

Giovanni Chronicles IV:
Nuova Malattia



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INTRODUCTION

For heAVens Sake catch Me BeFore I Kill More I cannot control myself
— Written on a murder victim's wall (in her own lipstick) by serial
killer William Heirens

This is the fourth and final installment of the **Giovanni Chronicles**. This epilogue concludes the events of *The Last Supper*, *Blood and Fire* and *The Sun Has Set*, and allows players to experience the more recent history of Clan Giovanni from the inside.

That's right — in the final installment, the players will not play the elders they have worked so hard to bring to power over the centuries, but Giovanni underlings, looking at the World of Darkness from the bottom up once again. The elder characters instead act as opponents, not in the sense that they directly and physically oppose the new characters (which would make for a quick fight), but in the sense that they act as foils to the new characters.

So, the question is, why now? After nearly 600 years of being told that their characters would play a great part in

the development and destiny of Clan Giovanni, why is the viewpoint suddenly being shifted across enemy lines?

Well, for a number of reasons. For one thing, a chronicle of elders is difficult to manage, just because of the way elder vampires tend to function. Old vampires worth their salt rarely take a direct hand in things, preferring instead to pull strings and use underlings to accomplish their ends. This approach, while fascinating to consider, makes for difficult and fractious roleplaying, not to mention that a “coterie” of elder vampires is unlikely. The shift in character allows for a more hands-on approach — and there is much more at stake for these characters than for the elders (the destruction of the Shroud and the Apotheosis notwithstanding).

Another reason is practicality. **The Last Supper** was released in 1995. For any number of reasons, the troupe whose

characters began as neonates in 1444 may not be the same as the one that began as ancillae in 1666, or as elders in 1848. This approach allows a Storyteller to begin with an entirely new troupe, if necessary, or a mix of old and new players.

The final reason for this change is that it forces the players to diversify the type of characters they make. If a player created a charismatic Setite character who achieves his ends by infiltrating religious institutions, and then tries the same thing with his new character, the Setite is going to be much more practiced, and will probably keep an eye on the local churches, to boot. The players must construct characters with new methods and ideas, lest elders who are undoubtedly their betters at traditional power games beat them.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

For the benefit of those who have not played the first three titles in the **Giovanni Chronicles**, a (very) brief synopsis follows.

The Last Supper: In Italy, in 1444, 13 people receive invitations to the home of Claudius Giovanni, a wealthy Venetian merchant. While there, they discover that their host and his 12 guests are vampires, and that instead of being treated to dinner, the “guests” are meant to *be* dinner. This sadistic meal ends when the Founders of the Camarilla attack, forcing the vampires (known as the Conspiracy of Isaac) to flee. First, however, they hastily embrace their hapless guests in hopes that they may delay the Founders. Not all of the fledglings survive the night (which ones do depends on the Storyteller’s sense of drama; the process of creating such characters is detailed below), but one who does is Marianna, the intended meal and bastard childe of Claudius Giovanni.

(Note that if the players actually partook in **The Last Supper**, their characters would have survived. The Storyteller’s fiat applies only to chronicles in which the troupe had no part in earlier chapters of the **Giovanni Chronicles**.)

While in the Founders’ custody, the Conspiracy’s childer receive a visit from Durga Syn, an elder Ravnos with powers of divination. She reveals that the vampires, known as the Children of Isaac, have a great role to play in the story of the Necromancers, and they must be allowed to do so. Hardestadt, a Ventruue elder and leader of the Founders, declares then that the hapless childer shall be used to expose and destroy the Conspiracy of Isaac and, should they fail, they will die with their sires.

The aforementioned conspirators mean to destroy the Cappadocian clan and to establish Augustus Giovanni as a new Antediluvian. Despite the fledglings’ best efforts, however (or because of them, as they may have chosen to throw in with their sires), Cappadocius dies

at Augustus’ hands. The Giovanni family, in the ensuing years, destroys most of its parent clan, becoming in itself a clan in the true sense of the word. The Founders take the Conspirators of Isaac into custody (where they may very well remain to this night^o). The Children of Isaac are left to fate, to do as they will.

Blood and Fire: Over two centuries after **The Last Supper**, the Founders summon the Children of Isaac and charge them with a new responsibility. They have discovered the Giovanni plan, using magics and theory advanced by Cappadocius himself, to somehow diablerize God. This process, called the Apotheosis, has prompted the theft of books from the Vatican. It is during their investigation in Rome that the children, now ancillae or elders themselves, first learn a name that will plague them for years thereafter: Ambrogino Giovanni. He has stolen clues to an ancient Chaldean text known as the *Sargon Fragment*.

Following Ambrogino’s trail to the Swiss Alps, the coterie meets and converses with members of the newly formed Sabbat, and helps to cement the ideological theories that become the Paths of Enlightenment. Some of the vampires may have elected, then or later, to join the Sabbat. In any case, Ambrogino has already departed, but the Children of Isaac learn his destination from Marianna, who is also hunting Ambrogino.

The vampires follow the trail to London, where they discover that they are not the only parties looking for the *Sargon Fragment*. They are attacked first at sea by a pirate ship commissioned by the Giovanni, and then on land in broad daylight. This attack, perpetrated by Egyptian ghouls, costs the life of Lester Vance, a Tremere archon. All of this is later reported to Mithras, the Prince of London; to Valerius, his chamberlain; and to Violetta, the Toreador justicar and childe of the Prince of Paris.

During the course of the investigations, the coterie finds its way to a Sabbat Tremere named Andre Mallotte. He tells the Children of Isaac little, but is in fact being used by the Giovanni to translate the *Sargon Fragment*. However, he overestimates his own control of the power and incinerates himself and a large portion of London in the Great Fire of 1666.

The Sun Has Set: Now powerful elders, the Children of Isaac follow tales of Giovanni activity back to London, and are witness to a Sabbat attack on the Camarilla. The attack, however, is a cover-up for Ambrogino’s own interests; he still wishes to obtain the text that eluded him in 1666: the *Sargon Fragment*.

The coterie discovers a letter in a tomb beneath Prince Mithras’ haven; the prince himself has gone missing. Valerius sits as a temporary prince, and can give little useful information about the tomb. However, the letter gives the location of another copy of the *Sargon Fragment* — Egypt.

Ambrogino learns this as well, and dispatches Giovanni agents to Egypt to obtain the document. The Children of Isaac,

however, are hot on the Necromancers' trail, as is Marianna, who has mounted a continuing vendetta against the Giovanni since her Embrace. In the sands of Egypt, the Children of Isaac are tested by the terrain and by the Setites, as are the Giovanni, but eventually end up finding the tomb, and two stone tablets that contain the *Sargon Fragment*. The tomb also contains the body of Claudius Giovanni, with enough blood left to lower the generation of one or more of the vampires present.

This chapter of the **Giovanni Chronicles** may have ended in any number of ways. The Giovanni may have captured the *Sargon Fragment* (and the true tome of power, the *Anexhexeton*), or the Sabbat, the Camarilla, the Setites or one of the Children of Isaac may have it. Marianna may also have smashed the tablets. If the Storyteller plans to introduce **Nuova Malattia** as the fourth installment in the series, she should read through the first three books and review exactly how those sessions concluded. If the troupe plans to play this part of the **Giovanni Chronicles** as a stand-alone game, the above synopsis should provide sufficient information.

THEN AND NOW

The Sun Has Set ended in 1888, while this book begins in 1929. Several events have occurred in the interim (and earlier) that come into play in this book.

CAPPADOCIUS

The Antediluvian who originally intended to bring Heaven to Earth under his rule was forced into the Shadowlands in 1444. Although Augustus committed treachery upon him, the interference of the Children of Isaac made the Amaranth incomplete. He existed as a ghost for years, watching the world change, and not involving himself directly in the affairs of his childer. He had met his end as a martyr, and chose to remain one.

As the years passed and he watched his progeny die, he grew angry. He ignored this, however, trying desperately to be the enlightened individual he had been in unlife. He also believed that someday he would have a chance to rest forever, as the Malkavian Founder Camilla Banes prophesied in **Blood and Fire**.

Sadly, this was not to be.

LA MADRINO TEMPESTA

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb code-named "Little Boy" on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. As devastating as this act was in the physical world, it also had far-reaching effects in the realm of the dead.

The Shadowlands, which is what wraiths call the dismal realm in which they reside, is prone to horrific storms called Maelstroms. These storms usually reflect some violent occurrence in the living world (or the Skinlands, in wraith parlance), and sometimes such an occurrence is so cataclysmic it produces

a Great Maelstrom. These soulstorms are so devastating and cause such chaos in the Shadowlands that the dead set time by them. The Fourth Maelstrom occurred during the First World War. Wraiths at the time thought they had seen the worst of human atrocity. They were terribly wrong.

Little Boy fell on Hiroshima, and *La Madrino Tempesta* ("the Mother of the Tempest") exploded across the Shadowlands. The chaos it caused never really subsided and, even in modern nights, the Shadowlands aren't quite safe. This causes some consternation to the Giovanni, who rely on wraiths quite heavily, but caused even more to Cappadocius.

Cappadocius had a chance to transcend this world and the Underworld but *La Madrino Tempesta* robbed him of the chance. It also drove his mind, already unstable by centuries of waiting and inaction, into an inescapable frenzy. Blown into the depths of the tempest by the storm, he emerges in 1998 with only one thought — revenge.

Even before he returns, the players' characters should feel the storm's effects. If the troupe plans on playing downtime sessions between acts, Necromancy might get more difficult to use in the months after Hiroshima (reflected by a temporary increase in difficulty). Perhaps the characters hear rumors of a new Giovanni who braved the storm and has not been heard from since. Perhaps they must strain to hear any wraiths with which they speak because of the storm.

SUPPORTING CAST

The following is a list of important characters, all of whom appear in this book. Some characters were introduced in the other **Giovanni Chronicles**; some make their first (and possibly last) appearance here. This list is given as a quick introduction; more complete information, including Traits, where applicable, is given in Chapter Five.

THE GIOVANNI

Ambrogino Giovanni: The powerful Necromancer does not appear in this book, although his grandchild, Andreas, is a major figure. Although he bears a special grudge in his unbeating heart for the Children of Isaac, he has more important things to do in the modern nights. For more information, see **Children of the Night**.

Andreas Giovanni: The head of Giovanni operations in Boston, Andreas is seductive, pragmatic and utterly ruthless. A supporter of psychology before the practice was invented, he Blood Bonds and Embraces the characters for experiments as much as for assets to the clan. For all his study and knowledge of the human (and vampiric) mind, he is not as strong as he pretends; if he survives Act III, he is paranoid almost to the point of incapacity in Act IV.

Francis Milliner: Andreas Embraces Francis Milliner in 1954. Prior to this, however, Milliner was a partner at Columbia Trust Bank, with Joseph Kennedy. Francis was blatantly passed over for promotion at the bank in favor



of Joe, and began an association with Andreas Giovanni. Francis is a superb financier, but much more interested in money than power. This is another reason Andreas likes him so much; he poses no threat to Andreas' seat of power. Francis is not wholly driven by greed, however; his grudge against the Kennedy family lasts to the modern nights.

Jason Milliner: Francis' nephew Jason is Embraced in 1959, an ambitious and intelligent member of the family. Unlike his Uncle Francis, he wants power, and may come into competition with the characters for status within the clan.

Domenic Giovanni: A rising member of the family, Domenic is nevertheless stripped of his station in Act II. Embraced in 1959, he blames the characters for his disgrace and plans his revenge on them. Although they won't know it at the time, the characters later share the stigma of disgrace, and Domenic will be there to enjoy it (in Act IV). He serves as an unliving example of the proverb, "Be careful how you treat people on the way up, because you'll meet them again on the way down."

Genevra: Genevra was never meant to be a vampire. She picked a doddering but powerful Giovanni named del Corral into granting her the Embrace. She accomplished this by manipulating the Inquisition into murdering his domineering wife, Carmina. Over the years, Genevra has sent other Giovanni to Final Death in similar manners while consorting with the Sabbat to further her own ends. Augustus Giovanni is aware of this and, in 1999, grants Francis Milliner permission to diablerize her, thus lowering him to the Eighth Generation. Neither he nor Francis tells anyone of this, so in Act IV, the troupe will investigate the murder of an elder Giovanni, not knowing the killer is one of their own.

Hank Rothenstein: Hank is not a vampire. A ghoul in service to Andreas, Hank has no desire to receive the Embrace. His specialty is acquisition, be it drugs, guns, booze or women. He is also very sensitive and, like many servant ghouls, somewhat mentally unbalanced, and he can therefore serve as a good ally or a dangerous enemy. (He bears no relation, by the way, to the Las Vegas Rothstein Giovanni family)

THE CAMARILLA

Quentin King: The Prince of Boston does not figure prominently into this book until Act IV, during which the Sabbat and the Camarilla clash over Boston. A Malkavian, King handles the pressure poorly. His greatest assets — the princes of six outlying provinces — are all in his thrall, believing him to be King Arthur, and they his knights.

Effie Feng: Effie poses as a Malkavian. She is not. She is a Kuei-jin, an Asian "vampire" on the run from her own people. She may act as an ally and supplier for the characters in the first act. She is not directly involved in Acts II or III, but the characters will find her to be a source of valuable (if cryptic) information in Act IV.



THE SABBAT

Max Lowell: Embraced in 1948, Max is a City Gangrel with his eye on Boston. If any of the Children of Isaac who arrive are Sabbat, he is their contact. When the Sabbat attacks in 1999, Max leads the assault (see the Synopsis below).

OTHERS

Reginald: The restless soul of a drifter who died in 1928, Reginald meets the coterie early on and maintains a dubious watch over it. He honestly believes that he is in Purgatory, working off his time, so he is not as miserable as many other wraiths.

Marianna: The child of Claudius Giovanni is in Boston as of Act II. She follows the last remaining copy of the *Sargon Fragment* here, and meets her death in Act III. However, she definitely leaves a lasting impression — how much of an impression depends on the characters.

THE CHILDREN OF ISAAC

Some of the most important characters in this book are not merely members of a rival vampiric sect or competitors within the clan. They are elders who have watched and fought the Necro-

mancers since the clan's usurpation of power. If the troupe has run the first three **Giovanni Chronicles**, the Storyteller should be able to choose several elders (three or fewer is probably best) to appear in **Nuova Malattia**. In choosing which elders to use, the Storyteller should let logic and the story guide her decision.

The Storyteller should let the elders' players have a say in this, preferably if they don't realize the importance of the decision they're making. Who would continue to follow the Giovanni, and to pay attention to their machinations? They have been told that they are destined to play a part in the clan's future, but is that destiny to fall before the Necromancers? Do the Children of Isaac even believe this prophecy? Also, the players should consider very carefully what their elder characters have done for the past four decades. Have they spent the time in torpor? Are they still in torpor? Have they remained with their sect or become (or stayed) independent? Are they allied with other vampires, or were they responsible for murdering one or two in a previous story? Consider that the period from 1882 (the end of **The Sun Has Set**) to 1929 (the beginning of **Nuova Malattia**) is the shortest amount of downtime that the characters have had. The world has changed drastically in so short a time. How have the elders coped? Do they still pursue their vendetta against the Giovanni, or have they given up in favor of other interests? How seriously do they take the assertion that their fate is inexorably linked to the Necromancers?

With all this in mind, the Storyteller should choose some, but certainly no more than three, of the Children of Isaac for this game. The Storyteller assumes the roles of these Kindred during this story, as they attempt to cripple the Giovanni. If the players of these characters participate in **Nuova Malattia**, the Storyteller should consult with them about how they think their characters would arrange certain situations, so as to give a more accurate portrayal of the elders. The Storyteller must be careful not to tip her hand, however — keep the elders' appearance a surprise for later in the story.

If the troupe undertakes **Nuova Malattia** as a stand-alone story, the Storyteller must create these elder characters. Refer to the above synopses of the **Giovanni Chronicles** for information on these elders' unlives. The Conspiracy of Isaac (the sires of the elders who appear in this book, remember?) included all 13 of the clans presented in **Vampire: The Masquerade**. The elders appearing in this book can be from any clan, except Giovanni.

In creating the Children of Isaac, remember that they were not Embraced following seduction or a sudden attack. They were never meant to be Embraced; they were meant only as aperitifs for their sires. They each had taps in their throats and were being drained like wine casks when the Founders stormed Claudius' manse and forced him to leave the characters behind as fodder. As long and varied as their unlives have been since, as much status in their chosen vampiric sect (if any) as they have gained, they have not forgotten their humble beginnings.

The Children of Isaac have met many luminaries in the World of Darkness, including the Founders of the Camarilla, Durga Syn, Ambrogino Giovanni and even the Ancient Cappadocius (albeit briefly). They were neonates when the Camarilla was new and ancillae when the Sabbat took form. They have seen the rise and fall of emperors, countries and cities. The sheer amount of history they have witnessed is staggering to imagine, and even these characters have their betters. This sense of never quite knowing who has been around longer, who speaks to (and for) which sect or elder, is one reason these mighty elders do not simply sweep into Boston and destroy the Giovanni there. The fact that they witnessed the diablerie of Cappadocius and that Augustus Giovanni knows them by name and sight is another.

In game terms, elder characters are created as described in **Vampire: The Masquerade**; they simply get more points to spend. Elders receive a 10/7/5 dot allocation for Attributes, a 20/12/8 allocation for Abilities, 10 dots in Disciplines (the majority of which should come from their clan, but nonclan Disciplines may be taken as well), 15 dots in Backgrounds and 7 dots in Virtues. This system generates elders who have been undead for approximately a century. To reflect the long unlives of the Children of Isaac, you may wish to give them 95 freebie points, and begin them with a Humanity or Path rating *three points lower* than the total of the appropriate

HELPFUL TRAITS

The following Abilities should be represented in the group. Given that the characters will be immersed in the subculture of the Mafia immediately after the Proxy Kiss is granted them, the usefulness of most of these Traits should be evident:

Streetwise (A character who begins with this Talent has a head start)

Subterfuge (Useful for second-guessing clients, ferreting out snitches and day-to-day survival around Andreas)

Etiquette (With a possible specialty in Mafia. As organized crime has its own rules of conduct, it would behoove the characters to know them)

Firearms

Security (Cracking safes, stealing documents, etc.)

Bureaucracy

Finance (Someone should have a rating of 2+ ideally; see "Money Matters" in Act I)

Investigation (As much for covering the group's tracks as anything else)

Law

Linguistics (Someone should speak Italian)

Occult (Not an uncommon trait; in 1929, spiritualism is a popular pastime)

Also, the Intuition Talent (which appears in the **Vampire Storytellers Companion**) would be applicable. It should be noted, however, that this gives a very loose sense of the mystical, and it is certainly no substitute for Auspex or Necromancy.

Virtues. This represents the inevitable degeneration that vampires experience; while it is possible to have a highly principled elder, it is an expensive, demanding proposition. Humanity or Path dots can be bought with freebies, but the cost is 4 freebies per dot.

If the elder has not been active the full time (has been in torpor, for example), she gets fewer freebies, but her Humanity does not drop as much. The exact "point value" of the Children of Isaac isn't as important as their identities, their motivations and their methods. Of course they could easily kill the players' characters in combat and, since all parties involved know that, exactly what Discipline or weapon they'd use to do it isn't crucial.

In choosing (or creating) the elders, the Storyteller must carefully consider their place in both the mortal world and the Jyhad. Both the Camarilla and the Sabbat have interests in Boston that span this entire story, so an elder of either sect (or both) would be appropriate, as would a member of one of independent clans, excepting the Giovanni, of course.

CHARACTER CREATION

The players' characters begin the game as mortals, and are promptly changed into ghouls by Andreas Giovanni. As such, they should be created using the rules for generating ghoulish characters. The characters receive a 6/4/3 allocation for Attributes and an 11/7/4 spread for Abilities. Backgrounds, Virtues, Humanity and Willpower are calculated in the same way as for Kindred, although Backgrounds such as Generation and Status are obviously disallowed. Ghouls begin with one dot in Potence and one dot in another Discipline, which their domitors (the vampires whom they serve) must know. Usually, this is a clan Discipline, but characters may choose from any Disciplines that Andreas knows, except Thaumaturgy.

When designing characters for the game, the Storyteller should keep careful track of the characters' ethnicity. It is important that some relation to a Giovanni family exists. This could be the "main" branch, the African-based Ghiberti, the Scottish Dunsirn or even the Meso-American Pisanob (see **Clanbook: Giovanni**). Of course, the characters should know little (if anything) about their family's supernatural habits; they should be distant enough relatives to have escaped the perversion so common to the Giovanni upbringing (this is important; see Theme and Mood below). However, as long as some trace of Giovanni blood runs in their veins, Andreas can justifiably consider them for the Proxy Kiss and, later, for the Embrace.

The players should design the characters as mortals, although they begin play as mortals. Their change into ghouls occupies a good portion of the first chapter, and the Storyteller may choose to forego the choice of Disciplines until this change occurs. The characters can come from virtually any background. The only common thread must be the Giovanni. A character with a "foot in the door," i.e., who already works for the family in some capacity, be it soldier, mortician, researcher, city official, is perfectly acceptable, as is a housewife whose family owes the Giovanni money, or an accountant who does some of their books. Whatever the character's concepts, certain Traits will be helpful or essential to them during the game. These are listed below.

Also, certain Merits and Flaws should be restricted or disallowed. Only one character, if any, should be allowed to take the Iron Will or Unbondable Merits, and it should fit his concept. Likewise, the Benevolent Domitor Merit (from **Ghouls: Fatal Addiction**) is off limits; Andreas is not benevolent. Many of the other Merits and Flaws from **Ghouls: Fatal Addiction** are legitimate choices; some, however (True Gypsy and Kinfolk among them) are best made unavailable.

Merits and Flaws such as Dark Fate are certainly allowable. Having a character with Dark Fate is highly recommended, in fact, as such a character fulfills a role in the final chapter

of this book (said fate will also mean the death of the character, but such happens to those of whom fate takes notice). Any extra drama the player may evince with his death is definitely worth a few extra freebie points at the beginning of the game.

THEME AND MOOD

As a Black Dog book, **Nuova Malattia** covers some ground not entirely appropriate to all troupes. Storytellers should select their troupes carefully, or think long and hard about whether their troupe is prepared to handle matters in the spirit in which we present them. It's easy to turn this book into a mess of B-movie cliches or to reduce the troupe to a group of nervously giggling post-adolescents. Make it obvious you want the players to take the story very seriously (assuming you do). This story — indeed, the entire **Giovanni Chronicles** — isn't for everyone.

THEME

The major theme of this book is desensitization. Throughout the story, the characters are in some cases asked and in others demanded to commit some obscene acts against their fellow humans (at least, while they themselves are still human). That said, during character creation, an important question to consider, and one best asked of the players in private, is what their characters' moral limits are. Does the character consider murder acceptable under certain conditions? What about torture? Has the character ever been a victim or practitioner of rape or abuse? How does the character's Humanity reflect this? Is he grimly resigned to his fate? Has his Humanity started to crumble at its foundation? Bear in mind that during the first two chapters of the book, women's independence was just beginning to take form, and many people still held to the "woman-as-servant" ideal. There were no special hotlines to call, and most victims of incest and abuse grew up repressing their hatred, only to inflict it upon their own families later. A character who grows up in that environment might think it normal, or at least inescapable, and feel no real remorse about causing pain to others.

Along the same lines, what would the character do to survive? To get rich? What is the most important thing to the character? Whatever it is, it is about to be replaced by vitae. Mothers have sold their children for a hit of crack, and vitae is even more difficult to resist. How far will the character go, knowing that to turn back means death at best, and Clan Giovanni's disfavor at worst?

Just as important, especially considering their domitor, are the characters' views on sex. Andreas is very interested in human sexual desire and what happens to it after the Proxy Kiss. He is himself amazingly seductive, and has no problem seducing men; after all, his actual sex drive is gone, and everything else is only acting. This may touch upon

some sensitive issues among the players, and certainly the characters. After all, until the modern era, homosexuality was usually classified as a mental illness. Are any of the characters secretly (or openly) gay or bisexual? Does the very idea horrify them? Is the housewife character married with an increasingly boring sex life that she wishes she could enhance, or has she been taught that sex is nothing more than a burden she must bear? Depending on the characters' answers, they may find themselves with alien feelings as the Blood Bond takes hold, or find their libidos amplifying terribly.

The immense lust a ghoul feels must be released, just like any other strong emotion. The way in which this is done will say much about the ghoul in question and her slide into moral decay. The Storyteller can reinforce this by informing players that people their characters encounter "seem" to be flirting; hopefully they will take the bait, only to discover that what they thought was a come-on was just friendliness. Rejection might not sit well with such a ghoul, and people have killed for less, after all. This is especially true for a male character who is ostensibly straight, but has developed (and repressed) a sexual fixation on Andreas.

This story echoes the core theme of **Vampire** perhaps more strongly than any book prior to it. Humanity and morality by nature come to the fore — this is not a story about amassing Disciplines and slaying foes. Even the political angle serves to illustrate the depths to which a character must sink to achieve prominence. A character (or several) may very well drop to Humanity 0 over the course of the tale — such is the price of power.

As a final note, never push the theme on a player who has grown uncomfortable. It may be wise for a coterie to develop a "safe word" that lets everyone know when to take a time-out. **Vampire**, while not necessarily a comfortable experience, is nonetheless a game, and if a player cannot enjoy herself under the circumstances, it is the troupe's responsibility to respect that person's mores. Such a player suffers no shame — this story may simply not be her cup of tea.

MOOD

The mood of **Nuova Malattia** can best be described as forced civility. Consider: The Mafia is a highly complex, very social organization. "Respect" is a serious consideration, as not showing it to one's superior can be fatal. Meeting with an enemy boss is often done over a meal. This kind of casualness should be very unnerving for the characters at first; not only do they have to kill people, arrange brutal fights, sell drugs and find young prostitutes, they have to remember to be *polite* while discussing it! As the characters get more used to the rules of conduct that accompany the Mob, however, this forced civility may eventually become something they force on others, perhaps their own ghouls or childer. This, of course, plays back into the theme of degeneration.

PROGRESSION

This book covers 70 years, much more time than any of previous installments of the **Giovanni Chronicles**. In addition, changes occur much more quickly in the 20th century than in previous eras. The Storyteller should endeavor to create a "feel" for whatever the current decade is. The first chapter, set in 1929, should have a much faster and frantic pace — the "Roaring '20s" — than the second chapter, which is set in 1959.

Also, the characters change from mortals to ghouls to vampires over the course of the book. Some of the coterie (roughly one third) should be Embraced at the end of the first three chapters. Each chapter provides the reasons and the circumstances of the Embrace. This means that until the fourth chapter, only part of the group will be Kindred. This also means that part of the group may have amassed more status than the rest, and they may be in a position to give orders.

The coterie's scattered Embraced is done for several reasons. One is simple realism; the Giovanni do not Embrace new ghouls by the handful. They wait for eligible ghouls to prove themselves before granting this honorable curse. In a troupe with six players, this means the rate of Embrace should be roughly one per decade. This is still fast, but Andreas enjoys inflicting the Embrace, observing what changes it brings to the mind and soul of a person.

The second reason is story-based. It would prove inconvenient in the first and second acts if none of the group could function in daylight, and downright damning in the third. Daytime activity is an advantage that the Kindred don't possess, and if they are wise, they will not be too nasty to the "lowly ghouls"; after all, said ghouls might be testifying in court to save the business some day.

The final reason is good, old-fashioned opportunity for conflict. The characters spend the first act as ghouls, all toadying to Andreas. Then some of them are Embraced. At this point, they should realize that the only way to end the cycle of dependence on Andreas' blood (and to become "made men," of a sort), is to receive the Embrace. Likewise, the characters who are still ghouls might kiss up to the Kindred characters, in hopes that they put in a word with Andreas.

Of course, such a separation between Embraces will put some characters above others in terms of raw power. However, this is a Black Dog product, which demands a greater degree of maturity than other games. Hopefully, players in the **Giovanni Chronicles** have learned that vampires rarely fight each other directly, and that having one more dot of Potence than your opponent only matters in a physical altercation. With luck, your players will recognize this as the superb chance for roleplaying that it is, and not get caught up in "Hey, how come *she* got Embraced, and not me?" (Of course, a *character* saying that is just fine....)

Another element to consider is the change from mortal to servant to servant with power. Below are some ideas for how to implement these changes, along with systems for how they work in game terms.

MORTAL TO GHOUL

This change occurs in the first chapter when Andreas feeds the characters his blood. As the vitae infuses their veins, the characters gain one level of Potence and have all the traits of a ghoul: retarded aging, the power to heal wounds, the power to increase Physical Attributes, the capacity to frenzy, etc. Of course, the characters aren't told about these things and a great deal of time in Chapter One is devoted to the character's transition into ghouldom.

Mechanically, a ghoul can hold two blood points of vitae in her system comfortably, and several more uncomfortably. For each point of Stamina a ghoul possesses, she may hold an additional blood point. Drinking more than this requires a Stamina roll (difficulty 8). Success means the blood can be used normally. Failure indicates nausea and pain (the character suffers an unsoakable Health Level of bashing damage for every point above her Stamina + 2, and must purge the excess blood before using any at all).

Even if the character succeeds in holding more blood, however, she is considered to be overdosing. While overdosing, the character receives an extra dot of Dexterity to reflection a heightened reaction time, but must also check for frenzy as does a vampire (though she will not frenzy from hunger). In addition, the player must roll Perception + Self-Control (difficulty 6) each scene or suffer from bloodborne hallucinations, the nature of which are up to the Storyteller.

It is possible for a ghoul to change her own supply of blood to vitae, but it requires ingesting vitae nightly for a month. After the one-month point, the ghoul may convert her own mortal blood supply into vitae at a rate of one point per night, as long as the feedings continue. If more than three consecutive feedings are missed, the ghoul's body converts vitae to blood at a rate of one point per three nights. Imbibing vitae again halts this, but it takes another month of consecutive feedings before the conversion may begin again. Note that this is not a fact known to many Kindred, let alone ghouls, so ghoul characters should not have justification to ask their newly Embraced allies to feed them every night during downtime. Andreas, incidentally, never feeds his ghouls this often.

More information on the conversion and on overdosing, as well as many other helpful facts, can be found in **Ghouls: Fatal Addiction**.

GHOUL TO VAMPIRE

This change can come anywhere throughout the book, be it from Andreas, or one of the other players' characters (either with Andreas' approval or not). Mechanically, a neonate Embraced by Andreas is of 9th Generation, whereas

one Embraced by one of the players' characters is of 10th, diablerie notwithstanding. A newly Embraced vampire keeps whatever clan Disciplines she knew as a ghoul, and upon the Embrace is "given" two additional dots in Disciplines. These, of course, must be chosen from the Giovanni clan Disciplines of Potence, Dominate and Necromancy. The character is assumed to practice these powers during the downtime that follows the Embrace.

As far as roleplaying goes, a few concepts bear mention. The characters probably begin their slide into inhumanity before their Embrace, but it is after the Embrace that maintaining a certain level of Humanity becomes critical. Andreas will inform them that though they are now beyond the human condition, they must maintain at least some facet of it, lest they become lost to the Beast and therefore useless to him. Andreas' own obsession with the human condition has sustained him (although, ironically, following this obsession was probably what dropped his Humanity so low in the first place). He will advise them to find a vocation, a pursuit, even an ideology; something to keep them human. However, no amount of trying to stay human changes the fact that the characters are not; they are now dead in a clan obsessed with death. What may eventually happen, as it did with Andreas, is that whatever they choose to keep them human becomes an unhealthy passion, and ends up turning the characters into obsessed monsters. (Hannibal Lecter, the cannibalistic serial killer in *The Silence of the Lambs*, is an example of this. While he is assuredly a monster, he is also a doctor, a socialite, an artist and a superb chef. The book brings this out much more vividly than the film, by the way).

Another important fact is that once the Embrace occurs, the character has died, both physically and spiritually. This means that the Blood Bond, while still intact, weakens considerably. This means more for the Embraces in Act III than in Act I, of course, but the sudden absence of feeling for Andreas can be easily replaced by confusion ("I thought I loved you"), confabulation ("I think I still love you"), fear ("How could I have loved you?") or possibly even anger ("I hate you!"). If any newly Embraced neonate gives him lip, Andreas will surely bond him again. However, it should provide an interesting look at the "maturing" process, as the vampire can look at the star-struck ghouls and think, "I remember that."

As mentioned above, it is possible for one player character to Embrace another. If this occurs, the Storyteller must decide what kinks this throws into the story. Was the character justified in doing so and does Andreas think so? Does she have enough autonomy to even make such a decision? An inappropriately Embraced neonate probably won't be killed outright, but may be disdained, put down, ignored and generally forced to prove herself double-time to make up for her sire's indiscretion. Plus, she will be of higher generation than her fellows will. Hardly seems worth it, right?