of evidence vampire-hunters look for. Unless a Hungry One leaves a trail of exsanguinated corpses in his wake, his feeding is even less likely to be noticed than that of a city's Kindred community.

From time to time, Nepheshim appear who claim to have discovered ways of preparing animal Vitae that make it as potent as that of mortals or even elder Kindred. Whether these claims are true has yet to be proven. Sanctified occultists who hear this tale may worry what sort of relationships the Nepheshim have formed with the Ordo Dracul.

The Social Problem

Many of the negative stereotypes pinned on the Gangrel travel with the Nepheshim as well. Although they're driven by spiritual fervor, it's inarguable that many Nepheshim lose some social finesse over the many nights they spend in lonely places.

From the Mendicant perspective, Kindred social games are artificial and shallow inventions designed to waste eternity. Few Nepheshim entering a city after a long period wandering in devoted service to Longinus are going to take kindly to the nightly social game-playing and duplicity of empty, pampered neonates, for example. Some Nepheshim do enjoy verbal or political sparring, as much as they enjoy any quaint local custom, but the Nepheshim who has walked from St. Louis to Chicago with a message for the Prince probably won't find courtly protocol to be worth waiting for.

Just how these social deficits manifest themselves varies from one Nepheshim to the next. Many become so accustomed to talking (or reciting the liturgies of the Dark Prophet) to themselves, they forget that such behavior is frowned upon in social settings. Others may find the intrigue and political games of Kindred society so pointless that it drives them to fits of frustrated rage. To represent this level of social difficulty, the Storyteller may require a Resolve + Composure roll to be made every year that a Nepheshim character of Humanity 4 or lower goes without interacting with another Kindred. If this roll fails, the character gains a minor derangement (recorded at his current level of Humanity) or exacerbates an existing derangement.

These are extreme cases, however. Most of the time, the Nepheshim's burden simply reveals itself as an unbreachable emotional distance from the other Damned or the kind of silence that a conversationalist might mistake for disagreement or scorn. To represent this sort of minor difficulty, the Storyteller may simply impose the a –2 penalty to all of the Nepheshim character's Presence and Manipulation dice pools for the first two or three scenes he spends reacclimating to Kindred society.

The Nepheshim aren't the only ones whose social shortcomings may be revealed upon their arrival. Given the rarity of Nepheshim in cities, less educated Kindred — Sanctified neonates, impious politicos — might be inclined to treat them like so many Kindred treat urban Mendicants: as pariahs rather than as holy pilgrims. Upon presentation at court, more than a few Nepheshim have been mistaken for homeless, unaligned vampires. Most Nepheshim experience such ignorance in domains where the Sanctified are insular or poorly informed, but such rudeness is seldom a surprise to the Hungry Ones.

Commandments and Traditions

The vows of the Nepheshim are a heavy burden, and those Kindred who think they want to take them are sternly discouraged from doing so, in a variety of ways. Those who show true diligence in their desire to join the faction must take the following vows and adhere to them religiously for five years and a night before they can be considered true Nepheshim.

Elders of the Nepheshim faction counsel against taking the Mendicants' vows if asked. If a Kindred is uncertain whether he wants to become a Mendicant, Nepheshim wisdom dictates that he should not do so.

Those who do take the vows are obligated to lead the unlife of a dark pilgrim for "five times a year and a night" after which the Kindred is free to wander or not, as he sees fit. Most elders think five years (and change) is too short a time for a supplicant to learn much from his vows, but it's short enough that, compared to the seemingly endless expanse of eternity that lies ahead of most Kindred, it doesn't intimidate every potential initiate.

Inescapable Integrity

Those who take their vows with the intention of "test driving" the Nepheshim path, and changing their minds if they don't like it, are in for a surprise. The initiation rite a Kindred undergoes when he takes his Nepheshim vows are part of a mystically enforced oath. Only an older Nepheshim can induct a new Mendicant into the faction, and the initiation involves a mystic oath to seal the initiation.

So long as he took the vows of his own free will, a lapsed Nepheshim suffers paroxysms of guilt (–3 to all dice pools) so long as he is taking any action contrary to the Nepheshim

vows. This oath is relatively lenient, as such things go: a Mendicant can stay in a city for up to one lunar month before the restlessness of conscience begins. The guilt lifts only when the Kindred resumes his wandering. If the Kindred returns to that particular city again within a year, the pain resumes at the moment the lights of the city touch his eyes.

Initiates into the Nepheshim aren't told about the mystical power of the vows. That fact is a secret known only to the faction's elders, and those who have violated the vows. Those who adhere to the vows never discover the oath, while those who try to cheat learn a lesson in integrity.

Taking the Oath

The mystical power of the oath is a matter of some debate. Some believe it is the echo of a curse placed upon the first Nepheshim by Vahishtael, others say it is the elaborate effect of a forgotten Theban Sorcery ritual. All that is known for certain is that any Nepheshim who has taken the oath can administer it: The Nepheshim recites the vows to the supplicant, who recites them back. Next, the Nepheshim opens his vein to the supplicant, who feeds from him (at least one Vitae, with all the consequences of the Vinculum applying as usual). This second step is repeated, once each night, until the supplicant is blood bound to his Nepheshim regnant. (Presumably, the blood oath of the Nepheshim is somehow transmitted through the Vinculum.) Finally, the supplicant cuts himself and bleeds (at least one Vitae) onto the bare earth, to mark his starting point.

This oath lasts only five years and five nights, after which the wanderer is free to maintain or abandon his vows as he sees fit, limited only by his own diligence and faith. For those Nepheshim who prefer having their vows enforced by the mystic blood oath — and surprisingly many do — the Kindred can take the oath again once his first oath is fulfilled. Only thing makes this second oath distinct from the first: it lasts forever.

Mendicant Exile

A small number of Kindred join Mendicant factions not out of a strong sense of spiritual duty, but as a last ditch effort to save face or avoid punishment after a severe violation of church or city law. In a few domains, where Mendicant factions have long been established and the Lancea Sanctum has close ties to the city hierarchy, a vow to undertake a Mendicant Requiem may be an accepted form of punishment. Before a vampire is offered this out, however, she must evince both true regret for the deed in question, and a true willingness to render duty unto Longinus in exchange for this leniency. The Kindred is then stripped of her possessions and titles, and either forbidden from attending court or Elysium for a period determined by the Prince or sworn into the ranks of the Nepheshim and banished from the city.

Obviously, the Lancea Sanctum doesn't want to become known as a quick-and-easy means for Kindred to escape the consequences of their own actions. Any Sanctified who agrees to take on the Requiem of a Mendicant and is later found to have reneged on his vow loses all of the benefits of this rough sanctuary. The Anointed have little choice but to make an example of such impious scoundrels, and Nepheshim elders in particular loathe those who take the vows of the Mendicants so lightly. In domains controlled by the Lancea Sanctum, breaking such a holy oath may be grounds for centuries of torpor or even Final Death. Even in secular domains, spitting on the mercy of the Prince and his Priests is grounds for punishment, in addition to that due for the original crime or infraction that incurred the vow.

In theory, all new members of the Nepheshim, regardless of how they came to be Mendicants, are taught the rites and oaths of the Nepheshim before being sent into the Chorbah. That's what new inductees are told, anyway. The truth of the matter is that, outside of a city, no Kindred is going to know how long a self-described Nepheshim has been on his journey, and probably won't much care, since the insights of the Nepheshim are thought to be relatively innocuous and intensely personal anyway. If he seems to be a survivor with knowledge of distant domains, few Kindred are going to doubt the wanderer in their midst is truly one of the Nepheshim.

Vows of the Nepheshim

The Nepheshim take seven vows when they adopt the Requiem of the wanderer. Though reference is made to these vows in *The Testament of Longinus*, the text from which they are derived — the *Book of the Nepheshim* — is actually counted among the apocrypha. Sanctified theologians regard this multilingual manuscript, written mostly in Hebrew, as a post-Longinus revision of an earlier spiritual (but not necessarily religious) text that pre-dates Christ. That Longinus himself references this text in *Torments* is evidence that it is not a heresy. It is, tonight, a book the Sanctified no longer debate — a niche work for a tiny and ancient denomination.

Each vow regarded as an ancient and sacrosanct commandment, even though the Nepheshim do not agree on the origin of the vows. Some say they were passed passed on by God, possibly through Longinus or the first of the Nepheshim. Others say they were derived by Longinus, based on his own travels and his awareness of God's will. Most are willing to speculate, but unwilling to settle on a personal choice. Facing the unknown is part of what drives the Nepheshim.

The Vow of Itinerancy

The first, core vow of the Nepheshim is the Vow of Itinerancy, sometimes called "the Vow of the Road" in common parlance. It stipulates that the Nepheshim shall never establish a place as his haven. The original texts are unclear on exactly how long a Nepheshim can rest in one place, but centuries of wandering suggest that a full lunar cycle is the longest a wanderer can stay anywhere in good conscience.

Other traditions have sprung up around this vow as well, most of which have to do with the Nepheshim's mode of transportation. Strictly speaking, Mendicants are supposed to travel only on foot. While Nepheshim have used camels and horses at various points throughout history, doing so is considered a minor breach of the Vow of Hardship. Sometimes, the vampire's duty to Longinus and the covenant outweighs the personal loss of failing his vow. If the Nepheshim has vital, timely information to deliver to the Sanctified authority of a particular domain, he may avail himself of whatever means of transportation is fastest.

The Vow of Solitude

The oldest extant versions of this vow prompt the Nepheshim to "wander in solitude as Longinus did" after leaving the legions, but they have long since been reinterpreted to mean that the Hungry One should wander all the lonely places of the world: wilderness, semi-rural areas and small towns. This doesn't mean that the Nepheshim are never to venture into cities, just that they should spend only a tiny portion of their time in them, and only within the constraints of the Vow of Vigilance, below.

The Vow of Hunger

It is from this vow, in part, that the faction gets its common nick-name. The Vow of Hunger stipulates that, except in times of conflict, the Nepheshim are never to feed to satiety, "but should always feel the bite of hunger, because hunger is the motive of the predator, and the Nepheshim should always remain in close relationship with it." In their first nights among the Nepheshim, many Kindred resent the discomfort this vow elicits, but may also appreciate it in some small measure because it grants a modicum of noble piety to the lack of Vitae they experience due to the difficulties of feeding in the wild.

The Vow of Hardship

This vow refers to a line attributed to Longinus himself: "Comfort is the most dangerous trap a predator can encounter. Be wary of comfort and satiation, for they breed complacency, and complacency is weakness, while the way of hardship leads to the chalice of strength." Some Nepheshim see this vow as redundant, in light of the other vows that already make comfort all but impossible, but the meaning is clear: When given a choice, the Nepheshim should choose the more challenging path. This vow, perhaps more than any other, is responsible for the scarcity of the faction. The idea of an eternity of hardship is not something many Kindred would care to bear.

The Vow of Equals

Of all the vows, this is the most vague. The literal wording of this vow in the original Hebrew states, "A Nepheshim may travel only with equals. Should he never meet an equal, he is advised to travel alone — there is no fellowship with fools." Some scholars suggest this means that a group of Nepheshim may travel together as a coterie, but more conservative elders insist the intent was to allow a Nepheshim to travel only with one other Nepheshim. Some wanderers interpret this vow to mean they are to travel only with those who are of equally potent blood, while others claim it means that Nepheshim are not allowed to wander with ghouls or mortals, or to enter into a Vinculum that renders one party subordinate to the other.

A majority of Nepheshim interpret this vow fairly liberally. As a matter of course, most Mendicants avoid mortals (except when feeding), eschew the creation of ghouls, avoid the Vinculum like the sun and wander alone, if only to remain unnoticed. Coteries of Nepheshim spring up on occasion, but most dissolve in the space of a year or two. The more members there are in a coterie of wanderers, the faster they have to travel, lest they feed too heavily from one thinly populated region.

The Vow of Vigilance

Longinus said unto the Nepheshim, "Be my eyes in the lonely places and you shall serve me well." This vow is commonly thought to take precedence over all the others, because it represents the Nepheshim's *raison d'etre* in Kindred society. In some domains, the Nepheshim are the covenant's only means of gaining knowledge about happenings beyond the safety of the cities. One of the few causes for a Mendicant to enter a city is to report important news. In exchange, the Sanctified elders of the city (if any) are expected to offer the wanderer lavish hospitality, which he is obligated by tradition to refuse three times before accepting. This is the only time it is acceptable for one of the Nepheshim to be comfortable.

The Vow of Intervention

This vow defines the limits of the wanderer's active hand in the world. Translated from Hebrew it reads, "Rectify egregious inversions of Longinus' order." This has traditionally been interpreted to mean that the Mendicant is to intervene in any improper or unnatural relationship between predator and prey. To date, it has been invoked to justify, among other things: the execution of a vampire found serving a mortal mage, the reclamation of copies of *The Testament of Longinus* that had fallen into mortal hands (and the destruction of their owners) and taking aggressive action against vampire-hunters, whom the Nepheshim see as inversions of Longinus' order (since it is the role of vampires to hunt mortals, and not the other way around). The Nepheshim might not be able to carry out the intervention himself, but he should report the perversions to those Kindred who *are* able.

Titles and Duties

As a general rule, the Nepheshim don't give much credence to hierarchies. Titles can be grand and important sounding, but they don't serve any function when a Mendicant is out in the Chorbah. Some titles have evolved over time, however, to distinguish how long a Kindred has been on the path of the Nepheshim, rather than to indicate status.

Yanaq

A Nepheshim who hasn't yet survived even one year and one night is called a yanaq (plural, yanaqim), from an old Hebrew term denoting a child who hasn't been weaned. Few Nepheshim take yanaqim seriously, though a yanaq who shows potential might be mentored by a more established Mendicant — or at least given a few pointers for survival.

Gamal

A Nepheshim who has survived one year and one night, but who has not yet finished his first term of servitude (five years and five nights) is called a gamal. The word denotes a child who has been weaned, as the Nepheshim has been weaned from the luxuries of urban existence.

Tsa'ah

A Mendicant who has kept the Nepheshim vows for the enforced period of five years and five nights, yet voluntarily keeps to his vows. These are the most revered members of the Nepheshim faction. These exceptionally hardy Kindred may not be the best conversationalists, but they make highly capable allies and terrifying enemies.

Zeb

A non-specific term used colloquially by veteran Nepheshim with one another, as a term of amiable respect. (e.g., "Where you going after here, Zeb?") Literally, it means "wolf."

Stereotypes

Hardliners: Soulless theocrats.

Proselytizers: They fear to truly spread the word.

Neo-Reformists: Visionary, but disrespectful of tradition.

Unifiers: No accounting for the individual.

Appearance: Some Nepheshim appear truly archaic, dressed in simple robes and cast-off clothes found in dumpsters and abandoned cars. To remain inconspicuous, however, most modern Nepheshim wear whatever simple clothes could go unnoticed at a local truck-stop: jeans, parkas, knit hats, work boots and the like. Many Nepheshim keep no possessions that will not fit in a jacket pocket, but a few carry backpacks with simple tools that can be used to sun-proof a makeshift and temporary haven: duct tape, black plastic trash bags, a sleeping bag and perhaps a hammer and nails.

Haven: Nepheshim are forbidden from keeping havens. They sleep in whatever safe nooks, holes, tunnels or shacks they can find.

Background: Of the five clans, two make up the vast majority of the Nepheshim. Foremost among these are the Gangrel, whose hardiness, ferocity and relatively asocial natures render them uniquely capable of withstanding the harsh isolated Requiem of a Mendicant. Only one other clan, the Nosferatu, is nearly as well represented within the faction. Haunts do not join the Nepheshim because of any particular advantage they have on the road (though many are indeed well-suited to the lot of the wanderer), but because many of them feel pushed away by society.

The Mekhet come in a distant third in the faction. While Shadows are more than capable of taking to the road, the wanderer' Requiem doesn't always foster the kinds of discovery and mystery that Mehket thrive on — many weeks or months can pass without new insight.

The least represented clans in the Nepheshim are the Daeva and the Ventrue. Kindred of these most urban (and urbane) clans likely find the Requiem of a Mendicant tantamount to exile. On those very rare occasions when Kindred of one of these two clans joins the Mendicant faction voluntarily, it is almost always out of extreme religious fervor or fear of some more awful fate.

Organization: Both as Mendicants and as wanderers, the Nepheshim do not have much of an organization to speak of. Nepheshim have special relationships with the Tsa'ah that oversaw their initial vows, but no other organization exists by default. Individual Nepheshim may organize into coteries or traveling companions, on rare occassions.

Some Kindred, however, believe the Nepheshim are a major ace up the Sanctified sleeve. Because they are rarely found in cities, their true numbers are unknown. Rumors assert that, were the Lancea Sanctum ever to call in all of its wandering Nepheshim, their numbers could potentially, overwhelm the Kindred population of some cities. The logistics of such a move staggers the imagination, and such a thing has never been done. If the rumors are true and it was even possible to summon them, would the Nepheshim heed the call?

Concepts: Dirty old man, doomsayer/soothsayer, penitent fugitive, railway preacher, roving troubleshooter, travel writer, wise hermit.

Quote: *"I've seen a hundred cities like this one and a thousand vampires like you, son."*

Nepheshim as Bloodline

While the Nepheshim are primarily known as a faction, recent centuries suggest they may have spawned a bloodline, as well. Some Gangrel Nepheshim whose sires were also wandering Mendicants have found they have the ability to change their blood. The strongest-willed of these can also muster supernatural powers of survival from a Discipline, being called Nahdad (if it actually exists), that these Nepheshim have been quietly exploring to ease the hardships of travel. For those Kindred of the new bloodline, this is a powerful transitional moment in their history — and one they're keeping to themselves. Not even other Kindred in the faction may realize what's taking place.

The only thing that has kept these Hungry Ones from openly claiming bloodline status already is a desire to keep the Discipline of Nahdad a secret. To their way of thinking, knowledge of Nahdad is only meant for those who suffer the cold, the hunger and the scratch of thorns in their nightly pilgrimage: the most honored and respected of the Nepheshim. For now, the Kindred of the Nepheshim bloodline seem perfectly content to blend in with the rest of the faction.

Parent Clan: Gangrel

Weakness: In addition to the ties to the Beast that affect all Gangrel blood, the blood oath of the Nepheshim manifests within the Vitae of this line. A Nepheshim cannot possess dots in the City Status, Haven, Herd, Resources or Retainer Merits. If he ever purchases a dot in one of the above Merits, he surrenders all dots in Nahdad. If the character gives up his dots in a forbidden Merit, lost dots in Nahdad are not recovered, but may be purchased anew. Plus, a member of the Nepheshim bloodline can never be free of his blood's exaggerated manifestation of the Nepheshim oath: Each night after the first that the character awakens in a particular territory (domain, city or town), he must spend a Willpower point to resist the nagging guilt that he is neglecting his vows. If the character leaves familiar territory and returns again within one year and one day, he must continue to spend Willpower each night that he awakens therein.

Disciplines: Auspex, Nahdad, Protean, Resilience

Proselytizers: The Messengers of Longinus

The Lancea Sanctum is not known for putting outsiders at ease. Left to their own devices, many Sanctified alienate more potential converts than they recruit, particularly in this modern, more secular age. As none of the Anointed are content to let the ranks of the faithful dwindle away, the Messengers of Longinus are allowed a great deal of latitude in their work in many parishes.

The Messengers are a faction of like-minded evangelists who spread the word of the Dark Prophet to those who have not heard it and visit it again upon those who have not taken it to heart. Their persistence can be disturbing — some Messengers resort to stalking their subjects, appearing out of the dark when the target's teeth are bloody to deliver a predator's sermon — but it's what makes them a force to be reckoned with.

Messengers have a great deal in common with mortal missionaries. They market *The Testament of Longinus* using techniques first pioneered by mortal evangelists, luring the timid with carefully disguised pamphlets and rallying the spirited with lively religious speeches performed in Elysium. Unlike mortal missionaries, the Messengers promulgate the Sanctified belief that the predatory role of the Kindred must be revered.

The Lancea Sanctum has always had an evangelical attitude, especially in the United States, where evangelism is louder. For Messengers, however, the hunt for new blood for the covenant is what gives purpose to the Requiem. Finding the weak, the uncertain and the needy and promising them the edifying answers they seek (and preparing them for the answers they'll actually get) is the core of the Messengers' mission. That their work contributes to the covenant's size and power, and therefore the faction's freedom to evangelize, is almost seen as a welcome side effect. Almost.

Proselytizers in General

Proselytizer factions are like the fangs that thrust out from the face of the Lancea Sanctum. Every faction has its proselytizers intent on promoting their particular take on the gospel, but dedicated Proselytizer factions have no other motives than the proliferation of Sanctified faith in all its forms. These are the Sanctified out in front, amid the heathens and the ignorant, guiding lost Kindred into the churchyard and the waiting arms of the Anointed. What happens afterward isn't the purview of a Proselytizer — once a potential convert as stepped inside, these holy marketers move on to the next target.

Some Proselytizer factions roam the World of Darkness as missionaries. Others stay in their domain, pursuing the same unaligned and undecided vampires night after night. Some Proselytizers seek out recruits because they truly want all Kindred to feel the grace and empowerment of pious service. Others are simply serving the covenant the only way they know how. Some Proselytizers are overactive zealots, driving off as many Kindred as they bring in. Others are casual emissaries of the Sanctified, hanging around the city's social scenes to keep the covenant visible and accessible.

The Messengers' zeal does not come solely from a desire to enlighten others with the words of Longinus and God. Converting others has its own inherent appeal to the members of this faction. Recruitment is akin to feeding to these predators; making a convert after a long courtship is like scoring good prey after a long chase. To Messengers, conversion elicits the same thrill and satisfaction as hunting blood in the name of Longinus — which, in a way, is exactly what they do.

While Messengers may deliver praiseworthy results, the methods they use aren't so respected by most Sanctified. Messengers are sometimes called "the Whores of Longinus" for to the lengths they'll go to bring converts into the fold. Messengers don't consider seduction, fear-mongering, browbeating and strategic misrepresentation of the facts to be excessive short-term tactics so long as the targeted convert ultimately *chooses* to join the Sanctified. There's very little a Messenger won't promise, however vaguely, to bring a well-connected or much sought-after vampire to the Lancea Sanctum.

In addition to high-pressure evangelism techniques, Messengers have been known to soft-pedal Sanctified ideals to such a degree that they flirt with accusations of heresy. A Messenger might revise passages from the *Testament* to make them more palatable to Carthians or promote a Creed of the faith as a symbol of Sanctified diversity, without revealing that it has been banned by the local Bishop. In domains without quality historical records, Messengers even pass off invented, covenant-aggrandizing stories as "secret histories of the city, known only to the Sanctified."

The fact remains, however, that the Messengers have not only stemmed the attrition of the covenant in modern nights but have, in recent decades, been making its numbers grow in certain domains. While the Bishops wonder such victories are worth it, the Messengers press on.

History

Proselytizers have always been a part of the Sanctified. It is one of the Sanctified duties, put forth in the *Testament*, to share the word with all other Kindred. The Messengers of Longinus, it seems, have been a part of the covenant since the eighteenth century, when they were thought to have first organized in Charleston as recruiters for a local parish. Over several decades, roving Messenger missionaries inspired followers in other domains, and the faction spread throughout the American South. The Messengers have never been a large group, but their reputation has traveled far.

In the last fifty years, the Messengers' task has grown steadily more difficult. Religion has lost its cachet in much of the country, and faith is seen as a shortcoming of the naïve or the ignorant. While mortal trends generally require years to make themselves meaningfully felt among the Kindred, the Sanctified feel this trend swept all too quickly into Kindred culture. The task of the Proselytizer factions is harder and more important than it once was, but the Sanctified know that the need for faith can be stirred up in almost any Kindred.

In the 1950s, a Sanctified minister from Baton Rouge, Louisiana changed the Messengers forever. This modest-seeming vampire, known as Brother Glen, brought modern American sales techniques and psychology to the faction. Brother Glen devised a series of simple guidelines for Messengers to remember and inspired Messengers to mentor new members on the tactics of good salesmanship.

Philosophy

The Messengers truly believe that the Kindred condition has no point without the word of Longinus. They take it upon themselves to provide the unlives of other Kindred with meaning by spreading the evangel as far and as aggressively as possible. Audiences should not just hear the gospel — they should *feel* it grab a hold of them.

The Messengers follow an unwritten, unspoken law: "Anything that results in a legitimate conversion is just fine." Unsound methods are unsound only until they yield fruit, at which point they become "innovative." When objectionable tactics — bribery, lies, Dominate — fail to win a convert, or attract the attention of the Sheriff, a Messenger may be loudly excoriated by the faction's elders as "misguided," "unethical" or "shameful," even though the same methods may have been used, and overlooked, countless times in the past.

In modern nights, the Messengers have become a kind of Sanctified marketing force — independent sales reps for the church of the Damned. Messenger culture and ideology is all about the next target, the next convert. Some employ insights gleaned from business guides to "Customer Psychology," while others regard *themselves* as the product being sold. "If a target buys into you," the Messengers say, "he'll buy into the dogma."

Commandments and Traditions

Modern Messengers have developed a list of short-hand, easy-to-remember guidelines to follow when making a convert. These are passed on to new Messengers by experienced mentors or at Gatherings of Shepherds, as discussed later on. Some Messengers add their own buzz-phrases and personal rules to these, and a few disregard one or two they don't think "will play in my parish," but in general these are the tenets of the modern Messenger.

Cultivate Endurance

Courting converts is not easy, but it is the responsibility of the Messengers to spur the souls of the doubtful, the frightened, the misguided and the confused towards their destined service of God and the Lancea Sanctum. If it means wading knee-deep through a swamp to take the Word to a Nosferatu, the Messenger does it. If it means sitting through hours of idle speculation on the inner workings of the Princely court, she does it. If it means being there for a distraught neonate as he tells the pitiable story of his last mortal day, she dos it.

Messengers should remember what Longinus said: "This was just one night among many, one drop in a rush of blood. This minute is past." The work of a Proselyte can take years, but if it is the work the Sanctified has vowed to do, then no second spent with a potential convert can be considered wasted. One year of hand-holding and reaffirment is lost in the face of an eternity of service.

Know Your Target

Without knowing what motivates her target, a Messenger may never convince him to see the Requiem as the Sanctified see it. To that end, a Messenger studies a target's habits to find out what's important to him before she ever brings up Longinus in conversation. A Messenger can't plot out a suitable conversion strategy without knowing, for example, how a target regards himself, what mortals he may be close to or where his moral compass points. The Messenger must be able to "read" a Kindred within just a few minutes of meeting him, to avoid tainting a relationship early on.

Some Messengers rely on an intuitive understanding of emotional displays and responses to read targets (using the Empathy Skill). Others use psychology (a specialty of the Science Skill) to analyze a subject's words and behaviors. Perhaps the majority of Messengers use their conversational Skills (such as Socialize and Persuasion) to draw more information out of a target.

Isolate Your Target

Just as a vampire doesn't feed from mortals openly in the streets, neither is it sensible to preach the word of the Sanctified to targets surrounded by their peers and allies. Proselytizers are taught to get their targets alone and as free from their social networks as possible. A potential convert can't truly hear even the wisest message if he's attuned to the secular words of his coterie. If the Messenger can seclude her prey, the target will undoubtedly be more open to her message.

Place Empowers Role, So Choose Your Place Wisely

Messengers are discouraged from pursuing or accepting roles in the city or covenant hierarchy, as they only distract from the Proselytizer's mission. Still, some fill available roles to take advantage of the access they afford to otherwise unreachable targets. By far the favorite role of most Messengers is that of Harpy. Being in a position to make or break an individual socially gives a Proselytizer access to ears that would normally not hear his pious message. Many Messengers, however, have found that such influence is often most potent when it is expressly, obviously *not* used. "You made a fool out of yourself tonight, son," the amiable Harpy says, "Do that at court, and you'd be finished. I know how it is, though. Let's see if we can't get you better prepared for your next big night out, huh?"

On the other hand, a Proselytizer Harpy can use her influence to pressure her targets, as well. With nothing but innuendo and a disapproving tone of voice, a beloved Harpy can cast another Kindred as a second class citizen. In domains where the Lancea Sanctum is strong, a Sanctified Harpy might make it so that the only way to achieve real esteem is to be Sanctified. The only way for a target socialite to escape the scorn and dismissal of a Proselytizer Harpy, then, is to convert — after which the Harpy has only good things to say about the individual in question.

That said, a Proselytizer Harpy who overplays his hand loses everything. If his blatantly partisan agenda is exposed he may lose all credibility among non-Sanctified Kindred at court. A Messenger who falls from such a visible position loses his ability to walk anonymously among the wider flock as "the everyman vampire." There may be no choice left but to seek out a new domain.

Sit With Your Target

Messengers do not proselytize from on high. They deal with Kindred personally, face to face, to cultivate trust and comfortability. Messengers walk their targets to the cathedral doors, one at a time.

A wise Messenger knows that social status is only a barrier between her and those she must educate. If she wants to be a successful evangelist for the word of Longinus, she must convince her target that she is like him — or, that if she is better off than he is, it is thanks to her relationship with the *Testament*. If portraying herself as her target's equal means hobnobbing with Princes and Primogen, then she should welcome the opportunity to make a convert from someone so highly placed and enjoy the experience. If it means portraying herself as an equal to the broken, the deranged and the deformed, that too is part of the Messenger's calling. It's a given that any Proselytizer who values social standing over her service Longinus should not become a Messenger.

Don't Preach to Prey

There may be times when a Messenger believes he can best secure a convert by approaching a suseptible mortal and grooming her for a Sanctified Requiem, but Proselytizers are expressly forbidden from mentioning the covenant to mortals — even if it is somehow disguised as a mortal institution (as a coterie of Messengers attempted to do throughout Indiana in 1932). Not only is it an egregious breach of the Masquerade, but mortals aren't seen as being worthy of the effort and can't appreciate what the Messenger is doing for them. In keeping with the scripture of the *Testament*, it is not a vampire's role to nourish the souls of mortals; it is, instead, the task of the mortals to nourish the bodies of the Kindred.

Rituals and Observances

Periodically, Messengers assemble in what are called Gatherings of Shephers to discuss *The Testament of Longinus* the state of the covenant in the local domain and recent experiences with new converts and new methods. These assemblies, despite the name, are typically open to like-minded Proselytizers of other factions, provided they can be discreet. In populous domains housing many resident Messengers, a Gathering of Shepherds may be an annual affair. More often, a Gathering is organized by pro-active local Messengers whenever it feels as though "it's been a while" since the previous Gathering. (To the Kindred social clock, "a while" might be several years or even a decade.) On occassion, a spontaneous Gathering might be called — as best it can be — if the domain is host to a number of visiting Proselytizer missionaries.

The Gathering of Shephers is one part church picnic, one part sales seminar. For small groups of Messengers and other Proselytizers, the Gathering might simply require a private room, perhaps in the basement of a local church, where Shepherds can exchange tales of tough or touching targets and commiserate on the state of the modern, impious laity. Missionary Proselytizers sometimes attempt to call their own Gatherings, inviting local Messengers and Proselytizers to a hotel suite, perhaps, to sup on captured kine and swap stories.

Larger groups organize more formal exchanges of information. The largest Gatherings see a dozen Proselytizers gathered around an overhead projector in a dark room, delivering speeches on psychology and sermons on the sad perils of stray sheep.

The part of these congregations that many Kindred would find disturbing, were they to find out about them, is when a potential target becomes the topic of discussion for every Proselytizer in attendance. They exchange information on him, on his habits, his affiliations, his coterie, his whereabouts and his perceived degree of piety (or impiety, as the case may be). Hearsay flows alongside personal testimonials on the subject's character and activities. A vampire deemed an especially desirable candidate for conversion — due to his personal training, his resources, or simply his reputation — can even inspire multiple Messengers to work in tandem to herd him into the Lancea Sanctum.

Titles and Duties

The Messengers may employ many different tactics to close a conversion on a target, but they have only one title and only one duty. All Messengers are converters for Longinus, expected to regularly, if not quickly, deliver new Sanctified to the covenant. Proselytizers of several different sub-factions, including the Messengers, use the title of Shepherd to identify and respect other Proselytizers. "Good evening, Shepherd Burke," one might say. Among especially formal groups, such as the Messengers, it is considered rude to refer to another Proselytizer without his title. When Proselytizers meet at the Gathering of Shepherds, this custom is seen by some to reveal cultishness of fanatical Proselytizers. ("Shepherd Lowe and Shepherd Winifred and I are going to see Shepherd DuBois. Did you want to join us?")

The title of Shepherd was chosen for its soothing impression. Some Messengers introduce themselves using the title, but others disregard as a show of casual comraderie. "We don't always use titles," a Messenger might tell his target, "You hear the covenant is nothing but formality all the time, but I've never known that to be true." Other Messengers never use the title around targets, believing it gets in the way of the Proselytizer's image as just a friendly, well-informed member of the Sanctified congregation.

A mentoring Messenger is just another Shepherd showing a younger associate the ropes. He is expected to continue working his "open accounts" at the same time, and gets no additional title other than "mentor." The mentor's duty is to the Lancea Sanctum and, some say, to his potential converts. What he provides his pupil is a service, and it must always come second to the mentor's holy duties.

Stereotypes

Hardliners: Dogmatic and uncompromising.
Mendicants: Same principle, different application.
Neo-Reformists: No respect for tradition.
Unifiers: Steadfast allies.

Appearance: In principle, Messengers should dress to fit in with a target. In practice, Messengers focus on targets that dress like they do. Messengers come from all walks of life, but quickly develop an appreciation for a clean, sharp-looking appearance — something that would put a stranger at ease. For some, this means a modest but handsome three-button suit coat and ironed khakis, or a complete suit. Others wear the jacket of some local team and a pair of jeans. The goal is to seem approachable, even average, and to reflect the target's culture and personal interests. If the target had to pick someone out of the crowd to ask for directions, it should be the Messenger.

Haven: Messengers maintain very private havens in much the same manner as any other modern Kindred. Like many other Sanctified, a Messenger's haven is likely decorated with symbols of the Lancea Sanctum.

Unlike other Kindred, Messengers keep records on the city's other vampires. Blurred photos of converts may be taped to the walls or pinned to a map of the city. Yellow sticky notes, arranged in a line near the map, record the timeline of a target's average night. Quotes, from a target's mouth to the Messenger's wall, have been transcripted from tapes made at the last meeting. Banker's boxes loaded with copies of *The Catechism* and Sanctified primers printed at Kinko's line two walls of the place.

A Messenger's haven is more than a sleeping area. It's a field office.

Background: While they're happy to draw members of any clan into the Lancea Sanctum, when it comes to inducting members into their own faction, Messengers suddenly become very particular. Messengers favor Kindred from the Daeva and

Ventrue clans for membership in the faction, for they have the subtlety and the poise the Proselytizer's work requires. Popular wisdom (and the Proselytizer stereotype) considers the Mekhet to be too secretive and judgmental, the Gangrel to be too bestial and unpredictble, and the Nosferatu to be too unsettling and socially awkward to make good recruiters. The Messengers like clean, pretty people to spread the word of Longinus; those who do not fit the description need not apply. Kindred of the unfavored clans who do join the Messngers have typically presented themselves to existing Messengers as personable, respectable agents of the *Testament*.

When Messengers Embrace new members, they tend to choose beautiful, charismatic charmers. Kindred and kine alike make the unconscious assumption that what is beautiful is good, and the Messengers want others to see the Sanctified as very, very good. Consequently, actors, lawyers, public relations executives, models, televangelists and marketing managers are all sensible childer for members of this faction. Anyone who looks good, sounds good, makes others feel good — and who can make a sale — may be considered a choice worth the shame and pain of the Embrace and Creation Rite.

Organization: In his early nights in the faction, a Messenger is paired with a mentor (represented with the Mentor Merit). That mentor teaches him the guidelines of the Messengers, gives him a crash course in sales psychology and explains the basics of "reading and writing body language." This short-term relationship seldom lasts more than a few weeks.

Messengers, following their training, operate largely independently. Outside of the Gathering of Shepherds, many Messengers go years without seeing others of their unique ilk. Many Messengers do love to talk shop, however, and so may meet regularly with one or two other Proselytizers between those larger gatherings.

When Messengers do work together, they are well-rehearsed, coordinated, orderly and careful. In such partnerships, one Messenger may act as the "driver," pushing the target towards a need for advice or sanctuary. The other then acts as the "receiver," who is there to counsel and assist the target for however long is necessary. One is provides power, the other finesse. Most targets never realize they've been steered by two vampires working in tandem.

Whether working alone or together, Messenger operations are all about maximizing effectiveness, about achieving that one goal: the next convert.

Concepts: Charming televangelist, cold-call broker, door-to-door evangelist, Mormon missionary, paid public speaker, suave saleswoman.

Quote: *"I know exactly how you feel. Felt that way for decades, it feels like, until Father Martinez helped me out. I don't know where I'd be tonight without the* Testament*."*

Minor Factions

Minor factions are more akin to social or professional clubs than major ideological philosophies. They have fewer members, smaller goals and narrow viewpoints. Their specialized (sometimes aberrant) fields of interest don't usually have the sort of cultural resonance that makes the major factions ubiquitous. Some are little more than Sanctified coteries bound together by philosophical or political motivations. Minor factions are almost always local phenomena, perhaps with very specific ties (a fugitive founder, a nomadic leader or a formal meeting between Bishops) linking them to similar factions in other domains. Not all minor factions are open to everyone but, in most cases, it's possible to belong to both a major and a minor faction. For example, a Kindred might be a Hardliner who is also an expert in the *Rule of Golgotha* for a local faction of Sanctified Exorcists.

In some cases, their presence of a minor faction goes almost unnoticed in the parish, as might be the case if a faction of Confessors meets unofficially outside parish territory each week to plan their protestation of the new Bishop. In other cases, a localized minor faction wields power or influence disproportionate to the faction's size in the Lancea Sanctum as a whole. For example, a Godslayer cult may be the prevailing Sanctified power in a certain city, despite the fact that they exist only in a few domains throughout the world.

Listed below are some examples of minor factions. However, many more exist within the Lancea Sanctum. Any title, duty or office of the Lancea Sanctum could conceivably become a faction of the local domain or parish, if the membership banded together to pursue its own priorities separate from those of other local Sanctified.

Exorcists

The World of Darkness is home to more monstrous creatures than vampires. Werewolves, wizards, ghosts and spirits share the world with the Kindred... as do other, lesser-known things. Many of these creatures pose a danger to Sanctified and secular Kindred alike. What's worse, some horrors appear to be servants of a greater evil — possibly the Devil himself. In order to

combat these creatures and protect their fellow Kindred, small groups of dedicated warriors have arisen among the Sanctified.

Most other Sanctified consider Exorcists to be dangerous fanatics, suicidal lunatics or both. At best, coteries of Exorcists destroy a few enemies or unidentified supernatural monsters before being destroyed themselves. At worst, they bring down the wrath of other monsters upon the parish. Not all Exorcist factions respond with violence first, however. Many are investigators and researchers, drawing on the ancient lore of the Lancea Sanctum to identify and combat threats both ancient and modern. A rare few Exorcist factions may even count the local Inquisitor in their ranks.

Most groups of Exorcists are private, withdrawn and insular, devoted to their own crusades rather than the domain's priorities. In certain parishes, especially those plagued by occult mysteries and violence, Exorcists may accumulate power and wield it as they see necessary to protect the congregation and identify the covenant's enemies in the city. Meanwhile, representatives of the secular domain may turn to Exorcists to deal with supernatural menaces throughout the Prince's territory.

Godslayers

Godslayers interpret quotes from the Bible (especially Exodus 15:11, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods") to mean that other gods do exist, but that God Himself is preeminent among them. As the faithful soldiers of the King of Heaven, Godslayers consider it their job to weaken other gods by destroying their followers. Thus, members of this faction hunt down and kill not only Kindred of other covenants and non-Sanctified religious denominations (such as vampires who continue to practice mortal Christianity), but prominent mortal heathens, as well. In the long, grim history of the covenant, Godslayer factions have even sought out werewolf priests and spiritual mages for elimination.

The story of the Godslayers comes in short, violent spurts. As word of their fanatical campaigns fades more slowly than the reports of their defeat, one or two surviving Godslayers build another faction of followers around themselves and then strike against at any heathens they please.

This faction is outlawed for two reasons: The first is that the actions of the group threaten the relations with other covenants and even the Masquerade. The second, and more sublime reason is that it is heretical to the Sanctified's Judeo-Christian roots to claim there is more than one god. In past nights, Godslayers have been brought down not by their heathen foes, but by Sanctified Inquisitors.

For the fifth time in two centuries, the Godslayers are thought to have been wiped out. Unfortunately, it's not entirely out of the question that a small or withdrawn domain is suffering somewhere under the bloody authority of a cloister of Godslayers.

Monastics

Monastic factions dwell away from a larger congregation and, often, outside of any Kindred domain. In many respects, they are not unlike the archetypal Christian monastery populated with contemplative, brown-robed monks. A few Monastic retreats even operate as mortal monasteries do.

Monastic retreats are seldom constructed for their purpose. Most are abandoned factories, grain processing plants or other rural buildings with numerous, interior or windowless rooms. Prey is typically scarce near such places, so Monastics sometimes keep handfuls of mortal cattle to feed on over time — which earns no favor from mainstream Sanctified. Monastic sanctuaries are typically open to non-Sanctified vampires, however, which may attract enough potential converts to placate disapproving Anointed.

Monasteries are intended as centers of pious learning, where Sanctified Kindred can find mentors and teachers, study texts and meditate. For many decades, Monastics were thought to be hoarding records of Theban Sorcery rituals, but most reports were found to be overblown. Still, Kindred seeking instruction and practice in matters both occult and mundane could find the tutelage they seek in one of these secluded structures.

Few Sanctified belong to a Monastic faction for more than a few decades. Most retreat to the distant sanctuary of the Monastics to avoid worldly consequences, escape the echoes of one's mortal life or find new insight into their own faith. When an elder Monastic decides to return to society — few Kindred can fulfill a Monastic vow for all eternity, and so the Monastics have long since given up that lofty sentence — he looks for an ancilla to accept his position in the monastery. In the modern nights, however, so few Kindred are making use of the world's few remaining monasteries that it's unlikely any of them will continue on into the next century.

Icarians

My sire has held this city for centuries. When he falls to torpor, as we all must, I will take over his position. Think about that before you raise your voice to me again.

It's common knowledge among the Sanctified of Europe that Icarians trace their origin back to one of the most revered leaders the covenant has ever seen: Icarius, Archbishop of Naples, pilgrim to the Black Abbey and Anointed by the hand of the Monachus. In 1388, Archbishop Icarius was attacked while he slept and diablerized by a vengeful Succubus (see p. 38). She then took control of the city. Three nights later, vampires of the Lancea Sanctum, rallied by the childer of Icarius, brought her down, and the progeny of the Archbishop declared themselves the heirs to his magnificent rule.

In the centuries that followed, the Icarians cultivated their combination of religious fervor, famed blood and validated vengeance into a belief that the scions of Icarius — who they call the Great Archbishop — are blessed by God with a divine right to rule the Damned. Icarian "divine heirs" strode throughout Mediterranean Europe from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, displacing dozens of Princes and Archbishops and replacing them with Icarian rulers. The scions of Icarius, seen by the larger body of the Lancea Sanctum as heretical usurpers with no regard for the covenant hierarchy, lost momentum as the image of the noble-blooded Dynast, wronged and grieving faded beneath self-righteous claims of heavenly inheritance. As more and more cities faced the so-called "Icarian Heresy" with outright force, the Dynasts relented. They kept whatever cities they had claimed by right, but sought no others for many decades.

Some elders who were close to the medieval Icarians claim the death of Icarius marked the birth of the bloodline, that the blood of his childer was changed by fevered vengeance, not by God. Icarians insist, however, that their line has held its own supernatural powers since Icarius Embraced his first childe. The surge of new Icarians practicing the heritage's rare Discipline is merely the result of many dozens of childer rushing to fill the impossible void left by their departed father.

Icarians truly believe they are meant to rule the Damned as pious and noble lords, with the blood of the Great Archishop as their license. In past nights, they saw themselves as holy political crusaders, restoring the thrones of Kindred domains to the Icarian Archbishops that God intended to govern them. That some stubborn Princes, blind to the sanguineous grace of the Dynasts, had to be burned out of their seats was a regrettable shame, but how could the Dynasts — or any of the Sanctified — tolerate a pretender on the throne?

Since the end of the Icarian Heresy, generally marked by the bloodline's failed attempt to win Avignon in 1724, Dynasts have reevaluated their philosophies and tactics. If the Sanctified regard the childer of Archbishop Icarius as self-aggrandizing heretics, how can there ever be a secure and beloved union between an Icarian Archbishop and her vassals?

The Icarian solution is calculated, well-reasoned and insidious. The Dynasts have come to understand that they must reclaim their good name through many years of pious service and demonstrations of skill. The Icarians plan to join the ranks of the Anointed, fill municipal roles in favor of the Sanctified and use their supernatural talents to benefit sitting Princes and Archbishops. They will prove that they are meant to rule. The modern mantra of the Icarians is this: "An Icarian serves to rule." As the Dynasts see it, that sentence signifies the Icarian destiny of rulership, their commitment to scale the ladders of hierarchy and their acknowledgement that they must first support the current Princes of the Damned.

That said, every Icarian is looking for a short-cut to the control of her local domain. A new, peacefully ascended Dynast Prince or Archbishop could *truly* prove that only the Icarians are meant to speak for the Sanctified and govern the Damned. And if peaceful ascension is not possible, an Icarian is entitled to do what is necessary to climb those final few steps. When the Icarians win new power, all the other Kindred shall see the truth. When the Icarians can gain control of the city without losing the favor of the Kindred, then shall they be loved.

Parent Clan: Ventrue

Nickname: Dynasts (sometimes Holy Dynasts)

Covenant: The roots of the Icarian bloodline reach deep into the history of the Lancea Sanctum and few Dynasts have much reason to leave their holy origins. Some, however, stifled by the demands of religious strictures on one side and the demands of a Prince on the other, feel not just rooted in the covenant, but trapped beneath it. Others feel the Lancea Sanctum's long memory, and the unhappy memory of the Icarian Heresy, will forever limit Icarian power in the covenant and prevent future Dynasts from taking the reigns of other cities. Icarians find the notion of sliding slowly into impotence terrifying. That the Sanctified would let such a

thing happen when the Dynasts are so plainly intended as rulers is a sad shame.

So it is that modern nights find the Icarians seeking out other avenues of power. Most Icarians don't intend to betray the Sanctified, of course — merely secure themselves Status in the city or with other temporal powers so the bloodline can prove that it is no threat to the Lancea Sanctum. Indeed, the Icarians have always been a great boon to the covenant and as the pious heirs to the blood of the Great Archbishop, they intend to go on as pious servants of the Sanctified the only way they know how: by organizing and commanding other Kindred to the benefit of the covenant.

The Icarian bloodline as a long, amicable history of dealing with the Kindred of the Invictus, and a younger, more cautious relationship with vampires of the Carthian Movement. Both covenants have been by Icarians as well-meaning organizations with a sad lack of religious motive among some of its greatest leaders. An Icarian would be comfortable dealing with the agents of either covenant, and could conceivably even pursue membership in one or the other if he had a plan for winding his path back to a higher station among the Sanctified.

Icarians hardly regard the Circle of the Crone and the Ordo Dracul at all, traditionally. Pagan heresies are the business of Inquisitors and crusaders, and the Dynasts interact with them predominantly as distant adversaries. It is the great shame of the bloodline that the Icarians are sometimes ignorantly lumped together with such heathens as "strays from the Spear."

Appearance: Dynasts maintain dignity in all things, including their dress. They prefer Italian suits, cut to the modern fashion, when they dress to contemporary styles. For formal covenant functions, such as Creation Rites and the Gran Ballo, Icarians have traditionally worn more archaic garb with flourishes reminiscent of a Bishop's vestments: red and white embroidery, iconic spears, signet rings, and so forth. As a rule of thumb, Icarians don't dress down for the sake of lower-class associates or informal social settings.

Beyond their dress, Icarians are known for the sense of serene confidence they exude. Icarians are resolute in the extreme, renowned for maintaining calm poise in the face of dire threats and armed enemies. The humorous Icarian stereotype, in fact, (as invented following the line's failed attempt to win control of Avignon in 1724) is the calm and collected vampire who negotiates terms while on fire. The fearsome Icarian reputation, however, whispered of tonight as it once was long ago, is that of the Spanish Icarian Fortuno who calmly ordered his enemies to douse his flaming body… and was obeyed.

Haven: Many, even most, Icarians have the wealth to maintain large, elaborate havens — often in well-appointed mansions or townhouses, typically staffed with loyal ghouls or attendant neonates, always equipped with the latest security features. Icarians richly appoint their nests with antiques, archaic furniture and fine linens. Historically, Icarians favored religious art that depicts the earliest nights of the Sanctified, such as imagery of the Centurion, etchings of the Black Abbey as drawn from the imagination and ornamental spears. In modern nights, it has become something of a fad among Dynasts to collect mortal art depicting the era of the Old Testament.

Dynasts can't abide the thought of their kin dwelling in unsafe conditions, so Icarians unable to secure their own lavish havens may be invited into another's sanctuary. In some domains, it's even customary for the eldest Icarian to supply a haven for his younger brethren, whether they are his childer or another's. Such gifted havens are rarely lavish, but always secure.

Some wealthy Dynasts go so far as to host non-Icarian visitors in their huge havens. Modern Icarians accept that with authority and power must come visibility, and few expect to keep an elaborate haven a secret for long. What's the point of a lavish display is no one else can see it? Icarian custom demands the host see to it that his guest is safe, fed and entertained, as a symbolic effort of his high station.

Of course, Icarians still recall the origin of their line, so no Dynast sleeps in the same space as a guest. Many Icarians keep isolated, secure vaults in which to sleep, protected by loyal electronics and well-tested guards. The first rule of every Icarian haven is said to be the same: He who looks upon a sleeping scion of Icarius shall die.

Background: Most Dynasts are of European or Middle-Eastern descent, as the bloodline only selected childer from Italy, Iberia, France, Germany and Turkey for many centuries. Gradually, as the Icarians seek to find new roles for themselves, a more diverse range of Kindred are being represented amid the Icarians, but whole decades go by without a new Icarian adopting the bloodline. The standards of any Dynast are high, to say the least. The Icarians are the descendants of a vampire one step removed from the Dark Messiah himself — the prize of such gloriously noble blood can never be awarded lightly.

Dynasts may monitor a potential childe for decades before presenting her to other Icarians as a potential new family member. Icarians follow all the old Sanctified traditions surrounding the Embrace, from the Choice to the Creation Rite, but they add their own customs in the earliest stages: Once a would-be Icarian has chosen Damnation over death, three other Icarians must be consulted to support her choice. If any one of the three decides the supplicant is not up to par — is too common, or lacking in willpower or dignity — then her choice is overruled and she must be destroyed as evidence of a Masquerade breach. Few Dynasts, therefore, present a prospective childe to their kin without first securing her approval by other means — many Icarian sires are thus indebted to their kin.

Character Creation: Social Attributes rank high among the Dynasts, especially Composure. Resolve is a key Icarian Attribute, as the Dynasts prize an unwavering, resolute commitment to the bloodline and the Lancea Sanctum above all else. Willpower is essential. No Icarian should be without dots in Intimidation, Persuasion, Politics and Socialize. Academics is also valued, as leaders must be well educated. To represent an established, archetypal Dynast, Merits must be given extra attention. City and Covenant Status, Contacts, Haven, Resources and Retainer are definitive traits for the Icarians

— those who cannot be well-rounded should strive to excel in one Merit of value to the parish or the local bloodline. A great many Dynasts seek out Sanctified or Invictus Daeva to teach them the magic of Majesty. Blood Potency, beyond being necessary to join the bloodline, is also a good way to represent the might of the blood of the Great Archbishop.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Constance, Dominate, Resilience

Weakness: All Dynasts suffer from the Ventrue clan weakness. Common Icarian derangements include suspicion, paranoia, narcissism, megalomania and delusion obsession. Many Dynasts eventually suspect that other Kindred seek to diablerize them as Icarius was diablerized, to steal their noble blood. Others, already taught the truth of their divine mandate, come to accept (usually on faith) some personal delusion as the undeniable truth: that the Dynast is destined by God to rule Milan, for example, or that the current Prince of Boston is an Acolyte spy. These derangements may manifest even in response to unrelated stimuli — as if they are roused from the Icarian blood itself.

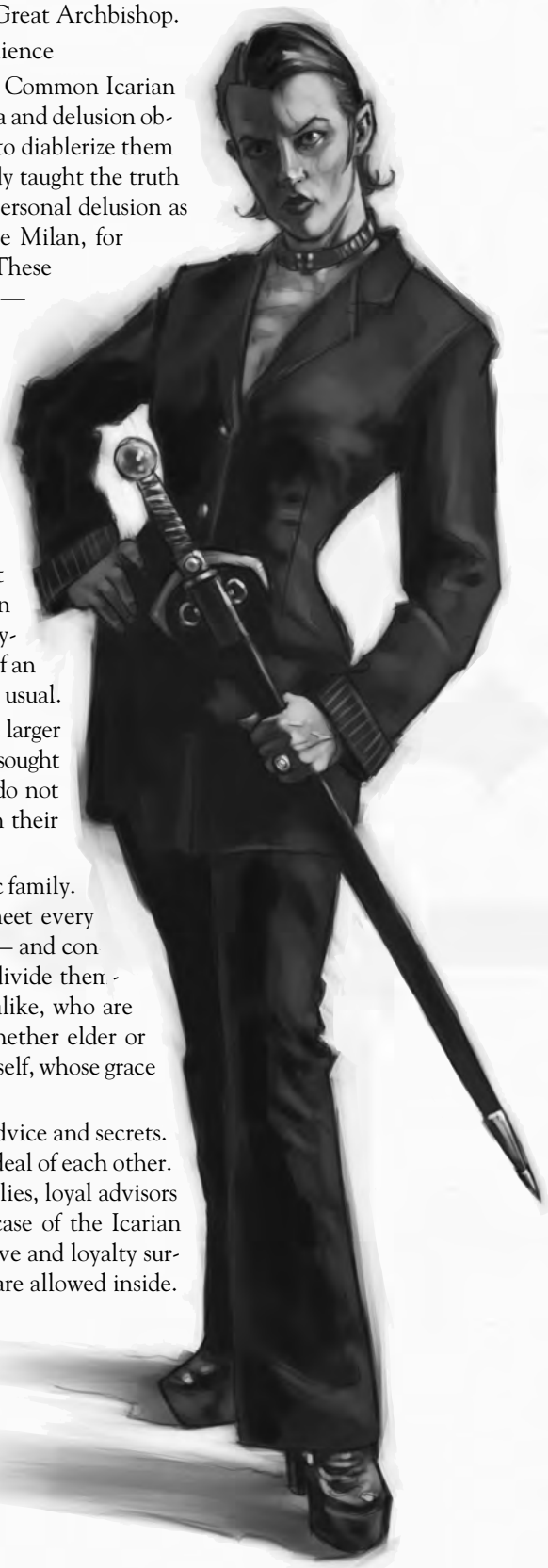
In addition to the shortcomings of the Ventrue, Icarians have their own weakness. The long-term goal of power over the Damned is of primary importance to all Dynasts. As a result, they derive less satisfaction from the smaller, intervening victories that come along the way. An Icarian regains only half as much Willpower when a scene plays out according to her Virtues. A full night's rest recovers no Willpower for an Icarian — instead of feeling recharged, she feels as though she's wasted time sleeping that could be spent fulfilling her great destiny. An Icarian *does* regain Willpower when scenes play out consistent with her Vice, and whenever the Storyteller chooses to reward the character with a Willpower point. All of an Icarian's Willpower is recovered at the conclusion of each story, as usual.

Organization: The Icarians have long slipped themselves into the larger organizations of covenant and city hierarchies. Historically, they have sought to control such social structures, but not to reform them. Dynasts do not have a single, shared philosophy of rule, only the belief they feel in their blood: that they are entitled and intended to rule other Damned.

As a bloodline, the Icarians interact like an extended, aristocratic family. They gather for family functions that vary by domain — some meet every year, others reunite in a favorite, central city every 50 years or so — and consult with each other based primarily on age. In general, Dynasts divide themselves into three generations: the youngest, neonate and ancilla alike, who are regard each other as siblings, even sire and childe; the eldest, whether elder or ancient, who are respected as beloved grandparents; and Icarius himself, whose grace and magnificence is beyond comparison.

Icarians meet to socialize and exchange news, but also to trade advice and secrets. Icarian siblings that dwell in the same domain probably see a great deal of each other. Ventrue cousins and Sanctified compatriots may be seen as vital allies, loyal advisors and confidants, but only other Icarians are family — even the case of the Icarian childe of a "plain" Ventrue sire. An invisible, inviolate circle of love and loyalty surrounds the Dynasts, and only the scions of the Great Archbishop are allowed inside.

Concepts: Boy king, dignified executive, expectant heir, handsome dignitary, host of Elysium, humble reformer, paranoid Prince, spoiled brat, well-groomed vizier, wise grandfather.



Mortifiers of the Flesh

I have sinned. I must repent. I have sinned. I must repent. I have sinned. I must repent.

The Mortifiers of the Flesh are, in some domains, as much a faction within the Lancea Sanctum as they are a bloodline. Dedicated to penitence through personal pain and tribulation, as well as to the religious dogma of the covenant, the so-called Flagellants are often as feared as they are misunderstood.

The bloodline is thought to be as old, at least, as the Black Abbey. Some claim it was begun by the Monachus himself, and that the bloodline's accessibility from any clan is evidence that its founder was not too far removed from Longinus himself. The more popular history of the Mortifiers, as put forth by more mainstream factions of the covenant, claim that it was founded by enlightened and penitent members of clan Daeva, who gathered after the fall of the Black Monastery and punished themselves for the loss of the Monachus. Some scholars of the Curse — including occultists of the Ordo Dracul — have suggested that Flagellant Blood does not carry the power of any sire (and so is not strictly a bloodline) but can only be transmuted through a force of will. Whatever the truth is, the genealogy of the Mortifiers has clearly been lost to time.

Despite its bloodline's lost origins, the Mortifiers can trace their history back centuries into the medieval nights. It seems clear that the Mortifiers were inspired by heretically extreme flagellant movements of the mortal church; the eldest Mortifiers claim to have practiced flagellation prior to accepting the Curse. Though members of the line may have had power over the Blood before being subsumed by the covenant, Mortifiers have been included in the membership of the Lancea Sanctum by default since the late fourteenth century. Flagellation movements did not last long in the churches of the kine, but they have no yet died out among the Sanctified. Modern Mortifiers, like those in centuries past, are assumed to be Sanctified, though a few Flagellants must exist outside of the covenant somewhere.

Mortifiers believe that the Curse is a divine punishment in addition to a conscription into holy service, and that vampirism a sin for which the Damned must eternally repent. Taking the Sanctified dogma to the extreme, Mortifiers show penitence through scarification and painful rites that inflict horrible wounds upon themselves. Some Sanctified theologians argue that such penitence reveals a terrible lack of acceptance of the vampire's earthly role — how can the Sanctified exalt a role he feels ashamed of? Many wise Anointed have come to conclude, however, that guilt and penitence — even when they are counted as weaknesses — can exist alongside reverence of the predatory role.

As Giancarlo of Naples, a Flagellant Priest, wrote to his Archbishop in 1611: "It is not that I believe my earthly service to be shameful, for I strive to fulfill the expectations held for me in Heaven, but how can I deny that my earthly state is sinful? As I have been Damned by the Lord, I am stretched in two ways, as if on the Rack: I must strive to serve as best I can even while I must be punished for the crimes that have led me into service."

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Mortifiers were more influential within the covenant — seen as admirably deranged devotees on the extreme border of selfless penitence —but their single-minded dedication to spiritual matters slowly withered their political relevance as the Lancea Sanctum's union with the Invictus grew more solid. Sanctified authorities have found that such gruesome extremism is often best kept "off the recruitment poster," so to speak. Flagellants are still sometimes found in political positions within the covenant, however, particularly in more conservative domains.

To Flagellants, the flesh is sinful. The flesh is the domain of the Devil and the Curse's fuel. By filling the body with pain, they can drive the Devil out, for a time. Flagellants draw out their Vitae to free themselves from it, but must always search for more. "The Blood was given to us," wrote Giancarlo, "so that we would have more to spend in penance."

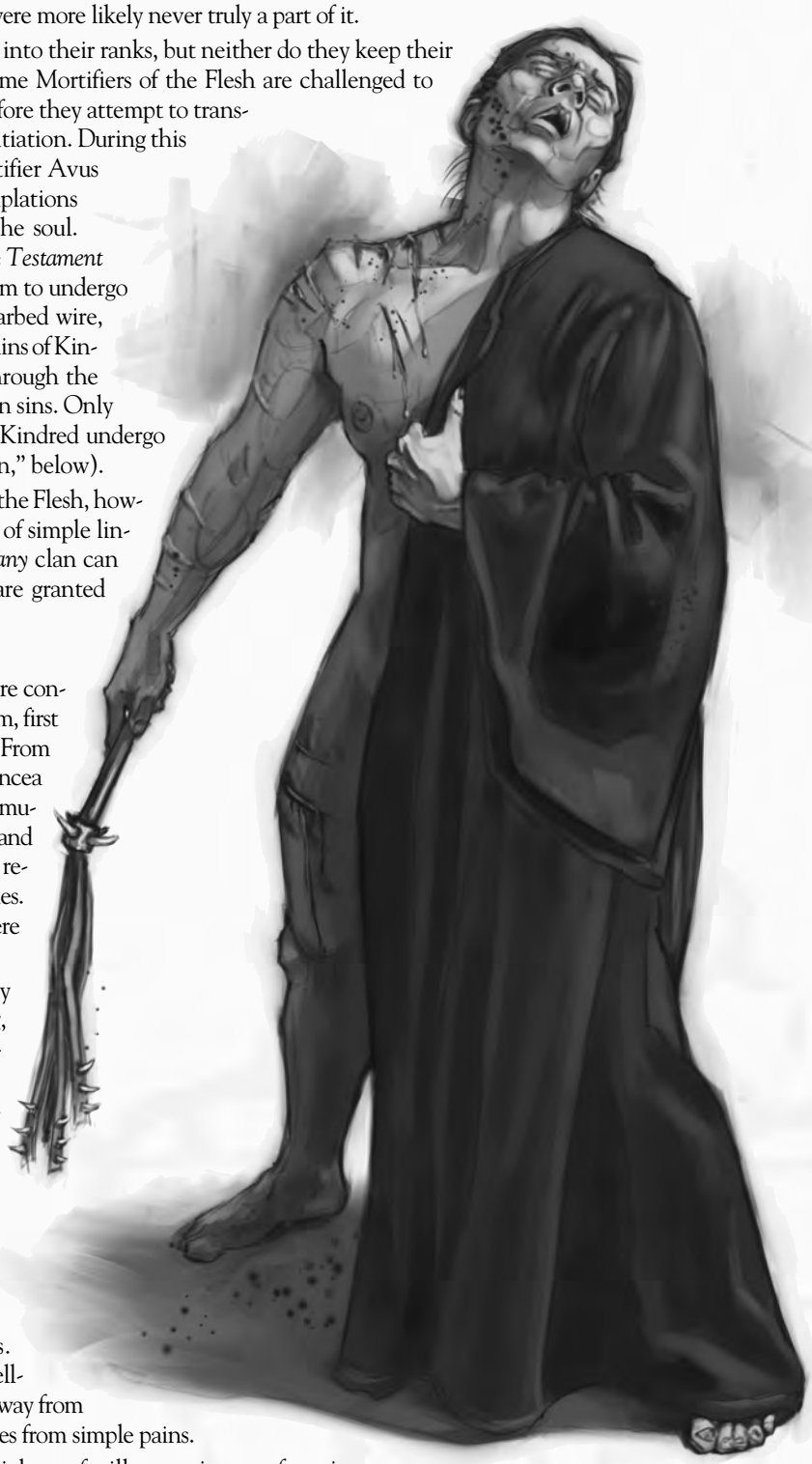
But the soul is pure. The soul can never be touched by the pain inflicted upon the body. The more pain a Flagellant experiences, the more he knows about the limits of the body. In time, he may learn where the body truly ends and the soul begins. One night, he may find that his body finally gives up his soul to Heaven, even while it continues to toil for Vitae on earth.

Mortifiers do their best to keep their spirits pure and strive to keep the Devil out of their body by avoiding frenzy. They seek to avoid all violations of the Traditions, believing they were given to the Kindred as a test — just three commandments to obey, but for all eternity. ("No matter how many or how few laws are held up, sinners shall sin," wrote one Mortifier.) As a result of their strict piety and avoidance of

the Blood, Mortifiers also avoid the Vinculum and all tastes of Kindred Vitae whenever possible. Many Mortifiers undertake voluntary torpor to diminish the demands of the Blood, so they may never have to feed on vampires.

The Mortifiers have, over the centuries, developed a Discipline called Scourge, tied to their knowledge of pain and the flesh. It is this supernatural power, itself caused by a change in the Blood, that proved the Mortifiers to be a bloodline despite their unknown origins and lack of a parent clan. Still, relatively few of the Sanctified who are categorized as Flagellants are able to learn the Discipline, because so few have the will to change their Blood. So it is that many Kindred who are thought to be Mortifiers having difficulty mastering Scourge have not, in fact, even become a part of the bloodline. As a result, those Kindred who are rumored to have left (or failed out of) the Mortifier bloodline were more likely never truly a part of it.

The Flagellants do not recruit Kindred into their ranks, but neither do they keep their ways secret. Vampires who wish to become Mortifiers of the Flesh are challenged to exist as Flagellants for a year and a day before they attempt to transform their Blood through the Ritual of Initiation. During this year, the petitioner is overseen by a Mortifier Avus and guided through philosophical contemplations of penitence and sin, of the body and the soul. The Avus guides the student through the *Testament* as it appears to a Flagellant, challenges him to undergo new extremes of penance (lashes with barbed wire, swallowing razor blades to symbolize the pains of Kindred service and braving red-hot nails through the flesh) and prompts him to identify his own sins. Only when this year of trials has passed can a Kindred undergo the Ritual of Initiation (see "Organization," below).



Parent Clan: Daeva. The Mortifiers of the Flesh, however, seem to have an origin beyond that of simple lineage. At Blood Potency 4, a vampire of *any* clan can join the Mortifiers of the Flesh if they are granted membership by an Avus.

Nickname: Flagellants

Covenant: The Mortifiers of the Flesh are considered a unique part of the Lancea Sanctum, first spawned by the monks of the Black Abbey. From time to time, Flagellants do leave the Lancea Sanctum, but most are subsequently excommunicated from the society of the bloodline and no longer considered Mortifiers, despite the retention of the bloodline's mystical qualities. Such outcasts seldom feel welcome anywhere else and become unbound.

Appearance: Flagellants traditionally avoid wearing fancy or expensive clothing, preferring simple, muted and colorless fabrics. They avoid any kind of worldly luxury and do not wear jewelry or other mammon. Most Mortifiers remove any tattoos and piercings left over from their mortal days. Though Mortifiers may keep plainly visible scars as evidence of their piety (or reminders of their sins), such marks are not displayed as a social distinction — they're possessions kept for the Mortifier's benefit and no one else's. Mortifiers often wear minimal clothing (well-worn pants or shorts, for example) when away from mortal eyes, so as not to protect their bodies from simple pains.

Some Mortifiers believe it is an essential act of will to retain scars from important bouts of flagellation. Others believe the unnatural capacity for the undead body to revert to its unscarred state is a defining facet of the Curse: a Flagellant can never be penitent enough. Each night demands new sufferings in pursuit of wisdom and piety.

Haven: In domains with at least a few Mortifiers, there may be a communal haven (often called a monastery), where Flagellants can retreat and perform their penitence. Such communal havens are generally well equipped with the tools of mortification, but are otherwise notably bare. Flagellants usually sit and sleep on hard, undecorated floors. Because they have such simple needs, Flagellants can make use of any remote and private space as a haven. Abandoned factories and industrial sites, littered with rusted and rotten hammers, hooks, wrenches, chains and other tools attract Flagellants. Stone or cement buildings and cold or dark environments are favored over more comfortable options.

Kindred who ask for hospitality within a Mortifier monastery are only turned away if the monastery's *de facto* decision-makers have reason to believe the visitor is an outright enemy. Few Kindred, however, seek hospitality at a Mortifier monastery if she has any idea of what goes on there. Mortifiers don't pressure others to behave as they do, but even many vampires lack the nerves to look on as flesh is beaten and flayed. Visiting Kindred who are susceptible to frenzy may be turned away.

Flagellants who do not stay in a monastery maintain simple havens of their own. In the rare case that a Mortifier keeps a haven more elaborate than a single, bare cell, he may set aside a room for flagellation.

Background: Mortifiers very rarely Embrace, as any existing vampire can be inducted into their ranks. Most Mortifiers don't believe it is their place to bestow the Curse on others; they hold the Traditions to be inviolate. Mortifiers who do choose to sire a childe suffer a –2 penalty on degeneration and derangement rolls resulting from the Embrace. In the rare cases when Mortifiers do Embrace, they always choose deeply spiritual childer — they need not be Christians, but they must possess a degree of devotion and piety that can withstand the centuries.

Contrary to the stereotype, very few Mortifiers are masochists. Mortifiers do not endure their sufferings because they enjoy pain; quite the opposite. As penitents, they humble themselves through mortification of the flesh. While some twisted individuals among the Mortifiers do get some strange pleasure out of self-flagellation, their love of pain develops after the Blood has been changed. A vampire could not summon the strength of will of change his Blood into that of a Mortifier of the Flesh if his motives were based on anything but spiritual penitence — you cannot lie to the Blood. Mortifiers experience a sad, spiritual comfort from their penitence, but it cannot rightly be considered pleasure.

Character Creation: Mortifiers come from all walks of life and all manner of Requiems. A Mortifier's Requiem puts his Resistance Attributes to the test. Most Mortifiers are academics, however, who rarely resort to violence against others, so Mental Skills are typically favored. While their reputation might suggest a high Willpower score, many Mortifiers turned to flagellation because they consider themselves to be lacking in it. As a result, many Mortifiers begin with an average Willpower score, then build it up over time. Despite the frequent use a Mortifier gets from the Weaponry Skill, most consider proficiency with weapons to be beside the point. Subterfuge, however, is useful for hiding grotesque scars from narrow-minded Kindred and skittish prey. Remember, also, that a character must have at least a second dot in Blood Potency to be eligible for a bloodline.

Bloodline Disciplines: Mortifiers retain the Disciplines of their parent clan in addition to gaining access to the Discipline of Scourge.

Weakness: In addition to the weakness inherited from his parent clan, a Flagellant feels the weight of his sins on his flesh. Once a Mortifier feeds, he is unable to spend Willpower points until he flagellates himself. For his penitence to overcome his weakness, the Flagellant must make a Resolve + Weaponry roll against himself (ignoring his own Defense) and accept whatever damage he does. (The Mortifier can use any weapon he likes; he does not have to use a whip or scourge.) If the Mortifier feeds later on during a night when he has already flagellated himself, he must repent again with a new Resolve + Weaponry roll or be unable to spend Willpower points.

In addition, a Flagellant who fails a degeneration roll suffers a –1 penalty to all actions until he endures penance through pain. To overcome this nagging guilt, the Flagellant must cause damage (of any type) to himself, equal to his Health and delivered by a weapon in his own hand. A short and simple flagellation session isn't enough: The character must undertake his penance slowly, like a meditation. Treat this penance as an extended Resolve + Weaponry action, with each roll requiring one hour. At the Storyteller's discretion, such penance may aid in the resolution of any derangements resulting from the loss of Humanity.

Organization: Flagellants are (theoretically) all sworn to follow the Lancea Sanctum leadership and, as such, faithfully follow any Sanctified with a rank within the covenant or city hierarchy. As for the internal relations of the Mortifiers, most cities with sizeable Flagellant populations have a formal or informal leader, called an Abbot. This leader, usually the eldest of the domain's Mortifiers, is expected to guide the spiritual growth of (and command absolute loyalty from) her fellow Flagellants. The Abbot is also in charge of the monastery, overseeing those decisions that affect the haven as a whole. A Flagellant who disobeys her Abbot or a member of the Anointed is expected to perform an act of atonement (such as the Ritual of Piercing, see below) and can be excommunicated if she refuses.

The Ritual of Piercing is performed as penance for transgressions against earthly authorities, such as a failure to respectfully follow the Bishop's orders or an insult against the Prince. It uses a nail with a length of barbed wire affixed on to one end. The nail is pushed through the flesh of the penitent Mortifier's hand or arm, and then the barbed wire is pulled through the wound. A successful Resolve roll is required to begin the ritual, followed by three or more Strength rolls (depending on the length of the barbed wire) to complete the ritual. Each success on each of these rolls causes one point of bashing damage to the penitent Mortifier.

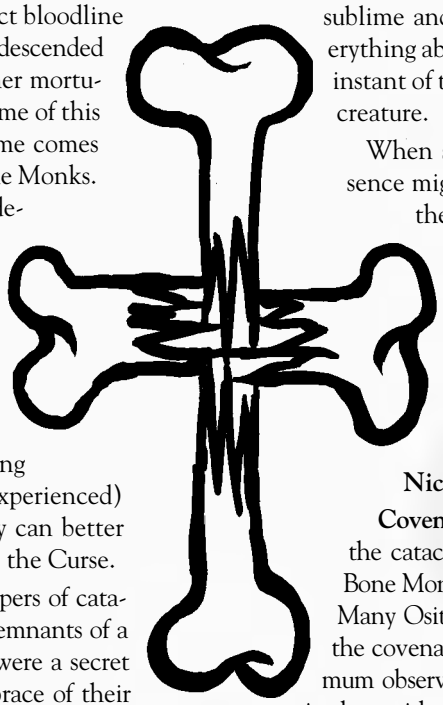
The Ritual of Initiation, held by the Mortifiers of the Flesh to be the most sacred rite a Kindred can attempt, is not actually a ritual at all. After a year and a day spent preparing for the Ritual of Initiation, a petitioner is released to police his own behaviors and administer his own punishments to himself. As a blessing, the Avus bestows a single Vitae (and a dot of Willpower) to the petitioner so that he may join the Mortifiers of the Flesh. Normally, such blood-sharing would be taboo among the Flagellants, so this act is kept secret — hidden behind the fictitious Rite of Initiation.

Concepts: Fallen priest, Father Confessor, prison warden, reclusive monk, religious advisor, religious prisoner, spiritual guide, torturer, visionary.

OSITES

THERE IT WAS! DID YOU SEE IT? THAT WAS IT... HER LAST MOMENT. AMAZING.

This small, enigmatic and almost extinct bloodline claims, like many faithful bloodlines, to be descended from one of the first Sanctified — a former mortuary priest and scholar of the dead. The name of this progenitor is lost, but the bloodline's name comes from the lineage's ancient nickname: Bone Monks. Osites (from *os*, meaning "bone") seek to derive spiritual understanding of the Requiem by studying that which God has withheld from the Damned: death. Osites traditionally regard funerary rites as fascinating cultural and occult events; they examine corpses, cemeteries, morgues and churchyards for some evidence of what lies beyond the mortal coil. By understanding both life (which the Osites have already experienced) and death, the Bone Monks believe they can better master the state of undeath and celebrate the Curse.



Some say the Osites used to be the keepers of catacombs beneath Rome; that they are the remnants of a Roman ancestor cult. Others claim they were a secret society of necromancers prior to the Embrace of their leader by the Monachus. Most often believed, however, is the tale told by elder Osites: that they were simple scriveners and morticians for the Sanctified in the early nights of the Black Abbey. It fell to the forbears of the Bone Monks to dispose of human corpses following Sanctified rites and ceremonies. Eventually, it fell to them to deal with the bodies of humans accidentally slain by sloppy predators. Within a few decades, the so-called Bone Monks were surrounded by death perpetrated by the Lancea Sanctum. Then, one night, the forgotten founder of the Osite bloodline saw that he was not alone in the crypts beneath the Black Abbey — he was surrounded by ghosts.

Since that night, the descendants of the first Osite have been pursuing the study of death. What, exactly, they seek varies with each Bone Monk — the sensation of dying, insight into the spiritual architecture of the world, the ability to return a soul to its body — but most agree that they'll recognize the secret when they find it.

Osites occultism speculates that the living and the dead each have their own spiritual energies, and that those energies are intermingled in the bodies of the Damned. According to Osites, when a creature dies, its living, physical essence (perhaps the mystic energy that separates blood from Vitae) is transmuted into a spiritual essence, and the moment of that transmutation (that is, the moment of death) is an instant of sublime and miraculous power. In that moment, everything about a person may be revealed. It is the only instant of true, naked honesty in the existence of any creature.

When something dies, a residue of its living essence might remain in the body, like a fragment of the self left behind when the soul broke free of the form. The Osite Discipline of Memento Mori is an attempt to make use of that residue. With it, and centuries of occult study, Osites hope to one day see the mechanisms of the universe and understand the mystical system God created.

Parent Clan: Mekhet

Nickname: Bone Monks

Covenant: The Osites claim their lineage began in the catacombs beneath the Black Abbey, and most Bone Monks have been Sanctified since the Embrace. Many Osites can hardly be called devout members of the covenant, however, as they tend to visit the minimum observances necessary to maintain good standing in the parish and provide little of value to Anointed who have nothing to gain from their macabre studies. Individual Osites are often privately pious — most are deeply spiritual — but few Osites have an interest in the quality of faith held by other Sanctified. The parish, and the Invictus or Carthian authorities, may demand that a local Osite earn his keep by using his supernatural insight to investigate even mildly suspicious deaths in the domain. Perhaps a Priest's Herd has been thinned or a Primogen's Retainer has been found dead and it is the Osite's responsibility to label the death a crime or an accident — or prove it to be what the Prince has already labeled it.

Osites tend to have fewer qualms than other Sanctified about dealing with pagan Kindred. They follow investigations and research wherever it leads, and are as fascinated by pagan perceptions of death as they are by Sanctified scripture. Over the centuries, a few Osites have chosen their occult studies over their dedication to Longinus and left the Sanctified for the ranks of the Acolytes or, more often, the Dragons. It's more common for Osites to maintain secret ties with other covenants, however, rather than risk losing the protection of the Lancea Sanctum.

Appearance: Most Osites care little for their appearance, appearing dirty and unkempt, whether in monks' robes or modern dress. Some dress like gravediggers or sewer workers,

others wear plastic aprons like a coroner or the tweed jacket of a college professor. Most Osites have given up on matters of fashion and style, though many are sociable and even pleasant. They appear as they are: fastidious scholars distracted from the Requiem by their obsession.

All Osites are pale and discolored like a corpse, with dark stains in the fingers and feet, where their blood pools and settles. Many develop bluish lips and red, stiff eyes. They are clearly no longer living creatures. They do not rot, however, but remain forever in a state like that of the recently deceased.

Haven: Most Osites make their havens near cemeteries, mortuaries, or historic catacombs and ossuaries. Osites don't concern themselves with creature comforts, but do collect texts, bones, memento mori images and all manner of funerary artworks, from Mexican sugar skulls to Egyptian scarab pendants. An Osite's haven is likely to be cluttered with photographs seemingly snapped at an autopsy, books on anthropology and medicine, morticians' trade publications, medical examiner's tools and other trappings of the macabre hobbyist. Wealthy or well-connected Bone Monks may have basement rooms with plenty of drainage for storing, examining and interviewing the dead. The poorest Osites sleep in secret nooks and crawlspaces beneath funeral parlors or mausoleums.

Background: It is a rare night when an Osite sires a vampire. Few mortals with a passion for death are willing to avoid it for eternity. Rather, most new Osites are drawn from the ranks of Mekhet Kindred who develop a fascination with death over the course of their own Requiems. Still, not many Osites have an interest in becoming the Avus for another vampire. The Bone Monks have little interest in, and less need to, expand their membership or increase the number of Kindred who can practice the bloodline's unique supernatural arts. The secrets an Osite uncovers are meant to satisfy his own spiritual pursuits and intellectual curiosities, not to grant the Lancea Sanctum some power over the dead.

Character Creation: Osites favor Mental Attributes, almost without exception. Wits is paramount, for an Osite must be perceptive, but Intelligence is also vital if he is to understand what he sees. Mental Skills such as Investigation, Medicine and Occult are essential to an Osite's studies. Physical Skills get overlooked by most Osites, though some dots in Larceny and Stealth can aid a Bone Monk that plans on trespassing in morgues and graveyards. Osites may seek Contacts in funeral homes, cemeteries and hospitals throughout the city, or keep a Retainer to run errands for him among mortals. Remember that a character must have at least a second dot of Blood Potency to even be eligible for the bloodline.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Memento Mori, Obfuscate

Weakness: Osites are touched by death, and it shows in their flesh and Vitae. Beyond the clan weakness of the Mekhet, which the Bone Monks have inherited, the corpses of these Kindred are slow to heal and quick to stagnate. The livid body of an Osite bruises like a corpse, even in undeath, darkening from even minor bumps and scrapes. Blood pools in an Osite's fingertips and feet when he stands upright and in his back when he lays sleeping, turning the flesh a sickly purple-black and making it difficult for the character to stir his languid Vitae.

An Osite who wishes to spend Vitae in the current scene must first use one Vitae to excite and circulate his blood. This first Vitae cannot power any Disciplines or other powers of the blood — it only makes it possible for the character to spend Vitae as usual for the rest of the scene. An Osite also requires two Vitae to wake each night.

An Osite character finds his body is sluggish to respond to the healing powers of Vitae. Unlike normal Kindred, an Osite heals only one point of bashing damage per Vitae spent; two Vitae are needed to heal a single point of lethal damage. Osites heal aggravated damage as other vampires do.

Organization: Modern Osites don't often organize outside whatever social structure is imposed on them by the covenant. The Bone Monks are so few and far between that little or no communication takes place between them anymore. Domains with more than one Osite are very rare. Those with more than two Osites have, in almost every case, been the home of a "chapter" (some say "cult") of Bone Monks for hundreds of years; such domains are thought to exist only in Europe. The Bone Monks of such a relatively crowded parish have probably been organized by the resident Bishop to serve some purpose for the covenant, perhaps searching catacombs for relics or researching some deathly rite of Theban Sorcery.

Outside of the covenant hierarchy, Osites sometimes work together as mentor-and-student or researcher-and-assistant pairs. Historically, such relationships are intended to repay an Osite Avus for admitting a new Bone Monk into the line. In practice that's certainly the case sometimes, but other Bone Monks work together for a short while (say, 10 or 15 years) to master the supernatural powers of Osite blood or investigate some larger mystery, such as a mass grave, a rash of hauntings or the motives of a serial killer.

Concepts: Cynical EMT, deranged ER doctor, eager mortician, gravedigger, hospice nurse, medical examiner, obituary writer, occult archaeologist.

Chapter Five:
Disciplines & Rituals

The mandate
and the mission
is in the Blood.
I saw the proof
of my power
over the mortal sheep
and the hungry wolves
had been stirred
into the cistern
of my heart.
That is the miraculous mixture
that raises the Predator
above the Prey.

Blood burns like oil
and thunders like a storm.
It stains the earth eternal,
as we only appear to.

I had to become its master
or forever be its slave.

— The Testament of Longinus

I have never seen a greater monster or miracle in the world than myself.

— Michel Eyquem, seigneur de Montaigne, *Of Cripples*.

Disciplines

The following four new Disciplines are the mystical secrets of bloodlines long-associated with the Lancea Sanctum. Some of these Disciplines, like Scourge, are not well known even to Sanctified Kindred who consider themselves experts on covenant history. Others, such as Constance, have been recognized features of Sanctified power for centuries.

Constance

The legendary focus and determination of the Icarian bloodline has long been described as "extraordinary" when, in fact, it is supernatural. Some believe this power first manifested in the childer who avenged the Amaranth of Archbishop Icarius in 1388, but others say Icarius himself used it. Many other Icarians relied on Constance during the years of the Icarian Heresy to resist efforts to reign in Icarian authority.

Constance enhances the notorious ambition and confidence of the Icarians. Constance allows a vampire to resist coercion and fear. Its users face fires with cool detachment and overcome setbacks and obstacles with calm resolve. Vampires with Constance seem unshakable, unbeatable and sure of themselves in the most dire situations. Their minds are thought to be wholly immune to supernatural assaults. Constance turned the Icarian drive to rule into an unquestioning belief in the bloodline's divine right over the Damned. Effort and ambition put Icarians on the thrones of dozens of European domains, but Constance kept them there.

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: Constance is unlike many other Disciplines in that it is not actively rolled. Rather, it represents an inner well of confidence derived from a resolute sense of divine entitlement. This well of the will can be brought to a boil by burning Vitae. The effects of this power last for the duration of the scene in which it is activated, affecting other rolls during that time.

Each dot of Constance increases the character's Resolve by one while the Discipline is active. Constance can only be invoked once per scene. You may not spend a second Vitae to double the benefits of the power.

Constance therefore increases a character's Willpower during the scene. No matter how many dots the character has in Constance, however, he may never have more than 10 dots in Willpower. As the character's Willpower dots are increased, so is his supply of Willpower points. Constance does not restore Willpower points that have already been spent, however. Willpower points granted by this power are lost at the end of the scene, when the character's Willpower dots return to normal.

Remember to mark off spent Willpower points from left to right — Icarians draw from their well of inner strength only when their natural drive has been exhausted. When the powers of Constance fade away, the character may crash as his mystically derived Willpower points vanish and he is left with none.

Example: *Father Augustus is an accomplished Icarian with seven dots in Willpower, Resolve 4 and Constance 4. He has been debating with a Ventrue Archbishop for hours over feeding rights in the local parish; he has just one Willpower point left. Dawn is not far off, and the two are in a building that belongs to the Archbishop. Augustus, thinking he is being stalled, is beginning to suspect the Archbishop or his minions plan on trapping him there, possibly as a hostage. Augustus activates his Constance — his Resolve increases to 8 and his Willpower dots increase to 10; even though he has seven dots in Willpower and four in Constance, Augustus' Willpower cannot rise above 10. Augustus gains three more Willpower points, for a total of four. He spends one right away on a Wits + Empathy roll to discern the Archbishop's mood and judges him to be tense and anxious.*

Within a few minutes, Augustus has resisted the Archbishop's attempts to Dominate him, thanks to his increased Resolve, and is on his way back to his haven. When he gets there, and the power of Constance wears off, he'll find himself without any Willpower points left. Augustus, exhausted, blames himself for trusting the Archbishop… but vows to win himself the feeding rights he's after.

Action: Instant

Memento Mori

In the Middle Ages, objects called *memento mori* were treasured as memorabilia of the dearly departed. Some mementos were items the dead had owned in life, such as combs, jewelry or tools, which were decorated by beloved survivors. Other mementos, honoring either specific souls or all the dead folk of the land, were created specifically to remind the living of the dead — or of Death itself — and were prominently displayed in churches throughout Europe. Many medieval mementos featured the dead as skeletal shades of their past themselves or depicted Death himself doing his grisly work. More gruesome mementos show the dead as rotting corpses. In Victorian England, the limits of memento mori expanded again to include photographs of the deceased after their death, typically dressed in their Sunday best and often surrounded by flowers and other serene imagery.

The phrase "memento mori" has various, subtly different meanings. Most often, it is said to mean "remember thy death," or "remember that you will die." (A more sentimental trans-

lation would be "remember the dead.") Although the message of a memento mori is sobering and sad, these grim reminders are also meant to remind the living to "get living."

That the Osites chose to name their mystical tradition of death magic Memento Mori is not surprising, but it does sometimes draw disapproval from Sanctified traditionalists. What is a memento mori to the undead but a reminder of life? What is it to a Sanctified vampire but a temptation to get involved in the affairs of mortals? Such semantic arguments seldom amount to real trouble for Osites, however, as they clearly have little interest in the living.

Instead, the semantics of this Discipline's name reflects the Osite desire for knowledge of death. The Osites, as a whole, don't seek to spur on death, circumvent it or even master it. Memento Mori is, foremost, a tool for gaining worldly insight through the study of the dead. With it, an Osite can observe the departed, consult with corpses, draw power from the dead and study the effects of death on others.

• *Twilight Sight*

The intended use of Memento Mori is to open the Osite's eyes to the insights that can be gleaned through the medium of death. This fundamental power allows the vampire to see the ghosts that haunt the material world. By mingling the lively power of the Blood with his own undead eyes, the Osite gains an insight into the traces of life that linger in the world after death. While using Twilight Sight, the Osite's eyes seem filled with jagged, blood-shot veins.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: No roll is required to activate this power. To make use of Twilight Sight, the player simply announces to the Storyteller that he is spending Vitae and opening his eyes to the dead. The Osite can then automatically see (but not hear or otherwise sense) any ghosts or other creatures in the state of Twilight with a Power rating inversely proportional to the vampire's dots in Memento Mori. With one dot in Memento Mori, for example, an Osite can see ghosts with Power 5 only, but with two dots in Memento Mori, an Osite can see ghosts with Power scores of four or five, and so on. (See "Ghosts," p. 208 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for more information on ghostly traits.)

This power doesn't grant the character any greater visual acuity outside of the ability to see ghosts. The Storyteller may still require a Wits roll to spot a hiding ghost or a Wits or Intelligence + Occult roll to make sense of strange ghostly forms. The Osite may add his dots in Memento Mori to any such rolls.

An Osite with one or more dots in Memento Mori can also attempt a reflexive Wits + Occult + Memento Mori roll to scrutinize undead creatures such as zombies. A successful roll reveals whether or not the creature is driven by some supernatural power of its own — such as its own spirit or a ghostly echo of vengeance — or whether it is merely the motiveless, animated instrument of some necromancer.

Action: Instant

•• *Consult with the Dead*

An Osite with access to suitable remains (a corpse is best, but a head might do) can interview a corpse to learn what secrets it kept for the soul. First the Osite must share some of his Vitae with the body, either by dribbling it into the corpse's mouth or brushing it onto the corpse's skin. The Osite must then whisper a question into the corpse's ear and listen for a quiet reply from the body. The words spoken by a questioned corpse may come from the lungs or the mouth, or might seem to come from nowhere at all. Whatever the source of a given corpse's voice, all in its presence can hear it — not just the Osite.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion + Memento Mori

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The corpse can never be roused. All future attempts to Consult with the Dead on this corpse meet with failure.

Failure: The corpse is not roused, but the Osite can try again.

Success: The remains of the corpse's mind are roused from death. The Osite persuades the corpse to reply to one question per success. The player of the Osite can now call for rolls to retrieve information from the corpse using dots the deceased had in Intelligence, Wits and Skills while alive. Each roll made on behalf of the corpse constitutes one reply, even if the roll fails. Questions that fail can be asked again, if the corpse still has replies to use. Very basic information, such as the corpse's name, may be attainable without a roll at the Storyteller's discretion, but still uses up one of the corpse's replies.

Exceptional Success: Extra successes grant the Osite access to more information from the corpse being consulted.

The Storyteller must be the final judge of what a character (and his corpse) might know and, as a result, what information can be obtained from a given corpse with this power. The Storyteller should strive to give answers that help to further the story while also suggesting something of the deceased's character.

Example: *Grant, an Osite Inquisitor, is investigating a Priest's recent interactions with mortal cultists and has finally located the body of the cult's former leader, dumped in the woods. The body is more than one week old (–3 penalty), but in relatively good shape (–1 penalty), and Grant knows it to be the cult leader, John Rice. After all these penalties, Grant has just four dice to roll, which yield two successes. Taking the corpse by the head, he presses his lips to Rice's ear and asks his first question: "Who killed you, John?" Grants opens the corpse's mouth and listens, but no answer comes. (The Storyteller knows Rice was shot in the back — he never saw his killer.) For his second and final question, Grant tries to plumb the depths of Rice's occult knowledge and follow up on a clue he found the night before, asking "What is the Beast of the Black Sunday?" The player asks the Storyteller to make an Intelligence + Occult roll on Rice's behalf, and she does. The roll yields just one success. Rice's body shifts, its chest falling, and it exhales, "You are, vampire."*

To use this power, the Osite needs access to vital portions of the subject corpse. A body that has been mutilated, rotted or partially eaten imposes a penalty (generally –1 for each limb's worth of flesh missing) on the roll to use this power. A body without a head can be used at a –5 penalty, and a head alone can be used with the same penalty. A severed head in physical contact its body imposes just a –1 penalty, however. At least a head or a torso must remain to be consulted; limbs and shredded flesh are not enough.

An Osite can only use this power once on any given corpse, but multiple Osites may subject a corpse to multiple interviews. Once an Osite has interviewed any one portion of the deceased, he cannot use this power on another portion of the same deceased person.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
–1 to –5	The body is mutilated or somehow incomplete.
–1	The character does not know the name of the deceased.
–2	The character does not recognize the deceased.
–3	The character cannot determine the deceased's occupation, sphere of knowledge or field of experience.
–1	The body is more than 15 minutes old.
–2	The body is more than one night old.
–3	The body is more than one week old.
–4	The body is more than one month old.
–5	The body is more than one year old (only possible if the body has somehow been preserved).

••• *Brush of Death*

The Osite knows he has made a breakthrough in the study of death when he learns this power. Brush of Death imbues the Osite's body with a deathly energy that rots flesh and evokes the panic of death. All who touch or are touched by him risk glimpsing a flash of their own bloody end.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: No roll is required to activate this power. The Osite's effort to transmute his own undead essence into a force of death automatically succeeds, consumes one Vitae and takes his action in a turn to complete. According to the traditional metaphysics of the Osites, the character is tipping his body's unnatural balance of living and dead energies and attuning his flesh to a state of death, rather than undeath. His flesh takes on a pallid or bloated appearance, damp and sweaty, like a corpse allowed to fester.

The Osite's flesh is now a conduit for the essence of death. His touch inflicts aggravated damage with an unarmed close combat attack, provided it reaches flesh (this attack does not ignore Armor; see "Touching an Opponent," on p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Any creature whose flesh touches the Osite's must succeed in a reflexive, contested action against the Osite or lose one Willpower point as grisly images and sensations his own death pulse through his mind

in a flash. This contested action pits the touched creature's Composure + Blood Potency versus the Osite's Presence + Occult + Memento Mori. If the Osite scores more successes, the creature in contact with him loses a point of Willpower. Otherwise, the frightening flash is unsettling but not enough to shake the creature's will.

So long as this power is in effect, the Osite's body looks and feels as if it is dead, even to the Osite himself. He is considered to have a Humanity of 1 for the purposes of relating to mortals (see p. 185 of **Vampire: The Requiem**) while this power is active. The Osite maintains his deathly state for the rest of the scene, unless he cancels this power prematurely, which takes nothing more than a thought.

Action: Instant

•••• *Blood From Bone*

Osites with this power can draw sustenance from the residual mystic power that pools, calcifies and stagnates in a creature's bones. With this power, the Osite can extract viable Vitae even from rotten corpses or steal an echo of knowledge and experience from the dead.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: No roll is required to activate the most basic use of this power. The player simply spends the necessary Willpower point to enable the character to draw the power of Vitae from bone. Strictly speaking, the Osite is not consuming blood but a residual, mystical essence that clings to the bones after death. This power instantly transmutes that mystical essence into Vitae within the Osite's body. To an onlooker, the Osite might seem to be sucking the marrow from bones, but the Osite needs bone itself, not marrow, to use this power.

The Osite can draw Vitae equal to the rough Size of the bones consumed. The size of individual bones isn't relevant; it's the rough, collected Size of the remains that matters. The mangled and mutilated remains of half a large dog (Size 4 in life) yield two Vitae to the Osite. The Storyteller decides if bones are too few or too far gone to provide sustenance to the Osite, but as a rule of thumb, bones remain viable for a number of weeks equal to the Size of the creature. For example, the remains of an adult human body (Size 5) contains viable energies for up to five weeks after death.

For the purposes of a Kindred's diet and Blood Potency, Vitae drawn from a corpse retains its human or animal classification, so that a vampire who can no longer feed on animals can likewise no longer feed on animal bones.

With a successful Resolve + Investigation + Memento Mori roll, a character can choose to transmute a human corpse's mystical essence into an echo of talent or knowledge, rather than Vitae.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Osite's attenuation to the energies of death is disrupted. He cannot use an application of Blood From Bone for the rest of the night.

Failure: If the roll to steal knowledge from a person's remains fails, all of the body's mystic essence is lost. The Osite gains no bonus dice and the Willpower point spent to use this power is wasted.

Success: The Osite gains no Vitae from the corpse, but may steal dots from any one of the deceased's Skills in life. (A trucker might yield dots in Drive, for example, while a hiker probably had a dot or two in Survival). The Osite can choose to take the dots from a particular Skill or he can seek out the Skill in which the deceased had the most dots. (If no one Skill had the most dots, the Storyteller breaks the tie by selecting the Skill more often used by the deceased.) The Osite can then add those dots as bonus dice to any one dice pool involving that Skill, at any point in the future. All of the dots must be used on one roll. The Osite can "store" dots from only one corpse at a time.

Exceptional Success: As a success, but the Osite also manages to extract one Vitae from the remains.

Action: Instant

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The corpse has not been moved from the spot of its death.
+1	The body died less than an hour ago.
—	The remains are mostly whole.
-1	Each week since the body's death.
-2	The remains are scattered or mostly incomplete.

••••• *Necrosis*

Osites who have mastered Memento Mori consider themselves to be like Death himself. With this power, the Osite can unbalance the mystic energies of others without disrupting his own Cursed state. With just a look, a victim the Osite can see directly is made to experience the sensation of death as his body rots and decays like a corpse. Living flesh wrinkles, grows soft and bleeds. Kindred Vitae rots in the veins.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Memento Mori – the subject's Stamina

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Osite's own energies are thrown out of balance. He loses Vitae equal to his Blood Potency.

Failure: The power has no effect on the chosen victim.

Success: The Osite sends a wave of death and decay through the victim. Mortals and living supernatural creatures suffer a point of lethal damage per success scored. Kindred and ghouls lose one Vitae per success scored, or one point of lethal damage per success scored when their Vitae is gone.

Exceptional Success: No additional effect beyond the staggering damage done.

An Osite must be able to see his victim directly to activate Necrosis. A victim spied through glass is susceptible, but one

seen through a CCTV system is not. The damaging effects of this power make the body seem rotten or old-aged, but the appearance gradually returns to normal if the damage is healed.

Nahdad

The rumored power of the burgeoning, untested Nepheshim bloodline is unheard of by many Kindred, Sanctified or not. It is a Discipline of intuition and survival, a power that defies the destructive efforts of the world at large. Nahdad makes it easier for a vampire to survive in the hostile, heathen wilderness between domains. If the Nepheshim bloodline is proven, and the numbers of vampires using this power were to grow, Nahdad could redefine the notions of Sanctified territory.

Cost:—

Dice Pool: Nahdad, unlike most Disciplines, has several powers but is not actively rolled. Rather, it grants a degree of supernatural intuition and self-control that empowers characters struggling to survive a wanderer's Requiem. Nahdad is considered "always on," and cannot be deactivated.

Each dot in Nahdad further enriches the Nepheshim's ability to use the following three powers. All Nepheshim have access to all three of these powers as soon as they gain their first dot in Nahdad. Over time, each aspect of the Discipline is further refined and empowered.

Action: N/A

Wanderer's Sense

First, each dot of Nahdad adds to the character's Survival dice pools. A wandering vampire uses Survival to find shelter from the sun, locate animal or human Vitae in the wilderness, predict the weather and navigate to new or familiar places. Wanderer's Sense enables the vampire to smell Vitae on the wind, intuit direction and sense the coming rain in his blood. Nepheshim do not forage for food as humans do, but do use the Survival Skill in dice pools to hunt for Vitae in the wild (which many Nepheshim call "foraging" anyway).

The Nepheshim know this sense is a supernatural power of the Blood, but it doesn't feel that way to them.

One Thousand Havens

Each dot of Nahdad also grants the character the equivalent of one dot in Haven Location or Haven Security, to represent the quality temporary havens the character can find for his short stays. (See the Haven Merit on p. 100 of **Vampire: The Requiem**.) To find a haven, the character makes a Wits + Survival + Nahdad roll as an extended action, with each roll representing one hour of searching. When the character has accrued five successes, he has found a suitable nest that makes use One Thousand Havens.

The Nepheshim's dots in Nahdad can be divided between Haven Location and Haven Security however the player likes, and the dots may be divided differently at each new haven. One night, a Nepheshim with Nahdad 5 might put four dots into Haven Security, to represent a nest with excellent site lines and entrances that are easy to miss, and just one into Haven Location, to describe a spot removed from the living but not utterly remote. A week later, he might put all five dots into Haven Location when he sleeps in a unprotected hole in the wall of a busy subway station.

The havens a Nepheshim finds are impermanent — the sort settled vampires would overlook. If a character leaves an area and then returns later, it is assumed that his temporary haven is either gone or no longer suitable, and a new one must be found.

Stomach of the Starved

The Nepheshim can continue to feed on animals, to a limited extent, so long as his Blood Potency is equal to or less than his dots in Nahdad. A vampire with Blood Potency 3 or higher can gains one less Vitae from an animal than he should be able to based on its Size, to a minimum of one Vitae, but can at least survive on it. A Nepheshim with Blood Potency 3 and Nahdad 4, for example, can manage to extract one viable Vitae from a Size 1 rat, but will have to spend much of his time hunting if he is to survive on such creatures.

If the character has Blood Potency 3 or higher, and he is surviving on animal Vitae because of this power, only human Vitae in his system is counted to determine if he is hungry or starving for the purposes of resisting Wassail (see p. 179 of **Vampire: The Requiem**). Animal blood can keep his Cursed body going, but it does not satisfy his holy hunger.

Scourge

Scourge is the Discipline of flagellance and pain practiced by the Mortifiers of the Flesh. Through centuries of penitent self-torture, the Kindred of the bloodline have managed to manifest their insights into pains of the flesh and purity of the soul through the Blood. This Discipline is the proof that Mortifiers of the Flesh can attain spiritual freedom and mystical powers through penance; it is the proof that the Flagellants are not simply an extremist faction of the covenant.

Scourge is excruciating to learn, and several of its powers require the Mortifier to endure pain to be used effectively. In time, however, Scourge enables the Mortifier the ability to gain insight through suffering, displace pain, augment and create physical anguish and free himself from some of the limitations of the body. Pious and penitent Flagellants may be tempted to use some of these powers to create needless suffering, however, and thereby require new penance from themselves.

Several of the following powers temporarily alter the way wound penalties and Health charts operate. See "States of Being" on p. 171 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for information on Health boxes and wound penalties in general. See "Damage, Wounds and Healing" on p. 170 of **Vampire: The Requiem** for relevant information specific to vampires.

• Penitence Through Pain

The first thing a practitioner of Scourge learns is how to strengthen his will by enduring the torments of the world — that which does not destroy him makes him stronger. Every rushing spike of pain,

every sting and burn, is like a taste to be savored. Mortifiers develop a sophisticated palate for pain. With that palate comes insight, and with insight comes the strength to endure. When a Mortifier is wounded badly enough to suffer wound penalties, whether by his own hand or another, he has a chance to regain Willpower.

Cost:—

Dice Pool: Wits + Medicine + Scourge

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character is overwhelmed by the qualities of pain and a surging sense of his own sinful failings. He loses one Willpower point.

Failure: The character gets no sense of purification from his pain. He regains no Willpower.

Success: The rush of pain washes over the character like a cleansing water. He feels a sense of forgiveness and personal renewal and regains one Willpower point.

Exceptional Success: The wave of pain is like a surge of self-confidence and personal empowerment. The rush of pain gives the character strength and certainty; he feels unbeatable. He regains a number of Willpower points equal to his Stamina dots.

Once the character has taken enough damage (of any type) to subject him to wound penalties, he may attempt to regain a Willpower point as a reflexive action. The character can only use this power as a reflexive action on a turn in which he suffers damage. As long as the character is hindered by at least a –1 wound penalty, he may attempt to make use of this power whenever he takes damage.

Penitence Through Pain can only be successfully used once in any given scene. A character that attempts to regain Willpower and fails can try again in the same scene only if he is wounded again. There is no limit to the number of times the character can *attempt* to use this power, but he can reap its benefits just once per scene.

Example: *Aaron, a Flagellant, has come under attack by a vampire of Belial's Brood. After being beaten with a bat for several points of bashing damage, he is knifed for three points of lethal damage, which puts marks into all three of Aaron's penalty boxes. As a reflexive action, Aaron attempts to regain some of his Willpower, but with the –3 wound penalty to his dice pool, he scores no successes. On his turn, he attempts to flee but his attacker is too fast for him. He's beaten with the bat again, then, for just one point of bashing damage. Because he still has marks in his penalty boxes but has not yet successfully used the power this turn, Aaron gets to attempt Penitence Through Pain again, this time scoring two successes! He regains one Willpower point and cannot use the power again for the rest of the scene.*

This power does not allow the character to "store" more Willpower points than his Willpower dots would normally allow. Willpower points in excess of the character's maximum are lost.

A Mortifier who is no longer hindered by wound penalties as a result of the higher-level power, Endure Pain, can still make use of this power whenever his wounds reach his three right-most Health boxes.

•• *Share Pain*

A Mortifier knows that pain is transient. With a touch and an expenditure of Blood, the Mortifier can steal the pain from a subject or cast off his own anguish onto an unwilling host.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Stamina + Empathy + Scourge versus subject's Stamina + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive. A willing subject can choose to forego the resistance action.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character draws out pain from his own past and possibly that of his subject. He is struck by a rush of guilt and pain that leaves him reeling. He can do nothing but stand still or move his Speed on his next turn.

Failure: The attempt fails. No pain is transferred to or from either party.

Success: The character can choose to accept the wound penalties of the subject or pass his own wound penalties on to the subject.

Exceptional Success: The character can dull the pain being transferred, if he wishes. Transferred pain that is dulled by the Mortifier of the Flesh goes unfelt by both the character and the subject for the rest of the scene, unless the power is reversed prematurely.

Share Pain subtracts the wound penalties currently affecting the source character and applies them to the target character. If the source character is further injured after this power is used, any new wound penalties are not transferred to the target character. Imagine the pain being transferred is a physical thing, handed from one character to the other; once the hand-off is complete, no more pain is transferred. Subtract any penalties that have been transferred away from those that are now being suffered by the source character so that, for example, a character with a –2 wound penalty transferred away by a Mortifier suffers just a –1 wound penalty when his right-most Health box is marked.

All transferred wound penalties are cumulative, so a Mortifier of the Flesh who is enduring a –3 wound penalty from his own body when he takes on the –2 penalty of his ally suffers a –5 wound penalty, in total. A subject whose wound penalties are removed does not heal any damage; he is simply no longer subject to the wound penalties for any damage he had already sustained when Share Pain was invoked.

Wound penalties transferred with this power remain transferred for the rest of the scene unless the Mortifier of the Flesh chooses to cancel the power's effects prematurely. The Mortifier can cancel the power with just a thought. Once canceled, wound penalties return to the character they were originally drawn from. If that character no longer has damage sufficient to impose a wound penalty when his pain is "returned," the pain disappears.

The Mortifier can have only subject's pain in transference at one time, though with subsequent uses of this power he can pass that pain onto a target other than himself. To transfer the pain of another subject, the Mortifier must first cancel any persisting use of this power he has in effect.

Example: *Aaron's childe, Marcus, has been stabbed by a vengeful Acolyte. Aaron touches Marcus on his forehead, spends a Vitae, succeeds on his roll to use Share Pain and takes Marcus's pain (that is, his –2 wound penalty) onto himself. Aaron is already suffering a –1 wound penalty of his own, so he is hindered by a –3 total wound penalty. Stepping over to the staked Acolyte attacker, Aaron uses Share Pain again to deliver the pain he took from Marcus onto the body of the Acolyte (who is already suffering a –3 wound penalty of his own). When Aaron removes the stake from the Acolyte's heart and questions him, the pagan will be suffering a total of –5 dice in wound penalties (-3 from his own wounds and –2 from Marcus's wounds). If Aaron wants to share someone else's pain, he'll first have to return Marcus's back to him.*

To use this power in combat, the Mortifier needs only to make contact with his subject. See "Touching an Opponent" on p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The power is applied to a target with whom the user has a blood tie.
+1	The Mortifier is transferring pain that he caused.

••• *Endure Pain*

Over time, the Flagellant learns to separate the sensations of pain from its ability to hinder. The Flagellant continues to feel the singeing heat of a bullet wound or the stinging ache of a slash across his flesh, but he does not let his body limit his focus and drive. With this power, the Flagellant begins to rise above his pain.

Cost:—

Dice Pool: No roll is required to activate this power. It is considered "always on." So long as the he has three or more dots in Scourge, the Flagellant diminishes wound penalties affecting him (whether from direct damage or through Share Pain) by a value two less than his dots in Scourge. So, with three dots in Scourge, the Flagellant ignores –1 die of wound penalties; with four dots in Scourge, he ignores –2 dice of wound penalties; and with five dots in Scourge, he ignores –3 dice of wound penalties.

Only wound penalties stemming from bashing and lethal damage can be diminished with this power — when even one of the Flagellant's three penalty Health boxes is marked with aggravated damage, the full force of his wound penalties come rushing back to him, even the remaining Health box or boxes are marked only with bashing or lethal damage. Even a single wound penalty from aggravated damage nullifies this power's effects until the Flagellant's last three Health boxes are free of aggravated damage.

At the Storyteller's discretion, particularly destructive attacks may still impose penalties on a Flagellant with access to Endure Pain. If, for example, the Flagellant's legs are smashed underneath a truck, he may be unable to support himself or move his legs at all, despite being able to separate himself from the pain of the experience.

Action: N/A

•••• *Weakness of Flesh*

A powerful Mortifier can change the way a body feels pain. With this power, the Mortifier heightens the sensitivity of a healthy body he touches, so that every bruise feels like a broken bone and every scratch feels like a gouge. The victim becomes impeded by even minor injuries.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Empathy + Scourge versus subject's Stamina + Blood Potency

Action: Contested, resistance is reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Mortifier is horrified by the misery he would've bestowed and loses one Willpower point.

Failure: The subject's body resists the Mortifier's power, possibly without the subject even knowing he was under attack.

Success: The victim's Health chart is altered to double the number of boxes that impose wound penalties. The last *two* Health boxes on the chart impose a –3 penalty, the next *two* Health boxes (third- and fourth-to-last) impose a –2 penalty and the next *two* Health boxes to the left (fifth- and sixth-to-last) impose a –1 penalty.

Exceptional Success: As a success, except the victim also loses a Willpower point each time he passes from one penalty threshold to the next (from no penalty to a –1 penalty or from a –2 penalty to a –3 penalty, for example).

By using this power, the Mortifier sets the victim up for pain and suffering in the future. Its effects last until the victim has been completely healed of all damage, so that her Health boxes are all empty, after which her Health chart returns to normal.

To use this power in combat, the Mortifier needs only to make contact with his subject. See "Touching an Opponent" on p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

••••• *Know Pain*

When the Mortifier masters Scourge, he achieves an increased understanding of the pains that straddle the gulf from the body to the soul. With just a look, the Mortifier is able to tear open the invisible scars of the mind and flood the body and the soul with immense pain. The victim must be able to see the Mortifier directly (not on television, for example) for this power to have any effect.

To activate this power, the Mortifier must cause himself damage sufficient to draw his own blood. Some Mortifiers swallow a razor blade. Some drive a nail through their hand.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Scourge versus subject's Stamina + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Mortifier is incapable of using Know Pain for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The victim successfully resists the power, possibly experiencing a fluttering memory of pain, but nothing more.

Success: The victim, whether mortal or supernatural in nature, is wracked with physical and emotional anguish. She feels as though she has been lashed with a whip. She feels as though her heart has been broken. She suffers a –5 penalty to all non-reflexive actions for the rest of the scene. The victim can break through the pain with an extended Stamina + Resolve action; when she has achieved a number of successes equal to the Mortifier's dots in Presence + Scourge, she is free of this power's effects. Note that this action is not reflexive and is therefore impeded by the power's –5 penalty.

Exceptional Success: As a success, except the victim must accrue successes equal to the Mortifier's Presence + Scourge + 5 to overcome her pain.

This power can be used on only one target at a time. Any number of potential victims may see the Mortifier, but only one can be afflicted with this power. Once a victim has been subjected to this power, it cannot be used against her again in that scene by any vampire.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The power is applied to a target with whom the user has a blood tie.
+1	The Mortifier has caused the victim physical harm in the past.

Theban Sorcery

The angel Amoniel delivered the early vampires of the Lancea Sanctum to the cavern where the miraculous powers of the Sanctified were first written, deep below the Necropolis of Thebes. The walls of the cavern were adorned with paintings, etchings and glyphs explaining the practice of divine rituals meant to grant power to the Longinians in future nights. Though the rituals — known collectively as Theban Sorcery — were put to limited use almost immediately, no Sanctified Kindred was considered to have mastered them prior to St. Daniel. On a fatal day in 286 AD, St. Daniel received a vision from Amoniel and, with it, a sudden mastery of these dark miracles. With the power of his faith made manifest through Theban Sorcery, Daniel is said to have awakened at will, driven off a host of mortal soldiers, blessed the weapons of a faithful ghoul and withstood the light of day.

Surely vampires had practiced Theban Sorcery before St. Daniel, but none had ever before commanded dark miracles of such awesome power. He is considered the first master of the covenant's unique magic. Sanctified sorcerers ever since have been chasing St. Daniel's powerful legacy.

The Nature of Theban Sorcery

The study of Theban Sorcery is seen as a largely scholastic pursuit by many Sanctified, sorcerers and mundane Priests alike, but the practice of Theban Sorcery requires more than academic study and a description of a ritual's performance and effects. A Theban Sorcery ritual can be written out, but some first enter the world in the form of divine imagery, as inspiration. A ritual can be read and understood, but it cannot be truly appreciated — made manifest — without an effort of will and a soulful investment. A ritual can be practiced and memorized, but it cannot truly be said to be learned until the sorcerer's knowledge of it transcends memory and language and becomes a matter of intuition and faith.

To turn inspiration into a ritual, and a ritual into power, requires three general steps: the discovery of the ritual, the identification of the ritual and the learning of the ritual. Discovery recognizes divine inspiration in the world. Identification reveals the capabilities of the ritual. Learning enables the sorcerer to activate the ritual.

Most sorcerers never discover a ritual. Rather, the majority of Sanctified sorcerers first interact with rituals that have already been identified and written down by the sorcerers who came before them. Any Kindred can read the record of a ritual, but that only describes what the ritual does and implies how it is made to happen. In some cases, even the record of an identified ritual is of little help to non-sorcerers — the notation may be so full of abstract references to the unknowably willful and intuitive efforts of Theban Sorcery that the text has no substance to the unenlightened.

In the Middle Ages, Sanctified sorcerers sometimes equated the study of Theban Sorcery with the study of religious hymns. A hymn can be written down and read, it can be heard, but it cannot be fully appreciated until it is performed. A hymnal can describe how a hymn should be performed, but it cannot convey the ability to perform it (or to perform it well). A hymnist can write a new hymn, but he does not truly create it — he finds its essential inspiration somewhere in God's creation, comes to understand how it was meant to sound and then conveys that message in writing that earthly beings can understand. So it is with Theban Sorcery.

Theban Sorcery in the Game

In game terms, a Sanctified sorcerer can study Theban Sorcery, read and record descriptions of a ritual and examine the inspirational imagery of new rituals without being able to use it. This is the role of the Academics Skill in the activation of the ritual. To perform a ritual, the sorcerer must know his own abilities, how to get the voice of his will to inflect just so upon the physical world, if he's to turn the notes into a song. This is the purpose of Theban Sorcery dots in the activation of the ritual.

Intelligence dots provide the power and verve to a ritual's performance; they describe the sorcerer's raw mental ability to effectively act. Characters that rely on Intelligence to fill out their ritual dice pools tend to act with aplomb, but perhaps with an excess of noise, hand-waving and gesticulation.

Dots in **Academics** provide the knowledge of what Theban Sorcery rituals are meant to do and what should be done to best evoke their power; they describe the sorcerer's familiarity with ritual practices, the quality of his studies and his precision. Individual rituals are not rated with dots because the sorcerer's individual quality of study is what matters. Characters that rely on Academics to fill their ritual dice pools tend to activate rituals with great precision or economy of movement, or may inform their ritual actions with historic flourishes such as quotes of holy scripture, archaic vocabulary or ancient customary gestures.

Theban Sorcery dots provide the strength and refinement of will, the soulful effort, that makes the ritual possible; they describe the sorcerer's mastery over his own soul. Characters that do not supplement their ritual dice pools with many dots from Intelligence or Academics tend to activate rituals with either passionate displays of their own greatness (perhaps the sorcerer shouts or shakes like a televised faith healer) or reserved moments of inward prayer.

Interpretations of Theban Sorcery

What *are* Theban Sorcery rituals? Where do they come from? While the story of Amoniel's presentation to the Monachus is considered the gospel truth, it leaves some questions unanswered.

Sanctified of different philosophical leanings favor different answers to the lingering mysteries of Theban Sorcery, and no one theory has ever enjoyed widespread popularity throughout the majority of parishes. As a result, Theban Sorcery is a popular subject for debate among serious and amateur covenant theologians. Many Bishops believe the mysteries of Theban Sorcery to be unknowable, and therefore an inexhaustible subject for Sanctified ponderings and discussion — something to contemplate time and again over the endless nights of one's Requiem.

The covenant's relative open-mindedness on this topic has been tested many times, however. With no formal, definitive explanation of the nature of Theban Sorcery to be found in Sanctified scripture, the subject has become open territory, accessible by extremists and heretics as well as pious, well-meaning contemplatives. More than a few minor heresies have grown out of apocryphal suppositions on the "true nature of Theban Sorcery," and more heresies of the sort will doubtless appear in future nights. It's one thing to consider the myriad, uncertain possibilities of the Theban Sorcery mystery; to declare the mystery solved is another thing altogether.

Theories that go against the details of the scripture — by claiming that Amoniel is actually just another aspect of Vahishtael, for example — are merely unpopular or regarded as outlandish. Heretical theories defy the spirit of the scripture, present speculation as fact or attempt to redefine the very cosmology of the covenant's Judeo-Christian roots. Extreme examples from history have supposed that Amoniel was an extraterrestrial, that Theban Sorcery is a variation of Cruac and that new rituals are actually created by the vampire who finds them and projected into the world as a manifestation of the will.

The following three theories on the nature and origin of Theban Sorcery have been supposed time and again in the history of the Lancea Sanctum. Little evidence exists to support any one theory over another, and few Sanctified theologians expect to ever know more for certain. Each of these possibilities is a matter of faith.

Gifts From Heaven

The least radical interpretation of Theban Sorcery's origins relies the most on the letter of the scripture. This theory accepts Amoniel as an agent of God, sent to Earth to deliver His gift to the Sanctified. Theban Sorcery rituals, therefore, are intended as boons to reward those Kindred who pledge themselves to the covenant and the study of the *Testament*. New rituals are presumed to appear on Earth when God decides the time is right; some were set into the world during Creation and others are brought down by Amoniel when the time of their need is imminent. In this design, ritual offerings are thought to be made to God Himself.

Secrets of Longinus

As the spirit colonialism spread among Kindred and kine, as Manifest Destiny drove living and undead missionaries to the remote corners of the world, the image of Longinus as an ancient explorer and world traveler became popular among Sanctified neonates and ancillae. The notion is that Longinus used miraculous powers to visit every continent and culture on Earth in the nights after his disappearance and that, on those journeys, he honed his powers into new rituals modeled on those bestowed to him by God through Amoniel. Rituals have therefore been hidden throughout the world by Longinus where he prophesized they would be needed. Sanctified missionaries and settlers see the presence of new rituals as evidence that Longinus has approved the surrounding lands as a feeding ground.

In this design, Longinus is the only Kindred capable of creating Theban Sorcery rituals; some Sanctified suppose he was taught by Amoniel after the *Testament* was dictated to the Monachus. It was Longinus who petitioned God to reveal Theban Sorcery to the Monachus. Ritualists who subscribe to this theory believe ritual offerings are sacrificed in tribute to Longinus, who made similar offerings to convince God to give Theban Sorcery to all Sanctified vampires.

Stolen by Angels

Sometime in the 1700's, Sanctified theologians in Eastern Europe put forth the idea that Amoniel was acting in secret when he brought Theban Sorcery to Earth. This theory, which is still regarded as heresy in some domains, supposes that Amoniel stole Theban Sorcery from Heaven and hid its rituals on Earth to aid the Sanctified. Amoniel, it is believed, admired the Sanctified for their piety in the face of damnation. Theban Sorcery rituals are his gift to the Sanctified, so that their duties in undeath might be made a bit easier and so that faithless Kindred might see the glory of Heaven and be converted. This interpretation of the *Testament* regards Amoniel as a selfless servant of God, willing to brave His wrath to see His work done well on Earth. Ritual offerings, then, are sacrificed on behalf of Amoniel, to repay Heaven for the stolen rituals.

Finding and Learning Theban Sorcery Rituals

Theban Sorcery rituals are gifts meant only for the holy followers of Longinus, delivered to the Damned by the angel Amoniel. For many years, the Sanctified believed every Theban Sorcery ritual the covenant would ever receive was contained in that holy vault. They were wrong.

Though no physical record of such a testament remains, the Monachus is fabled to have been told by Amoniel that a finite number of Sanctified miracles were set upon the earth for the Damned to wield in their nighttime service. The total number of rituals is a secret the Sanctified elders may keep to this night, or it have been lost in the Fog of Eternity. Some claim the number holds some occult power over the Anointed. Others claim the sum has apocalyptic significance in Kabbalistic numerology — that the final ritual will be carried to the Kindred by Longinus himself. The myths vary and perhaps no Sanctified can claim to know what is true for certain, but one ancient fact tied to all the legends has been proven true: the total number of Theban Sorcery rituals is greater than the lot contained in the Vault of Thebes.

In the many centuries that Sanctified vampires have been studying Theban Sorcery, a hundred new rituals have been discovered or rediscovered. Unfortunately, few new rituals have been found since the 1950s. Each year, it seems more ritualists claim that all the world's Theban Sorcery rituals have been discovered, yet word of new rituals spreads slowly across the Kindred domains every decade or so. The limited communication between parishes makes it difficult for any sorcerer to know, however, if a previously unknown ritual is new to the world or merely new to the parish.

The conjecture and uncertainty that surrounds talk of Theban Sorcery rituals makes many Sanctified sorcerers eager to visit the site a ritual's discovery for themselves. Rather than rely on hearsay or trust in the conclusions of other, possibly long-gone, sorcerers, a dedicated ritualist seeks out the sites of discovery for himself. Some see this as an academic venture, some see it as a pilgrimage.

Discovering A Ritual

Theban Sorcery rituals are not devised or invented. They are not concoctions of alchemy or mutations in the magic of the Blood. Theban Sorcery rituals can only be created by God (or, as some fringe Sanctified believe, by Longinus or Amoniel). Sanctified sorcerers merely discover them when it is God's will that they should.

The source of each ritual is unique, but common themes appear in the tales surrounding new finds. In these tales, Sanctified sorcerers rarely find new Theban Sorcery rituals when they're looking for them, but happen to uncover them, seemingly by chance, in a holy place (or a place made holy by the discovery). The archetypal accounts of miraculous discoveries have the Sanctified protagonist stumble onto a ritual when he is looking for something else — his sire, prey, a haven — or when he has finally given up the search for a ritual. One popular covenant fable, for example, describes the journey of a Sanctified sorcerer and missionary searching for new rituals in the nineteenth-century American West: After thirteen years scouring the desert, the searcher finally gave up his quest after being attacked and almost destroyed by werewolves in Utah. Teetering on the verge of torpor, the vampire crept into a crack in the mountains and succumbed to sleep. When he awoke, months later, he discovered that the walls of his cave were etched with inscriptions in Aramaic describing three previously unknown Theban Sorcery rituals.

Rituals have been discovered indoors and outdoors, in cities and in wilderness, in plain sight and in disguise. While the use of Theban Sorcery is an academic endeavor, a ritual can

be discovered by even the most ignorant Kindred. Some rituals have been discovered by sorcerers who immediately recognize them for what they are, but others have been found first by non-Sanctified vampires who mistake them for mundane hieroglyphs or etchings.

Lancea Sanctum scholars search for reasons behind the placement of rituals and the eras in which they are revealed. Are they meant to correspond with some unrecognized need or shortcoming of the covenant? Were they been left behind by Longinus himself as he traversed God's earth? Do they appear at the moment of discovery or do they lay waiting to be found by the right eyes?

Whatever answers Sanctified theologians come up with, the covenant leadership has made one thing clear: No matter what the scholars may *suppose*, no ritual was intended for just one vampire or lineage of vampires. The miracles of Theban Sorcery were bestowed upon the covenant, not just its experts or fortunate visionaries. Keeping a ritual secret from the covenant is the same as "stealing" it for the covenant's enemies. Of course, Sanctified have been whispering for centuries of the rumors that claim "secret rituals" have been hidden away by the covenant's eldest sorcerers. The most ancient and esteemed Anointed Kindred are presumably allowed to keep rituals to themselves because their interests are define the covenant's. Such powerful vampires don't hide rituals from the covenant, they hide them on behalf of the covenant.

Seeing a Hidden Ritual

Some rituals can be plainly seen even if they cannot be easily deciphered. But some rituals are subtly hidden in plain sight, easy to see but difficult to recognize as a ritual. An image of Amoniel might be hidden in a blood stain. A natural pillar of rock might also be seen as a symbol of the Spear of Destiny. The warped floor of a burnt church might hide the shape of a Roman centurion.

Some rituals are hidden in overt imagery that only needs to be noticed with a Wits + Composure roll. Hidden rituals, on the other hand, may require a trained eye (Wits + Expression), some knowledge of religious symbolism (Wits + Academics) or simply a bit of faith (perhaps Wits + Resolve or Wits + Empathy) to appreciate — not everyone who looks will see the Centurion in those soot stains. The Storyteller is entitled to call for any Skill-based perception roll she decides is appropriate, based on the nature of the image (Academics or Occult, perhaps) or the medium (Crafts might be right for an image in a plaster wall, while Expression is a good choice for an image hidden in a photograph). The Storyteller could even call for a Wits + Theban Sorcery roll, if she feels no Skill is appropriate.

Sample Discoveries

Some believe new rituals were found in catacombs beneath the Black Abbey, and vampiric missionaries in the New World are said to have uncovered dozens in the earliest nights of their visitation. The angel Amoniel is still frequently associated with new rituals, masquerading in some worldly disguise or appearing in a dream of torpor to tell the blessed Kindred where to dig. In some cases, the location of a ritual is tied to its power or purpose, but in other cases rituals have been found in strangely contrary places. Rituals appear on Earth in mysterious ways.

The following accounts of ritual discoveries give some indication of the variety of environments and circumstances in which rituals can be found. The Storyteller can use these samples to inspire hidden rituals in her own chronicle, or can affix a ritual of her choice to the account and use it directly. Players can refer to these samples of Sanctified history to enrich the dialogue of a learned sorcerer.

England — 1214–1409

Every thirteen years or so during this period, the Sanctified of another English town claimed to encounter a "roving corpse painted black as pitch" during the week of the Feast of St. Lazarus. Etched into the corpse's inky coating was text describing a ritual modern Anointed suppose was the Gift of Lazarus. The corpse's flesh, however, was said to be "slit like shirt-sleeves" so that readers had to press dangling bands of flesh back into place to read the ritual. To this night, it is not known if those old reports are describing a single, well-traveled ritual messenger or two-hundred years' worth of mysterious zombies.

Paris, France — 1674

A Priest feeding on the workers of a local slaughterhouse discovered an image of the Spear of Destiny formed in the wood grain and blood stains of an exterior wall. A Sanctified sorcerer determined the image described a Theban Sorcery ritual unheard of by Parisian Kindred at that time. The slaughterhouse was destroyed in a fire years later.

Venice, Italy — 1801

A Sanctified sorcerer laying torpid in flooded basement beneath the city was roused from her sleep by a vision. She dreamt that Amoniel dropped a wooden spear into a canal, and the spear floated through a crack in the foundation of a Venetian church to strike the skeletal remains of a body buried in the catacombs there. When she awoke, she sought the canal she'd seen in her vision and followed the spear's path to the catacombs. Therein she found a skull etched with spirals of Latin texts describing a previously unknown Theban Sorcery ritual.

Boston, Massachusetts — 1929

A stone cylinder, one foot long and engraved with writing in Hebrew, was found in a condemned synagogue being used as a haven by Dammitic sorcerers. The cylinder was said to have described two previously undiscovered rituals, but it disappeared a few nights later, after only one ritual had been successfully identified and recorded.

Mexico City, Mexico — 1954

After a seven-day long heat wave roasts the city, an image of "a bare-legged woman holding a spear" appeared in the bubbled paint of a road-side chapel on the edge of town. The image was so clear, it was first discovered by mortals, who were soon car-

ried away by Sanctified Priests as evidence of a Masquerade breach. The ritual symbolism of the image was then studied by Anointed contemplatives, who concluded it to be Livia the Whore, mother of Longinus. Finding it difficult to keep the chapel closed to kine, and with word of mysterious disappearances spreading through the neighborhood, the local Sanctified photographed the image, recorded what they considered to be its ritual significance and then destroyed the chapel. A new ritual was puzzled out of the evidence years later.

Fort Worth, Texas — 1979

A Tollison Creed sorcerer reportedly found ritual imagery describing Blandishment of Sin in the shattered windshield of an abandoned car. Though the ritual was well known in other parishes, neither of the domains Sanctified sorcerers had access to it before then. They saw it as a sign of impending violence in the parish.

Toronto, Ontario — 1999–Present

The Bishop of Toronto found Longinus' name etched into the ice of a frozen pond in 1999, but no other Kindred could see it for what it was. Two years later, she found an image of a sailing ship in the ice. In 2004, she found the image again. To date, she has been unable to fully see the ritual imagery she believes must be in the ice.

Storyteller's Option: A Pledge to Learn

Some Sanctified don't become sorcerers until they first encounter a Theban Sorcery ritual by chance. Perhaps the character discovers a hidden ritual shortly before the medium of its divine imagery is destroyed. Perhaps he uncovers a book describing ancient rituals, well known to the covenant at large, but he is the only Sanctified in the domain. If a character discovers a Theban Sorcery ritual but is unable to make use of it, what good does it do him?

Optionally, the Storyteller can allow a character — whether Sanctified or not, a sorcerer or not — to learn a Theban Sorcery ritual that he cannot yet activate as an investment for the future. Maybe the character finds a ••• ritual when he has only two dots in Theban Sorcery, but he doesn't want to risk losing access to the ritual in the future. Perhaps the character has never before been exposed to Theban Sorcery, but vows to become a sorcerer when his discovery of a new ritual triggers a religious epiphany.

If the Storyteller decides the ritual in question is expressed in such a way that even a character without sufficient dots in Theban Sorcery could understand it, the character could be allowed to spend the experience points to memorize, rehearse or otherwise learn the ritual now, while he has access to it. Perhaps the ritual is written out in plain English or intuitively explained by a well-spoken sorcerer. Because every ritual is unique, and many rituals can be described in different ways, the Storyteller should decide which rituals can be learned in this way on a case-by-case basis.

The system is simple: The player spends the experience to learn the ritual as normal, but is not allowed to activate the ritual until he has also bought the new dots of Theban Sorcery necessary to do so. A character with Theban Sorcery 2 could be allowed to spend the six experience points necessary to buy a ••• ritual, for example, even though he won't be able to use the ritual until he has spent another 21 experience points for a third dot in Theban Sorcery.

Visitations

Many Sanctified parables have been written about the few instances in which a Sanctified vampire has spontaneously gained the knowledge — and sometimes command! — of a Theban Sorcery ritual. These divine endowments, called Visitations, are seldom predicted but never forgotten. Some historical subjects of sorcerous Visitations have experienced visions depicting the activation of a new ritual; others have slipped into a fugue state in which they are able to even perform the ritual. Visitations are always brief, but may have long-lasting consequences.

In the case of a visionary Visitation, the visited subject simply can be considered the medium of new ritual imagery; rocks and trees can be marked with holy images, and so can the minds of the Damned. In some cases, such as the eighteenth century Visitation of a Philadelphian Daeva in which Amoniel verbally described the activation of a new ritual in the Daeva's native Finnish tongue, the subject receives a new ritual that can be recorded and learned immediately. In other cases, such as the account of a Sanctified Gangrel who received a vision of Amoniel "weeping a thunderstorm" during the Chicago Fire, the Visitation's divine imagery and symbolism requires pious contemplation or a leap of faith to fully understand. If the subject of the Visitation is unable to sufficiently describe his vision (either because of his own shortcomings in Social traits or because of the vision's unique strangeness), he becomes the only creature that can solve its mysteries.

In the case of fugue-state Visitations, the visited subject is granted temporary dots in Theban Sorcery and the ability to utilize one ritual previously unknown either to the subject or to all Sanctified. The length of a fugue-state Visitation might be as short as one turn but shouldn't be longer than one scene. The player of a Visitation subject might be allowed to control her character during the fugue or might be allowed to do nothing else than select victims, at the Storyteller's discretion. In general, it's a bad idea (and no fun) to disrupt a player's control over her character, so all but the most brief and potent Visitations should involve the player even if her character won't recall her own fugue period later on.

Visitation Stories

Visitations are a narrative instrument for Storyteller intervention and a blatant *deus ex machina*. But they don't have to be. A Visitation that occurs without warning at the climax of

a story to thwart or save the characters is the worst sort of *deus ex machina*, but the imminent arrival of a Visitation that was foretold in the story's earliest scenes is a source of tension and suspense. If the characters know one of them (but perhaps not which one of them) is to receive a Visitation (but perhaps not when), they can prepare themselves and make choices to enrich or inform the meaning of the climactic event when it occurs. Will they attempt to deny the Visitation? Where do they want to be when it occurs? Where do they have to be? Who else knows? How does a looming Visitation change the tone of an otherwise typical night?

Perhaps the best use for a Visitation, however, is at the beginning of a story. The aftermath of a Visitation is rife with story possibilities. The lingering consequences of a Visitation could follow a character for the rest of her Requiem. What happens when the subject of a Visitation chooses to leave the Lancea Sanctum? Was she even Sanctified when she had her vision? Who knows about the Visitation? How did they find out? How does divine intervention change the character's earthly relationships? Is she proud of the Visitation or is she ashamed of it? Will it ever happen again?

Identifying Theban Sorcery Rituals

A Theban Sorcery ritual may appear as an Aramaic inscription, a cave painting, a misshapen tree, or anything at all. Only rarely does a ritual appear magical at first inspection; more often it appears as obscure religious iconography or an archaeological find. Some rituals are contained in unusual terrestrial signs, such as an image of the Spear of Destiny hidden in a blood stain, visible only to the pious.

Before a ritual can be learned, it must be identified. Identification simply reveals what a ritual does and how powerful it is. The Storyteller might choose to describe an unidentified ritual's powers using half-translated impressions ("It speaks of black clouds and the midday sun…") or vague imagery ("The shape looks something like a disk circled in flame above a blanket of smoke…"), reserving a complete description of the ritual's level and game mechanics until the identification is complete.

Even characters without dots in Theban Sorcery may be able to discern what a ritual does. The challenge of deciphering meaning from ancient verses and symbolism is mystical, not magical. The examiners of the first Theban Sorcery rituals had no ability to activate them in the beginning, but were able to puzzle out their functions all the same. The Storyteller is free to decide, however, that certain information about a ritual (such as its level, range or duration) cannot be appreciated by an examiner without dots in Theban Sorcery.

Identifying Ritual Texts

Rituals that appear in written language, such as those recorded in the Vault of Thebes, just need to be read. Instructions for a ritual's activation ("He who is so named by the Sanctified…," for example, or "He who hears the voice of Thebes…") and descriptions of its effects ("…shall find his lies breed the locusts of Egypt," or "…should suffer the curse of Babel.") often contain allusions to holy scripture, from Genesis to the *Testament* itself, so sorcerers with a good grasp of ritual symbolism and Judeo-Christian theology are most likely to make sense of them. Many descriptions are long and archaic, some are even vague. Still, these rituals are the easiest to identify: Assuming the sorcerer can read the language in which the ritual is described, a simple Intelligence + Academics roll (modified by as much as a –5 penalty to reflect damage to the text, obscure references to academic minutiae or other hindrances) is all that's required to identify a ritual.

Identifying Ritual Imagery

Some rituals appear only as images or icons discernible only through careful examination and faith. Sanctified tradition holds that ritual imagery can only be "solved" through pious meditation and study (modern Kindred sometimes call this "cracking" or "freeing up" the ritual). To see the miracle in the enigmatic appearance of an unidentified ritual can require hours of contemplation or research. More complex and powerful rituals require more time and a greater knowledge of religious lore to be properly identified.

When a character attempts to crack a Theban Sorcery ritual, his player makes an extended action with a dice pool made up of either Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery (for research) or Wits + Expression + Theban Sorcery (for contemplation). The Storyteller is free to allow other dice pools to reflect unique approaches to solve the imagery. Attempts to solve ritual imagery through second-hand media, such as photographs and computer files, suffer a –4 penalty. Particularly unusual presentations (such as a ritual revealed in the blood spatter of a pure-hearted mortal murder victim) may impose as much as a –3 penalty on the examiner's dice pool. The total number of successes needed to understand the meaning of ritual imagery is equal to five times the ritual's level, so a • ritual requires five successes while a •••• ritual requires 20 successes. The time per roll varies with each ritual — some rituals must be contemplated or prayed over for days — but one hour per roll is a reasonable guideline. In general, this extended action can be interrupted and resumed without losing progress, so a character doesn't have to spend 20 straight hours in the presence of the imagery to make his breakthrough. A character might spend just one hour each night contemplating the imagery of a new ritual, for example, finally cracking it after a week of intermittent efforts.

As successes are accumulated, the character may develop a sense of the ritual's purpose (and the Storyteller may reveal hints, such as "it pierces bone" or "it says 'Amoniel would show her the future'"). When the imagery has been solved, the ritual has been identified.

Sharing an Identified Ritual

A sorcerer who has solved a Theban Sorcery ritual can spare other practitioners the trouble by explaining the ritual's power and meaning to others, either in person or in writing. Thus, students can be made to understand a ritual without having to reveal to them the locations of irreplaceable covenant ar-

tifacts and sacred imagery. Ritual descriptions and instructions can be re-recorded, if necessary, but the original divine presentations of new rituals are irreplaceable.

The vast majority of Theban Sorcery rituals are passed on orally: Records can be stolen and accountability can be denied, but the oral tradition places the responsibility for protecting the covenant's secrets with those who know them, and no one else. Written records are more likely to be kept in parishes with a long history of resident sorcerers, where the number of rituals known is greater than the number of sorcerers seeking to learn them. (In most parishes, sorcerers outnumber known rituals.)

If not for the Fog of Eternity, the covenant might strive to avoid all written records of Theban Sorcery rituals. As it is, only a few of the covenant's recorded rituals were drafted for the sake of dissemination to new students or neighboring domains. Most are created to be hoarded and read after an aged sorcerer awakes from torpor. The older the parish's sorcerers, the more likely it is that there are records of rituals to be found.

To create a written record of an identified Theban Sorcery ritual requires an Intelligence + Expression roll, penalized by the level of the ritual. (More complex and powerful rituals are more difficult to explain.) Written records spare other sorcerers the task of identifying rituals and allow other sorcerers to learn otherwise unheard-of rituals. They do not classify as equipment and grant no bonuses to ritual activation rolls.

To verbally explain a ritual's identification to another character requires a Wits + Expression roll, penalized by the level of the ritual, as above.

Storyteller's Option: Activating an Unlearned Ritual

This optional application of Theban Sorcery is useful for Storytellers who want to insert obscure rituals into a story without requiring a character to spend experience points on a power they'll only use once. Use it to create mysterious artifacts hidden in Sanctified reliquaries. Use it to give characters a taste of Theban Sorcery powers otherwise beyond their reach. Use it to create climactic suspense for a story in which the return of an unholy terror draws ever closer and only the successful activation of a long-forgotten Theban Sorcery ritual can save the night.

Under this rule, it's possible for a character to activate a Theban Sorcery ritual he has not learned (that is, a ritual not purhased with experience points), provided he has access to the original, physical artifact with which the ritual was delivered to Earth, whether it's a solid stone wall or the ceremonial shroud of an undead saint. The sorcerer must understand a ritual before it can be used, meaning the ritual must be identified before it can be activated. The character may not have to identify the ritual himself, however, if it's identification has been previously recorded by another sorcerer. A sorcerer could bring a text explaining the ritual with him to the site of the original artifact, for example.

To activate a ritual from its contextual artifact, the sorcerer must accrue successes equal to twice the ritual's level using Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery. A ritual artifact never grants an equipment bonus; it merely makes the activation possible. The appropriate offering must still be made and Willpower must still be spent, as with any Theban Sorcery ritual. A ritualist working from an original artifact can activate a ritual one level higher than his dots in Theban Sorcery, but the effort costs him an additional Willpower point and imposes a –3 penalty on his activation rolls.

Learning Theban Sorcery Rituals

Though written records of known miracles do exist, they alone cannot teach a practitioner how to master a particular ritual. To learn an identified Theban Sorcery ritual, the pupil must make a kind of spiritual breakthrough, whether through study, toil or meditation, and realize how he can will a ritual's power to manifest using practiced mastery of his own damned soul. That breakthrough — the personal and indescribable realization of how a ritual interacts with the soul — is represented by the experience points spent to learn the ritual.

Some Sanctified teachers claim the easiest way to understand a ritual is to fail at it a few times. Others explore scripture, believing truths are revealed at the intersections of mortal and Kindred gospels. At least one North African sect of the covenant believes fasting leads to miraculous insight. A vampiric church in Massachusetts submerges students in blood, "where there is truth." Scholarly parishes of Iberia require sorcerers to solve rituals they want to learn, even though previous sorcerers have already done so, as a demonstration of their abilities. Sometimes, however, a ritual is learned *despite* the vampire's efforts — one night the predator awakes and just *knows* how to properly express his faith to activate a previously elusive Theban Sorcery ritual.

Sources of Learning

Many, if not most, Sanctified sorcerers never see a ritual in its original context. The covenant guards the locations of its heavenly gifts with the unlives of its membership, lest the order's exclusive grip on Theban Sorcery be lost. Some sorcerers wonder if covenant elders aren't hiding the full power of many rituals from the congregation. It's also possible that parish sorcerers are working from poorly translated or badly written records, that the mistakes of previous sorcerers have been passed down for centuries. Could better records be found in some other parish? Can more potent versions of well-known rituals be found at the original discovery sites?

If the Lancea Sanctum is a powerful covenant in the domain, it may have knowledge of any Theban Sorcery ritual the player (and her character) seeks. If the covenant is small, weak

or otherwise limited in the local city, the character may have only a few rituals to choose from. Some domains have access to original ritual artifacts, others have only second- or third-hand written records passed down over thousands of nights. Many domains keep rituals only in the heads of the local sorcerers.

The Story of the Learning Process

All of this study and self-exploration may take place between chapters, or it might be the subject of its own story. A Sanctified neonate may have to prove his worthiness to learn to the local covenant leadership, or he may need to locate the only other Sanctified vampire in the city to help him. Test the strength of the character's motivation to learn by challenging the character in unexpected ways. Let her decide if the ritual is worth the trouble she'll go through.

Learning the ritual itself can be a story, but it works even better as a scene of denouement, as a scene of success. If learning a ritual becomes the climactic scene of a story, that implies there is a chance for the character to fail, which is no fun for the player. If the player has earned and saved the experience points to purchase a new supernatural power, and the Storyteller has approved the expenditure, there should be no chance of failure. The worst case scenario should be that the character cannot learn the new power *right now*.

This is not to say that learning a new Theban Sorcery ritual shouldn't be dramatic. Instead of whether or not the character *manages* to learn the ritual, a Storyteller should focus on the *consequences* of choosing to learn the ritual. Offer the character a difficult choice, with each outcome leading to a different narrative cost or repercussion of learning the power. Which of two Sanctified teachers does the character study under? Will he confess to the Bishop that he has learned a power forbidden to neonates? What does he offer a teacher in return for the knowledge he seeks?

The scene in which the character learns the ritual therefore becomes a rewarding epilogue, revealing as much about the character as the covenant or the power sought. Perhaps the player himself narrates this very personal moment.

Obstacles to Learning

Though Theban Sorcery itself requires intellectual and spiritual training to use, the hoops a Sanctified Kindred must jump through to be taught can test all varieties of Skills and Attributes. The pursuit of Theban Sorcery is an excellent opportunity for the Storyteller to make use of traits a player seldom gets to roll and avenues of Sanctified subculture her character rarely gets to explore. Here are examples of ways in which learning Theban Sorcery can become a mental, physical, or social effort.

Mental Obstacles: Your teacher understands the ritual you seek but demands that you crack the riddle-like parables he uses to explain Theban Sorcery (Wits + Academics). The Bishop demands all sorcery pupils create statuary honoring St. Daniel or Amoniel (Intelligence + Crafts). Your teacher engages you in a protracted debate loaded with political landmines to determine your position on the parish and the domain at large (Resolve + Politics).

Physical Obstacles: A previous Bishop foolishly gifted a text on the sought-after ritual to an Invictus ancilla who is no longer an ally of the local parish (Dexterity + Larceny or Dexterity + Stealth). Only a roving local paladin knows how to invoke the Blood Scourge, and you must show him what you'll do with it (Strength + Weaponry) or prove that you appreciate its power (Stamina + Composure). The teacher you seek is in a remote monastery, and you must trek on foot like Longinus to get there (Stamina + Survival).

Social Obstacles: Parish custom requires that you deliver a sermon on Theban Sorcery to the congregation (Presence + Expression). Theban Sorcery is outlawed in the domain and you must enter the Sanctified underground to fine a teacher (Composure + Streetwise). Only one Sanctified student is chosen each year to learn Theban Sorcery rituals, so you must make your case before a council of Lancea Sanctum sorcerer (Manipulation + Persuade).

Storyteller's Option: Lay and Secular Ritualists

The Sanctified strictly and ferociously guard their miraculous secrets, but they also know that small, carefully revealed glimpses of power can secure allies, lure in converts, and frighten enemies. The sorcerer who blesses the knives and axes of non-Sanctified allies is remembered as a valuable supporter and a dangerous foe, but to secure his aid again you must first do something for him… or the covenant.

In desperate times, the Lancea Sanctum may teach a non-Sanctified vampire one of the covenant's Theban rituals without demanding the student to formally join the covenant. Perhaps the last of the city's Sanctified must send a pack of unaligned vampires across hostile territory with a message for a foreign Prince and have agreed to protect the message and the messengers with dark miracles. Perhaps the Sanctified armor their new mercenaries in a bloody miracle in exchange for one more dangerous mission. Whatever the rare cause may be, a Sanctified sorcerer can share the covenant's rituals with characters lacking Covenant Status or even dots in Theban Sorcery with this optional rule.

The non-Sanctified character acquiring the secret miracle pays double the normal experience point cost to learn a Theban Sorcery ritual of that level; because only the lowest-level rituals are ever shared with outsiders, the cost is therefore typically 4 or 8 experience points — double the standard cost for a • or •• ritual. Once learned, the character rolls only Intelligence + Academics to activate his contraband ritual (since he has no dots in Theban Sorcery). Offerings must be made and Willpower points must be spent as usual. A character can learn only one Theban Sorcery ritual in this way, no matter its level, unless the Storyteller decides otherwise.

If a non-Sanctified character is given a ritual and then, later, joins the Lancea Sanctum and properly learns Theban Sorcery, the ritual he already knows becomes just one more in his repertoire.

[Matt, this next "sidebar" is meant to be a one-page spread, ideally facing the start of the new rituals immediately thereafter. If that's not possible, it's more important that this spread be its own, self-contained page. (Is there such a thing as a one-page spread?) I'm using headers other than <sbx>, though, because it shouldn't actually be *formatted* like a sidebar. Confusing enough?]

Theban Sorcery Rituals

These dark miracles of the Lancea Sanctum come from all over the world, from hidden messages in the warped paint of a burnt home, to forgotten inscriptions in ancient crypts, to dreams delivered into the torpor of ancient Nepheshim. The Sanctified of the New World heard tales of Spanish missionaries receiving strange dreams featuring what was, to the Sanctified, clear imagery of Longinus and the Damnation. Feeding from these missionaries passed fragments of these visions on to the supping vampire — drinking the visionary dry revealed not only the complete vision, but new rituals, such as Prison of Denial.

To this night, however, the majority of the known Theban Sorcery rituals come from the cavern beneath Thebes, revealed by the angel Amoniel. Many more were found scattered about Egypt, Persia, Jerusalem, and, eventually, Rome. Some rituals have been discovered more than once, or in multiple, subtle variations. As a result, some Theban Sorcery rituals have more than one name. Each ritual presented here is given just one name, but individual parishes — or even individual sorcerers — may have their own names for these grim miracles.

• Rituals

Celibacy

This pointed ritual, given in a vision to an English Bishop in the 18th Century, grants the subject — designated by a touch on the neck — a resistance to the ecstasy of the vampire bite, called the Kiss. Performing this ritual requires a sorcerer to toe the edge of the Masquerade; practitioners had best be careful. Each success scored on the activation roll grants an additional die to the subject's Resolve + Composure dice pool to resist the Kiss. In addition, the subject automatically reacts with alarm to the Kiss, however it is attempted (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 165), and is unable to voluntarily succumb to a feeding vampire. These benefits last until the next sunrise.

A mortal may be affected by only one instance of Celibacy at a time.

The Lancea Sanctum secretly uses this ritual on mortals suspected to be singled out for the Embrace by would-be violators of the Second Tradition. It is not a guaranteed deterrent, but it has stopped many violations before they can be completed.

The roll to activate this power is penalized by the subject's Resolve.

Offering: The sorcerer must obtain a bit of the subject's sweat to be consumed when the ritual is enacted. Sweat can be used when touched, so a sweaty subject of Celibacy can sometimes be spotted by a smear of ash on the neck.

Crown of Thorns

This ritual pains and disfigures a victim with a tortuous ring of bony thorns formed from his own skull. The victim suffers two points of bashing damage as tiny hooks of bone burst through the flesh of his head in a ring running just above his eyebrows. The thorns do damage only in the turn when the ritual is first activated, but persist for one turn per success. So long as the thorns remain, the victim suffers a –5 penalty on all Social actions. Between the bleeding wounds and the visible, unnatural thorns, the victim is frightening to behold — mundane Social actions, such as most uses of the Socialize Skill, may therefore be impossible as a result. Afterward, the thorns quickly and painfully recede.

Though the damage caused by the thorns can be healed normally, the thorns leave behind gruesome, sticky scars for a number of days per success; these scars plague mortal and vampiric victims alike. These scars impose at least a –2 penalty on Social actions, though especially pious or superstitious persons may react more unfavorably (imposing a –3 penalty, instead).

The Sanctified use this ritual to punish those who violate the canons of the covenant, or to shock mortals and ghouls with an agonizing brush of divine wrath. The pain punishes the victim, but his scars spread shock and sow fear among his kind.

The roll to activate this ritual is penalized by the subject's Stamina.

Offering: A thorny twig or branch swallowed by the ritualist in direct sight of the subject.

Hauberk of Blood

The vampire sheaths himself in the healing power of Vitae to protect himself from harm. For each success achieved on the activation roll, the sorcerer may infuse one Vitae with the power to protect himself or other Kindred from harm. This empowered Vitae instantly heals the subject, counteracting damage the moment it would be applied. A bullet might pass through the subject's body, but the wounds it leaves behind mystically vanish.

The Vitae to be used is then splashed, brushed or smeared onto the vampires to be protected (Sanctified paladins who know this ritual often paint lances of blood on their chests or faces). Damage ablated by the miraculous Vitae is subtracted from the total damage dealt in the attack; damage that is not countered affects the character as normal. All damage done to a character benefiting from this ritual affects the magical Vitae first; the character cannot choose to "save" some of the empowered Vitae for use against particular attacks.

One Vitae counters one or two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage; a single point of aggravated

Theban Sorcery Overview

For the convenience of players of Sanctified sorcerer characters, the general guidelines for using Theban Sorcery are reproduced here, with minor clarifications to the text as it appeared in **Vampire: The Requiem**.

Cost: Uses of Theban Sorcery always cost one Willpower point, spent on the first turn of ritual casting. Willpower is critical to use of the Discipline. It invokes the soul of the Kindred who performs a ritual. Willpower spent in this manner does not add three dice to activation rolls. Indeed, because a character may spend only one Willpower point per turn, a Willpower point may *never* be spent to augment Theban Sorcery rituals activated with a single roll unless specified otherwise. Willpower *may* be spent, however, to grant extra dice on rolls in subsequent turns if additional rolls are required to complete the extended action to activate the ritual.

Additionally, most Theban Sorcery rituals require certain items to be used or consumed to activate the powers. These components are known as offerings. Practitioners believe these items are offered in sacrifice to God, Longinus, Amoniel or whomever provides the actual manifestation of the power. Attempts to invoke Theban Sorcery without suitable offerings fail outright. Offerings are consumed upon the invocation of a ritual, leaving behind nothing but a handful of ash.

Theban Sorcery does not have the same linear progression that other Disciplines do. A character's mastery dictates the highest level of rituals that he may normally learn. Rituals are bought with experience points. For example, a character with two dots of Theban Sorcery can know an unlimited number of • and •• rituals (provided the experience points are paid to learn each), but he may not learn any ••• Theban Sorcery rituals until his base Theban Sorcery dots are increased to 3. Each time a character acquires a dot of Theban Sorcery (including at character creation), he gains a ritual of that level at no additional cost. More rituals may be acquired with experience points.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery. Note that, for many rituals, this dice pool is penalized by a resistance trait. The Gangrel clan weakness *does* apply to the Discipline user's roll on attempts to invoke Theban Sorcery rituals.

Action: Extended. The number of successes required to activate a ritual is equal to the level of the ritual (so a level-three ritual requires three successes to enact). Each roll represents one turn of ritual casting. The ritual is activated on the turn in which the target number of successes is reached or surpassed. Note also that each point of damage incurred in a turn is a penalty to the next casting roll made for the character, in addition to any wound penalties suffered.

If a character fails to complete the ritual in time (such as by being sent into torpor before accumulating enough successes) or decides to cancel the ritual before garnering enough successes to activate it, the effect simply fails. Any Willpower expenditures made are not recovered, however, and offerings are still burned to ash.

The variable effects of many rituals are based on the result of the ritual's activation roll. The result of a ritual's activation roll is the total number of successes produced in the extended action to invoke the ritual. Whether a ritual is completed in one turn or five turns isn't relevant. Only the total number of successes scored on the extended action matters.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The ritual fails spectacularly, inflicting some aspect of itself as a detrimental effect upon the caster. A ritual intended to damage a subject inflicts its damage upon the caster, for example, while a ritual designed to store Vitae in an object depletes the caster of some amount of his own.

Failure: The ritual fails entirely, but not dangerously. Willpower and offerings are consumed as normal, but the ritual has no effect.

Success: The ritual takes place as described.

Exceptional Success: The ritual takes place as described. In many cases, extra successes are their own reward, causing additional damage or conferring extra duration or capacity.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is turned on or applies to a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 162 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).
—	The character is unaffected by threats or distractions.
-1 to -3	The character is rushed or distracted, such as by invoking a ritual in combat or while trapped in a burning building. This penalty is cumulative with multiple distractions (such as by casting a ritual in combat during a hurricane). Successes gained on a meditation roll for the night (see p. 51 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) offset interruption penalties on a one-for-one basis.

damage is countered only if the character has five Vitae of protection empowered and painted onto himself when the aggravated damage is dealt. All forms of physical damage are subject to the Hauberk of Blood, even fire. The power of the ritual persists for one scene or until all the empowered Vitae has been used, whichever comes first. A character can wear a Hauberk of Blood invested with an amount of Vitae up to his Size, so an average vampire can be painted with a maximum of five Vitae empowered this ritual.

Example: *A Sanctified paladin is painted with a Hauberk of Blood made up of five Vitae. He is then struck in combat by a sword for two points of lethal damage, but the Hauberk of Blood counters that damage, reducing its total Vitae by two, from five to three. Later, the paladin is struck by an attack dealing three points of bashing damage, which is countered by two points of painted-on Vitae (two points of bashing damage are stopped by the first Vitae and the second Vitae is used up countering the third point).*

The paladin now has just one Vitae left in his Hauberk of Blood when he is burned for one point of aggravated damage; because the Hauberk of Blood has fewer than five Vitae left, not even that single point of aggravated damage can be countered, so the damage affects the paladin. The last Vitae of the Hauberk of Blood still remains, therefore, when he is stabbed for three points of lethal damage. The first point of damage is negated by the last Vitae in the Hauberk of Blood. The two remaining points of lethal damage harm the paladin directly.

Offering: The Vitae used in the ritual is the offering, though it can come from any willing or unwilling source. Unlike standard Theban Sorcery offerings, this Vitae turns to ash not when it is used in the ritual, but when it finally counteracts damage.

Sinner Song

The vampire compels her subject to reveal her most recent sin. The subject may or may not realize she is being magically influenced, depending on the behavior of the sorcerer, who may persuade ("Tell me, please, you must tell me.") or demand ("With the authority of Heaven, I command you!"). The sin in question must be severe enough to warrant a degeneration roll and, of course, the subject must be aware (on some level) of what she has done.

The roll to invoke this power is penalized by the subject's Resolve. The subject of the power must be able to hear the vampire's voice (even over a telephone) as the ritual is completed, to be affected. The caster's voice only has power at the moment of the ritual's completion, so recording cannot convey the effects of this ritual.

Offering: An article belonging to the subject, traditionally something associated with vice, such as a liquor bottle, a cigarette or a handful of pills.

Theban Inscription

In the earliest nights of the covenant, when Theban Sorcery was barely understood and the Sanctified were surrounded by enemies both living and undead, this simple ritual saved many vampires from Final Death by leading them to secret havens beneath the sun-bleached stones of Egypt. With a touch of his hand and a soft word, the sorcerer can leave a mark — be it words or a symbol — in virtually any surface. The mark can be as subtle or obvious as the sorcerer wishes: a worn patch of stone in the shape of a skull, a rough rust stain symbolizing the Spear of Destiny or a finely-wrought inscription of Aramaic words.

The more successes that are achieved on the activation roll, the larger the mark can be. As a general rule, an inscription can be up to one foot long or wide per success. The sorcerer can choose to create an allusion (such as an iconic reference to the Testament of Longinus) or a disguised image (such as a crucifix in a stretch of water-damaged wallpaper) if he wishes, requiring either an Intelligence + Academics roll (for an obvious symbol with hidden meaning) or a Wits + Academics roll (for a hidden symbol) to be made for onlookers to understand or spot the mark. The ritualist decides which dice pool, if any, is appropriate when the mark is made. (If the Storyteller agrees, other dice pools — such as Wits + Occult — may be required instead.) Finally, the ritualist may choose to penalize the necessary dice pool by a value less than or equal to his dots in Intelligence.

Offering: The mark to be made must be drawn or placed on the surface to be affected. An inscription may be written onto parchment, for example, to be pressed to the desired surface later. Many early marks were simply drawn by hand, with chalk or blood, onto the surface.

•• Rituals

Bird of Sin

This strange ritual was one of the original collection given to the covenant in the vaults beneath Thebes, and has been linked to other ancient magical traditions of Egypt. With this ritual, the character summons forth the guilt and immorality of a subject he can see directly into the form of a shimmering phantasmal bird — often an owl, but raptors of all sorts have been cited by sorcerers through the ages. Some incarnations shed feathers like a fire sheds cinders, others have been said to be cold, hard and sharp like ice; each bird reflects the sinner, rather than the ritualist.

The Bird of Sin immediately attacks the subject on the sorcerer's turn. Attacks continue for one turn per success scored on the activation roll. The bird has a dice pool equal to 10 minus the subject's Morality or Humanity for attacks; it ignores the subject's Defense. Its spectral talons and beak deal bashing damage, but can hurt only the subject of the ritual. The bird is completely intangible to all other creatures, including spirits and ghosts.

The subject can will the bird out of existence with a successful Resolve + Composure roll penalized by the caster's dots in Theban Sorcery. This effort is an instant action, performed on the subject's turn. If the roll fails, subsequent attempts can be made on following turns so long as the bird remains.

The action to activate this power is penalized by the subject's Resolve.

Offering: A feather at least four inches long.

Damned Radiance

With this ritual, the sorcerer impresses, shocks or frightens onlookers with the glorious majesty of a walking saint or the terrible stature of a furious monster. When the ritual is completed, the vampire adds his dots in Theban Sorcery to all dice pools involving overt use of Presence for the rest of the scene. In the eyes of onlookers, the sorcerer takes on an exaggerated, unearthly appearance, whether darkened by an intangible malice, smoking with hellish heat or shining with an angelic light.

The effects of this ritual are never subtle. The power overtly alters the character. Her appearance attracts attention and sticks in the memories of witnesses. The character suffers a –3 dice penalty on all Social actions requiring subtlety or finesse. If the character's appearance is truly unearthly (due to very high or very low Humanity, for example, or if the character has seven or more dots in Presence and Theban Sorcery combined), the penalty may even apply to Stealth actions, at the Storyteller's discretion.

The aspect of the Curse that blurs a vampire's image in mirrors and on film also interferes with this power — Damned Radiance cannot be perceived through second-hand evidence (such as photographs or TV signals), even by spending Vitae.

Offering: A mask, however cheap or exquisite, simple or ornate.

Prison of Denial

The subject of this curse is forbidden to communicate with, look at or speak of another particular person, called the exile and specified when the ritual is activated. For one night, the subject is forced to deny all contact with the exile. If the exile approaches the subject, she must leave. If the subject attempts to say the exile's name, her voice fails her for just that moment. If the exile and the subject are forced together — locked in a room together, for example — the subject is plagued with a supernatural mental block; the exile seems to be nothing more than a silent, blurry shape that the subject cannot bear to see.

The roll to activate this power is penalized by the subject's Resolve. If the sorcerer achieves an exceptional success, the subject is literally blinded when in the presence of the exile.

Offering: An image or unique possession of the exile, such as a photograph or monogrammed handkerchief, burned in sight of the subject when the ritual is performed.

Resistance of Discipline

Said to have been found in the broken remains of the Black Abbey just one night after the destruction of the Monachus, this ritual enables a practitioner of Theban Sorcery to better combat the other supernatural powers of the Damned. By activating this ritual, the sorcerer grants himself, or a subject who can hear the sound of his voice, a renewed attempt to resist any Discipline power resisted with a contested action that is currently affecting the subject or his immediate surroundings, whether he initially resisted the Discipline or not.

The original dice pool for the Discipline to be resisted should not be re-rolled. The subject is pitted against the successes rolled on the initial use of the power being resisted.

Example: *Solomon, a Sanctified sorcerer, believes another Kindred named Asher has been subjected to a Ventrue's Mesmerize power. Solomon calls Asher on the phone, his hands still stained with soot from enacting the Resistance of Discipline ritual. "Asher," Solomon says, "think hard about what that Ventrue told you. Do you remember? Think, Asher!" Solomon thereby makes Asher the subject of the ritual, so Asher's player rolls Resolve + Blood Potency again, this time scoring four successes, better than the three rolled on the Ventrue's use of Mesmerize. Asher is now free to disobey the suggestion he was given by the Dragon. "Yes, yes!" Asher says, "He wanted me to spy on you…"*

Offering: Any Judeo-Christian or Islamic holy symbol, such as a Star of David necklace, a prayer rug or a rosary.

Sanctity

This ritual fills a space with holy or unholy resonance, tangibly altering its atmosphere and appearance. The space — which must be a single room, closed off from other rooms and hidden from sight when the ritual is performed inside it — is thereby "aligned" to grant bonus dice to all actions involving a certain Skill, no matter who performs them, when those actions are undertaken within the affected room. The space grants bonus dice equal to the sorcerer's dots in Theban Sorcery for a number of hours equal to the successes scored on the activation roll, plus two.

A single Skill must be chosen for the space at the time the ritual is performed, but only a few Skills fall within the purview of this power: Academics, Empathy, Intimidation, Occult and Persuasion. The room takes on qualities favorable to the performance of the Skill, becoming quiet and serene for Academics use, growing dark and unsettling for Intimidation purposes, or taking on dramatic acoustics for Persuasion. Whatever the exact effect, the power of the room is clearly unearthly — frightening rooms may creak or groan or be populated by shifting shadows, while serene rooms may hum with sourceless chords or be lit by unmelting candles. Sanctified sorcerers must be careful how they use this ritual, for such supernaturally attuned spaces can lead to careless breaches of the Masquerade if happened upon by accident.

Offering: A decorative object, such as a tapestry or carpet, or an object symbolizing the action to be blessed, such a sword. When the duration of the ritual has passed, the room develops a thins coat of soot and ash.

••• Rituals

Blood Fire

The sorcerer's blood is transformed into the fuel of a righteous fire with this ritual. A foe that deals lethal or aggravated damage to the sorcerer with a close combat attack is burned by this holy flame when the sorcerer's body is slashed, pierced or otherwise physically penetrated. Treat the Blood Fire reaction as a reflexive action. The fire causes lethal damage to the attacker equal to the successes achieved on the Blood Fire ritual's activation roll, minus the rating of any armor the attacker is wearing. No attack roll is made for this backlash of flame, and the attacker's Defense does not apply.

Blood Fire is completely intangible to all persons except the attacker. It does no harm to other people or objects and cannot provoke frenzy from anyone it cannot harm. Once activated, Blood Fire reacts to a number of successful attacks equal to the sorcerer's dots in Theban Sorcery. If the Blood Fire is not completely utilized by the end of the scene, any remaining reactions are wasted. The sorcerer can only enjoy the benefits of one Blood Fire ritual at a time.

Offering: A burning object, at least as large and intense as a torch.

Lash Beyond Death

This ritual trains a vampire's will to endure past the moment of its own defeat — or destruction. The subject of this ritual (typically the sorcerer himself) may take a single action immediately after entering torpor or being delivered unto Final Death. The action to be performed is decided when the ritual is activated and cannot be changed, though it can be replaced by a subsequent use of this ritual. This ritual only affects vampires, and a vampire may be subject to only one instance of the Lash Beyond Death at a time.

The prescribed action can be anything the subject can perform in one turn. Generally this means an instant action, but the subject may choose an extended action, such as attempting another Theban Sorcery ritual, if he believes he can complete it with a single roll. The former Sanctified Archbishop of Naples famously (and perhaps mythically) enacted the Stigmata ritual of Theban Sorcery in the moment of his destruction, marking his assassin for destruction by nearby guards. If the vampire's body would be physically incapable of performing the action (a vampire without a tongue cannot recite a prayer, for example), this ritual is wasted. Nearly ruined vampire bodies have proven to be capable of frightening feats, however, including walking on ashen legs and speaking with mummified tongues.

If this ritual is to be activated on a willing subject other than the sorcerer, the subject may spend the Willpower point to activate the ritual instead of the caster. Though the subject may request an action to be mandated by the ritual, only the sorcerer has the power to commit the undead body to that act. Therefore, only the action actually mandated by the sorcerer is triggered by the subject's torpor or destruction.

If the subject is unwilling to accept the action mandated ("You will reveal the location of your sire before you are destroyed!"), the roll to activate this power is penalized by the subject's Resolve. Self-destructive actions ("Set yourself on fire when you enter torpor!") automatically fail when demanded of unwilling subjects.

Offering: Flesh from the subject (represented by one point of lethal damage) taken during the scene when the ritual is performed. The sorcerer swallows the ash of the offering to activate the ritual.

Legionnaire's Blessing

Similar to the Theban curse Blandishment of Sin, this ritual promises further suffering to the enemies of the covenant. This ritual, or something like it, was used by St. Daniel to bless the weapons of the Theban Legion. The sorcerer focuses this ritual on a weapon by kissing its blade or other deadly surface.

The damage rating of the blessed weapon is increased by the sorcerer's dots in Theban Sorcery. These bonus dice apply to a number of attacks equal to the successes scored on the ritual's activation roll. These blessed attacks can be made at any time that same night, when the weapon's wielder sees fit. Each empowered attack must be invoked with a prayer of the attacker's choosing, spoken by the attacker when the attack is made. Blessed attacks not used before the sun rises are wasted.

Guns and other projectile weapons cannot be imbued with the Legionnaire's Blessing, though thrown weapons can be. A single weapon can be affected by only one Legionnaire's Blessing at a time.

Offering: The weapon blessed is the offering. Unlike most offerings, however, the weapon is weakened rather than destroyed by the ritual. Once the weapon's blessed attacks are gone, the weapon's damage rating decreases by one. Subsequent uses of this ritual gradually destroy the weapon.

Pharaoh's Paces

Another ritual seemingly adapted from the tombs of Egypt, Pharaoh's Paces grants the sorcerer a supernatural manifestation of an ancient royal custom. When this ritual is activated, the sorcerer is imbued with the honorary privilege of the Pharaoh: no one may touch the sorcerer (by hand or with an object) or even set sight directly upon him for the remainder of the scene. The ritual's name comes from the third effect: no one may approach within nine paces of the sorcerer. Those within nine paces immediately step away, unless doing so would cause them harm. Only those persons within direct sight of the sorcerer when the ritual is performed fall under its effects.

Characters wishing to violate this arcane custom (to look at or attack the sorcerer, for example) can force themselves to do so with a successful Resolve + Presence action and a cost in Willpower. This effort of the will is an extended action with additional rolls possible every turn, provided the resisting character spends a Willpower point each turn he attempts a new roll. Willpower points spent to overcome this ritual's effects only make the extended action possible, and do not grant extra dice on any rolls. The target number of successes is equal to the successes scored in the ritual's activation action. Resisting characters can do nothing else but move their Speed while mustering the courage necessary to break through this magic.

Example: *Solomon, a Sanctified Bishop, invokes the Pharaoh's Paces in the presence of Matthew, a lay neonate, and scores five successes in total on the ritual's activation roll. Matthew immediately backs away from Solomon, casts his eyes to the ground and finds he cannot bring himself to look back at the Bishop. On his turn, Matthew spends a point of Willpower and attempts to overcome Solomon's sorcery. "Stand up to him," Matthew whispers to himself. "What are you so afraid of?" His Resolve + Presence action (with no additional dice from the Willpower point spent to allow the action) produces two successes. The Bishop walks over*

to a nearby computer and begins to type. On his next action, Matthew spends another Willpower point and earns another three successes, achieving the target number and overcoming the ritual.

He grabs Solomon by the wrist and says, "Sorry, Bishop, but those files aren't for you."

Once an onlooker has broken the spell, he cannot be made subject to this ritual again for the remainder of the scene. Anyone the sorcerer touches or makes eye contact with is instantly freed from the power of the ritual.

The sorcerer can continue to activate this ritual on himself to affect new onlookers or to replace his activation roll with a second, and hopefully better, result. Successes scored on a subsequent activation roll replace those of the previous activation roll, but resisting characters do not lose the successes they have already achieved on rolls to resist the power.

Offering: An article of gold, jade, or sapphire jewelry.

Vision of the Will

The sorcerer infuses an object the sorcerer touches with an intense psychic vision of his own creation. Whoever next touches the object receives this vision as a rush of sounds and images in the mind. Anything the sorcerer can imagine can be instilled in the vision, but the vision can last only as many turns as there were successes on the activation roll. The vision is undeniably intense, and can be used to persuade, enlighten, frighten, or intimidate the viewer.

The sorcerer can devise a vision that simply imparts facts or instructions (by depicting a journey across a foreign land, for example, or conjuring a vision of a wise man) or it can be used to attempt a Social action on the viewer (using Skills such as Expression, Intimidation, or Persuasion). The exact dice pools of such efforts must depend on the style and purpose of each particular vision but are always based on the caster's traits since the vision comes from the caster's memory or imagination. Because the sorcerer's own personality doesn't have to be a feature of the vision, Mental or Social Attributes are equally viable for these dice pools. A vision intended to frighten someone away might allow a dice pool of Presence or Intelligence + Intimidation, for example. A vision devised to pacify or soothe the viewer might use a dice pool of Wits or Manipulation + Persuade. Typically, a vision's dice pool is contested by the viewer's Resolve + Composure, but the Storyteller gets final say on the dice pool to be used for both the sorcerer and the viewer. When a vision is created, make a note of the dice pool it uses; don't roll the dice pool until the vision is experienced.

While the vision is being experienced, the viewer is unaware of her body or the outside world. Whether or not the viewer is affected by any Skills used by the sorcerer through the vision, the experience continues until it reaches its intended conclusion or until the viewer musters the will to resist the psychic presence of the vision. To resist a vision, the viewer must complete an extended Resolve + Composure action with a target number equal to the successes scored on the ritual's activation roll. Each roll requires one turn.

Example: *A ghoul treasure-hunter digging in Jerusalem happens upon an urn that had been infused with a Vision of the Will one thousand years before, and lapses into a trance while horrific visions of human slaughter splay through her mind. The sorcerer who created this vision is attempting to scare trespassers away from the tomb where he lays torpid — the vision has a dice pool made up of the sorcerer's Wits + Intimidation. The ghoul opposes the vision with Resolve + Composure and succeeds: she is frightened, but not scared off. Still, the ghoul wishes to free herself from the hellish vision, so she makes the first roll of an extended Resolve + Composure action with a target number of six (the successes scored on the sorcerer's activation roll a millennium ago). She produces just one success on her first roll and so stands entranced for a turn while the vile scene plays out in her head … unaware that zombies in the catacomb with her are drawing ever closer.*

A vision has no expiration date, and may lay waiting for an audience for millennia. This ritual causes a vision to be experienced only once, by the next person to touch the object, but the sorcerer may choose to infuse the vessel with more instances of the vision by investing more Willpower points in the ritual. To do this, the sorcerer must spend one turn in contact with the object for each additional point of Willpower to be invested. Extra Willpower must be invested after the ritual has been activated but before the sorcerer breaks contact with the object. This investment of Willpower does not require an action on the part of the sorcerer — he needs only to keep touching the object. Remember that a character can spend only one Willpower point per turn.

Offering: The object to be infused with the vision, which can be no larger than a human skull. When the last of the visions bound to the object have been experienced, it crumbles to dust.

•••• *Rituals*

Call of Amoniel

This ritual was discovered in the vault of Thebes on the first night after the angel Amoniel gave Theban Sorcery to the Sanctified, but was renamed following St. Daniel's day of reckoning. This ritual simply allows the sorcerer to successfully awaken any time during the following day, without planning in advance what criterion might be necessary to rouse her. A minor degree of clairvoyance is involved in this magic, as the character may even be roused by stimuli seemingly too distant to hear or feel — in short, the sorcerer automatically awakens when her sleep is disturbed. She may even awaken based on information that would normally be unavailable to a sleeping vampire, such as the time of day, the delivery of a package or the falling of snow. The range of this vague clairvoyance is extremely limited; the sorcerer is not made aware of anything outside the boundaries of the building or immediate region where she sleeps, but the specific limits are up to the Storyteller's assessment of the circumstance. As a guideline, assume the sorcerer senses anything she could if she were awake and walking circles around her sleeping body. For example, the sorcerer may sense a car door slamming outside her haven, but not a car just driving by. She may become

aware of rain clattering on the roof, but not of an approaching storm. She may dream that she's sitting by a campfire on the dirt above her slumbering corpse when she sees eyes shining at the edge of the firelight, but be unable to discern anything going on out in the darkness. The sleeping vampire doesn't necessarily see or hear these stimuli, however, but *knows* they're occurring.

Once the sorcerer is awake, she may remain awake all day without an extended action. Vitae must still be spent, as usual, to rise and to carry on into the night. A vampire under the effects of this ritual may also use the successes scored on the activation roll in place of her Humanity, if she chooses, to determine the maximum dice pool size for actions undertaken during the daytime. This use of the ritual lasts for a number of hours equal to the sorcerer's dots in Theban Sorcery, beginning when she first awakens. When those hours pass, her dice pools are limited by Humanity again, as normal. (For the complete rules on daytime activity for vampires, see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 184.)

If nothing awakens the sleeping sorcerer, the Willpower point spent to activate this ritual is still paid and the ritual is wasted.

Offering: A white bird, alive or dead.

Display of the Beast

The sorcerer exaggerates the Beast into a physical manifestation of malevolence. The subject of this ritual can be any single vampire within direct earshot of the sorcerer — including himself. His teeth — all his teeth — grow long and sharp. His eyes flash with a savage fire. His fingers become serrated and bony. Kindred in the presence of the Display of the Beast must make an extended action to resist the frenzy of fear. The successes required to overcome the fear are equal to the successes scored on the ritual's activation roll.

Mortals and ghouls who look upon the Display of the Beast go mad with fear. Terrified ghouls and kine must spend their turns retreating (moving at least their Speed away from the subject) until they cannot see the Display of the Beast any longer. Any non-reflexive actions taken in the meantime suffer a penalty equal to the sorcerer's dots in Theban Sorcery. Mortals automatically lose a point of Willpower upon first seeing the Display of the Beast in a given scene. Mortals and ghouls alike must spend a Willpower point to muster the courage to attack the subject of this ritual (no bonus dice are granted by the expenditure).

The roll to activate this ritual is penalized by the subject's Stamina. The Display of the Beast lasts for one scene, or until ended by the sorcerer, whichever comes first.

Offering: The skull of a dead mortal, whether naked or still clad in flesh.

Mark of the Damned

With a stripe of blood and an occult prayer, the sorcerer can ward a haven against those who would trespass in the lair and do harm to sleeping vampires. One point of Vitae must be spent for each dot the haven to be protected has in Haven Size (mini-

mum of one Vitae). This Vitae can be donated by any vampire, willing or unwilling; it does not have to be the sorcerer's Blood. The Vitae is painted over doorways and windows, plainly visible to visitors and intruders. Any mortal or supernatural creature who enters the haven intending to harm any vampire sleeping within is subject to one point of lethal damage for each success scored on the activation roll. This damage is completely supernatural in origin — gashes spontaneously appear on the flesh, stomachs give up throatfuls of blood, bones suddenly snap — and cannot be dodged or stopped with armor.

A trespasser who knows how the ritual works can attempt to hide his intentions even within his own heart, fool the scrutiny of the ritual's magic and avoid all damage with a successful Resolve + Subterfuge roll penalized by the sorcerer's dots in Theban Sorcery. Note that visitors and intruders who do not intend harm as they enter are unaffected by the ritual, but are not prevented from (or wounded for) developing violent intentions once they're inside.

Once the Mark of the Damned has been activated, the damage it deals to trespassers diminishes by one point per night, until the power has faded completely. Washing or scraping away the Vitae used to activate the ritual does not remove its power, but does diminish the damage and duration of the ritual by two. Any given haven can be subject to only one instance of this ritual at a time; fresh applications of this power replace previous applications.

Offering: Vitae, as described above.

Song of the Prey

As hunters attract prey, so do vampires attract the kine. This ritual lures mortals into the predator's lair with a subtle psychic call. The sorcerer selects a secluded location where he wants his prey to come, such as a cloistered garden or forgotten side yard, and plants there a thorny bush or tree, which is the offering for this ritual. The tree calls out to mortal minds with memories of hope and sensations of faith and awe. This song reaches out through homes and down streets, stretching as many blocks as the sorcerer has dots in Theban Sorcery.

The Song of the Prey affects wandering minds, steering folks on idle walks and vagrants with nowhere to go toward the tree with an indefinable sensation. A subject simply approaches the tree as a troubled soul approaches an open church in the middle of the night. Once in the vicinity of the tree, a subject sits down and wonders, dreams or explores old memories. While she does, she is entranced and the vampire may feed. When dawn comes, the subject is surprised to find that she's spent the whole night thinking, dreaming or perhaps praying, and hurries off without any knowledge that she's been attacked.

In the abstract, Song of the Prey can be used to guarantee tidy, quiet hunting. Each success earned on the activation roll yields the sorcerer one Vitae. This interpretation of the ritual is suited for use during in-between times of a story, and can be assumed to be a night's work — while the sorcerer is doing other things, prey is coming and waiting for him at the tree he planted.

When used in the thick of a story, this ritual attracts one or more unwitting mortals for the sorcerer to use as he sees fit. The total number of mortals drawn over the course of four hours is equal to half the number of successes scored on the activation roll. When dealing with specific, established characters this ritual can be resisted with a contested action, pitting the sorcerer's Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery against a mortal's Resolve + Composure. Mortals who resist the Song of the Prey are not steered by the ritual and do not approach the tree, though they may nonetheless dream of it. A player's character entranced by the tree automatically awakens if attacked or otherwise surprised, but not if subjected to the Kiss with finesse. Characters may attempt to resist the Kiss as usual, but are assumed not to be surprised by it.

In the 1950s, this ritual saw some use in English cities as Sanctified gathered up homeless kine for an unknown purpose. They were never seen again. In the American South this ritual is called The Smoldering Bush.

Offering: A living, thorn-bearing tree, bush or flower, which withers slowly as the ritual's power fades.

Spear of Faith

With this ritual, a Sanctified sorcerer can assault his enemies with his will alone. A number of subjects equal to the caster's Theban Sorcery dots, and who can be seen directly, may be chosen as victims. The sorcerer can choose to include fewer victims if he desires, and can include or exclude any eligible targets he chooses. The victim closest to the sorcerer suffers lethal damage equal to the successes scored on the ritual's activation roll. The next closest victim suffers one less point of damage than the first, and so on, until every victim has been affected or no more damage remains to be suffered. The victims do not have to be arranged in a row or line, as the Spear of Faith has no trajectory. Defense and armor are no help to the victims, as the Spear of Faith never misses.

The sorcerer hardly needs to move to use this power, but most sorcerers enact this ritual with grand gestures and loud proclamations of faith. The wounds each target suffers erupt exactly as though the victim were pierced or slashed in an exposed area with a spear, from blood spatter to torn clothing.

The roll to activate this ritual is penalized by the highest Stamina of the selected victims.

Offering: A metal pendant or idol in the shape of a crucifix or spear (Size 1 or larger).

••••• Rituals

Damned's Day

This is the legendary ritual used by St. Daniel to brave the sunlight and deliver merciless vengeance upon those who cut down the pious soldiers of the Theban Legion. No sorcerer since has been able to bring about the magnificent darkness of that holy day, but a few, powerful Sanctified have come close. This much-revered ritual draws forth thick clouds to blot out the sun and render the daylight a soulless, monotone

gray. These conditions allow vampires to move about beneath the sun with minor pain and superficial burns rather than enflamed flesh and hair. The ritual reduces the intensity of the daystar's rays to that of "faint, filtered sunlight" (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 173), and reduces the damage to vampires within the area of power. Kindred beneath the unholy canopy of clouds suffer lethal damage every minute, rather than aggravated damage every turn. In the event of an exceptional success, the sky darkens to such a grim depth that vampires suffer just two points of bashing damage per minute.

Unlike most Theban Sorcery rituals, it takes time for the power of the Damned's Day to amass even after the ritual has been completed. For each roll the sorcerer made to complete the ritual, the sky spends an hour thickening with smoke-like clouds. Note that rolls to complete the ritual are still made every turn — the clouds gather over one or more hours *after* the ritual has finally been completed. The clouds persist for 20 minutes per success scored on the ritual's activation roll, then swiftly, strangely drift apart. Incidental rain may accompany the clouds of Damned's Day, but such circumstances are not up to the sorcerer.

The clouds of Damned's Day gather directly above the sorcerer, and reach out to cover a region one mile in diameter. Though this grants a great deal of freedom to many vampires, it also draws much attention to the sorcerer. Experienced Sanctified know that a Damned's Day tempts Kindred to test the limits of the Masquerade — any sorcerer who enacts this legendary ritual sacrifices his subtlety and secrecy in the process.

Offering: The vampire's own flesh is offered up, seared away, as he enacts the ritual outdoors in sight of the sun. A minimum of one point of aggravated damage must be suffered for each roll the character makes to complete the ritual, though on especially bright days even more damage may be suffered before the ritual can be completed. The sorcerer gains no special benefit to resist the Rotschreck during this time, but the rolls of the extended action to resist frenzy may be made reflexively by the sorcerer while activating this ritual.

Fires of Vengeance

Is this the terrible power wielded by St. Daniel against the Romans? Sanctified scholars cannot say for certain, though this ritual was known to sorcerers at the time of his Requiem. It was one of the original powers given to the Monachus by Amoniel.

With but a look and the sound of his voice, the sorcerer turns a victim's sins into white-hot flame (though some witnesses describe the dark power as something more akin to electricity). The sorcerer proclaims the sinners who are to be punished ("Murderers!") and any mortal, ghoul or vampire within direct sight of the sorcerer who has committed such a sin is tormented by the Fires of Vengeance. The flames cause one point of lethal damage for every success scored with a dice pool equal to 10 minus the victim's Humanity or Morality, which can be resisted with a Resolve + Stamina roll (think of it as a reflexive, contested action between the victim and his own sins). If the victim's successes equal or surpass the points of damage dealt by the Fires of Vengeance, the victim suffers no damage from the ritual in that turn. Otherwise, the victim suffers the full force of the power that turn. Each turn the Flames of Vengeance continue to burn, the victim must resist them anew.

The sorcerer may keep the Fires of Vengeance burning for one turn per success scored on the activation roll. If the sorcerer performs any action other than moving his Speed, the Fires of Vengeance go out. If the sorcerer loses sight of a victim, the effect ends for that victim. Only those sinners in sight at the moment when the ritual is completed are effected by it.

Example: *Ezekiel, a Sanctified Bishop, has found the neonate coterie who stole an artifact from the covenant at a recent rite. They've hidden themselves in an abandoned hotel room on the outskirts of the city and there are only two ways into or out of their room: the front door, and a small window in the bathroom. Ezekiel arrives early in the evening, when the whelps are still tying their shoelaces, and has his loyal minions break down the door. Ezekiel steps into the moldy room and throws his hands apart, shouting "Thieves!" He can see all three of his enemies from where he stands. Each of them is soon sheathed in blue flames that spread from their thieving hands.*

All three of Ezekiel's victims have a Humanity rating of 5, so the Fires of Vengeance burn each of them with a dice pool of 5 (10 minus Humanity 5). The players agree to roll just one dice pool for the Fires and use that value for the lot of them, to keep things simple, and get three successes as a result. Each of them makes a reflexive Resolve + Stamina roll to contest the miraculous fires. Two of the victims roll fewer than three successes, so the poor bastards both suffer one point of lethal damage for each success scored by the Fires of Vengeance. The fortunate third victim gets three successes on his roll and suffers no damage whatsoever, though he still shrieks and panics over the fires licking up from his flesh.

While Ezekiel continues to glare and pray, one of the wounded victims bolts for the bathroom window even as his undead flesh blackens and cracks. Once he's in the bathroom, he's out of Ezekiel's sight, so the Fires of Vengeance go out — but there isn't enough room in the bathroom for anyone else. So, meanwhile, his two cohorts stand in sight of Ezekiel and continue to burn. One pleads for mercy, the other pulls his knife, then tosses it away when Ezekiel's enforcers reveal their fire-axes.

Both of Ezekiel's remaining victims must roll for and against the Fires of Vengeance again. This time, however, they both suffer four points of lethal damage! While their coterie-mate struggles to open the boarded-up window in the bathroom, these two collapse onto the rotted carpet and, writhing, beg forgiveness from Ezekiel.

The Fires of Vengeance are a spiritual force not be confused with earthly fire. They do not invoke a vampire's fear of fire (though may otherwise provoke frenzy) and deal lethal damage to Kindred and kine alike.

Offering: The vampire's Humanity. To perform this terrible ritual, the vampire gives his body up to the Beast and

cannot deny the loss of his self in the process. The sorcerer's Humanity automatically drops by one. A derangement roll may still be called for, but sorcerers who choose to use this ritual based on their own Virtues or Vices may be pardoned from the risk if the Storyteller approves — the monster who learns this power is unlikely to be further deranged by its use.

Imprecation of Sin

This ritual desecrates and destroys, spreads ruin and woe, and turns beauty to ash. By standing in the place he wishes to desecrate and making his offering, the sorcerer erodes and decays the environment around him, while simultaneously infusing it with an aura of sin.

A building desecrated with this ritual is ruined: Paint is blackened and blasted away, floorboards collapse, windows yellow and crack, ceilings split, and furniture rots away as though the building had been abandoned, abused, and exposed to the elements for two years per success scored on the ritual's activation roll. The equipment in a desecrated room is most likely ruined, as well, negating any bonuses typically granted by the space or the things kept within (the equipment in a ruined doctor's office is no longer a benefit to Medicine actions, for example).

The space also resonates with a Vice, as though the building were a character of its own. The sorcerer's player may choose any Vice to distill into the subject space. As long as a creature (mundane or supernatural) occupies the space, it is treated as if it had two defining Vices: its own and the space's. Thus a drug addict (whose Vice is Gluttony) who uses a space cursed with the Vice of Lust as a den of prostitution may regain a point of Willpower for her actions, even though she is not normally a lustful person. If she were driven to prostitution to pay for her drug addiction she could regain *two* Willpower, one for each Vice.

The Vice of the cursed site is insidious. It seeps into the minds and hearts of susceptible creatures who dwell too long within the place's resonance of sin. How long constitutes "too long" is up to the Storyteller, but may be defined as a period equal to the character's Morality or Humanity multiplied by ten minutes for first-time visitors. (Over time, the necessary exposure may expand into multiples of hours for frequent visitors.) For every such period a character inhabits the cursed space she must make a reflexive roll to resist undertaking actions that would earn her Willpower based on the place's Vice. This roll is a contested action, pitting the visitor's Resolve + Composure against a dice pool equal to the successes on the ritual's activation roll. If the character succeeds, she feels an impulse (to drink, to fight, etc.) but isn't carried away by it. If she fails, she attempts some sinful action appropriate to her own Morality or Humanity — perhaps, "feeling spontaneous," she decides to trash the space or pick a fight.

The power of the place doesn't instantly make her into a monster, but it does lower her normal boundaries so that, for example, a prideful argument might lead to violence or a night

of drinking might lead to infidelity. As a guideline, assume that the character undertakes an action that she'll regret and will probably, but not necessarily, provoke a degeneration roll (let individual circumstances guide such decisions). If the character cannot indulge in the place's Vice when she falls victim to it, she goes where she can (to a bar, to her home, etc.) as soon as she is reasonably able (possibly skipping appointments or missing work). Think of it as the character taking some of the Vice with her when she leaves — she might not rush out in search of drugs, but the Vice hangs over her until she acts on it.

A character influenced by a cursed space retains the extra Vice until she has regained one Willpower point by acting in a manner consistent with that Vice. Once a character has won Willpower from the extra Vice, she is free of it unless she returns to a space affected by this ritual.

Example: *A Sanctified sorcerer, intending to test the goodness of God's beloved mortals, breaks into an abandoned church (which the Storyteller decides would have a Haven Size of 3 dots) and performs an Imprecation of Sin using a man-sized wooden cross he finds in a storage room and scores seven successes on the activation roll. As the offering crumbles to ash the building rots as though fourteen years of rainstorms, rats and ransacking had taken their toll. The sorcerer infuses the building with the Vice of Gluttony.*

Over the next several months, neighborhood kids venture into the church on weekends to explore and wreak havoc. Before long, it is a popular site for drinking and drugs. Secretly, local Sanctified use it for brutal feeding frenzies in which human victims are utterly consumed by new converts (who feel stronger and more confident with the satisfaction of recovered Willpower).

Eventually, realtors come out to the church to see if it can be converted into luxury condos. They poke around the place for an hour or so, taking measurements and photographs. One realtor, failing his Resolve + Composure roll (against the building's dice pool of 7), says "You know, we haven't really gone partying for a while. What do you say we go out tonight and get fucked up?" By midnight, he's convinced his colleagues to go with him out to an underground club and by three in the morning he's passed out from drugs and beer and under the fangs of a hungry vampire.

The roll to activate this power is penalized by every dot the place *would have* in the Haven Size merit, were it a haven (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 100). The effects of this ritual are permanent until the space is affected by some other, more potent magic or is otherwise spiritually cleansed. A complete renovation can hide the appearance of sin, but the place's Vice may remain: Roll a dice pool equal to the successes earned on the ritual's activation roll; if a success is produced, the Vice remains. Only the complete destruction of the afflicted building ends the power of this ritual.

Offering: A ceremonial cross, spear or other symbolic representation, offered up at the site to be ruined. The offering must have a Size at least equal to the dots the space would have if it were a haven.

Night of Hell

The sorcerer dispatches an echo of damnation to the sleeping or torpid mind of a victim he can see directly (though, traditionally, Sanctified sorcerers whisper in the ear of their victim), whether mortal or vampire. This shred of Hell explodes in the victim's mind, unfolding into what seems to be years of anguish and suffering. The exact nature of the terrible vision depends on the victim, for it is her own hell she samples. The victim gains a severe derangement and loses all of her Willpower points as a result of the time she spends in torment. The victim's derangement may be overcome with time (and experience points) or, if it is the exacerbation of a preexisting derangement, the Storyteller may require the victim to reconcile her troubled mind through therapy or life changes. The lower the Humanity or Morality of the victim, the more her hell is her own doing, and the harder the derangement is to be rid of.

A torpid victim ignores the normal intervals of her sleep and lays unconscious until roused. A living victim sleeps through hunger and thirst to starvation. A victim cannot free herself from the nightmare unless her body suffers at least one point of lethal damage, at which point she comes back, screaming and terrified, to her ordinary, waking life; Kindred victims must immediately roll to resist a frenzy of fear (target successes: 10) upon waking. (At the Storyteller's discretion, more powerful magic or psychic forces may be able to penetrate the Night of Hell and help the victim.)

The roll to activate this power is penalized by the victim's Resolve. If the victim knows the sorcerer well, she may recognize his voice or face from her Night of Hell with a successful Wits + Resolve roll, penalized by the sorcerer's Wits, made reflexively during the torment.

Offering: Blood or hair from the victim.

Rain of Blood

The sky or ceiling erupts in a downpour of deadly blood. This ritual enables a sorcerer to transform his own Vitae into a slicing, scalding rain of blood. The rain falls slowly at first, a drop at a time, as the sorcerer enacts the ritual. Once completed, however, it pours down as hard as the sorcerer likes (and imposing as much as a –5 penalty on actions that could be affected by ordinary rain). Though the Rain of Blood falls on everyone and everything within a roughly 40-yard diameter (or smaller, decided by the sorcerer), only those the sorcerer wishes to harm are hurt by the rain. The rain inflicts one point of lethal damage per turn for a number of turns equal to the successes scored on the ritual's activation roll. No armor or Defense short of complete cover can stop this damage. Living victims who fail a reflexive Composure roll are also nauseated by the warm and gruesome storm, and suffer a –4 penalty on all non-reflexive actions so long as they are within, can see or can smell the Rain of Blood.

The Rain of Blood is real enough to the senses: it stains, it sticks, it soaks, it puddles and it remains even after the ritual's effects are ended. It may even provoke Wassail. It cannot be consumed as Vitae, however, and does not yield conclusive scientific results if tested for DNA or blood type; it seems to be an indecipherable mixture of human blood.

The sorcerer must be somewhere within the area to be affected when the ritual is completed, but can thereafter leave. If the sorcerer wishes to, he can end the Rain of Blood at any time with just a thought.

Offering: A single Vitae, which is turned into the Rain of Blood itself, drawn from the sorcerer's own body by blade or bite.

Appendix: Allies and Antagonists

The Kindred
you surround
yourself with
should be
the most
exemplary predators.
Then you'll always
be in the company
of the most awesome
and fearsome creatures
in the parish.
Your greatest ally
is that which
you would most dread
as an enemy.

—From a Creation Rite sermon by
Deacon J. Jeremiah Goldsmith

I called for my lovers but they deceived me: my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city while they sought their meat to relieve their souls.

—Lamentations 1:19

This appendix contains sample Storyteller characters drawn from the varied ranks of the Lancea Sanctum. Although these characters are intended for use by the Storyteller as a quick means to populate a story involving the church of Longinus, players might draw from this appendix for character concepts. Perhaps one of these supporting cast members would make a fine sire or patron for your character. Players of non-Sanctified characters with the Allies Merit might browse this appendix in search of a concept for an ally within the Lancea Sanctum.

These characters are not meant to be the main antagonists or leading allies of a story. These characters are just here to inspire you as a player or Storyteller and to serve when the story calls for a brief role to be filled right away. These are simple tools for solving simple problems. Use them to support, challenge, confront or provoke the players' characters, just as you would use the sample antagonists in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** or **Vampire: The Requiem**.

Storytellers are encouraged to flesh out these characters if they become more meaningful to the ongoing chronicle. Perhaps the suspicious Bishop becomes a nemesis of the players' characters and now needs combat statistics to define his capabilities in an upcoming assault on his haven. Maybe the players' characters choose to employ the diligent archivist and get to know her history over many months. Let the players' choices determine which characters need further information. Let the story tell you what characters are important.

When the time comes to further develop the game statistics of a character based on one of these shorthand descriptions, don't limit yourself by the abilities included here. The best course is to rebuild the character from the ground up to reflect the character as she has appeared "on stage," rather than how she was once vaguely defined. These sample characters work for you and the story. Change them, command them, redefine them and make them yours.

Non-Combatants

Use the following non-combatant characters for all manner of scenes involving the Lancea Sanctum, be they set on the concrete floor of a church basement, in the stained-glass glow of a cathedral knave or amid the ropes of the parish bell tower.

Accomplished Archbishop

Quote: "I understand why things seem so simple from where you stand, whelp, but keep your mouth shut until you know better."

Background: All Archbishops are accomplished, but not all have a reputation for great insight, patience and experience. While this vampire's nights of action are behind him, his gaze reaches into the weedy darkness at the edge of the city and his

word commands the action of other Kindred in the domain (Sanctified or not). Some Archbishops are stagnant navel-gazers holding onto power through custom or ritual alone, but others are philosopher-kings wielding power with ferocious grace.

Description: Archbishops tend toward old-fashioned religious wardrobes to augment their political strength with symbolic power. An Archbishop might seem worn and weary, slumped in his seat as though exhausted from the sort of remarkable Requiem that leads to such authority. Other Archbishops are vibrant politicians, speaking at court with a sermonizer's verve and a mayor's smile, as though rulership were the house in which they were raised.

Storytelling Hints: An accomplished Archbishop is at the top of the city and the local Lancea Sanctum. As such, he deals with the affairs of Kindred from every strata of the domain. The Archbishop needs agents to serve as his voice and hands in such dealings. An Archbishop leads like a general, rules like a Prince or shepherds like a Bishop. Certainly, there can be no greater mentor in the domain than an Archbishop. If nothing else, the Archbishop is the center of court and, often, the host of Elysium. He is the social landmark visible from every back alley and broken window in the city.

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool 7) — The Archbishop is a religious figurehead in addition to a political leader. He is well versed in matters of history, theology, philosophy and language.

Persuasion (dice pool 8) — While a Bishop can get by with strong oratory, the Archbishop must have broader tal-

ents for all sorts of negotiation, barter and mediation. The Archbishop gets what he wants with words.

Politics (dice pool 9) — Archbishops may obtain temporal power in a city through many means, but few can maintain it without a mastery of political tactics and strategy. Archbishops see through opposing plots, recognize opportunities when they arise and know who is in bed with whom throughout a darkened city of secret monsters. They are the masters of their profession.

Subterfuge (dice pool 7) — With reasoned arguments and informed strategy must come an ability to fake it. Not everyone the Archbishop deals with can be trusted, and not all of them should trust him.

Clandestine Heretic

Quote: "They would destroy me if they knew what I really think. Some night, maybe I'll make my peace with that."

Background: Deviation from the core beliefs of the covenant isn't something the Lancea Sanctum celebrates — or tolerates. Although one domain's vestments are another's heathen symbols, the unlife of a Sanctified heretic boils down to the same dramatic ingredients: fear, secrecy and anxiety. One clandestine heretic writes his private manifesto in his hidden haven while another engages in hushed debates behind the churchyard. The clandestine heretic doesn't hate the Sanctified and isn't ready or willing to leave the covenant, but his disagreement with the orthodoxy would make him an outlaw if he were discovered.

Description: Disheveled and anxious, the clandestine heretic talks softly and looks over his shoulder. He might keep his collar up or constantly check his pockets. "Can we talk about this somewhere else?" he asks.

Storytelling Hints: The clandestine heretic needs to confide in someone. Maybe with enough support he could show the covenant that his heresy is no threat to the status quo. He might seek out a friendly haven when he's found out, or he might be the subject of a quiet, unofficial investigation. When the clandestine heretic's true beliefs are revealed, is he a pariah or an enemy?

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool 4) — Having few (if any) like-minded Kindred with whom to discuss his beliefs, the clandestine heretic does a lot of reading on subjects even slightly related to his forbidden views.

Persuasion (dice pool 4) — The heretic routinely has to convince himself to stay true to his beliefs and has practiced what he'll say to others when he is inevitably revealed. He can't keep hiding for centuries, can he?

Streetwise (dice pool 3) — To get the religious paraphernalia and books he wants without going through local covenant channels, the heretic makes use of a little-known underground market in materials and media for fringe religious groups and secret cults.

Subterfuge (dice pool 5) — More than anything, the clandestine heretic has a lot of practice passing himself off as a "regular" Sanctified. He lies every night, even to Kindred he considers his colleagues and allies.

Conflicted Priest

Quote: "Believe me, I know the path isn't always clear, but sometimes we have to trust that our strength will come."

Background: Every holy predator in the covenant was once a breathing mortal, and many cannot make the change from mundane to monstrous morality so easily. The conflicted Priest knows his duty but worries about his ability to do it well. How can he take responsibility for his own excellence when the part of him that tries hard and understands the *Testament* is slowly slipping away? How can he be responsible for the well-being of other Kindred when he knows so little for sure himself?

Description: A conflicted Priest looks like any Priest in public but seems exasperated and tired in private. He might use traditional, elaborate or ridiculous religious costumes to substitute for his own certainty, hoping that the heavy weight of an iron spear pendant will overshadow the weight of responsibility and doubt. Or he might dress plainly, in jeans and a sport coat or slacks and a sweater, as though he were leading the simpler, familiar life he once knew.

Storytelling Hints: Despite his inner turmoil, a conflicted Priest has work to do. He attends to covenant rites, ministers to the laity and counsels the Kindred of his congregation. Does his conflict spread doubt or does he help other vampires find answers by sharing in the search for them? The conflicted Priest can ask the questions that are important to the story even though he doesn't know where to find the answers. His doubt might even draw characters who want to help him further into the covenant as they study and cope together.

Abilities:

Research (dice pool 3) — Until he can find answers of his own, the conflicted Priest looks for them in the writings of the Lancea Sanctum. (See "Research," p. 55 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.)

Empathy (dice pool 3) — His own emotional awareness makes the conflicted Priest sensitive to the feelings of others who feel like he does. This makes him a suitable counselor for Kindred who want to better understand their own thoughts. The conflicted Priest can show them their own fear and doubt reflected in his.

Dammitic Sorcerer

Quote: "Isn't it written that the rituals were found in Thebes? In ancient vaults? Doesn't it stand to reason that we should look for other insight and power from the nights before the Crucifixion?"

Background: Dammitic sorcerers seek out miraculous powers and sources of enlightenment in addition to those given to the covenant by Longinus. Many Theban Sorcery rituals echo miracles of the Old Testament and other occult powers of the ancient world, and Dammitic sorcerers tap into the ancient ways of Judaism and Kabbalah for further avenues of arcane insight. Some seek all manner of hidden knowledge, while some seek only new rituals (or new interpretations of old rituals).

Description: These workers of dark miracles are more concerned with action than appearance. Some Dammitic sorcerers adopt Hasidic dress even if they did not do so in life and cannot complete the traditional beards and hairstyles in undeath. Decorations in the form of simple Judaic pendants, traditional hats and rings are common exceptions. Most sorcerers seem serious, deeply reverent and well read. Few rush to speak, and most are contemplative and calm.

Storytelling Hints: Dammitic sorcerers might be in search of knowledge, or they might be the keepers of knowledge sought by others. Some hoard the lore they've got, but some are willing to teach rites of Theban Sorcery in return for other services, such as being a courier or performing manual labor. A Dammitic sorcerer interprets rituals somewhat differently than ordinary Sanctified sorcerers do, however, possibly performing rites in Hebrew or making use of nontraditional offerings. Dammitic sorcerers in search of power might be employers, rivals, petitioners or targets for attack.

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool 5) — Practitioners of Theban Sorcery must study theology, ancient languages and folklore to make the best use of the rituals they know.

Occult (dice pool 5) — Much of the lore a Dammitic sorcerer seeks can't be found in traditional academic libraries. A Dammitic sorcerer who has returned from a search for occult secrets might know secrets unimagined by any other Sanctified in the domain.

Theban Sorcery (dice pool 9) — A Dammitic sorcerer is an expert on the miraculous magic of the Sanctified both in theory and in practice. Though most Dammitic sorcerers are concerned more with rituals that augment or empower spiritual and intellectual pursuits, they have a reputation for knowing potent powers and putting them to use for worthy allies.

Diligent Archivist

Quote: "Stop paraphrasing. If you want to know exactly what he said, let's go and look it up."

Background: The Lancea Sanctum reveres a manuscript written more than 2,000 years ago and, as a result, continues to honor valuable new writings on the subject of Kindred faith. Recognizing that many writings won't reveal their true value for decades or centuries, the Sanctified record and protect sermons, essays and treatises by Bishops and Priests alike. To maintain the integrity and secrecy of such an archive requires dedication and diligence. Such archivists might not be deeply pious themselves, but they are valuable to the covenant, which buys them latitude.

Description: Some archivists are staunch traditionalists, maintaining only paper records and keeping all catalogues by hand. Others tend libraries of CD-ROMs or man the sole terminals of underground computer servers. Their appearances are as diverse as their methods, from the brown robes of a Benedictine scrivener to the polar fleece and eyeglasses of an IT staffer. Archivists notice fine details, take notes on everything and seemingly never forget.

Storytelling Hints: The diligent archivist knows the secrets that, when put together by characters in the know, solve mysteries. An archivist can be a vital ally or the weak spot exploited by an enemy. If records go missing or sabotage destroys treasured manuscripts of the parish, the archivist might be the final repository of essential knowledge. An archivist might even decide some of the parish secrets can no longer be kept and seek out Kindred to act on the information he has. Where information is power, the archivist is a prized resource.

Abilities:

Computer (dice pool 4) — The diligent archivist writes, stores and encrypts parish files, maintains hidden databases and writes new software. With quality equipment and software, the archivist can protect secrets from prying eyes and the passage of time.

Politics (dice pool 3) — Delicate, intimate information passes beneath the archivist's fingers and eyes. Over time, he develops a better picture of politics within the covenant and, sometimes, the whole city.

Research (dice pool 6) — Archivists frequently study each other's methods (at libraries, online, etc.). In some parishes, the archivist and the Bishop are the only Kindred allowed within the archive, so he must research facts and assemble reports for Priests and covenant outsiders. (See "Research," p. 55 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.)

Domineering Cardinal

Quote: "Rise, my child, and look upon glory."

Background: The domineering Cardinal is the most powerful Sanctified in the city — if not the most powerful vampire — and she knows it. Through centuries of devout toil and careful strategizing, she has become a predator that all other vampires should strive to emulate. She is ancient and fearsome. Let none in the domain deny her divine right.

Description: Lavish and brutal, glorious and terrible. The domineering Cardinal could be generous or graceful, but she has no *need* to be. She says what she thinks and disregards those too foolish to hear her. Her mannerisms are archaic and regal, and those who wish to see or hear her must do so on her strict terms. Do not look at her until given leave to do so, then see the strangely fearsome majesty of a man-eater in the finest clothes, of a monster dressed in the flesh of its prey.

Storytelling Hints: The domineering Cardinal demands service, sometimes commanding Sanctified servitors to perform inexplicable errands. She confidently authorizes the destruction of a well-known vampire. She orders the retrieval of a coveted artifact from its rightful owner. The domineering Cardinal is a remote and meditative queen who appears at court surrounded by defenders, then vanishes into the depths of the church surrounded by advisors. She sleeps for years at a time, then wakes and reinvents the politics of the domain. The Cardinal is the dame of consequence. She is the last vampire ever seen by a Sanctified sacrifice to her ancient thirst. She devours sinners.

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool 9) — As the premiere Anointed vampire of the domain, the Cardinal is an authority on matters of theology and history. She cannot afford to rely on power-hungry toadies to supply her with facts.

Intimidation (dice pool 10) — The domineering Cardinal gets her way from even the most resolute vampires. Her very presence is intimidating.

Politics (dice pool 9) — The Cardinal must be her own expert on the domain and the predators in it. For a figure of such religious and secular power, this information encompasses not only the personal allegiances of local Kindred but their philosophical leanings as well.

Hardy Mendicant

Quote: "Evening, there. Can I follow this road to Elysium?"

Background: The hardy mendicant is the odd outsider, the wandering philosopher and hermit who drifts into the domain with news of distant cities and new insights into the Requiem. Some wander to better themselves. Some wander to know the world. Some wander to strengthen the covenant. Some seek enlightenment, spiritual power or respect. Some are avoiding responsibility, commitments or justice.

Description: Dirty and weathered, mendicants need functional clothing that can last for years. Many carry rucksacks or duffel bags with all their worldly possessions within, and most are positively old-fashioned. Shoes, coats and hats seldom reflect modern trends, unless they have been salvaged from a Dumpster or gifted by an admiring Priest. A mendicant seems emotionally and philosophically distant but easy-going and understanding. Still, he is difficult to truly know. In a week, when he's gone, he might just vanish into the hundred years of places he's seen.

Storytelling Hints: Mendicants can be the harbingers of doom or salvation. They bring news and new ideas from other domains, which can spread through the parish to the relief or disgust of the Bishop or Archbishop. A mendicant goes out of his way to meet other Kindred, and he could inspire characters to reexamine their Requiems with his new perspective. The mendicant might even show local vampires places they never knew existed within — or on the edge of — the city. But is the mendicant's strange talk insightful or insane? When he's gone, will the parish be better or worse off for his visit?

Abilities:

Empathy (dice pool 6) — The hardy mendicant understands new cities, and the vampires who dwell there, first through intuition. Without time to get to know people, the traveler must be a quick study.

Occult (dice pool 5) — In his wanderings between the bright spots of the night, the mendicant has seen what else lurks in the dark besides the Kindred. Though he has seen more than he understands, the mendicant is willing to tell tales to those who'll listen.

Survival (dice pool 8) — The ability to find Vitae and escape the sun even in the hostile wilderness of the World of Darkness is what makes the mendicant hardy.

Iblic Creed Pilgrim

Quote: "This city isn't so different from mine, really. Not in the dark."

Background: What separates the wanderer from the pilgrim is the destination, whether it's on the earth or in the soul. An Iblic pilgrim might be journeying to see a holy site, visit a treasured artifact or even consult with a revered elder or ancient vampire. Pilgrims aren't nomads, though. They have homes, as well as the drive to travel far from them.

Description: Although some followers of the Iblic creed are old-fashioned or even archaic, a modern pilgrim is more likely to dress in a parka than a cloak. The undead do not worry about cold winds or rain, but a traveler in the World of Darkness is safest when he escapes notice. Regardless of the style, the pilgrim is dressed for travel, whether that means hiking boots and a backpack or wheeled luggage and a messenger bag for his laptop.

Storytelling Hints: A pilgrim hopes to travel under a flag of truce, but he cannot expect a welcome wherever he goes. Pilgrims must present themselves to the Prince (or his agents) upon arrival in any new city, even if they are just passing through. Even if the pilgrim travels in peace, he might have no interest in making friends. His own troubles might follow him on his trek or his unexpected presence might create new problems. Has the pilgrim reached his destination? Do the locals know there's a religious attraction in the domain? Will more pilgrims come in the future?

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool 6) — The smart pilgrim studies before embarking on a perilous trip through strange domains. The pilgrim has read a great deal about his destination and its religious significance.

Expression (dice pool 4) — In each city it seems to be the same: When the pilgrim arrives at court, he is expected to report what he has seen of the outside world. By now, he's getting good at telling stories.

Stealth (dice pool 4) — Not every place a pilgrim passes is a place where he wants to be seen. Sometimes a pilgrim sneaks through a strange or lawless territory without presenting himself to the local authority.

Survival (dice pool 3) — Though a pilgrim travels by civilized means if possible, some survival skills are a necessity in case of unexpected danger.

Impious Priest

Quote: "I'll get to that later, Father."

Background: Not all the followers of Longinus exhibit the piety and dedication the covenant celebrates. These venal Priests squeak by, performing the barest few of their duties while enjoying the protections and powers of their position. Such Priests are not much loved within the Sanctified church, but a good number of such poor examples continue to populate the order.

Description: Sloppy dress is one sign of a lazy Priest. Unfortunately, few other telltale signs are so obvious. Impious Priests might seem overindulgent or under-zealous. They dodge questions or they converse in vague terms to hide their lack of study. More than anything else, however, an impious Priest is revealed by his interests and actions.

Storytelling Hints: The impious Priest must have some skill that makes her of use to the parish, something to excuse her weak faith. Perhaps she has temporal contacts that are best exploited by an Anointed representative of the covenant or perhaps her title was awarded in recognition of service that has not since been duplicated (such as the defense of a Bishop or the capture of a heretic). Is the impious Priest a threat to the faithful integrity of the whole parish? What are the repercussions for aiding or opposing a vampire who does not feel bound by the same faith as her colleagues?

Abilities:

Politics (dice pool 3) — The impious Priest is more concerned with secular affairs than the state of her own soul.

Socialize (dice pool 5) — Time that could be spent in prayer and contemplation is instead spent visiting with other Sanctified and attending courtly social functions. This Priest might not know Longinus well, but she knows the vampires of the domain well enough.

Streetwise (dice pool 3) — The impious Priest has a reputation for being less zealous and demanding than her peers. As a result, it is to her that less devout pedestrian vampires come to confess. She is the parish's representative to the impious.

Inspired Proselytizer

Quote: "Look at yourselves! You know you are more than this! You have power! The kine are afraid of you, as they should be, but you can be so much more!"

Background: Proselytizers seek to add to the ranks of the Sanctified, whether to fill a hole in the parish or to fill a hole in themselves. These Kindred are the stereotypical recruiters of the covenant — great speakers and counselors found drawing attention in Elysium or sitting in solemn discussion with curious or frightened Kindred.

Description: An inspired proselytizer is marked by his graceful enthusiasm. The best proselytizers are attractive, even if not beautiful to the eye. The wardrobe of a good proselytizer is carefully selected to be pleasing and pious without risking the Masquerade. These vampires, after all, are those who are seen off Sanctified grounds most often.

Storytelling Hints: Proselytizers are persuasive, sociable sorts. Most domains with a Sanctified presence have well-known proselytizers working to inform the Kindred of the domain about the *Testament* and the Lancea Sanctum. An inspired proselytizer might be the de facto mouthpiece of the local Sanctified or a makeshift ambassador to the other covenants. Local Kindred might mock the proselytizer behind his back for his seriousness, but he remains popular through familiarity.

Abilities:

Empathy (dice pool 5) — A proselytizer needs to be aware of his audience's feelings, no matter how large or small that audience is.

Persuasion (dice pool 5) — His voice is the proselytizer's greatest strength. A vampire's mind isn't really changed with one conversation; a thousand tiny conversions make one Sanctified.

Oratory (dice pool 6) — A proselytizer might be a fine conversationalist, but he is an even better speaker. (See "Oratory," p. 83 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.)

Socialize (dice pool 4) — The proselytizer sways his audiences by getting to know the local Kindred. If he's to be known, he should be liked, as well.

Jaded Legate

Quote: "This type of shit's exactly the reason I can't stick around here more than a couple weeks at a time."

Background: Coming and going from the domain, seeing how other cities operate and understanding the true dangers of the outside world sharpen a Legate's cynicism. A Legate might have his title because he's unable to find contentment within the domain or because his contentment comes from within himself. If he is not self-reliant when he takes on the role, he will come to be in time, lest he meet Final Death in the brutal wilds (or a foreign domain). In time, however, so many nights of peril and wonder wear down the vampire's receptors for such things. For a jaded Legate, the thrills and mysteries of the Requiem have lost their luster.

Description: Practical and proven. Even a jaded Legate still has a sense of personal style — to decorate his body is to decorate his home — but years might go by before he updates his wardrobe or refreshes the painted emblems on his leather jacket. The jaded Legate might wear jewelry or sport tattoos, but he doesn't think much of them anymore. He's laconic, often casual, and seldom seems surprised, shocked, offended or impressed. For him, everything has become simultaneously routine and temporary.

Storytelling Hints: A jaded Legate might travel abroad to perform an obscure rite or deliver a vital message and find himself in the middle of another personal squabble between blood-suckers or opposed by one more coterie of self-important punks. He might be the foil to a socialite used to charming secrets out of messengers and ambassadors or he might be the escort of an unwelcome diplomat. For the right price and with a good enough plan, a jaded Legate might even be the ticket out of the domain.

Abilities:

Drive (dice pool 6) — Legates aren't just skilled drivers. They have valuable experience devising itineraries, avoiding tickets and managing safe travel in a hostile world.

Larceny (dice pool 5) — The places a Legate goes aren't always open at night. The cars he drives aren't always his. A Legate does what's necessary to keep on moving and doesn't much worry about laws that don't provoke a quick police response.

Streetwise (dice pool 6) — No Legate has access to all the resources and talents he needs to survive, so one who lasts long enough to become jaded must know how to deal with people who have the talents and resources he needs.

Survival (dice pool 5) — Though most Legates hope to avoid difficult situations on the road, none survive without the ability to cope with dwindling supplies and an approaching dawn.

Lay Sister

Quote: "You guys get so worked up sometimes. I don't know how you get through the night without killing each other."

Background: Most Sanctified aren't considered part of the clergy. Most are simply members of the larger congregation.

The laity of the Damned aren't the vampires who've earned the covenant its stereotypes but instead resemble the "ordinary" vampire population at large in the domain. Except for a Spear of Destiny necklace or occasional prayers for good fortune, many lay brothers and sisters don't seem like Sanctified at all.

Description: The appearance of individual Kindred of the general congregation is as varied as the vampires themselves. Compared to the Anointed of the covenant, however, the laity might seem more modern, more casual and more fashion-conscious.

Storytelling Hints: A lay sister might be a non-Sanctified's first exposure to the tenets of the Lancea Sanctum. Lay vampires might not even broadcast their limited allegiance at first. Although religion is important to these Kindred, it isn't *most* important. To learn about the *Testament* without sermons or threats, try the laity.

Abilities:

Crafts (dice pool 4) — The services that a lay sister performs for the covenant could be utterly mundane, based on a profession from life or unlife before joining the congregation. Perhaps she helps build ceremonial spaces for the parish, or maybe she maintains the Bishop's car.

Expression (dice pool 3) — A lay sister might contribute to observances by writing music, singing during Midnight Mass or acting in a monstrous morality play. Even casual members of the congregation are sometimes inspired to write or paint about their faith.

Streetwise (dice pool 3) — While the clergy is generally concerned about higher powers and greater power, the laity more often spends nights at street level, facing more earthly troubles.

New Convert

Quote: "So did Longinus say, 'Though my work is sinful my mission is divine.'"

Background: The new convert bristles with the enthusiasm of youth and seeks answers with ignorant hope. She believes, as a Sanctified monster, that the answers she seeks will inevitably come. She hasn't yet realized that the Lancea Sanctum doesn't have the answers, but simply knows trusted and respected ways to look for them.

Description: Eager and vocal, the new convert carries a copy of the *Testament* wherever she goes and quotes it with accuracy if not insight. With her enthusiasm has come an interest in showing her new allegiance. She wears prominent religious symbols with her modern, fashionable clothes or possibly even takes on the tonsure or a monk's robes.

Storytelling Hints: New converts demonstrate the empowerment of faith. A new convert who slowly loses her exuberance and gradually tempers her hope might symbolize the whole parish. A new convert who meets Final Death at the command of her Bishop might symbolize fanaticism. New converts can be valuable and eager agents or protégés. A new convert, unspoiled by factional politics, might be recruited into a new faction or lured into a heresy disguised as a secret society.

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool 3) — New converts are often challenged to quote from the *Testament* or given new religious tracts to read and study. Eventually, much of this knowledge will be forgotten or disregarded.

Crafts (dice pool 3) — An idle mind breeds doubt. New converts might be tasked with preparing a church for Midnight Mass (hanging curtains and banners, assembling prayer sheets, etc.) or performing simple labor for a Priest or Bishop.

Pious Bishop

Quote: "I believe it because Longinus has told us it is so. I know it because I have tasted it myself."

Background: A pious Bishop is a role model for the Sanctified. She has found a degree of peace and enlightenment as an undead monster of which mortals can only dream. She is

the shepherd of the parish flock, looking out for the well-being of her congregation in both body and soul.

Description: Impressive, gracious and fearsome. The pious Bishop is serene and inspiring when speaking before the congregation or offering counsel to a parishioner. In the heat of a bloody Sanctified ceremony, with her hands and teeth stained with Vitae, she reveals her mastery of the Beast and her acceptance of the Curse. She dresses in the formal robes of her office and speaks with the wisdom and authority that comes from centuries of experience.

Storytelling Hints: The pious Bishop is a respected and trusted leader. Parishioners strive to earn her approval and hope never to incur her wrath. She is an excellent mentor and advisor to those Kindred admirable enough to warrant her time. Vampires among the clergy and laity alike would face Final Death in her service. Many already have.

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool 8) — The pious Bishop knows not only the *Testament* but all manner of theological and historical subjects useful in the understanding of covenant scripture.

Persuasion (dice pool 8) — The piety of the Bishop is inspiring. Drawing from her own spiritual strength, she speaks with such persuasiveness that even the undead hearts of her predatory parish can be opened to faith.

Theban Sorcery (dice pool 13) — As her insight deepened, so did her understanding of Theban Sorcery. The pious Bishop is now a master of those miraculous rituals, and she uses them to demonstrate the power of faith and the covenant.

Sanctified Primogen

Quote: "Because it's been that way for two hundred years. Sometimes that's reason enough."

Background: As educated and enlightened elders, the Sanctified make obvious choices for inclusion among the Primogen. Even a Prince devoid of faith can respect the insight that comes from religious study and dedicated self-improvement. The Sanctified Primogen is well versed in history and philosophy. (Good advice dressed in religious symbolism is no less valuable.) Still, the Sanctified Primogen is less a preacher or missionary to the court than an attaché or diplomat. He's a political operative first and a religious representative second, like a lawyer for the church.

Description: Formal and impressive. Whether the Sanctified Primogen dresses in quasi-religious garb or a smart-looking suit, he is the image of respectability. Business-oriented and serious, even when he is fashionably dressed for court, the Sanctified Primogen shows class and restraint. He might dress to please the Prince, but his mind is actually focused on more important matters of church and state.

Storytelling Hints: Even the most respected Primogen from the Lancea Sanctum has his allegiance questioned now and again. A Kindred who straddles issues of religion and politics must always check his balance. Is the Sanctified Primogen working to aid the covenant or the Prince? What influence does the Lancea Sanctum have over the court by way of the Primogen? How does the Prince use the Primogen to influence the Sanctified? If the parish favors the Bishop over the Prince, the Primogen must tend to his loyalties carefully. If the Primogen worries about appearances too much, though, he could lose sight of his duties.

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool 7) — The Sanctified Primogen is respected for his educated opinion. To keep up with his own reputation, he must constantly study and research topics of interest to the Prince and of consequence to the domain.

Persuasion (dice pool 7) — Sometimes, to make the value of his advice clear, the Primogen must persuade the Prince to see things in a new light. When the Sanctified Primogen and the Ordo Dracul Primogen give conflicting advice, it's the better-argued position that wins the Prince's favor.

Subterfuge (dice pool 7) — Sometimes the Primogen must disguise facts to make his advice seem more valuable. When the Primogen needs the Prince to accept the Sanctified position on a conflict, an argument must be made to seem more reasonable than it is.

Suspicious Bishop

Quote: "Keep your eye on that one. He knows what faith *sounds* like, but he's hiding something."

Background: The suspicious Bishop achieved his position not through his spiritual strengths but through subterfuge and blackmail. Now he searches for threats to his power: conspirators, rivals, traitors, heretics and assassins. The paranoia of this Bishop is slowly coming to light, but not many know the truth of his rise to power.

Description: At first glance, the suspicious Bishop seems to simply be a powerful Sanctified leader with fine vestments and a scrutinizing eye. In time, however, his stares and prying questions suggest his deepening fear and growing paranoia. He refuses to be touched and avoids eye contact.

Storytelling Hints: The suspicious Bishop is a growing problem for all the Sanctified below him. Every night he seems to grow more focused on pursuing enemies both real and suspected than on leading the parish. What happens when his trust erodes? Will his investigations devolve into witch hunts? When he turns his suspicious eye on those who are loyal to him, what will he find? And how much of his fear is imagined? Has he really uncovered a Kindred conspiracy or as he truly lost his mind?

Abilities:

Empathy (dice pool 6) — Always scrutinizing, always judging, the suspicious Bishop has developed an intuitive sense of people's emotions.

Investigation (dice pool 6) — In his earlier nights, the suspicious Bishop dug up secrets on those whose power he sought. Now he uses his investigative experience to seek out conspirators and heretics.

Subterfuge (dice pool 7) — The deceit he honed in his pursuit of power is now used to defend his station and hide his own growing fear.

Tollison Creed Deacon

Quote: "Let your ears take in the gospel and you will *know* faith in your own heart! Hallelujah!"

Background: The Tollison Creed Deacon helps Kindred reach spiritual epiphanies by exploring everyday miracles and the influence of God on Earth. She takes a personal interest in the well-being of Sanctified parishioners and encourages increasingly radical expressions of faith from the congregation. The Deacon is a sermonizer and religious performer whose efforts are intended to pull followers into unexplored territories of religious ecstasy. She's a snake-handler — soothing vipers and rattlers with her touch — and a fire-gazer — treading dangerously close to fire pits without succumbing to the Red Fear.

Description: The Tollison Creed Deacon takes great joy in her work. She is thrilled by the experience of faith. Her whole demeanor promotes participation and withers fear. She is an ecstatic minister, encouraging and empowering, vibrant in undeath and seemingly accepting of the Curse.

Storytelling Hints: The unique observances and remarkable energy of the Tollison Creed lead some Kindred to think of these Sanctified as cultists. It's certainly true that the Deacon wields more influence than her status might suggest. What will she do with that influence? What other strange rituals does she perform for her Sanctified sub-group? How far will she go to test the limits of her faith… and that of her followers?

Abilities:

Animal Ken (dice pool 6) — The Deacon was a snake-handler in life. In unlife, with less to fear, her skills have grown. In time, perhaps she'll face off against more exotic and deadly animals. The confidence she exhibits when snake-handling, the bond

she seems to share with those fanged killers, inspires and encourages her followers to draw out and master their own Beasts.

Expression (dice pool 7) — Snake-handling is just part of the Deacon's carefully crafted performance. The Deacon is not insincere, but her show is a calculated, refined effort to influence an audience.

Occult (dice pool 5) — The Deacon's inspiration comes from sources stranger and less understood than the *Testament* alone. She seeks out evidence of God and tests of faith in ancient texts and cultures.

Combatants

Use these characters to fight for or against the players' characters when the story turns to violence. In the right (or wrong) circumstances, Sanctified and non-Sanctified characters alike have reason to fear these fighters.

Faithless Hound

Quote: "The Sheriff says I'm to take you to see the Bishop, by whatever means *I* say are necessary."

Background: The faithless Hound serves the local Sanctified powers that be because they have the authority to excuse all kind of trespasses and violence. In life, this mook was a bar-brawler. Now he's a leg-breaker for the undead church of the Damned, not because the cause is just, but because the covenant gives him the freedom to beat on ghouls and other vampires unloved by the Sanctified. It's a simple, exciting job. He's in the business of spreading fear, settling scores and breaking bones. Business is good.

Description: If not for the spear pendant pinned to his leather biker jacket or the centurion tattoo on his neck, the Hound wouldn't look like the pious type. He's got the scars that came with a life of rough living and the feral habit of flashing fangs that comes with a gradual surrender to the Beast.

He's dressed for work in durable leather and denim — clothes that'll survive a fight. Tonight he might have his brass knuckles or an aluminum baseball bat out for show, but he's got a claw hammer in his belt and a fire-axe on his bike.

Storytelling Hints: The faithless Hound is an agent of wrath, well suited to stories of comeuppance and brutal face-offs. He's been all over the city on the covenant's business, however, so he's seen things that could be of use and has dirt on lots of vampires who are unpopular with the local Sanctified authorities. Without any real dedication to the religion of the covenant, though, the Hound may be susceptible to bribery. What would it take to get him to betray the Sanctified? Could he be trusted if he changed sides?

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Drive 1, Intimidation 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Weaponry 2
Merits: Brawling Dodge, City Status 1, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 1, Haven (Security 1, Size 1), Resources 1, Strong Back
Willpower: 4
Humanity: 4
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Gluttony
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2
Speed: 11
Blood Potency: 2
Vitae/per Turn: 11/1
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Brass Knuckles	1 (B)	n/a	Uses Brawl Skill	9
Claw Hammer	1 (L)	1	Improvised (-1 penalty)	6
Fire Axe	3 (L)	3	9 again	9

Armor:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Reinforced/thick clothing	1/0	0

Health: 8
Disciplines: Vigor 2, Resilience 1
Derangements: Irrationality (mild; 5)

Inspired Crusader

Quote: "Better men than you have tried harder to destroy me and failed. I cannot die so long as I serve the Centurion."

Background: The crusaders of the Lancea Sanctum do battle to better themselves, to glorify the covenant and to defend the word of *The Testament of Longinus*. Some crusaders are savvy warriors, and a few are even subtle. The inspired crusader, however, is proud of her faith and her fanatical dedication to the cause. She might fight on the orders of a Bishop or Cardinal, or she might be on a crusade of her own. No matter who has selected her enemies, she fights without fear until she or her enemy is destroyed.

Description: The inspired crusader doesn't have the build of a person who swung swords in life, but the Requiem has given her the appearance of a weathered warrior. She wears scars and mangled flesh as symbols of her faith. Even when she's dressed in modern clothes, she's adorned with some symbol of the Lancea Sanctum. In the thick of battle, when she's splashed with blood and slashing flesh with an archaic sword, she alternates between serenity and ferocity. Her face might reveal pain, hate or even fear, but it is never darkened by doubt.

Storytelling Hints: Part of any crusade is the journey to reach or find the enemy. Vampires of any allegiance might be asked to help the inspired crusader find her foes. Such foes might seek to retaliate against the crusader and anyone who helps her. Worse, the crusader's revered commander might decree her old allies to be her new enemies, perhaps as heretics or pagans. What do you do when the fearless monster you once helped in battle comes to destroy you?

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Academics 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Firearms 1, Intimidation 3, Weaponry 4

Merits: Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 2, Iron Stamina 2, Resources 2, Weaponry Dodge

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 3

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 4

Vitae/per Turn: 13/2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Sword	3 (L)	2		10

Armor:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Reinforced/thick clothing	1/0	0

Health: 8

Disciplines: Dominate 1, Resilience 3, Theban Sorcery 2

Theban Sorcery Rituals: Blood Scourge (1), Hauberk of Blood (1), Curse of Babel (2)

Derangements: Megalomania (severe; 4); Power Fetish Obsession (mild; 6)

Zealous Inquisitor

Quote: "Stop crying. You sold your flesh to the Crone, so it cannot be worth all that noise. We may still be able to save your soul, so you should be relieved."

Background: The zealous Inquisitor does not just seek and stamp out heresy. He doesn't just stake deviants in the heart for delivery to the Cardinal. The zealous Inquisitor takes it personally. He's sad and angry that any Sanctified vampire would betray the covenant, and he has no patience for those Kindred who stand between the Lancea Sanctum and its traitors. No one is outside the Inquisitor's reach, and no one can truly be his ally — no one but Longinus.

Description: The Inquisitor makes eye contact with everyone and holds it for long, uneasy seconds. He might be formal or casual; he might be dressed to blend in or to be seen. He moves with cautious precision but seems weary. The Inquisitor cannot make assumptions, cannot presume anything, so he checks sight lines out of every room and puts people on the spot. "What does that mean?" he asks. "Why would you say that?"

Storytelling Hints: Just the suspicion of heresy is enough to bring out the zealous Inquisitor. In a domain ruled by the

Lancea Sanctum, even secular Kindred crimes can draw a Sanctified investigation. The Inquisitor draws out information about the principal characters and calls allegiances into question. He can give momentum to a mystery tale or bring the threat (and act) of violence to a story of suspense or torture. The Inquisitor examines gray-area issues then decides on a black-or-white consequence and carries it out. What happens when an Inquisitor is wrong? Is it better to be right or is it better to be on the side of the Inquisitor?

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Skills: Academics 3, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 4, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Persuasion 3, Politics 2, Socialize 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Weaponry 2

Merits: Contacts 4, City Status 2, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 3, Resources 3

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 4

Vitae/per Turn: 13/2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Ceremonial Knife	2 (L)	2		6
Stake	1 (L)	1	Must target heart	5

Armor:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Reinforced/thick clothing	1/0	0

Health: 7

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Obfuscate 3, Theban Sorcery 3

Theban Sorcery Rituals: Crown of Thorns (1), Sinner Song (1), Curse of Babel (2), Liar's Plague (2), Prison of Denial (2), Malediction of Despair (3)

Derangements: Suspicion (mild; 6)

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— Giselle Warner, Mekhet of the Ordo Dracul

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I am God's holy monster,
the drinker of mankind.

For so long,
I could not see the role I would play,
because I looked for it
with human, mortal eyes.
So I put forth the truth in these pages,
for you who seek as I have sought.
I am not some godless beast
who stalks beneath the dark grandeur of sanctity.
I am the grandeur.
I am sanctified.

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