



Clanbook: Tremere Revised

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Blood Sorcery and Blood Bonds

From her first night among the Kindred, the neonate Tremere leads a double unlife. Bound not only by the traditions of the Camarilla but by those of her clan, the Tremere must find a place for herself in her own hierarchy and in the deadly world of vampires. Learn the magic of the Tremere and the rigors of earning status in the clan.

The Ways of Warlocks

As part of the revised lineup of clanbooks, Tremere takes one of the classic sourcebooks for the game and brings it into a modern context. All-new information accompanies a re-examination of earlier concepts, allowing you to add as much depth to your character as you like. The sheer volume of information contained in the new clanbooks (each 32 pages longer than the first-edition series) permits Storytellers to round out their chronicles.

Clanbook: Tremere Revised Details

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Tanja says

Guess what clan my favourite character to play was from ;)

Brian says

It turns out that it *is* like if you took a bunch of D&D geeks and told them their spells were real.

The Tremere used to be my favorite Clan, back when the only Vampire book I owned was the corebook. My favorite character type in any RPG that supports the concept is a wizard, and these were literal blood sorcerers. I've moved away from that initial love since then, with my favorite Clan now vacillating between the Salubri and the Assamites (sorcerer caste, of course), but it meant that I went into this book with a bit more expectations than I had for the other clanbooks. Clanbook: Brujah was bad, but I didn't care that much since I don't care about the Brujah. I cared about the Tremere and I was curious about how the Clan that actually *does* have a strict hierarchy and could be said to be operating as a unified body would be presented. And overall, it's not bad.

The usual long history section is skipped almost entirely here, since the Tremere don't have a long and storied history. They came into existence one night in 1022 when a group of Order of Hermes wizards drank an immortality potion, the side effects of which had been grossly underestimated. What history there is is written by an apprentice who thinks most of what he was told is ridiculous and that real wizards obviously don't exist, so I didn't find it that interesting since I'm usually there for the unique perspective on vampire mythology. What I did like was the art done up like medieval-style woodcuts, including a picture of the Council of Seven and Tremere where Tremere is carved as an earthworm. More art in each Clan's "cultural style," so to speak, would make the Clanbooks a lot more interesting.

The section about the Tremere mindset gets into how they think that they're the most important part of the Camarilla, what with the utility of their blood magic. And they kind of have a point--how many other power groups in the Camarilla are capable of leveling a sorcerous curse on the entirety of another Clan? Thaumaturgy provides a toolset which simply cannot be matched by any other Clan (more on which later), which does mean the Camarilla and the Tremere are intertwined and is what allowed them to survive their early nights. The other factor is the hierarchy, here called "The Pyramid." On top is Tremere, and below him is the Council of Seven. Each of those has seven pontifices reporting to them, each of which has seven lords, each of which has seven regents, each of which has seven apprentices. Each rank is also subdivided into seven subranks. Thaumaturgical prowess is necessary but not sufficient for promotion, and many Tremere spend their entire existences as apprentices because they aren't treacherous or political savvy enough to rise higher.

Obvious the pyramid is not entirely occupied, since otherwise there would be more Tremere than there are vampires in total, though I have seen amusing postulates that the pyramid *is* filled and every supernatural creature in the World of Darkness is secretly Tremere. This means that there are open spots for promising candidates to move into, especially at the lower ranks, but there's still enough stultifying hierarchy that one of the best ways to get promoted is to, overtly or covertly, humiliate a superior in front of their superior and then step into the resulting opening. Or just assassinate people, if you can get away with it, and as long as

none of these machinations affect the Tremere's relationships with outsiders. Above all, the Clan must present a united front.

As is common with anything dealing with Thaumaturgy, a good chunk of the book is dedicated to powers. Thaumaturgy has the same problem that spells did in pre-3.x D&D did, or feats do in post-3.x D&D, in that it's the one place to put all the powers that don't fit anywhere else, leading to horrific vampire blood sorcerers who can...turn into pillars of living electricity (Path of the Levinbolt, described here), control the forces of nature (The Green Path), make people drunk (the Vine of Dionysus), or march very quickly (Transitus Velociter). Truly, the terrible powers worthy of a storytelling game of personal horror. As the rituals contained herein, like The Open Passage, which allows a vampire a few seconds of intangibility with regards to a door or wall after an hour of drawing intricate patterns in rat dung on it. Or Inscription, which provides the valuable ability to create D&D spell scrolls out of thaumaturgical rituals.

As you might guess, I was mostly unimpressed with the powers. Path of the Levinbolt is odd, and while Path of Shadowcrafting is at least thematic, a lot of the rituals stray pretty far from the theme of terrible blood sorcery developed to replace the lost powers of the Tremere's mortal magics. I know this is a game with D&D illusions, Necroscope fleshwarping, and magical healing as core vampiric powersets, but even taking that in mind, Thaumaturgy comes off as a grab-bag with no central theme, and that's true here. In a book about the Tremere, the worst part is the part about Thaumaturgy.

The NPCs actually stood out to me, because after two dozen pages of rules for Thaumaturgy, less than half of the templates actually deal with Thaumaturgy at all. There are templates like "Labor Union Leader" that don't even have it as a Discipline, to the point where after all the discussion of how important Thaumaturgy is to the Tremere and how central it is to their conception and reputation, it's trying to hard to show that there can be Tremere without Thaumaturgy, really, I swear! But it leads to "why are these people Tremere," and for most of them, there isn't a good answer.

I rated this four stars, but I'd say it's probably 3.5. It tries to move away from Tremere as "The Clan with Thaumaturgy," but it does so in a confused and haphazard way. There's never any real synthesis between the primacy of Thaumaturgy and the idea of Tremere who don't have it at all, especially after saying that Thaumaturgical prowess is one of the most important measures the Tremere use to determine Clan status. It comes off as the most centralized and monolithic Clan except for all the weirdos and deviants, which puts it in contrast to all those other Clans of individuals and small broods that still have Clanwide institutions like the Ventrue or the Toreador. As the most centralized Clan, the Tremere probably *should* have been depicted as more monolithic than others, and maybe some of the space devoted to making spell scrolls could have been devoted to that.
