

The Vampire Ritual Book

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Introduction:

The Vampire Ritual Book

Back in 1999, Father Sebastian asked me if I would be up to the task of composing a vampire ritual book for the Sanguinarium. This was at a time when I was highly active on a couple of Internet sites that allowed freelancers to post their work and then paid them a small amount of money for each independent hit that their work received. I had found early on that I had great success with my rites and rituals on these sites. I got a great deal of fan mail from Pagans and Wiccans who had encountered my work on the sites, and there were many requests to use my rituals for handfastings, child naming ceremonies, funerals, and the like.

I had already been hard at work developing the ritual structure for House Kheperu, and some of the early versions of seasonal rites and rites of initiation were up on my website at www.kheperu.org. These also gained me a great deal of email from individuals who wanted to make use of the rites or who simply wanted to let me know how much the rituals there had moved them.

However, House Kheperu is a pretty unique animal in the vampire community. At that time, our caste system was still very controversial, and many of our past life beliefs also distinguished us from other vampire households. As the past life material was worked into a number of our rites, it made them a little hard for groups that didn't have that background to make use of. Many of the other rites have integral roles played by members of each caste, and this further excluded the Kheprian rituals from a widespread, general use. Several groups were still borrowing bits and pieces of our rites and integrating them into their own practices, mainly because there were no other well-written ritual traditions publicly available that were vampire-based.

At first, Sebastian and I considered developing "official" Sanguinarium rituals, but I tabled that idea right away because there was too great a chance such a tradition would just degrade into something rigid and inflexible. Based on my experiences with ritual and my strong beliefs on the purpose of ritual for the group and the individual, I felt it would be healthier to develop sample rituals that would serve as a guideline for others who could use them as inspiration for writing their own.

I wrote up a number of rites, rituals, and prayers that I felt would appeal to a generalized vampire audience. In the meantime, Sebastian continued to evolve the Sanguinarium, taking it in different directions, until it gave way to his private occult order, the OSV. The idea for the Sanguinarium ritual book was tabled, and nothing more became of the manuscript. However, as I'm wont to do, I kept the completed manuscript on my hard drive, tinkering with it now and again, and adding new rituals as they occurred to me. Some were adaptations of Kheprian rites, but others were designed exclusively to answer needs I saw within the vampire subculture.

Today the community is constantly changing, but the need created by organizations like the Sanguinarium remains. Many people are drawn toward the vampire as a spiritual archetype, and those people feel a need for rites and rituals that differ from those belonging to more typical Pagan and Wiccan traditions. In the interest of helping such people develop a tradition more suited to their tastes, I picked up the old ritual book, dusted it off, and presented it here. Several of these rites have a distinctly Sanguinarium flair, for they were written with that tradition in mind.

Even in its heyday, the Sanguinarium did not appeal to everyone, but there are many individuals who celebrate the spirituality of the vampire. Because of this, even with the lingering Sanguinarium influence, I feel the rituals compiled here can have relevance to some aspects of our community. Certainly, with a few alterations here and there to customize the rites for a specific group, many of these rituals can be appropriate to anyone who feels drawn to that powerful archetype. It's important to keep in mind that even at the time of their original writing, none of these rituals were cast in stone. The section on "living ritual" addresses this more fully, but suffice to say that I firmly believe rituals should grow and change as the need for them grows and changes, and individuals should never feel shy about tailoring the rites to their own tastes in whatever ways seem most appropriate. Perhaps the most important lesson you can take away from the introductory portions of this book is the knowledge that a ritual has no power if it does not appeal directly to those who are participating in it. As such, treat your ritual work as divine play. Change the rules when it feels right, and adapt the words so you can feel your heart resonating through them.

--Michelle Belanger

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Chapter One:

An Introduction to Ritual

Ritual is most often associated with gods and with religion. When Wiccans perform ritual, they are invoking the Goddess and her consort, the God, bringing their presence down into the sacred space. When Catholics perform ritual, they are calling their God to be present at the ceremony, in the form of the Eucharist. However, ritual itself can be independent of specific gods or even specific religious practices. In this respect, ritual is a tool used to achieve a heightened state of consciousness, awareness, and focus, especially in a group setting.

Ritual is often performed with an expressed purpose such as to reaffirm the bonds shared by a community, to celebrate a particular time of the year, or to acknowledge an individual's rite of passage. Rituals can be constructed for extremely specific goals, and these will vary depending upon the group, the individual, and the situation. The heightened state that ritual inspires in the participants enables them to raise energy, harness it, and direct it toward a unified goal.

An additional purpose of ritual is to build a temporary or permanent structure of energy known as sacred space. Within the confines of sacred space, ordinary reality is heightened and refined so that it may come more completely into contact with the realm of spirit. Ritual establishes sacred space as a crossing-over point between the spiritual and the mundane so that the participants can move beyond the confines of ordinary reality.

Ritual often utilizes hand gestures, drama, music, the spoken word, and objects that appeal to all the senses. The use of candles and incense is common, as is the use of specific ritual clothes. These all serve as tools that establish focus and move awareness from ordinary reality to a more elevated frame of mind.

Ritual balances the sacred and the mundane, integrating body and spirit for all who participate. The elevated state of ritual is very energetically healthy and it provides an atmosphere that induces clarity, focus, and refined awareness. Ritual can also facilitate contact and integration with your Higher Self and for this reason can be very enlightening and empowering.

Sacred space improves the quality of energy in an area, and maintaining a constant presence of sacred space creates a cascade affect that heightens and refines the energy in a widespread location. For these reasons, it is very helpful to integrate some aspect of ritual into your regular routine. It does not matter what form

the ritual takes or even if it is an active expression of religious sentiment. How you choose to express and perform ritual will be unique to you and your particular interests and needs. As long as your ritual work is a striving toward something finer than ordinary reality, it will ultimately benefit and enrich you.

Vampire Ritual

The rituals of the vampire community have grown into a unique tradition all their own. Often separate from rituals invoking gods or goddesses, the rituals of the vampire community are typically focused on reaffirming the bonds of that community and evoking the power of the individual.

Great emphasis is placed on individuality in the vampire community, so there are no absolutes to ritual. Intent is everything. Dress, symbols, and tools vary from group to group and even ritual to ritual. The format of ritual also varies according to group. Not only is ritual form often customized according to the needs of each different group, vampires typically change their ritual format from ritual to ritual, maintaining a level of spontaneity that engages all involved, making each ritual a special and personal instance of divine play.

The design of vampire rituals is often syncretic, integrating elements from a variety of other systems and adding concepts relevant to vampires. Pagan and Wiccan rituals can serve as inspiration, but vampires will feel free to draw material from the rituals of ancient Egypt, from Hinduism, Persian traditions, Japanese Shinto, shamanism, and even LaVeyan Satanism. As long as the symbols and ritual activities speak on a meaningful level to those involved in the ritual, vampires feel free to innovate and explore a myriad of ritual expressions.

Although vampires have borrowed the basic structure of the Pagan Wheel of the Year, most vampire traditions play down the connection to nature. While many Pagan rituals take place in natural settings and out of doors, vampire rituals often occur indoors. The vast majority of vampires live in urban settings, and some people have suggested that vampirism itself is an urban phenomenon, a response to the city's lack of sources of natural energy. Whether people tend to be vampiric because their environment is lacking in natural sources of energy is a matter of debate. However, the fact remains that most vampires are city-dwellers. Not only do vampire rituals typically take place inside, it is not uncommon for vampire rituals to occur at night clubs or other social events, tucked in among the bands and other performers. Possibly as a result of this, vampire ritual often has a very theatrical element to it, with the participants dressing in Gothic finery in honor of the event.

In addition to a certain flair for the dramatic, vampire rituals tend to place a strong emphasis on energy and the energetic structure of sacred space. The sacred space in a vampire ritual is typically set up through a series of actions that are often delegated to three separate individuals or groups. First, the space is cleared energetically and the boundaries of the circle are established. After this, new energy is raised in the space, infused with raw, creative potential. Finally, the energy is harnessed and shaped into a spiritual temple. Every person present in the sacred space is seen as being a part of that temple, contributing some vital aspect to its structure.

Especially when a vampire ritual is being performed for an audience, the individuals involved in creating sacred space will use words, gestures, tools, and other ritual actions to demonstrate their work. However, these things are not seen as ends to themselves but as methods of focus. Each activity is accomplished by intent alone. For some groups, no outward action may occur to mark each step. Even though items are approached in terms of symbol only, there are still some significant meanings attached to colors and objects. Colors that will occur again and again in vampire ritual items and ritual clothes are:

black (shadows, hidden knowledge)

purple (wisdom, magickal power)

silver (psychic energy, the moon)

red (life-force, blood)

Once the space is prepared, participants will typically file into the space and form a circle. They often hold hands, sharing energy around the circle before beginning anything else. The sharing of energy is very important within the vampire tradition, and it is not uncommon for vampires to greet one another by touching energy or presenting their energy, unshielded, to be touched. This is a gesture of trust and it is also a way of connecting beyond words and beyond the facades so many people tend to keep up. Since vampires are uniquely tuned to this type of energy, it feels natural and right to open one's energy to companions in this way.

Vampire ritual is run by at least one priest. Gender is inconsequential. The priest often operates within the circle and may have one or two assistants. These assistants are often representatives of the different castes, a concept we will delve into in more detail in the next chapter. Although vampires do not often keep altars, a table is often kept in the center of the circle simply to hold any books or ritual tools that might be used during the course of the ritual. As there is such a heavy focus on energy and intent, vampire rituals do not require the use of ritual tools. The individual is seen as his or her own tool, and all ritual actions can be accomplished through an extension of energy or a focusing of intent. However, going back to the dramatic aspect of ritual, some groups do choose to use items simply for the aesthetic or theatrical qualities they bring to the ritual. These items can change from group to group and even from ritual to ritual.

After the sharing of energy, most rituals are opened with a statement or charge that expresses the sacred identity of the group. Specific deities are very rarely invoked. Even when they are specifically called upon, deities are still often seen in terms of symbol and archetype rather than as objectively real beings. If deities are called upon, they are almost always dark gods and goddesses with chthonic associations or associations with magick and forbidden wisdom. Some of the most common beings names are Lilith, Set, and Lucifer in his guise as Lightbringer.

This symbolic approach to deity arises because most vampires see the real "deity" at work in ritual as the individual. "Thou art god, thou art goddess," is taken very literally in this system, and each individual reverences his or her own divine spark. Because of this, vampire ritual is less a "drawing down" and more a "drawing out" -- the power of the ceremony comes from invoking the divinity within each participant.

Vampires most commonly gather for ritual for social reasons. Vampire rituals honor some aspect of the community, such as a rite of passage, or celebrate a specific holiday. Group ritual among vampires is very rarely used to accomplish magickal effects. Magickal rituals are almost always solitary affairs.

Raising energy and sharing it within the group is both a main function and a main goal of vampiric ritual. Creating sacred space, where spirit and divinity are more keenly felt, is also both a function and a goal of vampire ritual. A vampire ritual has been successful if the participants come away more aware of their energy and the way that energy connects all of them and if the participants come away with a heightened awareness of their immortal Selves -- that divine spark that is their inner divinity.

Other concepts and symbols relevant to vampires that might be encountered in vampire ritual:

Spiritual immortality and rebirth

Life-force, manifested as either prana or blood

Energetic connection and exchange between individuals

Affinity with night, darkness, and shadows

Rapport with spirits, mainly spirits of the dead

Death as change

Ankhs as symbols of life and eternity

Skulls, skeletons, or coffins as symbols of power/triumph over death

Ancient, hidden, or forbidden knowledge

Exceeding human limitations/becoming more than human

Ancient Egypt is often revered and drawn upon for inspiration because of its antiquity, its reverence for death and personal immortality, and its mythic connection with forgotten wisdom. In addition to this, the Watcher Angel and Enochian myths often hold significance among vampires. This is largely because of the notion that more-than-human beings at some point in the distant past made a conscious choice to become flesh. Adding to the potent allure of this mythos is the forbidden knowledge possessed by the Watchers, which was then passed on to humanity against the will of the gods. The Promethian aspect of this cycle of myths is also a strong part of the allure the figure of Lucifer holds for many vampires.

Chapter Two:

Ritual and Sacred Space

When we perform rituals and ceremonies, we are building sacred space. This is a realm which exists within yet apart from our ordinary reality that allows us to come into contact with the extraordinary. In sacred space, our sensitivities are heightened. Our thoughts and feelings are in an elevated state. Building sacred space may seem like something esoteric, but it is not difficult at all. Since the energies we harness for magick and ritual are within and throughout all things, in a sense sacred space is all around us. We only need to learn how to harness it.

Sacred space is really just a frame of mind. You can build it wherever and whenever you please. Once you get used to it, you can carry a little of it inside of you at all times, so that even in the midst of the most mundane environment, you can find a stillpoint and be at peace with yourself. Once you understand that sacred space is where you choose to make it, and that you can carry it within, you can perform ritual any time and anywhere – even on your way to work, riding the subway.

Some rituals call for a little more pomp and ceremony, however. Rituals held with large groups to honor important days or events can benefit from a more theatrical approach. It's important to understand that the pomp and ceremony is not required to create sacred space – what really build ritual space is energy and the Will to direct it. So long as your Will is focused, you can erect an inner temple with no outward actions and without resorting to any tools. But tools and ritual actions are not only helpful in achieving focus. They add an aesthetic level to ritual as well. They especially help to focus the attention of a large group, catching everyone up in the beauty and potency of the ceremony. Chants and ritual actions help us achieve the focus necessary to reach this state of mind. To this end, try starting and ending your rituals with the framework listed below. This will help

you establish the ritual area as something that exists outside of ordinary reality where the higher goals of ritual can be approached.

Caste Roles in Ritual

The set of ritual actions used below to build sacred space build upon the Kheprian concept of castes. Too often members of the vampire community encounter the word “caste” and assume that it is only related to a social hierarchy. However, in the Kheprian system, castes are more about energy and a person’s preferential role in working with energy. The first caste that enters Kheprian ritual space is the Warrior Caste. The Warriors clear the space of any pre-existing energy, breaking down any metaphysical barriers that might exist, chasing away unwanted spiritual entities, and then standing guard at the quarters. The Concubines – more widely known as the Counselor Caste – then enter. Their role is the generation of energy, building up raw material, connecting people and things, and facilitating flow. Once this caste has infused the blank slate created by the Warriors with energetic potential, the Priests enter. The Priest caste harness and direct energy, and in ritual they take the raw potential provided by the Counselors and shape it into the actual spiritual temple. Each Priest becomes a pillar in that temple, holding the shape of the structure throughout the ritual. The Warriors continue to guard the perimeter and serve as a firm foundation throughout the ritual, and the Counselors weave connections between everyone present, making sure energy flows and builds properly throughout the ritual.

The framework below is based on these notions. You do not have to recognize specific castes within your own system to use this, however. The castes are just formalizations of three fundamental relations to energy. Everyone falls into one of these three roles: grounding/stabilizing, connecting/building, and harnessing/directing. In truth, anyone – even members of the Kheprian castes – can perform *any* of these three functions. The distinction comes about because most people have one method that comes more naturally to them, and that feels more “right” to perform during ritual. When approaching this ritual system within your own group, talk among yourselves and decide what roles feel right to you. It’s perfectly acceptable to feel as if you fit into more than one, but consider what energetic archetype best fits how you view yourself magickally. Once you’ve assigned roles (and remember that you can switch them in later rites if you want to) then you can start building space through the set of steps outlined below.

Sebastian has suggested that in the Sanguinarium ritual system, the castes should be associated with the old guild system that existed on the Sanguinarium site from 1998 onward. These guilds are described in the *Vampyre Almanac*, and while their correlation to the castes is hardly perfect, they establish a division of concepts and duties within the Sanguinarium system. By Sebastian’s suggestion, the Mradu, once the guild for “sanguine scholars,” should be used to designate Warriors. Ramkht, the guild of “vampyre artists,” become Priests. There was no immediate corollary to the Concubine caste, so Lady Eden of the Court of Lightning Bay developed a term, *Kitra*, meaning “knot,” for this caste.

Erecting the Temple

The ritual space should be large enough to accommodate everyone in a loose circle. Within the circle, there should be a small table with a candle, incense, and any other ritual tools that might be required during the rite (don’t forget matches!). This should not be located at the center of the circle but rather off to one side, typically near the “head” of the circle. For some traditions, this will be North, while others prefer East. The direction of the “head” is a matter of individual preference and group symbolism. In the Kheprian tradition, the head of the circle is magnetic North, because that’s the way energy prefers to flow.

Part I: The Warriors enter the ritual space. All carry daggers that have been ritually consecrated. They walk counter-clockwise around the perimeter of the ritual space, using their blades to symbolically “cut” the energy and clear it. This “cutting” should be reinforced with an actual energetic sweep of the space. The person designated as the head Warrior leads this activity, and when he feels that the space has been cleared, he steps to the center and thrusts the tip of his blade into the floor, grounding the energy through the blade.

*I clear this space
With the steel in my hand
And the steel of my Will.
Let all that was here be sundered
So we begin with the purity of void.*

The Warriors take up points around the circle. Ideally, there should be at least four Warriors, and they should stand at the four quarters. If there are less than four, elect two to act as Watchtowers, standing at North and South. If there are more than four, elect four Watchtowers and allow the others to arrange themselves so there is balance in the circle when the other castes enter. As the Watchtowers take their positions, they turn to face outward from the circle, holding up their blades. Starting with the lead Warrior, who should stand at the “head” of the circle (for some this is North, for others, East) each Warrior, counter-clockwise around the circle faces outward, takes a fighting stance, and says:

*I stand as the Watchtower,
Guardian of this circle.
I have cast everything unwanted out.
Nothing we do not welcome here
Will pass my blade and watchful eye.
In Honor and Blood.*

The Warrior makes a symbolic cut in the air and then sheaths his blade, turning back to face the inside of the circle. As each Warrior finishes, they stand at attention, waiting for the next two steps in the ritual set-up.

Part II: The Counselors enter next. They pass through the outer perimeter established by the Warriors. Like the Warriors, the Counselors move counter-clockwise around the circle, using the Warriors to define the outermost edge. As they move, the Counselors begin to sway and dance, raising energy with their sinuous movements. They may play musical instruments or they may move to music that is already playing softly in the background. The lead Counselor lights a candle on the altar and lights incense from this. The lead Counselor gestures into the smoke, wafting the incense up across neck and throat. Each Counselor moves to the altar and does the same, always moving in rhythm to their dance. They Counselors join hands together at the center of the circle, cycling energy between themselves, building this energy internally, then pushing it out to fill the circle. Some groups may want to express the building of this energy in a more sensual manner than simply holding hands, instead having the Counselors touch and caress one another, celebrating life and love as they raise the energy of the circle. When the Counselors deem that they have raised enough energy, they extend their hands into the center of their inner circle, cupping their hands upward to hold a collective ball of energy. They infuse this with all of the positive emotions generated through their interactions and their dance, and the lead Counselor guides this also toward the energy that is the focus of the ritual. The lead Counselor says:

*This is our essence,
Our precious life.
Freely given to enrich this circle.
Spirit to spirit, flesh to flesh,
We weave the bonds that connect us.*

The lead Counselor guides everyone into raising the collected energy above them in the center of the circle, then releasing it outward. All the Counselors stand with their arms raised for a moment, letting the energy wash over them. Then they step backward and take their places in the circle, moving evenly between the Warriors to maintain balance in the circle.

Part III: The Priests enter last, moving through the Warriors and Counselors to the inside part of the circle. The lead Priest heads the procession as the Priests walk slowly around the interior of the circle, moving counter-clockwise. After they have made one pass around the circle, inspecting the work of the Warriors and Counselors, the Priests move to the center. They hold their hands out to their sides, palms up to grab and harness the energy. Each Priest should envision a temple. This can be a temple that takes whatever form seems appropriate in that moment, or it can be a temple that was agreed upon by all the Priests previously. As the Priests harness and shape the energy, they should close their eyes and focus on this temple, seeing themselves each as a pillar holding the entire structure up. When the lead Priest feels that the energy has begun to take on a solid form, he or she speaks the following:

*We are the Priest Caste,
Shapers of spirit and form.
With the Warriors as our Foundation
And the Counselors as our Mortar,
We build this structure brick by brick
Through our Immortal Will.*

Alternately, all the Priests can speak together, intoning as one voice the creation of the temple. As the words are spoken, the Priests open their eyes and raise their hands slowly up at their sides, palms up, guiding the energy into its final form. The temple should not merely be shaped as a circle but should actually be a complete sphere of energy, surrounding the entire gathering on all sides as well as above and below. When the lead Priest feels that the temple has been erected, he nods to the others and they begin to step away from the center of the circle, taking places among the Warriors and Counselors. They maintain their hold on the structure of the temple as they move, slowly releasing it to stand on its own. During the course of the ritual, the Priests must keep that sense of being a pillar in the backs of their minds, harnessing the energy and giving it structure, just as the Counselors must maintain that sense of connection, weaving energy between everyone in the circle, and cycling and heightening it within themselves. The Warriors continue to stand guard against any outside influences threatening the space of the temple, while at the same time maintaining a firm foundation so the energy raised and directed also stays grounded and does not overwhelm any in the rite.

Open any ritual or ceremony with this set of actions. The framework is suitable for consecrating sacred space for Cabals and other gatherings as well. If the wording of any of the declarations seems clumsy or inappropriate for your particular group, play with them a little until you find a formula that works best for you. The idea here is to get your energy and the energy of everyone with you focused on building a place where you can all reach higher into your Selves than ordinary reality allows. Different symbols speak to each of us more strongly, so add what you feel is lacking to make the wording speak to you.

Focusing Group Consciousness

Once you have declared the sacred space, another crucial thing you should attend to before starting the ritual is get everyone in tune. A ritual will work best if you've focused the consciousness of the group on the experience at hand. One way that we do this in Kheprian rituals is simply by standing in a circle and joining hands. We observe a moment of silence where everyone thinks about the ritual and the connection we all share. We pass energy among us around the circle, usually taking with our left hands and giving with our rights. The particular direction doesn't really matter. Counter-clockwise is what works for us, but the important thing is that everyone knows what direction things are supposed to be moving in before the sharing starts. If you haven't coordinated this ahead of time, some people will pull one way, some will pull the other, and the energy of the circle will get really crazy really fast.

In addition to sharing our energy so everyone balances and gets in tune, we recite the Kheprian Charge. This is a short declaration of who we are, what we believe, and how those beliefs connect us. A charge like this further serves to focus the consciousness of the group by stressing the group identity. When you're coming together to do a community ritual, you're doing it because there are important things you share as a community.

These beliefs and ideals define you as a group, and going over them in a ritualized fashion really helps achieve focus and a sense of interconnectedness.

As an example, here is the Kheprian Charge:

*We are the many-born, we are the Immortal
Eternal, we wander the aeons,
moving to the rhythm of our own inner tides.
We are active elements moving through passive worlds.*

*Endlessly we die and are reborn,
changed yet unchanging through the years.
We move from lifetime to lifetime,
taking up bodies as garments.*

*Ours is a journey toward understanding,
and our charge is knowledge and wisdom.
We are the catalysts, and as we Awaken to our Selves,
we serve to Awaken the very world.*

Wiccans usually recite the Charge of the Goddess to focus group consciousness at the start of a rite. Each group, by definition, will have a different belief system that defines it as a distinct community. Therefore, the Charge or opening prayer for each group will have to be customized for the beliefs of that group. This Charge, or opening prayer, does not have to be recited by everybody. In Wiccan ceremonies, as referenced above, the Charge of the Goddess is usually recited by the officiating priestess. Whether this opening prayer is recited by one person or by the group as a whole will really depend on the structure of your particular group. Some groups may not feel comfortable opening with a Charge or prayer. For some, a moment of silence where everyone shares energy and gets the group “in tune” is enough. A few of the more primal groups, like the Court of the Barrens in New York, prefer to focus conscious through a group howl, with each member throwing his or her head back, digging deep into their primal selves, and howling wordlessly with the power of that primal side. Each group has something different that appeals to them, and each group should feel free to experiment until that special something is found.

After group consciousness has been focused, you can move on to the body of the ritual, where the actual purpose of the rite is expressed and all of the ritual actions pertinent to that purpose are carried out within the sacred space.

Unmaking the Temple

At the conclusion of a ritual, the sacred space that has been erected in the form of a spiritual temple should be taken down. As the temple is taken down, it is important to acknowledge that the temple itself is a state of mind, something that is not dependent upon a particular time or place, but instead is carried in each of us at all times. In this sense, sacred space is entirely portable, and can be carried with the practitioners from place to place, being set up and invoked when it is needed. Never forget this, and never fail to bring back a little of the sacred reality into your ordinary lives.

The leading Priest decides when the rite is concluded. He should indicate the close of the rite to the participants in a formal manner. As an example, he can say:

*Brick by brick, we built our sacred temple.
And brick by brick, we now unmake it,
We take the essence back into ourselves,*

*And carry it with us always,
Thus our temple is never sundered
But it lives within.*

All other Priests answer, "It lives within." The lead Priest nods to the Warrior closest to the doorway or traditional exit of the circle. Typically, this is directly opposite the head of the circle. This Warrior, sometimes known as "Guardian of the Gate," then takes his blade and symbolically cuts a door into the space of the temple. He "holds" this door open, and the Priests file out.

The lead Counselor moves to the center of the circle and says:

*We have built bonds between us,
Spirit to spirit, flesh to flesh.
Our time together is over for now,
But we will always honor these bonds.*

The Counselors raise their hands, palms up, as the lead Counselor speaks. As the words are finished, all lower their heads and hold their hands over their hearts. They respond, "We honor these bonds." They pull some of the connections that have been established within the circle closer, holding the ties of the circle deep within their hearts. Like the Priests, they then file out past the Guardian of the Gate.

The Warriors are the last ones standing in the circle. The lead Warrior steps toward the altar. He takes his blade back out, passing it through the flame of the candle. Then he snuffs the candle and says:

*We are Guardians
And we are Destroyers,
We stand at the beginning
And we stand at the end.
With our strength, this space was created.
With our strength we tear it down
So it may be created once again.
In Honor and Blood.*

As he says, "In Honor and Blood," the lead Warrior drops to the ground and plants the point of his blade in the floor, grounding out the remaining energies. As he does this, all other Warriors respond with, "In Honor and Blood," and do the same. When all the energy is cleared from the space, they file out past the Guardian of the Gate. The Guardian is the last to leave.

Note on Special Roles

The castes lend themselves to a number of specialized roles within ritual space. In the closing of the temple, the most notable of these is the Warrior position of "Guardian of the Gate." This role is particularly important when a ritual requires passage in and out of the circle once sacred space has been established. The Guardian of the Gate is the creator and keeper of the energetic "door" that allows individuals to pass into and out of the sacred space. An additional function of this Guardian is to cleanse the energy of anyone passing into the circle. In traditional Wiccan and neo-Pagan rituals, this is often done with smudging, using the smoke of an herb like sage to symbolically burn away impurities and cleanse the energy around an individual. Rather than sage, the main method the Guardian of the Gate employs is simply reaching out with his own energy and clearing or "wiping away" any impurities from the person about to enter. This can be done symbolically by cutting an outline around the person with the Warrior's consecrated blade. Additional methods can be used if the group so desires, but the important aspect is the energetic cleansing.

In addition to the Guardian of the Gate, there are of course leading roles within each caste. These guide the other members of their caste through their actions and typically deliver the speaking parts involved with setting

up and taking down the temple. The person leading the body of the ritual, sometimes referred to as the High Priest, is almost always taken from the Priest caste but may not necessarily be the lead Priest who helped set up the ritual space.

Among the Counselors, there are two specialized roles within in ritual. The first is Herald. This is someone designated to pass between the inside and outside of the circle, leading new people in past the Guardian of the Gate when the ritual calls for such an entrance. While the Guardian of the Gate maintains the separation between sacred space and the outside world, the Herald is someone who occupies a middle ground, belonging to neither and thus free to move between both. Because this role involves establishing a connection between things outside the circle and things inside the circle, this position is ideal for someone who resonates with the energetic workings of the Counselor caste.

The second specialized Counselor role is ritual assistant. The ritual assistant stands near the High Priest, playing a supportive role to that position. The ritual assistant fulfills two main functions. First, the ritual assistant helps the High Priest handle any items needed in the ritual, handing things off or taking them away to free up the High Priest's own hands. Additionally, the ritual assistant acts as energetic support for the High Priest, ensuring that a direct connection of energy is flowing from those gathered to the High Priest to facilitate the magick of the rite. In my own Kheprian system, the ritual assistant is traditionally a Counselor, although this is also a position ideal for another member of the Priest caste.

Chapter Three:

Creating Living Ritual

As you go through this book, it's important to realize that the rites and rituals contained herein are meant to be a guideline only. Even in House Kheperu, our rites and rituals change a little bit every time we perform them. We can write down the general gist of a ritual, but we can never really capture the spirit of the thing on the page. A good rite, a *living* ritual, is something which happens in the moment, something which is built by the energies and personalities of everyone who is participating in it. The person who is leading the ritual adds their own touch to it. The person for whom the ritual is being held also influences the wording, the tone, and the feel of things. And every single spectator, each person who is not directly involved in the action of the ritual but who serves as a witness and an observer, all of these people add their subtle changes, as well.

The result is a ritual which is wholly unique for that point in time and for the people who are involved in it. It is potent, and it has very profound meaning for everyone involved. It is impossible to record the words that go along with a ritual like this. The words just come. What we can record is a basic framework for what the ritual is supposed to accomplish. This serves as a guideline that the ritual priest must be familiar with – so familiar with, in fact, that he can decide, right then, on the fly, what is appropriate to focus on, what he should change, what to leave out entirely, and what may need to be inserted for the rite to have the maximum impact and meaning for everyone involved. Yet even with these on-the-fly alterations, the ritual priest must still be able to pick up where he left off, maintain the overall continuity of the ritual, and bring things to a solid and meaningful conclusion.

I call this Living Ritual. It is very similar to an improvisational performance in theater, only applied to a ritual setting. It is not an easy form of ritual to pull off, because there are so many variables involved once things get going, and there is never the easy crutch of a scripted rite to fall back upon. In order to perform a ritual like this, the ritual priest must have an excellent sense of timing and a keen ability to judge people. He should know a good deal about people's emotional reactions, and how to maximize upon those in ritual space. He should know what symbols and phrases are meaningful not only to the individual but to the group as a whole, and he must know how to manipulate these for maximum effect. A background in theater certainly helps.

Ritual means nothing if it does not impact us upon a very profound level. But everyone who has chosen to participate in that ritual has asked to be affected on that level, and through their shared participation, they also serve to heighten that level, pushing it to an even more intense state. The group comes together as a whole,

opening themselves up to deeper experiences, to spiritual revelation and emotion, and it is the responsibility of the ritual priest to understand this, understand what is needed, and to guide the rite toward that end.

All of this makes the ritual sound like some kind of psychodrama. But that's only because it is. Our own theatrical tradition comes down to us not from stages that were meant to merely amuse, but from the Greek tradition of dramatic ritual that was part of the yearly celebrated mysteries. Theater and ritual have always gone hand in hand. Recreational theater still has a phenomenal impact on the emotional and mental state of those who observe it, not to mention those who actually are involved in the performance. It is a potent psychological tool, and why would something this profound be used merely for recreation when it can be harnessed and used to affect a more personal spiritual response in observers and participants?

Ritual is about stepping out of our ordinary space and crossing the threshold to something more profound. Think about going to the movies. When you enter the theater, you have made an agreement with the people behind the picture: you are going to suspend your disbelief, and for the course of the movie, the trials and triumphs, the joys and fears of the characters on the screen are going to become, at least for a little while, more real to you than your own life. You are going to live, for two hours, vicariously through them, and you will come away as if you had actually experienced all of those emotions yourself. Participating in a shared reality like that speaks to us on a very deep level. And in ritual, we are not just simply stepping through the doors and entering that Other space for the sake of recreation. We are stepping into a shared space with others who are important to us, to celebrate ideas that are important to us, and to strive toward something which we believe is nothing less than sacred. There is nothing more potent or more personally transformative than an experience of that kind.

So you see, a ritual priest has a very great responsibility to fulfill. He has to not only maintain that feeling of Other space, that sense of the sacred, in a general way, but he must also maintain the heightened sense of reality that everyone has come to the ritual to experience for each individual person. This requires a massive amount of presence and charisma on his part, as well as a very deep understanding of how the energies in such a group work, how to harness them, focus them, and keep them cycling through everyone so there is no lull in the intensity. Living Ritual is a direct, intense, and immediate experience. It is not only a very personal sort of ritual, but it is also a very *personalized* ritual. Which is why it must change moment to moment, as the need for such change arises, and why no one ritual, even if the framework and overall intent is the same, can be repeated precisely the way it was in a time before.

Tips for Creating Living Ritual

So how do you go about writing a Living Ritual? Well, we've found that you first have to throw out your expectations of what a ritual should look like, at least on the written page. There's just no neat way to write down one of these rituals, and even if you try, you're going to wind up rewriting it almost completely the very next time you hold that particular rite. If you do write one down, you're going to end up with something that looks more like a collection of rough notes, possibly with diagrams and a few isolated bits of dialogue that you will hope retain some semblance of their wording when applied to the actual rite.

Sound chaotic? Of course it does, but this is what it should be. You need to have just enough order in place to account for the natural chaos that will inevitably occur. A static script cannot possibly bend in the directions you will need it to bend if you are going to achieve true Living Ritual. What you need is a framework which you can build upon once you are actually involved in the ritual itself. This framework should be designed to be flexible but it should also have stable enough parameters that you have a clear beginning, middle, and end to the ritual. Everything in between really will depend upon what you want to accomplish with the ritual, what it's meant to celebrate, how many people are going to be involved, and what symbols and language you will need for the maximum impact of the rite.

As a general rule, the beginning of a ritual is marked by two things: establishing community and establishing the purpose of the ritual. These two things can be part and parcel of the same speech which opens the ritual, although this is not always the case. The middle of the ritual is a peak in the ritual action. It is a focal point of interest, where the main purpose of the rite achieves a climax and can then begin moving toward resolution. This is usually accompanied by some overt ritual action which acknowledges that climax and which marks it as

special for everyone involved. The end of the ritual is when things conclude. The climactic point of the rite is given resolution. The ritual priest offers an interpretation or explanation for why what has just been shared is important to the community. He takes the climax out of the realm of the individual and makes it something that is pertinent on a communal level. This is the point where even the observers to the ritual are given meaning which they can attach personally to what has just occurred.

Establishing community is usually achieved through a group prayer or charge which covers the basic beliefs that are shared by the community. These basic beliefs are the identity of the community. They are the mortar which hold the individual members together, and they are why each of those individual persons has chosen to participate in this rite in the first place, and share something special with everyone else.

Establishing purpose usually takes the form of a proclamation. The ritual priest explains why everyone has gathered together and what specifically is to be separated. If the ritual is something which focuses on one individual, such as a rite of passage, then that individual is brought forward and acknowledged as the focal point of the action to come.

A great deal can vary from here on out depending on the purpose of the ritual, the symbol system of the people involved, and the technique of the ritual priest. In general, there is action, and it moves toward a climax. This action involves spoken words, and the main dialogue will be that of the leading priest, but others will very likely have spoken parts as well, as they respond to the dialogue of the priest. Ritual actions may occur here, such as the taking of vows or the sharing of wine. Very rarely is this simply dialogue – an actual physical action which represents the ideas and beliefs expressed in the dialogue at this time has a very potent affect. It is a ritualized action, and as such it becomes a symbol for the meaning of the entire ritual. Usually the climax occurs when this ritual action takes place.

From the point of the ritual action, there is more dialogue which interprets and explains what just occurred. Blessings may occur here, or words of advice, or songs, or something else which takes the specific action(s) and puts it in the realm of individual meaning for every person present. The opening was an affirmation of why that group has something to share. You should not achieve closure with the ritual until everyone has actually shared something to reinforce that feeling of community.

Of course, this framework gives you a lot of room for improvisation. Sometimes it's hard to fill in those spaces, especially because there are no real guidelines for what is appropriate and what is not. On the whole, it is much easier for the ritual priest to just recite something out of a book, but it will never have the direct and personal impact that a living ritual can have. With a book or a memorized script, you are not in danger of saying the wrong thing. When put on the spot, however, things get said that maybe you never intended, but they are almost always the truth. They are spoken from the heart, in the heat of the moment, with all the masks we ordinarily wear stripped away. This, above all else, is the real source of power in Living Ritual. It forces us to be ourselves in the middle of the ritual space. There are no pretty words we can rely on except what we pull up out of our own hearts. No book or set formula exists to serve as a barrier between the leading priest and everyone else. It is all raw, immediate, and just the way it is.

Below you will find some questions that may help you when designing a living ritual of your own. They don't necessarily cover everything, but they should make you think enough about the ritual you are planning to probably come up with the questions that were missed.

What is the purpose of the ritual?

People come together to celebrate ritual for all manner of things. Usually, the main purpose of ritual is to mark a rite of passage. Marriages, baptisms, funerals, all of these are rites of passage. They mark a transition from one state to the next. A rite of dedication or the passing from level of initiation to the next, these are rites of passage as well.

Another purpose for ritual is to commemorate an event. Perhaps your group gets together every year to celebrate their founding. That would be a commemoration. Seasonal rituals commemorate events, although these usually aren't events as we think of them in a mundane sense, such as an anniversary, so much as a celebration which is tied to myth. Christmas commemorates the birth of Christ. Independence Day commemorates the "birth" of the United States.

If a ritual is not intended to mark a rite of passage or to commemorate an event, then it is probably just a community ritual. Community rituals are no less important than the other two types discussed above. In some respects, they are far more important, because they are what help to build the sense of unity and shared purpose within the group that holds it together. A very loose version of a community ritual is an annual family reunion. Everyone gets together and celebrates their bond as a family. Traditional meals are shared, traditional games are played. No one calls it a ritual, but that doesn't make it any less potent or significant. Community is why the other types of ritual hold any kind of significance for us in the first place.

What kind of meaning is it supposed to have for those present?

What do you want people to go away with from this ritual? Keeping in mind that the emotional level of sacred space is significantly heightened, determine what kinds of emotions you want to evoke in people. Is this ritual one of pure celebration, or is it meant to be a ritual of atonement, where everyone seriously reevaluates their lives and determines what needs to be let go. Is this a ritual of farewell? Is it something that will involve more than one strong kind of emotion, like a funeral where the life of the deceased is celebrated at the same time that his loved ones say farewell?

The emotional content of the ritual is very important, because you have to be prepared for intense reactions. It is not uncommon for people in ritual – even celebratory ritual – to be moved to tears. It is your responsibility to make certain that the language and tone of the rite is respectful of that, and that, by the end of the ritual, there is some kind of emotional closure for everyone, so they can go away feeling better about things. Catharsis is a power and transformative tool, but only because the person going through it feels cleansed at the end.

Who will be involved in running the ritual?

Who do you have to play the main parts in the ritual? Who will be the leading priest, and what are his strengths or weaknesses? Does he have the presence and charisma to pull the ritual off? If it is a very potentially emotional ritual, this is a crucial consideration. Some community rituals are pretty light-hearted affairs, and it won't have a negative impact on anyone if the leading priest is also light-hearted about the rite. But a priest who cannot maintain the solemnity and respect required for a more somber ritual, such as a funeral, may actually hurt the ritual. The rite is only as powerful as the people involved in it, and it certainly only has what power those people allow it to have, but the keystone for this power, the central pillar that must be able to hold it all up is the priest. If the priest is weak, then no matter what effort the other participants may make, the overall ritual can crumble.

Who will this ritual be open to?

Carefully consider who you will and will not allow to the ritual. Some rituals cannot be open to the public. Some rituals are so intensely personal, only the priest, the person involved, and a few hand-selected friends can participate if things are going to go smoothly. There is a level of trust that each participant must achieve in order to truly let go and experience all that the ritual has to offer. If the presence of just one person shatters that trust, then the ritual loses that much potency.

Respect is also a very important thing to consider among those who may potentially participate in a ritual. Some rituals, like celebrations of community, can be open to children or individuals at any level of initiation into

the group. But other rituals deal with much more profound ideas and beliefs. These ideas and beliefs hold great significance for the people celebrating them, or else they wouldn't be celebrating them in a ritual at all. Do not disrespect the sanctity of those beliefs by allowing people who either do not understand those beliefs or who cannot show them the respect they deserve in the confines of the ritual. This sets a precedent for some exclusivity in ritual, but the fact of the matter is, especially where beliefs are concerned, some things are exclusive. You do not want to expose a raw initiate to the mystery of mysteries – not because that is a great secret of the faith, but because a raw initiate probably won't even know what it is he's looking at.

What symbols do you want to use?

Symbols, phrases, and style of language can be very crucial to a ritual. Symbols, of course, have to be pertinent to the group in order to have any meaning. If a group is organized enough in its beliefs and its sense of community to be holding rituals, chances are it already has a number of established symbols which have significance for its beliefs and its community. Symbols like this add power to the ritual by giving everyone present a convenient focus for the ideas and beliefs which the symbol represents. If an Otherkin ritual is being held, no one needs to explain the meaning of the Septagram. The entire group understands the meanings, and part of that understanding defines them as a group in the first place. The Septagram then, like the Christian Cross, serves as a representation of the common beliefs of those gathered in the ritual.

As a group develops its own feel, certain phrases, words, or types of language also become part of that group's identity. When designing a ritual for that group, it is your responsibility to be familiar with these words and what they mean, not just on the surface but on a symbolic level as well. If there are specific prayers or standard responses, such as "So Mote It Be," which hold great significance for everyone present, then these should be worked into the rite. A lot of this really deals with the unique identity of the group for whom the ritual is tailored, but the basic idea is you're not going to conclude a Wiccan prayer with "Amen" and expect all the participants to resonate with that. The importance of the words is what the community attaches to them, and if the community attaches no importance, then there will be less of an impact when those words are used in ritual.

What tools do you want to use?

This again is a concern which is very dependent upon the beliefs and symbol system in place within the context of the community. What tools are ordinarily used by the members of the community, especially when delineating their sacred lives from the mundane. For example, do individuals within the community tend to light candles when they are meditating? Then candles should probably be lit for the duration of the ritual. Do members of the community tend to use incense to clear and declare their sacred space? Then incense should also be used as part of the ritual.

Some communities have very involved tools, and these have as much meaning and impact as the basic faith-symbols of the group. Wine, shared as a ritual drink, is a very symbolic ritual tool, and it finds its way into rites from Judaism to Christianity, and even to Wicca. Some tools can even be symbols in and of themselves, such as the wand in Wicca or the compass in Freemasonry. These are actual objects which can be used physically or symbolically during the course of the ritual which have deep meaning for the participants.

If you use a ritual tool, you of course need to understand what it means. The tool has significance because it represents something, and that representation must be pertinent within the context of the ritual. You're not going to have someone jump over the broom in a baptismal rite. That has meaning only for weddings, unless for some reason your particular group has totally reworked the meaning of that tool.

Some groups prefer to work without any ritual tools, but as covered above, even candles and incense fall under this category, and these can be found in practically every religion the world over. So consider carefully the content of the ritual and the impact certain actions need to have. If having a physical object can help reinforce the meaning of that content and those actions, then by all means use it in the rite. Just try not to get

bogged down in tools. When not used properly, ritual tools can be very distracting. Too many ritual tools tend to obscure the ritual rather than clarify and accent its meaning.

How do you want people to feel when you conclude the ritual?

This goes along with the emotional content you want to cover in the ritual, but it also impacts how you want to achieve closure with that impact. As discussed above, when done correctly, Living Ritual evokes a very powerful emotional response from the participants. You need to figure out where you want this response to take people, how you want them to leave the ritual and take it out into their lives. You really need to understand the psychology of your group in order to answer this question. You need to know what kind of emotional release they might need, and to what level that might be healthy. You need to be able to judge how far things should go, and you need to be able to pull it all back together into a meaningful whole. A lot of thought should go into this, and into the whole experience of the ritual, because of the deep psychological, spiritual, and emotional affects you can have on your participants with your rites.

This is nothing to take lightly, and you should always consider what you are trying to accomplish with as much wisdom and maturity as you can muster. Ritual is supposed to improve people's lives. It is intended to show them new aspects of themselves, help them to let go of old ways of being, and in general give them a tangible transformative experience that they can hold onto when they return to their everyday lives. That might seem like a tall order to fill, but I've seen it done. I've done it myself. And in the end, there is nothing more rewarding than feeling the impact that you have had on everyone in guiding them through this deeply meaningful experience. It's an accomplishment, and it's worth all the care and effort and stage fright you might have to endure when planning something real.

Chapter Four:

The Four Pillars of Ritual

In the past ten years, I have done a lot of work with rites and rituals. I've attended numerous rituals held by Wiccans and Pagans. I've run some Wiccan and Pagan rites myself, and of course I have designed, written, and run Khepriian rituals.

One thing all of this ritual work has taught me is that ritual operates on several different levels. Some rituals only hit upon one or two of these levels, but good rituals, really good rituals, encompass them all.

I've given the matter some thought, and after going through quite a few books on the topic and comparing the written theory to what I've experienced in practice, I think I've got an idea of what these levels are and how they affect the ritual. These levels of meaning are so important to the impact and success of the ritual, that I have chosen to call them the Pillars of Ritual. They are what holds the ritual up, what makes it work, not just for the group, but for the individual. They give it meaning and impact, intensity, and depth. There are Four Pillars, and if any one of these is not present in a ritual, that rite is generally incomplete on a very fundamental level. The Four Pillars of Ritual, as I see them, are:

Sacred
Psychological
Dramatic
Energetic

The Sacred Level of ritual is that level which contains the sacred and symbolic content which has meaning for the entire community. This is the level of the ritual that encodes the belief system in a meaningful manner, it

touches upon myths and shared beliefs. This is not so much the words, but the meaning behind the words. The words are just vehicles for this meaning.

This is really the most basic level of ritual, and the very reason for having a ritual in the first place. The Sacred Level of a seasonal Pagan rite, for example, is what makes that rite important and appropriate for that time of year. Any myths that go along with that rite, any specific charges or prayers, any symbolic ritual actions – these are all part of the Sacred Level of the ritual. It is the Sacred Level of the ritual which ties it to the belief system of the group and makes it pertinent to them as a spiritual community. In many cases, without the Sacred level, there would be no need to have the ritual in the first place.

The Psychological Level of ritual takes the beliefs and symbols of the group and makes these meaningful to the individual. The Psychological Level of a ritual gets the individual involved and speaks to him on a direct and personal emotional level. Aspects of a ritual that are part of the Psychological Level of that rite include songs, chants, or ritual actions which make each person get involved in a portion of the rite. Anything which requires each person to participate and requires them to apply the sacred meaning of the ritual to their individual lives, is part of the Psychological Level of the ritual.

Quite simply, these activities, within the context of the ritual, have a deep psychological impact upon the participants. When designed with this in mind, these ritual actions can help people work through attachments, overcome negative habits and behaviors, or achieve an emotional catharsis. When the Psychological Level of a ritual is missing, it becomes just a symbolic framework with no direct meaning for those present. And when the rite is over, and each person returns to his or her own life, there is little meaning they can take away for themselves.

The Dramatic Level may seem superficial in a way, but it is still an indispensable part of meaningful ritual. The Dramatic Level is in part the wording of the rite, but it is also how those words are delivered. The Dramatic Level of a rite relies heavily upon the skills and charisma of the person leading the ritual. Little things can really injure the Dramatic Level of a ritual. If the leading priest does not enunciate clearly, if words are jumbled or mispronounced, if the words are not delivered with the right tone or emotion, then the Dramatic Level of the ritual suffers greatly.

For example, if the leading priest were to take a very casual and even joking tone with a very serious rite, say a funeral, or even a marriage, that detracts from the meaning and impact of the ritual for every person present. The lines – and it helps to look at the wording of the ritual as if it were a script – have to be delivered with the proper meaning and respect. If the person leading the ritual does not take it seriously or if they do not have confidence in what they are doing, then the participants are likely to lose focus. The tone of the rite will degenerate into something silly or uncomfortable, which is everyone's loss.

Finally there is the Energetic Level of the ritual. I feel that this is one of the most crucial levels of ritual, but also the most overlooked. Very few people have a real grasp on how energy works between individuals, let alone how to harness that energy and focus it during a rite for the maximum power and impact.

Everyone rite and ritual occurs in something called sacred space. Sacred space is that realm of feeling and being that is removed from and slightly elevated above our ordinary day-to-day existence. When a Wiccan priestess casts the circle and calls the quarters, she is establishing sacred space. This is much more than the words and actions that she performs when establishing that space. The words and actions serve as a focus for the way she is manipulating the energy of the place to create a clear and protected pocket of sacred space wherever the ritual is being held. Knowing how to manipulate the energies of yourself and the surrounding area is one aspect of the Energetic Level of ritual.

Once sacred space has been established, the leading priest must then maintain that space and connect every participant into that higher, sacred level of awareness. This, too, requires a manipulation of energy. The priest must be aware of not only his own energy but the energy of every person in the rite. He needs to be able to reach out to all of these people and connect them on that energetic level, keeping the energy circulated

through the group and building it through the climax of the rite. This also is a significant part of the Energetic Level of ritual.

Everyone who participates in the ritual gives energy to it. This energy is charged with a feel that is uniquely them, and it is additionally charged with any emotions they are feeling as they experience the rite. Using this energy to heighten the emotions of the entire group, pulling it out of each person and feeding it back to them in a more heightened state, these are all things the leading priest must do on the Energetic Level of the ritual. All of this energy is then focused and directed toward a cause, such as healing or change, or it is simply given back to each individual in its heightened and refined state so that they will all carry the “charge” of that ritual back into their ordinary lives.

The Energetic Level of ritual is perhaps the hardest to master and the trickiest to perceive. With the first three Pillars of Ritual, there are obvious gestures, actions, and words that serve as focal points for the ritual priest. With the Energetic Level, however, the priest’s perception and influence occurs completely on the subtle level. His focus and charisma on the Dramatic Level can help add potency and direction to the Energetic Level. Each individual’s emotional response on the Psychological Level helps them to participate, knowingly or not, on the Energetic Level by giving emotionally charged energy to the rite. And the group focus that is achieved through the shared symbols and belief system helps to connect everyone, which makes it easier to build the sacred space and maintain the cycling of energies throughout the group. But unless the leading priest is aware of these subtle energetic interactions and knows how to harness them for the maximum impact of the rite, the presence of the energy can actually work against the purpose of a ritual, drawing focus off of certain key parts, draining certain individuals, making others uncomfortable because of clashing or out of sync energies, and sometimes heightening emotions to such a level that many of the participants go away feeling worse than when they actually started the rite.

A ritual can be held that is missing one or more of these pillars. It happens all the time, especially among groups that are relatively new to running ritual. Generally, the Sacred Level is always present, and when it isn’t, most people don’t know enough to call the activity they just engaged in a ritual anyway (a family reunion with traditional foods, activities, and so forth, fits the schema of a secular ritual, for example). When the Psychological Level is missing, the rite has little to no impact on the individuals who participated in it. It was usually just empty words and actions that they engaged in out of an obligation to a shared belief system. Some sects of Christianity have degraded to the point where their rituals are like this, totally lacking any personal significance for their participants.

We’ve probably all been to a ritual where the Dramatic Level was missing or dreadfully mis-handled. Rites like this are unfortunately as laughable as they are pathetic. And nearly every non-Khepriian ritual that I’ve attended has been missing the Energetic Level to one degree or another. I feel this is mainly because energy and the way it interacts on a subtle level between people is very poorly understood by our culture today, and even those people who understand in theory that it is there have very few resources at their disposal to help them learn to perceive and work with it.

The best rituals are those that contain all Four Pillars in a balanced mix. There should not be too much emphasis placed on any single one Pillar, because that will lead to problems with the ritual as well. Basically, if you look at the Four Pillars as actual supports, then the best approach is to make certain that the weight of the ritual is evenly distributed between them all, and that each Pillar is about the same size and strength as every other one. That way, they serve as a solid foundation for the ritual work and everyone involved can go away having been spiritually fulfilled as a community and as individuals on a conscious level and on a deeper level that speaks more directly to their subtle selves.

Chapter Five:

Personal Rites

These are rites that I perform that have a special significance for me. I am presenting these to give you a feel for what ritual can be like on a private and solitary level. I personally find these rites very useful and fulfilling, so you are welcome to try them out for yourself, tweaking the wording a little bit if need be, to see how they work for you.

As you have probably learned from the introduction to this little book of rituals, rites and rituals are intensely personal things, and no single ritual can be written that will work for every person in every situation. Often, even writing a ritual for a group is a delicate balance of each person's preferences from that group. Some people are very internal with their ritual: they don't like to do a whole lot of ritual activity. Chants and dancing seem a little hokey to them, and they feel awkward reciting memorized prayers. Other people are very hands-on with their rituals, and the real power of a rite for them is in the performance of ritual actions, drawing the circle with a sword, for example, or sharing cakes and wine among the group.

As you learn more about private and group ritual, you will find that there is no way you can satisfy everyone with one version of a ritual. For me, that's why personal rituals are so important – they allow me to do a rite just for me, with the words that work for me, and with the actions and the feel to things that work for me. In a group ritual, I have to compromise with everyone in what we do and say so that some aspect of the ritual speaks to everyone in the group. This may seem like appealing to the least common denominator, and it's true that some rituals written for groups will feel really watered-down and pale, but making certain that group ritual speaks to everyone present is very important for building a solid sense of community.

What all of this is intended to convey ultimately is that writing, performing, and participating in ritual is an intensely personal experience, and it is an experience that must be flexible, changing as your attitudes and needs change, and as the attitudes and needs of the group change. Don't ever be afraid to experiment with ritual, and don't ever feel that there is a right or a wrong way of doing a ritual. The right and the wrong of ritual lies only with you. Take what you want from these examples, and make them your own.

The Welcome of Twilight

This is a personal rite that I often perform when my regular life is starting to overwhelm the magick and mystery that I feel in the Darkside of my being. Whenever I am getting bogged down in work or bills or other mundane issues, I pick a cool, clear night, and I go out and watch the sun go down. I usually stand in an open place, far from people and buildings, where I can feel the darkness settling over all of nature. The birds settle down for the night and the night creatures begin to stir. I can hear bats chirping and fluttering overhead and some of the feral cats in the neighborhood call as they are stalking through the tall grasses. The sunset is really just a time of reflection. I allow it to remind me that the day-lit world is only one half of my existence, and that in time, it always gives over to something darker, wilder, and more mysterious.

As twilight falls and the light fades from the sky, I face the west, raise my arms above my head, and take several deep, cleansing breaths. I take in the energy of the night as it begins to wash over the land, and I feel the cool nightwind begin to pick up through the grasses and trees.

Sometimes out loud, sometimes silently to myself, I greet the night. I drink the darkness in, and I allow it to re-awaken that part of myself that is also darker, wilder, and more mysterious than anything the mundane world has to offer. Then I will usually say a prayer to the night as a reminder of why I cherish the darkness and why it speaks to me so much. This is a good example of my typical night-prayer:

Hymn to the Night

*I welcome the Night and the silence it brings.
I welcome the solitude, and the cool, soothing shadows.*

*The night is my time,
the time of mysteries, dreams, and contemplation.
The darkness within me now blankets the world.*

*The rising night-tide fills me with power and revelation.
Fortress! Sanctuary! Blessed Haven!
No matter my trials in the day-lit world,
I know the night will always be mine.*

After that, I continue with my head thrown back and my arms outstretched for just a little while, feeling the night wash over me as twilight fades to a glittered midnight-blue. Then I clasp my hands before me and bow my head, holding my power within me and giving thanks for the reminder of why that power is so special. In silence, I turn and leave the place I chose for this personal ritual, and return to my ordinary routine feeling empowered and renewed.

You can do this every night, or you may choose to do it only on nights of special importance. If you are feeling out of touch with yourself or your nature, I recommend performing this brief ritual in order to get reconnected. Use this as a re-affirmation of your power. Use it to invoke your Self and to establish dominion over the area in which you live. You can say the prayer out loud, or you can reflect upon it silently, meditating upon the meaning the words hold for you. It is a very useful centering ritual and it calls power that you can later direct as you please.

My Daily Meditation

Almost universally, we use candles during our meditations and in our rites. For myself, when I do my daily mediation, I start off in the darkened shrine, and I mark the beginning of the meditation with the lighting of the pillar candle in there.

The lighting of the flame, that first burst of light, is, for me, a symbol of beginning. As I hold the match to the wick, I reflect on where we have come from, how all of this started. And as the candle takes light, I recite the Im Kheperu prayer taken from the ancient Egyptian Text *The Modes of Ra*:

**Kheper-i kheper kheperu, kheper-kuy,
m kheper n khepri kheperu m sep tepy.**

"I became, and the becoming became. I became by becoming the form of Khepra, god of transformations, who came into being in the First Time. Through me all transformations were enacted."

After this, I continue with my daily meditation, reflecting on what I want to accomplish for the day. I state my concerns and my intentions out loud so I cannot later deny them. Speaking them out loud to myself is a kind of oath. I have said it, and in saying it, made it real. Later, if I begin to waver in my intentions, all I have to do is think back to saying the intention to myself. If I do not fulfill what was spoken, I have made it a lie. And I hate being a liar. This of itself is enough motivation for me to always get done what I have set out to do each day – even when the tasks I have set myself are a challenge to fulfill.

When I am finished with my goals for the day, there is a daily affirmation that I conclude with. This is a simple prayer, a prayer for strength. In its original version, I focused on the negative feelings, and I countered them by asking for strength. Later, I realized that this was not the proper approach. It made the prayer too weak, and almost implied a giving in to the weaknesses. So instead, I re-worded it to focus on the strength, and through the language of the secondary line, to eradicate the weakness from my being. It was a small change in syntax, but overall, it makes a huge difference in the statement and its psychological affect:

*I have my Balance,
So I am not weak.*

*I have my Self,
So I am not lost.*

*I have my Power,
So I am not frightened.*

*I have my Path,
So I will progress.*

Finally, when I have said all that needs to be said for the day, and I feel much stronger and centered in myself and focused on achieving my goals, I conclude the meditation. Since I started out by lighting the candle, I finish by blowing the candle out. Now, since I don't want to think that anything I've done in that shrine is finished once the candle is no longer burning, what I say as I blow out the candle is this: "The candle goes out, but the energy remains." And then I leave the shrine and go out to meet my day.

Chapter Six:

Archetype Rituals

The vampire as an archetype is a very potent tool. The history of the vampire alone insures this. From its roots in Eastern European folklore, the vampire has influenced poetry, fiction, and film throughout Western culture. The vampire as portrayed in these imaginative mediums further influenced the popular perception of the archetype, to the point where the perception of a real vampire was indelibly altered in the popular imagination. The reflexivity of fiction and fact have made it nearly impossible to separate the reality of the vampire from the archetype: one feeds into the other in a loop as complicated and infinite as the orobouros.

When working with the vampire archetype in mediums other than fiction or play, it is tempting to cast aside all those aspects of the vampire that seem to have developed solely in the avenues of fiction. And yet there is no denying that the fictional portrayal of vampires has left an indelible stamp upon our imaginations – and it is our imagination with which we guide our Will in magick and ritual.

For many years there has been a bitter divide in the vampire community. There are those individuals who maintain that a vampire is born and not made. This has led to a stark exclusivity in the community where individuals who are attracted to the vampire as a symbol and an archetype are looked down upon by the "real" vampires. I will admit that I myself come from the school of thought that vampiric qualities are more of a condition and therefore not something that someone can just choose to adopt. However, in this sense, I am speaking strictly of vampirism in terms of an individual's need to take energy and/or life-force from others.

I will be one of the first people to admit that the vampire, as it has developed into an archetype in popular culture, is a potent figure, laden with psychological and metaphysical significance. Because I recognize that the vampire as a archetype has grown into a potent symbol in the mythic imagination, I can see how a number of people may be attracted to this figure as a means of expressing certain aspects of themselves and of their spirituality. These individuals may not necessarily be vampiric in the respect that they regularly require energy in order to maintain their physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being. However, this fact does not undermine the vampire's allure to them, and it would be small of us who are legitimately vampiric to attempt to monopolize the archetype.

The rituals here are my attempt to harness the vampire archetype in a magickal and spiritual sense. They are intended especially for anyone to whom the vampire appeals on a deep and personal level -- whether they are strictly vampiric in an energetic sense or not. In some ways, the rites in this section are my attempt to bridge the gap between those groups of people within the vampire subculture that have been labeled "lifestylers" and those individuals who have labeled themselves "real vampires." In light of the potency of archetypal images in both a spiritual and psychological sense, I see no reason why the vampire cannot be approached within a magickal context in order to empower, enlighten, and inspire practitioners.

I understand that some individuals within the vampire subculture are going to be critical of this approach, largely because it seems at first to cheapen their exclusive claim to real vampirism. But I think over the burden of time we will see that those individuals who are by nature vampiric have potent allies and supporters among those individuals inspired by the vampire as an archetype. To maintain the schism between "real vampires" and "lifestylers" merely weakens us by turning two aspects of our community upon one another. A far preferable approach is for both sides to seek to understand and respect one another and further to acknowledge that there is even a possibility for some cross-over in these two approaches to the concept of vampirism.

The Vampiric Bond

In the myths and stories, there is a legendary connection that can be forged between two vampires. This is sometimes called a "blood bond" and it has been widely popularized through fictional mediums such as White Wolf's role-playing game, *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

Although it is most commonly a subject of fiction, the concept of a bond forged between two people and sealed by an exchange of their very essence is a potent one. Such a deep exchange is possible and shouldn't be dismissed merely because it has a counterpart in fiction and fantasy. In many cases, reality inspires fiction but there is nothing wrong with taking ideas from imaginative sources and putting them to practical use.

In magick, intent is everything, and the symbols you choose to express that intent are simply there to help you focus. As long as you can keep the fictional ideal separate from your practical use of it, there is nothing wrong or dangerous in deriving some of your symbols from a fictional source. Additionally, especially where the vampiric bond is concerned, a good deal of the fictional treatments of this connection exist because there is a basis for the bond in real experience.

The following rite draws upon this potent aspect of the vampire archetype. It is designed to be performed between two people who are willing to be committed -- and connected -- to one another in ways that go deeper than friendship but do not have to cross over into romantic love.

The exchange of energy/life-force/essence that occurs here cements a connection between the two people that goes deeper than flesh. It is something they experience in their hearts and in their spirits, and it is something that can tie them together empathically and even telepathically over great distances.

This rite is not something that should be undertaken lightly because it's not easily undone. The Vampiric Bond should be approached as a sacred union -- not exactly a marriage, but certainly more than just "best friends". The two people who dedicate themselves to one another in a rite such as this do not have to be -- or to become -- lovers. However, they are expressing a deeply felt love that ties them, if not flesh to flesh, then soul to soul.

The most important part of this rite is that it is an equal sharing between two people. One partner does not hold dominion over the other; both are bound to the other on equal terms. This is why each partner takes a turn at giving, and each takes a turn at taking from the other. A bond of this magnitude, when it's unbalanced in favor of one partner, is disrespectful of the other person's value as an individual. The disparity between the two people will eventually cause all manner of problems, and is something you should always seek to avoid.

A couple final notes. First of all, bonds like this do not limit you to just one person. It's not like you have one link you can give away and then you're done. If you want to, you can bond yourself to many people. Just keep in mind that you should always do this with people you feel a very deep connection with, people you are respectful of, whose essence you are willing to share within your soul.

Finally, because a bond of this sort is not necessarily a profession of romantic or sexual love, there is no rule saying you can only do it with a person of the opposite sex. Do this with whomever you choose; so long as you and the other person feel a deep connection and respect for one another that you'd like to acknowledge in a ritual fashion, who you do it with is strictly between you and them.

The Rite:

To prepare for this rite, you and your bonded-to-be should set an evening aside where you can be alone together. On your own, each of you should prepare yourself ritually: fast for at least an hour prior to performing the rite, drinking only water but eating no food and abstaining especially from alcohol, cigarettes, or any substances that might affect your perceptions. Take a cleansing bath or shower, allowing the water to wash away any stress, distractions, or energies you do not want to bring with you to this intensely personal rite.

Prepare the place where this exchange is going to happen. Place pillows on the floor so you and your bonded-to-be will be comfortable. Place candles or tealights around the room and dim the electric lights or turn them off completely. Burn some incense that you both find pleasing and that will help set the mood for this sacred, intimate exchange. Finally, put on some soft music in the background. Select this carefully, making sure that both of you resonate with the music on some level and find its sound to be conducive to the sort of ritual atmosphere you are building. Play it loud enough to drown out any extraneous noises that might otherwise distract you such as the sounds of traffic, neighbors, or room-mates. But keep it low enough so it does not detract from the experience, which should ideally be focused on just the two of you.

When everything is set, and you both feel focused and at ease, you are ready to begin. Sit down with your partner and take a moment for each of you to get into a focused and relaxed state of mind. You might find that it's helpful to meditate a little, just to still any turbulent emotions and help raise your consciousness to the level that this rite demands. Once you are prepared mentally and spiritually, take a few moments to just feel one another's energy. You can do this by holding out your hands, palms up, and having your partner place his or her hands over yours, palms down. Your hands do not need to touch; in fact, it is easier to get a sense for the energy if you do not touch skin to skin so this very physical sensation doesn't block out the more subtle perception of energy. You may also find that it's easier to sense the energy if you close your eyes.

When you have both successfully started to perceive one another's energy, take some time to touch body and energy. Gently put your palms together and feel both the energy and the flesh as they touch. Concentrate

on the sensation of the other person and their proximity to you, and work on opening yourself up to this other person until you feel some mingling of your energy with their own. You may want to take the touching farther, moving beyond just your hands to running your fingers along wrists and arms. As you touch your partner, make this a sacred rite, a worship of their essence and their flesh. Touch them so you begin to know the feel of them with your fingers; caress their fingers, their palms, and perhaps even their face. At no time does this touching need to be sexual; simply feel one another on both levels in an act that celebrates the sensation of both spirit and flesh.

After connecting on this level, take a few moments to make certain that you each have dropped all the shields you otherwise maintain to keep people, emotions, and other energies out. Open yourself completely to the other person, even if this makes you feel a little vulnerable. Finally, once both of you are as open and unshielded to each other as possible, you are ready to begin the actual exchange.

Kiss the person on the forehead over the third eye and breathe in as you do this. As you take in breath, also inhale their life-force, tasting their essence upon your tongue. Now place your lips gently over their heart. Breathe in as you breathed in over their third eye, inhaling and tasting their essence. Finally place one hand behind their head and tilt it to one side. Gently lay your lips against the pulsing vein in their throat. Press your lips to their skin just enough so you can feel their pulse against your lips. Here again, breathe in deeply, breathing their life-force as you inhale. You may want to put your free hand over their heart so you can focus even more completely upon the rhythm of the life coursing within them.

Feel that life bleeding out into you. Breathe it in deeply, savoring the unique essence of it. Breathe them until you can taste and smell and feel them with every fiber of your body. Breathe them until it feels as if your hearts are beating as one. Pull their essence inside of you, feeling it gather in your chest. Hold it in your heart until you feel their essence mingle with your own, so the other person truly becomes a part of you.

When you are finished, gently release your partner, reverently drawing away from their throat. Be sure to keep a hand lightly on their back or shoulder, as they may be unsteady after this exchange; you may find that you yourself are a little light-headed and dizzy.

Now the roles will switch. You become the passive partner, and your companion will take from you. He or she will go through the same set of motions: forehead, heart, and finally, throat. You both may want to twine your hands together as you are sharing this together. Many people find that if they close their eyes, they are able to focus more intensely on the sensation of the other person's essence and energy.

Share with one another until you feel a deep and ineffable commingling of Self. Make certain that this exchange is equal between you, so that neither partner has a stronger hold upon the other. When you are done sharing between you, take a moment to separate physically and just feel the connection that remains within you. Close your eyes and concentrate on the bond that now stretches between you and your partner.

To close the ritual, both of you should face one another and place your hands over one another's hearts. In unison, speak this vow:

*I give of myself
As I take from you,
so we forge a bond
that ties us soul to soul.*

*We are Immortal.
We are Undying.
And nothing can sever
the bond we have sealed.*

Close your eyes and concentrate on one another's energy until you feel your two hearts beat as one. Remain connected on this profound level for as long as you wish to: enjoy the intensity of experience this connection open up. When you are finished, you may wish to say something more personal to your partner. Do this if you

feel you want to. Then take down the sacred space and take some time to come down from your intensely heightened state. Sharing a light meal or even just some cheese, bread, and wine, will help to ground you after such an intense working.

Vampire Sunrise Vigil

Perform this ritual when there is something in your life that you need to get over or leave behind, be it an attitude, a relationship, or a particular period of your life that needs to be over.

This ritual is best done alone. It is also best done outside. If you can find a remote spot with a good view of the east where you will be undisturbed for a few hours in the early morning, this would be ideal.

This ritual is symbolic of dying and letting go of things that are painful to you. It gets its symbolism from the traditional idea that a vampire will burst into flames when exposed to the sun; there have been numerous instances in fiction and in film where a vampire has "met the sun" and thus brought an end to his or her life. The idea is a powerful one of the flames of renewal, with a spin that makes it especially pertinent to those drawn to the vampire archetype.

All you need for this ritual is yourself, a small parchment which you will prepare ahead of time, a non-flammable bowl of sand (a large mixing bowl filled up half-way with play-sand works well), and a lighter or book of matches (a lighter is much, much easier than matches). Please note that if you live in a dry climate that is prone to wildfires, please take every precaution necessary to insure that your use of fire out of doors does not get out of hand and endanger anyone. It goes without saying that any rite that uses fire requires you to handle that fire safely and responsibly to prevent injury to yourself and anyone else.

The parchment that you prepare ahead of time will contain a statement or list that detail what you are symbolically "dying" to. You may want to prepare this a few days ahead of the vigil itself and carry it on your person for a while, really charging it with the energy of those ideas, attitudes, feelings, and so forth that you are trying to let go.

Try to pick a clear, cloudless day for the ritual. Ideally, the place where you will be performing the rite will give you a clear view of the sun -- some place where, once the sun rises, you will be bathed in its light. If it is at all possible with your schedule, stay up the whole night before you perform this rite. You can spend the whole night at the location of the final part of the ritual, but this is not absolutely necessary.

When you are ready to perform the ritual, get up a few hours before dawn, while it's still dark enough to see the stars. Take a ritual bath or shower to cleanse yourself and get yourself into a spiritual frame of mind. Put on new, clean clothes. You can drink some water, but otherwise you should fast, not eating, drinking, or smoking a cigarette until after you've performed the rite. When you are ready, take your parchment, bowl, and lighter and head out to the location you've chosen.

Spend the next two hours or so keeping a vigil at the spot you've selected. Sit down in the grass and meditate on what you want to leave behind and why. Reflect upon all the reasons you are doing this and go over in your mind each little thing that led up to this point in your life. Consider the words you have inscribed upon the parchment and what they mean to you. Then think about what it will be like to release yourself from these things, to let the flames swallow all of it, until it is only ash, blowing away on the wind.

As you start to see things grow lighter in the east, it's not uncommon to experience a certain amount of anxiety or even fear. Any kind of letting go and leaving things behind is like a little death, and it's perfectly natural to be frightened of death, even if you've chosen to meet it on your own terms. The most frightening thing about letting go of something you've gotten used to is the fact that you're never sure what might come next: so the fear of death is really a fear of the unknown.

As you watch the dawn approaching, consider these anxieties and fears. Remind yourself that soon there will be no going back. Once the sun slips over the horizon, you will never be quite the same person again -- the old you will be consumed by the fire, and something different will emerge. Wrestle with the fear and dare yourself to continue sitting there, to face the sun and all that it represents. Dare yourself to face the prospect of letting go.

As the sun slips over the horizon, imagine that you are a vampire just like in the movies and the books. Imagine that the rays of the rising sun indeed can scorch your flesh, are scorching it even now. As you feel the sun fall on your face, your arms, your hands, feel it burning you to ashes -- burning away the person you were and leaving something else behind.

Once the sun has fully risen over the lip of the horizon, take out the parchment. Read off the words you have written then -- out loud so all of nature can hear these words, or silently, reflectively to yourself. Once you have read the words on the parchment, take out the lighter. Strike the flame and say:

*I let these things go.
I let them go,
And they are ashes
Carried upon the wind.*

Light one edge of the parchment. Hold it as the flames lick toward the center. Hold it as long as you can without getting burned. When only a tiny edge held in the tips of your fingers drop it into the bowl of sand. When the last ember has died, carefully pick up the charred parchment. Crush it in your hand and blow these away on the wind. With that final breath, expel everything and anything connected to what was written on the parchment that you have held inside you: all pain, all doubt, all attachment. Let all these things drift away on the wind with the ashes of who you were.

When you are done, face the risen sun. Feel its heat upon your flesh and know that it has burned away something you needed to let go anyway. Take a moment to reflect on this in silence, then gather up your things and return home.

Death and Rebirth Rite

This is a very intense ritual that should not be lightly undertaken. A good deal of preparation is involved, and it *must* be run by people who know what they're doing. The initiate will also invest a great deal of effort into this ritual. He or she must fast for at least twenty-four hours prior to the ritual. An hour prior to the ritual, the initiate must cleanse himself with a ritual bath. Oil of myrrh is added to the water. After this bath, the initiate dries off and, nude, censes his or her body with the smoke from seven incense wands (myrrh again, or a dark, underworld scent). The initiate must tie up his or her hair if it is long. Minimal clothing should be worn. Some may prefer to be nude.

The ritual chamber should be prepared as follows: a table should be set aside to store the ritual implements. These include a bedsheet, a roll of duct tape, a pair of scissors, a hood or blindfold, a vessel of pure water, a vessel of scented oil (vitalizing scents like lavender or rosemary are ideal), and a bell. A brazier with a charcoal should also be present with a copious supply of Phoenix blend incense (two parts sandalwood to one part cinnamon). The room should be lit only with candlelight. The room should be thoroughly cleansed, both physically and spiritually, and censed with the incense (phoenix blend) until the air is heavy with the smoke. The room should be set up as ritual space, with powerful wards, guardians, or shields to keep it safe. Two guardians, drawn from the Warrior caste, may be chosen to stand guard at the north and south of the chamber. They must remain silent throughout the rite, watching, except for when responses are indicate for all. They will take action only if a problem arises. It is recommended that no one beyond those directly involved in the ritual be in the chamber. If any exceptions are made, these people must stand on the furthest edges of the ritual space and remain silent throughout the ritual, except when responses are indicated for all.

A bed or table (a massotherapy table is ideal) should be set in the middle of the room. This may be draped with cloth or otherwise decorated. An extra length of cloth, preferably silk or gauze in a dark color should lie nearby. This should be long enough and wide enough to completely cover the initiate when he or she is lying down.

At least two people should enact this rite with the initiate: a Priest trained in metasurgery and a Counselor trained in the role of Herald. Both of them need to be strong enough to carry the initiate between them and move him or her a short distance. An additional attendant may be required to assist with this part of the ritual.

Part I: Preparation of the Dead

(Soft music like chant or ethereal music should be playing softly in the background. All curtains should be pulled. When it is time, the Herald takes the hood or blindfold and goes to where the initiate is waiting. The Herald approaches the initiate solemnly.)

Herald: You have been chosen to descend among the dead. Have you prepared yourself?

Initiate: I have fasted and cleansed myself in body and spirit. I am ready to descend.

Herald: Do you understand the perils of this journey? Do you know fully what you seek to undertake?

Initiate: I understand that the journey will be fraught with danger. I accept all responsibility.

Herald: Few who descend into the realm of the dead, ever return to the light of day. Only the worthy can survive the tests in the Hall of Judgment.

Initiate: I am worthy.

Herald: So be it.

(The Herald lays a finger against the initiate's lips)

Herald: I declare you dead. You have lost the power of speech. *(places the blindfold or hood over the initiate's eyes)* I declare you dead. You have lost the power of sight. You are as a corpse now, and I will lead you to the hall of the dead.

(The Herald takes the initiate by the arm and leads him or her to the ritual chamber. No one speaks to the initiate or acknowledges him as a living being from this point forward. The Herald may be accompanied by an attendant, and this individual will assist the Herald in handling the "corpse." The Herald leads the initiate through the main door and announces the arrival of the initiate to the Priest.)

Herald: I have brought you the dead one, the corpse of N. The body has been washed in water scented with myrrh. The flesh has been cleansed with offerings of incense. Now it remains for you to bind him (her) and prepare him (her) for journey into the underworld.

Priest: Bring me the corpse of N. that I may prepare it.

(The attendants walk the initiate over to the center of the room next to the coffin or table waiting there.)

Priest: Hand me the shroud and held me wrap the corpse.

(The Herald takes the sheet from the altar and unfolds it. The initiate remains standing, blindfolded. The initiate's arms are to be crossed upon his chest, hands in fists. Together, the Herald and the Priest wrap the initiate from the shoulders down to the feet. The duct tape is used to further bind the initiate in the sheet, wrapping from the shoulders to the hips, then down the legs, to the ankles. The bindings should be tight, but not so tight as to interfere with circulation. The Priest then leaves the Herald supporting the initiate and throws more incense on the coals. The priest takes up the entire brazier and fumes the body of the initiate, adding more incense as necessary to produce copious amounts of smoke.)

Priest: This is the corpse of N., who was one of our brethren. Tonight we prepare him for his descent into the netherworld. May the ancients protect him from the many perils that await him along his journey. May he reach the Hall of Judgment, strong and whole. And may he pass the tests, so that he will arise, a transcendent spirit, ageless and immortal!

Herald: May the ancients attend him and guide him.

(Once the initiate is firmly bound in the winding sheet, the Priest places his hand upon the initiate's forehead, over the third eye. This is the first Opening. The Priest should connect to the initiate's energy, reaching in and beginning to evoke a heightened state. The Priest should press forward into the initiate's energy, also pushing forward with his hand. The Herald should stand behind the initiate, bracing him with his body. The Priest continues to push forward, finally pushing the initiate over. The Herald, assisted by the attendant, catches the initiate. Together, they tilt the initiate horizontally, lifting him onto the table. Once the initiate is placed on the table, the

Priest draws the additional cloth over him, covering him completely. Note that this must be a very thin cloth, like gauze or silk, as it will be lying over the initiate's nose and mouth for the duration of the ceremony. Once the body is covered, the Priest stands over him, preparing to perform the Opening Ceremony. The Priest must build a rapport with the initiate's energy and run through a quick, minor attunement to help push the initiate into an altered state. All are silent as the Priest does this work.)

Part II: The Underworld Journey

(It is recommended that the instructions to the dead person be read allowed from a book. When the response calls for "All" this includes everyone in the room with the exception of the initiate.)

Herald: N., you are dead, but still you can hear me. I call out to you across the worlds. Hear well my instructions. You are a spirit now, and you will travel through the realm of the dead. Along each stage of your journey, you will come to a gate. At each gate, there are fierce Guardians. They will not let you pass unless you make the proper sacrifice. You must give this willingly and completely before you can pass through. Listen to me, and I will help you.

(The Priest moves to the Root chakra, the seat of Min. First, he connects with the energy here, reaching in to stimulate and connect with the chakra. Then he begins to loosen the connections between body and spirit. The chakra should be visualized as a gate, and the Priest should work to open this gate, releasing the initiate's energy.)

Herald: At the First Gate, they will ask you, why have you come here? And you must answer:

(The Priest, Herald, and any attendants all recite the response.)

All: I come to claim my birthright. You must let me pass.

Herald: The Guardians are fierce, and they will ask you, what do you offer? Fear not, N., but simply answer:

All: I offer my body, my connection to mortal flesh. I have no need of it here.

(As the offering is made, the Priest makes a final pull on the chakra, releasing the energies.)

Herald: The Guardians will take this offering, and they will let you pass. Beyond the gate is a realm of shadows, N., filled with specters and frightening beings. The hungry ghosts will descend upon you and attempt to rend your flesh. But you have no body now, so they cannot hurt you. Do not fear what you see here, but keep your feet upon the path. If you proceed without wavering, you will come to the next gate.

(The Priest moves to the Navel chakra, the seat of the Ba. First, he connects with the energy here, reaching in to stimulate and connect with the chakra. Then he begins to loosen the connections between body and spirit. The chakra should be visualized as a gate, and the Priest should work to open this gate, releasing the initiate's energy. The Ba can be visualized as a bird that is trapped in a cage; when the cage is opened, the bird flies forth.)

Herald: At the Second Gate, they will ask you, why have you come here? And you must answer:

All: I come to claim my birthright. You must let me pass.

Herald: The Guardians are fierce, and they will ask you, what do you offer? Do not waver, N., but simply reply:

All: I offer my life-force, the vitality of flesh. I have no need of it here.

(As the offering is made, the Priest makes a final pull on the chakra, releasing the energies.)

Herald: The Guardians will take this offering, and they will let you pass. Beyond the gate there will be more shadows. The hungry beings that haunt this place will descend upon you, grasping to drink your life force. But you are empty now, and they cannot hurt you. Do not fear what you see here, but keep your feet upon the path. If you proceed without wavering, you will come to the next gate.

(The Priest moves to the Solar Plexus chakra, the seat of the Ka. First, he connects with the energy here, reaching in to stimulate and connect with the chakra. Then he begins to loosen the connections between body and spirit. The chakra should be visualized as a gate, and the Priest should work to open this gate, releasing the initiate's energy.)

Herald: At the Third Gate, they will ask you, why have you come here? And you must answer:

All: I come to claim my birthright. You must let me pass.

Herald: The Guardians are fierce, and they will ask you, what do you offer? Do not waver, N., but simply reply:

All: I offer my shadow, the second vessel of my Self. It connects my flesh with spirit, I have no need of it here.

(As the offering is made, the Priest makes a final pull on the chakra, releasing the energies.)

Herald: The Guardians will take this offering, and they will let you pass. Beyond the gate there will be more shadows, darker and ever darker. These are ghosts that hunger for other spirits, and they will descend upon you and try to tear your subtle flesh. But you have given up your second body, so they cannot hurt you. Do not fear what you see here, but keep your feet upon the path. If you proceed without wavering, you will come to the next gate.

(The Priest moves to the Heart chakra, the seat of the Ab. First, he connects with the energy here, reaching in to stimulate and connect with the chakra. Then he begins to loosen the connections between body and spirit. The chakra should be visualized as a gate, and the Priest should work to open this gate, releasing the initiate's energy.)

Herald: At the Fourth Gate, they will ask you, why have you come here? And you must answer:

All: I come to claim my birthright. You must let me pass.

Herald: The Guardians are fierce, and they will ask you, what do you offer? Do not waver, N., but simply reply:

All: I offer my heart, the vessel of all I feel.

(As the offering is made, the Priest makes a final pull on the chakra, releasing the energies.)

Herald: The Guardians will take this offering, and they will let you pass. Beyond the gate there will be more shadows, darker and ever darker. The hungry ghosts here seek any memory of emotion. They will descend upon you, trying to tear feelings from your soul. But you have surrendered your heart, so there is nothing that can feel. Do not fear what you see here, but keep your feet upon the path. If you proceed without wavering, you will come to the next gate.

(The Priest moves to the Throat chakra, the seat of the Khu. First, he connects with the energy here, reaching in to stimulate and connect with the chakra. Then he begins to loosen the connections between body and spirit. The chakra should be visualized as a gate, and the Priest should work to open this gate, releasing the initiate's energy.)

Herald: At the Fifth Gate, they will ask you, why have you come here? And you must answer:

All: I come to claim my birthright. You must let me pass.

Herald: The Guardians are fierce, and they will ask you, what do you offer? Do not waver, N., but simply reply:

All: I offer my voice, the seat of spoken power.

(As the offering is made, the Priest makes a final pull on the chakra, releasing the energies.)

Herald: The Guardians will take this offering, and they will let you pass. Beyond the gate there will be more shadows, so dark, you can barely see. The hungry ghosts here feed upon the magick of words. They will descend upon you, trying to suck the voice from your throat. But you have surrendered your voice, so there is nothing they can steal. Do not fear what you see here, but keep your feet upon the path. If you proceed without wavering, you will come to the next gate.

(The Priest moves to the Third Eye chakra, the connection between the body and the Akh. First, he connects with the energy here, reaching in to stimulate and connect with the chakra. Then he begins to loosen the connections between body and spirit. The chakra should be visualized as a gate, and the Priest should work to open this gate, releasing the initiate's energy.)

Herald: At the Sixth Gate, they will ask you, why have you come here? But you have no voice, so simply remember the words:

All: I come to claim my birthright. You must let me pass.

Herald: The Guardians are fierce, and they will ask you, what do you offer? Do not waver, N., but reach up behind your eyes and offer your vision.

(As the offering is made, the Priest makes a final pull on the chakra, releasing the energies.)

Herald: The Guardians will take this offering, and they will let you pass. You cannot see them, but you can feel the hungry ghosts pressing around you. They seek to terrify you with terrible visions, but you are blind to their work. You cannot be harmed. Do not fear the things here, but keep your feet upon the path. If you proceed without wavering, you will come to the final gate.

(The Priest moves to the Crown above the head, the connection between the subtle body and the Akh . First, he connects with the energy here, reaching in to stimulate and connect with the chakra. Then he begins to loosen the connections between body and spirit. The chakra should be visualized as a gate, and the Priest should work to open this gate, releasing the initiate's energy.)

Herald: At the Seventh Gate, they will ask you, why have you come here? You are blind to the Guardians, N., and you have no voice to speak. This is the hardest gate of all, for there is nothing left for you to give except your Self. Hear the words and make it so:

All: I offer what I am, my past, my present, and my future. There is nothing more to give.

(As the offering is made, the Priest makes a final pull on the chakra, releasing the energies. He then reaches down through all the opened chakras, pulling energy from the Root, through the Navel, through all the chakras, all the way up to the Akh, creating a geyser of energy that fountains from body to spirit.)

Herald: And the Guardians will take you and drag you through the Gate. They will cast you into the Hall of Judgment where you are to be weighed against the measure of truth. If you weigh the scales down, you will be destroyed utterly, given to the creatures here to be devoured. But do not fear, N., for you weigh nothing now. You are empty of everything, open and clear. The scales balance beneath you, and you are judged worthy to return, a shining, immortal soul.

(all pause in silence for a few moments)

Herald: The ancients embrace you, for you are one of their own. But you have been given safe passage, permission to return. You go from gate to gate, returning to the world that you know. First, you are given back your sacrifice of Self.

All: You are an immortal spirit, shining and pure.

(The Priest connects with the Crown chakra, reweaving the connections between body and spirit. The chakra must be closed, but only partially, so that the initiate is pulled back to his body and his awareness of the physical world.)

Herald: You go from gate to gate, returning to the world that you know. Next, you are given back your sacrifice of vision.

All: You are an immortal spirit, your sight knows no bounds.

(The Priest connects with the Third Eye chakra, reweaving the connections between body and spirit. The chakra must be closed, but only partially, so that the initiate is pulled back to his body and his awareness of the physical world.)

Herald: You go from gate to gate, returning to the world that you know. Next, you are given back your sacrifice of voice.

All: You are an immortal spirit, your words vibrate with power.

(The Priest connects with the Throat chakra, reweaving the connections between body and spirit. The chakra must be closed, but only partially, so that the initiate is pulled back to his body and his awareness of the physical world.)

Herald: You go from gate to gate, returning to the world that you know. Next, you are given back your sacrifice of heart.

All: You are an immortal spirit, your feelings are pure.

(The Priest connects with the Heart chakra, reweaving the connections between body and spirit. The chakra must be closed, but only partially, so that the initiate is pulled back to his body and his awareness of the physical world.)

Herald: You go from gate to gate, returning to the world that you know. Next, you are given back your sacrifice of your shadow.

All: You are an immortal spirit. You move in two worlds at once.

(The Priest connects with the Solar Plexus chakra, reweaving the connections between body and spirit. The chakra must be closed, but only partially, so that the initiate is pulled back to his body and his awareness of the physical world.)

Herald: You go from gate to gate, returning to the world that you know. Next, you are given back your sacrifice of life-force.

All: You are an immortal spirit, vitality flows through your limbs.

(The Priest connects with the Navel chakra, reweaving the connections between body and spirit. The chakra must be closed, but only partially, so that the initiate is pulled back to his body and his awareness of the physical world.)

Herald: You go from gate to gate, returning to the world that you know. Finally, you are given back your sacrifice of flesh.

All: You are an immortal spirit, you are clothed in beautiful flesh.

(The Priest connects with the Root chakra, reweaving the connections between body and spirit. The chakra must be closed, but only partially, so that the initiate is pulled back to his body and his awareness of the physical world. The Priest also pulls the cascade of energy back down to the root, anchoring the initiate in his body once more. After a few moments, the Priest pulls the cloth off of the initiate, grabbing it at the feet and whipping it aside. The blindfold is removed and the initiate is allowed to open his eyes. The Herald and the attendant help the Priest lift the initiate into a standing position once more.)

Priest: This is the body of N., recently dead, but returned to us. I share with him my life, my sacred breath.

(As the Herald and attendant hold the initiate up, the Priest cups energy into his hands and holds these before the initiate's mouth. The Priest then breathes a violet breathe toward the initiate, revitalizing his spirit and flesh.)

Alternately, the Priest can literally open the initiate's mouth and lightly breathe a violet breathe into the mouth. What is important is the transfer of energy.)

All: N. lives!

(The Priest takes the scissors and begins to cut the wrappings away. The others assist. The Herald anoints the initiate's forehead and lips with pure water. Then he anoints oil on the wrists, the palms of the hands, and the soles of the feet. When the initiate is fully unbound, the Priest embraces him.)

Priest: Welcome back to us. You have endured a great journey, and you are forever changed. Go now with the attendants. Refresh yourself and reflect upon what you have learned.

(The initiate bows and is lead from the chamber. It is recommended that the initiate take a second ritual bath to contemplate the experience and to help ground back into his body. The Herald and attendant should accompany the initiate throughout this, as the initiate may be dizzy and have trouble standing. When the bath is finished, all break the initiate's fast together, sharing a meal.)

Chapter Seven:

Yearly Rites

When I first started working in the scene, one of the questions I always asked others when we were comparing experiences was if they felt differently at different times of the year. The responses were almost always the same. Summer made most vampires feel depressed and lethargic. The heat and sun and long days were just too much. October, when the first scent of fall was on the air, everyone experienced a thrill and a growing sense of power. Halloween was a universally favorite holiday among vampires, because they felt they could let go on that day and just be themselves. Most vampires, even if they didn't like the cold, loved winter because of the long nights and the strength and creativity this inspired in them. And then, around May, many of the others felt that restless intensity that I did, that almost agonizing surge of hunger and the temptation to just give in and go wild.

Comparing these experiences with the Pagan Wheel of the Year, I made some interesting connections. First of all, Samhain (pronounced "Sow-en") and Beltane, two major Pagan holidays, roughly corresponded to the times of the year that I and many others felt a peak of power. In October, for Samhain, the sudden rush was joyous and liberating, and for Beltane there was a desperate note to it, as if something inside me was giving one last swansong before dying away. Interestingly, Samhain and Beltane can be seen as threshold holidays. Samhain is believed to be the night the wall between the worlds grows thin, and the dead can walk among the living. It is the threshold of death where the Wheel turns toward winter. Beltane is the threshold of life, and has been celebrated as a wild fertility holiday for many hundreds of years. It is essentially the threshold of life, opening onto the Lightside of the year, and serving as a counterpoint to Samhain.

I found this very interesting. It made perfect sense why many of us were attracted to Pagan and Wiccan traditions, yet once we were involved with them, it always felt like something was a little off. Essentially, they celebrated many of the same holidays we resonate to, but with the wrong focus. For the Wiccans and Pagans,

the focus of the Wheel of the Year is light and life. The darkness is something to be overcome. Yet we are tied to night and to the Darkside of the year. We are inspired by darkness as much as they are inspired by light. This doesn't make us evil: it's more about balance. Among the spiritually aware, some people will resonate with the light. But that means some of us must resonate with the dark in order to make a whole.

The following four rites celebrate pivotal times on the Wheel of the Year. But these celebrations are from our perspective. I have stayed away from gods and goddesses or any other formal belief system. These rituals are more about uniting our community and celebrating who and what we are. You do not have to be Wiccan or Pagan or anything at all to celebrate and enjoy these rituals. No belief even in a god is inherent in the rites. It's all about us and what makes us unique. Hopefully, your household will enjoy these rites as much as my own has.

Timing Notes: The Night of Transformation should be celebrated on October 31, otherwise known as Samhain. The Night of the Immortal Stars falls upon the Winter Solstice, a date that varies from year to year but usually falls on the 21st or 22nd of December. The Night of Double Power should be celebrated on April 30, and the Festival of Radiant Life falls upon the Summer Solstice. Like the Winter Solstice, that date also varies from year to year, hovering around the 21st of June.

Notes on Caste and Gender

I need to make a couple of comments before we begin. First, in the rituals which follow, all male and female roles are interchangeable. There is no significance at all to the gender I specify in any of these rites. Men and women can both hold a priestly position, and there are no limitations on gender in any of the other ritual positions either. It is up to each individual group to determine who is best suited for leading ritual.

Additionally, for those groups that use the caste system, keep in mind that while the Priest caste is ideally suited to running certain rituals, members of other castes are equally capable of running rites. If you use the caste system in your group, consider the purpose and feel of a ritual, and use this to determine who would be best to run it. Rites that fall within the province of the Warrior caste, such as rites of protection and guardian rites, are probably best led by an elder Warrior. Rites that are about unity, connections, and love, may be run by Kitra, who have a special interaction with such energies. Do not limit yourselves by expectations but tailor your rites and rituals in a way that works best for you.

Furthermore, the rites here have been created for general use by the Sanguinarium. As there are a wide variety of traditions represented within the Sanguinarium, running from Pagan to Christian to LaVeyan Satanist, an effort has been made to strike a balance between dark and light traditions in both symbolism and wording. The rites are not expected to appeal to every group; there is no way to accomplish that. Instead, they are offered as examples for use as guidelines in creating your own vital, personal, and spiritually intimate rituals. Many rites are based loosely upon rituals typically celebrated by House Kheperu. If you want more information on specifically Khepriian rituals, reference our site at www.kheperu.org.

And as a final note, the final form of the rite for Im Sekhemu was inspired in part by a tradition begun by Vicutus of House Sekhemu. House Sekhemu has a rite where a rose is raised above the ritual area, and anything that is said or done beneath the rose stays within the realm of the rose. I felt this really helped to capture the essence of the celebratory part of the Im Sekhemu ritual, and so I incorporated some of the sentiments of the rose rite into this ritual. Those who wish to perform this rite more in keeping with Sekhrian tradition will add rose petals to the glasses of wine and suspend a single red rose above the ritual space as part of the process of constructing the sacred space for the rite. My thanks to Vicutus for this elegant and beautiful inspiration for my ritual.

Im Kheperu:

The Night of Transformation

Preparation:

A roll of the dead should be written out before the ritual. This should consist of the names of all the deceased who meant something to each of the persons participating in the ritual. This should be carefully scribed upon a piece of parchment. An attendant to the priestess should be chosen to keep track of this and to read off the names when the time comes.

Each participant should also prepare his or her own parchment with something he or she wishes to change in their lives. At the center of the circle, a brazier with hot coals should be erected. This should be large enough to safely burn the names of the dead as well as the individual parchments.

To begin, everyone gathers in a circle. The leading priest or priestess centers herself and establishes sacred space. This should be felt by everyone, and everyone should center themselves and add to the sacred space.

All parts are read by the ritualist or leading priest, unless otherwise stated. This ritual was first performed publicly at the first Kheperian Open House in October 2000.

(Begin with a Charge or Opening Prayer)

Proclamation:

Priest: This is the season of thresholds. This is the Im Kheperu, when the wall between the worlds grows thin and the realm of spirit and the realm of matter touch and merge.

This is a time of great power and transformation. Our present and our past become one. This is when we awaken to ourselves, when the memories of other lives and other times arise in our consciousness and we can most fully Become.

Tonight we come together to celebrate the threshold that we walk, to celebrate the transformative power of the holiday, and to embrace what we are.

(an optional reading from an appropriate source may be inserted here)

The Rite:

Priest: This is the threshold of the Dark Side of the Year, when the Wheel turns toward winter and everything descends into darkness and cold. The lesson of this season is death: death as transformation and change.

Death is not something terrible for us to fear. It is merely a transition from one state to the next. And within that transition lies revelation.

Death is the silent contemplation of a soul learning to know itself. It is that growth, as of a seed, which occurs only in darkness, hidden away from all senses.

In death, we descend into darkness that we may more fully comprehend illumination. It is a second birth, and when we emerge, we are transformed.

Everyone join hands and share the power of this night.

(an optional chant or song may be sung by those in the circle as everyone raises energy and shares it together.)

Example:

Present, future, first and last: Help us wake the slumbering past.

Present, future, part and whole: Help us wake the slumbering soul.

(energy is gathered during this chant, and it will be exchanged from person to person through their joined hands. In the Kheprian tradition, we share energy from left to right, although different traditions have a different preference. The priest is in charge of monitoring the energy, and when she feels an appropriate level has been reached, she gives the sign to draw the chanting to a close. There are a few moments of silence as everyone basks in the glow of what they have gathered.)

The Roll of the Dead:

Priest: In this season of death and transition, we take time to honor those who have gone before. We name them aloud, cherishing the memory of their lives that each of us holds within our heart.

(a chosen reader reads off the names of the dead. When the reader is finished, he or she goes up to the brazier and lights the parchment with all of the names, allowing it to burn to ash.)

Priest: For all you who have crossed over, we offer our blessings and our prayers. We cherish what we have left of you here, those invisible fingers of yours still touching our lives. You light the path before us, and you give us inspiration in our own journey.

Some of you remain with us. Some of you have already moved on. Wherever you are now in the Wheel, we promise to love you. We promise to never forget. Your deaths remind us that we too must move on eventually. Each lifetime passes so that the new may come. The knowledge we carry of our own pasts gives us hope for your future. We know that we will meet with you again, and even through death, we will carry our love for you in our hearts.

In honor of you, our blessed dead, and the example that you have set, we each of us this night promise to die to something that hurts us in our current lives. This is something which keeps us stagnant and prevents us from growth. It is a weight which holds down our shining souls.

(beginning with the priest, each person takes out his or her parchment.)

Priest: This night, poised on the threshold of living and dying, I promise to die to (insert vow). As you have let go of your old life and moved on to something new, I let go of this so that I too may be transformed.

*(the priest takes her parchment to the brazier and ignites it, watching it as it burns to ash. As the parchment burns, she whispers, “**Change it, change it,**” over and over. As she returns to her place in the circle, she continues this chant, at first being the only one saying, “Change it, change it.” The next person to her left goes forward, repeating the vow and watching the parchment and the words written upon it burn to ash. As the parchment burns, this person, too, begins chanting, “Change it, change it.” As this person returns to his place in the circle, he continues chanting, “Change it, change it,” with the priest. This goes around the circle until everyone has burned their parchment and the chant “Change it, change it” has gotten louder and louder as each person joins in. When everyone has burned their parchment and is chanting, the priest leads the chant until it gets louder and more intense. When it reaches a peak where everyone is completely engulfed in the sound of the words and the desire for change, the priest gives a sign and concludes with “Change me!” As before, there is a moment of silence as the energy ripples through all those present at the circle.)*

Priest: All you spirits – you mortal and immortal beings! Hear these our vows. Help us to learn from your example. Help us to let go of all those things in our lives that hold us back. Help us break down our barriers and let go of our fear. Help us to transform ourselves and our lives so that we may more fully Become who we were meant to be.

Does anyone have any prayers or requests to put before this circle before the ritual is ended?

(prayers and other things are shared. Everyone who wants to say something is given their time)

Priest: Friends! This ritual now is ended but our sacred space is never closed. Take what you have touched here tonight back into your ordinary lives; let it make every moment sacred and powerful. Go forth, changed in your Selves, so that you may better change the world in which we live.

In darkness and light.

All: Forever.

Akhemu Sekhu:

The Night of the Immortal Stars

Preparation:

Two scrolls should be written out ahead of time. One will have the names of all the members who are present at the ritual. Optionally, you can list their castes and degrees. The other scroll will have the names of those who are absent, yet still considered a part of the group. Their castes and degrees can also optionally be listed. There should also be a chalice and a bottle of red wine. The Herald is the keeper of the scrolls of names and will read these aloud when indicated by the Priest.

(Open with a Charge or Opening Prayer)

Proclamation:

Priest: This is the Night of the Immortal Stars, the longest night of the year. It is the night when the Darkside is strongest, and the Family gathers to celebrate our ancient bond.

Our paths are many, but the journey that we walk is the same. We are bound together by common experiences and common goals. We each seek self-cultivation and self-knowledge, and we each strive to integrate the knowledge and experience of a thousand lifetimes into one cohesive whole.

Bonds of spirit and bonds of blood hold us together, so that we return, lifetime after lifetime, to the same places and times. Whatever the circumstances of each birth, we find one another and gather together so that we may re-establish our ancient bonds.

The Reading of the Names:

Priest: Those who are present: know that we welcome you. You enrich this night with your presence, and we celebrate what you are able to bring with you here.

(The Herald goes through the roll of those present, beginning with the elders. Caste and degree or other status can be optionally named. Everyone bows their head as each name is read off and reflects upon their personal connection to each person named.)

Herald: (the Herald names each person present, using the name that person prefers when in ritual.)

Priest: We bless you. We greet you. We call you by name.

All: We bless you. We greet you. We call you by name.

Priest: And those who are absent this night: although distance and circumstance have kept you from this gathering, know that you are welcomed as well. Distance is a thing of the body only, and in our spirits we can feel you near.

(the names of those absent are read, beginning with the eldest among them. Each person bows their head and reflects upon their relation to each of those named)

Herald: (the Herald names each person who is absent, using the name that person prefers when in ritual.)

Priest: We bless you. We greet you. We call you by name.

All: We bless you. We greet you. We call you by name.

Priest: Brothers and sisters, present or absent, we extend to you our blessings and our love.

(an optional reading, appropriate to the gathering, may be inserted here.)

Priest: Everyone. We are children of darkness; darkness and night. Tonight is **our** night, the longest night of the year. This is the peak of the Dark Side, when our powers wax the greatest. The mysteries of this season pulse within our blood. The revelation of darkness fills our hearts, empowering our souls.

(the priest pours the wine and blesses it, holding the chalice aloft to the gathering.)

Drink with me, and drink deep the night. Let this wine symbolize our bonds of spirit and of blood. Each of us has our own particular journey, but nights like this remind us that we do not walk alone. We all have our individual strengths, but where those strengths fail, this family comes through. The darkness binds us, each to each, so we may rely on one another through the long nights.

As we share this wine, let us think upon what we give to one another. As the cup comes to you, speak aloud what the family gives you, and offer up your thanks.

Example:

As I drink from this cup, I take strength from the family, and a place to belong.

(the cup is passed around the circle. Each person takes the cup, holds it aloft, speaks their thanks, then drinks. When the chalice gets back to the priest, he places it back upon the altar.)

Priest: Carry these things in your heart of hearts, and let them empower you. And when you are separate from us and you feel alone, reflect upon this, and know that we are there with you, supporting you, connected in spirit as well as thought.

(The priest then leads everyone in a closing prayer, something which strongly speaks of your group's particular bonds. I've included the Khepriian Family Prayer as a guideline.)

Family Prayer:

May we endure together peacefully
May we enjoy each lifetime as it comes
May we benefit each other as we better ourselves,
And may we always find one another,
in every time and in every place,
To share this companionship
and to celebrate this bond.

In darkness and light.

All: Forever.

Im Sekhemu

The Night of Double Power

Preparation:

Music should be chosen, and a space should be set aside for dancing and other activities for after the ritual. Wine and food should also be laid out. The feast for after-ritual does not have to be lavish, but the food should be the kind everyone can enjoy. Decadent things like chocolates and pastries are very appropriate to the spirit of the holiday. Some groups may choose to indulge in more than decadent foods after the ritual. This day is a celebration of desires, and each group should decide for themselves just how far these desires should be explored within the context of the ritual. In all cases, any play and indulgence should be safe, legal, and performed between consenting adults.

(Begin with a Charge or Opening Prayer)

Proclamation:

Priest: This is the night of the Double Power. This is our wild season, when our power surges within us. October was the threshold of death, and this is the threshold of life. Here we emerge from the womb of winter, vital and changed. We are as newborns, and the first sensation we experience as we seize upon life is hunger – hunger and need.

(an optional reading can be inserted here)

The Rite:

Priest: This is the season of lust and life, when the Wheel turns toward the light side of the year. The nights are getting shorter, and we can feel the last peak of power before the coming of summer. This season teaches us that our natures are double-edged. While we each have great power, we also have great needs. The more fully we come into that power, the more undeniable the need.

On this night, we celebrate our hunger and what it means. We celebrate the double-edged power of this season, when the growing absence within us makes us acutely aware of what it is we are.

(If those standing in circle are not already holding hands, the Priest instructs them to do so. All join hands, completing the circle and sharing energy from left to right between the members.)

The Affirmation:

Priest: We cannot be other than what we are, and what we are is contradiction. We are an intricate dance of conflicting opposites: We destroy and we create. We die so that we are reborn. We hunger for life even as we celebrate living. And we give just as much as we take, changing people, awakening them, and touching their souls forever.

It is necessary for us often to be controlled in our daily lives, and to hide our natures. But in this season especially, hiding becomes difficult. It is hard for us to hide from others, and it is harder still to hide from ourselves. This season heightens everything about us, making our natures spill out around the edges of our ordinary lives. Yet there is a time and a place for restraint, and sometimes we can only learn to control a desire by first giving in.

As we stand here in this circle, I want each of you to think of a desire or a need that you have, that you have denied yourself. Why have you suppressed this hunger? I want you to reflect upon your need and accept it as something which drives you. Open yourself to your hunger so you may learn when you need to control it and when you need to give in. Raise your voice with mine as we abandon those things that restrain us:

Chant:

***Give me freedom, give me life,
give me strength in the night!***

(All join in this chant. The members of the circle may choose to dance as well. The chant should start off quietly, and as more and more voices are raised, it should gain in strength, conviction, and power. As all members of the circle chant or sing, the energy should be focused on releasing each person from burdens of insecurity and fear that hold them back from fully realizing their needs. The priest should monitor the progression of energy, allowing it to reach a heightened pitch, then giving the signal for the chanting to stop and the energy to be given its final direction.)

Priest: We could each drink a river of life and still not be sated, for this is the nature of our darkness. On this night, in the season of double power, we must understand, accept, and celebrate our hunger so we may then discover the balance between indulgence and restraint. Here and now, within this circle, may we each explore our hunger and desires. Dance, kiss, embrace, and feed, safe within the circle for as long as you require. May we each celebrate freely who and what we are here, and what is shared among us now, remains among us, safe in the darkness, and cherished in our hearts.

Now swear with me in our sacred space so that we all may feel safe in this moment.

Do you swear to be true to your hunger as you are true to your Self in the boundaries of this space?

All: So do I swear.

Priest: Do you swear that what happens here remains here, safe within our sacred space?

All: So do I swear.

Priest: Do you swear to experience this moment as nothing more and nothing less than a pure exploration of your needs and your identity?

All: So do I swear.

Priest: Then let us pass the chalice and drink deep the wine of night. This is our first indulgence. May we celebrate flesh and spirit, body and soul, in this life and in all lives, as befits the blessed children of darkness and light.

Priest: By this wine and by our essence, I hereby sanctify this place of our revels. May we sate our hungers for spirit and flesh together in this space. In darkness and light!

All: Forever.

(at this point, everyone moves toward the center of the circle. Instead of just holding hands, all embrace. Energy is exchanged among willing partners, and someone who has been designated beforehand puts on music while someone else brings the food and drink. All who are present take time to savor the sensations of touch and smell and taste as they sample the foods of the feast, enjoy the music, caress their friends, dance, and feed. This can last as long as the group likes. At the end of the revel, the circle is brought back together briefly to bring things to a close.)

Priest: What we have witnessed here and what we have enjoyed we will carry in our hearts forever. Our night of power has ended, and now we must return to the daylight world of mundane things. As we part, let us not forget what we shared this night, and let us carry it always in our secret hearts. In darkness and light.

All: Forever.

(The circle parts and the sacred space is taken down)

Seshep Ankh

The Festival of Radiant Life

Preparation:

A scroll, listing the names of all the donors, black swans, and other providers, should be prepared ahead of time. Anyone who has given energy to support a member of the household should be listed on this scroll, whether they will be present at the ritual or not. Ideally, as many donors as possible should be in attendance at this rite, and if there are enough, the circle should be set up so that a donor stands in every other space. The Herald is put in charge of this scroll and will read from it during the ritual.

When arranging the circle, separate the vampires from those who provide for them. From these, create two circles, vampires on the inside and donors ranged in a second circle around them. At the center of the circle, there should be a small table with cups and wine. A plate of fine chocolates or some other sweets should be here as well. All those who feed regularly from someone present in the circle should help contribute money to the purchase of the wine and sweets.

(Open with a Charge or Opening Prayer)

Proclamation:

Priest: This is the night of midsummer, the longest day of the year. On this night, people all over the world celebrate the sustaining power of light provided by the sun. But for us, the heat of the sun and the rays of its light are not sustaining. The sun drains us and exhausts us, making us long for the cool shadows of midnight.

We are children of darkness, darkness and shadow. But there is one light which we are drawn toward, and that is the light of precious life. Those who would sustain us do so by offering the radiant energy of their vitality. By taking this light into ourselves, we reaffirm what we are and we make ourselves strong.

(an optional reading may be inserted at this point)

Priest: We should never fail to appreciate those who offer up their radiant energy to sustain us in our need. They give themselves to us in body and in spirit out of respect and love. They are our cherished lovers and

friends, the black swans of our extended family. It is their light we should celebrate this evening, the light of their sustaining life.

Without the gifts they willingly provide for us, we would weaken and waste away. Our darkness cannot exist without their life, and it is the dynamic interaction of the two that grants us the power to change ourselves and to change the very reality around us.

The Blessing of the Providers:

(The Herald now reads the names of the providers written there. All donors, present or absent, are named aloud.)

Herald: Blessed providers, we give you our thanks, our loyalty and our love. May we never fail to appreciate you, lest you no longer be there to provide.

(The names are read from the scroll.)

Priest: Take a moment to consider those who have given to you. As you do, I want you to consider what you have provided in return.

(all contemplate in silence for a few moments).

Priest: We would be poor partners indeed if all we did was hunger and feed. Each of us in our own way offers something of ourselves to those that sustain us. I want you all to think of the things you have to offer. As we go around the circle, I want each of you to speak one offering aloud. Name it as a promise to give back to our givers, for without their precious radiance, our darkness would devour itself.

(Starting with the priest and going around the circle from her left, each person names something which they can offer to their donors. This should be kept to a simple word or phrase, such as "emotional support" or "love". When it gets all the way back to the priest, everyone takes a few moments to reflect upon the things that were said.)

Priest: All you donors who are present here. Know that we appreciate you, and we try to give back what we can. We are not simply takers. We do not devour and leave nothing in return. You who so often serve us, tonight let us serve you.

(The priest pours wine, handing cups to each of the vampires.)

Priest: Go forth to those who have given to you and give to them in return. Take this time to let your donors know how much they are appreciated and to say a special thank you. Offer them what you can, for they offer much to us in our times of need.

(The wine goes around the circle. The exchanges between members and their donors can be brief or extended and very intimate. When all the donors have been given something from each person who has taken from them over the course of the year, the vampires gather back to the center of the circle.)

Priest: Everyone. Do not forget what you have shared here. Let the light of their spirits sustain you throughout the summer to come. Respect their offerings, and always remember that they are as much a part of our community as we are.

This ceremony is ended.

Let us go forth to walk in darkness and in light.

All: Forever.

Chapter Eight:

Rites of Passage

Every society has its rites of passage, rituals which acknowledge the crossing over from one state of being to the next. Here in America, going out and buying alcohol on your 21st birthday has become a widespread tradition. When people do this, they are celebrating a rite of passage that marks their transition from childhood to adulthood.

Rites of passage help us to structure our lives. They help us set up the parameters that define one state of being from another. As the above example attests, rites of passage do not always have to be religiously connected. So long as the symbolism of the ritual resonates with its purpose, it will suffice for those involved.

There are some rites of passage experienced by all communities, regardless of religion or culture; these are birth, marriage, and death. These three transitions are experienced by practically everyone on the planet. But

depending on the society, there can be other transitions as well, such as a boy's entering into manhood, or a priest's ordination into his order. These transitions deserve to be formally recognized as well, and ritual adds both solemnity and meaning to the experience.

Within our community, there are quite a few rites of passage to be celebrated. There is the initial acceptance into the community, and after that, there are different levels of knowledge and understanding to be attained within the community. As a member learns and grows, he or she passes through a kind of spiritual childhood to a spiritual adulthood. This transition is important and should be recognized with a rite. Acceptance into a household is another transition unique to our community that can be solemnized with a rite of passage. Marriage is important to many members of our community, but the relationship between a vampire and a donor, while not always a marriage, should be solemnized as well. And these are just a few of the rites that have special significance to our unique community.

All of the following ceremonies use language and symbolism that make them uniquely ours. They are designed to help establish the stages of growth and the significant life transitions that are special to our community. As with all the ceremonies and rituals in this book, please feel free to alter and add to these rituals to tailor them for your own particular group or family.

The Rite of Dedication

This is the most basic initiation, one that simply acknowledges that the initiate wishes to become a part of the community. The person who takes this initiation is formally acknowledged as a student or fledgling, but he or she is still in the outer circle. This is not a ritual of transformation. That comes later, when the initiate knows a little more about the community. Most groups require that an initiate have a sponsor from within the community even to get this far. After this initiation, the sponsor is allowed to teach the initiate the basics of the community, and a rite of transformation (or death and rebirth) may be performed when the initiate is deemed ready.

(Begin with a Charge or Opening Prayer)

Priest: We gather together this night because there is one among us seeking answers. This new seeker has glimpsed the greater reality of what we are, and yearns to know more. Now it is time to take the first few steps on the journey toward understanding.

(Seeker), come forward. You stand now in a sacred place, before all those who have gone before you on this path, so be certain that you speak truly. Tell me, *(Seeker)*, what do you come seeking?

Seeker: I come seeking understanding.

Priest: And why do you seek this?

Seeker: To better know myself and my place in the world.

Priest: And how do you seek this?

Seeker: With pure intentions and an open heart.

Priest: Very well, then. We accept your sincerity. (*Seeker*). Look around you here at our gathering. These are your fellow seekers, those who have passed this way before. Our paths are many, but the journey we have undertaken is the same.

Ours is a journey toward understanding. In accepting our natures, we accept a responsibility our souls took up many millennia ago. Ours also is a journey of transformation. In changing ourselves, we seek to change the very world in which we live.

Ours is a solitary journey, often misunderstood. It is a long and arduous path we walk, and the way is not always clear. This is a journey of many lifetimes, and in undertaking it, you are undertaking a great responsibility. The burden you seek to take up here, you will carry with you for many years.

Do you still seek to walk beside us?

Seeker: I do.

Priest: Very well. Before you embark upon this transformative journey, there are certain vows you must make to us. I charge you by all you hold sacred to carry these vows in your heart. If it is found that you have broken any one of these, you will be expelled from our company, and all that you have gained will be stripped away.

Answer me, *"So do I swear."*

Priest: Do you swear to accept the burden of responsibility for your thoughts and actions as you follow this path?

Seeker: So do I swear.

Priest: Do you swear that you shall always seek with a pure heart and an honest desire and that you will never abuse the knowledge that you gain as you walk this path?

Seeker: So do I swear.

Priest: Do you swear that you will guard this knowledge from those who would abuse it, never revealing those of our number to any who might bring them harm?

Seeker: So do I swear.

Priest: And do you swear to dedicate yourself to change, taking up the burden of transformation which is our birthright?

Seeker: So do I swear.

Priest: It has been witnessed.

Initiate. Always look within yourself first for the answers that you seek. Others may offer guidance, but only you can walk your path.

Before you leave this circle, I have five gifts to give to you. Each is a lesson and a revelation. Carry them with you as your strength on this path.

(The Priest goes to the altar where a chalice of water, a burning candle, a bowl of ash, and some burning incense are waiting. The Priest takes the chalice of water first, and dipping her fingers into it, anoints the forehead of the Initiate.)

(Seeker's name), I do consecrate you with water, so you may be fluid and change as the tides of the world change.

(The Priest takes the candle and passes it under the Initiate's face, taking care not to burn him.)

(Seeker's name), I do consecrate you with fire that you may know your passions and the spirit which drives you.

(The Priest takes the ash and, dipping her fingers into it, marks the forehead of the Initiate with a single, short line.)

(*Seeker's name*), I do consecrate you with earth, so you may balance your spiritual pursuits with feet firmly planted here in the material realm.

(The Priest takes the lit incense and passes it in front of the Initiate, wafting the smoke toward him.)

(*Seeker's name*), I do consecrate you with air, that you may aspire to the heavens with an intellect and imagination capable of transforming the world.

(The Priest cups her hands and channels energy into them, then lays these over the initiate's heart.)

(*Seeker's Name*) And I do consecrate you with spirit so you may never forget what it is we are.

Now, (*Seeker*). Step forward and be reborn.

(The Priest embraces the Initiate, often giving a personal blessing as she does so. The Priest takes the Initiate's hand and has him stand beside her, presenting him to the group.)

Priest: Everyone, welcome (*Seeker*) into our number. Give him your blessings and your love.

(Each of those present embrace the Initiate, offering words of welcome or personal blessings.)

This ceremony is ended, and your journey just begun.

Go forth to walk in darkness and in light.

All: Forever.

The Sanguine Initiation

Within the Sanguinarian aspect of the community, blood plays an integral role in exchanges between mentor and student as well as between vampire and donor. In the mythology of vampirism, the power of the vampire is passed from mentor to student, and it is through such an exchange that one becomes a vampire or is “turned.” Most members of the community accept that you cannot be “turned” into a vampire – vampiric qualities are with us all along. However, potent exchanges can help to bring these to the forefront, and the passing of power from a teacher to an initiate is an ancient tradition that underscores a number of magickal systems.

While among Pranic vampires, the initiatory exchange is often one of energy, among Sanguinarians, the initiation of a new member into the community often involves a symbolic sharing of blood. This rite is an example of a Sanguine initiation, and should be used only by consenting adults in a safe and responsible manner. Both persons involved in such a rite should study the safe practices of bloodletting beforehand, so they understand all aspects of this exchange and all risks involved.

This rite can very effectively be turned into a Pranic rite of initiation simply by substituting an energy exchange for the exchange of blood.

Preparation:

You will need two new lancets, two cups of red wine, and alcohol swabs (and possibly band-aids) for aftercare. Set these out somewhere on an altar or small table near where the ceremony is going to be held. For most people, this rite is intensely personal and should be celebrated privately between mentor and student. For a few groups, this is an event the whole community celebrates, and therefore the mentor and student perform their exchange at the center of a circle formed by the members of the entire household. The actual form the ritual takes can vary from person to person and from household to household, but the exchange of blood between mentor and student is pretty universal in any Sanguine initiation. *Be certain that both mentor and student have recent paperwork verifying that they are free from blood-borne diseases. Be aware of safety first whenever working with blood.*

The Rite:

Mentor: I have brought you here tonight because I wish to share with you the most precious gift I have to give: my nature. You have been with me for some time now, learning and sharing in my life, and now I feel it is time to pass that life on to you.

We are creatures of darkness, but we are also creatures of life. Life empowers us and sustains us. It is our most precious possession, and the greatest gift we can share. By sharing my blood with you this night, I am sharing with you my life, my vitality, my very soul.

Do you understand the importance of what I am offering you? After tonight, we two will be connected in a way that goes beyond words. More than brother (sister), more than friend, you will be the child of my heart and my soul. Neither you nor I can break the bond that is forged tonight. Are you willing to accept it?

Student: I am willing to accept your most precious gift.

Mentor: Very well, but before I give of myself to you, you must first surrender yourself to me. I will be your teacher, your parent and your guide within this community, and in order for me to fulfill my role to you, you must place your trust in me. Do you understand what that means?

Student: I do, and I willingly offer myself to you.

(The student should focus on his vital energy, gathering it into one hand and focusing specifically on one finger. When ready, the student then opens one of the lancets and taps the tip of this finger with the sharp point. Continuing to focus vital energy and the essence of himself into that finger, thus infusing the blood, the student then guides a drop or two of blood to fall into the chalice of wine. Cupping the wine in both hands, the student gently swirls it around, continuing to infuse it with his essence and his energy. Reverently, the student hands the chalice to the mentor. The mentor accepts the chalice and takes a drink, without completely draining the chalice.)

Mentor: Your sacrifice is appreciated. With what you have given me, I will be bound to you as much as you will be bound to me. I will not forget our bond or treat it carelessly.

(The mentor then focuses on his own vital energy, gathering it into one hand and focusing specifically on one finger. Beyond just focusing on his essence and vital energy, the mentor should also focus on his identity as a vampyre, what that means and everything that comes along with it. When ready, the mentor then opens the other lancet and taps the tip of this finger with the point. Continuing to focus vital energy and the essential nature of his vampirism into that finger, the mentor then guides a drop or two of blood to fall into the chalice of wine.)

Mentor: This is my blood, my precious life. It is the symbol of my spirit and all that I am. I shed this for you so that you may drink and become one of our number.

(Cupping the wine in both hands, the mentor gently swirls the wine around, mingling not only his own essence and energy with the wine but also mingling his own energy with that of the student's. Reverently, he hands the chalice to his student. The student accepts the chalice and drinks the remainder. The student and mentor may embrace after this.)

Mentor: You are now blood of my blood and soul of my soul. Everything that I am, you are as well. Never fail to appreciate the sanctity of this precious gift. Let us be bound together, in darkness and in light.

Student: Forever.

(Mentor and student clasp hands, and may choose to press their wounds together. If either has anything further to say to the other, now is the time. The union should be solemnized with a moment of silence. If they are with a group, the mentor then presents the student to the others after this moment of silent reflection. If they have performed the ceremony alone, at the next gathering, the student will be presented around as a member of the community.)

Note: In the case of psi-vamps, this same rite can be used as an initiation. Simply remove the blood aspect entirely and rely solely upon an infusion of energy into the ritual wine. Any sanguine rite can be tailored to psychic vampires in this way, and similarly, any rite involving just energy can be used by sanguine vampires simply by replacing any energetic offering with a safe offering of a few drops of blood obtained with sterilized lancets.

First Degree Initiation

Some groups are very informal about their degrees of initiation. Some are very strict. This is a basic ritual to recognize an initiate's passage from the Outer Circle to the first level of the Inner Circle. Depending on the system, the initiate may still not have gone through a rite of transformation, although they most certainly have gone through a formal Dedication Ceremony as described earlier. To achieve this degree, the initiate must have decided on the role they wish to fill within the community. In groups that use the caste system, this means the initiate has decided what caste they belong to and how this affects their relation to the rest of their household. In order to "pass" this ritual, the initiate must adequately respond to the questions that the secondary priest and the High Priest will put to him during the course of the ceremony.

Preparation:

The energy of the ritual space is established according to the group's tradition. Once the temple has been erected, the members of the Inner Circle gather together with the High Priest. They all form a circle and join hands. At the far end of the circle, opposite the High Priest, two people do not join hands, leaving an opening in the circle. This threshold is blocked by a Guardian, typically played by a member of the Warrior caste, who stands facing out of the circle. The Guardian may have a blade or a staff to represent his or her office.

The initiate and the initiate's sponsor are not present for the set-up, nor do they stand in the circle. Ideally, they should meet in a separate room and wait for the Herald to retrieve them. The Herald is the only one allowed to pass in and out of the sacred space unchallenged. Those gathered in the circle discuss the initiate and how each person present feels about that person achieving this degree. When everyone is ready, the High Priest sends the Herald out to retrieve the initiate and his or her sponsor. The Herald leads them back to the circle, passing by the Guardian. The Guardian allows the Herald to pass but blocks the initiate.

The Rite:

Guardian: What are you doing here?

Initiate: I have come seeking the Elders.

Guardian: (barring the way) You may not pass.

Initiate: I have prepared long and hard for this.

Guardian: You may not pass.

Initiate: There is nowhere else for me.

Guardian: You may not pass.

Sponsor: I will take responsibility for him.

Guardian: Very well.

(the Guardian moves aside, and the sponsor leads the initiate into the circle. The initiate is brought before the High Priest.)

High Priest: (*Sponsor's name*) You have entered our Inner Circle with a stranger who does not belong. Who is this person and why do you bring him here?

Sponsor: This is (*Initiate's name*), my student. I have taught him the ways of our family, and now I feel it is time he be accepted among us. If you require, I will speak for him.

High Priest: Let him speak for himself.

(The Sponsor nods, then steps aside, leaving the initiate to stand alone in the center of the circle.)

High Priest: Who are you?

Initiate: *(Name)* the student of *(Sponsor's name)*

High Priest: Why do you come here?

Initiate: This is where I belong.

High Priest: What do you seek to gain?

Initiate: Knowledge of my Self and my community.

High Priest: What do you have to offer us?

Initiate: *(responds with the appropriate phrase)*

I am a Warrior, I offer my strength.

I am a Counselor, I offer my love.

I am a Priest, I offer my vision.

High Priest: Very well. You stand before our inner community, and we acknowledge your words. *(Sponsor's name)* speaks for you, and though his recommendation goes far, it is not enough. Many have come before us, and it takes more than words to win our trust. What are you willing to sacrifice to prove you are sincere?

Initiate: I offer my very life-force to any of you here.

(the initiate cups his hands before his heart and channels energy there. Anyone who wishes to share this from the circle goes and lays a hand over the initiate's heart.)

High Priest: Your offering is accepted. Your words are sincere. You claim a place among us. Do any of the Elders object to this?

Everyone: We have no objection.

High Priest: Then let us welcome him in. (*Sponsor's name*), you are no longer responsible for this person, for he has proven that he can walk among us on his own. From this moment onward, his actions are his own actions, and any praise or blame those actions earn belongs to him.

(The Priest places an ankh or other symbol of the household around the initiate's neck).

High Pries: (*Initiate's name*), take this ankh and wear it proudly. It is a symbol of our household, and by wearing it, you proclaim to all the world that you are one of our number. Let it remind you of this night and the duties you have proclaimed.

(The initiate can optionally say the Sanguine Ankh Consecration as the ankh is placed over his head. Once it is done, the High Priest embraces the initiate and presents him to the Elders.)

High Priest: (*Initiate's name*), you are given the title of Warrior /Priest / Counselor (*choose the appropriate one; alternately use Mradu / Ramkht / Kitra*). You now stand at First Degree within our circle. (*alternately, "Calmae"*). Use your knowledge responsibly, and respect what you have earned.

(Everyone welcomes the initiate by name and may at this time offer specific blessings. The sponsor may also offer specific words of encouragement or advice.)

High Priest: This ceremony is ended. Let us go forth now in darkness and in light.

All: Forever.

Marriage: A Sharing of Life

This basic wedding ceremony can be expanded upon to add elements of Pagan handfastings, more traditional aspects such as giving away the bride, and any number of alterations. It can also be altered to include a sanguine exchange between the bride and groom if they so choose this. For a Sanguinarian wedding ceremony, when the bride and groom exchange wine with one another, each of them should also make a small cut on one finger with a new, sterilized lancet, and add a few drops of their own blood to the wine they present to their partner.

This ceremony requires wine to be exchanged, and therefore you will need a bottle of wine and a chalice. The best man will handle the wine, the maid of honor carries the chalice. There is a place left for an exchange of personally-written vows between bride and groom, and an exchange of rings can be inserted here as well.

The Rite:

Priest: Friends. When we come into this world, we have only our selves, and most of our journey in life is walked alone. Some of us are content in our solitude, while others spend their whole lives searching for someone else to share with them their passions, their sorrows, and their joys.

A very lucky few of us can find that person: someone who helps us carry our burdens and achieve our dreams, just as we, in turn, help them. It is a rare and wondrous occasion when we realize that we have found someone to build a life with; and such an occasion should be celebrated, solemnly and joyfully, among friends.

We are gathered here tonight because there are two souls among us who cry out for union. They have walked together for a time now, and they have realized that they no longer wish to walk alone.

Would (*bride's name*) and (*groom's name*) please step forward?

(The couple to be married steps forward. If a more traditional wedding ceremony is desired, the groom may step forward and wait by the priest while a friend or relative walks the bride forward to join them.)

Priest: (*Groom's name*) and (*bride's name*). By swearing yourselves to one another this night, you help forge a bond that will be with you in every time and in every place throughout the long journey of years. Marriage is not merely a bond of the flesh; it is also a binding of souls.

When we touch one another, when we kiss and make love, we do not embrace only the body. We touch the spirit as well. The union of flesh is sacred and beautiful, but the union of souls is forever. Even when death separates you, that bond will remain. Nothing is more eternal than a vampire's love.

Now that you understand this, are you still ready to swear yourselves to one another and enter into a binding union?

Bride & Groom: Yes, we are.

Priest: Very well. Repeat after me:

(The priest takes the groom's hand and looks him in the eye. The Priest then says each line below, and the groom repeats it.)

Priest: I, *(groom's name)* promise *(bride's name)* my unconditional love.

Groom: I, *(groom's name)* promise *(bride's name)* my unconditional love.

Priest: To be her strength when she is weak.

Groom: To be her strength when she is weak.

Priest: To be her comfort when she grieves.

Groom: To be her comfort when she grieves.

Priest: To provide for her in times of need.

Groom: To provide for her in times of need.

Priest: And to laugh with her in times of joy.

Groom: And to laugh with her in times of joy.

Priest: Your vows have been witnessed.

(The priest releases his hand and takes up the hand of the bride.)

Priest: Now, *(bride's name)*, repeat after me:

(The priest takes the bride's hand and looks her in the eye. The Priest then says each line below, and the bride repeats it.)

Priest: I, *(bride's name)* promise *(bride's name)* my unconditional love.

Groom: I, *(bride's name)* promise *(groom's name)* my unconditional love.

Priest: To be his strength when he is weak.

Groom: To be his strength when he is weak.

Priest: To be his comfort when he grieves.

Groom: To be his comfort when he grieves.

Priest: To provide for him in times of need.

Groom: To provide for him in times of need.

Priest: And to laugh with him in times of joy.

Groom: And to laugh with him in times of joy.

(Priest releases her hand)

(The best man brings forth the wine. The maid of honor brings forth a chalice. Red wine is preferred, for it represents blood. The wine should be uncorked before the ceremony to avoid any awkward difficulties. Both the cup-bearer and the wine-bearer stand close to the bride and groom.)

Priest: *(Groom's Name)*, take up the wine and pour some into the chalice. As you do so, repeat after me:

(Bride's name), I pour out my life for you, I offer up my precious spirit.

Groom: *(Bride's name)*, I pour out my life for you, I offer up my precious spirit.

Priest: Let this sacrifice bind us, spirit to spirit, flesh to flesh.

Groom: Let this sacrifice bind us, spirit to spirit, flesh to flesh.

Priest: So that no earthly power may destroy our union.

Groom: So that no earthly power may destroy our union.

(The Groom hands the bottle of wine back to the best man. Then he takes the cup from the maid of honor and raises it to the Bride's lips. She drinks. The cup is then handed back to the maid of honor.)

Priest: *(Bride's Name)*, Take up the wine and pour your future husband a portion. As you do so, repeat after me:

(Groom's name), I pour out my life for you, I offer up my precious spirit.

Bride: (*Groom's name*), I pour out my life for you, I offer up my precious spirit.

Priest: Let this sacrifice bind us, spirit to spirit, flesh to flesh.

Bride: Let this sacrifice bind us, spirit to spirit, flesh to flesh.

Priest: So that no earthly power may destroy our union.

Bride: So that no earthly power may destroy our union.

(The Bride hands the bottle back to the best man and takes up the chalice. She raises this to her future husband and holds it as he drinks. Then she hands the chalice back to the maid of honor.)

Personal Vows:

(If the Bride and Groom have personal vows to make to one another, they can say them here.)

Conclusion:

Priest: Everyone here bears witness to this rite. Your hearts know that you two are wed. Kiss and show us all your passion.

(The Bride and Groom kiss. When they are finished, the Priest presents them to the audience.)

Priest: Our thanks to everyone who has gathered here tonight to bear witness to these vows. May I present to you (*Bride's name and Groom's name*). Please offer them your dark blessings for a long and joyous union. Go forth in darkness and light

All: Forever

Naming Ceremony

(Dedication to the Child)

Children are often a natural consequence of marriage and other unions. This ritual is offered as an alternative to a Baptism or Wiccaning, providing a rite that acknowledges both the child and the responsibility of child-rearing. This rite can also be used to bind a non-related care-giver to the child, as in the case of a step-parent or other individual who is committed to helping raise the little one.

The Rite:

Priest: We are gathered tonight to welcome a new soul into our community. This child represents the greatest potential any of us can achieve: the ability to affect the future. By nurturing, guiding, and gently instructing this new life, we can create positive change that will be felt now and in succeeding generations.

(The parents and/or caregivers are called forth. If both parents cannot be present, it is preferable that the mother lead the child through this ceremony, but there is no restriction that prevents the father from being the main supporter in the rite.)

Priest: (*Mother and Father*). This little soul has chosen you as his parents. There are things that he feels he can learn from you, and undoubtedly there will be things that you can learn from him.

Through your body, (*Mother*), you provided him flesh. It is thus your duty to nurture that flesh. As his parents and caregivers, you are bound to feed him and to clothe him, to keep him safe, and to nurse him through illness. But your duties do not end there, for this child is not simply a being of flesh and blood. He is a being of mind and spirit as well.

As you must nurture his body, so must you nurture both his spirit and his mind. In this way, you will become not merely his caretakers, but his guides, his guardians, and his friends as well. Henceforth, it will be your sacred duty to teach this child in the ways of the world, to instruct him in his spiritual path, to help him explore and develop his intellect and natural abilities, and to provide him with your compassion, your support, your discipline and your love.

Being a parent is not just about giving birth. In nurturing this little life, you are committing yourselves to great burdens and rewards. I ask you both, do you understand the full measure of what you are committing to? Are you both willing and able to undertake this responsibility to this child?

Response: Yes, we are.

Priest: Very well. There are seven vows that you must swear to this child. These bind you to him, in spirit as well as blood. I charge you both, by all that you hold sacred, to keep these vows inscribed upon your hearts, and to never forget them in all your dealings through this child's life.

After each, please respond, "So do I swear."

Priest: Do you swear to care for him when he is sick and to provide comfort for him when he is in pain?

Parents: So do I swear.

Priest: Do you swear to laugh with him and to teach him how to play so you are a friend to him as well as a mentor?

Parents: So do I swear.

Priest: Do you swear to be his emotional support when he is going through hard times and to serve as his spiritual guide as well as you are able?

Parents: So do I swear.

Priest: Do you swear to teach him about himself and the world around him and to help him learn to lead a happy and centered life?

Parents: So do I swear.

Priest: Do you swear to encourage him to experiment and explore his identity and his gifts, guiding him safely with an open mind?

Parents: So do I swear.

Priest: Do you swear to provide discipline when it is needed, but always to correct him with love and never with anger in your heart?

Parents: So do I swear.

Priest: And finally, to love him unconditionally, no matter what, and to always welcome him back into your heart if he chooses to stray?

Parents: So do I swear.

(The Priest weaves energy between all parties swearing the oath to bind and witness the vow.)

Priest: It has been witnessed. Now, place your hands over the child's heart.

(Those who are dedicating themselves to the child step forward and join the mother, each placing a hand gently upon the child. The priest lays hands over the hands upon the child.)

Priest: I bind you to this child, not with ties of blood, but with your own vows and dedication. In heart as well as in spirit, this child is now a part of you, to be treated as you would be treated yourself.

(Names of Mother and Caregivers), may each of you become a mentor to this child during his youth, and his friend once he has grown. Keep sacred the vows you have made tonight. Remember that you do not have to be a perfect parent, but you should strive to be perfect in your love.

(The Priest sends a warm wave of energy through all their hands, blessing the Mother and Caregivers. There is a moment of silence as all reflect on the ties sealed here this day.)

The Naming:

(All step away but the mother.)

Priest: Now, Mother: you have borne this child from his first moments. You shared with him your body, and it is by your choice that he was brought into this world. By what name shall we call him?

Mother: I name this child *(Child's name)*.

Priest. Very well.

(The Priest gathers energy into his left hand and touches the child on the forehead, the lips, and the heart.)

Priest: *(Child's Name)*. I greet you. I bless you. I call you by name. May you meet the world with an open mind, a questing spirit, and a loving heart. May the secrets of the world be clear to you, and may you always find your way along your particular life's path.

Now, for all those who have gathered to witness this rite, I present to you the child *(child's name)*, his mother, and his father. Please welcome this child into our community, and give everyone here your blessings and your love.

(The family and caretakers are presented around and each person present can greet them and offer blessings or advice. When all are finished, the Priest draws the ceremony to a close.)

Priest: This ceremony is ended. Let us all go forth and celebrate, in darkness and in light.

All: Forever.

Rite of Familial Bonds

By the descriptions that appeared in the 1998 *Vampyre Almanac*, the Sanguinarium tradition recognized several types and sizes of groups within the vampire community. These ranged from clutches to courts, differing both in size and in the nature of the connection between the individuals involved. Ultimately, as things grew and changed, the primary vampire unit became the House, a collection of individual bonds by similar beliefs and practices that is comparable to a Wiccan coven. However, a House is more of an organizational group, and many of us within the vampire community feel closer bonds than even our shared symbols and beliefs. The tight-knit groups founded by vampires who live in close proximity to one another harken back to the ancient tribe or clan, establishing extended families that rely upon one another and provide mutual support and love. When such a group is particularly close, calling it a House does not seem quite enough. For those who feel that their circle of friends have indeed become their Family, this rite exists.

Preamble:

Priest: The world is changing, and with it, our definition of family must change. Sometimes the families we are born into do not suit us. We may find that there are differences that cannot be surmounted. Our life choices may be rejected, or we may simply feel nothing in common with those to whom we are born. As we venture out into the world, we sometimes find brothers, sisters, and even parents among those who have no relation to us through blood. Although the relationship thus shared is something that the world might not recognize, we know the truth: family is where you find it, and love does not adhere to those boundaries imposed upon it by culture and society.

In our community, especially, we often choose to redefine the boundaries of family. We find new children in those that we teach; we find new parents in those who guide us through the discovery of self. Over time, such deep connections are built that we cannot avoid the fact that we have become family to one another. Despite the opinions of the rest of the world, we must feel free to accept our family where we find it, to enjoy the love and support of those the world might consider strangers, and to honor the connection we share with those who are our spiritual flesh and blood.

This is a ritual to honor such found family, so that their bond may be recognized and formalized by the community. For, whatever shape it may take, the bonds of family are sacred, and it is through love and support of others that many of us are able to make our way in the world. Would those entering together into this ritual please step forward?

(The family steps forward and stands in a semi-circle in front of the Priest.)

Priest: We gather this day to formally acknowledge the bonds that nature and birthright did not supply. You who gather here before me, *(name, and name, and name:)* you have come together in support of one another. Your connection has gone far beyond that of just friends. Yet, as you are not all lovers, and you are not blood related, the world still recognizes you only as friends.

There is a word for a group of people that help of one another grow, who support one another, financially, spiritually, and emotionally, who share a bond that will remain in their hearts throughout their lives. That word is family.

You *(insert number of people entering into the group)* have come before me this night to declare your devotion and to make it clear to the world that, even though you bear no connection through birth or through blood, you are a family nevertheless.

Is this truly your intention?

Family (as one): Yes it is.

Priest: Very well, but before we proceed, let me caution you. This bond is not to be undertaken lightly. You are about to pledge to me and all that you hold sacred that the *(number)* of you will hence forward be connected, that you will love one another and support one another through all of life's trials, working together to provide a healthy living space, where all of you can grow and flourish. Once forged, this bond should not be broken, so be certain that this is what you want -- and that you are willing to work to nurture it and to protect it. Is this still your intention?

Family (as one): yes it is.

Priest: Very well. You will make your vows together, and then individually so that your duty to one another is perfectly clear. First, place your hands together before me. I will bind you by the ties of spirit and flesh as you swear to me these vows. I will speak each vow, and you will all, as a unit, repeat it back to me.

(Everyone extends a hand to the center of the semi-circle, clasping hands so that they are all touching. The priest then lays his hand over theirs, weaving them together with threads of energy.)

Priest: I pledge you my love, my devotion, and my support.

All: I pledge you my love, my devotion, and my support.

Priest: In the weak times and in the hard times,

All: In the weak times and in the hard times,

Priest: When you cannot bear up alone,

All: When you cannot bear up alone,

Priest: I will be there, I will try to be strong.

All: I will be there, I will try to be strong.

Priest: When you need an ear to listen,

All: When you need an ear to listen,

Priest: a shoulder to cry on, or an extra pair of hands,

All: a shoulder to cry on, or an extra pair of hands,

Priest: I will try to help, I will do what I can.

All: I will try to help, I will do what I can.

Priest: as brother to sister, as parent to child,

All: as brother to sister, as parent to child,

Priest: I will be there for you,

All: I will be there for you,

Priest: so we can weather the storms of life together,

All: so we can weather the storms of life together,

Priest: as a family strengthened for unity and love.

Priest: as a family strengthened for unity and love.

Priest: These things, you swear, and as a family, you swear them together. Now, a family is a group that is made up by individual parts, so you must each take individual vows and swear before one another to solidify this union.

(The priest approaches each member in turn, starting with the mother or father figure, and proceeding through each member in turn, finishing with the newest member of the family. When he approaches each person, the Priest holds his hand over their head, gathering energy.)

Priest: As you swear these vows, you open your mind to thinking as a family. You open your lips to speaking as a family. And you open your heart to loving as a family.

(The Priest touches forehead, lips, and heart, in turn, connecting with the individual's energy and opening these points to the energy of everyone else in the family group. This is done for each person in turn before they take their individual vows. As the Priest continues to speak, he holds his hand over the individual's heart, binding their energy with the power and intent of the vow.)

Priest: The vows that you swear should be written upon your soul, so that you carry them with you always. You are bound by these oaths, and your place in this family relies upon your loyalty to these oaths. Never fail to

appreciate the power and sanctity of what you swear here this night. After each vow, swear to your new family: "I will be there."

Priest: In times of weakness and emotional need:

Family Member: I will be there.

Priest: In times of joy and celebration:

Family Member: I will be there.

Priest: For the simple things, those day-to-day tasks so often overlooked:

Family Member: I will be there.

Priest: When the family grows together, when the family fights, and when the family makes amends:

Family Member: I will be there.

Priest: In love, in devotion, and in mutual support, now and all the days of my life:

Family Member: I will be there.

(These vows are repeated for each member. When each member has sworn these vows to every other member of the family, the priest takes all of their hands and holds them collectively together. The priest then holds his hands over their hands, weaving energy between them, forging a blessing that solidifies the bonds that they have sworn.)

Priest: Spirit to spirit, flesh to flesh, I seal this sacred bond. May you be strong together, may you prosper together, and may you always know love. If any of you have any additional vows or statements to make to one another, please do so now.

(Insert optional declarations from the family members.)

Priest: Embrace, and be one.

(All the family members engage in a group hug.)

Priest: This ceremony is ended. Got forth as a Family in darkness and light.

All: Forever.

The Promising of a Donor

There are many kinds of relationships, and sometimes marriage does not quite fit the connection which exists between two people. Within our community, a unique form of relationship has developed: that of a vampire and his or her donor. A donor can be a Kitra (Counselor caste), drawn from within the vampire community, or a donor may be a non-vampire who has nevertheless chosen to offer him or herself up to a vampire companion. The relationship between the vampire and donor is something sacred, and it should be treated as such. Promises should be made on the part of both parties, and the occasion of this promising deserves a celebration all its own.

The Rite:

Priest: Friends, we are gathered on this night to solemnize a very special union. Many within our community cannot exist wholly on their own. Our power, our spirit, and sometimes our very health depends upon the offerings of others. Our Counselors, our donors, our Kitra, and our beloved black swans give of themselves to sustain us, and the relationships we forge with such providers can be as lasting and profound as any marriage.

Tonight we gather to celebrate the promising of a vampire and a provider. They have come together to formalize their relationship and to swear solemn vows. Would *(donor's name)* please step forward?

(The donor approaches the priest.)

Priest: (*Donor's name*), you have offered yourself body and spirit to your vampire. This is not something to be undertaken lightly. The very nature of a vampire is to transform and change. You cannot be touched deeply by one of our number without being altered in some aspect of your being. It is important, before you proceed, that you understand the risks of this relationship. Do you understand that, as a donor, you are offering your own vitality to strengthen your vampire's vital force?

Donor: I do.

Priest: Do you understand that, by swearing these vows, you are promising to take responsibility for your vampire's health, providing for him when he is in need whenever this does not endanger your own health and well-being?

Donor: I do.

Priest: Do you understand that you are responsible not only for the health of the one you would swear to, but also for your own health, caring for yourself so the vampire's demands do not overtax you, and keeping your body free of poison and disease?

Donor: I do.

Priest: Do you understand that when the one you would swear to feeds, he is touching not only your body but deep into your soul so that a connection will linger between you even when your physical bodies are distant?

Donor: I do.

Priest: And do you understand that his kiss may change you in ways no one can predict, opening potential abilities and resurrecting memories that may complicate your life?

Donor: I do.

Priest: Knowing these things, and having been advised of both the joys and the risks by the one you would swear to, are you still willing to proceed?

Donor: I am.

Priest: Very well. Would *(Vampire's name)* please step forward and stand before me?

(The vampire entering into the relationship steps forward.)

Priest: *(Vampire's name)*, you have offered to accept *(Donor's name)* as your donor. Do you understand that *(Donor's name)* is bestowing upon you a sacred trust and that this relationship is not meant to benefit only you?

Vampire: I do.

Priest: Do you understand that in taking these vows today, you take up a responsibility toward the one you would swear to, helping her, guiding her, and protecting her?

Vampire: I do.

Priest: Do you understand that you are obligated to guard her health as if it were your own, to never overfeed, and to only take with her permission?

Vampire: I do.

Priest: Do you understand that you both share responsibility for looking after your needs, communicating openly with one another about your health and your energy?

Vampire: I do.

Priest: And do you understand that the interactions you propose will forge a link the goes deeper than flesh between the two of you, and that you are not to abuse this link to abuse or control her?

Vampire: I do.

Priest: Very well. Before I solemnize this union before the eyes of our community, it is required that you each make vows to one another. (*Donor's name*), you will repeat after me:

Priest: I promise to give of myself to (*Vampire's name*), so that my life may strengthen his life, and my soul may strengthen his soul.

Donor: I promise to give of myself to (*Vampire's name*), so that my life may strengthen his life, and my soul may strengthen his soul.

Priest: I promise to always be discrete about our exchanges and to never talk about them with others without his knowledge and his permission.

Donor: I promise to always be discrete about our exchanges and to never talk about them with others without his knowledge and his permission.

Priest: I promise to offer myself freely and to never try to manipulate or control (*Vampire's name*) through his reliance on me.

Donor: I promise to offer myself freely and to never try to manipulate or control (*Vampire's name*) through his reliance on me.

Priest: I promise to respect (*Vampire's name*) and to be mindful of his hunger, so that when he is in need, I am there to provide.

Donor: I promise to respect (*Vampire's name*) and to be mindful of his hunger, so that when he is in need, I am there to provide.

Priest: And I promise never to turn on (*Vampire's name*), even if our relationship ends, but to always hold him fondly in my heart.

Donor: And I promise never to turn on (*Vampire's name*), even if our relationship ends, but to always hold him fondly in my heart.

Priest: Very well. It has been witnessed. And you, (*Vampire's name*). There are vows you must swear as well. Repeat after me:

Priest: I promise to care for (*Donor's name*) and to cherish the gift she provides for me, so that she never feels I have taken her for granted.

Vampire: I promise to care for (*Donor's name*) and to cherish the gift she provides for me, so that she never feels I have taken her for granted.

Priest: I promise to provide what I can in return for what she offers me, so that our exchange is never one-sided.

Vampire: I promise to provide what I can in return for what she offers me, so that our exchange is never one-sided.

Priest: I promise to be discrete about our exchanges, and to never talk about them with others without her knowledge and her permission..

Vampire: I promise to be discrete about our exchanges, and to never gossip or brag about them to others.

Priest: I promise to protect (*Donor's name*) and to never demand more than she can safely give, for her life is as my life, and her soul is as my soul.

Vampire: I promise to protect (*Donor's name*) and to never demand more than she can safely give, for her life is as my life, and her soul is as my soul.

Priest: And I promise to always hold *(Donor's name)* in fond regard, even if our relationship ceases, for the gift that she has provided for me I will carry forever upon my soul.

Vampire: And I promise to always hold *(Donor's name)* in fond regard, even if our relationship ceases, for the gift that she has provided for me I will carry forever upon my soul.

Priest: It has been witnessed.

(The Priest seals the vows with energy, weaving it between the Vampire and Donor, from forehead, to heart, to root.)

Priest: Everyone! *(Donor's name)* has proven that she understands her obligations to us, and she has sworn to be loyal and true. *(Vampire's name)* has proven that he understands his responsibilities, and he has sworn to treat his donor with respect and with care.

Until such time as this relationship is ended mutually by the both of you, take care to be faithful to your vows. Respect one another, and make an effort to communicate. Be mindful of one another's feelings, and never do anything without considering the consequences of your actions, for this is not a worldly union of the flesh, but an agreement to share an essential portion of your souls. By giving of yourself, by taking her life into you, you will forge an bond that will tie your two spirits together for many lifetimes to come. Do not take such a sharing lightly. No one outside our community can share a union such as this. Never fail to appreciate the sanctity what you have.

(The vampire may choose to give the donor a token that will mark her as his. This will most likely be a necklace with his house sigil on it, or a pendant of some other distinguishing symbol. In rare instances, a donor may choose to get a tattoo or piercing that represents this union.)

Priest: Everyone, I present to you *(Vampire's name)* and his donor, *(Donor's name)*. She is now his primary source of life, and his cherished provider. Let no one challenge the sharing between them.

Go forth in darkness and in light.

All: Forever.

The Rite of the Dead:

Celebrating the Journey of the Soul

In books and in movies, vampires are immortal, living a life that does not end except through violent circumstances. As vampires, we do not lay claim to the immortality of the physical body, but we do believe in the immortality of the soul. Death is inevitable for us all, and at the right point in life, it is often a welcome transition, leading us from a life we have finished to a whole new set of opportunities and possibilities. Although death should not be feared, there is no denying that it can be traumatic, and no one is hurt more than those who are left behind. The following rite acknowledges both the new journey undertaken by a soul that has transitioned from flesh to spirit and also the pain and loss experience by those who remain behind.

Preparation:

This rite should be performed either at the funeral home where the body is being shown to family and friends or at the graveside, prior to actual burial. Because so many members of the community see the body as just a vessel that is necessarily mortal and finite, few may choose to go to the trouble and expense of having their bodies embalmed. In the case of cremation, of course, no body is shown, and an urn, with a photo and other mementos of the deceased will be the focus of the rite.

In some cases, the family of the deceased will not be sympathetic to his beliefs, and a priest of a traditional religion will be present for the “real” funeral. In such cases, first attempt to get permission from the family members to have a small memorial service of your own. If it is impossible to reason with the family, then a private service among the community will have to be held without the actual presence of the deceased. In such a private rite, set up a small memorial altar to the dead person, placing photos, items of special importance, and other mementos at the center of the ritual space.

Friends and family gather for the ritual. A small group of those who were closest to the deceased (lovers, immediate family, best friends) is selected, and these individuals should have some token to leave with their departed one. These tokens are symbols of love, promises, and well-wishing for the future, and they can take any form. Flowers are acceptable, or polished stones, hand-made cards or letters, or even small statues or pieces of jewelry – these gifts represent one final bond between the living and the dead, and they are very important for the living to help them achieve closure with the deceased. If the rite occurs by the casket, these items are placed inside to be buried with the deceased. If the rite is held at the graveside, the tokens can be thrown in on the coffin before the first spadefuls of earth or left around the memorial stone. If the rite had to be held privately, have the immediate family and friends leave their tokens on the memorial altar, and then gather these up to be placed at the gravesite at a later time.

(The Priest opens the ceremony with the Charge or Opening Prayer)

Proclamation:

Priest: Friends! This night marks a very somber occasion. *(Name)*, our dear friend and a valued member of our community, has left us and moved on to a new life and new beginnings. Tonight we gather in honor of *(Name)*, to remember his life with us, and to reflect upon the meaning of his death.

Death comes to all of us in our time. Although our spirits are immortal, the flesh is weak. Our bodies are mere vessels for our eternal Selves, and not only is it unavoidable that these bodies will weaken and die, but that death is a necessary step for further growth and change.

However we may understand these truths in our spirits and in our minds, death is still a very difficult process for the heart to endure. We love what is familiar to us. We grow accustomed to a particular face or smile, the pleasing notes of a specific voice. These things are unique to each incarnation, and once they have faded they will never occur in quite the same way again. This is the true loss in death. The spirit has left a body that was failing and giving out in order to move on to something vital and new. But we, the living, must continue on with the knowledge that, although the spirit lives, the particular combination of body and soul that we have come to cherish and know as *(Name)* will never be with us again.

Reading:

(an optional reading may be inserted here. More than one person can read something they have prepared to honor the deceased. Many will probably want this honor. To keep the length of the rite down, choose three who were closest to the deceased. If many other members of the community feel they must say something, have them write their sentiments on a piece of parchment. These can be buried with the deceased or, if this is impossible, all the parchments should be gathered and burned, then the ashes scattered to the winds so the intent of the letters is carried to the deceased.)

Responsorial:

Priest: *(Name)*! You touched each and every one of us. You changed our lives, and none of us will be the same because of you. The bonds that we forged with you will not be erased with the passage of time, nor the passing from one life to the next. Even though you have moved on to something different, we will all remember what we share with you.

After each statement, please respond: "We will not forget."

(The Priest can read the following statements or, alternately, various members of the mourning party can each be assigned one statement to read. This last works well especially if the mourning party is sizable.)

Priest: Your vision, your insight, the lessons you taught us:

All: We will not forget.

Priest: Your voice, your smile, the sound of your laughter:

All: We will not forget.

Priest: Your heart, your compassion, the way that you touched us:

All: We will not forget.

Priest: Your quirks, your hang-ups, all your endearing faults:

All: We will not forget.

Priest: And when next we see you, in another life:

All: We will not forget.

(Everyone observes a moment of silence.)

Priest: *(Name)!* Along every journey there comes a parting, and while we may meet again in the future, for now we must say “fare well”. No matter how much we will miss you, you must move on to your new life, and we must carry on with our own.

Never forget us, as we will never forget you. Remember: lives may come and go for us, but this family is forever. We will always cherish you in our hearts, and carry our memory of you in our eternal souls. Now let us each make an offering to our departed friend, to strengthen him along his new journey.

(The Priest leads everyone in making an offering of energy for the deceased. Those with items to leave in the coffin or at the graveside can charge these with the offering of energy. Others may simply hold out their upturned hands. In single file, each should leave their offerings at the memorial. If the rite is not being held at graveside or coffin, then the memorial is likely to be a photo of the deceased or a simple shrine set up to honor the dead person’s memory. When everyone has had a chance to leave their offering, the Priest closes the ceremony with the Family Prayer.)

Conclusion:

Priest:

May we endure together peacefully.
May we enjoy each lifetime as it comes.
May we benefit each other as we better ourselves,
And may we always find one another,
In every time and in every place,
To share this companionship and to celebrate this bond.

Priest: Go forth in darkness and light.

All: Forever.

Chapter Nine:

Community Rituals

I've found that quite a few members of our community are very leery of ritual. They feel it comes too close to something that has burned them before: religion. Many of the organized religions that exist right now in the Western world are oppressive to the individual. They attempt to take one vision of divinity and make it right for everyone. They attempt to take one style of ritual and make it the only style anyone is exposed to. This style of religion stifles individual spirituality, for spirituality is often something that is intensely personal. One symbol and one set way of doing things does not and cannot suffice for everyone. Each and every one of us has a different path we must follow, and no one but we can say how it should be walked.

Please remember that the rituals here are not intended to become a religion. They are guidelines only, and they have all been written to leave room for individual expressions of spirituality. You do not have to believe in a god or goddess to take part in any of these rituals. You do not have to be properly religious at all: so long as you share a connection to our community, something in these rituals will speak to you.

When it comes down to it, most rituals that are performed publicly are less about religion or spirituality and more about community. Public rituals are intended to bring the community together. They give its members a shared tradition and shared experiences. Spirituality should be a fundamental part of any ritual, but spirituality is more the realm of the individual. The most intense spiritual experiences will still be had by the individual, alone, in moments of personal contemplation. No ritual written in all the world can take the place of spontaneous spiritual experience.

The following rituals are written specifically for the Sanguinarium community. They are rites that celebrate the starting of a household or the blessing of a haven – community-oriented actions which impact and generally benefit everyone. These are things that the community should celebrate and recognize together, and they hopefully will become the foundation of a tradition the community will follow in years to come.

Establishing a New House

Houses are the backbone of the vampire community. Houses are bound together by similar beliefs and practices, and they provide a support structure for members as well as a place to meet donors and others who are sympathetic to our lives.

Most houses are physical groups founded by a number of individuals who live in proximity to one another. Many such Houses often have a physical home that everyone can meet at which serves as the hub for networking, meeting, socializing, and instruction. But Houses are not limited to physical space. Many vampire Houses exist online, hosting message boards and websites where members can meet, network, and find support just as they do in a physical House.

It is a great responsibility to found a House, and running the House takes a lot of dedication and hard work. It's important that everyone remembers that a House exists for the betterment of its members. The fundamental concept that makes Houses work in this community is that there is strength in numbers. Not everyone will want to join a House and not everyone should be expected to, but overall, this small unit of organization can create big things when everyone within the House is working together for both the House's benefit and the benefit of the overall community.

The following rite is designed to be performed at a Sanguinarium Court or other sizable gathering of vampire groups.

Preparation: This rite is best performed before the entire community. In places where the community is small, everyone gathers in a semi-circle before the officiating priest. At the beginning, the members of the new household stand at the center of the semi-circle, mixed in with everyone else. The new household should prepare ahead of time a piece of parchment with all the members' names on it, starting with the elders and going down in rank. Caste and degree can optionally be listed and read off with each person's name. The new household should also have a representation of their house sigil and a brief explanation of what this means. The explanation may be written down or memorized by one of the elders. The members of the house can select a leader to respond for them, or they can each take turns responding to the questions of the priest.

The Rite:

Priest: Everyone. We have gathered this night to witness the birth of a new household within our community. This is a joyous and solemn event that the whole community is called to witness and to share.

Households are spiritual, social, and emotional families. They are the very building blocks of our community, and their diversity makes us strong. The members of a particular household are bound together by common beliefs and a common spiritual path. They share the same symbols, the same loyalties, and the same common goals.

Would the members of the new household please come forward?

(the prospective members come forward out of the crowd)

Priest: You (*three, four, etc.,*) desire to found your own household. This is not something that can be undertaken lightly. In founding a household you are pledging to the community and to all your prospective members to provide a safe and healthy space for people to learn and to grow. A lot of work is involved in maintaining a household, and every member must contribute to the betterment of the whole. Are you certain you are capable of these things?

Members: We are willing to accept the task.

Priest: Very well. First, to be recognized by the community, your household should have a name. What do you wish to call yourselves?

Members: We are the House of (*Name*).

Priest: And what sigil have you chosen to represent you?

Members: This is our sigil, the sigil of (*name*). We have chosen this because it represents, (*explanation of sigil*), and this suits the ideals of our House.

Priest: And what ideals have you founded this House upon?

Members: These are our beliefs. They are what hold us together: (*the fundamental goals and beliefs of the house are briefly explained by the speaker*).

Priest: And who are the members of this household?

Members: These are our Elders. They form the backbone of our House: (*reads off the names. Any who are present come forward to be recognized by the crowd.*). These are the others that make up our House. It is for them that the House exists: (*reads off the remaining names of members.*)

Priest: Who are the ones who take responsibility for this household? At least three should lead. Step forward.

(The individuals who have founded the House and who are committing themselves to running the House step forward and state their names. If the House has positions like Secretary or Treasurer, each person also names his respective title and position.)

Priest: *(Name and Name and Name:)* Each of you, independently, could not support this household alone. A single person has many strengths, but also many weaknesses. The opinion of one can be flawed, and with only a single point of view, how can these flaws be seen? Therefore, there must be three, so that no single one of you holds power alone. Decisions that are made for the community must be made together, with all three in accordance. What strengths each of you have will be shared to enrich one another. What weaknesses you suffer will not be suffered alone but supported by the strengths of the remaining two. In this way, you three will become the dynamic balance that will keep this place vital and strong. Are you three willing to lead this house wisely and responsibly?

Administrative Members: We are.

Priest: Very well. Before I give you sanctioning as a household and welcome you into our community, there are certain vows you must swear to us all. These vows are sacred and binding, and if you are found to be in violation of any of them, your position in our community will be taken away. After each vow, all must respond, "So do we swear."

Priest: To respect the privacy of our community and to never bring undue attention to us through illegal or objectionable activities.

Administrative Members: So do we swear.

Priest: To respect the rules of community and to teach any new members to abide by these rules.

Administrative Members: So do we swear.

Priest: To guide and teach all those who come to you so that they understand our community and respect our ways.

Administrative Members: So do we swear.

Priest: To respect the other members of our community and never to speak out against them in idle gossip but to voice legitimate complaints in a constructive manner.

Administrative Members: So do we swear.

Priest: And to help contribute to the growth of our community by providing a place where all can come to you to learn and grow and come to understand our ways.

Administrative Members: So do we swear.

(The Priest turns to all in attendance, addressing the other members of the community, heads of other Houses, etc.,)

Priest: The members of House (*name*) have sworn to us. Does anyone here doubt the sincerity of their words?

(There is a pause in case there is an objection)

Priest: You three: (*name and name and name.*) I give you my blessings, and I bless the sacred duty you have undertaken. I establish this household, (*name of house*) in your names, and in the name of our community.

(The Priest holds out his hands above the administrative members, blessing them with energy.)

Priest: May you be strong, even in the face of adversity and hardship. May you be wise, so that your judgment is never clouded by fear or personal desires. And may you be dedicated, so that everything you do, even in your ordinary lives, serves to better you and to better our community.

Now, with my authority as Priest and by the vows you have just taken, I formally recognize you (three, four) as House (*name*). You are now an official part of our community, with all the privileges and responsibilities which that entails.

All you who are witnesses: I present to you House (*name*). Give them your blessings. May they be strong and loyal, and may their family serve to enrich us all. In darkness and light.

All: Forever.

Blessing a Haven

A haven is any physical place that regularly hosts gatherings of the vampire community. In cities like New York, most havens are nightclubs, but a haven can also be the back room of an occult bookstore or even someone's private residence. The important thing about a haven is not its location but what it provides for the community: a place to meet. Havens are places where vampires can gather to speak with one another, relax, celebrate, teach, and let their real faces show. Havens can be devoted to purely social events, but many host a variety of things, blending socializing and fun with workshops, rituals, and other community-related demonstrations. The energy of a haven is important because it helps to provide a safe space that is conducive to honest and unrestrained interaction. Many havens, even those that are essentially just someone's living, have names. These names help to further establish the special atmosphere of the haven, lending the space a greater identity that it would normally have.

The following rite is designed to help establish the energy of a haven, and to consecrate it to its purpose of helping the community grow and thrive. The rite is written for a Priest, but as it is a cleansing ritual, it can also be performed by a Warrior (Mradu). Keep this in mind as you read the rite.

Preparation:

This ritual calls for incense to cleanse the space of the haven. Stick incense can be used, but the best effect is achieved with granular incense burned in a censer. If fire codes prevent the use of incense, scented water can be substituted instead.

(The Priest approaches the building to be consecrated. He begins at the main door, standing in the threshold.)

Priest: With darkness and with life, I bless and sanctify this place. May it be purified and cleansed of all disruptive influences. May the dust of the past be cleared away.

(The priest takes five to ten sticks of incense and lights them. When they are smoldering, he blows the fire out, and wafts the smoke around the threshold.)

Priest: With fire do I purify. With air do I cleanse. May all that is harmful be carried away. May all that is stagnant be cleared.

(The priest steps through the threshold and enters the haven.)

Priest: I do name this place (*name of haven*), and hereby dedicate it to our purposes. May it be a welcoming haven and a safe gathering place for our people. May all who enter come in peace. May joy and pleasure be had by all, and may no petty squabbles mar what nurtures us here.

(Go left and begin moving in a circle around the main floor. Waft the incense smoke up and down the walls. At each pass, repeat the prayer: **With fire do I purify. With air do I cleanse.** Let the sacred incense smoke clear everything away. When you have made a complete circuit of the main floor, stand in the approximate center of the room. Swirl the incense in a circular motion, wafting the smoke in a spiral toward the ceiling. Ground and center, then draw all the energy of the place into yourself. Transform this to the declared purpose of the haven, sending it all outward into the club, weaving the energy throughout the structure of the building and setting up boundaries between the physical space of the haven and everything beyond that space. Do this for each floor. Pay special attention to windows, sealing these off from hostile influences with incense and energy so that the boundaries of the haven remain firm.)

Priest: (*Name of Haven*). This is our sacred space, our home, and blessed haven. May no one mar the peacefulness that I establish here now. Let it draw those who need us in. Let it shine as a dark beacon for all who would seek shelter in the shadows of our world. This is our fortress against all who would judge, all who would misunderstand. Let it gather our community to us. Let it make us strong.

By all the powers, ancient and new, by all the spirits, mortal and immortal, I consecrate this place by the name of (*name*).

In darkness and light, forever.

(You can do a water version of this blessing, sprinkling water around the haven with a freshly cut branch or with your fingers. As an alternate Sanguine rite, the priest can draw a drop of blood from his finger prior to starting the blessing, mix this in with the water as an extra consecration, and bless the haven with both water and blood. Obviously, some wording should be changed for a water version, so instead of sanctifying with fire, the priest sanctifies with water and / or blood, and instead of burning away impurities, use the imagery of washing and cleansing. Warriors often prefer to use a blade for the consecration of the space, and may incorporate blood as well.)

Gathering Rite

This rite centers around the use of a pomegranate, a special fruit that does not grow in temperate climates. Typically, pomegranates are imported to the US in the autumn and they are rarely available fresh any other time of the year. When you are holding a gathering of your Family in the fall, this isn't a problem, but what about the rest of the year?

Fortunately, pomegranate juice is available year round, and with a little change in the wording, this can be substituted for fresh pomegranates in this ritual.

Although compared to other juices pomegranate can be a little expensive, a bottle of it is still cheaper than most table wines. The main brand of pomegranate juice that's available on American markets is called Pomme, and I've seen it at most grocery stores, though you may have search around a little for it. For example, the Super K-mart where I live keeps it with the specialty fruits and vegetables, and not with the regular juice. If you can't find Pomme in any of your local stores, they do have a website, so you could order it direct.

Pomegranate juice is also the main ingredient in grenadine syrup, so in a pinch, you could mix this with some ginger ale and still have a symbolic drink to share with everyone.

Preparation:

Three readers are selected from the group ahead of time. These can be representatives from each of the castes or simply three individuals who feel called to take part in the ceremony. Prior to beginning, sacred space is set up and the Charge is spoken.

The Rite:

First Reader (Priest):

We are gathered here this night to celebrate this, our ancient Family. As a Family, our paths are many, but we walk together as one. As we progress, we each help one another toward common goals, and we share common experiences along the way.

Second Reader (Warrior):

Though there are times that we may wander, we are tied together by bonds of spirit and of blood. These call us back to one another over and over, regardless the place, regardless the time. We set out together as a Family, and it is as a Family now that we move into the future, celebrating who and what we are each step along the way.

Third Reader (Counselor):

This pomegranate is filled with seeds, each shining like a single drop of blood. In myth, six seeds of such a fruit bound Persephone to the Underworld, requiring that she return again and again. In older myths still, this was the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. To eat of its flesh was to become wise as a god.

Second Reader:

The countless seeds enclosed in the pomegranate's flesh are like the countless lives enclosed in a single form. Each of us is one who is many. Each of us has traveled the lands of the dead, and yet again and again, we have returned. And each of us has seized knowledge other consider forbidden, so we may walk as more than mortal men.

First Reader:

Let us share these seeds among us, as a symbol of our Family. As the bowl goes 'round, take out three seeds. These represent present, past, and future. Savor them, and as you taste their sweetness, reflect on the mysteries of our family: who we are, where we come from, and where our future may lead.

(the bowl is passed and each participant takes out three seeds. When the bowl comes back to the first person, it is set upon the altar.)

Third Reader:

Let us all join hands and reaffirm the bonds of this, our ancient Family:

(the Third Reader then leads everyone in the Family Prayer)

Close:

May we endure together peacefully.
May we enjoy each lifetime as it comes.
May we benefit each other as we better ourselves,
And may we always find one another,
In every time and in every place,
To share this companionship and to celebrate this bond.

Priest: In darkness and light.

All: Forever.

Chapter Ten:

Other Prayers and Invocations

A ritual does not have to be enacted by a group to be powerful or even legitimate. Many of us are far more comfortable performing our ritual work alone. While group rituals build community, private rites can be very intense and potent. Many rites that are performed to work magick are private rites enacted between only one or two people. The fewer the number of people involved, the easier it is to get everyone focused together on the purpose of the rite. When working solo, you don't have to content with anyone's wandering attention. Some resources may be limited if you are working just by yourself, but in certain cases, the one-pointed focus that an individual can achieve makes it worth it.

Solitary rituals, in addition to being more focused are also more intimate and private. There are some ceremonies that have greater meaning for us if no one witnesses them save ourselves and whatever powers we may invoke. The following rites, which read more like prayers (hence the title of this chapter) are solitary rituals that you can perform by yourself wherever and whenever you feel they are appropriate. While many may feel better if they have a specific part of their home set aside for rituals, or if they perform their private rites at a personal altar or shrine, there is no strict need for these things. As we covered at the very beginning of this collection, sacred space, ideally, is carried within, and therefore you can make any place your temple or your altar.

Sanguine Ankh Consecration

Most vampire houses have a specific ankh that symbolizes the House and its ideals. For many vampires, whether they belong to a House or not, their ankh represents their dedication to pursuing their identity as a vampire, with all that this entails. When a new ankh is obtained, it should be consecrated before putting it on, so you reflect upon all that it means to you. If you have an altar, keep the ankh on the altar overnight. Then, after night has fallen the next day, take up the ankh and say these words:

*This is the symbol of life.
It is the symbol of my ancient heritage,
A heritage I now proudly proclaim.*

*Life sustains me and makes me strong:
Every breath and every sweet drop of blood
Is a celebration of what I am.*

*Let this ankh be my constant reminder
As I wear it each night above my heart
Of the life that is so very precious
And the darkness that encircles my soul.*

Kiss the ankh and place it over your heart. As an alternate Sanguine rite, you can draw a drop of blood from your finger and consecrate the ankh with this blood before saying the prayer. It's a good idea to reconsecrate your ankh on a yearly basis, to remind yourself of what it means to wear this symbol.

Prayer for Strength in the Face of Prejudice

Copy this prayer down and carry it with you. When you encounter a person or situation where you are being judged or treated unfairly because of who and what you are, take out this prayer and recite it to yourself. Whenever you feel weak or uncertain, read this prayer out loud, or reflect upon it silently. If you are hesitant about your own worth and your own power, it should give you confidence and strength.

*I am true to myself, and still they judge me.
I follow my heart, yet am condemned as a freak.
They hate me and they revile me.
They make no effort to understand.*

*Give me the strength to overcome their smallness.
Give me the wisdom to rise above.
Fear is the seed of their hatred.
I must accept myself regardless of how others feel.*

*I will not let their misunderstanding daunt me.
I will not let their prejudice keep me from who I am.
I am stronger than all of their narrow opinions.
Throughout all hardship, my soul will endure.*

What god are you invoking here? No one but you. You are praying to the higher part of you that lies beyond such petty things as appearances and prejudices. You are calling upon that immortal part of yourself that has been judged and tortured and even murdered for who you are and what you can do. This part of you has the strength to endure these things. This part is where your true wisdom lies. This prayer helps you connect with that a little better so you don't feel so weak or alone when faced with the harsh realities of the world.

The Khepriian Charge

Although the rites in this book are not intended to be strictly Khepriian rites, many of them are based upon the rituals celebrated within House Kheperu. To this end, most of the rites open with the Charge. While you are encouraged to write a Charge or Opening Prayer that encapsulates the spirit and beliefs of your own group, I have included the Khepriian Charge here as a reference and for use, should you wish to incorporate it into your own rituals:

*We are the many-born. We are the Immortal.
Eternal we wander the aeons,
Moving to the rhythm of our own inner tides.
We are active elements moving through passive worlds*

*Endlessly we die and are reborn,
Changed yet unchanging through the years.
We move from lifetime to lifetime,
Taking up bodies as garments.*

*Ours is a journey toward understanding,
And our charge is knowledge and wisdom.
We are the catalysts, and as we Awaken to ourselves,
We serve to Awaken the very world.*

The Family Prayer

In House Kheperu, the Family Prayer has several functions. It can be recited alone as an affirmation of Family, and it can be recited together as a group as a mini-gathering rite. Finally, we often close rituals with the Family Prayer as a reminder of where we have come from, who we are, and how we hope to relate in the future. Several rites within this book have been concluded with a modified version of this prayer. Below is the full version. Feel free to use this to conclude all rituals, just as you use the Charge to open them:

*We have passed this way before
And we will pass this way again.
We have been many things to one another throughout the years:
Brothers, Lovers, Friends, and Bitterest Enemies.
But through it all, we have remained,
Tied together, soul to soul,
In this our Ancient Family.
May we endure together peacefully.
May we enjoy each new lifetime as it comes,
May we strengthen each other as we strengthen ourselves,
And may we always find one another
In very time and in every place
To share in this companionship
And to celebrate this bond.*

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