Mortal life / The Ritual

O1: I am Walder Hoffner, son of a veteran of the Great Northern war and the only member of my family to survive the plague of 1720s. The losses I experienced have made me desperate to cheat death.
O2. I cultivate the loyalty of my servant Gabriel while he teaches me French, by showing interest about Lyons and his life there before he was forced to flee unknown prosecutors.
O3. My heart longs for Frieda's touch but our love can never see the light of day. She is a peasant, I am of noble blood and I have dedicated my life to escape death. I dread the day that she will tell me she's married to someone else but I have to look past the pursuits of the flesh.
O4. My cousin Hans and the radicals he falls with are in the area. In one of his short visits my cousin informed me with excitement about another witch hunt. Gabriel is especially careful around Hans.

O5. Moving in the circles I move, I have noticed Karl von Gerter. I saved the arcanist from Hans' gang. Grateful, Karl revealed he has unlocked immortality. The key to the blasphemous ritual is frequent baths in the blood of mortals. Karl revealed several drawbacks but I didn't care. I was bathing in the blood of a peddler within a forthnight. My skin is now alabaster and cold. I use rouge and avoid touching humans with bare hands. Will Frieda join me in immortality or she will be repulsed by the creature I have become?

Characters:
Mortal: Frieda, the peasant woman I love.
Mortal: Gabriel, My mortal servant - refugee from Lyons. Mortal: Hans Hoffner, my distant cousin and fierce opponent of the supernatural.
Immortal: Karl von Gerter, Gave me immortality.

The Early Years, Part A

A1: The flames of my laboratory illuminate our path as I escape into the night with Gabriel. The blood of several of Hans goons is fresh on my sword. We escape to Baden and I adopt the name Klaus Meyer.

A2: Less than a year in Baden, Gabriel introduced me to the Dark Shepherds; a group of scholars in the city of Rastatt with blasphemous pursuits of the occult deemed blasphemous by the church. My servant and new friends are aware of my pursuits but not my nature.

A3: I cut open Hans' throat with my sword after he found me in Rastatt while I was trying to lure a victim to my bath. I ended my cousin's life and his crusade against creatures like me. I feel a pang of guilt as I add his blood in the bathtube, sustaining my immortality but I was running out of time.

A4: What have I done!? Oh, Frieda, why did you have to follow Hans? The envy when I found your love letters among Hans' belongings turned to blind rage when I spotted you among the radicals following his demise.

All I could do as you were dying was to use their blood to bathe you and save your life by spending theirs.
Will you ever forgive me?
The Curse of Lethe will eventually take this memory from you - and me - and perhaps we can share eternity together.

A5: Karin Lundberg was saved by my father in the Great Northern War from Russian troops - unbeknownst to him, Karin is a blood bather. She tracked me through Hans to Rastatt seeking to repay the favor before the Curse of Lethe erased the memory of the debt. In the years that followed she taught me how to cultivate the power of stolen lives to lay blood curses. I gifted to her the book of dark magics that I got from Karl.

Characters:
Immortal: Frieda, the peasant woman I loved. I had to turn her to a Blood Bather to save her life after I nearly killed her.
Immortal: Karin Lundberg, Swedish Blood bather and my mentor.

The Early Years, Part B

B1: Investigating rumors about precious books led me to an abandoned village in Reinhardswald forest. In a dark cavern I encountered and battled the Thing of Reinhardswald. The touch of its tentacles changed me. My eyes are black and my world has no colors anymore but at least, I can see in the dark.

B2: My heart is heavy as I hold Gabriel's corpse to my bosom after Frieda's surprise attack. His mortal mind could not withstand her curse and he turned on me; I barely survived. When did Frieda steal the book I gifted to Karin? I decided to flee to Alsace to escape Frieda but I cannot escape the passion for her that still burns in my heart. I both dread and look forward to the Curse of Lethe liberating me from the memories my heart holds so dear.

B3: Gabriel's family located me in Strasburg. I incorporate the few Dark Shepherds that escaped with me into the clan and share their arcane knowledge. They enter my service after spending a night lying next to Gabriel's remains.

B4: Karin lent me her power and we bathed Gabriel's skull with the blood of his firstborn daughter. The woman didn't want to die despite her age but she didn't struggle as we slowly drained her. Gabriel didn't return to life but the skull occasionally talks now.

B5: Societies like the one Hans was a member of are spreading as the number of blood bathers increase. More Blood Bathers means more drained corpses and that draws attention. These zealots are more knowledgeable than Hans has been as they knew to target my diary. As I wipe the blood of my victims from my sword, I wonder what memories were lost with it. Frieda, before Hans stole you from me, did we ever shared a kiss

that is now lost to the curse?

B6: I hear the screams of the Bishop's bastard as she burns to death along with her father as Gabriel's kin hold the door barred. Bishop, your lackeys burned my diary and now my lackeys burned you along with your illegitimate spawn. The inquisitors won't bother me for some time.

Characters:
Immortal: The Thing of Reinhardswald. An abomination that stole the color of my eyes.

Established, Part C

C1: I found myself trapped in a church during a storm along with an orphan named Martin. I was inspired as the kid spoke of his dreams to visit some rebellious colonies that beat back the mighty British Empire. Could it really be that a few unorganized militias successfully fought off the mightiest empire in their quest for liberty? Dare I dream that I could find safe harbor in this land of opportunity Martin describes?

C2: Julian Gabriellen – great grandson of Gabriel – reached adulthood. I have shaped the young man from infancy and brought him completely under my will. As head of Gabriel's family he will serve me well as we find our opportunities during France's financial woes and the troubles they bring.

C3: Young Martin, a member of the Girodin party now, teaches me to dream again as he speaks of the benefits to the little man that will follow the French Revolution. His optimism is contagious and I dare dream that Frieda will forgive me but not forget about me.

C4: Taking advantage of the anticlerical sentiment during Robespierre's Reign of Terror I watch with satisfaction the guillotine taking the head of the last member of the Witch hunters in Strassburg and I dub my handkerchief in his blood. Vindicated for his exile and with his great grandson as the head of the family, the skull of Gabriel grows silent after 50 years.

C5: A firebrand witch hunter exiled by the faction I brought down 15 years ago returned and is recruiting in Strassburg! I have grown too complacent to notice and now I am again in danger. Frieda, are you safe from the Witch hunters, Napoleon's armies and the fires of revolution? Do you still remember me?

C6: Teresa and Julian were fighting as Teresa challenged her uncle's authority again. I demanded them both to drink toxic hallucinogens I prepared to prove their loyalty to me. I kept the mad scramblings they made as I find power in the words that needs to be investigated.

Characters:
Mortal: Martin, an orphan that wants to travel to the USA. Later a Jacobin of the Girodin faction.
Mortal: Julian Gabrielen: Grandson of Gabriel that I have shaped from infancy.
Mortal: Claude Vargien, a hunter bent on my destruction.
Mortal: Teresa Gabrielen: Julian's niece.

Established, Part D

D1: With increased stability following the end of the Napoleonic wars and greater scrutiny, I have to travel to acquire the blood I need for my baths. Trains make this much easier.

D2: I stand over Martin's grave, reminiscing about our decades together, sporadic as our contact has been, and ponder my Immortality. Young Martin, now dead of old age, taught me how to dream again. Should I have refrained from sabotaging his dreams because he was too precious to me to let him travel to USA? My long life is already filling with regrets as my memories are lost to Lethe. I still remember my father, my siblings. I remember Gabriel, Karl, Karin, Julian, Hans. I still remember Frieda. But for how long? Who and what have I forgot? Was it all worth it?

D3: Travelling to different cities or back to my country after decades away brings with it simple pleasures and new acquaintances - before the necessary murders - but I am used to them now.

D4: With Teresa help I captured Lucas Vargien, the son of an important hunter, Claude Vargien, in Strasburg but he doesn't betray his father or his comrades.

D5: I am free from the ravages of time, but my diary is not. The trusted repository of my memories, of who I used to be, shows severe signs of wear and some of the words are lost, like the holes in my mind.

D6: I am so used to the smell of blood that I haven't noticed that it clings on me like a mantle of death until the Gabriellens noticed my presence drives the dogs to frenzy. Does the corruption follows Frieda too? Did her hate for me deepen? Did it create something else about me that she would remember once the other memories are gone?

D7: The fog of the centuries clouds my mind as I near the 150th anniversary of my transformation. France is at war with my country. Will Frieda be safe? Will she look for me in the ashes?

D8: Karin and I managed to improve our blood magic to the point that we can completely exsanguinate a human we touch in a gory display, without leaving a drop in the body. Procuring enough blood for the bath is much easier now.

Characters:

Mortal: Lucas Vargien, son of Claude, hunter and my prisoner.

Ancient, Part F

F1: My heart beat in sorrow and elation as I found Frieda reading the notes of people I don't remember over the corpses of every last one of the Gabrielens. She claimed that she came to collect the debt. I am alone in my mansion but I now have hope!

F2: I can channel my power to turn my scent of blood to a feeling of dread as I embrace the monster I am slowly becoming.

F3: It has been a century since Napoleon destroyed the last vestiges of feudalism in Europe and my archaic manners are met with disdain or hostility among those I hunt.

F4: Hunters tracked me from possessions left behind in Baden and I am forced to flee to Paris. Frieda, I will return for you. Don't forget me.

F5: As the world goes mad and earth is bathed the blood of young men in the Great War, the beauty and peace of dawn calls to me, bringing me in touch with feelings I thought lost to the centuries.

F6: I watch the flames in the center of the inversed Mausoleum consume my diary as the cannons of my countrymen are just a few leagues from Paris - the memories there were treasured but not vital to my continued progress.

F7: My project required a different kind of sacrifice today; Jacques Tussaud, a traveler that I have encountered several times, was arrested in my place for my crimes. With the war draining millions of young men I am free from scrutiny for the time.

Characters:
Mortal: Jacques Tussaud, a man arrested as a German spy and serial killer in my place.

Ancient, Part G

G1: In the aftermath of the Great War, my hands trembled as I got the portrait of my family from the crippled German Veteran. The fog of Lethe receded - I could remember Hans again, his associates and I could remember the feel of my sword as it opened his throat. I remember feeling remorse of this murder once, but not anymore.

G2: I knew my end was coming when the car driver simply melted to a pool of rancid blood driving us right off the cliff. She came for me in the end. She still remembers me. I cannot muster to kill Frieda and trapped as I am in the wreckage, I am killed instead.

Remaining memories:

MEMORY1:
O1. I am Walder Hoffner, the occultist son of a veteran of the Great Northern war and the only member of my family to survive the plague.
A5. The Blood Bather Karin Lundberg was saved by my father in the Great Northern War. She became my mentor and I gave her my most precious book.
B2. My heart is heavy as I hold Gabriel's corpse to my bossom. I barely survived when Frieda's magic turned him against me and I had to flee to Alsace. When Frieda stole the book I gifted to Karin?

MEMORY3:
O3. My heart longs for Frieda's touch but our love can never see the light of day.
A4. What have I done!? Oh, Frieda, why did you have to follow Hans? Will you ever accept me?

MEMORY4: (Regained)
O4. Hans showed up excited and informed me about another witchhunt. I noticed Gabriel avoids him.
A3. I cut open Hans' throat with my sword after he found me in Rastatt, ending my cousin's life and his crusade against creatures like me.
B5. Societies like the one Hans was a member of are spreading. I wonder what memories were lost with my Diary as I wipe the blood of my victims from my sword.

MEMORY17:
F1: Frieda came to collect 'the debt' I owe her. I found her reading the notes of people I don't remember over the corpses of my servitors. I am alone.
F4: Hunters tracked me from antique paintings and I am forced to flee to Paris. Frieda, I will return for you.
G2: I knew my end was coming when the car driver simply melted to a pool of rancid blood. I cannot muster to kill Frieda and trapped as I am, I am killed instead.

MEMORY18: (Memory of Peace and Beauty)
F5: As the world goes mad, the beauty and peace of dawn calls to me.
G1: My hands trembled as I got the portrait of my family from the crippled veteran and I remembered Hans.

MEMORY16: (Diary)
D8: Karin and I improved our blood magic to the point that we can exsanguinate a human we touch in a gory display. Procuring enough blood for the bath is much easier now.

F2: I can channel my power to turn my scent of blood to a feeling of dread as I embrace the monster I am slowly becoming.
F3: It has been a century since Napoleon destroyed the last vestiges of feudalism in Europe and my archaic manners are met with disdain or hostility among those I hunt.

MEMORY19: (Diary)
F6: I watch the flames in the center of the inversed Mausoleum consume my diary - the memories there were treasured but not vital to my continued progress.
F7: My project required a different kind of sacrifice today; Jacques Tussaud was arrested in my place for my crimes.