

Buffy

the Vampire SlayerTM

roleplaying game



DIRECTOR'S SCREEN







Magic Table

Dispelling	Success Levels \geq (Power Level - 1), p. 141
Sorcery	Sorcery Level added to Spellcasting, maximum +5; quick casting possible, p. 143
Repeat Use	-2 (cumulative) per use unless rest (2 hours per Spell level; 3 hours for telekinesis); -1 per use additional if same spell used, p. 140, 143
Spellcasting	D10 + Willpower + Occultism, p. 140 If failed, no result; If Success Levels $<$ Power Level, roll on Spell Side Effect Table; If Success Levels \geq Power Level, successful casting
Telekinesis	D10 + Willpower + Sorcery, p. 143 Success Levels equals Strength of effect Damage: Success Levels \times 2, Bash or Slash/stab

Ranged Attack Chart

Automatic Fire	Roll once, each Success Level counts as one bullet that hits target, p. 116
Multiple Shots	Roll once, each additional shot drops one Success Level, p. 115
Pistol Ranges	Short: 5 yards Medium: 20 yards Long: 50 yards
Range Penalties	Short: none Medium: -1 Long: -3
Rifle Ranges	Short: 20 yards Medium: 100 yards Long: 300 yards
Throw Range	2 + (2 \times Strength) yards; no modifiers

spell side effect table

Roll a D10 and add the Spell's Power Level.

roll total result

4 or less	Phew! Lucked out, and the spell still works.
5-7	The spell is delayed. It appears the spell failed, but it will work normally at a time of the Director's choosing (ideally, a dramatically appropriate time).
8-10	The spell works, but it's less effective than expected. The duration, damage or effect is halved (if not applicable, then the spell is delayed as above).
11-13	The spell works, but the caster is damaged by its energies. The magician takes five Life Points of damage per Power Level of the spell.
14-15	The spell affects the wrong target (the Director decides who gets to be the lucky recipient).
16+	Spell has a completely unexpected effect. The magical energies run rampant, often causing physical damage to the area or summoning dangerous entities from beyond our reality. This also happens if the spell is disrupted at a critical point.

fear test modifiers chart

Vamp with his "game face" on: -1

Hideous demon creature: Half the creature's Attractiveness, rounded down (e.g., a critter with Attractiveness -7 would give a -3 to Fear Tests)

Splatter factor: -1 for some blood; -2 for a murder victim's body; -3 for R-rated gore; -4 for cult film carnage

Sudden or unexpected encounter: Add -2 to any other applicable modifiers (e.g., the bloody corpse falls out of a locker, the horrific vampire springs from the shadows, and so on).

Familiarity Factor: After seeing it often enough (third or fourth encounter), eliminate the penalty to the roll.

panic table

roll result	effect
9+	No biggie: The character toughs it out. May be afraid, but no panic here. Can act normally.
7-8	Startled: The character is startled but not paralyzed, and can act normally. Initiative is lost, however; the critter wins Initiative automatically on that Turn.
5-6	Freak out: The character screams and/or flinches away. Only defense actions can be attempted on that Turn and the character cannot go on Full Defense.
3-4	Run Away!: The character takes off running like a spider-eating spine-missing Zeppo for a full Turn, unless cornered, in which case cowering in terror is on the agenda. No attacks are possible and defense actions suffer a -2 penalty. After each Turn (or handful of seconds), a new Fear Test can be rolled (reduce any penalties by one with each successive Turn, until the character snaps out of it).
2 or less	Total Terror: The character is not in control of her actions. She may lose her lunch, pass out or suffer some other oh-so-embarrassing fate.

Armor Table

Armor Type	Armor Value	Notes
Leather or Tweed Jacket	2	Typical biker's jacket with lots of zippers or a Watcher's scholarly jacket
Leather Armor	3	Breastplate, helmet and arm and leg protectors
Chain Mail	8(4)	Second value is used against Bullet attacks
Plate Armor	12(6)	Second value is used against Bullet attacks
Bulletproof Vest	10(5)	Second value is used against Slash/stab attacks
Combat Armor	12	Worn by combat soldiers and SWAT teams

Base Damage Table

Attack	Base Damage	Notes
Assault Rifle	16	Bullet; use rifle ranges; can fire bursts; p. II8
Axe	5 x Strength	Slash/stab; can use two hands; p. II8
Baseball Bat	4 x Strength	Bash; any heavy club; can use two hands; p. II8
Baton	3 x Strength	Bash; p. II8
Big Ass Pistol	18	Bullet; use pistol ranges; p. II8
Big Ass Sword	5 x (Strength + 1)	Slash/stab; uses two hands; p. II8
Big Knife	3 x Strength	Slash/stab; p. II8
Big Pistol	15	Bullet; use pistol ranges; p. II9
Bow	4 x Strength	Slash/stab; max damage 20; use pistol ranges; p. II9
Break Neck	4 x Strength	Bash; must Grapple; p. I09
Choke/Strangle	1 x (Strength - 1)	Victim cannot breathe; p. I09
Crossbow	16	Slash/stab; use pistol ranges; p. II9
Head Butt	2 x Strength	Bash; p. III
Hunting Rifle	20	Bullet; use rifle ranges; p. II9
Jump Kick	3 x (Strength + 1)	Bash; Dexterity + Acrobatics roll first; p. III
Kick	2 x (Strength + 1)	Bash; p. III
Knife	2 x Strength	Slash/stab; p. II9
Pigsticker	2 x (Strength - 1)	Slash/stab; p. II9
Pistol	12	Bullet; use pistol ranges; p. II9
Pistol Crossbow	10	Slash/stab; use pistol ranges; p. II9
Popgun	9	Bullet; use pistol ranges; p. II9
Punch	2 x Strength	Bash; p. II2
Quarterstaff	3 x (Strength + 1)	Bash; uses two hands; p. II9
Shotgun	20	Bullet; use pistol ranges; p. II9
Slam-Tackle	2 x Strength	Bash; knocks target down; p. II2
Spear	3 x (Strength + 1)	Slash/stab; uses two hands; p. II9
Spin Kick	2 x (Strength + 2)	Bash; p. II2
Stake	2 x Strength	Slash/stab; p. I20
Submachine Gun	12	Bullet; use pistol ranges; can fire bursts, p. I20
Sweep Kick	1 x Strength	Bash; knocks target down; p. II2
Sword	4 x Strength	Slash/stab; p. I20
Takedown	1 x Strength	Bash; knocks target down; p. II2
Taser Rifle	5	Knockout effect; p. I20
Thrown Axe	4 x Strength	Slash/stab; use throw range; p. II8
Thrown Knife/Stake	2 x (Strength - 1)	Slash/stab; use throw range; p. II9, I20
Thrown Pigsticker	1 x (Strength - 1)	Slash/stab; use throw range; p. II9
Thrown Spear	3 x Strength	Slash/stab; use throw range; p. I20
Toss	1 x Strength	Bash; knocks target down; p. II2
Tranquilizer Gun	1	Puts target to sleep; use rifle range; p. I20

Rules

Attacking from behind	-2 to defense
Attribute (doubled) Roll	DI0 + (2 x Attrib)
Attribute (not doubled) Roll	DI0 + Attrib
Bash Damage	No modifiers,
Bullet Damage	After armor,
Fear Roll	DI0 + Willpower
Full Defense	+3 to all defense
Full Offense	+2 to all attacks
Getting Up	DI0 + Dexterity
Hacking Roll	DI0 + Intelligence
Knockdown	x3 victim's Strength
Knocked down	-2 to all defenses
Movement	Dexterity + Constitution (Dexterity + Constitution)
Multiple Actions	Roll once, apply to all
Multiple Opponents	+1 per opponent
Skill Roll	DI0 + Attribute
Slash/stab	After armor, -2 to defense
Research Roll	DI0 + Intelligence

Breaking

Interior Door:	Three Success Levels
Reinforced Wooden Door:	Four Success Levels, one roll
Metal Door:	Six Success Levels, and it ignores armor
Reinforced Metal Door:	Eight Success Levels, one roll
Interior Wall:	Armor Value 4; 20 points of damage
Brick Wall:	Armor Value 6; 40 points of damage
Concrete:	Armor Value 10; 80 points of damage

drama points usage chart

Heroic Feat	+10 to roll, p. 127
I Think I'm Okay	Heals half of damage taken, p. 127
Plot Twist	Gains plot "break", p. 128
Righteous Fury	+5 to attack actions; costs 2 Drama Points, p. 128
Back From the Dead	Resurrection!; cost varies, p. 128

injury table

10 or fewer Life Points	-2 penalty to combat rolls
5 or fewer Life Points	-4 penalty to combat rolls
0 or fewer Life Points	Unconscious if failed D10 + Willpower + Constitution roll, with -1 penalty per Life Point below 0
-10 or fewer Life Points	Dead if failed D10 + Willpower + Constitution roll, with -1 penalty per 10 Life Points below 0 (Survival Test, p. 121)

base modifiers table

- Easy:** +5
- Moderate:** +3 to +4
- Average:** +1 to +2
- Challenging:** No modifier
- Difficult:** -1 to -2
- Very Difficult:** -3 to -5
- Heroic:** -6 to -9
- Sheesh, right:** 10 or worse

Intentions: All players state i

Initiative: Director decides on

Action: In initiative order, c

Additional ad dexterity add

- 5-6
- 7-8
- 9-10
- 11-12
- +2

cheat sheet

- roll against attack, p. II3
- attribute), p. 99
- ate, p. 99
- s, can knock out, p. II7
- , double damage, bad vs. vamps, p. II8
- power (doubled), p. 106
- tense rolls, no attack actions, p. II3
- ack rolls, no defense actions, p. II3
- ity + Acrobatics, p. II3
- gence + Computers, p. 103
- Strength in one blow's damage, p. II3
- tense rolls, no attack actions, p. II3
- Constitution yards per second, p. 103
- Constitution) x 2 miles per hour, p. 103
- apply Additional Actions Table penalties, p. II4
- ent, to maximum of +4, p. II5
- ate + Skill, p. 99
- , double damage vs humans, p. II7
- gence + Occultism, p. 103

• stuff table

levels, and it ignores the first Success Level in any roll that causes damage. It ignores the first two Success Levels in any one roll that causes damage, and it ignores the first five Success Levels in any one roll that causes damage.

Name	Roll Basics	Damage	Notes
Aiming	Perception + Gun Fu, or Perception + Getting Medieval, or Brains Score	None	Adds Success shooting roll
Bite	Dexterity + Kung Fu + 2 roll, or Combat Score +2	3 x Strength	Must Grapple only for vari
Bow Shot	Dexterity + Getting Medieval - 2, or Combat Score - 2	(4 x Strength) Slash/stab (to maximum of 20)	Ranged attack apply (see p.
Break Neck	Strength + Kung Fu, or Muscle Score	(4 x Strength) Bash	If human die Points, Survey broken (dead)
Catch Weapon	Dexterity + Kung Fu - 5, or Combat Score - 5	None	Ranged def p. 109
Choke	Strength + Kung Fu, or Muscle Score	(Strength - 1) Bash	Asphyxiation p. 109
Crossbow Shot	Dexterity + Getting Medieval, or Combat Score	16 Slash/stab	Ranged attack apply (p. 115)
Decapitation	Dexterity + Getting Medieval - 5, or Combat Score - 5	Varies by weapon	Total damage p. 109
Disarm	Dexterity + Getting Medieval - 2, or Dexterity + Kung Fu - 3, or Combat Score - 2	None	Resisted by p. 110
Dodge	Dexterity + Acrobatics, or Dexterity + Getting Medieval, or Dexterity + Kung Fu, or Combat Score	None	Avoid getting p. 110
Feint	Intelligence + Kung Fu, or Intelligence + Getting Medieval, or Brains Score	None	Adds Success to next action p. 110
Grapple	Dexterity + Kung Fu + 2, or Combat Score + 2	None	Impairment p. 110
Groin Shot	Combat Maneuver - 3	Varies by attack	Tough on body p. 111
Gunshot	Dexterity + Gun Fu, or Combat Score	Varies by weapon	Ranged attack (p. 115), p. 116
Head Butt	Dexterity + Kung Fu - 2, or Combat Score - 2	(2 x Strength) Bash;	If target grapples defend; if a attacker takes

Turn Order

Intended actions for their characters.

or D10 + Dexterity (see Fast Reaction Time, p. 39)

characters perform actions

Actions Table

Additional Actions

1
2
3
4
+1 per

Additional Actions Penalty Table

Action	Penalties
First	none
Second	-2
Third	-4
Fourth	-6
+1	-2 per

Success Levels Table

Roll	Success Levels	Description
9-10	1	Adequate
11-12	2	Decent
13-14	3	Good
15-16	4	Very Good
17-20	5	Excellent
21-23	6	Extraordinary
24-26	7	Mind-boggling
27-29	8	Outrageous
30-32	9	Superheroic
33-35	10	God-like
+3	+1	

Combat Maneuvers Reference Table

Name	Roll Basics	Damage	Notes
Jump Kick	Dexterity + Kung Fu - 3, or Combat Score - 3	3 x (Strength + 1) Bash;	Acrobatics + Dexterity roll first; add Success Levels to damage, p. III
Kick	Dexterity + Kung Fu - 1, or Combat Score - 1	2 x (Strength + 1) Bash	Done with style and grace, of course, p. III
Knockout	Dexterity + Kung Fu - 2, or Dexterity + Getting Medieval - 2, or Combat Score - 2	Half damage of attack	Lights out; p. III
Melee Weapon	Dexterity + Getting Medieval, or Combat Score	Varies by weapon	Good ol' fashioned hack, slash, crush and maim, p. III
Parry	Dexterity + Kung Fu, or Dexterity + Getting Medieval, or Combat Score	None	Defense action, -2 against ranged attacks; p. II2
Punch	Dexterity + Kung Fu, or Combat Score;	2 x Strength Bash	Basic knuckle sandwich; p. II2
Slam-Tackle	Strength + Sports, or Muscle Score	2 x Strength Bash	Football or other roughhousing tackle; p. II2
Spin Kick	Dexterity + Kung Fu - 2 or Combat Score - 2	2 x (Strength + 2) Bash;	Kick for the cool folks; p. II2
Stake	Dexterity + Getting Medieval, or Combat Score	2 x Strength Slash/stab	p. II2
Sweep Kick	Dexterity + Kung Fu - 1, or Combat Score - 1	Strength Bash	Knocks target down (p. II3); p. II2
Takedown	Strength + Kung Fu, or Muscle Score	Strength Bash	Knocks target down (p. II3); p. II2
Through the Heart	Combat Maneuver - 3	Varies by weapon	x4 damage vs humans; x5 or x1 damage vs vamps; p. II2
Throw Weapon	Dexterity + Getting Medieval - 1, or Combat Score - 1	Varies by weapon	Range 2 yards plus 2 yards/Strength; p. II3
Toss	Strength doubled - 4, or Muscle Score - 4	Strength Bash	Must Grapple first, minimum Strength 4; p. II3
Wrestling Hold	Strength + Kung Fu - 2, or Muscle Score - 2	None;	Must Grapple first, defender is at -1 per Success Level; p. II3



DIRECTOR'S SCREEN

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Buffy is hip and tuned in. No *Buffy* game would be complete without a slew of pop culture references. These references are intended solely to help players capture the look and feel of *Buffy* in their games. No violation of copyright or trademark ownership is intended.

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OBLIGATORY WARNING TEXT: This handbook is written entirely for Directors. Player types should avoid perusing too much of it, particularly the sections after Episode Zero. You will spoil the suspense and intrigue of your *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* roleplaying game otherwise. Yah, we know you want to peek. Just wait until your Director has run the group through the gems contained herein. Trust us, it's much better that way.



Overview

Xander: So, uh . . . you and Oz. How do I put this? Are we on first, second, or, uh . . . ye gods?

Willow: That's none of your business, Alexander Harris.

—3.5 Homecoming



Ancient evils are forever on the rise, only to be buried by heroes and champions.

Your town has seen much more than its fair share of such rises and falls.

One such evil is the Djinn, a granter of wishes. Wishes don't seem too bad, do they? But really, it all depends on who is doing the wishing, and what the wishes are.

The Djinn's prison keeps it from manifesting, but it has been weakening over the centuries. The evil being is still restricted, but if someone on the outside wants something very, very badly, it can grant her wish. In return, all it requires are some souls. Not the wisher's, of course. At least not right away . . .

Anyone who takes the Djinn up on its deal is branded in some way with its Mark. It isn't necessarily a tattoo; it could be a recurring theme in the wisher's art, decorations on the wisher's object of power, or something she is constantly doodling.

What does the Djinn do with the souls? It braids them into its goatee. No, not really. It actually uses them to wedge the cracks in its prison wider and wider. Enough souls, enough cracks, and the entire structure collapses, freeing the Djinn to wreak its dark purpose—whatever that may be.

Unless a group of heroes stop it . . .

But before we get to all that, let's talk a bit more about playing, and particularly directing the *BtVS RPG*.





WHAT THE—?

So what's this strange looking book/pamphlet thing you're holding in your hands? It's a Director's best friend. Okay, that may be overstating things, but it's darn useful for all you Director types out there.

As explained in the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Roleplaying Game Corebook* (BtVS Corebook), you Directors have a great deal to do before and during a roleplaying game session. The *Director's Screen* is designed to ease your burdens and make being a Director much more enjoyable. The *Director's Screen* contains two separate items—a colorful screen made of heavy cardboard, and a staple-bound booklet. We'll discuss each in turn.

Now remember, the *Director's Screen* is designed to aid in almost all your tasks, but each of you brings your own sensibilities to the role and will use, modify and/or ignore the material presented here as you see fit. Don't worry, we don't mind. In fact, we wouldn't have it any other way. It's your game and your gaming crew. If you ain't happy, we ain't happy.

THE SCREEN

The screen will aid you in your storytelling and rules adjudication tasks. It does this in a couple of ways.

BARRIER

The screen may be set on its bottom edge to create a space or separation between you and your players. The heavy cardboard and panel-folds keep it steady and allow you to adjust the amount of space it takes up, and the amount of space it hides.

Used this way, the screen "sets the stage" in a sense by highlighting your space at the table and directing the players' attention to you.

The screen also hides your notes, plans and maps and keeps the players from knowing crucial details or secrets of the storyline until the dramatically appropriate time. Your papers can get numerous (particularly when the action is hot and heavy) and a large, concealed space to spread them out (larger than that provided by, say, your hands) can be very useful. Also, there may be times when you need to roll some dice to determine how something works out and you want to keep the results hidden from the players. (Say a vamp is trying to sneak up on the Slayer, rather than calling for the player to make a Perception roll—a sure sign that something is skulking about—you just make the roll yourself accounting for the Slayer's Perception and the vamp's sneakiness.)

Some of you won't like using the screen as a barrier, or the "I'm more important than you" status it conveys. In that case, don't use it that way. You will still find the screen a beneficial tool for game sessions.

MOOD AND REFERENCE

One side (the side facing the players) of the screen presents colorful and evocative illustrations to help set the mood and bring the setting and characters to life. Honest! Take a look. Stunning, isn't it?

On the other side of the screen, you will find the best stuff of all—all the information you need to run the game. Tables and charts are presented in an easy-to-read manner, including those

- giving damage formulas for various weapons and hand-to-hand attacks,
- revealing what die rolls grant what Success Levels,
- covering roll modifiers depending on the difficulty of the task or tasks attempted (for example, a Very Difficult activity should suffer a -3 to -5 penalty to the roll),
- presenting Fear Test modifiers and results,
- running down Combat Maneuvers, their rolls, damage and special features,
- and many others.

Your side of the screen is much like a sweet crib sheet, propped up right in front of your eyes. With this baby, you don't need to go looking through the book for the information you need.

THE DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK

This pamphlet complements the screen and further eases your Director-y burdens.

The first section, Episode Zero, includes a bunch of advice mostly concerned with how to run sessions and make the experience more enjoyable for all. Nothing set in stone here. It's just a bunch of suggestions that you may find useful. Use the stuff you think is cool; drop the stuff you think is lame.

The remaining sections present three separate, ready-to-run BtVS RPG Episodes. They interrelate and may be played in sequence or dropped at various places in a larger, already formulated Season. They are all based around the vile activities of the Djinn, the Big Bad first introduced in **Chapter Eight: Sweeps Week** from the *BtVS Corebook*.





THE EPISODES

To ease the presentation of the three Episodes, we've created a format that fits the show. They begin with some introductory text and then move into a Plot Synopsis. A cut scene appears next.

The beginning of each Episode includes a box like this. It signifies that a cut scene is taking place (see pp. 17, 31, 42). These scenes do not involve any of the Cast Members. They should be read aloud to the players to set the stage for this Episode. If you like, you can hand out copies of the page to a few of the players and have them read any dialogue as you read the narrative.

The remainder of each Episode is divided into four Acts: Introduction, Conflict, Climax and Resolution. Each Act includes one or more Scenes, each described in varying degrees of detail.

The Acts have four sections each:

Run-Down: A brief explanation of what happens in the Act, with a bit of background thrown in.

Action: This covers the actual events and encounters in the Act, including rules.

Troubleshooting: Some tips on how to handle problems when the players improvise or proceed along an unexpected path.

Game information for the Guest Stars and Adversaries involved in the Act, including all their stats, are located at various places. You will find them conveniently gathered in special sidebars that look like the one at the bottom of this page (except with different faces and numbers, but you probably already figured that one out?). This will enable you to get with the slayage without bothering to look stuff up. We are just so helpful, aren't we? You betcha!

NUMBER OF CHARACTERS

The Episodes presented here require three to five beginning characters, which can include the *BtVS* Corebook Archetypes, the First Season Original Cast, or characters created by the players.

LOCATIONS

Details of the exact locations in the Episodes are left vague. If your gang is playing the Original Cast, the town is Sunnydale, the local hangout is the Bronze and the school is either Sunnydale High or UC Sunnydale. Alternatively, the gaming group can be playing their own Cast Member-creations in Sunnydale, or a group in a completely different town. For that reason, the specifics of the region are left for your tailoring.

Name: Malcolm, Vampire Snitch
Motivation: Get rid of Gary, blood!
Critter Type: Backstabbing Vampire
Attributes: Str 5, Dex 4, Con 5, Int 2, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 12, Brains 3
Life Points: 56
Drama Points: 1
Special Abilities: Vampire

Name	Score	Maneuvers	Notes
Bite	14	18	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Grapple	14	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	11	14	Bash
Punch	12	12	Bash





Episode Zero

The Dos and Don'ts

Buffy: Being the Slayer doesn't give me a license to kill. Warren's human.

Dawn: So?

Buffy: So the human world has its own rules for dealing with people like him . . .

—6.20 Villains

As Director, you are crucial to the success of any session of the *BtVS RPG*. You are responsible for the storyline, both creating it and bringing it to life for the other players, for interpreting the rules of the game, for the scenes that involve the characters, and for the Supporting Cast who interact with the players. Such a critical role can be daunting if you've never done it before. However, with this handy-dandy guide, you'll be spinning *BtVS* tales and ad libbing plot twists in no time.

As with any position of deep and meaningful responsibility, Directors eventually learn certain tricks of the trade. But really, who wants to suffer through all that trial and error stuff anyway? Now, no book could ever provide guidance for every situation—that's what's so cool about roleplaying: anything can, and usually does, happen. What we've assembled here are a set of tools, some guidelines for recognizing the problems that may occur, and some possible solutions.

SHOW RULES VS. GAME DEMANDS

The first step to becoming a good Director is to understand what such an esteemed personage as yourself does. Often, the comparison is made between Directors and real scriptwriters. Both create a storyline, dress the scenes, cast the villains, and set the timing for the action. However, Directors have special responsibilities that set you apart from scriptwriters.

Scriptwriters, when creating an episode, have absolute control over every aspect of the show—the sets, the actors, the stories. Each word is scripted, each punch rehearsed, and each plot twist thought out well in advance. The writer creates what is needed based on the plot of the show, and the actors don't get a vote.

In roleplaying games, control is spread through the entire group. You set the scenes and prepare the Big Bads, but the players decide who goes to the cemetery and who stays at the library. The dice decide who lands the final blow and when the crucial bit of information gets discovered. This makes your job both easier (not all the storytelling comes from you) and more difficult (you have to figure out how to retain some semblance of control over things). Regardless, a clever Director can still use the tools of the scriptwriter, along as you engage in a few modifications.

On a television show, scriptwriters love to startle the audience. They use a gruesome demon jumping out of the darkness or a sudden betrayal by a friend to keep the viewers on the edge of their seats and actively involved in the action and with the characters. In a roleplaying game, each player is already part of her character's life. She controls the character's likes and dislikes, her past and futures. Whenever you throw something unexpected at the Cast, the players are the ones who deal with it. And naturally, when something extremely weird shows up, the players are the ones who feel threatened by it.

If the characters suddenly discover the dorm they've been living in for the past year is actually a top-secret government installation, the players are going to want to know why they never noticed it before. The hacker has been using the local network to get information from a dozen different illegal sources; she never wondered why the building had enough bandwidth for a small army, literally? The Cast has been prowling around at night for almost their entire high school career, and they somehow missed the construction of an underground lair stretching throughout the town? The players want to share in the game world and when large chunks of it change without warning, they feel as if they have lost some of the control over their characters.

So, how do you keep secrets in a game? The key is to drop hints, and let the Cast see the edges of the mystery. Build slowly, keeping the information light and seemingly unimportant. A casual detail mentioned during one session, and then a rumor overheard in a bar





during the next. Before introducing that secret military base, have a demonic informant complain about the "local militia" who has been patrolling near the dark places it likes to haunt. A Cast Member may notice heavy construction equipment being hauled into town, but no major building projects being started. Spread the hints out over several Episodes, so when they discover the secret, the connection to previous sessions clicks in. Remember, unlike the scriptwriter who has to cram all his information into forty-two minute-long segments, you generally have three- or four-hour sessions of gaming to lay your groundwork. That allows you to do more hinting and foreshadowing. Use that to your advantage.

Be aware of how any subtle clues will be received. Make sure that clues directed at coming Subplots are placed during scenes when the players already have a clear direction or goal. Otherwise, they may take it for a "big clue" leading to the next scene, rather than a "little clue" that will be followed up in future sessions. A foreshadowing Subplot clue that overly detracts from the current adventure is counterproductive (unless of course it's planned—red herrings are a very legit method of diverting the characters . . . just don't do it too often).

Stringing Episodes together with Subplots is something both good television and good gaming do. "Sudden developments" are more exciting if the development wasn't actually all that sudden, but was subtly hinted at previously. Introducing a minor character in the Season Premier, then dropping small hints and clues until she is revealed to be the hell-master the Cast has been hunting for six months is a good example. The final revelation was a surprise, but the players don't feel as if they've been walking around blind during the previous sessions. All in all, they have a thread of stories that connect them to the world.

ROLEPLAYING OPPORTUNITIES

Ethan: I wouldn't say that. I wouldn't say that at all. In fact, Ripper, old mate, I'd say something rather interesting was about to hap—

(Door opens and Giles shines flashlight inside.)

Giles: Did someone—?

Ethan (caught): Oh, bugger! I thought you'd gone!

—4.12 A New Man

Roleplaying games are something of a contradiction. You create an overarching storyline, but no one can plan for every possible move made by the Cast. You need to have a coherent story planned so there is direction to the game. The players, on the other hand, rightfully demand the ability to choose their own path, and won't be happy being restricted. (Hey, it's their game too.)

Balancing the two factors requires a flexible Plot. You must script a finite number of options that all advance the plot in certain ways, but usually only one of them is actually used by the Cast. As they make decisions that take them further from the main plotline, you script things so that it becomes more difficult to proceed. In this way, you "channel" the Cast without browbeating them into any particular action.

For example, the Cast is looking for a shape-shifting demon. The only person to have seen the demon's human form is a waitress at a dockside bar. However, the Cast decides to research this type of demon at the library. Rather than saying, "You waste several hours unsuccessfully looking for a picture of this nasty," you should announce that today the exterminator will be spraying the library for vermin. If this doesn't dissuade them, have the exterminators show up right on time and announce that everyone must clear out. If they sneak back in, have them roll frequent Constitution (doubled at first, then not doubled) rolls or they get violently ill from the fumes. After all is said and done, the Cast will have accomplished little by sticking with the library path. If the Cast hits the streets in search of information, their path suddenly becomes easier; perhaps their normal informants are particularly well-informed tonight and lead the Cast directly to the person they need to see.

That said, be sure to leave enough wiggle room so that inspired actions or ideas by the Cast can be worked in as seamlessly as possible. That's where the good Director ad libs, quickly adjusting and bridging whatever gaps occur.

Say that on the way to the library to research that pesky demon, one of the Cast remembers that the first victim (one the character read about only after the body was discovered) was found by the docks. The Cast Member happened to grow up around that area and her player asks you to fill her in on the details. You think this is a good approach and decide that she is familiar with Lou's Diner as a local gathering place for dockworkers. As it happens (or as you quickly bend the story details), the waitress with the key information works at Lou's. Gotta keep your mind open for such twists—makes the players feel more immersed in the story and more willing to contribute their ideas and creativity.

GAME MECHANICS

Given the number of pages devoted to how to use the Attributes, Skills, and Combat Maneuvers, it is easy to feel the need to roll dice for every event. In fact, some Directors believe that as long as the game mechanics cover a situation, those mechanics *must* be used. This isn't necessarily the best tack to take.



The game mechanics are designed to cover situations where an element of chance will provide extra detail, and guide the outcome of dramatic moments during the story. The *numero uno* time to use the game mechanics is combat. When you have the Cast locked in battle with the Big Bad, the dice add an element of the unknowable. The Good Guys will prevail in the end (we hope), but at what cost? The dice make sure no victory is too easy, and may allow the righteous to triumph over superior foes. Other good times to trust the dice are when you need to determine how long a task takes, or how many attempts are necessary. And lest you think die rolling is the exclusive domain of serious situations, game mechanics can be used for light-hearted events too. Driver's education tests, school talent shows, or a band's first paying gig are all excellent opportunities for a random element to make a Cast Member's life more interesting.

All this is good and fine, you say, but why shouldn't game mechanics be used for every situation? Simple—the dice should not make major decisions for the storyline. Use die rolls to determine things like how long research will take, not how successful the research will be. The decision to make spells and information available should be based on the flow of the session and your plan for the Episode or Series, not chance.

If Timmy has fallen down a well and the Cast is trying to pull him out, their success or failure will have a huge impact on the Season—something that should not be left to randomness. You've spent too much time crafting the storyline to let a bad turn of the dice derail it.

And nothing will change a series like a death, especially a Cast Member's. Random chance does not kill anyone on TV; scriptwriters always have excellent reasons for a character's demise (like a nasty contract dispute). If someone needs to sacrifice herself heroically, let her. The game is about heroes and the sacrifices they make. But if she's driving too fast trying to get to school on time, do NOT kill her off after a failed Drive roll.

Even Supporting Cast shouldn't keel over just because they failed a Notice roll. If the person was important enough to be given a name, her death should be significant enough to happen for a reason. This is not to say the Cast Member's actions are meaningless in a situation where the outcome has been determined—far from it. The Cast is welcome to disrupt the plot; the dice are not.

Game mechanics should also be ignored if they will disrupt the pacing of the game. Combat, for instance, is significant when it is for dramatic purposes, like vanquishing the Big Bad, or when the combatants are relative equals, like Buffy and Faith. However, trying to work out every combat will cause the game to drag.

Everyone knows Buffy is going to whip the snot out of Jonathan, no matter how important Jonathan is to your story. Rolls aren't necessary at that point; simply ask the Slayer how much she wants to hurt the twerp and move on. Of course, sometimes a twerp can pick up a super widget that makes him invulnerable (like that would ever happen, right?), or the battle is significant to the plot for some other reason—comic relief, for example.

On other occasions, game mechanics may simply get in the way. If the Cast is getting restless and is eager for a chance to stake some vamps, skip the roll for the research and get those heroes into some combat. If they have been moving too quickly through an Act, a stop at the library and a fast Intelligence and Occultism roll may not be the best idea. Require the Cast to explore other occult sources. Beating up the local vampire bartender is a time-honored tradition, as is calling the "old college buddy, who was tragically driven mad by exposure to the very monster we are now battling."

combat and screen time

The biggest danger of excessive combat is the amount of "screen time" warrior characters like the Slayer get. On television, one character generally gets to hog the spotlight, and it's usually the one who has her name in the show's title. In gaming, however, the Episodes are a team effort, and no one character should overshadow the others for too long. Zipping through situations where the opponents are obviously overpowered helps to maintain the balance for the times when a long, involved brouhaha is critical.

The most important thing to remember about game mechanics is that they are tools, nothing more. You as Director must ultimately decide what is best for the storyline. The dice can suggest, but they should not dictate.

FUDGING

Buffy: You think we missed anything?

Angel: I think we know everything she knows.

Buffy: May I say something? Psycho!

Faith: You played me. You played me!

—3.17 *Enemies*

Don't look so shocked! It's a time-honored tradition to "cheat" in order to make the plot work better. Yes indeed, you can occasionally step in and "change" the course of events by modifying the results of a die roll.





This can be as unobtrusive as ignoring a disastrous die roll or as obvious as having a powerful ally show up "just in time." Most of the time, your "adjustment" should be subtle—ignoring a modifier to a roll or allowing a Cast Member to "just happen" to be carrying the exact tool she needs. Sometimes, the change needs to be major. If a battle goes horribly, horribly wrong, ending with the entire Cast dead, you may suddenly tell the players, "you each wake up in your beds, screaming from a nightmare about your own death!" The dream sequence gambit is risky, but in some situations nothing else will do. Best if you tie the scene into some (hastily invented) mind or dream-control powers of the Big Bad. Not only will it make your "revision" more plausible, but it opens up all sorts of other plot twists. Makes it seem like you planned the whole thing from the start (though we recommend curtailing your "Oh crud, what do I do now?" comments while you are spinning the revised plot).

There are many reasons for you to exert direct control over a situation. A crushing defeat may set the Cast up for a rousing victory. The characters may have blundered into a situation far beyond their control ("So, if she's not a demon, how did she get so strong?"), or perhaps you simply overestimated the Cast's fighting strength. The *BtVS RPG* allows for occasions such as this, and recommends awarding Drama Points to characters who have just lost a bit of free will for the sake of the story.

On the other hand, knowing when not to interfere with the flow of the game is as important as knowing how to. If the Cast is designing a trap that won't hold the demon for more than a few seconds, the Watcher's old friend Randolph, Trap Master to the Throne, shouldn't show up and correct their errors. In general, let the Cast make their own mistakes; it creates a better story if the players know their characters aren't all-powerful.

In the majority of situations, the best Directorial manipulations are the most subtle. If the Cast blows off research time for patrolling, a gentle hint to get back to the books may take the form of a conspicuous absence of vampires in the graveyard. A simple flat tire can remind the Cast that running from a pack of hellhounds isn't properly heroic. You get the idea.

Now, about the manner of fudging. Be discreet. No one wants bad stuff to happen to their Cast Member, but they should at least fear it. If your players all know that you will blatantly manipulate things to make it go right, the suspense is ruined. We provided you with a nice big screen to hide behind—so use it when you are rolling dice. Also, don't be afraid to take a break, or even call a session short if you need time to figure out how to get

the gang out of the mess they got themselves into. If you can wing it and bring things back in line plot-wise, cool. Otherwise, better to take five.

DICE AS MISDIRECTION

The players will quickly learn to watch your actions. If you ask the Cast to make Perception and Notice rolls, and tell them nothing once everyone has failed, they will know something is in the area. Otherwise, you would not have asked for rolls. Also, if you roll several dice behind your spankin' new screen, they likewise know something is about to happen. Or is it? It's a silly little thing, but it works for gathering the attention of your players. If the Cast is bogged down in minor discussions, roll a die. Then ask one of the distracted players for their level in an Attribute you know is less than stellar. For instance, ask the Jock what her Intelligence is or the Nerd her Dexterity. Shake your head and double-check a table or chart. Ask about Life Points or Drama Points. Immediately the Cast will assume they're being watched, are under attack, and the distraction will vanish.

As they're walking down a dark alley, rolling a couple of dice is the gaming equivalent of a screeching cat knocking over a trashcan. The key to this trick is knowing what the players know: this is a game and die rolls are significant. But what it signifies is up to you, the Director.

AD LIBBING

Buffy: Life's a song . . . You don't get to rehearse . . .

—6.7 *Once More, With Feeling*

Keeping a natural flow to a storyline natural is a struggle, whether it involves a member of the Screen Actor's Guild or the roleplaying game screen. Events should flow into one another, and should have consequences, just as they do in the real world.

One of the most difficult parts of being the Director is the spur-of-the-moment creativity that is occasionally required. Since the Cast doesn't know what you've prepared for and what you haven't, count on them blundering off in some unexpected direction at some point (usually when it's most disastrous to the plot). And yet, no matter where they are, they expect the same level of detail as if they walked directly into a carefully designed encounter. If the informant is waiting in Sunnydale's most dangerous bar, and you have the names, family histories, and rap sheets of every other low-life scum in the place, the Cast will suddenly decide to go to the Bronze for clues. Well, clues and some dancing!



There are many ways to deal with these situations. First, don't over-prepare. An important part of ad libbing is taking what has already been planned and using it in ways that weren't planned. If a Supporting Cast Member is locked into one specific place, it becomes more difficult to slide her over to where the Cast actually goes (remember the waitress example we discussed). Let's say you design two informants: a group of vampires who are paranoid about sunlight and never leave their crypt and a rat-faced little human with thinning hair. It's impossible to have the vamp informants give out certain hints unless the Cast drops in for a chat. Now, if the Cast fails to find either informant's address, they may never go to the crypt, in which case you need to shift one of the informants over to whatever location the Cast does visit. Now, which informant will be easier to use? The human, while still memorable, will be easier to "relocate." Still, the vamp group is not a lost cause. Take those meticulously detailed low-life scum and make a few adjustments—instead of a gang, they belong to a fraternity. Now they aren't vampires, they're sophomores!

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

An important part of good directing is knowing the audience. No matter how carefully planned the session is, or how many hints are given, or how richly the locations are described, if the players are looking for a fun night of vampire slaying and you produce a dark angsty session, ratings will drop and fast.

This isn't to say one style is superior to the other; that's why there is more than one flavor of ice cream. Some groups will only be interested in interacting with the denizens of the Bronze and negotiating with friendly demons for ritual components, while others want vampires to dust, monsters to behead, and bizarre cults to smash. Neither of these approaches is wrong, but if you insist on introducing battle after battle to the bookworms or forcing the warriors to decipher puzzles, the Cast won't change—they'll become characters without players. Just like in television, if the viewers aren't enjoying the Episodes, they won't tune in next week.

How do you discover your players' preferences? Well, some of you will be playing with friends in a regular gaming group, so you should have some ideas. Still, some will be meeting the players for the first time or nearly so. A pre-Season questionnaire isn't unheard of, and can be as simple as "What is your favorite Buffy episode? Why? What was your least favorite? Which is better, *Buffy* or *Angel*? Could Giles beat up an FBI agent?" Of course as long as you're making up a survey, don't just find out about their gaming likes and dislikes.

Ask about movies, music, and books. Someone looking for lots of combat may like muscle-bound guys with funny accents or she may like gritty WWII movies. Each is going to differ in the type of "action" she's looking for. Similarly, an occultist who loves J.R.R. Tolkien and Robert Jordan is going to think of magic differently than someone who reads nothing but Umberto Eco and, say, Ken Hite.

It is often a good idea to take the first session to discuss the Cast, and what the players expect from them. Jane may want her character to do a lot of fighting, but Able may be looking forward to exploring lost ruins in an urban setting. Getting diverse characters to come together isn't as difficult as it may seem. No player expects an entire Season to be exactly what her character enjoys. As long as her Cast Member has something to contribute to each Episode, the player will be happy.

What a player wants from her character and the entire game is going to depend largely on her personality, but the correlation isn't always clear. A good number of players are quite happy to create a character very close to their own personalities, so they can experience epic adventures vicariously. Others create Cast Members different from themselves in very extreme ways. This allows them to explore different personalities. Be aware of who's looking to do what.

GOING OFF THE DEEP END

When preparing for a session, you should try to anticipate the combined creative force, and sometimes arbitrariness, of your players. By knowing your players—and their characters—you can anticipate their actions in most situations. With judicious ad libbing and fudging, you can handle most oddities.

Still, there will be times when the Cast makes decisions that are bizarre in the extreme. While you can't predict these deviations from character, be aware that they do happen. Forewarned is forearmed.

In most instances, only one character goes all freaky, suddenly acting in a way quite contrary to both her character concept and her previous behavior. This can happen for a variety of reasons. As the Director, you need to look at what is causing the odd behavior.

Players can inadvertently bring their troubles from Real Life to the gaming table and inflict them upon their characters. If someone is having a bad day, don't let a rash decision wreck a good character. Divert the action from that Cast Member for a moment and give the player a chance to catch her breath. Ask the other Cast Members about their actions, their Drama Points, Life





Points, or skill levels—anything to divert the focus from the character in question. Often, taking a few minutes to refocus will get the player back into the groove.

The behavior could also be the result of a misunderstanding of the rules. If a rules dispute is the source of the problem, make a ruling immediately and notify everyone involved that, while the ruling may be incorrect, it is better to be wrong for one session than to take time researching the correct rule.

If the player insists on continuing the irrational behavior, you may want to discuss the ramifications of the character's actions. For example, if the Cast Member wants to use her Slayer powers to rob banks, you would be justified in pointing out the massive manhunt that would result.

In the end, however, it's the player's choice. You can't play her character for her. Part of the impact of a role-playing game is discovering the repercussions of your character's choices.

GROUP DEEP ENDING

Xander: Hey, we gotta be like Sergeant Rock. Cool and collected in the face of overwhelming odds.

Anya: OVERwhelming? (turns to him) How much more than whelming would that be exactly?

Giles: Look, everything will be all right, we just need to stay here calmly. As soon as Buffy arrives—

(A battered RV screeches to a halt in front of them, windows covered with aluminum foil.)

Giles: —we'll feel oddly worse.

—5.20 *Spiral*

It is also possible that the entire Cast will head off the deep end. Usually, this is the result of a misunderstanding of the situation. Stop the action for a moment, and go over the Cast's intended plan of action, and the likely ramifications. The players may simply be looking at the session differently than you are or have different ideas about its necessary resolution. Remind the Cast of skills and Qualities which may have been forgotten, or suggest avenues they may not have pursued. Let them know, subtly, that they are on the wrong track. Also, make sure that all the Cast Members are behind the plan.

THE WARNING SIGNS

So what are these "trips off the deep end" exactly? It's hard to generalize, except to say that the actions run counter to the character's normal responses. For exam-

ple, a Cast Member might attempt to seduce the enemy. In most cases, ick! Demons have uses for the human body, but most of them require some sort of initial dismemberment. More human opponents may have perfectly good reasons for turning the seductress down, but then again, they may have good reasons for accepting. Either way, it's a dangerous game, getting all up close and personal with a Big Bad, or even a Little Bad. These are facts the Cast Member should know.

Another "out of left field" sort of activity is a sudden increase in violence. If the Cast Member has the Mental Problems (Cruelty) Drawback, this may not be out of place, but otherwise, aggressively racking up the body count isn't a good thing. It might be that the bad guy is human (not a demon or undead). We all know what happens if a human gets killed—eventually, even in Sunnydale, the police investigate. Now, the cops won't realize that the corpse was actually Victor Von Snitenhauft, evil wizard bent on destroying the world by summoning the Old Ones. In fact, most would lock a Cast Member away even faster if she tried to explain. A bloodthirsty player should be reminded of such things.

Now if the whole Cast decides the only good demon is a dead demon, the effects are a little different. The first thing that happens after the bodies start to stack up is a demonic exodus. Most vamps and minor demons would rather run than die. This is nice in the short run, but eventually the Big Boys return. Without the annoyances of the small fry, taking over the Hellmouth is going to seem much easier, at least to a demon with gumption. The players should enjoy their success for the moment, because their next fight is going to be much more dangerous. Pointing out these possibilities will help overly aggressive Cast Members reconsider their path.

Other behaviors that warrant Director intervention are suicidal actions, uncharacteristic cowardice, or sudden increases in greediness. In a Series where heroic sacrifice is occasionally required, suicidal activity may not seem out of place. Still, if a Cast Member attempts to die for trivial reasons, like being drained by a single lowly vampire, it may indicate the player is bored and is looking to leave the game altogether. This one has no in-game solution; it can only be solved by sitting down with the player and discussing the needs of her character.

Attacks of cowardice can seem like a rational reaction for Cast Members who are routinely attacked by supernatural creatures, but the *BtVS RPG* is a heroic game and shying away from combat isn't in the spirit of the genre. The solution for this problem may be as simple as being more generous with the Drama Point awards, or going over the rules for spending Drama Points.



Greed is one of the seven deadly sins and a sharp increase in a character's fixation on material possessions can be equally bad. This can be caused by the heady feeling of power a player gets from a character who is seemingly invincible. Solution? Reminding the Cast Member that she too can occasionally get her butt kicked . . . by kicking it. In extreme cases (and where you know the player can handle it), pitting the Cast Member against a powerful foe and inflicting said butt-kicking may be in order. Just be sure your bad guy is strong enough. There's nothing worse than an object lesson that gets punked and winds up teaching an entirely opposite subject. Then you're in deep doo-doo.

ENCOUNTER EXCELLENCE

Buffy: You never get even a little tired of hearing yourself speak, do you?

Mayor (chuckles, to Giles): That's one spunky little girl you've raised. I'm gonna eat her.

(Giles grabs a sword from the table and thrusts it through the Mayor's chest. The Mayor staggers back but regains his balance.)

Mayor: Whoa! Well now, that was a little thoughtless. (Pulls the sword out of his chest.) Violent outbursts like that, in front of the children? You know, Mr. Giles, they look to you to see how to behave.

—3.21 *Graduation Day - Part One*

We gave you a bunch of tips for creating and running Episodes, Seasons and Series in the *BtVS Corebook*. What about the individual sessions and encounters that make up those larger plots, you ask? Coming right up.

When designing an encounter, first focus on the setup—what the Cast will see before they react. Then, determine the best way to deal with the encounter. Make note of it. Then determine the worst way. Make notes. Then imagine a half-dozen different ways between those two extremes. The Cast will fall in there . . . maybe. Your notes of the best/worst/in-between should include things like "What types of rolls are necessary for this situation?" or "Could this kill a Cast Member?" and "What Quality/skill/power/gadget will be handy/necessary for this situation?"

For example, suppose the Cast needs to cross a chasm in the sewers. A wooden bridge is there, but it's too old and rotted to be used. The safest way to deal with the situation is to climb down to the bottom of the chasm, walk across, and climb back up. Safe, but it takes quite a bit of time—time that might not be available if the Cast is chasing this week's monster. The most dangerous way

would be to run across the bridge as quickly as possible, in the hopes that it won't collapse while they're on it. In between are the options of a running jump over the gap (do you have a Jock in the group?), flying over (any demons or spell casters around?), and lassoing a pipe on the other side and crawling across (any cowboys or other types that might have rope?). You can make a note to warn them away from the more dangerous actions by requesting Notice rolls and mentioning the smell of rot in the area, the echoing sounds coming from below, and the huge holes in the boards. You can guide the Cast toward a safer path by mentioning the protruding rocks on the walls, which make excellent handholds. You might also ask a Cast Member for a Perception and Acrobatics roll to gauge the ease of climbing.

Of course, these hints should only be used if the Cast is stumped. More often, the players will have a multitude of ideas, most of which can't be anticipated. What can be anticipated are the general categories of their actions. Does the plan involve throwing something? Use Strength and Sports. Climbing up, down, or across could require either Strength and Acrobatics or Dexterity and Acrobatics, depending on the nature of the climber.

Unless it's absolutely necessary, don't write down how deep the chasm is—make note of the maximum amount of damage it might do if someone fell in, but be prepared to modify that. If you think the Cast will actually climb down (they are veteran spelunkers, they're all Jocks, or they have mentioned rock climbing as a hobby), note how long, and how many rolls it will take to get down and up. Unless the Cast enjoys talking about rock climbing, one roll should do, especially if this is just a tactic to keep the White Hats from finding the demon's lair for a few minutes. For more suspense, require multiple rolls, like one to get down, one to cross the craggy floor, and one to get back up. Or several to climb each sheer face, if they're really good. Whatever happens, do NOT leave the matter of life or death to a die roll! Always leave the Cast a way out.

THE LIGHTS GO UP

Once all the planning is done and the notes are together—you know who the Season's Big Bad is, where the action is going to take place, and who the Cast are—it's time for the actual game session. You might be a bit nervous as the next few hours will determine if your planning and plotting were for naught. Still, remember that these are your friends, and everyone is looking to enjoy themselves. You'll be fine.





So how do you start the actual Episode?

No matter if the session is the Series Premiere, Season Premiere, or just a normal Episode, some things don't change. A large flat surface to roll dice, place character sheets, and keep snacks accessible is always needed, as is control of the lighting and the noise level. You'll also need your notes, books, spare paper, pencils, and dice. Time is important too. Try for a point when everyone is alert and rested, and have no pressing engagements. In general, "after work" is better than "before work," because there isn't anything looming, distracting the players. Oh . . . access to a bathroom and refrigerator shouldn't be overlooked.

Once everyone has arrived, take a moment to look over the group and gauge their mood. If Bob had a bad day at work, maybe you should wait until the next session to have demons blow up his character's apartment. If this is a Premiere of any kind, begin by having the Cast describe themselves. Remember to use all five senses, and don't skimp on the personality description. Some mention of goals and attitudes is appropriate as well. Unless this is the first Episode, a certain amount of "Previously, on *Buffy* . . ." is most appropriate.

ANATOMY OF A GAME SESSION

All game sessions have three phases: the opening, the game play, and the closing. Most will have a fourth part—the break—but it isn't absolutely necessary. The names give you a fairly good idea of what goes on, but there are occasional subtleties that can be important.

The opening is the first part of the game session. The players find their character sheets, a comfy place to sit, and their snacks (you get the feeling roleplaying and eating go together?). You recap the previous session and describe the current scene. These are the obvious parts, but least important parts of the opening in terms of the game itself. The most important part of the opening is when the players stop thinking about their jobs, bills, and significant others, and begin thinking about their characters. The transition is made at some point and you need to be aware of it when it happens. An easy way to tell when the players are "in" the game is their language. Before, they may refer to their character as "her" and "she says." Once they've entered the game, they say "I" and simply speak their lines, rather than preface them.

Game play is the real meat of the session. The players are thinking in character and you have the Supporting Cast lined up to answer questions, pose mysteries, and oppose the heroes. Much of this been covered, both in the *BtVS Corebook* and in various sections of this book.

The break might be considered an interruption, but clever Directors view it as an opportunity to control the timing of the Episode. Some sessions can last for three, four, or five hours—that's a long time to be sitting on your butt, even if the couch is very cushy. So, rather than wait until everyone needs to stretch their legs, plan the break ahead of time. When the Cast hits the library to spend a few hours with their good friend the reference stack, have the players refill snacks, use the bathroom, or just break character for a few minutes to talk about the newest releases at the box office. By working a planned breather into the session, you avoid artificial stretches of time when John's character doesn't react to anything, because John is topping off his drink.

The closing of a session sounds like a very natural thing—everyone picks up their books and goes home. However, just as a television program never fades to black in the middle of a conversation, you should be aware that the evening's session is coming to a close and plan accordingly. If the Cast is in the middle of an investigation, call an end just after a vital piece of information is found. If the Cast has just finished an Episode, put the characters in a relaxed scene, such as sitting around the dinner table, reflecting on their adventures.

DESCRIPTION, DESCRIPTION

Xander: So tell!

Jesse: Tell what?

Xander: What's the sitch? What do ya know about her?

Jesse: New girl!

Xander: Well, you're certainly a font of nothing!

DESCRIPTION,

—1.1 *Welcome to the Hellmouth*

Describing a scene requires a balance between the dryly factual ("The tabletop is three feet above the ground, five feet long and three feet wide") and the flowery but frivolous ("The tabletop rises above the floor as high as a man's waist, and yet is too small to lie upon"). In general, a few adjectives are better than one or none. Don't describe the table as "wooden," call it "dusty oak, hand-carved by someone with great skill, each leg patterned individually" or "cheap ply-board, with the veneer peeling off and numerous scuff marks and coffee rings." This gives the Cast a feel for their surroundings that goes beyond where the furniture is. There is a limit though. If you spend a half hour detailing every nook and cranny of a room, the Cast will never get around to searching it for clues.



When planning a scene, think of entering a room for the first time. You notice the general configuration of "where everything is," but your eye also picks out a few items that are more memorable. Describe the specific individual items, like a candle or incense burner, not just generic features, like a table or bookcase. This makes the place seem more immediate and not so bland. It adds real flavor to the scene. Once again, be careful—too much description can distract from the important elements, such as the character's interacting with the crazy old bag who might have the spell they are looking for.

Never lose sight of the fact that, first and foremost, the Cast is relying on your description to tell them what they can do with their environment. While knowing that the rug is "a thick plush, originally a deep purple, now stained into a mottled gray," is memorable, knowing the number of exits from the room is more important.

Applying heavily descriptive techniques to combat is tricky. Fight scenes need to move quickly and be memorable. Encourage the players to describe their attacks with more flavor than "I punch it." Brr-ing! Try "I grab its horn and yank its head down as my fist comes up." Much more vivid, and it helps the other Cast Members visualize both the attack and the demon itself. If the players begin to fall into the same routine, using the same descriptions, offer alternatives. If they keep doing it, give their opponents a bonus to defend against that attack. If the Slayer uses a flying kick to drive her spike-heeled boot into every vampire's chest she comes across, word is going to get out and somebody will be ready for her.

FIVE SENSES

When describing the scene, many Directors forget to include all five senses. The majority of information is gathered through vision, and so should it be with your Cast. Seeing a table is obvious—it has four legs and a flat surface, with certain dimensions. Sight will also give the table's position in the room, as well as whatever is sitting on or near it. For an unremarkable element or one that has no real bearing on the Cast, describing it with sight is fine.

On the other hand, the more senses you use, the more memorable the scene will be. The aforementioned table could be oily, scarred, or gritty when a Cast Member touches it.

Hearing most normal objects isn't really an option, but some, such as computers, air conditioners, and older television sets produce a distinctive noise that is easily overlooked when describing the location.

Smells can also be difficult to use in a description, without comparing the odor to another. If this seems too imprecise, it is sometimes useful to think of scents in terms of "flavors." A smell could be tangy or sweet, for instance. Memory is strongly linked to odors, so using them in a description will help fix the event or person into the Cast's memory. Describe a wino's breath, a frat boy's heavy aftershave, or the "coffee and cigarette" smell of a police detective. If a vampire has spent a good deal of time hiding out in crypts, she's going to smell a bit musty. A recently risen vamp may smell of earth. Demons' smells vary, based somewhat on their home dimension and how long they've been on Earth. Creatures from other dimensions can have very bizarre scents. Consider the possibilities of a demon who smells like "warm pickle juice poured over potting soil." If they have special powers, linking the ability to a smell may give the White Hats a vital clue. For instance, a demon that can become a cloud of darkness may smell like charcoal. As the demon sneaks up for a surprise attack, a Cast Member may get a warning whiff, just before it strikes.

USING THE SUPPORTING CAST

Supporting Cast Members are those the character's meet as they play through the Episode. But they're not just for you Directors.

Occasionally one Cast Member, the bookworm for example, stays behind while the rest of the White Hats track down other clues. If the "tracking down other clues" involves an ambush, the bookworm player is going to end up just sitting there as combat rages around her. Rather than let that player do nothing, hand her a 3x5 card with the stats for a minor Supporting Cast Member, who can aid the heroes in this battle, then return to her normal role. For instance, if the action was taking place in the morgue, the Supporting Cast Member might be the medical examiner—a normal person just doing some late night filing. The bookworm player can still be part of the action and the vital research still gets done. Once the vamps are dusted, the ME requests a transfer to another, less dangerous part of the country, and is never heard from again. Or not . . .

Allowing players to use other characters is something to discuss with the players first. Some players won't have a problem with it, and see it as a neat solution to otherwise sitting around. Others may feel it reduces their characters' importance. The Cast Members are the ones doing the important stuff, and the average citizens are there to be saved. It's like anchovies—love it or hate it, it's a matter of taste.





CUT SCENES

Ford: Oh, c'mon! Say it! It's no fun if you don't say it.

Spike: What? Oh. (Rolls his eyes.) You've got thirty seconds to convince me not to kill you.

Ford: Yes! See, this is the best! I wanna be like you. A vampire.

Spike: I've known you for two minutes, and I can't stand you. I don't really feature you livin' forever. (to Drusilla) Can I eat him now, love?

—2.7 *Lie to Me*

Another tool Directors can borrow from scriptwriters is the “cut scene.” A cut scene describes events that the Cast isn’t involved in. They can be used to give the players (as opposed to the Cast) a feel for the enemy and her goals, as well as setting the mood for the Episode.

For instance, the conversations between the Master and the Anointed One during the first season were cut scenes; they advanced the plot by allowing the viewer to get a sense of the villains, but didn’t give away much of the Evil Plan. Everyone knew that the Master was ancient and dangerous, and that his plots were likely to be subtle. However, when the cut scene shows Harmony plotting, the players know to expect something a little less thought out. This knowledge allows them to respond appropriately from Episode to Episode. The seriousness with which the Cast treats a threat is important, because if they get sloppy when the Master’s around, or too paranoid when Harmony is behind it all, it gets messy.

Cut scenes are usually read out loud to the players. There are no Cast lines or die rolls. They are presented as descriptive scenes, and then the story moves on. Or . . . for an interesting change of pace, have the players take on roles in the cut scene—temporary characters that they play for one scene before returning to their regular Cast Members. That involves the players in the scene more intimately, and frees you to do some more interesting things with their characters . . . like . . . say . . . stake them. As discussed regarding the Supporting Cast roles, make sure it’s okay with the players first.

The danger of the cut scene is revealing too much information. If the player sees in the cut scene that the Big Bad is planning to burn down the Slayer’s house on her birthday, it would ruin the surprise. If the demon’s weakness is silver, and it is mentioned in a cut scene, a major plot point is compromised. For this reason, the cut scene should be kept as short—and vague—as possible. This keeps the number of secrets revealed to a min-

imum. Further, if your players aren’t good at separating things they know as players from things they know as characters, the entire cut scene thing may create real problems. Again, know your players.

Cut scenes are very powerful tools. They aren’t something to be created on the fly. Writing the scene down in its entirety, then reading it at a later time is highly recommended. When going over the cut scene later, ask a few questions: “Does this give too much away, such as the villain’s one weakness, the location of the secret lair, or the traitor among the Cast’s friends? Does this confuse the issue by pointing the finger at the wrong person and deliberately misleading the Cast (unless of course that’s what you intend)? Does it enhance the mood and tone of the Episode?” Use the answers to make the scene better. Of course, you may not feel the need to warn the Cast about the upcoming Episode, preferring to let them experience it as the characters actually would. Cut scenes are merely tools, and if you feel you don’t need them, it won’t harm the Episode to exclude them.

TOYS FOR BIGGER KIDS

Some aspects of an Episode can be described with more depth by using props. Props aren’t necessarily funny hats and rubber swords. For a game session, they can be anything that enhances the players’ immersion in the world of their characters.

Mood lighting sounds silly but it can make a world of difference. It’s hard to be scared of the demon’s lair, hidden deep in the sewers, if every light in the room is on. Use soft, indirect lighting for scary scenes. Consider using colored bulbs for a particularly eerie effect. Candles work well for that extra flickering, ancient crypt look, but be careful! Open flames and character sheets do not go well together, and liquid wax on a rug can raise the blood pressure faster than forgetting to set the VCR on Tuesday night. Oh . . . and remember that gaming is, to a large degree, about reading. Whatever lighting FX you use, the illumination needs to be bright enough to read easily.

Music, played softly in the background, can enhance the session as well, especially if you can mix your own tape or CD, choosing songs that complement the Episode you have planned. For instance, if your Cast is going on a road trip up the sunny California coast to do some wave riding, try surfer music. Dark ancient crypt delving? Put on some Gregorian chants. And of course, any trip to the Bronze needs good old-fashioned rock and roll. For the authenticity buffs, soundtracks from both the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* movie and television series are available. Whatever music you use, keep the volume down. If you can’t hear



the players, the tunes are no longer enhancing the session, they're overwhelming it. Also, be aware that different people make different associations with music. For instance, a player who sat through an incredibly dull semester of "Classical Music 101" may become bored if she listens to Mozart. Another player may associate the same piece with the thick, rich smell of a library. Finally, have the music ready to go when you want it. Stopping play for ten minutes while you hunt up your copy of the *William Tell Overture* will eviscerate the mood, not enhance it.

Secret manuscripts are fun. You can find a variety of fonts on the web, some of which look remarkably like actual handwriting. When the Cast finds an ancient page from the Secret Order of Buncha-Old-Guys, hand them an actual piece of paper complete with cool writing to be read. Many office supply stores sell "parchment"-colored paper, for that properly aged look. Also, a wet tea bag wiped across the paper will give it an authentic weathered appearance, although it may also cause some water-based inks to run and smudge. If the clue is in code or an ancient language, prepare a second, translated version of the clue. Remember that the player is not the character—Bob's character the Watcher might read seven languages, but Bob the player might have difficulty ordering at Taco Bell.

HISTORY, LOCAL LORE, AND YOU

One of the key elements in involving the Cast in an Episode is visualization. If the players can "see" the area their characters are interacting in, they will automatically "feel" the scene more. While maps, handouts, and adjectives are helpful, nothing beats using a location out of the players' own lives.

In every town, there are certain buildings everyone has been in—the grocery store, a fast food restaurant, the pizza place. If you set the action at one of these locations, the players can instantly form a mental picture of what's going on. They don't need to be told where the checkout lane is; they shopped there this morning. This eases the descriptive burden on you, allowing you to focus your efforts on the decidedly unnatural thing trying to destroy the place.

Similarly, if the local area has a history or legend, incorporating this into the Episode gives the players a sense of realism, of connectedness. Perhaps a nearby house was the judge's home, and the tree in the yard was used for hangings. Ghosts could haunt the area, and when the Cast needs to contact a spirit, you can describe the location in terms of the local legend. In fact, the legend need not be local; it only needs to be something you

and your entire group are familiar with. Is everyone a Sherlock Holmes buff? Base a "case" on some of the great detective's adventures. Has the entire group studied Jack the Ripper? Include the famous killer in your next Episode.

A picture is worth a thousand words. If you have any photographic talent at all, a good technique is to walk around your hometown and snap photos of generic locations. A nearby dark alley looks much like a dark alley in any other city, as do manhole covers, classrooms, cemeteries, and residential streets. These photos become tools to describe locations.

SO PLAY ALREADY

Xander: The Avengers gotta get to the assembly. We'll go. We'll deal. We'll help. That's what we do. We help Buffy.

—5.16 *The Body*

These tips and hints should set you up well for your first game session, or enhance your performance in your fiftieth. Just like everything in life, however, it's the doing that matters. Give it a shot, see how it goes, do it again. Repeat a hundred times. The best teacher is experience and the best Directors are those with a game or twenty under their belts. Each game and gaming group is unique and each teaches something new. The truly great thing though is that you can play while you're learning. What's not to like?





Episode One

When Giants Clash

Xander: Who's Olvikan?

Giles: I know it's a demon, a very old one.
Might have a picture.

Xander: Come on Olvikan. Hey.

(Xander unfolds a page twice, like a centerfold.)

Xander: We're going to need a bigger boat.

—3.21 *Graduation Day - Part One*

When Giants Clash can be used as a Season Premier, Series Premier or even dropped in the middle of a Season. Notes for accommodating each of these three options are given.

This Episode contains a balance between research, descriptive character interaction, and combat. It should appeal to most characters and player groups, and can be played by any mix of characters. No special abilities or Qualities among the Cast Members are required.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

A few weeks ago, two vampires discovered a link to the prison of the Djinn (whom you may know from his diabolical activities in *Sweeps Week* from the *BtVS Corebook*). Both were very near the bottom of the vampire totem pole, and wanted to gain power and respect. Neither wanted to get beat up any more.

What they disagreed about was the type of power. Gary Point wanted a physical advantage to loom over those stronger than him, both as a human and as a vampire. Mark LaDuke wanted the hypnotic powers he had been originally promised (his sire was a little too much into the Anne Rice routine).

Luckily for the vampires (unluckily for Sunnydale or the Series locale), the Djinn granted both. Now with equal power, the two vampires agreed to split the town down the middle, at least until one could betray the other. They've got their gangs, and of course the territory doesn't seem big enough anymore. As a wascally wabbit once said, "Of course, you know this means war."

This Episode is about deeply held desires, their mirac-

ulous fulfillment and the bad that results. As they say, be careful what you wish for . . .

soul food

You may remember that we only mentioned the Djinn's appetite for human souls in *Sweeps Week* of the *BtVS Corebook*. That's because a human soul was on the menu in that Episode. Still, the Djinn's not so picky an eater (okay we probably just crossed the line and went too far with that analogy).

The Djinn is just as interested in demon souls. They too aid him in gathering the power necessary to break out of his inter-dimensional prison. Indeed, even before it was trapped, the Djinn liked to destroy both demon and human souls. That was one of the reasons for the uncommon team-up of humans and demons when the Djinn was last defeated.

Since vampires are human corpses inhabited by demon souls, they're just as appealing to the Djinn as any other human or demon soul. He'll offer his Wish to any he feels he can corrupt. In this Episode, the Big Bad seeks to taint two vampire souls. In **Episode Two: All A-Buzz**, the corrupter sets his sights on a demon soul. In **Episode Three: The Bricklayer**, the Djinn returns to harvesting a human's soul. He's an equal opportunity bane on existence.

ADJUSTING THE SETTING

Buffy: But someone could wish the whole world to be different right? That's possible?

Anya: Sure, alternate realities. You could uh, could have like a world without shrimp. Or with, you know, nothing but shrimp. You could even make like a freaky world where Jonathan's some kind of not-perfect mouth breather if that's what's blowing up your skirt these days. Just don't ask me to live there!



—4.17 Superstar

Although the references in this Episode are to Sunnydale, there really isn't anything tying this Episode to one particular town, other than the names. Change "the Bronze" to "Antone's" and "Sunnydale" to "Austin," and you've switched towns.

If your group isn't in any major metropolitan area, the warehouse district can be replaced by any semi-rundown part of town. Construction areas, large junkyards, or even the back side of a train depot all work as locations. The main criteria are relative isolation and no passersby to be hurt accidentally.

If the Cast Members are all Heroes, bumping up the power level is as easy as adding a few extra minions. The leaders should get a boost to their Ability Scores as well. If the group is a bunch of eggheads, don't hesitate to reduce the number of grunts working for Gary and Mark. The goal is to balance the threat level with the Cast's ability to handle it.

DUMPING THE Djinn

For some groups and Directors, the Djinn won't be a cool Big Bad. And that's okay. Here are some guidelines for those wanting to substitute another villain (or perhaps one of their own design) in these Episodes.

If the Djinn isn't the demonic deed-doer, who granted Gary and Mark those powers? There are several options here. The downtrodden vamps could have discovered a wish spell to grant their desires (and been too stupid to think bigger). A human sorcerer could have given them the power, and ordered them to raise an army to do his bidding. The secret lair deep in the sewers could hold a fountain of pure demon blood, spilling out of the Hellmouth, and any vamps who drink from it gain wild powers. In any case, the chase back to the lair still takes place, with the same wild pleadings when the Cast arrives. The source of the power needs either an escape route (the sorcerer can just pop away in a cloud of smoke) or a way to be handled (the blood fountain can be shut off by knocking the ceiling down).

In the other Episodes, similar solutions are just as easy. The Vermuscas may naturally have that many larvae, in which case the news reports would have to be a bit more gruesome. Taylor could worship just about any imprisoned demon, even the Old Ones behind the Hellmouth.

Even if the Djinn isn't the Big Bad in your Season, it could be the evil force to be reckoned with for an Episode. If it isn't coming back in a later Episode, make the barrier just a bit thinner. This adds an additional sense of urgency; not only do Gary and Mark need to be stopped,

but they need to be stopped before their souls are so corrupted that they become fodder for the Djinn. Add in some pyrotechnics as the barrier stretches and almost breaks. Then the planetary alignment dissipates, and the Djinn is once again trapped. Big finish, hugs all around.

The sewers under any town are mostly just pipes, moving wastewater to a treatment plant. Some pipes are larger, however; large enough, in fact, for people to travel through them. At a few places, several of the larger pipes come together, forming rooms.

Under the streets in the older sections of the sewer system, some of these rooms are quite dry, and often serve as a meeting place for evil plotting, dark rituals—or even a simple bitch session.

"He never asks my opinion. He just says 'Jump!' and expects me to do it," Mark grumbles, taking a large pull from his beer.

"At least he doesn't push you around. They slammed my jacket in the car door and took off. I was six blocks away from the lair before I got it unzipped. I thought we were supposed to be super-strong or something." Gary eyes his empty bottle unsteadily and tosses it onto the growing pile.

"Ha! All the vampires I ever heard of could do . . . stuff. You know, change shape, grow claws, fly. All we got was a face with tire tracks across the forehead. Oh, and we can't get drunk as easy. Watta gyp!" Mark shifts into his demonic visage. "Oooo, look at me! I'm soooo scary!"

"I could not care less about powers. I just wish I could show those jerks who's the bigger man, err, vampire."

"Well, I wish I had my own minions to command. They'd do my every bidding, and bring me beer, and blood, and some of those fried onion things, and . . ."

A gust of wind blows in from the side tunnel, knocking both vampires to the floor and toppling the lantern. The shadows dance wildly as the light rolls, then coalesce into an odd funnel shape, touching down on the small hill of beer bottles. The wind whistles over the mouths of the bottles, raising an eerie noise.

Mark and Gary look at each other uncertainly. They pick themselves up from the floor and begin to edge towards a grimy exit.

The howl changes to an ominous voice. "Your wish is granted."





Act One: Introduction

Cut Scene

Don't THEY DANCE BEAUTIFULLY?

Buffy: So something ripped him open and ate out his insides?

Willow: Like an Oreo cookie. (Xander shoots her a look.) Well, except for, you know, without the chocolatey COOKIE goodness.

Giles: Yes. Um, Principal Snyder has, has asked the faculty to keep the news quiet for now, um, so as not to unduly upset the students.

—2.20 Go Fish

Run-Down

This Act begins during an average day. The Cast goes about their normal activities, but hear rumors of not one, but two new gangs in town. This comes as a surprise to the characters. Even if they have gang-related contacts, they will have heard little. These two gangs, the Vipers and the Granites, have moved into the area with surprising speed. While not much is known about either group, the school authorities are trying to act responsibly in warning the students. At the same time, they are trying to keep the disruptions to a bare minimum.

The action kicks in that night during a patrol. The Cast encounters a group of vamps behaving very unvampishly. If they watch for a while, this first group is attacked by another gang. While the brawl is important, the leaders of the two vamp groups are the really strange aspect of it all. There is definitely more than meets the eye with these two Napoleon-wannabes.

series premier, season premier, or other?

When Giants Clash can be run at any stage of a Series.

If this Episode is being used to begin your Series, the first scene will most likely be a bit longer than is presented here. You'll need to introduce your characters to each other and give them a reason to risk their lives on a nightly basis. Having the White Hats discover the Slayer's secret is an easy hook, but putting the otherwise normal characters in a dangerous situation just so the Slayer can save them is a tricky job. In Act One, the Slayer could be on patrol and the others could either follow her trying to help, or stumble into the alley on their own (a vehicle breakdown in the wrong part of town, a wrong turn while chasing a purse snatcher, or just plain horrible luck). Either way, the vamps in the alley are more concerned with each other than with any witnesses, making things easy. First, this is a group of vampires, doing very unsubtle supernatural-type stuff. That's enough to turn a skeptic into a believer real fast. And once you've accepted vampires, why not a Slayer? Second, the vamps are scary, violent, and outnumber the Cast. The characters don't know that the vamps only want to thrash each other; the threat of being attacked should be very real. Finally, working together, the Slayer and the White Hats can get out in one piece. Call it one big bonding experience, and presto! you've got a team.

In the beginning of any Season where the Cast Members know each other and have already forged themselves into a Force of Good, *When Giants Clash* (followed by the other Episodes in this booklet) can be run without modification. Just set the scenes and let the players work through the puzzles. The Big Bad will still be around to menace them in the next Episode. Alternatively, if the Djinn doesn't work for you, sliding in more subplots to be followed up on later is easy. Maybe the snitch in Act Two can become a regular informant, or perhaps he has reasons for dispensing information other than seeking the Cast's love and admiration. Perhaps someone at the mall in Act Three decides that vampire hunting is something that needs to be supervised by the police. The leader of either gang could escape to plot his revenge in the background for a couple of Episodes.

Dropping this Episode into the middle of an ongoing Season, with or without the Djinn, doesn't require too much modification. If your Season Premier was *Sweeps Week*, you're all set; *When Giants Clash* was built on the same assumptions. If your Season doesn't include the Djinn, a couple of quick fixes are all you need. Read the Dumping the Djinn section (see p. 17) for the details. All in all, this Episode may go a bit faster if it is not played at the beginning of the Season. An experienced Cast will have more resources to bring to bear, and taking care of the problems presented may not be as much of a challenge. If you decide to wait, adding more minions is always an option, as is increasing the power levels of the Djinn-granted abilities.



Name: Granite Gang Member
Motivation: Blood!, obey Gary
Critter Type: Bullied Vampire
Attributes: Str 5, Dex 4, Con 5, Int 2, Per 1, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 12, Brains 9
Life Points: 56
Drama Points: 0
Special Abilities: Terror Death Gaze, Vampire

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	14	18	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Grapple	14	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	11	14	Bash
Punch	12	12	Bash



After the battle is over, the Cast can gather some important clues.

Action

A DAY IN THE LIFE: Before the vamp dusting begins, the Cast needs a bit of background on what's going on. This information should come to them as naturally as possible, so the delivery needs to be personalized a bit.

If a Cast Member works at an educational institution (like, say, as a librarian), a special meeting will be called for the faculty. The meeting mostly involves the principal (or dean) reading from an anti-gang pamphlet written in the 1950s. The attendees will be warned against confronting the gang members, but to watch for any "good kids" getting pulled into that lifestyle. Warning signs include the stereotypical leather jackets, bandanas, and surly attitudes. The local police department has provided examples of the gang's graffiti in the form of a quick slide show. In several frames, an occult-aware person might spot a meaningful symbol or two, but nothing is in-frame enough to make any sense of them. The police also warn that several mysterious "blood-draining" deaths have occurred in areas where the graffiti is most common (but they don't want that information disseminated to the students to avoid panic). The only solid piece of information offered is the names of the gangs: the Vipers and the Granites.

If the cast doesn't include a teacher or other adult ally, the same information can be mailed to the students' parents.

Students will be treated to a rally, lead by Eric the All-American Eagle, a "gang resistance" mascot in a bald eagle suit. Eric begins with a crackling tape of dated pop music, and gleefully launches into a speech on "civic

responsibility." Eventually, the point is made that spray-painting walls isn't good for America. Think Barney, only patriotic.

While the event is over relatively quickly, the distinct lack of cheerleaders makes it far lower on the "fun things to do at school" list than a normal rally, right behind public humiliation and cafeteria food. However, as everyone files out of the gym, several rumors can be overheard. The wave of illegal street art is the work of a pair of new gangs who are expanding their territory. In a couple of months, it is said, they'll rival anything L.A. has. Some have even heard that several bodies have been found near the gang graffiti.

If the Cast asks around, they get a bunch of "my brother knows a guy who is trying to get into the gang" type stories, but no one will admit to actually knowing anybody in either gang. A few remember seeing a "smash and grab" by a couple of guys at the mall. Most people have seen the graffiti in various places around town, but don't remember anything specific about it. Getting information from the police, either through a friendly officer or by hacking the computer system, adds that the gangs have been linked to dozens of break-ins and shopliftings in the last month, but no member has been arrested. Six weeks ago no one had heard of the Vipers or the Granites, but now they're suspected of being the number one source of crime in town. Neither gang has any history in any other town, and the leaders are complete unknowns wielding considerable influence.

ON PATROL: Now for some action. Get a good idea of how everyone is equipped, but don't allow them to go overarmed; one or two pieces of weaponry per person are all that's necessary. Any more and people are going



to start asking where the Renaissance Faire is. Besides, if the Slayer is the only character with significant combat skills, those weapons can make the crew more dangerous to themselves than to their opponents.

Don't forget to add some description to the patrol. Something like:

"Night, especially a night with a clear sky and warm breeze, can be very romantic. That is, unless you're out on patrol, looking for those things that go bump in the night. Of course, having friends along can help stifle the extreme boredom of it, and having someone to watch your back is always a Good Thing."

Allow some description time to get everyone in the mood, and then have the heroes wander into the warehouse district. The characters immediately know that something is up—strange noises emanate from ahead. A Perception and Notice roll zeroes in on the graffiti artists, who aren't being particularly stealthy.

The alley is long and fairly wide, and is filled with a number of empty dumpsters, wooden crates, and piles of cardboard. The Vipers (twice as many as the Cast Members present, minimum six; see p. 21) are smack dab in the middle of the alley, with the majority of the vamps up against a wall painting. The leader, Mark (see p. 21), is sitting back a few feet, enjoying a brew and surveying their work. He shouts insults at his "minions," who continue to work slowly and silently.

The immediate oddity of the scene is the minions. They don't talk back, they don't question, and they don't move particularly quickly. They are, of course, under

Mark's mental control.

The heroes can approach unseen, hiding behind dumpsters and keeping to the shadows. Sneaking up on the vamps isn't difficult; any attempt at being quiet is rolled at +2, due to the loud-mouthed leader and general sluggishness of the vamps. The crew can get close enough to see the vamps' faces, as well as get a good look at the symbols being painted. Cast Members who experienced *Sweeps Week* from the *BtVS Corebook*, can roll Perception and Occultism to notice the Mark of the Djinn (see *BtVS Corebook*, p. 225) amongst the miscellaneous scrawlings on the wall.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE: If the characters jump right in, opting for a frontal assault, the weirdness continues. The "artists" turn as one, almost as if synchronized. The leader, talking very tough just moments before, screams like a child, and runs behind his minions. The Vipers move forward sluggishly. Let the Scoobies dust a few, and then the Granites charge into the alley.

If they wait, the Granites (equal to the number of Vipers plus two; see p. 19) show up within a few minutes, proceeded by a large crate that smashes a couple of Vipers. Their leader Gary (see below) strides in, flinging bricks. He's huge—eight feet tall! The bricks seem to hurt, as the vamps hit by them don't get up easily. Gary won't target any of the Good Guys; his beef is only with the Vipers. If the crew does too much damage to the Granites, Gary throws a large dumpster at them. Anyone in its path will need to make a Dodge - 2 roll (remember those Drama Points) to avoid getting hit for 40 points of damage. Ouch!

Name: Gary Point, leader of the Granites
Motivation: Destroy the Vipers, blood!, bully other vampires
Critter Type: Wished vampire
Attributes: Str 9, Dex 4, Con 5, Int 2, Per 1, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 24, Combat 14, Brains 10
Life Points: 81
Drama Points: 3
Special Abilities: Giant (+2 to Grapple/Punch, -1 to Dodge), Hard to Kill 5, Vampire

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	16	31	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	13	—	Defense action
Grapple	18	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	13	23	Bash
Punch	16	22	Bash



Name: Viper Gang Member

Motivation: Do what Mark tells us to do

Critter Type: Hypnotized Vampire

Attributes: Str 5, Dex 2, Con 5, Int 2, Per 1, Will 1

Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 9, Brains 8

Life Points: 56

Drama Points: 0

Special Abilities: Vampire

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	11	17	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	9	—	Defense action
Grapple	11	—	Resisted by Dodge
Punch	9	11	Bash



The Granites are armed with stakes, as they expected to go up against other vampires. When they encounter something unexpected, they back up and let their boss throw bricks at it.

The Vipers are under their leader's mental control, and will sacrifice themselves to give him a chance to escape. They stick around and act as a blocking force if Mark hightails it out of there. Anyone who has fought vampires before can roll Perception and Notice to clue in to

this strange behavior.

WE'RE DONE: Overall, the battle is pretty one sided—the Granites have surprise and are very aggressive. The Vipers are all dust within a few rounds, and the Granites leave. The Cast Members can get in some parting shots, but they clearly aren't what the vamps are interested in. Any character who went mano a mano with Gary should get a Drama Point (she'll probably need it to do a crucial bit of healing!).

Name: Mark LaDuke, leader of the Vipers

Motivation: Punish enemies, blood!, avoid work

Critter Type: Wished vampire

Attributes: Str 5, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 4, Per 3, Will 4

Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 13, Brains 14

Life Points: 52

Drama Points: 3

Special Abilities: Hypnosis 3 (vampires only), Vampire

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	15	19	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	13	—	Defense action
Grapple	15	—	Resisted by Dodge
Hypnosis 1	16	—	Victim hesitates
Hypnosis 2	15	—	Victim ignores Mark
Hypnosis 3	14	—	Victim is controlled by Mark
Kick	12	14	Bash
Punch	13	13	Bash



After the battle, the alley is a trove of clues. The graffiti contains occult symbols, specifically the Mark of the Djinn. Other clues can be found on the radio and the paint cans. Both bear tags from shops in the mall.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the gang rumors don't interest the Cast, a psychic vision of the alleyway can lead them to the action. If the Bronze is more attractive than tracking down gangers, the Granites may pass by as the characters wait outside.

This scene is best played with all the Cast together, but if only some (or only the Slayer) goes on patrol, it can

be run with less than the entire group. Given the numbers involved, you may want to have the Cast set up a way to get reinforcements out on patrol. Your standard cell phone does nicely.

Once they find the Vipers, the Cast Members may want to attack immediately. Offer them easy access to hiding spots to watch by mentioning the dumpsters with deep shadows, and note the large number of vamps, or the fact that their unusual behavior bears investigating.

If Gary, the Granite leader, is directly attacked during the fight, he retreats, knocking things over behind him to discourage pursuers (and spending Drama Points, if

Act Two: Conflict

necessary). The Viper leader, Mark, doesn't want to fight at all. His entire gang puts themselves between their boss and anyone who wants to chase him.

THE GOLDEN TONGUE

Joyce: Well, I was thinking. I know the cheer-leading thing didn't work out . . . Maybe you should think about joining the yearbook staff. I did, it was a lot of fun.

Buffy: Not really my trip, Mom.

Joyce: I was, uh, photo editor. I got to be on every page, made me look much more popular than I was.

—1.3 Witch

RUN-DOWN

The players will want to gather more information on these vampire gangs. They've got a bunch of threads to track down, and that means research, including, of all places, the school yearbook. Of course, they may end up with more questions than answers.

Be ready with descriptions of your Cast's occult library (or wherever they do research), because they're going to be spending most of this Act there. While this is most likely a location the group takes for granted, don't skimp on the details. Remind them how cool having your own personal stack of forbidden knowledge is by using extra adjectives like "thick parchment pages," or "leather cover, worn smooth by hundreds of years of use." Describing a tome as an "occult book" can't hold a candle to "simple bronze bands holding lacquered wood covers over rough, yellowed pages."

Name: Ollie the Sneak, underworld Informant
Motivation: Avoiding pain, money
Critter Type: Sniveling Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 2, Con 4, Int 2, Per 3, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 9, Brains 10
Life Points: 34
Drama Points: 0
Special Abilities: Contacts (Various) 5
Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	9	—	Defense action
Flee	12	—	Full Defense
Punch	9	5	Bash



Name: Malcolm, Vampire Snitch
Motivation: Get rid of Gary, blood!
Critter Type: Backstabbing Vampire
Attributes: Str 5, Dex 4, Con 5, Int 2, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 12, Brains 3
Life Points: 56
Drama Points: 1
Special Abilities: Vampire

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	14	18	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Grapple	14	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	11	14	Bash
Punch	12	12	Bash



Action

Gathering information on the Vipers and Granites isn't difficult, if you know where to look.

SCHOOL: Yearbook patrol put names to the faces. The leader of the Granites is Gary Point, a short scrawny kid who died about six weeks ago, and the leader of the Vipers is Mark LaDuke, last year's debate team captain who vanished a few weeks before Gary. Most of the other members of the gang went to school locally, and disappeared at some point over the last year or two. Mark is pictured holding hands with a girl, who can be identified as Sue Gordas.

Sue (use Typical Student, *BtVS Corebook*, p. 154) is still in school, and still a member of the debate team. She isn't difficult to track down. Normally timid, she's less talkative than normal when Mark is mentioned. If the characters can get her to open up (either through genuine empathy or a Willpower and Influence roll), she'll admit she feels guilty about his death, because she was about to break up with him. He was very controlling and got upset when she didn't do exactly what he told her to.

If someone mentions seeing him recently, she tells the Cast about a "strange dream" she had, about a week after the funeral. Mark tapped on her window, and asked to be let in. Sue refused and told him that she wanted to break up with him. He threw a tantrum and broke the window, but couldn't get in. At that point, her parents came in, but Mark had vanished. Funny thing is that Sue doesn't remember waking up after that, but it must have been a dream. Still, how did that window get broken . . . ?

If the Cast Members let her know that Mark is still around, she becomes obviously upset. Her combination of guilt, fear, and shock push her to make a rash deci-

sion (like confronting Mark in Act Three, see p. 26). Award Drama Points to any Cast Members who sensitively handles this situation.

LIBRARY: Digging into the occult tomes turns up quite a bit of information. Tell the players as much or as little as appropriate, depending on the number of Success Levels rolled. In general, three Success Levels reveals everything listed for that topic.

- **Zombies**—If the Vipers' movements made anyone think of the shambling undead, a little research shows that zombies do follow orders and tend towards jerky motions. They don't get a vamp's game face nor do they explode into a cloud of dust when staked though.
- **Giants**—As far as the books indicate, only humans can become vampires. Trolls are about the same size as Gary was, but they're green and have horns. Vampires do get stronger when they get turned, but they don't get bigger.
- **Hypnosis**—Only very old and powerful vampires, like Dracula, can cloud the minds of their victims. However, there is a spell, the "Golden Tongue," which can force vampires to do your bidding. The spell can only be cast by a vampire though.
- **The Mark of the Djinn**—If the Cast has not encountered the Djinn previously, they can get the same information here. Also, it is well within the Djinn's power to grant wishes like Gary and Mark's powers.
- **Spells**—If the Cast includes a spell caster who knows something about the Djinn's gifts, one of them may want to research a "counter-spell." Dispelling a demonic wish is impossible without another demon,



freeing the mind

QUICK CAST: Yes

POWER LEVEL: 3

REQUIREMENTS: A pinch of fine sand mixed with ground amber is dropped into a candle. The resulting flare is reflected by a polished iron mirror into the eyes of the target.

EFFECT: Any spell that is influencing the mind of the target is dispelled. This only affects one target per casting, and does not work if the target is wearing glasses or is behind a window.

shrink

QUICK CAST: Yes

POWER LEVEL: 4

REQUIREMENTS: A wand made of thistle and an elm twig, held together with tar, is used to strike the target, while the caster recites a brief phrase invoking Damia, Goddess of Growth.

EFFECT: The target shrinks to one-half her normal height, and any specific benefits resulting from a large or giant size are lost. Otherwise, Attributes and skills are unaffected. Still, for those whose esteem is wrapped up in being big, it could force them into one or more Fear Tests. The spell lasts one hour per Success Level.

or some very black magics. Finding a spell to shrink Gary or to break Mark's influence over his gang is easier by comparison, but by no means simple. Here are two spells that could be found.

UNDERWORLD: Another source of information may be found among the less savory elements of society. Normal human criminals have noticed the presence of the new

gangs in town. The level of knowledge varies from person to person, but most know that neither gang has made any serious attempts to "take over" the town. The Vipers and Granites seem content to increase their numbers without pursuing any specific agenda. Sure, the Vipers are known to do some serious shoplifting and the Granites have trashed some equipment on a couple of construction sites, but they aren't making any serious profit from these acts. The various killings that have occurred don't cause the underworld any lack of sleep.

Well-connected individuals may know that the Vipers' lair is beneath the mall, and the Granites have carved themselves a place in the storm drains near the quarry. This information should be more difficult to come by, and should be more expensive, either requiring large bribes, more extreme threats, or favors at a future date.

In case you don't have a "regular" informant established in your Series, we have one for you (see p. 22).

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the players didn't notice the symbols on the wall the previous night, an occult tome may jog their memories.

Contacting the underworld may not yield any answers, especially if the Cast doesn't think of asking any questions. The vampire Malcolm (see p. 23), tired of being bullied by Gary, could offer hints about the next big clash, the gang's location, or the leader's powers, in exchange for the heroes taking Gary out. He also complains about Gary taking the best kills when feeding (that should endear him to our heroes).

If the Cast bumbles through their information-gathering attempts, a poignant encounter would involve a very confident Mark. He greets the characters in a crowded public place, where staking him really isn't an option. Mark laughs about his pathetic rival and mocks his powers. "Yeah, he's big. Now, if he were as big as his ego, he'd be dangerous. But the way he is, he's just a danger

Act Three: Climax

to himself." Mark brags that his gang has the characters surrounded and he has no fear of anyone now. He doesn't want to kill the Cast; he wants to warn them away from "his destiny"—utter destruction of the Granites and the uncontested rule of the local vampire population.

CLASH AT THE KIOSK

Willow: The Bronze?

Xander: It's closed tonight.

Cordelia: There's not a lot of choices in Sunnydale. It's not like people are gonna line up to get massacred.

Oz: Uh, guys? If I were gonna line up, I know where I'd go.

—2.14 *Innocence*

Run-Down

This Act includes the big fight scene—the two gangs

clash at the mall. When the Cast arrives depends on the results of their research from the previous scenes.

If the White Hats have spoken to Mark, or put finding the Vipers as their first priority, they'll be at the mall before the trouble starts. They'll have a chance to save some innocents, and maybe defuse the entire situation.

If the priority is finding the Granites, the Cast likely heads to the mall in short order. The writing is on the wall, quite literally this time. They'll arrive as the tension is mounting, and will have much opportunity for dusting vamps, but may have trouble keeping the average shopper out of harm's way.

If the group has gone down a different path, such as staying home, or ignoring the gang problem, they'll get tipped off to the problems at the mall after the mayhem has begun. Their best bet is to try to mop up any survivors or just chase down the leaders.

ACTION

Either research or informants could lead the Cast to the gangs' lairs. Wherever the trail begins, it ends at the shopping mall.

GETTING THERE: If the crew investigates the Granites' hideout first, the best place to look is the quarry. If you've never seen a quarry on *The Learning Channel*, it's your basic "big hole in the ground." For flavor, you can mention a couple of trailers, a handful of dump trucks, and miscellaneous pieces of heavy equipment. Several large (eight feet tall) storm drains open into the gravel pit, but only one has a thick bundle of extension cords leading to it; a Perception and Notice roll finds it (or just a ten-minute walk around the quarry).

The cords lead to a break in the drainpipe, which opens into a natural cave area. The ceiling is several dozen feet above, and the floor is littered with beer cans and dented kegs. The walls are covered with paintings of a recent nature, from the "urban primitive" school of art. Carved in letters five feet tall are the words "Tonight

describing the mall

The mall is fairly typical of indoor malls across America; a food court open to the second floor, small mobile carts in the middle of the walkways, and "employees only" corridors behind the stores. If you have a local mall, by all means use it as a stand-in. Otherwise, the only significant details are that the entire food court can be seen from the second floor (good for shooting or leaping into action), and the tables and chairs in the food court are not bolted down (good for flinging). To travel from the second floor to the food court, there are the main stairs, an escalator, and an elevator. Additionally, there is a cargo elevator and another stairway behind the stores, in the "employees only" section.

furniture tossing

As mentioned, the tables and chairs in the food court can be used as missile weapons. Only characters with a Strength 3 or better can fling these items enough to cause damage. Also the improvised weapons require a Dexterity and Getting Medieval - 3 roll, or the Combat Score - 3. Damage from chairs is $3 \times$ Strength (Bash); damage from tables is $5 \times$ Strength (Bash). Have fun!

the Vipers Die!" A little snooping reveals 15 sleeping areas (little more than piles of tarps and blankets), and one large couch, sagging and broken. Empty crates in various stages of disintegration make up the other furniture. Successful rolls based on Perception show a half-drunk, slightly warm pint of blood next to the microwave—whoever was "eating" left no more than a half hour ago.

Using the storm drains to reach the sewer tunnels under the town is not a good idea. Unless the characters have, for some reason, previous knowledge of the layout of the tunnels, they'll get lost in short order. Even if they do know their way around underground, the closest they can get to the mall is a manhole across the street. The Vipers have blocked all tunnels running beneath the mall.

BEING THERE: The Cast arrives at the mall at some point during this Act; the only question is what they know when they get there. If they have decided to begin the investigation here, the mall is quiet and normal-looking. Mark may be lurking in the shadows, but it would take a very observant do-gooder to spot him (Perception and Notice at -4). Talking to clerks about the shoplifters



confirms that the Vipers are frequent "customers."

At this point, the Cast may want to find the lair. Several maintenance doors lead to the basement, which is "guarded" by a pair of janitors taking a break. They'll try to stop anyone attempting to snoop around, and call security if necessary. Both are human, and know nothing of the vampires down here; they just don't want anyone to see them goofing off.

Assuming the Cast has slipped past the janitors (use stats for Joe School, *BtVS Corebook*, p. 154), the lair isn't difficult to find. Anyone looking for a hidden door finds a tarp hung across an opening in the wall; anyone not looking still has a reasonable chance (Perception and Notice) to see it moving in the breeze. Through the opening is what appears to be an old stock room. The shelves have been arranged into a simple maze, which is wide enough for one person at a time. In the back, a new wide screen TV sits in front of a high-end leather recliner, surrounded by empty boxes and packing foam. Lying in various corners are a half dozen vampires.

These vamps don't move as the characters enter. In fact, they don't acknowledge their surroundings at all. An Intelligence and Occultism roll reveals that they seem to be stunned or somehow robbed of their wills. A closer inspection shows that these vamps are starving! They are even more sickly pale than normal and dangerously thin. They do not move or speak at all. Dusting them would be a welcome release. In fact, these are the group that Mark originally worked with. Since he gained his power, he has forced them to stay motionless as punishment for the insults he endured. Other than these wretched beings, the lair is empty.

If the Cast skips the search for the Vipers' lair and just patrols the mall, they witness the Granites' big entrance. Gary is no longer trying to hide; he's hoping to draw Mark's forces into final battle. He and his minions swagger through the mall, taking what they want and breaking what they don't. A security guard (see p. 27) challenges Gary, but he is quickly grappled and bitten.

The Scoobies have their work cut out for them in this scene. The Granites muscle through the mall, looking for the Vipers. The Vipers grab any Granite member who wanders off by himself, and "convert" him. Both gangs have no problem tipping a few display cases over to cause a distraction, which can both hurt bystanders and draw the attention of the mall cops. Some of the gang members grab innocents to feed on them. The good guys must keep the obviously supernatural activity hidden, protect the shoppers (see p. 27) from harm, and try to avoid a riot. Award a Drama Point to any

clash at the kiosk timeline

30 minutes before sundown: Gary rallies his troops, and heads to the mall.

Sundown: Mark is expecting trouble after last night's bold attack. He moves his forces upstairs to the mall proper and hides in the air ducts, which he has mapped out.

30 minutes after sundown: If the Cast goes to the mall first, they arrive at this point. Minutes later, the Granites exit the manhole cover across the street from the mall. If the characters are ahead of the game, they may try to stop the vamps here.

45 minutes after sundown: The Granites make a grand entrance to the mall, with the freakishly large Gary leading. If the Cast has focused on finding the Vipers' lair, they may miss this disturbance.

One hour after sundown: The Granites wander the mall, making a nuisance of themselves. Security personnel confront them, but are quickly killed. The Vipers also begin their attack, grabbing Granites who have separated from the main group. The Granite members are brought to Mark, who "converts" them. If the Cast is in the upper area, they may spot one of these abductions.

One hour 30 minutes after sundown: The Granites, after briefly searching the mall, return to the food court area. They clear the area by force, violently attacking anyone who gets in their way. Gary commandeers a microphone connected to the PA system and shouts insults at Mark until the Vipers arrive.

One hour 45 minutes after sundown: As the Vipers head towards the showdown, Sue Gordas may confront Mark. If the Cast let his undead status slip out, she is armed with a large cross. Otherwise, she is a stunned bystander.

Cast Members who come up with a good explanation for the very confused shoppers.

The Cast Members have a very good chance of getting to the mall before the badness starts. They've got a couple of options. They can continue their investigation, hunting down the Vipers' lair and finding Mark's tortured enemies. They gain insight into what Mark's been up to and may be able to track them through the air ducts. They'll miss the Granites' entrance though.

If they know the battle will happen at the mall, the

Name: Lincoln Security, Mall Contractor
Motivation: Keep the peace, stop shoplifters
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 3, Con 3, Int 2, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 12, Brains 10
Life Points: 30
Drama Points: 1
Special Abilities: Kevlar armor (Armor Value 10)

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Cuff 'em!	14	—	Must Grapple first; Four Strength (doubled) roll Success Levels to remove
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Grapple	14	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	11	8	Bash
Punch	12	6	Bash



Good Guys can try to clear it of pedestrians before the vampires show up. Pulling a couple of fire alarms is quick and requires no preparation, but also tips off the gangs. If the Granites have already arrived and the Cast wants to be a bit subtler than mass evacuation, they can try to "encourage" an orderly exit by propping open the doors and directing the frightened customers toward them. They save some lives, but may miss out on some of the vampire leaders' motivations (if they care).

The investigation may delay the Cast enough that the fight has already broken out when they arrive. If so, they

should have two goals: get the customers out and try to contain the battle.

This is a good chance for the players to come up with creative ideas and execute them. Allow any plausible plan to succeed even if there is a chance it will go wrong. The idea here is not to get the Cast bogged down in a running battle with dire casualties and supernatural events all around. The action should be fast and furious but mostly limited to the Cast and the vamps. Don't be afraid to have the mall cleared with relative ease.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Name: Jane Bargainhunter, Mall Shopper
Motivation: Find a sale, flee in terror
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 2, Con 2, Int 2, Per 2, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 9, Brains 10
Life Points: 26
Drama Points: 0

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	9	—	Defense action
Run Screaming	12	—	Defense action; no other action possible



Act Four: Resolution

If the heroes are losing the battle badly, the mall cops can show up and distract the gangs for a few moments. All in all, the bulk of the vamps should be wiped out either by each other, by the cops, or by the Cast. A few may escape into the tunnels, but if the Cast dusts every vamp in sight, great. Just make sure the leaders get away, using Drama Points as necessary.

If the characters have missed all the clues leading to the mall, they will still hear of the riot. They can still get in on Act Four—Mark and Gary leave the mall and enter the sewers just as the Cast Members arrive.

BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS

Cordelia: Well, I heard it was rival gangs. You know, fighting for turf? But all I can tell you is they were in an ugly way of looking. And Buffy, like, knew them! Which is just too weird. I mean, I don't even remember that much, but I'm telling you, it was a freak show!

Girl: Oh, I wish I'd been there!

Cordelia: You should have been there. It was so creepy . . .

—1.2 *The Harvest*

Run-Down

With both gangs destroyed, the two leaders flee into the sewers. They blame their defeat on the incompetence of their minions, and see the Djinn as the only solution. With more power, they'll be able to compensate for the idiots they are surrounded with.

Yep, just your average, everyday case of megalomania.

The Cast members have to hustle to keep up with Gary and Mark. The vampires know the sewers far better than the characters, and are moving pretty fast. However, the Cast should arrive just in time to witness the Djinn granting the gang leaders' latest wish (and why shouldn't it? The vamps' insane desire for more power brings their souls just a bit closer to the Djinn's consumption.)

Being the unimaginative sort, Gary and Mark simply ask for more power. Gary gets bigger and stronger, and Mark's mind control can now affect humans as well as vampires. Obviously, these two are going to cause more trouble, and the Cast needs to stop them here and now.

Action

RUN FOR MONEY: This Act begins with a chase scene. If any characters are unsuited for running madly through

Name: Mark, the Dominating
Motivation: Escape from harm, destroy Gary, rebuild gang, revenge on Cast Members
Critter Type: Rewished vampire
Attributes: Str 5, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 4, Per 3, Will 5
Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 13, Brains 16
Life Points: 58
Drama Points: 3
Special Abilities: Hard to Kill 4, Hypnosis 3 (close eye contact necessary), Vampire

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	15	19	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	13	—	Defense action
Grapple	15	—	Resisted by Dodge
Hypnosis 1	18	—	Victim hesitates
Hypnosis 2	17	—	Victim ignores Mark
Hypnosis 3	16	—	Victim is controlled by Mark
Kick	12	14	Bash
Punch	13	13	Bash



the sewers (crutches, phobias, new shoes), they can stay behind and handle the cleanup at the mall. The others should be combat-ready, because this is gonna get ugly.

As with any chase scene, what is vital is the sensation of speed. Put on some fast-paced music and call for Dexterity (doubled) rolls (Dexterity and Sports maybe?) to keep up with the vamps, or Perception and Notice rolls if they lose track of them. Keep descriptions to a minimum. When you're running full tilt, you don't really notice much about your surroundings—when you're running full tilt in a sewer, you really don't want to notice much about your surroundings.

The sewer is wet and nasty as the chase begins. This area is the newer part of the system, made of nice solid metal and in continuous use. Bad smells, streams of unmentionable gunk and the occasional halogen light are the significant details. As they go deeper, the cement turns to brickwork, which is older, more fragile, and thankfully drier. The toilet smell fades to musty masonry. It begins to look less like a sewer system and more like an abandoned network of tunnels.

BEG FOR POWER: Once the vampires get to the place where they first met the Djinn, they'll beg for more power. The demon is trapped in its prison, but it can still make its presence known. A small whirlwind of dust blows over a pile of beer bottles, creating a very spooky "voice" that the vampires talk to. Well, actually, they

alternate between blaming each other or their minions, and promising the demon whatever it wants. They talk fast because they know the Cast is hot on their heels. In fact, the Cast should hear the tail end of the discussion.

When the Cast bursts into the room, the Djinn appears as a whirling dust cloud hovering over a pile of beer bottles. Gary and Mark are both on their knees, facing the whirlwind with their backs to the entrance. Lightning lances out of the cloud and strikes first Gary, then Mark, who scream in pain. The wind whips around the room. Any Cast Member who quips about the ventilation in the sewer dwelling should be rewarded with a Drama Point.

THE EASY: Leaping forward and dusting these vamps from behind would be smart. Shouldn't be terribly difficult—they are pretty much engaged with getting new powers. A couple of bashes here and there and then stack-city. Still, that would also be highly anticlimactic. We got it covered though. If the Cast does the smart thing and manages to tag both vamps, the wind immediately stops, the cloud vanishes, and the howling voice fades to silence.

After a moment, a more normal voice, slightly muffled and sounding like it is coming from the inside of a bottle, says, "That was expected. And now I feed. (Some slurping or other disgusting noises issue.) Does anyone else have a wish they'd like granted?" Any characters who experienced *Sweeps Week* from the *BtVS Corebook*

Name: Gary, the Large
Motivation: Destroy the Cast Members and Mark, rebuild gang, take over town

Critter Type: Rewished Vampire

Attributes: Str 12, Dex 4, Con 5, Int 2, Per 1, Will 2

Ability Scores: Muscle 30, Combat 14, Brains 10

Life Points: 99

Drama Points: 3

Special Abilities: Giant (+4 to Grapple/Punch, -2 to Dodge), Hard to Kill 7, Vampire

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	16	40	Must Grapple first; no Defense actions
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Grapple	20	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	13	29	Bash
Punch	18	29	Bash
Toss	26	19	Must Grapple first, resisted by Strength (not doubled)



recognize the voice as the TV MC from the final scene. It casually mentions the price—their souls or a steady stream of others (that latter part is actually a lie but what do you expect from a certified monster)—if asked, but the Cast should know better than to make a deal with something like the Djinn. If rebuffed, it sighs, and says, “We’ll meet again, you know. Though next time, I expect you will beg me to take your souls.” At that point the pile of bottles begins to explode, throwing shards of glass everywhere. Dodge rolls allow everyone to get out of harm’s way (if they fail the roll, inflict a few Life Points of cuts and bruises—nothing life-threatening, just a bit of a scare).

THE HARD: If the Cast decides to wait at the entrance to the room, they witness Gary grow to 12 feet tall, with freakishly long arms (see p. 29). From the sounds he is making, it doesn’t appear to be an easy transformation. Mark (see p. 28) doesn’t change physically, but characters with low Willpower begin to feel empathy for him; his hypnotic power now enables him to broadcast his thoughts. A Perception and Occultism roll could clue a character in on the mind-bending effect, and knowledge of what’s happening provides a +2 to the resistance roll.

Fighting Gary isn’t easy. His long reach and high strength make getting in close difficult. Luckily, he is more clumsy than normal. Any time one of Gary’s punches misses, it will hit the wall, causing debris to fall from the ceiling. Clever fighters will use this against him, and trick the giant into burying himself. The danger is being buried with him. The walls take five or six

punches before collapsing. The tunnels outside are safe. Alternatively, Gary’s heart still reacts the same to a stake and is now significantly larger. Targeting it is now only -1 to hit (normally, it would be -3), but it is roughly nine feet off the ground (an Acrobatics roll should be called for to reach the sucker and you might want to require the attacker to have a Strength 3 or 4 to penetrate the larger rib cage).

Mark isn’t a combat monster like Gary, but his broadcasts are hard to ignore. Every time a character wants to attack him, a Willpower (not doubled) roll is needed. Failure means the Cast Member hesitates for that Turn, awash with strange (and revolting) “feeling” for Mark. If someone is unlucky enough to be grappled by Mark, his hypnotic powers can now affect humans—treat it as the vampiric power of Hypnosis at Level 3, but he must make eye contact at close range (no more than a couple feet), and the victim is able to resist with a Willpower roll every Turn. Mark commands his victims to defend him, or clear a path for him to escape by causing a distraction. He defends himself physically, but he isn’t very effective at it.

TROUBLESHOOTING

In the excitement of the mall battle, the Cast may miss the leaders’ hasty escape. A frightened child could point them in the direction “the bogeymen” went.

If the Cast loses Gary and Mark in the sewers, their screams as their newest wishes are granted provide a free pointer in the correct direction.

Episode Two

All A-buzz

Xander: No, but this dude was completely different than praying mantis lady. He was a man OF bugs, not a man who WAS a bug.

—2.10 *What's My Line?* - Part Two

All A-buzz is a fairly straightforward Episode. As such, it is perfect for including scenes that involve and advance character and Season Subplots, or explore portions of a Cast Member's background. As these additions are wholly dependant on the Cast Members who are part of your Season, only general pointers and suggestions are given for you to tailor to your group. We have faith in you, though. You've gotten this far, haven't you?

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Every fifty years, a demonic insect known as a Vermuscas emerges from its nest and finds food for its young. Unfortunately, the young require human spinal fluid to hatch. Fortunately, the Vermuscas now only lays a single egg every half-century, and most of those don't live long after they hatch.

This wasn't always the Vermuscas (the singular, plural and possessive are the same) way. Ancestral memories recall a time when its kind covered the land, devouring everything in sight. Humans came and drove the demons back to their own dimensions, and only a few Vermuscas were left behind. Now the bug can only dream of its former glory during its hibernations.

During its last sleep, the Djinn granted its longest-held and most fervent wish: dozens of new young. Of course, feeding that many mouths isn't easy. The demonic vermin is on a rampage, collecting its gruesome nectar night after night to satisfy the brood. Now the Cast must stop the Vermuscas before its army of young grows wings and spreads.

Again, dreams and hopes are central to this Episode. The Subplot that wishes have a down side can also add a lesson . . . or not.

CUT SCENE

A group of unwashed men dressed in furs huddle around a primitive campfire. They grunt and gesture, ripping meat off a roasting animal with their bare hands. At the edge of the light, several other men stand guard, rough spears at the ready. The coming rains do not worry them as much as the creatures that roam the skies at night.

Above, a cloud slides past the moon, catching the guard's eye. The full pale moon is a good sign to his people, and yet he freezes in terror. Defiling the moonlight is the dark silhouette of a flying beast. As the man turns to warn his tribesmen, a great wind rises. Suddenly, dozens of creatures descend from the heavens, swarming the hunting party. The struggle is brief and the creatures take flight, each with a human in its grasp.

The campsite falls silent. Fat dripping from the spit sizzles on the embers. A few spears and other items sit, looking for all the world as if the hunters would return from the shadows at any moment. Then a spear falls from the sky, followed by the human who had wielded it. Quickly, more bodies drop, like a sudden perverse rainstorm. Each bears an expression of horror frozen upon his face, his head twisted at an impossible angle.

Above, the swarm of Vermuscas chatter gleefully, winging back to their nests. One in particular, a young one, savors the flavor of the humans, and rejoices in the bounty it will deliver to its larvae.

The scene shifts to a muddy subterranean lair, redolent with rot and unnatural gasses. An ancient-looking demonic insect lies partially submerged in the muck. It stirs as it remembers. Those days are long gone, as are the swarms of its kind. Their domination of the night skies was stolen from them, and now it is alone. Its larvae rarely hatch, and it bears fewer each cycle. The end is near.

How it wishes for the days of old.

In one corner, dust and small items of debris rise in an eerily familiar funnel of wind. A soft glow reaches out and bathes the insect . . .





Act One: Introduction

TRENDY SHOES CAN'T SAVE YOU

Buffy: Well, I'm not exactly quaking in my stylish yet affordable boots, but there's definitely something unnatural going on here and that doesn't usually lead to hugs and puppies.

—6.7 Once More, With Feeling

Run-Down

There really isn't such a thing as a normal morning in your supernatural-infested town, but most don't include police units covering the track field. A cross-country runner has been found dead, drained of fluids. The police are using their normal "gang activities" story, but even a quick look at the crime scene shows the body was dropped from a major height. Adding to the mystery are the odd neck wounds. Unlike the usual fang marks or animalistic gashes, this victim's injuries are on the back of his neck, well away from any major arteries.

Time to dust off the old investigation hats. The Cast needs to gather information from numerous sources to get a clear picture of what actually happened. And once they recreate what occurred, they need to find a way to stop it from happening again.

And all this before any problems of a more social nature get in the way . . .

Action

THE MURDER: The body was found in the soft earth off to one side of the track that circles the athletic field, well away from any buildings, trees, or towers. The grass is undisturbed, except for the numerous police footprints. The location is easy to spot, even without the marker outline; a vaguely human-ish shaped depression pits the ground. An Intelligence and Science roll at the crime scene determines that the body must have fallen from several hundred feet, judging by the dent in the ground.

Talking to the track team reveals that the victim's name was Percy Swan and that he was training well after dark last night. Percy was always very careful, one teammate tearfully explains, always using reflective tape and even wearing a pair of red flashing lights on his shoes. He had no enemies that anyone knew of, and was generally well regarded among the jocks.

Also training on the track last night was Carrie Fendstein. She was working on the opposite end of the

field (she's a high jumper) and noticed Percy running laps. "He was there one minute, and gone the next. I wasn't really paying too much attention to him, but heard this weird buzzing noise. I glanced up, and saw Percy running, but couldn't see anything else. So I made another jump, and the sound got louder. When I got up to yell at Percy, he was gone. I figured he had just finished up and hit the showers. Then it was quiet again." Carrie is seriously weirded out by the experience. Cast Members who take the time to comfort her should receive a bonus Drama Point. Indeed, Carrie could become a recurring character in the Cast Member's life. She could be used for Subplots, or endangered to add a personal touch to the character's motivation, or even developed into a Cast Member herself (much as Cordelia did in the *BtVS* TV show). In case, you want to go that route, we have provided stats for Carrie (see p. 33).

A visit to the morgue (with the requisite Willpower and Influence roll to get access, and an Intelligence and Science roll for that whole grody body analysis stuff) or hacking into the police computer gets a description of the wounds. It appears that falling damage was not the only type suffered. The victim's neck was broken and the spinal fluids were extracted with some sort of vacuum tube. In short, somebody sucked his spine out. Yuck! The medical examiner's report notes three long bruises that circle the body around the shoulders, chest, and waist. The victim was dead when he hit the ground.

THE BOOKS: As the Cast is gathering information, they come across a humorous report of a large parade balloon sighted last night. The balloon was described as "a giant bug" with a flashing red light on its tail. The journalist who wrote it laughs off the report, suggesting that sniffing mosquito spray kills brain cells.

Research into a spine-sucking demon provides many suspects, but narrowing it down to a flying insect demon (based on the eyewitness reports gathered during this Act or the next) will produce a name: Vermuscas, six-foot long bugs that use spinal fluid to feed their larvae. Once it was a scourge called by sorcerers and demons to wreak havoc on enemies. Now it only ventures out once every fifty years or so and rarely produces more than a few eggs at a time. Each egg needs a human-sized snack to hatch and more to grow big and strong. The demon flashes red, like a firefly, when it mates or feeds.

Non-occult research in the newspaper archives and among books of ancient native legends shows a pattern of "giant bug" sightings every fifty years or so in the

using magic on the bugs

If the Cast includes any well-meaning Wiccans, they will probably want to use magic to detect or combat the Vermuscas. For the first part, Thespia's Demon Detection (see *BtVS Corebook*, p. 146) works just fine, although the bug moves extremely quickly during its first attacks. For anything else, research is required. The spell below, created when demons ruled the world, summons swarms of Vermuscas. Finding this spell is impossible unless the researcher has already identified the demon. Clever Cast Members will notice that this spell does not include a "control" aspect, and that the bugs, once present, could do any number of (most likely bad) things.

summon swarm of vermuscas

QUICK CAST: Yes

POWER LEVEL: 4

REQUIREMENTS: Ground rose quartz, three candles, and a series of words of power. The candles are lit and the powered quartz is sprinkled over them as the character chants the summoning words and the location desired.

EFFECT: Up to one hundred adult Vermuscas (of those within a couple hundred miles) move as quickly as possible to the location envisioned. If the caster did not indicate a specific location during the ritual, the demons move directly toward her. After the duration (one minute per Success Level) runs, no more of the vermin arrive, but those that have already arrived stay until driven off or the food supply has been depleted.

area. The stories also report "mysterious deaths" around the same time, but this is a strange town, so it is difficult to tell if these are actually related or just your standard mysterious deaths from vampires, snake demons, or other assorted nasties. In the few cases where the injuries are described, they are consistent with Percy's.

THE SUBPLOT: This Episode is different from most, as a major Subplot is a social situation. The details provided are vague to allow you to customize the events to the Cast and their Drawbacks.

Nearly every Cast Member will have a Drawback of some kind. Now is the time to bring them into play and inconvenience the Cast. That's why they're called "Drawbacks," right? Perhaps the Clown has told one too many jokes at the quarterback's expense. Maybe the Slayer's Tragic Love Drawback prompts her to fall for a preening idiot who cheats on her. Obligations, Obsessions, Mental and Emotional Problems—this Episode is an excellent time for any of these flaws to rear their ugly heads. The ideal situation would be to choose a Drawback that affects the entire group, to one degree or another. If the entire Cast share a Secret or Obligation (especially one like "must keep parents in the dark about the occult"), great! But any Drawback can indirectly affect the entire group. An Addict turns to her friends for help, the Recurring Nightmares can prompt sleep-overs, and those afflicted with Bad Luck need someone to watch their backs and prevent any serious injury.

A word of warning though: hitting multiple Drawbacks from multiple Cast Members may make the entire group feel cursed. Use this Episode to strengthen the personal bonds between the characters by presenting social challenges, and letting the Cast overcome them. Don't torture them with their failings.

Name: Carrie Fendstein
Motivation: Graduate, excel at sports
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 3, Con 3, Int 2, Per 2, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 9, Brains 10

Life Points: 30

Drama Points: 0

Special Abilities: Jock

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	9	—	Defense action
Punch	9	5	Bash



It is possible that none of the Cast has Drawbacks of any value. They're just good, all-American kids. Don't despair—no matter how sweet and pure a character is, high school is the perfect place to make her feel uncomfortable. Pick an event: prom, the big football game, a history final, a week-long job fair. The actual nature of the event isn't important. What is significant is the opportunity for the Cast to interact with something that isn't going to destroy the world, take over Sunnydale, or try to kill them. No combat, no research, no spells; just normal people doing normal things.

In this Act, the problems should be just beginning. The Clown mocks a jock, who promptly threatens her. The Tragic Lover has a wonderful first date with a per-

son who is obviously "Mr. Wrong"—well, obvious to everyone except the Cast Member. The character's parents have a "talk" with her about her sister, and how they want them to spend more time together. The theme of the prom has just been announced, and voting has begun for the King and Queen.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the Cast doesn't interview Carrie Fendstein, her information can be found in the police report.

The Cast may not be able to identify the Vermuscas after the first attack. This shouldn't be a problem—Act Two is spread out enough to allow the research to be done over a longer time frame, if needed.

Act Two: Complication

BREAK OUT THE BUG SPRAY

Riley: Glad to be back in Sunnydale. The locals all speak English and I know who to beat for information.

—6.14 *As You Were*

Run-Down

The normal evening patrol gets pretty crazy. The Vermuscas continues to show up, attacking things all over town and taking victims left and right. As more victims are taken, the pressure to find the monster increases. The Cast needs to find a way to head the bug off at the pass. As the feeding continues, the demon becomes less swift and stealthy. It normally feeds a few eggs, and then returns to hibernation. This time, it has dozens of eggs requiring feeding, which means hunting on a scale almost forgotten. It begins to get sloppy and tired.

This Act should move from normal stress level to fairly intense, as the Cast feels the pressure from both the monster hunt and the issues facing them personally.

Action

HUNTING AND GATHERING: This Act takes place over several days and at various locations around town. The encounters can occur in any order and over nearly any time frame. As more attacks occur, the intervals between them decrease. Use the timing of the attacks to heighten the tension, both in the Cast, as they search for the elusive beast, and in the town, which may begin to identify the danger from the sky as an occult threat.

Most of these events end up in a police report or newspaper article, but a character can always get more information, more quickly, by being on the scene. On the other hand, if the Cast just happens to stumble across every single Vermuscas attack, they may begin to feel as if they are losing control. It is best to choose one or two events that would logically intersect with their normal patrolling activities (or recreational activities), and let them research the others. Note that if the Cast is present, the Vermuscas is less likely to leave with a victim.

- A police officer makes a routine traffic stop. As she walks toward the car, the Vermuscas swoops down and attacks the flashing lights on the police cruiser. The officer fires at the demon, which succeeds only in attracting its attention. The bug snatches her up and flies away. The understandably terrified motorist hides on the floorboards until someone (either another police officer or the Cast) finds her. The officer's body is found later on an overpass, several miles away.
- A crowd outside the popular local hotspot is milling about, waiting to get in. The Vermuscas swoops down and attacks the pulsing neon sign, showering glass on the pedestrians. The crowd promptly disperses, screaming. The demon easily grabs a victim and discards the body on a rooftop.
- Late-night disc jockey Sammy the Soundman leaves work at a different club, but only gets as far as his car. As he opens the door, the Vermuscas snatches him. His body is found next to his car, exhibiting damage from a great fall as well as the spinal and back wounds common to the attacks. A radio tower blinks redly nearby.

- A vampire named Blaire (see p. 36) is attacked outside her crypt. The Vermuscas can pick her up and fly away, but isn't able to collect anything from the walking corpse. It eventually drops her mangled body, and the vampire survives. This event obviously won't make it into the newspapers, but Blaire recognizes the danger of a demon that doesn't discriminate between humans and other demons. If the Cast has proven slow to recognize the danger of the Vermuscas, having a vampire seek their help should shock them sufficiently. Blaire doesn't have access to a telephone, so she waits in one of the local hangouts or near an area she knows to be patrolled by the Cast. Her mood at the moment is one of extreme fear; she came very close to being torn apart and she has no interest in tangling with the beast again. If the Cast asks for her help, she'll ask around, but ultimately she won't be able to provide anything other than the details of her own attack.

- Motorists report seeing a giant bug, attacking stop-lights at various intersections across the city. Several observers say they saw the thing flying overhead, and it only swooped down onto the light when it turned red. No one was hurt, but several cars were damaged as the demon dropped pieces of the light into traffic.
- The pilot of a small plane taking off from the local airport nearly runs into the giant bug. It circled her wings and knocked off some paint, but did no real damage. The pilot, Martha Coltran (see p. 36), got an excellent look at the beast and can describe it in detail. However, she is smart enough to realize the public is not ready to accept unnatural occurrences like this. She reports only "a big bird" to the police, but if the Cast convinces her of their ability to deal with the problem, she fills them in. In fact, she could become a recurring Supporting Cast Member, or even a new Cast Member. Personality-wise, Martha can either be a motherly figure with surprising resolve, or a lean, mean cowgirl.
- The harbormaster down at the marina reports that several of the docked sailboats were vandalized overnight. None of them were occupied, but a warning buoy was taken from the water and left on the dock.

Feel free to create other incidents as appropriate to your game, highlighting locales that are familiar to the Cast. They all follow the same pattern: a red light, the Vermuscas swooping in, the Vermuscas flying out after snatching a victim or other object, and whatever it picked up being dropping to the ground from a great height. On all victims, the tell-tale injuries may be found.

describing the vermuscas

The Vermuscas were one of hundreds of insectoid demons plaguing the world in the days of demonic rule. They were rarely controlled, but instead used as a clearing force. A powerful demon would summon a swarm to infest an area, eating every living thing. The swarm would then move on, and the summoner could conquer the land without resistance.

When the majority of demonkind was banished, a few Vermuscas managed to hide, usually in remote areas. Still, with humanity growing and changing the world, these demons lost more and more of their number. Finally, the last handful began hibernating for decades, hoping the demons would return during their slumber.

Vermuscas resemble normal insects—they have a pair of antennae, six legs, and two pairs of wings extending from their back. The scale is monstrous though. Their wingspan is at least twelve feet, and each leg extends to over three feet long. Its "skin" is a dark brown chitinous exoskeleton covered with short barbs; anyone touching it without heavy gloves takes four points of damage. Under the head is a set of mandibles which can open wide enough to engulf a soccer ball (or a humans' head), and behind that is a tube-like tongue as thick as a soda can. When gathering spinal fluid for its young, the Vermuscas grapples the human from behind with its legs. Then it inserts its tongue into the upper spine area. After it has finished, a gland swells between its head and thorax. If it is "excited" from the hunt, the end segment of its tail glows red, blinking in an undecipherable pattern.

In combat, the Vermuscas wants to swoop down and snatch up its prey. In the old days, when the night was always dark, this worked well. With modern streetlights, a six-foot bug dropping from the sky is a bit conspicuous. Potential victims can dodge its grasp. If the Vermuscas is unsuccessful, it hovers and attempts to grapple, giving a coordinated team ample opportunity to get a few attacks in.

The bug is old and . . . well . . . it has the brain of a bug, but it does have instincts. If a group has it surrounded, it flies straight up. When faced with a strong foe, it swoops back and forth, using its aerial dodge to avoid hits.



Name: Martha Coltran, Pilot/Adventurer
Motivation: Get commercial pilot's license, protect the public
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 3, Con 2, Int 3, Per 3, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 11, Brains 11
Life Points: 26
Drama Points: 6
Special Abilities: Fast Reaction Time, Nerves of Steel

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	11	—	Defense action
Grapple	13	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	10	7	Bash
Punch	11	6	Bash



The Cast should have enough information to see a pattern (the red lights) and formulate a plan. Historically, a small group of soldiers armed with spears would drive the Vermuscas off. After a few nights of this, the danger would be over. Obviously, the Cast must kill the demon or risk letting it return. The actual planning of the trap and/or strategy should take place in Act Four.

RE-SUBPLOT: Other than the Vermuscas' desperate attacks, what else does the Cast have to deal with? Whatever the Subplot, it starts moving from "minor distraction" to "life-dominating event." The Clown could be on the receiving end of increasingly dangerous "pranks" from the football team, or even actual threats. The tires on her car could be slashed, or the entire car could be set on fire. For the Lover, the object of her affection could begin to actively avoid her, and perhaps she has begun to recognize some of the lies she has been told. The kid sister could interrupt the research session

with inane questions ("What does that demon do? Why does it have claws? How do they go to the bathroom?"). The campaigning for Prom Queen has begun in earnest, with smear campaigns, bribery, and out-and-out deception.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the players are dragging their feet, the Vermuscas can attack someone with a personal connection to a Cast Member. Depending on the results, a player "abused" in this manner should be compensated with a Drama Point.

If the Cast makes the deductive jump of "bugs live in swampy areas, let's check out the marshes outside of town," feel free to jump ahead to Act Four. The Vermuscas shows up after the larvae have been dealt with, and will be very angry.

Name: Blaire Vogel, Unlucky Vampire
Motivation: Blood!, avoid being smashed by bigger demons
Critter Type: Vampire
Attributes: Str 4, Dex 3, Con 5, Int 2, Per 2, Will 1
Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 12, Brains 10
Life Points: 54 (currently 30)
Drama Points: 1
Special Abilities: Hard to Kill 3, Vampire

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	14	15	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Grapple	14	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	11	12	Bash
Punch	12	10	Bash





Act Three: Climax

GOING BUGGY

Buffy: No. You guys are gonna have a prom. The kind of prom everyone should have. I will give you all a nice, fun, normal evening . . . if I have to kill every single person on the face of the Earth to do it.

—3.20 *The Prom*

Run-Down

This Act occurs as soon as the Cast has enough information to set a trap for the Vermuscas. Chances are several days have passed, with the body count rising. In fact, assistance may come from unexpected quarters, as the local vampires offer information about its habits. The Cast confronts the Vermuscas, and either kills it or drives it away from the city.

On the social front, the intensity reaches fever pitch. A showdown is rapidly approaching, and as luck would have it, it looks like the final battle with the Vermuscas and the resolution of the Subplot are going to occur at the same time.

ACTION

THE BIG BANG: The Cast has a chance to put the hurt on the latest bug to bug their town. This Act is a straight up fight, with grand plans and preparations.

How easy or difficult this fight is depends largely on the preparation the Cast has done. The characters should have learned a great deal about the demon's strengths and weaknesses, as well as its tactics and feeding patterns. Now all that information needs to be synthesized into a plan.

Barring a giant no-pest strip, most plans will include a net of some sort. Resourceful Cast Members could try painter's tarps, fishing nets, or even the giant inflatable school mascot. Will any of these actually work? In general, a material works as a "net" if it is large enough to cover the bug (a ten foot square will do), and is strong enough to avoid being shredded in less than five seconds. The Vermuscas won't even notice bed sheets and the old fishing net your uncle uses every summer. Heavy canvas, like the tarps used by painters and construction crews, holds for a few seconds. Industrial strength fishing nets or anything made of steel cable should be fairly durable. Of course a thicker net is heavier, which makes actually throwing it over the demon more problematic.

An alternative to netting the bug is dropping something heavy on it. Unless a size 500 shoe is handy, the Cast could try to run it over with a car, drop a pile of bricks on it from a rooftop, or use a crane to smack it with a wrecking ball (nahhh, that's been done). The trick to each of these tactics is getting the Vermuscas into a certain position and keeping it there long enough to trigger the big bash. This could be accomplished by a Cast Member with a flashing light distracting the bug, then diving out of the way just in time for the big attack. Better get that timing right though. Missing the bug is one thing; clobbering your hunting buddy is a real no-no.

Other worthwhile options include the old fashioned "bottle of gasoline and a burning rag" trick, the even older crossbow and spear, or the not quite as tactically brilliant "let's stand between it and its young" routine (see Act Four for details). The disadvantage of these plans is none of them will kill, or even severely damage, the demon quickly. The longer the battle lasts, the more likely a non-combatant (either a passerby or a Cast Member with few physical defenses) gets hit. With the Vermuscas, one hit is all it takes.

Once the plan is decided on, the question of "where" arises. Ideally, this is a spot out of the way where the Cast will be able to set up their traps, like a construction site, junkyard, or parking garage. Most of these locations are available in the middle of the night, when the Vermuscas likes to hunt. But why is the flying demon going to fall into the trap? What will the group use for bait?

Flashing red lights are a good idea for a lure. The easiest place to get them would be to borrow them from a band—they're perfect for a good light show. Waving them around on top of a building for a few minutes attracts the Vermuscas without fail. It immediately zeros in on the light, and then looks for food. Hope the trap is ready . . .

If the Cast has a plan and is well prepared, but random, dumb luck pulls the rug out from under them, well, that's not good television, is it? Remind the players to use Drama Points liberally to salvage almost any disaster. If a character has taken a beating, have the Vermuscas ignore her. Reduce the damage, calling it a "glancing blow." And if the entire Cast has just had their butts handed to them, the Vermuscas can simply fly away, in search of food that does not fight back quite so much. In fact, if the battle lasts more than a minute or two, that is exactly what the big bug will do; those eggs aren't going to hatch themselves.



Name: Vermuscas (its demon name is three minutes of chittering and wing rubbing unpronounceable to humans)

Motivation: Gather food for larvae, rebuild nest

Critter Type: Demonic bug

Attributes: Str 15, Dex 5, Con 5, Int 1, Per 3, Will 1

Ability Scores: Muscle 36, Combat 16, Brains 9

Life Points: 105

Drama Points: 3

Special Abilities: Armor Value 5, Claws, Flight, Increased Life Points

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Aerial Maneuver	18	—	Defense action while airborne
Bite	15	36	Slash/stab
Claws	16	34	Slash/stab
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Grapple	18	—	Resisted by Dodge
Spinal Suck	18	50	Must Grapple first, no defense action



If the Cast doesn't have a plan, and basically intends to throw rocks (or bullets, or arrows) at the Vermuscas until it dies, they're in some serious trouble. Effective ranged weapons are a relatively new development from the demon's point of view, but it can adapt pretty quickly. It retreats, then circles around behind the group and tries to pick them up one by one. If the target puts up too much of a struggle—flailing around with the axe she is holding, just for instance—then the demon drops her. If the group acts in a coordinated manner and won't allow any of their number to be isolated, the bug flies off. One feeding source is as good as another to it.

A straight slugfest might kill the Vermuscas—emphasis on the “might.” More than likely, several characters will be dropped from a two- or three-story height, and the bug still won't be dead. It will just get tired of being poked. The characters, if they can still walk, can follow it back to its lair and into Act Four.

During close combat (and particularly if the bug is killed), the combatants quickly discover that its skin is crusted with mud and plants. The players may guess that this coating comes from its lair; if not, an Intelligence (doubled) roll reveals it to any with good Knowledge skills. After that, a Perception and Science roll points towards the marsh outside of town as a potential source of the muck.

SUBPLOT AGAIN: Of course, this massive battle has to take place between the really important stuff. Whatever hook is being used to draw the Cast in, it intersects with the Vermuscas battle during this Act. The timing may be slightly difficult, depending on the nature of the Subplot, so fit it in wherever is the most natural. The football team could choose to beat the snot out of the Clown just when she is supposed to be setting off the giant net. As the Lover is hauling flashing red lights, she may see the object of her affection making out with someone else. The kid sister could stumble into the trap just before the demon shows up. The plan falls into place on prom night.

Yep, high school and monster slaying—what a combo!

TROUBLESHOOTING

The most troublesome part of this Act is the possibility of either a bad plan, or a plan gone horribly wrong. The Vermuscas is a dangerous creature, and it could easily do major damage to an unsuspecting Cast Member. If the bug does start to put the big hurt on someone, remember: it's still a bug. If the food here fights back, it leaves as soon as an opportunity presents itself.

If the Scoobies don't have vehicles, the Vermuscas travels low enough for most of the town to see it. The Cast won't have any shortage of people staring and shouting, “It went that way!” If the bug is killed, they have to spend some time searching the swamp.





Act Four: Resolution

BIG, FLAPPY AND CRUNCHY

Xander: *That's the other secret to conscientious egg-care. A pot of scalding water and about eight minutes.*

Willow: *You BOILED your young?*

Xander: *I know it sounds cruel. But sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind. You can bet little Xander here is thick-skinned now—*

—2.12 *Bad Eggs*

Run-Down

The players find the Vermuscas' nest. Instead of just a few larvae, the crew is looking at a mound of hungry, squirming, three-foot worms. This is a fairly simple "mop-up" battle, but forces the Cast to deal with a high slime factor. A little more humor than normal wouldn't be out of place during this Act.

Also on the heroes' minds is the resolution of the social thread. Whatever the Cast did to get them through the big battle with the Vermuscas, now's the time to deal with the repercussions.

Action

MUCK ANYONE?: The Cast tracks down the Vermuscas' nest, either by following it after it escaped the trap, deducing its location from the muck on its corpse, or some other way (see Troubleshooting). This scene takes place deep in the swamp.

The Cast is going to get dirty. There just isn't any way around it. The swamp is filled with muddy water, slime-coated trees, and bits of ground that look solid but give way until the characters sink in up to their knees. Once they make it to the nest, they need to crawl through a small tunnel to get inside. Then the larvae squish messily, not like the relatively neat dust of vamps. Demon

Describing the nest

The Vermuscas is a semi-intelligent creature with strong instincts. Its lair was originally constructed of trees and brush, packed together with mud. Over the years, the swamp vegetation has overgrown some areas. This has strengthened the walls, and added to its natural camouflage. In general, it looks like a mound in the middle of a swamp. However, if a Cast Member climbs the mound, she finds various pieces of junk hidden under layers of moss, such as a car door (an Intelligence and Knowledge roll identifies the styling as 1950s), numerous arrowheads, and even a decaying black powder musket. It's obvious the Vermuscas has been around for centuries.

From the outside, the Vermuscas' lair looks like a pile of fallen trees and swamp brush. Surrounding it is a low mud wall, which could, to the casual observer, be a natural feature. However, closer examination reveals that this wall is packed, and unnaturally keeps the swamp water from the pile. The mud wall runs along the edge of the pile, sometimes blending in with the other bits. In one area, though, a gap of three feet separates the wall from the pile of brush; this is the entrance.

The Vermuscas normally lands on top of the pile, dropping whatever trinkets it has gathered during its nightly feeding run. It skitters down to the entrance tunnel, climbing in upside down. The tunnel is ten to fifteen feet long, going almost straight down for less than half that distance, and then curving gently upwards the remainder of its length. The mouth is only wide enough for one person to crouch in, but opens to twice that by the time it reaches the main room. Any Cast Member suffering from claustrophobia must make a Fear Test before entering the tunnel.

The inside resembles a bird nest crossed with a beaver house. The walls keep out the majority of the moisture, so there are no pools of standing water, but the air is damper than outside. The smell is a bizarre combination of rotting wood, musty stale air, and a warm fertilizer. Normal creatures avoid the nest, warned away by the demon's scent.

The interior of the lair is a single room, 25 feet across, with a domed ceiling ten feet high in the center. The nest is a depression in the center, and is less than ten feet across. The floor around the nest is soft, covered with a thick carpet of moss. The walls and ceiling are a bizarre combination of mud plaster, reeds, and compacted vegetation. There are no visible support structures; the entire lair seems to have grown into place. Here and there, the fungus glows with a soft bioluminescence.



slime, as well as the muck from the swamp, is going to get into everything. Yuck! Let's hope they wore old clothes. Otherwise, we have a major fashion Don't.

If the Cast followed the Vermuscas back to its nest, it will be inside feeding the larvae. In the cramped space, it is unable to fly at all. Without flight, the demon bug is a much easier kill—not easy, but easier. However if the Cast is clever, they can end this threat once and for all. Burning the nest is a bear—the swamp tends to keep everything rather soggy—but with sufficient gasoline, nearly anything eventually ignites. Then again, hauling gallons of gas through the muck isn't anyone's idea of fun. Carrying axes and crossbows would be simpler and just as effective, though more dangerous.

Sneaking into the nest isn't as difficult as it might seem. If the Vermuscas is present, it is busy feeding its young and won't notice if the Cast Members make successful Dexterity and Crime or Acrobatics rolls. The larvae are even less aware; no roll is necessary if the adult Vermuscas isn't there. The mass of larvae fills the entire nest, with the twitching eggs in the center and the more active hatched spilling out onto the spongy floor. The entire pile is worth a -3 on a Fear Test.

Once the adult is killed, the larvae have to be dealt with. While they aren't very dangerous individually, there sure are a lot of them. Squishing them one by one takes a long time, even if the Cast is armed with axes, swords, or really big work boots. Dumping insecticide by the gallon won't do much more than kill off the weak ones, and encourage the others to burrow away into the swamp. These are demon bugs; they require something a bit more destructive. Powerful chemicals, such as strong acids, kill them. Fire or a small explosion cooks most of the little buggers, and the resulting collapse finishes off any survivors.

Name: Vermuscas Larvae

Motivation: Eat!

Critter Type: Demonic bug larvae

Attributes: Str 2, Dex 1, Con 3, Int 1, Per 1, Will 1

Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 9, Brains 8

Life Points: 30

Drama Points: 0

Special Abilities: Armor Value 1

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	9	7	Slash/stab
Bump	9	5	Bash
Dodge	9	—	Defense action

vermuscas larvae

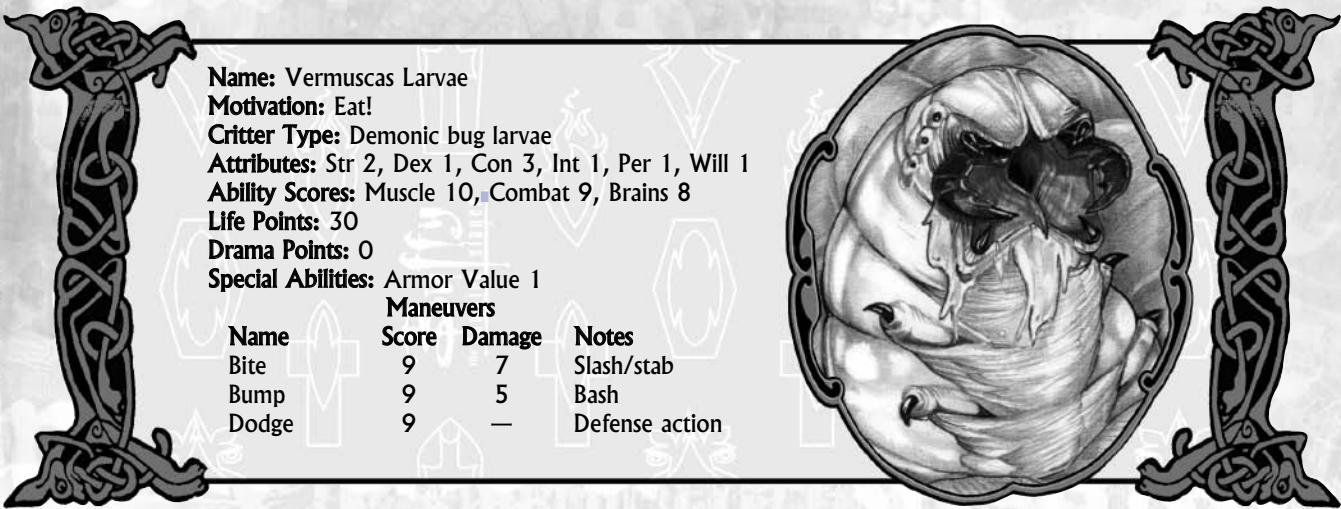
Demonic bugs are bound to have demonic bug babies, right? Vermuscas are no exception; its offspring look like normal grubs—three-foot long grubs with nasty pincers, but grubs.

Their skin is a pearly white, almost translucent. They have eight tiny, nearly useless legs on their underside, and a pair of eye groupings above their mandibles. They emit a high-pitched squeaking sound when hungry (which is constantly). They can recognize the difference between their parent and an intruder, but being newly hatched they take their time noticing any changes in their environment.

Normally the disgusting bugs huddle together, bumping and rolling against their siblings, squeaking, and waiting for their next feeding. If attacked, they throw their bulk around in a feeble attempt to defend themselves. They bite anything they find standing still.

Any value an unhatched egg, a captured larva, or any body parts may have on the demonic black market is up to you. No doubt some rare and powerful spell requires just such an ingredient.

Once the nest is cleared and the Cast has a chance to look around, they'll spot the Mark of the Djinn glowing faintly on the wall. As they examine it, the glowing lines rearrange themselves into the words "Oh well, there are plenty more relics like this one lying around, wishing for the old days! Until next time . . ." The letters fade after a few minutes.



Name: Young Vermuscas
Motivation: Eat!, hunt
Critter Type: Demonic bug
Attributes: Str 10, Dex 3, Con 5, Int 1, Per 3, Will 1
Ability Scores: Muscle 26, Combat 12, Brains 8
Life Points: 80
Drama Points: 1
Special Abilities: Armor Value 4, Claws, Flight, Increased Life Points

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Aerial Maneuver	14	—	Defense action while airborne
Claws	12	22	Slash/stab
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Grapple	14	—	Resisted by Dodge
Spinal Suck	14	33	Must Grapple first, no defense action



REVISITING THE SUBPLOT: Alright, the nest is destroyed, the Vermuscas is dead, and the Cast Members' homes are safe. Now all the Good Guys need to do is head home and shower for about three days, right? Wrong!

Now is the time for the resolution of the social element Subplot of this Episode. How it is wrapped up depends entirely on the situation that has been percolating along, the characters actions in addressing or avoiding it, and the direction you and they wish to take in resolving it once and for all.

Perhaps the Clown apologizes to the jock and her tormentor turns out to have been "testing" her. Maybe she's a nice girl, or a queen nasty. Or perhaps the Clown increases her popularity with a standup act thrashing the pain-in-the-butt at the school talent show. The Lover could try to reform her significant other or give that creep another chance (thus delaying the inevitable). Alternatively, she could make the breakup loud and public. The kid sister could get scared into becoming a recluse or could actually get hurt, leading to numerous serious discussions with the character's parents. The big social event could have already started, and the Cast arrives, trying to scrape the muck and crud off their tuxes, dresses, and shoes just as the Queen is announced . . . no wait, that's been done too.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the characters aren't armed, the Vermuscas' nest can contain some solid 2x4s or metal rods it has gathered over the centuries.

If a Cast Member has a new jacket or expensive pair of shoes, larvae stain it but good, and should earn her a Drama Point if she's a good sport about it.

If the Cast misses the nest, or doesn't destroy it completely, the baby Vermuscas sprout wings in a few weeks. Many die of starvation, or are eaten by their stronger brethren. However, once they are developed enough to be mobile, they'll hunt. And with the town being the closest food source, wackiness of an extremely deadly variety ensues. Just in case, we've provided young Vermuscas stats for your monstrous pleasure.

Experience point awards for this Episode should be based on the speed of the players' reactions. If they listened to the witnesses, raced to each attack site, and figured out the Vermuscas' patterns, award five points to each player. If they ignore the evidence or try to raise the larvae for themselves, the players should get a single point each, and perhaps a swat with a pillow.





Episode Three

The Bricklayer

Xander: And the glorified bricklayer picks up a spare . . .

—5.22 *The Gift*

PLOT SYNOPSIS

A mysterious stranger arrives in Sunnydale, sent in search of an ancient evil. Initially he is reluctant to involve the Cast in his quest. He begins appearing in various places an average person shouldn't be, gathering items of an obviously occult nature. He's up to something, but he dodges the characters' questions, other than to give his name as "Taylor."

However, if he hears of the Cast's experience with the Djinn, he enlists their aid in gathering the resources he needs to perform the ritual. He could teach the group much, but he's pressed for time. Once the materials are ready, he thanks the group, attempting to dismiss them. The spell is too dangerous for spectators.

Before the ritual can begin, a gang of vampires, possibly seeking to free the Djinn, wounds Taylor. He now needs the Cast, not only to fight the vampires, but to help him complete the ritual. He implores the Cast for help, and reveals his quest: an ancient evil's prison is weakening and he is here to take care of it. That evil? The Djinn. And the ritual needs to happen tonight.

The players must decide if they trust Taylor. If they do and he's lying, the Djinn could be released. If they don't and he's telling the truth, the Djinn . . . well . . . could be released. Sticky situation, yes?

Truth be told, Taylor isn't on the side of the angels. He worships the Djinn, and the ritual will indeed release it from the prison. However, he is telling the truth about needing the Scoobies; he just hasn't mentioned that their role will be as sacrifices. If they don't help voluntarily, he'll hire demon muscle to kidnap them.

This Episode deals with secrets and betrayal. But you probably already guessed that.

CUT SCENE

Deep in an ancient crypt built by Romans to cover another, even older holy place, a cloaked monk sits in a small room. His hood is pulled over his head, and his features are buried in shadow. He works at an old wooden table, weathered by age, scarred by use, and stained by the ink of a thousand scribes. The recesses of the room are dark, but several candles burn on the table. They illuminate the monk's book—a large tome, bound in leather and wood in a style popular hundreds of years ago. The dust hangs heavy in the air, but the monk seems accustomed to it. His thin hand turns a page, then another. He picks up a quill to make a note on a growing stack of papers. The surface of the table is awash with them, all filled to the margins with his flowing script.

Suddenly, a shrill buzz cuts the air. The noise is painful and completely alien to the still crypt. The monk fumbles in his robes for a moment, and frees a cell phone from within. He opens it with stained fingers and raises it into his deep cowl. Moments pass as he listens to the rasping voice on the other end of the line.

"The portents have come to pass. The prison of the Djinn is weakening. The Ritual must be performed in the nexus, and without delay. You will make the proper arrangements."

The monk does not respond. He stares unseeing for a beat, nods his head once, and then closes the phone.

The figure stands and carefully walks to a large globe in the corner of the room. His gait is slow but steady. His hands suggest he is old, but his movements remain strong and capable. He spins the sphere, running his fingers over the landmasses. After a few seconds, pressure from his hand slows and stops the rotation. One fingertip rests just under a very familiar place—your town.

"I pray there's time . . ."



Act One: Introduction

A MAN WALKS INTO A BAR

Willow: I've seen honest faces before. They usually come attached to liars.

—4.7 *The Initiative*

Run-Down

During a routine patrol, or perhaps on the way to the local hangout, one of our heroes notices a dangerous deal in the making—an obvious vampire handing a package to a man. When the Cast confronts the two, the vamp quickly hands the man a murky jar and runs. The man, Taylor, is conversational, but asks more questions than he answers. How the Cast deals with Taylor in this Scene determines his actions throughout the rest of the Episode.

Action

A PASSING STRANGER: This scene takes place in a dark corner, just off a main street. The Cast should feel confident and secure in this area. Either it's a place they patrol often or is close to a popular nightspot. The entire Cast should be together so the more timid characters won't feel like fleeing quite so quickly.

As the group walks by the alley, call for a Perception and Notice roll from all. Any Success Level and that character glimpses a flash of light from the darkness. If they all fail, a noise emerges from the alley and they should all roll again. A second look spots two figures closely examining a package. The shorter one hands the package to the larger, who peels the wrapping off and holds it up to the dim streetlight. The short one steps forward to point out some aspect of the contents (which are too murky to identify from where the Cast is), and the extra light reveals his game face—he's a vampire.

As the group makes it obvious that they've spotted the pair, the taller figure hands over a fist-sized roll of money. The vampire hastily stuffs the money into his pocket and runs into the shadows of the alley. At this point, the Cast has many options. They can send one or more of their faster members after the runner. Chasing him almost isn't worth the effort though. The undead, Bosch (see p. 44), soon stops and tries to talk his way out of the situation as soon as he realizes he's being followed. Dusting him nets the Cast a nice wad of cash, but costs them a potential source of components or information (a subject he'll raise quickly if threatened).

If some or all decide not to bother with the vampire, the other man, Taylor (see p. 44), calmly wraps the jar in a thick cloth and stashes it in his coat pocket. The man is confident, but not boastful. He does not attack the Cast, but if attacked, he defends himself, dodging and blocking attacks. As soon as possible, he makes a dash for the street. Once there, he disappears into the crowd in seconds.

If the Cast is aggressive or hostile towards the man, he introduces himself as simply as "Taylor," and attempts to walk away. The Cast can easily stop him by standing in his path and questioning him further, but he says very little. He glares with the intensity of someone who is restraining himself. There is a limit to how much the Cast can do, unless they want to physically attack him. Discretion is necessary to avoid attracting the cops, and a brawl isn't a good idea. If the Cast approaches Taylor with a reasonable amount of respect, he introduces himself and agrees to talk about his purchase in the alley, though he suggests finding a coffee shop to sit down.

Once introductions are done, Taylor says, "I am a member of an ancient order; we are known to outsiders as 'The Bricklayers,' if we're known at all. We are the latest in a long line of scholars, with a history stretching back hundreds of generations. My brothers have recently translated a series of scrolls that predict a certain . . . event. The stars are nearly in alignment and I have been charged with dealing with the situation."

Other things Taylor will talk about are the fleeing vampire ("Yes, my contact Bosch is a vampire, but a rather timid one. The only blood he drinks is what he can purchase. I don't traffic with the other kind."), what's in the jar ("It is R'xnor horn—one of a long list of materials which you are better off not recognizing."), and where he has come from ("I flew in from England yesterday. The jet lag seems to hit me worse every time I fly."). What Taylor won't talk about could fill volumes. He won't specify the prophecy, the time, or the way he needs to deal with the situation. He apologizes for his lack of forthrightness, but says the forces he is dealing with are too dangerous for anyone without his training. He is very interested in what the Cast is doing policing the alleyways though. He inquires about their abilities, the frequency of their patrols, and the extent of their occult knowledge. Taylor is amazed that one of them claims to be the Slayer. To avoid suspicion, he cloaks all questions in flattery and praise.



Name: Marvin Bosch
Motivation: Avoid pain, sell rare components, buy blood
Critter Type: Vampire
Attributes: Str 4, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 3, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 12, Brains 12
Life Points: 48
Drama Points: 2
Special Abilities: Vampire

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Kick	11	12	Bash
Punch	12	10	Bash



If the Cast brings up the Djinn, he is surprised. In fact, he asks very directly to hear of their encounters with the demon. Of course they are under no obligation to give him their life stories, but this is a good opportunity for a bit of boasting, especially from some of the less powerful Cast Members. As the Cast fills him in, Taylor admits that the Djinn is the main subject of his ritual. He makes it obvious they have impressed him enough for him to reveal more information.

"The walls of the prison holding the Djinn are wearing thin. At a certain point, in the very near future, a ritual to reinforce those walls must take place. Now, I cannot allow others, even experienced champions such as yourselves, to be part of it, but I would welcome assistance finding some of the components needed and preparing the ritual."

At this point, Taylor excuses himself, blaming the jet lag. He gives the Cast the phone number of his hotel

room, and asks for a way to contact them. After he has rested, he meets with them to gather more ingredients.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Aggressive Cast Members who want to chase the vampire catch him easily. However, they don't find much; the vamp begs for his life as soon as his pursuers get close. Bosch is quite willing to spill any bits of information he has in exchange for sparing his life. Bosch could also be replaced by an already introduced vampire as the runner, such Blaire Vogel from **Episode Two: All A-buzz** (see p. 36).

If the Cast threatens Taylor, remind them of the late night partiers passing mere feet from them. A scuffle of any size will undoubtedly draw the police.

Name: Rafael Taylor
Motivation: Gather ingredients for ritual, avoid confrontation
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 3, Dex 3, Con 2, Int 4, Per 5, Will 5
Ability Scores: Muscle 12, Combat 12, Brains 16
Life Points: 36
Drama Points: 6
Special Abilities: Hard to Kill 2, Sorcery 5

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Cane	12	11	Bash
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Full Defense	15	—	Defense action, no attacks
Parry	12	—	Defense action
Punch	12	8	Bash
Telekinesis	16	8	Bash or Slash/stab





describing bosch

Beings like Bosch are a common feature in the occult underworld, filling a necessary function: the gofer. He'll "go fer" ingredients for nearly any spell, and if you don't have a spell, he knows a slime demon who might have a copy. In fact, he knows quite a few people and things, and sells a little of everything to everybody. In the end, this is what eventually will get him into trouble. If a powerful somebody doesn't like Bosch supplying another somebody with magical components, Bosch will end up dusted. Then someone else will step into his place. It's the law of supply and demand in action; dark magicks demand specialized materials and those materials require a specialized supplier.

For the moment, though, Bosch is trying to keep his head down and blend in. He's wearing a pair of dirty jeans and black cowboy boots. His jacket is black leather, over a t-shirt advertising a local band or alternative rock radio station.

Physically, Bosch isn't intimidating at all. He's small and thin, with sunken eyes and a notably pale complexion (which is saying something, since most vampires don't tan well). If attacked, he cowers and whines. Given the opportunity, he runs back to his crypt to cower and whine there. All in all, he's pathetic, even if he does occasionally have good information.

Bosch doesn't show up in any other scenes, which makes him perfect to pop back up, three or four Episodes later. He could have the address of the Big Bad's lair, the last item needed for a world-saving ritual, or even the most recent copy of *Mucus Demon Illustrated*. Heck, he could find enough blackmail material to get some lieutenants of his own and elevate himself to Big Bad level. Whatever happens, the recognition factor adds extra spice to any future encounters.

describing taylor

Physically, Taylor is unremarkable. His height is average, and his gray hair is cut short. In a less unusual situation he could slip through a crowd completely unnoticed. He wears a trench coat over a dark blue business suit and carries a briefcase or umbrella, looking like any other professional on his way to work. The only item that is out of the ordinary is his lapel pin—a golden trowel.

Taylor's accent is vaguely British. He smiles when he speaks, and seems almost amused by the Cast. He exudes an air of confidence, almost arrogance.

Act Two: Complication

WHO WAS THAT?

Buffy: I walk. I talk. I shop . . .

—4.22 *Restless*

Run-Down

If the Cast has agreed to help Taylor, he asks them to run various errands for him. For the most part, these involve supply runs to different occult shops, chemical labs, and hardware stores. However, he also asks them to check out a nest of vampires, which fits into the prophecy somehow.

If the Good Guys aren't helping Taylor, either due to a violent misunderstanding during their initial meeting, general mistrust, or the fact that he simply hasn't asked, he still makes several appearances. A more paranoid individual might think he was watching them . . .

In either case, the Cast can dig up some dirt on Taylor, his prophecy, and the ritual. He is just too unusual a character to ignore.

ACTION

SHOP TILL YOU DROP: This Act takes place over several days, in a variety of places both mundane and bizarre. If the Cast isn't helping Taylor, they spot him in various locations around town. If they are on friendly terms, he



stops and makes casual conversation, asking about their daily activities. He occasionally asks for directions to a shop or an address, or for opinions on one brand over another. He gives the genuine impression that he is interested in the Cast as people, which may be very refreshing for the youngsters. If the Cast was rude to Taylor in the alley, or they attacked him, his appearances are less conversational. He acknowledges their existence, but leaves the area as soon as possible. No matter what their relationship is, he could be spotted at the drug store, farmer's market, garbage dump, occult shop, hardware store, or any other location that would provoke a "what the heck is he doing here?" response.

Cast Members who are helping Taylor can devote as much time as they wish to his errands. He is constantly polite and thankful for the help, but doesn't offer any explanations for the trips. None of his errands take more than an hour or so, but there are a great number of them. After each, Taylor will ask if they are sure they have time for another. He'll ask about other activities, concerned that he is taking up too much of the crew's time. In fact, no matter how much time the Cast spends with Taylor, he always has "just one more" item for them to take care of. Once the Cast's limit of good deeds for the day is reached, he thanks them graciously, offers them rides home, and asks them about the next day.

The majority of Taylor's errands are shopping trips. These can proceed as quickly or as slowly as the players wish. If you want to add interesting items to each list, or roleplay the clerk's reaction to such an odd assortment, the scenes can last a full session. Otherwise, the shopping section can be dealt with by a simple "A few hours later you have everything Taylor asked for." He always supplies the cash to make the purchases, and encourages the Cast to use the change to get pizza, coffee, or other treats as rewards.

For those who wish to take the extra time, here are some suggestions for the shopping experience. At the occult supply shop, Taylor's list includes peacock feathers, mummy dust, giant squid ink, powdered aloe vera, pickled wolfsbane flakes, and snakeroot. If the Cast is involved with or runs a magic shop, these items should be readily available. The other items must be acquired elsewhere. At the chemical shop (or pharmacy), Taylor needs glycerin, a granite mortar and pestle set, calcium carbonate, and about three pounds of toothpaste. At the hardware store, he asks for asphalt-patching tar, camel-hair paintbrushes in a variety of sizes, several power tools, a couple of galvanized buckets, and a dozen eight-foot long 2x4s. At the florist, he needs dried lilac stems, black rose petals, and plant food high in nitrogen.

what's with the huge shopping lists?

Taylor's ritual is intended to free the Djinn, and he is aware that most people won't appreciate a major demon rampaging through their town. He also knows that Sunnydale has heroes protecting it. Happily for him, those heroes may be co-opted into becoming his delivery staff. Taylor does need some of the ingredients on the lists, but not all. In fact, the ritual uses very few components; Taylor has padded his shopping lists to keep the Cast as busy as possible. He reasons that a group of super-busy heroes can't be taking the time to find the flaws in his cover story. While they are picking things up, he is hiring a group of vampires for Acts Three and Four, contacting the Djinn to pinpoint the time the prison will be weakest, and preparing for the ritual. Once he has dismissed the Cast, he has the vampires clean whatever ritual location he finds and move his supplies there.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: Once the supplies are gathered, Taylor has the Cast looking for a place to perform the ritual. This involves some amateur surveying, using some very unusual equipment. Taylor provides a box with a dozen crystals arranged in a circle, a small telescope on a tripod, and a geological map of the area. He has marked numerous locations on the map, corresponding to spots around town. At each spot, the tripod needs to be set up and the crystals placed between the legs, under the telescope. Then various landmarks are sighted through the lens, and the colors of the crystals recorded. The crystals change color, and in certain areas glow with surprising intensity. An Occultism roll reveals that Taylor is mapping lines of power, commonly called ley lines. These lines may already be on file with the local Wicca or mystical types (if they are willing to share), but Taylor wants to double check and make absolutely sure.

Once Taylor has the map, he spends a couple of hours deciphering the readings, then sends the Cast to find an abandoned building. He has marked on the map a five-block area that has the highest concentration of energy, and needs to find a safe location to perform the ritual. This area has several houses for rent, but the best by far is an old schoolhouse scheduled for demolition later next year. Taylor is delighted, and praises the Cast highly.

As soon as the building is located, Taylor thanks the Cast. "All my supplies are ready, I have a private place to work, and the stars are right. I'll have to work alone





describing the abandoned school house

From the outside, this building isn't much to look at. It has been deserted for well over a decade, when a police crackdown managed to remove all the homeless and seal off all the entrances. The majority of the paint has cracked and peeled off, and the wood beneath has been sun-bleached to a very light tan color. The only variation on the outside is the heavy boards covering the windows and doors. The boards over the front entrance have been removed and the doors replaced, most likely by the demolition company. The doors are new, made of aluminum and locked with a deadbolt. In the front yard stands a sign with the logo of a local construction company, promising demolition "within 12 months" to make way for a new gas station.

Getting in is possible either by picking the lock on the front door or climbing through the cellar. The entrance to the storm cellar below the building has shifted over the years, creating a gap just wide enough for a person to squeeze through.

The cellar runs the entire length of the building, with only two exits: the storm doors, and a short ladder leading up to a trapdoor, which opens into a cloakroom above. The floor is dirt, and the few painted-over windows have flaked just clear enough to let an inhabitant recognize if it were day or night.

The cloakroom is cramped and dusty, but it opens to the front of the large central room. No furniture remains, but it is easy to see where desks may have sat. Other than the cloakroom, which is little more than a walk-in closet, there are two other rooms, both in the back of the building. Both have rickety, creaking doors, but little else. The rear exit has been boarded over, as have all the windows. A thick layer of dirt, dust, and (shudder) varmint droppings cover every surface. The rafters are exposed, but the vaulted roof is mostly intact. The ceiling is a dozen feet above on the edges of the room, easily twice that in the center. Below, the floor is worn but mostly solid with a few loose boards.

If the Cast enters the building before bringing it to Taylor's attention, it is as described—untouched for years, though anyone who enters from the front door notices that the hinges have been oiled recently. Within hours of the Cast reporting back, Taylor has his supplies moved in and has begun cleanup. Observant characters may note that the cleanup progresses very quickly, given that a single man is supposedly doing the work.

from here. It is simply too dangerous for you now." Nothing they say sways him. He bids them farewell, and says he will contact them before he leaves the country.

QUESTIONS MAYBE?: If a suspicious Cast Member wants to research Taylor, a quick computer hack shows he entered the country from England a week before their initial meeting. This should raise questions with any character who spoke with him at length, because he claimed to have flown in that very day. If confronted with this, Taylor uses his age as a defense. He also no longer trusts any Cast Member who brings this up. Otherwise, he has no criminal record, no driver's license, and no local bank accounts.

Occult research shows that R'xnor horn is a rare material with affinity to spells dealing with barriers. If the researcher gets four Success Levels, a minor fact is illuminated: fresh human blood is needed to cut the R'xnor horn from the R'xnor. And any item requiring the use of human blood generally falls into the "black" section of the magic library.

An occult-savvy Cast Member may also try to deduce the ritual from the list of ingredients Taylor has gathered. This isn't easy to do as he has included many unnecessary

things in his lists. The Occultism roll suffers a -5 penalty and requires at least three Success Levels. If the Cast is working with Taylor, and watching how he stores and works with the materials they brought to him, it helps significantly. Three Success Levels are still necessary, but the modifier to the roll is negated. If the Cast Member succeeds, she is able to identify numerous elements of a "barrier" ritual. However, it is impossible to determine if it is a barrier breaker or a barrier strengthener.

Researching the Bricklayers is an exercise in frustration, for several reasons. First, "Bricklayer" is often used to implicate the Masons, who are at the heart of almost every worthwhile conspiracy theory. Second, occult groups don't generally advertise, and old groups don't have websites. Finally, without more definite information, it is nearly impossible to pin down which "secret occult group" recorded in the various books is actually the Bricklayers. However, if a character is persistent, and cross-references Taylor's home address (available from his passport or a computer hack), they can narrow the possibilities down to three groups. Actually contacting anyone in these groups takes several transatlantic telephone calls. Don't forget the time difference—the west coast of the U.S. is eight



hours earlier than England, the east is five. However, the payoff is great. None of the groups acknowledge Taylor as one of their own (one of them is lying but wants to do some background checks on the Cast before spilling any information), nor do they admit to sending anyone to America to deal with a prophecy.

Old-fashioned detective work produces some interesting information. Every morning, Taylor stops at a bank and collects a wire transfer of several thousand dollars. Tracing the transfer is difficult (-5 to the Intelligence and Computers roll), and leads back to an anonymous Swiss account. Afterwards, he spends a great deal of time gathering supplies. Occasionally he receives a phone call, after which he speeds across town, parks his rental car, and wanders around purchasing small, bizarre items. Any Cast Member who follows Taylor for more

than a day gets a nasty surprise; she loses sight of him for a moment, only to have him appear right next to her. He appears dangerously angry, and warns the nosy character to stay away from his business.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the players have dismissed Taylor as unimportant, have him bump into them during a patrol or during their normal day. His odd errands should perk interest. In fact, Taylor is watching them.

If the Cast just attacks Taylor at any point, he spends Drama Points to escape and then avoids them thereafter. The Cast still gets glimpses of him here and there so they know he's still active, but their shadowing activities no longer bear any fruit.

Act Three: Climax

THE TALE

Xander: Prank? Oh! The room! Some friends of Buffy's played a funny joke, and they took her stuff. And now she wants us to help get it back from her friends who sleep all day and have no tats.

Willow: Oh, those friends.

Oz: Funny guys.

—4.1 *The Freshman*

Run-Down

Taylor shows up one last time, in trouble. He arrives at a character's house, late at night, bleeding from a large gash on his shoulder. He's been beaten fairly badly, but will survive.

A nest of vampires has discovered the building where Taylor was preparing the ritual. He was ambushed, but managed to escape. He fears he won't be able to complete the ritual, and so has reluctantly decided to ask the Cast for help. At least, that's his story.

The truth is Taylor hired the vampires. They were his moving crew in Act Two, and now they provide the insurance he needs to prevent the Cast from interfering with the final stages of the ritual.

ACTION

A "FRIEND" IN NEED: Taylor appears at a dramatically inappropriate moment, barging in on whichever Cast Member seemed the most sympathetic to him and his

cause. This will, of course, require some hasty explanations, unless the character's parents (or roommates) are aware of her more unusual habits.

Of primary importance are Taylor's wounds. He refuses all professional medical treatment, because the injuries look much worse than they actually are. In fact, despite his complaints, a simple first aid kit patches him up completely. The medical treatment can lead to a major crack in Taylor's cover story, if the Cast Member is observant. Taylor has the Mark of the Djinn on his neck, just above the hairline. A Perception and Notice roll at a -5 penalty is needed to see it. Once spotted, and commented upon, Taylor skips the convincing, and jumps straight to threats and kidnapping (see Troubleshooting below).

Taylor first reveals his mission, as described in Act One (the Djinn's prison is weakening, he must reinforce it), and then does his best to convince the Good Guys that he is now unable to complete the ritual without their assistance. Given his earlier reluctance to share any information with the Cast at all, this should be taken as a significant step in their "relationship." He stresses that the ritual must be completed tonight and that he has no other contacts he can trust. Promises of money, books, and training abound. If the character has any failings Taylor might have observed over the past few days, he preys upon them. This is Taylor at his most charming. He is a naturally perceptive man, and he has been observing these heroes for several days. He has a very good idea what motivates them, and he uses that information to the best of his ability.



Before the ritual can begin however, the vampires must be driven out. This means the entire Cast must be assembled. Taylor is insistent on this point; his estimation of the number of vamps varies, just as long as the listener is impressed with their numbers. He also hints that the vampires were serving the Djinn; they may be performing a ritual to open the prison right now! And the opening ritual, he says, requires a human sacrifice.

If the Cast attempted to contact the Bricklayers during the last Act, the Cast Member who left her contact information gets a phone call at a dramatically appropriate moment (for instance, just before she's summoned to help Taylor). On the other end is the leader of one of the groups she contacted. He confesses to a mistake (now having decided to share with the Cast)—a member of their group, one Rafael Taylor, died two weeks ago and his passport was stolen. It appeared to be an accident at the time, but the Cast Member's inquiries raised questions and now they believe the cause of death was magical assassination. "Taylor was something of a dabbler, and so never actually fortified his defenses the way he should have, but nevertheless, you should be careful. The murder isn't so much a statement of power, but of willingness to do whatever is necessary," he says. He has no other information.

Once the entire Cast is assembled, Taylor leads them to the abandoned schoolhouse. He seems ridiculously paranoid, repeatedly checking to see if he's being followed and jumping at shadows. Cast Members with combat experience may find this behavior odd, especially if they've experienced Taylor's trademarked smug confidence. A successful Perception and Influence roll clues the Cast in—he's very excited, but trying to hide it by appearing scared. If questioned, he ignores the Cast,

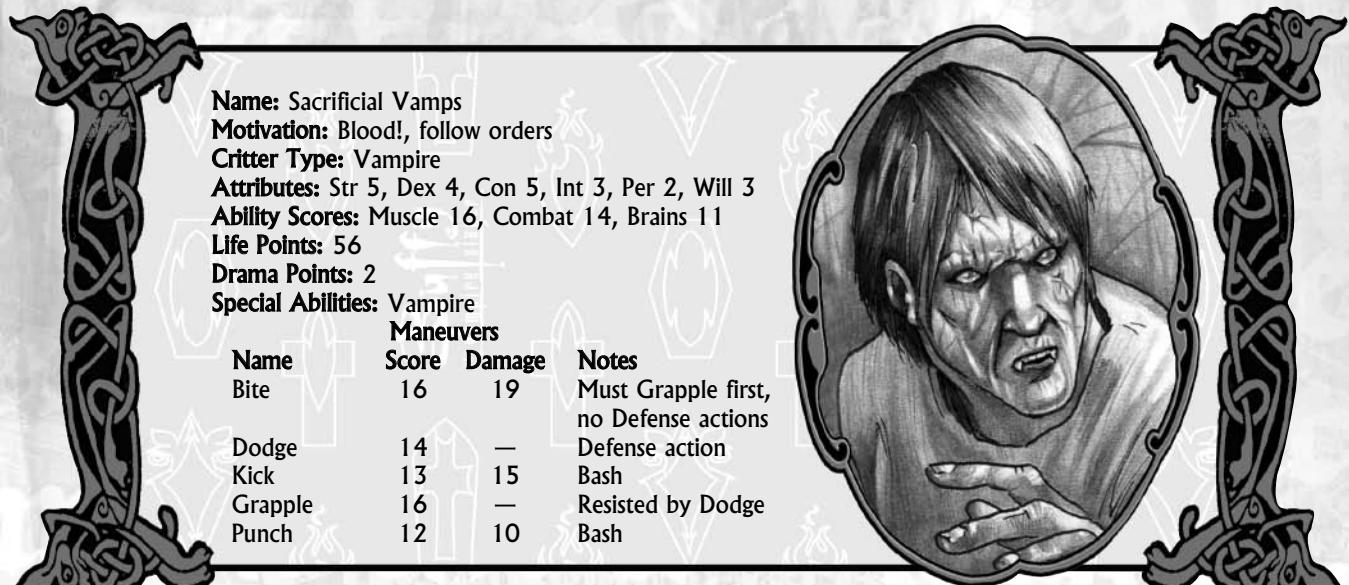
picks up speed, and talks about "getting the jump on them" and "surprise attack."

Taylor's plan is simple. The Cast bursts in and interrupts whatever the vampires are doing. Of course, he knows the majority of them are hiding and have left a pair of token guards to provide the illusion of resistance. If the Cast seems reluctant to attack, he peeks through a window and pretends to see a human sacrifice. The sacrifice is real, but it is impossible to see through the windows; Taylor's minions have painted them over on the inside. If the Cast remains slow to act, or is taking too long to plan the attack, Taylor slips away from the group and calls the vampires inside the building using his cell phone. He instructs them to take the gag out of the victim's mouth and make her scream. As soon as this happens, Taylor insists the Cast rush into the building. He even offers to lead, if someone can force the door open. The dangerous part of this plan, for Taylor, is the possibility that the Cast does not dust the vampires fast enough. If given an opportunity to speak, the vampires call Taylor by name and in general are very confused. They were told to wait here for him; they didn't sign up for fighting the Slayer and her friends.

Once the vamps are dust, Taylor frees the victim and instructs her to flee as fast as she can—advice she has no difficulty taking. At this point, Taylor has a wild look about him, very different from his normally calm, composed demeanor. He rushes around, gathering the ritual components, shouting orders, and in general trying to rush the Cast into helping him put the ritual together. The rest of the vampires, he says, could return at any minute.

Name: Sacrificial Vamps
Motivation: Blood!, follow orders
Critter Type: Vampire
Attributes: Str 5, Dex 4, Con 5, Int 3, Per 2, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 14, Brains 11
Life Points: 56
Drama Points: 2
Special Abilities: Vampire

Name	Score	Maneuvers	Notes
Bite	16	19	Must Grapple first, no Defense actions
Dodge	14	—	Defense action
Kick	13	15	Bash
Grapple	16	—	Resisted by Dodge
Punch	12	10	Bash





TROUBLESHOOTING

Suspicious characters may refuse to aid Taylor, in which case he grows angry and tries to shame them into at least watching his back while he struggles through the ritual.

If the Cast tries to keep Taylor from leaving, he is surprisingly agile in spite of his wounds. If possible, he calls for his "security team"—a group of vampires. If force becomes necessary, don't forget to hand out Drama Points to all those captured.

It is possible that the Cast and Taylor do not have a good relationship by the time he intrudes on the Cast Member with his wounds. If the Cast refuses to deal with him at all or confronts him about any holes in his cover story, he sighs and summons his minions. They can't enter the house, but Taylor should be able to grapple a character long enough to get her outside. The vampires then take the hostage back to the schoolhouse while Taylor calls the other Cast Members. If Taylor can't get a Cast Member, he makes do with a Supporting Cast Member, preferably a Dependant.

Act Four: Resolution

So CLOSE To . . . ?

Willow: What do we do now?

Giles: Abject prayer and supplication would spring to mind.

—1.4 *Teacher's Pet*

Run-Down

Now that the vampires have been "cleared" from the ritual space, Taylor must quickly convince the Cast of the urgency of his task. This is the culmination of decades of work on his part and soon he will be rewarded with power beyond his wildest dreams. This is the point when the smallest actions by the Cast make the largest difference. They have an opportunity to sabotage the scribing of the ritual, destroy materials, and even counter the ritual from within. The later they begin, the less chance Taylor has to completely destroy the Djinn's prison.

Taylor's success all depends on the Cast having figured out his true intentions. If they still believe his tale, they won't once the ritual begins. The clues stack up, culminating with Taylor's reference to the Djinn as "my lord," a big old neon warning sign if ever there was one. If Taylor notices the Cast's suspicions, or if they resist his orders, he introduces his "security." Yep, more vampires. They have secured his insurance, a hostage—who specifically is not important, but she should be someone significant to the Cast. Then, he activates the first part of the ritual—a field that keeps the Cast inside the circle. They are obviously the sacrifice that breaks the Djinn's prison.

Well, they're in the thick of it now. How are they going to get out?

Action

RITUAL ME THIS!: The ritual involves many components that have general uses. If the Cast hasn't deduced the ritual already, an Intelligence and Occult roll at a -4 penalty reveals the key ingredients. If any of these special items are moved, destroyed, or switched, the effects of the ritual change slightly or even drastically. While a good idea, any "blundering" in this manner is likely to arouse suspicion from Taylor, if he isn't distracted by the other Cast Members.

The supplies to perform the ritual are in a crate in one corner of the room. Taylor is too busy to open them himself and sets a burly Cast Member to the task. Taylor himself quickly outlines a series of lines on the floor with a can of spray paint, referring occasionally to an unmarked tome. If asked, he refers to it as "the Notebook"—the collected experimentations of the Bricklayers (see p. 51).

Once the crate is open, the first task is to paint the ritual circle. Taylor explains that the forces used in the spell are dangerous and the participants must be shielded. He hands out brushes and buckets of a black, lumpy, tar-like substance, which is smeared, more than painted. It has an almost sweet smell with a metallic tinge. He indicates that the spray-painted lines are guides, and that the material making up the "paint" is necessary to form the protective barrier.

The ritual area is inscribed by first painting a central square large enough for a person to sit inside. Then additional squares are arranged around the central one, equal in number to the Cast Members minus one. The squares are all connected to the central one by a thick line, at least a foot wide. This painting is all done with the thick, tar-like paint discussed earlier.



Once the squares are done, Taylor sketches wide lines that entirely circle the linked squares. He then etches symbols onto the wide lines, and paints over the scratches. This time the paint is thin, neon green in color, and has a pungent odor similar to car exhaust. As the arcane figures are drawn on the wide lines, they begin to glow. A shimmering curtain rises up from the lines and symbols to the rafters. The curtain has gaps allowing access to the empty squares, and even in its more solid areas seems to fade in and out of existence.

At this point in the ritual, Taylor is barely aware of the Cast. Any sabotage they might try now most likely works. However, these circles and symbols are largely for the Cast's sake; they hold them in place so the Djinn can consume them. Cast Members can easily steal components with a Dexterity and Crime roll. One small handful of components is hidden for each Success Level.

With the preparations complete, Taylor places a small lit candle into each square and asks each Cast Member to step in. He then inscribes more symbols on the squares, and warns the Cast not to move. As he finishes, a glowing wall springs up from the solid black square lines surrounding the characters. This time, the barrier is just barely visible, but very solid to the touch.

If anyone refuses to get into her square, Taylor sighs and says, "I had anticipated some reluctance. However, you really don't have a choice." He claps his hands, and the rear door opens. A group of vampires enter the ritual area, dragging a hostage. Ideally this should be a Dependant, but if none of the Cast has taken this Drawback, any innocent acquaintance works. The minions should include at least two vampires per Cast Member—more if they are combat veterans.

From here, there are several options. If the Cast feels like taking the risk, they can attack the vampires right here and now. The leech holding the hostage hands her off to Taylor, who retreats into one of the back rooms. The vamps are at a disadvantage, as they can't kill the Scoobies—they're still needed for the ritual, a fact Taylor shouts to his "troops" if they are winning. If the Good Guys wipe the floor with the bloodsuckers, Taylor exits as quickly as possible (the board's sealing the rear door have been replaced, allowing it to swing freely). Of course he still clutches the hostage, so following isn't a problem. Taylor's car is waiting a few blocks away. He drops the hostage whenever necessary to give him the moment he needs to get to his car. If the Cast doesn't catch up to him before he gets to the car, he pushes her out as he drives away, knowing they'll stop and care for their friend before chasing him.

If the Cast decides not to attack and enters their squares, the mystical walls close in on them. They cannot move beyond the lines of the square. The vamps and Taylor can't get to them either, but the hostage is still vulnerable. At this point, Taylor simply has to perform the ritual, and the Djinn will kill the Cast for the last bit of energy it needs to free itself from its prison.

Breaking through the barrier is nearly impossible—nine Success Levels on a single Strength (doubled) roll. However, experimenting with the magical wall shows that it only prevents people from passing. Other objects, such as the lit candle, a stake, or a shoe can be thrown (or levitated) through. While staking the entire group of minions or even enough to free the hostage is unlikely, there are other targets within the room. The packing material from the crate is dry and flammable. A lit candle tossed into it would quickly ignite a bonfire-sized blaze, which bothers the vamps more than Taylor. If the ritual is delayed for a few minutes by wounding Taylor or knocking the book from his hands, the fire spreads to the walls. At this point, the vampires should make a Willpower (not doubled) roll. Failure indicates their bravery crumbles in the face of the bonfire and they flee. Shortly, the entire building is engulfed. The painted circle begins to melt away, disrupting the barriers and freeing the Cast.

While the floor is fairly solid, it is worn and has suffered from years of neglect. It cannot stand more than a few blows from someone determined to break through. It will only take eight cumulative Success Levels before a hole, large enough for a single person, is opened to the basement, where the floor doesn't extend. Each additional four Success Levels doubles the size of the hole.

Taylor's notebook

If the Cast manages to take the Notebook away from Taylor and keep it as he escapes, they should read it as soon as possible. Reading just a page or two quickly tells the Cast Member of its dark origins. It is indeed the collected knowledge of a group of Djinn worshipers, though only a "traveling workbook," in that it contains some of the important signs, prophecies, rituals, and charts, but little history or background. The important information is also written in an ancient Babylonian code, which is very difficult to translate (-5 on any skill roll). At your discretion, this Notebook could be instrumental in devising a ritual to close the gaps in the Djinn's mystical prison in some later Episode.



Name: Vampire Mercenary
Motivation: Blood!, follow orders
Critter Type: Vampire
Attributes: Str 6, Dex 5, Con 5, Int 3, Per 2, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 18, Combat 16, Brains 11
Life Points: 75
Drama Points: 2
Special Abilities: Hard to Kill 7, Vampire

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	18	23	Must Grapple first, no defense actions
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Kick	15	18	Bash
Grapple	18	—	Resisted by Dodge
Punch	16	16	Bash



If a Cast Member is more acrobatically inclined, she can brace herself on the sides of the barrier, which form a tube, and climb toward the ceiling above (two Success Levels should be sufficient, unless you are a particularly demanding Director). The containment barrier only extends upward ten feet. From there the ceiling rafters can be reached easily. Unfortunately, the exposed rafters won't hold a person and pulling more than one rafter down causes the roof to creak ominously. Better to just jump to the floor from the top of the barriers.

Whether breaking through the floor or carefully jumping from the top of a barrier tube, it is easy to smudge the symbols around a companion's square. From the outside, there is no inhibition against disturbing the barrier's warding symbols or lines.

Taylor's ritual must be read from the Notebook, and if it is knocked out of his hands he must start again at the beginning. If a Cast Member disrupts the ceremony more than once, Taylor will be furious. He will call his tame vamps, smudge the symbols surrounding the square, and releasing that particular Cast Member. Then he will order the vampires to kill her.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the ritual is about to begin and the Cast is still clueless as to Taylor's true allegiance, there are several last minute hints that can drop the Clue Bomb. A Perception and Occultism roll while glancing at the Notebook highlights a "human sacrifice" requirement. During the laying of the circle, a Perception and Occultism roll leaves the character with vague feelings of uneasiness. If the roll generates multiple Success Levels, the Cast Member gets more information, such as the nature and intent of the ritual.

If the players figure out Taylor's game, but decide to play along and find a way to subvert his ritual, everyone should get five or more experience points. If the players fall for Taylor and help his ritual along, barely escaping with their lives, give each two points—at least they're alive, right? One additional point (or a Drama Point award) should be granted to anyone who took the initiative to investigate Taylor. Another point might be granted to a non-fighter if her Dependent or loved one was taken hostage and the Cast Member does something really brave during the climax to save her.





LIFE POINTS
DRAMA POINTS
EXPERIENCE POINTS

CHARACTER NAME _____

CHARACTER Type _____

DESCRIPTION _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH — INTELLIGENCE

DEXTERITY ————— PERCEPTION

CONSTITUTION — WILLPOWER

SKILLS

ACROBATICS	—	KNOWLEDGE	—
ART	—	KUNG FU	—
COMPUTERS	—	LANGUAGES	—
CRIME	—	MR. FIX-IT	—
DOCTOR	—	NOTICE	—
DRIVING	—	OCCULTISM	—
GETTING MEDIEVAL	—	SCIENCE	—
GUN FU	—	SPORTS	—
INFLUENCE	—	WILD CARD	—

USEFUL INFORMATION

INITIATIVE (DIO + DEX)

PERCEPTION (DIO + PER + NOTICE) -

NOTES

SUCCESS LEVELS TABLE

ROLL TOTAL	SUCCESS LEVELS	DESCRIPTION
9-10	1	ADEQUATE
11-12	2	DECENT
13-14	3	GOOD
15-16	4	VERY GOOD
17-20	5	EXCELLENT
21-23	6	EXTRAORDINARY
24-26	7	MIND-BOGGLING
27-29	8	OUTRAGEOUS
30-32	9	SUPERHEROIC
33-35	10	GOD-LIKE
+3	+1	

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QUALITIES

DRAWBACKS

COMBAT MANEUVERS

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Sex _____ **Height** _____
Age _____ **Weight** _____
Eyes _____ **Hair** _____

PERSONALITY _____

STRENGTH _____

WEAKNESSES _____

ROMANTIC INTERESTS _____

ROLE WITHIN THE GROUP _____

SHORT TERM GOALS _____

LONG TERM GOALS _____

POSSESSIONS

CHARACTER HISTORY

ALLIES/CONTACTS

A blank, lined notebook page with a decorative black border at the top and bottom. The word "ENEMIES" is centered in the middle of the page.

WEAPONS

TYDE

BASE CAD: DAMAGE

RANGE/NOTES

QUICK SHEET

Name: _____
Motivation: _____
Critter Type: _____
Attributes: Str _____ Dex _____ Con _____ Int _____ Per _____ Will _____
Ability Scores: Muscle _____ Combat _____ Brains _____
Life Points: _____
Drama Points: _____
Special Abilities: _____

Name	Score	Maneuvers	Damage	Notes

Name: _____
Motivation: _____
Critter Type: _____
Attributes: Str _____ Dex _____ Con _____ Int _____ Per _____ Will _____
Ability Scores: Muscle _____ Combat _____ Brains _____
Life Points: _____
Drama Points: _____
Special Abilities: _____

Name	Score	Maneuvers	Damage	Notes
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Name: _____
Motivation: _____
Critter Type: _____
Attributes: Str _____ Dex _____ Con _____ Int _____ Per _____ Will _____
Ability Scores: Muscle _____ Combat _____ Brains _____
Life Points: _____
Drama Points: _____
Special Abilities: _____

Name	Score	Maneuvers	Damage	Notes
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DIRECTOR'S SCREEN

Buffy: That's the plan. So. Am I crazy?

Willow: Well, crazy's a strong word.

Giles: Let's not rule it out though.

—3.22 *Graduation Day - Part Two*

DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?

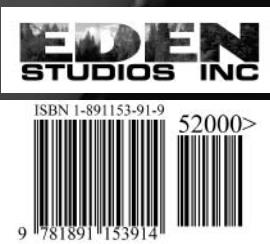
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