⋮ Undercurrents

Inside this Issue

What's New?

By Paula Watt, Editor

Hello Undercurrents readers,

Welcome to the newest edition of the Undercurrents. We had a noticeable lack of submissions this month, so I've re-printed an article from an earlier newsletter. I think it's more appropriate now than ever.

We have a story by Brad Heichelbech, a poem submitted by Jay Smith, the re-printing of the "How to Play a Prince" article, and a treatise on the nature of vampire anatomy. Enjoy! Ω

News from the DC

By Paula Watt, DC

 Hi everyone,

This month the new Tome is finally finished. The new prestige guidelines go into effect May 1st, 2001, so be prepared for some changes. Last I heard, the prestige guidelines hadn't been finalized.

We have several new members, and our contact list is almost too long to fit on a single page. :) Both chapters are growing nicely.

Well, there isn't a whole lot to say this month, so keep communicating and keep having fun! Ω

Heretic Malkavian Sermon

Submitted by Brad Heichelbech

And so it was, in the days before time existed, in the life of the Third Mortal. For when God raised his mighty hand to accept Caine's sacrifice of his brother's life's blood, he blessed Caine, placing a mark on his forehead that any who beheld him would no him. He blessed Caine, decreeing by his Word that any man who harmth Caine shall suffer harm sevenfold. And so began the existence of our Lord Caine.

And God, in His infinite wisdom, set Caine forth on an ordeal of Faith. Sending him forth into the land of Nod to seek out his destiny. Out into the land beyond Eden, into the brambled and thorned wastelands, beyond it into the Garden of Lillith, Caine did wander, for his faith was righteous and his heart pure. When in his arduous journey, the pain became too great, he fell to his knees, and as Seer, first of our blood, beheld a vision from God.

As he looked towards heaven, lo before him he beheld the Archangel Michael, offering to return him once more to the peace of Eden. Caine, for his faith was unwavering and his will set, refused this, saying not by his, but by mine shall I. At this, spoke Michael

"Then for as long as you walk this earth, you and your children will fear my living flame, and it will bite deep and devour your flesh"

Caine, persevered, his suffering greater, seeking the Small Dawn of Sa. Onward into the Garden he crawled, the thorns piercing his noble brow. Long did he travel before above him he heard the trumpeting sound of the heavenly host. Lo, before him he beheld the Archangel Raphael, offering again to him the peace of Eden. Caine, more feverently refused, for his faith was unwavering and his will great. For this Raphael spoke saying:

"Then, for as long as you walk this earth, you and your children will fear the dawn, and the suns rays will seek to burn you like fire where ever you hide always. Hide now for the sun rises to take it's wrath on you"

Suffering on the rays of the sun, the agonizing pain far greater then any he had felt, he crawled his way through the Garden. Caine knew God was testing him, and would not fail. As day became night again, lo before him he beheld the Archangel Uriel, again the heavenly host offered to return him to the Garden of Eden, saying God would forgive the failure. Caine, enraged by the very idea he would surrender, commanded the angel leave him, that only by his hand would he return to Eden. Uriel spoke, saying:

"Then for as long as you walk this earth you and your children will cling to Darkness. You will drink only blood. You will eat only ashes. You will always be as you were at death, never dying, living on. You will walk forever in Darkness, all you touch will crumble into nothing. Until the last days."

His devotion renewing his strength Caine rose to his feet, making his way again through the Garden, his hands and feet torn by the thorns, his face streaked with his own blood He continued his journey, seeking the wisdom that only

in suffering will one find. Then before him was the Archangel Gabriel, before the host could even speak, Caine declared he would not be taken back to Eden. At this, the angel replied:

"Son of Adam, Son of Eve, Behold, the mercy of the Father is greater then you can ever know for even now there is a path opened, a road of Mercy and you shall call this Road Golconda and tell your Children of it for by that road they may come once again to dwell in the Light."

And so Caine was enlightened, favored by God.

So it was prophesized, and so it has been written. Ω

From a Coordinator's Viewpoint

By Elaine Sweeney

Most of this page discusses the IC aspects of running a Prince or other powerful and/or ruling character. For a moment I would like to discuss the OOC aspects of this situation. One common theme that I've seen as a Coordinator is that people tend to distrust the players of powerful characters, usually due to a lack of understanding of the other person's perspective. Communication and development of trust between players can help produce understanding and reduce tension. While this is so for all players, it is even more necessary in situations where one character is significantly stronger or more powerful than another.

Let's say you find yourself playing the Prince. Perhaps your character became Prince due to being supported by a majority of the other characters. Or

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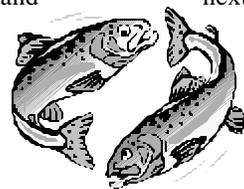## *Daughter of the Night*

Submitted by Jay Smith

The moon casts it's pale light

On perfection

Viperous grace and sanguinary beauty

She strides through the night as if it were

Her lover

Her companion

Her conquest

With queenly elegance she stalks

Lips like blood

That kiss the soul

Despoiling mortality

And a heart

Ablaze with passion

Flawless ivory skin

Fair auburn hair

And eyes

That sing to me

They pull me into their depths

And I drown

In the deep blue waters of eternity

maybe, your character was simply the strongest or played the best (IC) political game to achieve the position. Regardless of how your character got

Daughter of the Night (cont.)

Her gifts

Comely murder

Splendorous effusion of blood

Assassination of repute

Irresistible nobility

Her birthright

Supplication follows

In her wake

All the world

Must bend knee

To this malevolent empress

The daughter of the night Ω

there, you, the player, now have to deal with being the focus of the attentions of many of the other player characters.

Assuming your character is well-liked at the time of claiming Praxis, she will have a good amount of support at first. Be prepared, however, because no matter what happens, over time there will be discontent with the decisions made. If your character won the position against competition, there will be more discontent right from the start. In either case, supported or opposed, there will be those who oppose the Prince and be working IC to bring her down.

All of this is fine IC, and to be expected as a part of the game. The problems occur when OOC feelings are hurt over

IC actions. If the Prince makes a decision which harms another player's character, it is likely that other person will be hurt. Firstly, no one wants to feel that another player is 'worth more' than themselves in the game. Secondly, despite all the protestations that the characters are just fictions and "it's just a game," people do get attached to their characters. Many a Coordinator has had to listen to the "Well, I killed his character because that is what my character would do? and after all, it's just a game," excuse during the course of a Grievance. This doesn't buy a lot of sympathy. The fact is that people have feelings, and those feelings are more important than the game. If a player doesn't understand this and deal with it in the course of her actions, then she has erred.

So, what do you do? Well, there are a lot of options for handling situations in game. If your character has bested another, there are ways to gain something from this victory: blood-bonding, boons, demanding items/prestige/support/influences among them. The trick here is in the roleplay. Be creative! Your character knows what the local situation is, and now has the chance to manipulate another into supporting him. I can hear -- and have heard -- the complaints already: "Well, I know he (the other player) won't play the blood bond," or "But she broke a Tradition!" As a coordinator, my answer to the second concern is "perhaps that's so, in-game. Now, let's deal with the real issue." The first complaint, that of another not playing out their punishment, gets more to the crux of the matter.

Any social interaction comes down to the level of trust between the participants. In a roleplaying game, trust becomes one of the central components

of the interaction. Trust is developed OOC and IC: IC by playing one's character reasonably and fairly, OOC through communication with others. Communication is key. Talking with the other player is important. Certainly, some people don't like to reveal their next action to their opponent before acting it out IC, and most people don't want to spill their character's secrets to others. Still, if you don't trust another person enough to tell them that your character is going to interact with theirs in a certain manner, then why are you playing with them? Naturally, we all meet new people in the course of the game, and we definitely develop different levels of trust with those we know, but without confidence that we could at least get along OOC there is no point in pretending to game together. The only way to build trust is to communicate.

For example, in the case of the player whose character broke a Tradition and got caught, the player of the Prince can pull him aside and describe what she feels her character should do and why. Then give the other player a chance to present what he feels comfortable with. Usually, the two individuals can resolve a course of action, however if either feels uncomfortable, they can pull in an ST, Coordinator, or someone else to help mediate towards a solution. Often it helps if both players can be persuaded to look at the larger in-game ramifications of their actions. Perspective can work wonders. The player whose character was caught may see that his character's death is necessary for the greater storyline, and he may be satisfied with a cool death scene. Or perhaps the Prince sees the benefit in keeping a potential enemy beholden to her for use later.

Although there is concern about sharing too much of one's IC plan, players

discussing beforehand how an intense scene will play out can often allow all players involved greater enjoyment of the actual game event. Each player, now knowing the parameters of the situation, can play their character to the fullest knowing that everyone in the scene is fully IC and working together to produce a memorable spectacle. There used to be a slogan pertaining to the use of birth control and sexual responsibility: "If you're not ready to talk about it, you're not ready to do it." This applies to the game interaction as well. After all, Coordinators seldom, if ever, end up having to resolve conflicts between players who are communicating. In any case whenever your character's actions will significantly alter another player's character concept, communicate with that player beforehand.

As for the concern about other players not playing out their punishments, this will begin to fade as trust develops. If one character blood-bonds another, the player of the Regnant can discuss with the Thrall's player how he plans to handle the blood-bond. Each player can discuss what does and does not work for their character concept, interaction, and the storyline overall. Again, an ST viewpoint may be useful in deciding on a course of interaction. Over time, players will learn to trust that the other players are gaming with them and not trying to hurt them. Accepting IC defeat or loss is easier in an atmosphere of trust. Communication also allows the players and STs to establish expectations of game-play. For example, the ST and players may determine, through communication, that a certain IC action will normally result in character death if found out. Now players know that if they decide that their character is going to perform that

action, players they trust are going to have their characters kill the offending character. In short, communication works better than rules. Everyone has agreed, through discussion, that certain IC things have particular consequences for the good of the game as a whole, and everyone knows and accepts their responsibility to the story. Additionally, all know that the lines of communication are open to discuss concerns about issues which come up.

Finally, take responsibility for your actions. If your character does a thing, be prepared to talk about why should a concern come up. Yeah, I know this sounds like I'm asking for a lot of serious work over a game, but all too often, one person does something, another gets blamed, and the rumors and fighting spread rapidly through the Domain. Let me describe one situation which has come up several times. A Prince, or other powerful/ruling character, catches someone breaking a Tradition. That Prince goes to the transgressor's clan Elder or Primogen and asks that one to decide the punishment. The Primogen chooses final death, which then the Prince has carried out. Now, in-game it is quite acceptable for the Primogen to attempt to make it look as it the Prince is the bad-guy here. But, too often, out-of-game, the player of the Primogen never admits to the player whose character is killed that he made that decision. This is where the communication breaks down. The player of the Prince doesn't see any problem as she offered alternatives to final death. The player of the destroyed character only knows the Prince killed his character, and the one who made the decision is conveniently absent from any potential fall-out of the situation. Some Coordinator or ST gets

stuck tracing back what happened, but usually feelings are hurt well before anything is resolved.

Remember, we're here to play together. If you're angry at another, or they're angry at you, then you are not playing!

Now, I've been picking on the Prince character, but all of this goes for others as well. Whether you play the Anarch who brings down the Prince, the Primogen who 'whips his clan into shape' by removing the troublemakers, or the Sheriff who's 'just doing his job,' you, the player, don't escape from your responsibility to the other players. If you're going to screw someone over in-game, make sure you're talking to them about it out-of-game.

Ultimately developing an atmosphere of trust and understanding among the players comes down to this:

1. Treat each other reasonably, even in-game. Playing World of Butthead just pisses people off.

2. Be responsible and compassionate to each other OOC. The characters are supposed to be conniving back-biting leeches, not the players.

3. Communicate! Communicate! Communicate! Ω

Vampire Anatomy

Part I

By Chris Simpson

I would like to begin this article by stating that the theories presented here are courtesy of Robert How, and are taken from the following website: http://www.freethinkers.freeserve.co.uk/Vampire/index.htm. Check this site out, it's worth the time. There are many interesting things on the site dealing with vampires, werewolves and the like.

I will more than likely make this the first installment in a "Supernatural Creature Anatomy" series or something. If so, then I will be including a lot of Mr. How's material. From reading his material, I'm guessing that these are IC articles. The bulk of the website deals with the Tremere, and a bloodline called the Order of Draco.

Now, I will move on to the purpose of this article. Most of this article is not original material presented by me, but merely an article that I thought might be interesting to the readership. These ideas are also not sanctioned for play in the Camarilla that I know of, but they provide some food for thought, and add a little realism in my opinion. I think that it would be very interesting from a game mechanics standpoint to have a supplement dedicated to the anatomy of supernatural creatures. I can also see the possibility for abuse as well, but I still think that it would make interesting reading.

If you want, you can always let me know how you feel about these articles. I like feedback, so that I know what people are interested in, and what they would like to see submitted to the newsletter. If there is something that you would like to see submitted to the newsletter, let me know and I will research it.

Anyway, here is the first part. This first excerpt deals with the anatomy of vampiric blood. There are some very interesting points made here, and this helps to detail how vampires live off of blood and why they need their victims to be alive (most of the time, except for funky Flaws). I have taken liberty in editing parts of this article, because Mr. How's grammar was not that great. There may be parts that I missed, but the meat of the article is intact.

Enjoy!

Anatomy of Blood

An analysis of vampire anatomy and hematology,
By Robert How, July 1998

Much has been speculated on the nature of Vitae and the blood within Kindred, and this treatise hopes to study and explain various properties.

Composition of Blood

Firstly we must remember to separate out the various components of what we define Vitae, which means Life, for it is what gives us life. Human blood consists of several substances: plasma, the nutrient liquid; red and white blood cells (hemocytes, corpuscles, phagocytes etc.), various enzymes, and assorted hormones, neurotransmitters, adenosine tri-phosphate and the myriad other biochemical products of the living body.

Tied up in all of this is Quintessence, the fifth element of ancient lore, which is life - and this is what is most important to vampires. Quintessence makes up the human avatar, or soul, and so by feeding from Quintessence we are in essence taking a part of their soul, or soul-energy. (See the separate treatise on Avatars for a fuller treatment.)

I should note that we also need the water, oxygen and other products for maintenance of the body, but it is the Quintessence that powers the process. It is the living matter that is most important to us, which is why blood is best straight from the artery, because we are feeding from the fresh life force. After leaving the body blood quickly begins to lose its Quintessence as the cells begin to die. It also loses its heat, which is necessary to keep the blood alive, but also makes the Kiss a more pleasing experience - feeling the heat of a living being surging through one's flesh. Stored blood loses the individuality of its Avatar quite quickly, especially when mixed with others', and so, as well as its "nutritional value" (to ghoulishly borrow a modern mortal term) being lower, it is also less satisfying. Blood products - plasma, and various separated cells - are of little or no value as a form of sustenance to us, because of the small amounts of Quintessence that are left in them, especially when processed by High Scientific methods.

Vampire Digestion

What happens to the blood within a Vampire? Kindred dissection is an unpleasant process, usually only carried out on unwilling victims, or the newly dead undead (an amusing term in itself. Perhaps we can call them the Re-deceased?). Kindred intestines differ widely, but essentially have an elaborate membrane system made of collapsed organs, which filters blood directly into the body. As we know, the heart does not pump blood, but Quintessence diffuses about the body by osmosis. (See Decapitation: Heart, Brain and Anatomy.)

Blood Pool, the Soul and Diablerie

The blood pool is a measure of how much Quintessence the body can store, dependant on how powerful is the Black Avatar which is the vampire's "soul". We can visualize the Vampire soul as a tank. (If it is necessary for this imaginative exercise, we can picture one painted black, filled with blood, embellished with lots of little skulls with pointy teeth). This tank is the hole left by the original human avatar, and now taken up by the Black Avatar. When the human died, the tank was

emptied, and filled up with the original Vampiric Vitae that made them undead.

The holding-capacity of this tank depends entirely on the holding-capacity of the Avatar (or, how big a tank was installed in the hole where the soul once was. I'm enjoying this metaphor). It is almost impossible to increase the size of the tank, giving it a bigger capacity, without replacing the tank with a bigger one - but this is what happens during Diablerie.

Psychometric Gravity of Vitae

Vitae - the live essence (quintessence) of blood - naturally gravitates towards the soul, and clings closest to it. Following our tank analogy - Vitae (blood containing vampiric quintessence) is heavier, and the more concentrated is its quintessence, the heavier it is (therefore the term, Psychometric Gravity). Hence in our tank, the heavier blood sinks to the bottom and settles out according to weight. In vampires, ghouls and humans this means that the heavier blood - that of vampires, lower generations, and often also that infected with peculiar Vitae scourges - sinks closest to the bottom. As a result, it is the last to leave the body after injury, use or draining.

Low generation blood entering a higher generation kindred equates to more blood points not because it has greater volume, but because the Psychometric Gravity is higher. This means that it takes up more space in the host, because it has more energy. In the originator it is one blood-point, even though it has more power - but then, higher energy is usually necessary to power higher disciplines, and to maintain itself at a higher energy level.

Diseases

There are a number of strange blood diseases that do affect Kindred, and there has been much study and speculation as to their origin. Certainly, some common viruses and bacteria which affect humans affect vampires also, although rarely. But it is strange to note that there are other infections that have little or no affect on humans, except for cold or flu-like symptoms, but have dangerous affects on vampires. Symptoms vary from physical sores to prolonged frenzies, starvation, derangement and self-mutilation - although our Order is interested in these conditions, researchers have been understandably cautious and unwilling to expose themselves to danger. Ω

Rumors and Quotes

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The material printed here was gathered through keeping an ear open during the games, and through direct member input. Some of the rumors are true and some are false. They're things that your character might have heard IC, react accordingly!

Kindred Rumors

Wilf has been seen smiling and almost cackling to himself, in unusual places all over town; like grocery stores, and concerts.

There may be war brewing between the Tremere and the Prince of Nashville's bloodline. Recently Makov's uncle slew a high ranking Tremere.

The kindred of Savanna, GA are seeking outside help to with a growing problem of wraiths and ghosts in their city

Kindred Quotes

"**Don't** kill him until I have dancing bears."

- Sveltana Markova regarding Wilf

"I think I would like to take a walk in the park."

- Markov

"I understand you were only doing your job. Don't piss off the Oprichina ghouls, that's bad."

- Mercutio

"Why do I feel like slamming my dick in a door?"

- James OOC after losing his eye IC

"Quit squinting at me"

- Cricket OOC to James (who just has his eye burned out IC)

"Can I take that from you?"

"Yes, you might want to wipe the eyeball off it"

- Liz as a ghoul and Eric Covens

"I have this ability to see through things, and you have a nice ass and I like red heads"

- Ryan as BSD to Markov

"Oh, I thought you meant the whining girl in the closet. Well, I suppose you could see it as part of the decline in values in today's youth, but…"

- Bill Jones enters a conversation mid-stream

"I'm sorry, I slipped and my fangs fell into their necks. Then their souls just jumped into me, I don't know what happened."

- Cricket OOC after eating 2 NPCs

"My character is shorter then this so if you want to stare into her eyes you have to look here." (indicating breast area)

- Amy OOC at Anarch game

"It would seem that you are a cunning linguist then sir, and I'll find out for myself if you won't."

- Murron Mcklonough Kay's Anarch Angel speaking about the talents of a Setite's tongue to Marianna

"...fight for your sheep! What kind of Brujah are you?"

- A Brujah neonate being taught her birthright by an elder.

"I'm covered in weapons and livestock! What the hell?!?"

- Skar after relieving the Brujah neonate of her item cards.

"Let's get out the magic 'fuck Ray' cards."

- Ray OOC after being called out for *another* challenge...

"Not all Tremere are the evil dark warlocks you make us out to be. Some of us just wanna help"

- Jessie "Brash Little Superhero" Quick

Garou Rumors

Roo left in the middle of a moot after only being seen intermittently for months.

Changeling Rumors

Bhaahbee is nearing the third threshold of Bedlam. First he whispered to everything. Then he treats everything as if it were alive in someway. Now he carries a tower shield openly and has a fanatic sparkle in his eye.

Changeling Quotes

"Ok, picture this: A really big guy with another big guy in his lap and three other people sitting in his lap, all in a red wagon being pulled by a scrawny 7-year old on a bike. What's the cop gonna say? "I'm done.""

- Vulcan

"In the Dreaming, No one can hear a Slugah scream."

- Adam S' char looked over and saw Bahbi getting his hair combed and screaming... silently.

June 2001 Schedule

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
					1 Camarilla Social	2 7:00 pm Kindred Game
3 1:00 pm Changeling Game	4	5	6	7	8 7:00 pm Garou Game	9 7:00pm Mage Game
10 Camarilla Social	11	12	13	14	15	16 7:00 pm Kindred Game
17 1:00 pm Changeling Game 7:00 pm AN Chapter Meeting	18	19	20	21	22	23 2:00 pm Garou Game
24	25	26	27 7:30 pm Chapter/ST Council Meeting	28	29	30 7:00 pm Anarch Kindred Game

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Your elected Officers

Dark River Society

Paula Watt	Domain Coordinator (DC)
Chris Simpson	Assistant Domain Coordinator (ADC)
Winn Keathley	Domain Storyteller (DST)
Ryan Holdbrooks	Assistant Domain Storyteller (ADST)

Arcadian Nights

Adam Steinberg	Chapter Coordinator (CC)
Amanda Plageman	Assistant Chapter Coordinator (ACC)
Brad Thompson	Chapter Storyteller (CST)
	Assistant Chapter Storyteller (ACST)

Days of Bitter Rage

Chris Simpson	Chapter Coordinator (CC)
	Assistant Chapter Coordinator (ACC)
Travis Abston	Chapter Storyteller (CST)
	Assistant Chapter Storyteller (ACST)