

## The Masquerade

In 1435 there was founded an organization, a cause, an obsession, a war. Call it what you will; history knows it as the Inquisition. Besides burning harmless old women and excommunicating Frenchfield mice for eating farmers' wheat, this Inquisition did betimes achieve its aim, and cleansed the world of no few true witches, warlocks and monsters. Many such monsters were Kindred, and the diligent Inquisitors traced whole bloodlines and put all to the flame.

all.

For the first time, Vampires stood in real danger of extinction. Superstitious belief coupled with scientific thoroughness placed in mortal hands the wherewithal to rid the world of monsters forever. It was a terrifying time - as fearful as the great Holocaust which mortal visited on one another earlier this century. Those Kindred who survived bear the mental scars of the Inquisition to this day, and many live a life of paranoid seclusion, dealing with the breathing world as little as possible.

Before this time, Vampires lived more - or - less openly, relying on their power and position to preserve themselves. Though they did not announce their presence, they did not struggle to hide it either. They had grown proud in their strength, and the fall which followed was terrible indeed.

The survivors quickly learned the wisdom of stealth and secrecy, and networks sprang up as they do among mortals in times of crisis, conveying information and individuals sub rosa for the safety of all. This was the birth of what may be called a Vampiric society.

The name Camarilla arose for these organizations, reflecting the small, secret rooms used for meeting and concealment. Groups made contact with one another, united for the first time by this adversity.

The first global convocation took place in 1486. Many chose to absent themselves, but this meeting gave itself the power to speak for all Kindred existing or yet to be made, and to pass laws governing all. The first such law - and only one to stand to this day - is that of the Masquerade. It is this law - the first and most sacred - that is being broken by the writing of this document.

The horrors of the preceding decades had taught the Vampires the need for secrecy and shown them that, after all, they were vulnerable. It was vital, therefore, that the breathing world be convinced it had killed the last of them, or better yet, that they had never existed at all. They must match organization with organization and cause with cause, if they hoped to survive.

The Masquerade had two faces, each with a number of contingencies and lesser objectives. *imprimis simplicissimusque*, reasonable secrecy and care was required of all Kindred. Nothing must betray their continued existence, and any individual who broke this secrecy would be outcast and hunted down as a danger to all.

*Secundus*, active steps must be taken to change the character of mortal society, and direct minds away from superstitious thoughts. Many of the Kindred had turned to scholarship to beguile the lonely decades, and certain matters were made available to the *Taggänger* in the fields of alchemy, literature, art, geography, cosmology, and so weiter. Many mortals were already turning their steps in this direction, so the task was not unduly arduous. Names spring to mind such as Bacon, Dee, Galileo, Copernicus, Ariosto, Michelangelo, da Vinci, Cellini, and Columbus. It was a brave Age they made.

With so many fresh discoveries clamouring for attention, the mortals lost their single-mindedness in chasing monsters. A little later - principally thanks to an alliance of French Clans - material and political philosophies were influenced. Science had bred reason, reason denied monsters. Over the following centuries, they were able to crush superstition completely. No one of

any education seriously believed vampires had ever existed.

Not long ago, mortal minds turned once towards the mystical and superstition briefly took the ascendant. The knoweledge of certain chemical substances was made available, and many inquiring minds were distracted or forever silenced. And throughout this last century, steps have been taken to preserve this image of the Vampire in popular entertainments, for thus it may be seen more clearly as a fiction. The Masquerade is unraveling, as the mysticism of the mortals increases. The Camarilla is at war to turn back the tide - the evidence of that is all around us.

L E S T A T  
PRINCE OF DARKNESS