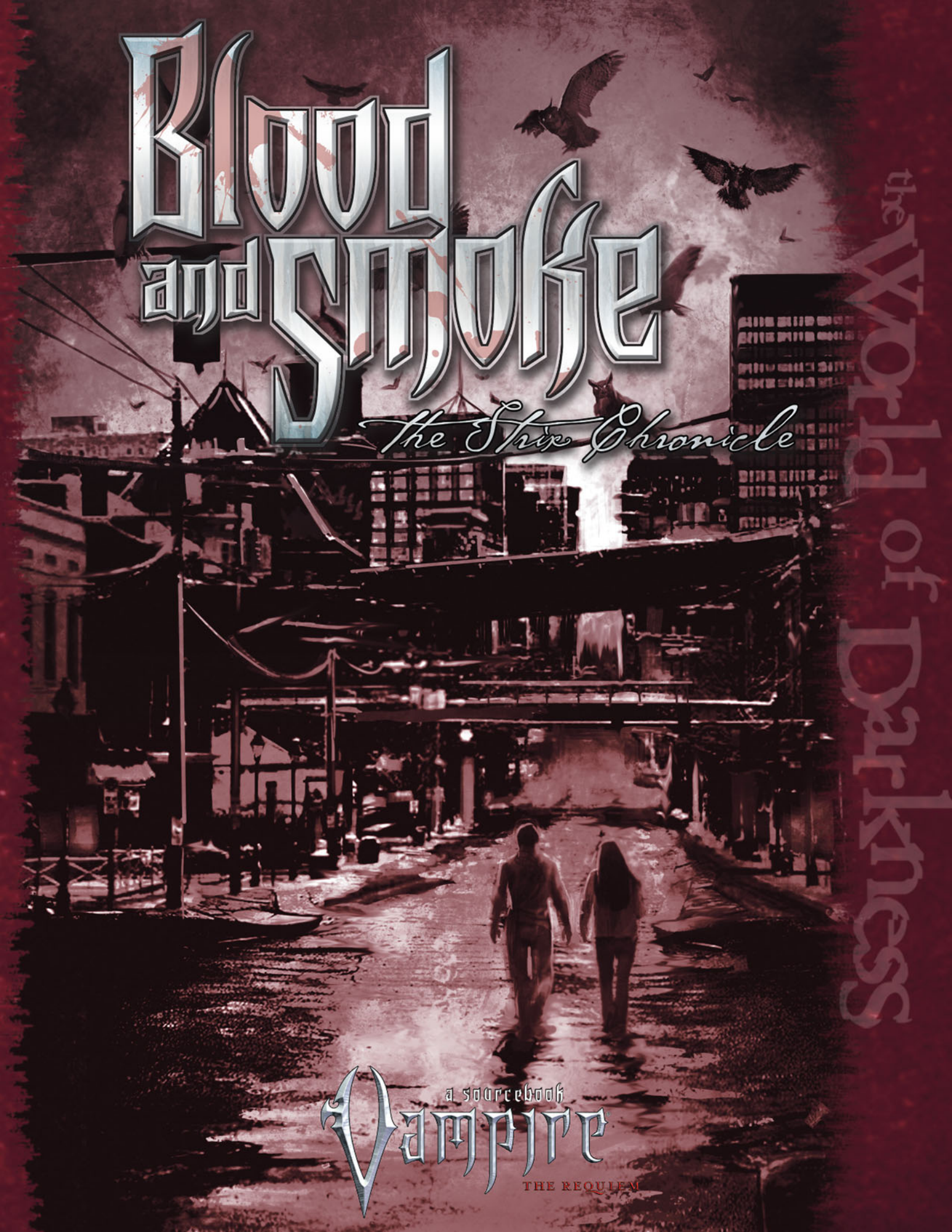
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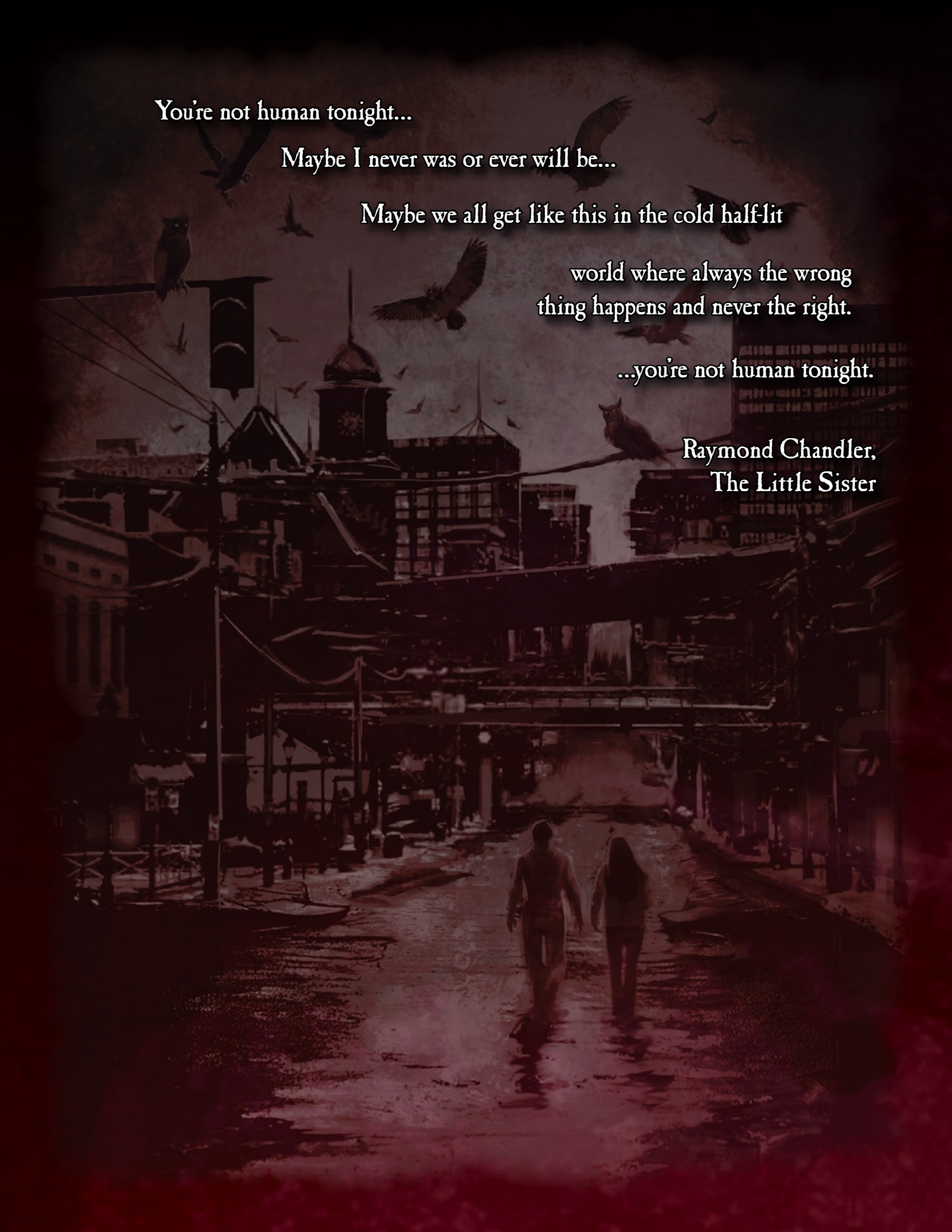
The Stix Chronicle
the World of Darkness
a sourcebook
Vampire
THE REQUIEM



You're not human tonight...

Maybe I never was or ever will be...

Maybe we all get like this in the cold half-lit

world where always the wrong
thing happens and never the right.

...you're not human tonight.

Raymond Chandler,
The Little Sister

Credits

Authors: Rose Bailey, David Brookshaw, N. Conte, Joshua Alan Doetsch, Elizabeth Greenberg, Susann Hessen, David A Hill Jr, Alec Humphrey, Wood Ingham, Audrey Whitman, Stew Wilson, Filamena Young

Developer: Rose Bailey

Editor: Ellen Kiley

Creative Director: Richard Thomas

Art Direction and Design: Mike Chaney

Interior Artists: Borja Puig Linares, Cathy Wilkins, Michael Rookard, Rovina Cai, Cris Griffin, Lauren Cannon, Carlos Samuel Araya, Steven Stahlberg, Marco Mazzoni

Front Cover Artist: John Bridges

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Dedication

To my predecessors: Justin Achilli, Will Hindmarch, and Joseph Carriker. Without you, there would be no **Vampire**.

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Introduction

A beast does not know that he is a beast,
and the nearer a man gets to being a beast, the less he knows it.

George MacDonald

The wind's cold tonight, and so are you. Dead, still walking, pushing your way through the crowd to find the people at its fringes. The boy in the flannel shirt, leaning lonely against the dumpster. The woman with the laptop, waiting too late on the coffee shop porch. One of them's going home with you tonight. Just a question of who you're going to feel less guilty about.

Vampire is a game of visceral drama and personal horror.

Vampire is about sex and murder, about power and wild defiance. It's about urban squalor and the romance of the city. It's about what's wrong with you — yes, you — and how that shapes the monster you'll become.

Vampire is also about thrilling action and nail-biting paranoia. It's about dying young and being a great-looking corpse. It's about acting out in all of the ways we imagine we would, if only we couldn't see ourselves in the mirror.

Vampire is a game about dead people and it should make you feel alive.

Themes

Vampire is built on contrast, taking place in a World of Darkness with blinding whites and pitch blacks. Characters try to stay in the cool, comfortable grays, but they can't hide all the time. And, hey, they look good in black.

Requiem + Masquerade

What are you going to do to make it through tonight? What about tomorrow night? And after the deeds are done and your belly's full, how are you going to live with yourself? What are you going to do with your damnation that makes it worth all the sins along the way?

That's the Requiem.

That's only half the question, though. Mortals are dinner, but they're also what you've got for dates. No matter how callous you become, you'll need to move among them. How will you keep your connection to Humanity, even as a sham?

That's the Masquerade.

The song and the dance don't always play well. Devote yourself to redeeming human sinners and you may discover they're the only creatures you understand.

Spend your nights in a vault perfecting your monstrosity and you may find yourself trapped, unable to flee through the masses when the hunters bash down the gates.

Old + New

Established 1856. That's what the firm's sign says. The owner was established 1856, too, even though his sharp-cut suit was made tomorrow. He's one of your guys. One of the sharks you swim with.

The Kindred are the real predators of the modern age. They're hip to our tricks, but they've got a hundred years of history behind them. You're one of them. So, congratulations: You are the child-stealer, the plague-bearer, and the faceless corporate titan sucking the life out of your own hometown.

Piety + Blasphemy

How did you get to be what you are? Were you a good girl, dragged kicking and screaming from heaven? Or a bad boy, brought back from the grave 'cause hell didn't deserve you?

Little of both, probably.

TRUTH AND LIES

VAMPIRES DRINK BLOOD

True. Feeding is a rush like nothing else — for us and our paramours. The blood sustains us, lets us wake each night to paint the town red.

VAMPIRES ARE IMMORTAL

Almost. There's very little that can harm us. Sun. Fire. Maybe a heart broken by a wooden stake, followed by losing your head to a hacksaw. Other than that, the years stretch out like a banquet.

A VAMPIRE'S PREY BECOMES A VAMPIRE

You wouldn't be here if they didn't. Most of the time the prey needs a dose of the Blood to wakey-wake. But there are exceptions, and you damn well don't want to meet one.

VAMPIRES HAVE TERRIFYING POWERS

So very true. I can crush your hand before you can make a fist, make you want to kiss me when I'm covered in blood, and I know a guy who can sniff your dirty secrets from the sweat on your skin.

VAMPIRES DON'T SHOW UP IN MIRRORS

Not so much that we don't. More that you never see us coming.

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS VAMPIRES

Poor baby. There's you. There's me. And there're some folks who are dying to meet you...

Somebody cheated death to bring you back, and now you have to make up the debt. You can devote yourself to faith and good works. Play philanthropist. Play superhero. Or you can accept that you're damned and get the party started. Piss on the cross. Get some head.

Little of both, probably.

How to Use This Book

Blood and Smoke: The Strix Chronicle is a reimagining of the **Vampire: The Requiem** storytelling game. Inside, you'll find a complete game, ranging from core concepts of the world of the dead to descriptions of vampire city-states around the world. You'll also find complete rules for playing one of the Kindred, the vampires that inhabit the World of Darkness. And you'll find out about the Strix.

The Strix are blood-hungry shadows that corrupt and enslave the dead. They're a scary, alien threat that's capable of destroying vampires and their societies both from within and without. Sometimes they knock over one domino and watch all the others fall...sometimes they just sweep all the dominos off the table, like an angry kid.

The Kindred are the sexy vampires of pop culture, creatures of grace and savagery, lust and fear. The Strix are the gory vampires of folklore, demon-possessed corpses desperately jealous of the living and the Damned alike. Throughout history, as the Kindred have sung their Requiems and moved to their Danse Macabre, the Strix have haunted them, bedeviled them, and even possessed them.

Chapters

Chapter 1: Who We Are Tonight introduces the five Kindred clans, the lineages of vampires who stalk the shadows between the streetlights. It also reveals their covenants, the secret societies of monsters who conspire for knowledge, power, and even salvation.

Chapter 2: The All Night Society pulls back the curtain on a world just behind ours. Here we learn what it's like to be a vampire. How you survive, how you feed, and above all how you lie. We learn about the society of the Kindred: the graces they put on to mask the Beasts lurking always within them.

Chapter 3: Laws of the Dead provides rules for creating and playing Kindred characters. We reveal the properties of their blood, the powers at their command, and the banes that can bring them low. We learn how each vampire struggles to hang on to her most precious possession: her Humanity.

Chapter 4: Rules of the Night describes the Storytelling system, the engine **Vampire** uses to drive and resolve its action. From investigating crime scenes to beating a man to death, the rules are here.

Chapter 5: The Parliament of Owls digs into the lore of the Strix. We detail their powers and weaknesses, the strange cycles of their not-lives. We present a large number of example Strix to serve as antagonists and catalysts in your stories, as well as complete tools for building your own.

Chapter 6: The World We Die In visits Kindred domains around the world. What secret religion rules the Mission in California? Who are the half-ghosts accepted as a clan in Raleigh? What new covenants have risen in Tokyo?

Chapter 7: Storytelling addresses the nuts and bolts of running a **Vampire** game. We discuss using character traits to drive the story forward, and present a set of steps for fleshing out supporting cast and conflicting agendas for your stories.

Appendix 1: The Living gives guidelines for mortal characters in a **Vampire** game. We also present rules and numerous hooks for ghouls, the half-Damned companions of vampires.

Appendix 2: Conditions provides a convenient reference to the lingering effects of supernatural powers and other rules.

An Introduction to Storytelling Games

Chances are, you know what a storytelling — or roleplaying — game is already. But just like vampires, we love meeting new people. So if you're new here, let's talk about the basics.

In **Vampire**, you play out stories following a core cast of characters as they make their way in the World of Darkness, a distorted reflection of our own everyday world. It's a lot like a TV drama, something like *Veronica Mars* or *Breaking Bad*. Individual gaming sessions, generally running two to four hours, are like weekly episodes. Secrets will be revealed, relationships will be tested, and blood will be spilled.

Around two to five players take on one cast member each. You'll make decisions for your character — when her best friend betrays her, you'll plot her scheme for revenge. When another vampire picks a fight, you'll decide whether she runs, negotiates, or unleashes her dread powers. Perhaps most importantly, you'll tell the story of her ongoing relationship with the human life she was dragged away from.

One player, the Storyteller, is responsible for portraying characters who don't belong to specific players, and presenting fictional situations that challenge the other players' characters. Think of these as the supporting cast of our imagined TV series — both ongoing characters who help or oppose the core cast, and guest stars of the week who turn up to cause unique kinds of trouble.

As for challenging the player characters, it's the job of the Storyteller to come up with scenes where the players have to make decisions fraught with conflict and danger. The Storyteller narrates a situation, then the other players say how their characters respond. The most important question a Storyteller can ask is "What do you do now?"

When a character acts, the outcome of the action is determined by rolling a handful of dice. The basics are simple. You add a few numbers on your character sheet (a mini-dossier) and roll that many dice. You'll find out whether your action works, or fails and gets your character into more trouble.

While players other than the Storyteller will generally be advocates for their characters' success, planning ways in which they can succeed, a lot of drama and fun comes from when things don't go well for the protagonists. Again, think of a television series...the most interesting episodes are often the ones where everything goes wrong for the characters until they find a way to turn it around. That said, the Storyteller should make sure characters have a chance to bounce back rather than constantly dumping suffering on them.

The Storyteller is responsible for...

...bringing the World of Darkness to life through description.

...deciding where scenes start and what's going on.

...portraying characters who don't belong to other players.

...involving each player and her character in the ongoing story.

...putting players' characters in tough spots, encouraging interesting decisions.

...facilitating the actions players' characters take, while making sure there are always complications.

...making sure that poor dice rolls affect but don't stop the story.

The players are responsible for...

...creating their own individual characters as members of the cast.

...deciding what actions their characters take.

...making decisions that create drama and help keep the story moving.

...highlighting their characters' strengths and weaknesses.

...confronting the problems the Storyteller introduces.

...developing their characters' personalities and abilities over time, telling personal stories within the overall story of the game.

Everyone is responsible for...

...giving other players chances to highlight their characters' abilities and personal stories, whether that's by showing them at their strongest or weakest.

...making suggestions about the story and action, while keeping in mind the authority of players over their characters and the responsibility of the Storyteller to occasionally make trouble.

Inspirational Media

Here are some books and movies that get us in the mood to play **Vampire**.

Vampire Media

***Already Dead,* by Charlie Huston:** The most remarkable thing about this novel and its sequels is that every one of them is a solid crime novel which would be good without vampires, but in which the struggle of the vampire-as-junkie is integral to every plot. It focuses on the struggle of a tough guy in a Manhattan carved up by several vampire factions, much like the covenants in **Vampire**. Huston does an amazing job making just Manhattan into an entire world.

***Carmilla,* by J. Sheridan Le Fanu:** The story of a vampire who infiltrates human homes by exploiting teenagers' needs for companionship, reinventing herself across the decades. A perfect story about the Masquerade, but also sometimes a poignant and sexy one about love and pain.

***The Hunger,* by Whitley Strieber or directed by Tony Scott:** The book combines grand historical flashbacks with the grit of vampires as murderers who must dispose of bodies and turn their homes into fortresses. The movie presents sexy vampires struggling with the limits of immortality. You'll hear strains of the Requiem in both.

***Near Dark,* directed by Kathryn Bigelow:** The grim and bestial side of the Damned presented more viscerally than perhaps anywhere else. Also a great example of integrating local flavor — specifically, the American landscape — into your chronicle.

***Night Junkies,* directed by Lawrence Pearce:** This movie is tightly focused on the night-to-night struggle of vampires with their hunger. Its London of seedy strip clubs, rough love affairs, and jealousy-fueled murders has a dark, intimate feel appropriate to the World of Darkness.

Non-Vampire Media

***Brick,* directed by Rian Johnson:** This modern detective story set in an LA high school looks like a complex mystery, but turns out to be a simple story of love and greed. Perfect **Requiem** material. "Lunch is complicated. Lunch is many things."

***The Big Sleep,* by Raymond Chandler:** We could also recommend *The Little Sister* or *Farewell My Lovely*. Chandler's sense of why people do awful things is wonderful, and his language is too cool for us to even try to summarize it, but he also does something else worth paying attention to: He makes Los Angeles come alive. And he hates it.

***Go,* directed by Doug Liman:** A movie about being young and careening from desperate gambles to amazing thrills to terrible disasters and never stopping. The party kid subculture portrayed here is looking a little dated, but we don't really care. In general, movies about reckless young people in trouble are great for **Vampire**.

***Katja from the Punk Band,* by Simon Logan:** A punk/industrial crime novel set somewhere in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. The grimy cast of punk singers, junkies, cops, and drug dealers would all make excellent **Vampire** characters, and the attitude is pitch-perfect, too.

White Wolf Books

You have everything you need to play in this book, but we've published many other **Vampire** books over the years that can enhance your game.

The World of Darkness Core Rulebook and its update, **The God-Machine Chronicle**, provide more rules and examples, as well as unique lore of their own. **The God-Machine Chronicle** rules update is free.

The Clan Books delve deeper into the family relations of the Damned. Presented as a selection of in-world artifacts written by vampires and humans alike, they bring the World of Darkness to life in bright, if blood-stained, detail. They are:

- **Ventrue: Lords Over the Damned**
- **Daeva: Kiss of the Succubus**
- **Gangrel: Savage and Macabre**
- **Mekhet: Shadows in the Dark**
- **Nosferatu: The Beast that Haunts the Blood**

The Strix Chronicle Anthology tells a dozen stories of encounters between the Kindred and their Nemeses. This fiction collection is a great read in its own right, and an excellent source for Strix antagonists for your game.

Damnation City is the definitive handbook to building your own city for the World of Darkness. It's packed full of sample districts, locations, and mortals, as well as example rulers and systems for playing politics. It's an invaluable aid to any World of Darkness chronicle...**Vampire** or otherwise.

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD

PART I

Thao

I was creeping around behind an old desert church under half an inch of moon, wondering if snakebites were still something I should be scared of, when I tripped over the first gravestone.

Jesus, Jack, you've got a morbid sense of humor.

There were maybe a dozen, now that I was looking. A tiny old congregation presiding over a sea of crabgrass. And Edie, somewhere.

His instructions hadn't been that specific. South on 95, and I'd know it when I got there. Four hours in, I pulled up to a tiny, graffiti-covered shack with a broken lock. I had to keep myself from knocking. Inside, nothing. A few broken folding chairs, piles of broken glass, a mummified rat encountered in the rafters...and some shell casings that were way newer than I felt strictly comfortable with. No one coming up the highway, though; and no cars but mine, idling next to the closest thing to shade in 40 miles. I made a careful circuit around the shack, where the only sound was a high buzzing in the grass. Some old animal instinct made me want to shiver.

The upturned dirt was yellow and dry, and marked with an abandoned shovel. I poked at the ground tentatively with the shovel. How deep did he put her? Was she going to...come out on her own?

What was she going to remember?

I tried to be patient. Maybe it would be better if she got up on her own. So I stood next to her...corpse...I guess, listening to the rattling grass for maybe an entire minute before I couldn't stand it anymore and dug into her shallow grave. I whispered and shouted and scraped the dirt out of her eyes and shook her stupid. Nothing. She just lay there, rigid, with sand in her bleached hair; and I panicked.

Maybe...maybe she was just too hungry?

I carried her back to the car, and laid her in the backseat. I tipped a bag into her mouth, and couldn't help wincing at the cracking sound her jaw was making while I held it open. But the blood just dribbled out and soaked slowly into my upholstery. I wished I could still feel sick.

Okay, no; no more panicking. I was going to fix this somehow. I knew a guy who had to sleep, once. He said blood did the trick if...you know, it was taking too long. He did mean, human blood, right? I mean, we could kinda get in trouble if it's... you know, not. Would that even work? Jesus, I don't know.

She would kill me if it worked. She would be awake to kill me if it works. Oh god, Edie. I'm so sorry, but we can't keep waiting.

I slit my wrist and squeezed.

It was a long few seconds before she started flexing her hands weakly. Oh thank god. But when she started pulling me closer, I ripped my arm away; and God help me, she pouted. The last time I was this embarrassed, I was still alive. I threw a handful of blood bags at her, and climbed into the front seat. Her flush was already making me feel guilty. A blood bond doesn't work both ways. I'd have to have some of her. Which would be wrong. Great, now we're both blushing, and she's looking at me like she can't even remember that she should be angry at me for this. This is not a romantic moment, we are escaping.

Once we're in the car, speeding back north, I finally remember to ask her. "Edie. What happened on the road to Vegas?"

chapter one
Who We are tonight

You're not alone in the night. You never have been. Sometimes, we've been so close to you that you'd have felt our breath on your neck – if we still breathed. The shadows between the streetlights are ours. You're still not alone. We're all of us linked to each other by blood, unruly broods and ancient dynasties alike. Our clans. We're tied by tradition, too, or the breaking of it. Our covenants. Family and co-conspirators, a society of monsters expecting guests for dinner. That's who we are tonight.

clans

Our blood runs in five cursed lines, Damnation passed from sire to childe.
Each filling a role. The seducer, the survivor, the voyeur,
the nightmare, the master.

Some say we were once one, children of a Mother of Monsters
who diverged through the centuries. I don't think so. I think the curse is inside all of us. Scratch — or bite — anyone deep enough and you reveal the Beast inside.

We are many kinds of monster.
But we are all Kindred, for we were once human.

Daeva

The ones you die for

He warns you. You're going to do it anyway. You both know that. Eyes like TV ads that enslave you to debt. Voice like the fast food jingle talking you into suicide by tiny bites. The wanting. Every happiness you already have turns to bile. You smile. "Yes," you say. "More," you say. "Anything."

Something dead approaches. It isn't dangerous because it's strong — and it's ungodly strong. It isn't dangerous because it's fast — and, oh Christ, it's fast! It's dangerous because the prey see something beautiful in it. The prey want to be devoured. These dead things sway, as fascinating as bioluminescence in the endless dark. They are the smoking mirror. They are the glowing orb at the end of a stalk, dangling over a great, glass-fanged mouth.

The Daeva are all allure and objectification. They embody the social horror of vampirism more elementally than any other clan, because they exploit mortal hungers to feed their immortal ones. They are exploitation. They do not hide so much as clothe themselves in the images we've constructed — of beauty and charm. They co-opt all the things we want to be and want to fuck.

The Serpents arose from the sticky musk of the ancient world. River tides teased the gaping valleys to frothing fertility. The elder nights throbbed with temple music. Priests and priestesses practiced their love arts for coin — communion of the cunt and the cock. There was no difference between god and demon or sex and worship. In that space between, the Daeva curse gestated. They reveled in that time and place where deities cared enough to do horrible things to you directly. But the world turned. The capital "G" God changed the paradigm. When they could no longer be gods, the Daeva became succubi and incubi. The world turned again. Tonight, when it is no longer practical to be a demon, the Daeva become zeitgeists. They are the walking dead personifications of the future bias. "I'll resist tomorrow."

See the prom queen. A teenage White Lady. She floats from prom to prom, a resplendent urban myth in the adolescent court. At the end of the night, she chooses one lucky king or co-queen. She could be an allegory of the dangers and anxieties of budding teenage sexuality…if she bothered with such abstracts. Her dress is soaked in Scotchgard.

See the Byronic poet. He perches at the edges of open mic nights and writer workshops. He's a whirl of burnt coffee smells, half-smirks, and raggedy charm. He always knows the right thing to say, the right critique or input that melts all your creative blocks. When he says you have potential, all the doubting voices die. You're an artist! But insecurity creeps back in whenever he's away. You dread disappointing him.

See the social media specter. It swims in the nutrient rich waters of personal ads and dating sites. It can detect a drop of despair across vast distances, from screen to screen. It wears usernames like masks. Having grown bored of bombarding the living with supernatural influence, it now plucks those strings with words from afar. It always types what they need. It gives good text. Meet-ups inevitably occur, and who is there to notice if another Internet profile goes dormant?

See the pantheon. How did you get into the VIP room? Everything's surreal. Dizzy. Nostalgia tickles like a phantom limb. All these vaguely familiar faces. Not people. Archetypes. Visages from magazine ads, pinups, and billboards going back a century. When did the music stop? The Marlboro Man, the American Dreamgirl, Rosie the Riveter, and all the rest stare at you, motionless and eternal.

Let the other clans skulk and lope. The Daeva strut through their damnation. They've danced down the centuries as both Madonna and Babylon whore. The thing we want is the thing we shun. They are the perfect predators. They are paragons. If only it didn't get harder and harder to enjoy. Stimulus fills the hole, but also erodes it wider. Yet the Serpents will never stop striving. They know that if you're not the one doing, then you're the one being done. The Daeva are never done.

Why you want to be us

You move wicked quick. You look great doing it. You get to go to all the best parties, whether that means being a charismatic cult leader, a rock star, or motherfucking Bruce Wayne. You have the power of everyone who ever turned you down in life. You roll human frailties and smoke them like cloves. You don't even have to take, because everyone's giving. But you can still take if you want to. Just knowing you can pull someone apart with your bare hands is all the rush one needs. Usually.

"I'm the siren song, and I'm the jagged rocks too. Crash into me."

Why you should fear us

The Serpents offer the thing you want, but their real evil is that they actually give it to you. Had a rough breakup, need to cry on somebody's shoulder? A Daeva will offer you hers. Desperately want to nail that guy with the long hair? He'll sleep with you, don't worry. All she wants in exchange is her teeth on your neck. The Daeva control one of the keystones of human misery: wanting, and the hollow curse of getting what we once wanted.

Why we should fear ourselves

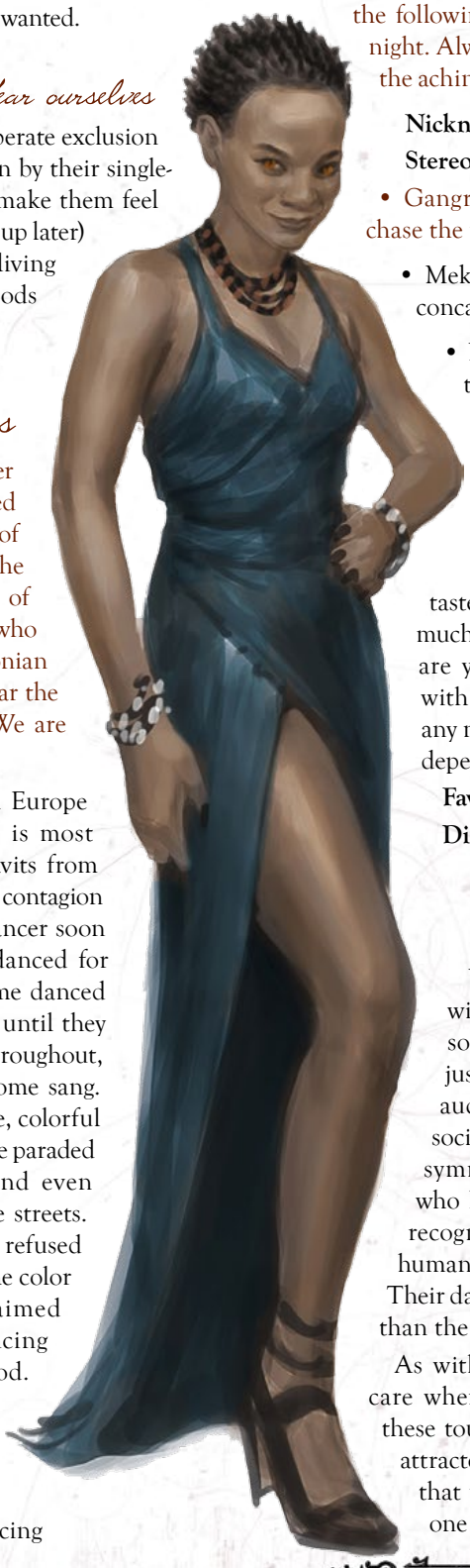
Like people who hunt sex to the deliberate exclusion of love, the Daeva are ultimately broken by their single-mindedness. They pursue things that make them feel alive (blood, sex, food they have to puke up later) at the expense of the things that give living people meaning and stable happiness. Gods should not envy the worshippers.

Clan Origins

- Inanna, goddess of war, murdered her handmaiden, Lilith — who was called Stranger and Scorned and Serpent of Eden. Then Inanna knew regret. She ransomed Lilith back from the owls of the underworld. Yet there are those who say the trade was a trick. In their Plutonian slumber, the progeny of Lilith can hear the screech-owls keen: "We are owed. We are coming."

- The Dancing Plague swept through Europe for centuries. The documentation is most complete: official reports and affidavits from surgeons, priests, and magistrates. The contagion spread on unknown vectors. One dancer soon became tens and hundreds. They danced for days, until collapsing in ecstasy. Some danced until their ribs broke. Some danced until they died from heart failure or stroke. Throughout, they screamed, laughed, or cried. Some sang. Witnesses claimed they "wore strange, colorful attire" and "held wooden sticks." Some paraded naked, made obscene gestures, and even committed sexual intercourse in the streets. Some became agitated by those who refused to dance. They reacted violently to the color red and pointed shoes. Some claimed they had been stung, and the dancing separated the venom from the blood. The clergy exorcised. Physicians bled patients. Mass hysteria? Ergot poisoning? One village claimed as many as 50 fatalities, but they had not counted the bodies that kept dancing after death. They did not hear the feverish beat tapping from shallow graves. There is a woman in a monastery outside of Strasbourg. The color red excites her so. She has been dancing since 1518.

- Once upon a midnight darkly, a snowy-skinned princess, the fairest in the land, awoke with a wet scream. Her stepmother cut out and ate her heart. But the princess rose again on the following eve, just as her descendants rise every night. Always, they are consumed by the need to fill the aching void in their chests — hungrily ever after.



Nickname: Serpents

Stereotypes

- Gangrel: It's so precious, how relentlessly they chase the prey. Must be exhausting.

- Mekhet: They call us shallow. We call them concave.

- Nosferatu: All in all, and I have to think that strumming love is more cruel than tickling fear.

- Ventrue: Give them a series of puerile achievements to attain, and they'll actually think they're winning.

Clan Bane (The Wanton Curse): You taste the romance in all things, but none so much as blood. Mortals are not just food. They are your obsession, and that fixation grows with every sip. Drink more than once, from any mortal, and you risk becoming emotionally dependent on your prey.

Favored Attributes: Dexterity or Manipulation

Disciplines: Celerity, *Majesty*, Vigor

How to Make a Monster

Whatever the Daeva pursue, they pursue with a prodigious lust. That pursuit is often social, but can be physical or intellectual just as easily. Regardless, it will require an audience. A Serpent need not be overtly social, but he will need eyes to frame his fearful symmetry. The aloof, puzzle-solving genius, who hungers for riddles, will need that genius recognized. The Daeva thrive in the crush of humanity. They are not so graceful in a vacuum. Their damnation requires a feedback loop, more so than the other clans, as a general thing.

As with Attributes, so too with Skills. Take a care when selecting Skill Specialities, as one of these touches of brilliance is likely the thing that attracted your character's sire. The back-story of that relationship can easily blossom from that one trait. Social Skills are rarely the tertiary

category, as Daeva keep in practice in dealing with the kine. They rarely lose the Man to the Beast through isolation. They are the vampires most likely to cultivate Empathy. However, they have a tendency to pick up the worst habits of humanity. More so than other Kindred, they understand the subtle nuances of the pain their social predation causes. That's just another road to the Beast.

Ask how much your character will rely on Majesty. If he's going to do it heavily, then you'll want Presence and Manipulation, as well as Empathy. Celerity requires no specific Attribute or Skill choices, but effects like Vigor's jumping ability benefit from Strength.

Many Daeva affect striking appearances, the better to attract the eye. These birds of Hermes glory in their peacock splendor. Unlike most other dead predators, they function best when seen. Yet through their command of Majesty, a Daeva can make any look work — plain clothes become glamorous — weather-worn garb becomes grungy and hip. Some Daeva stop worrying about their appearances, and somehow that not caring makes them even more attractive. Some go so far as to purposefully challenge themselves with clashing bits of clothing hastily snatched from the thrift store, amping their supernatural auras, and becoming beacons of incongruous Tyler Durden cool. Regardless of dress, a practiced eye might be able to identify a Daeva by the way she moves. They are always moving. Even the most clumsy mortal might awaken to sinuous grace as a Serpent.

In the Covenants

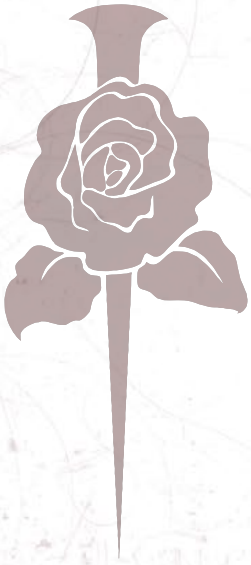
The Carthian Movement: The Daeva are the mouths of the Revolution. Their tongues turn ethos into contagion, stoke mobs into wildfire. The Serpents are the recruiters of the Revolution. The Firebrands of other clans know that you need at least one Daeva around. The feeding is good for the Serpents among the Carthians, as they swallow blood and fervor in equal measure. And the feeding for everyone else is better when they're around. And when violence must carry the politics of change, who else is so terrifyingly fast and bone-crunchingly strong?

The Circle of the Crone: Some of the most important voices in the Crone's choir belong to the Serpents. It is the wise hierophant who keeps them close. The Daeva's presence makes rituals grander, the spirituality more real, the air of a wild hunt more tangible. It's easier to believe. They are the maenads who inspire orgiastic revel. They put the romance back into sparagmos. Who better to lead by example in the ecstatic emulation of the perfect vampire?

The Invictus: The Daeva function well in the middle of a web. They know just how to pluck the strands. They know all the right vibrations. Their grandeur adds an air of legitimacy to the polite rituals and courtly behavior of the First Estate, making it all a better misdirection for the blackmail and backstabbing behind the velvet curtains. Who are the masters of the tyrannous emotions that control us all? Who looks more fetching in a crown?

The Lancea et Sanctum: The immortal passions of the Daeva can bend into religious ecstasy of a frightful intensity. Their sermons wash over the laity like a tidal wave. They have perched for so long on both the right and the left shoulders of humanity. Who, in motion, are more like angels or succubi? Who knows the exact point where divinity and perversion bisect? Who knows the sinners so intimately? Who better to tempt the mortals than the Serpents?

The Ordo Dracul: The Order is an ill fit for many Daeva. Yet those who get a taste for it become hooked, like mortals addicted to cosmetic surgery. The pain and danger and transcendence. More! Always more. These Serpents want to shed their skins and see what holy blasphemies may come. They are the charismatic gurus who underground fighting rings materialize around. They are the cult leaders who can convince their followers to do unspeakable things for knowledge. Who so envies the humans, yet clutches her own immorality? Who would do anything to have it both ways?



Gangrel

The ones you can't kill.

Wasn't the howling. Weren't the claws or magnesium eyes or the lizard brain keening, "Run, run, run!" Was the change. Like them trashy drive-in horrors, only on rewind. Monstrous bulk shrinking – snout flattening – fangs dulling down to pearls – fur receding to a naked obscenity. The smiling little girl walking towards you on filthy feet. That's what did it. Ten thousand beasts pressing out on her belly like it's a theatre curtain on opening night. That's what emptied your bowels and sanity.

Something dead approaches. It comes from way out, where The End eats the road. It is a brother to owls and a companion to scarecrows. No escape. You'll try to kill it, but it will not die. You'll try to outrun it, but it will lope after on four feet. You'll try to escape, but it goes where other monsters fear to tread. You'll lock yourself in a tower or a vault, but it will come on nighted wings or as ravenous smoke. You'll plead to its human face, but it will only grin and say, "He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man." You'll die wondering whom the monster quoted.

The Gangrel are the ultimate survivors. Close to the Beast and close to the bone, they're primal. No. Feral! They're tough, shrugging off what should be terrible wounds as the weapons harmlessly thunk in their dead flesh. They're out there, and you can't do a damn thing about them. More than any other clan, they are a reminder that the greatest lie the Devil ever told was, "Congratulations, you escaped the food chain!"

Where do they come from? Fuck you! That's where. Ask the sun where it comes from. Ask the moon. Ask Ekhidna, Baba Yaga, and Enkidu. Their history is the space between sharp teeth and your throat. They are the ripping, barking now-now-now! Still want the stories? Best get rambling. Hit the freeways, highways, rails, trails, and cornfields lovely, dark, and deep. Read the runic rhymes on ancient stone. Riddles written on the walls of moaning alleys. Fragments of epics scratched into condom machines in gas station bathrooms.

Seek out the oral traditions, echoed by the bleating herd. Ask the meth-head trucker about that black dog that harshed his buzz. Ask about the Unholy and her crows. The Gangrel make more bogeymen amongst their Kindred, per capita, and that's a fact. They are the voice in the bog. They are the thirsty earth. They are the reason men discovered fire. They are all mouths on the devouring road.

See the storyteller. A strange bird migrating from town to town. She perches in pubs, forest preserves, parks, hospitals, and the cafetorium stages of grade schools. The best seat is reserved for the storyteller. A professional orator, she specializes in ghost stories. October's when she's in season. She travels, tells tales, and collects them. She publishes collections of folklore. But some urban legends, the ones that fit like jagged jigsaw pieces, she keeps. She brings them back to her roost, writes them on the walls and ceiling. Laying on the floor, she takes it all in, unfocusing her eyes. As she hatches and crosshatches the scrawl, patterns emerge. She licks her lips, hungry for the locations of certain slumbering ancients.

See the CEO. They say successful businessmen have personality traits in common with sociopaths and predators. He's Shere Khan in a three-piece suit. The rules really didn't change. Eat or be eaten. Greed is good. The skyscraper is just another jungle, and he claimed it, floor to floor, marking with his own blood. He knows everything that goes on in his jungle. Every jackal and leopard bows to him. How they yowl, growl, and howl. Sometimes the primal metaphors cut too literal. He messes up so many suits. But he just sloughs them off like a molting animal. In his penthouse apartment, there is a closet with rows of suits like rotating shark teeth.

See the drowned ones. The lake is a popular vacation spot, but there are stories. Rangers still don't know why deer spontaneously leap into the water never to come out. When some folk look at their reflections on the mirror surface, they see pale faces that are not their own. Night-time swimmers sometimes spot their fellows going rigid in the water, eyes glassy, mouths gaping open, turning a shade more pale. Sometimes, during these spells, the swimmers get aroused and erect, but they're always too embarrassed to tell their friends. They just dip their legs back in the lake, hoping for another bite.

Let the other clans wrestle and strain with esoteric riddles of what it is to be a monster. The Gangrel offer something more pure. Power without guilt. Lust without doubt. The other clans need. Always needing. They need havens, an audience, solitude, mortal institutions, or secrets. The Gangrel take what they want. All that they need is locked away in the endless potential of their horrific clay.

"Br'er Rabbit, Br'er Rabbit, how do you do?
I'm the Br'er Devil, and I'm comin' for you."

Why you want to be us

With the other clans, you're all afraid of your Beast. Oh, it'll get me into trouble. Oh, it'll kill the people I care about. Woe is fucking you. No. As a Gangrel, you can't be stopped and you don't want to stop. The creatures of the wild run with you, and even better, you can strip away your disguise of human flesh and become one of them.

Why you should fear us

See that business about being unstoppable. We're serious there. The beast comes at you, you unload your last three bullets into it, it doesn't die, doesn't stop, doesn't flinch. And oh, yeah, it brought friends. The night has a thousand mouths. Say goodbye to your entrails.

Why we should fear ourselves

Self is a precious thing. Surrendering to, or even using, the Beast the way we do means sacrificing our sense of self to our inner hungers. Even our bodies are no longer our own, as we grow grotesque claws or transform into mist. It's not only in our minds, but swimming under our skins. There is no escape from the Beast, not for the our prey and certainly not for ourselves.

Clan Origins

- Ekhidna! Mother of Monsters. Your children call upon your name! But not so loudly. All the world is your womb. All of your children are embryonic sand sharks, hunting and devouring one another in the utero dark. Whatever is left will grow into the next lifecycle.
- In the wastes outside the Roman Empire, barbarians fornicated with savage gods. The bestial offspring of these couplings craved blood, and one fed upon Gnaeus of Ventrue. The Lord's blood debased the creature, and it became like him, a feral Kindred of a kind.
- Bogs have deep memories. A melting glacier shard forms a lake. Something prehistoric waits in the water — something that traveled thousands of miles in an ice sarcophagus — something that brewed the oxygen from the water with decay, choking the fish — something that urged ancient men to throw sacrifices into its mouth, then preserved those bodies with liquid necromancy, tanning flesh in water the color of strong tea. The first bog body tore through the placental layer of sphagnum moss and trembling earth. Only death can nourish it. It preserves some of the dead it swallows, pickling the corpses with the black bog water in its veins.
- Once upon a midnight darkly, a huntsman wept in the woods. He had failed his queen. In disgrace and despair, he resigned himself to lay exposed to the elements, as still as death. When the woodland creatures came to peck and gnaw upon his meat, he made no protest. The sun scoured away what flesh remained. The soil embraced his bones. Many and many a night later, the ground spat him up. When his descendants call, the woodland creatures answer, for each contains a tiny piece of the ancient in its belly, and all the world is a flapping, loping, crawling graveyard — savagely ever after.

How to Make a Monster

All Gangrel are survivors. Those who are not quickly change, or litter the earth with their ash. But not all Gangrel are alphas. Some saunter down the streets as the dog with the biggest bite. Some creep and hide as scavengers. Some move about as shifting chameleons. Many Gangrel go through several phases in the unholy lifecycles of their Requiems.

A Savage is molded by her environment and situation. The stereotypical Gangrel allots primary slots to her Physical Attributes and Skills, with plenty of points of Stamina, Survival, and Brawl. But there is room for variation. A Savage who survives on all growl and bluster might take Social Attributes as primary, and load up on Intimidation. A clever coyote of a Gangrel might survive through sharp Mental Attributes and a lot of Stealth and Larceny. Perhaps

he swims in political waters, latching on to more powerful monsters like a remora, flattering the fiends using high scores in Manipulation and Persuasion. Some Gangrel quickly abandon their Humanity, to become better predators. And some Gangrel practice human mimicry, down to an art, to become better predators.

If your character is going to make heavy use of Animalism, you'll want Manipulation and Animal Ken to start, adding Presence and Intimidation as he matures.

More than any other clan, the Gangrel's Beast expresses itself. This expression, through Protean, is unique from Savage to Savage, and affords a player a spot of creativity. What is your Beast like? Is it cold and reptilian? Is it an aquatic predator like a shark or leopard seal? Is it at home underground or in networks of alleys like a rat? Perhaps it is more akin to a bat or bird of prey, comfortable when looking down from great heights. It might rage like a wolf or bear. It might have a mad hyena cackle. It might be a chimera amalgam of creatures. Decide the flavor of your Beast, and work with the Storyteller on how to best manifest it through Protean. When not employing her shapeshifting powers, what behaviors does your character betray that subtly communicates this Beast?

Nickname: Savages

Stereotypes:

- Daeva: Watch the peacock eat its own wings to make itself tame.
- Mekhet: The shivering Shadows are always watching. So we just ramble to places they fear to go.
- Nosferatu: The abandoned, half-finished sculptures of a lazy Beast.
- Ventrue: Heya, little brother. Did you know that you'll last only as long as their termite towers? That'd make me nervous, staring down the mouth of forever.**Clan Bane (The Feral Curse):** The Beast lethargically coils under the R-Complex of most Kindred. But you and the Beast are as thick as thieves. It rises and rips out of your skin to protect you from the bad, bad world. But it has a price. It's harder to resist the Beast's call, harder still to remember why you should even want to.

Favored Attributes: Composure or Stamina

Disciplines: Animalism, *Protean*, Resilience

The Carthian Movement: Change is a savage enterprise. The dead don't like new ideas, but the Gangrel are dynamic in a vicious sort of way. They are the roar of the revolution and the messengers of the movement, traveling city to city. Some began as souls too wild to domesticate. Others are former hounds of the First Estate, tired of their masters' abuse. Their nature confounds the tactics of the establishment. How do you threaten the havens of those who sleep in the earth? How do you bring the heat down on those who can skip town at a moment's notice?

The Circle of the Crone: Whole murders of Gangrel perch in the Mother's Army. The clan's oral tradition teems with fierce mother figures like Ekhidna. Young Savages are easy recruits. Primal blood sings in tune with primordial magic. Hierophants lead Wild Hunts in the form of howling wolves. Feral witches roar to the stars and tap the wisdom of the dark earth. Who better to explore what it is to be a monster, than those so intimate with the Beast?

The Invictus: For all of their cagey instincts, road lust, and hunger for freedom, some Gangrel respond well to strong alphas. And who is more alpha than the First Estate? These Gangrel find their niches as the knights and growling hounds of lords and ladies. But some rise higher. They learn to translate their predatory natures to politics. They attain savage nobility. For so too does the Invictus respond well to alphas, and who is more elementally alpha than the get of lion gods and demon wolves?

The Lancea et Sanctum: Some Gangrel get religious when they realize they can call all of God's beasts to his vengeful purpose. The Savages make useful converts to the Chapel and the Spear. Who better to travel the world's hidden places in the search of relics? Faith molds people, and monsters are made of even more malleable clay. Some Gangrel become bestial seraphs, the wings of bats and owls ripping from out their backs. Some angels have more cause than others to say, "Be not afraid."

The Ordo Dracul: The Gangrel fascinate the Dragons. More often than not, it is the Order that approaches the Gangrel. Their protean bodies merit study. Endless variation that breaks the monotony of the eternally dead flesh. The Savages have more to offer the Dragons than just the physical. Creatures willing to leave behind their physical identities attain the sort of mindset needed to chase the elusive mysteries of the Ordo Dracul. Who better to evolve the Curse? Who else has that elemental audacity?

MEKHET
THE ONES YOU DON'T SEE.

That shit-eating grin. The shit-heel prick. How'd he get into your game? "Not playing the cards; I'm playing you," he croons. He's not wearing shades, but you can't see his eyes. Chuckle. "Always wearing shade," he says. Did you talk out loud? The fucker is playing the cards, because you just did a bottom deal, a triple lift, and two moves that ain't got names. You know his hand. He's already lost. Bastard's not even looking at his cards. He knows. He doesn't say, "Fold." Says something else. Says your secret. The thing no one else knows. The thing you sit up at night praying no one ever finds out. The table flips. Loud noises. Your poker buddies beat you bloody. Through it all, you see his grin. He just fades away, and the last thing floating in the tobacco smoke is that grin.

Something dead approaches. In its hollowed-out insides, there is an event horizon that swallows light, sound, and all knowing. Why do we find missing items, where we already looked, only after we've accused our loved ones? Is there a silhouette on the other side of the shower curtain? We can't leap out of the shower at every imagined sight. What hides behind that acceptance? Ignore the writing on the fogged mirror. Why are we running, in the streets, from a feeling? This is silly. Cold hands pull us down. We scream. No one helps. They just walk by. What in the Twilight Zone fuck is going on?

The Mekhet are often quiet, often invisible, and yet they see everything. Spies and prophets, they go where they will and learn what they want to. No secret is safe from the Mekhet. "We are the Y incision cut into this dark, dark world," whispers a voice. "Shall we loosen our stitches?"

They are the Shadows. It is difficult to know where they are standing right now and harder still to know where they've been. Decaying pages and sandstone glyphs nervously mutter hints. Stories echo down, out of ancient Egypt, of secret cults and walking cadavers with dissected souls. The Cherokee named the silence *ka'lanu ahkyeli'ski*, the Raven Mockers, who cut out the hearts of the sick and devoured their remaining years, unseen even as the victim's fellows sat in the same room. In Eastern Europe, men called dhampir claimed to be half-vampire, traveling from village to village hunting the hungry dead. They gazed through their coat sleeves, like a telescope, then wrestled fiends only they could see. Some called them con artists.

Time passes, first in sighs and then in riddles. The Shadows remain. They flock to mysteries and murk like anti-moths. In the age of information, the Mekhet curse creeps along whole new vectors.

See the magician. There is no schedule. There is no advance notice. His only audience are those who respond to the flyers that enigmatically litter the streets on particular nights. "Tonight!" they say. "Do not fail to see," they say. His audience stumbles up the steps to the black box theatre. Oh, the wonders he shows them when the doors lock.

See the bookshop clerk. She sits the graveyard shift at the all night adult book store. The lost 3 A.M. souls come to her, off the freeway. She answers their questions with an encyclopedic knowledge of every book, magazine, and DVD in stock. She offers sage advice on sex toys. Say the right combination of syllables, and she will open the secret room, where much rarer books repose.

See the P.I. Perhaps the greatest investigative mind of our time. But you will never meet him or her. The investigator operates outside of the view or knowledge of the client. Instead, you deal through the secretary. She speaks quite fondly of her employer, and her breath reeks of syrupy copper.

See the disquieting silence. No. You don't. It devoured its own name. It devoured its own echoes. Not even the Kindred remember. It only exists as a series of negative definitions.

Let the other clans tromp through their Requiems like drunk elephants. The Mekhet will...well, no one will know exactly what it is they're doing. What was that? It was only in your head. Yes. They are inside your head.

Why you want to be us

Go anywhere, see anything, know it all. Some people fear the shadows, but you are the Shadow. Cloak yourself in secrets and intrigue...or just watch. You like to watch.

Why you should fear us

The Mekhet are watching you sleep. No, really, they are. They find your breathing quite beautiful, and the way you turn over to the other side when some fierce dream grips you. One might live in your house, an unseen roommate. Wonder why you're tired in the morning? Midnight snack. Wonder how your wife

"I know you can't hear me, but this is how you're going to die..."

found out about the girl from Kinko's? The Mekhet dropped a little hint.

Why we should fear ourselves

We know ourselves by the way that others know us. The Mekhet become something less by hiding. Our identity loses all context. And what about knowing everyone's secrets? That means knowing some very bad things. It can be distinctly unpleasant to see what people are like beneath their masks; and for the Mekhet, there are no masks. More than any other clan, the Mekhet know there are things weirder than vampires out there. Ignorance was bliss.

Clan Origins

- The witch-king Akhenaten gave the high priest's daughter to a crawling thing from outside day or night. It ate her heart and hollowed her soul, and the witch-king married the thing that coiled in that hollow. With an army of hollow soldiers, Akhenaten tore down the old gods. The Cult of the Phoenix fell. But the Cult of Set was cunning. Their priests removed their Ka so that no demon could eat it. The Sethites rose after death and defeated Akhenaten, but did not understand the price of their actions.
- They had gone further than all before, seen all wonders. The eighth and ninth seas. The islands that moved in the night. The waterfall that flowed up. The explorers sailed into the land of the dead. There was no direction, no sun or stars, and torches would not light in the damp gloom. They illumined the way with reeking bundles of the blind fish that glowed as cold as gelid fire in the dead water. They asked the underworld shades for directions, but the dead do not speak without blood offerings, and even then, their tongues meander. First went the livestock. Then the sailors bled. A cup a question. Eventually, they returned to the land of the living, but not all the way. They had left every drop of blood in the underworld. They had to replenish, had to answer a longing that yawned wider than perdition. They had learned such secrets while asking the babbling shades for the way home.
- Once upon a midnight darkly, a witch did a very bad thing. Envy and pride had taken ill weed in her heart, growing every day till her breast was a rootbound garden of thorns. Her magic mirror devoured her reflection. And still her scattered progeny slink about in the gloom, obsessed with secrets and divinations, but fearful of the hunger of mirrors. They search as those who have lost something, but forgot what — silently ever after.

How to Make a Monster

The Mekhet see and are yet unseen. This is endemic to their Vitae. A Shadow often has at least a few dots of the Stealth Skill. Even a cement-footed klutz in life finds that, after the Mekhet Embrace, people say things to him like, "Oh! I didn't see you there." Likewise, Awareness and Investigation are common skills, as Mekhet tend to obsess over uncovering secrets. Larceny can prove useful too, as sometimes there are doors and locks between a clever Shadow and those delicious secrets.

Mental Attributes and Skills are rarely tertiary. Anyone can be Embraced by a Mekhet, but those newly dead minds find themselves hungry for mental stimulation and consumed by curiosity. Shadows compulsively gravitate to certain manias and expressions of an inner darkness. These obsessions might manifest as an interest in the occult, academia, puzzle solving, prophecy, weird art, poetry, symbolism, or other esoterica.

A Shadow who wishes to hide in plain sight with Obfuscate will benefit from Wits and Larceny. A young Mekhet who wants uses Auspex to sniff out his enemies' secrets will want Wits, Intelligence, and Empathy.

The clan's love of cyphers often makes its members talented users of the Cacophony, and they often have ratings in the Cacophony Savvy Merit. More than one Mekhet has found herself the center of an enigmatic cult (and should take the appropriate Herd and Retainers Merits).

Appearance varies from Shadow to Shadow. Some dress very professionally. Others play it more obvious, wearing lots of black. Others subconsciously dress more and more unremarkably, until they are hard to notice even when not employing supernatural stealth. Some Mekhet dress extremely eccentrically, a silent dare for the bovine-eyed mortals to see them. A weary vampire might let her appearance go, not bothering with grooming or changing clothes for a world to which she is invisible.

Some Mekhet do not even bother wearing clothes anymore. As a Mekhet suffers further disassociation from his identity, he may go through rapid and drastic changes in personal appearance, or even take on the likeness of his last victim.

Nickname: Shadows

Stereotypes:

- Daeva: Suffering unnatural lust towards a Serpent? Just look into her soul. Clears that right up.
- Gangrel: The Man and the Beast are having an amiable picnic in that Savage's head. It's rather disturbing.
- Nosferatu: You look how the Daeva feel.
- Ventrue: Those with the most schemes are always the most nervous when we walk into a room.

Clan Bane (The Tenebrous Curse): Whispering shades and forgotten lore lurk in your blood. Secrets and information distill down to a weird substance in your Vitae. Attuned to the otherworldly, vampire banes express themselves more quickly in you. Sunlight, fire, and the long slumber of torpor pull at your dead body with a stronger tide.

Favored Attributes: Intelligence or Wits

Disciplines: *Auspex*, Celerity, Obfuscate

In the Covenants

The Carthian Movement: The Movement is all about the signal. Often, visibility is preferred to stealth. But when the fighting gets dirty, the Revolution needs Shadows. Reporters and spies, the Mekhet are the ones to unlock all of the establishment's hidden closets and become intimate with every skeleton within. They get the juicy details to broadcast over the Cacophony. They are the whistleblowers piping at decibels only their fellow Beasts can hear. Who better to go muckraking in this weird world?

The Circle of the Crone: The Mekhet cannot help but seek out occulted secrets. Some are willing to dive into the pitch dark of the Crone's maw in order to seize those secrets. The Mother's Army, in turn, finds use for the Shadows. Their inquisitive minds take to blood sorcery with a frightening alacrity. The feverish beat of the Crone's drums can quicken even the icy passions of a Shadow. Some Mekhet can even leave their bodies and take to the spiritual plane during rituals. Isn't magic more fun when you're dead?

The Invictus: Who better to enforce the Conspiracy of Silence? Mekhet make fine spymasters for the First Estate. The only downside is that they are too good at this function, making covenant members of other clans nervous. Shadows often serve as agents and advisors, but some rise quite high. How terrifying is the prince who might know your every transgression at a glance? A Shadow prince might walk amongst his Kindred, wearing their faces. When a Firebrand baits you by asking your opinion of your liege…how can you be sure?

The Lancea et Sanctum: Some Mekhet come for the magic, and find religious zeal afterwards. The Sanctified are happy to induct a Shadow, as she can touch a relic and fathom its deepest secrets. Who knows what sins lurk in the minds of mortals? Who better to give the Lord's Judgment? Who else has the all-seeing eyes of God?

The Ordo Dracul: Simply put, the Order needs the Mekhet. It is the Shadows who can best sniff out dragon nests, and it is the Shadows most likely to determine the nature and use of those nests. Their supernatural senses are invaluable in the Order's experiments. The Mekhet can more directly see what other members of the covenant grope for in the dark with countless rounds of trial and error (mostly error). With the Shadows' natural obsession for riddle-solving, symbol-deciphering, and delving into mysteries best left alone, the Order hardly needs to give them orders. It merely has to let the Mekhet be.

NOSFERATU

THE ONES YOU FEAR

"Shhh." The voice behind you sounds like a squeezed handful of grave worms. It tells you that it will follow you home. It tells you that if you can make it to your front door, by the long path or the short, without turning around or nary a peep, it won't kill you. When did you lose your shoes? The pavement turns to tongue meat, tasting your bleeding soles with every step.

Something dead approaches. You shouldn't even know that it's there. But you do! Imagine them all lurking, the sad monsters. Just hanging around unseen. Trying to feel like part of the surrounding humanity. They sit in cafes. They go to movies. They ride in cabs next to people on their way to the airport. Pretend they're having conversations with the warm folk. Yet, their curse weeps like a cyst. People get the creeps. They don't know why. You wake up with a horrid taste in your throat, thinking you swallowed a statistical spider. You don't see the thing hanging above your face, drooling with longing. Oh, you would quiver to know what it would take to make a sad monster glad.

All vampires should be feared, but the Nosferatu control fear. They might look horrifying, or they might look like anyone else, but there's something about them. Something of the grave, something of the deep places that writhe with too many eyes and limbs and fingers that are not fingers, something just...wrong.

The Haunts have always been there. Haven't they? In the dark corners and crawly cracks of things. They haunted ancient Greece. Mothers prayed to them, even as their blackened babes ripened with plague. They called upon the name Nosphoros, "disease-bearing"; cursed by Artemis and Apollo to carry pestilent blessings. "O dread eater," they prayed. "O glorious worm, O ruined mouth, O pale thing that is both ghost and flesh, please pass over my household tonight." They haunted Rome, where the Brothers and Sisters Worm held court in the forever-dark of Necropolis. They haunted the hidden places of Romania when the empire fell. Through the dead rats, waste, and clotting gutters, they wriggled down the centuries, an undulant dread, lubricated on disgust.

Terror is a constant. Always, there is fear, always pouring, and the Nosferatu drink from a chipped cup. They wake to these strange nights, where grotesquery is chic. Always, they emulate not just the underground, but the Underworld. Look to the names of their modern Necropoli: Sheol in Los Angeles, Muspelheim in Hamburg, The Fields of Aaru in Detroit, and Mictlan in Mexico City. They answer the echo of something chthonic that wriggles in the ruins of their ribs. The elder Haunts tell stories of the Hidden Ones, the Gods Below, and even the most skeptical neonate can almost hum along to the song of the ancient and the sleeping. Whatever is in their Blood, it moves with a sickening plasticity of purpose. Every black drop is a carnival freak show. Horrid delights, grotesque wonders, endless putrid potential all stored in the family Vitae, expressed in endless variety through the petri dish of each living soul it slithers into.

See the street artist. For ten bucks, she'll draw the most insightful caricature that you ever did see. They say for a little extra, she'll draw something that'll turn your hair white. You ask for the extra. Eels squeeze your lungs. Legs give out. You can't take your eyes off your own warped face and what the impossible lines and angles reveal about yourself. She walks toward you, face like a rain-damaged charcoal drawing. She takes her payment.

See the urban legend. Sometimes he is a hook-handed brute stalking lovers' lanes, or a masked maniac with a corn knife. Sometimes he appears as a bleeding woman when teenagers dare to say her name nine times before a darkened mirror. He writes spiraling limericks on bathroom stall walls, and if you read them backwards, you'll die in three days. So they say. Sometimes he researches local legends. Sometimes he makes up his own. He creates living stories that evolve and mutate as they pass from lips to ears, fingers to keyboards. He infects minds, just as his Curse and fangs and Blood infect the neighborhood. The Kindred don't know why he does this. Some say the circulating myths carry secret messages over the Cacophony. Some say it's for his own vanity, an attempt at a more complete immortality.

See the underground cinema club. Very exclusive. Hush-hush. But you knew a cataphile who had an in with the urban subterranean exploration movement. "Do not fail to see this," he said. How long have you been down here? One hundred seventy miles of catacombs beneath Paris. Roman-hewn stone. Walls of skull and bone. Everyone walks silently. Tunnels full of glowing paint. Strange symbols. Melting-wax faces in the

"Every time you dangled a foot over the bed's edge, you made a promise. I'm collecting."

half light. An amphitheatre, terraces cut into the rock. Fully-stocked concession stand and bar. Short horror films play on the full-sized screen. The things you see. The nervous laughter. The shrieks. Strobes interrupt the film, backlighting the silver screen, revealing the things writhing behind it. You're so proud of yourself, the last one to keep from screaming, even when you cut your hand squeezing the Pepsi can. You join the chorus when pale salamanders, eyes sewn shut, lap up your blood.

The Haunts are still here. They never left. They perch on the edge of your periphery. They swim with the floaters, contaminating your vitreous humor. Always behind you. The more you turn, the more tired you get. Hush now. There are no such things as monsters.

Why you want to be us

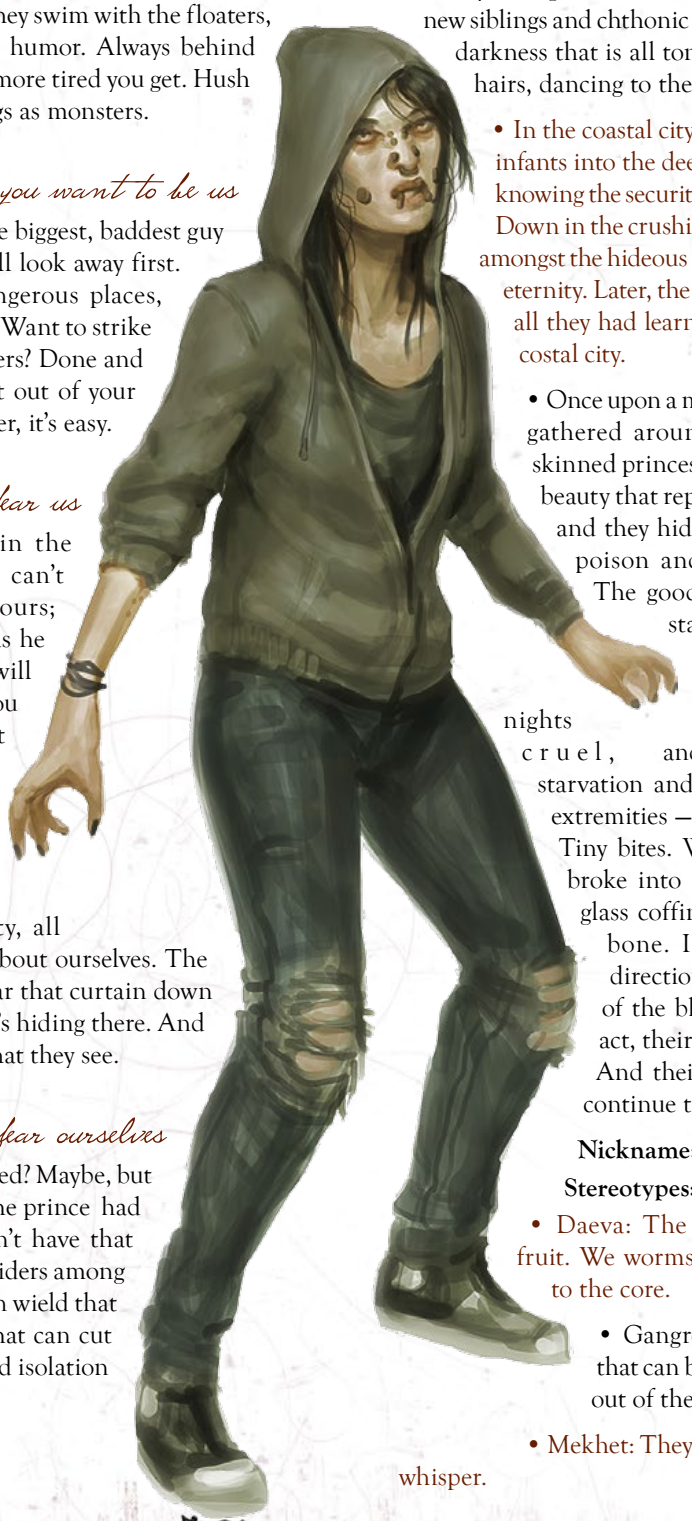
Never back down. Look the biggest, baddest guy you know in the eye and he'll look away first. Even in the city's most dangerous places, people give you a wide berth. Want to strike fear into the hearts of evildoers? Done and done. Want to scare the shit out of your asshole brother-in-law? Brother, it's easy.

Why you should fear us

You don't get a choice in the face of the Nosferatu. You can't be brave. Your fear isn't yours; it's his, and he can mold it as he wishes. You will quake. You will cower. You will run. And you can't do a damn thing about it. Terror, real terror, is not sweaty palms, pounding hearts, and screams — these are incidental. Terror is the stripping away of every construct of ego and society, all the things we like to think about ourselves. The Haunts have the power to tear that curtain down and force you to look at what's hiding there. And nobody, but nobody, likes what they see.

Why we should fear ourselves

Better to be feared than loved? Maybe, but Machiavelli was presuming the prince had a choice. The Nosferatu don't have that choice. They'll always be outsiders among outsiders; and even if they can wield that as a weapon, it's a weapon that can cut back. Isolation is their lot, and isolation feeds the Beast.



Clan Origins

- In that year, the graves of every land vomited up a quota of their dead. Spontaneous Damnation given not to fresh, pliable cadavers, but the decayed and worm-kissed.
- They dug into the suffocating black of the hollow Earth, this coterie of Kindred, the Brothers Worm. They devoured the writhing god that lived there, tasted the immaculate slime. Divinity changed their souls and bodies. Embracing their new siblings and chthonic nobility, they spent an age in the darkness that is all tongues and fingers and shivering hairs, dancing to the churn of the Earth's organs.
- In the coastal city, it was custom to cast deformed infants into the deep sea. They sank, wailing, never knowing the security of suckling upon a warm breast. Down in the crushing depths, the babes came to rest amongst the hideous creatures that hunt in the sunless eternity. Later, the castaway children returned with all they had learned, and they suckled upon that costal city.
- Once upon a midnight darkly, seven grotesques gathered around a glass coffin. The snowy-skinned princess came to them in exile, saw the beauty that reposed beneath their deformities, and they hid her in their remote cabin. But poison and treachery had laid her low. The good-natured grotesques vowed to stand vigil over her lovely body, until a hero or wise person came to break the spell. But the nights grew long, and the winter was cruel, and no one came. In the throes of starvation and self-hate, they nibbled — only extremities — only what she would not miss. Tiny bites. When the nightmare of winter broke into spring, they looked inside the glass coffin and saw naught but skin and bone. In horror, they fled in seven directions; and whether by the alchemy of the black apple or the curse of their act, their insides matched their outsides. And their children's children's children continue the feast — fearfully ever after.

Nickname: Haunts

Stereotypes:

- Daeva: The Serpents tempt with spoiled fruit. We worms hide inside, eating your apple to the core.
- Gangrel: For us, the worst has fallen that can befall. For them, it's still crawling out of their skins.
- Mekhet: They are the silence. We are the stage whisper.

- Ventrue: There is a moment — after the meticulous planning, the flawless execution, the perfect victory — a moment of triumphant respite. That is where we nest, in the shadow between seconds, waiting for you.

Clan Bane (The Lonely Curse): You are an avatar of disgust. Dread and discomfort oozes from you, scabbing everything over in the putrid film of your rotting soul's exhaust. Your body is warped, or the world around you warps. This could manifest in ways grotesque or subtle. Fear and all its gibbering siblings come easy for you. Most other forms of social communion do not. Yours is a lonely Requiem.

Favored Attributes: Composure or Strength

Disciplines: *Nightmare*, Obfuscate, Vigor

How to Make a Monster

A Nosferatu might begin play with any set of Attributes as primary. All the more tragic if they were strongly social in life. Most Haunts have high Composure ratings. They witness so much horror in their Requiems that it becomes difficult to unnerve them. More than a few Nosferatu develop high ratings in Resolve, over time, as the isolation of the curse often makes them self-reliant.

Members of this clan usually have an affinity for the Intimidation and Stealth Skills. This is a product of both their supernatural natures, and which abilities they have to hone to survive. As for Backgrounds, Nosferatu often have ratings in Haven (underground lairs), and benefit from having Retainers to deal directly with the mortal world.

A young Nosferatu's use of the Nightmare Discipline benefits most from Presence and Empathy, while the Discipline's capstone power favors Intimidation. Strength dots benefit from the persistent effects of Vigor. Obfuscate suggests taking dots in Wits and Larceny, though most powers don't require rolls.

Perhaps the most important consideration when creating a Nosferatu character is the form his horrific curse takes. Players have more creative latitude here than with the other clans. Haunts are infected with a weirdness that warps their bodies or the world around them.

The curse can express itself as a series of physical deformities: bulging eyes, empty sockets that still yet see, corpselike skin, grotesquely long fingers, withered limbs that can somehow upend a car, hideously large mouth, mouths in places they should not be, vestigial limbs, skin that hangs like wet clay, scales, malformed skull, excreted fluids, a miasma of cloying dust, a stench. Players can find a treasure trove of inspiration by Googling images of subterranean or deep sea fauna.

The curse can express itself in ways stranger still: an animate shadow that moves when the Nosferatu is still; a shadow belonging to someone else (her last victim?); maggots manifesting in any place he lingers; objects (including her clothing) rotting away at her prolonged touch; strange twittering and giggles that manifest about him; her mouth never moving when she speaks; his voice always seeming to come from a few feet away from his head; lights flickering low in her presence. Perhaps the viewer's eyes always slide off the Haunt's features, and no one remembers what it was that was so wrong about him.

In the Covenants

The Carthian Movement: Sometimes, the politics of change are the politics of fear. The people should not be afraid of their government. The government should be afraid of its dead. Underground networks and subterranean lairs are handy things when taking on the Man. Who better to wage guerrilla war on the entrenched establishment? Who better to initiate a reign of terror?

The Circle of the Crone: Some Haunts look at their own visages and see a reflection of the Crone. Divinity is terrible for mortals to look upon. These hags and hierophants preach that they are blessed with a divine beauty recognized by eyes ancient and deep that operate under different aesthetics. The Nosferatu murmur about the Gods Below. Why not worship the Hidden Ones more directly? Who better to become a perfect monster than one unfettered by a human face?

The Invictus: The First Estate knows the value of Haunt agents. Some Nosferatu creep to great heights. There are cities where rat lords and worm ladies hold nightmare court below. The Invictus of other clans are forced to descend, to speak courtesies on gritted teeth to the Haunt lackeys who guide them down, hoping the wretches do not abandon them in the dark. What was that Machiavelli said about fear?

The Lancea et Sanctum: Some Haunts look at their visages and see the faces of demons. Religion comes easy after that. In centuries past, Nosferatu serving the Spear carried sickness and pestilence as the wrath of Heaven upon humanity. Terrorizing sinners comes so easy to them. This gives their horrible curse a purpose. What wretch would not want to learn that her malady serves a divine plan? Who better to instill the fear of God? Who more fully embodies a divine plague on mankind?

The Ordo Dracul: Seclusion, and something to contemplate to fill that seclusion, suits the Nosferatu. The Haunts have strong stomachs and adjust quickly to performing grotesque surgeries and disturbing procedures. Underground sanctums make for ideal laboratories, and Dragons know the value of recruiting local Haunts. Some Nosferatu toil their nights away, subjecting themselves to all manner of esoteric experiments, trying to fix their twisted forms, or transcend them and enter the next stage of change. Who would be more driven to subvert his Curse?

Ventrue

The ones you can't deny.

"Let's make this interesting," she says. She tells you all the heinous things you are about to do. You laugh in her face. Ridiculous. Then, one by one, all of your limbs betray you. You see everything. You see it all through the socket windows of your Judas body. You try, and fail, to scream through the frozen smile fracturing your face.

Something dead approaches. It moves with the calm of someone who already knows the outcome. It stalks as bold as a revenant lion. Bullets and threats slide off its skin, raindrops on obsidian. Eyes like the tinted windows of a luxury car, mouth like an iron maiden, smile like a blood-stained crown. Those tinted windows roll down. Its words violate you. You'll put that gun to your head if it asks. Its voice is full of chains and meathooks. You dance like a marionette, as it leads with all the grace of storybook nobility. In obeisance and despair you realize Prince Charming is Bluebeard.

The Ventrue are rulers, yes, but more than that they're winners. They're the best and the darkest, the lords and generals of the night. They don't ask, they take. You start, they finish. They come, they see, they crush.

History is written by the victors, and the Lords are always writing. Just ask. They love their histories. They will tell you how the blood of deities and kings distilled into Vitae in the cradles of civilization. They will speak of Troy — of the lares and mares, the household gods and lingering shades of the dead who protect the noble families. They will teach you how to read between the lines of the epic poem, the *Aeneid*. They will show you how Aeneas vs. Achilles is a metaphor for the Man vs. the Beast. They will speak of their divine inheritance: the five-fold aegis and the mastery of men and animals. Flip the pages and watch a parade of triumphant cadavers marching down the centuries. Eternity is a banquet held in their honor — wassail! wassail! — and the wine, that is the life, is ever flowing.

See the raggedy king. He wears a crown of barbed wire and a patchwork coat of many colors. The park is his kingdom. Beggars, buskers, and animals all bow to him. The living statue, the pickpocket, the stray cats, the raccoons, they all make up his court. He knights some of the street folk, with a vermiculated blade, before giving them a bent chalice of his blood which he calls "the grail." There are some who think him mad. His subjects do not.

See the big boss. Meeting the man himself is a tedious ritual. You have to know a guy who knows a guy. You have to get past goon after goon. There is a hidden smoke-filled room, past several other smoke-filled rooms, a nasty nesting doll of power. There he is. Broad shoulders form a power-house V in that pinstripe power suit. You tremble as you step forward, kiss his emerald ring. He is the apex and the fulcrum. All the city is his pendulum. City aldermen, criminals, Christ…everyone spends time in his pocket. He flushes red as he talks, and you shiver. In awe, you barely notice the little old woman, sitting as still as death in the corner — the one he looks to before giving every opinion and answer.

See the guru. She has a warm smile and manic enthusiasm. Her infomercials haunt the night. She has a line of self-help books. Her voice hypnotizes countless people through her self-actualizing CDs. They follow her on all the social websites. The product really works. She builds fortresses of confidence within her followers. But that fortress erodes and crumbles if they spend any time away from her influence. Dependence can sound like self-reliance, if you spin it right. They need more. They fork over cash to go to her seminars. They learn how to sell her products. Her influence spreads like a happy epidemic. Waves and waves of the herd, all conditioned before they even meet her. Their blood is enriched and seasoned with a special balance of nutrients she sells to them.

See the director. In the black box theatre, he is God. It begins with the desperate actors lining up for auditions. His approval means the world. He commands them. He gets inside, tinkers with their clockwork. He manipulates scenery and people, weaves them all together to form a vision, manifesting fantasy as reality. Night after night, and his Kindred ask him why he wastes his time when there are more important games to be played. He smiles and says, "Practice makes perfect." And they cannot deny the power of his voice and gaze, over that of the city's more serious dead.

Let the other clans toil and trouble. The Lords shall exalt. *Carpe noctem!*

Why you want to be us

Oh, come on. You've never wanted to run the show? You've never wanted to go into a conflict knowing you'll come out on top? Of course you have; and as a Ventrue, you will.

"There's no need to struggle. It's already over."

Why you should fear us

The Gangrel might chase you down, but the Ventrue walks calmly towards you, shrugging off your pathetic attempts to hurt him. No weapon or words will stop him, but his quiet voice will freeze you where you stand. He's going to get what he wants, and it doesn't matter who gets hurt, because it won't be him.

Why we should fear ourselves

What if no one could say no to you? Maybe it would feel great at first. For many of the Ventrue, it does. They command their lessers, and are unquestioned. But what resentments lurk behind those mesmerized eyes? Again, better to be feared than loved...but what if the Ventrue are just despised?

Clan Origins

- Cronos swallowed his children. They in turn gnawed their way out of his belly, and that brief eternity of darkness and viscera stained their grace. Their descendants measure the path to power in mouthfuls of gore. They patiently raze all obstacles, all enemies, one bite at a time.
- Marauding Gangrel tore through Eastern Europe. Some of their number broke away from the packs to settle down and become masters of men. They abandoned the mutable flesh and discovered the Lordly Tongue. Some say these alphas evolved to a more sophisticated forest. Others say the Lords are a weak offshoot of the Savages, little brother choking on a razor-wire noose of repression.
- The Camarilla fell, but its last scions walk the world still. Each is a marble monument to something lost, something on the tip of the welling blood tide of the family's communal memory. There are unread secrets written in their blood. Time-capsuled histories, messages in bottles, they stride across the centuries.
- Once upon a midnight darkly, the owls and ravens of the forest found a hero and guided him deep into the nighted woods, to the place where lay a snowy-skinned princess. The charming prince knelt to awaken the beauty with a kiss but found her lips cadaver cold, and she did not stir. The woodland birds sang, and the prince felt a strange desire opening in his breast like a nocturnal flower. He took her upon the stone. At the height of the cacophony and the passion, the cold princess jostled awake, laughing like broken glass shaken in a velvet bag, eyes like yellow lamps. And all the scions of the charming prince inherit the gifts he received that night — majestically ever after.

How to Make a Monster

Domination comes in many flavors. A Ventrue might achieve it through Physical, Mental, or Social Attributes and Skills. Players may pick any category as their character's primary. Choose any of the three, and then decide how that works as your path to power. Does your Ventrue character take control through calculated displays of brawn? Perhaps your Lord rules out in the open with her presence, or by pulling the strings from the shadows as an ingenious mastermind. The Ventrue approve of excellence in all of its forms. They give the Embrace to members of old-money families and self-made successes alike. They also Embrace professionals at the tops of their respective fields.

The signature Lordly Discipline of Dominate suggests Intelligence, Expression, and Subterfuge. A young vampire styling herself a Lord over beasts as well as people with Animalism will want Manipulation and Animal Ken to start.

Breeding matters to the Lords. The Dynasty Membership Merit becomes important. Players can work with the Storyteller to create a memorable dead family to give the weight of history and long shadows to cast over the character. Merits such as Contacts, Status, and Resources are common to the clan. These may have been acquired in life or after. Like any other vampire, the Ventrue might Embrace a prince or a pauper, but the Blood has an illimitable inertia that pushes that vampire towards influence, no matter how humble his origins.

Appearance varies widely amongst the Lords. Many dress for success in high-contrasting colors and power angles. Those who wore uniforms in life often carry them over into death, deriving what authority the garments carry. For some Ventrue, the first declaration of power is the physical appearance that others first see. The first impression is vital. However, there are other Ventrue who hide their power behind ordinary, even homely appearances. They rule behind anonymity. They turn

their vanities inward and are able to subsist entirely on the self-satisfaction squeezed from the smiles they give themselves in private.

Nickname: Lords

Stereotypes:

- Daeva: Forever is wasted on those trapped in the tunnel of immediate gratification.
- Gangrel: We are the monarchs of lesser beasts, we do not become them.
- Mekhet: "Knowledge is power," he sneered to me. So I made him sing everything he knew to me in falsetto.
- Nosferatu: If fear is your only tool, then every problem starts screaming.

Clan Bane (The Aloof Curse): Excellence breeds contempt. When people are puppets for your will and buildings are play pieces on a grand game board, it is hard not to become distant. It is so very easy for you to become detached from those people, places, and things that keep the Man secure in your breast.

Favored Attributes: Presence or Resolve

Disciplines: Animalism, *Dominate*, Resilience

In the Covenants

The Carthians: The Ventrue win. Victory is sweeter than blood. And what game is more engrossing than taking on the house? Some Lords join the Revolution more for the challenge than for ideological fervor. Firebrands who value the Lord' input know the difference between succeeding and just vomiting ethos. Being a champion of the masses can be addictive.

The Circle of the Crone: Lords of men and beasts, some Ventrue expand their mastery of the world by bending occult forces to their will. Becoming one with the dark earth, they make themselves into witch-kings and witch-queens. The Lords like to connect their Blood to deities, and some find this urge satisfied by becoming avatars of the Crone and all of her many faces.

The Invictus: There are those, handicapped by an over-reliance on stereotypes, who say the Invictus is the covenant designed for the Ventrue. They would not be wrong. All the best qualities of the Lord's Blood are highlighted and encouraged by the First Estate. Who so elementally manifests the ideals of the Invictus? Who else is Manifest Destiny made flesh and fang?

The Lancea et Sanctum: Some Ventrue know that their inherent superiority comes at a price. They must guide their lesser cousins. How better than as spiritual authorities? No, don't thank us. The work is reward enough. Some Sanctified Ventrue have an iron-clad faith in a higher power. And some more jaded Lords believe the only higher power is themselves. These latter still find value in the Second Estate, for the clergy of any society are a sure path to power. Who else is so like the Almighty, so as to better understand His will?

The Ordo Dracul: For creatures so well equipped and so driven to master the world around them, it must be infuriating for the Ventrue to have so little control over their Beasts, banes, and the Curse within. How can you rule others if you cannot rule your own Curse? Some Ventrue join the Order and study their mystical arts with a frightening obsession. Step by step, they take praxis over their vampire bodies, just as they would take over a city, block by block. Also, Dracula is something of a hero to many young Lords. Who else among the dead has won out so completely?

Lost Clans

The Blood is mutable and takes on many shapes, filling the hollows that humanity carves into its soul. The curse is not static. It is not singular. It has many strains. It evolves. The Blood wants to spread. Monsters of unique and discrete origins can become Kindred by the common thread of their twisted humanity. Clans of the damned rise, and clans of the damned fall. It has happened before. It will happen again. It is happening right now.

The Akhud

In the time of Abraham, the five cities of the plain — Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Bela — were ruled by five kings. These kings were not sovereign, however, as the five cities suffered under Elamite rule. The cities of the plain joined in rebellion. That rebellion was stamped out. And yet the five kings rose again, sending an elite force that slaughtered the soldiers of Elam. What turned the tide so drastically? What changed? What would the five kings be willing to do with defeat and desperation wriggling in their innards?

There are Kindred historians who believe the five kings joined the ranks of the hungry dead. How did this happen? We can only speculate. We might imagine an occulted ritual performed under the blind new moon. Perhaps, an exotic visitor went from court to court with an enticing offer. Or maybe the sheer toxicity of their hatred and despair pickled the flesh and souls of the five kings.

Five dead kings and the cities of the plain were free. What a terrible freedom it was. Just as the kings and their get fed upon the cities, so too did their Curse corrupt it, seeping into the bones of the people and the bricks of the buildings. The unbreathing kings taught their people new ways to revel, sin, and slaughter. They discovered whole new vistas of blasphemy, and peacetime was bloodier than war. The river Jordan turned red for an entire year.

In this time, Lot, nephew of Abraham, entertained two strange visitors in the city of Sodom. In the dark hours, a large mob gathered, shrieking and blaspheming outside Lot's walls. "Where are the men who came to you in the night?" they asked. "Invite us inside, that we may know them." Lot knew the five kings and their children wandered house to house, demanding tithes of blood and defilement, and he refused. Again, the nighted figures asked, "Where are the men who came to you in the night? Bring them outside, that we may know them."

Lot refused to give his guests to the nighted mob of Sodom. He offered his virgin daughters, but the mob only grew angrier. Lot's visitors, who some say were angels, called out and cursed the names of the five kings: Bera, Birsha, Shinab, Shemeber, and Zoar. The mob hissed and shrank away. Lot fled. "Don't look back," the strange guests said. Lot's wife did look back, and she turned to salt.

Sodom fell. Gomorrah fell. The sins of the five cities had grown too great. Some say it was fire from the heavens that smote all to rubble. Others say the five kings grew too lusty, spreading their Curse until mostly vampires populated the cities. The tension of too little food and too many predators grew until a spark set off a communal frenzy, a frenzy so total it spread to all five cities and destroyed them. In madness and lust and rage, the vampires went into fits of reproduction and murder, until only the few remained. Through the incestuous cycle of Embrace and Amaranth, each survivor was a walking mass grave, teeming with the forfeit souls of the devoured. Each wretch was a legion of curses. They were the Akhud.

Dead and desperate, they sought the restoration of the five cities. The only way to cleanse the multitude of sins that stained them was to destroy every other vampire upon the face of the Earth. But who put this notion into their heads? An angel? A demon? The Akhud were bound in their mission by a blood promise that prevented any clan member from betraying another in word or deed.

Whether the Akhud still exist, or ever existed, none can say for certain. They do make fearful bogeymen for scholarly sires to tell their childer, though many elders would prefer the stories to fade away. Redemption through the destruction of one's Kindred is a dangerous notion to whisper into any cold ear.

The Julii

Tonight, pale lips call them the Dead Julii and even the Exceedingly Dead Julii. But once they were dead by a lesser degree. They accomplished what few of the Damned can even dare to imagine without irony. They built the Camarilla, the impossible

promise of what the All Night Society could be, a worldwide vampire government on which the sun never rose. Nothing has equaled that promise since. Eventually, all promises break. The Camarilla crumbled. The Julii are ash and whispers.

The whispers say that they are cousins of the Ventrue. Or they spawned the Ventrue. Or chthonic night birds spawned them. Or they boiled down into an infectious thought — madness as a contagion. Or they were a Daeva bloodline. Or they raised their own Masquerade, hiding from the other Kindred, building an even greater Camarilla on the dark side of the moon, where they converse with immaculate machines.

Arguing the particulars misses the point. This is the point: The Julii were. They changed the world. Their name is something for the dead to aspire to. They also represent something cautionary. The dead are not as forever as they like to think. Julii is the name that reminds immortals of their mortality. Something wiped out the Julii, every last one. That realization brings an owl-winged dread.

The Pijavica

Some Slavic Kindred recall a particularly odd offshoot of the Curse, damnation that developed through several stages of a bizarre life cycle. Once Embraced, the intended body died. The extremities withered, while the stomach swelled and blackened. Many villages knew to burn the bloated cadavers. But more and more in modern times, some learned person would step forward and explain that these changes were merely the effects of decay — collecting gasses or pooling blood in the stomach cavity.

A corpse left to come to term eventually burst, a squelchingly sentient mass of blood slithering from the putrescent guts. Crimson and black, clotting and boiling, the crawling gore was vulnerable to light, fire, and starvation. It could not hunt properly, having to absorb sustenance from spilled blood or the open wounds of the sleeping. Many of these abominations died away, seeping back into the dark earth, but those that fed grew. The first forty nights were the most decisive in the making of the vampire. It gathered substance, forming a jelly-like body. That body grew into a boneless mass, taking on many shapes, eventually shedding its skin to reveal a mostly human form. The mature vampire could then walk amongst its prey.

Kindred who know of the Pijavica all agree that this odd strain of vampires no longer exists. They were too peculiar to live, even in this strange world. There are no exact dates, but general consensus puts the Pijavica extinct by the late 19th century.

A Dragon in Slovakia claimed to have studied several specimens of the Pijavica in detail, in the mid-1800s. She captured and grew them in her laboratory. Her sketches reveal grotesque shapes both manifold and multiform. She observed that the quantity and quality of absorbed blood greatly affected the forms the Pijavica took. The Dragon experimented with many types of stimuli and food, getting the most extreme results from werewolf blood. She hypothesized that the lifecycle of the Pijavica was an accelerated, stunted version of what she had observed in some extremely elder Kindred. Unfortunately, proof of her studies no longer exists. Some decades ago, a local pack of werewolves killed the Dragon and destroyed her lab. All that remains is a partial set of her notes, sketches, and the shattered remains of several specimen jars.

covenants

We always, *always* have something to do.

But the problem is that the one thing we can always do is hunt. And the vampire who only hunts, who times his existence based upon how long it is until he can next feed, becomes a hollowed-out, s narling monster at a truly terrifying rate.

So we find purpose in each other. We cling together...first, yes, for simple survival, food and shelter, the pretense of love. But then for faith, for power, for liberation, for defiance, even for reform.

What did you do to make it through tonight? What will you do to make it through tomorrow night? And what covenant will you make with your Kindred to make it all worthwhile?

THE CARTHIAN MOVEMENT
THE REVOLUTION

I still go to meetings.

This isn't the usual meeting place. This is the place with the slightly faulty fluorescent tube and the plastic chairs all in neat rows and the Che flag and the bookstand with copies of Engels and a newish edition of Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* which is, I can tell you, one of the most inspiring books I have ever read, before or after I died. This is the friendly place. Where we have the meetings when new folks are here. New blood.

Danny and Steve have just given the presentation about Solidarity for Cuba, and Owen's talk on why we have to support Robert Mugabe's stand against imperialism went down a storm (although I have to bite my hand to keep from laughing). We've only had one walk-out so far. That's all right. Nine new guys and one new girl are left. And that's because Annalise and Emily brought them along, and Annalise and Emily both fill out a tight revolutionary T-shirt in the most fetching way a man (or woman — I'm not a bigot) can imagine. This is why they handle the recruitment. They are willing to make sacrifices for the cause.

And here's Annalise now, looking just as glamorous and dangerous as she did when she was burning draft papers at Berkeley in the Spring of '65, and I thought, oh, baby, the Movement could use you.

It's time to mobilize. Annalise is taking volunteers.

ANSWER (that's Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, and we'd never take them over because they have a terrible acronym) are infiltrating the organization of a march against the war. The Worker's Rights Group, who split from the Worker's World Party, are going to crash the protest and canvas for members and we can't have that because they're splitters. Also, we need to keep the numbers for ourselves because there's a bunch of us need to eat, you know? Annalise doesn't say that last part. Frank — sixty-seven years old and not looking a day over twenty-five — is running interference, scooping up the leaflets from the other protesters, and Georgie is handing out our leaflets.

Of course, it's agreed I'll be in the office with Annalise, Karl, and Emily, manning the phones and monitoring the police, which is vital, and more plausible than sleeping, which is what we'll actually be doing.

This is the part where we've all volunteered to do stuff and now, Annalise turns on the new guys. "OK. Your turn to do something."

Twenty pairs of eyes turn on them. And every one of them ours. Maybe seven of them were picked because we thought they'd be useful. They're going to be staying with the girls for drinks, after. And maybe some indoctrination. A few minutes tied to a chair under Emily's care, and none of them are going to remember this next bit. Frank and the boys are already holding them down in their chairs.

The other two, a skinny boy with blue hair and this lovely round-faced girl with a face full of piercings, well. They're students. They're far from home. They're not going to be missed for a while. And the leadership are so very hungry.

The screams of the new recruits as Karl, the girls, and I pounce on our after-meeting feast are hidden beneath a rousing chorus of the Internationale. Next time we have a meeting, they'll be singing too.

I do love a good meeting.

You want to join the Carthian Movement because: You were politically radical in life. You believe that the society of the dead needs to change. You want to blow things up. You are holding a grudge against a vampire elder. You are, for all the terrible things you do, an idealist. You are afraid that nothing will ever change.

The big picture: The Carthian Movement uses the ideologies of the living to bring democracy to the dead. Anyone who disagrees with that gets their haven firebombed.

The condition of the vampire is, according to the Carthians, in stasis. Stasis is equivalent to certain destruction. Human political movements can gain power swiftly and effectively, and keep it, and as far as the Carthians can tell, they do it well. The Carthians offer a new deal to the neonate and the outcast, a new way of governing the Kindred without the self-serving aristocracies of the Invictus, with whom the Firebrands of the Revolution often come into conflict.

Some of these revolutionaries want to tear things down, while others believe in diplomacy. The Carthians run from knuckle-headed thugs with bats and knives to smooth-talking politicians who use the voice of the common vampire. They recruit from those Kindred who feel disenfranchised or wronged — and vampires very easily feel wronged. *We can fix it,* say the Carthians. *We can bring the change that you wish to see in the night, and you will benefit, as will we all.*

We're gonna have a new city. A clean city.
And anybody who doesn't like it is gonna see the sun.

The Carthians promise upheaval, and in many ways are the change they wish to see, modifying their ideals on an almost nightly basis. The Carthians do not question the necessity of reform, but they are willing to question reforms themselves. Some nights, this makes them fractious...but on many more, it leaves them well prepared.

The Carthians promise real change — but into what? Carthian elders, their consciences worn down by their long Requiems, are appallingly dangerous, because they do not back down. They're pragmatic monsters, but see themselves as part of something bigger and will make sacrifices for the future. They will suffer and inflict suffering to make Carthian Law the *only* law.

Where we came from: In 1779, an apostate from the Parisian Lancea et Sanctum published a pamphlet on a private press entitled *Contre Les Vampires Patriarcals.* Like much of the best literature of France just before the Revolution, it was a subtle, nuanced text, rich with hidden meanings. Presenting as an allegory the idea of the aristocrat as bloodsucking monster, the pamphlet was in fact a call to arms for the neonate to throw off the shackles of the elder.

The treatise was published under the name of Emmanuel Baptiste Carth. This wasn't the author's name. His name was apparently Eric Giraud. Giraud met Final Death under a midnight guillotine in 1780, but Carth lived on; and as revolutionary fervor gripped France, Carth took on a life of his own. Across Europe, east and west, pamphlets under the name of E. B. Carth appeared, each offering a political message for the dead coded under an apparent tract for the living. Neonate movements and reformers had existed before, but now they had a name and banner under which to join, a shared identity. By the middle of the 19th century, vampires who followed the pamphleteers were calling themselves Carthians.

E. B. Carth is still publishing, mostly on the Internet. Everyone knows that Carth is a fiction, but then, that's the source of his power. He is an idea, and the Carthians are those who will kill for an idea. It is the power of the Carthian idea that created, in the second half of the 20th century, the phenomenon of Carthian Law, where the Blood itself obeys the ideology of the vampires.

Carthian rhetoric, with its talk of equality and justice, can make the Movement seem the most benevolent of the vampire covenants. But the Carthians' ideas of equality extend only as far as the dead. Some of them are capable of treating the living with a terrifying utilitarianism. After all, they are called to serve the *greater* good.

Our practices: Everything the Carthians do is dedicated towards the creation of a new vampire order. The traditions of vampire society have their uses, but the way the established covenants enforce them leaves a lot to be desired. The Carthians preach that all vampires are equal, but the fact is that some corpses are more equal than others. Nobody's going to shed a red tear for a knight who follows her prince to the stake.

Since the Carthians use political systems adapted from modern ideologies among the living, it's only natural for them

to use the human radical groups they so resemble. Political groups, particularly radical groups with uncompromising views, split like crazy. The Carthians, with the powers of the dead and the application of a few drops of blood, can bring splinter cells under their power.

All the Carthians muck in — it's fair to say that Carthians are probably the busiest vampires, always seeming to have a project, always looking for an opening. They aren't, however, mindless zealots. Where the Invictus deal in intimidation and bribes, the Carthians are often the first to the bargaining table. Somehow, though, they deals they make always manage to favor the Revolution.

Carthians are often found in the governments of other covenants. Being open about their shared agendas makes them a peculiar type of honest. Other covenants, particularly those that don't possess a specific political ideology, find that honesty makes the Firebrands the devil you know. The Ordo Dracul and the Circle of the Crone often think this way. For all that Carthian ideology sets them in conflict with existing governments, their reputed ideological purity makes them reliable. Their usefulness as part of the state in turn gives them a wedge to push their reforms.

Nicknames: The Revolution (within the covenant), the Firebrands, the Movement (within the covenant), the Vermin (Invictus)

Concepts: Sexy campus recruiter, firebrand ideologue, distant intellectual, street ganger, disenchanted war veteran, guilt-ridden liberal arts teacher, well-intentioned political extremist, middle-class freedom fighter, liberation theologian

When we are in power: Our ideologies triumphant, Carthian purges and executions begin. Vampires who surrender and recant their former allegiances should expect to be closely watched by Carthian thought police, lest they end up mind-controlled or bound by blood bonds. Nonetheless, they're allowed in — a successful Carthian state grows by bringing vampires outside the covenant into the fold. Yet it's often at this point, when we have won, that we are at our least united. We Firebrands are well aware that power corrupts, and many of us are as willing to remove our own governments as those of the Invictus.

When we are in trouble: Carthians against the wall operate as plucky underdogs; we work in a strange way, in harmony with our ideals. Without the problems of power to undermine us, the Movement can behave as it always meant to. We are still monsters, but we hold together. We support each other, keep our possessions — ghouls, herds, havens — in common, and work hard to ensure our both survival, and the survival of our comrades. When in the minority, we do our best to recruit or suborn lower-level members of the establishment, and are rarely above stooping to honeytraps, blackmail, and mind-control. Yet, our commitment also breeds a kind of patience. The Revolution will happen. And it will happen in fire. But not yet. Suicide will not bring change.

The Circle of the Crone

The Mother's Army

The Chase brings with it a feeling of elation, a sort of wild, fierce joy. I can feel the dappled moonlight filtering through the leaves onto my skin. I can hear the animals go silent as I pass nearby; I like to imagine the sad papery sound of death, of flowers withering away instantly as I brush past them. I can feel my hot, iron-heavy breath coming in heavy gasps — unnecessary breath, born of a reflex, some remembered race-memory from before I was even living, as if the beast from which I evolved could only return to me after I died, after I had ceased to be human. I can feel my blood burning, the needle-sharp points of my teeth against the tip of my tongue. And the fear, too. A sense of absolute terror, always, the feeling that it's a dangerous thing, that any of us could end up completely destroyed, become the next victim, if not of the quarry, of the thing inside.

It's wonderful.

I almost fall headlong into the hollow, tripping over a root, but landing, hands splayed, legs sprung on the bare earth. Our quarry has fallen — the root clearly got him. He's on the ground in the hollow, crying like a child. The sole of one of his ridiculous boots has come away and he's too scared to know quite how much it hurts, that he wouldn't be walking away on that ankle even if I let him go. Half of his ponytail has come loose. I can see the others catching up out of the corner of my eye, and they're hungry too. But this is my first Chase, and what happens next is up to me.

He's managed to turn over. He's pleading with me. Begging. He's saying, "I didn't mean it. Please. I didn't mean it." He doesn't really believe it, doesn't believe who I am, even now. The ring in his nose has been ripped out, and the blood is running down over his mouth into his goatee. I hate him so much. I'm enjoying the feeling of breathing so much. My hands are flexing like claws. "I take it back," he says, between sobs. "Please, I take it back. Please. Please don't. You're not faking. You're real, you're real. Just, please, please don't. Please."

I start to laugh. "You wanted the real deal. You want to see the Goddess? Here she is. And she's hungry."

The others, all around us, begin to sing. It's not an old song but it sounds old.

Nobody who cares hears him screaming.

You want to join the Circle of the Crone because: You believe that you are strong. You want things to change back to an earlier, less structured time. You believe in a distinction between spirituality and religion. You think if you're going to be a monster, you'd better do it properly. You are afraid that there won't be a place for you in the future.

The big picture: Vampires in other covenants hide their monstrous natures behind veneers of self-control, or hellfire religion, or politesse, or ideological fire. But the vampires of the Circle of the Crone are the howling beasts who roam in bloodstained packs. In other covenants, the dead try to hold fast to religions and ideologies, maintaining hierarchies and rigid systems of control. The Acolytes believe that you must change. Other covenants believe that to be a monster, you must do the will of God, or have a will to power, or study dark secrets. But the Mother's Army is made of monsters just because it's the way they are.

They are the attendants at every witches' coven you've imagined, the crazed, naked bacchanals who tear apart the bodies of those who get in their way, who sit like spiders at the centers of orgiastic witch-cults populated by the unwitting and the lonely. Their thinkers and mouthpieces might affect etiquette in some quarters, but have somehow more energy than the theologians of the Sanctified or the boardroom manipulators of the Invictus. They are the ebullient academic occultists and the old-fashioned coven leaders who give the covenant an eloquent, seductive voice.

The members of the Circle of the Crone might call themselves pagan. These are the vampires who see the Curse as anything but — as a blessing bestowed upon the strong, the survivor. They are a part of nature. They are monsters because it is the way of things.

And natural creatures evolve and develop. The Ordo Dracul believes that the a vampire should become a different sort of monster. The Sanctified force the Kindred to subjugate their own feelings and afflict humanity. But the Acolytes believe that both beliefs are restraints, and the only way truly to enjoy the bliss of monstrosity is to leave all restraints behind.

Their priestesses and hierophants do not, unlike their Sanctified rivals, impose a structured theology upon their followers and allies. In fact, they'd probably inflict Final Death

Your God might be jealous, friend, but mine? Mine's royally pissed off.

on anyone who tried to. The Circle is more a convenient banner under which many disparate groups with disparate practices and beliefs can rally in the face of opposition from the more monolithic covenants. Under different circumstances they might be enemies, but these groups recognize their common ground in the face of common opposition. Individually these groups would have been destroyed centuries ago. As the Circle of the Crone, they'll probably still face destruction — but they'll take their enemies screaming with them.

The Circle's component movements range from old to new, from ancient blood-cults to post-modern feminist magick societies. Within the covenant, secrets and magics are shared freely, but outsiders are kept forever in the dark. None of them are human religions, or owes much to human mysticisms; every one is a dark mirror of living superstition. In the few, brief centuries since the Circle's founding, the Crone's Acolytes, the self-styled Army of the Bitch-Mother, have created a chaotic, freely contradictory synthesis of belief, and with it, a roughly-defined system of blood-magic that has spread like a virus across the Western world.

The Acolytes cheerfully lead cults, covens, and societies of outcasts and freaks, the human herd from which they choose both their prey and their childer. If the Acolytes seem strange, even by Kindred standards, it is not unrelated to the strangeness of their preferred subjects for the Embrace.

Where we came from: There have always been pagan vampires, or those who hold to the indigenous beliefs of their living years. We, the Circle of the Crone, came into being less than two hundred years ago. A number of coteries in Scotland and Ireland were pushed close to extinction, and sick of watching their friends and allies forcibly converted to the creed of the Lancea et Sanctum through the Vinculum and direct mind control. They organized as best they could, and won some of their first victories there on the bleak moors. They spread the news of victory across Western Europe first, and then to the Americas, where vampires belonging to the indigenous and enslaved minorities there were quick to bring their own voices to the Covenant. The First and Second Estates were not ready for the violence of the new covenant's birth. A dozen or more princes were reduced to ash in a few decades. The Acolytes brought blood, fire, and wrath to the dead, showing the monsters what monstrosity truly was. Led by one crazed, self-proclaimed Mother-Goddess after another, the Circle of the Crone swept through the society of the dead, not so much uniting the pagan underbelly as giving them a common name and a common purpose.

Right from the beginning, the Circle of the Crone has served as something of an underground railroad among the Kindred, allowing us heretics to find each other with a speed impossible for other Kindred. Few used — and still use — the Cacophony with our ease, making up for a lack of organization and formal ideology with the speed of communication.

It was no doubt our command of the Cacophony that allowed for the formulation of Crúac. Although our blood sorcery is given an Irish-Gaelic name, the magic happened by itself as we communicated, weaving a synthesis of dozens of forms of blood magic, some ancient, some brand-new. Of all the magics the Kindred practice, it is the most fluid, the most susceptible to change.

Change in everything is the key; we Acolytes realized that early on. Change is sometimes violent, sometimes personal, but always constant. The anger of the heathen gods, of the Carnivorous Mother-Goddess from whom we draw our name, demands an alteration in the order of things. Things must change. For the new to survive, the old must be swept away, in fire and blood. And that means the covenant itself must change, and change constantly. The dead are cold and in stasis, so the old guard say. But the Circle of the Crone, notwithstanding our archaic name, will accept only evolution or destruction — and if destruction is the way, it won't be alone.

Our practices: It's hard to pin down any one practice as generic. Our rituals are often unique to our homelands, a mixture of old and new; every ceremony constantly changes, and might be wholly different from one night to the next. We dance naked, run in wild hunts, light ritual pyres (always risky for the dead), and perform blood sacrifices. Sometimes the sacrifices are human. Sometimes strangled, sometimes stabbed, sometimes suffocated. It's not as common as the other covenants would like to believe. But they happen.

Most of us have some sort of involvement with a human cult of some kind: a controlling "personal development" cult that steals its members from their families and friends; a neo-Bacchanalian sisterhood; a cerebral occult study group; a coven of blood-drenched witches. The cultists are sometimes dupes, lured in by the half-deceptive promises and glamours of the vampire. Often transformed into willing servants by bonds of blood forged in mock-pagan ceremonies, these cultists can become our effective and willing agents. They recruit. They bring in money. If, a lot of the time, we are more closely involved with the affairs of our herds than the devotees of any other covenant, it is at least worth it for the benefits we receive. Human agents — often unwitting — can go places and do things we can't. And of course, they're expendable.

This is just as well. We are the least numerous of the covenants (with the possible exception of the Ordo Dracul). We exist in a state of sometimes open, sometimes undeclared war against the more established, hierarchical covenants. We need all the help we can get (whether the help knows it or not). Neither ideologically tied down like the Carthians, or possessed of the tools of power that the Invictus have, we of the Circle have only our desire for change on our side, our absolute need to be *better*.

Among our most powerful tools is Crúac, our vicious system of blood magic; it is flexible and ever-changing, but not for the conscience-stricken. We share Crúac freely among our members — outsiders looking to steal our power find we guard our secrets jealously and fiercely.

Nicknames: The Acolytes (within the covenant, formally); The Mother's Army (within the covenant, informally); The Witches (derogatory)

Stereotypes: Riot grrl, working-class matriarch, indigenous people's rights campaigner, reclusive wealthy occultist, dissolute swinger, technopagan clubber, body modification enthusiast, voodoo priest, strange-eyed street ganger, witchy librarian, aging old-school libertine; suspiciously friendly laird of the manor

When we are in power: Of all the covenants, only the Ordo Dracul controls fewer domains. That might be because when we are running things, vampire society becomes a free-for-all. When newly in power, we settle grudges that might go back for centuries, purging former oppressors with unparalleled ruthlessness. A domain under Acolyte control is no place for the weak, nor the squeamish. "Do what thou wilt" becomes the whole of the law, and with it comes what is either (depending on which way you look at it) the perfection of vampire society, or its utter dissolution into Darwinian violence: Less anarchy, and more the rule of the strong without formal laws or any pretense of "civilization." While the Invictus have strict patterns that govern their brutality, and the Sanctified use the tools of religion to justify horrific acts of violence, the Circle of the Crone use their liberty to destroy anyone who steps out of line. How "stepping out of line" is defined, however, can change from night to night — sorry.

When we are in trouble: When cornered or persecuted, we undergo a peculiar change. While not exactly organized, our Mother's Army closes its ranks, becoming more secretive than ever, and in our own way rigidly organized. Backs against the wall, we are prone to acts of astonishing flamboyance and brutal violence; those who take it upon themselves to oppress the Acolytes find their havens put to the flame, their ghouls ritually strangled, and their neonates staked at sunrise in the middle of lonely forest crossroads.

The Invictus

The Conspiracy of Silence

No one is drinking the coffee.

I am making the coffee, because the Managing Director asked me to be here. It suits her for me to be here, but the coffee is only here because it is supposed to be here, because this is an Informal Board Meeting, and you know it is an Informal Board Meeting because you have coffee. It's good coffee. I was always good at making coffee.

The coffee sits on the table in front of the boss and the Senior Partners. They don't look at it. They don't even touch it. MacIntosh and his PA, Miss Rai, have not touched the coffee either, but they're toying with it, running fingers around the pristine china rims, going to pick the cups up and never quite managing to get the cups to their mouths.

"You have to realize," MacIntosh is saying, "that for all intents and purposes, the company seems to have been trading the same way for sixty-seven years. With the same board. Deepa?"

Miss Rai hands him another sheaf of papers, containing things all of us already know. He could have reached over and picked them up himself, but that's not the point. The point is power.

Actually, it's been more like 68 years, and this is part of a sequence of events we experience every couple of years. This is the part where the Financial Officer discovers that the signatures of the board members are still the same. He finds this suspicious. He finds a reason to explain it, which inevitably tends first towards the mundane, then the ingenious, then the suspicious and criminal. MacIntosh is possessed of no more imagination than his predecessors.

One might think that this was an inexcusable breach of secrecy, but the fact is, it is important that we do this. Because men like MacIntosh are unimaginative, and unimaginative men run this great country of ours, to our benefit. And because, as the boss told me the other day, it is important because we are the only ones who *can* do this. We have the power. And it is important to demonstrate that we can do things that our more benighted family cannot. We create this conflict to show how easily we dispatch it, how utterly it does not bother us. We do not endanger ourselves. Because we rule. Because the point is power.

MacIntosh is finishing. He is saying, politely, that my masters are in an awkward position, and that we should close off this field of inquiry before the authorities are alerted. He is threatening us with the law, of course. He has not yet noticed that the last time I offered a refresh, I triggered Miss Rai's conditioning. She is staring blankly across the table, mouth slightly open, eyes glassy, breathing so shallowly she could be almost as dead as me (oh, Deepa, I have never met a mind so easy to core out as yours, and I have never taken so much enjoyment in doing so, and I so hope I can keep you).

The Managing Director is getting tired of the game now. She says, "*Quiet*, now," and MacIntosh stops mid-sentence, eyes wide, suddenly frozen with a realization of something beyond his pathetic imaginative faculties. "Julia?" I shiver as the boss says my name. I take my suit jacket off first, obviously. It was expensive. Slipping between him and his deliciously entranced assistant, I pull his chair back, and sit on his lap. I hadn't realized how hungry I was. He can't talk, can't move. Doesn't matter if that's fear or the Managing Director's power. It's all power and hunger, really. But the point is power.

You want to join the Invictus because: You always want to be on the winning side. You were powerful when you were alive. You'd rather work with the system. You're motivated by greed. You don't see any point in changing things. You are afraid of missing out on the big payday.

The big picture: The Invictus knows where the bodies are buried. And they know which ones are only sleeping. This is the legend: The beast that sits in the center of a huge empire, the cultured monster wearing a coronet. The old money. The Prince of Darkness.

So very often, at the heart of the vampire web lies the lord and master, the queen, the mistress. The trappings of power — regal, corporate, political, criminal, military — are just trappings. In the end, the structures are the same. Power is the means and the end, the payment for indispensable service. The vampires of the Invictus either have power and know how to keep it or want it and know how to get it. The master of an Invictus house — they often call the ruling structure a "house" — might be the CEO of a holding company, the Godfather of a sprawling crime empire, a mayor, a general, or just a King or Queen; and might maintain a variety of complex hierarchies. But it's always a hierarchy.

Most polite and formal of the major covenants, its complex social niceties and sometimes archaic forms of behavior mask blackmail and back-stabbing more vicious than any living human could imagine. Schemes to take down rivals can take

I've kept your secret. Time to discuss the terms.

literally decades to come to fruition, relying on dizzyingly complex plans, pawns who don't know they're pawns, mind control, blood bonds, terrifying financial investments with long-delayed payouts, and sudden acts of horrific violence.

Every vampire in the covenant covets the job of the vampire above her; every vampire fears the one beneath. But personal advancement must not come at the cost of the establishment, or its great trust. The Invictus has maintained the traditions of the dead for longer than any vampire covenant now, longer even than its predecessor, the Camarilla itself, survived. The hierarchy must remain intact. A prince cannot be removed if his absence would put the age-old forms in danger; a subordinate cannot be disposed of if no one survives to replace him. The Invictus is the prince, her council, their henchmen, their soldiers. Like the Lancea et Sanctum, the leaders of the Invictus consider all vampires to be under their jurisdiction — unless they set themselves against it, as do the Carthians, in which case they are at best tolerated as dissidents, and at worst proscribed, with all the horror that entails.

Above all, the Invictus are the Conspiracy of Silence. The Invictus have links with the various seats of temporal power, the better to maintain the Masquerade and make the living pull the wool over their own eyes. If their rules are unwritten and often unspoken, they are no less binding. A new vampire might exist for years among the First Estate and still have trouble parsing the covenant's complex etiquettes. He might take decades to understand fully the extent of the conspiracy's reach in both the worlds of the living and the dead.

The Invictus' relationship to the Masquerade is complex. On the one hand, it is the Invictus who keeps it. It is their highest tradition. No one upholds the Masquerade like they do, and, as a result, no one is better placed to be in charge. Of course, the Masquerade helps keep the Invictus on top. The Establishment is frighteningly good at using up-to-date methods of keeping in touch, of hammering down rumors and finding ways to blackmail. On the other hand, Invictus leaders get away with things that their neonates can't, because they're more able to contain the consequences.

Where we came from: More than two and a half thousand years ago, the vampires of ancient Rome founded the very first covenant. They called it the Small Debating Chamber, the *Camarilla,* and it was the first organized government of the dead. It was a thing of dark beauty and terrible legend. It ended more or less at the same time Rome itself ended, in fire and violence, in a cataclysm of horror whose details and causes are lost to history and the screeches of the owls. As the Dark Ages began, the vestiges of the Camarilla became a new, lesser but still glorious, vampire ruling class. It took on the trappings of nobility, and its officials, henchmen, and serfs. They survived. *We* survived. We are the Camarilla ongoing, bloody and unbowed, unconquered – *Invictus.*

For most of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the Invictus and our allies, the Lancea et Sanctum, were the unchallenged rulers of the Kindred in Europe. Occasionally, other covenants — such as the Legion of the Dead, the Gallows Post, or more

recently the Ordo Dracul — have arisen or have fallen, but these invariably always become part of the hierarchies we perpetuate. It has only been since the 18th century that the Invictus has not ruled alone over the Western dead. Even so, more domains, particularly in Europe, North America, and Australasia, are still ruled by an Invictus majority than any other. If the dead have traditions and etiquettes, they are Invictus etiquettes. If a domain has a hierarchy, it is an Invictus hierarchy. If the society of the dead exists at all, it is because the Conspiracy of Silence preserved it. This is the Invictus version of history; if it is a lie, the truths are lost, because we willed it so. History is written by the victors, and we never admit to losing.

Our practices: Members of our covenant have always understood the value of the adage: You have to change to stay the same. As human power structures have changed, the Invictus has changed with them. We recognize that in the end, the Camarilla's final fall was its inability to accept the inevitability of Rome's destruction. You disagree with my version of events? A shame, since my version of history is what is written in the books.

The Invictus, over the centuries, has been a court of nobles, an absolute monarchy, a dictatorship, a corporation, an organized crime family — all are, the First Estate knows, simply ways of preserving hierarchies and keeping our great secret. A man in black, a bullying middle manager, and a mob enforcer might appear to draw their authority from differing sources, but the effect is the same: The silence remains, and those who it shelters know who they owe. Our neonates often end up strong-arming dissidents, hiding evidence of our existence from the living, serving as pawns in the metabyzantine schemes of the elders, and learning piece by piece how to make allies (if not friends) and influence people — one way or the other.

Every vampire in the Invictus considers himself or herself a ruler with the potential for more, from the lowliest ground-level soldier to the grayest bureaucrat. Better to be a henchman of the Invictus than not in the Invictus at all.

The Invictus maintains the Masquerade, but to do so, we must gain and demonstrate power. From time to time, an Invictus leader might commit indiscretions, but the personal connections she accumulates on the way up are eminently useful in making those indiscretions disappear. A neonate or ancilla might have to be responsible for cleaning up these messes. Power still needs its tools. A young enforcer could be anything from a dead private detective, to a musclebound legbreaker, to the manager of a team of spotter ghouls who watch the unawares vampires of the domain for infractions of local rules.

The Invictus is ancient, but we are modern. We use information technology. We watch the Internet. We use the tools of business and organized crime, changing tools to preserve the status quo, to keep us on top, and above all to keep the secret. Everything depends on our victory.

Nicknames: The First Estate (formally, within the Invictus and the Lancea et Sanctum); The Old Man (outside of the covenant, especially among the old) or just The Man (among the young); The Conspiracy, sometimes The Conspiracy of Silence (used by allies and enemies alike); The Ownership; The Establishment

Concepts: Old-school Eurotrash, Merc-driving capitalist bloodsucker, intimidatingly silent bodyguard, Man in Black, well-bred dominatrix, boarding-school teacher, privileged frat boy or sorority girl, soulless bureaucrat, Man of Wealth and Taste, military officer, working-class entrepreneur, business-like mobster, jobsworth security guard

When we are in power: The Invictus are the default vampire government in many ways. We made the traditions, and the power structures of the Kindred are those of the First Estate. Although our power might be expressed in many different ways, a hierarchy always exists. In an Invictus-ruled domain, expect the Lancea et Sanctum to be, if not favored, significant, and the Carthians to be held in disdain. The status of the Circle of the Crone and the Ordo Dracul varies, often based on whether we need their occult secrets to keep everyone else in the dark.

When we are in trouble: When an Invictus house no longer rules, its members do everything they can to be in power again, even if that means betraying their own ideals. If open war is declared against the First Estate, few of us will fight to the death. Many will capitulate and try to become part of new power structures. We play the long game, knowing that the time will come when one of our own will earn authority, and we groom our neonates accordingly. We bide our time, playing at being good members of the new order, the better to end up in charge of it once again. Fear for the Carthian or Acolyte prince whose advisors are Invictus. He may not be prince for very much longer.

The Lancea et Sanctum
The Sanctified

The Cenobite's sermon at the Sunset Mass uses as its text Eschaton 12:13, "But God will not bless those who waste their faith on Him." The living, he says, are saved through faith by the Grace of God, but the dead, they have no such recourse. Ours, she says, is a faith of praxis; we do God's will, always doing, always striving, and it is in action that our damnation is sanctified.

All four of us shift in the pew, uneasily. She usually does one of these sermons when she needs something. The others have nothing to worry about. They're laity. But I'm part of the Parish Council. After the final malediction and dismissal, I wait for the shortest possible seemly interval before leaving, but she is there already, at the door of the chapel. Under the dappled illumination of the stained glass image of Saint Longinus, all in red, I can see something crawling under the edge of her habit, just above her eyebrows. I imagine maggots burrowing into her forehead.

This is how they ask you: As you're leaving, as you shake hands and offer your thanks and it's as normal as it can be, at the point when you're most vulnerable. They never order, but the request is from God, and you can't say no. She knows things about me I never confessed. Last time, I was asked to keep a rivet from the armor of Saint Daniel in my possession for a month, in a locket around my neck. The time before that, I had to steal a copy of a book about the Plague Angel from the University Library's Secure Collection, and burn it before the Others found it. And the time before that...that was when I had to visit the priest and find out if he was worthy.

I am told that vampires do not really dream. I still have nightmares about that time.

It's always something simple they ask you to do, until...until it isn't.

You want to join the Lancea et Sanctum because: You value tradition. You might not think things are great as they are, but you believe they'll be worse if change comes. You seek to find meaning in your condition as a vampire. You are curious about the past. You are afraid of Hell.

The big picture: The Lancea et Sanctum is, quite simply, the organized church of the Kindred. God cursed vampires to be hungry and dead, and in their damnation they are called to do God's work. In the Book of Job, Satan is God's agent in the torment of an innocent man, tempting him to blasphemy. The Sanctified see themselves as doing the same: They torment the innocent, and root out those whose faith is weak.

The Lancea et Sanctum is to the Church Universal what the individual vampire is to a living believer: a parasite; a monster that feeds, and corrupts, and mimics. But in so doing, the Sanctified do the will of God Himself. They produce the trials and persecutions that refine the faithful and weed out the unbeliever. They send the faithful to the right hand of Jesus, a place forever denied to the Damned. A Lancea et Sanctum theologian once called the organization "the Third Version of Judas," the true betrayers who are too pious to be allowed the consolations of goodness.

The ambivalent relationship of the Sanctified to their living flocks is a case in point. While they have for centuries maintained a strict rule that they do not worship alongside the living, vampiric shepherds do everything they can to make sure these churches survive, pursuing those who would persecute or otherwise harm the living church with terrifying viciousness. On the other hand, the Sanctified believe that they must keep their flocks strong. With fear, a Sanctified monster keeps the wayward children of Mother Church on the straight and narrow: teenagers are terrified into maintaining their virginity by the monsters who hunt at Lovers' Leap; an abusive priest is fed on, and then driven to suicide; a family is frightened into staying with the church by nightmares and supernatural portents. With temptations, the monsters weed out the weak: A vampire plays on the deep-seated doubts of a nun, driving her to experimentation and addiction, then to prostitution and finally to homelessness and death; a televangelist is given the opportunity to embezzle funds from the Rwandan Orphanage Appeal; a student Bible-group leader is lured to his doom by a beautiful, dark woman. All too often those whom the Sanctified tempt and are found wanting become the next generation of the Sanctified themselves, rising from the grave to atone for the unforgivable.

The devotees of the Lancea et Sanctum consider themselves to be the moral center of the Kindred. They are the clergy who minister to the laity of other covenants, who merely attend services.

This is my blood. Do this in remembrance of me or I won't allow you to forget it.

The Lancea et Sanctum's divine monsters are the archivists and librarians of the Kindred. Just as medieval monks were the keepers of knowledge, the Sanctified maintain some of the oldest records of the Kindred, and most cities with a significant Lancea et Sanctum presence have a Black Collection of histories, diaries and sacred texts. A small Lancea et Sanctum printing press even exists — the Society for the Promulgation of Longinian Doctrine — producing printed-on-demand texts for dissemination among the dead (and *only* among the dead). The most significant of these texts is *The Testament of Longinus*, the vampires' Bible. Of course, just like their medieval daylight predecessors, the Lancea et Sanctum's librarians suppress or destroy as many books as they keep. The Sanctified just as often keep artifacts and texts far away from the prying eyes and grasping fingers of the curious, both living and dead.

Where we came from: Longinus, the centurion who thrust his spear into the side of Christ, was (our tradition says) transfigured by the gore of the Savior, and became unique among the dead, a vampire unlike any other. Compiling *The Testament of Longinus*, a Testament for the dead to mirror the New Testament of the Living, Longinus' disciples founded the vampiric church many of the dead still follow, *lancea et sanctum*, chapel and spear.

The "Chapel" represents the church that Longinus's followers founded; the "Spear" is the spear that pierced that side of Christ, which is now seen as a metaphor for the church's role as a thorn in the side of both the living church and the moral conscience of the church of the dead.

It was the Lancea et Sanctum that presided over the fall of the Camarilla, Ancient Rome's legendary vampire government, and which, along with the Invictus that was built on the Camarilla's decaying foundations, was the primary moving force of Kindred government. It was a Sanctified Bishop in Constantinople who first formulated the Traditions, and it was the Lancea et Sanctum that enforced the practice of Masquerade. Theirs are the oldest surviving Kindred-written texts. The Enlightenment brought the rise of the newer covenants — the Carthians, the Ordo Dracul — and their new ways; and the hold of the Lancea et Sanctum over the minds of the dead waned, just as that of the temporal Church began to waver. When later still the Circle of the Crone unified and became a word-of-mouth movement in its own right, the Lancea et Sanctum became once more as it was in Rome, just one of a number of covenants. Do not underestimate the power of the vampire church, however. Faith is still a powerful mover in the lives of millions, and wherever some expression of Christianity exists in numbers, there the Sanctified are.

Our practices: The Lancea et Sanctum tends, in almost everything we do, to try at least to preserve the old ways, to maintain things as they are, or at least as the Sanctified believe they should be. Even if a Sanctified corpse brings chaos and tragedy to a living community, her intention is to prevent larger changes.

The Sanctified preach. We believe all Kindred exist in the context of Longinus' Church Eternal: the priests and divines

(the Lancea et Sanctum), the laity (all those outside of the covenant who respect Longinus and take the sacraments), and the doubly damned heretic (everyone else, but particularly the Circle of the Crone). This is why we behave as a church, organizing services, and why we interfere in the temporal politics of the Damned — all the better to push our agenda, which some consider the most conservative of any of the covenants. This conservatism brings us often into conflict with the Circle of the Crone, whose neo-pagan syntheses of what the Sanctified often see as old heresies and apostasies leaves a bitter taste.

The Sanctified study, and that study is often dangerous, since we are at our most militant when finding and acquiring historical documents and artifacts — or destroying them, and all the traces with them. The truths the Lancea et Sanctum seek are dangerous, and our neonates may be asked to guard, steal, or destroy all sorts of truths without ever finding out what these truths are. A book. A thighbone. A petrified canine tooth, elongated and carved in tiny Latin letters with *Malediction* 19:6 — "I gorge myself on their hypocrisy." A vial of dust. An incorruptible apple, two thousand years old. An owl feather in a golden reliquary. A plague jar, sealed for centuries but still swarming with living flies. A clay coffin containing someone old and sleeping, whose knowledge offers a terrible threat to the leaders of the covenant but whose power demands that he must not be disturbed.

One important aspect of Sanctified study is Theban Sorcery, the dark miracles handed down from the most ancient Egyptian cenobites. The greatest secrets of our sorcery are known to the Lancea et Sanctum's priests — secrets they pass on sparingly, if at all.

The Sanctified also deal with the living, manipulating church leaders and religious congregations for their own purposes. We might send a neonate to put a minister to the test with the temptations of sex, or drugs, or darker things. Or to whisper in an evangelist's ear at night, the better to control the politics of a city. A church soup kitchen is both a great place to hide and a source of easy blood; a protest in front of an abortion clinic creates a distraction, allowing for blood and drugs to be stolen; a few drops of Vitae in the jar of consecrated wine, and the private communion held with a major gangland figure becomes a means of control.

Human links are especially useful because it travel is important to us, possibly more than to any other covenant except the Carthians. There is no other way to find the knowledge we seek, suppress, and use.

Nicknames: The Sanctified (within the covenant), the Church Eternal (old-fashioned), the Second Estate (used by the Invictus), the Judges (usually derogatory)

Stereotypes: Creepy nun, apocalyptic street preacher, father confessor, earnest student evangelist, delusional derelict, church janitor, night manager at the orphanage, Pentecostal middle-class professional, nurse, old-school BDSM enthusiast, uptight middle-aged bachelor or spinster of the parish, placard-wielder or leaflet-giver, "reformed" serial killer, librarian

When we are in power: In some parts of the world — Rome and the Vatican, Salt Lake City, Seoul and some parts of the American South, for example — the Sanctified wield enormous power. In these cities, the fist in our velvet glove is made of the strongest steel. Longinian eucharists are used to create blood bonds, and sometimes in Sanctified cities, nearly every vampire is in thrall to the Bishop. Even in these places, however, we pay lip-service to a temporal Kindred government, a prince belonging either to the Invictus or (slightly more rarely) the Carthians, who although in most ways a puppet of the Sanctified, puts his or her name to commands and orders. The Lancea et Sanctum does not, its Bishop says, command; it requests. It is for the temporal powers to command, and the Sanctified to recommend.

When we are in trouble: Christianity at its dawn flourished in times of persecution. Those cities where we are at our weakest are those in which our Christian herd are either persecuted (for example, in Pyongyang or Abu Dhabi) or are simply a minority in a secular city (as is the case in Stockholm or Tallinn). However, these places are often where the small numbers of Sanctified are the fiercest. We are both jealously secretive and openly dismissive of the other covenants, waging covert wars against more powerful vampires. We tend our human flocks and defend them against the people who would kill them, visiting terrible vengeances upon persecuting authorities. When against the wall, the Sanctified find their truest meaning. When threatened, we truly believe that we are doing God's darkest will.

The Ordo Dracul
The Defiant

"The most exciting part about a Dragon's Nest is that you never quite know what you're going to get," I say.

Richard the Could-Be-King looks at me, one eyebrow raised under his floppy fringe. His smirk — his usual expression — falters. I sort of fancy Richard, but I know he's bad news. He's new, see. A bit erratic. All, *oh can I have a mystical name now?* and *when do I get to learn the good stuff?* A bit too keen. And a bit too keen to tell people all about it. So Mr. Kogaion says, it's time to take him to a Dragon's Nest. See what he's made of.

"Have you gone wrong, Frances?" he says.

"You're not impressed. I can tell."

"This is a leisure center."

Rich, Rich, you are so very wet behind your ears. Yes, this is a leisure center. This is, in fact, the leisure center that the County Council had to shut down because of the concrete cancer on every outer wall, and the 55-year-old woman who got killed when a bit of the ceiling spontaneously fell on her head during her second go on the rowing machine.

If only she had known when to stop.

So no lights are here, and in the three months since they shut the leisure center — with no small amount of controversy, and an election coming too — no one has moved the gym equipment. It's just sitting here, rotting. Some of the metal is rusted around the edges. It's covered with a layer of dust that stinks of age. It looks like it should have been shut for years. Rich doesn't seem to have any idea how significant this is. Presumably he hasn't seen past his stupid floppy fringe. But no spiders. No bugs. Nothing living.

I run my finger over the rail of a walking machine, leaving a furrow in the dust, which sticks to my finger. As I disengage, a bolt of static electricity zaps my hand. I yelp, and hope Rich didn't hear me. Probably not. Ventrue. Practically deaf. As I look around, trying to look like that wasn't an accident, I spot a thing.

"Hah," I say, still sucking my finger. "See that?"

"No."

I forgot. He can't see so well in the dark as I can. I turn on my torch and wave it towards the wall. Graffiti. Four slanted lines under a kind of upside-down U-shape, spray-painted on. We approach it, slowly.

"Do you know what that is?" says Rich.

"It's a sign on the wall," I say. "It's a signal."

"Well, yes." He is impatient. "For who?"

"I don't know," I say. "But can't you feel it? Can't you feel the power in the air? The electricity? The energies? The hairs on the back of your neck, standing up. Then way your feet are moving through it like...like...jam."

"Jam."

I was doing so well. He's just staring at me, standing in the middle of the decaying gym equipment with these amazing energies all around him and he doesn't have a clue.

"I don't even know what we're doing here," he says.

"Well, it's kind of, you know, salutary to find out what exactly is waiting in here. I mean, I've got a clue, but, well, we need to flush the little chap out. Let him do his thing. Then we can figure out if we can use the place."

I can hear the sound of footsteps. Right above us. The floor above us. I can smell ozone and dry rot. I can almost see him, or I can see hints of him, anyway, the way that even month-old cobwebs crumble as he passes, the crackles of something lethal and somehow stale. They don't call me the Queen of Eyes for nothing. In point of fact, they don't call me the Queen of Eyes.

But that's who I am.

"Wait a minute. What do you mean, flush him—" Rich doesn't get to finish his sentence. I'm gone, poof, into the shadows, out of sight, and that always dodgy ceiling collapses onto him, someone huge and big and flashing with electricity and all these huge fists like bricks, all studded with bits of metal and rivets. Dead flesh that isn't dead. Incoherent roars. The sound of tearing.

It's not nice to watch, but it's what I'm here for. Rich gives it his best shot, bless him. And we've got the present owner out to play and settled the question of whether the Could-Be-King... well, actually Could Be.

Hard luck, Rich.

You want to join the Ordo Dracul because: You want to cheat death — *properly*. You think you can be better. When you were alive, you yearned to be a vampire. You believe that being a vampire could be wonderful, and you want to find a way. You want to become alive again, but so much better than human. You find the occult world terrifying. You are afraid of what you might become.

I will spit in the eye of God. And he will allow it.

The big picture: The dead scientist who experiments on humans, werewolves, and fairies in a sterile white laboratory. The occult archaeologist who rifles through the tombs of the terrifying beasts of old. The chillingly plausible preacher who leads his disciples into self-mutilation and surgical alteration. The robed cultists whose rituals depend on the sacrifice of angels. These are the Ordo Dracul. They are the Order of the Dragon, the children of Dracula himself.

They adopt mystical names, play at arcane ceremonies, forge underground fighting rings, start cults, explore places they should not go. The Ordo Dracul knows more about the hidden world than perhaps any other group of vampires. If they do not always share the things they've learned with each other, they still have a source of knowledge and experience that ensures the other covenants keep them around.

Like the Lancea et Sanctum, the self-styled Dragons seek knowledge through seeking out artifacts and text. But while the Sanctified seem to collect it to keep it or destroy it, the Dragons, instructed by their cold leaders, whom they call the *Kogaions*, collect it to learn about it and make use of it, no matter how dangerous it might be. It has to have a purpose. Nothing the Ordo Dracul learns is without a use. Everything works towards tightly defined goals: the betterment of the vampire condition, the amassing of an individual's supernatural power, and the defeat of God.

Like the Sanctified, the vampires of the Ordo Dracul teach their neonates that God ordained that they be vampires; but in their eyes, this makes God an enemy. They spit in the face of God's injustice. God is senile, they say. God is mad. God must be torn down from his throne. They would fight angels themselves to weaken God's hold on the Damned. The goal is life, but not simple human life: the life of an immortal, unleashed by the curse of mortality and the curse of undeath alike. The spiritual disciplines taught by the Order, the Coils, don't quite get a vampire there, but it's a start. And a start on the road to transcendence is enough.

But what then? What happens when the vampires shed their curse and have only power? Will the hunger also be gone? The Order of the Dragon doesn't have the answer to that, yet. But they yearn to find out, and when they do they will learn what they can, and they will look up to Heaven and they will spit in the face of God.

Where we came from: Dracula. He was the first Kogaion of the Dragons, the attributed writer of the *Rites of the Dragon*, that troublesome hymn to undeath that still circulates tonight among the Kindred. The Ordo Dracul, without ever gaining his permission, took his name. But then, asking permission was the very opposite of Dracula's lessons.

No vampire even knows what he was really like. All that is known, outside of the Rites, is that he was once Vlad Tepes, the Impaler, hero of Wallachia. In the closing nights of 1476, as his assassins closed in on him at the end of his third reign, he cursed them and cursed God, and God heard him. That

night he became a vampire with no sire, the most famous of all the revenants.

Among the Kindred, knowledge is found; and it was a vampire of the Ordo Dracul who found out that Dracula wasn't the first to be so singularly Cursed, and wasn't the last. But then, that's the *modus operandi* of the Dragons: They find these things. If the Dragons are a threat to the other covenants, it is precisely because they continually reveal truths about the vampires.

The Order uses these truths as weapons — they always have. But at the same time, in threatening the truths to which the more traditional covenants have long held, they make the Kindred strong. And they always have. Right from the beginning, the vampires of the Ordo Dracul have sought to be better monsters: more efficient, more powerful, colder, harder, and so much more intelligent.

Our practices: We vampires of the Ordo Dracul seek to improve ourselves, and the Coils of the Dragons are just one way we do so. Some say we unearth things that perhaps should not have been discovered. We say that the only discoveries we should not pursue are those that, when unleashed, turn and destroy the creator — but there's really no way to know what will happen until we get started, hmm?

(Not long ago, a Sanctified Bishop in London blamed the Dragons for bringing back the Owls. The Kogaion of London smiled and did not deny it.)

A Kogaion of the Dragons is oddly secure in her place. While all the other covenants are wracked with infighting, the Dragons seem almost to avoid the role of Kogaion, pushing our most senior members into the role almost as some sort of punishment, Vampires of other covenants find this hugely confusing. But even the most enthusiastic Kogaion finds that the secrets she must learn to hold the position are burdensome, and eventually, maddening.

The existence of a neonate in the Dragons is a constant test. Elders send them to find artifacts and texts before the Sanctified squirrel them away. Sometimes they are sent into dangerous situations just to see how they handle pressure. It's often the neonates who are the first to enter what we call "Dragon's Nests," the places of power that exist in dizzying variety. Werewolves, magicians, fairies, ghosts, spirits, angels, and other creatures all create spaces, deliberately or accidentally, where the supernatural powers of the world concentrate themselves. We can't always get anything out of these places, but when we find one, we nearly always try. Sometimes, if a neonate has been disappointing, a trip to a nest can be the final data point in an analysis as to whether he is even worth keeping.

All this means that while we Dragons don't know a vast amount about other supernatural forces, we know more than most of the other covenants. More than knowing, though, the Order acts on its knowledge. We continually put ourselves in dangerous situations, because if our existence is worth bettering, it is worth risking.

Nicknames: The Defiant (within the covenant), the Dragons, the Order (or Order of the Dragon, outside of the covenant)

Concepts: Venturesome archaeologist, charismatic occult study group leader, underground bare-knuckle boxer, cold-fish doctor, quirky writer, failed suicide

When we are in power: Of the five major covenants, the Ordo Dracul is the one least likely to hold power over a Kindred domain. In the few places where the leaders of the Kindred are Dragons, the Kogaion is usually pretty laissez-faire about the intrigues of the other covenants. It's not that we are weak, it is that these things are of little concern to us, which often infuriates rivals. A Dragon prince (or *Voivode*, if he wants to be traditional about it) is often the strongest, and most magically adept of all the vampires in the domain, and quite capable of dealing with assassins and enemies without any help. He just doesn't care about *why* he has enemies and assassins. This can drive the leaders of the other covenants insane with impotent rage and make a Dragon's domain a potential flash point.

When we are in trouble: Persecuted Dragons seem almost invigorated by the experience. We are made stronger by everything we experience: We are improved. Push a Dragon down and soon you will be devoured.

VII
The Only Thing We Fear

The Dead Lieutenant is apologetic. His face is in shadow, but the lamp illumines his desk. From a drawer he pulls out a file. He begins to rifle through it, sorting photographs and documents towards the front.

"Facts, facts. You only want the fucking facts, when all I got are conjectures. OK, then. Just the facts.

"One. This has happened more and more frequently recently. I mean, Baltimore ain't an old city, in the grand scheme of things. But this is happening. It is still happening. Vampire homicides, committed by what must be vampires, with all the usual suspects and the grudges safely out of the way. But Kindred. Or something like Kindred. They do things that a regular guy couldn't do. Find their way into places a breathing guy couldn't go. And whack our people.

"Two. No one sees them coming." He sits back, pushing the dossier towards me. "One thing in common all of these attacks have is that no one had any warning that they were targeted. No pattern in politics. North Side, East Side, West Side. Rich neighborhoods, poor. No warning.

"Three. The only reason we have to call them Seven is because when they've whacked some sorry fucker, they leave a calling card."

He shows me a picture. A wall in a run-down residential house. A skeleton in a new business suit, a few shreds of rotting flesh on the bones, the skull separate and sitting neatly on the lampshade. On the wall, written in blood, three figures. V, I, and I. The Roman number seven. "Never the figure. Always the Roman numeral. We see it and we see a number, but it might not be a number at all. It could mean anything. Vampires In the, uh, Inferno. Victims' Inadequate Escape."

"That doesn't start with an 'I'," I say.

"Fuck you," he says, simply. "Point is, it could mean anything." He is warming to his subject.

"Four. They don't talk." He pulls out a witness statement, looks like he's going to read it out to me. He doesn't. He puts it back. "So there was this one guy, Gussie Weems, who was on the Johns Hopkins campus, shadowy sort of fucker, and he gave me a sworn statement he saw the guys who beheaded Father Andrew. He says he watched the motherfuckers come up and stop him, and they had maybe a minute of just standing there. And they did not say a single. Fucking. Word. And neither did Father Andrew. Then they took him to pieces and he couldn't do a single thing to stop them.

"Five. If you see them, they'll get you. Night after he gave this statement, swearing that he was fine, that they never saw him, Weems got dismembered. All the parts burnt, five little bonfires, except his head. Big Roman seven on the wall of his squat. Bye, Weems.

"Six. Aside from Weems, we don't have a motive. At least none we can make sense of." He throws down sheets of paper, one by one. "Sanctified priest. Carthian soldier. Acolyte prostitute. Cop. Nerese from City Hall. No apparent reason why."

He pauses, steeples his fingers. Only his hands are in the light.

"Seven. And this shows how fucking circumstantial we have to get here, every 'Seven' homicide occurs within 72 hours of a confirmed sighting of an Owl. The victims weren't there when the Owl was. It could be a coincidence. It could be connected. It's the only pattern we can find."

I lean over to take a closer look at the papers. He reaches across and snaps the folder shut, withdraws it before I can say another word.

The interview is over.

Reasons they might join VII: They are mad. Their morality does not allow for the existence of vampires. They are controlled by something else and are not responsible for their actions. They are on a mission. They have orders. They are holding an ancient grudge. They are afraid of something more terrible than the Kindred.

The big picture: They are vampires who hunt vampires. They leave behind the wreckage of their Kindred victims, often creatively destroyed, along with the three characters that make the Roman numeral for seven, displayed prominently on a wall, or a sheet of paper, or on a screen. And that's all. They are the subjects of whispered rumor and terrified speculation. The fear of VII is the thing the five great covenants have in common.

Some connection between VII and the Strix seems to exist. When the Owls come, the hunters of VII are not far behind. But what? Do they serve the Owls or hunt them? Are VII the tools of the vampires' destruction or their only hope for salvation from their shadowy screeching nemeses?

This is the writing on the wall.

Where they came from: Where VII came from is a mystery. Are they old or new? Do they go back to the days of Rome or are they a new phenomenon? No one is sure. Seven rumors occasionally filter through the Cacophony. Any one of them may be true. More than one of them could be true. None of them may be.

They do not know what they are doing. Every vampire of VII has been brainwashed, and hunts in a post-hypnotic trance, triggered by some obscure cause, for reasons lost to time. Any vampire could be one of them without knowing it. *You* could be one of them.

Their minds and souls have been broken and remade by the God-Machine, and now, like clockwork corpse-dolls they serve a corrective work, destroying other vampires, or kidnapping them, that they too might become mindless destroyers; only the God-Machine knows why only seven exist in any domain at a time, or why they leave their mark.

They are led by a lost clan, the princes of a city destroyed in the days of the Old Testament due to God's wrath upon the dead, following some terrible mission to restore their long-destroyed city's fortunes in the eyes of God. What looks like the Roman number seven is really a sigil from a long-forgotten alphabet, the sign of the forgotten clan.

They are vampires who have escaped the mastery of the Strix somehow (perhaps through a ritual known only to the vampires of VII), and who now hunt down the Owls and their servants and allies. Since the Kindred do not know whom the Strix have corrupted, VII's victims appear random. But they are carefully chosen.

They belong to a mystical cult (its acronym VII) who practice a powerful form of blood magic. They offer Kindred a simple choice: Join or be destroyed. Joining brings with it terrible consequences, perhaps even the bartering of its members souls.

A human king betrayed by the Kindred in the Middle Ages begat seven families, who themselves became Damned the better to pursue and destroy the Kindred. Who knows what they might do should they ever succeed?

They are not true vampires; rather, they are the supernatural doppelgangers of vampires, shadowy beings, perhaps creations of, or slaves of, the Strix. They mirror the Kindred. Every one has one vampire whom it must kill, at which point it too ceases to exist. Only seven exist at a time.

Their practices: They hunt silently. Somehow their victims fall prey to the silence too, as if it were some sort of trap, or plague. They do not seem to need to communicate.

If they are following their victim for more than one night, they give no sign, because they are effective enough that their quarry has no clue. It is more terrifying to consider that they may need only one night to do their work. VII does not warn you.

The three characters "VII," displayed prominently by a victim's remains, often provide the only clue that they are the perpetrators.

Not all instances of a Strix sighting precede an assassination by VII, but most of VII's murders follow a sighting of a Strix.

As hunters and soldiers, these vampires are calm, efficient, and apparently emotionless, far removed from the Firebrands of the Carthian Movement or the baying Acolytes. No one has ever seen a vampire of VII frenzy.

Does VII teach blood magic to its hunters? Sometimes evidence of rituals — odd objects left behind, the remains of a magical circle, some other thing — suggests a system of magic unknown to the other covenants.

VII's vampires do not seem to be concerned about what happens to them. Will they destroy themselves when their work is done? Do they consider themselves different?

Nicknames: The Fallen Princes; the Betrayed; the Sages; the System; the Wraths of God; the Trumps; the Imposters

Stereotypes: Humorless soldier; conscience-stricken detective; horror-haunted madman; unsuspecting sleeper agent; seeker of revenge; man or woman out of time; cult member

When they are in power: VII do not come into power. If they have the upper hand, vampires disappear, one by one; and soon no vampires are left, not even VII.

When they are in trouble: No one would know if the vampires of VII were in trouble. They hunt the Kindred, and then they are gone. A lucky or resourceful neonate might find out why — or end up joining them — but until then, where they go and where they come from remains a mystery.

Broken Covenants

Covenants rise and fall, occasionally. They have done so ever since the Camarilla, first and arguably the greatest of all covenants, fell some 16 centuries ago. Of the Camarilla itself little more needs to be said. It survives in the Invictus and in the Lancea et Sanctum that destroyed it.

A few covenants survived for longer than a few centuries. They are gone now, for all intents and purposes, but traces of them survive. The horrors they left behind might still have significance for the curious or unlucky neonate, even now. Some covenants exist as rumors; and while hard evidence of their having existed is relatively easy to find, do they exist now?

Wait for them to find you, and perhaps you may find out.

The Legion of the Dead

The Legion of the Dead originated in the Camarilla. That vampire government dissolved, and most of its military wing joined the Lancea et Sanctum and later the Invictus. But the Legion, the Grim Battalion, continued to exist as a separate body. It was a very different beast, a bloody-handed mercenary band of blood-drinking thugs, assassins, and murderers who thrived in the turmoil of the Dark Ages. By the 9th century, the Grim Battalion's creed had devolved to "profit or die."

Working for the highest bidder carries its own risks; after too many betrayals, too many turns, too many bribes taken, the trust they had earned was gone. The Legion of the Dead, one by one, found themselves eliminated. By the 12th Century, all were gone.

Even now, one can still find pieces of their legacy in museums: a thousand-year-old sword, miraculously preserved but carrying a reputed curse; a rusty suit of armor hidden in a vault, haunted by the terrifying, enraged victims of its wearer; hoards of cursed coins, left by the greed-fuelled soldiers of the Grim Battalion, waiting to be found, and to unleash their horrors upon the dead who still lust after blood, glory, and wealth.

The Gallows Post

In some ways, the late Middle Ages were a golden period for the dead. Plagues and wars swept across Europe and North Africa. People hid in the dark, in their communities, hardly traveling at all. The routes and wildernesses of Europe became dangerous places; stories of the terrible things that haunted the lonely pathways of the North were common currency. The truth lay in the loosely-formed group who would eventually be called the Gallows Post, the creatures who feasted on the lifeblood of lonely travelers. For a price, they arranged safe passage for the other dead, and maintained secret hiding places far from civilization where the Kindred could spend the day. The Gallows Post ensured the lines of communication that made the existence of the vampire covenants possible.

As the world of the living became relatively more open, routes became easier to travel, and borders became less inchoate and more effectively guarded, the world of the Kindred closed down; and it became harder for the dead to travel. Having reached a peak in the 16th century, the Gallows Post dwindled, slowly. The last vampire of the Gallows Post met his Final Death in 1892.

Still, to one who knows the signs and the ancient forms, secret wilderness places still remain where the Gallows Post allowed the dead to wait on their travels. But who knows what else waits there?

The Children's Crusade

The Kindred — those with some smidgen of human conscience remaining — shy from embracing the truly innocent. It wasn't always the case. For about five hundred years, between the 12th century and the 18th, the Embrace of children was the sole preserve of the Children's Crusade; and conversely, if children were Embraced, the First and Second Estates in many domains dictated that they were put into the Crusade's care.

A child who becomes a monster is a truly terribly thing, denied the right to grow up, and quite possibly lacking the maturity to deal with the physical and spiritual horrors of the vampiric condition. These dead children took care of their own, hunting their brothers and sisters who had fallen into madness with a terrible sing-song glee. But after a time it became apparent to the Invictus and the Lancea et Sanctum of a hundred cities that the Children's Crusade was corrupt in ways that the adult monsters could not fully understand. The Crusade hid the crimes of the maddened dead children who filled its ranks. The children made deals with owls.

Hunts took place. Terrible things were done. The Children's Crusade is gone — outside of a few fog-addled recollections of the older Kindred, a handful of letters, a single book published by subscription in the 19th century. But some are not gone forever. Some, only a few, still sleep, in hidden, lonely places: lost attics, sewers, caves. And if

these creatures awaken, these terrible, tragic devil-children could once again try, one by one, to rebuild their traditions and begin the Children's Crusade once more.

The Tenth Choir

If the Tenth Choir existed at all beyond whispered legends, word-of-mouth stories denied by some of the Sanctified with almost excessive force, little evidence remains.

Elisabeta the Plague Nun sometimes tells the story of a fraternity of vampires who believed that since their living, hungry death was a curse of God, they must take revenge on the divine. Between the 17th and 20th centuries, the Choir developed a system of blood magic to consort with angels and devils. They drank the blood of angels. They sought to murder God. One story told to a neonate by Ephraim Tench, the Beast of Uttoxeter, describes how a vampire Embraced an angel. Or became a blood-drinking angel (Ephraim's memory isn't what it was). Was this symbolic? Did the Tenth Choir's members deal in metaphor? Did the Tenth Choir exist at all?

The last anyone heard of the Tenth Choir was in the London Blitz.

If a diary or a grimoire were to surface containing the ideas and achievements of these blasphemous dead men, what would it be worth? Who — or what — would stop at nothing to retrieve it?

Does the Tenth Choir yet exist?

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD

PART II

Edie

Jackrabbit and Jefe and Katy Cruel and me, all standing around our heart's desire, and you could have plucked the air like a guitar string.

We hadn't quite made it this far in our plans, you see. We knew who was going to waylay the escort car, who was going to peel a guard away here and there, who was going to crack the van open like an eggshell, and who was going to pick up the bag and run (that would be me). We just cheerfully assumed there was only going to be the one.

We were just rolling some old hippy caravan winding its way south to the land of hemp milk and raw honey. Small money, but low risk for a couple of kids. Katy leaves them with a few nightmares to keep them company, and maybe they'll think twice about driving at night. Our directives were clear – no big shots, no damage to the local infrastructure, no suspicious deaths. Collect our cut, sell it anywhere else, and wait a few weeks to do it again.

Jack's still got a sweet-looking face behind all those teeth, and he can play a mean "lost lonely stranger." So he's first out of the gate looking cold and scared and all "buddy can you spare a dime," but the face leering out from behind the van's tinted windows was lean and angry and gray in

the moonlight. Jefe and Katy were busy escorting the van's honor guard into the desert. So when someone hopped out of the back of the van, silent as you please and reeking of someone else's blood, I was the closest available party to train his piece on. At which point shit got a bit out of hand.

We neither of us had been expecting the other, or that we might share an awfully familiar scent. **God, Dad, keep it in your pants.** Which added the element of surprise and betrayal to otherwise ordinary pain when he shot me, and I broke his face. Our cover was pretty well blown, so I figured I might as well open the van and see if I had any more family on hand. And if I happened to step on someone's shattered cheekbone to climb inside, well, neither of us were going to say anything about it.

Another two shots to my sternum and I was past caution, the Beast was not coming back. Probably I must have been screaming or choking or singing like a bird, because Jack poked his head through the heavy curtains just in time to watch me wiping the blood from my hands. Or, looking past me, actually. At the hundreds of black plastic-wrapped bricks I had splattered with the interiors of some people who had probably used to work for my dad. Which, you know, hurts me too in a way.

A van full of heroin was not on the itinerary. And the day was in danger of staring back at us.

Katy made me bury the bodies, which I suppose was fair, and we ran.

chapter two
the all night society

There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy, and the tired.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby

How did you get here?

Nobody's from here.

They all came with good intentions and lousy directions. They all took a wrong turn at Ninth and Hennepin. There's a diner, way-way down, where THE END eats the road. ALL NIGHT, sputters the neon. Inside are faces of souls long gone, some familiar, but slightly off, like one of those paintings full of dead nostalgia archetypes — Marilyn and Elvis and Bogey.

Inside, they all laugh and smile, because they know how to make the motion, the way liquid latex knows how to pour into a mold. Everyone drinks their dinner. They come here every night, after the sun cuts itself on the jagged-glass edge of the horizon, and the sky is a red, gushy mess, and the hot air cools like bath water. The waning day knows they are coming. The All Night Society.

The old wives croon that the dead hide in their dark spaces, because they are afraid of the sun. Maybe, just maybe, the dead are sporting sorts, and they give the daylight a head start. "You go hide, and I'll count to dusk."

Welcome. There's a stool open. There always is.

Needs Must

If you have a thirsty man, a glass of water, and something between them, you have compelling drama. The need's the thing.

The vampire is fascinating, not because of her alien nature, but because all of her motivations are familiar. We know those needs. We know what it is to thirst. That darkness comes from a place we all understand. We did this.

The Beast magnifies need. The vampire is a glorious vortex of needs. She is never quenched, and so she is always a story.

There is you. There is the glass of water. In between, is amphetamine bedlam.

Be thirsty.

All These Things That I've Become

Same kind of night. After dusk, but I can still feel the street heat and taste the bitters and sweets and September blues. Same kind of night we made the promise. She was a kid, and I was a kid, legs hanging off the fire escape, dangling over forever.

"On the off chance that one of us becomes a vampire, we have to turn the other," she said. "Promise?"

I promised. Silly. Random. But it had that Jupiter gravity that things only have when you're that young. A pinprick – and we exchanged blood-drop thumb prints pressed on index cards scribbled with biology test notes.

Restless, we felt the pull of impending mortalities. Just a taste – we still knew we'd never grow old. The promise was a defiance to all that biology. We made out a little, eager and clumsy as June bugs smashing into sodium-lit walls.

Time happened. Life spoils things. We lost touch. After that, well, death can be a bitch too.

Tonight, I found the index card lingering impossibly in the mausoleum of my life. I put my tongue to her thumbprint, and I was there. A little social network ninjutsu, and I had an address.

Now I'm skipping down the street. Nostalgia snow-globing my dead head. Everything is potential. The audacity! To keep a silly, impossible promise, a cackling middle finger in the face of their stupid Danse and the hungry-hungry sky.

I'm up the fire escape. I knock on her window.

She startles. I slip in. I say her name. She says mine, but with a question mark. No explosion of pent-up contexts. I show her the card. "The promise!" I say. I can protect the promise, seal it in red antioxidants and fuck what free radicals may come.

She drops the card. Confused. She doesn't even remember. She flinches away. I bite, catch her swooning, try to apologize. In the light, I see crow's feet clawing her eyes, bunched up shirt revealing stretch marks. Where's the girl? I bite again. Drink deep. It's crazy, stupid, but a voice says I eat life, so I can drink away all the years between the then and the now. I fathom her depths. Scrape bottom. No girl.

I look up to my blurred face in the hall mirror. How long has it been? It hurts, but I sharpen my thoughts, cut through the murk, and my face clears. Receding hairline. Extra chin. When did that happen? Where'd the gaunt, Byron boy go?

Now a kid's crying in the next room.

My shadow laughs at me. Wendy's down, and I'm no fucking Peter Pan.

The Damned have a hierarchy of needs. It starts down low, on your hands and knees, desperately tonguing scabbed lust out of the grooves of the alley pavement — no concern for anyone watching you ruining your Sunday best.

Vampires need blood and shelter the same way humans need food and shelter and even love.

Blood

Everything comes back to this. Pick any door. It doesn't matter. In this funhouse nightmare, every hallway comes back to the feeding room.

Like anyone else, vampires need food. They thirst for the blood of the living. A vampire's hunger is more urgent than a mortal's. If he exhausts himself and fails to feed, he'll slip into torpor, the long sleep of the dead.

The vampire is well adapted to feeding. When he is ready, his fangs descend. Exposure to the traces of vampire blood in his mouth, as well as the bite itself, create a feeling of intense euphoria in the recipient. Vampires call this the Kiss. This is love and lust for both parties. This is the sex you know you should not have, but will come back for. It's transgressive, cutting through all the staid and sensible boundaries. Then comes the peak, as blood courses through the vampire's veins as if he were still alive.

When finished drinking, the vampire merely licks the wound, and it closes, much as he can force his own blood, or Vitae, to seal his wounds.

The mortal luxuriates in a pleasant, sleepy afterglow. The vampire's body hums, once hollow, now full. He can do anything! But afterglows fade faster than the embers of spent cigarettes. Both predator and prey shiver in the deep, knowing that there is a reason for the rules against the living fucking the dead.

The Kiss leaves mortals with an unclear memory of what happened. Force and supernatural mesmerism rarely need come into it, but the ease of feeding does not absolve the vampire. There are consequences. There is damage done, and harm to another harms the self. The Kiss passes something on. The victim's mind weakens to the vampire's will, becomes more vulnerable. It's a diluted drop of the Curse, but the contamination accumulates over time, seeps into the people the vampire feeds upon and through them is reflected in his territory. This is pay-it-forward damnation.

Shelter

The vampire is immortal, yet she lives on a countdown — tick-tock. Every morning at dawn, she is compelled to sleep. If she resists that call, and exposes herself to the light, her skin begins to smolder. A young vampire slowly blisters and burns. An older one, far removed from the humans who laugh and smile in the sunlight, may actually catch fire.

Kindred must have shelter — not a proper haven — we're not that high on the hierarchy yet. This is tearing through the streets, with moments to spare, survival. What would you do?

- They ran Eddy out of the city. Nothing so terrifying as the barren prosperity of the burbs — everything new, nothing decrepit, nothing abandoned. With the sun turning his skin to egg yolk on desert rock, Eddy crouched down to die, but the thing living inside him gave him the strength to sprint across the asphalt, kill the man washing the ice-cream truck, and lock himself in the back freezer. Twinkling music now, three nights later. Hot enough that people are happy to buy frozen treats after dusk. Eddy doesn't know where to go, is too afraid to leave his white coffin. He drives, people stop him, and he feels like that guy in the story who takes the place of the genie in the bottle.
- "Alright, Laurie, I looked, and there is nothing under your bed," Daddy said before closing the door. The night light flickers, and Laurie clutches her blanket. "Don't let your arms or legs hang off the sides, and you'll be fine," said the voice below.
- Accepting that it was disgusting, bordering on embarrassing, the sewers were not so bad. Victoria's dress was a shambles, but one day sleeping in the grunge would not kill her. She knew the stories of the things that scuttled down here were just tales to frighten fledglings at Elysium, just another way to show dominion over the weak. There were phrases, painted on the slimy walls, that made no sense to Victoria. She had never tuned into the Cacophony. She dismissed the distant shuffling noises as imagined, but that did not stop them from coming closer.

Moving Up

And should a vampire eke out a little more than mere survival, what then? A better flat? The Kindred are nocturnal predators, corpse-demons styling in human skin. What do they need with the comforts of home? Yet the urge to nest lingers. Four walls do more than hold out the sun; they hold something in. Smart Kindred build themselves mausoleums in honor of the lives they lost. Add a bit of hearth, decorate with a few things familiar, and the ghost of the Man might haunt your halls a little while longer.

Among the Thorns

The Kindred are not so far above or below the kine as they would like to believe. They play with their food. They take in. They touch, and contaminate. Eventually, everything is a part of everything.

Context is king. The rose is not beautiful because of its red petals, but because it filters that beauty through the thorns that you sometimes have to bleed for to enjoy.

How do your relationships change when the heart stops beating? Do you have breathing family? How did that tendon twist? What of your neighbors? Awkward small talk in the halls or elevators, when you're pressed so close and the Beast whispers suggestions oh so delicately, and something in them

knows it. What of the homeless you once overlooked — laying in doorways like dropped groceries — how do you see them now?

Contexts are not just people, but places, cultures, the view of the cityscape from a particular balcony. The library. The pub. The sports stadium. The park. Do you still go to the supermarket, with an empty cart, eyeing all the walking food? The vampire exists in an ecosystem. It's not balanced, and it's not nice, but everything is joined in a web.

You change the mortals, and they change you. They are not just juice bags, and they are not just sheep. They form the solid anchors and tearing barbs that keep the Man from fleeing the Beast. This is important, because the Beast and the Man are not necessarily enemies. The Beast protects the Man from dangers and hunger and those who would tread on him. It's a bad world, and sometimes it pays to have a big brother.

The Man makes the Beast a more sophisticated predator, he gives it the tools of adaptability and creativity. But a vampire's humanity is an atrophying muscle. It must be flexed or it will wither. Alienation must be countered or at least slowed. Relationships with mortals have the power to do this. You need love, even if it's only the whetstone that you sharpen your teeth on.

You are only as alive as the company you keep. Who are your touchstones ?

- A tenuous partnership forms between you and the neighborhood watch lady. You see each other every night. You bring her coffee, exchange small talk, and in the small hours, you are the only two on Earth. She doesn't even flinch at the way your eyes reflect her flashlight anymore. She had a daughter, once, before the mugging that went bad on this very block. She points out the furry form dashing across the street. "The coyotes came into the city over the last decade, but you hardly ever see them. Like ghosts. At first we were afraid. What of our pets? Our kids? But now I look around, and I see a lot fewer rats. You dig?" Yeah. You dig.
- You have become the pusher in a burnout burg, dealing Vitae and the Kiss, giving these breathing zombies an alternative to meth. You loathed them at first, those vacant eyes and the gormless slack of their jaws, but they're growing on you. Is this budding empathy, or are you just becoming a loser like them?
- The sports stadium is older than your sire. That's comforting, the way you imagine the ocean or the stars must comfort the elders. You make most of the night games. The individuals of the roaring crowd change, but they are all the same entity, the same colony of coral. You breathe them in and you cheer. You never feed here. You don't want this place contaminated, and you've put a broken baseball bat through more than one chest to keep it that way.
- You live in the attic of the high school bully who tormented you once upon a time. He never sees you, but you spend long nights standing right next to him, feeling the heat of his body. You let the Beast play with his fear, the way a cat plays with yarn while daydreaming of murder. This was not your intention. You came to kill him months ago, but couldn't. You're living on nostalgia now, and you realize you'll miss him when he's gone, while you have all the time in the world.

The Contaminant Worm

"Ever notice how people and their pets start to resemble each other?" says one teenager to the other. They share sips of stolen schnapps and cold bites of post-October wind. They chat and walk through the old cemetery, never noticing they are being watched by a roosting creature who now resembles the angelic statuary, the mantle of rain-worn wings, the chipped fingers like claws. Crows perch on its head and shoulders.

The dead are changed by their territory and victims; in turn, their territory and victims change them. The blood goes in, and the blood goes out. It gets harder and harder to tell who is the nightmare of whom.

It gets in the blood. In the short term, the vampire inherits the buzz and high of alcoholics and addicts. In the long term? Well, given a little water, time can sculpt canyons.

The ancient monster lairs in New York, blends with the people on whom she feeds, because the accents and culture have seeped into her blood. Now it's hard to see through all that blood, to remember the Renaissance France she once knew so well. Time and blood eroded the stone.

But the river flows both ways.

The neighborhood haunted by the Gangrel gets wilder by degrees. Intimacies become primal. Arguments at the bar become physical. Everyone feels itches that their ancestors knew how to scratch.

A Nosferatu dwells in a mall. There is a children's restaurant — full of electronic games and fun — that has become inexplicably sinister. The adults dismiss it, ignore how grotesque the leering faces of the animatronic band have become. Dismissal is easy, and parents throw whole generations of screaming children to the clowns. The kids cannot ignore it, and the cheap pizza grows soggy with tears.

Who am I to you?

All the handholds of the tree are familiar. I don't even have to knock on the second story window. It opens. He's been waiting for me. The first time, I had to force him. The second time I had to beg. I'm relieved I don't have to do that anymore, but part of me hates him for not resisting.

"I need more," I say.

"Ok...ok," he says. "I can stay home sick tomorrow. I hate algebra anyway."

This part is always awkward. I take off my college letterman jacket, and we both sit on his bed, a body's width apart. Silence. Then we lean in clumsily, moving in the wrong directions – neck? wrist? somewhere else? – smiling politely like the people who keep cutting each other off, trying to pass in a cramped hall.

Neck. Teeth. Then all awkwardness drains away. It's so good. He moans in my ear. I muffle a moan that vibrates his throat. He breathes heavily. He holds on to me to keep from falling, and I gently lay us down. I can feel him stiffening. A flailing hand unintentionally clutches my breast, grasping and kneading, and the nipple stiffens, and my body never reacts like that anymore, except in this moment, and it's so, so sweet. I drink, and we gently grind against each other, because what else can you do to keep from floating away? He gasps and shudders – a little death, just a little death – and I press his face against my shoulder to keep it quiet. I could drink down all of him, but I stop.

We're lying parallel on the bed, both breathing. Both warm and smiling and any troubles are a million light-years away. Then the mood cools and congeals into something sticky. We both startle and jump up, like we've just been caught in the bathroom.

I've got my jacket on.

"Also..." I say. "I need..."

He opens a wallet with Spider-Man on it, and hands me his last ten spot. It breaks my heart, even more than the blood, because what the hell else could I possibly take from him?

"This is the last time," I say. It's such a pretty lie. I jump up on the windowsill, the air feels good and I need to get outside. I don't turn back. "Tell mom and dad I said hi."

White Lies

Vampires talk frequently about the Masquerade, the great deception that keeps the mob from their doorsteps. For most vampires, though, the Masquerade is not a global conspiracy. It's the cloak a vampire weaves, every night, to protect her from the sun and the hunter's fire.

Each thread is a lie. Learn to lie, and your body will lie too — a heartbeat, a flush, warmth, and breath. Lies that beget lies that beget lies. That is your existence now. What does that do to you? If you do not learn to lie well, people will die. Well...more than usual.

A vampire's personal Masquerade is a series of cons. How do you score blood? How do you stay hidden when census takers come calling? Lies to loved ones. Lies to strangers. Lies to food. You wish you could have started practicing early, telling fibs to steak dinners just to get the feel.

What of the people you knew in life? It takes so many tiny lies to maintain that. "Sorry, had a massive hangover and couldn't make the morning meeting." "I'm photosensitive." "I'm swamped, can't come home for Christmas." You could take care of it all with one big lie, let the daytime world believe you've died. That lie has enough truth in it.

It's a little overwhelming, like going to a cold read audition with terminal consequences. Not to worry. Lying gets easier alarmingly fast. And lies offer their own reward. There is no feeling so sickeningly wonderful as getting away with something.

Scoring

The Beast screams your need for blood. The Beast gives you some desperation to strengthen your resolve. But the Beast is as good at coming up with a plan as a crazed shit-house rat. Time for the Man to step up. He's got the Kiss, and he's got the drive, now he just needs a little finesse to seal the deal. How do you tilt the machine? How do you work the angles that get the blood flowing into your funnel? But take a caution and a care as to what is going down that funnel. Remember, it changes you.

- You eat animals, stray cats and dogs, and even a pigeon once. You tell yourself you've got this beat, that you can continue this way forever. The easiest con to pull is on the self. Maybe if you just mix in a few drops of human blood, that would soothe the ache in your chest.
- You play the angel of mercy. You haunt elderly homes. You spend long conversations with the conversation-starved; and just at about 3 A.M., when you know them well enough that it hurts, you send them on their way and fill your belly. You have to talk to them first. It has to hurt going down.
- You prowl the most popular suicide spots. The Aokigahara Forest, in Mount Fuji, Japan. Nanjing Yangtze River Bridge, in Nanjing, China. The Golden Gate Bridge, in San Francisco, California. Something pulled these people to this action, just as something pulls you to feed. On a long enough jump, a body hits the water as if it were cement. Not all of them die on impact. You help them along.
- You're an EMT on the night shift. The flash of the whirling lights. Humanity at the gritty ground floor. Everyone knows your vehicle drives in that space between society and the dead — just where your kind is comfortable. It's like meals on wheels, only you're delivering to yourself. How long can this last?
- You migrate with the food, to the most war-torn lands. You have an old passport, expired press badge, and a camera that no longer works. You sleep in the earth, and all through the day you drink the blood that just spills and spills and soaks into the ground.
- You are an exotic dancer, and no one says no when you suggest going into the back room for the special. It's money, and it's cash, and they always tip bigger after the Kiss.
- You frequent the strip clubs, and always say yes to the back room. The dancers never seem to mind your lousy tips after the Kiss.

Ghouls

The hungry dead take and take, but they also give back to the community. They spread their blood because it makes mortals pliable. It can make a ghoul too, if you're willing to put in the work.

Ghouls are the half-damned , mortals fed on vampire blood. In addition to a wicked rush, they get some of the vampire's supernatural powers, with few of her ugly weaknesses. Vampires use ghouls not only to do dirty work by day, but to keep in touch with the mortal world. The most successful Masquerades are built on understanding the living at least well enough to bullshit your way along, and ghouls can bridge the gap between the living and the dead.

Among other vampires, ghouls get a few scraps of respect. They're not family, not Kindred by any means... but a ghoul represents someone that another vampire was willing to cultivate. Of course, that also makes ghouls vulnerable, for putting fear into the heart of a ghoul is one way to chill the blood of his master.

A ghoul becomes an addict, feeling a bit of a vampire's hunger. But human blood won't sate this hunger. The ghoul needs Vitae.

A vampire need not press the prospective ghoul's lips to his wrist. There are so many other ways to skin that cat.

The Serpent bites his lip, and you barely notice the copper in the kiss.

The Haunt spits bloody phlegm in your eye, inexplicably, as you pass on the midnight road. Now you sit in your apartment feeling more afraid than you think you ought to, wondering if you should go get tested for some disease.

You reach for your expensive coffee, but it tastes weird. A Shadow smiles in front of your face, but you cannot see her.

You drank from a chalice when a Lord commanded you to. And now you...no...you don't quite remember what happened.

The Savage cuts you and then herself, pressing the open wounds together. Something wild surges between.

Let the conspiracy theorists prattle on to radio talk hosts. The invasion is already happening, has been happening, one drop at a time. The pervasive infection. Kindred can walk down the street and smell familiar vintages on strangers. The curse wants to spread.

The Traditions

Through us, you enter the society of liars and thieves. Through us, you enter the population of blood-drinkers and egos grown fat on getting away with murder. Through us, you enter the congress of corpses lacking the decency to lie still. What laws could we possibly respect?

There are three rules even the dead fear to tread over. The Traditions. Recite them now — you'll find they skip right off the tip of your tongue.

Three pillars bear the weight of a culture of monsters. Where did they come from? There is no common origin story. No one remembers a time before them. Eternal they remain. Who first spoke the words? Some whisper the name "Camarilla," but it hits the cold ear the way "Camelot" touches the warm. When we raise our heads, above the immediate keen of Beast and Blood, we might see the mystery of ages twining above in the distant dark.

THE FIRST TRADITION: MASQUERADE

Do not reveal your true nature to those not of the Blood.
Doing so forfeits you your claim to the Blood.

THE SECOND TRADITION: PROGENY

Sire another at the peril of both yourself and your progeny.
If you create a childe, the weight is your own to bear.

THE THIRD TRADITION: AMARANTH

You are forbidden from devouring the heartsblood of your Kindred.
If you violate this commandment, the Beast calls to your own Blood.

The conservatives say the Traditions are written into the Blood, from the Beginning. They say these laws are mystically enforced. Certainly the Sanctified agree. Some of their number go so far as to say that Longinus himself dictated the words, his spear still slick with the blood of the messiah.

But a murmur runs through the subversives. They say the Traditions are so universal, so old, because of their common sense to Kindred. It is good sense to hide from the herd, to not overpopulate the world with predators, to discourage one's fellows from eating him. These so-called supernatural consequences, they argue, are incidental to a vampire's nature, and if the Traditions were so mystically enforced, what need would there be for princes to preside over them? The Cacophony and millennia of Kindred culture are enough to program these three simple rules for being a monster.

The debate continues, but it misses the point. There are three rules. Violating them brings pain.

The First Tradition

The zebra knows lions exist, but the zebra forgets, just long enough to take a drink or go to sleep. So it goes with the Masquerade. This is no grand conspiracy, but a guideline for Kindred interaction with the mortal world. This is not about fooling the global community, but making sure the upstairs neighbor does not suspect.

The Masquerade is a source of conflict in the All Night Society. What constitutes a breach? What is the proper response? The answers are not definitive and vary from domain to domain. That finagling room, between the gaps of interpretation, is where the opportunists can bury their rivals.

The Kindred protect the here and the now, tonight, block by bloody block. They keep the locals from getting wise — the crusading cop, the determined reporter. The Masquerade is a local issue. It means you choose, through willful act or gross negligence, to shit where you and yours eat.

Belief does not come into it. People can believe in the supernatural. They can even believe in vampires. Knowledge is the key. So long as the paranoid man does not suspect the bartender, the one he tells all his crazy theories to, is Kindred, his beliefs do not matter.

This is not about vampires needing to quake and hide, but about the fear humans have of what is hidden from them — just past the truth of Santa Claus and all the horrible adult revelations — the fear that if they shake even the most mundane structure, crawling things will fall out.

The Lost Visage

A vampire does not lack a reflection. You just never see her in the mirror. The Beast knows precisely where to stand. A vampire is not a blurred mess in a photograph, but for some reason, never seems to look at the camera, or the flash smears the image, or it goes over- or under-exposed.

Frustrating, yes, but hardly supernatural. Unless you are a rogue statistics professor, manically analyzing vampire sightings and...what was that in the mirror? Surely nothing. Surely too much caffeine. Surely.

It's a defense mechanism. The vampire rolls in lies until they soak into her skin. Kindred lie about their origins, lie to each other, secrete lies to mortar their honeycomb society, lie to themselves, lie to make themselves seem bigger and scarier, to seem smaller and less threatening, to seem fuckable when they should be creepy. Lies collect on a vampire like remora on a shark.

The Second Tradition

The Second Tradition is an oft-debated conundrum. If the society of vampires supporting it followed it to its extreme, that society would not exist. We fuck. We procreate. We produce more mouths to argue why we should not fuck.

The Sanctified rage from the pulpit, speaking barbed-wire sermons of Old-Testament-style reckonings. It is not our place to pass on the curse, they say. Some Kindred mythologies offer repeating themes: A lonely progenitor vampire creates companions, only to discover his or her folly too late. Those who cleave to this Tradition warn of angering that first vampire, or the offended gods who inflicted the Curse. To make more of the hungry dead is to bring on the wrath from above or below.

Writing this in the dark. Don't want IT to see. Don't want IT to know. Can IT cipher the writing by the scratching of my pen? Don't know. Have to take the chance. Write as quiet as I can. Have to hope you find this. Dare not mail it. IT would know. THE SECOND TRADITION IS A LIE.' They act like something divine wants to stop it spreading, like the Curse wants to be lonely. That's not in the data. The Curse wants to spread.' The Curse. The Blood. Same thing. IT is living. IT is viral. IT doesn't want us to stop. The standard Embrace isn't the only way. The Curse leaks out, gets into people, when we feed, when we give them blood, when we force our influence on them. I've collected stories. Favorite vessels remaining viable Embrace candidates long after death. Ghouls rising from their graves. Revenants mindlessly killing, vomiting black blood on their victims, who rise as more Curse-pukers. Revenant reproduction sprees are when IT gets impatient. Usually it's very patient. It knows we'll pay the price, eventually. There's the mythos. Longinus, Dracula, and other originals. They say there are many unique curses. THERE'S ONLY ONE.' It's airborne. Everywhere. Waiting. The evil that people do, the empty cavities they carve out of themselves, the Curse is just the thing that pours into the void, incubating, waiting for the proper confluence of spiritual-chemical variables. Grotesque alchemy. Every individual type of damnation is just another tumbler in a lock, and the Curse is a turning key, always turning, AND IT HAS SO MANY TEETH. A Haunt told me her clan used to rise, spontaneously, from the ground. Oh God. I feel it, slithering inside me. Hyperaware. Always there. So gross. All of us, us Kindred; we're all just organs of IT. Tried to tell my sire. Our Blood's too close. Too sympathetic. IT knew. IT punishes me, every day, when I sleep. Little games. Wake up to items rearranged in my room. Hidden keys. Wake up to scissors in my hands and runes cut into my chest. I think it spells a warning. Be careful when you read this. The Blood knows. The Blood is up to something.

Enforcement of this Tradition tends not to absolutely exclude siring new vampires, but limiting it, and placing the chains of responsibility on those who are allowed to breed. In some domains, the prince or eldest Kindred controls the population by giving sanction to Embrace. In other domains there is no enforcement. Some Kindred, particularly of the Circle of the Crone, see the Embrace as a necessary rite. But there are domains that fear the pillar of the Second Tradition. There are places where sire and newly vivified childe shriek from crosses or burning wicker men, crucified to whatever force the local Kindred believe the Embrace offends.

Dissenters argue that this is a law that needs no enforcement. Populations of predators take care of themselves, and the price of the Embrace is enough to control the numbers. There is a price. The Beast takes a toll for this transgression. The sire loses something, a bit of personality, or maybe a piece of the Man, sliced off on the altar of the Beast, where every vampire, sooner or later, sacrifices more and more of themselves.

The Third Tradition

What is the sin that makes monsters quake? Amaranth. What is the law that sociopaths fear to break? Amaranth. The serial killer, the dictator, and the devil hold a tea party with stitched-together corpses — they laugh, they profane, they take turns making love to the prettiest cadaver — what is the topic of conversation that makes them stare down at their gore-stained plates? Amaranth.

The Third Tradition offers the least controversy, suffers the least argument, because even the most depraved fiend has trouble talking about it lightly. This is beyond murder or mutilation. The stakes are much more eternal. He who devours a vampire's heartsblood also devours the soul.

This is the fastest way to become a tougher, more terrible vampire. The price, however, is steep. Diablerie places the Man on a hook, and dangles it before the ravening Beast. There is no way to become callous enough that this does not matter. The torturer and mass-murderer suffer for this act. You take the power and some memory from your victim, but you take more than that. Their personality bleeds into yours, confusing the already dissociate landscape of the vampire mind. The one you hurt more than anyone can be hurt lives in your head, forever, and they do not wish you well.

Once you commit diablerie, the individual you were no longer exists. Past that threshold, something else takes your shape.

W.H.,

Below is a transcript of the recording. The original no longer exists in police evidence. It seems the priest, one Father Victor Lewis, was recording his confessions, in secret, for his own private use. By the way this ends, we can assume the First Tradition is mostly intact. That leaves us with the more worrisome Third. The names Montresor and Fortunato are aliases, references to an Edgar Allan Poe story. So we're looking for some local Kindred who had a rivalry. That does not narrow the field considerably, but we'll see who has vanished and go from there. More as it develops.

—Hardaiken

[Beginning of recording.]

Father Lewis: and how long since your last confession?

[pause]

[garbled, voice full of static]

John Doe: A long time.

FL: Do you have any sins you wish to confess? Take your time.

JD: My sins aremanifold and multiform. I came here, tonight, only because of one.

FL: And what is that?

JD: I am a cynical creature, Father. But I now know, beyond all shadow of a doubt, that the immortal soul exists.

FL: A reaffirmation of faith is not a sin, my

JD: I know what a soul tastes like.

FL: Excuse me?

JD: Like Montresor, I bore a thousand insults from my Fortunato. He was my close friend, but somewhere along the way, he became my most hated acquaintance. After one, final insult, I took revenge. I walled him up, forever, in the catacombs of me. I drank his soul.

FL: Listen, this is a sacred ritual. You

JD: Please hear my confession, Father. I cannot admit this to my peers. I'm suffering for my sin. I did not comprehend. I did not fully appreciate the Third Tradition. He lives inside of me. II have become the home his ghost haunts. I'm the sacred crypt of the one I most despised. I hear him laughing, right now, rattling his chains through my halls. He means me ill, Father. He distracted me, while I crossed a busy street, and I was struck by a car. He has learned to mimic the voice of my conscience, and tempts me to self-destructive acts.

FL: I thinkI think you should go now.

JD: I let the most diabolical creature I have known into my mind. He rifles through my most naked memories. I am always exposed. Always violated! I knew the problem. With my Fortunato, I swallowed so much evil. All I had to do was diffuse that evil with good.

FL: I don't understand.

JD: I tried children. I filled myself with so many children. But their voices do not linger. I think they are frightened of Fortunato. I think they hide. I know I would. But I can no longer hide from Fortunato.

[rattling sound]

FL: What? The door?

JD: It was then that I realized I must try a priest.

FL: Help! Oh, Lord! Help!

JD: The children cry for help, Father, with mute voices. You will care for them, yes? I know you will. You will lead them against the evil that is my Fortunato.

[sounds of violence and breaking wood (the confessional booth was found in splinters)]

[screams]

[silence]

Breaking Tradition

The **Vampire** setting assumes that vampires are good at staying hidden, don't Embrace like mad, and only rarely cannibalize each other. The Traditions are broken regularly enough that there's a need for law, but not enough to break down vampire society or the veneer of the ordinary world that the Kindred hide behind.

However, we expect that in your actual games, the Traditions will be violated semi-regularly. Covering Masquerade breaches is a classic plot hook, and it's a major duty for characters who are members of the Invictus. The Traditions are deliberately designed so that vampires have motivation to break them, and so that there will be drama when they do.

Sinners in the City

Bright lights, long shadows. We love the city. Glamour and decay. The need to travel diminishes. Everything we need, and everything that might threaten us, is here already. The city is the whole world. Take a slice, look at it with dead eyes. You see all the layers. We add a few more with our Curse and our Cacophony.

The city chews us up. It is sometimes a harsh romance. We always come back willingly. We love the city.

We pray she loves us back.

The Food

The masses teem. This is important when feeding. It is not merely a matter of blood volume, for even the smallest town has enough blood to sate a vampire, but the ability to hunt unnoticed. The thickest cloud to cover a mortal mind is apathy, and apathy is achieved with ad nauseam. Face after face after face, and who can keep track of it all? Mortals have only so much love to give; that stuff don't run cheap. Someone vanishes in a small town, and it is a tragedy. Someone vanishes in the city, in the quagmire of media over-stimulation, and...what were we talking about again?

The Folks

There are communities in the city, both living and dead, that play to one's Masquerade and one's Requiem. In the city, the two can weave in and out of one another. Cities offer community activities (concerts, open mic poetry, sporting events, college night courses, etc.) that the Kindred can enter and leave with relative anonymity. Here we can warm ourselves by the heat of humanity. It is important to be in the crush of people, for the Beast feeds on isolation. Here we can learn the tricks of the Man, if for no other reason than to have more finesse as hunters. And we can cool ourselves on Kindred companionship. While vampires do dwell in more sparsely populated areas, they rarely do so in numbers that could be considered a community. The city allows the vampire to move back and forth, run hot and cold, between people and monsters.

The Fun

What is the point of tear-stained immortality if you can't have a little fun? What might a dapper corpse do on a Friday night?

- Parties: The All Night Society is fraught with parties. There is Elysium, the meeting grounds of the dead, but mortal parties offer something to Kindred too. With their powers of persuasion and stealth, even the most exclusive parties open to the vampire. Lines in front of clubs melt. You have a backstage pass to city life. What do you do with it?
- Entertainment: Movies, plays, concerts, and shows of all types are not just a frivolous luxury to Kindred, but a practical tool. There are few quicker ways to absorb the culture than through art. Movies offer slang. Songs and plays give context. Do you stay in the audience? Or do you take to the stage?
- Voyeurism: Many Kindred can walk unseen or have senses that allow them to observe people from afar. Everyone is either a voyeur, or skilled at self-deception. Vampires often watch mortals, in their natural element, at their most honest moments. You can watch drug deals, listen to confessions, haunt crime scenes, shadow celebrities. Maybe you have senses that allow you to gaze deeper into people. What color does his soul turn when he's high on cocaine, when he has a spiritual revelation, when he's fucking his girlfriend's sister? You get to know all these things. What do you do? What do you want to witness most?

What's Here?

The city, she offers much. She spreads a bounty of food. Faces vanish within her, and no one notices. She offers hearth and home. She nestles the vampire, safe from the sun, in her many pockets and abandoned dens. She has shade to spare. She offers a congregation of dead, where Kindred can play at community.

Feeding Grounds

For all the rusty, clockwork complexity of Kindred intrigue and their Danse Macabre, most conflicts stem from this. Hungry dead

mutts scrape by, night to night, with dangerously unpredictable hunting. The more comfortable vampire establishes a place where she knows the odds, the escape routes, and all the quirks. What sort of feeding ground have you carved out of the night?

- Slum Housing: You put down a greasy wad of money to become a slum lord of the night. This may be your haven too, though eating where you sleep can be tricky. It's a stocked larder. They cram as many warm bodies as they can into the cramped confines of low income housing. The high rotation rate in tenants keeps people from becoming too familiar with you and ensures fresh blood. Better still, they call you to come to them, and are pleasantly surprised by how quickly you reply at 3 A.M. to fix the problem that suddenly manifested.
- The Night Club: This is the classic. You may not own the club, but you have staked it out as yours in Kindred circles. The hot press of bodies and heavy beat vibrating the chest makes you feel alive. You and your friends play games of "speed-feeding" during the intermittent bouts of strobe lights — so many evil little deeds can happen in the disorienting flicker — the Beast knows just where to weave in the millisecond interludes between flashes. They never see you coming.
- Homeless Shelter: You volunteer at the neighborhood soup kitchen or shelter. This comes with a certain level of respect and trust from the community. It is a beautiful arrangement, you feed others as they feed you. You creep through the rows of spring cots in the wee hours, bed to bed, so many you don't need to take much from any one person. The shudders, mutters, and moans do not sound any different from all of the other shudders, mutters, and moans. The Masquerade practically takes care of itself when you deal with the least fortunate strata of society. The Kiss is the only joy many of these derelicts have, you lie to yourself.
- Conventions: You stalk the local convention center and nearby hotels. There is always a convention going on. Professionals and fans of all stripes gather, and many find they want to drink, or have sex in hotels. The feeding is prime, and the regular rotation ensures your face will not be recognized. You might even purchase a badge and see a seminar or two. The Requiem is long. You may as well learn something.
- Midnight Mass: Not the ritual of the Sanctified, but the mortal gatherings. Some Kindred avoid churches, but you are above that. Here you have regular night gatherings of large groups of mortals. Cities contain churches of many

denominations. The advantage here is that you go in knowing what your potential food wants to hear.

- AA Meetings: Recovering addicts were made for vampires. Groups of people who are off balance, who maybe need a shoulder to cry on, who give in to temptation. The Kindred might even find some empathy. No one knows addiction like the hungry dead. Any vampire can stand up and speak of his "addiction" with complete sincerity (and once you can generate that, you have it made).

Havens

You must hide from the sun. You may as well do it in a place you enjoy, something better than the simple four walls and a roof we discussed earlier. What den do you dig out?

- The Penthouse: The standard for the powerful night child with class. The corpse in a vampire likes the lowest portion of a given place, following its crypt instincts to hide below. But the predator in her exalts in heights, in looking down like a bird of prey, in seeing the grand scope of the cityscape as a tangible board game that she can reach out and grasp.
- Storage Units: Havens on the cheap. These can be locked up tight, once you know the tricks.
- House Boat: Many Kindred would not find a floating haven secure enough. But you like the thrill, tempered with the help of a trusted ghoul. You like the ocean; it makes you feel young. When you have to leave a domain in a hurry, your haven comes with you.
- The Haunted Attraction: These usually pop up seasonally, in October, but you have found a year-round haunted entertainment complex to nest in. You thrill at the gaudy ambiance and smell of latex. Your grotesque or bestial features go unnoticed, and sometimes you act as part of the show for kicks. In the chaos of smoke and shrieks, you're just another attraction. The presence of your Curse only helps the reputation and attendance of the establishment. This is the closest association between the horror of your existence and joy. You drink down the sweetness of those laughing screams for all that they are worth.
- The Pet Cemetery: You know the secret of sleeping in the earth. Yet you do not wander, do not slumber in any random patch of soil. You find respite in the place where the people of your community go to bury their pets. They take that which is most beloved, and they plant it. You like the feel of that, the layers of nostalgia soaking into your bones. It's a bittersweet note of loneliness that harmonizes with your Requiem.

Elysium

It has different names, from domain to domain, but let us call it Elysium. It is an afterlife of sorts. This is the All Night Society, distilled. Here the intrigues of the dead play out at varying levels of civility.

In a society of egomaniacal predators, neutral ground is a necessary institution. Elysiums are agreed upon locations where Kindred who have not run afoul of the establishment can gather without fear of being harmed.

In some cities, the Elysium travels like a floating market or a secret show. Often the sites are fixed. Some cities define territories in radial slices reaching from the spoke of a major Elysium, so that each major domain theoretically has access to the neutral center.

The promise of safety from direct physical harm does not extend to protection from treachery. Kindred paw at each other with their dread abilities and profane arts — this is not forbidden. Customs vary, but feeding is often not allowed. There are so many things that can go wrong.

You are out on the town, at the gala ball of all monsters. What do you do to impress?

The City as State

In the All Night Society, cities become city states. Their culture and boundary lines only illumine when the sun goes down. Vampire hierarchy often rises to an apex. This just comes naturally to predators. Often there is a vampire at the top, call her Prince or Boss or Exalted One or Bishop or President. Domains are authoritarian regimes, governments of tooth and claw and hyena laughter. Some princes are more openly brutal than others.

In the government of the dead, it does not pay to micromanage. Princes rule by ruling others. It is not only to the elders to wield influence over industry, organizations, and turf. There are many forms and flavors of power. Where might you make your mark?

The political machine has grinding teeth. Blood is the lubricant. Fear is the power source. Fear is the prime motivator of vampire participation. But this is not just fear of the big bad elders. When the shit hits the fan, it is good to have a scary vampire political machine grinding away all dangers to paste. There are Masquerade breaches, outside vampires, and other things that go bump in the night. This is when the fanged machine shines. Never underestimate the ability of a conglomerate of selfish individuals to come together when a common danger approaches. Vampire justice is ruthless and beautifully effective in these moments.

Kindred political systems run an exquisite spectrum of variation, as diverse as all the deadly ecosystems of the earth.

The Princedom

He is a man of wealth and taste. By force of will and arms, not to mention a certain old world charisma, he's earned the respect and fear of the Damned. He's taken on the mantle of ruthless leader and magnanimous patron: the prince. He's advised by elders of each clan, and representatives of each covenant. Harpies critique the court, making sure each vampire's Masquerade stays plausible. They all hold power, but the true instrument of the prince's will is his sheriff and her hounds, pragmatic monsters who put dissenters and liabilities to the torch.

Sample Cloister: The Four Fiefs

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom of four fiefs in central Illinois. There was Peoria and East Peoria, and across the river, down a goblin road, was Bloomington and Normal. A prince arose, a powerful Lord who called himself Remus, after the legendary founder of the necropolis below Rome. He had a plan to unite four tiny fiefs into a larger kingdom cut off from all other kingdoms by the Woods.

What are the Woods? The Kindred cling to cities. Everywhere else is the Woods. The Four Fiefs float in an ocean of fields, barren highways, and tiny ghost towns, where blood is thin on the ground, where hiding places from the sun are scarce. The Kindred do not like looking across the miles and seeing the horizon smiling sinister. The wolves and the Weird roam such places.

What is the Weird? There are other things than vampires that lope in the night, but have no names, and the Kindred do not like what they cannot name. Even bogeymen have bogeymen. Inside the Four Fiefs was safety, prosperity, and feeding. Outside was horror and death and the cries of owls.

One might wonder how Prince Remus ruled such a place. The power of the prince rested on the shoulders of his four barons. He picked them from his covenant, the Invictus, and his clan, the Gangrel. Four old monsters who did not fear the Woods.

In every Kindred lurks the Beast. But the Gangrel Beast is not a nasty abstract. Their Beasts have teeth and claws and wings and fur swimming under the skin. The Savages can talk to the coyote, skip between truck stops, and sleep in the earth. All the world is a haven. And so, the four barons and their children were messengers and ferrymen, guiding their shivering Kindred through the Woods, and Remus ruled a connected Kingdom. Everyone needed the Gangrel, and so everyone needed the prince. Then it all went bad.

The prince forgot whom he owed his power to. The Savages tolerate insults only so long. The barons dragged their prince from his coffin. They took him into the Deep Woods, in a field where scarecrows come alive.

The barons said, "Remus, you will suckle at the four teats of the She-Wolf no longer. This is your test. Let the Weird take you!" They hobbled him and left him in the field. He was never seen again.

The Four Fiefs cracked. Each baron now rules separately. They snap at each other, and the nights are violent. The Woods and the Weird creep in — not just in the fields, but in unmarked alleys, unclaimed warehouses. Every door and keyhole could lead to the Woods. The Kindred huddle in their tiny villages. Huddling they remain, for they need the Savages more than ever. The Gangrel are the dread psychopomps. None of the other Kindred dare to travel the short distances between the Fiefs without them. And no one is willing to travel beyond that.

The fairy tale continues.

The Coalition

Domains run by various kinds of coalitions do exist, though they are not common. Perhaps Carthians won, and rule by a vampire Senate. Perhaps the Ordo Dracul runs the city as a great experiment of politics divided by ley lines, intersecting at multiple and equal points of power. There may be a collection of Invictus elders, each of power so equal, no one can decide on a prince; and so a tense council of nobles is formed to prevent war on the streets. Coalitions are usually no less authoritarian.

The Theocracy

Spirituality is powerful leverage in politics. Look at the mortals. As secular as countries like the U.S. have become, they are still swayed by the clash of religions. A city is dominated by the Lancea et Sanctum. Midnight Mass is conducted before every Elysium. Attendance is not officially mandatory, but everyone knows what is good for her. The Traditions are held to the letter, punishments for infringement are severe. Alternatively, the Circle of the Crone runs the late night show. A grand hierophant oversees the domain through various priests and priestesses. Everyone has bled on the altar. Everyone has seen strange and terrible things that bind them together. The Second Tradition all but does not exist here.

A theocracy may also form around a religion of the Damned that is neither the Spear nor the Circle. Vampire Theocracies can be frightening places, and yet they offer monsters powerful inspiration and direction. Participation in such realms is much more enthusiastic. Times are good, unless you are a heretic.

Cloisters

Welcome to the country of xenophobia. Cloisters are cut-off cities, completely isolated from Kindred society at large. Travel for the dead is dangerous, and cities are independent, and Kindred mistrust outsiders — but inter-domain communication often happens (especially in the information age). Not so with cloisters. They are the true dead zones. Off the grid. Lights out.

A city might become cloistered by a particularly effective authoritarian regime. Outside communication is controlled by the powers that be. They allow no one to enter. Perhaps you live under the thumb of a harsh Kindred dictator. Or maybe you are blessed to exist in a paradise of the Damned, one that is jealously guarded from outsiders.

Inversely, a cloistered city may be a domain where no one is allowed out. A city plagued by Malkavia. The majority of the Kindred here are mad. Neighboring domains have banded together to quarantine the doomed realm. No one leaves, by pain of Final Death. You awake every night in a madhouse city, struggling to survive against the lunatics. Realities warp. Have you been infected? Would you be able to tell if you were?

Grace of Monsters

Michael,

I so enjoyed speaking with you at church. And may I say how refreshing it is to see a knight of the First Estate so dedicated and passionate in his attendance of Midnight Mass?

Our conversation was cut short. Society. That was the topic. Why do the Damned seek the Damned? It should not come so naturally to us. We are lone predators. Our hackles rise at the slightest competition, because sinners are tasty, and the dark teems with tasters. We are tigers loping in the forests of the night. Yet we seek immortal hands and eyes to frame our fearful symmetry. Why?

Perhaps our cadaverous skulls are reliquaries of vestigial artifacts, the behaviors etched into dead mammalian synapses reading as illumined script. We are vessels filled with divine curse, yet we are still molded from the breathing clay.

Perhaps we seek the company of the only ones who can relate. For who else knows what it is to mortify the mortal flesh with our teeth? Loneliness, unchecked, can lead to the sin of procreation, from which we must abstain.

Perhaps it is the silent coaching of forward-thinking instincts, the desire of our hunger to place us near our fellows for that future night when the human vintage will not suffice.

Perhaps it is fear. Just as His flocks of sheep gather together and huddle around the fire (and with good cause), so too do even we, the apex fiends, have our own bogeymen. Have you heard the owl-winged stories, passing like contagion, amongst the barbarian dregs at the edges of our domain?

We are a society of immortals, but we are not completely stagnant. The young Firebrands paint pictures of ancient Kindred nervous of cell phones, startling at the honk of every motorcar. This is not so. I have had the honor of serving as liaison to the Eclipsed at our church. I aid those elder Sanctified waking from the long slumber, easing their transition into the new age. So I have some perspective.

Our dead minds are active during torpor. They hone themselves on nightmares, preparing for the ever more modern world. This Long Night of the Soul purifies us for our ghastly purpose. The elders awaken with soft, pliable minds. They mimic the herd, picking up new tricks with the frightening alacrity of a toddler playing with a smartphone. An elder who went to sleep after the Great Chicago Fire recently showed me how to use this thing called Twitter.

We awaken in our crypts to exciting new nights. We scan popular tourist spots with public web cams, gauging the flow of the herd. We hunt through Internet dating sites, where desperation wafts, like a musk, off personal profiles. There are even new forms of seduction. The kine have sex through digital text. Did you know that? We are learning new ways to revel and sin and test the breathing sinners. We can do these things because we are not moldering corpses from the dark ages. We are the Lord's perfect predators, released as a plague on humankind for every century to come. We drink the blood of a new age, and we are that age. The grace of monsters is terribly beautiful.

This is the age of electronic social networking. And so our society changes. The kine socialize with averted eyes, buried in glowing screens. They interact, constantly, but become more distant — floating islands of ego broadcasting at each other. Humanity is developing a social model that is so familiar to our own, yet with new innovations and nuances, and so we learn.

We are all mastering the art of being alone together.

Alone with you,

Abbess Gilda

Underground Culture

In the placid suburbs, families link together, forming a merry chain, enjoying a Labor Day cookout and block party, so many happy mouths enjoying a bounty of meat. Yet noses wrinkle. Just a hint, a waft, the slightest of notion that something is corrupt, that something nasty is going on beneath the surface. None of them see the feast beneath the Johnsons' deck — a dead fox writhing in slow, undead motion, as it bursts open with writhing maggots, all of them blasphemously mimicking the feast outside, all of those happy mouths masticating spoiled meat.

In a baytown, a father and daughter happily trip-trap down the docks after a good day's recreational fishing. They have not looked carefully enough into the mouth of the catch to see the parasite crustacean that attached itself there, in the cold dark, drinking the blood from the fish tongue till it atrophied and fell away. The scuttling creature anchored itself there, taking the place of the organ in its ghastly masquerade.

In the city, a mother takes her toddler for ice cream. "Look, Daniel, a hawk!" The boy laughs from his stroller at the bird of prey's flight. As the adults talk, Daniel sees the sparrow hawk catch a pigeon. It can't kill the larger prey outright, just snares it in the barbed wire mesh of its talons, begins plucking and eating the pigeon alive, pulling away rib meat and, eventually, organs. Murder by tiny beakfulls. Daniel starts crying, but doesn't have the vocabulary to explain why. His melting ice cream drips away like innocence.

All these worlds, layered on top of each other. But the borders cannot hold. Something always bleeds through. We have interrogated personal Requiems, but how do they link together? Now we enter a masqued ball, a legion of secret revelers wearing their masks. The curtain billows.

In a coffee house, during open mic, a poet, too nervous to expose herself through her own words, instead reads a passage from a well-worn book:

"There was much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust."

She does not even realize how well she summed up an invisible world almost touching her own — she can almost sense it, an underground culture, something hipper than hip, something she could see if she just decoded the graffiti tags, Craigslist ads, and show posters for bands she has never heard of. She does not know the strange poetry that is read in this room, late at night, when the sign says: CLOSED — the odd figures doing an interpretive dance to "Candy Colored Clown," in the basement, to an audience snapping cold fingers — the pleading whimpers coming from the locked closet and the gummy sound of limbs struggling in a duct-tape web.

The Cacophony

At a crime scene, the police do not read into the hidden context — a Savage warning a Lord — in the words painted on the wall:

A ROOM IS A PLACE WHERE YOU HIDE FROM WOLVES

THAT'S ALL ANY ROOM IS

Mortals walk the streets, and there is a humming in the back of their lizard brains. A music in the graffiti, in the underground performance art, in the rhymes penned on bathroom stalls, flyers blowing as discordant notes on the wind. Walk into the right succession of alleys, basements, and bars, and they all weave together into a disjointed song. The mortal can't read the music, but senses an elusive cadence. The mortal wants to hum along to the Cacophony.

The Cacophony is the vector of Kindred culture. This is how they communicate within and beyond their territories and cities. The Cacophony is the underground journalism, literature, and art of the Damned. It has always lurked as a hollow echo to mortal culture, but saw its renaissance in the 1960s, growing alongside the counterculture of breathers. Vampire samizdat!

The Burlesque Grotesque

There is a traveling group of performers the Kindred know as the Burlesque Grotesque. This artistic conclave has chapter houses in a few cities in the local region. Troupes consist of Nosferatu, shape-shifting Gangrel, and other bloodlines whose Beasts express themselves through the flesh. These inhuman and bestial features are accentuated with black light reactive paint and ebbing LED lights, to accomplish an alien beauty. Every vampire broadcasts his own personal damnation.

Performances are held either in large, underwater tanks or in vacuum-sealed rooms with no oxygen. All performances occur in black-lit darkness. The burlesque dancers writhe, glowing and blinking, in displays not unlike that of deep sea animals communicating through bioluminescence. They emulate these strange creatures from landscapes never touched by the sun.

There is an apocryphal tale of a mortal hipster who infiltrated the vampire audience, only to die of asphyxiation in an airless black box theatre.

Over the Cacophony, Kindred rave about the transcendental experience of seeing the Burlesque Grotesque. In this way, the clever conclave spreads, never invading a domain, but simply waiting for the demand to grow and a city to ask them to visit. Another theatre is raised, in a slow and steady spread.

Some say they are simply an art house coterie, easing their Requiems through expression, having no other agenda. Others claim that this is a clandestine conspiracy, with unknown goals, communicating to each other through their light displays (aided by enforced sympathy of the Blood), in ways as subtle and complex as the deep marine creatures they emulate.

Word on the wire is they're coming to your town next.

Many in the All Night Society assume this was the brainchild of the Carthians. But no, the movement was spearheaded by youthful elements of the Invictus, who needed ways to communicate basic messages regarding Masquerade safety — a song of silence. The signal spread, solidifying into branching explosions of cultural artifacts reaching across covenants: books, pamphlets, mix tapes, private gallery exhibitions, and secret shows. It is an information network that is more cultural than administrative.

The signal never stopped. Naturally, there has been ongoing retaliation from conservative elements, but the Kindred are clandestine by nature. The Cacophony sings to them. The signal continues.

New information technology gives the Cacophony even more vectors to spread. If you could just find the right URL, the correct online zine, the demo track of that experimental band, a whole new world would open up to swallow you. As it turns out, Kindred have almost been emailing and tweeting for centuries — short cryptic missives claw-carved into stone walls or the condom machines of truck stop bathrooms.

Tonight, vampires can go through all the social motions: seduction, jokes, debates, even bitter arguments, with scores of humans, with the safety of space between them. Nosferatu glory in this age of faceless communication, can sext the mortals who would otherwise reject their twisted forms. Elders can tickle their complex webs from any location, just by caressing the glowing, liquid plasma of a screen. The hungry dead become digital ghosts.

The vampire experience is fraught with visceral horrors, but this is one of the dark joys. Open your dead eyes, and the city speaks to you, revealing a whole new dimension stenciled on the metropolis you knew. The blitzkrieg of signals takes coherence. Every street, nook, and cranny hums. You can hum along too. Soon, you'll know the words. Soon, shivering alleyways will whisper riddles to you.

Learn the Cacophony, and you'll never be alone again.

Conclaves

Kindred are local creatures, no? They are their domain, and their domain is them. Travel is complicated, if not deadly. And yet some see the horizon as a dare. Some howl to the sky, and occasionally a response echoes back. The Cacophony gives them a more far-flung voice, shotgun communication, messages in bottles written in blood.

Vampires form cliques, and when those cliques stretch over multiple domains, they evolve into a conclave. The term comes from the historical habit of Kindred gathering at some midpoint or neutral ground. This could be an ancient graveyard, an all-nite diner, an abandoned theme park, or the ballroom at the Ramada Inn. Some conclaves meet in the occulted corners of the Internet.

When every word comes fang-punctured, it can be hard for monsters to call other monsters friend; but there is something reassuring in the relative permanence of vampire correspondents, and it is always better to deal with the devils one knows.

Conclaves can take root for myriad reasons. A group of ancillae stretch out into a cross-domain coterie, to better gather and share information. A regional conclave forms around a specific creed or agenda and behaves much like a covenant. A powerful elder spreads her bloodline across a region, keeping her descendants tightly linked through blood and fear. A group of elders, who spent their dead youth as a coterie, spread out to all nearby cities, keeping in contact, but keeping their distance as their hungry egos grew too big to be contained in one domain.

Some conclaves even form global factions, though their influence is thinly spread.

The Danse Macabre

We have heard the Requiem for one vampire, but what happens when the song is joined? How do they intertwine? A chorus forms, opening up new possibilities as monsters engage each other. Here lurks the menagerie, an unkindness of Beasts. Each one of the Damned has a different song, but when those songs play over each other, the dance begins.

The Cannibal Totem Pole

Three strata of vampire society must coexist in the Danse Macabre. These are the stories that swallow one another.

The Neonate

These are the coyote stories.

They are the tales rooted in emotion and the fundamentals of the vampire experience. These are naked fangs running on raw nerves, and moment to moment struggles with the Beast. You're a monster so close to being human. You are a predator afraid of all the bigger predators. You are afraid of all the things you don't know, and you don't know most things. These are the thrilling tales of running. Run, run, run!

Neonates survive night to night, forming loose groups. Mistakes are inevitable. Plans have to change on the turn of the unlucky dime. You are the mutt, the down-and-out, the fleet-footed scavenger staying one step ahead of calamity.

Revel in the excitement of the unpredictable. The elder knows what he will be doing in 50 years. You don't know where you'll be in 10 minutes. Yours is the desperate power, the x-factor. Everyone else, ancillae on up, will underestimate you. They have their reasons, but you can surprise them. Sometimes it takes just one moment to shake the totem pole. Neonates can even surprise themselves, in wonderful and horrible ways.

In the All Night Society, the neonates bear the dread weight of all above them. They are the numerous, the expendable. The ancillae influence you, and so do the elders through them. Gravity is the unfair tyrant; blood flows up and shit flows down. If you could just survive another night.

The Ancilla

These are the wolf stories.

These are the tales of politics and the dead community. These are the smooth monsters wearing damnation like a stylish coat. Immortal intrigue, thy name is ancillae. The middle management of the Damned deal in grim hierarchies, predator-and-prey posturing, and the complex social stratum of bloodsuckers. The game turns more subtle, but the ancilla is just savvy enough to get ahead.

You still have the trappings of humanity, but they are weatherworn. The Man might just be a tool to make a cleverer Beast. Innocence is barely a memory. Betrayal is like a frightening ladder; you just take it one rung at a time, and you reach heights you never thought possible.

In the All Night Society, you are one of the movers and shakers. You have some influence over the clueless neonates, and you better use it, because you're just smart enough to understand the barest depths of how the elders are using you. Fuck or be fucked. Welcome to the damnation game.

The Elder

This is the tiger story.

This is the tale based on ideas and shadowy influence. It is lonely at the top, and the apex predator can afford a little malaise, a little reflection, belly bloated with slaughter. There is enough room and time for turning thoughts inward, and that is a very dangerous place to look. From neonate to ancilla, you have collected a gallery of transcendental horrors. It is only now that you get to tour it.

In the All Night Society, you perch your bulk atop all others. You are a walking conspiracy, spreading influence over a domain, or even a region. You let your voice drift down to the ancillae. You barely notice the neonates. It is hard to identify them as individuals. There is your hungry self, and there are others. What more distinction need be made?

Humanity is a half-forgotten dream. Elders are the unmarked grave of many. The names on the tombstones dotting your shriveled soul are worn nearly smooth. You are no longer just a vampire, you've evolved into something alien and inscrutable. You are the pupa for something even more unknowable. All you need to do is survive the long chrysalis, and you might get to spread your terrible wings.

Malkavia

The M came like a thief in the night. No one knew how it spread. It swims in the Blood, true, but we still do not comprehend the vectors. Does the bite of a Malkavian transfer the affliction? Must the infected vitae be consumed? Does skin-to-skin contact suffice? Active transport seems unlikely. Stockton, a Lord, surmised that only the weak-minded, and those predisposed to perversion, are susceptible. After the outbreak, we found him trying to escape his epidermis. Nessah, a fellow member of the Order, speculated that close proximity was enough, that the M could spread via concentration of deranged thought. After the outbreak, I found her in the lab, attempting to animate teddy bears by replacing the stuffing with a transfusion of grave worms. She would not put down the scalpel, and so I left. Collating.

How does the M spread? I hypothesize that there are several, if not dozens, of variables. Individually, these variables are inert, but in certain combinations, they trip the tumblers to madness. The sheer number of combination possibilities makes detection difficult. Ancient record suggests that infected blood may remain dormant for centuries, even skipping whole generations, but still passing from Embrace to Embrace. This possibility is fascinating, but also confoundingly outside the scope of the current study. I would require centuries of observation in order to test the theory.

Data collection continues. Subjects are plentiful, but the work is difficult. The tedium has made me irritable. My clothes no longer seem to fit properly. But that is impossible. Collating.

What is the history of the M? In the Dark Ages, the afflicted were better accepted in Kindred society, filling a niche that resembled both jester and magician. Their preternatural insights and prophesies accepted as a boon. But the 14th century brought the bubonic plague, and paranoia of contagion. The Demented became outcasts. Are they oracles or plague rats? Collating.

Outside, the laughing and the screaming never ceases. It is damaging to focused concentration.

The term "Malkavia" comes from a supposed patient zero, a Russian Kindred named Malkav. This Demented was famously studied, at length, in the 18th century, by a fellow Dragon. Documentation supports the account, though I find it doubtful Malkav is truly the first Demented. Still, the notion of a patient zero begs investigation. See Codex Malkavia (I cannot seem to find my texts of late).

Security in the lab has been compromised. I continue to find babbling notes, penned on paper and taped to the walls and other surfaces. I disinfect the lab every time I find one, yet they multiply. How do they get in?

What is the nature of the M? Bishop Treader says it is a second curse laid into the blood of the Damned by God. If this is true, then my Order has another holy curse to undo. Since the outbreak, Treader becomes homicidal when he hears or sees the number nine.

Delaney Downs, of the Mekhet, said that Malkavia comes from the touch of the divine, but is not a curse. Divinity, she says, burns, and where the psyche is scorched thin is where the light of miraculous vision shines through. After the outbreak, Delaney's personality shattered, and she now only appears in the guise of other Kindred. Where or who she is remains unknown.

Perhaps the M is an evolutionary step for the Kindred, our supernatural senses and minds becoming more and more aware of a super-reality. The in-between phase of such an adaptation might be clumsy. Whatever its nature, the M resists all treatment both scientific and mystical. This terrifies the immortals, though predators do not confide fear to one another, as a general thing.

The study was largely academic until the outbreak. We do not know the cause. The M spread in such numbers. As always, lack of knowledge is the prelude to hysteria. Society fell. Court ceased to function when the prince refused to trust anyone wearing clothes. Later, the Primogen tried to rule as a council. As court reopened, the leader of the Carthians stood, screaming that she was sane, that she could never be insane, and everyone began screaming, and then they all laughed at the queer faces they made. They might still be laughing now. It was decided that the infection would be cleansed by killing the infected, but then the Demented outnumbered the lucid.

The strange notes continue. I find them when I wake, in the lab and in my haven, taped to the walls, to the tables, even to my forehead. The missives are written on scraps of 90g, pH neutral, chlorine-free paper, whitened with calcium carbonate. Just the sort of stationary I prefer, only it is not penned in my handwriting, but in a feminine Spencerian Script (which I eschew for the more workman Palmer Method). The pleading notes give me incomprehensible warnings. Each one is signed, "D.D."

After the outbreak, the princes of the surrounding domains ordered a ruthless quarantine. Whosoever leaves the city shall be put to Final Death. Whosever from this city surfaces in another domain shall be put to Final Death. There is no escape. This is Bedlam City.

A voice mimicking my own calls out from the cellar. It begs me to open the door. I dare not. I dare not! We are all on the Ship of Fools. I want to get off. I don't belong here. There's been a terrible mistake. I don't belong here!

The Predatory Note

An agitated beast paces your ribcage. It recognizes other Beasts — smells them, sees them, feels them, warns you by the prickling of your neck hair. It is an aura, a telltale, preternatural friction between vampires when they meet. It broadcasts the measure and flavor of one monster's Damnation to the other.

And with their Beasts so announced, the Kindred must decide how to respond. How will you react to the Gangrel's animal stink, to the Ventrue's lordly stare, to the Daeva's intoxicating grace, to the Nosferatu's freakish miasma, to the Mekhet's nimbus of suffocating silence? How will they react to you? What is the texture of your inner monster? You might tear into each other. You might shake hands. One may take a higher place in the pecking order. You might even break the furniture of the nearest hourly motel.

Domains form from networks of these predatory auras. Turf is the primary conflict between vampires. Turf means food. And turf becomes personal, because the vampire is changed by the influence of the hunting ground, and the hunting ground in turn becomes like the vampire. Travel is more complex than walking from neighborhood to neighborhood. Every street you cross could insult another monster. Ignorance is rarely an acceptable excuse to the tooth and claw law of the Beast. Do you dare walk down the road?

This is the All Night Society, your society. The space between you and all of your fellows is filled with gnashing hyenas. When the laughter sounds, will you keep your cool?

The Sympathetic Note

Blood calls to Blood, adding an eerie, connective pitch to the chorus. The Damned are lone predators, but they are not islands. The Blood recognizes. The Vitae that oozes through the still heart knows its own. The Blood knows the sire, the sibling, even the clan, even when the vampire isn't conscious of it.

No matter how selfish the Kindred might be, the Blood ties them together. Family matters. Meetings between related Kindred, sire and childe, take horribly dramatic tones. They

feel the tidal pull of each other. The common blood makes them more susceptible to their preternatural charms, the arts of the Beast, and sorcery.

Blood ties can go horribly wrong. Hard enough to be a monster; you are anchored to other monsters. When Katrina tore apart New Orleans, related Kindred the country over frenzied in one great nightmare wave. There were vampire riots. The Masquerade frayed.

What does it mean that the Blood knows and reacts? What does the Blood whisper between us? What is the Blood plotting?

The Cannibalistic Note

The simplest note. The most foreboding note. It's the kind of heavy bass that rattles the rib cage and reverberates the heart to something akin to beating. Kindred do not always talk about it, but it hangs over their heads — the simple knowledge that any vampire who lasts long enough will eventually be forced to feed on their own.

Any of your elders might need to eat you. At least a little. How old do they have to be? How should you know? They don't wear pins. Can you concentrate during polite conversation? When her ancient, unblinking eyes fall on you, do you feel like one of those ridiculous cartoon characters who turn into a hot dog or steak under the hungry gaze of his fellow? Even worse, her predatory aura probes you with an invisible tongue the entire time. What if you taste good?

Dead Taboos

Despite being blasphemies themselves, the ambulating dead have taboos. These are not the primal laws of respect for hunting grounds or the terrible abomination of diablerie, but rather the social gaffes of the Damned.

One taboo regards the Kiss. A vampire's bite transmits some of the corruption that animates her. This clouds the judgment of the victim, subduing with pleasure or domination. The Kiss normally does not affect another vampire the way it does mortals, but if one pushes, even one's fellow dead can be overcome. The All Night Society frowns on Kindred invoking the Kiss on one another. It's an insult. Throats have been ripped out over less.

Another taboo is perversion — a reciprocated blood bond between two or more vampires. The Kindred decide they love each other. They decide to ignore the taboo of giving each other the Kiss. They know the dangers of the blood bond, but how dangerous can mutual feelings be?

Is this love? You bet your fangs it is. This is love on the deep. Beast and Curse be damned, love is the most wonderful feeling... except when it isn't. Love is the anxiety of not knowing what the other thinks of you. Love is insecurity. Love is fretting over wrong steps. Love is explosive jealousy. Love is fearing harm coming to your lover. Love is a scuttling swarm of insecurities building termite mounds of contempt for those who would stoop to choose us. Love is a prelude to horror.

Now give all of these things the razor-edge of preternatural codependence. Love is the potential energy of the raised guillotine blade. Love is the reassuring knowledge that you could hurt them as much as they could hurt you.

It has a name, so it happens often enough, and Kindred society frowns on it, either because they are cold-hearted monsters who have forgotten what love is, or because they are not fucking stupid. Hard to say.

Kisses and love. Even the dead know to fear them.

Solace

There is a drug. It comes in a tiny, silver syrette. And that tiny needle goes under the tongue. When it goes off, it's liquid nostalgia. It feels like a lover from those deep, deep dreams, when you wake up in tears at the loss of this fictional, half-remembered person — a love so deep, yet so fleeting, that it washes away the shower spray. And then burning. Your body is burning. It hurts so good. The dead cells hum. The veins thrum. The heart turns over in a sluggish beat. You feel human. You feel fantastic.

At least that's the rumor. They say the drug makes the dead alive, or close to it, for one night. The body warms. The food has taste, and the wine makes you drunk again. You shed your supernatural powers, and the hunger dies away. For one night.

Yeah, but where do those silver syrettes come from? An Ordo Dracul experiment? They seem just as mystified. An Unaligned junkie says the stuff is made from the blood of women who cut themselves. But what does that scrag know? The new Sanctified recruit says it's an abomination brewed by the Devil himself. But she's always thumping that razor-wire bible.

You keep looking. You know a friend of a friend of an acquaintance who swears their sire's buddy talked to a guy who used the drug, but you've never seen so much as an empty syrette. Every dead John and Jane you talk to rolls their eyes like you just asked them about Santa or true love. But when they think you're not looking, those black ice eyes melt a little with longing. They all do. Everyone knows that everyone knows. They're all looking. They're asking for it by name.

"Solace."

Say it out loud. It sounds like "soulless" on the tongue. You don't know if that's a coincidence.

Lexicon

As with any subculture, Kindred have their own slang. Some of it's almost antique, words the dead have preserved and twisted. Some of it's modern, developed in an age of industry and information.

Ancilla (an • SILL • uh): Kindred too old to be considered neonates, but not yet elders, whose Requiem has lasted roughly 50 to 150 years. The plural is ancillae (an • SILL • ae).

ancient: The rare vampire who has existed for over a millennium.

Avus (AY • vuss): A character's "grandfather" or patron in a bloodline from which she is not truly descended.

barrens: Portions of the city unfit for hunting. Typically, places people don't go after dark, or which are monitored closely by the police.

The Beast: The inchoate urges that drive vampires away from the Man.

blood bond: The artificial love and loyalty spawned by feeding from the same vampire three times. Also known more formally as a *Vinculum*.

bloodline: A group of vampires that splits off from a parent clan to form a distinct lineage of its own. Some bloodlines do not differ from the parent clan in significant ways, while others claim different powers or weaknesses.

blood sympathy: The mystic link between "related" vampires.

The Camarilla (CAM • er • ill • uh): The earliest commonly believed-in Kindred state to stretch across vast areas of the world. The Camarilla governed during approximately the same span of time, and over approximately the same parts of the world, as the mortal Roman republic and empire.

The Carthian Movement (KAR • thee • enn movement): A group of vampiric idealists, who believe in reconciling the Requiem with the political ideas of modern mortals.

Carthian Law (KAR • thee • enn law): The strange ability of the Carthian Movement to back up Kindred law with mystic force.

childe (CHILD): Kindred "offspring"; also used to refer to particularly young neonates, or as a minor insult (akin to calling someone a "kid" in mortal circles). The plural is childer (CHILL • der).

Circle of the Crone: A covenant of ritualistic Kindred who revere pagan gods, spirits, pantheons and/or progenitors.

cloister: A city or other large domain that's "gone dark," where Kindred can't (or won't) communicate in or out.

Coils of the Dragon: A mystic way of learning that allows vampires to avoid or exploit aspects of their curse, as practiced by the Ordo Dracul.

conclave: An organization of vampires that stretches across multiple cities, but is not a government in and of itself. Sometimes, conclaves are groups of individual, like-minded Kindred. Other times, they are made up of official representatives of multiple domains.

coterie: A small group of allied Kindred.

covenant: A faction of Kindred who share certain political or theological beliefs. Some covenants are spread across the world, but they tend to have independent leadership and local variations from domain to domain.

Crúac (KREW • ack): The bloody, witchcraft-like magic practiced by the Circle of the Crone.

Daeva (DAY • vuh) : A clan of vampires known for being emotional, physically powerful, and desirable.

Damned, the: The race of Kindred; vampires.

The Danse Macabre: The interweaving Requiems of all vampires. Often used to describe the web of politics and conflict that those Requiems create.

diablerie (dee • AHB • ler • ee): Kindred "cannibalism"; draining another vampire of not only his blood but his soul. Sometimes called *Amaranth*.

Disciplines: The preternatural abilities and edges the Kindred possess, allowing them to vanish, turn into animals, and perform myriad other inhuman feats.

domain: A Kindred territory, usually with a single governing authority. Most frequently used to refer to a Kindred city-state, or districts of one. The largest domains stretch across multiple mortal cities.

draugr: A vampire who has lost touch with humanity, becoming either a mindless beast or a completely uncaring predator.

elder: A vampire who has survived for over 150 years; also a term of respect.

Elysium (ell • ISS • ee • um): A location used for Kindred gatherings and declared a neutral, "no violence" sanctuary by the authorities of a domain.

The Embrace: The act of turning a mortal into a vampire.

Final Death: A Kindred's real, true, ultimate death; when her Requiem ceases and she never again rises as a vampire.

fledgling: A neonate; a newly created vampire under his sire's protection.

frenzy: A berserk state in which the Beast takes total control over a vampire. Rage, fear and hunger can induce frenzies; when precision is needed, the term is qualified by cause

(rage frenzy, fear frenzy or hunger frenzy). Unqualified, the term generally indicates

rage frenzy.

Gangrel (GANG • grell): A clan of vampires known for being primal, hardy, and savage.

ghoul: A mortal fed Kindred Vitae and possessed of various supernatural abilities, though far weaker than most vampires.

haven: A vampire's residence; where one finds sanctuary from the sun.

herd: A collection of mortals from whom a vampire feeds regularly.

Invictus (in • VICK • tuss): A covenant of vampires who are determined to protect the Masquerade, while at the same time enjoying their Requiems as the elite among the dead.

Kindred: The modern (and most frequent) term by which vampires refer to themselves and their race.

kine: A term for mortals; the phrase "Kindred and kine" refers to everyone.

Kiss: The act of biting and taking blood from a mortal, as well as the pleasure it provides both participants.

Lancea et Sanctum (LAN • kay • uh ET SANK • toom): A covenant of vampires who honor the Roman centurion Longinus, whom they have adopted as a form of "patron saint" for the act of testing Christ's divinity.

Lick: A faintly vulgar term for a vampire.

Man, the: The vampire's human impulses and self-control. Used to compliment or contrast the Beast.

The Masquerade: The efforts required to hide Kindred from the mortal world.

Mekhet (MEK • et): A clan of vampires known for being quick, discreet, and wise.

mortal: An ordinary human. Although Kindred are, to varying degrees, aware of other monsters in the World of Darkness, they frequently use "mortal" to describe everyone who's not one of them.

neonate (NEE • oh • nate): A young vampire, engaged in his Requiem for less than 50 years.

Nosferatu (noss • fur • AH • too): A vampire clan known for being stealthy, strong and terrifying.

Ordo Dracul (OR • dough drah • KOOL): A covenant of vampires known for its mystic studies and desire to transcend the vampiric curse.

poacher: One who feeds in another Kindred's territory without permission.

perversion: The act of two Kindred drinking each other's blood.

The Rack: The best parts of the city in which to find food, including nightclubs and other loud, crowded areas.

regnant: The Kindred who holds regency over a thrall; the dominant member of a Vinculum. Also called a *domitor.*

Requiem: The Kindred condition; the whole miserable, cursed song of a vampire's unlife, whether singularly or metaphorically.

revenant: A vampire "born" from a spontaneous Embrace. Usually a victim of a vampire who, for unknown reasons, rises after death.

VII (SEVEN): Apparently a clan, covenant, or other group of vampires that detests the Kindred and seeks to destroy them, its own members excepted.

sire: A vampiric "parent," one who has Embraced a childe; alternatively, a verb, meaning "to Embrace."

Theban (THEE • ben) Sorcery: A mysterious form of blood magic practiced primarily by members of the Lancea et Sanctum.

thrall: One who is bound to a regnant; the member of a Vinculum who feels artificial devotion to another.

torpor: A death-like sleep into which Kindred fall if they are injured severely or starved for too long. Kindred can also enter torpor willingly to escape the world for a time.

Traditions: The three primary Kindred laws, passed down through the ages and rooted in the Kindred condition.

unaligned: A vampire who claims membership in no covenant. Also known as an unbound or independent Kindred.

Ventrue (VENN • true): A clan of vampires known for being regal, commanding, and aristocratic.

vessel: Any source of blood for the Kindred to feed on; usually but not always used to refer to a mortal.

Vitae (VIE • tay): The blood of a vampire.

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD

PART III

Thao

"Edie, what am I looking at?"

"Um, my living room?"

I know it's your living room, you cunt. But when I visit your subdivision cathouse on a Friday night, there are some things that I should be seeing. Like, for example, everything you're supposed to be selling me. And I am sure you didn't misplace it."

"Thao, you can't get mad at me! It wasn't my fault this time!"

"Wasn't your fault that you gave it away already? Party favors at your last 'sleepover,' maybe?"

"I didn't give it away, we just...didn't take it."

"You what." I actually needed to take a real breath. Flush with someone else's life, I steadied out and didn't kill my stupid sister. "Look, you know how this works. You and your little band of gypsies steal something of value, then you give it to me, and I sell it to pay off Dad and keep him from looking too hard at your bleeder harem upstairs. Because I am beneficent and you don't know how to talk to people. I swear, it's like you think you can just do whatever you want now that you're already dead."

TUESDAY

"You are such a bitch. Why can't you just spot me this time? We couldn't take it; it was way too risky."

"'Hey, you want to take on the big bad world all by yourself? Go ahead. I could have bought my way into the actual city with how much I've put down to fix your personal problems. See how well you do lurching around out here in the suburbs with no one to protect you." And I walked out the door. And I felt free for the first time in thirty years.

But I only made it as far as the stairs.

"Thao, we couldn't take it because it was Dad's."

A chill ran right up my spine, and I rolled my eyes rather than let her see me shiver. "What do you mean it was Dad's? Weed is a little déclassé for his friends."

"It wasn't weed, and every body I buried in the desert smelled just like us."

I have to go."

"Thao, wait! We can handle this, but I need you..." I slammed the door in her face. "To listen to me." I heard her whisper on the other side. And then I walked away.

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C. Wilkins

chapter three
Laws of the Dead

When I become death, death is the seed from which I grow.

William S. Burroughs

Introduction

Vampire: The Requiem is about the thrilling fantasy of being a vampire, combined with the depth and drama that comes from exploring how scary vampires are. In this chapter, we explore creating your own vampire persona, as well as introduce the many dread powers of the Damned.

Ready to join us in the neon night?

Character Creation

With this system, we take a raw idea for a character, and turn her into one of the Kindred, defining her traits according to the game's rules. In the end, we'll know who she is, and what she's capable of. Then, we can explore her Requiem. Take a look at character sheet in the back of this book. It's your map to exploring your **Vampire** character.

Step One: Character Concept

At this first stage, come up with a rough idea of who you want to play. Who was she in life? What kind of vampire is she? Don't worry too much about things like clan and covenant at this step. Instead, try to filter down the idea of your character into a single statement. "Playboy with a jealous streak" is a concept. "Street poet" could be another. It doesn't need to be complex, just a solid, archetypical idea. Think of how you'd describe your favorite character from a book or movie to a friend if you only had a couple of seconds to do it. That's a concept.

As you go through the process of character creation, if ever you run into hurdles or hard choices, you can always go back to your concept, and take the path that fits closer. For our example above, if you're hard-pressed for Merit choices, you might take Resources, Striking Looks, Enticing, or even Street Fighting. Those all evoke the feeling set forth by the concept.

As well, choose three Aspirations. When choosing your character's Aspirations, choose one or two that reflect her Kindred existence. Does she want to become a leader in her city? Does he want to find a candidate for the Embrace? As well, choose at least one Aspiration pertaining to his associations with the mortal world. Does he have a former boyfriend he's trying to keep safe and away? Does she have a mother with mounting medical bills she's helping?

Aspirations are one of the most important ways you can earn Beats and Experiences, which advance your character. More importantly, they're clear statements to your Storyteller about the types of things you wish to see happen to your character. It's important the Storyteller takes note of all the troupe's Aspirations. This way, she can add hooks in the chronicle to touch on something for everyone.

Also, starting Aspirations are a great way to establish coterie relationships. For example, if a coterie consists of two Invictus characters, one may have the Aspiration, "Become a member of the Inner Circle," and another might have, "Become knight to a ranking Invictus." This helps to put coterie dynamics into a loose perspective, and can help chronicle momentum start strong.

Lastly, Aspirations make for great fodder for quick and easy goals. Don't be afraid to take at least one Aspiration without immense challenge or risk. For example, "Find a safe haven" isn't an unreasonable goal, and it gives you something to do during the first session if you're struggling to find a place for your character. Look at easy Aspirations as story hooks. In play, try to involve the other players' characters in accomplishing them.

If you're struggling with Aspirations, revisit this stage once you've fleshed out the character some more. Often, one part of the character creation process will stand out for a given character. These stand-out parts will help you determine goals.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Now, we step into the most basic traits that define the character's capability. Attributes tell us how strong, how smart, how charismatic she is. Look to the three categories (Mental, Physical, Social), and prioritize which you think is most

important for your character. Then, determine which is second most. When selecting Attributes, consider why your character's sire might have Embraced him. What drew the sire's attention? Where was he exceptional?

In your primary category, place five dots and split them between the Attributes. In your secondary, place four. In your tertiary, place three.

As you'll see on your character sheet, your character gets one free dot in each Attribute. A single dot represents a deficient Attribute, something below average. Two dots represents the average of human ability. Three dots is above average, highly competent. Four dots is a remarkable specimen, a rarity. Five dots is the pinnacle of human capability.

Step Three: Select Skills

Next, you'll select your character's Skills. These have the same categories: Mental, Physical, and Social. Similarly, you'll prioritize these three categories. Skills do not receive free dots. Your primary category gets eleven dots. Your secondary gets seven. Your tertiary gets four.

When choosing Skills, think about your character's background. Does your socialite have three dots of Crafts because she spent a lot of time in her father's custom car shop? Does your gangster have two dots of Socialize because he had to navigate the cliques of a private school as a child?

Step Four: Skill Specialties

Skill dots represent training and experience with a broad range of techniques and procedures. Skill Specialties allow you to refine a few Skills, and show where your character truly shines. You define your own Skill Specialties. They reflect a narrow focus and expertise in a given Skill. For example, your character may have an Intimidation Specialty in Interrogation, or an Academics Specialty in History.

Choose three Specialties. Again, use this as an opportunity to better understand who your character is, and who she was prior to the Embrace. A character with Empathy: Detecting Lies is wildly different than one with Empathy: Consoling. Crafts: Traps says something completely different from Crafts: Carpentry.

In play, players will tend to solve problems with the Skills their characters are Specialized in. The Storyteller should expect this and work with it.

Step Five: Add Kindred Template

We have the flesh and blood. Now, we add the fangs.

Clan

A character's clan is the lineage her sire Embraced her into. This cannot change once play starts, but your character may channel her lineage toward a bloodline (see p. 98). Look over the five clans, the Daeva, Gangrel, Mekhet, Nosferatu, and Ventrue, starting on p. 103.

Clan is more archetype than personality. While the Disciplines and banes of the various clans may influence behavior, any person could be Embraced into any clan. There's something to be said for playing into stereotypes, but challenging established norms can be very fulfilling.

Your choice of clan determines the Disciplines with which your character has an affinity. As well, every clan has two favored Attributes. Take an additional dot in one of these. This can only take an Attribute to five dots.

Clan	Favored Attributes
Daeva	Dexterity or Manipulation
Gangrel	Composure or Stamina
Mekhet	Intelligence or Wits
Nosferatu	Composure or Strength
Ventrue	Presence or Resolve

Covenant

Covenants are Kindred social orders. While your character's sire may influence her covenant choice, ultimately the choice is hers. Also, it may change with time. You may choose to start play without a covenant. Kindred without covenants are often seen as untrustworthy, but they have more freedom to negotiate their own alliances.

Covenants offer certain advantages to their members. In order to purchase these advantages, your character must have at least one dot in the Covenant Status Merit (see p. 113). The covenant advantages are as follows.

- **The Carthians:** Firebrands of the Carthian Movement may purchase Carthian Law Merits (see p. 115).
- **The Circle of the Crone:** Acolytes of the Circle may learn the Crúac Discipline (see p. 150).
- **The Invictus:** Scions of the Invictus may purchase Oaths (see p. 116).
- **The Lancea et Sanctum:** Judges of the Lancea et Sanctum may study Theban Sorcery (see p. 150).
- **The Ordo Dracul:** The Defiant of the Ordo Dracul may develop Coils and Scales of the Dragon (see p. 154).

Masks and Dirges

Choose a Mask and a Dirge for your character. Whereas a mortal character has a Virtue and a Vice, Kindred characters have Masks and Dirges.

Kindred wear Masks in public. A Mask is the persona she shows the prey. The Mask is the pretty lie, the identity that keeps her walking among the flock as an insider, even though she's nothing of the sort. It reflects how she deals with human society.

The Dirge is who she is behind closed doors, and when dealing with other Kindred. A Dirge is the harsh truth to which

Mask and Dirge Archetypes

Authoritarian
Child
Competitor
Conformist
Conspirator
Courtesan
Cult Leader
Deviant
Follower
Guru
Idealist
Jester
Junkie
Martyr
Masochist
Monster
Nomad
Nurturer
Perfectionist
Penitent
Questioner
Rebel
Sadist
Scholar
Social Chameleon
Spy
Survivor
Teacher
Visionary

she clings. It's the grounding point to which she always returns. When she walks the halls of Elysium, and works within her covenant, she presents her Dirge.

For each of these traits, choose an archetype. This is a simple statement of identity. We've provided a sample list you can choose from, or you may craft your own. As well, you can mine the sample Professions on p. 164 of **The God-Machine Chronicle** for potential archetypes.

You can find more on Masks and Dirges on p. 84.

Touchstone

Your character's Touchstone is a person, place, or thing that reminds her of her humanity, and helps keep her grounded. You'll need to name a Touchstone, and write it next to your sixth Humanity dot. See p. 87 for more on Touchstones. If you choose to take the Touchstone Merit, you may start with additional Touchstones at lower levels of Humanity.

Disciplines

Disciplines are extensions of the Blood. They are ways the Beast's tendrils creep out into the world to manipulate, to pervert, and to destroy. These unholy tricks can accomplish nefarious and terrifying things, from changing the vampire into an animal to forcing a victim into an artificial love.

Choose three dots in Disciplines. At least two must be from the vampire's in-clan Disciplines. The third dot may be from any Discipline. If you choose a third Discipline dot from a non-clan Discipline, consider how your character learned it. Did she have a mentor? Did she steal the blood of another clan?

If the character starts with Covenant Status in the Circle of the Crone, Lancea et Sanctum, or Ordo Dracul, she may use this dot to begin play with Crúac, Theban Sorcery, or the Coils of the Dragon, respectively.

Blood Potency

Blood Potency is the Curse's raw, unbridled power. It determines how much Vitae the Kindred may store, and how rapidly she can expend it. It affects certain Discipline rolls, and most Discipline resistances.

All Kindred start play with a free dot of Blood Potency. You may purchase one or two additional dots for five or ten of your ten starting Merit points, respectively.

You can find more on Blood Potency on p. 89.

Step Six: Merits

Choose ten dots' worth of Merits. Kindred may also possess any of the Merits from **The God-Machine Chronicle**, except for those on the Supernatural Merits list, and both Vice-Ridden and Virtuous (since Kindred do not have Virtue and Vice traits). As well, we've provided an extensive list of Kindred-specific Merits on p. 109.

Step Seven: Determine Advantages

Use the following rules to generate Advantages.

Willpower

Willpower is essential in the Danse Macabre. It keeps the Beast at bay, and can fuel certain advantages. A vampire's Willpower score is equal to her Resolve + Composure dots.

Humanity

A vampire's Humanity score represents his ability to understand humankind, and reconcile his existence with it. Humanity begins at seven dots.

Others

A vampire's Defense score is equal to the least of her Wits or Dexterity Attributes, with her Athletics Skill added. Size is 5. Health is equal to your character's Size + Stamina + Resilience. Speed is Size + Strength + Dexterity.

Vampire Creation Quick Reference

Here are the very basics for creating a Vampire character.

Step One: Concept

Choose a concept. Come up with three Aspirations.

Step Two: Attributes

Prioritize categories. They receive 5/4/3 dots, distributed in any combination.

Step Three: Skills

Prioritize categories. They receive 11/7/4 dots, distributed however.

Step Four: Skill Specialties

Choose three Skill Specialties.

Step Five: Add Kindred Traits

Choose clan, covenant, Dirge, Mask, Touchstone, Blood Potency, and Disciplines.

Step Six: Add Merits

Select ten dots of Merits.

Step Seven: Advantages

Willpower is equal to Resolve + Composure. Humanity is 7. Size is 5. Health is Size + Stamina + Resilience. Speed is Size + Strength + Dexterity. Defense is the lower of Dexterity and Wits, plus Athletics.

Experienced Kindred

Storytellers may choose to allow players to make more experienced characters to start play. These bonus Experiences allow characters to start beyond that level.

Rank	Bonus Experiences
Around the block	5
Rising star	10
Ancilla	15
Rank elder	25
Mover and shaker	35
Urban Legend	50
Methuselah	100

Kindred Template

Clan

Choose the clan to which your vampire belongs.

Daeva: Hungry, passionate, seductive.
Daeva Disciplines: Celerity, Majesty, Vigor

Gangrel: Primal, hardy, feral.
Gangrel Disciplines: Animalism, Protean, Resilience

Mekhet: Quiet, cunning, knowing.
Mekhet Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Obfuscate

Nosferatu: Unsettling, mysterious, fearsome.
Nosferatu Disciplines: Nightmare, Obfuscate, Vigor

Ventrue: Unflappable, domineering, confident.
Ventrue Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Resilience

Covenant

Choose a covenant to which your character claims membership.

The Carthian Movement applies mortal solutions to immortal problems with modern and experimental government.

The Circle of the Crone venerates female divinity, painful change, and the old ways remixed for the modern world.

The Invictus safeguards the Masquerade with hierarchy and tradition.

Vampire Creation Quick Reference (continued)

The Lancea et Sanctum preaches a dark faith; they are both wolves and shepherds.

The Ordo Dracul struggles to transcend the Curses through eldritch alchemies and rites.

Blood Potency

Blood Potency starts at 1 dot. Additional dots may be purchased with five Merit points each. A maximum of two dots may be purchased in this way.

Disciplines

Animalism: The ability to communicate with and command animals.

Auspex: Forbidden understanding and senses.

Celerity: Impossible speed.

Coils of the Dragon: Secrets that transcend the Curse.

Crúac: The terrifying rituals of the Circle of the Crone.

Dominate: The ability to control the mind.

Majesty: The power to command trust and adoration.

Nightmare: The power to harness terror.

Obfuscate: Powers of stealth and distraction.

Protean: The power to change shape.

Resilience: Immense toughness.

Theban Sorcery: The dark miracles of the Lancea et Sanctum.

Vigor: Inhuman strength.

Experience Costs

Attribute: 4 Experiences per dot

Merit: 1 Experience per dot

Skill Specialty: 1 Experience

Skill: 2 Experiences per dot

Clan Discipline: 3 Experiences per dot

Out-of-Clan Discipline: 4 Experiences per dot

Coil of the Dragon, within chosen Mystery: 3 Experiences per dot

Coil of the Dragon, outside chosen Mystery: 4 Experiences per dot

Scale of the Dragon: 2 Experiences

Humanity: 2 Experiences per dot

Blood Potency: 5 Experiences per dot

Experience

A player earns Beats for his character in many ways (listed below). When your character has gained five Beats, they convert to one Experience, which can be used to develop your character's abilities.

Beats

You gain Beats when your character fulfills one of the criteria below.

- If your character fulfills an Aspiration, take a Beat. At the end of the game session, replace the Aspiration.
- Each Condition has criteria for resolution. When resolving a Condition, take a Beat.
- Some Conditions provide Beats for actions other than resolution.
- Any time you fail a roll, you may opt to make it a dramatic failure and take a Beat.
- If your character takes lethal damage in one of her rightmost Health boxes, take a Beat. Vampires do not gain Beats from bashing damage.
- At the end of any game session, take a Beat.
- Any time your character risks detachment (see p. 107), take a Beat.

Disciplines

Learning a Discipline takes Experiences. An in-clan Discipline dot costs three Experiences. Any other Discipline or blood sorcery costs four. As well, Disciplines sometimes require teachers. Kindred may develop their clan Disciplines without a teacher. Also, any Kindred may develop Animalism, Celerity, Obfuscate, Resilience, and Vigor independently. When learned out-of-clan, Auspex, Dominate, Majesty, Nightmare, and Protean require teachers, as they are tied deeply to the blood of the clans. Not only do they require teachers, but they require blood from a vampire with the Discipline in question. It doesn't have to be blood from a clan with affinity for that

Discipline; any vampire who possesses the Discipline at a higher level than the vampire who's learning will do. This Vitae carries the normal risks.

Coils of the Dragon, Crúac, and Theban Sorcery require teachers. They do not, however, require the student to imbibe Vitae. Kindred may not learn the signature Disciplines of bloodlines, even through diablerie.

Blood Potency

After approximately every 50 years that a vampire is active, her Blood Potency will increase on its own. Some vampires' blood thickens faster, though, so you can increase your character's Blood Potency before then with Experiences. Five Experiences purchase a single dot of Blood Potency. You can read more on Blood Potency on p. 89. This includes how vampires might increase their Potency dots.

Devotions

Devotions each have an associated Experience cost. A new Devotion usually costs one Experience per dot in the Devotion, halved and rounded down For example, ubsume the Lesser Beast, which requires Animalism •••• and Dominate ••, costs three Experiences. All Devotions cost at least one Experience. Particularly specialized Devotions may cost a point less, while wildly versatile Devotions cost an extra Experience.

The Heart of the Beast

Kindred traverse a long path for what could be eternity. Sometimes, they move at a crawl, with stagnation and inevitability weighing on their every step. Sometimes, they sprint at a fever pitch, confused and confusing. But Kindred never walk this path alone. They walk with their Beasts, and with the Beast comes the hunger.

Anchors

Kindred are unnatural. Each vampire has three anchors that ground her in the reality of the World of Darkness. In addition to helping define her existence, anchors serve as a source of Willpower. Kindred do not cling to the mortal concepts of Virtue and Vice, as their very existence is mortal sin. Their Masks, Dirges, and Touchstones fill that void.

Each anchor has two conditions that give Willpower recovery. The easier recovers a single Willpower point. The harsher refreshes all Willpower. A character may only refresh all her Willpower using an anchor once per chapter. For the single Willpower point option, err on the side of allowing the point. For the full refresh, use risk of Final Death, breaking points, and markedly dramatic scenes as benchmarks for qualifying moments.

Like Aspirations, anchors are not supernatural traits. They're a narrative mechanic that helps us portray Kindred psychology.

Mask

Mask is the bearing Kindred present to the world. It's the façade, the pretty lie. It's the excuse for why he can't stay for breakfast in the morning. It's the reason she gives the cab driver for dropping her off near an abandoned warehouse at odd hours of the night. It's his excuse for barely touching his dinner.

The First Tradition reads: "Do not reveal your nature to those not of the Blood. Doing so forfeits your claim to the Blood." Kindred take this concept seriously, and extend it beyond the purview of their unnatural existences. Revealing oneself is a form of vulnerability. Vulnerability is a quick route to Final Death.

Any time a vampire overcomes a small hurdle in defense of her Mask, she gains a point of Willpower. When committing atrocious or existentially risky acts in defense of her Mask, she regains all her spent Willpower points.

Dirge

The Dirge is the truth behind the lies. It's the vampire's secret self; it's who he is when the lights are off and nobody is present to witness his dirtiest moments. It's his dark indulgence. It's the self-loathing she will never admit. It's his desire for an end. It's her need for companionship.

A Dirge gives the Kindred a sense of identity. After all, her very existence is a lie. In the Danse Macabre, truth is rarely more than a pipe dream. For most vampires, honesty only exists within oneself. Defending that internal honesty helps her to maintain perspective.

Any time a vampire withdraws from his outside life in defense of his truer self, he gains a point of Willpower. When committing terrible, damning acts in defense of his personal identity, he regains all his spent Willpower points.

Mask and Dirge Archetypes

Here are numerous sample archetypes for your characters' Masks and Dirges. Feel free to pull from this list, or come up with your own. Each includes a brief description, and sample actions that could recover Willpower for each.

Note that the risks and costs listed should always be meaningful. They should have value in the story, to count as Willpower conditions.

Authoritarian

An authoritarian must be on top. She prides herself not in competition, but in control. She must assert her superiority and dominance whenever possible.

Single Willpower: Shut down an inferior trying to rise to your level of power.

All Willpower: Commit a widespread hit against a rival's mortal connections.

Child

A child isn't necessarily a child in age, but in behavior. He looks for others to care for him, and always stands behind someone else. He'll always diffuse responsibility.

Single Willpower: Find someone to take responsibility for your mistake.

All Willpower: Commit a terrible crime to see how authority might react.

Competitor

The competitor relishes engagement and trial. She must test herself against others in all things. She's never comfortable not knowing if she's capable or not.

Single Willpower: Challenge someone clearly your superior.

All Willpower: Risk Final Death to prove that you can handle something.

Conformist

A conformist needs structure. He can be on top of it, or on the bottom of it, but he must adhere to some external concept and hierarchy in order to feel complete.

Single Willpower: Choose an obviously disadvantageous path, because it fits with protocol.

All Willpower: Stand by the losing side with shield at the ready, because it's *your* side.

Conspirator

A conspirator must involve herself deeply in all things. She must have layers of machination for even the most meaningless tasks.

Single Willpower: Add a layer of meaningless complexity to a plan.

All Willpower: Refuse to take an action in self-defense without excessive, dangerous plotting.

Courtesan

A courtesan exists to see others enjoy themselves. He revels not for himself, but to let others bask in his revelry. He's a master of the art of enjoyment.

Single Willpower: Put yourself out for another's pleasure.

All Willpower: Be the last one dancing when the party's on fire.

Cult Leader

A cult leader wants for faith and devotion. He may have faith and devotion of his own, but he wants for a group to adore him and his word above all. This may or may not be a religious cult.

Single Willpower: Convince someone to deny logic because of your word.

All Willpower: Risk exile or death to defend your cult's belief system.

Deviant

A deviant lives to flout norms and break traditional expectations. She isn't concerned with rebellion; she's concerned with crime, sin, and debauchery.

Single Willpower: Commit a crime against your recognized society.

All Willpower: Commit a high crime in plain view of an authority.

Follower

A follower needs direction, and is loathe to come up with it on his own. He devotes much of his attention to finding the right person to offer that direction.

Single Willpower: Follow a directive blindly, for the sake of following.

All Willpower: Follow a dangerous directive without hesitation.

Guru

A guru lives to learn, and to impart that knowledge to others. She's a repository and font of wisdom on every topic she can manage to study.

Single Willpower: Give advice that someone uses to succeed.

All Willpower: Give protected, dangerous information without asking for payment.

Idealist

An idealist sees a better future, and all things exist within the context of that eventuality. He never accepts compromise, only recognizing a perfect achievement of his goal.

Single Willpower: Deny a compromise that would water down your ideal.

All Willpower: Refuse safety for fear of abandoning your ideal's purity.

Jester

A jester never takes the world seriously. She looks for the absurd in everything, and shows it to the world. Everything is a joke. Everything has fault.

Single Willpower: Point out an absurdity in the current state of affairs, to lighten the tone.

All Willpower: Favor wit and cunning over direct self-defense in a situation of serious danger.

Junkie

A junkie puts indulgence before anything else. He can forget the rest of the world exists while he's on his favored high.

Single Willpower: Ignore a problem or responsibility in favor of immediate gratification.

All Willpower: Abandon an important relationship over your pursuit of pleasure.

Martyr

A martyr puts others before herself in all things. She's concerned with community and the cause, over her own safety and reputation.

Single Willpower: Take another's burden upon yourself without expecting recompense.

All Willpower: Put yourself at risk to save someone else or an ideology.

Masochist

A masochist savors suffering. To a masochist, living without pain is not living. He never runs from a chance to experience new tortures.

Single Willpower: Find and experience a new source of hurt.

All Willpower: Willingly explore pain, beyond the point of safety and reason.

Monster

A monster exists to torment, frighten, and destroy. She loathes existence, and spreads that loathing wherever she goes.

Single Willpower: Cause pain for the sole intention of causing pain.

All Willpower: Commit a capital crime without additional motive.

Nomad

A nomad cannot stand staying still. Stagnancy is worse than death to the true wanderer. He sheds homes the way some shed clothing.

Single Willpower: Abandon a home.

All Willpower: Abandon a society, organization, or city.

Nurturer

A nurturer cares for others, and tries to bolster them to comfort and greatness. He protects and fosters, measuring his success by the success of others.

Single Willpower: Put yourself out to help another succeed.

All Willpower: Take full responsibility for another's dangerous mistake.

Perfectionist

A perfectionist never settles for success; nothing short of flawless accomplishment is enough. She revisits and tinkers with any minor imperfections, to the point of excess.

Single Willpower: Revisit an already successful action to hammer out a flaw.

All Willpower: Stick with a failed and dangerous plan, in order to fix what went wrong.

Penitent

A penitent embodies regret and lessons learned. He cannot make a mistake and allow it to go unpunished. The only sin is to mistake without learning.

Single Willpower: Punish yourself for a mistake.

All Willpower: Risk death to correct an egregious error in judgment.

Questioner

A questioner cannot accept anything at face value. She must poke and prod, finding the holes in logic and function. She asks the questions that everyone else wants to ask.

Single Willpower: Challenge an accepted truth.

All Willpower: Put a long-believed truth to the test, at your own peril.

Rebel

A rebel refuses to accept tradition, mores, and folkways just on account of their existence. He fights to break new ground and pave his own way.

Single Willpower: Openly flout a tradition.

All Willpower: Openly flout a Kindred Tradition, or a covenant taboo.

Scholar

A scholar must study, and must learn. She's never satisfied with base explanation; she must always dig deeper and uncover the truths behind the truths.

Single Willpower: Uncover a lost piece of information.

All Willpower: Uncover forbidden knowledge.

Social Chameleon

A social chameleon blends with his surroundings, and fits in wherever he may go. He considers no group to be exclusive.

Single Willpower: Ingratiate yourself to a new social clique.

All Willpower: Burn an important bridge to guarantee acceptance in a new group.

Spy

A spy infiltrates, and uncovers intelligence that others wish to keep hidden. She does whatever the situation demands in order to uncover hidden truths.

Single Willpower: Build a new identity or uncover a secret.

All Willpower: Uncover a damning secret that could end someone.

Survivor

A survivor favors his own existence above all things. He puts safety and stability as the primary drive of most actions. To succeed is to live.

Single Willpower: Favor the safe path over the higher risk, higher reward path.

All Willpower: Abandon a social group or relationship in order to stay safe.

All Willpower: Put yourself at risk for the sake of showing a good example.

Visionary

A visionary has a clear picture in his head. This picture is of something bigger, something greater. It's his life's work to show that vision to the world.

Single Willpower: Help someone by sharing your vision with them.

All Willpower: Put yourself at risk to show a group the power of your vision.

Touchstone

A Touchstone is part of the mortal world, usually a living, breathing person. Rarely, it can be a place or thing. The Touchstone tests a vampire's Requiem; and by her very existence, she asks challenging questions of the Kindred. She tests his values, his priorities, and his true nature. She touches his Requiem in a fundamentally positive way, even though her association might cause complications and tribulations for the vampire.

For young Kindred, the Touchstone is usually someone he knew in life. She may be a family member, confidante, lover, or even a rival. She's someone who reminds him of what he was when he was alive.

For older Kindred, the Touchstone is usually tied to his less savory affairs. She may be the daughter of his prized ghoul, someone who looks like his long-dead wife, or the janitor he passes by every morning on his way to sleep. She's someone who reminds him that once, he was alive.

Touchstones provide built-in conflict for every character. When thinking of a Touchstone, consider how your character

might potentially lose it. Think of how he protects it. Think of how he reacts when it's threatened.

In game terms, Touchstones help a vampire maintain his Humanity by adding dice to detachment rolls. If a character has a single attached Touchstone, it adds a +2 die bonus to detachment rolls. With multiple Touchstones, add a +3 die bonus. See p. 108 for further details on detachment. When a vampire has no Touchstones, detachment rolls are made at a –2 die penalty.

Write Touchstones alongside your character's Humanity track. Write the first Touchstone next to the sixth Humanity dot. Consider a Touchstone attached when there is a dot next to it. For example, with only four Humanity dots, your character's initial Touchstone is no longer attached. Any time the vampire defends her attachment to her Touchstone, she regains a Willpower point. If this defense causes her serious harm, she regains all her spent Willpower points.

If a vampire loses her last Touchstone — for example, if he died — then she has two choices. She may immediately lose a dot of Humanity. If she takes that path, she has one month to find a new Touchstone to replace him. If she does not within that time, she gets the Languid Condition (see p. 304). Alternately, she may take the Languid Condition immediately. The vampire doesn't consciously choose the Condition, but she resigns herself to the slowing of her blood. This applies whether or not the Touchstone was attached at the time.

Taking a new Touchstone requires the Touchstone Merit (see p. 115). Write the new Touchstone in next to the appropriate Humanity level. Replacing a lost or dead Touchstone requires gaining a dot of Humanity. Replace the Touchstone on her Humanity track.

Remember that additional Touchstones bought with the Touchstone Merit are subject to the Sanctity of Merits rule if lost. (See p. 109.)

Example Touchstones

Here are a number of example Touchstones. These are general, and most characters should be able to use at least some of them with little modification. We encourage you to customize Touchstones. After all, they're what anchors Kindred to their Humanity. They should feel real and human.

The Ex

Before the Embrace, you and he were a thing. It ended a while ago, but early in your Requiem, you needed a quick and easy fix, so you keep coming back to him. The thing is, you just want a casual thing and some no-strings blood, but he's looking for something serious. He swears it'll be different this time.

Former Partner

When you and she started your business, your heads were in the clouds together. Now, you've moved on to bigger and better things; at least that's what you tell her. It's nice to reminisce about old times, but lately she's been asking why you're living in that shit hole on the south side, and why you don't just come back to work with her.

Friend With Benefits

You and he have a ritual. The Sunday game comes around, you have a few cold ones, act like you're still in college, he sucks you off, then you suck him off. It's a great arrangement, but he's been looking for outside entertainment. It's not against the rules; hell, you don't have rules. But he's just canceled for next Sunday.

Gravesite

Since you've started the Danse, you stop by your gravesite every few nights on the way home. You're in awe of your rival predators; they feign mortality so well. But deep down, you loathe the idea. You find the great lie abhorrent, and this little show of defiance helps you to keep perspective.

High School Sweetheart

You and she fumbled around as teens. You learned a lot from one another; most importantly, you learned that you weren't really compatible. After your Embrace, you looked back to those moments that made you feel human. The awkward sex and failed communication did just that. Just hope her father was bluffing when he threatened to kill you.

House of Birth

That old place. It's passed hands five times since you were born. Nobody loved that house for more than a couple of years at a time. Now, it reminds you of those moments when mom defended you from dad's belt. You went to purchase it, but the city has it marked for demolition.

Replacing Touchstones

Touchstones don't come easy. While you can — and must — replace a lost Touchstone within one month, establishing those relationships can take longer. Close friends and confidants take cultivation. This is intended; it means most Kindred must build and maintain relationships with mortals beyond just their handful of Touchstones.

On the other hand, there exist Kindred who don't, but still get by. They do so by falling into fast friendships and deep flings. Sure, these relationships end disastrously, but that's all part of the drama. It creates a tense cycle where the vampire is constantly losing and finding new flings, throwing herself harder into each. The pursuit of this week's best friend becomes something of an addiction.

Intrepid Detective

When you disappeared, he just wouldn't leave well enough alone. He took one look at your case file, and found it fishy. It's been a few years, but it's a pet project. It's a white whale. Even though your family stopped looking, he hasn't. He reminds you that sometimes, people really do care.

Murderer

You were in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and she killed you. She didn't plan to, it just happened that way. She now spends out her days in the penitentiary. You visit every now and again. You wear a disguise so she doesn't know who you are. She keeps you grounded, since her life ended with yours. But the warden's talking about moving her to solitary.

One That Got Away

You meant to feed from him. Let's be honest; you were probably going to kill him. But that car went down the wrong alley at the right time, and he got away. In the moment, it pissed you off. But now, you see him as a reminder of what you are. His life would have never been in danger if you didn't exist. So you follow him. But you feed first.

The Orphan

She was barely a teen, hanging out in between, just a part of the scene. Her parents did every drug in the book, and rarely came home. She was set for a terrible life, until you stumbled upon her. Now, you help keep her warm. You put her up. You make sure she gets up for school right before you collapse for the day.

Spouse

You could have left him when you were Embraced. You should have. But you loved him so much, and you couldn't imagine existence without him. That's a problem. He's getting a few years on him, and he's starting to ask questions. You wouldn't wish the Embrace on your enemies, let alone your soulmate.

Terminal Parent

Mom should have quit smoking thirty years ago. She knew that, but it never mattered. She kept it up, and now she breathes through a machine. Dad died of the same thing a few years back, now she's your only remaining family. Her condition's getting worse, the doctors give her a few months at most. You do have ways you could preserve her, though.

Therapist

He was there to listen, for a couple hundred an hour. Now, he's there to listen because you confessed a little too much, and he's utterly fascinated. He even keeps night hours, just for the case of a lifetime. You need someone to talk to. He needs you to sign this disclosure form.

Victim's Lover

You killed her. You lost control, and you snapped her neck. You're dealing with that. So was her wife. You've sworn to yourself that you'd keep her wife safe. You've even chatted with her a few times. She seems pleasant. She seems like a good meal. But you can't bring yourself to touch her in that way, after the way you hurt her before.

Witness

He watched in horror as you took your first life. You murdered in cold blood, and he'll never forget that moment. Of course, the Masquerade says he can't go telling everyone what he saw. Unfortunately, that meant you had to intervene. But without mind control, your only chance meant leveling with him and answering his questions.

Blood Potency

Blood Potency reflects the power of the blood that pumps through a vampire's dead heart. With time, with activity, and with diablerie, Kindred become stronger and more able to store stolen life within their corpses.

In game terms, a higher Blood Potency score allows a vampire to store more Vitae, spend more Vitae in a turn, and develop his Attribute and Skill traits to superhuman levels. All vampires begin their Requiems at Blood Potency 1. You may purchase additional Blood Potency dots at character creation, at the expense of five of your Merit dots each. After play begins, Blood Potency increases through three methods: Experiences (five Experiences buy one dot of Blood Potency), through dangerous and illegal diablerie, or the passage of time. Every 50 years a vampire remains awake and active, she gains a dot of Blood Potency.

As Blood Potency increases, so does the relative difficulty of a vampire's Requiem. Namely, her feeding becomes more difficult. At the Embrace, she can feed from anything with blood, including animals. Once she reaches the third dot of Blood Potency, animals no longer sustain her. At six dots of Blood Potency, she can only gain nourishment from the blood of the unnatural. Usually, this means other vampires (some Kindred can feed from other creatures, with the Unnatural Affinity Merit, see p. 114). If a vampire feeds from something beneath her Blood Potency restriction, she must spend a point of Willpower for every Vitae she wishes to consume.

Additionally, Blood Potency affects certain other aspects of her existence. For example, her body's response to sunlight depends on her Humanity and Blood Potency scores (see banes, p. 101). As well, if she falls to torpor (see p. 105), her Blood Potency multiplies the amount of time she remains in slumber.

For every twenty-five years a vampire spends in torpor, she loses a dot of Blood Potency. Many elders fall into voluntary slumber in order to ease their feeding restrictions, or simply out of boredom and melancholy. Some find a perverse excitement in the prospect of waking to a whole new world. When her Blood Potency falls below six dots, the vampire does not lose any Attributes or Skills above the fifth dot.

Effects of Blood Potency

Blood Potency	Attribute/ Skill Maximum	Max Vitae/ Per Turn	Can Feed From
0	5	Stamina/1	Animals
1	5	10/1	Animals
2	5	11/2	Animals
3	5	12/3	Humans
4	5	13/4	Humans
5	5	15/5	Humans
6	6	20/6	Kindred
7	7	25/7	Kindred
8	8	30/8	Kindred
9	9	50/10	Kindred
10	10	75/15	Kindred

Immortality, Injury, and Mortality

Left to their own devices, Kindred persist eternally. Unfed, they'll fall to torpor, but without outside intervention they are unending. As well, vampires can easily withstand grievous wounds that would easily kill even the hardiest of humans.

Kindred take only bashing damage from many sources that would normally cause lethal damage to humans. This includes most non-supernatural weapons. A sword slices through a Kindred body the way it would a human; it's just that vampires don't have the same need for stable flesh, working organs, and intact blood vessels. A mortal whose viscera splay across a city street is most certainly doomed, whereas a vampire recovers after only minor inconvenience and a small investment of Vitae.

On Kindred bodies, bashing and lethal wounds look the way one might imagine the same injuries to a corpse. Gashes, contusions, and lacerations all still happen, but bruises appear blacker and blistered, cuts expose raw tissue but do not bleed. If the vampire invokes the blush of life (below), she bruises and bleeds like the living. Note that even with the blush of life, bleeding does not equate with a loss of Vitae. The lost blood is fully inert.

Those few terrible things that cause aggravated wounds to mortals cause only lethal harm to vampires. This mostly includes terrible harm from chemicals, certain supernatural punishment, and the skills of utmost masters in certain fighting styles meant to maximize debilitating bodily harm.

Few rare perversions of nature — Disciplines, Devotions, and sorceries — cause aggravated wounds to Kindred. Some masters of the Protean Discipline hone their claws and fangs to such vicious ends; this breeds a healthy fear and respect of clan Gangrel within most courts.

Aggravated wounds look completely unnatural. They're perversions of nature that tax the Masquerade. Each vampire wounds differently. Flesh may become brittle and burn like paper. Tissue may bubble and stink. Blackened veins may streak across the victim's body. Foamy pustules may taint the area around the injury. Whatever the method, aggravated wounds appear as manifestations of the natural world violently eliminating something that *does not belong.*

Torpor and Final Death

Kindred have little to fear from bashing wounds. A vampire remains conscious when her last box is full of bashing damage. She still suffers wound penalties. However, when her last box is marked with lethal wounds, she falls to torpor (see p. 105). When her last box is marked with aggravated damage, she suffers Final Death. Within a minute, her body reverts to its true age. For younger Kindred, this means decomposition, with a collapse of skeletal structure and soft tissues turning to liquids, ash, and minerals. For the oldest Kindred, this means a full disintegration into a pile of dust and ash, with only the tiniest fragments of bone remaining.

Tricks of the Damned

The Embrace comes with many drawbacks. However, it also comes with numerous advantages. Every vampire can use the following edges. Many of these advantages require Vitae. These expenditures are reflexive, and subject to the vampire's Vitae per turn limit as determined by her Blood Potency (see above).

Blush of Life

Normally, a vampire looks the part of a corpse. He's pale. He registers no pulse. He exists at slightly below room temperature. Food and drink taste terrible, and immediately cause violent, bloody vomiting. However, with a bit of Vitae, he can fake life temporarily.

By spending a point of Vitae, Kindred may invoke the blush of life for a scene. This makes them functionally human. They become warm to the touch, with a full, hearty pulse. They produce natural bodily fluids. They function sexually in the way a human can, becoming physically aroused, erect, and lubricated. They can keep food and drink down, ejecting it later in the night. They'll pass medical inspection while the blush remains active.

Kindred Senses

Kindred exist in the dark. Not only can they see better than humans in the dark, their other senses are sharper to facilitate their predatory needs.

Kindred do not suffer normal vision penalties for being in the dark, and can compensate with hearing. In full darkness, they only suffer a –2 die penalty to rolls that require vision. If they encounter traces of blood, even if dried or hidden (in a carpet, for example), they immediately see even very small quantities.

Vampire hearing becomes similarly enhanced. They can hear heartbeats at three yards or meters per dot of Blood Potency. Upon Embrace, a vampire's sense of smell attunes to the scent of blood. A vampire can smell the presence of blood from about ten yards or meters per dot of Blood Potency without rolling. Multiply this range by her Auspex dots. If she's tasted a particular human's blood, she can add her Blood Potency to any rolls to track him by scent. Kindred blood does not offer this advantage, since it's mostly old, dead, and its smell is a blend of all the vampire's recent victims.

If any of her Kindred senses apply, add her Blood Potency to any rolls to detect hidden people or details by the traces of blood.

A Taste of Blood

In addition to being able to smell blood and to identify and track with blood, Kindred discern subtle cues from blood they taste.

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure

Dramatic Failure: The Storyteller gives two true statements about the blood, and one very dangerous lie.

Failure: The blood offers no insight.

Success: You can discern basic details from the blood. These include blood type, clan, the presence of popular drugs, how long the blood has been out of the body, blood-borne diseases and poisons, if you've tasted that person's blood before, and if the blood is human. It can also tell the number of steps removed a character is in blood sympathy to another character who's blood you've tasted (see Blood Sympathy, p. 98). If the donor is not human, your character detects what it is (if she's tasted that type of creature's blood before).

Exceptional Success: You can discern extensive details from the blood. These include whether the blood is from a ghoul and to what clan, infections, what the vessel ate recently, hormones in the bloodstream, diseases, some causes of death, and other fine details at Storyteller discretion.

Suggested Modifiers: Auspex active (+2), blood-tied (+2), currently hungry (+2), hour-old blood (–1), day-old blood (–3), week or more old (–5)

Physical Intensity

Vampire tales speak of creatures stronger and faster than anything human. With Vitae, any Kindred can accomplish massive bursts of physical prowess. By spending a point of Vitae, he may add two dice to rolls involving his choice of Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina for the turn. This does not increase traits derived from these Attributes. However, it will increase relevant resistances. For example, a Strength increase will reduce an opponent's rolls to grapple him.

Healing

Kindred blood seeks to return a vampire to the state of her Embrace. Her hair and fingernails regrow as she sleeps. More importantly, Vitae can force her injured body to reconstruct, mending bones and knitting torn flesh in seconds. In dramatic instances, severed limbs regenerate or even simply reattach (if she's able to heal the entire injury in a turn).

A single point of Vitae heals two points of bashing damage, or one point of lethal damage. A single aggravated wound requires five Vitae and a full day's sleep. Aggravated damage is the only type of wound that leaves a scar on Kindred. The scar appears natural, unlike the original damage.

The Cleansing

While Kindred sleep, they return to the time of their Embrace. Anything that wouldn't constitute a Health level of damage heals automatically and returns to its original state. For this reason, many sires recommend their childer groom for the Embrace, as part of the ritual of entering the Danse.

If an injury would require Vitae to heal (represented by Health levels), the vampire will unconsciously heal it during daysleep. Sometimes, this means the vampire will not have the Vitae necessary to wake. As she falls to slumber, she may spend Willpower points to "preserve" wounds through her rest, to keep herself from healing them and spending excessive Vitae. This cost is once per wound, and covers the wound permanently.

Sometimes, Kindred force other marks to remain. For example, vampires often keep scars, tattoos, and piercings for spiritual reasons or just to fit in with the flock. Many Kindred remove long hair, in favor of wigs or cleaner, more modern styles. The vampire spends Willpower to fight the healing process while she sleeps. After a day's rest, any damage heals as normal, but her body remains changed.

Predatory Aura

Every step she takes, every corner she turns, a Kindred's Beast stands ready to face threats, to defend territory, and most importantly, to feed. To the Beast, everything is a challenge, a potential conquest, a meal, or a combination of the three. To other predators, the Beast is a palpable thing, something that identifies another monster.

This presence, the predatory aura, builds a paradox in Kindred society. On one hand, it guarantees vampires will never truly be civil, as all remain one misstep away from each other's throats. On the other hand, it forces Kindred to hold tight to traditions and propriety, in order to keep the Beast at bay and force a modicum of nicety.

Without a Discipline or other ability to mask or suppress the predatory aura, Kindred perceive other vampires as their own kind. If they can smell the vampire, they know it's a vampire. If they touch a vampire, they know it's a vampire. Note that this is one-sided: One character may not notice the other. It's not just the aura, it's all the right cues. Kindred notice the shallow or nonexistent breathing of their kind. They notice the subtle, predatory tones in a voice. They smell multiple victims' blood on another.

Further, a vampire can voluntarily intensify her predatory aura to elicit a reaction. Against other Kindred, this escalates the encounter, forcing fight or flight instincts. Against mortals, this asserts power and cows the lesser creatures. Lashing out with the Beast takes an instant action, and against Kindred costs a point of Willpower. It's free to use against a mortal.

The Bestial Triad

Every vampire can evoke three aspects of the Beast; the monstrous, the seductive, and the competitive. The aura chosen reflects the way the vampire approaches the confrontation. It also determines the Conditions given during the clash.

The Monstrous Beast: This represents the Beast-As-Destroyer. Its every instinct is to rip asunder. The monstrous aura inspires a witness to fight or flee. It evokes the most primitive survival instincts in its victims, and causes the Bestial Condition (p. 301).

The Seductive Beast: This is the Beast-As-Tempter. It needs hot abandon, and a temporary escape from reality. It inspires the need for immediate, throwaway coupling. It evokes the primal need for instant gratification, and causes the Wanton Condition (p. 307).

The Competitive Beast: This is the Beast-As-Alpha. It needs to come out on top, to command, to control. It inspires power plays and dominance games. It evokes the need for a rigid hierarchy, a food chain, and causes the Competitive Condition (p. 302).

Lashing Out

To lash out, the vampire must take a simple action appropriate to the aspect of predator used. A monstrous Beast growls, threatens, gnashes teeth, or calls to action. A seductive Beast sidles up to the prey, whispers beautiful lies, or gives a telling gaze from across the crowd. A competitive Beast draws a line in the sand, announces terms, or takes the role of mouse in a chase.

Roll Blood Potency, plus a Power Attribute. Use Strength for monstrous, Presence for seductive, and Intelligence for competitive. The modifiers below apply to all rolls for predatory aura. Both sides may use whatever modifiers apply. Note that Disciplines do not add to predatory aura rolls unless specifically mentioned. For example, Vigor does not add to the monstrous Beast, and Majesty does not add to the seductive Beast.

The opposition has two choices; fight or flight.

Fight: This represents a counter-challenge. One Beast flares, and is met with equal aggression. This requires a point of Willpower if the responding character's Blood Potency is lower than that of the vampire who lashed out.

Roll an appropriate Power Attribute + Blood Potency to contest. This does not have to be the same aspect of the Beast. For example, if a vampire confronts another with the seductive Beast, the opposition may opt to respond with greater implied violence, and oppose with the monstrous Beast.

If the aggressor scores more successes, the victim gains the Condition associated with the aggressor's Beast. As well, the aggressor gains a +2 die bonus on any rolls to pursue her aspect's interests for the remainder of the scene.

If the opposition scores more successes, he turns the confrontation on the aggressor. The opposition imposes the Condition associated with his Beast, and gains a +2 die bonus on any rolls to pursue his Beast's compulsions for the remainder of the scene.

Mortals can fight the Beast, but they cannot impose a Condition on the vampire. They do gain the +2 die bonus to attack, flee, or otherwise neutralize the risk.

If both characters achieve the same number of successes, they both impose their Conditions, but neither gets the +2 die bonus.

Flight: This represents a stark withdrawal. It costs nothing, and allows for a reasonable out from the challenge. This usually means a convenient escape or excuse to pull away. It typically makes the character look inferior or foolish. The aggressor may pursue. The victim gains the Condition associated with the initiating vampire's aspect of the Beast.

Others and the Predatory Aura

Other denizens of the World of Darkness may have similar auras. Most well-known is the feral mien of the werewolves. When Kindred notice werewolves, they feel physiological responses they never otherwise experience, such as goose pimples along their arms, and chills down their backs. They feel the adrenaline surge in the pit of the stomach that humans associate with danger and tense excitement.

Other creatures in the World of Darkness may exhibit predatory auras with Storyteller discretion.

Predatory Aura Modifiers

On your territory	Feeding Ground dots
Hungry	+1
Starving	+2
Victim has been targeted by predatory aura in the scene	−1 (cumulative)

The Cycle of Death

The Requiem is significantly different from mortal life. From the moment of Embrace, everything takes on a new, bloody tone that defies logic and reason. Certain phenomena drive that home.

The Embrace

The Embrace is the process of becoming a vampire, and entering the Requiem. On the surface, it's quite easy. The sire drains a mortal completely of his lifeblood, then feeds him a bit of her own Vitae to rouse him back to the land of the living.

It's just two things:

Bite the mortal.

Feed his corpse.

It's so simple. However, with all things in the Requiem, it's not always straightforward.

The act of the Embrace is a willful action; Vitae alone is not enough to wake the victim, a sire must choose to commit the Embrace. This choice comes at the price of a Humanity dot. This means that the traditional Embrace is never accidental.

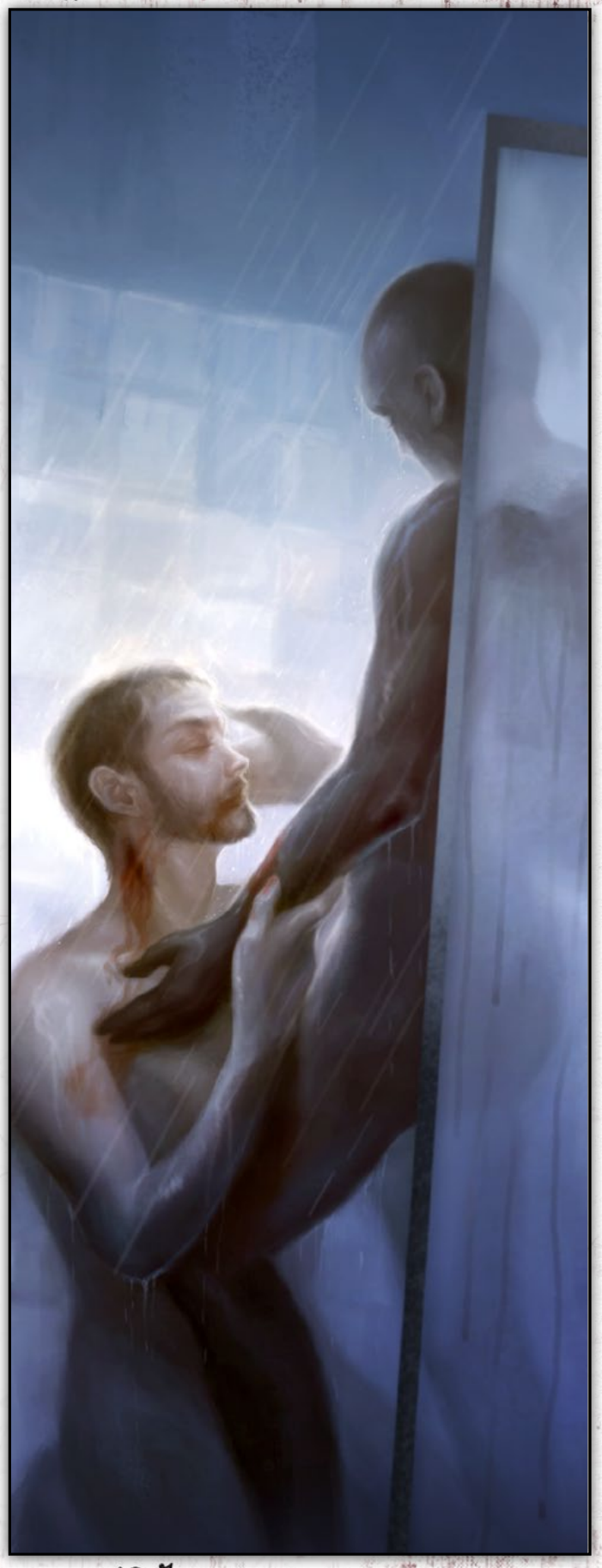
Posthumous Embraces

While yes, an Embrace requires the mortal be contaminated in life, sullied by the touch of the Damned, this does not have to be immediately before death. Sometimes, those fed by, or fed from Kindred at some point in their lives die and come in contact with Kindred Vitae. Sometimes, they awaken.

A sire must choose to commit the Embrace, and that choice comes at the price of a Humanity dot. Posthumous Embraces break that rule.

If a mortal has fed from a vampire in at any point in her lifetime, she is a candidate for the posthumous Embrace regardless of her cause of death. Within a week of her death, before significant decomposition sets in, contact with Kindred Vitae could mean she awakens as Kindred. The donor rolls his Blood Potency. If the roll is successful, the corpse rises in seven nights, minus one for every success on the Blood Potency roll. This costs the donor a Humanity dot only if he makes a deliberate choice to attempt an Embrace. (The troupe should exercise some common sense and avoid "accidental" Embraces achieved through ridiculous contortions of events.)

Generally, Kindred deride and mock the posthumous Embrace. Known posthumous sires are branded "grave robbers," and their childer are seen as dirty and incomplete. Functionally, they're identical to any other Kindred. Some Mekhet favor the posthumous method for spiritual reasons; they believe it helps the vampire transition into the Requiem quicker.



Rules for Revenants

Unless noted below, revenants function identically to Kindred.

Blood Potency: Consider a revenant's Blood Potency 1, and it may not increase.

Vitae: Revenants can store a number of Vitae equal to five plus their Stamina. Each night upon waking, they lose all their stored Vitae, and awaken starved. Often, the loss of Vitae takes the form of sweating out their stolen blood as they sleep.

Clan: Revenants have no clan, so they have no clan banes.

Disciplines: Revenants may only learn Disciplines as out-of-clan, and cannot learn clan-specific Disciplines without a teacher. They may never learn Devotions, blood sorceries, or Coils or Scales of the Dragon.

Humanity: A Revenant starts with Humanity 7.

The Embrace: Revenants can create neither revenants nor Kindred.

Contamination: Revenant blood cannot sustain ghouls or establish blood bonds.

Diablerie: While they do not gain the normal benefits of diablerie, Amaranth will uplift a revenant into a vampire of the victim's clan.

Blood Sympathy: Revenants have a +5 die bonus to all blood sympathy rolls to their sires, instead of +3. Often, city officials use revenants as bloodhounds to find their illegitimate sires.

Spontaneous Embraces: Revenants

Sometimes, those contaminated by the Kindred bite or Kindred blood die, but don't stay dead. Victims of violent feedings and ghouls will sometimes rise as revenants shortly after their deaths. The possibility of revenants, like other mutations of the Embrace, is widely rumored but not widely known or understood.

Revenants are not-quite-Kindred vampires. They often lead tragic and brief existences. However, any knowledgeable Kindred can uplift them to become full Kindred. Uplifting a revenant requires that the surrogate sire feed the revenant his Vitae, and invest a point of Humanity. At that point, the revenant becomes Kindred, and of the surrogate sire's clan.

When a vampire exsanguinates a contaminated mortal, roll the vampire's Humanity + 2. If the roll succeeds, the death occurs as expected. If the roll fails, the corpse rises as a revenant at some unpredictable time during the following week.

When a ghoul dies, roll their regnant's Blood Potency. If successful, the ghoul rises as a revenant after seven nights minus the successes rolled.

Kindred aware of the possibility of revenants often destroy the corpses of the dead in ways that prevent them from rising as vampires. Some feed with needles other accoutrements to avoid contaminating their victims.

While neither of these phenomena cause the vampire direct Humanity loss like an Embrace, being responsible for a revenant's creation is a breaking point for Kindred with Humanity 3 or more.

Anomalies

Revenants and posthumous Embraces are only two exceptions to the traditional Embrace. Anomalies happen. Two of the major covenants tell stories of anomalous Embraces: Both Longinus and Dracula allegedly received the Embrace as a curse from the Abrahamic God. Nomads share stories of strange Kindred without traditional sires, from cultists who found proto-clans after morbid blood rituals, to strange Ordo Dracul surgical experiments that end in sireless vampires. For a time, it was widely rumored in the Lancea et Sanctum that sexual intimacy with a human would damn the unfortunate mortal to return from the grave.

Feeding

The blood is everything. It's life. It's food. It's power. It's closeness. It stands to reason that feeding is an all-important act for Kindred. Ask a dozen Kindred how they feed, you'll get five dozen answers.

While most vampires learn numerous feeding practices from their sires, every Kindred develops her own methods and tricks. With different skill sets, social circles, and Disciplines at her disposal, her best meal ticket is the one she finds herself.

The Assault, The Kiss

Vampires have two traditional avenues of feeding. They can feed aggressively, or subtly. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Normally, a vampire's fangs retract, only looking barely sharper than normal canines. At will, a vampire can unsheathe them to bite, and to feed.

When feeding violently, a vampire's fangs act as 0L weapons that use the Brawl Skill. That is to say, on a successful attack, they cause lethal damage equal to their successes, even to Kindred. As well, the attacker also takes one Vitae (which causes an additional point of lethal damage to mortals). The drawback is that a bite must be performed as a Damage move

The Feed Move

The vampire may use this move once she has bitten her opponent in a grapple, and bests her opponent in the grapple roll. She steals one Vitae per success. Against mortals, this causes one point of lethal damage per Vitae taken. The number of Vitae taken may not exceed the vampire's Blood Potency dots.

as part of a grapple (see p. 177). A mortal bitten violently gains the Scarred Condition (see p. 305). While still grappling and after a violent bite, the vampire gains access to the Feed move.

When feeding non-violently, the vampire's fangs cause an enticing, invigorating sensation that distracts the victim, to draw attention away from the reality of the feeding. Many Kindred use this method as part of a seduction. A mortal bitten subtly gains the Swooning Condition (see p. 306). The bonuses and penalties for Swooning apply to the vampire's Discipline rolls. With a subtle bite, the vampire can take one Vitae per turn, and may lick the wound afterwards, leaving no trace of her feeding.

At Storyteller discretion, particularly dramatic feedings can cause Persistent Conditions. For this reason, many vampire hunters have the Scarred or Swooning Conditions. On the other hand, so do many devoted blood dolls.

In reference to the effects of a bite, the word "mortal" applies to humans, ghouls, warlocks, and other things that are mostly human. Vampires, werewolves, mummies, fairies, and other things far removed from humanity are not normally subject to the Assault and the Kiss. The bite is pleasurable or unsettling; just not mechanically so.

If the vampire knows she's feeding from something not human, and knows that it is otherwise immune to the benefits of her bite, she may spend a point of Willpower to give them the Scarred or Swooning Conditions as normal. Kindred are aware of this effect, and see its use as abhorrent and degrading. Kindred who rely on it with their own kind often end up ostracized or worse.

Blood Supplies

Vampires can find blood through numerous sources. Most commonly, blood comes from humans. They can also feed from stored blood, from animals, from other Kindred, and rarely from other supernatural creatures. Note the Blood Potency restrictions on what powerful Kindred can feed from (see p. 90).

Vitae is not blood. At least, not directly. Blood flows through mortal veins; Vitae through Kindred. However, when Kindred "spend" Vitae, their bodies do not lose the fluid that animates them; it simply becomes inert. Picture Kindred blood as paint. Blood is the oil, the water, the vessel. You can't paint with oil or water. The Vitae is the pigment. It brings color, it makes the paint vibrant. It's only a small part of the mixture. You could remove the pigment and still have a pail of fluid, it just wouldn't be very useful on a canvas.

Human blood is best warm, from the living. Kindred can pull a number of Vitae from a mortal equal to the mortal's unmodified Health dots. Every point of Vitae she takes causes one point of lethal damage. If she takes more Vitae than the human has dots of Stamina, he suffers the Drained Condition (see p. 303). Once a vampire attains her sixth dot of Blood Potency, she no longer finds human blood nourishing.

Cold blood from a corpse or kept outside the body for more than a few minutes (but no more than a night) is far less satisfying. To gain a single point of Vitae, a vampire must consume as many pints of this blood as her Blood Potency times two. Technologically stored blood, for example in refrigerated plasma bags, is similarly unpalatable to potent Kindred.

Kindred Vitae is a dangerous food. First off, Vitae is addicting (see Vitae Addiction, p. 99). As well, it causes the blood bond (see Blood Bonds, p. 90). However, it's efficient. Every Vitae taken is a Vitae earned, and this causes no additional damage to the victim. Stored Kindred Vitae is effectively cold blood.

Animal blood is a challenging meal that provides only limited sustenance for the youngest of Kindred. Size 0 animals provide no nourishment. Size 1 animals provide one point of Vitae. For example, a large rat will provide a single point of Vitae. Size 2-3 animals provide two Vitae each. Size 4-5 animals provide 3. Each point of Size above that adds one more Vitae available.

Starting Vitae

In a perfect world, a vampire remains well-fed, and never risks her hunger getting the best of her. At the start of most game sessions, and at the beginning of any scene where the characters did not have established Vitae, the Storyteller should call for a starting Vitae roll. As a suggestion, any time one or more nights pass in the story where the characters could have fed, that's grounds for a starting Vitae roll.

To roll for starting Vitae, roll a single die, looking at the number on the die rather than checking for successes. Add your Feeding Grounds Merit. This is your starting Vitae. It cannot exceed the capacity noted by your character's Blood Potency (see p. 90).

Consider tracking Vitae not on the character sheet, but with tokens. Red poker chips, glass beads, or other tactile, visual representations work well. The act of handing tokens back and forth helps to conceptualize the flow of blood.

Feeding Scenes

Vampire: The Requiem characters will wander through their existences, feeding from countless vessels over the years. This is the heart of the game. Clearly, we can't portray every feeding situation over the centuries. But every chapter should feature at least one feeding scene. Feeding scenes are much more abstract than most rules, since every vampire feeds in different ways.

As a rule, feeding scenes tend toward those meals in a vampire's Requiem that matter most. When things go as intended, the vessels give context for the vampire's existence. When things go wrong, they crash down (or inexorably fall like dominos) into grand tragedies.

Since most feeding scenes will feature only one character, use these opportunities to put a spotlight on her. Let her shine. Let her fall in the mud with style. If the scene has multiple speaking Storyteller characters, don't hesitate to pass their portrayal to the other players, so they can take ownership of the moment. To foster this participation, offer a Willpower point to players willing to adopt a bit part.

We offer two options; with dice and without dice.

With Dice

Use the following system to resolve feeding scenes when you want to roll dice and engage character traits.

Dice Pool: As determined by the action. For example, seduction may require Manipulation + Persuasion, and cornering and jumping someone in an alley might be Strength + Streetwise. Use the Attribute + Skill combination to encompass the whole, intended action into a single roll. By spending a point of Vitae, you may add an appropriate Discipline rating to your roll. If you choose to do this, consider any failures dramatic failures, and do not take the Beat for it.

Action: Instant, roll represents one hour's efforts

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Something happens beyond the realm of expectation. Maybe the vessel wasn't quite human. Maybe another lick calls your meal his herd. Maybe she was out hunting for vampires. Maybe the vampire's Touchstone watched the whole thing by accident. Look to the sidebar for examples of dramatic failures while feeding. This doesn't necessarily prohibit feeding, but the vampire must deal with the inauspicious scene at hand.

Failure: The stars just don't align as intended. Crowds appear in all the wrong places. Conversation partners have wingmen ready to drag them away from private trysts. The hour is a wash. That is, of course, unless you wish to take a Beat and turn that failure into a dramatic failure....

Suggested Feeding Modifiers

Situation	Modifier
Feeding Grounds Merit	+1 to +5
Hunting multiple vessels simultaneously	−2 each
Additional hours of hunting in a night	−2 (cumulative)
Only hunting for one half hour	−3
Dressed wrong for the hunt	−2
Hunting repeat prey	+1
Hunting animal blood (urban)	+1
Hunting animal blood (rural)	+3
Hunting in the Rack	+2
Poaching	−2
Hunting during a curfew	−3
Hunting during a crime spree	−3
Hunting a very specific vessel (for example, by hair color, by profession, or by age)	−2 to −5

Example Dramatic Failures

Note that not all these examples will work for every character, or every feeding scene.

The Witness: One of the vampire's Touchstones stumbles on the scene and witnesses everything.

The Inquisitive: Most meet the Kiss with rapture and fascination. This vessel is curious, and wants to know more.

The Hunter: A hunter led the vampire into a trap.

The Relatives: A mysterious vampire with a blood tie enters the scene.

The Rival: The vessel just happens to be a member of a rival's herd.

The Wrong Turn: The hunt went down the wrong alley, and the vampire feeds in another's turf.

The Resistant: The vessel is immune to the Kiss, for reasons unknown.

The Affliction: The vessel has one of the rare diseases that can plague the dead.

The Anemic: The vessel dies unexpectedly after only a shallow feeding.

The Nemesis: The vessel is merely a shell, possessed by the Strix.

Success: Things go as intended. Your character finds a suitable vessel, and may feed freely, with relative safety. Remember to pay attention to the effects of feeding on the vessel.

Exceptional Success: Things go phenomenally well. During the scene, the Storyteller must give at least three important, identifying features or personality traits about the vessel. Once, at an appropriate time in a later scene, you may request the vessel's involvement. If you do so, take a Beat. This involvement may be abstract: for example, if they're dead, or if they gave a detailed description to the police.

Without Dice

This system fosters a more intimate, dramatic, and organic experience with feeding scenes. You don't touch the dice until after the scene's completely over. The only game traits you need to reference are your character's Mask and Dirge.

In this system, everyone at the table can participate by bringing in (initially) nameless mortal characters. However, the spotlight player (playing the feeding Kindred) and the Storyteller can interject in these events. Both the spotlight player and the Storyteller can offer a Beat to any player that delivered an excellent experience with a mortal bit character during a feeding scene. This happens after the scene.

To start out, the spotlight player describes the scenario. He describes where his character is, what kind of person he's looking for, and how he approaches. That ends his initial participation.

Next, the Storyteller picks up and brings a degree of action to the situation. Does the mark notice? Is there an unexpected

bit of attention on the side? Be descriptive. Be evocative. Focus on symbols and aesthetic here, to emphasize the ambience. However, this should focus on a single piece of drama.

From there, go back and forth. Every exchange should be a single action, a single exchange. Unlike a normal, rolled action, the narrator can dictate other characters' responses.

At any time, other players may raise their hands. At the end of an action, the narrating player may allow the player to step in with a bit character to influence the scene. Similarly, it's one action, then back to the spotlight player or Storyteller.

During the scene, the spotlight player can invoke fiat to interject at any time and have his character contradict the current action. To do this, he must invoke his character's Mask or Dirge, literally using one of them in the description of the interjection. His character must be defending one or the other. However, this gives the spotlight player full narrative control for that moment. The Storyteller marks a tick each time the spotlight player does this.

Alternatively, the spotlight player can interject at any time by sending his character into a frenzy. This does not add a tick.

Keep going until the scene comes to a logical close. At the closing, the Storyteller counts the number of accumulated ticks. Subtract those from the vampire's Humanity, and the player rolls for detachment as if the hunt were a breaking point at that Humanity level. Normal modifiers apply to this roll. As well, roll for detachment for any other events that transpired during the scene (especially if the character went into frenzy).

Example of Play

Joe, Rustyn, and Jeff are playing a game of **Vampire: The Requiem**. Jeff is the Storyteller, Joe's playing Joanna Sangiovanni, Rustyn is playing Robyn. Jeff decides that during this chapter, they'll showcase a hunting scene for Joanna.

Joe: "Joanna hits up campus. She's going to the Verge, that little hipster bar off the main drag. She's rocking the classic black cocktail dress. Totally over-dressed for this place. But she dumbs it down a bit with a pink feather boa she picked up at the thrift shop. That song's still on the radio, so thrift shops are in style. She's looking for a student who is frustrated and fed up with the guys buying her drinks and trying their cheesy-assed lines on her."

Jeff: "There she is. She's sitting with her elbow on the bar, rolling her eyes at a trust fund kid. He's in expensive jeans, weathered to make them look old and worn. He says, 'I'm just saying, you're not doing anything. I'm not doing anything. Maybe we could do something, somewhere else. I've got a beachside view.' She winces and takes a deep breath. He shifts to corner her against the bar."

Joe: "Great. Joanna slips in and under his arm. She puts her arm around the girl's waist, and says, 'Hey Angie. Is this guy bothering you?' Then she looks to him, 'Are you bothering my girl?'" She uses Lay Open the Mind and tells the girl, 'play along.' She nods, and gets up from the stool."

Rustyn: (Raises her hand, Joe passes to her) "So, as Joanna and the girl stand to leave, the guy doesn't know what to do. He stands there looking confused for a second. Then, a second guy, this one in a football jersey, puts his hand on Mr. Trust Fund's shoulder and says, 'You gonna let them blow you off like that?' Trust Fund shakes his head and puffs his chest confrontationally."

Jeff: "Trust Fund puts a hand on the girl and..."

Joe: (Puts his hand up) "I'm stepping in here. So he puts his hand on the girl? Well, Joanna's Dirge is that of the Competitor. She's not going to let some two-bit frat boy touch her meal. She narrows her eyes, and grabs the guy's wrist. Tight. Like, his mother's going to tell him to get that checked out kind of tight. She says, 'You're going to let us blow you off like that.' He winces, nods, and says, 'Yes, ma'am.'"

Jeff: "Alright." (Jeff marks a tick) "The two of you start your way out. She doesn't know what's going on. She's still confused, but follows along beside you. She says, 'What did you do? He was crying! He was just some jerk, you didn't need to hurt him!' She stops to confront you just outside the door."

Joe: "Joanna looks at the girl, and says, 'He was a cretin. He'd have hurt you if it went any further. Let's get out of here, and we can talk all about it. I don't want his gorilla friend getting any bright ideas to follow us out.' Joanna tugs her toward the car."

Jeff: "The girl does not seem impressed. She snaps her arm away and turns on her heel..."

Joe: (Puts his hand up) "Interfering. So, Joanna's Mask is Nurturer. She goes from a stern expression to a total caring, compassionate façade in seconds. She looks hurt and put upon by the reaction. Joanna uses Lay Open the Mind to dig into the girl's thoughts about her ex, Mark, who hurt her before. 'You do know I was just trying to protect you, right? I just didn't want to see you hurt again.' She tugs on the girl's heartstrings and guilt trips her a little."

Jeff: "She nods and forces a smile." (Jeff marks a tick) "She falls back in line beside Joanna, and starts the walk back to the car. 'And I'm Emily. Not Angie.' She grins and gets into the passenger seat."

Joe: "I think we can call a close there? Joanna will spend the next few hours with her, but she'll be gone before Emily wakes. She'll get her number though, of course."

Jeff: "Yeah, that's fine. I've got two ticks here, so you're going to have to check for detachment at Humanity –2. What's Joanna's Humanity?"

Joe: "Five. So I'll be checking at a 3? That's two dice. But Joanna has a Touchstone, so she gets +2."

Jeff: "Yeah. I don't think there are any other modifiers. So roll."

Joe: (Joe rolls, and gets two successes) "Two successes. So Joanna doesn't lose Humanity. But she gets a Condition. Would Wanton make sense?"

Jeff: "Yeah. I could see Competitive, too. Since you shut down that frat boy."

Joe: "You're right. I think I'll take Wanton, though. Speaking of the frat boy, Rustyn should get a Beat for playing the gorilla."

Jeff: "Agreed."

Daysleep and Waking

Once the sun rises, the vampire's soul drags her toward slumber. This isn't a certain thing, but difficult to resist. Unless she's at risk of facing the sun, she sleeps. To resist sleep, make a Stamina + Resolve roll. If successful, the vampire remains alert and active, but she gains the Lethargic Condition (see p. 305). With an exceptional success, she does not gain the Condition.

Any time Kindred sleep, they stay asleep. Waking is difficult at best. Only direct threats like fire, sunlight, or a collapsing building will wake a vampire. The act of waking is hard, fast, and disconcerting. The blood snaps her to brief consciousness, and allows her to take immediate actions to defend herself. The dead heart shoves Vitae through the body once, hard.

When something disturbs the vampire's slumber or puts her at risk, make a Stamina + Resolve roll. Success allows her to remain awake for a number of turns equal to her Humanity. Failure means she remains asleep. Once those turns are over, she falls back to sleep without an additional Humanity roll. Once she's exceeded 5 + her Blood Potency successes during her waking turns, she can remain awake indefinitely, as if she never went to sleep in the first place.

Any time a vampire wakes from slumber, she immediately expends a point of Vitae. Normal waking happens shortly after the sun goes down. Waking is like a fatal heart attack in reverse; the body hurts and does not work. The heart slowly begins pulsing, and the body slowly fights back to life. The limbs begin paralyzed, but then tingle and grow flush.

Bloodlines

While all Kindred owe lineage to one of the five clan trees, sometimes the blood twists and warps the branches into something altogether different. These bloodlines shift and focus the Kindred condition toward specific, often familial abnormalities.

Kindred may join bloodlines as allowed by their Blood Potency dots. A character may join her sire's bloodline at Blood Potency 1. At Blood Potency 2, a vampire with which she shares a blood tie (see p. 98) may act as Avus. At Blood Potency 4, any vampire of her clan may act as an Avus. An Avus is a sort of mentor. Acting as an Avus into a bloodline requires feeding the prospect at least one point of Vitae. This carries all normal risk of addiction and blood bonds. At Blood Potency 6, vampires may create their own, unique bloodlines. This is to say, all bloodlines were founded by Kindred of Blood Potency 6 or greater. A character may only be part of one bloodline, and cannot leave a bloodline once joined.

Many times, these bloodlines possess unique Disciplines, exclusive Devotions, or strange sorceries. All bloodlines have four Disciplines considered in-clan. These do not always align with their parent clan Disciplines. A given bloodline may have one unique Discipline; and nobody outside the bloodline can learn their gift, even through diablerie.

Every bloodline is somehow different from its parent clan by way of an additional bane. Often, these banes are more pronounced and restrictive than their clan counterparts. For example, one Mekhet ancient bloodline takes aggravated damage from sunlight regardless of the member's Humanity, and one group of Gangrel can only feed from Kindred, from the moment its members adopt the lineage.

Properties of the Blood

There's blood, and there's Blood. Kindred Vitae is not human blood, and it carries with it a series of potent and important properties in addition to fueling eternal life and Disciplines.

About Vitae

Vitae is not blood; at least, not directly. Kindred create Vitae as a byproduct of processing the blood they absorb. There's no digestion; the blood seeps through the gullet and washes through decaying tissues. Vitae is the perverse fuel that exists within the Kindred's blood. When Kindred use their Vitae, they do not normally lose blood. The Beast is too selfish to let go of that fluid. However, certain Disciplines, the act of creating a blood bond, and the Embrace require the vampire to contaminate the world around her with her Vitae. She does this through blood.

Vampires do not naturally bleed when cut. The Vitae is possessive; it pulls the blood back to the body in the way a drop of mercury absorbs back into a pool. When exhibiting the blush of life (see p. 90), vampires will bleed normally, but still not lose Vitae. Some heinous injuries can cause limited Vitae loss. For example, if the vampire loses a chunk of flesh or a limb, the blood will remain with the lost part, and pour out as the tissue and bone decays. Only in these terrible cases would blood loss equate with Vitae loss.

Blood bearing Vitae is slightly darker, and has an almost syrupy quality. It has all the normal metallic smells blood should, but also has a subtle, sweet smell, like a dessert wine.

Blood Sympathy

Blood calls to blood. Relatives by blood share a certain amount of mystical sympathy; they can feel one another at their most important moments. They sometimes feel strong sensations and emotions from their relatives, including frenzies, the pain of violent torpor, and the shame of crushing defeat. This is rarely with clarity; it comes in the form of cryptic symbols, daymares, and hallucinations. Only the strongest ties — such as those between sire and childe — result in clear messages.

The various effects depend on how many steps removed the two characters are.

Once Removed: This step is for sires and their childer exclusively. Sires and childer enjoy a +3 on all sympathy-based

rolls. This level of sympathy has no range limits; sires and childer feel each other world-around.

Twice Removed: This step is for siblings, grandchilder, and grandsires. Twice-removed Kindred receive a +2 die bonus on all sympathy-based rolls. Sympathy affects any relative on the same continent.

Thrice Removed: This step is for cousins, a sire's siblings, and great grandsires and great grandchilder. Thrice-removed Kindred receive a +1 die bonus on all sympathy-based rolls. Sympathy affects any relative in the same city.

Four Times Removed: This final step is for all clanmates. They receive no modifiers for sympathy rolls. Sympathy affects any clanmate within a mile.

Sympathy comes into effect automatically any time a vampire's relative enters torpor or suffers Final Death. The feeling washes over the vampire and she senses her relative's state in vague, often symbolic terms. As well, characters can initiate sympathy to communicate their states of being to their relatives once or twice removed. To do so, they must spend a Willpower point and make a Blood Potency roll. Each success allows them to contact a single relative; the relative must still make the roll to detect sympathy.

Any particularly powerful emotion can trigger sympathy, at Storyteller discretion. This is less a foolproof detective tool, more a dramatic device. Any time a relative suffers a horrible fate, sympathy may cause frenzies.

Detecting Sympathy

When prompted, a character may roll to detect blood sympathy. She may also spend a point of Willpower to force sympathy and detect a specific relative, assuming they're within the range allotted by their tie. Some Kindred use sympathy to track their family members.

Dice Pool: Wits + Blood Potency + Blood Sympathy

Action: Instant

Dramatic Failure: Rolls to detect Sympathy cannot dramatically fail.

Failure: The sympathetic tie fails.

Success: The character connects with the relative. She gets a vague impression of the character's mental state, and his general direction. If the relative enters torpor or Final Death, his relative knows one of those two things has happened (but not which).

Exceptional Success: The character connects clearly. She understands her relative's mental state, his direction from her, and his rough distance from her. She knows if he's reached torpor or Final Death. In addition, he send a message of a single, short sentence that she hears through the blood tie.

Discipline Sympathy

As well as feeling the sensations of their relatives, vampires are more capable of using their Disciplines on those with whom they share blood ties. If a vampire uses a Discipline on a relative, add the blood sympathy bonus to the roll. Rolls made to enact Crúac sorcery use double this modifier.

Vitae Addiction

Vitae is life. Life tastes very, very good. In fact, it tastes so good, it's highly addictive to both mortal and Kindred alike. Vitae's addictive quality is one of the strongest tools Kindred can bring to bear. Even ignoring the blood bond (see p. 90), Vitae is a remarkable bargaining chip. Just as in the mortal world, addiction's a terrible thing when leveraged against a person.

Vitae addiction feels very similar to addiction to a strong drug. An addict does not have to see her vice to want it; she always wants it. It sits in the back of her mind, festering. An addict could just let her wound heal, but instead, she pokes at it, she tongues it, she just can't let go. At any given time, no matter what she's doing, she is also thinking, "I could be getting my score instead of this." Some blood addicts resort to attacking other Kindred, or even committing Amaranth to get a fix. Many seek out contaminated blood when they casually hunt, using hard drugs as a tepid replacement for their true needs.

Any time a character drinks Kindred Vitae, he must roll Resolve + Composure, with a –1 die penalty for each point consumed. If he fails, he gains the Persistent Addicted Condition (see p. 301). Any time he's faced with further opportunities to drink Vitae, he must indulge, succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll, or gain the Deprived Condition. If a character tempts him with Vitae, she may make a Contested roll (usually Manipulation + Persuasion or something similar) against his Resolve + Composure.

Elders and Addiction

Once Kindred reach a certain degree of power, blood addiction no longer threatens them. If a vampire can only garner sustenance from Kindred (at six dots or more of Blood Potency), she is immune to blood addiction. This doesn't render her immune to blood bonds, however.

Blood Bonds

While addictive, Vitae carries a far more sinister effect for those who drink it: the blood bond. A blood bond, also called a Vinculum, is a strand of powerful, one-sided emotion borne of Vitae. One subject to a blood bond finds himself drawn to, wanting, needing, devoted to, and even loving the one from whom he's fed.

While many Kindred expose humans to the blood bond, often as part of creating ghouls, other Kindred are just as vulnerable to the blood's draw. Many sires bind their childer. Many Princes impose bonds on criminals. Every city, every covenant, and indeed every vampire views the bond differently. Some abhor it. Some find it a regrettable inevitability. Some revel in it. Most fear it. Some Kindred willingly succumb to the bond with a trusted ally, because a given Kindred may only be enthralled to a single vampire. This serves as a form of perverse protection against a less desirable bond. Some mutually blood bond each other, to heighten feelings of intimacy.

A bound character is called the thrall, the character he's bound to is his regnant.

The Bond in Play

Any time a character imbibes a point or more of Vitae, it creates or reinforces a blood bond. The bond comes in three stages, usually at the first, second, and third drinks.

Kindred characters can attempt to resist the bond by spending Willpower. Make a Blood Potency roll, minus the number of Vitae ingested. The Willpower point does not add to this roll. If successful, that drink does not add to the bond. However, the character suffers Vitae addiction normally. Any further attempts to resist the bond from the same vampire suffer a cumulative –1 die penalty; even ancient Kindred cannot resist the bond forever. Mortals have no such defense.

First Stage: Have you ever felt a crush, that butterflies-in-the-stomach feeling, but for someone you know you shouldn't want to have anything to do with? Have you ever kissed someone, and loved it at the time, then regretted it later, only to know you were going to do it again and love it just as much? That's what the first stage of the bond feels like. It's not love. It couldn't convince anyone but maybe an inexperienced teen that he's in love. But it pulls you and makes you *want*. It makes you want to be close to your regnant. It makes you want their approval.

When taking a Social maneuver against her thrall, the regnant's impression is considered one step higher (see p. 174). As well, she gains a +1 die bonus on any Social action or Discipline roll against the thrall. Causing direct or indirect harm to one's regnant constitutes a breaking point at Humanity/Integrity 5.

Second Stage: Have you ever felt complete and utter tension when simply thinking about someone? Have you ever made a stupid excuse to run off and touch yourself to get rid of that tension? Have you ever blushed when someone's name came up, then lashed out when someone accused you of having feelings for them? This is what the second stage of the bond feels like. It's easy to confuse for love. It's a strong, pervasive affection that makes you vulnerable, and keeps you persistently wanting more.

When taking a Social maneuver against her thrall, the regnant's impression is considered two steps higher (see p. 174). As well, she gains a +2 die bonus on any Social action or Discipline roll against the thrall. Causing indirect or direct harm to one's regnant constitutes a breaking point at Humanity/3, or on Integrity with a penalty of –3.

Third Stage: Has someone's name alone make you bite your lower lip in anticipation? Has it ever aroused you to imagine her reaction to something you've done? Have you ever sabotaged something that could have been special, for fear of its intrusion between you and her? Has your brain gone wild, imagining the worst possible scenario when she meets someone new? Have you ever thought to intervene in order to protect what you have? Have you ever tried to agitate her, because her irritation is better than her neglect? This is the feeling of a full blood bond. It's nothing short of infatuation. It's a tantalizing, forceful affection that always eats at the back of your mind.

When taking a Social maneuver against her thrall, the regnant's impression is always considered perfect (see p. 174). As well, she gains a +3 die penalty on any Social action or Discipline roll against the thrall. Causing indirect or direct harm to one's regnant constitutes a breaking point at Humanity/Integrity 1. Lastly, all of the regnant's lingering Discipline effects gain additional duration. Any Discipline that would last a scene lasts one night. Any that last a night instead last a week. One week becomes one month. One month becomes one year.

Once the bond reaches the third stage, it shatters all other existing bonds, and prevents further bonds from forming.

The blood bond lasts a year from the most recent drink. Full or partial, the bond disintegrates after that time. Outside waiting out the year, methods for diffusing the bond — save for an overwhelming third-stage bond — are unreliable myths at best. The year limit isn't quite on a calendar...it can vary by a few days or weeks. We simplify to a year for easy gameplay.

Perversion

Sometimes — more often than Kindred like to admit — two vampires will share from one another to the point of a full bond. They become hopelessly addicted to one another, and immune to outside bonds. They become self-absorbed. To each other, they are everything. It's the sort of love that almost always ends in tragedy. Kindred call this phenomenon "perversion," and for good reason.

In some cities, perversion is illegal. Most couples committing the crime believe they'll be able to hide it, but the signs are usually obvious. In most, it's derided and chastised. Of course, what petty, self-serving society wouldn't reject those able to rise above childish bickering in favor of eternal companionship and happiness? A couple that doesn't care about the barbed words of courtiers or the protocols of Elysium is more dangerous to the status quo than even the most anarchist Unaligned Kindred.

Ghouls

In humans, Kindred Vitae teases at the gifts of the Requiem. When mortals taste Kindred blood, Kindred can give them a hint of their power. These mortals are called ghouls. They enjoy limited access to certain Kindred advantages. They quickly heal wounds, no longer age, and exhibit increased physical potency. They may even use some Disciplines. However, these gifts are fleeting; they depend completely on the ghoul's continued reliance on Kindred Vitae. If a ghoul goes without for a month, she loses all these gifts as if she never had them.

This phenomenon serves as a great advantage to Kindred; it's a powerful tool for tempting mortals into the blood bond, and thus helping to maintain the Masquerade in their servants. Ghouls make for loyal and effective aides; their ability to maneuver uninhibited during the day means that many Kindred use them to maintain their mortal personas or watch over their havens.

Ghoul Retainers

Ghoul servants use a slightly altered version of the Retainer Merit from p. 123. By definition, ghoul servants are inherently more competent than their mortal counterparts. Use the Retainer rules to create a ghoul servant, but add a dot of the regnant's Disciplines for a one- or two-dot Retainer, a second dot for a three- or four-dot Retainer, and a third dot for a five-dot Retainer.

Most cities see ghouls as a necessary burden. Some Princes outlaw the practice of ghouling, as a ghoul is arguably not "of the Blood." In many cities, ghouls are even welcome on Elysium grounds. Typically, a ghoul is considered slightly more significant than a mortal, but less than Kindred. Trespasses and transgressions against ghouls are generally allowed, and ghouls are expected to respect "their superiors." Most cities treat killing or maiming a ghoul identically to attacking the owner's haven, as older Kindred see ghouls as valuable property.

On an individual level, Kindred defend their ghouls fiercely. Even an abusive regnant will grow violently defensive over his ghouls; after all, a ghoul is an investment of Vitae, the very thing that keeps the vampire rising from night to night. An underground initiative within the Carthian Movement — the Anti-Obstructionist Army — dedicates itself to eliminating Kindred interference into the lives of humans. Generally, this means eliminating those Kindred who maintain large stables of ghouls. The Movement publicly eschews this philosophy, but has made no major steps to eradicate it from their ranks.

You can find full rules for ghoul characters, including character creation guidelines, on p. 290. Creating a ghoul requires one point of Vitae, and a point of Willpower. A ghoul needs further Vitae monthly, but no further Willpower.

Diablerie

Diablerie, often called Amaranth in the old form, is the act of murdering another Kindred, and drinking the very essence that animated him. Diablerie is seen as cannibalistic, and is taboo in even the most lawless of cities. Only fringe groups within the covenants condone diablerie, and their parent covenants tend to root those groups out and disown them once uncovered.

To commit diablerie, a vampire must drink from her victim beyond the point of Final Death. Once a Kindred victim is completely without Vitae, each point that would otherwise be taken becomes instead one point of lethal damage. Once the victim's Health boxes are full of aggravated damage, the victim's very soul struggles against his assailant as he reaches Final Death.

At this point, the murderer's player spends a point of Willpower and rolls Strength + Resolve. Vigor may add dice to this roll; the Willpower point does not. The murderer may continue to roll, until she runs out of Willpower to spend, or she achieves a number of successes equal to the victim's Blood Potency dots. Once she reaches that mark, the diablerie is complete.

The murderer immediately gains one Experience per dot of the victim's Blood Potency. This Experience may only be used to purchase Blood Potency dots. It can be saved if it's not enough to buy a dot. As well, the murderer gains a dot of the highest of the victim's Disciplines that she does not have herself. If she has all of the victim's Disciplines at equal or higher level, she instead gains a Skill dot from her victim's repertoire.

Diablerie is always a breaking point, regardless of the vampire's Humanity score. The very act feels heinous. During and after the act, the murderer feels dirty and *wrong*. She sometimes hears the victim's voice in the back of her mind, urging her toward oblivion as penance for her crime. Most Kindred will kill a human at some point during her Requiem, but Amaranth is far more than extinguishing a life: It's the willful destruction of a soul. While modern, secular minds often eschew the existence of a soul, a diablerist will never deny its existence. Diablerie causes the Tainted Condition (see p. 306).

Diablerie Addiction

Diablerie, while perverse, is the greatest rush a vampire can experience. The sensation and resulting power are utterly addictive. Do not roll to resist addiction; the addiction takes automatically. Resisting a reasonable opportunity to commit Amaranth in the future requires a Resolve + Composure roll, with a penalty equal to the would-be victim's Blood Potency dots. Failure results in the Persistent Addicted Condition (see p. 301).

Curses Great and Small

While Kindred carry many gifts and advantages, their Requiems are far from blessed. Vampires suffer numerous banes. Collectively, Kindred all suffer from the "great banes": fire, sunlight, and stakes through the heart. In due time after the Embrace, vampires suffer the banes of their clans. All Kindred feel the pull of the Beast, which tempts them into violence. Torpor drags them to lengthy slumbers. As the years pass and they fall away from humanity, Kindred develop other, unique banes.

The Pain of Purity: Sunlight

Sunlight represents truth and honesty. It stands for visibility, where Kindred exist in the deceptive darkness. While it isn't always immediately deadly, it burns Kindred flesh. The Lancea et Sanctum attributes this to the judgment of God, as potent Kindred and particularly monstrous vampires burn hotter

and faster than young, humane Kindred. Damage taken quickly looks like a normal burn; the flesh chars, sears, and smokes. Damage taken slowly looks more like decay, as the flesh sloughs off with time.

When sunlight strikes Kindred, the rays begin to decay and burn their flesh. Their Humanity dots determine the intensity of the damage, and their Blood Potency dots determine how quickly they disintegrate. See the tables below for details. Find where the vampire falls on the Humanity scale to determine what type and how much damage they take, and use their Blood Potency to determine at what interval they suffer the damage. For example, a Humanity 5, Blood Potency 3 vampire suffers three levels of lethal damage every minute of exposure. Resilience does not affect sunlight damage.

Note that high levels of Blood Potency mean multiple times the damage in a given turn. So a Humanity 5, Blood Potency 8 vampire takes nine levels of lethal damage per turn exposed to the sun.

A character can avoid damage from sunlight only with complete coverage from its rays. If she only exposes her eyes, for example to run for shelter, consider her Blood Potency one step lower on the chart.

Humanity Dots	Damage Type
7-10	1 lethal
6	2 lethal
5	3 lethal
4	1 aggravated
3	2 aggravated
2	3 aggravated
1	4 aggravated
0	5 aggravated

Blood Potency Dots	Damage Frequency
0	–
1-2	Ten minutes
3-4	One minute
4-5	One turn
6-7	2x / turn
8-9	3x / turn
10	5x / turn

The Pain of Knowledge: Fire

Fire represents humankind's dominance over the natural world, and ability to manipulate its environment as a tool. This symbolically human tool destroys Kindred flesh like nothing else. The Circle of the Crone believes fire burns as a lesson to Kindred, reminding them from whence they came, and can never return. Most Kindred just acknowledge that it could mean Final Death within moments, and avoid it at all costs.

Fire automatically inflicts aggravated damage per turn of exposure (no attack roll is required). The larger the flame, the more harm that's inflicted. The hotter the flame, the greater the injury. Mortals take only lethal damage. Each turn, a vampire may turn a number of aggravated damage levels to lethal levels equal to his dots in Resilience.

Size of Fire	Damage
Torch	1
Bonfire	2
Inferno	3

Heat of Fire	Damage Modifier
Candle (first-degree burns)	–
Torch (second-degree burns)	+1
Bunsen burner (third-degree burns)	+2
Chemical fire/molten metal	+3

Clan Banes

The five lineages of Kindred each carry affinities for certain Disciplines. This gives them advantages others may not have access to. On the other hand, each clan also has a bane, a particular aspect of the curse that only affects their familial line.

Clan banes do not affect a vampire until she reaches six dots of Humanity. They do not go away if she regains her seventh dot; they remain with her throughout the rest of her Requiem.

Daeva: The Wanton Curse

Daeva immerse themselves in the mortal world; it not only feeds them, it compels them. When Daeva choose vessels, they become obsessed. When they drink from a mortal once, they're fine. On their second and further drinks from the same source, roll Humanity. Failure causes the Persistent Dependent Condition toward the mortal (see p. 302). The Condition only goes away with the mortal's death. For this reason, Daeva tend toward either remarkable promiscuity, or they cultivate massive harems and herds.

Gangrel: The Feral Curse

Gangrel Beasts boil close to the surface. A Gangrel can run with the devil inside her, but has difficulty fighting it. All her dice pools to resist frenzy are limited by her Humanity dots. This weakness does not affect dice pools to ride the wave.

Mekhet: The Tenebrous Curse

Mekhet blood is the blood of shadows. Their Requiem is one of secrecy and symbolism. For this reason, Mekhet each suffer a single bane that is not tied to a breaking point. When the Mekhet reaches Humanity 6, choose a bane (see p. 108 for banes). This bane counts toward the three banes a vampire is allowed, so a Mekhet is less able to mitigate detachment. As well, consider a Mekhet's Humanity to be one dot lower for all Humanity-based banes (including sunlight and torpor).

Nosferatu: The Lonely Curse

Nosferatu embody fear, disgust, and all manner of uncomfortable feelings. Some are inhumanly ugly. Some have a gaze that makes a person feel violated. Every Nosferatu has something that stands in the way of normal relationships. When dealing with humans, treat the Nosferatu's Humanity as two dots lower for the purpose of Social penalties, and treat any Presence and Manipulation failures as dramatic failures. This bane does not apply to interactions with Touchstones or Kindred.

Ventrue: The Aloof Curse

The Ventrue are confident. Why wouldn't they be? They're clearly superior. This attitude frequently causes Lords conflict, as they treat all those around them as objects. When creating a Ventrue, apply his first Touchstone to his seventh dot of Humanity. This means his first Humanity loss will also detach that Touchstone as the bane takes effect. Further Touchstones may fill his sixth through second dots.

Frenzy

Sometimes, the Beast grows impatient. When the vampire faces danger, hunger, or threat, the Beast goads her to immediate and extreme response, usually meaning a blood-soaked frenzy. Frenzy comes from many sources, but always shares the same response: End the problem by any means necessary.

When faced with a strong enough stimulus, the vampire risks losing control of her Beast. She can temporarily hold the monster inside, but eventually she must face her monstrosity. Either she'll force it down, or the Beast overwhelms her to fight, feed, or flee.

A frenzying vampire can, but is under no compulsion to, lash out with her predatory aura.

Who's Driving

While a vampire's rational consciousness is no longer in control during frenzy, that's no reason to yank control away from the player. Let the player roleplay it out. If there's a real issue with how either player or Storyteller plays a character, talk it out after the session and see if you can't come to a compromise.

Resisting Frenzy

To resist the Beast, roll Resolve + Composure. Check the suggested modifiers for penalties and bonuses depending on the circumstance. The Storyteller is encouraged to come up with other situational modifiers to reflect the relative tension of the scene. For example, if the vampire's rival has made a point of goading her every time they meet, it may impose an additional –1 die penalty to the roll. Resisting frenzy is reflexive.

Dramatic failure on this roll results in frenzy, and the character cannot end the frenzy until she reaches a breaking point. If the Beast gets its desire, choose a new one. Failure means the character succumbs to frenzy. Success means she resists the Beast, but gains the Tempted Condition (see p. 307). Exceptional success means she not only resists the Beast, but regains a point of spent Willpower, and any Willpower she spent fighting the Beast during the scene. When a character enters frenzy, she gains a Beat. She can opt to turn a failure into a dramatic failure for a second Beat. As with any Beats, these Beats only come from dramatic situations with consequences.

Willpower cannot be spent for three bonus dice on a roll to resist frenzy. Willpower has a different effect. A point of Willpower holds off the Beast for one turn. The vampire visibly fights the frenzy. She may growl, hiss, smash something, or sprint off. But she's temporarily in control. However, she must still face her Beast. Once she stops spending Willpower, make the Resolve + Composure roll like normal, but take a bonus die for each Willpower point spent. So, if you spend four Willpower points for your character to take four turns fighting her frenzy, on the fifth turn, roll her Resolve + Composure + 4.

The Frenzy

Upon entering frenzy, determine what the Beast wants. Does it want to escape? Does it want to punish the person who insulted his host? Does it want blood? Typically, frenzy ends when that thing occurs. Some Devotions and Coils may end frenzy prematurely. If the character enters torpor, the frenzy ends.

A vampire's Touchstone can talk her down from frenzy with an extended Social roll, requiring a number of successes equal to three times the vampire's Blood Potency. The Touchstone can make one roll per turn. So a Blood Potency 4 vampire's Touchstone would require 12 successes to talk her out of frenzy. During this time, the vampire's likely to cause significant problems for herself and others.

When in frenzy, the vampire becomes stronger, faster, and tougher. Her Beast drives her to feats of terrifying physical prowess. Add her Blood Potency dots to any Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina rolls or resistances. (Do not apply her improved Stamina to her Health levels.) Ignore any wound penalties she should suffer. She can grab and bite as a single instant action, as she ravenously mauls her victim. Apply the successes on her Strength + Brawl roll to establish a grapple as lethal damage, and she takes an immediate point of Vitae from the victim.

If a character tries to coerce her to behavior contrary to the Beast's desires, either via Social actions or through Disciplines, the effort fails. They can, however, divert the Beast's attention to another, similar target. For example, if Veronica falls to her Beast due to hunger and leaps at Elspeth, Elspeth might Dominate her to attack Dominic instead.

While frenzied, the vampire does everything in her power to accomplish the Beast's desires. She does so with immediate, forceful, and destructive abandon. If there's someone in the way, she throws him or decks him. If she's hungry, she bites the closest thing to her mouth. That said, the Beast isn't stupid. It's capable of doing the kinds of things an enraged, terrified, or starving animal predator is, and it will lash out with the predatory aura if that will help sate it.

Suggested Modifiers

Here are some of the general modifiers that could influence frenzy. Under the right circumstances, any of these things could be a provocation to frenzy.

Provocation or Circumstance	Modifier
Dead friend	–2
Dead lover	–4
Destruction of important property	–1
Destruction of minor property	+1
Expecting provocation	+1
Hungry (4 or fewer Vitae)	–2
Hurt friend	–1
Hurt lover	–2
Inside burning building	–4
Insulted by a superior	–1
Insulted by an inferior	–2
On Elysium grounds	+2
Provocation was Touchstone	+2
Publicly ostracized	–2
Seeing a trivial open wound	+1
Seeing a massive open wound	–1
Small fire (torch)	–2
Starving (2 or fewer Vitae) –4	
Sunlight (causing aggravated damage)	–3
Sunlight (causing bashing damage)	+2
Sunlight (causing lethal damage)	–1
Surprised by provocation	–1
Wounded (at all)	–1
Wounded in last three Health boxes	–3

Frenzy Chicken

While losing control to the Beast can prove fatal, or at very least socially inconvenient, it can also prove a stark advantage to be the first to lash out in a brawl. If multiple characters simultaneously use Willpower to resist their Beasts, the first to give in gets the biggest benefits. When any character in the scene enters frenzy, any other characters who were attempting to resist their Beasts only benefit from half their Blood Potency dots (rounded up) on Physical actions if they succumb to frenzy. Kindred can avoid this penalty by immediately giving in to their Beasts, or by riding the wave.

Taking any action contrary to the Beast's agenda requires a point of Willpower per turn.

Riding the Wave

Some Kindred choose to grab their Beasts by the reins, and wield that monstrous power. It's a risky proposition, but one with great rewards. This practice is called riding the wave of frenzy.

To ride the wave, spend a Willpower point, and make the normal Resolve + Composure resistance roll. The Willpower point does not add to this roll. Success holds off the frenzy for a turn as if she'd spent Willpower to fight the frenzy. She can continue to do this until she fails, runs out of Willpower, or until she accumulates five successes. Treat any failure on this roll as a dramatic failure.

If she reaches five successes, she rides the wave. This functions identically to a normal frenzy, with all normal benefits. However, you may choose the Beast's desire and specific target at the outset. This desire does not have to align with the provocation. For example, if Victoria risks frenzy because she's starved, she might choose to kill Dominic instead of feeding.

Normally, a frenzied Beast will not force its host to commit diablerie. However, a vampire riding the wave may choose diablerie as the desire.

Torpor

Over time, through great injury, as result of feeding restrictions, or because of starvation, Kindred fall to the sleep of ages: torpor. This cold, dead slumber equalizes the young and the old, thinning the blood with time and leaving elders to awaken fresh and new.

When one of the Kindred falls to torpor, she appears dead. Her skin tightens over her flesh and dries out. Her joints harden, and the top layer of her tissue turns to a faint, ashen dust. During her slumber, she experiences strange, nonsensical dreams that keep her mind active and exercised. Usually, this means she's prepared to adapt to a new world. Sometimes, this goes awry; she wakes up a whole new person, or, rarely, with distorted memories of her past existence.

At the end of a vampire's turn, after any reflexive healing, if her last (rightmost) Health box is filled with lethal damage, she falls to torpor. If she's in daysleep, and has no blood with which to awaken, she instead drifts into the torpor. As well, a vampire can voluntarily fall into torpor, to shake off the feeding limitations imposed by her Blood Potency.

During the first day of torpor, the vampire subconsciously spends as much Vitae as it takes to heal any wounds she may have. If, after spending all her Vitae, she still suffers a wound in her last three Health boxes, consider her Humanity one dot lower for determining how long she slumbers. For every twenty-five years a vampire remains in torpor, she loses a dot of Blood Potency.

Use the following chart to determine how long a character must remain in torpor. Multiply the base duration (based on the vampire's Humanity dots) by her Blood Potency. After that amount of time in torpor, she can awaken. This isn't always exact; it could be up to a quarter of the time shorter or longer. As well, any vampire with two more dots of Blood Potency than she has can feed her a point of Vitae to awaken her (with the normal risks of blood bonds and addiction). This can happen at any time.

Humanity	Base Torpor Duration
9-10	One night
8-9	Two nights
6-7	One week
5	One month
4	One year
3	Five years
2	Ten years
1	50 years
0	100 years

Some rare bloodlines are rumored to know deep secrets about the truths of torpor. They claim to communicate with those in the throes of torpor. They swear they can divine otherworldly knowledge of the realms of the dead from torpor dreams. They suggest the Kindred soul wanders another plane with the specters of history, and comes back with hidden information. Of course, none of these claims have ever been confirmed. But some Kindred swear by the stories of these haruspices, and some rulers keep them as chief advisors.

A Stake to the Heart

When a wooden stake penetrates the Kindred heart, the vampire immediately enters torpor. Unlike normal torpor, he awakens immediately upon the stake's removal, but not before. To target the heart, make an attack roll with a –3 die penalty after factoring Defense. If the attack causes five points of damage, it penetrates the heart.

Humanity

Kindred are not human. They were, once, but now they're something entirely different. However, to blend in with mortals, to walk among the flock, Kindred must maintain perspective and understanding of their former lives. The Humanity trait reflects this perspective. Vampires who maintain high Humanity scores live side-by-side with mortals, and can relate to the living. Vampires with low Humanity scores grow distant and alien; they lose sight of what they once were, and more importantly, what they prey upon.

For some Kindred, Humanity is a downward spiral. It's a great tragedy that ends in monstrosity and destruction. For some, it's a constant struggle to maintain ties and never lose sight. Most Kindred find a range of Humanity that suits them, a certain distance or closeness to the breathing world.

This system replaces the Integrity system in **The God-Machine Chronicle**. Mortal characters who are Embraced replace Integrity with Humanity, and start with seven dots (regardless of their Integrity scores). These ratings are compatible. For example, if a Discipline affects a vampire character based on her Humanity rating, Integrity will work similarly on her mortal counterpart.

The Humanity Scale

Humanity exists as a continuum from zero to ten dots. **Vampire: the Requiem** characters begin play with seven dots. Higher Humanity scores are possible, but difficult to maintain.

Humanity level is reflected in a character's behavior and appearance. As he sinks into depravity, he becomes less and less like the mortals around him. He becomes more a monster, more focused on survival than on abiding by the societal norms of the herd. Often, this presents as aloofness or detachment. The character simply ceases to relate to human mores and expectations. These descriptions are only guidelines; it's up to you to determine how your character exhibits the path he walks. Also, there are minor Social modifiers listed. These modifiers apply to rolls relating to humans. Manipulating humans for food with Subterfuge or frightening them with Intimidation are not affected; but trying to understand a human's emotional cues with the Empathy Skill would be affected. Note that these penalties do apply with Touchstones; inhumane vampires find establishing relationships with humans to be difficult, or even not worth the time.

Ascetic (Humanity 9-10): A rare vampire with this degree of Humanity goes out of her way to immerse herself in mortal affairs, and to feed sensibly. She's poised and confident in her dealings; she's an expert in the way humans behave, feel, and think. She manages to think and act the way they do, in the way an expert method actor would. She appears as an iconic, idealized human. Gain a +2 die bonus to any rolls to relate to humans.

Humane (Humanity 7-8): A vampire in this range of Humanity is either very good at maintaining her attachments, or she's very new to the Danse Macabre. She has little difficulty blending in with humans. She remembers with perfectly clarity what mortal life was like. She remembers the way food tasted. She remembers the way sweat felt across her skin. She feels pain for those hurt by her actions and those of her kind.

Balanced (Humanity 5-6): At this point, she's been around the block. Most neonates and some ancilla fall into this range. She's seen pain and anguish as result of her condition, and is beginning to accept it as part of existence. She still has no issue relating to mortals; she just recognizes that she's never going to be one again. She's selfish, and lies like second nature. She has a subtle, ashen pallor. Take a –1 die penalty on any roll to relate to humans.

Weathered (Humanity 4): A weathered vampire has seen more death and devastation than most mortals will in a lifetime. Most ancilla fall into this range of Humanity. While not spree killers, a vampire at this level has taken lives, and understands that he probably will again in order to guarantee continued survival. He sees humans as fragile and temporary. He's calculating and cunning, having a mind attuned to consequence. This shows in immediate behaviors. For example, he might avoid early morning social functions to avoid worst-case traffic on the way home. Take a –2 die penalty on any roll to relate to humans.

Callous (Humanity 3): At this level, a callous vampire maintains a cynical and jaded world perspective. He'll step over anyone and anything in the name of survival. Most elders fall into this range. Typically, he'll take the safe route for the long haul. He'll kill witnesses before risking their escape. By this point, Humanity takes its toll, and the vampire appears deathly or sickly. This appearance isn't unnatural, per se, but it makes humans uncomfortable. Take a –3 die penalty on any roll to relate to humans.

Monstrous (Humanity 2): A monstrous vampire is barely recognizable as human, unless he's specifically acting the part and using the blush of life. He looks like a moving corpse, with dry flesh tightened over bones and a faint red hue to his eyes. He's short-tempered, selfish to a fault, and will kill to suit minor interests and petty desires. Not only does he have difficulty dealing with people, he doesn't want to. Most of the mortals in his life are servants and feeding stock, viewed as resources at best. Take a –5 die penalty on any roll to relate to humans.

Animalistic (Humanity 1): A vampire this close to the Beast exists in a state of animalistic stoicism. She can speak and interact just like anyone else, but takes no action without intent. Words are but tools for the hunt. Every action is a step toward the next meal; nothing but blood is worth her time. While she could fake humanity with a bit of blood, she can't be bothered, and instead looks like a corpse, a statue, a morbid doll. Crowds part when she walks through; her presence demands fright or obeisance. Your character cannot relate to humankind. Any such rolls use only a chance die.

Draugr (Humanity 0): A character who reaches zero Humanity dots becomes draugr, lost to her Beast. She becomes a threat, no longer able to interact with society productively — Kindred or mortal. Nothing is sacred; draugr will not hesitate to shred the Traditions as a means of escape. Draugr are forever lost to their monstrous natures; only the vaguest rumors suggest they can be redeemed. In most cities, authorities kill draugr immediately and without mercy.

Some draugr are careful predators, acting with stealth and bestial cunning, or retaining ritualistic behaviors from their former lives. For example, a fallen Mekhet might set up clever ambushes and sleep in an old library, nesting among moldering books he can no longer read.

Breaking Points

Breaking points are moments and experiences in a vampire's Requiem that push her to risk detachment. Any time she experiences a breaking point, roll to resist detachment. For an event to constitute a breaking point, it must be applicable to her Humanity level, or lower. For example, a Humanity 5 character risks a breaking point if she commits manslaughter (Humanity 3 breaking point), but not if she's rejected by a human (Humanity 8 breaking point).

The listed breaking points are examples only. Add breaking points at Storyteller discretion, or shift these up or down to fit the situation. Typically, the more personal the event is, the lower level a breaking point it should be. If something is significantly distanced from the character, or she had no way to prevent it, it should be a Humanity level higher. Many reflect experiences that serve as reminders of the vampire's state. For example, watching mortals eat a meal is a harsh reminder that mortal food no longer nourishes Kindred, and that it's an experience forever denied to the Damned.

Many breaking points reference human contact. This refers to interaction, usually verbal. While it does not have to be positive interaction, it should be human in nature, and meaningful. Jumping a derelict in an alley, feeding, and fleeing is not interaction. Nor is tying up an enemy's ghoul and torturing her in a basement. However, the act of feeding the captive or finding the derelict a shelter for the night could be. Note that time unconscious in torpor does not count as time without human contact; torpor is its own breaking point.

Note that breaking points do not occur while a character is in torpor. At the Storyteller's discretion, discovering a missed

Sample Breaking Points

Humanity 10 (Five Dice)

One night without human contact.
Lying in defense of the Masquerade.
Spending more than one Vitae in a night.

Humanity 9 (Five Dice)

Watching humans eat a meal.
Committing a superhuman feat of physical prowess.
Feeding from the unwilling or unknowing.
Urging another's behavior with a Discipline.
Spending an hour in the sun.

Humanity 8 (Four Dice)

Creating a ghoul.
Rejected by a human.
Riding the wave of frenzy.
Depriving another of consent with a Discipline.
Spending most of a day in the sun.

Humanity 7 (Four Dice)

One week active without human contact.
Surviving something that would hospitalize a human.
Injuring someone over blood.

Humanity 6 (Three Dice)

Falling into torpor.
Feeding from a child.
Reading your own obituary.
Experiencing a car crash or other immense physical trauma.

Humanity 5 (Three Dice)

Two weeks active without human contact.
Reaching Blood Potency 3.
Death of a mortal family member.
Joining a covenant to the point of gaining Status for it.

Humanity 4 (Two Dice)

Impassioned violence.
Spending a year or more in torpor.
Surviving a century.
Accidentally killing.

Humanity 3 (Two Dice)

One month active without human contact.
Reaching Blood Potency 6.
Death of a mortal spouse or child.
Impassioned killing.

Humanity 2 (One Die)

One year active without human contact.
Premeditated killing.
Seeing a culture that didn't exist when you were alive.
Surviving 500 years.
Creating a revenant.

Humanity 1 (Zero Dice)

One decade active without human contact.
Heinous, spree, or mass murder.
Killing your Touchstone.

breaking point *could* trigger a detachment roll, but this is fairly rare, as the experience of torpor prepares a vampire's mind for the shock of a new world upon waking.

Detachment

When reaching a breaking point, the character faces potential detachment: the loss of a Humanity dot. To resist detachment, roll the number of dice associated with the breaking point's level. If the character has Touchstones, she can draw on additional dice. Willpower may not be spent to improve this dice pool. Any time your character faces a breaking point, take a Beat.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the character lose sight of her Humanity, she sees the breaking point as nothing of consequence whatsoever. In addition to losing a dot of Humanity, gain the Jaded Condition (see p. 304).

Failure: Your character lets go of some of his mortal attachments, and moves toward monstrosity. In addition to losing a dot of Humanity, gain the Bestial, Competitive, or Wanton Condition as he revels in his selfishness.

Success: Your character holds onto a scrap of empathy, despite the urge to let go. She does not lose Humanity, but gains the Bestial, Competitive, or Wanton Condition as her nature pushes her to withdraw.

Exceptional Success: Not only does your character hold onto her concept of Humanity, she steps away from the conflict with renewed vigor. She takes the Inspired Condition (see p. 304). The inspiration relates to her newfound affinity for mortality.

Banes

When Kindred hit certain points in their detachment, they can turn their monstrosity inward, growing spiritual scars over their emotional wounds. When losing Humanity, a character can take a bane and a Beat. If he does so, he becomes unable to lose Humanity from that particular breaking point again. However, each bane causes a –1 die penalty to further detachment rolls, which speeds the Requiem's downward spiral.

Suggested Modifiers for Detachment Rolls

Have an attached Touchstone	+2
Have multiple attached Touchstones	+3
No attached Touchstones	–2
Protecting your Masquerade	–1
Protecting your Requiem	+1

A character may only have three banes. You may choose from the sample banes below, or create your own. As a rule, most banes use Humanity as part of their mechanics, and can affect Vitae or cause bashing damage. Sometimes, they use the inverse of Humanity, expressed as (10 – Humanity). Many banes provoke frenzy. A vampire cannot use more dice to resist a bane-provoked frenzy than she has Humanity dots.

Banes are a player choice, but vampire characters themselves do not choose them or the transgressions they affect.

Bells: Your character cannot stand the sound of bells, and it causes intense pain. This only happens in the presence of actual bells; recordings will not cause pain. Each minute she's exposed to the sound of bells, she takes (10 – Humanity) dice worth of bashing damage, and is provoked to frenzy. Some vampires manifest this bane in response to hymns instead of bells.

Blood of the Unwilling: Your character takes no sustenance from the blood of the unwilling or the unknowing. When feeding from an unwilling vessel, she gains no nourishment from the first few Vitae taken. This amount is equal to (10 – Humanity).

Crossroads: Your character is confused when he knowingly passes through a crossroads. For the remainder of the scene, all his dice pools are capped by his Humanity dots.

Face of Hunger: When your character finds himself hungry, it shows on his face and on his skin. His eyes grow red, and his skin pulls tight over his visage. He looks every bit the corpse. When he has less than five Vitae, his Humanity dots act as a cap on all his Social actions. Humanity also caps all dice pools to resist frenzy inspired by hunger.

Grave Soil: Your character is tied to the soil of her place of death. If she does not sleep with at least a handful of dirt from her region of death, all her dice pools are capped by her Humanity for the next night.

Hated by Beasts: Animals despise your character. They'll put their backs up defensively, growl, hiss, or boast. Any attempts to deal with animals through Animal Ken or Animalism suffer a (10 – Humanity) penalty.

Holy Day: Your character holds one day of the week holy. She cannot resist the daysleep, and cannot awaken during that day unless her body suffers damage equal to 10 – Humanity.

Invitation: Your character cannot enter a private dwelling uninvited. If he does, he suffers bashing damage equal to (10 – Humanity). He cannot heal the damage as long as he remains inside.

Open Wounds: Your character's wounds stay open until she sleeps. She can heal Health levels with Vitae, but the wounds do not close until she's undergone daysleep.

Plague of Purity: Your character finds the pure of heart to be utterly repulsive. Any touch by a human with Integrity 8 or higher causes (10 – Humanity) bashing damage.

Rat King/Queen: Your character attracts vermin. She's always surrounded by rats, flies, cockroaches, or other creatures of plague. This causes discomfort and disgust in most mortals, causing her to fail any Social roll not related to the Intimidation Skill. She can send the vermin away for a number of minutes equal to her Humanity score with a Willpower point.

Repulsion: Your character finds a certain substance abhorrent. Choose this when taking the bane, but it should be something that is likely to appear in many homes. For example, garlic, salt, roses, or silver are all valid repulsions. She cannot come closer than (10 – Humanity) feet from the item without spending a point of Willpower. As well, if the object of repulsion enters a wound, it causes (10 – Humanity) dice of bashing damage.

Symbols: Symbols of faith and devotion weaken your character. When touched by such a symbol, or when acting against someone brandishing such a symbol, his dice pools are limited by his Humanity dots.

Webs: A spider's webs cause your character great problems. Even a web from a small spider stops her in her tracks. Once she touches a web, breaking free requires breaking the web, which is treated as an item with Durability equal to (10 – Humanity).

Merits

These Merits are available to Kindred characters. If the prerequisites mention a covenant, the Merit requires a single dot of the appropriate Covenant Status to purchase. If the character changes or abandons their covenant, the Merit does not go away. Some covenants may take issue with former members sharing their secrets, however. See the Appendix (p. 288) for Merits specifically for mortal and ghoul characters in a **Vampire: The Requiem** chronicle.

Sanctity of Merits

While Merits represent things within the game and your character, they're really an out-of-character resource, a function of the character creation and advancement mechanics. These Merits often represent things that can go away. Retainers can be killed. Mentors can get impatient and stop dispensing wisdom. So while Merits may represent temporary facets of your character, Merit points continue to exist. At the end of any chapter where your character has lost Merits, you can replace them with another Merit.

For example, your character has three-dot Retainer, a loyal dog, and an eldritch horror eats that dog out in the woods. At the end of that chapter, you may re-allocate those Retainer dots. You may choose to purchase Safe Place (two dots), to reflect your character's choice to bunker down from the monster, and perhaps Direction Sense (one dot) so your character is less likely to get lost in those woods in the future. When the character leaves his Safe Place, you can replace those two dots with something else.

When replacing a Merit, consider what makes sense in the story. Pursue the new Merit during the course of the chapter if possible, and make the new tie something less superficial than a dot or two on a sheet.

With Storyteller permission, you may "cash in" a Merit voluntarily and replace it with Experiences. This should not be used as a way to purchase a Merit, take advantage of its benefits, and then cash it out for something else. If a Merit has run its course and no longer makes sense for your character, however, you may use those points elsewhere.

Merits such as Ambidextrous, Eidetic Memory, and the various Fighting Style Merits reflect abilities and knowledge that your character has and therefore shouldn't be cashed in or replaced. Then again, if an Ambidextrous character loses his left hand....

General Kindred Merits

Acute Senses (•)

Effect: The vampire can see, smell, and hear at twice the distance and with twice the accuracy of an average, healthy mortal. The vampire's senses of taste and touch are also twice as sensitive as those of the same hypothetical person.

The vampire can perfectly identify any sensory stimulus she has experienced before; for example, the smell of a lover's sweat, the texture of a rare fabric, or the sound of an individual's scream.

Add her Blood Potency to any roll to use her senses. This includes any rolls to remember and identify sensory details.

Drawback: Her senses sometimes overwhelm her. Any time you roll an exceptional success on a roll relating to her senses, she gains the Obsession Condition for the stimulus, but instead of being Persistent, it lasts for a number of nights equal to your successes.

Altar (•••)

Prerequisites: Circle of the Crone Status •

Effect: Your character is attuned to a mystical, bloody altar. She may have crafted it herself, or a covenmate may have designed it. In the presence of the altar, Acolytes may use the teamwork rules (see p. 173) when using Crúac rituals. However, double the time necessary to make the roll, and determine the time per roll by the lowest Crúac dots of the collective group. This allows vampires uninitiated in the secrets of Crúac to participate in rituals. Characters do not need dots in Crúac to act as supporting performers with the Altar Merit, but double the time between rolls if any participants have no Crúac dots whatsoever.

Drawback: Unlike most Merits, three or more characters must purchase this Merit to gain its benefits. Each character contributes a single Merit dot to the total cost. Additional characters may purchase dots in the Altar, but to use the teamwork advantages, they must contribute.

Anointed (••)

Prerequisites: Lancea et Sanctum Status •

Effect: Not all Sanctified are members of the clergy. Most are lay members. Those anointed under the damnation of Longinus

wield his word like a firebrand. Once per chapter, roll Presence + Expression when preaching to a crowd. A small clique of listeners levies a –1 die penalty, a small crowd a –2, and a large crowd a –3. Listeners gain the Raptured Condition (see p. 305).

Drawback: The character may not use this Merit on herself.

Atrocious (•)

Prerequisites: Cannot have the Cutthroat or Enticing Merits

Effect: Your character's monstrous Beast dominates her personality. Her threats always ring true. Her very gaze inspires anger and fear. Any rolls to invoke the monstrous Beast gain the 8-again quality.

Drawback: Your character does not get the 10-again quality on any rolls to invoke or resist the seductive or competitive Beasts.

Attaché (•)

Prerequisites: Invictus Status •

Effect: Normally, Retainers (see p. 123) serve a couple of functions, represented by dice pools. They don't normally allow a character to access other things represented by Social Merits. However, Invictus vampires with this Merit have Retainers of a more thoroughly loyal breed. Each Retainer gains any combination of the following Merit dots equal to the vampire's Invictus Status: Contacts, Resources, or Safe Place.

Drawback: While the Invictus may access these Merits, it must be done through an intermediary. So it might take a bit of time, or require a bit of red tape navigation to access. At very least it will require a few inconvenient phone calls.

Bloodhound (••)

Prerequisites: Wits •••

Effect: Your character can discern the intricacies of blood by smelling it, as if he had tasted it. When using his Kindred senses to detect blood, to track by blood, or to pick out the details of blood, he only needs to smell a blood source.

Cacophony Savvy (• to •••)

Prerequisite: City Status •

Effect: You have your finger on the pulse of the Kindred underground. You're adept with the codes and cants that allow Kindred culture to flourish despite the Masquerade. Each level of Cacophony Savvy builds on the previous. This Merit assumes the character can read and deliver Cacophony messages.

Drawback: The Cacophony is not a spectator sport. You can't just consume; you must create. If your character does not regularly contribute news and gossip to the Cacophony, she falls out of touch. To become an active part of the Cacophony again, she must add something of value.

Gettin' Up (•): Your character can read the signs when she sees them. With an Intelligence + Streetwise roll, she can identify the intended message. She can identify further details, including the messenger's clan, covenant, favored herd, and city of origin by taking a –1 die penalty for every detail she wishes to discern. Additional details come at Storyteller discretion.

If the area surveyed is part of someone's Feeding Grounds Merit, you can add their dot rating to your roll, and discern things the owner didn't mean to communicate. For example, particularly pale junkies in the neighborhood might suggest that the owner feeds from addicts.

Backpacker (••): Your character is privy to all the personal ads, magazine codes, tracts, and tagging locations to find the latest Kindred news. Any time new Kindred come to town, your character knows their favored feeding grounds and their common aliases within a week. Using Gettin' Up, she can discern more personal information about them from the grapevine.

Wearing a Hat (•••): Your character embodies honor among thieves. She's a highly respected part of the Cacophony, and as a result, nothing happens without her knowledge. She's a hub of local culture, and the first line of defense against vampire hunters by extension. Once per chapter, roll Wits + Politics. For each success, you can ask the Storyteller one of the following questions about the current state of affairs:

- Who is on the way up?
- Who is on the way out?
- Where in the city is the Masquerade thinnest?
- What mortal is closest to uncovering Kindred?
- Where's the best feeding in town?

When acting on the answer, consider all rolls exceptional successes on three successes instead of five.

Carthian Pull (•)

Prerequisite: Carthian Status •

Effect: Carthians know people. Being the covenant arguably most in touch with humanity, they tend to have the most numerous connections. Membership in the Movement can mean leveraging those connections. Each month, you can access a number of dots of the Allies, Contacts, Haven, and Herd Merits equal to your Carthian Status.

Drawback: These Merits are not yours. They're very temporary, very superficial. You don't get a house from Haven dots; you get crash space for a couple days. Each use is a favor, and the Movement expects members to repay their favors.

Claws of the Unholy (•)

Prerequisite: Protean ••••

Effect: A Gangrel's claws are deadly and bestial; yours are downright unnatural. The vampire allows the Beast out of its cage and lets it punish all those around her. When wielding claws borne of Unnatural Aspect while in frenzy, this Merit takes effect. The weapon modifier for the claws becomes +0 aggravated. These claws ignore all armor not generated by Resilience.

Drawback: You may only use Claws of the Unholy while in frenzy or riding the wave. Once purchased, this modification is not optional; the character manifests Claws of the Unholy any time she's frenzied.

Close Family (•)

Effect: Your character feels blood sympathy more keenly than most of her kind. Add +1 to all blood sympathy bonuses, and apply the 8-again quality to all blood sympathy rolls. As well, treat all relations as one step closer for the purposes of sympathy distances.

Drawback: When you feel sympathy, you feel it hard. Any time you succeed on a blood sympathy roll, your character loses the ability to spend Willpower for bonus dice for the remainder of the scene, due to the distraction.

Cutthroat (•)

Prerequisites: Cannot have the Atrocious or Enticing Merits

Effect: Your character's competitive Beast flows in her every action. Her smug bearing forces a desire to dominate or submit. Any rolls to invoke the competitive Beast gain the 8-again quality.

Drawback: Your character does not get the 10-again quality on any rolls to invoke or resist the monstrous or seductive Beasts.

Distinguished Palate (•)

Effect: Your character can discern the subtle nuances in blood and Vitae. Consider any Taste of Blood roll (see p. 91) an exceptional success with only a single success.

Drawback: When taking this Merit, choose a preferred feature in a vessel that comprises no more than one-tenth of the population. This may be a hair color, a blood type, or even a drug in his system. When feeding from any other mortal source, ignore the first point of Vitae ingested in a given scene, as nothing sates your character like her preferred meal.

Dream Visions (•)

Prerequisites: Must be Mekhet

Effect: Your character's Mekhet blood touches on a level of universal interconnectedness that her mind cannot truly grasp. However, sometimes it gives her fleeting glimpses of insight and intuition. During the day, she dreams of what's to come in vague symbols. Once per night, when she meets someone new or visits a new place, make a Blood Potency roll. If successful, ask one question to the Storyteller or the character's player. The question must fit with a yes/no/maybe answer. The answer reflects the last day's dreams.

Drawback: This Merit may only be used once per person (and only on first meeting), and once per night. So, if she meets multiple new people, you must choose who the dreams were of.

Dynasty Membership (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Clan Status •

Effect: Your character claims membership to a long-standing dynasty of Kindred. Her clan and city know her family's exploits, and they often precede her. Each level of this Merit builds on the earlier abilities.

Drawback: You must make your association known to take advantage of this Merit. Within certain crowds, throwing around a lineage could be more trouble than it's worth. The dynasty must have at least three members.

New Kid (•): You're recognized within the dynasty, but not in an influential position. Once per chapter, you may add the Clan Status of the dynasty's most senior member to a Social dice pool instead of your own.

Exemplar (••): You're afforded sway and respect within the dynasty. Against any who would respect or fear your dynasty, you may ignore the first Door in any Social engagement.

Patriarch/Matriarch (•••): You're acknowledged as a head of your dynasty. Once per chapter, you may make a demand of a dynasty member. They gain the Tasked Condition. If they fulfill the demand, gain a Beat. The task must be something that would take a full night's work, or put the recipient in danger.

Enticing (•)

Prerequisites: Cannot have the Atrocious or Cutthroat Merits

Effect: Your character's seductive Beast oozes with ease and confidence. Her smoky looks tantalize the imagination. Every movement of her hands makes promises. Any rolls to invoke the seductive Beast gain the 8-again quality.

Drawback: Your character does not get the 10-again quality on any rolls to invoke or resist the monstrous or competitive Beasts.

Feeding Grounds (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has fertile feeding grounds, whether officially granted or not. Dots in this Merit represent the ease of hunting in that territory. Add the dot rating to any hunting rolls, and to starting Vitae rolls (see p. 95). In addition, add the dot rating to any predatory aura conflicts on her territory.

Drawback: Territory doesn't maintain itself. Trespassers must not go uncontested, or your hold on the area falters.

Friends in High Places •

Prerequisites: Invictus Status •

Effect: The Invictus have their fingers in a lot of pies...but any one vampire only has so many fingers. So the vampires of the First Estate do not just leverage their personal connections — they leverage each other's. An Invictus member can always do a little horse trading.

Each month, your character can automatically open a number of Doors equal to her status dots. The person being persuaded must be acting on behalf of an organization. You could persuade the fire chief not to investigate a series of arsons at your rival's havens, but couldn't convince him to give you a personal loan.

Drawback: The influence the character drew upon must come from a specific Invictus member...and your character now owes him a favor.

Haven (• to •••••)

Prerequisite: Safe Place •

Effect: A good haven is not only safe from the sun, but also familiar and comforting. The dot rating reflects your character's affinity for his home and its defenses against the sun's intrusion. A low rating might mean an unreliable apartment with boarded windows. A high rating may mean an ancestral home with no windows and an extensive system of vaults.

Add your Haven dots to any Humanity rolls to notice danger while sleeping, and any Stamina + Resolve rolls to remain awake. As well, add it to any Kindred senses (see p. 90) rolls within.

Drawback: Losing a Haven is a breaking point at Humanity 8, minus its dot rating. A Haven must be tied to a Safe Place Merit (see p. 123). Like a Safe Place, a coterie may share a Haven Merit. Each member that wishes to benefit must invest Merit dots in both the Safe Place and the Haven.

Herd (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character cultivates cliques of mortals willing and eager for the Kiss. Each week, you can draw on a number of Vitae equal to twice the Merit's dot rating. This requires no roll, only a quick interlude. Taking more than that amount requires normal hunting rolls.

Drawback: Addicts need their fix. Sometimes, they demand attention. If neglected, they'll withdraw. Your character must have at least minor interactions with her Herd before they'll give blood freely.

Honey Trap (•)

Effect: Your character's blood not only bonds, but it invigorates. When a vampire tastes your character's Vitae, she regains a point of Willpower. If this results in a new bond, or steps up an existing bond, she also takes a Beat.

Invested (•)

Prerequisite: Invictus Status •

Effect: In the Invictus, you get out what you put in. Through doing favors and making herself noticed, your character has gotten back plenty. Divide dots equal to your Invictus status in the Herd, Mentor, Resources, and Retainers Merits. You may distribute them as you like. These dots can be added to existing Merit dots, or added upon later. If she loses dots of Status, the dots granted by this Merit go away as well.

Drawback: These advantages came from the covenant. They're not only known, but they're a matter of covenant scrutiny. Rivals may call whether your character deserves them into question.

Kindred Status

Within Kindred society, there exist three types of Status: City, Clan, and Covenant. Each functions as the Status Merit on p. 123, within its purview. City Status allows its advantages within the scope of the assigned city. Clan Status only functions within its designated clan, and Covenant Status similarly within the chosen covenant.

City Status reflects a vampire's sway in the city, whether official or unofficial. There's no specific dot rating tied to a given position. For instance, a Prince may have three dots of City Status, if the city doesn't respect his authority as much as the Sheriff with five dots.

Clan Status reflects notoriety and recognition within the clan. Typically, a character with high Clan Status is iconic within the clan. A character with five dots of Ventrue Status is whom most Kindred think of when they speak of the clan Ventrue. Kindred recognize a low-Status character as a frequent collaborator within clan circles.

A character may not gain Status in a clan to which she does not belong.

Covenant Status is generally tied to positions and direct authority within covenant structure. A character with five dots of Covenant Status is a regional leader within the covenant, a character with one dot has minor responsibilities to their organization of choice. Additionally, each covenant has available Merits that scale depending on Covenant Status dots.

A character could theoretically gain Status within multiple covenants. Most of the covenants will allow members to dabble in other organizations, so long as they don't share secrets. The Ordo Dracul, for example, will not stop a member from attending Sanctified mass. But the moment she shares her knowledge of the Coils, she'll find her Requiem cut abruptly short. Her combined dots in one type of Status (City, Clan, or Covenant) cannot exceed five, and she may never have as many dots in her affiliated group as she does to the group to which she belongs.

Kiss of the Succubus (•)

Prerequisite: Must be Daeva

Effect: All Kindred can evoke lustful, passionate reactions with a bite. The Daeva's bite is downright addicting. Her Kiss causes the Addicted Condition in mortals as well as the Swooning Condition (for Addicted, see p. 301; for Swooning, see p. 306).

Drawback: This gift is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it keeps blood dolls coming back. On the other, they won't stay away.

Lineage (•)

Prerequisite: Clan Status •

Effect: You come from strong stock. Your sire's well known, and his influence bleeds onto your interactions. Once per chapter, this Merit can represent a single dot of one of the following Merits: Allies, Contacts, Mentor, Resources, or Status. The Merit must be one your sire may have possessed.

Drawback: Calling on your sire's reputation taxes his social capital. He may ask for repayment for using his name.

Lorekeeper (•)

Prerequisites: Lancea et Sanctum Status •

Effect: The Spear is tasked with the acquisition and maintenance of history and mystical secrets. Most devoted members of the covenant establish and maintain libraries. Since most of this knowledge has to pass through mortal hands, the Sanctum also tends to attract those, likeminded, who wish to surround themselves with ancient secrets. When a member of the Lancea et Sanctum with this Merit buys the Library Merit (see p. 121), she also receives dots in the Retainers and Herd Merits, divided however she chooses.

Drawback: The Retainers and Herd afforded by this Merit are drawn in by the lure of forbidden knowledge. To maintain these advantages, the vampire must be willing to let slip at least some of that information to her mortal retinue. Unfortunately, sometimes mortal librarians aren't quite as zealous about defending their secrets.

The Mother-Daughter Bond (•)

Prerequisites: Circle of the Crone Status •

Effect: The Circle exists through tribulation and mentorship. Without tight-knit bonds, the Circle would never have survived its tumultuous early years. When a member of the Circle with this Merit purchases the Mentor Merit, that Mentor is protected by the True Friend Merit (see p. 124). The vampire does not have to purchase True Friend to take this advantage.

Drawback: Strong bonds go both ways. The mentor is likely to have stronger requirements than most teachers, and will require a substantial amount of the vampire's time. More importantly, she'll demand loyalty, if not monogamy.

Night Doctor Surgery (•••)

Prerequisite: Carthian Status ••

Effect: Carthians have adapted a bit of real-world surgery and a little body horror into a series of morbid reconstruction techniques to help injured Kindred heal. Night Doctor Surgery helps bones reset, and speeds the knitting of flesh. With an hour of treatment, roll Intelligence + Medicine. Each success converts one point of lethal damage to bashing. Alternatively, three successes can convert one point of aggravated damage to lethal damage. Failure means the wounds remain; dramatic failure upgrades three points of bashing to lethal, or two lethal to aggravated. With Storyteller discretion, this Merit and Willpower expenditure may be used over time to make changes to facial appearance.

Drawback: Knowledge of Night Doctor Surgery affords a great responsibility. If your identity is known, the Movement will call on your services frequently. For this reason, most Night Doctors use pseudonyms (usually a letter, like Doctor H), performing their services while masked. You cannot perform

Night Doctor Surgery on yourself. You may only make one attempt to treat a given injury.

Speaker for the Silent (•••)

Prerequisite: Dynasty Membership •, Invictus Status •

Effect: Any Kindred may be part of a dynastic house, but the Invictus take dynasty membership very seriously. Some members receive training to channel the minds of torpid dynasty members. With this Merit, the character can choose to act as a medium for a torpid elder's consciousness. While possessed, the Speaker is aware of what occurs around him, but the torpid Kindred has control of his body, and can speak through him. The torpid Kindred retains no access to her Disciplines while possessing a Speaker. At any time, the Speaker can spend a point of Willpower to eject the torpid mind. The torpid Kindred can relinquish her control at will.

Pack Alpha (•)

Prerequisite: Must be Gangrel

Effect: You're pack-minded. Your blood draws to blood. You may designate a coterie of Kindred and ghouls as your pack. Every Gangrel has a different method for the designation. Some anoint with blood. Some have hazing rituals. When the pack takes teamwork actions, the supporting characters gain the 8-again quality on their rolls. The anchor character does not, but still adds dice equal to the others' successes.

Removing a pack member must be done by force. You must cause lethal damage in one of their last three Health boxes, then exile them from your presence for at least a week.

Drawback: When a member of your pack defies you, you must make an example of them or lose a point of Willpower.

Unnatural Affinity (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character can take nourishment from the blood of some of the stranger creatures of the World of Darkness. Each dot of this Merit allows your character to gain sustenance from one type of supernatural creature. This may mean werewolves, ghosts, mummies, zombies, or stranger things still. This blood counts as Kindred Vitae for the purposes of feeding restrictions.

Drawback: This advantage does not inherently mean the character is (more) able to feed from the chosen subject. For example, ghosts exist in an ethereal state, and don't have physical blood. Werewolves are notoriously difficult to feed from for more practical reasons that often end in Final Death. If you take this Merit, work with your Storyteller to determine how your character might feed from these monsters.

Swarm Form (••)

Prerequisite: Protean •••

Effect: When taking the Beast's Skin, some Gangrel can instead become a swarm of small creatures: Size 0 or Size 1 animals. The character may perceive through any of the senses of any individual creature in the swarm, but the swarm acts as a single entity.

The swarm may spread over five yards or meters per dot of Blood Potency. Creatures beyond that range die and rapidly decompose. The swarm moves at the vampire's Speed, modified for the creatures' Size, in any logical direction.

The swarm limits visibility and hearing, and causes panic in all those present. Everyone within the swarm's area suffers the persistent Distracted Condition (see p.302) until they get away. With Storyteller discretion, a swarm may have other features suited to the swarm animal. For example, rats should be better at biting through barricades.

The swarm resists most harm. Roll attacks against the swarm as normal, but after factoring armor and other modifiers, the swarm only takes one point of damage of the appropriate type at most, or two points of damage with an exceptional success. Fire, sunlight, explosions, and other large-scale threats cause normal harm to the swarm, which is affected by banes as normal. To attack those within her swarm, roll Strength + Brawl, ignoring Defense. Divide the damage however you wish among those inside. Apply a victim's armor to the damage normally. The damage is lethal (bashing to Kindred). Alternately, a success may instead allow the vampire to take one Vitae from a victim.

Secret Society Junkie (•)

Prerequisites: Ordo Dracul Status •

Effect: The Ordo Dracul exist within one of the most secret of secret societies. But many of its members participate in other such organizations in mortal (or other) spheres. Members of such secret societies tend to draw toward the Dragon, like a moths to a flame. When the vampire takes Status or Mystery Cult Initiation (see p. 121) reflecting non-Kindred organizations, she also gains Herd dots equal to the Merit.

Sworn (•)

Prerequisites: Ordo Dracul Status •

Effect: Your character is not only a member of the Ordo Dracul, she's sworn to serve one of its branches. When taking this Merit, choose to which faction she belongs (the Axe, the Dying Light, or Mysteries typically). She gains dots equal to her Covenant Status to split between the Mentor and Retainer Merits. These reflect teachers and wards within the faction. She can swap these Merits out between chapters, as she receives new assignments.

Sworn of the Axe must defend the sanctity of the Order's secrets. They're the soldiers and assassins expected to clean up any leaks. If a Dragon leaks knowledge of the Coils, they can expect a visit from the Sworn of the Axe.

Sworn of the Dying Light act as the research and development wing of the Ordo Dracul. The Sworn dedicate themselves to learning, teaching, and creating Coils.

Sworn of the Mysteries are the guiding hands of the Order as a whole. They make sweeping decisions determining the

covenant's political and social directions. They're expected to know the affairs of all local chapter houses.

Drawback: Being Sworn is no easy task. It means being tied inexorably to the covenant, with deep and time-demanding responsibilities. Your character cannot go two full nights without devoting at least some time to covenant affairs, or she'll be punished.

I Know a Guy (•)

Prerequisites: Carthian Status •

Effect: When Carthians make Allies (see p. 118), their covenant acts as a sort of support network that bolsters the efficiency of those allies. Once per story, a Carthian may access temporary Retainer dots equal to their Allies. These Retainers act in the Carthian's interest, just like any other Retainers. (Since Allies gained with Carthian Pull don't really belong to the character as a Merit, they don't count for purposes of I Know A Guy.)

Drawback: These Retainers represent the Allies group in question, and will serve its interests first and foremost. If the Carthian wants them to do something contrary to the group's interest, she'll need to manipulate, threaten, or otherwise risk her relationship with her Allies.

Touchstone (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has multiple Touchstones. Each dot in the Touchstone Merit allows for an additional Touchstone. Look to the Touchstone chart for which Humanity dot each new Touchstone is applied to. For more on Touchstones, see p. 87.

Drawback: Losing attachment with Touchstones will speed the loss of Humanity. As well, if your character's last Touchstone dies or is destroyed, your character will feel the call of torpor.

Undead Menses (••)

Effect: Throughout history, various cultures attributed mystical significance to the menstrual cycle. Many of these myths carried stigmas against menses, due to the unhealthy fears of men in power.

With this Merit, your character still produces menstrual blood. Once per night, she can produce a viscous, dark blood. If she uses this blood in casting a Crúac ritual, she benefits from the 8-again quality. If she touches it to a person before affecting them with a Discipline, they suffer her Blood Potency as a penalty to his Resistance.

Drawback: The character must identify as female. If she draws forth her Undead Menses multiple times in an evening, each beyond the first causes her a level of aggravated damage. As well, any attempts to identify her by her menstrual blood gain a +5 die bonus.

Unsettling Gaze (•)

Prerequisites: Must be Nosferatu

Effect: All Haunts have an unsettling effect. Your character's Beast oozes with terror. When she evokes the monstrous Beast (see p. 91), she unsettles her target deeply and makes him question himself. Any time she infects a victim with the Bestial Condition and scores an exceptional success, she also forces a breaking point if the victim has a higher Humanity (or Integrity) than hers.

Drawback: Forcing a breaking point in another is also a breaking point for your character if her Humanity is 3 or higher.

Where the Bodies Are Buried ••

Prerequisites: Invictus Status ••

Effect: The Conspiracy of Silence covers up a lot of secrets... and your character's been quietly keeping track. A number of times equal to your Invictus Status per story, you can ask one of the following questions about another vampire whose name and covenant affiliation you know:

- Who would this vampire run to if he were in trouble?
- Who is this vampire's most frequent vessel?
- What is this vampire's main source of income?
- Who is this vampire's closest living family member?
- Has this vampire covered up the murder of a human?

Drawback: Digging into this information attracts attention. At least one fellow member of the Invictus will know you were investigating the vampire.

Multiple Touchstones

Touchstone Merit	Associated Humanity
0 dots	6
•	5
••	4
•••	3
••••	2
•••••	1

Carthian Law

Carthian Law Merits stand as the Carthian Movement's edge in Kindred society. Each affords the Carthian certain advantages pertaining to the recognized law of the city. In many cases, this law did not come from the Carthians, but that doesn't mean they can't use it to their advantage. Carthian Law gives Kindred law a sort of metaphysical weight which prevents a city's residents from breaching protocol. Carthians have learned to leverage that, making them valuable to even cities without a Carthian government.

Lex Terrae (••)

Prerequisites: Carthian Status ••, Feeding Ground •

Effect: Territory is bond. Feeding ground is sacrosanct. Any blood poached from your character's Feeding Ground is tainted for Kindred she has not specifically allowed. When next a poacher sleeps, the blood dissolves in his gullet. When he wakes, he violently retches, taking one bashing damage per Vitae lost. As well, his lips and mouth stain with black streaks that paint him as a poacher. These marks last for one week.

Drawback: This Merit requires a clearly-defined and publicly announced feeding ground.

Mandate from the Masses (•••••)

Prerequisites: Carthian Status •••••

Effect: Carthians wield consensus the way a cop wields a baton. With the power of the Movement behind her, a ranking Carthian can call on the will of her people to strike weakness into the Movement's opposition. With her words and the mandate, she strips a Kindred enemy's blood down to nothingness. To enact this law, your character must make a clear and direct admonishment against one of the Movement's enemies. Cross a dot of Willpower off the Carthian's sheet. She must also garner the support of others of the Movement for a vote — from both Storyteller characters and players' characters. If the vote favors the admonishment, add the total dots of Carthian Status in support (including the user's five). For every five dots, reduce the victim's Blood Potency by one dot. If this reduces him to zero dots, he effectively becomes a revenant (see p. 94 for rules on revenants).

Drawback: The Willpower dot (belonging to the vampire who invoked the mandate) and Blood Potency (belonging to the victim) only come back if the victim flees the city or meets Final Death. If the Carthian meets Final Death, the victim immediately regains his lost Blood Potency. A single vampire may only be victim to one instance of this Merit at a time.

Right of Return (••)

Prerequisites: Carthian Status ••, City Status •

Effect: This somewhat rare Merit allows a Carthian to work within another covenant without fear of her covenant's ostracism. After all, Carthians aim for human solutions, and nothing is more human than the ability to adapt and socialize.

With this Merit, the character's Carthian Status does not count toward her normal limitations on multiple Covenant Status Merits. She can have as many as five dots of the Covenant Status Merit, not counting her Carthian Status. While individual characters may oppose your character's cosmopolitan membership practices, she's adept at defending them. In any Social Maneuvering with members of a covenant she claims Status in, treat her impressions as one step better (see p. 173 for more on Social Actions).

Drawback: Kindred remain ever paranoid, particularly with a Carthian in their midst. Every step she takes receives the utmost scrutiny. Your character loses the 10-again quality on rolls to hide suspicious behavior from members of her other covenants.

Strength of Resolution (•)

Prerequisites: Carthian Status •

Effect: A Carthian stands resolute in the face of that which would force her to violate the law. Add her Carthian Status to any dice pool to contest a Discipline or other supernatural power which would coax her to violate acknowledged city law.

Plausible Deniability (••••)

Prerequisites: Carthian Status •••

Effect: Carthians don't break laws; they defy laws. Influential Carthians can throw law to the wind, then laugh it off with an argument about the definition of the word "is." Any attempt to use a Discipline or other supernatural power to prove your character's guilt in breach of city law or Tradition automatically fails. She cannot be forced to confess by any means, and attempts to detect her honesty through mundane means suffer her Carthian Status as a penalty. She exhibits no stains on her aura from diablerie.

Drawback: It's one thing to deny the truth. It's another to deny the truth to witnesses. You lose the ability to use your City Status and Carthian Status dots in any Social rolls against anyone who knows for certain of your character's guilt, and opposes her.

Invictus Oaths

Invictus Oaths are the First Estate's ace in the hole, its way of establishing and maintaining a rigid and effective hierarchy. An Invictus Notary officiates Oaths; a character with the Notary Merit can preside over any Oath, so long as the participants meet the prerequisites for the Merit. Recognized and manumitted Invictus must have at least one active Oath. This is to say Invictus require the presence of a Notary for their induction.

Each Oath is a two-way street, with two active participants: the liege and vassal. The vassal must purchase the Oath Merit to gain its advantages; the liege does not. When swearing an Oath, the participants must define terms in addition to the Oath's effects. Usually, they swear for a finite time, often a year and a day. Terms include conditions for violation, which end the contract (and the Oath's effects) immediately. Unless otherwise noted, the vassal does not have to be Invictus; in fact, most are not. In rare cases, ghouls or other mortals enter Oaths. Most Notaries refuse to preside over such agreements.

Typically, Oaths are temporary. Merit dots revert when the Oath ends; see The Sanctity of Merits on p. 109.

Notary (••)

Prerequisites: Invictus Status •••

Effect: The Invictus appointed your character a Notary, a scholar of Oaths. She presides over Oath agreements. Because of your standing as an arbiter of the status quo, Invictus may not use their Invictus Status in rolls against you. As well, each

month, you may request access to a single dot of Allies, Contacts, Herd, Mentor, or Resources, granted by the covenant at large.

Drawback: Invictus are deathly serious about the sanctity of Oaths. If you're caught knowingly administering an unwilling Oath, or Oath a non-Invictus as liege in an agreement, the Invictus will remove you from the Estate. Usually, this removal comes through Final Death.

Oath of Action (••••)

Effect: With this Oath, a vassal swears to perform a service to his liege. The service must be a difficult task with definite criteria for accomplishment or failure. At the time of the swearing, both parties agree upon one of the liege's Disciplines. The vassal gains access to that Discipline. The liege's Blood Potency increases by one. This Oath stands as a rare exception to bloodline Disciplines: a vassal may temporarily access a liege's bloodline gift.

If the vassal accomplishes the task, the Oath ends and the liege suffers aggravated damage equal to the Discipline dots granted. If the vassal fails the task or a month passes, he suffers the damage instead. While not uncommon, some domains consider a liege's interference in the task to be bad form. The liege does not lose access to the Disicpline.

Drawback: A character may be part of only one Oath of Action at a time, as vassal or liege.

Oath of Fealty (•)

Prerequisites: Invictus Status •

Effect: This most basic Oath establishes a foundation of trust within the Invictus. The vassal may draw a number of Vitae from his liege equal to his Invictus Status in a given week. This Vitae transfers mystically over any distance, and replenishes the vassal's pool without risk of Vitae addiction or blood bond. The liege always knows if the vassal lies to her, in voice or in writing.

Drawback: A vassal may only owe fealty to one liege.

Oath of Penance (•••)

Effect: This Oath is a form of apology from a vassal to an aggrieved liege. For the agreed-upon term, the liege receives every tenth Vitae the vassal ingests. This Vitae comes over any distance, without risk of blood bond or addiction, and counts as Kindred Vitae. Some ancient Invictus use this Oath to skirt their need for Kindred blood, by establishing massive networks of "punished" vassals. During the same period, the vassal becomes immune to the liege's Discipline effects.

Drawback: While a vassal is paying penance, she may not gain the benefits of any other Oath. She retains their drawbacks.

Oath of Serfdom (••)

Effect: This Oath is a contract between a landlord and a tenant. In Invictus domains, Princes often use this Oath as the go-to for granting territory. Young Invictus refer to this practice as "castling." Oath of Serfdom agreements typically involve "red rent," a certain blood tithe given to the landlord regularly.

While in her granted land or when defending her liege, the vassal gains access to a dot of Celerity, Resilience, or Vigor, chosen at the swearing of the Oath. She must still pay relevant activation costs. As well, she instinctively knows when another creature with the predatory aura enters her territory, and from what direction. If she knows the trespasser, she can identify him. The liege gains the vassal's Feeding Ground Merit dots in any rolls against her. As well, he becomes immune to blood bonds from the vassal.

Kindred Fighting Merits

The Danse Macabre provides mechanisms to avoid overt violence between Kindred. However, even the most civilized Kindred cities are far deadlier than their mortal counterparts. Despite a façade of nicety, Kindred society holds numerous violent traditions. From the Invictus rite of Monomacy, to a Carthian jumping in ceremony, violence is far more commonplace than anyone wants to admit.

These Merits reflect specific tricks vampires developed to kill one another efficiently.

Kindred Dueling (Style, • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Fighting Finesse, Composure •••, Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character is not only a competent fighter, but also one trained specifically to take advantage of Kindred variables in a fight. Use of Kindred dueling requires an edged weapon. While humans could theoretically learn some of these tricks, the practical experience required could prove deadly. Note that Kindred Dueling abilities may not be used together. If you're using Hamstring, you cannot benefit from Carving as well.

Hamstring (•): With a well-placed tendon strike, you can briefly cripple a vampire's ability to augment their physical prowess with Vitae. By targeting a limb (and taking the penalty to do so), your successful strike can deny that limb from the benefits of Physical Intensity (see p. 91) for a turn. The rest of the body may still use those advantages.

Taunt (••): You know the way the Beast works, and how to taunt it with short, shallow swipes. Before you roll, remove a number of dice from your pool no greater than your Weaponry dots. Make your roll. If the attack succeeds, the victim must roll to resist frenzy, with a penalty equal to the number of dice you removed.

Carving (•••): When you strike, you curve the blade hard and strike to pull the flesh apart, making it harder to heal in the heat of the moment. When Carving, your weapon's damage rating deals lethal damage to Kindred instead of bashing.

Pincushion (••••): You hit deep, intending to lodge your weapon in its victim. If you choose to leave your weapon in the victim on a successful strike, the victim cannot heal the wound with Vitae. You may remove the weapon as a reflexive action. If anyone else wishes to remove it, he can attempt a Strength + Stamina roll, minus the damage caused, as an instant action.

Spray (•••••): You cut to remove mass from the body, and by extension, blood. Sacrifice your Defense for the turn to use this maneuver. On a successful attack roll, you can choose to remove Vitae from your opponent instead of Health levels. You can divide Health levels of damage and Vitae in any combination after the roll.

Riding the Wave (Style, • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Composure •••, Resolve •••

Effect: Your character runs with her Beast, and knows how to use it to her advantage. She's turned riding the wave into a raw, primal art. These maneuvers may only be used while riding the wave. They cannot be used in a normal frenzy, or outside of frenzy.

Ravage (•): Due to your character's connection to her Beast, her fangs become horrendous weapons. They look no different, but her Beast knows how to use them with the utmost efficiency. While riding the wave, they become 1L weapons when used in a bite attack.

Primal Strength (••): Your character's Beast blasts outward in short bursts, in order to accomplish quick feats of strength. When lifting, jumping, or destroying objects as an instant action, double the Strength bonus aquired while in frenzy.

In the Zone (•••): When attempting to leash the Beast and ride the wave, your character still operates at peak efficiency. She still has to spend Willpower points in order to make rolls to ride the wave, but those Willpower points also give a +3 die bonus to any action taken in the turn.

Unyielding (••••): Your character rides the wave frequently; it ceases to be taxing on her mental reserves. After a scene where she successfully rides the wave, she recovers any Willpower spent to initiate the ride.

Animal Grace (•••••): Your character dodges and strikes as fluidly as an animal, with confidence and awareness. When spending Willpower to attack or defend, gain both benefits. Add a +2 die bonus to Defense, and a +3 die bonus to attack rolls.

Human Merits

Any vampire can possess these Merits, but they're also available to and relatively common choices for players portraying mortal characters.

For additional Merits available to all characters, see p. 158 of **The God-Machine Chronicle**.

For Merits specific to mortals and ghouls, see p. 298.

Allies(• to •••••)

Effect: Allies help your character. They might be friends, employees, associates, or people your character has blackmailed. Each instance of this Merit represents one type of ally. This could be an individual, or the members of an organization, society, or clique. Examples include a covenant, the police, a secret society, organized crime, unions, local politics, and the academic community. Each purchase has its own rating. Your character might have Allies (Masons) ••, Allies (Carter Crime Family) •••, Allies (Carthian Movement) ••••, and Allies (Catholic Church) •.

Each dot represents a layer of influence in the group. One dot would constitute small favors and passing influence. Three could offer considerable influence, such as the overlooking of a misdemeanor charge by the police. Five dots allows favors that stretch the limits of the organization's influence, as its leaders put their own influence on the line for the character. This could include things such as ignoring massive insider trading or fouling up a felony investigation. No matter the request, it has to be something that organization could accomplish.

The Storyteller assigns a rating between one and five to any favor asked. A character can ask for favors that add up to her Allies rating without penalty in one chapter. If she extends her influence beyond that, her player must roll Manipulation + Persuasion + Allies, with a penalty equal to the favor's rating. If the roll is successful, the group does as requested. Whether the roll fails or succeeds, the character loses a dot of Allies. This dot may return at the end of the chapter. On a dramatic failure, the organization resents her and seeks retribution. On an exceptional success, she doesn't lose the dot even temporarily.

One additional favor a character can ask of her Allies is to block another character's Allies, Contacts, Mentor, Retainer, or Status (if she knows the character possesses the relevant Merit). The rating is equal to the Merit dots blocked. As before, no roll is necessary unless the target's Merit exceeds the character's Allies. If the block succeeds, the blocked character cannot use the Merit during the same chapter.

Alternate Identity (•, ••, or •••)

Effect: Your character has established an alternate identity. The level of this Merit determines the amount of scrutiny it can withstand. At one dot, the identity is superficial and unofficial. For example, your character uses an alias with a simple costume and adopts an accent. She hasn't established the necessary paperwork to even approach a bureaucratic background check, let alone pass. At two dots, she's supported her identity with paperwork and identification. It's not liable to stand up to extensive research, but it'll turn away private investigators and internet hobbyists. At three dots, the identity can pass thorough inspection. The identity has been deeply entrenched in relevant databases, with subtle flourishes and details to make it seem real even to trained professionals.

The Merit also reflects time the character has spent honing the persona. At one or two dots, she gains a +1 die bonus to all Subterfuge rolls to defend the identity. At three dots, she gains a +2 die bonus.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times, each time representing an additional identity.

Anonymity (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Cannot have Fame

Effect: Your character lives off the grid. She could have been dead for decades, making new identification difficult. This means purchases must be made with cash or falsified credit

cards. She avoids any official authoritative influence in her affairs. Any attempts to find her by paper trail suffer a –1 die penalty per dot purchased in this Merit.

Drawback: Your character cannot purchase the Fame Merit. This also may limit Status purchases, if the character cannot provide sufficient identification for the roles she wishes to take.

Area of Expertise (•)

Prerequisite: Resolve •• and one Skill Specialty

Effect: Your character is uncommonly specialized in one area. Choose a Specialty to assign to this Merit. Forgo the +1 die bonus afforded by a Specialty in exchange for a +2 die bonus.

Barfly (••)

Prerequisite: Socialize ••

Effect: Your character is a natural in the Rack and can procure an open invitation wherever she wishes. Whereas most characters would require rolls to blend into social functions they don't belong in, she doesn't; she belongs. Subtract her Socialize from any rolls to identify her as an outsider.

Contacts (•)

Effect: Contacts provide your character with information. This Merit can be taken multiple times; each instance represents a sphere or organization with which the character can garner information. For example, a character with three dots of Contacts might have Bloggers, Drug Dealers, and Vampire Hunters for connections. Contacts do not provide services, only information. This may be face-to-face, by email or telephone, or even by séance in some strange instances.

Garnering information via Contacts requires a Manipulation + Social Skill roll, depending on the method the character uses. The Storyteller should give a bonus or penalty to the roll, depending on the following factors: how relevant the information is to that particular Contact, whether accessing the information is dangerous, and whether the character has maintained good relations with or done favors for the Contact. These modifiers should range from a –3 die penalty to a +3 die bonus in most cases. If successful, the Contact provides the information.

One use of a Contact is to dig up dirt on another character. A Contact can find another character's Social Merits and any relevant Conditions (Embarrassing Secret is a prime example).

If someone attempts to block Contacts with the Allies Merit, add up all Contacts dots to determine the effective rating, to a maximum of five.

Double Jointed (••)

Prerequisite: Dexterity •••

Effect: Your character might have been a contortionist or spent time practicing yoga. She can dislodge joints when need

be. She automatically escapes from any mundane bonds without a roll. When grappled, subtract her Dexterity from any rolls to overpower her as long as she's not taking any aggressive actions.

Etiquette (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Composure •••, Socialize ••

Your character knows her way around society, customs, and traditions. More importantly, she can use this talent to make or break reputations. This Merit applies to any social interactions where etiquette, style, poise, and reputation carry weight, and uses the Social Maneuvering rules on p. 173.

Bless His Heart (•): Your character's words are always well-considered. No matter how vile, the things she says come off as defensible and respectful. When a character engages yours in a Social interaction, you may opt to use your character's Socialize score instead of the lower of her Resolve and Composure to determine her starting Doors.

Losing Your Religion (••): When your character lets loose and insults someone, she leaves mouths agape. When tearing down a target verbally, use 8-again, and take a +2 die bonus to the roll. Afterwards, move the interaction one step down on the impressions chart.

In High Cotton (•••): Your character cultivates standing and respect, and carries it like a knight wears armor. You may apply one relevant Status or Fame Merit to rolls to contest Social interactions. Other Merits may apply with Storyteller permission.

Half-Cocked (••••): Your character is always prepared. On the other hand, others are not. In a new Social interaction, if the impression is good, excellent, or perfect, ignore the subject's Resolve and Composure on the first roll.

Grace Under Fire (•••••): While your character may not always win, she never looks bad. If a character opens all her Doors, and you opt to offer an alternative, his player chooses three Conditions. You choose which one your character receives.

Fame (• to •••)

Effect: Your character is recognized within a certain sphere for a certain skill, or because of some past action, or just a stroke of luck. This can mean favors and attention, but it can also mean negative attention and scrutiny. This can tax the Masquerade if one's not careful. When choosing the Merit, define what your character is known for. One dot reflects local recognition or reputation within a confined subculture. Two dots means regional recognition by a wide swath of people. Three dots means worldwide recognition to anyone who might have been exposed to the source of the fame. Each dot adds a die to any Social rolls among those who are impressed by your character's celebrity.

Drawback: Any rolls to find or identify the character enjoy a +1 die bonus per dot of the Merit. If the character has Alternate Identity, she can mitigate this drawback. A character with Fame cannot have the Anonymity Merit.

Fast-Talking (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Manipulation •••, Subterfuge ••

Your character talks circles around listeners. She speaks a mile a minute and often leaves her targets reeling, but nodding in agreement.

Always Be Closing (•): With the right leading phrases, your character can direct a mark to say what she wants, when she wants. This trips the mark into vulnerable positions. When a mark contests or resists your character's Social interactions, apply a –1 die penalty to his Resolve or Composure.

Jargon (••): Your character confuses her mark using complex terminology. You may apply one relevant Specialty to any Social roll you make, even if the Specialty isn't tied to the Skill in use.

Devil's Advocacy (•••): Your character often poses arguments she doesn't agree with in order to challenge a mark's position and keep him from advancing discussion. You can reroll one failed Subterfuge roll per scene.

Salting (••••): Your character can position herself so a mark pursues a non-issue or something unimportant to her. When your character opens a Door using conversation (Persuasion, Subterfuge, Empathy, etc.) you may spend a Willpower point to immediately open another Door.

Patron's Privilege (•••••): Your character can take advantage of her mark's greed and zeal. When the mark does particularly well, it's because your character was there to set him up and to subsequently tear him down. If a target regains Willpower from his Vice while your character is present, you may immediately roll Manipulation + Subterfuge to open a Door, regardless of the interval or impression level.

Fleet of Foot (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Athletics ••

Effect: Your character is remarkably quick and runs far faster than her frame suggests. She gains +1 Speed per dot; anyone pursuing her suffers a –1 die penalty per dot to any foot chase rolls.

Hobbyist Clique (••)

Prerequisite: Membership in a clique. All members must possess this Merit and the chosen Skill at ••+

Effect: Your character is part of a group of hobbyists that specializes in one area, as represented by a Skill. It may be a book club, a coven, a political party, or any other interest. Many Kindred choose to cultivate this group as a Herd as well (see p. 112). When the group's support is available, you benefit from the 9-again quality on rolls involving the group's chosen Skill. As well, the clique offers a +2 die bonus on any extended actions involving that Skill.

Drawback: This Merit requires upkeep. You must attend at least monthly, informal meetings to maintain the benefits of Hobbyist Clique.

Indomitable (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve •••

Your character possesses an unyielding will. The powers of the supernatural have little bearing on her behavior. She can stand up to Kindred Dominate, a witch's charms, or a ghost's gifts of fright. Any time a supernatural creature uses a power to influence your character's thoughts or emotions, add a +2 die bonus to the dice pool to contest it. If the roll is resisted, instead subtract a –2 die penalty from the monster's dice pool. Note that this only affects mental influence and manipulation from a supernatural origin. A vampire with a remarkable Manipulation + Persuasion score is just as likely to convince your character to do something using mundane tricks.

Inspiring (•••)

Prerequisite: Presence •••

Effect: Your character's passion inspires those around her to greatness. With a few words, she can redouble a group's confidence or move them to action.

Make a Presence + Expression roll. A small clique of listeners levies a –1 die penalty, a small crowd a –2, and a large crowd a –3. Listeners gain the Inspired Condition. The character may not use this Merit on herself.

Interdisciplinary Specialty (•)

Prerequisite: Skill at ••• or higher with a Specialty

Effect: Choose a Specialty that your character possesses when you purchase this Merit. You can apply the +1 die bonus from that Specialty on any Skill with at least one dot, provided it's justifiable within the scope of the fiction. For example, a doctor with a Medicine Specialty in Anatomy may be able to use it when targeting a specific body part with Weaponry, but could not with a general strike.

Iron Will (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve ••••

Effect: Your character's resolve is unwavering. When spending Willpower to contest or resist in a Social interaction, you may substitute your character's Resolve for the usual Willpower bonus. If the roll is contested, roll with 8-again.

Language (•)

Effect: Your character is skilled with an additional language beyond her native tongue. Choose a language each time you buy this Merit. Your character can speak, read, and write in that language.

Library (• to •••)

Effect: Your character has access to a plethora of information about a given topic. When purchasing this Merit, choose a Mental Skill. The Library covers that purview. On any extended roll involving the Skill in question, add the dots in this Merit. This Merit can be purchased multiple times to reflect different Skills. Its benefits can be shared by various characters with permission.

Mentor (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit gives your character a teacher who provides advice and guidance. He acts on your character's behalf, often in the background and sometimes without your character's knowledge. This may be a sire, a covenant leader, or other figure. While Mentors can be highly competent, they almost always want something in return for their services. The dot rating determines the Mentor's capabilities, and to what extent he'll aid your character.

When establishing a Mentor, determine what the Mentor wants from your character. The dot rating chosen should reflect the importance of the objective to him. A one-dot Mentor might be incapable of dealing with modern society and wants to live vicariously through your character. This might mean coming to him and telling stories of your character's exploits. A five-dot Mentor would want something beyond price, such as an oath to procure an ancient, cursed artifact that may or may not exist in order to prevent his prophesized death.

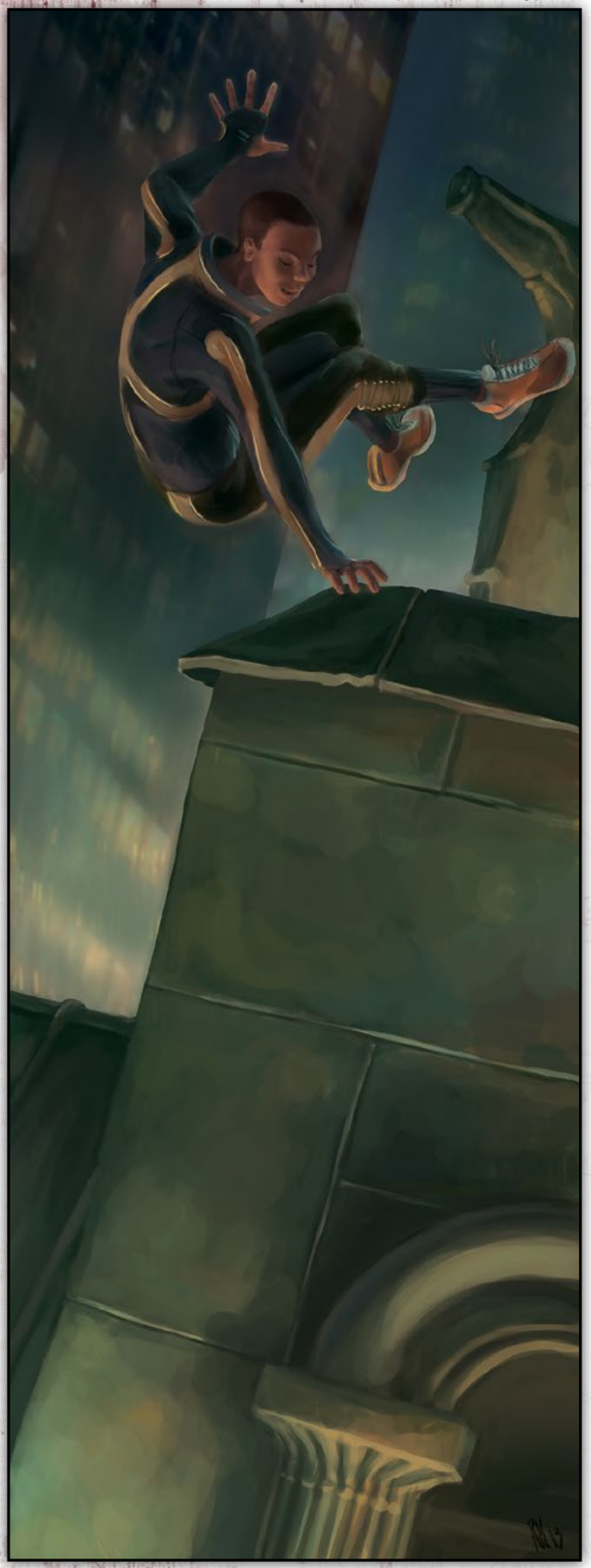
Choose three Skills the Mentor possesses. You can substitute Resources for one of these Skills. Once per session, the character may ask her Mentor for a favor. The favor must involve one of those Skills or be within the scope of his Resources. The Mentor commits to the favor (often asking for a commensurate favor in return); and if a roll is required on the Mentor's part to secure the favor, he is automatically considered to have successes equal to his dot rating. Alternately, the player may ask the Storyteller to have the Mentor act on her character's behalf, without her character knowing or initiating the request.

Mystery Cult Initiation (• to •••••)

Cults are far more common than the people of the World of Darkness would like to admit. Mystery cult is the catch-all term for a phenomenon ranging from secret societies couched in fraternity houses and scholarly cabals studying the magic of classical symbolism to mystical suicide cults to the God-Machine.

Mystery Cult Initiation reflects membership in one of these esoteric groups. The dot rating dictates standing. One dot is an initiate, two a respected member, three a priest or organizer, four a decision-making leader, five a high priest or founder. If you wish your character to begin play in a cult, work with your Storyteller to develop the details.

Designing a Mystery Cult requires three things, at bare minimum. First is a Purpose. This is the defining reason the cult exists. Usually, it's tied in with the cult's history and recent background. Second is a Relic. This is an item that grounds its members' faith. For example, a piece of the God-Machine, an ancient text bound in human flesh, or the mummified flesh of a saint. The last is a Doctrine. Every cult is defined by its rules and traditions.



In addition to standing, a Mystery Cult Initiation Merit offers benefits at each level of influence. Develop these as well. The following are guidelines; use them to craft your own cults:

- • A Skill Specialty or one-dot Merit pertaining to the lessons taught to initiates.
- •• A one-dot Merit.
- ••• A Skill dot or a two-dot Merit (often a supernatural Merit).
- •••• A three-dot Merit, often supernatural in origin.
- ••••• A three-dot Merit or a major advantage not reflected in game traits.

Parkour (Style, • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, Athletics ••

Your character is a trained and proficient free-runner. Free-running is the art of moving fluidly through urban environments with complex leaps, bounds, running tricks, and vaulting. This is the type of sport popularized in modern action films, where characters are unhindered by fences, walls, construction equipment, cars, or anything else the city puts in their ways.

Flow (•): Your character reacts instinctively to any obstacles with leaps, jumps, and scaling techniques. When in a foot chase, subtract your Parkour from the successes needed to pursue or evade. Ignore environmental penalties to Athletics rolls equal to your Parkour rating.

Cat Leap (••): Your character falls with outstanding grace. Normally, characters take one level of bashing damage for every ten feet fallen. Every success on a Dexterity + Athletics roll reduces the effective height by ten feet. However, if the character would take lethal damage from the fall, the Dexterity + Athletics roll will not reduce the damage. Parkour mitigates this limitation. Additionally, add your Parkour rating to the threshold of damage that can be removed through this roll. Parkour will not mitigate damage from a terminal velocity fall.

Wall Run (•••): When climbing, your character can run upward for some distance before having to traditionally climb. Without rolling, your character scales 10 feet + five feet per dot of Athletics as an instant action, rather than the normal 10 feet.

Expert Traceur (••••): Parkour has become second nature for your character. By spending a Willpower point, you may designate one Athletics roll to run, jump, or climb as a rote action (reroll all failed dice once). On any turn you use this ability, you may not apply your character's Defense to oncoming attacks.

Freeflow (•••••): Your character's Parkour is now muscle memory. She can move without thinking in a zen-like state. The character must run for at least a full minute in order to establish Freeflow. Once established, your character is capable of taking Athletics actions reflexively once per turn. By spending a point of Willpower on an Athletics roll in a foot chase, gain three successes instead of three dice.

Resources (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit reflects your character's disposable income. She might live in an upscale condo, but if her income is tied up in the mortgage and child support payments, she might have little money to throw around. Characters are assumed to have basic necessities without Resources.

The dot rating determines the relative amount of disposable funding the character has available, depending on your particular chronicle's setting. The same amount of money means completely different things in a game set in Silicon Valley compared to one set in the Detroit slums. One dot is a little spending money here and there. Two is a comfortable, middle class wage. Three is a nicer, upper middle class life. Four is moderately wealthy. Five is filthy rich.

Every item has an Availability rating. Once per chapter, your character can procure an item at her Resources level or lower without issue. An item one Availability level above her Resources reduces her effective Resources by one dot for a full month, since she has to rapidly liquidate funds. She can procure items two Availability levels below her Resources without limit (within reason). For example, a character with Resources 4 can procure as many Availability 2 disposable cellphones as she needs.

Retainer (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has an assistant, sycophant, servant, or follower on whom she can rely. Establish who this companion is and how he was acquired. It may be as simple as a paycheck. He might owe your character his life. However it happened, your character has a hold on him.

A Retainer is more reliable than a Mentor and more loyal than an Ally. On the other hand, a Retainer is a lone person, less capable and influential than the broader Merits.

The Merit's dot rating determines the relative competency of the Retainer. A one-dot Retainer is barely able to do anything of use, such as a pet that knows one useful trick or a homeless old man who does minor errands for food. A three-dot Retainer is a professional in his field, someone capable in his line of work. A five-dot Retainer is one of the best in his class. If he needs to make a roll within his field, double the Retainer dot rating and use it as a dice pool. For anything else use the dot rating as a dice pool.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times to represent multiple Retainers.

Safe Place (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has somewhere she can go where she can feel secure. While she may have enemies that could attack her there, she's prepared and has the upper hand. The dot rating reflects the security of the place. The actual location, the luxury, and the size are represented by equipment. A one-dot Safe Place might be equipped with basic security systems or a booby trap at the windows and door. A five-dot could have a security crew, infrared scanners at every entrance, or trained dogs. Each place could be an apartment, a mansion or a hidey-hole.

Unlike most Merits, multiple characters can contribute dots to a single Safe Place, combining their points into something greater. A Safe Place gives an Initiative bonus equal to the Merit dots. This only applies to a character with dots invested in the Safe Place.

Any efforts to breach the Safe Place suffer a penalty equal to the Merit dots invested. If the character desires, the Safe Place can include traps that cause intruders lethal damage equal to a maximum of the Merit rating (player's choice as to how much damage a given trap inflicts). This requires that the character has at least a dot in Crafts. The traps may be avoided with a Dexterity + Larceny roll, penalized by the Safe Place dots.

Sleight of Hand (••)

Prerequisite: Larceny •••

Effect: Your character can pick locks and pockets without even thinking about it. She can take one Larceny-based instant action reflexively in a given turn. Her Larceny actions go unnoticed unless someone is trying specifically to catch her.

Staff (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has a crew of workers or assistants at her disposal. They may be housekeepers, designers, research assistants, animators, ghouls, cheap thugs, or whatever else makes sense. For every dot in this Merit, choose one type of assistant, and one Skill. At any reasonable time, her staff can take actions using that Skill. These actions automatically garner a single success. While not useful in contested actions, this guarantees success on minor, mundane activities. Note that you may have employees without requiring the Staff Merit. Staff simply adds a mechanical advantage for those groups.

Status (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has standing, membership, authority, control over, or respect from a group or organization. This may reflect official standing or informal respect. No matter the source, your character enjoys certain privileges within that structure.

Each instance of this Merit reflects standing in a different group or organization. Your character may have Status (The Luck Gang) 3, Status (Drag Racing Circuit) 2, and Status (Police) 1. Each affords its own unique benefits. As you increase dot ratings, your character rises in prominence in the relevant group.

Status only allows advantages within the confines of the group reflected in the Merit. Status (Organized Crime) won't help if your character wants an official concealed carry firearms permit, for example.

Status provides a number of advantages.

First, your character can apply her Status to any Social roll with those over which she has authority or sway.

Second, she has access to group facilities, resources, and funding. Dependent on the group, this could be limited by red tape and requisitioning processes. It's also dependent on the resources the particular group has available.

Third, she has pull. If your character knows another character's Mentor, Resources, Retainer, Contacts, or Allies, she can block their usage. Once per chapter, she can stop a single Merit from being used if it's of a lower dot rating than her Status and if it makes sense for her organization to obstruct that type of person's behavior. In our Organized Crime example, if your character knows that the chief of police has Contacts (Criminal Informant), you may opt to block usage by threatening the informant into silence.

Drawback: Status requires upkeep and often regular duties. If these duties are not upheld, Status may be lost. The dots will not be accessible until the character re-establishes her standing. In our Organized Crime example, your character may be expected to pay protection money, offer tribute to a higher authority, or undertake felonious activities.

Striking Looks (• or ••)

Effect: Your character is stunning, alarming, commanding, repulsing, threatening, charming, or otherwise worthy of attention. Determine how your character looks and how people react to that. For one dot, your character gets a +1 die bonus on any Social rolls that would be influenced by his looks. For two dots, the benefit increases to +2. Depending on the particulars, this might influence Expression, Intimidation, Persuasion, Subterfuge, or other rolls.

Drawback: Attention is a double-edged sword. Any rolls to spot, notice, or remember your character gain the same die bonus. Sometimes, your character will draw unwanted attention in social situations. This could cause further complications.

Sympathetic (••)

Effect: Your character is very good at letting others get close. This gives him an edge in getting what he wants. At the beginning of a social maneuvering attempt, you may choose to accept a Condition such as **Leveraged** or **Swooning** in order to immediately eliminate two of the subject's Doors.

Taste (•)

Prerequisite: Crafts •• and a Specialty in Crafts or Expression

Effect: Your character has refined tastes and can identify minor details in fashion, food, architecture, and other forms of artistry and craftsmanship. Not only does this give her an eye for detail, it makes her a center of attention in critical circles. She can appraise items within her area of expertise. With a Wits + Skill roll, depending on the creation in question (Expression for poetry, Crafts for architecture, for example), your character can pick out obscure details about the item that other, less discerning minds would not. For each success, ask one of the following questions, or take a +1 die bonus to any Social rolls pertaining to groups interested in the art assessed for the remainder of the scene.

- What is the hidden meaning in this?
- What was the creator feeling during its creation?
- What's its weakest point?
- What other witness is most moved by this piece?
- How should one best appreciate this piece?

Trained Observer (• or •••)

Prerequisite: Wits ••• or Composure •••

Effect: Your character has spent years in the field, catching tiny details and digging for secrets. She might not have a better chance of finding things, but she has a better chance of finding *important* things. Any time you make a Perception roll (usually Wits + Composure), you benefit from the 9-again quality. With the three-dot version, you get 8-again.

True Friend (•••)

Effect: Your character has a true friend. While that friend may have specific functions covered by other Merits (Allies, Contacts, Retainer, Mentor, et cetera), True Friend represents a deeper, truly trusting relationship that cannot be breached. Unless your character does something egregious to cause it, her True Friend will not betray her. The Storyteller cannot kill a True Friend as part of a plot without your express permission. Any rolls to influence a True Friend against your character suffer a –5 die penalty. In addition, once per story your character can regain one spent Willpower by having a meaningful interaction with her True Friend.

Unseen Sense (••)

Prerequisite: Human character (not Kindred)

Effect: Your character has a "sixth sense" for a type of supernatural creature, chosen when you buy the Merit. For example, you may choose Unseen Sense: Vampires, or Unseen Sense: Fairies. The sense manifests differently for everyone. A character's hair stands on end, she becomes physically ill, or perhaps she has a cold chill. Regardless, she knows that *something isn't right* when she is in the immediate proximity of the appropriate supernatural being. Once per chapter, the player can accept the Spooked Condition (p. 305) in exchange for which the character can pinpoint where the feeling is coming from. If the target is using a power that specifically cloaks its supernatural nature, however, this does not work (though the Condition remains until resolved as usual).

Disciplines

Without discipline, there's no life at all.

—Katharine Hepburn

The Kindred wield strange powers — a vampire could sway men's minds, vanish from plain sight, or manifest her victim's worst nightmares. These powers come unbidden in the vampire's blood, and call on not just his human mind but the Beast hidden just under the surface. The Beast walks unseen through the world of men and cows lesser animals. It slips the bonds of flesh and inspires awe and jealousy from other people.

Using Disciplines

Some Disciplines are a fundamental part of the vampire's nature, available to her whenever she wants thanks to the power burning in her blood. These abilities may require her to expend Vitae; a few exceptional ones may also require her to spend a Willpower point. Others require her to demonstrate her mastery of the Discipline. The dice pool to activate a Discipline is made up of three traits, rather than two — an Attribute, a Skill, and the Discipline itself. The vampire uses her full mastery with the Discipline, no matter which ability she's using — a vampire with Animalism 5 uses her full five dice for all Animalism powers, even if she's just using Animalism 1. The corollary of that is that a vampire cannot use a Discipline power that's greater than her Discipline dots — a vampire with Dominate 3 can't access The Lying Mind or Possession, as they require more than three dots of Dominate.

Each Discipline calls on the Beast, whether using its talents overtly or expressing it through the blood inside. While the mechanical effect of a player failing her Discipline roll is that nothing happens, that's not strictly true. Something happens. The Beast won't just accept the idea that tapping its power produces no results. Maybe the lights flicker, or the vampire's flesh writhes on her bones for just a second. Maybe her victim sees a second, screaming face trying to escape the vampire's head for just a second. Whatever it is, it's not enough to properly freak her victim out — that's the domain of the Nosferatu, through their Nightmare Discipline. It's just something that reminds the vampire that she's not human, she's tapping something within herself that she doesn't fully understand and cannot truly control. The Storyteller and player should work together to come up with a couple of potential minor signs that the vampire's tried to use a Discipline, even though nothing particularly supernatural has happened.

Learning Disciplines

Many Kindred spontaneously manifest new Disciplines, as the Beast asserts itself in new and strange ways. The Blood makes strong connections between vampires, so most Kindred only display the Disciplines of their Clan. To learn another Discipline, the vampire must first track down another vampire who possesses the Discipline and drink at least one point of his Vitae — with all of the attendant consequences.

Supernatural Conflict

The Kindred don't just face off against one another. The World of Darkness is a strange and horrible place. Werewolves stalk the night, hunting unseen prey. Patchwork men question what it really is to be human, and some people who die don't stay dead. Many of these creatures have mysterious abilities of their own, and when they come into contact with vampires it's only a matter of time before someone goes too far and their powers come into conflict.

This book focuses on vampires and the mortals who surround them. One of the Kindred is harder to browbeat than a human, and thus adds his Blood Potency to rolls to resist Dominate. A mortal doesn't have the supernatural chops to resist a Nosferatu manifesting his worst nightmares, so only rolls his Composure against the effect.

The supernatural forces of the world can resist a vampire's talents in much the same way as the Kindred themselves. When a Discipline calls for a contested roll, use the victim's nearest equivalent to Blood Potency — a werewolf's Primal Urge, or a Promethean's Azoth. In return, the power of the Blood protects a vampire from the strange powers of these creatures. Where another supernatural power calls on that equivalent trait, a vampire can add her Blood Potency to her Resistance Attribute for contested rolls.

Note that Blood Potency and related Traits do not add to the Resistance Attribute used in a resisted roll, just contested rolls.

Clash of Wills

Sometimes, two Disciplines clearly oppose one another. If the normal systems for the Disciplines fail to resolve this, such as when two vampires attempt to Dominate the same person, or Auspex is turned against a vampire hidden by Obfuscate, there is a Clash of Wills.

All characters using conflicting powers enter a contested roll-off, each using a pool of his Blood Potency plus his dots in the Discipline. Devotions use Blood Potency plus the highest rated Discipline among the prerequisites, while blood sorcery uses Blood Potency plus the character's dots in Crúac or Theban Sorcery. Ties reroll until one player has accrued more success than all others. The effect invoked by that player's character wins out and resolves as usual, while all others fail. Victory of one power in a clash does not mean the immediate cancellation

of the others, save in cases where only one power can possibly endure (such as competing Domination).

Characters may spend Willpower to bolster the contested roll, but only if they are physically present and aware that powers are clashing. Certain powers, such as those with exceptionally long durations, are more enduring in a clash. Night-long effects add one die to the clash roll, weeklong effects add two, month-long three; and effects that would last a year or longer add four.

Clash of Wills can apply to other supernatural creatures, as well. The traits involved depend on the creature and will be elaborated upon in later books.

Example: *Two Mekhet, Piotr and Alan, have come into conflict. Alan is attempting to use The Spirit's Touch (Auspex 3) to snoop around Piotr's den. However, the den is disguised by Oubliette (Obfuscate 5), thus the two characters enter a Clash of Wills.*

Alan has four dots of Auspex and two dots of Blood Potency, so Alan's player will roll six dice. Piotr has five dots of Obfuscate and three dots of Blood Potency, eight dice. Oubliette is a long-lasting power with a three-week duration, so Piotr's player adds two dice, bringing the roll up to ten dice total. Neither character can spend Willpower on the roll because Alan isn't certain anything supernatural is going on and Piotr isn't present.

Both players roll; Piotr's player gets two successes, while Alan's rolls an impressive four. Therefore, The Spirit's Touch has won out and Alan becomes aware of the building's true nature. To all other characters the location remains occluded.

Animalism

A vampire's Beast is not just a facet of her predatory nature, but a predator in and of itself — and it's at the top of the food chain. A vampire can slip the leash of her Beast just a little to overpower weaker animals, forcing her will on them. Most Animalism powers affect predators and scavenging animals. In a city, the Kindred can call on feral cats and dogs, pigeons and crows, foxes, and more rats than anyone wants to think about. Rural vampires can summon bats, wolves, mountain lions, and even bears — any animal that feasts on the flesh of another.

Feral Whispers •

To those she would command, a vampire must first make herself understood. So it is with beasts as well as men. A vampire using Feral Whispers overpowers the animal's instinctive reactions and forces it to understand. She can ask questions of a creature and it must respond as best it can, and with a further slight nudge, she can compel it to obey her. A canny vampire can use magpies and crows to spy on her victims from above, or command a gangster's mastiffs to savage their owner.

The vampire talks to the animal, either using human words or, much more frequently, by making animal sounds of her own. She can command groups of animals, such as a flock of birds or a swarm of rats, as long as she is close enough that the animals can all hear her, and she can see all of them.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Animal Ken + Animalism

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene, command can persist up to a night.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The animal misunderstands the vampire's command, giving false information when the vampire asks, or obeying a twisted version of the vampire's command.

Failure: The animals fear the Beast, fleeing from a superior predator.

Success: The vampire can communicate with an animal, asking it what it has perceived. Most animals can remember what has happened over the last night. Animals relate what they have encountered through the lens of their own perceptions — dogs answer in terms of smell and hearing, while birds relate what they could see. The vampire can also give the victim a simple command, equivalent to what the animal could do on its own, such as "attack him," "follow her then return here," "chew through these cables." The command doesn't normally persist for more than a night, but the vampire can add simple contingencies such as forcing the beast to go to ground if noticed, or to return once the command is complete.

Exceptional Success: The animal is exceptionally obedient to the vampire, improvising to follow the spirit of the Kindred's command.

Raise the Familiar ••

True beasts cannot be Embraced. They have never had the necessary Humanity. With this power, though, the vampire can complete the process halfway. By feeding a drained animal some of her Vitae, a vampire can infuse it with a fragment of the Kindred's twilight life. It looks as it did when it died, though if appropriate, it might gain retractable fangs like a vampire. But the fangs are a lie — its true tragedy is that it cannot transubstantiate blood into Vitae. If it was wounded in death, it retains signs of the injuries, but its body functions fully. A coyote crushed by an SUV has a tire track running across it but no crushed bones, and a crow with a busted wing has bone jutting out of the wound but can still fly.

It doesn't act like a normal animal — it doesn't hunt for food, nor is it spooked by loud noises. It sleeps throughout the day, but becomes active at night. A human observing such an animal might be able to tell something's wrong, but only the most grievous wounds usually make them take the time to look.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Requirement: Feed 1 Vitae to the corpse (included in cost)

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: (Blood Potency * animal's Stamina) nights

The vampire feeds one point of Vitae to the animal's corpse. The animal returns to a semblance of life for a number of nights equal to (Blood Potency * animal's Stamina). Once she has raised a beast, a vampire can feed it more Vitae; each point

ensures the animal's continued existence as though the vampire had just raised it.

The raised creature gains a semblance of intelligence and a certain low cunning, enough to follow complex orders that most animals could not understand, and to interpret the spirit of commands rather than the letter. Treat the familiar as having one dot of Intelligence.

Infused with Vitae, the familiar takes bashing damage from attacks like a vampire, and does not fall unconscious or bleed out. The animal does not decompose.

The Vitae burning within the animal's dead veins forges a sympathetic link between it and the vampire. The vampire can use Feral Whispers on her familiar at any time, over any distance, communicating silently or issuing commands at any range. Though she must still roll to see if her familiar interpreted her command, the animal does not resist.

Summon the Hunt ●●●

The vampire infuses some of her Vitae with the essence of her prey, making it irresistible to other predators and scavenging beasts. Wherever she spills her blood — on the ground, over an object, or even splashing it on another person — the animals she calls will try to consume it. Her blood only loses potency once the summoned animals destroy whatever she poured it over or once the sun rises, at which point the Vitae burns away as though it were never present. She can focus her Beast's call on one kind of creature, for example summoning just birds or rats. Prey animals in the affected area rightly shy away, afraid of the power of a vampire's Beast.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Requirement: Spill 1 Vitae upon the target (included in cost).

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism

Action: Instant

Duration: One night, or until the item marked with blood is destroyed.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The animals follow the Beast's call, but lash out against the vampire in fear.

Failure: Animals within the Discipline's range feel their normal fear of the Kindred and stay well away.

Success: The vampire chooses when spilling the Vitae whether to summon all predators and scavengers, or whether to restrict herself to one kind of animal. All animals that match her request within (successes) city blocks in the city, or (successes * 100) yards (successes * 90 meters) in the country respond to her call. Once they taste the spilled Vitae, the vampire can imprint a command as though she had used Feral Whispers on the animal. All animals receive the same command, but it persists even while the vampire slumbers; the animals follow her command for one night per success.

Exceptional Success: Animals that taste the vampire's blood follow her command with single-minded zeal. They do not stop to eat or sleep, deriving sustenance from the taste of Vitae alone.

Feral Infection ●●●●

The vampire floods the area with her predatory aura, infecting everything around her with the ravings of her Beast. The scent of her blood inspires rage in animals, and can drive men mad, especially those who have recently touched her blood. Other Kindred witnessing the effects of Feral Infection recognize the Beast unchained, likening the victims' actions to their own moments of frenzy. The vampire using this Discipline can exert a measure of control over her victims' madness, focusing her own Beast against some victim she wants to crush, or a goal she wants to conquer.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Requirement: Spill 1 Vitae upon the ground (included in cost).

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Animalism

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The vampire loses hold of her Beast, and it smashes past her. She is provoked to frenzy, though with a –2 die modifier on the roll to resist.

Failure: Affected animals display odd behavior — chasing their tails, or attacking their own limbs — but nothing drives them into a rage.

Success: Any animal that can smell the vampire's blood enters a state of feral rage. It lashes out, attacking the nearest victim without a thought for its own safety. Once the victim is unconscious or dead, the animal feeds on his flesh. If the vampire wishes, she can direct the mob of frenzied creatures towards a single target or goal. She can't give complex instructions or a direct command, but can point out targets to attack or the direction to move in.

Humans and supernatural creatures must make a reflexive (Resolve + Composure – vampire's successes) roll to resist the vampire's predatory Aura. If the victim has touched or imbibed the vampire's blood within the last night, they suffer a –3 die penalty. A failed roll puts the victim under the vampire's command. Vampires and werewolves frenzy, their victims dictated by the Kindred who provoked them. Humans and other supernatural creatures fall into an atavistic state where they must attack the target, or move towards it if they can't reach it. If the vampire does not set a command, her victims turn upon one another. A supernatural creature can spend a point of Willpower to ignore the vampire's commands, though she remains frenzied.

Exceptional Success: Unleashing her Beast sates it temporarily. The vampire gains the Sated Condition (p. 305).

Lord of the Land ●●●●●

The vampire marks her territory with Vitae, in much the same way that animals use urine or feces. She must encircle her territory in a ring of Vitae, claiming it as her own — assuming she

has driven off any prior residents. When encircling the territory, she must walk the whole border. Some Kindred open wounds on their hands and arms and walk at a stately pace, dripping a slow stream of thick blood behind them. Others run wild, smearing blood and bodily fluids on surfaces like a feral beast.

Once she has established her territory, the vampire is privy to everything that happens within it. She can command animals, summon or banish people, and provoke other vampires to leave her lair. Most vampires establish their territory in small places, like a brownstone or small public garden. A powerful vampire might claim a whole public park or castle, but he must make sure that nothing interrupts his claim — more than one vampire has discovered that his territory is already claimed by an angry pack of werewolves halfway through claiming it.

Cost: 3-9 Vitae and 1 Willpower

Requirement: The vampire must walk a circuit around his new territory while marking it with Vitae. Three Vitae is enough to secure a small house or garden, six can secure a city block, while nine is enough to claim a castle. She must make sure that the area contains no other vampires; many Kindred prefer to evict all supernatural denizens. While the Discipline will still function if her territory contains werewolves or other monsters, they will suffer the effects — and will deduce that the vampire is to blame.

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One week per dot of Blood Potency, longer if the vampire remains in his territory.

The vampire marks her territory. It remains empowered for at least one week per dot of Blood Potency, though the effects of this Discipline only end when the vampire leaves her territory after the duration. Rumors speak of ancient vampires lying in torpor whose territories remain active to this day.

A vampire's territory scares off most creatures. Animals and wild beasts won't enter, and will fight to escape if forced inside, unless otherwise affected by the vampire's powers. Humans and supernatural creatures, including other vampires, must succeed at a reflexive Composure + Blood Potency roll to enter — or to stay in the area once it is created. Unless they roll an exceptional success, the feeling of overwhelming dread inflicts a –3 die penalty on all actions. For Kindred, simply being in another vampire's territory is provocation to frenzy, and rolls to resist suffer a –2 die penalty. If a vampire explicitly invites someone into his territory — or uses Feral Whispers or Summon the Hunt in the case of animals — they do not suffer these penalties. Ghoul animals are also exempt.

When the vampire is within her territory, she can feel when a person or animal crosses into her territory; if an invader is a vampire, she knows his general Blood Potency. She always has a rough idea of where everyone is within her domain, and only supernatural means such as Disciplines can cut through her awareness — triggering a Clash of Wills. As the undisputed master of her territory, a frenzying creature cannot attack the vampire, nor may they spend Willpower to resist her commands delivered through Feral Infection. Any commands given by Feral Whispers last indefinitely, or until the animal leaves the vampire's territory. Finally, the vampire can snatch the senses of any animal she has raised with Raise the Familiar within her territory, and use that animal to deliver commands using Feral Whispers to other creatures.

Auspex

Auspex turns the Beast's predatory instincts loose on secrets, finding points of weakness and hidden gems that the vampire can exploit to his advantage. Auspex is an internal Discipline, revealing information to the Kindred through visions that range from the direct to the hallucinatory. Other vampires have no way to know when someone is using Auspex to discover their secrets, and for that reason many Mekhet feel the stares and whispered barbs of other vampires who worry what secrets the clan of Shadows will uncover next.

Beast's Hackles •

The Beast focuses on danger and weakness. A vampire who borrows her Beast's senses can use that focus to know if someone is about to attack her, or to pinpoint the weakest person in the room. The Beast is sensitive to things that other people cannot normally perceive; using this Discipline can pierce Obfuscate (see "Clash of Wills," p.125).

Cost: Varies, as the Discipline is slightly tiring; the first use in a scene is free, but subsequent uses in the same scene cost 1 Vitae each.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy + Auspex

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The player asks a question as though he had rolled a success; the Storyteller should either give false information, or present a warped version of the truth.

Failure: The vampire's senses cloud; his Beast doesn't see any immediate point of weakness.

Success: The player can ask one question of the Storyteller. The Storyteller's answer should include the imagery conjured by the Beast to convey the answer. This level of Auspex can only answer immediate questions about danger or weakness;

Contact

It's easier for a vampire to use Auspex on another person if he's spent some time in intimate contact with her. The contact doesn't need to be sexual, any period of platonic physical contact is enough. Digging a bullet out of someone's side — or carefully severing her arm — reveals her secrets to Auspex. Intimate contact gives a +3 bonus to the vampire's roll.

the sample questions below cover much of the information the Beast can provide.

Exceptional Success: The player can ask two questions.

Sample Questions

- Who here is the most likely to give me what I want? *Blood throbbing through the victim's jugular vein. The sound of jingling coins from the victim's pocket.*
- Who/what here is most likely to lapse into violence? *The victim's hands stained with blood. The smell of gunpowder wafting from the victim.*
- Who here is most afraid? *The smell of urine from the victim's pants. A whimpering sound from the victim.*
- Who/what here is most likely to hurt me? *Blood drying on a car crusher. Waves of hot rage boiling off the victim.*
- Who here is closest to frenzy? *The victim's face twists into a frenzied rictus. The taste of hot bile when facing the victim.*
- Is a vampire here using Auspex 5? *A pall of grey smoke hanging in the air. A feeling like someone walked over the vampire's grave.*

Uncanny Perception ●●

The vampire focuses on a single victim, peeling back the layers of lies and misdirection to reveal the truth underneath. The Beast sniffs out the victim's dark secrets, things that she doesn't want anyone else to know. What the vampire does with that information is up to him.

Cost: Varies; the first use in a scene is free, but subsequent uses against the same target that scene cost 1 Vitae each.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Empathy + Auspex

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The player asks a question as though he had rolled a success; the Storyteller should give false or misleading information.

Failure: The Beast unveils no secrets. Does the victim really have nothing to hide?

Success: The player can ask the Storyteller one question per success. The Storyteller's answer should include the imagery conjured by the Beast to convey the answer. This level of Auspex focuses on questions concerning the secrets and weaknesses of a single character.

Exceptional Success: The images give the vampire further insight into the questions asked.

Sample Questions

- What is this person's mood? *A flash of emotion on the victim's face. A smell that the vampire associates with the emotion — the smell of fresh blood signifying rage, the sound of grinding stone signifying isolation.*
- What is this person afraid of right now? *Shock as lights suddenly shine on the victim. The sound of dogs barking.*
- What is this person's Vice/Requiem? *The sound of conspiratorial whispers. The smell of drugs wafting off a junkie.*
- What is one of this person's psychological vulnerabilities? *A sudden feeling of incredible depression. Shifting walls and colors as if in a hallucination.*
- Is this person a diablerist? *The smell of brimstone and clotted blood. Thick black blood dripping off the victim's chin.*
- Is this person being controlled by someone else? *Marionette strings leading from the victim's limbs up to the ceiling. A whispered voice that tells the victim what to do as she acts.*
- Is this person a supernatural creature — and if I have seen them before, what is she? *The taste of torn flesh. The glowing halo of a mage's nimbus.*
- Who here does this person want to hurt most? *A bloody dagger drops from the victim's hand, pointing to the answer. The taste of bile when looking at the target of the victim's ire.*

The Spirit's Touch ●●●

A vampire can turn his Beast's senses on an object or place, uncovering secrets and destroying lies just as surely as if he had focused on a person. A vampire can only use this Discipline on a particular object once per scene.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Auspex

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The player asks a question as though he had rolled a success; the Storyteller should give false or misleading information.

Failure: The object yields no secrets to the Kindred's senses — this time.

Success: The player can ask the Storyteller one question per success about the place or object. The Beast conjures images to answer rather than just words. In addition to the sample questions below, the character can ask questions suggested for Auspex 1 and 2 if they would be relevant.

Exceptional Success: The vampire can fully appreciate the object or place, and gains a +1 die bonus when using/interacting with it for the rest of the scene.

Sample Questions

- Who last touched/owned this? *A vision of the person holding the object. The sound of the victim's voice, identifying herself.*
- What is the strongest emotion associated with this object? *A hot flash of rage. A sudden flash of serene clarity.*
- What was the object being used for at the point of strongest emotion? *A vision of the vampire using the object. Sounds and ghostly outlines of people walking through the room.*

Lay Open the Mind ●●●●

The Mekhet focuses on bringing her thoughts in line with her victim. He begins to think like her, and soon hears her thoughts in his mind. By concentrating and gently changing his own thoughts, he can project ideas or memories into the victim's mind. With a little practice, the vampire can communicate without words, or project full memories to overwhelm the victim's senses. He can even stimulate memories by thinking of a time, place, or emotion that causes the victim to remember — even if the victim had blocked it out or had it removed by magic.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Socialize + Auspex vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The vampire aligns to the victim's thoughts, but he cannot keep his thoughts separate from hers. He suffers the Confused Condition (p. 302).

Failure: The victim's thoughts remain outside of the vampire's grasp.

Success: The vampire's thoughts align with the victim's mind, and remain connected for the rest of the scene. He hears her thoughts as though she were speaking them aloud. People don't think in complete sentences, but the vampire can discern the victim's precise mood and intention, and some snippets of her current motivation and considerations. He can also project thoughts, either speaking directly into the victim's thoughts, or depositing a mental image or memory.

By focusing, the vampire can drag up a full memory from the victim, including things that the victim has forgotten or that were suppressed by magic (though doing so takes a Clash of Wills). He experiences all of the memory in an instant, with all five senses. If he chooses to transmit that memory to the victim, he can inflict a Condition like Guilty, Inspired, or Shaken as appropriate (p. 302 and p. 305). Uncovering further memories costs 1 Vitae per memory.

Exceptional Success: The vampire can retrieve as many deep memories as he has dots in Auspex before paying Vitae to uncover more.

Twilight Projection ●●●●●

The vampire unshackles his mind, leaving his body and projecting his senses throughout the world. His astral form exists in a twilight state, with no real physical or spiritual substance to it, but still in the world and noticeable only by other vampires with Auspex. The vampire can move at incredible speeds, traveling to any point within the moon's orbit — an area that some Kindred call the "lunar sphere." While his senses and consciousness travel the world the vampire's body appears to be a normal corpse, albeit one that does not decay.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Auspex

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's senses part from his body, but something sends his consciousness far away.

Failure: The vampire cannot slip the bounds of his dead flesh.

Success: The vampire's senses part from his body, and can travel the world. Multiply the vampire's Speed by his (Auspex + Blood Potency). The vampire is not bound by gravity, and can travel through physical obstacles and even into the ground. He cannot interact with the physical world in any way when separate from his body. He can see and hear as well as he can normally, but cannot use Disciplines. The vampire's body lies in a torpor-like state, and he is unaware of anything that happens to it — though if someone kills his body or drives him to torpor, his mind jumps back to his body. Apart from that, the vampire must move his astral form back to his body to awaken. Every sunrise that the vampire remains separate from his body he loses a dot of Blood Potency — and suffers Final Death if his Blood Potency reaches 0. He regains any lost dots upon returning to his body. He must still spend a point of Vitae at the beginning of each night. Some vampires speak of strange magic that can prevent a vampire from returning to his body, or of his body walking around unbidden, with yellow eyes the only sign that something might be wrong.

Exceptional Success: The vampire's senses slip away easily, and he is left with a memory of where his body is. He can reflexively spend a point of Vitae to instantly return to his body — or to the edge of any mystic boundary that prevents him from returning.

Celerity

Unleashing her Beast, a vampire can cross vast distances in the blink of an eye, catch a thrown punch before her attacker has even moved a muscle, or snatch a gun barrel away from a man's temple before he can pull the trigger. Celerity makes a vampire so fast that it's as if she never has to move at all.

Cost: None or 1 Vitae per active effect

Dice Pool: None

Action: None (for persistent effects) or Reflexive (for active effects)

Duration: Permanent (for persistent effects) or one turn (for active effects)

Like other physical Disciplines, Celerity has two kinds of effects: persistent and active. Persistent effects are always on, and have no cost. Active effects are reflexive and cost one Vitae per effect.

Persistent: Add the vampire's dots in Celerity to her Defense, or to her Dodge roll when defending actively. If a Firearms attack denies her normal Defense, the attacker still takes a penalty on his attack equal to the vampire's dots in Celerity. A character must still be aware of incoming attacks to defend against them.

If she is restrained, slumbering, or otherwise unable to respond, Celerity offers no advantage.

Active: By spending Vitae Celerity allows for bursts of speed faster than the eye can perceive. For each point of Vitae spent choose one effect from the following list. A vampire may spend additional Vitae to invoke multiple effects simultaneously, but no effect of Celerity may be used more than once per turn.

• Immediately move to the head of the Initiative queue. This boost in Initiative lasts only one turn, after which all combatants return to acting in their rolled order. If multiple vampires attempt to jump ahead simultaneously they enter a Clash of Wills (p. 125), the winner acts first.

• Interrupt the action of another character with a brief action of her own. This could be an attack, making it possible to disable an opponent in mid-action. It may be movement, avoiding harm by shifting out of reach. Or it could be any other instant action, like activating a Discipline or dodging. However, the vampire is still limited to one instant action. She cannot use Celerity to make two attacks, or an attack followed by another instant action. Likewise she cannot move further in a single turn than her Speed would allow. The decision to interrupt is made after another character's action is declared, but before it actually occurs (before dice are rolled). Once interrupted, the other character must continue his declared action, if it's still possible. If the action is no longer possible, he takes no action. Alternatively, that character's player may declare his action a dramatic failure and take a Beat. Celerity cannot interrupt reflexive actions or actions of which the character was unaware. Finally, using Celerity in this way is exhausting; a vampire may only interrupt as many actions in a scene as she has dots in Celerity.

• Multiply her speed by her dots in Celerity plus one. Moving in this way is sudden, jarring, the vampire appears to shift from point to point without crossing the space in-between. She may use this to briefly avoid detection or launch surprise attacks.

Dominate

The Beast demands obedience from lesser creatures. It slips into the Kindred's voice, modulating his tone and his words to express absolute authority. It progresses from the simple barked commands of a drill sergeant to creating false memories of whatever the vampire desires — or letting her steal her victim's body to walk in the sunlight once again.

Mesmerize •

All a vampire has to do is meet her victim's eye to catch him in her thrall. Her control isn't obvious; she just asks him to do something and her victim acquiesces. He could unlock a door, pass her a gun — or forget ever meeting her. Some cruel vampires mesmerize passers-by just to take the rap for their crimes.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Expression + Dominate vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Instant

Eye Contact

Dominate requires a vampire make eye contact with her victims in order to issue commands. That contact is one-way — the victim needs to see the vampire's eyes, but not vice versa. This contact is possible through simple barriers like sunglasses (even mirrored) or tinted windows, but does not work when looking at a video feed rather than the vampire herself.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The victim sees through the vampire's attempt to control his mind; emboldened, he gains the Steadfast Condition (p. 306).

Failure: The vampire's victim proves stronger-willed than she'd thought.

Success: The vampire holds her victim's gaze for just a second, but it's enough to inflict the Mesmerized Condition (p. 305).

Exceptional Success: The vampire's control flows over the victim's brain like water. They want to do whatever the vampire says. The vampire can issue a command in the same action as mesmerizing the victim.

Once she has inflicted the Mesmerized Condition, the vampire can command the victim as an instant action. Her commands can't be longer than three or four words, and she has to be direct — her control doesn't extend to issuing vague commands. "Follow me," "Shoot your husband," and "Repeat after me..." are all suitable commands, while "Forget," "Submit," and "Do my bidding" have too much room for interpretation. She can even mess with the victim's memory, making one statement about the current scene that victim will remember as truth. While she can still only use simple and unambiguous commands, she can pack a lot of changes into four words: "You killed that man" and "I was not here" combine to frame the victim for murder.

Iron Edict ••

Once she's got a hotline into her victim's mind, the vampire can take some time to play with his thoughts and memories. While it takes more of her power to relay complex commands, she goes from jerking her victim's strings to controlling him like a puppeteer, making his ever movement dance to her tune.

Cost: 1 Vitae; none if victim is in Vinculum with the vampire

Dice Pool: None

Requirement: The vampire must have inflicted the Mesmerized Condition on the victim

Action: Instant

The vampire can issue a longer command to a Mesmerized victim. This edict can be up to three sentences long, and can

include a successive series of actions. The command takes two turns per sentence to convey. As with Mesmerize, the vampire's control doesn't extend to commands that rely on the victim's interpretation. The victim takes the Dominated Condition (p. 302) and will follow the vampire's commands as soon as she finishes speaking them. He continues to follow the order until he has completed his task, or the sun rises. Many Kindred use Iron Edict to issue a simple command, such as "Obey my direct instructions when I give them to you," which effectively gives them control over the minion until the sun comes up — though it doesn't extend the duration of the Mesmerized Condition.

Entombed Command ●●●

The vampire's has enough control over her meat-puppet to implant a subconscious trigger, a specific set of conditions that will turn him into her slave when he encounters them. She can force her victim into a suggestible state when he points a gun at her, make him transfer all of his money into her account when he hears Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or only allow him to remember his son when he smells lilacs.

Cost: None; other Dominate powers may cost Vitae.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Subterfuge + Dominate – victim's Resolve

Requirement: The vampire must have inflicted the Mesmerized Condition on the victim

Action: Instant

Duration: One week per success, or one month per success (see below).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The vampire's attempt to set up a trigger backfires. The victim loses his Mesmerized Condition. For the next week, when he encounters one trigger that the vampire attempted to set he instead gains the Steadfast Condition (p. 306).

Failure: The attempt to set triggers in the victim's mind doesn't take. Is he fighting back, or is there another reason?

Success: The vampire can implant a number of subconscious triggers equal to the number of successes rolled to trigger specific effects of other Dominate powers. She must pay any Vitae cost for these powers as normal. These triggers remain in place for one week per success, or one month per success if the victim is in any stage of Vinculum towards the vampire. During that time, the effects of the trigger emerge each time the victim encounters the stimulus.

Exceptional Success: The vampire's commands slip into the victim's subconscious with ease. Reduce the Vitae cost by one when implanting Iron Edict and The Lying Mind.

Each trigger is a specific event or sensory stimulus that causes the linked effect to emerge. The vampire must pay any Vitae cost for other Dominate powers, but only need do so once to attach that power to any number of triggers. Using Iron Edict in conjunction with Entombed Command to force a man to show up at a nightclub when he argues with his wife, and making him fill a USB stick with sensitive information from his workplace all costs only one point of Vitae. Describing both the trigger and its specific effect on the victim takes about two turns per trigger.

Other Dominate abilities work as follows when channeled through Entombed Command:

- **Mesmerize:** The victim gains the Mesmerized Condition when he encounters the trigger. If the vampire isn't present to capitalize on his state, the effects soon fade.
- **Iron Edict:** When the victim encounters the trigger, he immediately gains a Dominated Condition relating to the imprinted command. As he is entirely under the vampire's sway when Dominated, he does not encounter other triggers until he resolves the Condition.
- **The Lying Mind:** The trigger serves as a switch for memory alteration. Encountering it once causes a memory to emerge (or to vanish), while encountering it again reverses the change.

The Lying Mind ●●●●

A mistress of Dominate can dance through her victim's memories, sculpting them to her whims. He might not remember his family — or she might force him to remember the tragic death of a son who never existed. She can subtly alter his memories, replacing his wife's face with her own, or moving his memory of a vacation from Paris to London. Beyond necessary generalities, this does not allow the vampire to read the original memories.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Requirement: The vampire must have inflicted the Mesmerized Condition on the victim; the victim must consume or be anointed by 1 Vitae (included in cost).

Action: Instant

Duration: Permanent

While he remains Mesmerized, the vampire can spin her victim's memories like cotton candy, stretching far back into childhood. She must either feed him some of her Vitae or drip it onto his forehead. She can create memories of events from nothing, erase memories of an event or person, or change the people, events, and location of existing memories to serve her purpose. As part of this alteration, she inflicts a persistent Condition on the victim. If she deletes a broad swath of memories, the victim receives the Amnesia Condition (p. 301), otherwise he takes the False Memories Condition (p. 303).

The vampire has to speak with her victim, describing the changes she wants to make to his memories. Crude alterations — deleting a swathe of his past, or replacing his wife's face with the vampire's in all his memories — take about a minute to describe, but more detailed changes can take quite a bit longer. When changing memories or creating new ones, the vampire can create the factual content of the memory, but the victim's thoughts and feelings remain out of her control. She can create an environment that makes him predisposed to certain reactions, but she can't force him to love a son she's just invented. The vampire's changes are permanent, unless she used Entombed Command to only reveal them on a trigger.

Possession ●●●●●

Controlling a victim's memories and actions is one thing, but for some vampires the truest expression of control comes from suppressing the victim's will entirely, taking complete control of his body. The vampire moves her mind into the victim, using his body instead of her own.

Cost: 1 Vitae and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate – victim's Resolve

Requirement: The vampire must have inflicted the Mesmerized Condition on the victim.

Action: Reflexive

Duration: 1 night per success

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The victim's mind will not be bound to the vampire's control. He immediately resolves the Mesmerized Condition and regains a point of Willpower.

Failure: The vampire cannot take total control of her victim just yet.

Success: The vampire takes over her victim's body for one night per success. While in this new body, she uses her victim's Physical Attributes and Skills in place of her own, and gains any Physical or Combat Merits that the victim possessed. She can stay awake during the day by spending a point of Willpower at dawn and takes no damage from sunlight — if she does not spend Willpower, she returns to her body. Each night, she must spend a point of Vitae as normal. She cannot use Disciplines or Blood Sorcery when possessing someone else, nor can she access any supernatural powers her victim may possess, but she otherwise controls his body totally. If she attempts to kill herself the victim may roll Resolve + Blood Potency as a reflexive action, on a success he evicts the vampire from his consciousness. Possessing a victim removes the Mesmerized and Dominated Conditions, and the vampire is not subject to any triggers set on the victim by Entombed Command while she remains in control. Once she leaves the victim's body, those triggers affect him as normal. While she commands the victim's body, the vampire's own form lies in a torpor-like state awaiting her return; if she remains in the victim's body for so long that her body slips into torpor, she immediately snaps back into her body.

Exceptional Success: The vampire slips into the victim's body with ease, and leaves her jaunt in another body with renewed purpose. Upon leaving the victim's body, she regains a point of Willpower.

Majesty

Majesty draws on the Beast's animal magnetism to amplify a vampire's force of personality, making people like him and want to make him happy even though normally they wouldn't give a shit about him. They like him and want to be around him just because it makes them feel good. Using Majesty isn't like leaning forward and slipping a command behind a human's eyes, it's arranging the world so that people will kill — or die — for his attention.

Awe ●

Awe shines a spotlight on the vampire even in a crowded room. He's the most important person around and people want to be around him. Awe creates an aura of power, a sense that the vampire's important, like a billionaire playboy or a movie star. He could be wearing tattered clothes, with open wounds and his face caked in shit but people still think he's cooler than them, and they want to be around him.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene

When he wills it, all eyes fall on the vampire and nobody cares what he's doing. For the rest of the scene, he suffers no penalties to Social rolls from his actions or appearance — even if he's just beaten another man to death or waved a gun in a crowded nightclub. Given a chance, he can talk his way out of minor criminal offenses and almost any social faux pas.

As the center of attention, he adds his Majesty dots to any Presence rolls when talking to people around him. This bonus only applies when talking to people normally, not to other uses of Majesty. Anyone paying attention to him also subtracts his Majesty dots from any Wits + Composure rolls to notice anything other than the vampire. With a word, he can summon anyone in the room to his side — not by any mystical compulsion, but by making her aware that he wants her to approach. Another vampire can fortify herself against Awe with her predatory aura (see Lashing Out, p. 92). If she succeeds, she is unaffected by Awe.

Confidant ●●

The vampire doesn't have to shout to be heard, and in a crowd that he's already Awed, sometimes speaking quietly is the best way to get attention. With little more than a soft voice and a knowing look, the vampire brings someone new into the fold and becomes her trusted confidant.

Cost: None

Requirement: The vampire must use Awe on the victim.

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy + Majesty vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

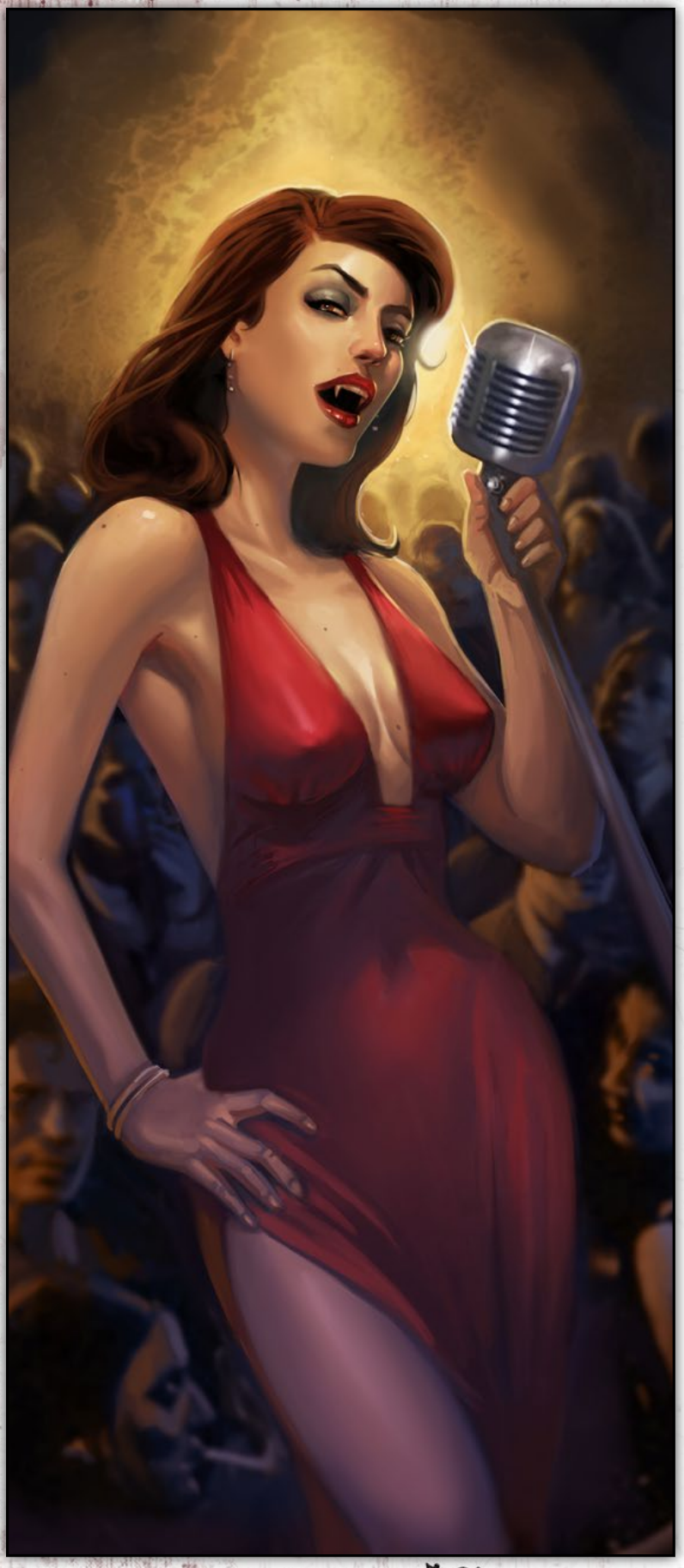
Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The vampire slips up, letting some of what he wants the victim to feel leak back into himself. He's affected by the Swooning Condition (p. 306) for the victim.

Failure: The victim doesn't feel that she's worthy of joining the vampire's inner circle just yet.

Success: The vampire successfully charms his victim. She gains the Charmed Condition (p. 301).

Exceptional Success: It's incredibly hard to resist the force of the vampire's personality. The victim's Charmed Condition lasts for nights, rather than hours.



Green Eyes ●●●

To a victim of this level of Majesty, the vampire's attention feels so good that it's addictive. His inner circle craves his attention like a crackhead craves a rock or a writer needs coffee. That craving first becomes desperation and then jealousy as other people attract the vampire's gaze, if only for a minute.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Requirement: The vampire must have inflicted the Charmed or Enthralled Condition on the target.

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Scene

His victim is now thoroughly obsessed with the vampire, and he can play with her feelings and desires like they were a cheap harmonica. With Green Eyes, he can shift the emotional state of anyone he's Charmed, sending them into a violent rage (or even a frenzy, in the case of some supernatural creatures) or making them so depressed that they feel hollow without him. Each shift costs him a point of Vitae, but he can instill the same emotion in any number of victims at once.

The vampire can ask one of his Charmed minions to do something in such a way that they feel an obsessive need to accomplish it. He could ask them to kill someone, to give him money, or to perform debased and degrading acts for his amusement. A Charmed victim will do whatever he wants within reason — if the request would lead to the victim taking lethal damage or hitting a breaking point, the victim will save her own skin. She resolves the Charmed Condition immediately. An Enthralled victim is far more dangerous — she won't commit suicide for the vampire, but anything else is fair game. If his victim would hit a breaking point, she doesn't notice (and doesn't roll for experiencing the breaking point) until the Enthralled Condition expires.

Loyalty ●●●●

Among his inner circle, the vampire praises some more than others, bringing them even closer to him. With a few words he can inflame their love for him. Beyond jealousy and obsession comes complete loyalty. A victim will do absolutely anything for him — and just thinking about crossing the vampire is traumatic. She ignores her other friends and her family. Her vampire is all that matters.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Requirement: The vampire must have inflicted the Charmed Condition on the target.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Majesty vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Something sets the victim on edge, some discordant note forces her to rethink her affection for the vampire. She immediately resolves the Charmed Condition.

Failure: Though the victim remains devoted to the vampire, her loyalty does not flare into fanaticism.

Success: The vampire inspires burning loyalty in the victim. She'd do anything for him, giving up her blood or organs — or taking a bullet for him. The victim gains the Enthralled Condition.

Exceptional Success: The Enthralled Condition lasts for one week per dot of Blood Potency.

Idol •••••

More than just a celebrity, a vampire who can play with people's desires becomes a king or a star, the kind of person who wouldn't ever be so crass as to demand people's loyalty. People around him give it willingly, pledging to do whatever he wants if he'll only notice them, look at them, or smile in their direction.

Cost: 2 Vitae and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Scene

Idol enhances Awe's aura of superiority to divine (or blasphemous) levels. The vampire can wait until she's established Awe and then enhance it, or pay the price to immediately establish her superiority over everyone else in the room.

Anyone affected by the vampire's Awe must make a reflexive roll of Resolve + Blood Potency minus the vampire's Majesty dots in order to take an action that could harm or embarrass the vampire in any way. Unless they succeed, they can't so much as crack a joke at his expense.

If the vampire has inflicted the Charmed Condition on anyone in his presence, she must make a reflexive Resolve + Blood Potency – Majesty dots roll when the vampire activates Idol. If she fails, she acquires the Enthralled Condition for the remainder of the scene. People who the vampire has already Enthralled cannot spend Willpower to act against him.

Nightmare

The Beast doesn't need fear. Fear is rational, understandable — a reaction to a presented stimulus. Any idiot can make people fear him. Nightmare indulges the Beast's desire to cause abject terror. It starts slowly at first: Just for a second, you see a human face in the path of a circular saw. Your keyboard feels unaccountably warm and fleshy, but when you look down it's fine. Walking down the street the shadows fall at the wrong angles. You bump into someone, an old friend from your childhood, and all you can do is run and scream. You fall into the arms of your wife, shaking and sobbing, but she's holding you too tight and she smells wrong. Your daughter comes up behind you and sinks her teeth into your thigh. You scream in pain and bolt out of the door. Looking back, you see your daughter's face.

Only then does the real terror begin.

Dread Presence •

Everyone around the vampire feels the world go slightly wrong as she exudes a deeply unsettling aura. Even if they barely notice her, they feel a wave of fear and uncertainty. The world seems colder, everything's just that bit more distant. People feel like someone's watching them even when they're otherwise alone, and for just a second they see horrible truths manifest in the world around them.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene

The vampire exudes an aura of fear for the rest of the scene that gives her a number of benefits. She adds her Nightmare dots to all mundane Intimidate rolls. People around her subconsciously register her as the cause of their fear, and they shy away from her. Her victims can act against her but their hearts aren't in it — they can't spend Willpower to bolster their actions, though they can still use it defensively. A vampire can lash out against this aura of fear with his predatory aura (see Lashing Out, p. 92). If he succeeds, he isn't affected by Dread Presence.

As a reflexive action, the vampire can conjure brief illusions. One person's food looks rotten and maggot-ridden, another raises his steak-knife but sees a murder victim's head on his plate. A woman reaches for a doorknob but when she pulls her hand back it's covered in blood. These illusions can only affect two senses each, and must be small — no larger than a small dog, and no louder than a shout. They only last for a turn or two at most, but they're always unsettling. The vampire chooses who can see each illusion, and she can only project one at a time. Though equal parts frightening and disgusting, the illusions cannot themselves cause any harm or significant pain.

Face of the Beast ••

All it takes is a glance, and the vampire can magnify one of his victim's fears to truly horrifying levels. If she knows what sort of things her victim fears, she can choose to enhance that fear specifically; otherwise she inspires an unguided terror that flares up in the victim's heart without her knowing precisely what he's afraid of. Whatever the case, the victim flees immediately.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy + Nightmare vs. Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Something goes wrong. Though the victim sees visions of his fear made manifest, he stares them down. He regains a point of Willpower.

Failure: The victim's fear troubles him, but he doesn't flee.

Success: The victim gains the Frightened Condition (p. 303). If the vampire activates Dread Presence, she can designate herself as the source of the victim's fear.

Exceptional Success: The vampire gains a vision of precisely what the victim is so afraid of. While this has no mechanical advantage, it gives her something else to exploit.

The Grand Delusion ●●●

Touching her victim's mind, the vampire sparks a delusion that only she fully understands. What she makes him believe doesn't match up with the world as he knows it, and that discrepancy sparks a gut-wrenching fear in her victim.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Nightmare vs. Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested, resistance is reflexive

Duration: 1 night

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: While the victim doesn't believe what the vampire wanted him to, she does. The vampire gains the Delusional Condition (p. 302) for the rest of the scene, her false belief being whatever she wanted the victim to believe — if she wanted Daniel to believe his friends all hated him, her delusion would be "Daniel's friends all hate him," not "my friends all hate me."

Failure: The delusion sparks behind the victim's eyes, but then gutters and dies.

Success: All it takes is a few words, and the victim suffers the Delusional Condition (p. 302). The vampire defines his exact beliefs, but can't control his reaction to these beliefs, nor can she inspire a delusion that would make the victim homicidal or self-destructive. She can force someone to believe that his friends hate him, but not that he must attack them. The delusion lasts for a night; if the vampire activates Dread Presence, it instead lasts for a number of nights equal to the vampire's Blood Potency.

Exceptional Success: The vampire sparks intense delusions in the victim. The delusion lasts for three nights; if the vampire activates Dread Presence, count her Blood Potency as two higher than it is.

Waking Nightmare ●●●●

Having altered her victims' beliefs and stoked their fears, the vampire can now spark disturbing hallucinations of a kind that all vampires suffer in torpor. These awful visions adhere to nightmarish logic, even the most apparently innocent vision turning sinister when the victim has time to focus on it.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy + Nightmare vs. highest Composure + Blood Potency in group

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Duration: Scene

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The vampire starts to hallucinate, perceiving something that only she can see that terrifies her. She must immediately roll to resist frenzy.

Failure: The victims do not hallucinate, or it does not particularly affect them.

Success: The vampire inflicts a single hallucination — a change or addition to what is currently present in the scene — on her victims. The hallucination lasts for a scene.

Exceptional Success: The victims suffer the vampire's version of reality for a full night.

This terrible hallucination manifests to all senses, though it generally can't change more than a single person, object, or feature of the location. She could invert the colors in a building, create a shambling monster that stalks her victims, or give herself a nightmarish appearance. The Storyteller should work with the player to determine how big a change the vampire can make. Once created, the Nosferatu can control how the vision reacts while it remains in her presence; once she has separated from her victims, her creation takes on a life of its own. The hallucination takes no effort to maintain, and will run its course even if the vampire meets Final Death.

Unleashing the fears of the Beast gives the hallucination the taint of nightmares, even if the Nosferatu doesn't intend anything overtly horrifying. A doll's eyes follow the victims around the room, that nice man has too wide a smile and it doesn't touch his eyes, the gentle stream reflects the light wrong and something strange is swimming in it. Nightmare cannot create a pleasant image, though no matter how awful the hallucinations can't cause actual harm or inflict significant pain.

Alone, Waking Nightmare only affects one person. Used with Dread Presence, it can affect any number of people in the vampire's presence — though they all suffer the same hallucination, and while they are together their perceptions remain roughly consistent.

Mortal Terror ●●●●●

The Nosferatu can summon horrific visions from the depths of a victim's soul. She twists everything around her victim to

present one of his worst fears made flesh. Her victim can't sleep, his hair turns white from terror, and in some cases his heart stops dead. She can't conjure pure fear out of nothing — her victim must already be afraid. Some Kindred implant a delusion, or summon an illusory terror to make the victim afraid.

Cost: 1 Vitae and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare – victim's Composure

Condition: The vampire needs to have inflicted the Frightened or Delusional Conditions on her victim.

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The victim faces his fears down and doesn't back away. He gains a +3 bonus to resist Nightmare for the next week.

Failure: The victim's heart skips a beat and he starts sweating badly, but he doesn't falter.

Success: The fear reaction tears through the victim; he suffers one point of lethal damage per success. If he survives, he bears a permanent mark of coming through his fear — a nervous twitch, or a sudden streak of white in his hair — and takes the Broken Condition (p. 301). If the vampire activates Dread Presence, the victim also loses one point of Composure per success; these lost dots heal at the same rate as lethal damage.

Exceptional Success: The vampire can taste and savor the victim's fear. If her victim dies, she regains a point of Willpower.

Obfuscate

The Beast is a hidden killer. It lurks just below the surface, unnoticed by its prey until it's too late. Just another man in the street, no different from anyone else. Just another woman passing by. Why can't you remember what they looked like? One of them turns, and you can't quite see his face, but he's walking towards you. Another second and he's grabbed you. His teeth sink into your neck and all you can think is "why won't anyone do anything? Why won't they help me?"

Obfuscate is the reason you'll never be sure that you're alone again.

Mixed Signals

Obfuscate tricks the victim's mind directly, removing traces of the vampire from the sensory information reaching her brain, rather than fooling her senses directly. Obfuscate affects smell and taste as much as sight or hearing — potentially useful if you've angered a pack of werewolves, or a vampire with sharp Kindred senses.

Face in the Crowd •

The vampire can turn his predatory aura inwards, walking through crowds of people who pay him no heed. As long as he doesn't do anything to obviously draw attention to himself, nobody notices him. He's just one more person on the street, part of the city's nightlife. People don't shy away from him because of what he's wearing or what he looks like. He's just as much a fixture of the city as the rats and the graffiti.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene

For the rest of the scene, people's eyes just slide off the vampire. People can tell that someone's there, but they don't remember who he is or what he looks like; he's just "some guy," average height and build, average hair, average clothes. Unless the vampire's doing something to draw people's attention — pulling a gun, or screaming at people — or he's in a place where someone doesn't expect anyone else to be, everyone around him ignores him. They don't care what he's carrying; he could walk down the street with an assault rifle strapped across his back or a body slung over his shoulder, and as long as he doesn't use it to draw attention, nobody particularly cares or remembers.

If the vampire is violent towards someone — if he punches someone or starts feeding in a crowded subway station — his victim will automatically notice. If he's doing something that would draw attention, including but not limited to being violent, everyone around him must make a reflexive Wits + Composure roll to notice the commotion, penalized by the vampire's Obfuscate dots. The vampire's predatory aura seemingly disappears, so that other vampires can't sense it.

Touch of Shadow ••

With just a touch, the vampire can extend the muted attentions of Face in the Crowd to an object or animal, rather than himself. His subject fades out — if he masks a desk, people subconsciously register that it's there and won't bump in to it, but they can't recognize what's right in front of them unless the vampire forces them to interact with it. Even a forensic team would only remember seeing a desk if they examined photos of the scene after the fact.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Requirement: The vampire must touch the object he wants to hide; in the case of an unwilling victim, the vampire must roll to touch his opponent (see p. 177). The animal or object cannot have Size greater than the vampire's own (but see Suggested Modifiers).

Dice Pool: Wits + Larceny + Obfuscate

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Scene

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Something draws people's attention to whatever the vampire wanted to hide. It's the first thing they

notice when they come onto the scene, and they want to find out more about it.

Failure: The object or creature doesn't fade into the background.

Success: For the rest of the scene, people's eyes slide off the object. The vampire can affect an inanimate object or animal with the same effects as Face in the Crowd — people subconsciously register that the subject is present, but they're not actively aware of it. If an observer is forced to deal with something affected by Touch of Shadow — being thrown into an occulted table or door, or bitten by an occulted dog — that observer can then recognize the subject's existence.

Since people have a hard time noticing occluded objects, the vampire can hide behind an object affected by Touch of Shadow to remain unnoticed. In order to notice the occluded object, observers must succeed at a reflexive Wits + Composure penalized by the vampire's Obfuscate dots. A living creature affected by Touch of Shadow can see anything else that the vampire has Obfuscated without a roll.

Exceptional Success: The victim of this power doesn't stand out to any observer, even if they're looking at photographs or video featuring him when the power was active.

Suggested Modifiers

–1	Increase the maximum affected Size by 1
–2	Increase the maximum affected Size by 2
–3	Increase the maximum affected Size by 3

Cloak of Night ●●●

With but a thought, the vampire slips from sight as well as mind. He doesn't just fade into the background, he straight-up vanishes. He leaves no scent and makes no sound, though it doesn't mask incidental signs of his passing, like drifting smoke or creaking floorboards. He can pass this effect on to others, even stealing people from the world with Touch of Shadow.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: None

Cloak of Night increases the effect of Face in the Crowd and Touch of Shadow. At its most basic, the vampire can now use Touch of Shadow on other people. This costs no addiional Vitae , and the victim is overlooked just like an object or animal. Even if the victim strikes someone, only the person she hits will notice her; everyone else must roll to notice her as for Face in the Crowd.

The vampire can also spend an extra point of Vitae when activating Face in the Crowd or Touch of Shadow to vanish completely. Rather than being overlooked or just an "average presence," the vampire instead completely disappears. Everything that he's carrying vanishes with him. People can no longer notice his presence if he attacks someone or if he cries out. A sadistic vampire can use Cloak of Night to make his victim vanish in a crowded street, then feed with impunity while his victim cries out, never knowing why people do not help her.

Particularly canny observers can follow the vampire by incidental signs of his passing — disturbed smoke, gaps in crowds, and the like. An observer rolls Wits + Composure – the vampire's Obfuscate dots as an extended action. Each roll takes one minute, and the observer must roll more successes than the vampire's Wits + Stealth + Obfuscate.

The Familiar Stranger ●●●●

Rather than removing himself from the perceptions of other people, the vampire can instead adjust how they see him. He can either appear as a subjective face, a "frail old woman," or a "young lothario," or as a specific person, like "Tom's friend Jason." People perceive the vampire as though he were who they'd expect to see based on his chosen disguise — everyone has a different idea of what a frail old woman looks like, after all.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: none

Action: None

When using Face in the Crowd or affecting a person with Touch of Shadow, the vampire can spend the Vitae required to activate this power. She can specify a particular image that she wants to project, either a subjective category or a specific person. If she takes on the form of a specific person, everyone sees and hears what they would expect were that person present. He needs to know that the person exists, and he can't use his description to influence people's reactions — "the woman Tom will fall in love with," or "a man Jennifer finds trustworthy" both fail, as they rely on influencing the victim's thoughts and emotions about the person being imitated.

A vampire can also use The Familiar Stranger on objects through Touch of Shadow. He can redefine how people see the object. The illusory object must be roughly the same size as the original object, and will pass most forms of mundane inspection — though an illusory gun won't fire, and an illusory knife won't cut. Simply discovering that the illusion won't function isn't enough to break it, however — that only happens at the end of the scene.

Oubliette ●●●●●

The vampire creates a realm of his own, hiding a place from mundane senses and scrambling the perceptions of everyone within. He can turn an alleyway into a maze that nobody can escape from, or make a humble brownstone appear to be a stately manor house. He must mark the area's boundary and exits with his Vitae, impregnating the stones and soil with his blood and bending the location to his will. Once he has spread his blood, he slumbers there for one full day before awakening as the master of his abode.

Cost: 3-9 Vitae and 1 Willpower

Requirement: The vampire must spread Vitae around the area he wishes to claim, marking the gateways, exits, and landmarks. Three Vitae is enough to secure an apartment or

small house, six can Obfuscate a brownstone or alleyway, and nine is enough to hide a mansion or similarly large building. After spreading blood, he must slumber for a full day in the location. He can spread the bloodletting process over several nights, but he must spend every day asleep in the location until his work is complete. The Oubliette absorbs the blood that he spills, making it invisible to Kindred senses.

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: 1 week per dot of Blood Potency

Once he has established an Oubliette, the vampire can use Touch of Shadow, Cloak of Night, and The Familiar Stranger at any distance, on anyone or anything within his haven. He can affect multiple different people or objects with a single activation of the power — making the exits vanish with Cloak of Night, or using The Familiar Stranger to make his ghouls look like people his victims want to see. Using other Obfuscate powers in the Oubliette requires only one roll, and Cloak of Night and The Familiar Stranger do not cost extra Vitae.

The vampire can affect individual aspects of the area separately, making rifles look like snakes or making a single door disappear, or he can make more sweeping changes with just one use of Touch of Shadow — making his run-down brownstone into a manor house with all the appropriate trappings, while the vampire himself becomes a venerable old gentleman.

Someone interacting with elements of an Oubliette can see their true natures, but only for a few seconds. Since the Oubliette can cover a large area, and can change in the blink of an eye, most people shrug off minor changes as just a trick of the light.

A vampire's Oubliette lasts for one week per dot of Blood Potency, though she can reinforce the effect before it ends.

Protean

Every vampire is one bad day away from giving in to the Beast. Some keep the creature leashed within, holding it back and only letting it out to prey on the weak. Others indulge their Beasts, reveling in the descent from an undead thing yearning for its grave to a force of savage power. A vampire who attains the pinnacle of Protean becomes a formless creature, nothing more than smoke and hunger.

Unmarked Grave •

With a silent command, the earth itself yawns open to embrace the vampire. She merges with the ground, becoming immune to almost any harm. She can remain there indefinitely, waiting in a cocoon of soil until the time is right for her to emerge. She does not have to find stone or mud, she can just as easily slip into concrete — as long as she has servants willing to feed her while she rests.

Cost: Varies; 0 for soil or earth, otherwise Vitae equal to the Durability of the material.

Requirement: The vampire's hiding place must be at least the same Size as her.

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: Indefinite

The vampire sinks bodily into the earth, for as long as she desires. Once interred, she's mostly insensible to the outside world, though she can remain conscious if she so wishes. She has a sense of the ground above her — she's well aware if someone tries to concrete over her hiding place. Her Kindred senses continue to function, and she remains capable of sensing the predatory aura even though her safe haven means another vampire's predatory aura can't force her into a fight-or-flight reaction. Should someone spill blood or Vitae upon the ground, she can absorb it. The ground dilutes Vitae enough that it can't result in a blood bond, but to a Vitae-addicted vampire just the taste might be enough to drive her out of the ground, thirsty for more.

The only way to harm the vampire is to damage or destroy the ground she resides in; she takes one point of bashing damage for each point of Structure that her haven loses. When she takes her first point of lethal damage she emerges from the ground, unable to hold herself in.

Predatory Aspect ••

All the vampire has to do is give in just a little bit, and her Beast can slip out through her flesh, warping her body into a monstrous form. While every Gangrel's Beast is different, its manifestation usually takes inspiration from a predatory or scavenging animal of some form. Some twist their bodies to run on all fours like a wolf, while others take on the rough skin and strange senses of a shark.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Scene

By spending a point of Vitae, the vampire can manifest a small host of bestial traits. When she first learns Predatory Aspect, she picks three adaptations from the list below. From then on, she can manifest any or all of these changes for the rest of the scene by spending a point of Vitae.

If none of these adaptations make sense for the character, the player and Storyteller should work together to create new ones, using these as guidelines.

- **Aquatic:** Growing webbed hands or slick scales, the vampire can swim at the same Speed she can run on land.
- **Claws:** Sharp claws grow from the vampire's fingers. They are 1L weapons that use Brawl to attack.
- **Extra Sense:** The Kindred grows extra sensory organs, giving her tremor sense, echolocation, or some other sense that allows her to "see" without using her eyes. Using this sense, she has a 360-degree field of vision.

- **Feral Senses:** Taking on a hawk's eyes or a dog's sense of smell allows the vampire to hear heartbeats and see or smell blood as though her Blood Potency were two dots higher.
- **Patagia:** By growing a flap of leathery skin between her arms and torso, the vampire can glide — as long as she falls at least ten yards (ten meters), she can travel thirty yards (thirty meters) horizontally, and she takes no damage from the fall.
- **Prehensile Tail:** The vampire grows a long, prehensile tail. She can use it to grab things as though it were an extra arm, though it doesn't have a hand and can't be used for fine-motor tasks like unlocking a door or firing a gun.
- **Quadripedal:** Longer arms and shorter legs allow a vampire to run on all fours like a cheetah or wolf. When running on all fours, add +4 to her Speed and double all jump distances.
- **Wall Crawling:** The vampire grows hundreds of tiny insect legs, claws on his feet, or barbed hairs on his body that allow him to move freely across walls and ceilings without an Athletics roll.

A character can change her adaptations by spending a day in her Unmarked Grave and spending one point of Vitae for each adaptation she wants to replace. When she changes adaptation, the player should work to maintain the theme of a specific predatory creature — though she may pick a different predator to copy when the vampire's adaptations change.

Beast's Skin ●●●

The Beast can warp a vampire's flesh, taking the form of an animal that she has consumed. Her body warps and shifts, growing extra muscle or folding in on itself until she fully resembles an animal she has consumed. The Beast will not give her the form of prey — her new skin must resonate with her predatory nature in some way.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene

Her flesh ripples and warps as the vampire takes on the form of an animal. She must have consumed the beast — killing it by feeding from it. She can only take on the form of predatory animals, carrion-eaters, plague-carrying beasts, and parasites between Size 1 and 7. A vampire can keep a number of forms ready equal to her dots in Protean; to add or replace one she must consume the appropriate beast then slumber for a full day and night in her Unmarked Grave.

In animal form, she takes on the beast's Physical Attributes and Skills, and its Size, Speed, and Health. She can move and sense and attack in any way that the animal can — a shark can swim and bite and sense blood, while a rat can scurry and bite, and a crow can fly. She may be unable to use some Physical Merits at the Storyteller's discretion. She can remain in her animal form indefinitely, but she still feels the need for blood burning within her, and sunlight still harms her.

While in animal form, the vampire can use her Disciplines as normal.

Unnatural Aspect ●●●●

With her Beast boiling in her blood, the pathetic shell of the vampire's human or animal form cannot contain it. Her flesh warps, twisting and cracking under the pressure. She manifests truly horrific changes — though they may be inspired by the animal kingdom, these features come from the Beast itself, rather than the pale shadows that walk the world.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: None

Duration: Scene

When manifesting her Predatory Aspect, the vampire can spend an extra point of Vitae to produce a fourth feature, this one being her Beast made manifest. She can assume an adaptation from the following list; if none of these are suitable the player and Storyteller should work together to create an appropriate feature.

- **Barbed Hands:** Pushing out tiny barbs on her hands and arms, the vampire can grab her opponents with incredible ferocity. Add her Protean dots to all grappling dice pools. When choosing the Damage move in a grapple, the vampire deals lethal damage. These barbs enable very gory feeding in the middle of a fight, tearing the victim's skin as she bites him.
- **Hooked Hands:** The vampire's hands grow great hooked claws and other unnatural appendages that allow him to dig through soil and rock at up to half his Speed.
- **Horrid Talons:** By growing giant fangs or serrated talons, the vampire can deal horrific damage to anyone who gets in her way. These weapons give a +2 lethal weapon modifier on all Brawl attacks, and armor piercing 2. The damage is lethal even to vampires.
- **Rubbery Flesh:** Warping her flesh into a rubbery substance and her bones into flexible cartilage, the vampire can stretch, condense, and contort her body in impossible ways. She can fit through almost any gap more than an inch (two centimeters) across. If the contortion requires a roll — such as squeezing through a drain cover while someone's shooting at her — add the vampire's Protean dots to her dice pool.
- **Wings:** The vampire grows great wings of sharp bone and pale leathery skin. The vampire can fly at up to her full running Speed.

The vampire can replace her chosen Unnatural Aspect by sleeping for a full day and night in her Unmarked Grave and spending two points of Vitae.

Primeval Miasma ●●●●●

The Beast bursts out from the vampire's body, dissolving it into a cloud of hungry smoke. Occasionally, her victims can see

flashes of yellow within the smoke, like the gleaming of eyes. Nothing short of an airtight room can bar her passage, and nothing physical can harm her.

Cost: 3 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Taking on a smoke form gives the vampire a number of advantages. She can condense herself down to her human Size, or expand into a cloud of up to (Protean + Blood Potency) yards (meters) in diameter. She can move through pretty much anything that isn't actively airtight, and floats at half her normal Speed. She can perceive inside the cloud of smoke as clearly as if she were looking with her human senses, but the world outside her form is blurred and muted. Her Kindred senses continue to function as normal.

In her smoke form, the vampire is immune to all harm that doesn't come from fire, sunlight, or other banes that deal damage. If her smoke form is ever fully exposed to sunlight, she returns to her human form. Nothing else can force her back into her human form — as long as she avoids sunlight she can slumber in her Miasma form. It has all the same benefits as her Unmarked Grave, allowing the vampire to shift her adaptations and animal forms.

Other beings pass right through the smoke. If a victim has any open wounds, the vampire can feed from them just by having them enter her Miasma — the blood boils out of his wounds, evaporating in a flash of grey and yellow smoke. If she needs to feed and can't find someone who is already bleeding, the vampire can instead force herself into the victim's lungs with strands of semi-tangible smoke, stealing her life-force along with her breath (grapple and "bite" using her normal Physical Attributes).

Resilience

The Kindred are walking corpses, free of the frailties of a mortal form. Their bodies are capable of great endurance, but Resilience harnesses the Beast to take that endurance beyond "great" and into "impossible." With Resilience a vampire could continue to act even when his body has been reduced to little more than bone and tendon.

Cost: None or 1 Vitae per effect

Dice Pool: None

Action: None (for persistent effects) or Reflexive (for active effects)

Duration: Permanent (for persistent effects) or one action (for active effects)

Like other physical Disciplines, Resilience has two kinds of effects: persistent and active. Persistent effects are always on, and have no cost. Active effects are Reflexive, and cost one Vitae per effect.

Persistent: Add the vampire's dots in Resilience to his Stamina. This may raise a character's Stamina above the normal limits imposed by his Blood Potency. Whenever he is dealt aggravated damage, for each dot of Resilience he possesses, downgrade one point of aggravated damage to lethal. This applies to damage from fire and all acquired banes, but not sunlight. Resilience offers no reprieve from the sun's blazing eye.

Active: By spending Vitae a vampire can dismiss grievous wounds, even those from banes. For each point of Vitae spent, choose one effect from the following list. A vampire may spend additional Vitae to invoke multiple effects simultaneously, but no effect of Resilience may be used more than once per turn.

- Subtract his Resilience dots plus one from all non-bane sources of damage. Mechanically this is similar to armor, but does nothing to reduce the visual and superficial signs of injury. Removed damage appears to be dealt, but resisted wounds do not inhibit the vampire physically in any way, though in a social context they likely create some difficulties. All superficial wounds may be healed completely for one Vitae whenever he next slumbers.

If an injury specifically removes a limb, an eye, or so on, the vampire *does* suffer logical impairments from the injuries.

This method of reducing damage does make it more difficult to stake a vampire.

- Subtract his Resilience dots from all damage from fire or other acquired banes. Sunlight still remains beyond the power of Resilience to defend against. All superficial signs of damage remain: Even if a vampire lost no Health while dashing through an inferno, he still emerges a burnt corpse. In this case, however, the visible damage is only as severe as it would be for a mortal who'd suffered the same level of harm.

Vigor

While all Kindred possess the power to bolster their might in short bursts, Vigor allows some vampires to kick like a freight train or rend steel with their bare hands. The Beast tunes every bone, tendon and muscle fiber to its highest performance , allowing the night's most fearsome predator to strut through the jungle of his choosing without fear of lesser, weaker creatures.

Cost: None or 1 Vitae per active effect

Dice Pool: None

Action: None (for persistent effects) or Reflexive (for active effects)

Duration: Permanent (for persistent effects) or one action (for active effects)

Like other physical Disciplines, Vigor has two kinds of effects: persistent and active. Persistent effects are always on, and have no cost. Active effects are Reflexive, and cost one Vitae per effect.

Persistent: Add the vampire's dots in Vigor to her Strength. This can raise her Strength above the normal limits imposed by her Blood Potency. Additionally, the vampire may make a Strength + Athletics roll to jump. The yards (meters) jumped are equal to (successes) * (Vigor dots + 1).

Active: By spending Vitae a vampire can energize her dead muscles, giving her a brief but substantial burst of strength. For each point of Vitae spent choose one effect from the following list. A vampire may spend additional Vitae to invoke multiple effects simultaneously, but no effect of Vigor may be used more than once per turn.

• Add her dots in Vigor as a weapon bonus to all Athletics, Brawl, and Weaponry attacks made this turn. This puts enormous strain on weapons, especially those not intended for heavy hitting. Improvised weapons take one point of damage for every dot of Vigor over that tool's durability whenever they are used in this manner.

• Lift and hurl objects normally far too unwieldy to use as weapons, such as boulders, cars, and other people. Any object she can lift, with Size no greater than her Strength, can be used as an improvised melee or throwing weapon. Improvised weapons have a weapon bonus equal to the lower of their Size or Durability. Objects with Size greater than 5 deal lethal damage to mortals, while those with Size 10 or more deal lethal even to vampires.

Devotions

Many vampires develop the abilities listed here for each Discipline, but some manifest new powers of the Blood. These new Discipline techniques, called Devotions, can manifest spontaneously in some Kindred, or can be developed by careful honing of Discipline abilities. Once a vampire knows a Devotion, she can teach it to another Kindred in much the same way as the standard Discipline techniques. Any vampire with the appropriate prerequisite Discipline dots can develop any Devotion for which she has the dots — as long as she has a teacher, or has plenty of time to practice. Even so, most Kindred keep the Devotions they know secret, passing them along only when it suits their purposes. Devotions are rare enough among the Kindred population that they have intrinsic value as secrets.

A new Devotion usually costs one Experience per dot in the Devotion, halved and rounded down. Subsume the Lesser Beast, which requires Animalism 4 and Dominate 2 costs three Experiences. Particularly specialized Devotions may cost a point less, while wildly versatile Devotions cost an extra Experience. All of the Devotions in this section cost one Experience per dot unless noted otherwise.

Body of Will

(Resilience •••, Vigor •)

Kindred trained in this Devotion can push through pain, and find strength in pain and injury. On the outside, it looks like masochism; crippling blows empower and invigorate the vampire. But this Devotion transfers the energy of a wounding attack into the fuel for the vampire's Vigor.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Stamina + Survival + Resilience

Action: Reflexive

For one turn per success, the character suffers no wound penalties. As well, during any turn where he takes damage, he does not need to spend Vitae to activate one effect of Vigor.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Chain of Command

(Dominate •••, Vigor •)

Dominate masters can implant suggestions and commands into their victims. With this Devotion, the vampire can force more of her own will into her victim, imparting a single use of her own Dominate for the victim to use later. She must clearly explain on whom he must use the gift, and how. She can give a general description, such as "the first person you see wearing red." Or, she can be very specific: "Tell this to Gregor at 11:45 P.M. sharp."

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Persuasion + Dominate, vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

The victim does not have to resist if he so chooses. If successful, the vampire plants one of her Dominate effects deep within the victim. At the specified moment, he uses the Dominate command as directed. However, this uses the vampire's dice pool, not the victim's.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Cloak the Gathering (Obfuscate •••••)

The vampire slips from the mind as easily as easily as blood dripping from an open wound, though rather than picking off his victims, he can make a whole group vanish at once. He might obscure his comrades — or pluck a group of unwilling victims from the minds of onlookers, leaving them scared and isolated.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: None

Cloak the Gathering enhances the effect of Touch of Shadow and Cloak of Night. By paying two extra points of Vitae, the vampire can expand the effect of Touch of Shadow to encompass a number of people equal to his Blood Potency, though each one cannot individually have a Size greater than the vampire's own. He can also opt to activate Face in the Crowd at the same time. If he also pays the extra cost for Cloak of Night to vanish completely rather than fading into the background, the effect applies to everyone masked by Cloak the Gathering — so for four points of Vitae total he can vanish from sight along with a number of people equal to his Blood Potency. The vampire doesn't have to touch everyone he takes with him, but they must be within his (Obfuscate + Blood Potency) yards (meters).

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Conditioning

(Dominate ••••)

Over a period of weeks, the vampire pushes on her victim's will, forcing him to repeat the same tasks over and over until he cannot resist her voice. She slowly builds up control over her victim to the point where he can barely manifest his own thoughts or feelings. Instead he's an empty shell, waiting for his mistress' next command.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Dominate vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

Requirement: The vampire must have inflicted the Mesmerized Condition on the victim. Conditioning can only be used on the same victim once every two nights.

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The victim reasserts his will in a dramatic fashion. He resolves the Mesmerized Condition; he keeps the bonus to resist further Mesmerize attempts for the next week.

Failure: The vampire cannot get her victim to repeat exactly the same tasks for now.

Success: The victim's will bends before the vampire. He gains the Subservient Condition (p. 306).

Exceptional Success: The victim's will bends like grass before the storm of the vampire's commands. Mark an extra cross when applying the Subservient Condition.

Each time the vampire inflicts the Subservient Condition on a character, his player should put a cross or other mark above one of his Willpower dots, starting from the left. Each dot can only have one mark. If the Subservient Condition is allowed to fade naturally, remove the rightmost cross. When each of the character's Willpower dots has a mark above it, he exchanges the Subservient Condition for the Enslaved Condition (p. 303).

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Cross-Contamination

(Majesty •, Nightmare •)

Majesty awes its victims; Nightmare unnerves them. This Devotion blends the two effects, creating a confusing aura where those affected rapidly shift between fear and elation.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy + Lower of Majesty or Nightmare

Action: Instant

Once active, this Devotion confuses everyone in the vampire's immediate presence, forcing their emotions to swing between adoration and disgust. This causes a handful of effects:

- They become confused and disoriented, not sure what to think or feel. This reduces their effective Composure by one dot.
- The vampire becomes a beacon for the crowd's attention. Looking away from her requires a Composure + Blood Potency roll, contested against her successes. The victim must only meet the vampire's successes.
- Any rolls to resist Persuasion- or Intimidation-based Social maneuvers lose the 10-again quality.
- A character may not have Awe or Dread Presence active at the same time as Cross-Contamination.

This Devotion costs 1 Experience to learn.

Cult of Personality

(Majesty ••••, Vigor •••)

Under normal circumstances, Loyalty inflicts a deep, overbearing sense of obedience on a single victim. With this Devotion, the vampire broadcasts her charm and overwhelms all in her presence. All but the strongest fall in line and worship her.

Cost: 10 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Socialize + Majesty

Action: Instant

If successful, this Devotion washes the effects of Loyalty over the crowd. It affects any character with fewer Composure + Blood Potency dots than the vampire has successes. Those afflicted gain the Enthralled Condition.

This Devotion costs 4 Experiences to learn.

Enchantment

(Majesty ••••, Obfuscate ••)

Majesty is a gift that draws attention and bends feelings toward the vampire. With this Devotion, and a bit of Obfuscate, the vampire can deflect those feelings to another person, or to a place or thing.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Majesty vs. Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

If successful, this Devotion works as Loyalty, but the vampire can designate a source for the Enthralled Condition instead of focusing it on herself. All the other parameters remain the same, but the victim insists on defending and cherishing a different person, place, or thing. She has to somehow communicate the desired subject of the Enchantment to the victim for this Devotion to work.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Enfeebling Aura

(Majesty •, Resilience •)

Many Daeva masters of Celerity and Vigor claim that Majesty means nothing when you're staring down a skull-crushing fist. This Devotion seeks to disprove that notion. It brings forth

the vampire's supernatural presence not to awe a crowd, but to cow and enfeeble a victim. While it won't completely stop an assailant, it will even the playing field in a tussle.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Majesty vs. Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

If successful, this Devotion temporarily removes dots of the victim's Celerity, Resilience, and Vigor, in whatever combination the vampire wishes. The vampire removes dots one-for-one along with her Majesty dots for the scene, up to her successes. For example, she can sacrifice three dots of her Majesty, losing access to them for the scene, to remove two dots of Vigor and one dot of Resilience from her victim for the scene.

This Devotion costs 3 Experiences to learn.

Foul Grave

(Protean •, Nightmare •)

Usually, when interred in an Unmarked Grave, the vampire rests passively, barely aware of his surroundings, let alone able to influence them. With this Devotion, he can project his predatory aura on those near his resting place. Some vampires use this ability to divert pursuers or even as a stalling tactic when confronted by a mob of attackers.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

While the vampire does not fully maintain all his senses, he's vaguely aware of those nearby. He gets a brief mental glimpse of mortals in the vicinity, and still feels the auras of Kindred. While in his Unmarked Grave, he can activate predatory aura normally, but it costs a point of Vitae in addition to the Willpower required if the victim is Kindred.

This Devotion costs 1 Experiences to learn.

Force of Nature

(Protean ••••, Resilience ••••, Vigor ••)

Most of Protean's gifts change the vampire subtly, or in small ways, in accordance with nature. Unnatural Aspect takes that a step further, moving into eldritch territory with a single mutation. When the vampire activates Force of Nature, her body becomes a mess of rapid change. She grows and loses limbs in the blink of an eye. Her skin becomes rock solid, then gelatinous within moments. She's truly protean; she changes the way water flows. However, she needs the strength of Resilience to protect her form from collapsing in upon itself.

Cost: 8 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

When activating Force of Nature, the vampire gains as many of the advantages of Predatory Aspect, Beast's Skin, and Unnatural Aspect as she wishes, without Vitae costs. She can adopt additional modifications or shed existing ones as a reflexive action. As well, with an instant action, she can shift a number of Physical Attribute dots equal to her Protean to other Physical Attributes. These change derived traits, and can exceed her normal limitations.

The effects of Force of Nature last for the scene.

This Devotion costs 5 Experiences to learn.

Gargoyle's Vigilance

(Auspex •, Resilience ••)

This Devotion grants a patient and vigilant vampire the ability to oversee her haven with immense clarity. She becomes completely aware of every single inch, and can respond at a moment's notice. When she moves against a trespasser, nothing can stop her. Her Resilience affords her senses a stoic patience, so she can divide her attention throughout her resting place.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

This Devotion requires the vampire to remain completely still, in a location reflected by the Safe Place Merit (see p. 123). She has to be stationary for at least ten minutes before this Devotion offers its benefits. While stationary, she has full use of her Auspex abilities, centered on any single spot of her choosing within the haven. Having full awareness, she may change the spot at will. She receives +5 to any rolls to detect intruders.

If she decides to move against an intruder, she gains +5 to her Initiative for the scene. As well, she does not need to spend Vitae to activate her Resilience.

With a point of Willpower, this Devotion may be used while the vampire slumbers.

This Devotion costs 1 Experiences to learn. An advanced version of this Devotion exists, utilizing Protean 5, costing 4 Experiences. This version allows the vampire to become a statue, immune to fire and sunlight while remaining stationary.

Hint of Fear

(Celerity ••, Nightmare ••)

Usually, using Face of the Beast takes extended eye contact, and none could confuse it for anything but an attempt to invoke pure terror. With a subtle application of Celerity, this Devotion allows the vampire to use a rapid, unnoticeable look to bring the Face of the Beast to bear. If the vampire doesn't designate himself as the source of the fear, onlookers will be none the wiser.

Cost: 1 Vitae, plus one for Face of the Beast

Dice Pool: None, roll normally for Face of the Beast

Action: Reflexive

This Devotion allows the vampire to use Face of the Beast as a reflexive action. This requires a second point of Vitae, so the vampire must be able to spend two vitae in a turn to use it without preparation.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Juggernaut's Gait

(Resilience •••••, Vigor •••)

With this rare Devotion, an elder Kindred can temporarily render herself completely immune to harm. Her blood flows rapidly from her flesh, and coats her body to defend her. Even the strongest Kindred cannot maintain this ability for more than a few seconds at a time, but for those moments, they're veritable gods of blood.

Cost: 5 Vitae per turn

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

This Devotion requires the vampire spend five Vitae per turn she wishes to remain immune to harm. During this time, all damage — bashing, lethal, aggravated, even damage caused by the fire or by sunlight — is absorbed into her blood before it reaches her skin. She takes no damage from any source.

Note that this Devotion does not allow the vampire to spend additional Vitae; she must be able to spend five in a turn to use Juggernaut's Gait without preparation. She can spend the first four on preceding turns, and the fifth when she wishes to evoke the protection. However, invoking the Devotion is reflexive, and the Vitae may be spent after an opponent makes a successful attack roll.

This Devotion costs 4 Experiences to learn.

Quicken Sight

(Auspex •, Celerity •)

With the preternatural awareness of Auspex and the remarkable speed of Celerity, the vampire gains a exceptional sense of time and the space around her. For a brief moment, she sees everything at a slow crawl, and can react thusly.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

When activated, Quicken Sight lasts for a turn. The vampire can examine the details on fast-moving items, and respond to things outside the normal human spectrum. She can read multiple pages of text in three seconds. She can apply her Defense to ranged attacks, and can benefit from aiming instantly.

This Devotion costs 1 Experiences to learn.

Reason's Salon

(Animalism ••••, Resilience ••)

Animalism can draw bestial behavior out of a person, but with this Devotion, it can also suppress those behaviors. By spreading his Vitae about a building or gathering place, the vampire can keep Kindred from losing control and unleashing their Beasts for a short time. For this reason, it's not uncommon to see a Gangrel Master of Elysium.

Cost: 5 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

The vampire must spread his Vitae about the location (usually a building or clearing) he wishes to calm. Throughout the evening, vampires within suffer the user's Resilience dots as a penalty to all predatory aura rolls. As well, they add the same number to any rolls to resist frenzy.

This Devotion costs 3 Experiences to learn.

Riot

(Animalism ••••, Majesty •••••)

Feral Infection gives an Animalism user the power to move a small group of people to bestial rampages. Coupled with the pinnacle ability of Majesty, an elder can cause a large group of people to explode into complete bedlam, where they hurt each other, destroy property, and resort to other violent, antisocial behaviors. This Devotion brings the full weight of the vampire's predatory aura to bear on her surroundings.

Cost: 10 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Majesty

Action: Instant

When activated, Riot overwhelms a wide area (a city block, or half mile), and everyone within it. Anyone with a lower Composure + Blood Potency than the vampire's successes suffers from the Bestial, Competitive, and Wanton Conditions. The victims burst into aggressive, base behaviors. This is not animalistic behavior; it's destructive, short-sighted, and selfish. It causes a bloodbath of massive proportions. Use of this Devotion is considered a Humanity 1 breaking point.

This Devotion costs 5 Experiences to learn.

Shared Sight

(Auspex ••••, Dominate •)

While employing Dominate's trance, a practitioner of this Devotion can extend to her subject some of her second sight. It's a limited, less effective version of her Auspex, but it opens an otherwise uninitiated mind.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Empathy + Auspex

Action: Instant

When activating this Devotion, your character may impart to another a number of dots of her Auspex equal to or less than the successes rolled. The recipient has full access to the abilities granted, but cannot use the lender's dice for activation. to the borrower must make rolls with just Attributes, Skills, and any Auspex dots he may have. The imparted dots last for the remainder of the scene. During this time, the lender loses that many dice from all Auspex rolls.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Shatter the Shroud

(Auspex ••, Vigor •)

With Auspex, Kindred can see through the shrouds of Obfuscate and other Discipline effects (and supernatural powers) that others use in attempts to hide. This Devotion extends that ability with force, shattering those gifts and exposing their users for the world to see.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

Activate this Devotion any time your character wins in a Clash of Wills roll (see p. 125) to pierce a hiding ability. Not only does your character win the Clash of Wills, but the victim's hiding effect ends immediately. He can re-activate it normally on the next turn, if applicable.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Stalwart Servant

(Dominate •••, Resilience •)

This Devotion enables the Kindred to impart some of her preternatural toughness through her blood, making for stronger servants and bodyguards. The subject drinks of the Kindred's Vitae, with normal ghouling, addiction, and blood bond effects, and then receives a hint of the vampire's Resilience.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: This power requires no roll to invoke

Action: Instant

Once the subject feeds, the vampire imparts her own Resilience dots onto him. He still needs to spend Vitae to activate the Resilience, but he receives one as part of the invocation. He cannot benefit from this Devotion if he already has Resilience at an equal or higher level than the vampire. This Devotion lasts one night. The vampire may maintain a number of subjects equal to her Blood Potency. The drinker gains the passive benefits of Resilience, and the vampire does not lose access to the Discipline.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Subsume the Lesser Beast

(Animalism ●●●●, Dominate ●●)

The vampire locks eyes with an animal and forces her mind into its body. She can only command a predator, a parasite, a carrion-eater, or a plague-bearer; she cannot affect a mere prey animal. She completely subsumes the animal's consciousness, piloting it like a meat puppet. Her body falls into a state of torpor while she controls the beast.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Animal Ken + Animalism – animal's Resolve

Requirement: The vampire must feed 1 Vitae to the animal (included in cost).

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The animal throws off the vampire's attempt at control. For the rest of the night, the vampire manifests a number of physical tics akin to the animal's behavior. Any Social rolls suffer a –2 penalty.

Failure: The vampire cannot take total control of the animal yet.

Success: The vampire takes over the animal's body for one night per success. She uses the animal's Physical Attributes and Skills in place of her own, and cannot use her own Physical or Combat Merits. She can stay awake during the day by spending a point of Willpower at dawn, and takes no damage from sunlight; if she does not spend the Willpower, she returns to her body. She cannot use any Disciplines or Blood Sorcery while in the animal's body, but can use any of its senses, natural weapons, or forms of locomotion. While she commands the animal's body, her own body lies in a torpor-like state, awaiting her return — though she must spend a point of Vitae every night to remain active. If the vampire remains in the animal's body for so long that her body slips into torpor, she immediately snaps back into her body.

Exceptional Success: The vampire can still access some of the power of her blood even in the animal's body. She keeps access to Auspex when in the animal's body.

This Devotion costs 3 Experiences to learn.

Summoning (Dominate ●●●● or Majesty ●●●●)

The vampire reaches out to someone whom he knows, anywhere in the world, and calls her to his side. Somehow, the victim knows that the vampire wants her to be with him, and she will go to be by his side come hell or high water. Summoning isn't instant — it can't account for natural disasters — but the victim will happily empty her bank accounts and steal from friends or family to make the trip. She knows who has called her and where to find him, but the urge to meet him is an emotional compulsion rather than a supernatural command, and she won't put herself in unnecessary danger to make the journey — a vampire is still self-aware enough to seek shelter for the day even though he has been summoned. At the time of summoning, the vampire can impress upon his victim the need to bring something with her — weapons to defend her master from a nemesis, or a sacrifice for some strange Blood Sorcery.

Kindred can develop this Devotion with the requisite level of either Dominate or Majesty. Its effects are the same, but the vampire must buy it related to one Discipline. The requirement and dice pool are set when the vampire develops the Devotion.

This Devotion costs 4 Experiences to learn.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Requirement: Dominate: The vampire must have inflicted the Mesmerized Condition on the victim within the last year. Majesty: The vampire must have used Awe on the victim within the last year.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + (Dominate or Majesty) vs. Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Duration: 1 night

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The victim knows that the vampire wants her to go to him, and does everything in her power to actively avoid him, using her sense of where he is to aid her.

Failure: Something prevents the victim from coming to the vampire's side.

Success: The victim knows where the vampire is and has a sudden compulsion to travel to him. She will travel to meet him by the most direct means available to her, stopping only for necessities. The compulsion lasts for the rest of the night from the vampire's perspective — if he's calling someone from the other side of the world, the effects last until sunrise wherever he is.

Exceptional Success: The victim's compulsion lasts throughout the day and for all of the next night as well, long enough for many international journeys — or at least for the victim to find a way to smuggle herself overseas.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The vampire knows exactly where his victim is.
–1	The vampire has no idea where his victim is, but knows that she is within the same domain.
–1	The victim dislikes the vampire and resents being summoned.
–3	The victim is over 500 miles away, or despises the vampire.
–5	The victim is on the other side of the world.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Sun's Brutal Dreamscape

(Nightmare •••••, Resilience ••)

Nothing frightens Kindred worse than the vengeful rays of the sun or the heat of the fire. Most Kindred can manage short bursts in the daylight, but most avoid it whenever possible. This Devotion curses a sleeping victim to suffer all the burns the vampire experiences from the sun, and curses him with horrifying dreams of the sun's purifying touch. These terrifying daymares leave the victim waking terrified and charred.

This Devotion may only be used on Kindred victims. It costs 4 Experiences to learn.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Nightmare, vs. Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Once used successfully, this Devotion remains active for a number of nights equal to the successes rolled. While it is active, the victim, selected by touch, suffers every sunlight wound the vampire takes, so long as the victim is asleep when the damage occurs. The vampire still takes the damage. This damage can awaken the victim. A victim so awakened wakes with the Frightened Condition (see p. 303).

Touch of Deprivation

(Obfuscate ••••, Dominate ••)

With this Devotion, the vampire can deny a victim her senses with only a touch. He chooses a single sense when activating the Devotion, and that sense becomes temporarily useless. Often, this Devotion serves to blind enemies or deafen a victim at a critical time.

This Devotion costs 3 Experiences to learn.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Auspex vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Instant

To activate this Devotion, the vampire must touch his victim (see Touching an Opponent on p. 177). If successful, the vampire denies the victim's chosen sense for the remainder of the scene. This Devotion can be used to deny the victim one of her Auspex abilities, if known.

Undying Familiar

(Animalism ••, Resilience ••)

Raise the Familiar awakens a dead animal to serve its Kindred master. However, the animal must be dead for that ability to take effect. This Devotion cuts out the middle man, and awakens a living, ghouled animal at its time of death.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Activate this Devotion and Raise the Familiar at the same time, when feeding an animal Vitae. As long as the animal remains ghouled, this Devotion remains in effect. If the animal dies while ghouled, it immediately rises under Raise the Familiar, but its undead existence is measured in weeks instead of nights.

This Devotion costs 1 Experiences to learn.

Wet Dream

(Majesty ••, Nightmare ••)

This Devotion blends the more subconscious effects of Majesty and Nightmare to plague the victim's sleep. His dreams leave him both feeling dirty, and wanting more.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Majesty, vs. Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

If successful, this Devotion takes effect when next the victim sleeps. His frightening and arousing dreams cause the both the Spooked and Swooning Conditions (see p. 305 and p. 306). The vampire chooses the subject of both Conditions. The victim sheds each Condition individually. However, the two Conditions only give one Beat, and only once they're both resolved.

The Wish

(Celerity ••, Majesty ••••, Vigor ••)

"For three nights, you'll be fast, you'll be strong, you'll be beautiful, and you'll stand above the flock. After that, you're mine. Do you understand?" This classic Daeva Devotion is a common fixture of the Serpent's Embrace. The vampire finds someone she wishes to exalt, then makes him an offer for temporary supremacy. He gets a taste of power, and wants more. At the end of the deal, the victim becomes irrevocably attached to the vampire. It requires a great deal of Vitae to enact, but creates a loyal supplicant.

This Devotion can only be used once on a given character, and only on mortals. It costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Cost: 5 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Majesty

Action: Instant

To use this Devotion, the victim must agree to the terms; three nights of power, but he willl belong to the vampire afterward. The terms can be that vague, but must be stated and agreed to, without any supernatural coercion. The victim must feed from the vampire as part of the agreement. When the deal is struck, the victim gains a number of advantages for three nights:

- He gains two levels of Celerity and Vigor. He can activate them by spending Willpower instead of Vitae.

- He gains three levels of Majesty. He can activate these with Willpower instead of Vitae.
- He needs no sleep, and can go without food and water without issue.

At the end of the period, he gains the Persistent Enthralled Condition. It persists indefinitely.

Vermin Flood

(Animalism •••, Celerity ••, Vigor ••)

This Devotion takes the groundwork laid by Summon the Hunt, and increases it exponentially. Vermin Flood calls every small animal in the neighborhood to swarm en masse and pick apart every little thing in the chosen area. Not only do they feed on living things, but they wipe the space clean. While effective as an assault against groups, it sees some use in cleaning up crime scenes. Unlike Summon the Hunt, this Devotion never appears to be a coincidental event. The Vermin Flood is a plague of biblical proportions. While it tends to stretch the Masquerade, it also causes disbelief in onlookers. Those in the swarm do not survive to tell the tale.

Cost: 10 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism

Action: Instant

To activate this devotion, the vampire must spread her Vitae over an area no larger than a small house or an alleyway. Once activated, every animal of Size 2 or lower immediately swarms with the speed and intensity of the vampire's Celerity and Vigor (persistent effects only). This includes any vermin, cats, birds, and insects. They wash over the area, tearing, chewing, and destroying. Everything in the area but the vampire takes lethal damage equal to the vampire's Animalism dots each turn. This ignores any non-magical armor. Characters moving in the swarm move at half Speed. The vermin will not leave the affected area for the remainder of the scene. Only a very large fire will slow the swarm, and even then, only in the area aflame.

This Devotion costs 4 Experiences to learn.

Wraith's Presence

(Obfuscate •••, Nightmare •)

With this Devotion, the vampire can make herself or something else vanish from the mind's eye, but appear elsewhere. This diversion can distract a pursuer, or make someone rush after a false lead.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

Activate this Devotion when using Cloak of Night. The vampire projects an exact image of the desired subject in another place she can see. The image stays mostly still unless the vampire concentrates on moving it. It'll make the necessary

motions to appear realistic — for example, an image of a human will breathe. The image cannot talk or make noises. The image vanishes as soon as anyone touches it.

Breaking this effect without touching the phantom uses the normal Clash of Wills rules (see p. 125).

Blood Sorcery

While the Invictus pledge their oaths, the Carthians have their laws, and the Ordo Dracul evolve through the Mysteries, the Circle of the Crone and Lancea et Sanctum jealously guard the secrets of blood sorcery. Most Disciplines are simple, if powerful, to use — the Blood responds to a vampire's call in ways she knows and is prepared for, without the need for elaborate ceremony or external action in all but the most powerful cases. The Acolytes and Sanctified, however, have discovered the means of using the Blood's potential for so much more. By using the special Disciplines taught by those covenants, a vampire can perform a ritual to reach out far beyond her physical shell, twisting the world according to her desires. To the uninitiated, it looks like magic. To the Sanctified, it is prayer; and to the Acolytes, it's an object of worship itself. To the Strix, its use by Kindred is an affront. The rewards of blood sorcery are great, but so too are the costs.

The process of using a blood ritual is broadly the same for both covenants, although the Discipline and the effects it makes possible are very different. The vampire prepares herself, deciding on which ritual to attempt. She uses her Ritual Discipline to summon the power, coaxing it through sacrifice and shaping it before making her request. If she has gathered enough power and focused it correctly, her will is done.

Crúac

The Ritual Discipline taught by the Circle of the Crone, Crúac is an ancient, malevolent art — described by some opponents of the covenant as a literal infection of Vitae, a *thing* living within its practitioners. The power summoned by Crúac rites is the power of the Beast itself, paid in blood and forced to taint the world by invoking the primal gods of the Crone. Casting a rite is a fervent, consuming, ecstatic experience, and Acolytes often push the edge of frenzy when they perform their sorcery. Crúac is corrupting, wild, and pagan, degrading everything it touches with the corrosive aura of the Beast. It works its sorcery on flesh, wood, and stone, and is not concerned with the lofty thoughts and intellect of the Man.

Learning Crúac

Only Acolytes in good standing (Circle of the Crone Status • or more) may learn Crúac or the rites that use it. If an Acolyte ritualist loses all status in the covenant, she may still use and develop the Discipline but not learn any more rites. Some Acolytes take theft of the covenant's secrets very seriously, and hunt down ex-members who attempt to teach Crúac to outsiders. Ex-Acolytes rarely advertise any talent in Crúac, however, as the All Night Society regards them with a mixture of superstition and apprehension. Bad things happen to Kindred who practice Crúac outside of the Crone's protection — from simple misfortune to being targeted by the Strix. Stories disagree on whether the "curse of the lone ritualist" can be blamed on the covenant, or perhaps has something to do with the Discipline itself.

Because it rouses, then harnesses the power of the Beast, Crúac use pushes an Acolyte away from humanity. Learning a dot of Crúac is a breaking point for Humanity 4 or lower (see page 107), and simply *knowing* the Discipline caps Humanity at 10 – Crúac dots.

Theban Sorcery

The Ritual Discipline of the Lancea et Sanctum, Theban Sorcery was discovered early in the covenant's history. According to the writings of St. Daniel, one of the earliest members of the covenant, he was led by an angel naming itself "Amoniel" to a cavern deep beneath Thebes in Egypt. The cavern walls were covered in inscribed incantations and diagrams. These formed the basis of Theban Sorcery, which Daniel faithfully recorded and passed on to his fellow Kindred. Theban Sorcery is stern, deliberate, and judgmental — the product of a harsh, uncompromising faith — and the power it calls down feels the same way. Some ritualists characterize the power of miracles as transmitting the touch of God's Curse (as opposed to the Beast) onto the subject. Sanctified miracles provide divinations, reveal wrong-doers and punish those who trespass against the church's laws. Performing a Theban miracle is an act of concentrated faith, mentally exhausting and not done in haste. Every miracle requires a physical sacrament, a symbolic item that crumbles to dust as though it were a slain elder when the ritual reaches a crescendo.

Crúac and the Strix

As a power deeply linked to the Beast, requiring practitioners to reject the Man, Crúac often seems deeply suspicious to those Kindred who know about the Strix in any detail. Even more damning is the fact that some Strix use Crúac rites with a proficiency equal to any Acolyte. Who learned the Discipline from whom, however, is a mystery — and Strix ritualists require Kindred Vitae, not their own shadow-stuff, to feed into their rites (they usually do this by sacrificing a captive vampire). Regardless of who cast the first rite, the Strix regard Crúac as "theirs," and extract high prices from Acolytes seeking the Owls out to learn rites only they know.

Learning Theban Sorcery

Only priests of Lancea et Sanctum Status • or more may learn Theban Sorcery or miracles for use with it. If the ritualist loses all status in the covenant, he can no longer learn new miracles. Learning the Discipline entails oaths to never reveal its secrets to outsiders — and the church has miracles to find and enact vengeance upon oath-breakers.

Because it requires the careful, deliberate exercise of intellect and faith, Theban Sorcery requires the ritualist to have maintained his faculties. A Sanctified ritualist must have a Humanity rating equal to or higher than the dot rating of any miracle he wishes to attempt.

Rites and Miracles

Crúac and Theban Sorcery have ratings likes any other Disciplines, but don't have any useful effect by themselves — all the Disciplines do is call forth the Beast or Curse. The ritualist must then hold that power with blood or sacrament before shaping it into something useful.

Ritualist characters may buy rites and miracles separately from the Ritual Discipline itself for two Experiences each. Every dot of Crúac or Theban Sorcery (including the first) also comes with a "free" rite or miracle, taught by the covenant as part of ongoing training. If a ritualist has lost the status needed to learn new rituals, he can still buy new dots of the Ritual Discipline, but does *not* receive free rituals.

The Sacrifice

The ritual sacrifice must be made at the outset, before the Ritual Discipline is used. If the ritual fails, the sacrifice is still lost.

Crúac rites cost one Vitae per dot of the rite. The first Vitae is spent by the caster as though fueling a Discipline. Any remaining Vitae used must be spilled in the ritual's casting, and not necessarily by the caster — mortal blood is insufficient until it has been consumed by a vampire and turned into Vitae, but some Acolytes force their students to sacrifice Vitae for especially costly rites, or murder captured Kindred as part of the ritual. Vampire blood spilled during a rite becomes inert, and becomes unsuitable for feeding.

Theban miracles cost one Willpower to mentally prepare the ritualist, and a sacrament offered to the saints and angelic forces who oversee miracles in the Sanctified's hagiography. At the end of a failed ritual attempt or when a miracle succeeds, the sacrament crumbles to dust.

Many ritualists go further than these minimum requirements, adding props, assistants, and elaborate performances. These have no mechanical effect, but can play an important psychological role in mustering the ritualist's Willpower.

The Request

Once the sacrifice has been made, the ritualist harnesses the power using her Ritual Discipline.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult + Crúac or Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery

Action: Extended. See the Extended Action rules, on page 170. Ritualists may roll as many times as the unmodified dice pool. The base time per roll is half an hour, reduced to 15 minutes if the character has more dots in the Ritual Discipline than the dot rating of the ritual being cast. A ritual must be completed in one attempt. Ritualists do not receive any bonus for attempting a ritual having already failed with a near miss; rituals automatically fail if interrupted; and ritualists may not use Defense while casting. Many rituals are also Contested or Resisted, as noted in their descriptions.

Unless a Merit that modifies extended actions expressly says that it applies to Sorcery, Crúac or Theban Sorcery rolls are not affected by it. The exception is the Library Merit (p. 121), which applies to Theban Sorcery rituals at the Storyteller's discretion.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The ritual completely fails, and the sacrifice is wasted. The ritualist gains either the Tempted (for Crúac) or Humbled (Theban Sorcery) Condition. The next ritual attempted by the vampire suffers a –2 dice penalty.

Failure: The ritualist is having difficulty, and accumulates no successes. The player decides whether to abandon the ritual entirely or continue. If the ritualist continues, she gains the Stumbled Condition.

Success: The ritual accumulates successes. If the target number of successes is met, the ritual's effect immediately takes place.

Exceptional Success: the ritualist makes great strides in achieving the ritual. The player decides which of the following effects takes place in addition to accumulating successes.

- Reduce the target number of successes by her dots in the Ritual Discipline.
- Reduce the time per roll to 15 minutes (or to 5 minutes if she has more dots in the Discipline than the rating of the ritual).

Inventing new Rituals

The supplement **Blood Sorcery: Sacraments and Blasphemies** provides a detailed system for improvising new rites and miracles, in which characters gain dots in ritual Themes as they progress in the Ritual Disciplines. If you're using that system, refer to that book for when new Theme dots are gained and how to calculate the target number of successes and dice pool for improvised rituals, except for the time taken per roll. The ritual extended action here replaces the one in that book.

Potency

Some rituals require a measure of how successful they were — those that cause injury to the victim, for example. The potency of a ritual is one after meeting the target number of successes, plus one for every additional success rolled above the target. If you get an exceptional success during your ritual, you can choose to add your Discipline dots to Potency if the ritual successfully completes, in addition to the other effects of the exceptional success.

- Apply the Ecstatic (Crúac) or Raptured (Theban Sorcery) Condition if and when the ritual succeeds.

If the target number of successes is met, the ritual's effect immediately takes place.

Suggested Modifiers:

Modifier	Situation
+1 to +3	Power is turned on or applies to a vampire with whom the ritualist already has blood sympathy. Crúac doubles this modifier to +2 to +6.
0	The ritualist is unaffected by threats or distractions
–1 to –3	The ritualist is rushed or distracted. The penalty is cumulative with multiple distractions.
0 to +3	The ritualist prepares an elaborate ritual above the minimum sacrifice.
0 to +3 Theban Sorcery Only.	The ritualist successfully meditates before casting (bonus equal to successes on the meditation roll.)
0 to +3	Crúac Only. The ritualist sacrifices more Vitae than required (bonus equal to excess Vitae spent.)

Defending Against Sorcery

The subject of a blood ritual does not need to be present for the ritual to take effect, but ritualists are wary when using rituals to target Kindred and other supernatural beings. The victim of an unwanted ritual has a chance to shake it off, and the touch of the ritualist's vampiric nature exposes her to her intended victim.

- Rituals note in their descriptions if they are Contested or Resisted, along with the dice pool involved. Contesting a roll is reflexive.
- Via a sensation much like blood sympathy, vampires are always aware when someone uses a blood sorcery ritual on them — their Beasts react to the ritualist's sorcerous presence from the moment the sacrifice is made until the ritual fails or succeeds. This applies even to vampires in daysleep or torpor, although they can't do anything about it until they wake. Note that vampires don't know what a ritual is *doing*, just that one is taking place.
- Conscious victims may spend Willpower to increase the dice pool to Contest by +3, or add a +2 bonus to Resistance.
- Frenzying increases a victim's dice pool or Resistance as though she spent Willpower without requiring the expenditure.
- While the ritual is taking place, the victim increases his blood sympathy to the ritualist by two ranks if he is of the same clan, or gains it at "Thrice Removed" if he is of a different clan.

Crúac Rites

The following rites are examples of those taught by the Circle of the Crone.

Pangs of Proserpina (•)

Target number of successes: 6

Contested: by Composure + Blood Potency

The victim suffers feelings of intense hunger, provoking frenzy in Kindred. The victim may be up to a mile away from the ritual during casting, and is starving for the purposes of the roll to resist frenzy, regardless of how much blood she has consumed.

Rigor Mortis (•)

Target number of successes: 5

Resisted: by Composure

The victim, who must be a vampire within a mile of the ritual, suffers the loss of the reanimating power of Vitae. His next physical action is penalized by a –3 die penalty.

Cheval (••)

Target number of successes: 5

Resisted: by Composure

The subject of this ritual must be present at the casting, being physically touched by the ritualist. For the rest of the night, the ritualist may see and hear what the subject does, no matter how far away she is.

The Hydra's Vitae (••)

Target number of successes:5

The ritualist lays a curse on his own blood, transforming it into poision. Vampires and Strix drinking from the ritualist suffer one point of lethal damage per Vitae taken and gain no nourishment from it. Mortals and ghouls drinking from

the ritualist suffer two points of lethal damage. Blood is only venomous as long as it's in the ritualist's system, and the effect ends at the next sunrise.

Deflection of Wooden Doom (•••)

Target number of successes: 6

The ritualist wards himself from having his heart impaled. All attempts to stake the ritualist fail until the next sunrise.

Touch of the Morrigan (•••)

Target number of successes: 6

The ritualist pours the consuming, tearing force of his Beast into his hands. He may attempt to strike an opponent with his open palm (Touching a Target requires a Dexterity + Brawl roll in combat). The first time he does so, the victim suffers the ritual's Potency in lethal wounds. The ritual ends when it is first used, or at the next sunrise, whichever is sooner.

Blood Price (••••)

Target number of successes: 8

Contested by: Composure + Blood Potency

The ritualist claims blood consumed by his ritual's subject. The subject must be a vampire or ghoul present for the casting. Every time the subject drinks blood, Vitae up to and equal to the ritual's Potency is gained by the ritualist instead of by the subject. If the subject drinks more than the ritual steals, she gains the balance. The effect of the ritual ends at the next sunrise.

Willful Vitae (••••)

Target number of successes: 7

The ritualist makes herself immune to Vinculum and blood addiction for the remainder of the night. The ritual does not counteract any addiction or Vinculum that the ritualist already has.

Blood Blight (••••)

Target number of successes: 8

Contested by: Stamina + Blood Potency

The ritualist mystically destroys his victim's blood. Mortal victims suffer the ritual's Potency in lethal damage. Kindred, Strix, and ghoul victims lose the ritual's Potency in Vitae. This will usually provoke a frenzy check in Kindred.

Feeding the Crone (••••)

Target number of successes: 10

The ritualist transforms her fangs into a maw of wicked, flesh-tearing teeth. She gains no Vitae from feeding as long as the ritual remains in effect, but her bite does +2 aggravated damage. The effect of the ritual fades at the next sunrise, or if she uses one Vitae to cancel it early, transforming her features back to normal.

Theban Sorcery Miracles

The following miracles are examples of those taught by the Lancea et Sanctum.

Blood Scourge (•)

Target number of successes: 6

Sacrament: The ritualist's own blood — at least one Vitae

The ritualist transforms a portion of his blood into a weapon. At any point until sunrise, he may create a stinging whip of Vitae (a 2L weapon). The whip crumbles to dust at the end of the scene in which it is used, or when the ritual's effect ends with the sunrise.

Vitae Reliquary (•)

Target number of successes: 5

Sacrament: any object up to size •••

The ritualist infuses an object with up to the ritual's Potency in Vitae. The Vitae stored is mystically transferred from the ritualist's body, and can be retrieved by any vampire, Strix, or ghoul who touches the object. The Vitae still causes Vinculum and blood addiction in anyone drinking it. After one lunar month, the ritual ends and the object crumbles to dust.

Blandishment of Sin (•)

Target number of successes: 5

Contested by: Resolve + Blood Potency

Sacrament: a scrap of paper with the victim's name written on it

The ritualist names a victim, who must be within one mile of the ritual. The next time any bashing damage is inflicted on the victim, it is upgraded to lethal. The ritual upgrades all damage from one single attack, and ends at sunrise if the victim is not injured that night. A four-dot version of this miracle, requiring 8 successes, upgrades damage from lethal to aggravated.

Curse of Babel (••)

Target number of successes: 6

Resisted by: Resolve

Sacrament: an animal or human tongue

The victim of this ritual, who must be within one mile of the ritual, is rendered unable to speak or write until the next sunrise.

Liar's Plague (••)

Target number of successes: 5

Contested by: Resolve + Blood Potency

Sacrament: an insect carapace

The ritualist curses his victim, who must be present for the ritual, to not tell any falsehoods. If the victim lies over the course of the next scene, beetles swarm from his mouth.

Malediction of Despair (●●●)

Target number of successes: 13

Contested by: Resolve + Blood Potency

Sacrament: a lock of the victim's hair

The ritualist curses her victim, who must be within one mile of the ritual, with regard to a specific action. The next time the victim engages in that action, he suffers a –5 dice penalty. This occurs only once.The effect of the ritual ends if not used after a lunar month.

Gift of Lazarus (●●●●)

Target number of successes: 8

Sacrament: a communion wafer placed under a corpse's tongue

The ritualist raises a servant by animating a human corpse. The servant has no Willpower, but retains all skills the person had when alive. For every day the servant was dead prior to this ritual being used, reduce an Attribute by one. The ritualist may command the servant herself or tell it to accept orders from another. If its rightmost Health box is filled with aggravated damage or a full lunar month passes, the ritual ends and the servant is destroyed.

Stigmata (●●●●)

Target number of successes: 5

Resisted by: Stamina

Sacrament: a crucifix

The ritualist curses his victim — who must be present for the ritual — with the wounds of Christ. The Stigmata last for the ritual's Potency in turns. Mortal victims suffer one point of lethal damage per turn from blood loss. Vampires and ghouls lose one Vitae per turn. If a vampire runs out of Vitae through this ritual, he begins to take lethal damage instead, provoking a frenzy.

Transubstatiation (●●●●)

Target number of successes: 8

Contested by: Stamina + Blood Potency

Sacrament: a drop of liquid gold

The ritualist transforms one substance to another — water into wine, lead into gold, a human into stone, or a wolf into a cat. The object, creature, or person to be transformed must be present for the ritual. The ritual cannot affect anything larger than the ritualist, cannot create intelligence and does not harm the things it transforms, although damage or injury sustained by the transformed subject remains when the ritual wears off. All transformations are undone at the next sunrise.

Mysteries of the Dragon

Within the Ordo Dracul circulate tales of the Order's founder, who escaped his cursed state by transforming it. Legends describe Dracula walking beneath the sun, enduring ages without blood, and never succumbing to the Beast. No one knows if they're true, but the stories ignite hope. Hope that the Kindred condition could be changed, and in time, risen above.

Building on knowledge passed down through Dracula's brides, the Ordo Dracul began to search for and refine ways to achieve transcendence. The Dragons scour the world seeking occult secrets to further their understanding of the Curse. They call the results, refined through rigorous self-control and clear-minded study, the Mysteries of the Dragon.

Unlike Disciplines, which augment the body or bend the predatory aura, Coils manipulate and seek to change the very essence of the vampire. Each ties into a universal aspect of the Kindred condition, twisting the Curse and the Beast to the vampire's benefit. Coils also don't drain a vampire's precious Vitae, although they may change the effects of some uses of Vitae.

The Order argues quite a bit about where this pilgrimage is supposed to be going. There are those who say that the pinnacle of their research is the total dominion over all deathly banes. Others claim that true evolution lies in manipulating the Beast, not denying it. Some stick to the traditional stories, that transcendence is defiance of God or nature. Others see those beliefs as metaphors for the triumph of the vampire over the otherwise unknowable forces that created him.

Coils of the Dragon

The Coils of the Dragon stand as proof that the Order's methods bring results. Coils, like Disciplines, are on a ladder from one to five dots. With each dot comes a potent and everlasting change to a vampire's accursed state. Through these changes the Dragons can circumvent banes, empower their blood, and form unions with the Curse far deeper than the average vampire. Some of the Defiant even think that the best way to counter a divine curse is to find a bigger curse and let the two clash.

New Coils

New Coils appear frequently, and old ones disappear. The Ordo Dracul makes a lot of progress, and also creates a lot of variations. There may be more than one way to achieve a particular effect, which you can customize to an individual character or the aesthetics of your stories.

The arduous process of developing new Coils and Scales, or alternate powers for existing Coils, can be a fun part of an Order-heavy chronicle.

Upon joining the Ordo Dracul a vampire chooses a single Mystery. Each Mystery contains a Coil, which Mystery members commit themselves to researching and refining. At the pinnacle of every Coil, there is enlightenment, different for each Mystery. Achieving this will raise the vampire to an entirely new state of being. To date this pinnacle has never been confirmed to exist, but the Dragons consider what they *have* achieved evidence that they can achieve much more.

System: A Dragon learns new tiers in his Mystery Coil for three Experiences per dot, and during character creation a player may spend one of his starting Discipline dots to take a dot in his Mystery Coil. Learning Coils outside a Dragon's chosen Mystery is possible, but the ideological and personal differences between the adherents of different mysteries mean that a Dragon from a different path may have to prove himself. A Dragon can have no more dots in each non-Mystery Coil than he possesses dots in the Status (Ordo Dracul) Merit. Non-Mystery Coils cost four Experiences per new dot, and cannot be learned during character creation.

Scales of the Dragon

Dragons have performed countless ghastly experiments in the name of improvement, frequently on themselves, but mostly on others. The majority of these endeavors end in failure, with the death or maiming of the subject. But occasionally a Dragon's research will bear unexpected fruit, and uncover a procedure that furthers the Mystery's objectives. These are called Scales.

Through Scales a Dragon can share with others aspects of his enlightened state. Kindred can be forced to sleep at night and wake during the day, mortals given a taste for blood, and ghouls made to last well beyond their natural span. But these procedures can be brutal, tantamount to torture, and carry side effects both physical and psychological. As such, Dragons who pursue them maintain private laboratories, secured against interlopers, in which they can carry out their experiments in peace. Such laboratories may represent uses of the Safe Place and Haven Merits.

System: All Scales have a prerequisite Coil, a particular tier with which the Scale resonates. For Dragons who do not meet this prerequisite Scales cost two Experiences, if the prerequisite is met the Experience cost drops to one.

Developing New Scales

Coils evolve through study and experimentation, and new Scales are discovered in the process. Every Dragon strives to add to this body of knowledge, but developing a Scale is difficult. There exists no way to guarantee a procedure's success, no hard and fast system for subverting the Curse. Experimentation is the only option.

System: A Dragon who wants to develop a new Scale has a lot of ground work ahead of him. The process takes months and will tax both his resources and Humanity.

- First, select a Coil to act as a prerequisite for the Scale, one that has effects similar to those the Scale will accomplish. This needn't be a Coil the Dragon knows himself (or even one that currently exists), but the process will be easier if it is.
- Next the Dragon must gather the proper components. This means acquiring test subjects, collecting occult texts and ingredients, and procuring a safe location in which to perform his experiment. A character with dots in the Haven, Herd or Resources merits (p. 112 and p.123) may temporarily commit some or all of those dots to the experiment, with each dot adding an additional die to the subsequent extended roll. If he does, those dots remain inaccessible until the experiment is finished or abandoned.
- Make an extended roll of Intelligence + Medicine, Occult, or Science (the Storyteller decides the Skill), with each roll representing one week of experimentation. For every committed merit dot add one additional die to this roll. A character who went to a special effort to acquire unique components should be awarded an additional bonus for his efforts of one to five extra dice. The target number for this roll is the dot rating of the Scale's prerequisite Coil times three if the Dragon meets the prerequisite, and the dot rating of the Scale's prerequisite Coil times five if he doesn't.

Succeed or fail, the Dragon suffers a breaking point at Humanity 5 minus the dot rating of the prerequisite Coil. Assuming he is successful, he must still spend the normal experience to internalize the new Scale. Presenting a new Scale to his Mystery Kogaions is grounds for an immediate increase in Order status.

Mystery of the Ascendant

The Mystery of the Ascendant follows one strict doctrine: The sun is the enemy; to overcome its rays is to overcome all adversity. Initiates of the Mystery believe that by overcoming the banes of fire and sunlight a Dragon can in turn defeat her every infirmity. This is not to be mistaken with a return to mortality. Such a change would be seen as an exchange of weaknesses, rather than true transcendence, and would be likely to get a vampire laughed at and his research ignored.

Scales of the Ascendant manipulate the boundary between life and death, pushing subject's minds and bodies to their limits in an attempt to find the perfect "near life" state. Direct exposure to sunlight and fire, sleep deprivation, and medically induced death are common practices. All experiments have but one aim: To cure the vampire of his vulnerability to sunlight and allow the Dragon to walk in the day; lucid, unafraid, and uninjured.

Coil of the Ascendant

Surmounting the Daysleep •

A Dragon will not be held down by the distant rays of the dawning sun, nor made weak by its celestial body. So long as she benefits from the blush of life (p. 90) the Dragon need not

roll to resist her daily slumber, nor will she gain the Lethargic Condition (p. 305) for remaining active during the day.

The Warm Face ••

Before she can overcome the sun a Dragon must first make herself as she was when she walked beneath it. The blush of life now lasts 24 hours, instead of just one scene. The Dragon still requires blood and slumber to restore lethal and aggravated wounds.

Conquer the Red Fear •••

The uninitiated may fear the light, but the Dragon does not. A Dragon who has learned this Coil no longer risks frenzy from exposure to fire or sunlight (p. 103). She may stand next to a blazing bonfire or stare into the rising sun and retain total self-control (though the latter will still be quite painful).

Peace with the Flame ••••

To conquer the bane of fire is one of the most significant victories a Dragon can achieve on her path to ascension. So long as she benefits from the blush of life she takes only lethal damage from fire, not aggravated. If she also has dots in the Resilience Discipline (p. 141) it further magnifies her endurance, with each dot reducing one point of fire damage from lethal to bashing.

Sun's Forgotten Kiss •••••

This Coil represents the closest the Mystery of the Ascendant has ever come to achieving Dracula's defeat of the sun. When activating the blush of life the Dragon may spend additional Vitae. For each extra Vitae she spends the Dragon counts her Blood Potency as one dot lower, to a minimum of one dot, for determining the interval at which sunlight harms her (p. 102).

Sample Scales of the Ascendant

Day-Wake Conditioning

Prerequisite Coil: Surmounting the Daysleep

Procedure: The subject, a vampire, must resist the Daysleep until the compounding penalties of the Lethargic Condition (p. 305) reduce his resistance roll to a chance die. He may then slumber, but only at dusk, and only in a brightly lit chamber. Traditionally this was accomplished with large quantities of candles, but recent practitioners have found high-wattage incandescent lights to be just as effective.

Outcome: This subject's sleep cycle is reversed — he wakes at dawn at though it were dusk, and slumbers at night instead of during the day. The condition persists indefinitely, so long as the subject continues to slumber in a brightly lit location every night. Failure to do so for more than two days consecutively undoes the Scale's effects.

Epidermal Shielding Bath

Prerequisite Coil: Sun's Forgotten Kiss

Procedure: The Dragon fills a large vessel, generally a bathtub, with an alchemical mixture of blood, salt, pulped human fat, and other arcane ingredients. A Kindred subject is then submerged completely in the bath, and must remain submerged for a full hour while the Dragon slowly bleeds Vitae into the mixture. This last step may be performed while submerged if the subject is the Dragon herself.

Outcome: For every point of Vitae spilled into the bath increase the subject's effective Humanity by one when determining damage dealt by sunlight (p. 102). This boon lasts for 24 hours, beginning the moment the subject emerges.

Flesh Graft Treatment

Prerequisite Coil: Peace with the Flame

Procedure: Using a system of skin grafts and mortal blood transfusions the Dragon coaxes dead flesh into an almost-living state, allowing for the rapid recovery of grievous wounds. Skin grafts are prepared 24 hours in advance, and allowed to soak in fresh human blood during that time. To begin the treatment, she wraps the grafts tightly around damaged regions, then injects them with human blood no more than a minute old.

Outcome: The subject's flesh is briefly reinvigorated to a near living state. In Kindred this allows for aggravated damage to be healed with Vitae as though it were lethal (p. 91). Mortals become able to recover lethal damage with the expenditure of Vitae. Of course, since most humans do not possess Vitae to expend, the Dragon must include it in the injection. In this case the Scale also induces a stage-two blood bond (p. 99) in the subject, and may also use the process to create a ghoul.

Mystery of the Wyrm

The common view of vampirism treats the condition as a curse, a supernatural affliction of body and soul. Initiates of the Wyrm spurn this notion. Within their doctrine the Requiem is a blessing. But for all its power the Beast is savage and easily roused to panic. The Mystery of the Wyrm intends to correct this, to refine the Beast and make it obedient to a Dragon's desires.

Scales of the Wyrm are savage, even by Order standards; subjects are dissected, or ravaged by frenzy. These experiments focus on guiding the Beast, and the augmentation of a vampire's natural prowess.

Coil of the Wyrm

Stir the Beast •

Before the Beast can be tamed a Dragon must first know how to wake it. For a point of Willpower he may enter frenzy unprompted. When he does so the Dragon selects a target or goal, no more than a few words, which becomes the objective of his frenzy. He has no more control over his actions than he would in an involuntary frenzy (p. 103), and all rolls to escape frenzy before the stated objective is met are made at a –2 die penalty.

When the original goal is no longer pressing or possible, the frenzy ends.

Using Stir the Beast is a reflexive action, and it can be used to avoid involuntary frenzy.

Beast's Hunger ••

The Beast provides all Kindred with the tools they need to be apex predators; a Dragon need only learn how to tap them. Whenever he frenzies, voluntarily or involuntarily, add the Dragon's dots in Coils of the Wyrm to his Blood Potency for determining the acuity of his Kindred senses (p. 90) and intensity of his predatory aura (p. 91).

Leash the Beast •••

As he comes to know the Beast, and the Beast him, the Dragon may direct it with greater ease. Riding the wave (p. 105) no longer costs Willpower to attempt, and he adds his dots in Coils of the Wyrm as a bonus when attempting to ride the wave.

Beast's Power ••••

The Beast is a source of unlimited power and savagery, held back by mortal cowardice and inhibition. The Dragon can free himself, and by extension his Beast, of these restraints. When he enters frenzy the Dragon may opt to forego all resistance, falling into a state that will not cease until the Beast is sated (though he may still ride the wave). If he does so the Dragon adds his Blood Potency to his Defense, Health, and Speed for the duration of the frenzy.

Eternal Frenzy •••••

By this point the Dragon and his Beast are close to becoming one. He seethes with power at every moment, wielding his inner monster like a weapon against all challengers. While he is in frenzy the Dragon will not fall into torpor even if all his Health levels are filled with lethal damage. Should he end frenzy with all his Health boxes full of lethal damage, the Dragon immediately succumbs to torpor. Fortunately, he may now retain his frenzy past the end of the scene, riding the wave from impulse to impulse until he is destroyed, or sleep takes him. (He may also choose to leave frenzy at the end of any scene.)

Sample Scales of the Wyrm

Augmented Vitae Draught

Prerequisite Coil: Beast's Power

Procedure: Needles, glass tubing, and an air-tight container must be acquired and cleansed in an alchemical solution before performing this Scale. Once ready, the Dragon inserts the needles into key veins in his chest, arms and legs. Then he spends a single action making his blood flow, equivalent to using Physical Intensity (p. 91).

Outcome: The Dragon's physical prowess remains unaltered; instead the Vitae drains out through glass tubes and into the storage container, where it remains potent for a number of hours equal to his Blood Potency. If imbibed by a mortal during this time the Vitae augments her physical attributes in the same manner in which the Dragon would have augmented his own. In a human host, however, Vitae circulates and endures for a much longer period, bolstering her physique for an entire scene.

There are some side effects to this process. The solution is extremely poisonous, and the augmentations hazardous to the mortal's physical well being. At the end of the scene the subject collapses and takes levels of bashing damage equal to twice the Vitae invested in the Scale. She also develops blood addiction (p. 99).

Kindred Sense Endowment

Prerequisite Coil: Beast's Hunger

Procedure: The Dragon prepares a concoction of blood and bone, which is boiled and distilled over the course of two hours into a noxious burnt sludge. This substance is subsequently applied to a mortal subject's nose and eyes, with the rest being ingested. This is a sickening procedure, soon after which the subject vomits out the ingested portion of the draught.

Outcome: The subject is sickened, but gains the ability to see and smell blood as though she were a vampire with two dots of Blood Potency (p. 89). The subject also acquires a hunger for human blood, as a newly embraced vampire would, though it

offers nothing more than the risk of Integrity loss and terrible sickness. All these effects endure for approximately 24 hours.

Surgical Heart Removal

Prerequisite Coil: Eternal Frenzy

Procedure: Over the course of about six hours the Dragon surgically cuts out a Kindred subject's heart (which is customarily stored in a black onyx box), and re-binds the veins in a mockery of their original order. This process is both risky and demanding, requiring an extended Intelligence + Medicine roll with a target of ten successes and an interval of one hour.

If successful, this procedure can be reversed with an identical roll.

Dramatic Failure: The heart of the subject is destroyed in the process. The shock is so terrible and sudden that the subject flies instantly into a mindless frenzy before succumbing to Final Death at the end of the scene.

Failure: The heart of the subject is disconnected improperly. She immediately falls into torpor as if staked, and will not recover until her heart is returned to its proper location.

Success: Without a heart the subject cannot be staked. She also cannot gain additional Vitae from feeding, though she may still spend Vitae previously stored or gained through blood sorcery rites. Should her body be destroyed the subject will regenerate from the heart itself after the proper interval of torpor. Should the heart be destroyed she dies instantly.

Exceptional Success: All the normal benefits of an Exceptional Success on an extended roll, but nothing more.

Mystery of the Voivode

In blood there is power; this is the creed of the King. While other Dragons concern themselves with banes and the Beast, those who follow the Mystery of the Voivode focus on the blood bond. They aim to rise above the petty politics and slaveries of the Damned, becoming beings of pure and transcendent will. In life, Dracula was called Voivode, and was not questioned. In death, his disciples will reclaim his authority.

The Scales of this Mystery focus on blood and servitude. Initiates of the Mystery commit psychological torture; inflict Vitae addiction; and experiment in the creation of blood bonds, ghouls, and other Kindred. Given the nature of the Mystery's objectives, most Dragons practice these arts in absolute secrecy, lest the local ruler...misunderstand.

Coil of the Voivode

Taste of Fealty •

In her first step to becoming king, a Dragon forms chains of blood, binding others into service. Her Vitae becomes dramatically more addictive, with each point counting as two for the purposes of Vitae addiction (p. 99). What's more, those who are addicted to her find all other blood shallow and tasteless. Addicts can only resolve the Deprived Condition (p. 302) resulting from blood addiction by drinking the Vitae of someone with this Coil.

Into the Fold ••

The bond between a subject and his master should be akin to that of family. The Dragon develops blood sympathy (p. 98) towards those she has blood bound, and they her. A stage-one blood bond is treated as four times removed, stage-two three times, and stage-three only twice removed. If the Dragon is already related to a subject, use the closer connection when determining bonuses.

Call to Serve •••

As a future king, the Dragon does not have time to spend cajoling others and slowly binding them with her blood. They must want to follow, and they must want to follow immediately. When building a blood bond (p. 99) the Dragon may bleed additional Vitae to expedite the process. Three Vitae will take her subject straight into a stage-two blood bond, while five pushes him all the way to stage three with a single sip. This Vitae must be shared over no more than a few minutes, but is not subject to limits on Vitae per turn.

Voivode Undisputed ••••

The voivode is above all others; none may command her or hold her in thrall. Those connected via blood sympathy gain no bonus to discipline usage against her. Additionally, she adds her blood sympathy bonus to rolls to resist blood bonds and contest the predatory aura (p. 91) of anyone she has bound.

The Vast Dynasty •••••

To a normal vampire, the Embrace is a dangerous act that erodes the perpetrator's Humanity. But a king requires kin to watch her kingdom while she sleeps. This Coil removes the automatic Humanity loss associated with Embracing a mortal. The act of Embracing is instead a breaking point at Humanity 3; the Dragon adds one die in addition to any other modifiers on the roll to avoid detachment.

Sample Scales of the Voivode

Blood Cleansing Ritual

Prerequisite Coils: Taste of Fealty

Procedure: The Dragon prepares a wash of animal blood and viscera, mixed with several draughts of her own Vitae. She uses

this to perform a "washing" procedure: The Dragon repeatedly dumps this solution into the subject's nose and mouth. As the implementation of this Scale is tantamount to torture, subjects are typically restrained.

Outcome: This process is repeated once for every point of Vitae the Dragon invested into the solution. Each time, if the victim is blood bound to another vampire, roll a number of dice equal to the Dragon's Blood Potency minus the blood bond creator's Blood Potency. Success on any roll permanently removes the blood bond. Despite the inclusion of the Dragon's Vitae, it does not create a bond towards the Dragon.

Fealty's Reward

Prerequisite Coils: Call to Serve

Procedure: This Scale may only be performed on a mortal subject who is in a stage-three blood bond towards the Dragon. The Dragon feeds on the subject till all but his last Health box is filled with lethal damage, then slits her wrists and spills her gains into a basin. The subject must then drink that Vitae, and be allowed to rest for 48 hours.

Outcome: When the subject awakes he shall find that he has become a ghoul (p. 100), filled to his natural capacity with Vitae. This state will last for a full year, instead of just a month, and may be renewed only by the Dragon through the standard expenditure of Vitae and Willpower. Should this condition ever expire the ghoul dies immediately, and rises as a draugr at the next new moon.

Mass Embrace

Prerequisite Coils: The Vast Dynasty

Procedure: First things first, the Dragon must locate and gather a group of mortals she seeks to embrace. Given the risks of this Scale, and weakness of the Dragon upon its completion, she would be well-advised to bring several allies as well. Subjects are brought together in a low, concave space capable of containing large quantities of liquid (in this case, blood).

The Dragon then completes the following steps. First, she hemorrhages all of her Vitae, bleeding it onto the ground. Then she moves from subject to subject, sucking them dry of blood and bleeding her gains into the collective pool. Finally the Dragon must sip from the pool at her feet, and inject the blood into the now-dead subjects' veins. After this, though it is not formal step of the Scale, she should run for cover.

Outcome: Subjects are Embraced, and rise with Blood Potency 1 and a single point of Vitae. Roll a chance die for each subject. Those for whom it comes up a success awake in full control of their actions, while those who fail fly instantly into Frenzy. Those unfortunates for whom the roll comes up a dramatic failure rise as draugr.

Like an unmodified single Embrace, this costs a Humanity dot.

Sanguinary Invigoration

Prerequisite Coil: Into the Fold

Procedure: Using a large syringe, the Dragon extracts Vitae, and mixes it with a combination of arcane ingredients. Within ten minutes of preparation this cocktail must be injected into a living vessel, human or animal, or it loses its value.

One point of Vitae is required.

Outcome: Despite being injected with a noxious poison the subject is at no risk of being killed, being blood bound, or suffering Vitae addiction. Instead he is invigorated, jittering like a man on a stimulant binge. It's a mixed feeling...he's a little shaky, but he also gets a touch of the vigorously alive feeling a ghoul experiences. For him this is where the effects end, but to the vampire this Scale offers much more. The vampire treats her Blood Potency as four dots lower when determining whether or not she can feed from the subject, and four dots higher when determining the distance at which she can smell his blood.

The invigoration lasts one week, though the side effects may or may not wear off sooner.

This means that even elder Kindred, with high Blood Potency, can feed from the subject of Sanguine Invigoration. But because they would be consuming the Dragon's blood along with the subject's, other vampires run the risk of becoming addicted or blood bound to the Dragon. On the other hand, those already addicted to the Dragon's blood will find the subject's blood as satisfying as that of the Dragon herself.

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD

PART IV

Thao

There was an oily feeling in my stomach when she woke up the rest of the way, my blood still smeared on her lips. Her smile was so soft and happy and my fault. I kept driving.

"Okay, Edie, this is important. What happened after I left Friday?" She was touching my arm. Caressing it really, like she'd never seen me before. Oh god oh god I'm such a shit for doing this to her. "Edie, please. Tell me what happened. Jefe's gone, Katy won't answer the phone, and Jack would only tell me where to find you."

"Ah...I, we, decided to give Dad some space, you know? Leave town for a few weeks. Give him a chance to forget that I fucked up, or at least to get distracted by someone else's bigger fuck up. We stumbled into a fight we weren't quite expecting or prepared for. I, uh, overestimated my capability, I guess you'd say." She was wringing her hands.

"A fight so bad that Jack had to put you in the ground, but which left him in a position to do so? That seems unlikely."

"Ha ha, yeah. I was just super unlucky this time, so let's go home and not talk about it anymore, okay?" Edie's not evasive. Or rather, she is so bad at lying that it's practically the same thing. She'd be twitching with the strain of not telling me every thought in her head even if things weren't...different between us now.

I could make her tell me, I thought. And I could. It should have been harder; harder to give in, harder to tear her apart, harder to praise her obedience. But I could. She looked so betrayed, for just a second, until I touched her face to bury it under all her fake love.

"It went...really badly. Like, everything went really badly." She paused and looked up at me. "Dad came by."

Fortunately, there was no one for me to swerve into.

"At first I thought you had sent him." She looked a little embarrassed and a little mad. "He wouldn't come in, though. He made me stand outside his car while he asked me weird questions, filtered through the glass: how we'd found the van, and what we were doing there. So we packed up and bolted about ten minutes after he left. What else were we going to do – wait until he came back to humiliate me again?"

Yes, I thought. That had more or less been the point; for you to wait on his good graces.

"Okay, so then what? It's not like he hit you..." And then I feel awful for even bringing it up. "Did Dad do this to you?"

"No, She did." Edie looks terrified. "We ran, but it didn't do any good, Thao. We just found something so much worse. She destroyed Jefe and Katy, and...and once I thought I'd finally killed it, she...crawled inside of me."

chapter four
rules of the night

I often think that the night is more alive and more richly colored than the day.

Vincent Van Gogh

This section contains the basic rules for playing **Vampire: The Requiem**. More information, system variants, and examples can be found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and the **God-Machine Chronicle**.

Traits

In addition to the supernatural traits of the Kindred, World of Darkness characters have mundane traits common to mortals and monsters alike. Attributes are raw potential, Skills are trained abilities, and Skill Specialties are specific areas of training in which a character excels. Willpower is the extra effort a character can bring to bear in a stressful or dangerous situation, when success is crucial or hangs by a thread. Willpower is also used by some supernatural powers.

Finally, a mortal (but not a vampire) possesses a personal Virtue and Vice from which he can draw strength and refill his Willpower, much the same way a vampire derives Willpower from her Mask, Dirge, and Touchstones.

Attributes

Attributes represent essential traits that every character possesses by default. These serve as the foundation to most rolls in **Vampire: The Requiem**. The nine Attributes are split into three categories; Mental, Physical, and Social. If a game rule refers to a "Social roll," or a "Mental action," that means an action that uses the appropriate Attribute category.

All Attributes receive one free dot. This reflects a below-average capacity. Two dots are about human average. Three and four reflect a high level of competency, while five reflects the height of human potential in that field. When creating your character, prioritize each category. The primary category receives five dots, the secondary four, and the tertiary three. Kindred characters also receive a bonus dot depending on their clan.

Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes reflect your character's acuity, intellect, and strength of mind.

Intelligence

Intelligence is your character's raw knowledge, memory, and capacity for solving difficult problems. This may be book smarts, or a wealth of trivia.

Attribute Tasks: Memorizing (Intelligence + Composure, instant action)

Wits

Wits represents your character's ability to think quickly and improvise solutions. It reflects your character's perception, and ability to pick up on details.

Attribute Tasks: Perception (Wits + Composure, reflexive action)

Resolve

Resolve is your character's determination, patience, and sense of commitment. It allows your character to concentrate in the face of distraction and danger, or continue doing something in spite of insurmountable odds.

Attribute Tasks: Resisting coercion (Resolve + Stamina, reflexive action)

Physical Attributes

Physical Attributes reflect your character's bodily fitness and acumen.

Strength

Strength is your character's muscular definition and capacity to deliver force. It affects many physical tasks, including most actions in a fight.

Attribute Tasks: Breaking a barrier (Strength + Stamina, instant action), Lifting objects (Strength + Stamina, instant action)

Dexterity

Dexterity is your character's speed, agility, and coordination. It provides balance, reactions, and aim.

Attribute Tasks: Keeping balance (Dexterity + Composure, reflexive action)

Stamina

Stamina is your character's general health and sturdiness. It determines how much punishment your character's body can handle before it gives up.

Attribute Tasks: Staying awake (Stamina + Resolve, instant action)

Social Attributes

Social Attributes reflect your character's ability to deal with others.

Presence

Presence is your character's assertiveness, gravitas, and raw appeal. It gives your character a strong bearing that changes moods and minds.

Attribute Tasks: Good first impressions (Presence + Composure, instant action)

Manipulation

Manipulation is your character's ability to make others cooperate. It's how smoothly she speaks, and how much people can read into her intentions.

Attribute Tasks: Poker face (Manipulation + Composure)

Composure

Composure is your character's poise and grace under fire. It's his dignity, and ability to remain unfazed when harrowed.

Attribute Tasks: Meditation (Resolve + Composure, extended action)

Skills

Whereas Attributes represent innate ability, Skills reflect behaviors learned and honed over a lifetime. These are things that could be practiced or learned from a book. Similarly to Attributes, Skills are divided into Mental, Physical, and Social categories.

Skills do not receive free dots at character creation. Skills without dots are deficient or barely capable. Skills with a single dot reflect a cursory training. Two dots is sufficient for professional use. Three is a high level of competency. Four is outstanding, and five is absolute mastery of the discipline. When creating your character, prioritize categories. The primary category receives eleven dots, the secondary receives seven, the tertiary four.

We've listed sample actions for each Skill; these lists are just common actions, and should not be taken as comprehensive guides to where Skills can apply. We also suggest dice pools, but it's important to look at the context of the scene, and apply the best Attribute + Skill combination for the events at hand. Also remember that equipment and environmental modifiers can shift a dice pool. We've listed some sample equipment and factors that could enhance Skill usage.

Using a Skill with no dots incurs a penalty. For Physical and Social Skills, it levies a –1 die penalty to the roll. For a Mental Skill, it's a –3 die penalty.

Mental Skills

Mental Skills are largely learned, as opposed to practiced. They reflect knowledge and procedure, lore and understanding.

Academics

Academics is a broad Skill representing your character's higher education and knowledge of the arts and humanities. It covers language, history, law, economics, and related fields. For many Kindred, Academics is a key Skill, since they've experienced history first hand, or need to understand rivals who come from the dim past. Occasionally, a mortal researcher stumbles upon Kindred when looking for experts in archaic fields.

Sample actions: Recall trivia (Intelligence + Academics, instant action), Research (Intelligence + Academics, extended action), Translation (Intelligence + Academics, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Internet access (+1), Library (+1 to +3), Professional consultant (+2)

Specialties: Anthropology, Art History, English, History, Law, Literature, Religion, Research, Theban Sorcery, Translation

Computer

Computer is your character's advanced ability with computing. While most characters in the World of Darkness are expected to know the basics, the Computer Skill allows your character to program computers, to crack into systems, to diagnose major problems, and to investigate data. This Skill reflects advanced techniques and tricks; almost everyone in the modern nights can operate a computer for email and basic Internet searches. A few ancient vampires resist the change of technology, but enterprising Kindred of all ages embrace it as a means to connect with the future.

Sample actions: Hacking a system (Intelligence + Computer, extended action, contested if against a security administrator or

other hacker), Internet search (Wits + Computer, instant action), Programming (Intelligence + Computer, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Computer system (+0 to +3, by performance), Custom software (+2), Passwords (+2)

Specialties: Data Retrieval, Graphics, Hacking, Internet, Programming, Security, Social Media

Crafts

Crafts reflects your character's knack with creating and repairing things. From creating works of art, to fixing an automobile, Crafts is the Skill to use. Since art evolves with culture, knowledge of Crafts is common amongst Kindred who aim to remain close to humanity. Many Daeva focus on the arts as a way to channel their passions into something less destructive than the hunt.

Sample actions: Appraisal (Wits + Crafts, instant action), Counterfeit item (Intelligence + Crafts, extended action), Create art (Intelligence + Crafts, extended action), Repair item (Wits + Crafts, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Point of reference (+1), Quality materials (+2), Tools (+1 to +3, depending on utility and specialty), Well-equipped workplace (+2)

Specialties: Automotive, Cosmetics, Fashion, Forging, Graffiti, Jury-Rigging, Painting, Perfumery, Repair, Sculpting

Investigation

Investigation is your character's skill with solving mysteries and putting together puzzles. It reflects the ability to draw conclusions, to find meaning out of confusion, and using lateral thinking to find information where others could not. Kindred with the Auspex Discipline often develop Investigation, as mundane methods complement their second sight.

Sample actions: Examining a crime scene (Wits + Investigation, extended action), Solving riddles (Intelligence + Investigation, instant or extended action)

Suggested equipment: Forensic kit (+1), Unrestricted access (+2), Reference library (+2)

Specialties: Artifacts, Auspex, Autopsy, Body Language, Crime Scenes, Cryptography, Dreams, Lab Work, Riddles

Medicine

Medicine reflects your character's knowledge of the human body, and of how to bring it to and keep it in working order. Characters with Medicine can make efforts to stem life-threatening wounds and illnesses. While Medicine offers little utility on Kindred, some vampires learn about the human body after years of watching those around them fall to every malady imaginable.

Sample actions: Diagnosis (Wits + Medicine, instant action), Treating wounds (Intelligence + Medicine, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Medical tools (+1 to +3), Trained assistance (+1), Well-stocked facilities (+2)

Specialties: First Aid, Kindred Physiology, Pathology, Pharmaceuticals, Physical Therapy, Surgery

Occult

The Occult Skill is your character's knowledge of things hidden in the dark, legends, and lore. While the supernatural is unpredictable and often unique, the Occult Skill allows your character to pick out facts from rumor. This is a common Skill for Kindred interested in their roots and their very natures; being able to pick out the sliver of truth in ancient stories can give insight into the Requiem.

Sample actions: Identify the sliver of truth (Wits + Occult, instant action), Relate two similar myths (Intelligence + Occult, instant or extended action)

Suggested equipment: Well-Stocked Library (+–2)

Specialties: Casting Lots, Coils of the Dragon, Crúac, Draugr, Ghouls, Ghosts, Phrenology, Revenants, Sorcery, Superstition, Vitae, Witchcraft

Politics

Politics reflects a general knowledge of political structures and methodologies, but more practically shows your character's ability to navigate those systems and make them work the way she intends. With Politics, she knows the right person to ask to get something done. Few Kindred survive long without developing at least some Politics, as Kindred society is rife with tradition, Status, and complex patterns of authority.

Sample actions: Cut red tape (Manipulation + Politics, extended action), Identify authority (Wits + Politics, instant action), Sully reputations (Manipulation + Politics, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Official position (+1 to +5, by Status)

Specialties: Bureaucracy, Carthian Movement, Church, Democratic, Invictus, Local, Ordo Dracul, Organized Crime, Scandals

Science

Science is your character's knowledge and understanding of the physical and natural sciences, such as biology, chemistry, geology, meteorology, and physics. While older Kindred don't always value modern sciences, many vampires hold strong to sciences that were prominent when they were younger.

Sample actions: Assess variables (Intelligence + Science, instant or extended action), Formulate solution (Intelligence + Science, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Reference library (+1 to +3), Well-stocked laboratory (+2)

Specialties: Physics, Neuroscience, Virology, Alchemy, Genetics, Hematology

Physical Skills

Physical Skills are those practiced, trained, and learned through action.

Athletics

Athletics reflects a broad category of physical training and ability. It covers sports, and basic physical tasks such as running, jumping, dodging threats, and climbing. It also determines a character's ability with thrown weapons. Over time, most Kindred will develop at least the rudiments of Athletics; when hunts go wrong, sometimes chases are the only answer.

Sample actions: Acrobatics (Dexterity + Athletics, instant action), Climbing (Strength + Athletics, extended action), Foot chase (Stamina + Athletics, contested action), Jumping (Strength + Athletics, instant action, one foot vertically per success)

Suggested equipment: Athletic Shoes (+1), Rope (+1)

Specialties: Acrobatics, Archery, Climbing, Jumping, Parkour, Swimming, Throwing

Brawl

Brawl reflects your character's ability to tussle and fight without weapons. This includes old-fashioned bar brawls as well as complex martial arts (**The God-Machine Chronicle** offers numerous Merits to complement unarmed fighters). Many Kindred develop at least some facility with the Brawl Skill since it helps to defend oneself when otherwise unprepared. It is also particularly useful with Vigor. Gangrel often focus on Brawl, since it allows them to utilize the natural weaponry of the Protean Discipline.

Sample actions: Breaking boards (Strength + Brawl, instant action), Hand-to-hand combat (covered in the combat section, p. 175)

Suggested equipment: Brass Knuckles (+1)

Specialties: Biting, Boxing, Claws, Dirty Fighting, Grappling, Martial Arts, Threats, Throws

Drive

Drive is the skill to control and maneuver automobiles, motorcycles, boats, and even airplanes. A character can drive a car without Drive dots; the Skill relates to moments of high stress, such as a high-speed chase or trying to elude a tail. It's assumed that most modern characters have a basic ability to drive. As well, Drive can reflect your character's skill with horseback riding, if appropriate to her history. In the cities, many Kindred rely on public transportation, but for some, the car is a way of life. Outside of cities, nomadic Kindred almost have to be capable drivers.

Sample actions: Impressive maneuvering (Dexterity + Drive, instant action), Pursuit (Dexterity + Drive, contested action), Tailing (Wits + Drive, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Performance vehicle (+1 to +3)

Specialties: Defensive Driving, Evasion, Off-Road Driving, Motorcycles, Pursuit, Stunts

Firearms

Firearms reflects your character's ability to identify, maintain, and otherwise use guns. This Skill covers everything from small pistols, to shotguns, to assault rifles, and anything else related. While guns aren't highly effective against dead flesh, Kindred sometimes rely on guns as a method of Masquerade defense: Wielding a sword in public draws significant attention; and if you shoot a vampire, they'd best stay down if they don't want to raise questions. Not to mention that guns are very deadly to the living.

Sample actions: Firearms combat (see p. 175)

Suggested equipment: See p. 179 for a full list of firearms

Specialties: Handguns, Rifles, Shotguns, Trick Shots

Larceny

Larceny covers intrusion, lockpicking, theft, pickpocketing, and other (generally considered) criminal activities. This Skill is typically learned on the streets, outside of formal methods. However, stage magicians and other entertainers learn these skills as part of their repertoire. Many Mekhet and Nosferatu learn this Skill to complement their use of the Obfuscate Discipline.

Sample actions: Bypass security systems (Dexterity + Larceny, extended action), Lockpicking (Dexterity + Larceny, extended action), Pickpocketing (Dexterity + Larceny, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Crowbar (+1), Crowded area (+2), Lockpicks (+2), Partner in crime (+1)

Specialties: Breaking and Entering, Concealment, Lockpicking, Pickpocketing, Safecracking, Security Systems, Sleight of Hand

Stealth

The Stealth Skill reflects your character's ability to move unnoticed and unheard, or to blend into a crowd. Every character approaches Stealth differently; some use distraction, some disguise, some are just hard to keep an eye on. While any Kindred can find the value in a solid escape, Mekhet and Nosferatu tend to learn Stealth early on as they develop the Obfuscate Discipline.

Sample actions: Losing a tail (Wits + Stealth, contested action), Shadowing (Dexterity + Stealth, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Binoculars (+1), Dark Clothing (+1), Smokescreen (+2), Spotters (+1)

Specialties: Camouflage, Crowds, In Plain Sight, Obfuscate, Rural, Shadowing, Stakeout, Staying Motionless

Survival

Survival represents your character's ability to "live off the land." This means finding shelter, finding food, and otherwise procuring the necessities for existence. This could be in a rural or urban environment. Note that most Kindred won't directly benefit from being able to find food in unknown environs. However, many Kindred, Nosferatu in particular, use the Survival Skill "in reverse," to find inhospitable, unsafe environs where they can thrive but no human would dare tread. This skill also covers the ability to hunt for animals. Humane Kindred often rely on animal blood for subsistence.

Sample actions: Foraging (Wits + Survival, extended action), Hunting (for animals, Wits + Survival, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Survival Guide (+1), Survival Knife (+1)

Specialties: Foraging, Hunting, Navigation, Shelter, Weather

Weaponry

Weaponry is the ability to fight with hand-to-hand weapons: from swords, to knives, to baseball bats, to chainsaws. If the intent is to strike another and harm him, Weaponry is the Skill. (You can find numerous Merits for Weaponry-based fighting in **The God-Machine Chronicle**.) Many Kindred boast impressive Weaponry Skills, on account of coming from less civilized times. For this reason, numerous covenant traditions call for Weaponry-based duels that favor archaic knowledge over modern firearms.

Sample actions: Attacking another (see p. 176)

Suggested equipment: See p. 180 for a full list of weapons

Specialties: Chains, Clubs, Improvised Weapons, Spears, Swords

Social Skills

Animal Ken

Animal Ken reflects your character's ability to train and understand animals. With Animal Ken, your character can cow beasts or rile them to violence under the right circumstances. Many Ventrue and Gangrel develop Animal Ken, due to its inherent compatibility with Animalism.

Sample actions: Animal training (Manipulation + Animal Ken, extended action), Cowing an animal (Presence + Animal Ken, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Treats (+1), Whip (+1)

Specialties: Animalism, Canines, Felines, Reptiles, Threatening, Training

Empathy

Empathy represents your character's ability to read and understand others' feelings and motivations. This helps discern moods, or read deceptive behavior in discussion. It is not inherently sympathetic; one can understand another's positions without agreeing with them. Many social Kindred develop Empathy as a hunting tool; there's nothing better for the hunt than saying exactly what the mark wants to hear.

Sample actions: Finding someone's pain (Wits + Empathy, contested action), Sense deception (Wits + Empathy, contested action), Soothing nerves (Manipulation + Empathy, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Muted clothing (+1), Relaxing environment (+2)

Specialties: Calming, Emotion, Lies, Motives, Personalities

Expression

The Expression Skill reflects your character's ability to communicate. This Skill covers written and spoken forms of communication, journalism, acting, music, and dance. In addition to being a powerful political tool, Kindred find Expression useful in hunting. An emotional connection breaks down barriers, and leaves a mark longing.

Sample actions: Composing (Intelligence + Expression, extended action), Performance (Presence + Expression, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Quality instrument (+1 to +3)

Specialties: Dance, Drama, Journalism, Musical Instrument, Performance Art, Singing, Speeches

Intimidation

Intimidation reflects your character's ability to influence others' behavior through threats and fear. It could mean direct physical threats, interrogation, or veiled implications of things to come. While Nosferatu are known for their mastery of Intimidation as part of the Nightmare Discipline, older Ventrue develop it for its utility in Dominate. Any vampire can benefit from a bit of Intimidation, though, since it can shut down a conflict before it escalates.

Sample actions: Interrogation (Wits + Intimidation, contested action), Staredown (Presence + Intimidation, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Fearsome tools (+2), Gang colors (+2), Isolated room (+1)

Specialties: Direct Threats, Interrogation, Stare Down, Torture, Veiled Threats

Persuasion

Persuasion is your character's ability to change minds and influence behaviors through logic, fast-talking, or appealing to desire. It relies on the force of your character's personality to sway the listener. Daeva are known for their ability with Persuasion; a common aphorism is that a mortal who can talk a vampire into going back to the vampire's place is a good candidate for the clan. Persuasion is perhaps the safest way to convince a potential meal to meet in private.

Sample actions: Fast Talk (Manipulation + Persuasion, extended action), Firebranding (Presence + Persuasion, instant action), Seduction (Manipulation + Persuasion, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Designer Clothing (+1 to +3), Reputation (+2)

Specialties: Confidence Scam, Fast Talking, Inspiring, Majesty, Sales Pitch, Seduction, Sermon

Socialize

Socialize reflects your character's ability to present herself well and interact with groups of people (alive or dead). It reflects proper (and setting-appropriate) etiquette, customs, sensitivity, and warmth. A character with a high Socialize is the life of the party. Socialize is a survival tool in the halls of Elysium, where rudeness could mean Final Death.

Sample actions: Carousing (Manipulation + Socialize, instant action), Fitting in (Wits + Socialize, instant action), Getting attention (Presence + Socialize, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Drugs (+1), Knowing People (+1), Money (+1 to +5)

Specialties: Bar Hopping, Church Lock-in, Dress Balls, Formal Events, Frat Parties, Political Fundraisers, The Club

Streetwise

The Streetwise Skill is your character's knowledge of life on the streets. It tells her how to navigate the city, how to get information from unlikely sources, and where she'll be (relatively) safe. If she wants to get something on the black market, Streetwise is how. Kindred who specialize in Streetwise typically do so in order to operate beneath the law, and beneath media scrutiny. When wealthy people disappear, it draws attention. When the poor vanish, it's just a statistic.

Sample actions: Finding a shortcut (Wits + Streetwise, instant action), Working the black market (Manipulation + Streetwise, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Burner phone (+1), Known nickname (+2), Valuable Contraband (+1 to +3)

Specialties: Black Market, Gangs, Navigation, Rumors, Undercover

Subterfuge

Subterfuge is the ability to deceive. With Subterfuge, your character can lie convincingly, project hidden messages in what she says, hide motivations, and notice deception in others. The Masquerade is a grand lie that all Kindred must tell. Subterfuge is integral to every bit of Kindred existence. A vampire who cannot effectively lie cannot deal with humanity, and thus finds herself slipping rapidly into monstrosity.

Sample actions: Disguise (Wits + Subterfuge, instant action), Lying (Manipulation + Subterfuge, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Costume Supplies (+2), Fake ID (+1),

Specialties: Detecting Lies, Doublespeak, Hiding Emotion, Little White Lies, Misdirection

Skill Specialties

In addition to Skills, your character possesses Skill Specialties. These are refinements of the broader Skills. These should be narrower than the main Skill, and help to define your character's particular expertise. For example, your character might have three dots in Firearms, but a Specialty in Rifles. He's capable with all guns, but particularly good with rifles. If you look to the Skill descriptions, you'll see example Specialties. The Storyteller is the ultimate arbiter of what constitutes a Specialty and what doesn't; Specialties that are too broad or too narrow can hurt the story or never come into play.

If a Specialty applies to your roll, add a die. Multiple Specialties may apply to a single roll, within reason. If you find yourself going to great lengths to justify a Specialty, it probably shouldn't apply.

Skill Specialties let you flesh out your character and offer a mechanical benefit. When creating your character, let Specialty choice guide his development. For example, there's a huge difference between a character with Brawl 4 (Bar Fights) and Brawl 4 (Aikido).

Virtues and Vices

Virtue and Vice are traits human characters possess instead of Masks and Dirges. Virtue is a point of strength and integrity in the character's life, Vice is a place of weakness. This is just a brief touch on the topic; for more, look to **The God-Machine Chronicle**. When choosing Virtues and Vices, use the following guidelines:

- Both should be adjectives that describe dominant personality traits. Don't use physical descriptions.
- Traits that describe existing Advantages, Attributes, or Skills similarly do not apply. For example, "Strong," and "Composed," would not work as Virtues.
- Virtue should be a point of self-confidence and self-actualization, but something easy and tempting to ignore. It's a higher calling, if she chooses to walk the talk.
- Vice should contrast Virtue as a short-term, quick source of distraction from the world. It should be a hiding place when you're weak.
- Virtue and Vice must be different. The same adjective could work as both a Virtue and Vice in some cases, but a character must have two different ones.

Whenever a mortal character acts in accordance with her Vice, she regains one spent Willpower. When she takes meaningful actions in accordance to her Virtue, she regains all spent Willpower. She can only recover Willpower from her Vice once per scene, and her Virtue twice per Chapter.

Speed

Your character's Speed is the number of yards or meters she can travel in a single turn. This trait is a combination of her Strength, Dexterity, and a species factor that reflects her age, physical configuration, Size and other considerations.

Other species, such as horses and cheetahs, have physical configurations that lend themselves to high travel rates.

Factor	Species
1	Turtle
3	Human toddler
5	Human adult
8	Wolf
10	Caribou
12	Horse
15	Cheetah

Rolling Dice

When your character is trying to accomplish something and the outcome is in doubt, you roll a pool of ten-sided dice based on his relevant traits and read the results to determine success. Most of the time, you roll a number of dice equal to an Attribute plus a Skill. For example, to get the cop off your back you use your character's Manipulation Attribute of 4 and Subterfuge Skill of 3, so you roll seven dice. If you have a Specialty (p. 80) that's relevant to the roll, add an extra die to your pool.

Each die that shows an 8, 9, or 10 is a success. Normally, you only need one success to achieve your goal. It's always better to get more successes — especially if you want to hurt someone, since your successes add to your damage in combat.

Every die that comes up 10 is a success. You also roll the die again, potentially scoring another success. If this second roll comes up as another 10, count the success and roll it again, on until you roll a number other than 10.

Many rolls have modifiers, either from equipment, circumstance, or someone working against your character . Most modifiers are within the range of +3 to –3, though they can range as low as –5 or as high as +5. Apply the modifiers to your dice pool before you roll. Add all the bonuses first, then apply penalties.

If your pool drops below one die, you instead roll a single chance die. The chance die only counts as a success if you roll a 10. Any other result is a failure. If you roll a 1 on the chance die, your character suffers a dramatic failure.

Roll Results

Your roll can succeed and fail in a few different ways:

Success: Your character's action goes off as planned. Achieved by having at least one success (a die showing 8, 9, or 10; or a chance die showing 10).

Failure: Your character's action fails. This doesn't mean "nothing happens," just that she doesn't get what she wants and complications are headed her way. Occurs when you roll no successes.

Exceptional Success: Your character's action succeeds beyond her expectations. Achieved by rolling five or more successes. Your character gains a beneficial Condition. (See "Conditions," p. 193.) Usually, the Inspired Condition is most appropriate. You can instead give this Condition to another character when it's appropriate to the story.

Dramatic Failure: Your character fails badly, and things are about to get a whole lot worse. Suffered when you roll a 1 on a chance die. Alternately, you can take a Beat in exchange for turning a normal failure into a dramatic failure.

When to Roll Dice

You don't need to roll dice for many actions. If your character isn't in a stressful situation — nobody's actively trying to tear his throat open, nor is the building being demolished as he works — you don't need to roll. When the dice hit the table, the Storyteller should have some idea of what will happen if the roll fails as well as if it succeeds. Sometimes, that's coded in the rules. If you fail on an attack roll, you don't deal any damage. Other times, it's up to the Storyteller. If you fail a roll to jump between buildings with the prince's hit-squad on your tail, do you make it but fall on the other side, grab the next building by your fingertips, or plummet to the alley below?

Circumstance and Equipment

Sometimes, fortune favors your character. Other times she gives it a helping hand by packing the right tools for the job. The Storyteller should weight how the circumstances affect a character's chance of success. A slight advantage — picking an old and damaged lock — might be worth a bonus die, while a stressful situation — trying to pick a lock while people are shooting at you — might subtract three dice from your pool. Most of the time, the modifier from circumstances will be between +3 and –3, though in very rare cases — picking a lock while your character is *on fire* — it can range from +5 to –5.

Bringing the right equipment for a task also gives you extra dice to roll. A sharp suit might give bonus dice when trying to convince the CEO that your character knows the best plan, while a good pair of running shoes will help her escape from the things lurking in the shadows. Most equipment offers a +1 to +3 die bonus. A top-of-the-line or custom item might give a +4 or +5 die bonus, but such items often cost more than just money. When a task is impossible without some kind of equipment — hacking a computer, or driving a car — equipment bonuses indicate how far your tools are above the baseline. A beat-up old station wagon might not add any dice to a Drive roll, but a top-of-the-line sports car may add +4 or even +5 dice.

Willpower

A character's Willpower represents her determination and her ability to go above and beyond what should be possible to achieve her goals. Spending a point of Willpower adds a +3 die bonus to most dice pools, or +2 to a Resistance trait. You can only spend one point of Willpower per action.

Attribute Tasks

Some actions require no special expertise to perform. Mostly, these come in the form of Wits + Composure rolls to notice something that doesn't seem right, or using Strength + Stamina rolls to lift something. In these rolls, you add two different Attributes together to make your dice pool. If an action doesn't seem to involve any particular Skill, it can be handled by an Attribute Task.

Muddling Through

If your character has no dots in an applicable Skill, the Storyteller may allow you to roll your Attribute as a dice pool. Your character's dice pool suffers a penalty for being untrained: if the roll would involve a Mental Skill, you take a –3 die penalty, while a Physical or Social Skill applies a –1 die penalty.

Actions

The majority of actions in the game are *instant* actions. They represent acts that only take a couple of seconds. In combat, an instant action takes up your turn.

A *reflexive* action is the sort of thing you don't even need to think about doing. Most rolls to resist supernatural powers are reflexive. You can take a reflexive action at any time, and it doesn't take your turn in combat.

When two people fight over a specific goal, they engage in a *contested* action. You roll your dice pool and the Storyteller (or other player) rolls the dice pool for the other party. Whoever rolls the most successes is the victor. Note that you count the total number of successes rolled when working out if you scored an exceptional success — don't subtract the other party's successes from yours. A contested action takes up the action of the person initiating the action; resisting it is a reflexive action.

Extended Actions

An *extended* action is an attempt to complete a complex task. You roll your dice pool multiple times. Each roll takes a certain amount of time, and represents a step in the process — your character either makes significant progress or faces a setback. You determine your dice pool for the action as normal — Attribute + Skill + Modifiers. Make a note of your Attribute + Skill + Specialty (if any); that's the maximum number of times you can roll before the action fails.

When you take an extended action, the Storyteller determines how many successes you require. Most actions require between five and twenty successes. Five reflects a reasonable action that competent characters can achieve with the right tools and knowledge. Ten represents a difficult action that's still realistic for a

professional in a field. Twenty represents a very difficult action that even a particularly skilled character will have trouble pulling off.

The Storyteller also determines the interval between rolls. If an action would take weeks to complete, she might consider one roll per week. If it's likely to take a day's work, one roll per hour makes for a solid timeframe.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: In addition to the effects of a failure, the first roll on a further attempt suffers a –2 die penalty.

Failure: You face a setback. The Storyteller will offer you a choice: take a Condition of her choice or abandon the action. You can offer a different Condition if you think it makes sense. If you refuse or cannot agree on a Condition, you lose all accumulated successes (see "Conditions," p. 193).

Success: Add the successes scored on the roll to your running total. Work with the Storyteller to determine what steps your character has taken towards his goal.

Exceptional Success: Choose one of: Reduce the number of successes required by your character's Skill dots, reduce the time on each following roll by a quarter, or apply the exceptional success result of the action when you complete your goal.

Resistance

Sometimes, an action is resisted. You roll your Attribute + Skill, but apply a modifier of one of your opponent's Resistance Attributes (Resolve, Stamina, or Composure), or your opponent's Defense. This resistance is over and above any other modifiers applied to the dice pool.

If you're not sure whether to use resistance or a contested action, use this guideline: Resistance applies in situations where the number of successes on the roll is an important factor. If what matters is just whether the roll succeeds or not, use a contested action. For example, combat applies Defense as a resistance because the number of successes on the roll determines how badly the attacker messes up his victim. A supernatural power that puts a victim in your thrall uses a contested action, because the number of successes that you roll doesn't matter to the power.

When uncanny powers are involved, supernatural creatures can sometimes add an additional trait, called Supernatural Tolerance. The Supernatural Tolerance trait for Kindred is Blood Potency.

Common Actions

Here are some sample ways you can apply your Skills. Remember, you can invent your own at any time.

ARGUMENT
(Intelligence + Expression – victim's Resolve)

You try to sway someone with a rational argument. (If arguing with a crowd, use the highest Resolve in the crowd.) (See also Social Maneuvering, p. 173)

- **Dramatic Failure:** You convince them of quite the opposite.
- **Failure:** They listen, but are ultimately unaffected.
- **Success:** They accept the truth (or apparent truth) of your words.
- **Exceptional Success:** They're convinced, and become a recruit to your point of view. Though they might change their minds if they find themselves at risk.

CAROUSING
(Presence + Socialize or Streetwise)

You mix with a group, bringing high spirits with you and using them to loosen tongues.

- **Dramatic Failure:** A faux pas reveals that you don't belong... and maybe even hints at your supernatural nature.
- **Failure:** You end up a wallflower, with a drink in your hand that you don't even want.
- **Success:** You make a single-serving friend, who might be willing to pass secrets or go with you somewhere private.
- **Exceptional Success:** You make a friend you can contact again.

FAST-TALK
(Manipulation + Subterfuge – victim's Composure)

You may not be able to win the argument with facts, but you can try to get out of trouble with a little judicious spin.

- **Dramatic Failure:** The other party has a good idea what the truth is.
- **Failure:** The other party doesn't believe you.
- **Success:** The other party swallows your story.
- **Exceptional Success:** The other party believes you so thoroughly that they're even willing to offer a little aid... though they won't put themselves at any kind of risk.

INTERROGATION
(Manipulation + Empathy or Intimidation – victim's Resolve)

You try to dig secrets out of a reluctant informant. (See also Social Maneuvering, p. 173.)

- **Dramatic Failure:** The informant is so alienated or injured that he will no longer reveal information.
- **Failure:** The informant blabs a mix of truth and falsehood — even he may not know the difference.
- **Success:** You get the information you were looking for.
- **Exceptional Success:** You get the information you were looking for, and the informant is willing to continue cooperating.

INTIMIDATION
(Strength or Manipulation + Intimidation – victim's Composure)

You try to get someone to do what you want by making them afraid of you.

- **Dramatic Failure:** They don't take you seriously, even if you knock them around a bit. They won't be doing what you want.
- **Failure:** They're unimpressed with your threats.
- **Success:** They're coerced into helping you.
- **Exceptional Success:** They develop a lasting fear of you, which could make them easier to coerce in the future.

INVESTIGATING A SCENE
(Intelligence + Investigation)

You look for clues to what's happened in the recent past...or tidy up so that no one else can find them.

- **Dramatic Failure:** You find clues, but you contaminate them, or you leave evidence of your presence.
- **Failure:** You find evidence, but it's damaged and hard to interpret. Or you miss a spot in your cleanup that you won't find out about until later.
- **Success:** You find a clue of exactly the sort you need, or manage to significantly confuse future investigators.
- **Exceptional Success:** You find a clue, and know exactly how it fits in, or you leave the scene immaculate and impossible to decipher.

JUMPING

To get past an obstacle or get out of danger, you leap into the air.

- **Dramatic Failure:** The task not only fails but your character loses her balance.
- **Failure:** Your character doesn't achieve any significant distance at all — she jumps too early, has a false start, or loses her nerve.
- **Success:** Your character leaps a number of feet equal to the successes rolled, or a number of meters equal to the successes rolled divided by three.
- **Exceptional Success:** Your character leaps an impressive distance. If successes gained exceed the amount required to make the jump, your character may attempt another instant action in the air (say, firing a shot) or upon landing (maybe running up to her Speed), at the Storyteller's discretion.

REPAIR
(Intelligence + Crafts)

You try to fix something that's broken down.

- **Dramatic Failure:** The broken object's a lost cause. It'll never work again.
- **Failure:** You're stymied by the problem, but could come back to it in another scene.
- **Success:** You get the thing working...for now.
- **Exceptional Success:** The object works better than before. It won't break again anytime soon.

RESEARCH
(Intelligence + Academics or Occult)

Using your existing knowledge, you look for information on a current mystery.

- **Dramatic Failure:** You learn something, but it doesn't help. In fact, it sets you back. If using Occult, it might also give you nightmares.
- **Failure:** You turn up a lot of promising leads, but they're all dead ends.
- **Success:** You find the basic facts you were looking for.
- **Exceptional Success:** You find what you were looking for, and leads towards a much bigger score of information.

SHADOWING A MARK
(Wits + Stealth or Drive vs. Wits + Composure)

You follow someone, perhaps in the hopes of ambushing them, or of finding out their destination.

- **Dramatic Failure:** You're caught, either by the mark or some observer that's become suspicious of you.
- **Failure:** The mark senses he's being followed, and manages to lose you.
- **Success:** You follow the mark to his destination.
- **Exceptional Success:** You find some means by which you can continue following the mark, such as an unlocked entrance into the building he arrived at.

SNEAKING
(Dexterity + Stealth vs. Wits + Composure)

You're trying to avoid notice by someone...or multiple someones. Maybe you want to get into a place undetected. Maybe you're trying to break out.

- **Dramatic Failure:** You attract a lot of attention...enough that now it's going to be hard to get out.
- **Failure:** You're noticed, but still have the chance to slip away.
- **Success:** You avoid notice and get closer to your goal.
- **Exceptional Success:** You avoid notice and get away before anyone has another chance to catch you.

Permutations

The Storytelling System has a few variations in how dice rolls work. This section lists the ones used most commonly in **Vampire: The Requiem**; for a more complete list see the **World of Darkness Rulebook** p. 134-135.

- **9-Again:** You re-roll dice that show 9 or 10, as opposed to just 10. Keep rolling until you get a result that isn't a 9 or 10.
- **8-Again:** You re-roll dice that show 8, 9, or 10 — any successful die — and keep rolling as long as your dice show successes.
- **Extra Successes:** Assuming your roll succeeds, you get a number of extra successes added to your total. This permutation mostly applies to weapons, which add their damage bonus as extra successes on your attack roll.
- **Rote Actions:** When you've got plenty of training and the steps you need to follow are laid out in front of you, you've got a significant chance of success. When you make a roll, you can re-roll any dice that do not show an 8, 9, or 10. If you're reduced to a chance die on a rote action, don't re-roll a dramatic failure. You may only re-roll each die once.
- **Successive Attempts:** When you fail a roll, you may be able to try again. If time is not an issue and your character is under no pressure to perform, you may make successive attempts with your full dice pool. In the far more likely situation that time is short and the situation is tense, each subsequent attempt has a cumulative –1 die penalty — so the third time a character tries to break down the door that's keeping her inside a burning building, her roll has a –2 die penalty. Successive attempts do not apply to extended actions.
- **Teamwork:** When two or more people work together, one person takes the lead. He's the primary actor, and his player assembles his dice pool as normal. Anyone assisting rolls the same pool before the primary actor. Each success gives the primary actor a bonus die. If one of the secondary actors rolls a dramatic failure, the primary actor gets a –4 die penalty.

Time

When you're playing **Vampire: The Requiem**, time in the story can speed past or slow to a crawl compared to time in the real world. Weeks or months might pass in the space of few words, while a tense negotiation plays out in real-time — or takes even longer.

In addition to years, nights, and hours, **Vampire** also uses six units of dramatic time. These build upon one another, from shortest to longest.

- Turn — The smallest increment of time, a turn lasts for about three seconds. A character can perform a single instant action in a turn. Turns normally only matter in combat or other dramatic and stressful situations.
- Scene — Much like a scene in a play, a scene in a roleplaying game is the time spent dealing with a single, specific event. The Storyteller frames the scene, describing what's going on, and it's up to the players to resolve the event or conflict. A scene might be played out in turns, progress in real-time, or skip forward depending on dramatic necessity.
- Chapter — A chapter is the collection of scenes that happen during one game session. From the moment you sit down and start playing to the point where you pack up your dice, you're playing out a chapter of your story.
- Story — A story tells an entire tale, following the dramatic arc of a related series of events. It might comprise several chapters or be completed in just one. It has an introduction, rising tension, a number of twists, and a climax that brings things to a conclusion.
- Chronicle — The big picture, a chronicle is the collection of interlinked stories that involve your characters. They might be linked by a common theme or overarching plotline, or they may only share characters and locations. As your story progresses, the players and Storyteller work together to create an ongoing chronicle.

Social Maneuvering

People often won't do what you want just because you ask them to. You need to persuade them, make your offer or request as enticing as possible. You don't have to use positive enticements — "Your wife won't find out about your affair," is often more effective than "Here's fifty bucks for your trouble." You just need to find out what the other person wants.

Under a strict reading of these rules, one character could use Social maneuvering to get another to do whatever she wants. That's not quite fair, since it's the persuader's player making the rolls. His victim doesn't get any option to say "no." As such, this system should only be used by player-controlled characters on Storyteller characters. Leave the manipulation of other player's characters to roleplaying, and let the players determine their characters' responses. Suggestions for using Social maneuvering on other player-controlled characters can be found in the **God-Machine Chronicle**.

Goals & Doors

To begin a Social maneuver, you need to declare your character's intended goal: What you want the victim to do, and how your character is going to make that happen. At this point, you only need to announce the initial stages. The Storyteller will determine if the goal is reasonable — while a vampire could convince a rich victim to hand over a large sum of money, he probably can't convince her to abandon all her wealth, at least not without supernatural powers.

Each victim has a number of Doors, which reflect her resistance to coercion, her skepticism, and her mistrust of other people. A character has a base number of Doors equal to the lower of her Resolve or Composure. If the announced goal would be a breaking point for the victim, add two Doors. If the goal would prevent the victim from resolving an Aspiration, add a Door. Acting against a victim's Virtue (or Mask, in the case of Kindred) also adds a Door.

The number of Doors can change as the situation alters. If the goal seems mundane at first but ends up being reprehensible, it will probably increase the number of Doors required. If your

character changes his goal, any Doors that he's opened remain open, but assess Aspirations, Virtues, and breaking points in case of a potential increase.

A character has to open Doors one by one. Every successful roll opens one Door — not one per success. As Doors represent a victim's unwillingness to do what your character asks, they're strictly a one-way relationship.

First Impressions

The Storyteller determines the first impression based on past history between the characters, the circumstances when the persuader first asks, the nature of the favor being asked (assuming the persuading character is up front with what he wants) and other relevant factors.

Absent any other factors, two characters start off with average impressions of each other. If the persuading character influences the interaction — wearing appealing clothes, playing appropriate music, or meeting in a pleasant environment — that moves up to a good impression. If they really get off on the wrong foot, they may start with hostile impressions of one another, in which case the persuader must attempt to increase the victim's impression at another meeting, or force the Doors (see below).

When the characters meet, the persuading character can make an appropriate roll to increase his victim's impression of him — Wits + Socialize to create the perfect guest list, or Manipulation + Persuasion to get the best table in a restaurant. A successful roll moves the impression one step up the chart.

If your character knows his victim's Vice or Dirge, he can use that to his advantage. He can make an offer that tempts his victim, enough that agreeing to it would replenish a Willpower point. If the victim accepts, move the impression one step up the chart.

If all else fails, apply leverage in the form of gifts or bribes. Offer something, and if the recipient agrees, move the impression one step up the chart. What you can offer is limited by your Merits; an accepted offer gives the recipient the use of the Merit for a designated amount of time.

Impression	Time per Roll
Perfect	1 Turn
Excellent	1 Hour
Good	1 Day
Average	1 Week
Hostile	Cannot roll

Opening Doors

At each interval, the persuading character meets his victim and moves closer to his goal. He makes a roll based on the situation and how he's persuading his victim in order to open a Door. This roll need not be Social. Fixing a mark's car with Intelligence + Crafts could open a Door just as easily as writing her a song or poem with Presence + Expression. The Storyteller should present situations that demonstrate the range of possible options, mixing

up the dice pools involved. In some cases, she might make the roll into a contested action — having the victim roll Wits to detect a lie.

A successful roll opens one Door. An exceptional success on this roll opens two Doors. Failure imposes a cumulative –1 on all further rolls with the same victim; the Storyteller can also worsen the impression level by one (if she does the player takes a Beat). If failure lowers the impression level to "hostile," the persuading character had better find some way to improve his chances.

If your character knows one of his victim's Aspirations he can use that to his advantage. He has to present a clear path to her Aspiration, and the steps he'll take to help her achieve it. Doing so opens one Door. If the stated opportunity presents itself and the persuading character doesn't help, two Doors close.

Failure

Social maneuvering fails when the victim no longer trusts the persuading character. This can happen when the player rolls a dramatic failure on an attempt to open a Door, though the player takes a beat as usual. Otherwise, the victim has to realize that she's been lied to and manipulated — not just that the persuading character was trying to talk her into something, but that he's only ever used her for that goal and doesn't care about anything else. Finally, the attempt fails if the impression level reaches "hostile" and remains there for a week.

Forcing Doors

Sometimes, subtlety just won't cut it. A character needs something right now, and will do anything to persuade his victim to do what he wants. He can attempt to force his victim's Doors, but it's a high-risk method. Forcing Doors is a sure-fire way for a character to burn bridges and leave lies and mistrust in his wake.

To force a victim's Doors, state your goal and your approach. Make a roll for your approach as you would to open a Door normally, but apply the current number of closed Doors as a penalty to the roll. If you succeed, you open all your victim's Doors. If you fail, your victim won't ever trust you again; you can't use Social maneuvering against her again.

To make things easier for the persuading character, he can apply hard leverage — a catch-all euphemism for threats, intimidation, drugging, blackmail, and other heavy-handed forms of coercion. If the persuader uses a form of hard leverage, it's a breaking point for him. The Storyteller decides the level of the breaking point. If the difference between that level and the character's Humanity score is 2 or less, hard leverage removes one Door. If the difference is 3 or more, it removes two Doors. Hard leverage can only be used in conjunction with forcing Doors; remove the Doors before rolling for the character's approach.

Resolution

Once her final Door is open, the victim has to do something. Storyteller characters abide by the declared goal and do what the persuading character wants.

If a character tries to use Social maneuvering on the same victim again, that affects how many Doors she throws up in his path. If the attempt succeeded by opening Doors, subsequent influence attempts begin with one fewer Door. If the attempt failed, or the persuader used hard leverage, successive influence attempts begin with two more Doors. A victim always starts an influence attempt with at least one Door.

Combat

Vampires put on airs and graces, pretending to be civil to one another and nice to their prey. That's a genteel lie, masking a far simpler truth: Vampires are inherently violent creatures. They need blood; and when that need burns hot enough, they don't care who they have to hurt or kill to get it.

Combat is a catch-all term for what happens when two perfectly reasonable people find that they cannot reach agreement like rational individuals and instead beat the living shit out of one another until one of them gets what she wants.

Everybody wants something out of a fight. The very first thing you need to do — before worrying about who attacks first or anything like that — is to determine what each character wants to get out of the fight. Boil it down into a simple sentence that starts with the words "I want:" "I want to kill Johnny," "I want the book that Frances is holding," or "I want what's in Larry's wallet."

A character's intent has to be something she could achieve through an act of violence in the current scene — even a gunman on the White House lawn couldn't get away with "I want to be President of the United States."

By stating her character's intent, a player is setting out how much her character is willing to hurt — even kill — someone else in order to get. If your intent has nothing to do with hurting people and you end up killing someone, you lose a point of Willpower.

Optional Rule: Beaten Down & Surrender

Any character that takes more than his Stamina in bashing damage or any amount of lethal damage is Beaten Down: He's had the fight knocked out of him. He must spend a point of Willpower every time he wants to take a violent action until the end of the fight. He can still apply Defense against incoming attacks, can Dodge, and can run like hell, but it takes a point of Willpower to swing or shoot back.

Before that happens, he can surrender, giving his attacker what she wants according to her declared intent. If you give in, you gain a point of Willpower and take a Beat, but you take no more part in the fight. If the other side wants to attack you, they've got to spend a point of Willpower to do so, and probably suffer a breaking point. If everyone on one side has surrendered, the fight's over and the other side gets what they want.

If one side's intent involves violence, the other side can't surrender — not without being killed. If that's the case, their intended victims don't get Beaten Down, and gain no benefit from surrendering. When someone wants to kill you, the only thing you can do is to try to stop her, whether you run like hell or unload a shotgun at her.

These rules only apply to people (or vampires) who would incur a breaking point for committing (or attempting) "murder." Creatures that don't have a problem killing people in general can ignore surrender without penalty and don't have the fight beaten out of them like normal folks.

Down and Dirty Combat

The Storyteller might decide that your character can get what she wants without focusing on the details of the fight. Maybe she's picking on people weaker than her. Maybe she's internalized the mechanics of violence. Or maybe the fight's not the important thing going on with regards to the character's intent. If that's the case, the Storyteller can opt to use a Down and Dirty Combat. This system resolves the entire fight in a single roll. Storyteller characters might deal some damage, but they're never able to initiate a Down and Dirty Combat.

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Dice Pool: Combat pool (Dexterity + Firearms, Strength + Brawl, or Strength + Weaponry) versus either the opponent's combat pool (as above) *or* an attempt to escape (Strength or Dexterity + Athletics). Ignore Defense on this roll.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's opponent gets the upper hand. This usually includes the opposite of the character's intent — if she wanted to disable the guards so she could escape, she is stunned instead.

Failure: The opponent wins the contest. If the opponent used a combat pool, deal damage equal to the difference in successes plus weapon modifier. Also, the opponent escapes unless he wants to press the combat.

Success: The character wins the contest. She deals damage equal to the difference in successes plus her weapon modifier and achieves her intent — if her intent includes killing her opponents, then she does so.

Exceptional Success: As a success, and the character also gains a point of Willpower from the rush of inflicting violence on an inferior opponent.

Initiative

When a fight's inevitable, it helps to know who acts first. Time in combat is always tracked in turns. At the start of combat, determine your character's Initiative by rolling one die and adding her Initiative Modifier.

When your character is using a weapon, apply its Initiative penalty for as long as she's got the weapon ready. The only way to avoid this modifier is to sling it or drop it. Dropping a weapon is a reflexive action, but picking it back up takes an instant action. A character wielding two weapons subtracts the largest Initiative penalty from her score, and then reduces it by a further one. Wielding a baton (Initiative penalty –2) and a riot shield (Initiative penalty –4) thus applies a –5 die penalty.

Surprise

Characters who don't realize that they're about to be on the receiving end of bloody violence have a chance to notice the ambush by rolling Wits + Composure, contested by the attacker's Dexterity + Stealth. Any character who fails the roll cannot take an action in the first turn of combat, and can't apply Defense for that turn. Determine Initiative in the second turn as normal.

Attack

On your turn, your character can attack using one of the following dice pools:

- **Unarmed Combat:** Strength + Brawl – Defense
- **Melee Combat:** Strength + Weaponry – Defense
- **Ranged Combat:** Dexterity + Firearms
- **Thrown Weapons:** Dexterity + Athletics – Defense

Resolve the attack roll like any other action. Determine damage by adding the successes rolled to any weapon bonus. See "Injury and Healing," below.

Defense

Subtract your character's Defense from any unarmed, melee, or thrown attacks that the character is aware of. Every time your character applies his Defense against an attack, reduce his Defense by one until the start of the next turn. Spending a point of Willpower increases her Defense by two, but only against one attacker.

You can choose not to apply your character's Defense against some attacks. If two unarmed gangbangers attack before a chainsaw-wielding lunatic, you might want to let the gangbangers get their blows in, and apply your full Defense against the maniac swinging a chainsaw at your head.

You cannot apply your character's Defense against firearms attacks.

Dodge

At any point before your action, your character can choose to Dodge. Doing so gives up her normal action. When Dodging, double your character's Defense but do not subtract it from attack rolls. Instead, roll Defense as a dice pool, and subtract each success from the attacker's successes. If this reduces the attacker's successes to 0, the attack does no damage. Apply successes from Dodging before adding any weapon bonus.

Against multiple opponents, reduce Defense by one for each opponent *before* doubling it to determine your dice pool. If your Defense is reduced to 0, you roll a chance die. A dramatic failure when Dodging leaves your character off-balance;, reduce her Defense by one for her next turn.

Unarmed Combat

These rules present special cases that come up when fighting without weapons.

Bite

A human's teeth do –1 bashing damage. Other creatures treat their teeth like weapons, dealing lethal damage to mortals (see "Weapons," below). A vampire's fangs used in anger deal +0 lethal damage (see "The Assault, The Kiss," p. 94). Animals have a weapon bonus depending on the kind of creature: a wolf applies +1, while a great white shark gets +4.

Humans and vampires can only bite as part of a grapple, using the Damage move.

Grapple

To grab your opponent, roll Strength + Brawl – Defense. On a success, both of you are grappling. If you roll an exceptional success, pick a move from the list below.

Each turn, both grappling characters make a contested Strength + Brawl versus Strength + Brawl action on the higher of the two characters' Initiatives. The winner picks a move from the list below, or two moves on an exceptional success.

- **Break Free** from the grapple. You throw off your opponent; you're both no longer grappling. Succeeding at this move is a reflexive action, you can take another action immediately afterwards.
- **Control Weapon**, either by drawing a weapon that you have holstered or turning your opponent's weapon against him. You keep control until your opponent makes a Control Weapon move.
- **Damage** your opponent by dealing bashing damage equal to your rolled successes. If you previously succeeded at a Control Weapon action, add the weapon bonus to your successes.
- **Disarm** your opponent, removing a weapon from the grapple entirely. You must first have succeeded at a Control Weapon move.
- **Drop Prone**, throwing both of you to the ground (see "Going Prone," below). You must Break Free before rising.
- **Hold** your opponent in place. Neither of you can apply Defense against incoming attacks.
- **Restrain** your opponent with duct tape, zip ties, or a painful joint lock. Your opponent is immobilized. You can only use this move if you've already succeeded in a Hold move. If you use equipment to Restrain your opponent, you can leave the grapple.
- **Take Cover** using your opponent's body. Any ranged attacks made until the end of the turn automatically hit him (see "Human Shields," below).

Touching an Opponent

Sometimes, a combatant doesn't want to do damage. Maybe she wants to plant a bug, or deliver some supernatural power. Roll Dexterity + Brawl, or Dexterity + Weaponry to tap an opponent with a weapon. A successful roll deals no damage.

Ranged Combat

These rules present special cases that come up when shooting at people.

Autofire

Automatic weapons can fire a short, medium, or long burst in place of a single shot.

- **Short Burst**: Three bullets fired at the same target. Add a +1 die bonus to the shooter's dice pool.
- **Medium Burst:** Ten bullets, which can hit one to three targets standing close together. Add a +2 die bonus to the shooter's dice pool. If firing at more than one target, subtract the total number of targets from the shooter's pool, then make one attack roll per target.
- **Long Burst:** Twenty bullets at as many targets as the shooter wants. Increase the shooter's dice pool by +3. If firing at more than one target, subtract the total number of targets from the shooter's pool, then make one attack roll per target.

Range

The firearms chart (below) lists the short, medium, and long ranges of some sample firearms. Shooting a target at medium range imposes a –1 die penalty, while shooting a target at long range increases that to –2. Shooting at targets beyond long range reduces the attack dice pool to a chance die.

Thrown weapons have a short range of (Strength + Dexterity + Athletics – object's Size), doubled for medium range, and doubled again for long range. Aerodynamic objects double each range — so an aerodynamic object's long range is {(Strength + Dexterity + Athletics) * 8}. Characters can only throw objects with a Size less than their Strength.

Cover and Concealment

Hiding behind something is a good way to not get shot. How effective it is depends how much the cover hides. Concealment penalties apply to a shooter's dice pool.

- **Barely Concealed:** –1 (hiding behind an office chair)
- **Partially Concealed:** –2 (hiding behind the hood of a car, with upper body exposed)
- **Substantially Concealed:** –3 (crouching behind a car).

A character who is concealed and wants to fire at someone else takes a penalty to his Firearms attack that's one less than the penalty afforded by the character's protection — so if he's substantially concealed, he can fire back with a –2 die penalty.

If a target's entirely hidden by something substantial, he's in cover. If the cover's Durability is greater than the weapon modifier, the bullets can't penetrate the cover. Otherwise, subtract the cover's Durability from the attacker's damage roll. If the cover is transparent (bulletproof glass, for example), subtract *half* the cover's Durability, rounding down. Both the object and the target take any remaining damage.

Human Shields

Sometimes, the only available cover is another person — be they a terrified member of the public or a life-long friend. Characters who use human shields treat them as cover, with Durability equal to the victim's Stamina + any armor. Unlike normal cover, the victim takes all of the damage from the attack.

Using a human shield is almost certainly a breaking point. For a mortal, this means a pretty severe modifier (–3 or more) if the victim dies; Kindred may risk a breaking point if they have Humanity 2 or more.

Reloading

Reloading a firearm is an instant action. If you need to load bullets separately, you cannot apply your Defense on the same turn. If you have a magazine or speed-loader, you don't lose your Defense.

General Combat Factors

Some conditions apply to all kinds of fights.

Movement

A character can move his Speed in a single turn and still take an instant action. He can forsake his action to move at double his normal pace.

Going Prone

When a character can't find cover, the next best thing when bullets are flying is to drop flat to the ground. Ranged attacks against him suffer a –2 die penalty. A standing attacker using Brawl or Weaponry to attack instead gains a +2 die bonus.

A character can drop prone at any point before his action. Dropping to the ground costs his action for the turn. Getting up from being prone also takes your character's action.

Specified Targets

Attacking specific body parts has its benefits. In addition to ignoring armor (see "Armor," p. 180), strikes to limbs and the head can have added effects, noted in brief here. The **God-Machine Chronicle** includes these effects in a system of Tilts — a comprehensive set of Conditions that specifically affect combat.

- Arm (–2): A damaging hit can Arm Wrack the victim if it deals more damage than the target's Stamina
- Leg (–2): A damaging hit can Leg Wrack the victim if it deals more damage than the target's Stamina
- Head (–3): A damaging attack can Stun the victim if it deals at least as much damage as the target's Size
- Heart (–3): If the attacker does at least five points of damage, the weapon pierces the opponent's heart.
- Hand (–4): On a damaging hit, the victim suffers Arm Wrack
- Eye (–5): On a damaging hit, the victim is Blinded

Arm Wrack forces you to drop whatever you're holding in the affected arm, and gives you a –2 die penalty to rolls requiring manual dexterity if you're using your off-hand. Having both arms affected reduces rolls relying on manual dexterity to a chance die, and gives a –3 die penalty to all other Physical actions. The effects go away when the character heals from her wounds, or receives medical attention.

Blinded gives the victim a –3 die penalty on any rolls relying on vision — including attack rolls — and halves his Defense if one eye is blinded. The penalty increases to –5 and the loss of all Defense if both eyes are blinded. A single attack against the eyes blinds one eye, or both on an exceptional success. The effects go away when the character heals from her wounds, or receives medical attention.

Leg Wrack halves the victim's Speed and applies a –2 modifier to Defense and Physical rolls that require movement. If both legs are affected, you drop prone (see above) and can't get up. Your Speed is reduced to 1, and you have to give up your action to move. Physical rolls requiring movement are reduced to a chance die. The effects go away when the character heals from her wounds, or receives medical attention.

Stun causes the character to miss her next action. Her Defense is halved until she next takes an action.

Killing Blow

When performing a killing blow, you deal damage equal to your full dice pool plus your weapon modifier. You've time enough to line up your attack so it avoids your victim's armor.

While people who kill in combat can justify their actions based on the heat of the moment, performing a killing blow is a premeditated attempt to end a sentient life without the target having a chance to do anything about it. Going through with a killing blow is breaking point whether the victim survives or not.

Weapons and Armor

Weapons are one of the fastest ways to turn a fight into a murder. Sometimes, that's what you want: Pulling a gun shows you're serious about killing people.

Ranged Weapons Chart

Type	Damage	Ranges	Clip	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Example
Revolver, lt	1	20/40/80	6	0	2	1	••	SW M640 (.38 Special)
Revolver, hvy	2	35/70/140	6	–2	3	1	••	SW M29 (.44 Magnum)
Pistol, lt	1	20/40/80	17+1	0	2	1	•••	Glock 17 (9mm)
Pistol, hvy	2	30/60/120	7+1	–2	3	1	•••	Colt M1911A1 (.45 ACP)
SMG, small*	1	25/50/100	30+1	–2	2	1	•••	Ingram Mac-10 (9mm)
SMG, large*	2	50/100/200	30+1	–3	3	2	•••	HK MP-5 (9mm)
Rifle	4	200/400/800	5+1	–5	2	3	••	Remington M-700 (30.06)
Assault Rifle*	3	150/300/600	42+1	–3	3	3	•••	Stery-Aug (5.56mm)
Shotgun**	3	20/40/80	5+1	–4	3	2	••	Remington M870 (12-gauge)
Crossbow***	2	40/80/160	1	–5	3	3	•••	

A weapon's damage rating adds bonus successes to a successful attack roll. When a weapon might help out in other ways — using a chain to grapple someone, or a gun to intimidate her, add the weapon's damage rating as an equipment modifier.

Every weapon deals lethal damage to mortals. A baseball bat, club, or mace does just as much serious trauma to the human body as an edged weapon or a bullet. Kindred do not have such frailties, and take bashing damage from all mundane weapons, including knives and guns.

The full traits of a range of weapons are presented in the Ranged and Melee Weapons Charts.

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack to determine the amount of lethal damage dealt.

Ranges: The listed numbers a short/medium/long ranges in yards/meters. Attacks at medium range suffer a –1 die penalty. Attacks at long range suffer a –2 die penalty.

Clip: The number of rounds a gun can hold. A "+1" indicates that a bullet can be held in the chamber, ready to fire.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the gun.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a –1 penalty on attack rolls.

Size: 1 = Can be fired one-handed; 2 = Must be fired two-handed and can be hidden in a coat; 3 = Can be fired two-handed but not hidden on one's person

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

* The weapon is capable of autofire, including short bursts, medium bursts, and long bursts.

** Attack rolls gain the 9-again quality

*** Crossbows take three turns to reload between shots. A crossbow can be used to deliver a stake through the heart (–3 die penalty to attack rolls; must deal at least 5 damage in one attack)

Improvised Weapons

The weapons charts can only go so far. Characters who grab improvised weapons still stand a chance of doing serious damage.

If your improvised weapon is close enough to one of the weapons above, use the associated weapon profile. Otherwise, an improvised weapon does (Durability – 1) damage, with an initiative penalty and Strength requirement equal to the weapon's Size.

Using an improvised weapon reduces your attack pool by one die. On a successful attack, the weapon takes the same amount of damage as it inflicts; Durability reduces this damage as normal. Once the weapon's Structure is reduced to 0, the object is wrecked.

Melee Weapons Chart

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Special
Sap	0	–1	1	1	•	Stun
Brass Knuckles	0	0	1	1	•	Uses Brawl to attack
Baton	1	–1	2	2	n/a	
Crowbar	2	–2	2	2	•	
Tire Iron	1	–3	2	2	••	+1 Defense
Chain	1	–3	2	2	•	Grapple
Shield (small)	0	–2	2	2	••	Concealed
Shield (large)	2	–4	3	3	••	Concealed
Knife	0	–1	1	1	•	
Rapier	1	–2	1	2	••	Armor piercing 1
Machete	2	–2	2	2	••	
Hatchet	1	–2	1	1	•	
Fire Ax	3	–4	3	3	••	9-again, two-handed
Chainsaw	5	–6	4	3	•••	9-again, two-handed
Stake*	0	–4	1	1	n/a	
Spear**	2	–2	2	4	•	+1 Defense, two-handed

Type: A weapon's type is a general classification that can apply to anything your character picks up. A metal club might be an antique mace, a metal baseball bat, or a hammer, while a hatchet might be a meat cleaver or an antique hand-ax.

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack to determine the amount of lethal damage dealt.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase by 1.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a –1 die penalty on attack rolls.

Size: 1 = Can be hidden in a hand; 2 = Can be hidden in a coat; 3+ = Cannot be hidden.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

Concealed: A character who wields a shield but doesn't use it to attack can add its Size to his Defense, and uses its Size as a concealment modifier against ranged attacks.

Grapple: Add the chain's damage rating to your dice pool when grappling.

Stun: Halve the victim's Size when aiming for the head with intent to stun

Two-handed: This weapon requires two hands. It can be used one-handed, but doing so increases the Strength requirement by 1.

* A stake must target the heart (–3 die penalty to attack rolls) and must deal at least 5 damage in one attack.

** The reach of a spear gives a +1 Defense bonus against opponents who are unarmed or wield weapons of Size 1.

Armor

Armor provides protection against attacks, including bullets and knives. Though it's rare to find Kindred wearing armor, police officers and other law enforcement agencies rely on it.

- Ballistic armor applies to incoming firearms attacks. Each point of ballistic armor downgrades one point of damage from lethal to bashing.
- General armor applies to all attacks. Each point of general armor reduces the total damage taken by one point, starting with the most severe type of damage.

If armor has both ballistic and general ratings, apply the ballistic armor first.

When applying armor to an attack dealing lethal damage, you always take at least one point of bashing damage from the shock of the blow.

Armor Chart

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability	Coverage
MODERN						
Reinforced clothing*	1/0	1	0	0	•	Torso, arms, legs
Kevlar vest*	1/3	1	0	0	•	Torso
Flak Jacket	2/4	1	–1	0	• •	Torso, arms
Full Riot Gear	3/5	2	–2	–1	• • •	Torso, arms, legs
ARCHAIC						
Leather (hard)	2/0	2	–1	0	•	Torso, arms
Chainmail	3/1	3	–2	–2	• •	Torso, arms
Plate	4/2	3	–2	–3	• • • •	Torso, arms, legs

Rating: Armor provides protection against normal attacks and Firearms attacks. The number before the slash is for general armor, while the number after the slash is for ballistic armor.

Strength: If your character's Strength is lower than that required for her armor, reduce her Brawl and Weaponry dice pools by –1.

Defense: The penalty imposed on your character's Defense when wearing the armor.

Speed: The penalty to your character's Speed when wearing the armor.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the armor.

Coverage: The areas of a character protected by the armor. Wearing a helmet increases the armor's coverage to include a character's head.

* This armor is concealed, either as normal clothing (e.g. biker leathers) or being worn under a jacket or baggy shirt.

Armor-Piercing

Some weapons have an armor piercing quality, usually between 1 and 3. When attacking someone wearing armor, subtract the piercing quality from the target's armor. Subtract from ballistic armor first, then general armor. Armor-piercing attacks in close combat subtract from general armor only.

When shooting at an object — or a person in cover — subtract the piercing quality from the object's Durability.

Injury and Healing

Characters can suffer three types of damage. Fists and feet, along with other kinds of low-impact trauma, deal *bashing* damage. Brass knuckles, knives, and speeding trucks deal *lethal* damage. Kindred take bashing damage from all mundane weapons, because they're less fazed by pain and don't depend on their internal organs.

Some horrifying powers — along with the great banes of the Kindred — deal *aggravated* damage. When something deals aggravated damage directly, it's quite obvious. Flesh bubbles and sloughs away. Foaming pustules taint the victim's flesh. Blackened veins streak out from the site of the injury.

If a mortal's health track is filled with bashing damage, his player must make a reflexive Stamina roll each turn for him to remain conscious. If it fills with lethal damage, then each minute thereafter in which the mortal receives no medical attention — mundane or supernatural — he suffers one more injury. One health box currently marked with an X is upgraded to an asterisk for aggravated damage, from left to right on the character's Health chart. Once all boxes are filled with asterisks, he's dead.

If a vampire's health track is filled with bashing damage, she remains conscious. If it fills with lethal damage, she falls into torpor. If it fills with aggravated damage, she suffers Final Death, and her body rots as though she had died on the date of her Embrace.

Marking Damage

When a character suffers bashing damage, mark it with a slash (/) in the leftmost empty box of his health track.

When a character suffers lethal damage, mark it with a cross (X) in the leftmost box of his health track that doesn't contain lethal or aggravated damage. If you mark over a point of bashing damage, it moves one box to the right.

When a character suffers aggravated damage, mark it with a large asterisk (*) in the leftmost box that doesn't already contain aggravated damage. If you mark over a point of bashing or lethal damage, it all moves one box to the right.

Always mark the most severe injuries at the left of a character's health track, and push any less severe injuries to the right. Characters heal their rightmost health boxes first and progress left.

Example: Persephone has seven dots of Health. She's just taken one point of bashing damage. Her Health boxes look like this:

If she's later stabbed and takes a point of lethal damage, her Health track would be:

If Persephone next suffered a point of aggravated damage, her Health boxes would look like this:

Wound Penalties

As your character takes damage, it impairs her ability to act. When one of her three rightmost Health boxes has damage marked, she suffers a penalty accordingly. Subtract this penalty from every action she performs, including rolling for Initiative, but not including Stamina rolls to stay conscious.

Health Boxes Marked	Penalty
Third-to-last	–1
Second-to-last	–2
Last	–3

Upgrading Damage

If your character's Health track is already full of bashing damage, any further bashing or lethal damage upgrades the leftmost point of bashing damage to lethal — turn one of the slashes into a cross.

If your character's health track is full of lethal damage, any further damage upgrades an existing point of lethal damage to aggravated. Turn the leftmost X into an asterisk.

When a mortal's rightmost Health box has bashing damage marked in it, she has to make a Stamina roll each turn or fall unconscious. If it has lethal damage, she takes another point of damage each minute (upgrading existing lethal damage to aggravated) until she receives medical attention.

Healing

Characters need time to heal once they've been beaten to a pulp. Kindred use their Vitae to return their bodies to the state of their Embrace, but mortals rely on time and medical care to set broken bones and heal bullet wounds. This is a double-edged sword: Kindred can use stolen blood to heal their wounds, but can't be helped by time or medicine.

Mortal characters heal their rightmost health box at the following rate. The healing time is enough for the wound to fully recover — lethal damage doesn't "downgrade" into bashing. Normally, a character can heal without medical attention, though use of the Medicine Skill will doubtless help him recover. The only exception is if a mortal character has all her Health boxes full of lethal damage — she's bleeding out. She can't recover from that without urgent medical attention and emergency surgery.

Wounds recover at the following rates.

Bashing: One point per 15 minutes.

Lethal: One point per two days.

Aggravated: One point per week.

Example: After a scuffle with an off-duty cop, Persephone's out of harm's way for now. She isn't looking for another fight.

Her health track is the same as it was at the end of the fight.

Her rightmost wounds heal first. Each point of bashing damage takes 15 minutes to heal. Her lethal damage then heals over the course of the next two days. Finally, her aggravated wound heals over the course of the next week. In all, it's taken a little over a week and two days for her to recover from her injuries.

Objects

Objects, such as lead pipes, walls, or cars, in the Storytelling System have three traits: Durability, Size, and Structure. Mostly, these relate to how easy the object is to destroy.

Durability: How hard the object is to damage. Subtract Durability from any damage dealt to the object. Durability has no effect against attacks that deal aggravated damage.

Durability	Material
1	Wood, hard plastic, thick glass
2	Stone, aluminum
3	Steel, iron
+1	per reinforced layer

Size: How large the object is. Objects smaller than Size 1 can fit entirely in a person's palm.

Size	Object
1	Pistol
2	Crowbar, sawn-off shotgun
3	Assault rifle
5	Door
10	Sports car
15	SUV

Structure: An object's Structure is equivalent to its Health and equals its Durability + Size. Each point of damage removes a point of Structure. Once it's taken more damage than it has Durability, anyone using the object suffers a –1 die penalty. When its Structure hits 0, the object is destroyed. Objects do not differentiate between bashing and lethal damage, and can be repaired with an appropriate Craft roll.

Disease

Outside of combat, a character who suffers from a disease suffers damage over a period of time. Resisting the damage inflicted by a disease requires a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. This roll is not contested but it is modified by the severity of the disease. Only one success is necessary to avoid damage each time.

Some diseases are the kind that people don't heal from. A character's cancer could go into remission, or he can hold his HIV back with medication, but time alone won't cure them. The Storyteller should set a benchmark of how many rolls the character has to succeed at in a row for the disease to go into remission. Medical treatment can offset any penalties to the Stamina + Resolve roll applied by the disease — but might inflict penalties on other rolls, as sometimes the cure is almost as bad as the disease.

Drugs

A character who has taken drugs, willingly or not, must fight off the effects of the drug. Resisting the effects requires a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. This roll is not contested but it is modified by the potency of the drug ingested. Only one success is necessary for a character to regain her senses. In the case of some drugs, this roll must be made once per hour, once per scene — or even once per turn, in the case of strong hallucinogens or narcotics.

Overdose

Characters who overdose on drugs treat the drug like a poison, with a Toxicity somewhere between 3 and 7. The overdose deals damage once per hour until the drug has run its course — if a character's spent 8 hours drinking, then the poison takes another 8 hours to fade, with Toxicity between 3 (beer or wine) to 5 (rubbing alcohol). A character who injects stronger heroin than expected takes damage for (8 – Stamina) hours, with Toxicity 7.

Extreme Environments

The human body is not conditioned to withstand extreme heat, cold, air pressure, and other weather. These harsh conditions hinder and endanger unprepared characters. When exposed to a harsh environment, the Storyteller assigns a level to the environment, using the chart below as a guideline. Survival gear can reduce the effective environment level.

While characters are exposed to these conditions, they suffer the level of the environment as a penalty to all actions. After a number of hours equal to the character's Stamina, he takes bashing damage equal to the environment's level once per hour. In the case of a Level 3 exposure, the damage is lethal instead of bashing. Fourth level environments cause lethal damage each *turn* after a number of turns equal to the character's Stamina.

Any damage caused by levels 2-4 exposure leaves lasting marks, scars, and tissue damage. Damage caused by extreme environments cannot be healed until the character is back in a safe environment.

Environment Levels

Level	Example Environs
1	Safe environment
2	Light snow, heavy storms; too cold to sleep safely; air pressure causes shortness of breath; sweltering sun can cause first-degree burns
3	Heavy snow; cold causes physical pain and potential hypothermia; sun quickly causes first degree burns, can cause second degree burns with time; minor radiation poisoning
4	Desert exposure; heat rapidly causing second-degree burns; moderate radiation exposure
5	Desert sandstorm, severe hurricane, tornado, tsunami

Poison

Outside of combat, a character who is the victim of a poison or toxin suffers lethal damage over a period of time equal to the poison's Toxicity. Some substances deal this damage only once. Others deal this damage once per turn or once per hour until purged — or until the poison has run its course. To resist the damage, make a reflexive Stamina + Resolve – Toxicity roll. Each success reduces the damage taken by 1. This roll must be made every time the poison deals damage unless the character stops fighting and gives in.

Equipment

Here are some examples of the equipment you can buy with Resources.

Equipment, tools, and technology help to solve problems. Having the right tool for the job can mean the difference between life and death — or in the World of Darkness, the difference between life and a fate worse than death. This list is not all-inclusive, but features many of the tools characters in the World of Darkness might have at their disposal.

Equipment is divided up by the Skills they typically assist with. Mental Equipment typically assists with Mental Skills, for example. As well, Supernatural Equipment deals with the paranormal, and may not be suitable for every chronicle. Lastly, Bygones are items that characters cannot procure easily or recreate. They're unique items that deal with the otherworldly.

Availability and Procurement

The dot cost of a piece of equipment reflects directly on the Resources cost if your character wishes to purchase it (or the components, for some things). It also reflects the level of Allies or other Social Merit required in order to find the item and the Skill level required to procure it with a single dice roll. For example, if a Party Invitation has Cost •••, a character with Larceny •• should not be able to find and steal the item without a roll, but a character with Politics •••• might be able to get one by virtue of saying the right words to the right organization. If your character wishes to obtain higher Availability items with their Skills, it requires a deeper effort.

Size, Durability, and Structure

These are guidelines that represent common, standard examples of the items in question. For most items, characters could procure better examples at a higher Availability rating.

Dice Bonuses

Most equipment offers a bonus to dice rolls pertaining to its use. Multiple items can influence a given roll, but a roll should not receive more than a +5 bonus.

Services

In addition to the fully-fleshed equipment in this chapter, characters may look for services from other characters. Below is a list of some things characters may pursue. Each has an Availability rating that works identically to other equipment. This can act as a foundation for what certain levels of Allies, Status, and other Social Merits might accomplish. Most are sorted by Skills to reflect their general uses. Most include a die bonus as well. Assume most services take a week to procure at the listed Availability levels. Raise Availability by one to make that a day instead.

Note that some services listed could be highly illegal and should be limited in access to appropriate Merits. In many cases, illegal services only offer negligible die bonuses. Their real advantage comes from a layer of separation from legal authorities.

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
ACADEMICS		
Historical specialist consulting	• • •	+3
Research assistance from grad students	• •	+2
Translation of a dead language	• • •	+2
COMPUTER		
Custom phone application	• • •	+2
Digital image enhancement	• •	+3
Graphic design/forgery	• •	+2
CRAFTS		
Antiquities restoration	• • •	+2
Auto repair	• •	+3
Custom equipment modifications	• • •	+2
INVESTIGATION		
Consultation on evidence	• • •	+3
Investigative photography	• • •	+2
Private investigation/ background check	• •	+2
MEDICINE		
Black market surgeon	• • • •	+3
Expert medical witness	• • • •	+2
Rush plastic surgery	• • • •	+2
OCCULT		
Esoteric consultant/sage	• • • •	+3
Exorcist	• • •	+2
Protective amulets or wards	• • • •	+1
POLITICS		
Campaign assistant	• • •	+3
Cutting red tape (read: bribe)	• • •	+2
Spin doctor	• • •	+2
SCIENCE		
Fact-checking	• •	+3
Falsifying research/coverup	• • •	+2
Lab access	• •	+2

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
ATHLETICS		
Meditative assistance	• • •	+2
Personal trainer	• • •	+3
Throwing an a thletic competition	• • • •	+4
BRAWL		
Arrange underground boxing ring	• • •	+2
Bodyguard service	• • •	+3
Self-defense classes	•	+1
DRIVE		
Chauffer	• •	+2
Stunt performance/ mock crash	• • •	+3
Tour bus rental	• • • •	+2
FIREARMS		
Antique gun repair	• • •	+2
Cover fire from gangs	• • •	+3
Procuring smuggled military arms	• • • •	+2
LARCENY		
Breaking and entering	• • •	+2
Security consulting	• • •	+2
Stealing a protected relic	• • • •	+3
STEALTH		
Strategic distraction	• • •	+3
Tailing a suspect	• • •	+2
Targeted vandalism	• •	+2
SURVIVAL		
Field dress and preserve an animal	• • •	+1
Trail guide	• •	+3
Weatherproof a shelter	• •	+2
WEAPONRY		
Properly forged sword	• • •	+2
Identify wound from obscure weapon	• • •	+2
Training in archaic warfare	• • •	+2

Services (continued)

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
ANIMAL KEN		
Buy a trained animal	•••	+2
Identify animal droppings	••	+1
Rule out natural causes of death	•••	+2
EMPATHY		
"Good cop" interrogator	•••	+2
Neutral arbitrator	•••	+2
Therapy session	••	+1
EXPRESSION		
Document forgery	•••	+3
Ghostwriting	••	+2
Motivational speech	•••	+1
Intimidation		
Anti-interrogation training	••••	+3
"Bad cop" interrogator	•••	+2
Deprogramming therapy	•••	+2

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
PERSUASION		
Defense attorney	•••	+3
Hostage negotiator	••••	+3
Pickup artist	•••	+2
Socialize		
Catering	••• or ••••	+1 or +2
Elocution consulting	•••	+1
Escort	•••	+2
STREETWISE		
Arrange a rave or block party	•••	+2
Black market access	••	+2
Find crash space	••	+1
Smuggling contraband	•••	+1
SUBTERFUGE		
Amateur Actor/Actress	••	+2
Con artistry	•••	+2
Gambling ringer	•••	+2

Game Effect

A character with the item can use these Effects. Any restrictions, costs, or parameters are listed individually.

Mental Equipment

Mental equipment is all but essential for many character types. Mental Skills without the proper tools are almost useless in most cases. A doctor without medicine is hardly capable of healing, and an auto mechanic without a toolbox couldn't change some minor belts on a car.

Automotive Tools

Basic (Kit): Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability •

Advanced (Garage): Die Bonus +2, Availability •

Effect: Automotive tools are a necessity for all but the simplest automobile repairs. Even then, a fully stocked garage with heavy equipment is required for more involved tasks such as engine or transmission replacement. If time is not a factor, any trained character with a Crafts Automotive Specialty can repair a vehicle's mundane issues without rolls. Complex modifications and enhancements or massive damage always requires a greater effort (an extended Intelligence + Crafts roll) to work out.

Cache

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 2, Size 1–5, Structure 5, Availability • to •••

Effect: A cache is a hidden and defensible place for items, usually weapons. It keeps important items from prying eyes. A cache can never be more than half the Size of its parent object. For example, a Size 6 car can support no larger than a Size 3 cache. A given cache can hold two items of its Size and any reasonable number of smaller-sized items. Its Availability determines its die bonus, which both adds to concealment rolls and subtracts from rolls to find the items within.

Communications Headset

Die Bonus +2, Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability ••

Effect: Communications headsets keep characters in constant contact. Different varieties works over different distances, but most commercial models works over about 200 feet. A common alternative is a conference call between cellular phones and Bluetooth headsets. If the users have practiced using their headsets together, they gain the die bonus on any coordinated efforts. In the case of a teamwork action, the die bonus only applies to the final roll. If the users are unpracticed, the bonus falls to +1 and actors must make reflexive Wits + Composure rolls to participate successfully.

Any heavy objects can obstruct a headset's signal. Anything obstructing with Durability higher than 3 requires listeners to make a Wits + Composure roll to understand shared messages. Levy a –1 penalty for each point of Durability over 4.

Crime Scene Kit

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A crime scene (or CSI) kit is a toolbox full of investigative aids such as magnifiers, fingerprinting dust, cameras, tape, testing chemicals, and sample bags. While the kits offer a die bonus to Investigation rolls, the more important benefit of the CSI kit is that it allows evidence to be moved and digested elsewhere. Properly applied, it allows investigators to do the bulk of their work off-site and at their own pace.

Code Kit

Die Bonus +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: A code kit is a series of tools created for the purpose of making and interpreting a code for a specific audience. A common example is a book code, where a page, paragraph, and word from a certain book are used as the foundation for a cypher. This keeps any uninformed eyes off the intended message. In the case of a book code, a book is often chosen that all message recipients can access easily. This guarantees that the code never has to travel with the code key.

A successfully designed cypher is difficult to break. The die bonus acts as a penalty to any rolls to crack the code without the necessary reference key.

Cracking Software

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A, Availability •••

Effect: Crappy software's a dime a dozen. Good, reliable cracking software is hard to come by. With solid software, a hacker can force passwords, breach firewalls, and otherwise make a nuisance of herself in computer systems. Beyond the dice pool modification, the benefit such software offers is a sort of buffer between the hacker and security. Any efforts to track the hacker takes two steps; one to identify the software, then one to trace it back to the source. Functionally this means two rolls on behalf of the security personnel, with an opportunity for the hacker to withdraw before detection.

Digital Recorder

Die Bonus +1 or +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability • or ••

Effect: In the last decade, digital audio recorders have gotten smaller, more effective, and more affordable. Now, any student can carry a coin-sized device that would have put intelligence agencies of the 1980s to shame. The cheaper model of recorder gives its +1 bonus to any rolls to catch words or sounds. The bonus also applies to concealment rolls. The more expensive model gives +2. With an Intelligence + Computer (with die bonus), a character can contest any rolls to obscure discussion or mask noises.

Duct Tape

Die Bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Duct tape has as many uses as one can think of, and just as many you never would. It can reinforce barricades, stabilize weapon handles, bind prisoners, repair broken pipes, and so much more. In most cases, duct tape can offer a +1 bonus to Crafts-related rolls. Alternatively, it can add a point of Durability to almost anything. If used as a restraint, rolls to break free suffer a –3 penalty, and must overcome the duct tape's Structure.

First Aid Kit

Die Bonus 0 or +1, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability • or ••

Effect: A first aid kit contains all the necessary supplies to stabilize an injury and stop wounds from getting worse until the victim can find proper treatment. The one-dot version of the first aid kit does not offer a die bonus, it simply allows for treatment. The two-dot version offers a +1 to treatment rolls due to superior supplies.

Flashlight

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3, Availability •

Effect: In a world of darkness, a flashlight can be a person's best friend. It generally does what it's supposed to; it helps cut a path through the unknown. Its die bonus subtracts from any penalties due to darkness, and adds to any rolls to search in the dark. A good flashlight can serve as a club in a pinch. As well, it can blind an unfortunate subject. A Dexterity + Athletics roll, subtracting an informed opponent's Defense, will put the beam where it needs to be. The victim's player may make a contested Stamina roll. If your character scores more successes than the subject, they're blinded for one turn. Victims with especially acute senses are blinded for two turns.

Glowstick

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Glowsticks use a chemical mixture to summon forth enough light to see in a small area. Most commercial glowsticks last a couple of hours; police and other professional varieties can last twelve. Because they're small, airtight containers, they serve the added benefit of being useful underwater or in the

rain. Functionally, they work the same as a flashlight. However, they cannot be used to blind a target, since their soft glow is far less obtrusive than a flashlight's beam. They're also very conveniently worn, which can serve strategic purposes for a group operating in low-light conditions. A member will not go missing without being noticed so long as they have a glowing neon bar on their belt.

GPS Tracker

Die Bonus +3, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: With the advent of the modern cellular phone, most modern people have a GPS-enabled device on their person at any given time. With a bit of know-how, and access to someone's phone, your character can track their every move (provided those moves are not in caves, tunnels, or sewer systems). Some characters will trade GPS data in case one of the group becomes lost or if they have to follow someone without notice. Planting a phone on an unwitting subject can serve as a highly effective tracking device.

Keylogging Software

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A, Availability ••

Effect: Keylogging software does exactly one thing: It logs keystrokes on a computer. This is usually done to record incriminating data or passwords. Usually, keylogging software is coupled with software to transmit the data once captured. The challenge for the would-be intruder is installing the software. Email scams are an unreliable way to get onto a specific computer, but could fool one member of a large organization. A thumb drive is very effective, but requires direct, physical access to the recipient computer. The software's die bonus offers an advantage to breach a network or to find important data.

Luminol

Die Bonus +2, Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Luminol is a chemical that reacts to certain metals in human blood and other bodily fluids. The reaction causes a faint neon glow for about thirty seconds, visible in the dark. It comes in an aerosol can and will seek out faint traces, even after a thorough cleaning. In addition to showing the exact locations of violent crimes, luminol can assist in tracking wounded people and animals. Luminol's die bonus applies to any roll to track by the fluid traces, or to piece together the details of a crime scene.

Multi-Tool

Die Bonus +1, Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: Sometimes, the need for mobility doesn't allow for your character to carry around a full tool kit. In these cases, a multi-tool can be a lifesaver. From sawing to stripping wires, to opening bottles, to filing off serial numbers, a multi-tool can do the job in a pinch. The multi-tool offers a negligible die bonus on numerous Crafts and other assorted tasks, and most importantly, allows for rolls when sometimes they couldn't be made for lack of proper equipment. While not made for use as a weapon, it can serve as one causing 0 lethal, but suffering a –1 penalty to hit.

Personal Computer

Die Bonus +1 to +4, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability • to ••••

Effect: In the developed world, almost every household has access to a personal computer. They vary in size, functionality, and price, from decade-old models that can barely surf the web to high-end machines that can process gigabytes of data per second. In today's world, many lives revolve around computers. For some people, their entire careers and personal lives exist within digital space. The Availability of the computer determines its die bonus.

Smartphones

Die Bonus +1 to +2, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability • to •••

Effect: By themselves, smartphones can make calls, send text messages and emails, take pictures, maintain an agenda, and search the web. With a bit of software, the Smartphone becomes the multi-tool of the electronic age. While it cannot accomplish the raw computing power of a full-sized personal computer, higher-end smartphones can manage almost all the same tasks with ease.

Most major gadgets have been successfully replicated with smartphone applications. GPS scanning and tracking are staples of the amateur investigator. Facial recognition software finds a face in a crowd with relative accuracy. They can photograph and transcribe text, then translate ancient tomes. They can store a library's worth of text and allow for automated searches. They offer directions with photographic assistance. The value of a mindless video game on a stakeout is often underestimated.

Special Effects

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 5, Structure 3, Availability •••

Effect: Special effects is a catch-all term for the tricks and chicanery used by amusement parks and stage magicians to fool witnesses. A character may use these as a distraction or a defense. For example, the Pepper's Ghost illusion is relatively easy to set up with the right tools. It uses a large mirror and a sheet of glass, along with a model and a light source. It projects an illusion of the model's reflection, and makes witnesses see a "ghost."

In addition to the die bonus, special effects generally fool their audience at first. A witness will fall for the trick, unless given good reason to be suspicious. This can waste valuable time or lead the witness into a trap.

Surveillance Equipment

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability •••

Effect: Standard surveillance equipment usually consists of motion detectors, cameras, and monitors. High-end versions may include infrared heat sensors, barometric scanners, or even more complex gear. Either way, the point of surveillance equipment is to survey, detect, and otherwise track who enters or leaves a location. Often, this also means locking down breached zones. Unless someone knows surveillance equipment exists and actively avoids it, his presence is noticed and recorded. If he tries to avoid it, contest his Dexterity + Stealth against the installing technician's Intelligence + Computer or Intelligence + Crafts (for digital and analog systems, respectively). The technician may add the equipment's die bonus. If the intruder scores more successes, he remains unnoticed. Otherwise, he goes on record.

Survival Gear

Die Bonus +1 or +2, Durability 2, Size 2 or 3, Structure 3, Availability • or •••

Effect: Survival gear is the catch-all term for the various kits of equipment needed to survive in harsh environments. This could encompass tents, canned foodstuff, raingear, sleeping bags, sterile water, or any of the various things a person can use to survive the world outside their cushy homes. They come in two levels: a basic level and an advanced level. The basic level offers +1 and subtracts one from the effective level of environment, (see Extreme Environments, p.184), while the advanced offers +2 and subtracts two from the effective environment level. This does not help with a level 4 environment. A resourceful character can jury rig or scavenge the necessary supplies for a basic survival gear, but an advanced set of gear requires very specialized equipment. Basic survival gear can assist with most any environment, but advanced survival gear must be catered to one particular type of environment.

Talcum Powder

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size 1, Structure N/A, Availability •

Effect: Talcum powder can keep a baby's bottom from getting diaper rash, but it can also show the presence of the unseen, and show evidence of intrusion if placed at a portal of entry. If dusted with talcum powder, a character must achieve five successes on a Dexterity + Stealth roll to enter without a trace. Fewer successes will only obscure the specifics of their feet and hands. Some paranormal investigators use talcum powder as a way to give ghosts and other invisible entities a method for communication.

Ultraviolet Ink

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Ultraviolet Ink, or invisible ink as it's commonly called, is an outstanding way to relay messages in plain sight. Since the naked eye cannot perceive the ink without an ultraviolet light, a character can scrawl messages for other recipients in-the-know. It also allows for secretive information to be passed around through mundane channels. If someone's being surveyed by nefarious forces, an ultraviolet message scribbled on a throwaway magazine is much easier to get into their home unmolested than, say, a suspicious letter slid through their doorframe. If you need to mark a path to a secret hiding place, what better way to conceal the guiding marks?

Physical Equipment

Physical equipment enhances the use of Physical Skills. This often means the use of simple and complex machines to make things easier, or simple tricks to heighten the effectiveness of a character's inherent talents.

Battering Ram

Die Bonus +4, Durability 3, Size 4, Structure 8, Availability ••

Effect: The purpose of the battering ram is to bring down doors and other barricades with direct, focused force. A battering ram uses a Teamwork action (see the World of Darkness Rulebook, p. 134), allowing up to four participants. The primary actor adds the ram's die bonus to her roll. A ram ignores two points of Durability.

Bear Trap

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5, Availability ••

Effect: A bear trap is a large metal contraption that looks something like a set of deadly jaws. For this reason, they're also commonly called jaw traps. When a human or large animal steps into the bear trap, it snaps shut on their leg. Due to the serrated edges on the trap, this can cause massive bleeding or even broken bones.

The jaw trap causes 3L damage and ignores two points of armor or Durability. A character trapped in the jaws can attempt to escape as an instant action. Doing so requires a Strength + Stamina roll, with the trap's die bonus as a penalty due to the distracting pain and the strength of the jaws. Failure on this roll causes another point of lethal damage as the jaw digs in

further. Creatures without opposable thumbs cannot escape this way and must rip themselves free.

Any rolls to hide a bear trap suffer its die bonus as a penalty. They're difficult to hide due to their awkward shape and weight.

Caltrops

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: Caltrops are small, pointed pieces of metal, arranged in such a way that one point is always facing upward. This makes walking (or driving) through a patch of caltrops inconvenient and painful. These traits assume enough caltrops to fill a doorway or other narrow corridor.

Moving through caltrops causes one point of lethal damage. Caltrops ignore a point of armor or Durability. To move through safely, a Dexterity + Athletics roll is required with the caltrops' die bonus applied as a penalty to the roll. A character may only move half Speed (rounded down) while moving safely through caltrops.

A character may hide caltrops, although it is difficult. A Wits + Larceny –3 roll is required, the caltrops' die bonus does not apply to this roll.

Camouflage Clothing

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: Camouflage clothing allows its wearer to blend in with her surroundings enough for the untrained eye to pass over. Effective camouflage must be catered to the environment; greens and browns in the woodlands, shades of grey in an urban area. Proper camouflage adds its bonus to rolls to remain unnoticed.

Climbing Gear

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: Climbing gear includes ropes, pulleys, handles, carabiners, hooks, and other assorted tools for scaling things. They serve a twofold purpose. First, they add their die bonus to the normal Strength + Athletics rolls for climbing. Second, if properly applied (with a Wits + Athletics roll), they prevent a character from falling more than ten feet at a time.

Crowbar

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: A crowbar is a curved piece of steel used to pry open shipping pallets, jammed doors, and other things a normal person would be incapable of doing by hand. It adds to any dice rolls used to establish leverage. When prying things open, it also allows your character to ignore two points of Durability on the lock or barricade. Additionally, a crowbar can be used as a weapon (see p. 180).

Firearm Suppressor

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A firearm suppressor is popularly and misleadingly referred to as a silencer in cinema and other media. It's a cylinder placed on the end of a gun barrel that changes and lightens the sound of a shot. A suppressor delivers many minor benefits, but two noteworthy advantages: short-range accuracy and concealment.

Increased Accuracy: A suppressed firearm travels through a longer barrel and the muzzle crown evens the expulsion of hot gasses that can slightly affect trajectory. In game terms, reduce a suppressed gun's damage rating by 1 due to the bullet's subsonic flight, but increase the attack dice pool by 2 when firing at short range.

Position Concealer: The sound changes dramatically, to the point where many people do not recognize the sound as that of a gunshot and are often unable to place where the lower tone came from. The muzzle flash is also reduced dramatically with a suppressor, helping to conceal a shooter's position. A character trying to identify a suppressed shot must roll Wits + Firearms – 2. Any character searching for the shooter using the gun's tells suffers a –2 penalty.

Gas Mask

Die Bonus +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: A gas mask is a filtration device placed over the face that defends against noxious chemicals in the air. With a working gas mask, a character can stand minor toxins for as long as he needs, whereas other characters might take damage over time or require rolls to remain conscious. Powerful toxins may still require rolls. A gas mask adds five dice to these rolls.

Handcuffs

Die Bonus +2, Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: A solid pair of steel handcuffs is made to restrain even a remarkably strong person. Applying handcuffs to an unwilling combatant is an additional option in a grapple. Roll Strength + Brawl – the opponent's Strength. Success means the handcuffs are where they need to be.

Breaking out of successfully applied handcuffs requires a Strength + Stamina – 4 roll. Each success on the roll reduces the Structure of the cuffs by 1. Cuffs reduced to 0 Structure snap open. Each attempt to escape causes 1 point of bashing damage.

A character may also try to finagle their hands out of the cuffs. This requires a Dexterity + Athletics – 4 roll. Success allows for an escape, and causes one point of bashing damage. Failure on this roll causes one point of lethal damage, as the thumb jerks out of socket.

Attempting to do anything requiring manual dexterity while cuffed incurs a –4 penalty, or –2 if the hands are cuffed in front. Witnesses are unlikely to behave favorably around a cuffed character, Social rolls against strangers incur a –3 penalty.

Many police forces and security companies now prefer heavy duty plastic zip ties in place of handcuffs. While they're slightly less durable (Durability 3), they incur a –5 penalty from behind or –3 from the front, because they can be far tighter on the wrists. They can also be cut free.

Lockpicking Kit

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A lockpicking kit consists of picks, tools, and rods for manipulating tumblers and opening locks. A good kit contains a wide array of tools to all but guarantee intrusion of an analog lock. With such a kit and at least a dot of Larceny, a character can pick a lock without a roll if time is not an issue. If time is an issue, the die bonus applies to the Dexterity + Larceny rolls. At Availability •, a character may procure a portable lockpick. It has Size 1, Structure 1, and is far more concealable. However, it only offers a +1 bonus and doesn't allow for picking without rolls since the kit realistically may not have the right tools for a given job.

A lockpicking kit only works on mechanical locks. Digital locks require more specific hacking and code prediction. A character may procure a digital lockpick at Availability •••, but typically only works on one type of lock, such as the keycard locks used in hotels. Digital lockpicks can be Size 2, or Size 1 if crafted as an extension of a laptop computer or smartphone.

Mace (Pepper Spray)

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Pepper spray, or "mace" as it's commonly called, is a blend of chemicals (mostly capsaicin, the "hot" part of a chili) in a small spray can, designed to debilitate threats. Civilians use these devices in self-defense; police use them to subdue unruly criminals. Use of pepper spray requires a Dexterity + Athletics, or Dexterity + Firearms roll. Each yard is a range category, so one yard is short range, two yards is medium, three yards is

long range. An opponent's Defense applies, but in normal wind conditions, the die bonus applies to the roll.

Upon the first attack, the victim sis stunned. An opponent struck suffers a –5 penalty to all actions. This penalty can be reduced by one for every turn spent rinsing the eyes with water. Commercial chemicals designed to clean the eyes will fully remove the penalty after a turn.

Rope

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Rope is one of the oldest tools known to humankind. It's never left prominent use because of its simple and efficient utility. A good rope adds its die bonus to relevant Crafts rolls and anywhere else it would assist. As a binding agent, it resists breaking with a Durability (or effective Strength) equal to its user's Crafts score, due to the multiplicative effect of solid knots. An applicable Specialty adds one to the user's Crafts score for this purpose. Some interrogators, shibari fetishists, and boy scouts alike specialize in remarkable knot-tying, potentially rendering subjects completely and hopelessly immobile.

Stun Gun

Die Bonus 0, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •, ••, or •••

Effect: A stun gun is designed to deliver an overwhelming amount of electricity to an assailant in order to shut down her muscles and send her to the ground. As a defensive item, this gives the would-be victim time to run or get help. As an offensive item, it leaves the victim ready for restraint or worse.

These devices come in two varieties (hand-held and ranged) and three intensities (1–3, corresponding to their Availabilities). The hand-held model has live leads on the edge of a handle and can be used as many as fifty times on one battery charge. The ranged model fires small wired darts up to fifteen feet away. While the ranged model has similar battery life, it uses a compressed air cartridge that requires replacement after each shot.

Use of a handheld stun gun requires a Dexterity + Weaponry roll, penalized by the victim's Defense. The ranged model uses Dexterity + Firearms, also penalized by the victim's Defense. On a successful hit with either, the victim takes one point of lethal damage. The successes subtract from the victim's next dice pool. With the ranged version, the darts remain in the victim's body, adding three successes automatically each turn. They can be removed with a Strength + Stamina roll, with the initial successes penalizing the action. With the hand-held version, the attacker can attempt to maintain the shock, which takes a Strength + Weaponry, penalized by the greater of the opponent's Strength or Defense. Once the accumulated successes exceed the victim's Size, the victim collapses in neuro-muscular incapacitation. Once the shock ends, this lasts for (10 – victim's Stamina) in turns.

Social Equipment

Social actions deal with people. Social Equipment offers tools for leverage, influence, and manipulation.

Cash

Die Bonus +1 to +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability • to •••••

Effect: This represents a wad of cash, a briefcase of money, an offshore bank account number, or some other lump sum. It can't be reflected in the Resources Merit since it's not a regular income. However, it can be expended to offer a bonus equivalent to its Availability on any social roll where a bribe could benefit. As well, it can be expended to purchase one item of equal Availability. For more complex uses, consider it a single month's allotment of the same Resources.

Disguise

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 1, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability • to •••

Effect: A good disguise goes a long way to help fit in with a strange group or go unnoticed in a crowd where one doesn't belong. Properly costumed for a situation, no rolls are required to blend into the crowd. Any rolls to actively detect the outsider suffer a penalty equal to the die bonus of the disguise; the disguised character also gains the bonus to remain hidden.

With a disguise, a character can emulate the first dot of a single Social Merit that would make sense within the scope of the scene. For example, it doesn't make money appear from thin air, but it would allow a character to get their drinks on a nonexistent tab, reflecting Resources •. This requires a Composure + Subterfuge to maintain in the face of anyone in the know, contested by the witness's Wits + Subterfuge. The die bonus of the disguise applies to the liar, but does not affect the witness.

Fashion

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability • to •••••

Effect: Never underestimate the value of high fashion. Like a disguise, fashionable clothing allows a character to fit in. However, the point of fashion is to draw attention, not to fade into the crowd. As opposed to anonymity, fashion means being noticed. Note that the clothing chosen must be appropriate to the setting. Punk chic will not work at a Senator's fundraiser, for example. When improperly dressed, the die bonus applies as a penalty to all Social Skill rolls.

The die bonus for Fashion is equal to half the Availability, rounded up.

Conditions

Conditions represent ways in which the story has affected your character, and what she can do to move past those events. Players don't buy Conditions, events in the game apply them and they remain until certain *resolution* criteria are met. A character can't have more than one copy of the same condition unless each applies to a distinctly different thing — for example you may be Delusional about both spiders crawling under your skin and your friends plotting to kill you. You'd have to resolve each independently.

Characters can gain Conditions as a result of various factors. Disciplines inflict a number of Conditions, most of them bad for the victim. A player can also choose to take a Condition relevant to the situation as a result of an exceptional success, and breaking points can cause Conditions as your character deals with them. Sometimes, the Storyteller will inflict Conditions based on the circumstances of the story.

The listed resolutions for each Condition are the most common ways to end its effects; other actions may also resolve it if they would reasonably cause the Condition's effects to end. Work with the Storyteller to determine Condition resolution. When your character resolves a Condition, take a Beat. If a Condition has a natural time limit and then fades away, don't take a Beat — just waiting the Condition out isn't enough to count as resolving it.

Some Conditions are marked as Persistent. These Conditions typically last for a long time, and can only be resolved permanently with a specific and impressive effort. Once per game session, a character can gain a Beat when a Persistent Condition impacts her life.

Improvised Conditions

Storytellers shouldn't feel limited by the list of Conditions in the Appendix (p. 301). As a rough guideline, a Condition typically consists of a modifier between +2 and –2 dice to a certain type of action, or to any action taken with a certain motivation. A Condition is removed when the character's done something significant to act on it, or when she addresses the original source. The sample Conditions later in this book have examples of how to resolve them, but you can also resolve them after other events if it makes sense in the story.

If play would bog down as you search for the right Condition, just improvise one and keep things going.

Lingering Conditions

Conditions are designed as reminders that events that happened earlier in the story have repercussions later. Usually, Chekhov's rifle applies — if you put the Condition on stage, it should fire by the end. But storytelling games are slippery things, and sometimes a story thread represented by a Condition is better to drop for the sake of the ongoing narrative.

For example, an emotional state like Wanton might no longer be relevant to events in the game because a long time has passed, or it might have been the result of a conflict with a character you don't care about anymore. In those cases, it's perfectly fine to just cross off the Condition. We recommend awarding a Beat as if resolving it, but that's at the Storyteller's discretion.

We recommend doing this sparingly, but bottom line: If a Condition doesn't feel relevant to the story anymore, just let it go.

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD

PART V

Edie

Jefe was the one who warned us. After we'd stumbled into the dusty mountain enclave, but before we realized we'd have to leg it. The church services were new, but a coterie "passing through" is suspicious enough without us asking nosy questions about how...insular the nightlife was. Best to lay low a few nights in this hospitable village and be on our way before someone showed up on our doorstep with leaflets about the good word. The first night was quiet, if weird. A quartet of licks was waiting stoically outside our classy "We Rent By the Hour" motel, making awkward small talk and burning a hole in the back of my head while I smoked out on the walkway. Our watchers seemed relieved when we finally approached them, even though Katy usually scares the crap out of everyone. The town was dead when Jefe drove through, though. No sound but his motor, no lights but in that reclaimed clapboard church. Just miles of dustless, silent road, lit only by the eyes of the fat, sleepy owls nestled in the eaves of every home.

The second night, a different four; looking more bored than scared, unwilling to even maintain the pretense of conversation with one another. The motel owner waived our bill and told us to stay as long as we'd like. We, of course, bolted immediately. But we ran out of gas long before we ran out of road, always leading back to that motel. The owner waved politely at us as we dragged our car back into the parking lot, as though he hadn't seen us speed past this place ten or fifteen times, and we tentatively stepped back into "our" room. A kid (maybe his)

was sitting on one of the beds, fiddling with his name tag, looking too tired to be scared anymore.

"Having dined at Sister Abigail's table, you must ask permission to leave it." He droned and slurred a bit, like he was repeating the directions to the cafeteria for the hundredth time. "You can speak to her directly at The Blood of the Lamb congregation, she's at nearly every weeknight gathering." He startled slightly, staggering up through his daze as though he were only suddenly noticing he was here, with us, and very alone. "Oh jeez, you guys. You shouldn't try to just leave like that! The Sister can get pretty angry at your kind for wandering in and out."

"Nice. You're fucking with us because we got lost in your creepy little desert town in the ass-end of nowhere. Well done, kid whose neck I'm going to snap." Katy took ghost stories a little personally. She had napped most of the drive, though. She hadn't seen the road just melt out from under us like it had never been there; all high buzzing grass and lightless desert plains.

Jefe's a little sweeter, but not much. "I don't take orders. If your prince wants to speak with us, she clearly knows where to find us. Now tell me everything about her, and if you're lucky I won't make you pull our car to the highway with what's left of your teeth."

"Well, I guess it started when Pastor David shot that big old barn owl living in the chapel tower. When he hung himself later that week, his sister came to town to look after us all."

MIKE

chapter five
The Parliament of Owls

"If evil spirits could perceive that they were associated with man, and yet that they were spirits separate from him, and if they could flow in into the things of his body, they would attempt by a thousand means to destroy him; for they hate man with a deadly hatred."

— J. Sheridan Le Fanu, "Green Tea"

They've always been here.

Ever since humanity learned to be afraid of the dark, it has been plagued by shadow beings jealously hungering for life. The Kindred hear stories of corpses clawing their way out of graves, tearing flesh and thirsting for blood; and the younger and more foolish among them imagine that they're stories about draugr, or revenants, or debased Kindred. The Kindred are the only true vampires. The fiends, the corpse-stealing smoke-shadows, don't exist.

Those Kindred are wrong. And if the Strix ever hear them voice such opinions, they might just make an example of them.

The Strix are counterparts, shadows, and — according to old legends from the nights of the Camarilla — *relatives* of the Kindred. Where vampires are people brought back from death by the power of the Embrace, hungering for blood as their connection to Humanity fades, the Strix were never human. Shades of darkness and omens of doom, they steal life without needing the medium of blood, and force their shadowy forms into the bodies of the dead to experience the feelings of flesh. They are the monstrous vampires of legend, the ones with no Humanity but not given over to the Beast's insanity. The Strix are coldly, calculatingly evil. They hunger for the life they've never known, and hate the living for having it. They see the Kindred — like them, but masquerading as human — as perversions in need of a harsh lesson in inhumanity.

The Strix embody themselves in corpses.

The Kindred *are* corpses.

The Birds of Dis

In its natural state, a Strix is an owl-like shape made of smoke and pooled shadows in defiance of any nearby source of light. It retains coherent form only when perched, still, surveying everything around it for prey. When in motion, a Strix half-flies, half-flows, a blur of shadow accompanied by a telltale chill. Even this is only a convenience — a Strix can lose all of its owl-shape entirely to flow through any crack or gap visible to the naked eye, reforming on the other side as soon as there's space.

The Strix are vampires, just as much as the Kindred are. They feed by perching on the living, absorbing the victim's breath as Vitae. Some prey on sleeping victims, but Strix are quite capable of incapacitating someone before draining the terrified unfortunate. Kindred legends tell of Strix feasting en masse in the aftermath of battles and carnage, gorging themselves on the injured and dying.

Without physical form, the Strix laugh mockingly at injuries that would drive a vampire into torpor. Blows, hurled objects, and weapons pass harmlessly through them, but every Strix has weaknesses. The Owls share the Kindred's aversion to sunlight and fire, hinting at their shared past, but the two great banes don't burn the Strix. Instead, fire and sunlight become impenetrable barriers, forcing the Strix into concealing darkness. Every Strix has additional banes, too, which force them away like sunlight or even injure them.

The Strix are jealous of all aspects of life, and bitterly hate all living beings for that vital force. They steal Vitae when they feed, but many Strix want to take things further. Some wish to experience what is denied to them — to eat, fuck, fight, and feel injury. Some want to punish the living by ripping their comfortable existences apart. Some want to show the Kindred that there's really no difference between them at all. The most powerful Strix can become solid, material, even in their normal form — they're still made of shadow and stolen life, but their claws are wickedly sharp and their beaks tear flesh. The majority of Strix wishing to experience embodiment do so the same way the Strix do anything. They steal it.

The Strix perches on a corpse, as though it were about to feed from a living victim. Instead of drawing breath out, the Owl forces itself *in*, flowing into the mouth and nostrils, down the throat and into the body. It settles, its shadowy half-real substance suffusing the bones and viscera. And then it opens its new eyes.

Once possessing a corpse, all the delights of the flesh are open to the Strix. If it knows how, it may still feed by drawing breath even when embodied; but most Strix use the opportunity to take life in more violent, bloody ways. Strix-possessed corpses rip and consume the flesh of victims, the Vitae gain almost incidental to the sheer fun of slaughter. Other, calmer Strix feed the way the Kindred do, by drinking blood. Their rotting hosts lack a vampire's fangs or the Kiss, though, so they must draw blood in other, more obvious ways.

Unfortunately for the Kindred, the Strix aren't impeded by the fact that some corpses in the World of Darkness are still walking and talking. Other vampires make excellent hosts for the Strix — their bodies don't decay, they have more efficient means of feeding, the more powerful are full of Vitae the eager Strix can use, and, frankly, the Kindred have it coming to them. They deserve it, with their pathetic Masquerade and — most damningly — their denial of kinship with the Strix.

Not every domain has suffered a Strix attack; and although the Cacophony passes on warnings about yellow-eyed demons and malevolent shadows, not all Kindred even know that the Nemeses exist. Those who do tell horror stories of Strix attacks, of hungry dead rampaging through the city leaving the Kindred terrified and desperately scrabbling to recover the Masquerade. More knowledgeable Kindred know that the violent, id-crazed Strix are actually the minority — most of the Birds of Dis are patient in their contempt for the living and the pretenders. The Owls' hatred is cold, not the abandon of Kindred frenzy. They possess Kindred and infiltrate the Danse Macabre, laying their plans to destroy the pretense of society the Kindred cling to. Even so, the Strix are rare. Paranoid Kindred accuse rivals of being Strix in far greater numbers than the Owls usually gather, tearing divisions in Elysium without a Strix having to lift a talon.

Kindred scholars know two sure tests, however, for a vampire suspected of being a Strix — one subtle, and one extremely dangerous. The subtle tell is in the eyes. When the light catches them in just the right way, the eyes of the Strix glow yellow no matter what form they're in. The more violent way is sunlight. Possession sends the Kindred soul into dormancy, so the banes of the possessed are those of the Strix, not the Kindred whose face it is wearing — and hiding within a corpse means the Strix isn't in contact with those banes. Fire still burns, insofar as it burns any corpse; but a vampire who can walk uninjured in the sun harbors an Owl. Once discovered, or just strongly suspected, the Kindred know one way to kill a possessing Strix. If the body it possesses is destroyed while also completely surrounded by one of the Strix's banes, the Bird has nowhere to go and dies. For most cases, that means incineration. Only burning a body to ash, without leaving a single body part exposed, is certain to prevent the Strix from escaping.

In the absence of knowledgeable vampires who remember some Strix-lore, a domain aware of Strix infiltrating the All Night Society is a desperate, paranoid, place. Kindred expecting their persecutors to behave like Kindred face a rude awakening, as the Birds laugh off deadly banes and treat their hosts as disposable puppets. Eventually, through trial and error, the Kindred sometimes learn effective methods and expel the Shadows from their domain. The survivors pass warnings and stories out through the Cacophony.

The Strix suffer from additional banes as they age, resembling the banes suffered by calloused Kindred, and it's the knowledge of these methods that Strix-afflicted domains try to spread. Many young Kindred have wondered, at one time or another, why mortal legends of vampires contain so many inaccuracies and weaknesses the Kindred don't suffer — crosses, running water, silver, certain herbs, the thresholds of homes and more. Some of these were spread by Masquerade-minded vampires as misinformation. Others are stories of calloused Kindred. Most, though, are the results of the Cacophony. These legends don't describe Kindred — they describe the *Strix*; they are desperate attempts by besieged domains to warn and arm other vampires against the Nemeses.

Some Princes consult Mekhet sages, hoping to find some easier way of telling the Strix apart by scrutinizing suspected hosts with Auspex, but no such method exists — to the Mekhet Discipline, the aura of a Strix in a vampire host is exactly — disturbingly — like that of a vampire who has committed diablerie.

Most Mekhet sages don't like to think about that one too hard.

Omens of Doom

The majority of Strix are isolated by choice, individual monsters who fly, hunt, and feed alone. Sometimes, though, they work together. A conclave of Strix — called a *parliament* by occultist Kindred — is a harbinger of doom for a city. Whether they are drawn by some unspoken sense of impending disaster, like birds finding their way home to nest, or they are themselves responsible for it, a large gathering of Strix always precedes some calamity. War, natural disaster, slaughter, and plague follow parliaments, while occultist Kindred obsessively study reports and histories, trying to discern a pattern to the Owl's gatherings. Here are a few of the tales they tell:

- In ancient Rome, an entire clan of Kindred was destroyed by the Strix in reprisal for trespasses none could remember. Birds of Dis poured into the city from the darkness outside, forcing possession of the benighted clan's members and murdering one another's hosts. Desperate to end the incursion, the other Kindred killed any of the clan marked for death themselves, whether they were possessed or not.
- In 1303, Strix-infected bodies rose out of the sea in Alexandria following a major earthquake and tsunami. Somehow, they

knew where to find the havens of the Damned. Only one Kindred survived, quite insane, to tell her story.

- In 1547, the Caesar of Moscow was diablerized in public by his own childe and presumptive heir. The childe claimed not to remember the deed, and had sufficient support that he might have become Caesar...but then they all died in a fire.
- In 1738, hundreds of Strix appeared in southeastern Transylvania alongside an outbreak of bubonic plague, bent on punishing any Damned they could find for some unknown slight. This ignited an eight-year war between the Birds of Dis and the Romanian Kindred...which the Kindred won. The majority of Strix lore in Europe and Russian domains originated in this conflict, though the *cause* of the attack was never discovered.

Kindred Spirits

The Strix are intelligent and capable of speech — their voices when in Shadow Form sound directly into the minds of those they speak to — and sometimes one of the Kindred finds an Owl in talkative mood.

The Strix tell stories of a shared bond of history and hunger with the Kindred. They claim to have taught the first Kindred how to survive the Curse, nurturing their Beasts until they had the instinct needed to overcome human scruples at taking blood. Sometimes, the Strix say that they *are* the Beast — that every Kindred is host to a dormant Strix, that what the vampire mistakes for his own darker nature is an Owl whispering to him, that the Embrace tears and divides the inner Strix, diluting its essence through the lineages of Kindred only to be reunited by diablerie. Some Strix tell the Kindred that their existence is a gift, given by the Strix to mortal cannibals, pathetic undead monsters without the will to true vampirism, ghosts who wanted to return to physical form, and dozens of other variations. The Strix can't seem to make up their minds on exactly *how* they're related to the Kindred, but they all see the relation as self-evident and are roused to terrible, vindictive cruelty when the Kindred deny it. No matter what a vampire says, though, the Strix take Humanity as denial. They only approve of the most debased Kindred and draugr, and even then only grudgingly. After all, the most inhumane Kindred still has physical form, the strength to snap a neck and the pleasure of blood flowing down her throat when she feeds, none of which she deserves.

Shadowed Past

Where are the Strix from? They don't know. The Birds of Dis have been in the world since the human race lit their first fires, hoping to ward off the dark. They aren't spirits, they

aren't ghosts, and they aren't demons — though some Sanctified vampires would beg to differ on that last one. Legends tangle them up with the hidden origins of vampires, merging with the first Kindred, providing the catalyst for the first Embraces, or uplifting the first postmortem Embraces into Kindred. There's every reason to believe that, like the Kindred, they are many types of being with strong similarities, rather than a single "species."

That's a long, long time ago; and contrary to popular myth among the Kindred, the Strix have never gone away. They may have broken into this world from another in the primeval nights, but none remember it, or are believable when they claim to. The Strix don't age, but they do die when destroyed or when they reproduce, and all Owls encountered in the moderns nights are as native to the World of Darkness as the Kindred are.

Sometimes, an old and potent Strix simply tears itself into two smaller, independent Owls. Sometimes new Strix just appear, flowing out from cracks in the deep, dark places of the world, coalescing out of the spilled blood of mass graves and the final breath of murder victims. Old legends of the lost Julii say that the founder of that doomed clan found a way into a terrible, hungry place beyond the world, where he struck the bargain with the Owls that his clan later broke.

It doesn't matter. The Strix are "from" the dark outside the cave, the bad day-mares of Neonate vampires, and the funeral-pyre smoke of murderers, and they have been since prehistory.

Game Systems

The Strix use rules similar to those for ephemeral beings (in the **God-Machine Chronicle**, p. 215), but not exactly the same. The Strix aren't made of ephemera — their natural state isn't in Twilight — don't have Rank or Essence, don't possess Influences or Numina, and don't have bans or banes as ephemeral beings do. Still, the similarities between spirits, ghosts, and the Owls are haunting, and the source of much speculation among the Kindred.

Shadow Traits

The Strix, to their eternal anger, aren't alive and don't have physical forms unless they steal them. A Strix's mind, body, and soul are undifferentiated, all part of the same shadow-stuff. In game terms, they are represented by different and altered Traits.

Shadow Potency

Just like the Kindred, the Strix have dots in an Advantage that measures their supernatural strength and grants them increased access to powers at the cost of some disadvantages. Kindred characters use Blood Potency, but a Strix doesn't require Blood for Vitae. Their Advantage is called **Shadow Potency**, and dots in it determine many of a Strix's other Traits.

Shadow Potency ranges from one to ten dots, and determines the maximum ratings in Attributes the Strix can have, how many dots of Attributes it has, how many Dread Powers it has, and which forms of Embodiment it can attempt. It also determines the maximum Vitae pool and how many Vitae the Strix can spend per turn, just like Blood Potency does for one of the Kindred. Last, Shadow Potency determines how many additional banes a Strix suffers from.

Unlike Kindred, Strix never suffer from feeding restrictions as they become more potent, even when embodied in a vampire host. An elder suddenly and inexplicably able to feed from animals or mortals is very likely possessed.

Strix use their Shadow Potency rating as a Supernatural Tolerance trait, and substitute it for Blood Potency whenever they use a Discipline or if they are targeted by a vampire using an effect that requires it.

A Strix gains one dot of Shadow Potency every 100 years, and may only additionally increase it through diablerie — either by possessing a vampire who commits Amaranth on another vampire, or by feeding from and diablerizing another Strix when in Shadow Form (for more details, see p. 200.) When Shadow Potency increases, all derived Traits increase — the Strix immediately gains new Attribute dots, Dread Powers, and Embodiments.

Strix don't enter torpor, so don't reduce their Shadow Potency like elder Kindred do by sleeping through the ages. Instead, at any time, a Strix may roll Shadow Potency as a dice pool, splitting the successes in Shadow Potency away as a "child" and reducing its own Shadow Potency in the process. If a Strix survives at Shadow Potency 10, it *must* reproduce in this way when it reaches the point where it would gain another dot.

Vitae and Feeding

Strix store and use Vitae much like Kindred do, with some key differences — they may boost any Attribute, not just Physical ones, with a +2 die bonus for a turn by spending a Vitae (the maximums given by Shadow Potency represent permanent dots, not Vitae-boosted ones), and activate their Dread Powers. They do not need to spend Vitae to rise during the day (the Strix don't sleep), even when in a Kindred host. When possessing a host, they may spend Vitae to heal the host like a vampire.

Vitae in Shadow Form can't sustain life — Strix can only feed ghouls when they possess a vampire, and being possessed by a Strix doesn't make a living victim a ghoul.

Strix may also spend three Vitae to regain a spent Willpower point once per scene.

Strix in Shadow Form and embodied Strix using the Breath Drinking Dread Power feed directly from the life force of living victims. The Strix perches within a foot of the victim's mouth (normally *on* an incapacitated or unconscious victim) and grapples and "bites" using its Power + Brawl. Instead of the Feed move Kindred use, however, the Strix uses the Breath Drinking move.

Strix can feed from one another by colliding and forcibly merging the shadow-stuff that forms them, in an act disturbingly

Effects of Shadow Potency

Shadow Potency	Attribute Maximum	Attribute Dots	Vitae/ Per Turn	Dread Powers	Embodiments*	Banes**
1	5	4-6	10/1	3	Shadow Form	Sunlight and Fire
2	5	7-10	11/2	4	Possess Corpse	None
3	5	7-10	12/3	4	Possess Revenant	+1
4	5	10-15	13/4	5	Possess Kindred	None
5	5	10-15	15/5	5	Possess Living	+1
6	6	13-18	20/6	6	Synthesis	None
7	7	13-18	25/7	7	Materialize	+1
8	8	16-21	30/8	8	Enter Twilight	None
9	9	16-21	50/10	9	Shadow Jump	+1
10	10	19-24	75/15	10	Dark Places	None

* Strix have all Embodiments for their level of Shadow Potency, plus any from lower ratings

** Strix have all Banes for their level of Shadow Potency, plus any from lower ratings. A Shadow Potency 7 Strix suffers the banes of sunlight, fire, plus three more.

like the Amaranth. The aggressor must first merge with the victim — treated as a grapple by game mechanics — and then both Strix roll as though they were feeding, taking Vitae from one another every turn, aggressor first. If one of the combatants loses all Vitae, it takes lethal damage to Corpus instead. Once a Strix has injured another to the point of destruction, it may spend Willpower and roll Power + Resistance in the same way as Kindred commit diablerie (see p. 101), destroying the victim once it has achieved successes equal to the victim's Shadow Potency and gaining a dot of Shadow Potency in the process.

Embodied Strix may feed in other ways, described in the Embodiments. Even when embodied, though, the Strix are immune to blood addiction and the Vinculum.

Breath Drinking

The Strix may use this move once it has "bitten" in a grapple, and bests its opponent in the grapple roll. It steals one Vitae, and inflicts one lethal damage against the opponent. On an exceptional success, the Strix may take Vitae and inflict damage up to its Shadow Potency *or* gain a skill dot in a skill that the victim has.

The Strix loses its Defense and may not use any Dread Powers or Embodiments while using the Breath Drinking move. Unlike the Kiss, the Strix feeding does not cause euphoria. Conscious victims gain the Scarred Condition.

Ghouls lose the Vitae in their systems before suffering damage. The Strix can't drink the breath of revenants or vampires, as their Vitae is bound inexorably to their blood. To get at it, the Strix needs to steal a material form. Soulless victims produce no Vitae — the source of their vital essence has already been removed.

Attributes and Skills

Strix don't have the nine Attributes familiar in material characters, but use the simplified set of Power, Finesse, and

Embracing Embodiments

In very rare circumstances, a vampire might try to Embrace a body being used by the Strix as a host, either attempting the post-mortem Embrace on a corpse host or embracing a living victim. This actually does work, though not as the Kindred might expect — the Strix itself is entirely unharmed by the experience. As it's already inside the body, it is effectively given a Kindred host, even if it doesn't have the Shadow Potency necessary to possess a vampire itself.

At the Storyteller's discretion, a body vacated by a Strix might be a subject for the post-mortem Embrace.

Resistance that ephemeral beings use. When they possess a host body, Strix use their own Attributes in place of Mental and Social Attributes, but use the host's own Physical Attributes.

Power describes the raw ability of the Strix to impose itself on the world. It is used for all rolls that call for Intelligence and Presence. When not in a host, it is also used for Strength.

Finesse describes how deft the Strix is at imposing its desires with fine control. It is used for all rolls that call for Wits or Manipulation and, when not in a host, Dexterity.

Resistance describes how well the entity can avoid imposition. It is used for all rolls that call for Resolve, Composure, or when not in a host, Stamina.

All Strix begin with two dots in Brawl, Athletics, and Occult. The Strix learn skills by absorbing them during feeding or by reading the mind of a host. A Strix may have up to its Attribute dot maximum in Skill dots, and no Skill may be raised above 5. If a Strix gains a new Skill dot when already at its maximum, it may choose to replace one of its existing dots.

Willpower

Strix have Willpower dots equal to Finesse + Resistance or ten, whichever is lower, and may spend it to boost resistance traits or enhance dice pools like any other character.

Strix may spend Willpower to heal Corpus damage at the same rate as a vampire healing injuries with Vitae.

Strix have no Virtues, Masks, Dirges, or Touchstones. In addition to spending Vitae to regain Willpower (as noted under Vitae, above), they have a single Vice trait like a human.

A good Vice for a Strix is something that urges them to take a body. "Hedonist" is a classic, although you could sharpen that a little to "Gourmand." A Strix eager to show the Kindred the folly of Humanity might have a Vice of "Pedagogy."

Strix regain one spent Willpower point per night, when they first perceive the sun has set. A Strix that spends the entire night underground doesn't regain Willpower, only one that sees that the bane of sunlight has gone.

As Strix don't sleep, they don't regain Willpower through rest.

The Strix don't have to spend Willpower to go for blood in combat, and don't have to accept a surrender.

Corpus and Injury

Many Kindred believe the Strix are immune to all harm, and they're nearly right — physical, even ephemeral, attacks pass right through the Owl's smoky bodies. Some magic, though, including potent Crúac rites, the most devastating Disciplines and some banes can rend the shadows and actually injure a Strix.

Instead of Health, a Strix has dots and boxes of Corpus, equal to Resistance + Size. Corpus boxes don't have wound penalties associated with them.

The Strix aren't injured naturally, so have no healing mechanism — their wounds don't heal over time. Injuries manifest as tears and rips in the Strix's Shadow Form, worsening with increasing severity of damage. An Owl can, however, force itself back into shape, knitting smoke to shadow. The Strix may spend Willpower to heal as though they were a vampire healing wounds with Vitae.

Strix don't fall unconscious no matter how much damage they've suffered, and are only destroyed when all Corpus boxes are filled by aggravated damage.

Injury is an extremely rare sensation for a Strix. They are completely immune to all physical and ephemeral attacks except for Disciplines and Devotions that inflict aggravated damage, which inflict Bashing wounds on them instead. Some banes inflict injury as well, notably sunlight and fire if the Strix is unable to escape.

Aggravated and lethal wounds on a Strix in Shadow Form also cause it to lose Vitae — one per box filled.

When a Strix possesses a host, all injury is suffered by the host rather than the Strix.

Other Traits

Because they have simplified traits, Strix calculate their derived traits a little differently.

Initiative: Initiative is equal to Finesse + Resistance.

Defense: Defense is equal to Power or Finesse, whichever is *higher*, when in Shadow Form, and Dexterity + Finesse (whichever is *lower*) + Athletics when possessing a host.

Speed: Speed in Shadow Form is 12. The Strix may fly, unimpeded by weather, air conditions or other hazards, at its full speed. Strix may pour themselves through any opening large enough to see.

Size: Strix are usually Size 2, though Strix with Shadow Potency of 8, 9, or 10 increase their Size by one per dot of Shadow Potency above 7.

Stealth: As "living" shadows, the Strix are extremely hard to spot, especially at night. They receive a +3 die bonus to all Stealth-related dice pools.

Language: Strix "speak" directly into the mind of anyone they can make eye contact with. The other party to the exchange perceives it as hearing a voice no one else can hear, speaking in her native language. Speaking makes the Strix's yellow eyes flash in its Shadow Form, as though caught by the light. Strix possessing a sapient host can either speak aloud using any languages the host knows or knew, or make eye contact and use their native telepathy — which again makes the possession obvious. Most Strix pretending to be Kindred stick to speaking aloud.

Integrity: The Strix utterly lack Integrity or Humanity. If a dice pool calls for Humanity or Integrity, substitute Shadow Potency instead.

Aspirations: The Strix don't earn Beats or Experiences like other characters; but for the purposes of Social maneuvering and powers that interact with Aspirations, they do have short- and long-term goals.

Banes

Just as their cousins do, the Strix suffer from the supernatural banes of vampirism. Two are common to all Strix — the great banes of fire and sunlight — and others manifest as a Strix grows in power.

Common Banes

Fire and sunlight don't burn a Strix, but they do form an impenetrable barrier to it. A Strix hit by the sun's rays or flames is forced back by any means available to it — flowing through small gaps if possible, or even possessing a host if one is available. If a Strix has absolutely no means of escape — if it's completely surrounded by fire, or trapped against a surface by sunlight with nowhere to retreat to — it suffers one lethal wound to Corpus per minute of exposure. Host bodies protect against the damage and physical repulsion of the two great banes, but fire is still dangerous for its damaging effects to the body, rather than to the Strix — a host body destroyed by being completely covered in fire ejects the Strix directly into the flames, where it suffers grievous injury and death as if it were one of the Kindred.

Uncommon Banes

Starting at Shadow Potency 3, Strix gain additional banes, which often resemble the banes developed by calloused Kindred. Some example banes are;

Abjuration: The Strix is vulnerable to abjuration, warding, and exorcism as though it were a spirit, using the rules starting on p. 231 of the **God-Machine Chronicle**. If an abjuration would cancel the Conditions created by a spirit's Manifestation, it will forcibly end a Strix's use of an Embodiment to Possess a host.

Bells: The Strix cannot stand the sound of bells, and hearing them causes intense pain. This only happens in the presence of actual bells; recordings will not cause pain. Every minute it is exposed, it takes its Shadow Potency in dice of bashing damage.

Counting: The Strix must stop to count things that are in disarray, even when in Shadow Form. Examples include rice, sticks, coins, and other collections. Unless it is injured or forced to stop (by being pushed away by sunlight, for example) it can't stop for a period of time equal to its Shadow Potency in minutes.

Crossroads: The Strix is confused when it knowingly passes through a crossroads. For the remainder of the scene, all its dice pools are capped by Shadow Potency.

Hated by Beasts: Animals sense and despise the Strix. They put their backs up defensively, growl, hiss, or boast. Any attempts to deal with animals through Animal Ken or Animalism suffer a penalty equal to Shadow Potency.

Invitation: The Strix cannot enter a private dwelling uninvited, and treats the interior as though it were filled with sunlight.

Loner: The Strix cannot abide the presence of another Strix, and must retreat if one comes within its Shadow Potency in yards.

Material Bane: The Strix finds a certain substance abhorrent, such as garlic, salt, roses, or silver. It is repulsed from the bane as though it were sunlight, and if the material is used as a weapon against the Strix — even in Shadow Form — it deals lethal damage. This bane may be taken multiple times to represent different materials the Strix can't abide, and is the most common additional bane.

Plague of Purity: The Strix finds the pure of heart to be utterly repulsive. Any touch by a human with Integrity 8 or higher causes Shadow Potency in dice of bashing damage.

Ravening: The Strix is consumed by a terrible hunger, like a starving vampire. It cannot stop feeding for its Shadow Potency in turns, unless its victim dies.

Running Water: The Strix treats flowing water, and the air above it, as though it were sunlight. It can fly over a bridge, but not over a stream, and if immersed in moving water it suffers one lethal wound per turn.

Symbols: Symbols of faith and devotion weaken the Strix. When touched by such a symbol, or when acting against someone brandishing such a symbol, all of its dice pools are capped by Shadow Potency. Physical contact also deals one level of Bashing damage per turn.

Frenzy and the Predatory Aura

The Strix sometimes claim to *be* the Kindred Beast, and it seems to many Kindred that there's truth in that. The Owls never suffer frenzy — they don't lose control like Kindred do — but their presence triggers the predatory aura even when in Shadow Form. Kindred can sense Strix as though they were Kindred, and Strix can sense both Kindred and other Strix. Neither can tell the other apart by aura alone: Kindred can't discern whether someone is a vampire or a Strix possessing a corpse; and a vampire's first instinct when she senses a presence she can't see is probably "Obfuscate," not "Strix."

The Strix may lash out and respond to another lashing out just like a vampire, rolling Power + Shadow Potency in the contested rolls. The Strix have no barrier between themselves

Supernatural powers and the Strix

The Strix treat Shadow Potency as a Supernatural Tolerance Trait, and use it in Clash of Wills, but they're rather difficult to affect with supernatural powers anyway.

The Strix are not ghosts, spirits, or demons, as defined by other World of Darkness games, and are completely unaffected by any powers that apply to those beings. Unless a Strix is using the Twilight Form embodiment, it isn't in Twilight either, and is immune to any power that affects beings that are.

The Strix *are*, on some level, shadows. Powers that affect shadows can be used to affect the Strix if they beat the Owl's resistance.

Kindred blood sorcery can't summon spirits or ghosts that aren't already present, but it *can* summon Strix as though they heard the Gathering Cry.

and their vinculum Wanton Condition by reaching a breaking point. Instead, they resolve it by forcing someone else to a breaking point through their actions.

Common Powers

All Strix share four supernatural abilities, over and above their shadow traits.

The Gathering Cry

Nemeses are solitary by preference, but in exceptional circumstances the Strix can summon one another's aid, whether to assist in a crisis or plot their schemes. The Strix spends a Willpower point, and then emits a high-pitched screech, audible to other Strix, some animals, young humans, and Kindred with enhanced senses for the Strix's Resistance + Shadow Potency in miles. Other beings with exceptionally keen hearing may also perceive the cry.

Owl Eyes

The Strix have even greater affinity with darkness than the Kindred and can see unimpeded without any light. An Owl suffers no dice penalties due to poor visibility even in complete darkness. If a Strix does have sufficient light for a human to see by (moonlight, or streetlights, for example), it enjoys a +3 die bonus to rolls involving perception and sight.

Taint of Life

The Strix share the Kindred's ability to sense and track prey, but instead of blood the Owls are drawn to life — and the stolen life in Kindred Vitae — itself.

Strix may sense any living beings or Vitae (whether it's in a ghoul, a vampire, a Vitae reliquary, or some stranger receptacle) up to their (Shadow Potency * 2) in yards (or meters).

The Strix, like the Owls they resemble, are excellent trackers. Add a Strix's Finesse + Shadow Potency to any dice pools to track or hunt a victim the Owl has taken Vitae from before.

Doom Sense

The Strix have an innate sense for impending disaster and the weight of destiny, and often gather at significant events, especially those that will cause widespread suffering and loss of life — all the better to feed from.

Without a Dread Power to evolve this sense further, all a Strix can tell is if some calamity is looming within its Shadow Potency in months. Certain supernatural powers, though, warp probability on a much stronger and more immediate level, and the Strix can discern these clearly — the Strix are always aware of fortune, fate, or luck-altering powers and Merits active on individuals within their presence.

Nine Tenths of the Law: Embodiments

Only the very youngest and weakest Strix are confined to their shadow-bird forms. As they age or consume other Strix, the Birds of Dis gain the power necessary to enter a host body — corpses at first, but soon graduating to revenants and the Kindred.

Shadow Form (Shadow Potency •)

Unless possessing a body or using one of the embodiments available to higher-Potency Strix, a Bird of Dis exists in its native shadow-owl state, using its own Attributes for dice pools, taking damage (when it encounters something that can injure it) to Corpus and feeding by drinking breath.

Possess Corpse (Shadow Potency ••)

Once a Strix has developed its Shadow Potency through age or diablerie, it can possess corpses by pouring itself into the airways. Although freshly-dead corpses last longer, only the end of decomposition, when a corpse is just a skeleton with no skin or hair, serves as a barrier. Possessing a corpse costs one Willpower and takes a single turn, but does not require a dice roll.

The embodied Strix uses the host body's Physical Attributes for dice pools, but its own simplified Attributes for Social and Mental actions. Injuries damage the body's Health (Stamina + Size) rather than the Strix's Corpus. Corpse hosts only take Bashing damage from wounds, no matter what weapon is used, unless a bane stipulates that it causes more severe injuries. The embodied Strix doesn't fall unconscious from excessive damage, and can stay active until all Health boxes are filled with aggravated wounds.

The Strix can't glean any useful information from an already-dead brain, so can't absorb any knowledge, languages, or skills from a corpse host. It can use any Skills it already knows in dice pools. Strix with the Auspex power The Spirit's Touch, however, may read the host's memories as though it were a revenant, below.

Embodiment in physical form allows a Strix to feed in a physical, albeit messy, fashion — consuming living flesh (requiring a grapple and enough successful bite attacks to do lethal damage or, more likely, an already-unconscious or incapacitated victim) provides one Vitae per two points of lethal damage inflicted. If the embodied Strix drinks vampire blood, it receives Vitae as though it were a ghoul but remains immune to blood addiction or the Vinculum.

The Strix's presence hastens the body's decay — the host loses one dot of each Physical Attribute per week. When Strength reaches 0, the embodied Strix can no longer lift anything or inflict damage with Brawl or Weaponry. When Dexterity reaches 0, the embodied Strix can no longer move. After Stamina reaches 0, the remaining Health due to Size begins to

deteriorate at the rate of one Health dot per week. When Health reaches 0, the body collapses into a useless, decayed heap and the Strix is ejected back into Shadow Form. Corpses that aren't "fresh" when first possessed start out having already decayed, to an extent determined by the Storyteller. If the body doesn't crumble through decay, but is destroyed by damage, the Strix is in danger. If the final turn's worth of damage did *less* damage than the Strix's Shadow Potency, the Strix is ejected unharmed into Shadow Form. Otherwise, apply the final turn's full damage to the Strix's Corpus as well as to the body's Health.

A Strix can choose to end its possession of a corpse at any time. Disentangling itself requires no roll, but takes a full turn.

Possess Revenant (Shadow Potency •••)

Strix at this stage of development may invade and take over the bodies of revenants as they sleep, sending the mind of the victim into dormancy and providing the Strix with a body suited for consuming vast quantities of Vitae.

The Strix pays a point of Willpower and rolls its Finesse + Power + Shadow Potency vs. the victim's Resolve + Composure + Blood Potency. Attempting possession takes a turn, and the Strix must be within a foot of the victim.

Dramatic Failure: The Strix not only fails to penetrate the host, but injures itself in the attempt, and suffers the victim's Blood Potency in lethal damage.

Failure: The Strix is rebuffed, and fails to possess the host.

Success: The Strix possesses the host.

Exceptional Success: The Strix possesses the host and does not suffer any dice penalties for using the host's skills and Disciplines.

Possessed victims are sent into torpor, and experience torpor-dreams while the Strix is in control of the body. The victim's banes are replaced entirely with those of the Strix. The embodied Strix uses the host body's Physical Attributes for dice pools, but its own simplified Attributes for Social and Mental actions, and the Strix's Shadow Potency and derived Vitae maximum and spend per turn instead of the victim's Blood Potency. Injuries damage the body's Health rather than the Strix's Corpus, according to the damage rules for vampires. Notably, as the joined entity uses the Strix's banes and the victim is already in torpor, staking does not have any effect beyond the physical damage inflicted, and the embodied Strix does not fall into torpor when the body's Health is full of lethal damage — only being completely destroyed with aggravated damage will stop it.

On the first night of the possession, the entity may read the host's mind with a Finesse Roll at a –4 die penalty, use the host's Physical Skills at a –3 die penalty, and use Disciplines and Social and Mental Skills at a –4 die penalty. The penalties all drop by one die per night.

Vampiric — even revenant — bodies do not decay like corpse hosts do, and the Strix may stay indefinitely. If the host body is destroyed through injury, the Strix has a chance to escape — if the final turn's worth of damage did *less* damage than the Strix's Shadow Potency, the Strix is ejected unharmed into Shadow Form. Otherwise, apply the full final turn's damage to the Strix's Corpus as well as to the body's Health.

Decay

Decay of corpse and living hosts manifests in a multitude of ways, depending on the individual Strix and the punishment the host has taken. Some exhibit visual signs like the eyes growing clouded (when not flashing yellow) or skin flaking away. Others give off a smell of putrefaction, or grow emaciated like drug addicts.

When in a vampiric body, the Strix can consume and process blood as Vitae using the same rules as a revenant or vampire, except for its immunity to being addicted or blood bonded. Strix never suffer from the feeding restrictions of high-Blood Potency Kindred. It can use the revenant's fangs and enjoys the benefits of the Kiss. Upon entering a vampire or revenant for the first time, the Strix gains as much Vitae as the host had in her system, up to its Shadow-Potency derived maximum. Any remaining Vitae in the body is lost. Revenant bodies do not lose all Vitae at the end of a night when possessed by a Strix.

The Strix can commit diablerie when in a host, increasing its Shadow Potency as described on p. 201. If the host survives possession, it immediately gains the benefits (and suffers the Humanity loss) for any diableries the Strix committed while in control. Other breaking points only apply at Storyteller's discretion; the vampire's mind was in torpor when the Strix committed the breaking point, but discovering any atrocities that took place while not in control can be a breaking point for a victim after the possession ends.

Unless forced out by injury, the Strix can exit the body at any time with a turn's effort. Roll the host's Blood Potency penalized by the Strix's Resistance; the Strix loses Vitae equal to successes when it exits, which stay in the host. The host is then treated as though she were a torpid vampire reaching the end of torpor — Blood Potency is reduced by one for every 25 years of possession to a minimum of one, and she must pay one Vitae to regain consciousness if possible. Because the Strix has already processed the blood in the former host's body into Vitae, the blood source the Strix preferred doesn't affect its usefulness to the newly loosed host.

Possess Kindred (Shadow Potency ••••)

With more power, a Strix can extend its ability to possess revenants to invading and taking over full Kindred. The rules are the same as for possessing a revenant, with two exceptions and changes:

The Kindred must be torpid, not just sleeping.

Strix cannot use a host's blood sorcery, and gain no benefit from Coils, Carthian Law, or Invictus Oaths. The other party

to an Invictus Oath loses the benefits of the oath while the victim is possessed.

Strix embodied in a vampire can attempt to Embrace; but without Humanity to spend, their Embraces nearly always result in revenants.

Possess Living (Shadow Potency •••••)

Strix are creatures of death and impending doom. They find it easier to enter the bodies of the dead and walking dead, but powerful Strix can overcome the difficulty of invading a still-living host. Being possessed by a life-leeching shadow-owl is extremely traumatic for a living victim, many of whom don't survive the process.

As with other forms of possession, invading a living victim is an instant action and costs a Willpower point. The Strix rolls Power + Finesse + Shadow Potency, contested by the victim's Resolve + Composure + any Supernatural Tolerance trait.

Dramatic Failure: The Strix not only fails to penetrate the host, but injures itself in the attempt, suffering one point of lethal damage, plus one for every dot in a Supernatural Tolerance trait the would-be victim has.

Failure: The Strix is rebuffed, and fails to possess the host.

Success: The Strix possesses the host. Doing so inflicts the Strix's successes on the possession roll in lethal damage to the host, and grants the Strix the same amount in Vitae. If this is enough to kill the host, the possession continues using the rules for "Possess Corpse," above, except that Attributes decay at one dot per *month*.

Exceptional Success: The Strix possesses the host and does not suffer any dice penalties for using the host's skills. It may choose to not injure its victim while entering the body, but if it does so it doesn't gain Vitae.

If the victim survives, the result is a Strix in a living body — the victim's mind and soul are plunged into dormancy, only to return if the Strix ends the possession while the body is still alive. The embodied Strix uses the host body's Physical Attributes for dice pools, but its own simplified Attributes for Social and Mental actions. Injuries damage the body's Health rather than the Strix's Corpus, but the Strix does not fall unconscious when the Health track is filled with Bashing damage.

On the first night of the Possession, the entity may read the host's mind with a Finesse Roll at a –4 die penalty, use the host's Physical Skills at a –3 die penalty, and her Social and Mental skills at a –4 die penalty. The penalties all drop by one die per night.

Living bodies require more than the Strix's power to keep healthy, and the Owls are often careless with their toys. The body will still starve to death if the Strix doesn't remember to eat and drink, and is still killed if all Health boxes are filled with lethal damage. If the body isn't completely destroyed (all Health boxes filled with *aggravated* damage) then the possession immediately changes to "Possess Corpse" as described above. Otherwise, the Strix suffers full Corpus damage if the final turn's worth of injury is more than its Shadow Potency. While the host is still alive, the Strix may spend Vitae to heal it as though it were a ghoul, and the body heals naturally over time at its normal rate.

The feeding options for a Strix in a living host are more restricted, but better in the long term. The Strix may reflexively drain its host for Vitae, inflicting a point of lethal damage to the host per Vitae gained, up to the point that the host dies. It may also drink vampire blood like a ghoul, but this does not grant the other benefits of ghouldom. A patient Strix can "farm" the vital essence of its own host, allowing the body to heal between bouts of Vitae draining.

Stranger Hosts

Why should vampires have all the fun? The Strix can attempt to possess other supernatural creatures just as easily as revenants and the Kindred. Possessing Sin-Eaters, Mummies, and Prometheans requires "Possess Kindred," while possessing Werewolves, Mages, Changelings, and Demons requires "Possess Living." Strix inside supernatural hosts cannot access any powers held in the soul — they can't use a mage-host's powers, a mummy-host immediately dies and becomes a corpse-host, a werewolf-host can't use Gifts — but purely physical powers such as a werewolf's shapechanging may still be accessible at the Storyteller's discretion. Advantages like Mana, Glamour, and Essence don't convert to Vitae, but living hosts can still be farmed as described under Possess Living.

Where things get *really* strange is if the Strix then attempts to use Synthesis on a supernatural host. Unique monsters and aberrant powers result.

Synthesis (Shadow Potency ••••• •)

A powerful Strix can merge itself into a host body, permanently infusing the hungry shadow into the victim. Synthesis may only be attempted once a Strix is already embodied in a victim. The Strix pays a point of Willpower and begins an extended action using its Shadow Potency as both dice pool and maximum number of rolls, with an interval of one roll per night. The target number of successes is determined by the nature of the host:

Victim	Target number of successes
Corpse	5
Revenant	10
Kindred	15
Living	20

If successful, the Strix immediately rolls Power + Finesse and loses its successes in dots of Shadow Potency. If this takes it to zero, it is destroyed, otherwise it is ejected into Shadow Form.

- Corpse hosts are immediately changed into Kindred, with a Blood Potency of 1. They lose Humanity equal to the Shadow Potency lost.
- Revenants are uplifted into full Kindred, but lose Humanity dots equal to the Shadow Potency lost to Synthesis.
- Kindred gain Blood Potency dots equal to the Shadow Potency lost, but automatically lose the same amount of Humanity.
- Living hosts suffer lethal damage equal to the Shadow Potency lost. If killed, they rise the following night as Kindred with Blood Potency 1.

The Clan of a new vampire created is that of the last vampire the embodied Strix drew Vitae from, the clan of the vampire who created the revenant, or randomly-determined if the host has no existing ties to the Kindred.

Materialize (Shadow Potency ●●●●● ●●)

Very powerful Strix can force the Vitae held in their shadow-selves to become solid, granting their ghostly talons a very sharp and physical edge.

The Strix pays a Willpower point and becomes material for the rest of the scene. It still uses the Strix's simplified Attributes, but the Strix may engage in combat. Its talons are 3L weapons, and its beak grants bite attacks of 2L.

While Materialized, a Strix feeds through eating flesh or drinking vampire blood, like an Owl embodied in a corpse host.

Injuries are inflicted onto the Strix's Corpus, but it still only takes Bashing damage from sources other than banes. In physical form, it may also spend Vitae to heal wounds at the same cost as a vampire. It may *also* spend Willpower to heal as normal, but may only heal from one method in a single turn.

Twilight Form (Shadow Potency ●●●●● ●●●)

Having developed beyond becoming solid, some Strix then progress to shifting their shadowy forms into Twilight form, to hunt and consume the ghosts and spirits that exist in that state.

The Strix pays a point of Willpower and vanishes entirely from the naked eye as it shifts into Twilight.

While in Twilight, the Strix enjoys complete intangibility—it may pass, unnoticed, through solid objects, and the damage it suffers from banes is reduced by one type (to nothing if already Bashing.) It can perceive and interact with ghosts and spirits, attack them as though it were Materialized, and even feed on their Corpus by eating their "flesh," gaining one Vitae per three Corpus consumed.

Returning to the shadows, however, is a costly process. Twilight form is permanent until the Strix makes an effort to reform its shadowy body. Doing so requires a successful Power + Resistance roll, and the Strix loses one dot of Shadow Potency as it re-forms.

Shadow Jump (Shadow Potency ●●●●● ●●●●)

By this stage of development, a Strix has grown such an affinity for shadows that when under great duress it may enter one and exit another, leaping instantly to escape, attack from an unexpected direction, or cover great distances quickly.

The Strix plunges into a shadow and rolls Shadow Potency as an instant action. If successful, it emerges out of any other shadow within its Shadow Potency in miles. Jumping between shadows requires the Strix to form a new body instantly, and it never escapes without a mark. The Strix suffers a point of lethal damage per mile jumped, plus one.

With effort, the Strix can even shadow jump while in a host body, with a –3 die penalty to the Shadow Potency roll. In addition to the damage (which the host body suffers, not the Strix), the Strix loses Vitae equal to the damage.

Dark Places (Shadow Potency ●●●●● ●●●●●)

The most powerful Strix have progressed from shifting their own shadow bodies toward and away from physical substance, to leveraging their kinship with shadows, aiming to recapture the abilities of the primeval Strix that first entered the world. The Strix can take an area of complete darkness and make it *more*, deepening it until it is no longer the simple absence of light but a gateway to wherever the Strix first came from.

Creating the gateway requires a total lack of illumination in an area of at least a cubic yard (or meter). The Strix perches in its center and pours itself into the area, as though it were a host. It spends a Willpower point and rolls Shadow Potency. If successful, the area becomes part of the empty shadow-place the Strix originated in as well as remaining part of the world. Anything with a taint of the Strix's nature — Strix, vampires, and ghouls, for example — may cross over to the Strix's world entirely by spending a Willpower point. The gateway only stays open for a scene, however, and anyone seeking the ancient Strix must cross back over in time or be lost.

While the gateway is open, new Strix sometimes emerge from it, escaping into the world. Some Strix use this Embodiment to summon allies, while others intentionally stay on the other side when the scene ends and the gateway closes, reuniting with the ancient shadows.

Dread Powers

Beyond the powers common to all of their kind, every Strix exhibits a range of supernatural abilities, some more frequently seen than others. As they increase in Shadow Potency, Strix develop more refined and potent abilities.

"Dread Powers" is a catch-all term for the knacks, tricks, and refinements of their powers every Strix learns, classified as **Doom**, **Host**, **Shadow**, and **Vitae Powers**. Dread Powers aren't Disciplines — a Strix doesn't have to learn all the Doom Powers in sequence, but instead only develops those that agree with its own growing potency.

Dread Powers have Shadow Potency minimums. If a Strix loses dots of Shadow Potency, it loses its Dread Powers in reverse order. For example, if a Strix gained "Breath Eating" upon reaching Shadow Potency 6 and then dropped back to Shadow Potency 5, that's the Power it would lose. Strix that regain lost Shadow Potency often — but don't *have* to — regain the same powers.

Doom Powers

The Strix are omens of disaster, both personal and on a wide scale. These Dread Powers help the Strix to sense and shape that doom.

See the Cracks

Minimum Shadow Potency 1

The Strix despise Humanity, but even humans have a small part of themselves the Owls find worthy. This power allows a Strix to sense the worst part of a human's nature.

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Finesse + Resistance – victim's Composure

If successful, the Strix intuits the victim's Vice, Integrity level, and the presence of any Integrity-related Conditions. Against vampires, it reads Humanity, any Humanity-related Conditions, and what the Kindred's banes are.

Ambition's Source

Minimum Shadow Potency 1

Everyone wants something. All beings move through the webs of potential futures seeking their own perfect outcomes. A Strix can sense these forces, allowing it to offer a victim just the right thing — or bedevil every attempt to achieve it.

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Finesse + Resistance – victim's Composure

If successful, the Strix learns one of the victim's Aspirations per success, starting with the longest-term ones and progressing to short-term goals.

Tip of the Tongue

Minimum Shadow Potency 2

The Strix has enough sense for the future to anticipate what someone is about to say before she says it, allowing it to lead a conversation, appear to agree with its victim and manipulate social interactions.

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Finesse + Resistance – victim's Composure

If successful, the Strix adds its Shadow Potency to its Finesse in all dice pools calling for Manipulation regarding the victim. This power lasts a scene.

Web of Destiny

Minimum Shadow Potency 3

The Strix can sense the immediate possible futures like the strands of a spider web, and strike at them to cause disaster. It may make its own endeavors more likely to succeed, or ensure the ruin of others' efforts.

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Power + Finesse (– victim's Resolve if used against a victim.)

If successful, the Strix bends probability and consequence to its liking. If it used this power to benefit itself, it gains the 8-again quality to a number of future dice pools equal to successes. If it attacked another's efforts, the victim suffers a dice penalty equal to the Strix's Shadow Potency for as many future dice pools as the Strix gained successes, and all failures on those actions become dramatic failures. The victim gains a Beat for the first dramatic failure suffered in a scene as a consequence of this power.

The Beast's Rebuke

Minimum Shadow Potency 4

The Strix hate their relatives for the pathetic pretense of Humanity. Vindictive Strix can turn a vampire's inner hunger against her with this power, tearing her away from her mortal life.

Action: Instant and Contested

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: Power + Finesse + Shadow Potency vs. Resolve + Composure + Blood Potency

If the Strix is successful, the vampire targeted suffers auditory and visual hallucinations tempting her to indulge her vices and give in to her Beast for a period of time equal to the Strix's successes in nights. The victim suffers a penalty to Social and Mental rolls involving mortals, and to attempts to resist frenzy, according to her Humanity as follows.

Humanity	Dice penalty
10 - 6	5
5	4
4	3
3	2
2	1
1	no penalty

In addition, the vampire loses the benefit of any Touchstones for the duration of this power.

False Fiend

Minimum Shadow Potency 4

The Kindred in some domains are constantly on the lookout for embodied Strix, watching for the signs of possession. This power allows a Strix to spread that doom out to deserving victims with a touch, turning the hunters against themselves.

Action: Instant

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: Power + Finesse vs. victim's Stamina

If successful, the victim (who must be touched by the Strix during the action) becomes cursed with an illusionary appearance of possession — the skin becomes waxy and corpse-like, the eyes glow yellow when the light catches them. Even sunlight and fire do not appear to damage them (although the victim still takes damage, if she is a vampire.) The illusion lasts for the Strix's Shadow Potency in nights. Attempts to create a further illusory appearance over the curse, with Obfuscate for example, are subject to a Clash of Wills.

Vice Manipulation

Minimum Shadow Potency 5

Now that the Strix can invade both Kindred and living mortals, it has learned to taste the subtle differences in its hosts' baser natures. With this power, the Strix can twist those impulses to its liking.

Dealing with the Devil

Many vampires — and several other supernatural creatures — tell stories about making deals with the Strix, classic devil's bargains in which the Owls granted great power for a price. The Julii supposedly created the Kindred Beast — or maybe just those of their clan — by pact with the Birds of Dis, after all.

The Strix aren't demons, and they aren't wish-granting djinn. Pacts with them are no more supernaturally binding than an agreement between two vampires. Sometimes, the Strix do agree to grant a supplicant some favor in exchange for a price. If the price is met, and if the Strix feel like abiding by the agreement, the Owls must then try to get the customer what he wants using their existing abilities — some powers are useful for fulfilling evil bargains, but the Strix can't work miracles. For some reason "grant me great power" or wish variants thereof always seem to translate to "please possess me" when the Strix get around to granting that wish.

The "safest" deal, therefore, is for knowledge. A Nemesis that agrees to bargain may have survived for centuries and learned the secrets of many hosts — and if the price is right it might be willing to share.

Action: Instant

Cost: 3 Vitae

Dice Pool: Power + Finesse – victim's Resolve

If successful, the Strix alters the victim's Vice, Requiem, or equivalent Willpower-regaining Advantage to one of its choosing for a full lunar month.

Host Powers

With these Dread Powers, a Strix exhibits changed or unusual Embodiments, allowing it to take even the most dedicated Kindred Strix-hunter by surprise. Many of these powers do not require dice rolls, being permanent alterations to a Strix's Embodiments.

Breath Eater

Minimum Shadow Potency 2

One of the most common Dread Powers, a Strix with this power may feed by stealing breath even when embodied in a host.

Hollow Bones

Minimum Shadow Potency 3

The Strix are as naturally weightless as smoke, and this Dread Power transfers some of that lightness to an embodied host. While in a possessed body, the Strix triples the host's normal jumping distance and suffers only one level of Bashing damage per 10 yards it falls, to a maximum damage of (10 – Shadow Potency) levels. By spending one Vitae, the Strix may land, cat-like, on its feet and hands, no matter how far it has fallen.

Sheep's Clothing

Minimum Shadow Potency 3

The Strix treat their host bodies harshly, and the physical signs of that treatment are quickly obvious — especially in corpse hosts. With this Dread Power, the mutable nature of the Strix's Shadow Potency cloaks its meat shell.

As long as the Strix has Vitae above a certain threshold, its host shows no signs of physical degradation (including the slow changes produced by the Preservation Dread Power). This is an illusion which can be pierced by supernatural abilities using a Clash of Wills. If the Strix spends enough Vitae to drop below the threshold, the true state of its host becomes visible.

The threshold is equal to two Vitae plus one per every three dots of Attributes or Health the host has lost through decay.

Preservation

Minimum Shadow Potency 5

Unlike the Kindred, Strix do age, and their Vitae can't sustain ghouls unless they possess vampires. Most Strix abandon corpse hosts when they decay beyond repair, and almost none stay in a living host long enough for that body to die of old age. "Almost none" is not "none," however, and a few Strix learn how to meld their shadow Vitae into a host.

Strix with this Dread Power modify their Possess Corpse and Possess Living Embodiments. Corpse hosts do not decay, but are otherwise unchanged. The more obvious changes come with living hosts, who grow more entwined with the Strix. While possessed by Strix with this power, living hosts age but don't die of old age, kept alive for decades or centuries. Although they don't decay, Strix Vitae lacks the magical stasis of Kindred Vitae; so living hosts altered by this Power gradually change over time, warping to become more Strix-like. Fingernails grow long into claws, and teeth elongate after a year, allowing living hosts to bite for lethal damage in a grapple and convert blood into Vitae like a vampire. After a few decades the host resembles an emaciated walking corpse, a living vampire with yellowed eyes and a permanent snarl. Unfortunately for the host, separation is fatal if the possession lasts longer than a year — the body has become so warped it can't survive without the Strix's presence.

Contagious Genesis

Minimum Shadow Potency 6

Rather than merge with a host to perform the Embrace, this Strix has learned to combine the insidious nature of vampire blood with its own ability to spawn new Strix, allowing it to slowly subvert an entire Kindred court. By spending three points of Vitae when in a vampire host, the Strix can roll Shadow Potency as a dice pool. If successful, it creates a new Strix of Shadow Potency equal to its successes, which is held dormant within the host's blood. This does *not* reduce the Strix's own Shadow Potency, but instead reduces the Blood Potency of the host by one. If the embodied Strix then feeds its blood to a victim the dormant child-Strix is capable of possessing, the child-Strix awakens and immediately possesses the victim. If not, the child-Strix awakens and is ejected from the shared host after the parent's Shadow Potency in nights.

Talons of Fury

Minimum Shadow Potency 7

Some Strix are more than just smoke and shadows. A Strix with this Dread Power deals aggravated damage with its talons and beak when Materialized.

Shadow Powers

These are the Dread Powers of communing with and controlling the shadows that a Strix makes its home. These powers enhance a Strix's ability to hunt, alter its Shadow Form or manipulate darkness.

Sudden Surprise

Minimum Shadow Potency 1

Owls are ambush predators, and so are vampires — even the Strix. A Strix with this Dread Power adds its Shadow Potency to Finesse + Stealth + 3 to perform an ambush.

Screech

Minimum Shadow Potency 2

The Strix emits an ear-splitting screech, rendering victims unable to think or move and greatly assisting in a subsequent feeding attempt.

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Power + Finesse vs. victim's Stamina + Composure

If successful, the victim is stunned: She loses her next action, and has only half her Defense until her next action. If the Strix gains an exceptional success, or successfully uses this power twice on the same victim in a scene, the victim is immobilized.

Smoke and Mirrors

Minimum Shadow Potency 3

Some Strix learn to manipulate shadows and smoke apart from their own bodies, forming distractions and illusions to harass a victim and pretend that the Strix are present in greater numbers. With this Dread Power, the Strix shapes naturally-occurring smoke or shadows into illusory images.

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Power + Finesse

Cost: 2 Vitae

The easiest illusion for a Strix to form is itself — most Strix with this power use it to form duplicates of their own Shadow Form, and receive a +3 die bonus to the activation pool. Duplicating a host body receives only a +1 die bonus, while more abstract shapes (tendrils, faces, grasping claws) are at a –1 to –5 die penalty depending on how different they are from the Strix's own form. A number of illusions appears equal to successes on the activation roll, and may participate in combat using the Strix's Initiative and Attributes, but only serve as distractions — they neither suffer nor inflict damage. Discerning the true Strix among its creations requires a Wits + Composure roll penalized by the Strix's Shadow Potency.

At Shadow Potency 7, a Strix may spend a second Dread Power slot on this power, granting its illusions some degree of physicality if it spends an extra point of Vitae on the power. The illusions gain Corpus equal to the Strix's Resistance (and are destroyed when they lose all Corpus to any form of damage), and inflict +1L damage when they attack.

Labyrinth

Minimum Shadow Potency 5

From observing Kindred in their Havens, the Strix have learned the value of a home ground advantage. This Power denies that advantage, turning a vampire's home against it, or traps prey in a place of the Strix's design. The Strix partially embodies itself in a building, sealing all exits except for one — in case the Strix itself needs to escape.

Action: Instant

Cost: 4 Vitae

Dice Pool: Power + Finesse

The dice pool is penalized by any Safe Place Merits invested in the building (as penalties), but the building can be of any size up to a large mansion. If successful, the building seals itself — doors and windows vanish, replaced by walls, and the Strix's Shadow Potency is added to the Durability and structure of all materials. A single access point, decided on by the Strix when using this using this power, remains open. The access point only needs to be as large as the Strix needs to escape when in Shadow Form, but can be larger if the Strix anticipates having to use it to exit and enter the labyrinth while remaining embodied in a host. The Labyrinth remains sealed for the Strix's Shadow Potency in nights. It may release it early by paying one Vitae.

Vitae Powers

The Strix are just as practiced at consuming and using Vitae as the Kindred, and use these Dread Powers to alter or increase their capabilities.

Indomitable

Minimum Shadow Potency 1

One of the most common Dread Powers, this ability (or curse) is a relic of the Strix's war against the Dead Julii, kept useful by the Strix's ongoing antagonism with vampires. The Strix is immune to mind-affecting Disciplines (Majesty, Nightmare, Obfuscate, and Dominate), and if it is the target of one, rolls its Shadow Potency contested by the vampire's Blood Potency. If successful, the Strix turns the power back on the pretender — the vampire suffers a penalty to all Mental and Social rolls equal to the Strix's successes for the rest of the night.

Kindred Disciplines

Minimum Shadow Potency 1

The Strix can use Kindred Disciplines when embodied in vampiric hosts, and some Strix become practiced enough at the strangely physical uses of Vitae that they retain the ability even after leaving the host behind. Each Dread Power slot devoted to Kindred Disciplines provides the Strix's Shadow Potency in Discipline dots, which the Strix can spread among any Disciplines it has encountered. The Strix may even give up dots to instead gain three Experiences' worth of Devotions per dot.

The Strix can't use Theban Sorcery, but they can use this Dread Power to learn Crúac. Additional rites after those gained by dots in the Discipline cost one dot of "Discipline" for two dots of rites. However, Crúac still requires blood for all Vitae expenditure *after* the initial point of Vitae to activate the Discipline (see p. XX) — the Strix can only use it when in a revenant or Kindred host, or by murdering ghoul or vampire captives for their blood.

This power may be bought multiple times.

Command the Lost

Minimum Shadow Potency 4

The Strix are used to subduing the wills of hosts, and some turn that power outward, aping and mocking the way Kindred twist the minds of their playthings. A Dominated servant is an investment of power for a vampire. For a Strix with this power, he's a toy to be discarded.

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Power + Resistance – victim's Resolve

The victim of this power must have a broken will already — whether by the Strix or by anyone else. The Strix love taking other's slaves away from them. Victims with any of these conditions qualify: third-stage Vinculum; the Broken, Fugue, Intoxicated, Enervated and Soulless Conditions; and having spent all Willpower points.

For the rest of the night, the victim must obey any instructions the Strix gives them, even fatal ones. He may not spend Willpower to resist any of the Strix's Dread Powers or Embodiments.

Shadow Infection

Minimum Shadow Potency 5

The Strix emits an aura of sapping, leeching enervation and lethargy, stealing energy from everything around it.

Action: Instant

Cost: 3 Vitae

Dice Pool: Finesse + Resistance

If successful, all living beings within the Strix's Shadow Potency in yards (meters) suffer a penalty to all dice pools equal to its Finesse. Every living victim affected grants the Strix one Vitae and inflicts one lethal damage. Vampires do not give up their Vitae so easily, but can't direct it themselves — any vampire or ghoul caught in the affected area can't spend Vitae. The effects fade from all victims at the end of the scene.

Soul Bite

Minimum Shadow Potency 7

One of the most heinous Dread Powers, a Strix with this power has learned to tear at the very foundations of living beings — their souls.

Action: Instant and Contested

Cost: 5 Vitae

Dice Pool: Power + Finesse vs. Victim's Composure + Resolve

The victim, unlike other Strix forms of feeding, *must* be conscious, and must be a living human being with no supernatural powers — the Strix needs the soul to be active in order to hook it like a worm and rip it out of the victim, and the souls of monsters are too strange for the Strix to grab hold of. If the Strix succeeds, it removes the victim's soul. The victim begins to suffer from the Soulless Condition (see p. 305).

Living souls aren't much good for the Strix by themselves — they can't eat them like they can consume one another through diablerie. The soul does, however, continue to produce Vitae while detached. The Strix may attach it to an object with another successful Power + Finesse roll, creating a *phylactery*, a soul-housing talisman. A phylactery produces one Vitae per night, which the Strix can absorb by touching it in Shadow Form or by handling it in a host body. Vitae not absorbed is lost — the phylactery only ever contains one Vitae. Some Strix have variants of this Dread Power that cause strange effects linking the victim to the phylactery containing her soul, such as a doll that inflicts very real versions of mock-injuries it undergoes on its "twin."

A Gallery of Horrors

Anna Red

Darkened trees, undergrowth…the noises are faint, but unmistakable. It's hunting me. Has been for near on half an hour now. At least, that was when I realized it. I don't know what it is, but it's careful. Patient. Toying with me. It knows what I am. It's taking precautions. Even I couldn't spot it. Only a faint glimmer every now and then. It took my coterie first. Both of them. One at a time. Left me for last. And now, it's hunting me.

Something stalks the forests and alleys. Something powerful. Something wickedly intelligent, and baleful. Malicious. It enjoys what it does. It hunts, it kills, and not randomly — it relishes panic and fear. Grows stronger from it. It takes the body of a woman, usually a hiker, hermit, or lone homeless person, whose skin it rides until falling apart. The Kindred call her Anna Red.

Anna Red is more of a rumor than a fact. No surprise when dealing with the Strix…but what's unique is that she's a very widespread rumor. All kinds of most likely unconnected events are blamed on her — the disappearance of a respected Nosferatu in Portland, the brutal massacre of a ghoul family in rural Georgia, and similar crimes, both real and fictional. One vampire called her an "anthropomorphization of the primal fear of the predator — a symbolic juxtaposition of Kindred and kine, representing our fears of being hunted as we ourselves hunt." More down-to-Earth ones call her a damn good story to tell in the woods.

The truth, of course, is that Anna Red is real. She's out there, right now. Where she resembles a beast, it's as much in cunning as savagery. She might consider what she does art, if she cared to defend it. Simply striking terror into the hearts of your enemies, hunting down a fleeing victim, is fine, but not very interesting in the long term. No, she prefers a much more refined approach, and she has her routine down to pitch perfection.

First, she starts by picking off a random homeless person here, a loner there — people who won't be missed. The police

eventually realize there's a serial killer on the loose (and if they don't, she starts leaving clues). The media starts casually reporting on "his" doings, but because of who she targets, it's hard to rally institutional and community support. She leaves just enough clues that the Kindred population can safely conclude it's a vampire behind the killings. She keeps eluding the police for a while — maybe months, maybe even a year. The Kindred grow more and more concerned over these Masquerade breaks, and try to cover it up.

Then, she moves to hate crimes, targeting minority groups. At this point, the first cries of "cover-up!" and "conspiracy!" usually start up...which presents a new kind of risk for the Kindred who actually *are* covering something up. And when that happens, Anna Red breaks into the home of a completely average, random family. Panic rises, and hopefully, a copycat or two has started up by now.

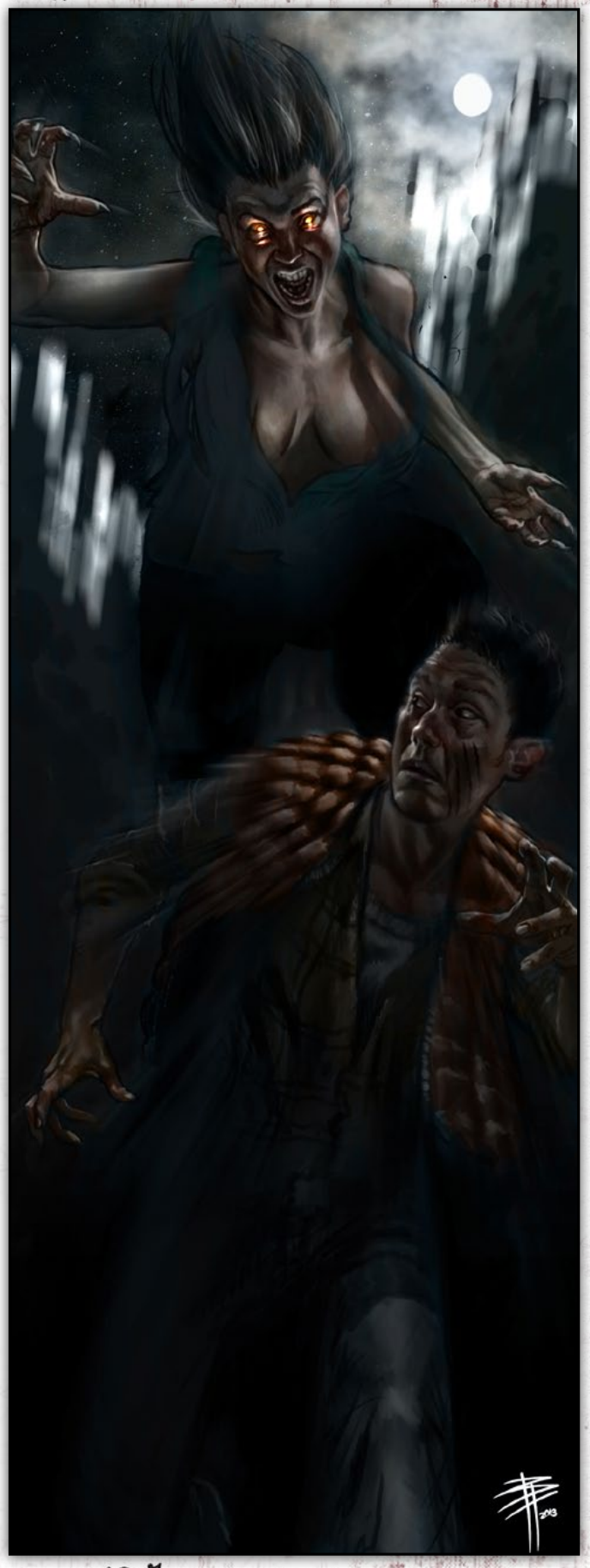
That's when Anna Red targets a respectable, wealthy person, preferably a vampire or retainer thereof, and kills them in the open, somewhere busy, without being spotted, in an obviously supernatural manner. And she leaves them drained of blood. When this happens, she makes a sport of trying to maintain the panic at fever pitch for a while. Eventually she grows tired of the game and vanishes without a trace, to hunt random wanderers for a few years out in the wilderness.

Stories

A spree of murders motivated by hatred hits a minority group that a member of the coterie belongs to. His friends in the community voice their fears; the police seem more interested in protecting the majority; and the prince just wants to cover it up. If anything is to be done, it's up to the coterie. The killer is obviously a vampire, but there are enough vampires in the city that it's hard to narrow it down significantly. The police will be of limited help, unless someone has a trustworthy contact within the department. But if the coterie can catch the killer, its members stand to gain status in the eyes of those who concern themselves with the Masquerade. Meanwhile, there are whispers of strange animal sightings — especially of owls.

A parapsychologist affiliated with a guerrilla journalist organization has been investigating the recent rash of murders and has come to a conclusion as stunning to his peers as it is eye-rollingly obvious to the dead: It's a vampire. Not only that, but he claims to have proof, which he's planning to plaster all over the Internet as fast as possible, once he gathers the last few clues and organizes it all. In the middle of this grand series of threats to the Masquerade, however, the Kindred have already mobilized all their assets, and those are stretched thin as it is. Someone will need to show initiative and deal with the researcher. And to further complicate matters, it turns out the parapsychologist is someone the coterie is already familiar with — a contact or ally, perhaps, or an old enemy. Could they come under suspicion of treason against the Kindred?

The recent rash of vampire-related murders has gotten suspicion boiling among the Kindred. The Circle blames the



Ordo Dracul, the Daeva blame the Nosferatu, and quite a few eyes are turned in the direction of a purported diablerist elder who was exonerated of his crimes not long ago. Paranoia boils to a fever pitch, fingers point; several Kindred have already tried to use the situation to rid themselves of rivals. The threat to the Masquerade is clear and immediate, and something needs to be done now. But how can anyone be trusted to do something, when anyone could be the killer? And as the killings escalate, what measures will become necessary to deal with it?

Name: Anna Red

Vice: Wrath

Shadow Potency: 5

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 5, Resistance 5

Skills: Occult 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Stealth 3, Weaponry 3, Intimidation 2

Corpus: 7

Willpower: 10

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 5

Initiative: 10

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred, Possess Living

Dread Powers: *Shadow;* Sudden Surprise, Smoke and Mirrors. *Vitae;* Indomitable, Kindred Disciplines x 2.

Disciplines; Celerity 3, Obfuscate 1, Vigor 3, Resilience 3

Vitae: 15, 5/turn

Banes: Fire, Hated by Beasts, Plague of Purity, Sunlight

The Baron

"This is the finest vintage. 28 years old. Healthy." Our host sniffs the goblet of blood. "Ah, delectable." I raise my own goblet, sipping it. It's decent enough, but I can't help but think it'd taste better a little more fresh. Still, politeness counts, especially when you want the support of a guy like this.

"Yes, indeed," I reply, using my best table manners

"My young friend, dawn is fast approaching." A glance outside the stained-glass windows confirms this. "You will stay here, yes?"

I smile, a smile I can't quite keep free of strain. "Yes, of course, Sir."

In the year 1853, a Strix took over the body of the Mekhet noble, Baron Örnsköld, who at the time was less than a decade into his Requiem. The Strix came to be known by the vampire's name, with those very few who realized its true nature referring to the creature itself simply by the name "The Baron." Seeking to establish a safe identity for itself, the very first act of the merged creature was to diablerize Örnsköld's sire, the Countess Oxenstierna, and then take what valuables he could carry and sail to America.

Ever since, the good Baron Örnsköld has remained torpid within his own undying body, the body's puppeteer carefully maintaining its masquerade as a member of Kindred society. The Baron has sired three childer, none of whom has ever talked to the real Mekhet. All these childer are marked by some of the strangeness of the Strix, in some way, but only one of them has any suspicion at all that something is off.

The Baron dwells in a rather opulent Renaissance-style manor outside the city, rarely leaving the safety of that place. He is known to be an eccentric among Kindred, but then again, isn't every Shadow? The Baron maintains his personal masquerade with care, for much the same reason Kindred masquerade from mortals: If one is a wise hunter, one does not reveal one's presence to the quarry.

And quarry is what Baron Örnsköld considers the Kindred. To him, the thrill of the chase is the greatest joy of the hunt, not the feeding itself. His hunting grounds are his own extensive manor-house and its grounds.

The Baron is careful to pick only those Kindred who will not be missed as his prey: Itinerant Gangrel, the lowliest Nosferatu outcasts, unaligned with few ties...these are the quarry he hunts, with the occasional more powerful Kindred thrown in for sport and as a challenge.

His preferred methods of hunting are twofold: First, and most desirable, is having the prey come to him. The powerful Mekhet elder makes an enticing ally, and he has carefully cultivated a reputation as a vampire whose ear is open to the voices of the voiceless. Thus, many come to him; and he entertains them, treats them as honored guests, and then shows them to the guest quarters. He allows about three out of four to leave. The second method is more direct, and requires planning. He prefers to use it only when truly hungry: Kidnapping.

Regardless of how the unfortunate soul ends up in his mansion, she will wake up the next evening to find that all exits from the building have simply vanished. The Baron will appear and inform her that if she can escape intact, she may leave. Very few ever do.

Stories

An associate (or even friend) of a coterie member is a Mekhet — a childe of the good Baron Örnsköld. Said vampire is a neonate; she is a fey, mercurial thing, given to fits of pique, moody silences, and eerie displays. While she will defend her actions rigorously if challenged, in private she has admitted that she is sometimes unnerved herself at the changes her mind underwent during the Embrace. Further, any vampire tasting her blood will find there is something...not quite Kindred about it. One day, she displays a startling new power nigh unheard-of among the undead: the ability to survive in sunlight indefinitely, albeit paralyzed. No other vampires observed the event, but the neonate herself confesses the truth to her friend. This obviously casts some suspicion on the Baron himself. Do his other childer have this ability, too? Or is it an individual quirk? Can the ability be learned, perhaps similar to a Coil of the Dragon? What will the coterie do with this information?

One too many Kindred has gone missing, and wiser heads among the Invictus have come to the conclusion that something

is hunting vampires. Something that knows too much. The Invictus sends the coterie to investigate, and the clues point to the old manor outside the city. What can be found in there to explain this? And if the coterie goes in for a night's reconnaissance, will they ever return?

Somehow, the coterie has ended up trapped inside Örnsköld Manor. The Baron himself has appeared to taunt them, and tell them that they will be allowed to leave if they can find an exit. And now he is hunting them across the shadowed mansion and the grounds outside, into the crypts beneath, and through the hedge maze. He can seemingly melt into pure shadow, and reform from any patch of darkness there is, always cutting them off, wherever they go. His cold laughter can be heard resounding throughout the house, and strange things can be seen slithering, crawling, and walking through the hallways in glimpses. Reality itself seems upset in this place, and the hunter is relentless and remorseless. Can they survive the night? Will anyone even realize they are gone? And if they do escape the manor with knowledge of the Baron's secrets, what contingency plans will he enact to silence them?

Name: The Baron – Baron Örnsköld

Vice: Pride

Shadow Potency: 6

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 4, Resistance 6

Skills: Occult 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, (increase these and add more as appropriate to your chronicle, but all Strix have these at a minimum)

Corpus: 8

Willpower: 10

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 6

Initiative: 10

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Vampire, Synthesis (Baron Örnsköld)

Dread Powers: *Shadow;* Sudden Surprise, Labyrinth. *Vitae;* Indomitable, Kindred Disciplines x 4.

Disciplines; Auspex 4, Celerity 4, Dominate 2, Nightmare 2, Obfuscate 4, Vigor 4, Resilience 4.

Vitae: 20, 6/turn

Banes: Abjuration, Fire, Sunlight, Symbols

Kindred Host: Baron Örnsköld

The Baron's Childer

The Baron has an unusually strong bond with his host body, and can sire Kindred. The resulting childer are Mekhet, but have unusual mental quirks and may develop unique Disciplines or other abilities.

The Black Cat

The cat's eyes gleam in the moonlight, a pale yellow. It sits on the windowsill, staring, its tail lying flat and motionless. It does not purr, does not make a sound, but just watches and waits. As you draw closer, it finally stands up, and promptly falls over dead. The stench of rotting carcass grows stronger, and there is a rustling behind the fence – followed by the growl of a very large dog.

Animals are pure. They're simple. And they can be very malicious. Unlike vampires, animals know their place and don't overstep their bounds. This makes them perfect hosts for the Strix called the Black Cat. Because animals coexist with humans in their cities, the Black Cat finds no shortage of hosts close to its chosen prey, whether that be humans or vampires. Recently dead pets, strays, even wild animals forced into neighborhoods to find food and shelter, all of them make suitable hosts for this Strix. Once it has taken on a host, it looks for vampires, following the telltale signs. After it finds its targets, the creature then studies them to learn more about its prey, using an innocuous body like that of a cat, a rat, or a bird.

The Black Cat hungers for more than simply spying on vampires, however. It wants to tear them down, each of them, stripping away their kingdoms of concrete and glass. Vampires fancy themselves decadent rulers of the night, rather than the savage Beasts they truly are deep inside. The Black Cat means to show them the horrible truth, naked and dripping red. Vampires are monstrous cannibals, preying on their former friends, families, and strangers, bringing pain and misery wherever they go, all the while playing at being refined, sensual predators. They have forgotten the law of the jungle, that by fang and claw alone does one prove one's worth. The Black Cat hates vampires for their betrayal of this law more than anything else. It sometimes actually respected vampires who realized this truth and set themselves up as kings and queens of blood and damnation. Those days are long gone, and such vampires are now invariably destroyed by their own kind or others. Thus, the Black Cat hates the modern world for its promotion of weakness, for its slow corrosion of the Beast's purity. The world was once a paradise of flesh and blood for the taking. Now, the Black Cat is determined to return the world to that hunter's paradise, one vampire at a time.

This Strix will only take on animals as hosts, never deigning to sully itself in the body of a vampire. Once it has chosen a suitable host and studied its prey, it does everything in its power to further its agenda: leaving animal corpses in and around the vampire's haven, wounding humans and other vampires to provoke the Beast by the smell of blood. It will also possess draugr, whose Beasts have overcome simple Humanity and returned them to the primal fury of their most ancient selves. When one can communicate with the Black Cat at all – normally impossible without some kind of telepathic power or the ability to communicate with animals – it speaks of the creation of vampires as the world's most perfect predator. Vampires do not tire, do not age, do not falter to disease or poison, hunting the

night where none but the greatest of predators tread. Vampires, the Cat says, were made to rule the night. Now they cower behind Masquerades and titles while humans rule the world.

The Black Cat will see to it that they remember *what*, not *who* they are.

Stories

A vampire finds animal corpses littering her haven, both inside and outside. At first, they are just small animals, like mice and small birds. Eventually, the bodies get larger: rats, cats, even dogs. If the vampire identifies strongly with a certain animal, perhaps one whose shape she can assume with Protean, the Black Cat will leave just such a corpse behind. Then it starts to leave wounded animals nearby, especially when the vampire is hungry. A wary vampire might notice the shape of black cat, likely a stray, with matted fur and the stink of a filthy animal, always lingering in the area, watching. Few would connect the cat with the events plaguing her life, but eventually the vampire will realize that these events only started after the black cat appeared. If she does not notice, or doesn't take steps to drive away the menace, the Black Cat will eventually start wounding humans when the vampire is hungry, following it in the form of dogs or rats and striking when no one will notice. It may even attack a human in order to drive away a vampire's chosen prey, leaving her with little recourse and the Beast growling in hunger. Its ultimate goal is to make the vampire frenzy from hunger and give in to the Beast, bit by bit, especially if the frenzy claims a human life in the process.

A vampire's favored ghoul pet begins to act strangely. To start with, it seems to be much more intelligent than before, learning new tricks and understanding its master far better than it did before. It even helps hunt, sniffing out suitable prey. However, it is not long before it starts to go out during the day, coming back with a red muzzle and the smell of blood on its breath. Bodies start to turn up, mauled to death, and the clues point back to the vampire's pet, bringing heat down on its owner. With humans and Kindred both breathing down the vampire's neck, she has to find answers and quickly. What will she do when the animal disappears but the bodies keep piling up?

Tired of scratching away at the veil of Humanity, the Black Cat decides to try something bigger. It possesses dead dogs and any appropriate wildlife in the area: cougars, coyotes, bears, even feral rats. A spate of fatal animal attacks follow, in which many of the victims are completely exsanguinated. The public is on high alert, causing problems for everyone involved and making hunting the streets even more difficult. The vampire court suspects something at work behind the sudden increase in animal attacks, but has difficulty tracking down a culprit — until a draugr begins to leave a trail of victims that draws the news agencies to sensationalize the attacks.

Name: Black Cat
Vice: Curiosity
Shadow Potency: 2
Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 5, Resistance 3
Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Occult 2, Stealth 2
Corpus: 5
Willpower: 8
Size: 2
Speed: 12
Defense: 5
Initiative: 8
Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse
Dread Powers: *Host;* Breath Eater. *Vitae;* Kindred Disciplines.
Disciplines; Animalism 2
Vitae: 11, 2/turn
Banes: Fire, Sunlight

Animal Host: Black Cat

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2
Skills: Physical; Athletics 4, Brawl 2 (Claws), Stealth 4 (Stalking), Survival 2
Health: 4
Size: 2
Speed: 12 (species factor 7)
Defense: 8

Granny

"Yes, dear? Oh, do come in! I have some lovely tea and cupcakes ready. You don't drink tea? Oh, that's a pity, but I suppose I can whip up something you'd like. So tell me, dear, why did you come to see old Granny? Ah, yes, I've had that question a lot. If you want the answer, dear, I'd be happy to tell you, but maybe you could do me a little favor first?"

Some Strix prefer total anonymity, leaving behind a trail of inexplicable chaos and destruction. Others prefer to make their presences known, if not their true natures. Some few try to balance secrecy and notoriety. The Strix known as Granny is one of them, presenting herself as a benevolent old spirit while leaving a trail of clues pointing to her true nature. Some clients enter bargains with her with full knowledge of her motivations, but most only discover her machinations after they've already played their part in her schemes.

This being prefers to take over the bodies of kindly-looking, elderly ladies, often striking bargains with them to achieve that goal. She is a strange, quiet creature, sticking to the periphery of the world, offering her advice for trinkets and minor favors. Her advice is much sought after, and requires much seeking after — the creature called Granny is well-known to be a body jumper, which makes her an elusive one to find. Her advice is always helpful, and always insightful. Most Kindred who know of her suspect her to be a mortal witch of some kind, or perhaps a spirit of knowledge, or perhaps something else. Many are wary, but few are wary enough.

The price for Granny's helpful advice is always low. But both the advice and the price are carefully chosen to benefit herself. Her advice is carefully selected to nudge the petitioner in the

direction she wants him to go, and the price she asks is never as harmless as it seems. She has the ability to see the web of influences and connections that various actions lead to, and she delights in finding just the right thread to tweak to cause some disaster. While the disaster can never be easily traced to her, she relishes placing out clues that her mental inferiors will miss. Sometimes — rarely — she underestimates them.

Granny is none too particular about what disaster happens, but prefers to target the wealthy and influential. She considers herself a master manipulator, and takes pride and glee in her art. The effect matters less than the act itself. She will break up a happy marriage, or have a healthy person committed to a mental institution for life, just as readily as she will cause a plane to crash or a mass murderer to escape justice. The most devilish thing is that since these consequences so rarely strike the petitioner, and her advice is so helpful, many would seek her out even if they knew what she was and what her game is.

Granny is not above more direct measures, though. If her plans are foiled, she flies into a deadly rage, and the Strix is not as old or fragile as its body appears. When angered, she sprouts long, black, owl-like talons from her fingers, which she uses to quickly skewer her opponent. Then, of course, she finds a way to use the death to spread more chaos, while conveniently avoiding discovery. Some Kindred whisper that not every petitioner returns. While disappearances certainly do happen, it's a rare event, as Granny finds simple murder to be un-artistic.

Stories

Strange, apparently random accidents have started plaguing the domain. A local tough accidentally met the sun, a school bus had a nasty crash, and a measles epidemic has claimed several lives, among other things. More rational-minded Kindred believe it's a simple statistical cluster, but the superstitious view is that the city has fallen under some curse. And some insist that there are subtle clues that point to deliberate intent. In the middle of this chaos drifts an elderly mystic, who offers useful advice to those who approach her for a symbolic price. Maybe, if the coterie can find her, they could ask her what is going on? Or maybe they could try to follow the so-called clues and see where they lead?

Left with a difficult decision, where any choice could spell disaster and there is seemingly no way to even predict the probabilities, the coterie finds itself in a position where they're in dire need of guidance. It just so happens that the kindly old medium who calls herself Granny has been spotted in the city recently — maybe she could provide some much-needed guidance? If they can find her, will they be able to foresee the disastrous consequences of agreeing to her deal? Can they figure out the truth behind the kindly mask, and if they do, can they afford to turn down her advice in their difficult decision? After all, her advice *is* always helpful.

The mortal grandmother of a coterie member has started acting strangely. She still recognizes her family, and she can still recount some of her old memories, but she has grown less sociable and more withdrawn. She seems to engage in her old hobbies with less interest, but she entertains strange visitors at strange hours. And even when she's acting like her old self, there's simply something...off about her. The family suspects she's growing senile. However, among the Kindred, there are rumors about a body-jumping old sage, dispensing her wisdom in return for trinkets and minor favors to those who can find her. When the character realizes what happened to his dear old grandmother, will he find a way to exorcise Granny from grandma? What if all she requires to leave the body is a simple favor? Of course, it might be useful to have a Strix for a grandma, however briefly the body lasts. What if the character decides he values the Strix's advice more than his grandmother's life?

Name: Granny

Vice: Sadism

Shadow Potency: 7

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 7, Resistance 4

Skills: Occult 4, Politics 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2

Corpus: 6

Willpower: 10

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 7

Initiative: 11

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Vampire, Possess Living, Synthesis, Materialize

Dread Powers: *Doom;* See the Cracks, Ambition's Source, Web of Destiny. *Host;* Breath Eater, Sheep's Clothing, Talons of Fury. *Vitae;* Indomitable

Vitae: 25, 7/turn

Banes: Abjuration, Fire, Loner, Invitation, Sunlight

Hantu, the Sorcerer

You see a figure wreathed in the smoke spiraling up from the fire. It stands tall, dark and without flesh, spreading wings of shadow. A brief flash accompanies the opening of hateful yellow eyes, and then the fire flares up, singing your skin and igniting the Beast's fury. Whatever the shade is, both Man and Beast within you instinctively recoil from its wrath.

Known by many names throughout the millennia, the creature called "Hantu" is first known from legends out of Indonesia. Unlike many of its kind, Hantu has never been known to inhabit a vampire body, and only rarely possesses dead mortals. It does, however, raise them as its servants when the need arises. Hantu prefers to stick to its natural form, a creature of smoke, shadow, and malice. It hates the Kindred with a passion that sears like the sun, a hatred born in times now lost to history. Even if one could speak with Hantu, answers are not forthcoming. It prefers to let its Kindred victims know fear through mystery. Some theorize that the creature once created a clan, and that the clan then betrayed it or failed in its original purpose. These theories point to the Mekhet as an example of the clan Hantu might have created, and indeed the

Strix seems to save the fullest extent of its wrath for Mekhet.

What makes Hantu more terrifying is its mastery of fell magics, from blood sorceries to strange powers no vampire commands. Having practiced these powers over countless centuries, Hantu is more than the equal of any Kindred or mortal thaumaturge. Wielding the powers of elements, of mind-rotting fear and spells to do far worse than destroy a vampire's body, legends speak of Hantu even holding sway over the souls of the dead. Some fearful rumors hastily scrawled in withered old journals or spoken in only the most secure locations by those in the know say that vampires are not safe from this creature's hunger for souls. It diablerizes the Damned, they say, and their souls become fuel for its unholy powers. Whether or not this is true, Hantu does prefer to keep certain vampires, usually Mekhet, "alive" and incapacitated. What becomes of such victims is perhaps better left unknown.

Hantu figures into many stories around the world, but has only rarely been seen in the urban areas where vampires congregate in numbers. Its appearance always heralds a time of great disaster for the Kindred. In older times, this meant vampire hunter crusades leaving whole villages burned to the ground; the inexplicable thinning of the Blood; or plagues among mortals that left a domain with precious little food, forcing vampires to turn on one another. In the modern era, vampires attribute bridge collapses, ice storms and sometimes even tornadoes to Hantu's arcane might. One thing remains certain among all the questions: Whenever a vampire speaks of owl phantoms and disaster, the eldest begin to fear the return of Hantu the Sorcerer. Even creatures of the night must fear the shadows, the elders say, when Hantu stalks a domain. No haven is secure enough and no vampire powerful enough to stay Hantu's vengeance. So they say.

Stories

A series of unlikely omens heralds a disastrous fire that claims the lives of several prominent Kindred attending a nightclub show, along with dozens of mortals. One of the survivors mentions the dread name Hantu, the ancient demon of smoke and darkness responsible for the destruction of many Kindred domains throughout history. Soon the court is up in arms about the possibility of an attack, guided by the elders and what little knowledge they possess about the Strix. A whole city full of paranoid vampires must try to draw battle plans for something with which they cannot reason, something without physical form. The only chance lies in the portents that herald the most powerful uses of Hantu's magic, leading to a race against the doomsday clock to follow the signs and find Hantu before it's too late.

Even the shadows are no haven for the city's Mekhet anymore. Something is hunting them down, and survivors of the attacks recall fleeting glimpses of a yellow-eyed phantom lurking in the dark. Some Mekhet know enough about Kindred legend to whisper the names "Strix" and "Hantu." Yet the city's rulers don't believe the stories, thinking the domain under attack by vampire hunters. The world is a dangerous enough place, they say, why grasp at legends? Facing potential eradication with little support, the Mekhet must find some way to escape their foe or lure it into a trap. Yet as the story unfolds, it becomes increasingly obvious that this is an enemy which cannot simply be staked and left for the sun, and one which has far greater knowledge of vampires than they do of *it*.

Name: Hantu

Vice: Hate

Shadow Potency: 8

Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 5, Resistance 8

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Occult 5

Corpus: 11

Willpower: 10

Size: 3

Speed: 12

Defense: 8

Initiative: 13

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred, Possess Living, Synthesis, Materialize, Enter Twilight

Dread Powers: *Doom;* Vice Manipulation, Web of Destiny. *Shadow;* Shadow Infection, Soul Bite, Talons of Fury. *Vitae;* Indomitable, Kindred Disciplines x 2.

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Crúac 5, Dominate 3, Nightmare 3

Vitae: 30, 8/turn

Banes: Fire, Hated By Beasts, Material Bane (Silver), Plague of Purity, Sunlight

Lady of Shivs

Her voice is soft. "My friends. I'm glad you could be here tonight. It's sad that things have come to this." She looks up, her voice gaining power. "I knew Matt. He was a friend of mine. He was a friend of yours. Matt was a good kid." She pauses, lets her words sink in. "The elders Embrace us without our consent, set rules for us without our consent, and kill us when we break those rules, to protect themselves. Who'll be next?"

Kindred society is an organism in a constant state of decay, the lifeblood flowing through its veins in dispute among the organs, and the hands resenting the brain's control. Particularly young Kindred sometimes vent their rage against the elders by drugging their victims, urging mortal protest movements to camp outside Elysium, and other petty tactics. But some want to take more drastic action, and the Lady of Shivs offers the chance.

Three incidents have been firmly attributed to her. One of those ended up with its host city going silent — those who visited it afterward say there was no sign of a Kindred presence within its bounds. Her modus operandi is fairly subtle — she starts by recruiting the pathetic dregs of Kindred society, outcasts desperate to feel a sense of acceptance and belonging. She unites them under the banner of revolution, firing up their imaginations and sense of pride.

She works her way up the ladder, relying on her charisma and ability to read others to personalize her pitch. She has the same

goals as you, the same hopes and dreams, the same concerns, and she will confess to them a moment before you bring them up. To the city's elders, she appears to be an ambitious neonate on the path to power. To would-be rebels, she appears to be the herald of a new age, finally acting upon the truths everyone already knew.

Hope is hard to stamp out. When the ambitious neonate is finally discovered to be Strix, she already has an army of fanatics on her side, who will see any attack on her as another cowardly lie by the elders and their puppets. And some would support her to the death, even if they knew what she was.

In a domain under the Lady's talons, tensions between the powerful and the weak escalate rapidly. Rebellion leads to sanctions, which lead to more rebellion, and those who haven't chosen a side watch helplessly as their city plunges towards civil war. Even the savviest Prince finds her options are limited. Giving the rebels what they want is a show of weakness — one which the Lady is sure to pounce upon. Not granting them their concessions will only inflame their anger, though, leading to more violent reprisals.

The best way to foil the Lady, therefore, is to discover her while her plans are still young, and her recruits number only a handful of misfits and outcasts. Of course, the vigilance required to have a decent chance at this is high, and the Lady of Shivs is just one Strix. This makes her more of a boogeyman, a potential worst case scenario, that might be brought up once in a blue moon. and then dismissed. Especially when those few elders who know of her are firm in their belief that if she came to *their* domain, they would be wise enough to recognize and destroy her.

Stories

The situation has escalated rapidly. The Vanguard have gutted the Carthians and gained a great deal of power, and violence has broken out between the Prince's loyalists and the rebels. Which side will the coterie choose? The Prince may reward service handsomely, or take it as her due. But the rebels could provide an opportunity for an ambitious young vampire to establish himself as a power to be reckoned with — or be crushed when the movement loses. Is it possible for the Vanguard to figure out the true nature of their leader? If they can, will they depose her, or will her supporters be too devoted? If the Prince's side figures it out first, can they capitalize on the knowledge, or will it simply come across as hollow propaganda?

The coterie has experienced abuse at the hands of their elders, so when a charismatic young Kindred approaches them with a way to achieve their common goals, it's natural to be tempted. The recruiter is a rising star in Kindred society, and they stand to gain from the alliance. Or they could join up in an attempt to infiltrate the group and gain status in the eyes of their elders. But can they avoid getting caught up in the enthusiasm of the movement, and see its true heart for what it is? Neonates who hitch their wagons to this rising star might just be pulled down when it crashes and burns, whether they joined out of genuine sentiment or cold calculation.

A city has gone silent and become a cloister. Regular correspondence between its elders and their allies in other cities hasn't arrived on schedule. Wanderers whose last known destination was the city haven't been heard from again. Even mortals seem to realize that the city's atmosphere has suddenly, subtly, changed. The situation is uncertain — the city could be dangerous, or up for grabs. An ambitious coterie of neonates could establish their own domain there, if they could survive long enough. Has the threat that laid the domain low vanished? Or is it still lurking there? Who else will rush in to fill the power vacuum — Kindred, or otherwise?

A good friend of a coterie member has suddenly vanished off the streets. The Prince and her people are keeping silent about what happened, and have banned any investigation into the matter. The friend in question is a young, charismatic Kindred who has a wide circle of friends who agree with her political views. Does the coterie investigate? What will they do when they discover that their friend is no Kindred at all? And will they be drawn into her crimes by association?

Name: Lady of Shivs

Vice: Greed

Shadow Potency: 4

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 5, Resistance 3

Skills: Occult 2, Politics 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Corpus: 5

Willpower: 8

Size: 5

Speed: 12

Defense: 5

Initiative: 8

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred

Dread Powers: *Doom;* Tip of the Tongue. *Shadow;* Screech, Smoke and Mirrors. *Vitae;* Indomitable, Kindred Disciplines appropriate to her current guise.

Disciplines; Majesty 4

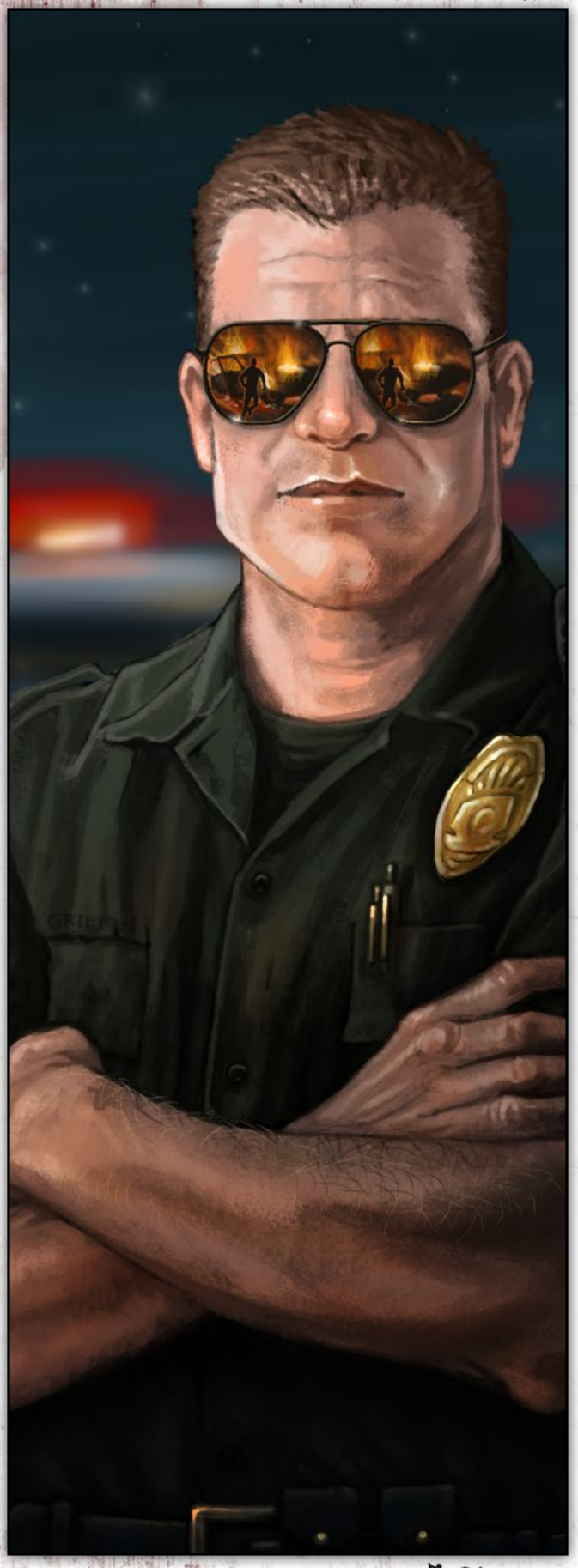
Vitae: 13, 4/turn

Banes: Fire, Loner, Sunlight

Lord of Irons

I can feel my jaw snap under the blow. The officer cackles softly. "Scream, you fucking shit. There's nothing you can do. You think anyone's gonna take the word of some little shit like you over mine? People like you, they should have the decency to stay indoors where decent folk don't have to see 'em." He punches again. Laughs. No more bones break. Luckily. The officer turns and walks off. And I lie there until someone calls 911.

The Strix dance in the shadows of the mortal world. Crime, corruption; these are places where a Strix may frolic unmolested, doing what it pleases. Police brutality and police



corruption aren't exactly unheard of in the World of Darkness, and the Strix that has been given the name Lord of Irons partakes in these extravagancies with sadistic glee.

The Lord of Irons is no wrecker of societies, but a parasite, latching itself onto the failings of law and order and having his fun with those souls who come under his clutches. He isn't faceless or scheming, but direct and personal. He does what he does because he hates. He does it because it's fun. And above all, he does it because of the thrill of getting away with it. He dives into his roles, and plays games with his victims. Sometimes, he loses. Then he finds a new host, and starts over.

Sometimes, what he does is simple — beat someone up, mess them up but good, and make sure they're discredited utterly if they try to get him convicted. Sometimes, it's more subtle — taking bribes to look the other way and keep the other cops away from crimes in progress, letting organized crime build up and function, tamper with evidence. But it's never particularly long-term. He wants instant gratification, and really has no overarching goal. He's a vandal, but he can ruin someone's life if the pique catches him. And he's spiteful and vindictive. And given his short-term use of his hosts, he has no reason not to kill.

The Lord usually targets a crooked cop for possession; she was already corrupt and secretive, making her sudden change of personality less noticeable. The Strix targets cops in large, under-funded police departments, where each officer has less oversight by their over-worked, under-paid superiors. And he targets places where crime is already flourishing, allowing his own excesses to blend in a little bit more. That is to say, he usually targets the poor.

The Lord of Irons is persistent — if he is caught or killed, he simply returns as a different cop, often going for whatever individual spoiled his fun last time around. And he usually is caught after a month or two — there's only so far the blue code of silence can stretch. Of course, by that time, he has already done a lot of harm. Occultists may notice the trail of rotted corpses, all cops with a history of corruption in life, but are likely to suspect a curse laid by a vigilante or angry spirit. The idea that police brutality might be caused by a body-jacking owl demon is far enough out there that he gets away scot-free, to start all over again as a different officer.

His victims have few true options beyond simply ganging up with friends to stay safe, but the Lord of Irons will probably return in his next form anyway to "avenge his discredited comrade" and finish his old work. Running and hiding can turn into a lifestyle rather quickly. Only drastic measures can truly make the victim safe again.

Stories

The coterie breaks up a police beating of one of its informants, arranging for the officer to be arrested. A week later, a different officer is suddenly on the group's trail, seemingly determined to kill them. He stalks them every so often, and then finally attacks a member when she's on her

own, swinging a two by four. The vampire obviously wins the fight — but the next time the officer finds one of them alone, he's brandishing a blowtorch! How did he figure out what they are? Will he try to direct the entire police department to start hunting vampires? The characters finally manage to get rid of him — only to have him replaced with another officer! Worse yet, an older Kindred is now angry at them for costing her two ghouls.

The police have gone off the handle. There are beatings and even murders committed by officers of the law, and they start taking bribes from criminals to look the other way. At first, only one officer seems to be involved, but soon after, other cops are spotted doing the same. The brutality seems to target mainly minorities and the powerless, leading to rumors that a hate group is taking over the city. The public is enraged by the city government's failure to protect them, and embattled communities begin taking up arms to defend themselves. Can the characters find the culprit before the city falls into anarchy? Or will they take advantage of the chaos to further their own interests?

A hostile creature has been plaguing the Kindred of the city, and the coterie are among the Kindred sent to track it down. But it's proving elusive, especially once the police force starts seemingly deliberately protecting the thing. At the same time, one of the characters' ghoul contacts in the police starts giving them odd information, short and rather sparse in details, which doesn't help very much. Tracking the creature proves to be a time-consuming task, and after a while their ghoul contact is put on trial for police brutality — and then dies of natural causes in her cell. The informer who got the officer busted turns up dead not long after. There's something really wrong at the department — could the entire police force be in on this? Have they been enslaved by the creature?

Name: Lord of Irons

Vice: Hatred

Shadow Potency: 5

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 4, Resistance 4

Skills: Occult 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 1

Corpus: 6

Willpower: 8

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 5

Initiative: 8

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred, Possess Living

Dread Powers: *Host;* Breath Eater, Grotesque Ejection, Hollow Bones. *Shadow;* Sudden Surprise. *Vitae;* Indomitable.

Vitae: 15, 5/turn

Banes: Fire, Plague of Purity, Ravening, Sunlight

Marty Baxton

The Carthian waves awkwardly as he approaches. He must be new to Elysium, since he looks out of place and a little disheveled. He's voiced his support of your ideas in the past, however, and never seems too ambitious for his own power. Such allies are rare, and it's somewhat comforting to know not every vampire in the court is looking to knife you in the back.

Marty Baxton ("Bax" to his friends) is an easygoing guy, a Carthian neonate Embraced young. He is kind of an awkward young man, friendly enough but lacking in much of the guile that other Kindred use in their Social maneuvering. Bax doesn't seem like much of a power player, instead preferring to remain on the sidelines. He is quick to befriend any vampires who approach him, and offers his support to the coterie in Elysium and on the street. Willing to perform even arduous favors for little recompense, Bax can easily ingratiate himself among a group of more experienced vampires. He knows such relationships are imbalanced but does not care as long as he has the friendship of some vampires who know the ways of the Requiem better than he does.

Yes, Marty is a Strix inhabiting the body of a vampire, but he has no directly malicious agenda. He has gotten quite good at impersonating a vampire and remaining an unassuming member of the city's Kindred. His goals are as mysterious as his seemingly endless supply of friendliness. There is only one real oddity to his behavior: He does not frenzy, nor does he ever get angry (though he can sometimes feign anger). Astute observers will note that he does not seem sincere, and this is because the Strix possessing him does not truly understand emotion. He has found pleasure to be the easiest emotion to grasp, since it comes naturally to vampires during the Kiss. Though he is trying to master the vagaries of anger, he finds it difficult to truly feel the intensity of the emotion that most vampires do when the Beast stirs them to wrath.

In an attempt to avoid making waves, Bax simply extends his friendship to all who will have it, and is perhaps a little too eager to please his newfound allies. Most simply take him for a fool Embraced by an even more foolish sire, soon to be used up and discarded by someone with more sense. They are happy to make use of Marty's services while he survives, unaware that in their taking advantage of him, he is learning more and more about them and what makes them tick. Bax knows many secrets, simply because many coteries overlook him due to his laid-back attitude. He sometimes trades these secrets for free, "just between friends," and observes the results. The more he learns about Kindred society, the better he can hide among them, and the more he masters the strange emotions of these creatures.

What is Marty's ultimate goal? He doesn't tell anyone, and perhaps he doesn't even know that himself. For now he is content to study and learn, gathering secrets and allies among the Kindred community. Perhaps one day he will

make a play using the connections he has gathered, turning on his former friends and sowing chaos among the Kindred community before disappearing to pull the same plot elsewhere.

Stories

Bax makes for a good ally to a coterie. He can take a proactive role, approaching the characters and declaring that he is new to the court, looking to make some friends. When he backs up his words with actions, the characters may be willing to trust him more. They don't realize that he is learning far more from them than they are from him, and that his trade is secrets. He may not be a direct threat now, but if he should ever decide to take advantage of those who take advantage of *him*, he'll have a lot more leverage than they realize. When the coterie's rivals seem to have inside information that puts them one step ahead, few might suspect someone like Bax of foul play until it's too late.

The new neonate seems almost clueless about vampire society. He stumbles his way through social gatherings, constantly steps on the toes of elders without meaning to and irritates other neonates. Bax is friendly enough, just lacking in the social graces that most vampires quickly develop. He approaches the coterie and tries to befriend them, desperate to learn his way in Kindred society after being abandoned by his sire — whom he actually diablerized once possessed by the Strix. He is eager to please his allies, and will even join the coterie if they let him. Once in their trust, he tries to continually prove himself, testing the boundaries of his friendship with the characters as though unsure just how far it will go. If they study his odd behavior, they might notice some telltale signs of something wrong. Surveillance might even find him out in the light of noon, which raises a whole new slew of questions.

Name: Bax
Vice: Cowardly
Shadow Potency: 4
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 5, Resistance 3
Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 1, Occult 2, Subterfuge 4
Corpus: 5
Willpower: 8
Size: 2
Speed: 12
Defense: 5
Initiative: 8
Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred
Dread Powers: *Doom;* Ambition's Source, False Fiend. *Host;* Sheep's Clothing. *Shadow;* Smoke and Mirrors.
Vitae: 13, 4/turn
Banes: Fire, Loner, Sunlight

Mother

"Don't get too close to the window," Sorin said. He pulled back the little curtain they'd hung over the window so Prince Abel could see the creature in the cell. It huddled in the corner, shoulders hunched, face turned away and hidden from view. As Abel watched, the creature slowly turned its head to look at him. Its great yellow eyes were round and unblinking, and between them a slope turning into a beak where its nose and mouth once existed. The beast let out a shriek and threw itself at the cell door. Sorin quickly shut the curtain, though it could not drown out the high-pitched cries. "We don't know who or what made it. All we know is that it's...it's a vampire."

Kindred legend speaks of Strix originating entire clans. No vampire in the modern nights can say whether or not this is true, but the evidence is there for those who wish to look. Most won't like what they find, but the naked truth is rarely friend to vampires. Some Strix, when they deign to speak with their ancient nemeses at all, corroborate this story, delighting in the anguish it causes their progeny. Or perhaps some wish to remind their wayward children of what they have forsaken in order set them back upon the proper path.

Just as vampires can lose their way, so can Strix. "Mother" is one such creature. She — insofar as "she" sees herself as a would-be mother — mourns the loss of her old purpose. The fires of anger that once sustained her through the long nights have died to an ember. Vampires are such a scattered species and have all but forgotten their creators. There is little joy to be found anymore in tormenting the descendants of another's line. Mother wants something more, something new and exciting to disturb the monotony of the nights. She wants to create a new clan, so that she may once more vent all her rage upon something.

While owl imagery is common in the legendry of the Daeva and some others, the only written records that name the Strix are those from centuries after the fall of the Camarilla. However those "Julii" were really created, the process is beyond Mother. So far, all she can do is create flawed childer, but she feels that with practice will come mastery. In the meantime, Mother leaves her creations to run free, invariably to be destroyed by the sun, by their "cousins" or the weaponry of frightened mortals. Thankfully, stories of half-owl, half-human mutants are confined to the tabloids, but the fear they inspire in vampires is all too real. Mother's childer are vampires in the sense that they drink blood, they burn in sunlight and they are neither dead nor alive. However, all are monstrously deformed. Many have beaks and horrific owl-eyes instead of human eyes. Others have fleshy, feather-like growths covering their bodies, or horribly distended mouths full of tiny beak-like fangs. None can pass for human, and all are as lost to the Beast as the most feral draugr. Though they are far removed from the Damned, Mother does not fret. She may be decades away from perfecting her childer, but to an immortal creature, even decades are ultimately meaningless.

For the Kindred, however, these creations are meaningful in a terrifying way. Few suspect the Strix or even know the legends

of their kind, but they know something is out there, somehow Embracing people and creating these monsters. Every one is a threat to the Masquerade, and every one is an affront to the vampires who view themselves top of the food chain. If Mother succeeds, there will be a new clan to vie with the others, an unknown, and Kindred fear and hate the unknown. Or she may succeed in creating a breed of monsters that threatens to tear open the Masquerade's throat. Either way, the Mother of such abominations must be put to the torch before her childer disrupt the delicate balance.

Stories

A series of very public attacks that suggest a mindless draugr draw both Kindred and mortal attention. Yet when the court finally tracks down the culprit, it is a monster made in mockery of man and vampire. No vampire steps forward as the sire of the creature...but then, who would? While some theorize it is a Gangrel from a neighboring domain lost to the Beast, more such creatures begin to turn up. Their origins are a mystery, but it is a rapidly growing threat to the city's Kindred domain. Some of the creatures cry for their Mother before they are destroyed, leading the court on a desperate hunt for the mother of monsters.

A sudden influx of new vampires to the domain surprises the local court. These newcomers possess strange Disciplines never before seen and have no knowledge of Kindred customs. The eldest of them is less than a month old, but wields power on par with the elders of the city. Moreover, these upstarts have no desire to conform to the archaic Traditions of their kin. Rather, they are intent on finding their own lot in the city, revering a strange, owl-eyed Mother and hunting with no regard for territory or self-control. Now the local vampires find themselves embroiled in a turf war against a new enemy about whom they know too little, sired by a creature they do not understand. Delving into Kindred lore reveals a possible culprit, but the answer is far more frightening than even the newcomers: If the Strix have returned, more terrible miracles might follow. Is this really the birth of a new clan? And if so, can the court allow them to flourish, or must they wipe out this fledgling clan before it can spread beyond the city limits?

Name: Mother

Vice: Ambition

Shadow Potency: 6

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 4, Resistance 6

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 4, Expression 2, Occult 2

Corpus: 8

Willpower: 10

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 4

Initiative: 10

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred, Possess Living, Synthesis.

Dread Powers: *Doom;* The Beast's Rebuke. *Host;* Contagious Genesis, Create Progeny (see below). *Shadow;* Screech. *Vitae;* Indomitable, Kindred Disciplines.

Disciplines: Dominate 2, Majesty 3, Protean 1

Vitae: 20, 6/turn

Banes: Abjuration, Fire, Hated By Beasts, Sunlight

Create Progeny

A rare power in modern nights, Create Progeny allows a Strix to create offspring that are neither Strix nor vampire. Legends hold that similar powers created the vampire clans in ancient times, but Mother cannot match such a feat. The childer she creates are monstrous undead creatures, no longer human but clearly not Kindred. Their Humanity long since consumed by feral hunger, these creatures exist only to devour everything they can hunt down. Here is an example of these monsters and the danger they pose to anything in their path.

Owl-Mutant

Blood Potency: 0

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 4 (Bite)

Health: 9

Willpower: 4

Size: 6

Speed: 15 (species factor 6)

Defense: 6

Initiative: 4

Banes: Fire, Sunlight

Weapons: The owl-mutants have powerful bites capable of inflicting grievous damage. Their beaks or distended maws function as weapons with +2L ratings. These count as supernatural, dealing lethal damage to vampires.

The owl-mutants hunger constantly and feed on animals, both living and dead. They will devour a corpse, bones and all, which sits in their blood-filled gut for several hours until the creature expels the half-digested remains to make room for more prey. Always ravenous, the monsters have no concept of self-control and eat simply for the sake of eating. They will always pursue living prey over the dead. Their senses are very sharp and provide a +2 die bonus to Perception rolls, with an additional +2 die bonus for hearing-related rolls. Even in complete darkness, their hearing lets them locate prey.

Though they are not vampires, the owl-mutants share many things in common with them. Sunlight and fire burn the creatures just as readily as they do vampires. A stake through the heart causes paralysis. They cannot heal damage inflicted on them, however. The mutants simply hunt and devour until their bodies fall apart from stress and damage.

"Rebellion," the Prince states. "will not be tolerated." He rises from his throne. "For too long, this...this cancer marred our company. These impudent children who presume they know better than those with experience. I know some respectable members of our ranks have adopted this philosophy. I know many of you are very attached to it. Therefore, I announce amnesty. All who step forward now and renounce their leanings will be forgiven, with no questions asked." He sits down. "But regardless of whether you stand up or not, the Carthian Movement is disbanded."

Princes sometimes crack. Sometimes quietly, sometimes spectacularly. Some are deposed after two centuries, at which point a carefully preserved collection of Kindred heads is found in his private chambers. Most princely insanity is simply the natural result of Kindred existence. And some is more nefarious.

Mr. Scratch is the name given to a Strix who enjoys pulling the strings of princes. When an influential Kindred wants power, no matter the cost, Mr. Scratch stands ready to oblige. He can make you prince, or help you keep that title. For a price.

Those foolish enough to accede to his offer find their very bodies torn away from them, put under his malign will, where he uses the power vested in him for no grander purpose than simple havoc. When society won't collapse fast enough on its own, he gives it a little push, from the very seat of power.

Sometimes, he enjoys being patient and clever, spreading subtle chaos for as long as he can. And sometimes, he delights in simple, brutal measures. And then, every so often, he simply uses his power for petty ends, such as banning the color red in vampires' clothes ("Do not draw attention to your nature by your style of dress!"). What his actions all have in common is the goal of undermining the Kindred's faith in their own society.

Beyond all else, this Strix exists simply to satisfy his own pique. His motivation is amusement, plain and simple, and he will play "jokes" that are cruel or simply a little ridiculous on the Requiems of others. Some domains, he has rendered down into burning ruins before revealing himself, laughing; and in others, his actions seem harmless until the repercussions are felt decades later. Sometimes, rarely, he's even been an improvement over the last prince. His sense of humor is inhuman and bizarre, and quite often fatal. If confronted, he might simply abandon his stolen body, leaving the unfortunate Kindred to answer for the Strix' actions — a final joke, at the expense of his host.

Any Kindred who thinks the Strix is harmless is probably up for a nasty surprise — either he will prove them wrong, brutally, or use them for his own ends. He is charming and charismatic, well able to sweet-talk quite a few into keeping his true identity a secret. Nothing is quite as hilarious as gradually gaining the trust of an entire domain, only to betray them all and leave. Mr. Scratch is amoral and heartless, and above all, unpredictable, except for one thing: If he knows someone thinks him "figured out," that they know what he's going to do next, he'll do the opposite. In this way, he can be trapped.

The mentor of a coterie member has gained an important position in his covenant. The prestige reflects well on the younger vampire, who finds herself inundated with new friends, invitations, and favors asked. The new political climate she finds herself in is quite treacherous and hard to navigate, and the only one she can rely on for guidance is the mentor. However, the older vampire has changed. Perhaps he simply no longer needs the neonate, or perhaps his fading humanity has been tarnished by power. His advice has started getting unreliable. It almost seems like he's setting his protégé up to fail embarrassingly, and even dangerously. Is he trying to get rid of her? Why? Is there anything she can do to convince him to take her back? And now the crazy sewer-dwelling Ventrue keeps muttering about "demonic possession."

The city's prince has apparently lost his mind. He has started issuing insane edicts, punishing Kindred in bizarre ways for crimes they never committed, or for crimes he simply invented on the spot. A powerful Gangrel met the sun for breaking a non-existent vagrancy law, and the Invictus has found several of its traditions outlawed on pain of flogging. The domain is slowly falling into chaos — and worst of all, the prince has managed to maneuver to consolidate several important alliances even in the midst of the unrest. Has he caught Malkavia? Rumors talk about a strange man he met the night before his new, erratic behavior started — who was he? The prince addresses the claims, saying the man was his dinner. Is that the truth? And what about the rumors that a large, shadowy owl was spotted in the city not long ago?

The prince has always been considered merely adequate — a compromise between elders which placed an easily manipulated puppet on the throne. Now, however, he has suddenly grown a backbone — more, he has become shrewd. He has started playing the elders against each other, to his own benefit. He has solidified his power, and his name has turned from a term of derision to being spoken with respect and fear. Those who abused his naïveté in the past find themselves punished or pardoned, depending on what will gain the prince the greatest influence. Unfortunately, one of the individuals who had gotten the better of the prince is a member of the coterie; and now, her fate is uncertain. Can the coterie uncover the prince's new dirty secret before he passes judgment? And if they can, what can they do about it? What is his eventual goal?

Name: Mr. Scratch
Vice: Apathy
Shadow Potency: 4
Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 5, Resistance 3
Skills: Occult 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 1
Corpus: 5
Willpower: 8
Size: 2
Speed: 12
Defense: 5

Initiative: 8

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred

Dread Powers: *Doom*; See the Cracks, Ambition's Source, The Beast's Rebuke, False Fiend. *Vitae*; Indomitable.

Vitae: 13, 4/turn

Banes: Fire, Invitation, Sunlight

Ms. Gem

I saw her self-destruct. Growing up, we were really close – like, best friends. We'd go to school together, laugh together, cry together. And over the course of a couple weeks, I saw her self-destruct. Drugs, some really questionable sex partners, fights – she fell apart. No regard for her own health. And at the end, when she was lying there, bleeding, broken, something big and dark left her. Flew off. And then she cried for about a minute before she died. Her last words: "It wasn't me."

Live hard, die young, rinse, repeat. The Strix needn't fear any consequences of their lifestyles — they can live the high life over and over again, and simply discard their worn-out bodies like so many rags. Ms. Gem is the name given to one of the Birds of Dis, one which enjoys stealing the bodies of the young and vibrant and savoring everything that such a body has to offer.

Drugs, hard and soft. Wild parties. Extreme sports. Safe sex, and violent and dangerous sex. Street fighting. Riots. Anything that's adrenaline-filled, exciting, or just plain pleasurable is something Ms. Gem will try, over and over again. A mortal body possessed by a Strix starts decaying, but those ridden by Ms. Gem don't just decay — they fall apart, covered in scars, bones broken, overdosed on drugs.

Ms. Gem's favored body is young, attractive, in good physical shape. That means she usually targets middle-class youth below age 25, although she'll make exceptions when she finds a different body that catches her interest sufficiently. She steals a body and rides it to destruction — to the people around the victim, it looks like the victim just went off the rails and self-destructed for no apparent reason.

Ms. Gem isn't really sadistic. She's just indifferent. She has no sense of morality. She'll listen to the cries of the bereaved, shrug, and go off her own merry way. She also has no sense of malice — she just wants to have fun, damn the consequences. The fact that she needs to destroy lives and reputations forever to do so is simply how the cards fall. She's simply selfish — anything others have to give up for her pleasure, she makes sure they lose. She sees the world in terms of opportunities and obstacles — obstacles are dull and tedious, and are to be avoided or overcome quickly; opportunities are painful or pleasurable or interesting, and must be sought out and dwelled upon.

Although she prefers young, healthy hosts, others will strike her fancy on occasion. She especially enjoys taking over bodies with particularly unusual chronic conditions that cause a great deal of pain, then abusing those bodies as much as she can to experience it. On those rare occasions where she can get hold of a vampire host, Ms. Gem is gleeful — they're resilient, and have so many interesting ways to experience suffering or pleasure. If she could, she'd also be incredibly interested in taking over other supernatural bodies to experiment with. But she hasn't yet, and the planning required is too dull for her tastes.

Ms. Gem is an old creature. She rode bodies in the times of ancient Rome, enjoying everything that culture had to offer. She knows a great deal about the ancient mystery cults, as well as other secrets; but she doesn't guard her knowledge very jealously, seeing little value in it. If someone could manage to strike a bargain with her, that knowledge would be easy to obtain.

Stories

An ancient vampire who survived the fall of the Camarilla is rumored to be about to rise form torpor soon. The rising vampire is an ancient, legendary Nosferatu who was deeply involved in Rome's Cult of Augurs, the sorcerers who served the Camarilla. Little beyond myths and legends has penetrated the mists of time regarding this fearsome being. Whether she will turn out to be friend or foe is completely unknown — and there are rumors that the Kindred mystery cults of ancient Rome committed ritual diablerie. It's time to seek out an authority on the mystery cults — and unfortunately, the only authority accessible is Ms. Gem.

A mortal friend of a coterie member has started acting strangely. She's abandoned her studies completely, and thrown herself into an absolutely reckless lifestyle — partying, adrenaline-seeking, taking it all to an extreme level. She's started looking gaunt and drawn, but still zooms about like she had all the strength in the world. Something's up, and it turns out she's running in the circles of another Kindred! But the truth is that the vampire had nothing to do with her behavior — will the coterie figure that out? Their friend is doomed, of course — the Strix killed her as it took over her body, so even if they drive it out immediately, she will die. Can they figure this truth out? The only way to save the friend is the Embrace, but is that even a good idea? Can they get permission? And how will they handle the consequences?

A coterie member finds himself drawn into the orbit of a charming young neonate — a real party animal, throwing massive bacchanals and enjoying the fruits of latter-day nobility. The young lady has an infectiously carefree and hedonistic attitude, seemingly genuinely having not a single care in her Requiem. She has gathered a group of Kindred of a similar outlook together — and now she has her aim set on a particularly handsome Daeva elder known for his debauchery. She enlists the coterie's help in this endeavor, trying to stage an event that will show the elder that the little group has what he wants. Can they do it? And if they succeed, will they realize the neonate's plans in time to stop her from taking over the elder's extremely powerful body?

Name: Ms. Gem

Vice: Desperation

Shadow Potency: 9

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 6, Resistance 7

Skills: Academics 4, Occult 5, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Socialize 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1

Corpus: 11

Willpower: 10

Size: 4

Speed: 12

Defense: 6

Initiative: 13

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred, Possess Living, Synthesis, Materialize, Twilight Form, Shadow Jump

Dread Powers: *Doom;* See the Cracks, The Beast's Rebuke, Vice Manipulation. *Host;* Breath Eater, Hollow Bones. *Vitae;* Indomitable, Kindred Disciplines, Command the Lost, Shadow Infection.

Disciplines; Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Majesty 3, Resilience 1

Vitae: 50, 10/turn

Banes: Bells, Fire, Invitation, Material Bane (Hashish), Running Water, Sunlight

Old Man Marshe

The old man looks up as you pass him by, a toothy grin barely visible behind his long, ratty beard. His eyes glint yellow in the streetlight's glare. He stands and coughs a bit, and you hear him muttering something unintelligible. Despite his lurching gait, he keeps up with you just the same as you speed up, and you smell something familiar: old, dried blood clotting his beard.

Marshe *is* hunger. He is not subtle and he is not suave, seducing his victims through charm and guile. Old Man Marshe, as they call him (after the few words of his mutterings they can understand) is a stalker and brutal killer. What he lacks in grace he makes up in ferocity and power. He always strikes those who hunt the streets, especially the vampires hunting among the city's vagrant population. Marshe also preys upon humans, but few signs remain of those he devours. For devour them he does: Blood, flesh, bone, even clothing, Marshe eats it all slowly and with great relish. Flecks of flesh and bone and droplets of blood stain his beard, the only remnants of his victims. Marshe is the Beast's hunger left unchecked, consuming everything it can catch.

Marshe is an old man with a bald head and a long, scraggly beard stained with things best left to the imagination. His eyes are always an inhuman yellow in the night lights, glossy like the eyes of a dead man. While his skin is covered in dark splotches, Marshe doesn't appear to be decaying, nor does a vampire ever encounter him in a different body. Either the possessing Strix has learned how to preserve the body, or else its possession of a body transforms it into the appearance that all stories of Marshe recall. His clothes are always dirty, perhaps taken from some of his victims, and he stinks of urine, dried blood and sometimes alcohol. Though Marshe moves with a sort of haphazard lurching gait, he is deceptively fast. Even vampires with Celerity have found themselves cornered by Old Man Marshe. Only a few escape to tell the tale of the crazy old man who hunts vampires. He also possesses terrible strength that belies the withered old frame he inhabits. He's been known to crush arm- and leg-bones to prevent his victims from escaping, and vampires can endure much more punishment than mortals. Marshe knows this and uses it to his advantage, slowly eating his way up a vampire's body from the feet. He mutters strange things between crunching bites, sometimes intelligible, often not, although his victims can rarely parse any meaning in the midst of their pain and terror.

Marshe seems to be a wanderer of sorts, since he is rarely found in the same alleyway where the rare survivor encountered him once before. On occasion, vampires have gone hunting him, only to be stymied by the old man's ability to evade capture. Sometimes a particularly puissant or lucky vampire will overpower Marshe or escape him, but even the most grievous of wounds don't slow him down. Adding to the mystery of whether he changes his hosts or can preserve them is the fact that wounds never stay with him. A few vampires think that he heals his host body by devouring humans and vampires, and the fact that he hasn't fallen apart even years after the first recorded encounters with him lends credence to the idea.

Stories

A lone vampire hunting the back streets encounters a strange old man in an alleyway. She finds him muttering, and though he smells of blood, he does not have the same living blood in him that her prey does. He begins to follow the vampire, and try as she might to escape, it seems he's around every corner. When he attacks, he does so with frightening speed and power, biting and clubbing with his bony fists. A tense chase follows, through abandoned lots and alleyways, through a park where few others can help the vampire, or even through graveyards. Marshe is implacable and fast, enjoying stalking his prey, always stepping from the shadows with a hungry grin. A clever or quick vampire might be able to escape. Then it's just a simple matter of convincing other vampires of this horrific monster haunting the alleyways and vacant lots — not an easy feat, when one's story sounds like mad ramblings.

Vampires are disappearing without notifying the Prince of their plans to leave. It seems to be only the vampires hunting in poorer districts, and now the court is worried about a new hunter cell operating in the city. The coterie is sent to investigate. More paranoid characters might bring with them a bevy of ghoul retainers and weapons, but those pose their own problems: Wandering around the city heavily armed can call the kind of attention a vampire court does not want. This sort of hunt is tense and full of false leads. The coterie might question homeless people, but the potential witnesses are also suspects. Every sound in the alleys could be a potential threat, or just a stray cat. And what if the group finds Marshe? Can they chase him down before he escapes? Perhaps Marshe starts picking off stragglers one by one, striking from the shadows in an attempt to lure the coterie into an ambush. When they finally corner him in an empty office building, who is the hunter and who is the prey?

Name: Marshe

Vice: Gluttony

Shadow Potency: 6

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 6, Resistance 5

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 5, Occult 2, Stealth 3

Corpus: 7

Willpower: 10

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 6

Initiative: 11

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred, Possess Living, Synthesis

Dread Powers: *Doom;* The Beast's Rebuke. *Host;* Grotesque Ejection, Preservation. *Shadow;* Labyrinth, Sudden Surprise. *Vitae;* Kindred Disciplines.

Disciplines; Celerity 2, Resilience 5, Vigor 4

Vitae: 20, 6/turn

Banes: Fire, Hated By Beasts, Ravening, Sunlight

Pastor Samuel

"You see, my flock, we are not alone, are we?" A murmur of agreement rippled through the congregation. "No, we are not. Because there are demons among us, aren't there?" Murmurs grew into a chorus of agreement. Heads nodded. "They look like us, they sound like us, but they aren't us, are they? They feed on us. They tempt us. They try to steal us from the light!" At that, Pastor Samuel took the hood off the struggling figure bound to a chair beside the podium. "But we aren't going to be tempted, are we?" "No, Pastor Samuel!" they shouted at once, all standing and converging on the bound man. Samuel smiled and raised his hand high. "We are going to PURGE these demons with FIRE and WRATH!"

Vampires have a long history with religion, factoring into many mythologies from early times into the modern age. Some covenants, such as the Lancea et Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone, are highly spiritual themselves. The Damned even have their own demons: the Beast within and other things that haunt the night, some of which prey on vampires.

Pastor Samuel recognized this long ago and saw the potential in corrupting such institutions from within. He has taken on many names throughout the years, but he's been "Pastor Samuel" for two decades. Samuel established a small church in one of the poorest districts of the city several decades ago. He took in the disenfranchised and lost and united them with his powers of charisma and persuasion. On the outside, the building is old and rundown, like the neighborhood; but within the church itself donations have shaped something warm and welcoming—and full of bloody religious imagery. Pastor Samuel is good at firing up his congregation with talks of damnation, hellfire, and demons. Unlike many other preachers, however, Samuel actively encourages his people to help him banish demons, and so they do. Violent criminals, people suspected of witchcraft, vampires — all are Samuel's targets, especially vampires. He directs his "warriors of God" to hunt these people down, helped with inside information that only he can provide, and he incapacitates them and brings them to the church. There, on the church grounds, the congregation burns the unholy to purge it from the world.

Despite his advanced age, Pastor Samuel looks no older than he did thirty years ago, but none of the churchgoers in his spell question it. The possessing Strix figured out a way to slow down the decay of its corpse-hosts, allowing Samuel to hide the rot of his body. Not that his people would care. Samuel is their shepherd, and even death cannot stay his guidance. The flock is a blind cult following Samuel's teachings, secure in their own salvation at his hands. Samuel sustains himself on the offered blood of his flock, and their donations allow him to expand on the building. All manner of sadistic implements of torture fill a massive, medieval-looking dungeon hidden beneath the main floor, built over decades. The wicked are "cleansed" through trial by blood and then fire, burned in a fire pit while the congregation chants a prayer and the sweet smoke funnels out to the chimneys.

Pastor Samuel's parishioners only ever meet at night, and Samuel personally welcomes each new convert. Once he has accepted them into the flock, they never again feel a need to belong or a sense of uncertainty about the future. Those who listen to Samuel's sermons are sure of their place in His great plan, instruments of His divine vengeance. Meanwhile, kindly old Pastor Samuel just smiles and spreads the ashes of the guilty. If vampires think themselves Damned, who is he to disagree?

Stories

When a vampire goes missing, the coterie is assigned to investigate. The trail leads them to a nearby parish where Samuel leads his flock in a fiery sermon about hunting down the demons. It's apparent that the people have given over their thinking to Samuel's control, and the smell of blood in the place is fresh. The old pastor himself is obviously not what he seems, but what can the coterie do without making themselves his targets?

A character's mortal family member just joined a new church and now can't stop talking about it. When she begins to speak of Pastor Samuel leading the flock against cannibal demons and cleansing the world of their presence, other vampires grow concerned; but the truth is a lot stranger than a simple gathering of vampire slayers. Attending some of Samuel's sermons shows that he knows secrets no mortal should know about vampires. If the characters are clever about keeping hidden, they may even witness the purging of one of the unholy. Pastor Samuel is too well-protected by his people to simply storm the church and destroy it without a lot of force, which would draw a lot of unneeded attention and might fail to kill Samuel. The court wants to know how Samuel knows so much about vampires and how he keeps finding them. The only way is to send someone in, either ghouls or the unlucky coterie. What do they do when it comes time for the ritual offering of blood?

The coterie becomes Samuel's next target. They awaken not in their havens, but in the labyrinthine dungeon beneath Samuel's church, where cultists and deadly instruments of torture await. Pastor Samuel himself offers the vampires a choice: trial by blood or fire. If they can escape the deathtraps and survive the wrath of Samuel's flock, they can prove their purity and join his cause. Samuel has no plans to allow the vampires to save their skins, however. Instead he delights in their suffering, especially as they turn increasingly to the Beast in frenzy or desperation.

Name: Pastor Samuel

Vice: Zeal

Shadow Potency: 4

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 3, Resistance 5

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Occult 2

Corpus: 7

Willpower: 8

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 5

Initiative: 8

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred

Dread Powers: *Doom;* Ambition's Source, Tip of the Tongue, Vice Manipulation. *Host;* Preservation. *Vitae;* Kindred Disciplines.

Disciplines: Majesty 4

Vitae: 13, 4/turn

Banes: Fire, Plague of Purity, Sunlight

Human Host: Samuel

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Skills: Mental; Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Occult 3 (Superstition). Social; Expression 5 (Speeches), Intimidation 3, Persuasion 4 (Inspiring), Subterfuge 3

Health: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 4

The Photographer

I smile, and the camera wipes away my sins. "Beautiful! I love it!" the photographer says, and turns the lens. I strike a pose. Flash. The camera wipes away my blemishes. "You have it in you, darling!" I switch poses. Flash. The camera wipes away my flaws. Just a few more pictures, and I will be the perfect photo object.

The camera lies. Pictures reveal the world the photographer intends to show. The model poses for the camera, but the picture does not show the model. The model can never be good enough. Pictures never reflect the real world. Occasionally, though, reality may come to reflect the pictures.

The Photographer is not too particular about its hosts — it will possess anything that owns the correct equipment. The right lenses, right cameras — nothing digital, of course. The Strix is consumed by the art — to take the ideal picture, to capture the perfect moment in time in just the right way. Much can be done with software and airbrushes, but ultimately, this transforms the art of photography into a form of painting. The Photographer does not want that — it wants pure, unadulterated photography, and to those ends, it needs the perfect object.

The perfect object, of course, does not exist. But it can be molded. The Photographer's camera does not capture reality as it is, but alters it to improve the picture produced. The camera wipes out flaws and blemishes to create the perfect object for the Strix's art. The picture is flawless because the model becomes flawless.

It's the perfect arrangement. Youth, beauty, perfection, the right attitude, the right thoughts — and all it costs is your soul. And the soul does not show up on camera. The Photographer is a myth, a legend, a utopian dream among the beautiful people — an obscure little fairytale. Maybe a cautionary tale to some, but there are those who think it sounds very appealing indeed. One who lives on his looks will find his livelihood threatened when age claims his youth, and the tales say the Photographer can undo that little issue.

The Photographer is real, of course, and those few who find it are bound for fame and fortune. They look amazing, even into old age, and even though they end up robotic and distant and easily directed, well, isn't that a job hazard that must be dealt with? The Strix's craft is addictive, though, and a model who comes back again and again eventually simply lapses into a coma — a truly stunning corpse.

The picture reflects reality, and the reality changes to accommodate it. But old truths do not vanish that easily. All the blemishes, all the flaws that the camera wipes away, everything it steals ends up committed to the photo negatives. If developed, the picture turns out to show perfection. If viewed on its own, however, the negative shows a run-down, battered world full of people with flaws and failings, but it all looks unmistakably *vibrant*, lively. Everything has its price. And the picture's price is the soul.

Stories

A coterie member comes across a relic of high sentimental value — a picture of one of their ancestors (mortal or otherwise), dated in the early 20th century. The character never got to meet this ancestor before she died, and this is the first time he has ever gotten to see her. And she is stunningly beautiful — simply gorgeous. Then the character starts having dreams about her — dreams where she begs him to let her out of the picture. If he doesn't act on these dreams, he starts having nightmares about being trapped inside a photograph forever. Checks of the picture will find magic has been used in the taking of it, but that the picture itself is entirely mundane. Could it be a replica? Is there

an original out there, with the woman trapped inside? Will they realize that the picture was indeed copied — from the negative?

A coterie member's mortal brother has always been a very conscientious person. He is smart, devoted, dutiful, and was a straight-A student in high school and college. He's been a pillar of his community, and very admired. Recently, though, he has become even more dutiful and conscientious, to the point of it being pathological. He seems to have become fanatically devoted to keeping up appearances, to the point that he never lets down his guard. And he has started working out more or something, because he has become stunningly attractive. He's more admired than ever, but he's lost his friends, one by one, as they said he "no longer seemed alive." His pictures start appearing in fashion magazines, though, and it seems he has been sucked into the fashion model lifestyle. Has he simply started taking his new job too seriously, or is there something more going on here — something that must be stopped?

The coterie has a rival: an ambitious, scarily competent Daeva ancilla whose greatest weakness is his vanity. The Serpent has recently acquired a splendid penthouse haven in the middle of the Rack, he has been appointed to a minor office among the Invictus, and the Prince has publicly declared she owes him a boon. And he has gone out of his way, in the past, to thwart, stymie, and attack the coterie. The rivalry is not friendly in the least, but vicious and cutthroat. And he looks to have won. That's when one of the characters hears a rumor about the Photographer, and its morbid travails. The Serpent is very vain, and he has been looking for someone to create a portrait to display in his new haven. But hunting down the ephemeral creature might turn out to be quite a handful — and what if the Strix wants a picture of a coterie member in repayment?

Name: The Photographer

Vice: Perfectionism

Shadow Potency: 7

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 7, Resistance 3

Skills: Crafts 1, Occult 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Expression 5

Corpus: 5

Willpower: 10

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 7

Initiative: 10

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Vampire, Possess Living, Synthesis, Materialize

Dread Powers: *Host;* Breath Eater, Sheep's Clothing. *Shadow;* Smoke and Mirrors. *Vitae;* Indomitable, Kindred Disciplines x 2, Soul Bite.

Disciplines; Auspex 3, Celerity 4, Nightmare 4, Obfuscate 3

Vitae: 25, 7/turn

Banes: Abjuration, Crossroads, Fire, Material Bane: Sulfur, Sunlight

The Photograph That Steals Your Soul

The Photographer's Soul Bite is unique among Strix. It requires him to take photographs of the victim, and he can only attempt it on an individual once per night. He can use the ability on supernatural creatures, and take pictures of Kindred without any special effort. The victim has to be willing to pose for a photograph, but she doesn't have to consent to the Soul Bite. The Photographer usually works the Soul Bite into the middle of a photography session, and most victims never notice the supernatural attack.

The Photographer's Soul Bite does not take the entire soul at once, but instead reduces the victim's permanent Willpower by one dot per photography session, and allows no roll to resist. When the victim's Willpower is reduced to zero, her soul becomes trapped in the negatives from her final photography session, and her body falls into a coma or torpor. She cannot be revived unless the negatives are destroyed.

Anyone affected by the Photographer's Soul Bite even once gains Striking Looks 2 and the Addicted Persistent Condition.

The Ringmaster

"You can buy tickets and concessions at the booth! Come on in for tonight's fantastic show: Daeva versus Gangrel! Will wiles win the war, or shall savage strength succeed? The victor takes it all, blood and cash! Step up, gentle folk, for a very special surprise at the end! Is anyone brave enough to step up to the plate blind? Any volunteers? You, ma'am? Ladies and gentlemen, we have a volunteer for our special blind event! Stay after the show to see the spectacle unfold! Extra charges apply."

The chosen spectator sport of ancient Rome was the gladiator fight — brutal and savage murder on stage, in front of cheering crowds. The winner was a hero. The loser was quite dead. And the greatest gladiators were superstars of their era. This instinct, this fascination for violence and blood, did not end with the fall of that fabled Empire, though. Especially among a species as fascinated by blood as the Kindred.

The Ringmaster arranges to sate this desire, offering blood sports to the baying crowds. Some shows are available to anyone who will pay the charge, and some cater to a more exclusive clientele. This Strix does not just offer up any old form of violence, however, oh no — he offers supernatural gladiator fights. Vampire versus vampire. Vampire versus hunters. Vampire versus werewolf. Anything he can arrange.

And he is none too particular about where his bold warriors come from. He wants to see the blood flow. He feeds on the blood of the match, bathing in the tank beneath the arena where the potent blood settles after a fight. He thrives on bloodshed,

violence, and death — Final Death, for a gladiator in his arena may win fame and fortune in the fighting circuit, but when she loses her first match, she is done.

Above all, though, the Ringmaster adores the humiliation, the degradation. He hates Kindred. He loathes them with a burning fury. To see them debased, humiliated, exposed for the pitiful creatures they are, in public, in front of a roaring crowd, the crowd lowering itself to the fighters' level by enjoying the spectacle. He revels in the precious Humanity that slips through the grasp of the victor and the spectators, counting it as success, bit by bit. He debases the Kindred in the room, slowly. He humiliates them. He makes them all into animals, worthless, beneath him. And they pay him for it.

Of course, not all the gladiators are willing. Though he pays well, some need some...convincing. His host, a Ventrue ancilla, is a master of Dominate; the Ringmaster adds his own shadow-tainted prowess on top of that to make his lure irresistible. He is charming, charismatic, magnetic, and handsome. He knows some Majesty, extracted from gladiators in times past. Sometimes, he uses his Disciplines to attract unwilling warriors. And sometimes, he stakes and kidnaps them.

His weakness is complacency. He has a good thing going, here. He's spent time and energy making this arena into his livelihood and his joy. He's grown attached to his body and his role. He will fight tooth and claw to avoid having to give it up. He could start over elsewhere. He won't.

His main strength is that most of his victims are willing. Not all, by far, but most. They adore him. The crowd loves him. He is popular. He has status. The Lancea et Sanctum considers him a valued member. He has, in short, connections. And those connections will defend him, if necessary.

Stories

The coterie has ended up in the ring, perhaps Dominated to Hell and back, or perhaps willingly. They stand to gain quite a lot — maybe money, maybe territory, maybe blood, or maybe even something else. What they stand to lose are their Requiems. Their opponents: A small coterie of vicious killers. And they outnumber the characters by one. How can they win this fight? Can they cheat? Or maybe they can use the terrain to their advantage. But the fun doesn't end there! If they win, the Ringmaster has another, very special event in store for them: A fight against a cell of vampire hunters, with unusual powers. Step right up for tonight's extravaganza: The men of God, versus the Damned! This is the fight of the decade, and only one side will remain standing!

Someone the coterie needs has ended up in the Ringmaster's show, under top billing. The loser of the show meets Final Death, as usual. And the Ringmaster is completely unwilling to consider any kind of payoff or substitution. How will the coterie proceed? They could try to sneak that someone off, and risk the Ventrue's wrath. Standing in the way are his ghoul bouncers, as well as a rabidly adoring and expectant mob of fans. Last but not least, their special someone has been Dominated until her brains fell out. They *could* try to arrange for their chosen contestant to win. Step right up! Tonight's show: Kindred, versus wizard!

When it's discovered that a murderous ghost is in the domain, old grudges are supposedly set aside to find and destroy the fiend. The Prince has called a blood hunt on the being, and the promised reward is exactly what the coterie has been scheming to get. Now every Kindred in the domain is suddenly gunning for the coterie's prize. The Ringmaster, Thomas Grier, comes to them with a startling offer: He knows that the creature is a Strix and where it is, but he can't take it out on his own. If they help him, he will let them have all the parts of the reward they wanted, and keep only small scraps for himself. It sounds too good to be true: If he truly knows where the Bird of Dis is, he could pick and choose his allies. Why the coterie? What will happen if they trust him? What will happen if they don't?

Name: The Ringmaster

Vice: Reckless

Shadow Potency: 4

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 3, Resistance 3

Skills: Occult 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Weaponry 1, Expression 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1

Corpus: 5

Willpower: 6

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 5

Initiative: 6

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Vampire

Dread Powers: *Doom;* False Fiend. *Host;* Hollow Bones, Preservation. *Shadow;* Sudden Surprise, Screech. *Vitae;* Indomitable.

Vitae: 13, 4/turn

Banes: Bells, Fire, Sunlight

Strix Hunter

"What was that?" screamed Alex. "What was that thing?"

The newcomer looked at him for a long moment, the fire's light flushing orange against his pale skin. "Strix."

Alex shook his head. "What the hell is 'Strix'?"

"They're old. Older than you. You ever wonder where your kind comes from?"

"Nah, man, I ain't got time to worry about that shit. And what do you mean 'my kind'? Aren't you one of us?"

Then, for the first time, he noticed that the yellow firelight reflected strongly in the stranger's eyes. Like moonlight on a cat's eyes but brighter, like they were lit from within. The stranger grinned.

The Strix are not some monolithic culture. Each is an enigma wrapped in danger and darkness. To vampires, it looks as if the Strix are *their* adversaries, Nemeses from some forgotten past.

Yet the Nemeses do vie with one another, often for reasons few outsiders would understand. Their goals are many, and sometimes these goals are at odds. Some vampires wonder, if Strix truly *are* the Beast, if they ever diablerize one another. The answer is more disturbing than they imagine.

Strix are hungry, whatever their origin. Reports both trustworthy and not speak of their thirst for blood. At times, they slake this thirst upon mortals, just as vampires do, but they have also been known to drink vampires dry. The Beast's hunger unchecked by Humanity even leads them against their brethren. Whether they do it for power or not is impossible for vampires to know, since they do not get the opportunity to study Strix closely enough. In their many encounters throughout history, however, vampires have known Strix to prey upon one another as fiercely as they do their natural enemies. Foolishly optimistic Kindred might think "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," but Strix cannot be trusted. Even the seemingly benign ones are still monsters lurking in the dark corners of the world, voraciously preying upon humans, vampires, and one another. Their motives are alien; wherever they came from in the mists of prehistory, they are not human and never were.

The Strix Hunter is a strange entity, even for its kind, because it hunts other Strix. It rarely explains its reasons to vampires, if indeed they even know of it. Often, it possesses the body of a vampire in a domain beset by Strix and uses that body to hunt down its prey. Once it has cornered its quarry, whether within a body or not, the Hunter seizes its prey and greedily devours it. At this point it will leave any body it inhabits, leaving a bewildered vampire struggling to regain his Humanity. The Strix Hunter certainly gains *something* from its conquest, though just what that is can vary. Maybe it's the simple elimination of a rival. Canny vampires suspect that there is more to it than that, and imagine that diablerie is just as big a taboo among Strix as it is among vampires. If so, that might explain why the Hunter seems to prefer using a vampire's body to devour its kin. Perhaps it's easier to hide the act from watchful yellow eyes that way. More jaded vampires think it's an even baser desire: Just as vampires feel the rush of power and pleasure from the act, so is the experience heightened for the Hunter when it inhabits a body. The parallels between Strix and Kindred are not lost on these vampires, who suspect that older and more powerful Strix, like vampires, find that mortal blood no longer sustains them. Even vampire blood may not be enough, and only the life-force of their own kind will satisfy the Hunter's gnawing hunger.

Stories

Strange events occurring in the city lead the court to believe the domain is being invaded. Shadowed things haunt the footsteps of old vampires, striking terror into their dead hearts even in their havens. Several vampires go missing, though traces left behind suggest they did not simply vanish into the night. One vampire in particular, an old Sheriff who served under multiple Princes, speaks of Strix and legends come back to haunt them all. His sire warned him of these creatures before they claimed her, too. Soon he has the Prince declaring a hunt for these specters, and the Sheriff, most knowledgeable about these vampiric bogeymen, leads that hunt personally. He employs the coterie to help him track down the shade, leading down into the subway system beneath the city and whatever secrets it holds.

Two vampires are caught up in a desperate game of cat-and-mouse when both are possessed by Strix. The situation is more complicated by the fact that the hosts are both highly influential Kindred. The vampire court is plunged into chaos as the two former allies wield all their resources against one another, threatening to plunge the entire domain into a civil war. Even if the warring vampires are somehow dealt with, two more begin to act the same way — it's only a matter of time before this sinister new madness afflicts the prince and tears the court apart. Every vampire must either pick a side in this internecine conflict or find a way to stop it.

A strange creature approaches the players' coterie of vampires and offers a deal: It will teach them new ways to master the Beast, new forms of blood magic, in exchange for helping them hunt down its kind. If they accept, the Hunter does make good on its promise — by performing a ritual binding lesser Strix to them. The shades drive their Kindred fetters to flee, since the Hunter now comes for them. Bound to whispering shadows whose very presence provokes the Beast and hunted by an ethereal predator, the coterie has to find a way to escape and unchain the Strix from them, or else kill a night stalker much older and more powerful than they are.

Name: Strix Hunter

Vice: Greed

Shadow Potency: 5

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 5, Resistance 5

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Occult 2, Stealth 3

Corpus: 7

Willpower: 10

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 5

Initiative: 10

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred, Possess Living

Dread Powers: *Doom;* The Beast's Rebuke, See the Cracks. *Shadow;* Labyrinth, Sudden Surprise. *Vitae;* Kindred Disciplines.

Disciplines: Obfuscate 2, Protean 3

Vitae: 15, 5/turn

Banes: Fire, Bells, Sunlight, Symbols

Teach

Ms. Delgado opens the door, and she really isn't looking good. Sunken, yellowed cheeks, and her eyes burn with fever. I wince, and tell the kids, "Say 'get well soon!'"

They all sing it, like a choir, and Ms. Delgado looks touched. I'm amazed she can stand, to be honest, because she looks like a walking corpse.

"Should we come inside?" I ask her.

"Oh, of course!" she replies, looking touched. We go inside. Her entire class. 26 kids, aged 9, plus me. 25 leave.

Preying on kids is one of the lowliest thing a human being can do. That's general consensus among mortal society, and even monsters such as the Kindred have to have reached a certain state of moral decay before the last twinge of guilt at killing a child disappears. This is why the Strix nicknamed Teach decided to make this its modus operandi.

Teach does not have a favorite gender in its hosts, although modern demographics being what they are, it ends up in a female body more often than not. That's because Teach has a very specific type of host it prefers: a particularly popular and beloved grade school teacher. Once it finds one of those, it takes over the unfortunate teacher's body, feigning illness to avoid having to go outside in daytime. It has the children come to it, with well-wishes or for answers to questions, and then brainwashes them, creating its very own, pint-sized cult.

Teach has the power to brainwash children, you see — and only children. The power doesn't work on grown-ups, for whatever reason, and Teach is very fond of its teacher's pets. It will occasionally kill a child, to feed on it, or just for fun. Its little cultists will do anything to cover up the death, even if it costs them their lives. That's one of the reasons why Teach does what it does, you see — for sustenance. It can grow bloated and fat on the succulent blood of babes, like a twisted spider in its web.

When discovery looms, Teach simply kills all its little slaves in a ritual murder-suicide, and the news media have a field day running stories of the "monster teacher," smearing the name of an innocent person who probably genuinely cared for the children he taught. This makes trying to fight Teach a very dangerous proposition indeed — wait too long, and it will devour more of its disciples, but let it catch wind of what you're doing, see you coming, and it will simply massacre all the children under its care.

Teach's weakness is its paper trail — it pulls this routine every 10 years, and has done so three times before. On the second of those occasions, 20 years ago, someone almost figured out its true nature, and Teach failed to cover it up quite well enough. The clues are out there for anyone dedicated enough to find, but they are in the hands of the Kindred.

Teach has a goal in its existence. It isn't simply killing random children, although a large part of its immediate motivation is indeed sustenance. There is a method, a sorcerous pattern, that even Teach doesn't truly realize — the strategy is instinctive, not conscious, and Teach only knows it exists, not what it is. If that ritual pattern can be broken, Teach will be too stunned to harm its wards.

Stories

The child of a coterie member's mortal family has started disobeying curfew, staying out late at night, and skipping school. The kid was always a teacher's pet, and she's always taken school seriously, never shirking her homework or attendance. Something is awry. If the character chooses to talk to the kid, he'll find that she's clearly hiding something, acting like she's not quite herself, but that's quite normal at her age. What might raise some red flags if found out is that she's spending all that time at her teacher's house. Will the character choose to investigate now? Or will they wait until the first disappearance? Once children start disappearing, the girl will help cover up what happened. When will the character choose to involve himself? And will he realize that what's going on mirrors a large-scale ritual murder/suicide 10 years ago?

The murder of children always raises an uproar. In the aftermath of a major ritual murder/suicide scandal involving a grade school teacher and his pupils, the press is in a feeding frenzy, gobbling up every scrap of information they can find for the sake of ratings. And that's when the story breaks: The teacher apparently drank the children's blood. Now there's a new cell of hunters in the city, and they have accidentally caught the coterie's scent while investigating the "vampire cult tragedy." The only way to get the hunters off their backs without further fanning the flames of vampire hysteria might be to cover up the Masquerade breach, and get the press to run the "true story." But someone seems to be working against them at every turn — who, and why?

One of the coterie members is part of the Lancea et Sanctum or Circle of the Crone, and one of the covenant's blood sorcerors has discovered something frightening: The mystical residue of a massive, massive blood sorcery ritual that has been in the casting phase for the last several decades, and is now nearing completion. The covenant is in an uproar, many accusing the sorceror of being a crackpot, and some preparing for the end of the world. Many members are sent out to try to get to the bottom of this mystery — among them the coterie member. It's time to call in favors and get in touch with old contacts, because their own Requiem may be at stake if the ritual goes off — not to mention the gain in status and favors owed they'd get within the covenant for being the one to figure out the truth.

Name: Teach
Vice: Carelessness
Shadow Potency: 5
Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 4, Resistance 3
Skills: Occult 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2
Corpus: 2
Willpower: 7
Size: 2
Speed: 12
Defense: 4
Initiative: 7
Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred, Possess Living
Dread Powers: *Host*; Breath Eater, Hollow Bones. *Vitae*; Indomitable, Command the Lost, Shadow Infection.
Vitae: 15, 5/turn
Banes: Counting, Fire, Ravening, Sunlight

The Thief of Masques

Some of the younger vampires had their smartphones out, but the Prince and much of her council read the headlines from the newspapers sitting in front of them. The headline read "Man Survives Hail of Gunfire, Murders Cops" in big, bold letters. The story was even more distressing: A man suspected of the violent murder of a family survived a brutal shootout with the police, then tore the armed officers apart with his bare hands and, if witnesses were to be believed, teeth. Multiple eyewitnesses claim the suspect then fled the scene by scaling a nearby wall "like a spider."

"We've got a problem," said the Prince.

Not all Strix live to torment vampires. Some simply have their own reasons for stealing bodies, from preying on humanity to furthering agendas stretching back thousands of years. There are some, however, that the Kindred fear most of all, the ones responsible for witch hunts and whole crusades against vampires. The Thief of Masques is one such creature, and his desire is simple: He wants to destroy the Masquerade. Vampires are weak, have let themselves become ruled by their fear of humans, their fear of the Beast. The Thief wishes to return vampires to their roots through trial by fire. If the Masquerade is destroyed, vampires must adapt to survive or perish. If they cannot, they do not deserve their gifts.

Strix like the Thief of Masques are among the most immediately dangerous of their kind. Such a creature understands why vampires maintain the Masquerade and how best to break it. Flagrant displays of supernatural power are a favored tactic, especially when coupled with some horrific act of violence. The higher-profile the crime, the better it serves the Thief's interest. A skilled mimic, the Thief can take on nearly any physical form, even stealing the appearance of his previous victims. The Thief also wields powers that resemble Disciplines, so he never needs possess a vampire in order to endanger the Masquerade. When he *does* take a host, he uses the ability to walk in daylight to his advantage, so that other vampires cannot easily keep him in check. He likes to stage high-profile crimes or attacks, especially those that involve violence to his body that no human could survive.

The Thief's actions immediately draw the ire of every vampire who wants to remain hidden, and sometimes even draws the attention of other supernatural creatures who don't want to see the doors of truth about the hidden world thrown wide. In his natural form, he's difficult to track down and combat, since he flees direct conflict unless it would force vampires to reveal their nature in public. The Thief will not hesitate to steal a vampire's body and is clever at remaining hidden, until the time comes to drag a staked victim into the middle of a sunny and well-populated street. He will also lead hunters to vampire havens, but only when he can be assured the information will be spread somehow, filmed on digital camera and put on the Internet for the world to see. With the dawn of the information

age, the Thief thought the latter method would be a surefire way to break the Masquerade, but the advent of easily-faked film and video and the sheer jaded skepticism of the Internet-going world has disappointed those hopes. One small blessing in disguise is the blurring effect vampires have on film.

Even so, the Thief of Masques never stops trying. Every time he strikes, the Masquerade cracks a little more. One day, it will shatter entirely and leave the Kindred bereft of their Humanity to hide within.

Stories

Vampires start flagrantly violating the Masquerade in ways hard to cover up: Interviews given to news agencies by a "real-life vampire," complete with demonstrations of vampiric power. Attacking and feeding in public. One vampire dragging another into the sun for punishment on a well-traveled street — but somehow surviving the experience. A man perpetrates a violent crime, leading to a showdown with the police — but he escapes more or less unscathed through the hail of bullets. Even once the offenders are dealt with, more breaches keep occurring. The court is in chaos and must figure out what force is behind this sudden streak of lawbreakers before the damage done is irreparable.

Hunters keep attacking vampire havens with great success, as though they have inside information. At first it seems like vicious Kindred power plays, but even the earlier victims' rivals are targeted and destroyed. Each haven burned to the ground is a problem to cover up; an alleged cell of arsonists claims credit in the headlines for "slaying vampires." Unrest grows among the neonates, most heavily affected by the violence, since the elders cannot protect them. Counterattacks against suspected hunter cells are swift and brutal, inciting even more panic in the domain. Faced with an inability to keep their lesser Kindred safe, the elders find their political support evaporating; even with all their clout, their own safety is in doubt. All vampires are tasked with finding the hunters' informant, which is no easy feat when it's a living shadow capable of assuming any face. Someone within the court may be a traitor....

Name: The Thief
Vice: Treacherous
Shadow Potency: 5
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 5, Resistance 3
Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Occult 2, Subterfuge 5
Corpus: 5
Willpower: 8
Size: 2
Speed: 12
Defense: 5
Initiative: 8
Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Vampires, Possess Living
Dread Powers: *Doom*; The Beast's Rebuke, See the Cracks. *Vitae*; Command the Lost, Kindred Disciplines x 2.
Disciplines: Obfuscate 5, Protean 5
Vitae: 15, 5/turn
Banes: Fire, Material Bane (Mirrors), Sunlight

Varney the Vampire

The old man's grin fades and he takes a deep breath in through his nose, smelling you. As you watch his features sag and contort into a horrific scowl, his eyes sink into his skull and his ears elongate and droop like withered leaves. His fangs descend with a bone-cracking sound and his fingernails elongate into claws. The creature stares at you with unblinking yellow eyes and whispers in his deathly voice. "Time to pay your respects to your ancestors."

Even the Birds of Dis feel the weight of years on their minds. Some Kindred theorize that the minds of the Strix become confused when not in host bodies, warping memory the way some disorders affect Kindred in torpor. This accounts for the many conflicting claims Strix make regarding their history and their relationship to vampires. Of course, the Strix are beings of smoke and shadow, creatures for whom deceit comes as easily as the truth. Sometimes the price of their lies is their own memories of the truth. So it is with the "vampire" called Francis Varney.

The Bannerworth family has long considered itself cursed. Bannerworths who find success in business invariably see their fortunes vanish into financial ruin. Bright young scions of the family who came to the new world in a time before the American Civil War died in tragic accidents or violent crimes. Marriage and relocation can't save those of the Bannerworth heritage from the curse that dogs their footsteps. The answer to that mystery lies in the crumbling portrait of the Bannerworth family patriarch and Varney's uncanny resemblance to it.

Ten generations ago, a Strix that no longer remembers its own name possessed the Bannerworth patriarch. Initially it desired just to torment the humans for its own amusement, but found that the pleasure of inhabiting a body to do so was too great to give up. The Strix remained in the patriarch's body and kept it preserved for years, then decades, until the family could no longer ignore his unaging vitality. By then it was too late. Francis Varney's obsession with his mortal family drove him to follow future generations, scheming to bring about their ruin. He posed as great-grandfathers and great-uncles, inheritors of family estates and forgotten relatives. Eventually, he adopted the name he now uses and terrorized descendants of his host's original family in different manners. Related families fell into his web, like the Croftons, whom Varney mercilessly torments.

The passage of many lives and even more years saw Varney's obsession grow. His memories are hazy and his dreams are full of blood and darkness. The possessing Owl's memories have intermingled with its host's, so now all that Varney knows is "his" family and the aching desire to torment them. The desire stems from sheer Strix cruelty and the creature's hatred of humanity. Unfortunately for the Bannerworth line, Varney

focuses his efforts solely on his extended family and those who join with them.

Varney preys upon his family in manners that let him prolong the agony. He plots against their financial businesses and brings about ruin. He will haunt patriarchs until he drives them mad, besetting them with visions of decaying, walking corpses and their own humanity giving way to a beastly hunger. If he can drive one to consume his own family and fortune to satisfy selfish urges, so much the better. If not, grief is just as powerful a tool when the lynchpins of families fall victim to murder or evil fortune. He will curse whole family units to suffer loss after loss until finally the family breaks under the weight of an uncaring world. When he is finished, Varney discards his playthings and moves on to find more.

No matter what, Varney can always count on future generations for his unlivelihood.

Stories

One of the characters is distantly related to the Bannerworth or Crofton families and becomes Varney's next target. Her first clue is the mysterious loss of her financial assets due to fraud. Then she finds her haven ransacked and torn apart by something with monstrous force. The only thing left untouched is an old family heirloom portrait. Security footage, a concerned neighbor or even ghoul retainers recall seeing a strange old man approaching the haven, asking around about the character. Their description matches that of the portrait, leading the coterie on an investigation into the character's family history to discover the identity of the stalker before it's too late. Clues may lead to the initial ruin of the Bannerworth family and the mysterious disappearance of its patriarch, said to preside over the family in its decline for several decades.

A young neonate named Clara Crofton brings a disturbing tale to Elysium. Her venerable "great-uncle" Francis murdered her mortal father in cold blood just before Clara went to meet with him. When she confronted Francis, the old man shifted from human appearance to something ghastly and monstrous before fleeing. He spoke of family ties and "the gift of the Beast" before he vanished into the night. Now the prince wants this creature found and brought before the court, and has assigned the coterie to assist Clara in finding her father's killer.

Name: Francis Varney

Vice: Hunger

Shadow Potency: 5

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 4, Resistance 5

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Occult 5, Stealth 2

Corpus: 7

Willpower: 9

Size: 2

Speed: 12

Defense: 5

Initiative: 9

Embodiments: Shadow Form, Possess Corpse, Possess Revenant, Possess Kindred, Possess Living; Varney has remained in his host for so long that he refuses to separate or even remembers that he was once a wraith of blood and smoke.

Dread Powers: *Host;* Breath Eater, Preservation, Sheep's Clothing. *Vitae;* Kindred Disciplines x 2.

Disciplines: Nightmare 3, Protean 2, Resilience 5.

Vitae: 15, 5/turn

Banes: Sunlight, Fire, Hated By Beasts, Ravening

Human Host: Francis Varney (a.k.a. Matthias Bannerworth)

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Skills: Mental; Academics 3 (Economics), Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Occult 4 (Vampires). Physical; Brawl 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 4 (Breaking and Entering), Stealth 4 (Shadowing), Weaponry 3. Social; Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 4.

Health: 9

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Defense: 4

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD

PART VI

Edie

We didn't know quite what to expect when we staggered downstairs, frog marching a bloody teenage boy across town to meet his prince. The Sister had arrived practically on the eve of the Pastor's death; just in time to cut him down, but not in time to save him. So she took his place in the congregation. There was no request and no dissention; but she was beautiful, and wise, and she protected them. She definitely wasn't a witch, but he had no idea if she was "like us." Just that we'd visited, and we shouldn't have, but that she is hospitable or whatever. Some bent priestess, maybe; running a revival town-slash-feedlot out in the desert because she couldn't deal with the city or her sire or her ex and wanted to play at being a goddess. Weird, but we could probably take one delusional priestess without much trouble. And besides, as long as she was looking for silence instead of conversions, we had every reason to get along.

I walked first, as is our custom. I had the "name" (which gets us out of a lot, honestly); and I was an impatient bitch besides. "Sister Abigail" was pretty and pale like honey and flax, with shining hazel eyes and an open, welcoming smile. But she felt so wrong that I flinched and barely checked the urge to tear out of the too-too crowded church. But the crowd was pushing us forward, and there was suddenly a lot more space

between me and the door than I would have liked. As I looked back at the ageless prairie housewife standing in front of me, something rolled and fluttered under her skin and I knew we were fucked.

It was like we were in a fairy tale; trapped in the lair of the wicked witch with only our (pretty pitiful) wits to save us. Katy and Jack pressing against my back, Jefe desperately pushing his way back through the crowd, me just caught in her eyes (yellow not hazel, glowing not shining). As one, the crowd surrounded us. Drunk on the spirit, or maybe literally drunk, they sang.

I had an awful feeling about all of this. I felt her ribs crack and bend under my tender ministrations, but nothing slowed her down. Broken joints popped and locked under her skin, mesmerizingly beautiful and obscene even as it tore and black mist seeped out of her wounds. I dug my fist deep into her chest and tore blindly, trying to keep my nose and eyes shut tight against the smoke that I was already breathing in. Her body suddenly went limp and wet in my hands, and the flock howled.

As I blacked out, I heard her whisper in my ear; wet and vicious, hot and dying. "Long live the new flesh."

Chapter Six
The World We Die In

In the country the darkness of night is friendly and familiar, but in a city, with its blaze of lights, it is unnatural, hostile and menacing. It is like a monstrous vulture that hovers, biding its time.

W. Somerset Maugham

The Polis Erebus

Athens, Greece

Athens is old. Older perhaps, than even the 7,000 years of habitation recorded in its mountains and valleys. Athens is young. Its latest stab at democracy is younger than your grandmother. Athens is diverse. Centuries of occupation and a staggering tide of immigration (both legal and otherwise) have changed the blood they once proudly called "purely Ionian." Athens is divided. Centuries of war have left deep scars of anger and distrust, deepening the rift between its richest and poorest citizens.

Officially, Polis Erebus extends only modestly beyond the city limits; officiating over only those vampires who choose to live within its borders. Officially, the Prince of Patras merely enjoys frequent visits with his retired sire in Athens. Officially, Thessaloniki and Kavala are ruled jointly by the sisters of an elderly Athenian priestess, herself exiled and dreaming in Meteora. Unofficially, the parliament of Athens receives many letters, and is paid many visits. Officially, every Athenian citizen has a seat in that parliament, and an equal voice in the management of their nation's affairs. Officially, there is room for a diversity of political stances and views toward Kindred and kine. Unofficially, proving appropriate ancestry can be challenging for native Greeks, much less expatriates (or, God forbid, foreigners); particularly for those resistant to instruction on how "best" to use their vote.

The Secret History

History books tend to lose interest in Greece after the Romans came. Democracy, statuary, a few hundred wars, and then suddenly there's a Europe, and a horde of Ottomans on the other side. Greece disappears in the commotion, a faded memory of the enlightened past. Romantic Englishmen were ever so happy to discover that Greeks still existed, and could be generously provided with a German king.

Sixty years ago, Kallikrates Makridis, regional chair of the Invictus, a man born to be prince, bet heavily on a mortal interest, and lost; he was staked and abandoned by his own generals as a preemptive sacrifice to the wolves at their gate. It wasn't enough. While Kallikrates's best and brightest scrambled to fill the void he left, the sons and daughters of the Invictus were hunted like kine; and in a few bare nights, those who had escaped were already swearing new oaths to whoever might take them in. Without the backbone provided by nature's superior predator, The Revolution to Save a Nation fell, and a tentative parliament regained control over the still-bleeding wound that was post-war Greece. Carthian clutches swelled, through pity or greed. Seized Invictus bank accounts were practically empty. And ever so briefly, they were held together by the promise of an Athens truly unified under the careful leadership of the Movement; Kindred in harmony and kine stewarded out of their lingering dark age.

Wishes, unfortunately, did not turn to fishes for Athens's lovely dead. A generation on, the kine were still rioting, still struggling against their imposed poverty, still desperate to blame anyone at all for their continuing fall from grace. In truth, the Carthians were wholly overwhelmed by their sudden majority, and began pulling apart almost immediately. The loose coalition of rebels and anarchists, who had been tabling their internal conflicts for centuries, suddenly had access to a newly free Greece. And the promise of a new, better government faltered. Even without the disruptive influence of their new members, too few Carthians truly agreed on how to revitalize the pitiful urban economy, or re-establish a cultural identity: one free from the influence of Rome's Camarilla, or the Turkish Spears that followed, or the European princes that pillaged even as they claimed Greece's culture as their own. And if they couldn't forge their own identity, what hope did they have of shaping Athens, let alone its distant and superstitious wildernesses?

The first split was 17N; they took with them the communists and the anarchists and the Kindred who hungered for a revolution still to come. For there was no more hope in the Firebrands. Alecto followed, flush with Invictus whispers; ready to punish the world for a Greece that hadn't been permitted to rule itself for a thousand years. For there was no more fire

in the Revolution. But a lonely few held; and Ypochrési beat a kind of unity from the chaos that surrounded them. Greece had staggered under the weight of a history that would crush a lesser people, and they would see it stand tall again.

The Circle of the Crone stayed safe by staying small. Sisters here and there, worshipping the monster within and guarding the lost holy places; always circling the edge of the light thrown by the campfire, but never stepping in. And so they might have stayed, until the Mother of Monsters took matters into her own hands. Blood will be spilled in the streets of Athens tonight, and the monsters that emerge must be better, purer, and *hers*. In the dark and secret parts of the holy earth, Ekhidna waits for her deathless daughters; they rest uneasily in their havens, listening to the whispers of Cruác in their dreams.

But among the kine, young department secretaries and their girlfriends still drink in Kolonaki, dressing for who they wish they could be. Old communists linger in rembetika dens a little longer than used to be prudent, and watch tourists and Greeks too young to be afraid play at being revolutionaries. Hopeful students crowd into Athens Polytechnic's doors, confident that they will make the crucial difference between today and tomorrow. And everyone holds his breath. Maybe this will be the year that it will finally be real; that the nightmares will end and the city will feel safe and clean (and not just where the tourists can see). Sometimes it even feels like it will stick. Hardly anyone important gets rounded into the makeshift shipping crate jails come late summer, and Kindred only ever seem to visit (thanks to a generous and practical coalition government). Bleeders and breeders may still suffer and starve, but bright young children can walk the streets at night and fear only each other.

The Clans

When a city's ruled by passion and fueled by tourism, a cunning Serpent can make an easy living...provided the young **Daeva** doesn't get shot up first, or subjected to a sire's "affectionate" bond. The Carthian fracture has hit them hardest, though. Where once they were unified (as much as nature could allow) in the spirit of freedom, they have fallen upon one another; brother and sister, mother and son. And they are just as kind as family can be. All factions find some voice in this house, but the din it raises can be heard on the streets outside. Right now, given the general disfavor in which Ventrue citizens have been held, Daeva are disproportionately represented in covenant politics. That may not last another public confrontation.

Fifteen thousand kilometers of barely-watched coastline and ridges of steep, dry mountain make Greece a fine, Savage place; a sweet-blooded feast of slow refugees and fat tourists. But

even among the few tight-knit **Gangrel** families, the patrilineal promise is broken. Favored sons are turned away toward the bone cold and monstrous sprawl of Athens itself; to join the ranks of the dispossessed and discontent. That hungry-eyed Afghan woman selling honeydew in the alley may be sharp of tooth and claw; or maybe she just covets your passport and resents that easy way with a handful of euros. It's a hard world, and there's not enough room for those who merely *want* to survive. Where all burn for vengeance, more Gangrel would turn that fire within than without.

Shadows have an unfortunate reputation in Athens. The **Mekhet** are permanent foreigners, ever denied an official place in parliament, ever suspected of being that wicked voice drumming up discontent. And yet they have prospered, curled deep in the nests of their enemies like cuckoos. They answer only to one another, where others tear their houses down around themselves. They are silent watchers and gentle nudgers, where others kindle the fires of another civil war. They are patiently waiting — for has a quiet mind not benefited them already? The Mehket of Athens have perfected a disappearing act; present yet unremarkable in every facet of Greek politics, indispensable but unwatched.

A Haunt in Athens steps into a respected class of politicians and religious leaders. For three thousand years, in the face of persecution and conquest, the **Nosferatu** have upheld the traditions of the Kataraménon; they proudly wear their mortification like old ascetics. That legacy of religious and civic service has given them a perhaps undeserved reputation for honesty and honor; an off-putting aura or a melted face has become a badge of enlightenment. Today Nosferatu find themselves unusually welcome in dead society, and unusually dedicated to preserving it. Ypochréosi is packed tightly with idealistic young monsters, liberally watering the tree of liberty with the nightmares of tyrants.

It's tricky to be a Lord among citizens. After all, **Ventrue** was Kallikrates's clan: Like his covenant, its reputation has been dragged down with him. Young Ventrue (for the old have fled into the arms of distant princes or long dreams) cut their teeth in Athens the hard way; as hatchet men and errand girls, intriguing with one another for every sliver of power they can accumulate. That fresh-faced girl with golden hair has been watching you for weeks, waiting for just the right moment to take you aside and gently apply a boot to your throat in the name of whoever offered her the best price in the first blush of evening. Each favor takes her closer to the desk of a certain quiet Mehket functionary. But blood, as they say, will tell. The tender lamb of modern democracy will once again depend on leaders forged from the very best the Ventrue have to offer.

The Covenants

Athens is crawling with political blocs, but has only five true covenants, all skewed by the deeply insular nation.

The **Kataraménon**, the Church in Exile, are doubly Damned. Cursed first by Apollo, then by God to be the demons that haunt the path of his better children. Technically disjoint from parliament, they are the keepers of one half of Greece's oldest faith: the inheritors of the Apollonian tradition, and the careful curators of its Byzantine post-Christian evolution. As times have demanded, they have been oracles and plaguebearers, confessors and revolutionaries; always reaching toward political legitimacy, but never quite committing to its responsibilities. Today they hold the thankless job of directing Kindred aggression where it belongs — outward, against the kine.

Needs must where devils drive. Kine and Kindred will suffer, and many may die. But above all, Athens must not fall again. We will stand tall. **Ypochréosi** is not the only covenant that wants a functioning, thriving city; but no one has been willing to sacrifice so much, or so many, in the name of stability (if not peace). With detention camps and festivals, blackmail and assassinations and christening presents, Ypochréosi keeps the millions of threads of city life woven tight in its hands. And there are so many hands working in unison that it's hard to see who is responsible for even a single brutal retribution, much less who is guiding all those hands.

Alecto understands the weight of legacy. While Ypochréosi eagerly tramples traditions so old they defined western civilization, and 17N eats its own heart aching for a change that will not come, Alecto looks backward for the answers that will save Athens from herself. They strive to understand Greece, to educate its worthy citizens, and to emulate its most decisive leaders. After all, tyrants have prospered on Greek soil; perhaps the only language her citizens can understand is tyranny. All they need is a few virtuous men willing to police the borders of their nation against the philhellenic fetishism of Europe's princes, and police their citizens against the inadequacies coddled by long years under foreign rule.

Once upon a time, **17N** could only be found buried deep in the bars and skeletal bookshops of Exarcheia. These days, you're as likely to find a shingle in Gazi or a brand new apartment complex out in the suburbs. Anarchism is modernizing, and they are remaking Athens a block at a time; fistful by fistful of counterfeit euros. Revolted equally by Alecto's nostalgic fascism and Ypochréosi's brutal form of political moderation, the modern liberal dead are determined to burn it all down and start anew, turning the fire in their belly into fire in the streets.

The **Circle of the Crone** is nameless here, for there have always been chthonic cults in Athens, all secretive and strange in their own private ways, lone priestesses and pure-bred daughters each upholding a legacy that stretches past any individual memory or recording. They are the distaff half of Greece's elder faith; pushed ever underground by the encroaching Church. But the Mother of Bones has awoken; finally ready to create the army she was Embraced to create; finally ready to march on Athena's citadel and deliver the blood of the Polis Erebus to Ekhidna as her missing centuries' worth of hecatomb.

Close to a decade ago, the **Lancea et Sanctum** sent a representative from the nearby Sultanate of Tarsus, to help "reintegrate" a revitalized city. He was received quite warmly, and has remained a guest of state ever since. No further envoys have been requested or permitted entry.

The Dragons maintain bolt-holes in their secret, safe places; but on the whole, the **Ordo Dracul** find themselves more welcome in the southern Sultanates than in a city more concerned with survival than transcendence.

Notable Kindred

Patriarch Panagiotis Crysostomos of the soft voice and bleeding eyes is, in his heart, a heretic. He knows that each of us travels alone to faith and to death, and that he was born again to harry the living in their apostasies and prolong the atonement of the dead. His Embrace was freely offered and accepted, at the end of a long lifetime that tailored him for induction into his new, honored calling. He had fled his generation's long war, bartered stolen antiquities (still covered in the blood of his brothers) for bread and favors, shaved his beard, became some sad shopkeeper in a Turkish slum. He knows he deserves to be here, out of the gaze of God. But even as the centuries wear on, and he guides an ever stronger, ever hungrier flock; he plans for heaven. The Mother of Bones has promised him a third birth, for only the smallest of favors.

Sakis the Stenographer shed his old name along with his niqab when he landed in Piraeus, and took up typing. He quietly labored as the personal assistant to one politician after another (through coups and assassinations and simple attrition) until he had simply always been there. He's an excellent secretary; pleasant and innocuous, with a face that slips around and past your memory and an unthreatening eagerness to do what he's told. In the last 30 years he's become something between an office manager and a mascot; proof that parliament's legendary bureaucracy could be used for good as well as mischief. It's fortunate that he doesn't seem to have political ambitions at all, because he takes such usefully detailed notes.

Mikis Giotopoulos would be the first person to tell you that he isn't really that important, just a foot soldier in the war on boring nightlife. He goes to bars, drinks himself stupid and flirts the pants off college girls (and sometimes boys, but on the sly). He must not be doing too badly for himself, though; maybe half of those evening projects become regulars themselves, enthralled even as he crawls all over his newest mark. They come back much sterner stuff than they'd left, though; political, driven, and very invested in understanding the practical machinery of city life. Who signs what when cargo ships reach Piraeus? Does his sister go to Athens Polytechnic or the Panteion? That's nice, we could use more lawyers.

Despoina, Mother of Bones has always had vision, but the visions are new. Before, she merely wanted what every priestess before her has wanted — to exact judgment on the world in the name of the Mother of Monsters and to carry the remains of her sire in a blue glass bottle. Her Acolytes were few, for the daughters of Athens were unfit for her blessing. And why share power when she could remain safe under the earth, waiting out the long centuries for an *appropriate* apprentice? Her sleep has been troubled though, for Ekhidna dreams, and has chosen to share her dreams with Despoina. Athens will be in flames; perhaps not this week or next year, but soon. And Despoina must prepare the army that will burn it.

Notable Locations

The first thing you'll notice, when hiking up to the House of Erechtheus, is how much is missing. The blown-out chunks of ruined stone; the missing statuary; the omnipresent scaffolding; the bullet holes. All casualties to wave after wave of occupation. But the **Acropolis** has been under almost continuous renovation since the 1970s; and while what's gone will never quite be the same, it's more whole than it's been in hundreds of years. The citadel is both more and less than Elysium: It's not a safe zone, but is explicitly neutral territory. It isn't a bad place to arrange a meeting (if you're a drama queen). Kindred are expressly forbidden from building havens in and around what remains a very holy site to both the Kataraménon and the Circle of the Crone.

Syntagma Square was built to commemorate the first constitution of Greece (wrested from their imported king following an armed uprising). Following yet another war, the Greek Parliament was built alongside it; always looking toward the spot where Greece fought for self-rule. Protests are drawn to it even today, and not just because of the free wifi. It's also kissing distance from nearly every historical landmark in the city, bringing together tourists, politicians, and citizens alike. The nightlife is vigorous and political — Polis Erebus votes here, under the heavy gaze of Greece's troubled past.

The walls of **Oleander** are stained with hash smoke and brittle with layer after layer of flour-paste band flyers. A double row of framed photos hang over the bar; dour men and dark-eyed women, clutching bouzouki and outi, wilting in precognition of some great heartbreak just past the horizon. Most nights, the bartender, a young buck of 70, dutifully pours out retsina to equally spry patrons and the odd lonely tourist, and fills his hours lingering by the jukebox. But every so often (every night for a week, then gone for four months), three ageless musicians pack the house with sticky smoke and music that makes your heart ache for home.

Broken Things Remembered

Beijing

Look carefully while crossing. In Beijing, your life depends on it. Cars, bicycles, and pedestrians weave through one another like the strands of spiderwebs. Around the corner, tourists cram together down narrow hutongs to the market. They haggle for gaudy rhinestone jewelry, cheap tasseled ornaments, fine silk scarves.

It's the city of history and construction, of bright tile sidewalks and filthy concrete, of the dance school and Bar Street and Xinjiang lamb kebabs. Politics and international industry live here. You can get anything but good pizza and fresh air. Everyone dreams of home.

Everyone but the Kindred. Beijing is home to them. No one goes hungry. They have their pick of the crowds in shopping malls or on the subways. They are invisible, and they are everywhere. They drive taxis. They sell fruit and phone cards on the street. They run the official Internet cafes and the ones the government keeps shutting down. They give away bottles of expensive liquor to make the most important officials look the other way.

If solitude is scarce and the Kindred have to fight for every iota of influence they have — what of it? Their way of life depends on the city. It is the city of everything they ever wanted and everything they didn't.

If only they could forget how they got here.

The Secret History

Until 1958, Kindred were spread quietly through the eastern region of China, creating and adapting to local customs and cultures. They swore loyalty to the Ventrue-led Empire in Beijing. The only other vampire government to unite so many Kindred under the same banner was the Camarilla, nearly a millennium earlier. And again like the Camarilla, their Empire fell.

In 1958, Mao commanded China to destroy what he called the Four Pests. He said it was for hygiene. So the humans killed them, and were especially zealous in murdering sparrows. They beat pots and pans, yelled, and destroyed nests.

Li Songlian, Premier of the Henan Kindred and night administrator of the city of Xinyang, enthusiastically joined in the campaign. Her sire disapproved. He refused to speak to her from that day.

Her agenda, though, was not Mao's.

"Thousands of birds have descended on the villages," she wrote in a formal complaint to Beijing. "You might see them out of the corner of your eye. They are hungry ghosts. They brought with them despair and death and a plague. Corpses wake. Kindred lose themselves. When I Embraced a villager who had been my lover, the other Henan Premier dragged him into the sun. He burned. The Premier did not, although far worse awaited him after."

Soon after the sparrows were killed, stories and letters of complaint trickled into the capital. Locusts had eaten the crops. No birds were left to eat the locusts. Granaries were full of seized grain, yet children returned from school to find their families starving.

By 1960, desperation thinned the Masquerade in Henan Province, along with the Kindred's blood supply. Some of the village elders under Li Songlian's control were hiding their sources of human food. Some of the humans in her province were even resorting to cannibalism, and Li feared diablerie was next. She sent another plea to Beijing.

Zhao Xiangjun, King of the Beijing Kindred, didn't much care. No one starved in his district, though his mortal resources had been stripped away. Most of the landowners who had made the empire's fortunes had been forced to publicly denounce themselves and had been tortured, some of them to death. The rest had been sent to laogai camps for "reeducation through labor," along with Zhao's retinue of mortal scholars.

So Zhao did nothing, which was a shame for him. The stories from Henan province, especially Li Songlian's city of Xinyang, became too heinous for Beijing's human government to ignore. Corpses littering the side of the road. Cannibalism.

"The landlords have retaken control," Mao said, "and ruined my utopian experiment." He sent hundreds of soldiers to surround Xinyang. Many humans died in the beatings that followed. All but forty-seven Kindred were captured there and bound. Thirty more died from being bound in the sun.

The survivors limped their way to Beijing, picking up a few dozen more desperate Kindred along the way. There was food in Beijing, they had all heard. The journey was long and arduous, made possibly only by the remains of the network of routes and safehouses the Empire had maintained. Even those were slowly falling into ruin.

When they finally arrived, Li Songlian's sire whispered discord into the air. Zhao refused them entry. He called them Mao-worshippers, sparrow killers, mad fools who saw ghosts everywhere.

Li Songlian's sire spoke aloud, as chronicled in the letters written by an elder of Shuangjing Village.

"The hungry ghosts are among us," Li Songlian's sire said. "They will eat everyone and everything you care about. The Kindred of Beijing have forgotten us. We must fight to be remembered."

"Beijing has already eaten everything we care about," Li Songlian said. "Kindred politics will not bring them back."

"Everything?" he asked. "Why did you plead for Beijing's aid, and why do you lead us to them now? Has all of Henan been eaten? Has revenge?"

She settled back and watched her remaining Henan Kindred. Many of them were leaning closer. Several were nodding. A few just looked hungry, as they always did now.

She sighed. "Very well," she said. "If you must."

That is when the war began.

No Kindred group tells the story the same way. Some of the Mekhet describe in detail Li's siege tactics. They say the Premier of Henan appointed them to the first Bureau of Silence. She understood what destruction comes from careless whispers. The Gangrel say the Premier and her small army overcame the Emperor with the power of the Beast. The Ventrue say they were denied their rulers' birthright the day the Empire fell.

Just one story always stays the same. When Li Songlian's sire heard the Empire had fallen, when he heard how many Kindred had fallen with it, he grinned. He walked out into the bright morning sun. He did not burn.

The Clans

In Beijing, the **Mekhet** will say anything you want to hear. What they'll *do* is entirely unrelated.

They keep their strangleholds on the Bureau of Silence and the Bureau of Childer because they're a family. A close one. Nothing is more important than family.

They have to eat, though, and they have to put the new childer through the Academy. So they sell. Technology, information, safe passage through anyone's domain. Anything but what they're thinking. Everything comes at a high price.

Beijing's **Ventrue** go back more generations than anyone can count, and they'll tell you so at every opportunity. They will invent opportunities if you don't give them one. They will do anything they ever want to do, other than rule the city.

The Ventrue neonates don't quite believe that. They can do more. They are so few because they are so special. That waitress down the road catches one's eye? She's in his bed before he even hungers for her. His sire put her there. He wants a new car? His sire has bought the new head of the Beijing Traffic Management Bureau. No one has even considered denying them anything. They influence the governments and the markets. They poach others' childe candidates. They can even have two childer of their own, where the other clans only get one.

The Mekhet in power are afraid of what those Ventrue neonates will do when they discover the true penalty for Embracing three times. But they don't tell anyone that.

The **Gangrel** hate all of you. The Bureau of Silence knows everything that's happening in the city, but sometimes its eyes in the countryside get dirty. Many of the Gangrel are employed to clean that dirt out. They are liaisons and occasional advisors from the rural villages. They only visit the city for official events, and they resent each visit immensely. Everyone tastes terrible and the Kindred are too polite. Mekhet and Ventrue everywhere take pictures with the Gangrel when they visit.

The **Nosferatu** here are particularly fond of the pollution and of the frightened children begging outside Quanjude Restaurant for roast duck. When it's windy, they visit abandoned construction sites. They enjoy the blinding sandstorms of loose dirt.

Few **Daeva** choose to stay here, despite the endless supply of food. Everything just feels too *restricted* here for them. Not their scene.

The Covenants

The Kindred of Beijing spent several centuries developing the **Way of the Dragon** and the **Dragon's Path**. Although the covenants are not part of the Ordo Dracul, their followers were influenced by Dracula's ideas in the early 20th century. *Rites of the Dragon* is an extraordinarily popular book, though critical interpretation varies substantially from the West.

To be a follower of the Way of the Dragon, all you have to do is align your will with the Beast's. Easiest way to calm the Beast is to agree with it. True followers of the Way appreciate the Academy. They approve of the isolation and the literature, and they love experiments that get blood under their fingernails.

The Dragon's Path teaches Kindred to methodically detach from the Beast's hunger and the troubles that come with it. Devout followers of the Path feed exclusively from blood banks and corpses, something which becomes harder and harder as they age. Eating directly from living donors strengthens the Beast's power over them. Eating from the Kindred is even worse. The Masters at the Academy teach the Path. Slightly less blood-bonding foolishness and diablerie to deal with.

Both groups insist they've mastered a Mystery that was previously unknown. Neither group will explain further.

Once a year, a few especially devoted followers of both the Way and the Path go to the Minshan mountain range in Sichuan province. They take in the beauty. They pretend to breathe the fresh air. They write poetry. Most especially, they visit the cascading glacial pools at Huanglong, a place they consider a namesake.

The **Bureau of Childer** processes requests for new Embraces. Only a very few are approved. The Mekhet Minister of Childer assures the Ventrue the interview process for Childer candidates is efficient and carefully considered. No one knows quite what he means.

The Judges of the **Lancea et Sanctum** choose followers selectively and demand absolute loyalty. Most Ventrue ancillae want in. No one else can understand the appeal. The Mekhet surreptitiously encourage their involvement: It keeps the Ventrue feeling content and special and powerful. This may not work out to their benefit, as the Ventrue have been able to increase the Spear's meager mortal influence.

Fifty young Mekhet and 10 Ventrue comprise the **Bureau of Silence**. The only one with a public face is the Premier. The Bureau does whatever it takes to maintain the Masquerade, and is highly connected within the human Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. At any given moment, only 10 members of the Bureau have any real power. The trick is knowing which 10. A hint: It's never the Ventrue. Don't tell them that.

Notable Kindred

At Xizhimen Station, Audrey Hepburn is plastered along the side of a bus shelter advertising bottled tea. A woman spreads out a tarp beside it. She is selling lotus seed pods, bottled water, and secrets, if you know the right way to ask.

Her name is **Haiyan.** She won't tell you her family name. Too much danger. She *will* tell you anything else you pay to know. For a steeper price, she'll make sure someone dies horribly or lives worse. For the steepest price, she'll make you feel like you're alive again. You don't want to pay it.

Everyone wants to be on **Wei Xiaobo's** good side. He runs the Academy; and while it's not the only way to rise to power, it also won't beat you into an early torpor if you fail. Probably. Unfortunately, no one has the slightest idea how to get on his good side, not even the Mehket. The only things that seem to make him happy are train crashes and insects. Once, he engineered a train crash himself. He gets angry if anyone else does it, though.

Gao Xieda and **Zhang Qinxin** are perverting themselves together. Their perversion is recent, in the last decade or so, or their Kindred would never have permitted their rise to power.

Both Gao and Zhang have thankless jobs. Gao Xieda is the Minister of Blood Echoes. Other people collect the vampire lineage registrations. She's the one they send out to stop a frenzy in Beihai Park. She is an immigrant from Kursk, one of the few Daeva in Beijing. Most of those Daeva spend their free nights clubbing. Her you can find on Yabao Road, selling fur coats to Russian tourists.

Zhang Qinxin's job is even worse. She's the Premier of the Bureau of Silence. She keeps the Bureau of Childer from sanctioning the wrong people, ensures no one ever finds out about that frenzy in Beihai Park, and makes certain that what Haiyan's selling won't give anyone Malkavia. She does her job efficiently and fairly. Everyone hates her, usually even Xieda.

Former Academic Minister **Zhun Dan** catapulted to a confused and very temporary prominence in 1990, when He Ming's famous Ordo Dracul text *Commentaries on Mencius and the Analects* disappeared from the Academy.

The Bureau of Silence blamed the book's loss on the local Minister's greed and poor management. Zhun Dan pilfered fifteen million yuan meant to pay for daylight human security around the building. The lower pay he offered attracted scum who cleaned out the building and ran.

Some from the Lancea et Sanctum pointed to blurry photographs from the Academy's security cameras. These appear to be men from the People's Armed Police. Why would Zhun Dan hire them for security?

Minister Zhun Dan was promptly sentenced and imprisoned. No one is allowed to speak with him.

Notable Locations

If Kindred are hungry for something different, they visit the **Wudaokou** subway hub.

The Cacophony is loudest here. Pay that erhu player in the station a few hundred yuan. He'll give you a flash drive. Pay the pedestrians for something else. Beijing's international students all travel through this hub. They're adventurous and young enough to understand the appeal of the immortal. They make excellent blood dolls.

Don't get too attached, though. They always forget, they go home more frequently than do most blood dolls. But if they try to leave you, well, people expect them to go missing from time to time. They're students. They've got exams, or the Internet isn't working again, and anyway they're not due back in Korea for a month.

The Marco Polo Bridge is a place of peace and a memory of war's beginnings. An architectural marvel. No one agrees on what to call it.

Chinese humans pragmatically call it the Lugou Bridge, Bridge Over The Reed Ditch. Western humans named it the Marco Polo Bridge because a famous Westerner visited it once. Western vampires call it Elysium. Chinese vampires call it Youdu: capital city of Hell. The Ventrue like that name. The Mekhet think it's overwrought.

At night, stone lions along the bridge cast shadows in the floodlights. The Kindred chose this place for those lions. One represented each domain in Beijing. Now there aren't enough lions.

The bridge is the quietest Elysium in Beijing. Another Elysium is five minutes away: a Sino-Japanese war museum. It illustrates horrors, scars on the land and its people. The Kindred here like scars.

Outside **The Tavern**, the character for "fortune" hangs upside-down. Kindred and humans alike need good fortune here.

To the uninitiated, the bar is called "Jiusi," or "The Tavern." Its true name is Jiuquan Simiao: Temple of the Underworld. When Kindred receive Bureau approval to Embrace, they meet candidates here. Grab drunken tourists and dance to terrible techno. Approach the loner reading Lu Xun in the corner.

"Buy you a drink?" they ask. "Come home with me. God, just let me touch you."

Every patron is pre-screened by the Bureau of Childer. It's an interview, of sorts. Kindred can only choose one person to Embrace, unless they're rich or Ventrue or have a death wish. They'd better not choose wrong.

The Academy looks like a warehouse from the outside. Inside, the Dragons advance their knowledge. The curriculum lasts a minimum of 12 years. Discussing it outside of the Academy walls is forbidden unless you're with the Bureau of Silence. That's all anyone outside the Academy knows, even if you pay for the Cacophony's best work.

Mekhet and other ambitious Kindred compete fiercely for admission. Sometimes to the death.

The Margraviate of Berlin-Brandenburg

Berlin, Germany

A layered painting, each layer an era, woven through with boulevards, water, and parks, and framed in concrete — this is West Berlin. But over twenty years after the Wall fell, the East is still deeply scarred by its Soviet past. And the numerous monuments to the victims of the Nazi Party attest to an older scar upon the psyche of the Kindred, many of whom remember the War and the strangers who entered afterwards, during the occupation. Late at night, they trade memories of foreign vampires and clockwork devils. Berlin has seen too much, and still wakes up covered in sweat in the middle of the night.

The city's Kindred also recently woke up screaming. But for them, the nightmare is all too real. Shadowy figures stalk them relentlessly, and even some elders have vanished from their own havens. The Kindred are hooked on a line, and they are being reeled in, one by one, each pulling the next along. One out of four Kindred have gone missing or met their Final Death. And it's accelerating.

The margravemarkgraf has finally enacted a dauntingly ambitious plan to deal with this menace: His subjects have been given orders to inspire mortals to pick up the stake and torch. To become hunters. These hunters have a stunning array of well-honed strategies in their arsenal. Who better to root out those preying on the predators?

The Secret History

In 1945, the Kaiserin Clara vom Magdeburg, ruler of Berlin's Kindred, disappeared, along with her bank accounts. The old order — the Shadow Empire — was suddenly swept clear by the tides, and in its place was left an empty throne. A year of bloody fighting among the city's Kindred followed, which ended with the Elector Council mostly uniting behind a young Serpent named Joachim Hirsch. The childe of the Ordo Dracul elector, Hirsch had never shown exceptional promise or creativity, seeming content to reap the benefits of a Requiem in his prestigious sire's shadow.

On his coronation, he declared himself the legitimate heir to the old Margraviate of Brandenburg, and became the MargraveMarkgraf Heinrich III. He established himself as a ruthless and competent ruler very quickly; and by the time two decades had passed, the electors were his fawning lapdogs, his own sire included. East Berlin, when the wall fell, had been rent with half a century's unceasing power struggle, and the margravemarkgraf quickly found allies there who simply wanted peace to return. He annexed the domain into his own in less than a year.

The 1990s were chaotic, but also marked by hope. The future seemed promising, and when an enterprising neonate vanished without a trace in 1998, nothing much was made of it. A few Kindred of especially sensitive nature, however, felt a chill wind from the south and took to the habit of looking over their shoulders whenever they heard a bird cry.

At the turn of the millennium, as the mortals feverishly celebrated at the stroke of midnight, his body was found. It was marked by claws directly over his heart, showing very few signs of decay — like he had only met his first death that night. And as the margrave called the court together, another neonate failed to turn up. She was never seen again. Over the next two years, three more neonates vanished.

Ancillae started vanishing. Then, the occasional elder. Finally, in 2009, the turn had come for an elector. Maria Goldstein, Elector of the Invictus, vanished without a trace, her haven left in chaos. The margravemarkgraf ordered several new Embraces, and established an elite corps of vampires and ghouls to police his domain — the Watchful Eyes. At first, they seemed to have met with success. Peace returned to Berlin.

A year later, on the anniversary of the founding of the Watchful Eyes, their headquarters burned down during their celebration. Not one single member who was present that night managed to escape, leaving only a scattered few Eyes left. The margravemarkgraf had wasted all his efforts, and exhausted all his options. All, that is, save one. On New Year's Eve, 2011, Heinrich III announced to the Elector Council that he was going to turn to Berlin's vampire hunters to solve their problems.

The year 2012 started out with a rash of almost-public vampire attacks.

The first step of the plan seemed to work: The occasional dangerous eccentric who styled himself a hunter became the heart of a tight-knit cell of believers. In step two of the plan, the margravemarkgraf started feeding the hunters the occasional scapegoat. In step three, he started planting clues.

The margravemarkgraf is walking a difficult line. He needs to feed these hunters enough information about vampire society to work on, but not too much. He hopes that giving the hunters the clues he has about the mysterious attacks, each carefully falsified to look like an attack on a mortal, will allow them to root out the culprit where his own subjects couldn't. He needs to feed them enough scapegoats to keep them motivated, but not enough that the hunters or neonates of Berlin figure out what happened to them. And he must Embrace enough of them to rebuild his Watchful Eyes, but not so many the hunters cotton on.

He has publicly announced that he is manipulating the hunters into hunting the assassin, but not how — and if the young vampires of the city figured that out, he might find himself trying to douse a full-scale revolt. His hope is that the fever will kill the disease before it kills the host. Even so, he has quietly made preparations to abandon Berlin in a hurry if need be.

To be a neonate in Berlin tonight is to be a very small fish in a tank full of sharks. Many of them have a haunted look to their eyes, and most know to avoid blue-collar neighborhoods and try to not draw attention. In such an environment, bitter resentment of one's elders naturally simmers. The neonates aren't sure exactly how the margravemarkgraf is responsible for their suffering, but they do know their elders Embraced them and placed them in this situation, and the margravemarkgraf is nearly the eldest of them all.

The Clans

The margravemarkgraf is **Daeva** himself, but the Serpents find no preferential treatment here. Indeed, the tyrant tends to give his own clan much less benefit of the doubt than anyone else, wishing to avoid the appearance of favoritism. It has worked quite well, and earned him a reputation of impartiality at the cost of making his own clan bitterly resentful of him. Berlin's Daeva tend to define themselves in opposition to the margravemarkgraf, and the Invictus and Revolutionary Council both see a disproportionate number of Serpents among their ranks. Conversely, the Dragons have very few Daeva at all. The Daeva have been hit harder than any other clan by the assassin; that, coupled with ever-growing emigration, has reduced them to a bare fourth of their old numbers.

The **Gangrel** find themselves in a curiously torn position in this domain. On the one hand, theirs is the only clan completely unrepresented among the electors, which is cause for anger. On the other hand, with the city falling rapidly to savagery, the Savages find themselves slowly outnumbering everyone else, and coming closer to thriving under siege. That the Gangrel should be in charge of a city where over a third of all Kindred are Savages is becoming a popular position among their own numbers.

The **Nosferatu** and **Mekhet** both find themselves less touched by the current crisis than the Lords and Serpents, because of their ability to hide. But even among the Haunts' Necropoli and the Shadows' cults, they find themselves hunted, some of their numbers vanishing in their most secure havens. The two clans have therefore banded together tightly, hoping to ensure their mutual survival. Mutual Mekhet–Nosferatu blood bonds aren't uncommon, and some paranormally-inclined Kindred wonder if what they're observing is the birth of a new, merged clan. The fact that half the electors are Haunts or Shadows makes some observers uneasy about this alliance.

The **Ventrue** have been winnowed down to half their old numbers, and the traditionalist Lords are among the staunchest supporters of the margravemarkgraf's initiatives. The increasing irrelevance of the clan as their numbers fall and their elders seem to petrify has led to a surge of radical fervor among the clan's youngest, though, and what the shadowy assassin hasn't already destroyed might well get torn apart in a bloody generational conflict.

The Covenants

The **Watchful Eyes** is a very small covenant, comprised of less than half a dozen survivors of the original Eyes, plus newly-Embraced vampire hunters selected for recruitment by the Eyes' current leader, the Haunt Sara Ferreira. There are also a few promising recruits from Kindred society at large. The Eyes is a cult-like group, fanatically devoted to hunting their shadowy nemesis, which they have nicknamed Abaddon. They are fanatically paranoid, and operate in cells, subject to Ferreira's First Cell—those who survived the purge. Politically, they have a great deal of power, with Ferreira serving as their elector. As the experts on Abaddon, the margravemarkgraf lends them his ear easily.

The **Revolutionary Council** was East Berlin's only official covenant during the Cold War, and was in undisputed charge of the domain. Unfortunately, while its control was undisputed, its leadership was anything but, and very few Kindred managed to actually retain the position of Councilmember for more than a year. As East Berlin's only covenant, the margravemarkgraf appointed them a seat on the Elector Council. Its elector is Ludwig Schneider of the Ventrue, and he calls himself Chairman instead of Elector.

The Council's members are called Revolutionaries, although some older Kindred still refer to them as "Ossies." They assimilated West Berlin's **Carthian Movement**, something of a surprise to the elders who assumed that the fractious Council would itself be assimilated. The Council, outnumbering the Carthians enormously, ended up simply absorbing the older covenant.

Over the last two decades, though, the Council has become Westernized and gradually shed its members as their old communist ethos became increasingly irrelevant. In modern nights, the Council are the Carthian Movement in all but name, with a grumbling old guard who reminisce about the glory days of the DDR. They do still attract some East German Kindred, though, among those discontented with seeing themselves overshadowed by the still-somewhat-wealthier and more politically powerful West.

Representatives of the **Circle of the Crone** are not terribly numerous in Berlin. Those present often face some suspicion over the attacks, as some Kindred say the feats the assassin has performed seem too similar to those possible with Crúac for comfort. The elector who represents the Acolytes is an elder who calls himself Augustus, who belongs to clan Nosferatu.

The local **Invictus** vampires find themselves oddly irrelevant, overshadowed by a strong and charismatic margravemarkgraf who isn't even one of their own. The covenant takes on an almost mystical significance here: they are biding their time, waiting for their own charismatic leader to emerge — a secular Messiah. Its elector is the Mekhet Sofia Goldstein, childe of Maria Goldstein.

The **Lancea et Sanctum** of Berlin enjoys a steady membership, and the margravemarkgraf's ear — its position is sacrosanct under Heinrich III's traditionalist reign, and its priests perform their prayers and rites under every public event. The elector who represents the Sanctified is Cardinal Margarete Kohn, of the Lords.

The **Ordo Dracul** is practically an extension of the margravemarkgraf. Technically, it is under the control of the elector, Werther the Younger, the margravemarkgraf's sire. In reality, the elector is under the Vinculum, and does as commanded. The margravemarkgraf's political opponents among the Dragons are few and circumspect.

Notable Kindred

Usually called simply the MargraveMarkgraf, **Heinrich III** is a populist with a gift for manipulation and astonishing charisma. He is also completely ruthless. A tyrant, he tends to underestimate others, though he is good at hiding it. Recent events have forced him to the brink of sanity, though, and he has started to crack under the strain. His current schemes are very likely to collapse around him, violently, and he knows it.

The Elector **Sara Ferreira** of the Watchful Eyes is a grim figure, always clothed in sturdy clothes of black and dark brown, with a hat that throws her face in shadow, except her eyes. She seemingly has no sense of humor, but very keen observers can sometimes pick up a hint of sarcasm in her voice. Her eyes glow orange, and the fiery intensity can sometimes inspire Rötschreck in others. She is always heavily armed, and usually keeps two ghouls close to her as bodyguards. She is fanatically devoted to the security of Berlin, and will do whatever it takes to maintain it, without mercy or pity. Deep down, though, she has doubts and despair.

The Ventrue neonate **Johann** is a figure the Elector Council would dearly love to hear nothing more about. The Lords are falling into irrelevancy, into extinction, he claims, and the clan's neonates will not accept that. Johann is a bright, shining star for the Young Lords — a charismatic and passionate firebrand who promises the world and more. He dresses flashily, often emulating counterculture trends, and uses wide, sweeping gestures when talking. Some, though, can see a nasty glint in his eyes, a sickly fire that promises more, different things to his followers.

Lady Niemand (which means "nobody") is a centuries-old Mekhet elder rumored to slumber beneath the city. She's supposedly powerful beyond compare, with eyes that so sharp they can see tomorrow. If she could be found and awakened, she could be an extremely powerful force against the mysterious assassin. Unfortunately, Lady Niemand might very well be nothing but a myth; and if she is real, what sort of things might such an ancient creature do when awakened? For one thing, she might overthrow the margravemarkgraf to rule for herself — a possibility of which he is very conscious. And so he tries to dissuade the young and hopeful from looking for Lady Niemand's tomb.

Not everyone fighting against the assassin is one of the Watchful Eyes or a mortal hunter. **Sergeant Stein** and her squad are a Bavarian coterie of Kindred who specialize in hiring out their services to the highest bidder. As luck would have it, they are in Berlin at the moment, and have been hired by the Watchful Eyes. They are a completely amoral bunch, though; Kindred in the Eyes and without are worried that this band of killers might be just as willing to work for the assassin if it outbid the margravemarkgraf. Stein's band is extremely well trained and equipped, and represents a significant threat to even large and powerful groups,

Notable Locations

Berlin's famous zoological garden, **Tiergarten**, is the center of the assassin's killings, and thus is considered almost completely off-limits by the Kindred. The margravemarkgraf and the Eyes have been trying to draw hunter attention to the area for months, but somehow the mortals always seem to get distracted. Curiously, a lone Gangrel, Alfred Bauer, has made his haven there since the 80s, and hasn't observed anything untoward going on. This has naturally cast some suspicious on Bauer. He himself would be most displeased if he discovered the Eyes' plans.

Not to be confused with the shopping district of the same name in Zürich, **the Complex** is where the headquarters of the Watchful Eyes is located, inside an unassuming series of apartments that have had doors and stairs installed to allow the Kindred inside to move about freely. The headquarters are always guarded by several ghouls, and some Eyes sleep in hidden compartments there; but standing policy is that as far as possible, most Eyes should spend most of their time elsewhere. Never again will the Eyes be wiped out so easily.

The melodramatically-named **Shadow Palace**, the last of the nerve centers of the old Shadow Empire, is the margravemarkgraf's haven, Elysium, and court all in one. This is where the Elector Council meets every month, and where all formal Kindred business in Berlin occurs. All know where this unassuming-looking, early 19th century redbrick building stands; and word spreads quickly when the margravemarkgraf summons his subjects to attend to him. Inside, the Palace is decorated in classic Hanseatic style, a throwback to the traditions the margravemarkgraf honors.

The margravemarkgraf's plan to attract hunters to Berlin means the city is shot through with their cells, like shotgun pellets in a corpse. Most of these cells are unknown, even to the Eyes, but they have managed to track a particularly important group to its lair. **Jägerhof**, that lair has been dubbed. This cell meets in an old house not far from Tiergarten, and has at least fifteen members to its name. These hunters are the margravemarkgraf's main conduit of false information to the inquisitive mortals throughout his domain, and he makes good use of it. One of the cell's members is even a ghoul of the Watchful Eyes.

Even in these nights, the young Kindred of Berlin still socialize and party. **Die Rote Flasche** is one of half a dozen establishments in Berlin that has traditionally catered to the All Night Society. It's one of only two that are still open, and the Flasche is by far the most popular, owing mainly to the proprietor's numerous contacts among the city's musicians and other entertainers. To the musicians, the club looks like a harmless place, just a few years out of date. The true party only begins once they have left.

The Pit of the Nameless

Montreal, Canada

Montreal's a good city to be a glutton. Good food. Good sex. Good drugs. Good art, if you're into that. Whatever you want to indulge in, you can drag back to your den, curl up, and hide away from the biting cold winter. Everything's hearty. From the warm, rich, gravy-slathered foods to the robust push for labor rights, the island's an ideal place to castle up.

That is, if you're alive.

If you're Damned and take the time to breathe, you can see your breath. Joints lock in the cold air. They beg your body to stop, to feed, to enjoy the warmth of prey. The Beast screams for you to indulge, to gorge, to hibernate. But that's impossible. In Montreal, you are the prey.

So long as anyone can remember, the Nameless has kept Kindred from playing their grand games. Nobody knows what the Nameless is, but everyone has their ideas. Some believe it's the devil. They're probably not far off. Some believe it's an ancient draugr, lost forever to the Beast. The only truths about the Nameless are that it exists, and that you'd best not cross it.

The Secret History

Southern Quebec's Kindred history stretches back millennia. For ages, native Mohawk and nomadic Iroquois people inhabited the region. Kindred were few and far between. Populations were too tight-knit, and too few to support more than the occasional, small bloodline or solitary vampire.

Of this era, the only known remaining force awake in the modern nights is a small family of Ventrue called the Tsihstekeri. They watch Kindred affairs from the sidelines since time immemorial.

By the 16th century, Europeans began exploring the region. They established trading posts, hunted for furs, and sometimes traded, but often struggled against the natives. It was more than a century before European Kindred followed suit. In the late 17th century, Kindred immigrated as French settlers established hospitals and missions. The new vampires in town did not approve of the established residents of their new home.

When the French Kindred arrived, they rapidly outnumbered the locals. The local Kindred had home advantage and tried to weather conflicts defensively, but the French vampires pressed on. In one notable clash, they mobilized mortal troops against a native settlement. The troops overwhelmed the locals, and took them prisoner. Orders were to execute the natives, but the French Kindred intervened to imprison the captives elsewhere. In essence, they created a stable for easy feeding, and enslaved the whole village.

For decades thereafter, the local Kindred fought to free the enslaved prisoners. The vampires were forced to join other settlements, or in some cases, to integrate with the growing French city. The enslavers ghouled their victims to extend their lives, and held the "farm" as a sort of trophy. After repeated attempts, the native vampires seemed to abandon hope of saving their enslaved kin. After 50 long years of careful plotting, they launched a concerted effort, slaughtering Kindred, burning havens, and most importantly burning the farm to the ground.

This massacre left most of the French Kindred dead or fleeing. Twenty years passed with nearly no European Kindred presence in Montreal. As the French ceded Canada, British Kindred came in. After the initial xenophobia settled, the native Kindred found an ally in the British, thanks to their common opposition to the French. This frequently put the native Kindred at odds with their communities, who were not so welcoming of the British.

The Kindred blended, and cooperated. Montreal grew into a city, and alongside it, Montreal's Kindred became a society. Its first — and last — prince, Ventrue Invictus Thomas Sheridan, tied the city together in a traditional model. While far from perfect, his rule was relatively popular. He kept the peace, and maintained the Traditions for nearly a century. That was, until November 5th, 1935.

That night, a young Carthian found Sheridan, hanging from the Mount Royal Cross. As he approached, a black figure with shining eyes appeared behind Sheridan. With a single swipe, Sheridan fell into a pile of ash. That night was declared "The Martyrdom." That night, Theban Sorcery failed, and has yet to return.

Montreal's Kindred panicked. They went searching for the culprit, this shadowy figure. They scrambled to restructure in Sheridan's absence. They appointed a pro-tem prince, his Seneschal. One month after her appointment, she turned up atop a textile factory in the Mile End district. A neonate discovered the new prince's bound form, the figure appeared, and she met Final Death. This time, the figure left a message scrawled into the concrete. It simply said, "No more Princes."

The city fell into chaos. Each of the great covenants declared authority. None complied with the others' declarations. The city wasn't lawless, per se. It had five sets of laws, many of which were incompatible with others. Territories meant little. Elysium was a joke. The covenants each upheld the Traditions the best they could, but their resources were stretched thin as conflicts of interest and cults of personality kept enforcement to a minimum.

In 1970, Montreal's Carthian Movement made the last major grab for power. They gathered at a junkyard, and organized an effort to seize the city by bringing it under full Carthian leadership. Near the end of the planning session, the mysterious figure showed up. The sole survivor was a neonate named Eva Dubois. She claimed that the figure single-handedly slaughtered over two dozen Kindred that night, then left her with six rules before taking her eyes. Over 40 years have passed, and her eyes are still gone. The rumor around town is that it told her she wasn't to regrow them. She called him "The Nameless." She called that night "The End and the Beginning."

The Rules have been the law of the land ever since. Any time Kindred break the rules, they vanish. Once, a coterie of Lancea

et Sanctum broke the second rule and held a church gathering. No witnesses survived; the building burned with no escapes. Night to night existence means fear of the Nameless. Its rules break the traditional order, but nobody has an answer. Efforts to find it have resulted in further disappearances. After all, that's rule number four.

Sometimes, Kindred out on the town claim they've seen the Nameless. They say they see a shadow with shining eyes. They say they see a stalking, nondescript figure. The stories rarely line up; its size and shape changes from story to story. In some stories, it even speaks.

The Tsihstekeri suggest that the Nameless is but a harbinger, a portent of worse things to come. But what could be worse?

The Clans

Montreal's clans are networks of small broods. With the rule about groups of five or more, excessive communication outside one's family becomes a risk, so many keep clan relations to a minimum. However, these family cliques do help to establish a status quo. Families of victims from the Nameless's massacres tend to make names for themselves. Established families tied to the initial French settlements and the British conquest also see favor.

Daeva skew heavily to the French occupation. Branches of three major families, the Leclerc, the Guillaume, and the Vasseur, make up almost all the Daeva in Montreal. Others exist, but achieving status outside those lineages is an uphill battle, as the old families are as entrenched as can be in a city with such a scattered social order.

Gangrel keep small urban packs. Since most of the Gangrel died in The End and the Beginning, the local Gangrel families are mostly nomads who became trapped by rule three. This gives the Savages a unique investment in finding and ending the Nameless. Perhaps ironically, the most common rumors suggest the Nameless is a Savage.

Mekhet are uneasy in Montreal. After all, they're supposed to be ever-aware, and difficult to find. The Nameless breaks those rules. Thus far, no one has found it; and it finds anyone who breaks a rule, regardless of clan or blood. This leaves many Mekhet depressed and dejected. Others go about their business, completely ignoring the Nameless (except its rules, of course), or delving into research and study, in hopes of finding an answer to the city's plague.

Nosferatu scoff at the city at large. After all, they're used to being sequestered, and avoiding large gatherings. In Montreal, though, they're not Haunts; they're Ferrymen. The Nosferatu gift is one of access. This means mobility, which is essential for those too paranoid to walk the streets. At least one recognized Daeva — childe to the Carthian leader from the End and the Beginning — hires two Nosferatu as permanent escorts, as she's afraid of drawing the Nameless's ire.

Ventrue come from all walks, but boast the eldest Kindred in Montreal. A line descended from the Mohawk stands proud, and are one of the only families unaffected by the Nameless's purges. Many of the British Kindred who occupied early came from Ventrue stock. Most importantly, Ventrue who speak with representatives of the Tsihstekeri line simply stop fearing the Nameless. None have said what they're told, but they become noticeably more afraid of something else entirely.

The Covenants

The Carthian Movement is the smallest covenant. Since the End and the Beginning, they've had trouble growing their ranks. The few remaining focus on social experiments to build a viable Kindred city without Elysiums, without formal feeding grounds, without proper law enforcement, and without all the trappings of a typical city. They've developed a series of phone trees and communications networks to allow for rapid dissemination of information across the whole population. Now, they're working on procuring abandoned buildings all across the city to facilitate a network of safe havens for the entire population.

The Circle of the Crone sees Montreal as the ultimate trial, the ultimate lesson. All Acolytes claim membership to a cult of four vampires; the covenant disallows smaller and larger cults. One cult even offers devotion and worship to the Nameless. It's lost two members so far from excessive searching.

Of all the covenants, the Circle thrives in this environment. They relish esoteric rules, and they deal well with a constant dose of fear. Many hold their fear up as a point of inspiration; one notorious acolyte creates haunting, menacing art installations inspired by the Nameless. During one private showing, the viewer vanished, never to be seen again. An unpopular rumor suggests that her art is the Nameless's vehicle for terror, and that its proliferation gives it its power.

The Invictus stands, weakened, ineffectual. Without the ability to organize, they're hardly able to exist. The covenant's credibility falters, as many of their most important rituals and traditions break down in face of the rules. Most Montreal Invictus adhere to First Estate traditions only within their dynastic houses, and even then only within layers of overlapping generations; never more than four involved at a time. For this reason, the covenant is less a formal covenant, more a series of practices for rigidly organizing one's family.

The Invictus find even less luck than the Carthian Movement in recruitment efforts. Most new recruits are Embraced directly into the covenant, and most wander elsewhere. Without widespread shows of power, the Invictus has little appeal for ambitious young Kindred.

The **Lancea et Sanctum** has a predicament. Their Theban Sorcery just doesn't work. It stopped working the night of The Martyrdom. Some say God has turned His back on them. Some say He's testing them. Some say the Nameless is the great demiurge, and must be stopped as part of their purpose on Earth. Regardless, tension's high within the Spear. As a group, they band together to share havens, herds, and money. The Carthians joke that the Sanctified are superior communists.

In place of Theban Sorcery, Lancea et Sanctum members receive Retainer, Herd, and Haven dots equal to their Lancea et Sanctum Status. This reflects the church's collective pool of resources that they share amongst one another.

The Ordo Dracul manage their affairs, and have few conflicts with the Nameless and the rest of the city. At least, not by way of their covenant. Individuals have their own struggles. But to the Ordo Dracul, study and experimentation come first, and typically this means working in very small groups. They have adapted well to the rules; any information that requires dissemination goes up the chain one by one, and back down as necessary.

Notable Kindred

Angela Tsihstekeri is the youngest, but most popular, of the Tsihstekeri line. She's a British immigrant of 30 years, but she's done well to make herself known. Very few in the city do not know her at least by name. If anyone wishes to speak to the family, they must go through her. Most Ventrue, at some time or another, seek out the eldest of the blood to uncover the secret. Her role is to determine whether or not the seekers really wish to know. She tests their assertions, and judges whether they'll keep the secret within the blood.

Julien Vasseur is tired of the games. He's tired of the Invictus. He's tired of his Daeva line. He's tired of the milquetoast structures that won't stand up to an invisible monster. He needs something else, and he'll lean on any shoulder he can find. If he sees the spark of rebellion in a Kindred eye, he'll do everything in his power to inspire them to rise up and break the shackles of the rules. This won't make that Kindred popular with his family, his covenant, or the invisible monster.

Richard Cromwell leads the Lancea et Sanctum, the best he can, given his circumstances. He sees himself as the steward of a morbid hospice; the covenant sees him as a failure grasping for straws. Unfortunately for his efforts, things have been coming up bunk for the Spear, ever since the Martyrdom. He needs a break. The covenant isn't giving it to him; nobody else is willing to stand up and lead what appears to be a debunked cult.

Tiffany West is an artist. Her canvas is the mind, and her medium is fear. For years, she's inspired the Circle of the Crone with her terrifying abstract art installations. Because of their tangential tie to the Nameless, she's fallen under the Lancea et Sanctum's ire. They claim she's the reason their miracles cease to work. They claim she's why the monster can appear wherever it wants. They claim she's a devil, in service of something worse, and that she needs to be destroyed. The Circle cannot allow this to happen, as she's a pillar in their faith, a sign that they can persist through this struggle.

Notable Locations

Unlike most cities, Montreal's night life has few integral locations. Since Kindred are limited in their ability to meet, many are very close to nomadic, and most actively avoid contact with others outside their coteries.

The **Mount Royal Cross** is the cross of the Martyrdom. This is ostensibly the cross of rule six. Some call it The Sheridan Memorial. Everyone's very aware of it, and its history. A handful of Kindred have made trips to the cross. Each disappeared.

Post Box 5170 is literally that; a rented post box. It's one large box amongst thousands, and nearly every recognized Kindred in Montreal has its key. The Carthian Movement arranged the system, and releases weekly bulletins using this box. Others can leave notes as a sort of message board, unfettered by the unreliable phone systems. Also, as part of its functionality, it's a good place to meet Kindred if you're not too concerned with whom you want to meet, just how quickly you can meet someone.

Now, the courtesy is, when you meet Kindred new to the city, give them a key. Even if the meeting's not a good one, give out the key and induct them. It's better for the greater stability that way.

There are the rules, then there are the rules. The Nameless has not declared **the Rue Saint Paul** off-limits, but Kindred seem to suffer strange and unfortunate events on Saint Paul Street. It's long since been assumed haunted. Any vampire who walks the street for more than a quick crossing suffers terrible bad luck within the next night.

The Triangle

Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina, United States

Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill — also known as the Research Triangle, or just the Triangle — is an extended metropolitan area, a single city divided into many pieces. It's a region built on tobacco money, a place that elected two African-American Congressmen before the year 1900, and then saw brutal racial oppression soar in the 20th century. It's a city in growth, the urban sprawl slowly converting the land in the middle into more of itself, melting together. It sees great wealth, and it sees crushing poverty.

Among the Kindred, the domain is a prosperous one, with a growing population and a respectable, established gentry. It's the very model of a Kindred domain, sipping the mortal crowds like wine. But there is one thing that sets it apart from its neighbors: It houses six clans instead of five.

The sixth clan is the Jiang Shi. How the Phantoms came to be part of the Kindred scab over the Triangle isn't quite clear, but it is clear that their eldest are creatures of strange powers and stranger weaknesses, much different from the other clans — and that their distant descendants aren't.

The Secret History

How the Jiang Shi came to be so important in the Triangle is unknown. They seemingly have always been here, interacting with other Kindred, growing slowly to be more like their neighbors. There was never a point where they were formally inducted as a clan — older Kindred consider them to be something different, and beneath them; younger ones consider them something more than that: a clan, on par with all the others, but lesser than the speaker's own. In practical terms, they are accepted because they are too numerous to eliminate and pushing them outside Kindred society is a liability to the Masquerade.

Until a few decades ago, the area was divided between half a dozen smaller domains, each under separate rule. As the urban zones started knitting together, friction arose, and eventually, the Queen of Raleigh annexed the others and added them to her own. These nights, she is the Queen of the Triangle, assisted by her Privy Council. She prefers to spend her time on higher-level matters, such as elders' affairs, rather than micromanaging the teeming masses. This leaves the average neonate in a fairly lenient situation.

The Triangle is divided up into dozens of fiefs, each commanded by its own baroness or baron. These vampires are charged with keeping their barony in order, and paying tribute to the queen's court. Baronies are fluid, often being merged, divided, or having their borders changed as the queen sees fit. Within these borders, their suzerains are responsible for keeping the undead population in line, and otherwise have free rein to do as they please.

Some baronies have extensive hierarchies, with officials and regulations, while others are quiet, the dominion of a solitary baroness. Perhaps most common, though, is a baroness with one or two lieutenants, demanding the occasional tribute or service, with a few laws in place. Some baronies are petty autocracies, where the average neonate will find himself brutally repressed. The queen, however, makes it a strict policy that internal unrest in the baronies is of no concern to her unless the tribute is interrupted, or the Traditions broken — in which case the baroness is held responsible. For this reason, the wise fief-holder tries not to inspire too much revolt.

The city's Jiang Shi are an established and respected presence. While the Lords have a bent towards power, and the Shadows towards the occult, the Phantoms have a reputation for scholasticism. Their libraries are objects of legend, and the dark things they know the object of myths.

The Phantoms are often stereotyped as frail but knowledgeable. Their blood is not as potent, so their powers don't quite have the bite of the other clans', while they're also just a little bit easier to injure. These factors are by no means insurmountable, though, and the Phantoms have a small array of strange powers nobody else can seem to learn to make up for. Among other Kindred, the Jiang Shi are said to be easy to kill, but only if you catch one off-guard — and they are very good at not letting that happen.

Mortals and Kindred alike flow through the veins of the city like pumping blood — pulsating slowly, keeping it alive. In the Triangle, many mortals are middle-class, not terribly wary, and somewhat out of shape — easy prey, one by one, but the Triangle is also not a place where mysterious disappearances can happen very often without drawing attention. It's just a little too educated, a little too well-off.

And the Queen is more than happy to sacrifice the occasional foolish baron who lets the media catch on a little too far. After all, she is Invictus, and the Masquerade trumps all other concerns. Such sacrificial lambs are Dominated and then subjected to carefully-orchestrated vigilante justice, or to one of half a dozen other methods of persuading mortals that the mystery has been solved.

Those measures, of course, are still not enough to make the domain safe for vampires to make their havens in. There are mortal obsessives — no matter how broken they may seem, they occasionally do manage to stumble across the truth. And there are also other things — what haunts the Devil's Tramping Grounds, for instance? And what was the source of the lights at the Maco railroad track?

The Clans

The **Daeva** have it good in the Triangle. The domain teems with mortal life, and the Daeva here attach themselves to it with gusto, attending late-night sports events and art exhibits, throwing themselves into the party. Here, each Daeva is a force

unto her own, independent, striking personal alliances and rivalries with other Serpents and Kindred from other clans. The sire–childe bond is more reminiscent of patronage than anything else — the sire provides the childe with a Requiem, and with some contacts and resources to start him off. In return, the childe maintains his image and reputation, and does the occasional favor for his sire. Such is the theory, anyway — in practice, it rarely turns out quite so idyllic.

The Triangle's **Gangrel** tend to be drawn towards the outskirts of the domain. As such, many Savages find themselves drawn from the suburban population, though few childer are chosen who were sedentary in life. The clan has a definite middle-class flavor in this area, which often means they aren't taken very seriously. Despite this, its Kindred are no less capable than other clans, and far from all of them are so-called "Suburban Savages."

The **Jiang Shi** have found a role halfway between scholar and early warning system. They have uncovered several major threats, such as the statue of the bronze bull which led to the Final Deaths of several ancillae in the late 1960s. In structure, the Phantoms are organized into clutches — small groups of three to five vampires, all of whom share certain resources. A childe is usually inducted into the sire's clutch by default, and then expected to find one of her own when she becomes an ancilla. The clan recruits heavily from the city's researchers, scientists, and occultists.

In this domain, the **Mekhet** have many places to hide. The settlements that evolved into Raleigh-Durham are old and haunted, and not a few of those ghosts were Mekhet. They are the invisible clan, rarely noted, blending in with Kindred society without making many waves. The iceberg only shows its tip to those watching. In truth, the Triangle's Shadows have influence that runs far and deep, and very few outsiders ever hear about the powerful Shadow Guilds that plot and maneuver and try to control the clan's young.

The **Nosferatu** thrive in the Triangle. Being an area full of colleges, plenty of mortal weirdoes and freaks are found throughout the domain, and these provide both cover for the Haunts, and prospective childer the clan's members can respect. Most Nosferatu in the Triangle were outcasts in life, drawn from the more alienated limbs of the student body, or from the homeless that the city would rather forget. As such, the clan is filled with dysfunctional diversity.

The **Ventrue** here tend to be rather laid-back. The average Lord is rather young, and the clan as a whole has a good reputation. They're stylish, they don't take offense easily, and they usually don't hesitate to do what needs to be done. This facade has been very carefully cultivated by a few key elders of the clan, and they maintain it diligently despite the fact that many Ventrue fail to live up to this reputation. For this reason, the clan maintains a great deal of influence over the Kindred here, leading by example instead of decree.

The Covenants

The Invictus rule the Triangle. Here, the Masquerade is often stretched thin as the teeming masses pulsate through the city's veins. The city is alive, and its eyes are constantly searching. The Invictus drape the veil over those whose lives are stolen by the drop, and they do a very good job indeed. For the last century, they have been in charge, relatively unopposed. After all, who else would want to take up such an onerous duty? The Invictus rules through a council chosen from its elders, consisting of seven members. These seven take on the role the prince would fill in many other domains, and they have no formal way of coming to agreement on how to rule. In practice, the queen decides This her .

This domain's **Sanctified** are much the same as they are throughout the region. They hold sermons and extol the duties of the children of Longinus. While some aspects may take on a less formal air, their priests are no more forgiving than those elsewhere. Their dark churches are filled to the brim at Sunday midnight, as many Kindred from other covenants feel some sense of obligation to the faith. But many do not, and open scorn or defiance of the whole doctrine is a constant source of conflict.

The **Circle of the Crone** here take a much more open form. "An ye do no harm, do as thou wilt," they say, and they believe strongly in the freedom of every Acolyte to worship as he desires. Tolerance of the beliefs of all others is paramount here, even if those beliefs may extol virtues that would be considered vice anywhere else. Those who want to enslave humanity and keep them penned up as cattle rub shoulders with those who believe even feeding on a mortal is unforgivable, and they remain amicable.

The **Dragons** draw most of their membership from those Kindred who associated with the colleges in life. Thus, the Triangle's Dragons tend to have an academic bent, with research papers and even their own research journal — written in code, of course.

The **Carthian Movement** of the Triangle tend to be allied with the Acolytes. As Acolytes feel about religion, so do the Carthians believe about politics: All beliefs are worthwhile. Such is the theory, anyway — in practice, the Carthians are always at each others' throats, swearing that all legitimate political stances are worthwhile, but *this* one is not legitimate. This makes the Carthians both rather irrelevant to the city's politics, and also very dynamic, a characteristic that attracts as many members as the infighting drives away.

Notable Kindred

Her name used to be Carla Williams, but for the last 50 years, she has been only **the Queen** — first of Raleigh, and then the Triangle. No other name is permitted for her. She is the Queen, and the position of queen is defined by her. In many ways, she is fairly lenient, but she drives her baronesses hard, encouraging scheming and politicking by placing convenient prizes for those young ones to fight over. In appearance, she is a slight, African-American woman in her forties, stern and emotionless, an unassailable fortress that seemingly nothing can surprise. She is a competent ruler, and most sedition is

JIANG SHI

"SO FEW KNOW THE TOUCH OF THE GRAVE. AND I DO SO WANT TO TOUCH YOU."

Nobody really knows where the Jiang Shi come from. In the Mediterranean, they're believed to be descended from a victim of the Sons of Phobos, who stole a pure heart to replace the one taken from him. In Iceland, where they appear in disproportionate numbers, they're associated with the folkloric draugr. Kindred from Eastern China and the Korean Peninsula associate them with forms of blood sorcery that have otherwise died out. Scholars of Mekhet lore think they might be another kind of Hollow being. And to those who know the Strix, their spirit-like attributes look very suspicious.

There are relatively few Jiang Shi — the particulars of their Embrace ensure that. For a Jiang Shi is created by replacing the blood of an ordinary person with the blood of one extraordinarily pure. By tasting a person's blood, a Jiang Shi can tell whether it's suitable. A Jiang Shi Embrace thus usually involves two murders, one of which sticks. The blood doesn't have to be fresh, but you try looting a blood bank looking for the essence of somebody who could cast the first stone. By also taking the heart of the "donor," the newly born vampire can begin with Blood Potency 2 instead of 1.

Jiang Shi must feed on the living just as others do, and they can master Disciplines. Their feeding produces not pseudo-sexual euphoria but numbing cold. As their Vitae dwindles, their appearance becomes monstrous, with claw-like fingers and a strange green mold that begins to grow upon their skin. Touching this mold produces a milder version of the same chilling effect as the Phantom's bite.

A Phantom can spend a Willpower point to return to his "grave" (the site of his death). Unless the Phantom sleeps the day in his grave, he requires two Vitae instead of one to wake in the evening. He can change his grave by enacting a heart transplant ritual at the new site. (This carries the usual purity requirement.)

Since there are so few Jiang Shi, they don't usually encounter the Kindred. Most frequently, they make contact with other vampires socially or through the shady businesses so common among the Damned. These Phantoms are aware of their differences from the more numerous sort of vampires. They use these to their advantage, but also take pains to keep a low profile lest they run afoul of the larger population's Masquerade. The fact that they have a name at all points to some kind of catastrophic breach in East Asia in the past.

In Raleigh, though, something's gone very wrong, or very right. There's a population of Jiang Shi there to rival the local Mekhet, and practical concerns have led to them being accepted into the local vampire state.

Bane: The Ephemeral Curse. Because their presence in this world is strangely light, they cannot cause either the Swooning or Scarred Conditions by feeding.

Nickname: Phantoms

Favored Attributes: Intelligence or Dexterity

Disciplines: Animalism, Obfuscate, Celerity

curtailed by her relative popularity or her implacable reputation. Her clan is a subject of much speculation.

Mr. Talbot, or just Talbot, is in many ways considered the epitome of taste and decorum among the Triangle's Kindred. In life, this Carthian was a modestly successful painter, with more talent than marketing skills; as a Jiang Shi, his talent has become recognized, and his distaste for self-promotion takes the form of impeccable modesty. Slowly, those layers of Kindred society in the domain that would consider themselves refined have congregated around him, until he is now that one vampire who knows everyone. Mr. Talbot is a handsome African-American man with a friendly face and a winning smile — one he chooses to display often.

A controversial figure, to say the least, the **Reverend Rawlins Cartwright** is technically merely *Mister* Cartwright. However, this Serpent's charismatic nature and unusually polished speech-writing skill has rendered him an authority in the ranks of the Lancea et Sanctum. What this tall, severe man of Sámi descent preaches is considered heresy by orthodox Sanctified doctrine, and many of the church's leaders despise the Reverend for this, adding it to their own personal grudges. His long-due reckoning has been postponed because of his popularity, and his hard-line stance proves very popular with troubled young vampires.

Sarah Cheung was Embraced less than five years ago, and entered Kindred society much like a bullet enters a body. She

is full of passionate intensity, burningly political and driven. She works furiously, parties hard, and promotes her agendas heavily — a social dynamo that pulls even older Kindred into her orbit. She doesn't consider herself a leader, but an example. Even so, her magnetism gives her a great deal of power over certain segments of the All Night Society, especially within the Carthian Movement. She simply doesn't think much about it. Cheung spends her Requiem with her heart on her sleeve, leaving behind waves that will change things, for better or worse.

The Phantom named **Sophie Blake** is not a very popular figure. The term "seer" is something of a euphemism — though she is very skilled in the traditionally Mekhet art of Auspex, and does have genuine insight into paranormal phenomena, she is mainly known for seeing things in a much more mundane fashion. In short, everyone thinks she's a spy. She sells her information to the highest bidder, always claiming she gleaned it through the use of Disciplines or her Sanctified sorcery. She is considered something of an outcast among her fellow Jiang Shi, a blemish on the clan's reputation. She's a tall, stocky woman of mainly Irish descent.

Notable Locations

One of the United States' most prestigious hospitals, the **Duke University Medical Center** has treated Senators and celebrities. These hallowed halls have accommodated stalking Kindred since the Center's inception, and since the 1970s, it has been a constant prize to be won. The queen has placed the hospital on the border between four different fiefs, two of them held by distinguished elders, and none of them have managed to establish safe feeding rights in the venerable institution. With so strong a focus on thwarting each other, the hospital itself has been allowed to run relatively unmolested by the ambitions of the dead, just as the queen wants it. Much of her Majesty's wealth comes from the hospital's coffers.

Located outside the Research Triangle are the **Devil's Tramping Grounds**. This campsite for hikers contains the circle where no plants will grow, and it's rumored that those who spend the night within that circle never return. This isn't quite true, as plenty have stayed there with no ill effects. However, Kindred with a particular sensitivity report that they feel uneasy when inside that circle — that they feel as though something ancient watches them from within, something half-asleep. Some have reported that no animals other than birds will enter the circle.

On the outskirts of Raleigh stands the **Cartwright Building,** an unassuming 30s-era redbrick structure, short and squat. Under the building is a sizable basement, which houses a nightclub — one that caters to the Triangle's most exclusive clientele. The club is owned by the Queen, whose court is held in the private section, in an exquisitely-decorated Gilded Age banquet hall, which has picked up decorations from the entire 20th and 21st centuries. The main club hall is a pulsating heart, beating in time with the music, as Kindred mingle and squabble; and the house's very own vintage is served throughout the night.

In 1977, the **railroad tracks that ran past Maco Station** were pulled up, putting an end to a century of strange phenomena known as the Maco Light. Fairly often, lights would shoot down the tracks, as if cast by the lanterns of a phantom train. The lights have not been seen since 1977. Instead, there have been reports of a ghostly whistle, faint, and one young boy reported seeing a stretch of tracks, from a distance. One Mekhet ghoul with unusual insight has stated that he felt as if something were pushing up against the veil separating this world from the next — something big.

The Research Triangle is defined by its institutes of higher learning, and many of its Kindred were students in life. Not all are willing to give up on that calling simply because they are now dead. These vampire scholars have banded together and started **the Mausoleum**, an academy based in a private tomb in a Durham cemetery. It offers classes in Kindred history, culture, psychology, Disciplines, and theology. Such a gathering of knowledge under one roof is watched with suspicion by the Invictus, but underwritten by the Ordo Dracul. As colleges go, the Mausoleum is small, but it remains an institution of the Triangle.

The Mission

San Francisco and beyond, California, United States

Rainbow-colored flags pinned up instead of curtains in the third floor window of an aging, apartment building styled after the Golden Age of Hollywood. A pair of entrepreneurs discuss their budding start-up while standing on a pier and watching seals bark and clap for the tourists on Fisherman's Wharf. Alcatraz sits, dark and mostly empty but for the curious, the historians, and the ghosts just off shore. On shore, a hundred hawkers sell Alcatraz-branded shot glasses and black and white striped T-shirts. New Catholics visit one of the oldest churches in North America, as did their converted grandparents before them. In Chinatown, the freshly immigrated as well as the third- and fourth- generation Americans rub shoulders and shake hands.

It's a city that's old but full of youth. It's a city built on tradition that somehow supports progress at breakneck speeds, and that isn't a thing true for the human population alone. San Francisco is the center of the Mission, a regional Kindred state that counts among its numbers some of the oldest Kindred in North America, and yet the power and force in the city is all in the hands of the young and inventive. The Lancea et Sanctum support their ancient traditions, and also welcome an array of creeds the likes of which would find no safety in most Sanctified strongholds. Diversity, of course, creates factions, and those factions struggle endlessly for power and resources.

The Secret History

But why San Francisco? How did it find its particular and peculiar equilibrium? The answer may well be in its founding.

It takes an intense drive for a group of humans to travel through the wilds of an unknown continent in order to discover, explore, and in the case of the de Anza Expedition, bring God to the heathens. That drive has to be a sort of obsession for Kindred to follow, especially in the late 1770s when travel was, without cleverness, deadly to many. And so, the Kindred stalked behind and later took part in the Spanish Mission expedition that resulted in the founding of Mission Dolores. They were driven, dedicated, and above all, obsessed.

I would never speak it aloud, but I worry that my Master has lost his faculties. We had hoped, his childer and I, that when we crossed the ocean to New York his obsession with the New World would settle. Alas, it has not. Instead, he is convinced that we must follow some savage and a governor to find a land route into California. He's been furiously writing letters to his contacts in the Spanish courts, and we plan to leave for New Mexico in a few days. He assures me that myself and a taste or two from the help brought along on the expedition will be enough to sate him. He prayed, he said, and his Dark Father told him the secret miracles he would need to survive the journey. He told me directly that while God was sending these men to California, the Devil himself was sending my Master.

Brother Antonio, precious servant of Cardinal Inglorious the 1st.

The travel proved brutal, and the future Cardinal's many writings showed a quick descent both in terms of his faith and his stability.

And worst of all, from the Cardinal's point of view at least, when they finally arrived at what would be the Mission Dolores, it was not a paradise full of innocent savages ready to be terrified into God's loving arms. Instead, he found Kindred.

At that point, Inglorious the 1st stopped writing entirely for nearly two decades. His most trusted companions vanished from history; and when the Sanctified of Spain reached out, they were met with silence. In the next 50 years, the religious practices of the Lancea et Sanctum in the Mission were secretive and laity were given milquetoast attention at best.

The official story tends to be that the Cardinal converted the locals upon Embrace. It erases the existence of preexisting Kindred entirely, and suggests a peaceful conquest.

In truth, the assimilation went more toward the Cardinal than from him. The shock of finding Kindred among the natives, finding that they were capable and even powerful apex predators was too much for his damaged psyche to endure. He broke, and it was local Kindred who put him back together. In time, a hybridization occurred, with the city's practices looking on the surface like mostly typical Sanctified behavior. Behind the façade, the Cardinal and his inner circle, led by his lover, a man called Hummingbird, were practicing a Kindred version of the local religion that added notes of Spear tradition without subscribing to most of its dogma. A secret creed was born. Many of the most powerful Kindred in the Mission practice it to this day. Behind closed doors, of course.

And so, when the Lillian Heresy took up root, when other, stranger heresies and cults showed up, they were permitted to exist. Not out of some progressive spirit, but because they made good foils when more hardline Sanctified came around to ask questions. These more obvious cults allowed the true, secret cult of the Mission to flourish.

And while the Second Estate was deeply wrapped up in their secrecy and their faith, young members of the First Estate saw an opportunity.

Without a traditional relationship between First and Second Estate, new ideas were able to blossom. These young Invictus could take their idea of control to new heights and aim for something grander than princedom and an estate full of ghouls.

The Invictus of the Mission watched the media grow from the Pony Express to the telegraph. Even as early as that realized that if you wanted to have real control over the masses of kine, you needed to control what they heard, saw, and understood. Books were a primitive way to do this, a method for controlling information that had long been experimented with. But as technology was rushing forward, the Invictus of the Mission realized, they would need to get a hold on it, or be slaves to it forever.

The Clans

The **Daeva** and the **Mekhet** embrace the Cacophony here as openly as vampires can. The Cacophony in the Mission has a personality all of its own. Rumor and fact move through the vampire population of the city, often carried unwittingly in mortal gossip and media, as if guided by a clear will. Popularity and clan influence don't necessarily always determine who has access to what information. An unpopular neonate dials a cell number she was emailed by a mail service running on a compromised computer in somebody's dorm room. She gets a recorded message that tells her where to find a party she has no reason to go. She goes. Meets a man she later accidentally Embraces, and within six months, he's the city's newest rising star. It could have all been coincidence. Serpents and Shadows don't think so.

The Gangrel find themselves much in demand as messengers and deputies, as in Beijing. Even with the urban sprawl fairly dense, there's an advantage to being able to hole up anywhere. The difference here is that the Mission's Gangrel *prefer* the city. They teach their neonates to see the cityscape as a jungle, a complex ecology easily dominated by the canny vampire. As Serpents and Shadows hide their communications in plain sight, the Savages watch the movement and behavior of the food. Their Kindred manipulate the message, and they pick off the menu.

From an outbreak of bubonic plague in 1900, to the AIDS epidemic today, the Mission has had a long relationship with plague. The **Nosferatu** have never feared these plagues. If you ask, most Kindred of the Mission are aware that they have an unusually high population of Nosferatu, but most can't actually recall seeing that many. The Haunts of the Mission are insular, inter-connected, and largely related. The Cacophony whispers that they all, *all* share a bloodline and that their matriarch is a Sanctified priest obsessed with the spread and control of disease. She is rumored to have diablerized *en masse* a group of Morbus, a Mekhet bloodline who spread disease like no other. It is true that the Nosferatu of the Mission are mostly one large extended family. And like any large extended family, the clan is also potentially a powder keg.

If you want to understand where extremism comes from, and how things like the peaceniks and the hippies, over time, could end up birthing groups like PETA and Greenpeace, you'd have to look at the foibles of human nature. Or, if you're talking about the Mission, you might want to blame the domain's **Ventrue**. While the Ventrue can't be blamed for every charismatic or extremist group that came out of the Bay Area, they're hardly uninvolved. The Ventrue of the Mission take competition very seriously. Pushing their vassals, especially among the Leftist hippies of the Mission, is an active sport in the clan.

The Covenants

Many of the surrounding domains of the Western Americas look to the Mission with a mix of curiosity and fear. Los Angeles in general and the Sanctified of Portland in particular keep a careful eye on the Mission.

The Mission authorities chew on the word "tolerance" when asked to explain the laissez-faire attitudes toward the **Acolytes** and numerous strange creeds actively practicing within the domain. They chew on it like it tastes terrible and yet they know it's good for them. The truth is, the current Cardinal would like nothing more than to destroy all the heretics with fire and show the non-believers the truth of the creed of Inglorious the 1st. Nevertheless, he dare not, not with so many cities nearby so very curious about the Mission. Therefore, the authorities dance and practice their animistic demon worship in the bowels of the city, hidden behind layer after layer of secret and smoke screen meant to steer outsider to any of the other bizarre cults that have taken up in the Mission.

Meanwhile, the **Invictus** have declared war on the Internet. Or, rather, that's how it looks from the outside. They work tirelessly to control localized nodes, control regional server farms, and legislate locally to influence everything from cyber-stalking to ecommerce and local taxes. They've experimented with takedown tactics; DDoS as a weapon of control; and of course, Embracing the best and brightest they can find among information workers.

Further, they're unusually good at manipulating the local news and media. This is all part of a grand scheme to control humanity through the media it consumes. Most recently, they've begun investing in the companies that make app games, reasoning that long-term behavior can be shaped with short-term incentives. Their scholars study the movement of information across social networks, while their engineers work to more efficiently mine stolen social data.

From the outside, the **Carthian Movement** looks like just so many thugs grifting and strong-arming their way through unlife. It's a good con, too, since it leaves the Movement almost entirely under the radar in the Mission. Which is how they need it. By and large, their interests are not in the Mission itself, but specifically in "liberating" Oakland as a Carthian domain. But they're patient. They can wait a very very long time.

Notable Kindred

Brother Mockingbird has no political power and no religious authority that anyone can point to exactly, but most members of the Lancea et Sanctum within the Mission still know he's one with whom you do not fuck. There are those who claim he's older than the Mission itself, but he won't make such claims. He remains quietly the spiritual center of the secret and unnamed creed at the center of the domain. He's known for cruel and dangerous pranks made under the guise of "lessons." Usually, they're practiced on Kindred who did anything but ask to learn from him.

Russ Clarkson claims to have been there the day Harvey Milk was shot, though how he won't explain. He can prove it, more or less, with a level of descriptive detail about the moments in and around this famous moment in modern Mission history. His haven is a veritable museum of Milk, the gay rights movement, and the shooting itself. He claims by following the events as

they unraveled around Milk's death, the change, the stunted progress, he can unlock some part of the human condition. He says something in this exact event is important not just to the Mission, but to the Order and all Kindred.

Tiberia Octavius Julius claims that her particular bloodline can be traced all the way back to ancient Rome. There are very few who are impressed by this fact. Further, she explains that the Mission's center, San Francisco, consists of seven important hills, just as Rome once did. Because of its expansive domain, Tiberia claims that the Mission may someday be the new Camarilla. Rumors insist that she's taken a werewolf lover, and is building a cult in worship of this pack of wolves.

Carrie Figtree gives, without a doubt, the best "haunted" tours of Alcatraz. She only works at night, and only takes special parties that have to schedule with her months in advance. She claims complete rights over the island, and has since its closing as a prison so many years ago. "The spirits will get out if I'm not here," she claims; and so far, no one has challenged her on that claim.

Holly Esposito claims praxis over the Napa Valley. She actually refers to herself as the Princess of Grapes when visiting other parts of the Mission. She claims to be a Carthian, though the Carthians of San Francisco make no public acknowledgment of her. She would, likely, have been put in her place decades ago, but her herd and vassalage has so much wealth that her money doesn't just talk, it screams. Some of the established Invictus complain that Esposito is funneling money to the Movement in Oakland specifically, but they don't yet know why and can't prove a thing.

Dig far enough back into the history of the Mission's Cacophony, and you'll find the tapes of **Mrs. Robinson**. Robinson used her mortal identity, Angelo Pascual , as a disguise as she threaded her way through the nightlife of 1970s San Francisco, documenting the clandestine Kindred culture among the newly open (and legendary) gay club scene. She knew all the best mortal musical acts...but more than that, she recognized the rising importance of DJs. Her tapes, now collectible more than subversive, record Kindred history of the period in-between mortal musical artifacts. Robinson is still around, but she's moved into production. Surely, she's still leaving messages, but for whose ears?

Notable Locations

To no great surprise, **Stanford University**, within the Mission's domain, is a stronghold of the Ordo Dracul. Dragons come from all over the world to study with the elder there. What may come as a surprise is how few Dragons leave Stanford once they've arrived. Some, for certain, simply stay to teach others or deepen their own understanding. In truth though, a good number of pilgrims to Stanford simply go missing. There is, according to the few Dragons who know about such things, a Perilous Nest, a place with great learning potential and great

danger, somewhere in the complex that houses Stanford's Collider. Those who go to learn from the Nest almost never return.

Twin Peaks Tavern in the Castro District is the place to see and be seen in the Mission. Arguably, Twin Peaks is the oldest gay bar in the country, and its giant plate glass windows means that no one passes on the street without stealing a glance. From within, you can see the best and worst of the city as you dance and drink the night away. If the Cacophony is as independently functioning as the city's Serpents believe, its beating heart is somewhere in this bar.

Old Saint Mary's Cathedral isn't the oldest or even the most important church in the Mission, so far as the Kindred are concerned, but it is the home of the Lillian Heresy. Famously, the outside of the Church has a clock and a quote from Ecclesiastes 4:23: "Son, Observe the Time and Flee from Evil." According to tradition, this warning was meant to shame those men going to a brothel that once operated across from the Cathedral. The worshippers claim it has another meaning, quoting further, "She will bring upon him fear and dread and trial: and she will scourge him with the affliction of her discipline, till she try him by her laws, and trust his soul." Any and all Kindred are invited in to test their soul against Her wisdom. The bowels of the Cathedral, they say, run red with the Vitae of those who didn't fly.

Beddnerys

Swansea, Wales

Swansea is marked by a strong working class culture. Once, it was a charnel city, dynamic and troubled, chewing through countless workers and spitting them back out when it had broken them. As time passed, Copperopolis softened and became kinder, but the ghosts of the foundries never quite seem to die; and the gears grind on, though less conspicuously. The shrines on every corner have fallen silent, neglected, as the congregation worships the Ospreys and Swans instead — Swansea is a city in growth.

For the Kindred outside, the domain of Beddnerys — Swansea, Neath, and Port Talbot — is unclaimed wilderness: Not worth the bother, inhabited by maybe a few lone monsters, but nothing more. But the domain holds more than it lets on. Its inhabitants don't want attention — they just want their freedom.

Beddnerys is ruled by the Assembly, a council consisting of one member each from four different clans. The Dead Jacks, as the domain's Kindred call themselves, are hemmed in. In the east, by the Metronome of Port Talbot, an unknown power makes the town dangerous to Kindred; and in the south and west lurk the werewolves of the Gower Peninsula, against whom the Dead Jacks find themselves forced to close ranks again and again.

The Secret History

Nerys ferch Owain seems to have been in Beddnerys since the dawn of time, practically. Nobody can set any sort of estimate for when she arrived. Perhaps she here when the first settlers arrived. Perhaps she came later. Whatever the case, the date of her Final Death can be set quite accurately: September 21st, 1839.

The ancient Gangrel and her brood were the undisputed Kindred masters of the domain for centuries, by dint of no others being permitted to enter. Any vampire who did would be hunted down rapidly. As such, recorded Kindred history starts in 1838 — the times before this point are shrouded in mystery. Legends abound, from the reasonable (Nerys mostly spent her nights in torpor, attended by her childer) to the absurd (she discovered an entirely new form of blood sorcery, and created some form of otherworld alongside the mundane domain).

Sometime in the late 1700s or early 1800s, the elder must have slipped into the Sleep of Ages, because she was found torpid in a Roman tomb outside city limits when the neonates came for her. There was a mock trial, where the unconscious form of the lady was convicted of crimes against the common Kindred. She met the sun that morning, and her tomb was claimed by the neonate who first discovered it. She promptly sealed it off, claiming it as her haven, and then its whereabouts slowly fell into oblivion.

The victorious youth fell into squabbling about who should be in charge. However, the pressing matter of the werewolves who held the land around the city led the parties involved to make concessions to protect their own hides. The Masked Assembly of Beddnerys was established — one representative of each of the four clans.

The Swansea of the time was a desolate place. Even vampires were horrified at how the life was being drained from the city — a traveler at the time described a place where only sickly yellow plants grew. Beddnerys' Kindred didn't come from the ranks of the high and the holy. In life, they had been farmers and factory workers and craftsmen; and in death, they still resented the ones who had made them and their loved ones suffer. Vampires of respected lineage and wealth who traveled to Beddnerys had a tendency to vanish, and it didn't take too long before foreign Kindred simply stopped visiting. This suits the Dead Jacks just fine.

The werewolves of the peninsula are very argumentative, and seem to consider Beddnerys to be their territory. The situation has remained unchanged for a century now, and the skirmishes that have occurred have been spectacularly pointless. Still both sides try to undermine each other, and have tried quite a few tricks before — on one occasion, a member of one of the werewolves' human families managed to get himself Embraced, and stayed in Beddnerys for over three years before being uncovered. Under these circumstances, no outsider is trusted.

The Dead Jacks are, overall, a rather suspicious lot. They hold together, not out of an abundance of trust, but out of necessity. There is a certain solidarity in the us-versus-the-world mindset, but that will only get you so far, and Kindred politics are only marginally less cutthroat in Beddnerys than elsewhere.

The city's Kindred value their independence greatly. It's a fairly well-accepted maxim among them that to be a vampire is to be free of mortal restrictions. Why, then, should they accept an unliving tyrant? They only barely tolerate the existence of the Assembly, as it is. Kindred outside Beddnerys are idiots who give up their inherent freedom, the thing they sacrificed their lives for, so they can placate old monsters who represent the very worst among the exploitative classes. That taint can't be allowed to gradually seep into this domain.

Politics and power in Beddnerys are ineluctably tied to the Assembly. These four Kindred are in a ceaseless tug-of-war over the future of the domain. Among its lesser Kindred, they represent different political "parties." These elders know to make themselves valuable — one doesn't become a representative without already having a great deal of support for the position among one's clanmates. The representatives are appointed on a clan-by-clan basis ("the freedom for each clan to choose however they see fit!"), with much jockeying for the position when it comes open. A representative sits until he faces his Final Death, falls into torpor, or tenders his resignation.

The Assembly has been in power for as long as it has for three reasons. First, Beddnerys is surrounded by enemies, a state the representatives emphasize strongly. In these times of crisis, who could show disloyalty? Secondly, they give the movers-and-shakers of the Dead Jacks what they want, and in return have their support. A representative's position is always tenuous, even though the Assembly itself is firmly ingrained;

and thus they all do what they can to maintain the support of those whose voices matter. Finally, they make sure to maintain the veneer of democracy — technically, even a fledgling *could* be appointed to office, and in fact, it's not uncommon that a younger vampire is allowed to become a representative in between elders' tenures, set up to fall to demonstrate that the young don't have the skill and wisdom to rule.

The Clans

In Beddnerys, clans are paramount. Clans are inherent, defined. There's nothing abstract about them — one's clan is one's clan. Ties of blood are strong indeed, and in a domain as small as this one, each can trace its origin to no more than three or four Kindred, barring the odd stranger here and there. It's these matriarchs or patriarchs who are usually found on the Assembly, supported by their descendants and various Kindred from other lineages.

The **Gangrel** are strong. Tough. Independent. They take no shit from anyone. They are above petty concerns. Neutral judges. This is received wisdom in Beddnerys. Though quite a few question it, it's usually done in private, and the Assembly at least pays it lip service. The Gangrel, on their part, add that they were here first.

The domain's **Daeva** are a gregarious lot, given to raucous celebration and fighting. They tend to be fairly close-knit among their own lineages, trading favors up and down among themselves, with the different matriarchs and patriarchs maneuvering to take the clan's seat at the Assembly.

Beddnerys' Lancea et Sanctum sees **Nosferatu** in disproportionate numbers, as many as one in three members being Haunts. Though the clan has to tolerate some ribbing from other Kindred, they have a reputation which their inherent strangeness only underscores: The forcibly ascetic ways in which many young Haunts find themselves spending their Requiems look quite virtuous to others.

Mekhet find themselves regarded with some suspicion. Though their kind are tolerated, and have representation on the Assembly, they arrived later than the rest, and brought with them Acolytes. Indeed, while the other clans have members among the Circle of the Crone, its eldest are Mekhet. The clan as a whole tend to be the ones who dabble in dark and disturbing secrets, and certain rumors pin the blame for the Metronome's emergence on the Shadows. A few of the more traditional types even mutter that the Mekhet have friends among the wolves of the Gower. They can never quite rid themselves of the stain of the stranger.

The true outcasts, however, are the **Ventrue.** Beddnerys was forged in the smoke and ashes of the chartist movement in the mid-1800s, and it was founded by the laboring classes, in resentment against their exploiters. That resentment, though never fully gone, has mostly died out; Lords are no longer strung out and burned when found, but they have been banned from the area for a long time. Recently, a few have trickled in, but

they find themselves in a hostile environment where any and all political power is diligently denied them, and where the leaders still regard them with unbridled hostility. After all, hard toil in the factories is not that far in the past for a century-old working-class vampire.

The Covenants

In Swansea, the covenants are secondary to the clans. Political power is mostly held by lineages, ruled by their matriarchs and patriarchs as a sort of extended family — an arrangement far more suitable for the elders than their descendants, who find themselves further and further removed from power as the generations pass. Still, for now, the covenants mostly are more cliques than political parties, and political factions center around single, powerful Kindred.

The **Lancea et Sanctum** is the largest covenant by far. In Beddnerys, it long ago shed its Catholic trappings, evolving instead into a starker, more austere form, taking up the Protestantism that was the faith of the common people in the area. In modern nights, the Sanctified find themselves riven, as the severe old guard find their views challenged by younger Kindred to whom the faith is less a way of life than a complement to it. Even so, the majority of Kindred in the domain — three-fourths or so — at least pay lip service to Longinus. The Sanctified have no formal hierarchy, instead gathering in diverse congregations of varying natures, usually led by a minister.

The **Circle of the Crone**, comprising of about half of the city's un-Sanctified vampires, are the second-largest covenant. Their beliefs are rooted in the ancient Welsh myths of the land, searching for the severed head of Bran the Blessed and taking their inspiration from the Mabinogion. There are several branches of the covenant among the Dead Jacks, but these take two general forms. The first one's rituals are often blood-soaked and ecstatic — rather than any kind of genuine continuance of ancient beliefs, these Acolytes are reacting to the stern Christianity of the Sanctified. The second are more restrained, seeing in their own darkened souls a reflection of something that the strict, orderly Lancea et Sanctum doctrine can't possibly explain — something these Acolytes yearn for.

The **Ordo Dracul** of the city are a rather small organization, but see a lot of dabblers among younger vampires before they settle back down into the Lancea et Sanctum with their sires. Older members of the order tend to be ascetic, believing in hard work and self-deprivation, which is what frightens most prospective recruits away. The established members consider this a good thing — the Order isn't for everyone. Better the unworthy winnow themselves out.

The **Invictus,** the **Carthian Movement,** and the unaligned in this domain are more or less interchangeable, blending together into a group of mostly younger Kindred who don't belong to any of the other covenants. Most are atheists or agnostic, with a significant minority of Muslims and other less-numerous religions. This is where most of the true discontent is brewing — and this group is steadily growing.

Notable Kindred

Nerys ferch Owain — Lady of the Gower

Nearly two hundred years after her Final Death, the Lady of the Gower has become something akin to a mascot of Beddnerys and the Dead Jacks. They are proud of her and the history of their domain. She's become a symbol of their independence.

The real Nerys ferch Owain cared only about the freedom of one person — herself. She died in the dawn, and even though witnesses saw her crumble to ashes, rumors of her return are always circulating.

Sarah Carmichael — Last Scion of Nerys

Most of Nerys's childer were destroyed soon after their sire met her end, slowly hunted down over months and years. One childe, however, had joined in with the attackers, and was accepted into the new order. Her name was Sarah Carmichael: What the Lady had done to earn her hatred, she has never told anyone; but that hatred runs deep. She has never sat on the Assembly, and from other Dead Jacks she faces a mixture of distrust and reverence. She rarely consorts with other Kindred.

Carl Black — The Reverend

The Lancea et Sanctum is powerful in Beddnerys, and Pastor Black is perhaps the most influential individual among the Sanctified. He holds no seat on the Assembly, although he aims to get one eventually — however, this Gangrel is charismatic and personable, with a soft and compelling voice that has swayed many younger Dead Jacks to his point of view. He is himself on the cusp of becoming an elder, but he has a common touch that makes him not seem his age.

Llewellyn Ford — The Outsider

Llewellyn Ford is a Ventrue — and from Cardiff to boot — who settled in Swansea a few years ago. He seems to not be too fond of the city or its inhabitants, who return the favor threefold, as he is routinely accused of being a spy for the werewolves, or even the Metronome. Nevertheless, those few who have approached him in a friendly manner have gotten the impression that he is most eager to stay here. He mostly comports himself with dignity and grace. He is the most visible member of the Lords in the domain.

Tom Lark — The Union Man

Some people are born to be Kindred, and Tom Lark is one of these. An enterprising young Haunt, Tom was a factory worker in life, and rose to a prominent position in the labor union. His sire saw potential in him, and as soon as he was Embraced, he set his sights for the top. A thoroughly ambitious man, Tom knows how to foster loyalty. But his main strength is sheer physical power, and the knowledge of how to use it, both practically and socially.

The Catacombs — An Urban Legend

Though Swansea is an ancient place where human remains over twenty thousand years old have been found, for most of its existence it has been lightly populated. And certainly, in ancient times, there was no cause to carve out a system of catacombs or similar under the area. And yet, among the Dead Jacks, the rumors about a set of tunnels under the domain are very hardy. A few claim to have been inside them, but they can never seem to pinpoint any way in — it was always by accident. And more, they report having felt watched. Could the old lady have created a series of catacombs under her territory? Or maybe it's just a fairy tale?

The House of Harry Grindell Matthews — Off-Limits to Vampires

The inventor Harry Grindell Matthews is known as a harmless eccentric among mortals. Among Kindred, his reputation is altogether darker. The area where he lived and performed his experiments is a frightening place to the undead, instilling them with the constant sense of being watched, from behind, by something baleful. The Assembly has investigated, and declared the entire area off-limits. Because of this, it has become a treasured spot for criminals and outcasts, who can evade even a full blood hunt by hiding here. Lawgivers are very reluctant to come in after them — a fact that almost makes up for the fact that not all who hide here are seen again. Surely, they must have simply left the domain.

The Gower — Wolf Territory

Out on the moor, southwest of Swansea, the Assembly holds no sway. Nominally, this area is part of Beddnerys, but in reality, it's held by the eternal enemies of the Dead Jacks — the werewolves of the Gower. The source of this enmity is simple: the Gower Peninsula is all Nerys ferch Owain's old haunts, and the Kindred consider it to be theirs by law and right. The wolves, on the other hand, have made it plain that they consider everything apart from the oldest parts of Swansea to be their territory, and they become more aggressive as the metropolitan area, and thus the Dead Jacks' domain, grows. The war is subtle, not overt, and both sides grow ever more paranoid as the other tries new tricks.

Port Talbot — The Metronome's Dominion

Blood mixed with ashes, Port Talbot is where the grinding gears of the past lie the closest to the surface. It's the most polluted place in Wales, dominated by its steelworks, and scarred by terrible poverty. For the Dead Jacks, it's a buffet. If not for the Metronome.

The Metronome is a name given to an unknown force of some sort of supernatural nature. It's predictable — almost — following the same set pattern, reacting to the same Kindred act the same way every time. A Dead Jack can exist in peace with the Metronome, until she finds herself unwittingly running afoul of one of its rules. For some, it's worth the risk. But Port Talbot remains mostly Kindred-free because of it.

The Three and Four Diamonds

Tokyo Metropolis, Japan

The June rain is so thick, you can't see three meters ahead. You cross crowded streets, guided only by human traffic and the faint wisps of headlights. Anyone on the outside would ask why you're walking three city blocks in the storm. The report, you say, isn't going to deliver itself.

You're not the rule. After all, many of the street vendors closed for the day. Nobody wants ribbon fried potatoes when the rainwater's up to their ankles. If it weren't for meticulous urban planning, the city would sink under floodwaters. You remind yourself of that, and that pushes you forward through the deluge. It's those willing to get a little wet who make the world better for everyone else.

You look to the others out on the streets, working toward a better Tokyo. You watch a police officer guide traffic. You spot a subway engineer rushing to his station. These people could be at home right now. They could be clean and dry. But they're here to guarantee the thousands walking through the rain are not wasting their time.

The Danse Macabre in the Tokyo Metropolis is very similar. When it rains, it pours, but dedicated individuals don't mind getting wet. This keeps the gears grinding efficiently. Unlike most cities, however, not all those individuals are Kindred. Three powerful Kindred conspiracies, the zaibatsu, form the structure for Tokyo by night. A fourth zaibatsu, run by humans, holds the Masquerade hostage as a bargaining chip.

The Secret History

Kindred organized in Tokyo, formerly Edo, for centuries. Since the 17th century, Tokyo held fast as one of the strongest Kindred cities in the world. Through the Meiji Restoration, the Kindred flourished. After all, many were old enough to remember Imperial Japan, and their childer kept close to their dynastic expectations. Unlike the mortal world, the Kindred world was notably static during this period.

By the late 19th century, Tokyo boasted the single largest population of vampires in any city, worldwide. Depending on whom you ask, it's still the most populous.

This is not the story of modern Tokyo. Modern Tokyo's story begins in 1923. While its Kindred slumbered, the Great Kantō earthquake shook Tokyo to its core. Buildings toppled, and firestorms overtook the city. Over 100,000 mortals died in the devastation, and nearly half the Kindred population.

The Kindred deaths swung heavily to the less privileged dynasties; entire lineages ended that day. The military arm of the Invictus, coupled with Lancea et Sanctum emissaries from Nagasaki, seized the opportunity to wrest control of Tokyo. The swift effort proved effective for the Invictus. They met resistance with extreme force. With promises of defense and rebuilding, they quelled the remaining dissent.

Quickly thereafter, the Great Depression hit the recovering city, and sent the new regime into turmoil. This, coupled with Japanese war efforts against China, led ambitious and impulsive Kindred to participate in the Second Sino-Japanese War, and by extension, World War II. The division of forces leaned heavily against the Japanese regime; their alliance was not so strong as the Japanese mortal army's relations with Russia and Germany. Germany was too entrenched to communicate with the Japanese Kindred. Russian Kindred loathed the potential consequences of Stalin's policies on their feeding stock, so they refused to support an ally. Forces from all sides battered the Japanese Kindred. In 1945, shortly after the Japanese surrender to the United States, the old regime surrendered similarly.

The Kindred surrender was far less formal an affair, more based on threats from the outside and back-door agreements than on treaties and radio news coverage. Tokyo agreed to disband the covenants, and diffuse central rulership. The agreement was that Tokyo would have no further princes.

In place of the covenants, large coteries emerged. The Kindred defiantly called them zaibatsu, referencing the industrial complexes dissolved during the occupation by the United States following World War II. Over the following decade, nearly one dozen such coteries filtered down and consolidated into three major powers: Takahashi Family, Maeda, and Ume House.

At the same time, a mortal businessman called Inoue Akio entered into the same arena. He personally ran afoul of a coterie, who threatened him into backing out of a business deal. Instead of backing out completely, he looked deeper. He found evidence of vampiric influence all throughout his holdings, and those of his closest allies. Worse still, he found that some of his associates were mentally enslaved by the monsters. Through a mix of mysticism and ingenuity, he shook off Kindred influence and formed the Hototogisu. Over the years, the Hototogisu grew to compete with the three Kindred zaibatsu, unofficially and grudgingly gaining acceptance as a fourth major power in Tokyo's hidden world.

A handful of times, Kindred organized and attempted wholesale power grabs and regime creations. Each time, the population — and in particular the zaibatsu — stopped them. The altruistic argument was always that instilling a true regime would violate the agreements, and thus bring outside scrutiny and wrath. The other side of the coin is that the zaibatsu are very comfortable with their control, and will fight to defend their every last scrap.

In 1987, a group of Kindred under the banner of the Carthian Movement claimed leadership. Twenty Carthians stood strong at a public gathering, and made the announcement. The zaibatsu said nothing. Over the following months, each of the 20 saw irreversible financial collapse. Their holdings were seized, their influences ran dry. Weekly, one of the 20 met his or her demise due to strange, almost coincidental circumstances. One of the eldest died when a public works employee opened his haven windows at noon. Another met Final Death as her apartment complex suffered a massive gas leak and subsequent conflagration. Any given death could have been a coincidence, but each happened on Sunday, one every week until each of the 20 were destroyed. Now, the zaibatsu hold all public city meetings on Sundays, as a reminder of the failed revolution.

In 2010, every respected leader in the zaibatsu received a letter from the Hototogisu. These letters were identical, save for their addressing. They outlined a five-year plan to relieve the zaibatsu — and indeed the Kindred at large — of all major influence over Tokyo. Each similarly offered an opportunity to work with the Hototogisu, in order to craft a unified Tokyo under four recognized groups. Instead of levying punishments, the way the three did against the Movement insurrection, the Hototogisu favored mysterious rewards. Those Kindred who responded with interest in collaboration saw near immediate shifts of good fortune. This led to further success within the largely meritocratic zaibatsu. Within the first couple of years, leadership swung heavily toward those at least amiable to the Hototogisu.

Recently, a camp of the Lancea et Sanctum has stood up to speak out against the Hototogisu, proclaiming it and its sympathizers heretics, and in gross violation of the Masquerade. So far, they've not aggressed in any confirmed fashion. However, certain figures have gone missing, and the Lancea et Sanctum is neither confirming nor denying involvement.

Now, these three factions, the zaibatsu, the Hototogisu, and the Lancea et Sanctum stand on unstable ground. Numerous independent interests watch like hawks for the opportune moment to strike. A sharp action from any faction could tip the power in Tokyo. The five-year plan has almost reached a head.

The Clans

Tokyo often downplays clan affiliation for a few reasons.

First, the zaibatsu maintain meritocratic policies; accomplishment and achievement justify promotion. Of course, this is an ideal, so it's hardly an ironclad rule. Nepotism and familial ties sometimes win leadership positions. Ironically, while those related to prominent figures find most promotions easier to attain, they are almost never promoted to the highest echelons. Members point too much scrutiny at leaders' families, excessive promotion is dangerous at best.

Second, those interested in strong familial bonds participate the least in the zaibatsu. They feel that their choices in childer clearly reflect refined selection, and thus they deserve fast favors. If the zaibatsu won't indulge that distinction, do they truly trust the leadership's judgment?

Lastly, for the few invested in potential rulership, popularity comes from playing the inside game. Leaders of powerful dynasties sit in prominent zaibatsu positions, while their families abstain from the organization, or even take roles in others. One Ventrue family, the Susanoo, has members on each of the three boards.

Tokyo's **Daeva** tend toward two minds on the faction conflict. Most align with the zaibatsu, since the power they offer allows for freedom and excess. Then again, some find the structure limiting at best, or frightfully boring. The stark minority of Daeva among the Lancea et Sanctum and the fervently anti-zaibatsu groups hold disproportionately powerful positions. Their passion helps to mobilize and inspire other Kindred to action.

The **Gangrel** take largely apolitical positions. Many act as enforcers for their various factions, because they believe their roles offer the most stability possible. Shizuoka Iwao stands as the most well-known independent force in Tokyo. His argument is that none of the other clans have the same investment in the struggle, since when things escalate it'll be Gangrel on the front lines. This encourages his vocal abstinence.

The **Mekhet** are arguably the wealthiest Kindred in Tokyo. After all, with their information-gathering abilities, they've been able to uncover valuable information on the Hototogisu, the Lancea et Sanctum, and the various independent factions. Some remain as neutral as possible, even within their organizations. Some use their information personally, blackmailing and extorting their way to the top.

The **Nosferatu** almost universally hold up the zaibatsu. The Haunts find the zaibatsu focus on achievement and ability refreshing; while it's not completely free of prejudice, it allows them to take power and influence they might be denied in more biased cities. They're one strong exception to the lack of formal clan organization in Tokyo. The clan holds a firm grip on Tokyo Metro rapid transit. Any Kindred wishing to use the efficient subway systems in Tokyo must pay or make agreements with the clan. Right now, they debate demanding tribute from Hototogisu members taking the subways; they've just yet to find an effective method of enforcement.

The **Ventrue** hold an interesting and unique position in Tokyo. Most of the most vocal opponents to the zaibatsu model boast Ventrue blood. Many strong Ventrue families lost power in the zaibatsu takeover; the youngest of these families act as firebrands for the old order. Right now, they're drawing impressive sympathy from the Lancea et Sanctum, and with those critical of the Hototogisu alliances.

The Zaibatsu

On paper, the three Kindred zaibatsu claim three-fourths of the Kindred population: Nearly 250 vampires at least maintain nominal membership in the organizations. The fourth is almost exclusively human. A small handful of Kindred have officially signed on as members of the Hototogisu, but none have leadership roles yet.

Characters may buy Status in their zaibatsu. Each of the zaibatsu offers an advantage, similar to a traditional covenant advantage. A single dot of Status is required for each.

The Hototogisu

The Hototogisu is named after a breed of cuckoo. Rumor suggests that it's a reference to the cuckoo's practice of laying her eggs in other birds' nests. When Inoue Akio formed the Hototogisu, his plan was to use his awareness of vampire activity and the Masquerade as a leveraging tool to wrest power away from the Kindred. Now, his organization competes with the three largest Kindred groups in Tokyo.

At its core, the Hototogisu looks like a small business conglomerate. The board consists of representatives from numerous, otherwise unrelated businesses from food manufacturing to taxi services and fashion houses. They meet in

the Cerulean Tower in Shibuya Ward every Friday at lunch time. Lesser officers in the organization refer to the board as the Friday Club. Friday Club meetings address basic operational logistics, and govern inter-company deals. As well, each executive is expected to speak on their company's status in the five-year plan.

Inoue himself sits in the back of each meeting and gives a thumbs down or a thumbs up to each presentation, telling the executives whether they're advancing quickly enough on the timeline or otherwise being ambitious enough. After three thumbs down in a year, the executive is replaced by her most senior subordinate. Removed executives often expatriate or commit suicide: This is less as a show of honor, but more for fear of what might happen when vampires discover a former rival no longer has Hototogisu protection.

Each member company operates independently outside the five-year plan. Only ranking officers in each company receive initiation into the Hototogisu, even though every employee is at least aware of the conglomerate by name.

Each company maintains access to the private organizational library, hidden near the Tokyo International Forum in Shinjuku Ward, which includes dedicated mentors on various topics both mundane and supernatural. Employees have varying degrees of access, called The Five Circles. Each Circle reflects a degree of trust and respect within the conglomerate. Greater circles include deeply protected information, such as defensive magics, and rosters of known vampires and their havens. Friday Club members can delegate employees to receive trinkets and artifacts of varying mystical potency, but never weapons. Inoue's directive includes a prohibition against wielding unnatural weaponry.

Employees operate with general guidance from their leadership, but by and large, the expectation is for acquisition. The Hototogisu must acquire business arrangements, both on the books and off. If a criminal enterprise moves in on one of their territories, they're tasked with pulling the necessary strings and making an effort to conquer or destroy the threat. Employees may request assistance from any other employee, but this right is a double-edged sword: If superiors view the request as extraneous, it makes the employee look weak; yet if a foolish employee neglected to request help and failed as a result, he faces censure.

The Hototogisu hires "contractors," or private citizens not affiliated with conglomerate industries. Usually, this means police officers. Many times, it means criminals. Sometimes, it's just a private attorney, zoning officer, or other specialist. Unless the contractor desires, these contracts are always under the table, with no tax records behind them. These contractors extend the Hototogisu's fingers deeper into Tokyo's infrastructure. While it'd be exaggeration to say that nothing happens without Hototogisu attention, it's not unrealistic to say that very few important things happen without the cuckoo's eye.

Hototogisu Status

Status in the Hototogisu affords a series of advantages, one at each level. These advantages come from different sources: the organization's material support, mystical rites (often tattooed on the employee), or from artifacts. This Merit works similarly to the Mystery Cult Initiation Merit (see p. 121). As well, it affords the normal benefits of Status within the Hototogisu.

- • Initiates are taught enough about Kindred to know what to look for, and how to keep safe. This gives an Occult Specialty in Vampires.
- •• The Hototogisu teaches specifically how vampires infect every level of government, business, and crime. This allows them to use their Occult Specialty in Vampires any time Kindred influence applies, regardless of the Skill used. This works identically to the Interdisciplinary Specialty Merit (see p. 121).
- ••• The zaibatsu teaches its established members numerous counter-interrogation techniques, chants, and prayers that act as the Indomitable Merit (see p. 121).
- •••• With advanced training in dealing with vampires, employees become all but immune to vampiric charm. They gain the Iron Will Merit (see p. 121), and cannot be subject to the third stage of a blood bond.
- ••••• Members of the Friday Club are taught to craft charms for their most trusted ground troops. These charms take one hour to craft, cost one Willpower point, and require an Intelligence + Occult (Vampires) roll. For each success, the charms work for one night. Anyone holding the charm is indiscernible from a vampire. She appears cold, she has no noticeable pulse, even her aura shows signs of vampirism. During this time, the employee does not require food, and can safely drink human blood in order to maintain the façade. Because of the power of this ruse, its secrets are kept tightly within the board's membership.

Maeda

Nickname: Cockroaches (disrespectful), Towers (respectful)

Maeda, formally The Maeda Group, began with its hands in agricultural production and spread heavily into the retail sector. They claim their founder was a member of the prominent Maeda clan during the Sengoku Period. There's no evidence to substantiate this claim, and no named Maeda family members hold leadership positions in the conglomerate.

On the Kindred side, they've grown a reputation for physical force. During most of the major anti-zaibatsu rebellions, Maeda enforcers cracked down on the insurrectionists. Maeda has consistently provided policing forces for Elysiums and Masquerade enforcement. Where most cities use blood hunts, Tokyo uses Maeda hit squads. Curiously, as years went by, violence became less and less a concern, so Maeda's influence waned dramatically.

Lately, they've seen profits drop due to anti-GMO sentiments, many of which Hototogisu manufactured with propaganda and online rumor campaigns. Between this, and the unpopularity of their enforcers, Maeda's now seen as the weakest link among the zaibatsu. Maeda's leadership has resisted the Hototogisu alliance harder than any other conglomerate, and won't last another decade under its current momentum.

Maeda's most ambitious employees have been allocated to the New Special Projects Division. Their stated goal is to expand into new territories, with the understanding that Maeda's power in agriculture and brick and mortar retail may not exist in the coming years. For some, this means outside the Tokyo metro area, and even outside Japan in some cases. The New Special Projects Division is dedicated to the survival of the corporation, even if that means strategic withdrawal from Tokyo.

Many of the more independent Maeda minds have branched into organized crime. Their thought: Quick money is the answer to the corporation's problems. With more capital to invest into expansion, Maeda might survive in the end. The flaw in that plan is that organized crime is risky business. Other Kindred already have their hands in that pie, and don't like encroaching corporate action. Gang syndicates — popularly called Yakuza, or Boryokudan (violence gangs) — don't take kindly to domineering outside forces, and they often respond violently to threats.

Zaibatsu Advantage: Maeda employees benefit from a trained oath called the Mind of Infinite Immutability. Rolls using their Resistance Attributes (Composure, Resolve, and Stamina) benefit from a bonus equal to their Maeda Status dots. Resisted rolls against Maeda members subtract their Status dots as a penalty.

Takahashi Family

Nickname: Masters (disrespectful), The Family (respectful)

The Takahashi Family fancies itself the natural leader of the three zaibatsu. For obvious reasons, this puts its members at odds with most of the city. However, they maintain the strongest ties to Hototogisu, which gives them a deep advantage in most dealings. They have complex influences in powerful corporate entities as well, including The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, the Japan Exchange Group, and Honda.

The Family is anything but a family. Its board disallows blood relations from serving simultaneously, or even immediately replacing displaced members. It keeps a strict hierarchy; every ranking member has two subordinates. The six board members each have two subordinates, those 12 each have two, and those 24 each have two. That limits total membership to 90 Kindred. At times, the pyramid has been complete. Currently, nearly half the 24 have either one or no subordinates. Each member answers to her superior, and her superior's word is rule above all, even superseding the board. The zaibatsu thus encourages the occasional upward coup; they believe it keeps officers on their best, most competitive behavior.

Takahashi members take assignments by industry. Every board member has a broad industry under her authority; inferiors take assignments within that field. The board divides business by transportation, financial, energy, media, manufacturing, and health. The board debates gray areas and overlap, but every member has a role to play in the greater plan. Takahashi expects members to entrench themselves completely in their roles; they create ghouls, they take havens, and they financially delve into their work as directly as possible.

While members usually meet with their superiors regularly, the zaibatsu tradition requires monthly reporting, staggered by days of the week to move information up the chain quickly. These reports must be performed as a piece of art: usually a poem, a painting, or a play. Some members use interpretive dance or other more abstract art forms, but bear the risk of confounding their superiors. These ritual performances establish standing in the conglomerate, as proud mentors show their superiors their workers' reports at board parties. In recent years, thanks to the media board, many of these meetings have taken place virtually, with all participants logging into network video calls. A group within the financial wing has pushed to in-person meetings, touting accountability in the face of the Beast.

Zaibatsu Advantage: Takahashi Family members enjoy many benefits of station. They receive the Retainer, Herd, and Haven Merits equal to their Zaibatsu Status Merit, free of charge.

Ume House

Nickname: Ume (respectful), Pits (disrespectful)

Ume House, or Plum House, considers itself the spiritual wing of Tokyo's zaibatsu. While its members still hold influence in many mortal spheres (for example, Narita International Airport), they focus most of their attention on history and spiritualism. They maintain shrines and museums, historical societies and cults. This of course leaves them behind the other zaibatsu in raw monetary power. They attempt to make up for it by influencing more traditional politicians.

Members of Ume practice an ancient form of blood sorcery called Kigan (literally "prayer"). While it owes some influence to Shinto, the two practices forked over a millennia ago, so their rituals bear only superficial similarity. Kigan allows Ume to spill their blood, effectively bribing spirits to enact mystical effects. Unlike some Kindred sects, the Ume are open about their practices. They offer their services to the other zaibatsu; their curses and blessings come at a premium and keep the Ume operating strong.

In modern tradition, every Tokyo coterie is expected to contain an Ume. The Lancea et Sanctum mostly reject the Ume, many independent coteries eschew zaibatsu attention, and the other zaibatsu try to diffuse excessive scrutiny. Still, nearly half the city's recognized coteries have an Ume priest. These priests preside over coterie rituals including purifying baths, funerals, and hunting prayers. The general belief is that hunting outside of rigid and esoteric parameters causes spiritual impurity. Many write this off as intentional vagueness to exalt and unnecessarily value the Ume scholarship.

Zaibatsu Advantage: Ume House members can learn Kigan. In game terms, it's identical to Crúac. The rituals' names are different, and the basic execution is framed as prayer and bloodletting. Most

importantly, Crúac and Kigan are incompatible practices; a Crúac practitioner with three dots cannot find a Kigan practitioner to teach her the fourth dot of Crúac.

The Other Factions

While most Kindred find themselves under the banner of the zaibatsu, a handful of factions hold influence in the city.

The Lancea et Sanctum

The Spear has an agenda; they aim to remove the zaibatsu, and most importantly the Hototogisu. The fact that humans know about and readily work with Kindred in Tokyo stands as an affront to everything they believe in. However, the small church numbers hardly over one dozen members, so they can't take as direct action as they might like. Instead, they work through subtler means, sowing dissent and rebellion through the independents and disenfranchised zaibatsu members. With the force of Kindred blood, it's not very hard to inspire overwhelming pride in young vampires. After all, why would such powerful beings deal with fragile humans as equals?

Right now, the Sanctified struggle appears an uphill battle. They focus mostly on improving the vampire church's image, and defaming the zaibatsu. But they wait like vultures, until one of the conglomerates shows a weak enough point to strike. Once one falls, they believe, the whole system will collapse.

Independents

While a few individuals have attempted to organize the non-zaibatsu interests as a valid political force, they've had little luck. The reasons for non-membership in the corporations are as numerous as the non-members. A few minor gangs stand alone, but mostly, the non-corporate citizens simply abstain from the process. The gangs, the Hototogisu, and the Lancea et Sanctum court more reasonable non-corporates, to varying degrees of success.

The Nosferatu

The Nosferatu maintain a semi-formal organization, in spite of or in addition to zaibatsu membership. In the complex subway systems, all Haunts are equal. There is no board. There are no corporations. They keep an unwritten rule not to sell corporate secrets, or participate in overthrow attempts. Their most important priority is survival; they believe that when the conflict becomes violent, the Nosferatu would be best served in the tunnels, lasting out the devastation.

Notable Kindred

Tokyo boasts over 300 Kindred; it's possibly the single most populous Kindred city. Here are some of the prominent figures characters are likely to encounter.

Dana Merchant – Dana is the current face of the Lancea et Sanctum. She tries to be the Nun Everybody Loves, the more accessible face of the covenant. A recent transplant from London, the Daeva is an expert at drawing attention and stirring tensions to get what she wants. Right now, an uneasy Tokyo is the best thing she can hope for. She accomplishes that unease with a welcoming smile.

Ibaraka Hitomi – Hitomi is director of the Maeda New Special Projects Division. She scouts throughout Maeda membership and without for potential recruits. As a capable Mekhet, she spies on her targets, looking for two things: ambition, and dirt. Those with ability but no leverage are worthless to her. As a function of her spying activities, Hitomi is one of the most knowledgeable Kindred in Tokyo.

Kobayashi Yoji – Yoji is the current New Member Orientation Specialist for the Takahashi Family. Every new recruit meets with him for at least two weeks. During this time, the smooth Daeva performs a combination of indoctrination, interrogation, and inspiration, often at the same time, and always leaving the recruit wanting more.

Shiga Sato – Shiga acts as chief Ume priest to the Takahashi Board, and consults for Maeda. Her role is something of a Kindred housing inspector; the Haunt investigates territory claims for validity, and for threats to city security. She uses her Kigan rituals to scour below the surface. She's been accused of nepotism; Ume residents appear more likely to receive approval. She claims it's because they know what to look for. But any Kindred looking into personal territory will have to deal with her at some point.

Notable Locations

Cerulean Tower – This massive skyscraper in Shibuya Ward houses the Friday Club, and most important Hototogisu operations. Unless granted special permission, Kindred are not allowed on Cerulean's block. (Some who have pushed their luck have turned up missing.) However, the Hototogisu has put forward an invitation to a first annual party, held in the basement noh theater. Who will and will not show up has been a source of much rumor.

Keidanren Hall – Keidanren is a meeting hall in Chiyoda Ward. One of its smaller rooms has been reserved as a neutral safe place for Kindred dealings, and other rooms frequently house zaibatsu events. Because of its public access to any Kindred citizens, and its proximity to many mortals, it's an ideal secure location, and an even more ideal place for harpies to loiter in hopes of hearing something juicy.

Roppongi – Roppongi is a neighborhood of Minato Ward, known for its affluent areas, tourism, and nightlife. In Kindred spheres, it's commonly recognized as the Rack. In the past decade, local authorities have cracked down on and closed numerous Yakuza-run establishments. This is good news for the vampires, who were ill-welcomed by the syndicates. Since the crackdown, Kindred are always on the streets, hunting and engaging in deals. To preserve its status as a neutral feeding ground, the zaibatsu agree to grant no formal territory in Roppongi.

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD

PART VII

Thao

Her house, my house, was burning. It smelled like all the stupid manga I'd bought Edie when she wanted to learn Thai. Like my first kiss. Like meeting my new sister. Like gas. Like meat. Five years ago, two years ago, and now; I should have known better.

Edie was screaming, sprinting. Maybe she could hear something besides the blood in my ears; the terrible pounding quiet; the patient absence of fire trucks. Father was smoking, walking. Maybe he was waiting for something besides my terror and Edie's awful gagging tears. Why had I thought we could come back?

He was near enough to touch her, to shove her into the flames. She was looking at me; love and distrust and back again. Was he speaking? Was she shouting? Edie, stop making it worse. And then she struck him. Slapped him like you could just touch him. Like we weren't being punished enough. For a delirious moment I thought she was going to push him into his own stupid fire. But she backed away, and looked at me like she was waiting for something.

They're so close, so close, and her hair is going to burn. All I can do is speed everything up. Bang bang, Father.

Sooner than I thought, I could feel his breath on my neck. Whispering in my ear, arm gentle around my throat. She was reaching toward me; close enough to make her flush and sweat. It's okay, Edie. It'll be okay.

Then there was a little press, and I....

My father is peace.

Edie

"Edie, Edie. This is truly how you've been wasting my money? I thought your sister had been telling tales about you."

I flush, more guilty than I ought to be; and try to give Thao a dirty look. Why is she so scared? It's Dad. On the scale of horrible things I've seen lately, he is no longer even ranking. He walked toward me, arms open, ready to embrace me. Once I apologize for being such an ungrateful childe, once I accept my punishment. But I can't. How many...people, I have to remember that they're people, did he kill just to prove that he can control me, us? I look at Thao again, and she's frozen, hand twitching by her gun like she can't quite bring herself to touch it. The house creaks and a fresh wave of oily smoke pours out. I gag and start to sob. They trusted me. I needed them, and they trusted me to take care of them. And he doesn't even have the decency to think it matters.

"I'm going to have to cut off your allowance if your behavior doesn't improve."

Oh. Oh, Thao. How long has he been doing this to her instead of me?

I can't take it back, but maybe being stupid will be enough to make her brave. So I slap him, because why the fuck not?

Tears are pouring down her face, and she's shaking so hard I'm surprised she can aim. But she catches him in the back and he staggers. I'm about to laugh until I realize she's barely grazed him. And he's faster than me. When her blood splashes against my hands, the need is so awful that I can't keep myself from licking it off my fingers as he drags her body toward the flames.

But he dropped the gun. I know where she keeps her clips. And I put a bullet in him for every step he takes away from me.

Chapter Seven
Storytelling

But it was the first time I had ever really used the place I knew and the things I felt in a piece of fiction, and there was a kind of dreadful exhilaration in seeing things that had troubled me for years come out in a new form, a form over which I had imposed control.

-Stephen King, The Body

The Storytelling System is a toolkit. In this book, we offer numerous tools and elements to build your interpretation of **Vampire: the Requiem**'s world, to weave strange tales, and to cultivate curious chronicles. However, all the tools in the world are useless without some degree of guidance. So in this chapter, we provide ideas and frameworks for how to use these pieces together. We cut it apart by element, and each element receives more than one avenue for execution. As well, we offer a few Storyteller-specific tools and tricks, things that don't appear on the character sheet. Lastly, each piece gets an optional addition or change that you can use to emphasize that particular element. This is a fork from the rules presented, if you want your chronicle weighted toward that idea. It's not a fully-fleshed idea; it's more of a seed for divergent play.

Masks and Dirges

These traits define how Kindred interact with and engage their world. A vampire cannot exist without either. As Storyteller, Masks and Dirges are powerful tools to guide play. Simply, they're the first chance the players have to express what kind of gameplay they expect. So it's worth writing these down and keeping them close.

Mask and Dirge Scenes

Beyond the very general direction of play, you can use this to fill space when there's a lull in activity, or when you need time to plan your next move. Most of the time, when you're not sure what to do, offering a feeding scene is an easy fallback. But sometimes, characters might not need or want Vitae. Or, practically, they might need Willpower. In these cases, use a Mask or Dirge scene.

To initiate a Mask or Dirge scene, take a look at one of the characters' anchor traits, and choose a clear, iconic action that would fit within that archetype. For example, take Brit. Her Mask is Bouncer, guarantor of hospitality and cracker of skulls when the time comes. So an easy scene begins with Brit working a club floor, spotting an altercation and getting involved.

However, you can make it a Dirge scene at the same time. To do that, you need to twist the scene and play the trait against its counterpart. So in our example, Brit's Dirge is that of a Judge. Turns out Brit knows the guy who's about to be on the losing side. He's a ghoul, and Brit considers him to be a bully, throwing around his weight now he's got a taste of the Blood. Brit could break up the fight, but she'd be losing a chance to see the ghoul get what's coming to him. And either choice she makes, Brit's made an impact on the ghoul, one that's sure to come up later.

Mirrors

On the other side, you can challenge Masks and Dirges by offering examples that bring a character's anchor traits to their logical conclusions. Introduce characters with the same (or opposite) combinations. Any time you create a Storyteller character with an important role in your story, consider the players' characters' Masks and Dirges when building. This way, you can show how those traits may end in massive failure, or astonishing success with a disgusting price.

For example, if the coterie's leader is a philanthropist Ventrue with an Autocrat/Social Chameleon Mask/Dirge who rose through the ranks of poverty to leech off the wealthy and put them where they once put him, answer in kind. Perhaps one of the biggest rivals for the coterie is an archaic nobleman who gave up his riches when Embraced, and now thrives by shepherding the homeless into a defiant pseudo-militia. They're both Autocrats/Social Chameleons, but in completely opposing ways. Not only should they disagree, but their conflicts will offer more challenge for the Ventrue whose enemies exist outside the auspices of his influence.

Twist: The Whole of the Monster

If you want to heighten the importance of Masks and Dirges and put them front and center in your chronicle, get rid of Attributes. In place, add two five-dot traits called Mask and Dirge, and every character gets five dots between them to start. They are still named, as normal. When making a roll to express the character's vampiric side, use Dirge in place of the Attribute. When making a roll to hide the character's true nature, use Mask instead. If neither apply, use a default single die. If the action directly references the named trait, instead of the normal Willpower refresh, add a +2 die bonus to the roll.

For derived traits, this will take a bit more consideration. You'll want to favor simpler approaches over deeper, more tactical choices in this more abstracted option. For example, you should consider the Down and Dirty Combat rules on p. 176. If you need a derived trait, determine it on the fly, and use whichever of the two traits works best. For example, Defense in public is likely to just be your character's Mask, unless she's willing to violate the Masquerade, in which case her Dirge protects her. In the case of multiple Attributes used at the same time, double the appropriate trait. In this sense, Speed will vary wildly depending on the character's current focus. Ignore Willpower dots; just use the +2 mechanism.

For human characters, do the same for Virtue and Vice. Clearly, they won't have Blood Potency, but that won't cause conflict since they can't allow the Beast to take over. You may consider only allowing three dots between them to start, though.

Aspirations

On the surface, Aspirations do two major things: They tell a Storyteller what you want to see in the game, and they give you a motivation even when your character might not have an immediate hook to the story. As it stands, they're mostly open-ended — players can do with them what they please. However, the Storyteller can use minor focuses to deeply influence a chronicle.

A couple of notes on Aspirations:

- It's important to remember that grander Aspirations can award Beats any time the character takes meaningful steps toward resolution; don't punish players for taking lofty goals.
- Players can shift Aspirations between game sessions. Nothing forces them to keep Aspirations that have become useless or are no longer fun to pursue.
- Aspirations should help to guide the chronicle. If you can't find a dramatic way to introduce the players' presented goals, ask them how they'd like to see them addressed.
- Aspirations can be "meta." The player knows them; the character doesn't have to.
- Particularly early on in the chronicle, Aspirations change. As the players feel out their characters, and begin to understand the chronicle's direction, they'll want to shift goals. This is fine.

The Team

Vampire assumes the players are at least portraying a loose coterie of Kindred. Its toolkit approach allows variation on the form, and nothing forces cohesion. After all, vampires are self-interested to say the least; it stands to reason that cohesion might be a weak point for many groups. However, if the Storyteller needs a stronger group bond, Aspirations are a good place to start. Requiring players to take one or two Aspirations that pertain to coterie-mates puts an integral character advancement tool on the line, and requires the characters to work together if their players want Experiences. One required Aspiration will make for a cohesive game. Two will result in a very tight-knit experience.

The easiest way to do this is to assign coterie members for Aspirations by table position. Look to your left; take an Aspiration toward that character. Or, you could require everyone develop one to a character that hasn't already been taken. This way, everyone's the subject of another's trait. With either direction, Aspirations should shift organically — this might mean that sometimes, a character won't be the subject of an Aspiration.

The opposite end of this is to use it for a rivalry-based game. If the group comes to the table prepared for one-upmanship and backstabbing, expressing intra-coterie rivalries in the form of Aspirations will make for a deeply treacherous experience.

Negativity

Remember that Aspirations don't have to be positive. Ultimately, Aspirations express what you — the player — want to see in play. **Vampire** is a game of gothic horror; tragedy is par for the course. However, tragedy and loss are a hard line to walk. Without some grace and light, darkness can quickly become a chore. We play to have fun; any loss and negativity has to remain fun.

Aspirations, however, let us express things we not only want to see, but are comfortable with. If a loved Storyteller character dies casually as part of a plot, that can be a letdown. But if a player takes an Aspiration "To lose my best friend," that says the player wants it to happen. If a player takes, "Make an enemy in my covenant," run with it.

So just like with the cohesion model, if you want to emphasize tragedy, treachery, and loss, simply require some point of negativity in Aspirations.

Twist: The Will to Achieve

In this option, Aspirations are front and center, as part of the Willpower mechanic as well as the Experience system. To use it, have the players assign each Willpower dot to an Aspiration. Divide as equally as possible; the one or two leftovers can be assigned as the player sees fit.

Willpower recovers identically in this model. However, it may only be spent in pursuit of an Aspiration. It doesn't have to result in resolution of the Aspect, but spending the Willpower gives a Beat. Advancement will happen quicker in this model. If you go with it, consider removing the dramatic failure option for obtaining Beats since the focus is more on goal accomplishment than exploring failure. Also remove the Beats for resolving Aspirations; if the resolution is important, the player will spend Willpower on it.

If you use this option, players can choose more long-term, larger-scale Aspirations since they won't miss out on Beats while trying to achieve their goals.

Blood Potency

Blood Potency is a way to pace a chronicle. It tracks advancement in a very clear and evident way. It offers numerous advantages as it increases, with incremental disadvantages.

Gaining Blood Potency

As it stands, Blood Potency increases every 50 years, or when the player decides to spend 5 Experiences to increase it. Then there's Amaranth, which is a whole different thing. But how does Blood Potency increase outside those parameters? What's it like for Kindred to distill their Vitae into something greater?

If you're playing a game where you expect characters to strive for increased Blood Potency, consider how you could focus a chronicle on that growth. (If someone takes "Gaining Blood Potency" as an Aspiration, this is doubly important.) There are two sides to look at: The act of increasing Potency, and what it feels like as it increases.

Principle Focus of Vitae

In short, if a player wants to raise her character's Blood Potency, most reasons given will be fine. But it's worth giving a bit of attention to the how, since Blood Potency is the single most expensive trait a player can buy in **Vampire**. It usually takes many game sessions to accumulate that Experience; what happened to justify the increase during that time? If the player isn't sure how the character would focus her blood, here are a few ideas to get started:

- The character uses Disciplines and spends Vitae in order to solve simple, mundane problems.
- She often uses frenzy as a solution, instead of facing it as a problem.
- She feeds from Kindred whenever possible, or at the lowest Blood Potency levels, eschews animal blood.

- She feeds beyond capacity.
- She expends and refills her Vitae almost completely, frequently.
- She maintains multiple ghouls.
- She Embraces childer.

Generational Stories

Blood Potency can also act as a sort of "timeline" for a character's evolution through a story. This clearly doesn't matter much in a game set in the 21st century alone, but if you play a game that spans centuries, this changes significantly.

One prime method for this style of play is the generational chronicle. Choose three or four eras and locations you wish to play in. Everyone should create a character for the oldest, and modify the sheet for each time period. As a general rule, 15 Experiences per century works well. Note the shift in Blood Potency: Every 50 years active is a free dot. If the players want, they can similarly make characters in any of the other time periods (particularly if the oldest character is in torpor during that era, or otherwise indisposed).

While telling the story of a dynasty can be very interesting play, the idea here is to show how a character progresses and intensifies with years and Blood Potency. Playing a character with starting points, then seeing how he behaves as a frightening, ancient juggernaut, can give unparalleled insight into the character's inner workings. It also gives an opportunity to show a character what they could become using portents and prophecy, with relative certainty.

Twist: Blood Beats

If you want a chronicle where Blood Potency increases rapidly, consider offering "Blood Beats," which specifically afford Experiences that can only be used to buy Blood Potency dots. Any of the following might afford Blood Beats (in addition to Beats they might normally offer):

- Dramatic Failures on Discipline rolls
- Exceptional Success on Discipline rolls
- Embracing
- Ghouling
- Creating revenants
- Exsanguinating a victim
- Frenzy or riding the wave
- Spending your last Vitae
- Drinking beyond capacity
- Joining a bloodline
- Gaining a Discipline dot
- Rolling for Detachment

Feeding Scenes

As noted in the rules for feeding scenes (see p. 94), these scenes should be front and center in most **Vampire** chronicles. They should be relatively frequent; it's reasonable to start every game session with a feeding scene.

Vitae Tokens

In addition to the "with dice and without dice" rules presented in the feeding scenes rules, one easy trick to make feeding scenes deliver is to use tokens. Glass beads, coins, anything with a little weight. It's very easy to say, "Alright. How many Vitae do you take?" But with the tokens, simply hand one over at a time. As you transfer each token, describe the flow of the scene, the flow of the blood. Don't gloss over these moments. Toss in a bit of symbolism and temptation with each token. Also, don't use numbers in these scenes if at all possible; just hand tokens, and describe reactions.

Twist: Above All, Feed

In a chronicle where feeding scenes mean more than anything, get rid of traits and dice. Attributes, Skills, these can all fall by the wayside. You may choose to allow Specialties for further character description and a bit of a foundation, but they're not necessary. Instead, use dice. Just take a pile of dice, and give them out like Vitae tokens (see above). Ignore Blood Potency for this simple play option, even. Characters can hold any reasonable number of Vitae.

Vitae are dice. Simple as that. If you want to make a roll, roll as many of your Vitae as you want. Failed dice stay in your pool. Successes go to the Storyteller's pile. The Storyteller rolls between one and ten dice, depending on how challenging a given action should be. Damage comes straight out of your Vitae pool as well. A character without Vitae goes into frenzy; a frenzied Kindred gets five dice on any action for free, but those dice do not return to the Vitae pool.

However, it's unreasonable to use feeding "with dice" in this method of play, since the Vitae would be expended to hunt.

Conditions

Conditions allow you to package game effects, and develop and shed them easily. They also provide a mechanism to encourage a bit of drama, in exchange for Experience rewards.

Cards

You can track Conditions on the character sheet, but using slips of paper or index cards can help guide play. An index card can offer a page number, and a simple, notated version of the Condition for ease of reference. If you place them atop or in front of your character sheet, they stand as a solid reminder of any active influences on your character. When the Condition's resolved, just hand the card back to the Storyteller.

This also helps the Storyteller, as she can use small clusters of Condition cards to act as representatives and reminders of prominent Storyteller characters. It also helps the players remember potential advantages they may have. If their rival has the Monstrous Condition, they can exploit that. However, if they don't remember it's there, it may not see play at all until it resolves.

Twist: Conditions-As-Health

If you like the way Conditions work, and want to heighten their prominence in your chronicles, replace Health with Conditions. It abstracts damage systems a bit, but allows you to remove some of the numbers in a combat scene in favor of dramatic flavor.

In place of the Health track, characters gain Conditions when injured. Anyone can gain the Maimed and Incapacitated Conditions. Add the character's Stamina + Size. At 3, the character can take the Incapacitated Condition. At 6, they can also take Maimed. For every 2 above that, they can take one Bruised Condition (round down). So, at 3, they only have Incapacitated available, at 6 they have Incapacitated and Maimed, at 8 they have Incapacitated, Maimed, and Bruised. At 10, they have Incapacitated, Maimed, and two Bruised. At 12, it'd be three Bruised, and so on.

Any time the character takes damage, he must take a Condition. His player chooses to take a Bruised or Maimed Condition, if available. If none are available, he gains Incapacitated. If already Incapacitated, mortals gain Dying, while Kindred suffer Final Death.

If the attack would cause five or more points of damage, it causes two Conditions. If the attack would cause bashing damage to a Kindred, it only causes a single Condition even if the attack would cause five points of damage or more. If the attack causes aggravated damage, the Condition becomes Persistent. Against mortal characters, lethal damage is Persistent.

Use the following Conditions:

BRUISED

Your character is beaten up a bit. It's nothing drastic; it affords a −1 die penalty to Initiative and any instant actions. This Condition does not award a Beat when resolved.

Possible Sources: Injury

Resolution: Spend a Vitae for Kindred, wait a half an hour for mortals. If Persistent, spend five Vitae for Kindred, or wait two days for mortals.

Beat: n/a

MAIMED

Your character is seriously injured, and is deeply impaired by the harm. Initiative and all actions suffer a −2 die penalty. Halve his Speed.

Possible Sources: Injury

Resolution: Spend two points of Vitae for Kindred, wait two days for mortals. If Persistent, spend ten points of Vitae for Kindred, or wait one week for mortals.

Beat: n/a

INCAPACITATED

Your character is suffering a terrible wound. If Kindred, he falls into torpor. In torpor, further damage will cause Final Death. If mortal, he must succeed in a Stamina roll each turn or fall unconscious.

Possible Sources: Injury

Resolution: Spend two points of Vitae for Kindred, wait one week for mortals. If Persistent, spend ten points of Vitae for Kindred, or wait two weeks for mortals.

Beat: n/a

DYING

For mortals only. Your character is dying. Without immediate medical attention, he will expire rapidly. Every minute without medical attention, he must succeed in a Stamina roll or die.

Possible Sources: Injury

Resolution: Medical attention

Beat: n/a

Disciplines

Disciplines express the differences between vampires and their abilities; they're the easiest way to identify the differences between clan lineages. In most games of **Vampire**, they'll take a front seat already.

Disciplines are designed to make things happen...when one comes into play, a plan falls into place, a situation escalates. They're also *coercive*. Most Disciplines represent power that a vampire wields to force someone to do what they want.

Personification

To take a symbolic approach to Disciplines, have each player develop a supporting mortal Storyteller character for each of their characters' Disciplines. The mortal must in some way embody a theme relating to the Discipline. For example, a Daeva might represent Vigor with a member of her herd she paralyzed by accident, who she now visits in the hospital sometimes. Or a Ventrue's Animalism is embodied by an old man whose dog saved his life from a burglar.

If possible, these mortals should be Touchstones, Herd, Retainers, or other characters represented by game traits. Even if not, they should come into play with some frequency to complement or contrast the Kindred's abilities.

Twist: Learning Through Suffering

When Kindred employ Disciplines, they create victims. Vigor breaks bones. Dominate breaks minds. Disciplines exert the vampire's will on the world in harsh ways. In this shift, characters can only learn Disciplines once they've fallen victim to them.

Any time a player's character is victim to a Discipline, mark a check next to the Discipline (or add the Discipline with no dots) to her sheet. She cannot learn a dot of a Discipline without as many checks as that level of the Discipline. When she buys a dot, erase all such checks.

If you want to prioritize Discipline learning, those checks can count as Beats that can only purchase Experiences to spend on Disciplines.

Frenzy

Frenzy offers **Vampire** characters a loss of control. While this is already troublesome for some characters, when you consider the Requiem it becomes even worse. Vampires are all about control. Almost every Discipline allows the vampire to control her environment in some way or another. The taste of her blood enslaves minds. When the Beast takes over, she loses control.

Normally, this is a chance for a player to explore what their character's basest, most practical desires lead to without the restraint of Humanity. The player roleplays out unbridled anger or insatiable thirst. The choices the player makes serve to highlight why it's so important for the character to maintain control.

Twist: Beast Guides

To take the frenzy concept further, with this twist, players play each others' Beasts as sentient, tempting forces. Every player assigns another to act as her character's Beast. Everyone has to have someone else; no player gets to play two Beasts, and unlike normally, nobody gets to play her own. The Beast's player—or Beast Guide—takes tokens equal to the character's Willpower; Willpower expenditure becomes exclusively the purview of the Beast.

At any time, the Beast Guide can whisper and tempt the vampire, offering Willpower for a destructive or antisocial action. The vampire doesn't necessarily have to do what the Beast says; she can lie to the Beast, but the Beast won't like it, and will likely withhold Willpower or trick the vampire in the future.

Touchstones

Like Masks and Dirges, Touchstones are a great ways to kick off scenes. When you hit a lull or need a breather—pick a player and ask to check in on their character's Touchstone. You can also use such a scene to simultaneously ratchet up drama while refilling a character's Willpower.

Touchstones are also good for letting a player show how events in the game are affecting her character. You can use interaction with a Touchstone as a "tag scene" at the end of a session, where the aftermath of the exciting and traumatic events a character has been through get explored.

What Touchstones Are

Touchstones are grounding points for Kindred. Kindred are neither human nor monster, and walk a difficult line between the two sides. They walk this line with the help of their Touchstones. Kindred existence is a slide (or sometimes a crash) toward monstrosity. A Touchstone is the rope at the top of the hole. It's useful, at least until you've let go of it.

Imagine Trevor, a person born in a small town. He grows up, he goes to school, then he finds a career and moves to the

city. By all measures, he was once a small town kid. But the city's done a number on him, and now he's all action item lists, memos, soy lattes, and subways. But Eric, Eric grounds him. Eric was Trevor's high school crush. They'd sneak off during football games and make out beneath the bleachers.

They never lost contact. Even when Trevor moved to the city, Eric kept texting him. They'd call each other every few weeks, and talk about whomever they were dating, and what they had for lunch. But it was always just a little weird. Trevor would tell Eric a joke about the city traffic, but Eric had never seen gridlock in his life. Trevor would talk about the aggressive merger he was working on, but Eric's work experience began and ended in a local grocery store where his family was friends with the owners. But this helped Trevor keep it real. It reminded him of his roots.

Sometimes, Trevor would visit home. He went to his high school reunion, and had a little fling with Eric. He visited all the old stomping grounds. He wandered through the lackluster malls, he tried to explain his job to his family even though they had no idea what he did. He could always visit the old hometown, but he was always a visitor, never a resident.

In essence, Eric was Trevor's Touchstone. The city was the Danse Macabre. The small town was his human life.

What Touchstones Aren't

Touchstones aren't minions. Touchstones aren't Allies, Contacts, Herds, Mentors, or Retainers. Not by default. If a player wants to buy a Social Merit to reflect other functions for a Touchstone, that's actually a great way to build the character's social web. (Similarly, when using Climbing the Ladder, below, assigning social Merits and Touchstones to characters created that way is great for integrating them into the ongoing story.)

Touchstones are not advantages by themselves. They're the vehicles for choices.

Touchstones shouldn't be threatened in situations where the player has no significant choices. They should not be constantly in the crosshairs. Ultimately, Touchstones exist for the players' characters; they should have a say in their Touchstones' destinies.

This isn't to say that plot cannot happen, and unfortunate situations can't arise. But by and large, the players should be able to decide the basic relationships and stories they want to tell with their characters' Touchstones. This means you should communicate with your players. Ask them to describe those relationships, and tell you where they'd like to see them develop. You can twist and turn these pitches, but keep the players' desires in mind.

Portraying Touchstones

When playing a Touchstone character, always have an agenda. Even if the player calls for the scene, come up with a purpose, and a goal. This could be a goal pertaining to the vampire, or it could be a goal for the Touchstone that has nothing to do with the vampire at all. The latter works well to flesh out the Touchstone, and give her a bit of identity and a point to relate to. She doesn't have to accomplish the goal, but you should portray her with the goal in mind.

In many cases, playing with an agenda will coax the player to have their vampire engage with that goal. They might feel sympathetic to the Touchstone and try to solve the problem, or they may try to fuss with it. Either way, it gives a potential plot that directly impacts the vampire's life and his struggle against the Beast.

Be vulnerable. Vampires are eternal. Touchstones are temporary. Touchstones are fragile. At least, this is how a vampire should see a Touchstone, more and more with every passing night. Use Touchstones to remind players what their characters overlook and take for granted. Touchstones complain about skipping meals, or they have trouble with landlords. Touchstones have difficulty with the neighbor kids scratching their cars. They're on a different level from the vampires — play this up.

Non-Human Touchstones

Not all Touchstones are human. Most are. How do you portray a place or an object? That's a complex issue, but the simplest answer is, "the same way you'd portray a person." You still want to play vulnerably. You still want to have an agenda. You still want to play into the player's interests. However, you have to do so through third party actions, symbolism, or events. If Sara the Ventrue has an antique pocket watch given to her by her mortal father, a scene describing polishing and maintaining the watch against rust and tarnish can show vulnerability.

What about other vampires? What about stranger things, like werewolves, mummies, and fairies? There's nothing stopping a character from taking one of these things as a Touchstone. But they should be very rare, and you should ask the player just how the creature reminds the vampire of her humanity. If it makes sense, and fits within the story framework you want to use, run with it. Some combinations work better than others. Sometimes, a childe can make for a great Touchstone. Rarely, a sire will. But maybe the sire decided to pursue Golconda, and aims to bring his childe down that path as a form of personal penance for the curse of the Embrace. So now the childe sees her sire as a Touchstone.

The Black Box

An option to emphasize Touchstones is to offer the players the choice to enter Black Box scenes with their Touchstones at any time they'd like. In a Black Box scene, the player can expect intense, emotionally charged interactions. It's a private affair (the other players can watch, if everyone accepts), and you take whatever conflicts or problems exist between the vampire and her Touchstone, and ramp them up to 11.

In a Black Box, there should be a palpable sense of risk. The vampire should worry about losing the Touchstone, even if it's not a real, significant risk. In these scenes, keep dice rolls limited. Frenzy rolls, detachment rolls, these things can still occur. But the goal is pathos and forward movement in the story. Start with the conflict. You're supposed to play a Touchstone with a goal, right? The goal here is conflict. If the Touchstone is a fling, now there's a love triangle. If the Touchstone is a business rival, the business goes dry and the rival considers suicide. Did the Kindred kill someone recently? Maybe that person was the Touchstone's best friend. Think big. Think of conflicts where things must change.

A powerful Black Box scene should result in a Beat for the Kindred. These types of scenes can act as great "downtime" fodder, since they lend themselves to one-on-one play.

Holding Hands

Another option is to have players portray one another's Touchstones. At character creation, have everyone give a name and concept for their Touchstones. Then, go around the table and draft out the roles. Every player chooses a different Touchstone to portray. If a player purchases the Touchstone Merit (see p. 115), add those Touchstones to the pool, and some players will get more than one. If possible, mix up the players. If Mikaela has three Touchstones, Pat might portray one, Caleb another, and Jennifer the third.

Unless your players absolutely want to create the Touchstones in entirety, they don't have to immediately. But it's a good idea to hand out character sheets, so necessary dots can be filled in as need be. At any time a player wishes, she can call on her character's Touchstones to appear in a scene. The player of said Touchstone determines if it's feasible and dramatically appropriate.

In this variant, offer players a Beat any time they forego playing their characters in favor of playing a Touchstone for a scene. This is particularly important with charged, focused scenes like The Black Box (see above).

Time

In a vacuum, vampires live forever. However, **Vampire** chronicles do not. Time is perhaps the single most important resource in a **Vampire** game, and the strongest dramatic element when properly harnessed. Here are a number of tools to use time in your games.

Scenes

Scenes are the basic unit of time in the Storytelling System. They're arbitrary in length, based wholly on the events happening in game. But one of the easiest mistakes that can ruin a scene is to let it go on too long. It's like having a house guest who just doesn't know when to take a hint and leave.

To keep scenes moving, anyone can call for scene closure. They just ask, "Close?" If any single player agrees and responds, "Close," the scene ends there. This means whatever events are transpiring, you fade to black. If there's a chase, it ends in escape.

On the surface, it seems this might be rife for abuse. It isn't for every group, but remember that a temporary setback will only escalate conflicts. If the characters escape the Sheriff, that'll only motivate her to redouble her hunt and strike harder next time. Also, the Storyteller holds final say on this; if the players just end scenes to avoid consequences, intervene. The idea is to move on at pivotal points, and add suspense. It keeps things from dragging on too long, and it often gives a clear point to start the next scene.

Flashbacks and Cutaways

In **Vampire**, linear time can be a crutch. When characters potentially exist for centuries, why not play out other time periods? If the coterie has ties that go back even a few years, it's worth exploring those moments in play.

Flashback scenes can occur any time a background element comes up in the present, but hasn't been fully fleshed out. Anyone not playing a character relevant to that time period should be encouraged to create a simple character to portray in the flashback. Most importantly, flashbacks should be kept pointed, lest they overwhelm the main flow of the game. If the flashback has significant depth, it should constitute a game session itself.

For those not portraying their own characters, allow earned Beats to transfer to their main characters, or at the very least award them one Beat for the time spent.

Cutaways are a whole different situation. Cutaways occur when something's happening away from the main action, and generally away from the main characters. There are two ways to handle this. The less challenging way is to show and dictate the scene as the Storyteller. Portray any relevant characters, and show the players what's happening off-screen. The more complicated way is to give everyone a part to play for the cutaway. While more challenging to transition, it's more rewarding because the players will take investment in the scene.

When using a cutaway, you're showcasing your setting. You're giving information your players' characters are likely not privy to. You're presenting the richness of the world, but holding it just out of the characters' hands. This can be used as a bit of a teaser, but it can also be done to give a sense of sympathy for characters that don't get the chance to earn it in scenes with the characters. For example, a prince will often seem the autocrat, the tyrant, when engaging the characters. But if you show him interacting off-stage with his childe, you can show vulnerability and compassion he wouldn't show them.

Pacing and Urgency

It's very easy to say that an immediate concern offers limited time for solution. Even if you tell the players, "you have two hours to solve this," that means little in the scope of the game. After all, a combat turn that's three seconds in-game can take 10 minutes, and an hour car ride can take seconds. That's part of the abstraction of a storytelling game.

If you represent the immediacy visually, and state clear terms, it becomes much clearer. Break the time down into increments, and define what those increments are. Draw a map. Show them what it means.

For example: The coterie has two hours before a plane leaves, taking with it the evidence that'll exonerate one of their own. They have to race across the city to get to a private airfield and stop the character assassin. Show them what that means. Their enemy isn't the character assassin. Their enemy is the clock. Draw a clock. Mark it at 11 P.M. Scribble a plane at the 1 A.M. spot. Tell them that every roll takes 20 minutes. Normally, this would just be, "You have six rolls on an extended action to make it." But with every roll, mark the clock as it moves closer. Let them play out a few minutes of dialogue between each roll. But this way, they have a visual before them to remind them just what's at stake.

Twist: Like Sands Through the Hourglass

To take the urgency concept a bit further, why not use real time as a pacing mechanism for turns? Pick up a timer. Ideally a sand timer. A one- or three-minute hourglass works best (one, if you want very high tension scenes). Once Initiative's decided, hand the timer to the first player. He upturns it on the table, and take his action. He hands it to the next player, who overturns it, and starts her turn. This goes on until the scene is over.

If a player runs out of time, he restarts the timer, and his actions all step down one degree of success. Exceptional successes become successes, successes become failures, failures

become dramatic failures. Each time the timer ends on the same player's turn, it goes down another step. If the turn goes on long enough, this could guarantee a dramatic failure.

This encourages very rapid turns. The quicker a player takes her turn, the less time the next player will have. It adds a new level of strategy to the game, while cutting down the desire to bog down a scene with rules checks and questions of clarity. For the Storyteller, this means the players won't always make the best possible decisions in the moment, which adds some chaos and uncertainty to capitalize on.

As well, it requires engagement from all involved players. They can't step away. They can't look over a suite of Disciplines and Devotions to debate about what they want to do. They have everyone else's turn to decide, and that's it.

Climbing the Ladder

Here's the deal. You're an addict now. The worst kind. You've probably killed over it. You've most unquestionably destroyed lives in the process. You can't get clean, either. Not from this. You go cold turkey, you don't even die, because that would be too merciful. No, if you somehow stave off your need for long enough, you fall asleep forever and get lost in addiction dreams until the sun burns out. (Or some asshole comes along and feeds your addiction and you wake up to start all over.)

You're always going to be an addict. Some people claim that faith or discipline can save you from your addiction, but no one can really prove that yet. So no, your best bet is to find a way to manage it. To do that, you're going to have to assess yourself, where you've been, and look honestly at what you've done. You're going to have to face yourself, sweetheart, if you want to get through this.

It's a long climb up these steps.

-Barbra

This is a method, a series of steps, in which you and your troupe can sit down and examine both the depth of your characters and the world in which they live.

The earlier you start the steps, the better the results, so you don't want to do this as the very last step, or at the end of a long character creation session and hours of city planning by the Storyteller. Instead, you'll want to start with few or no Storyteller characters in mind, and when the players have concepts and some of a sheet, but nothing yet carved in stone. The steps are a great chance to ask daring questions, dig deep into character potential and really bring the drama to the table as a collaborative effort.

While everyone is sitting around filling in dots, muddling over Merits and working out which clan works best for what you had in mind, you work the steps. You build your group dynamic, help the Storyteller fill out her city, and get a strong sense of who you're really playing. You're asking questions, building relationships, and fleshing out the population of the city you're hunting or being hunted in.

First, write down everyone's character name and their character concept on a large sheet of paper. You can use a few sheets of regular paper and tape them together. You can use index cards and move them around as the steps are completed, or put this all down on a big whiteboard. However you do it, you're going to be adding a lot of other names to the space, and connecting these names together with lines, so leave some room.

Give a look over the steps. Each one starts out with a principle to give you an idea of what it means and what kinds of questions this step asks and answers. If as you're going, you want to tweak any of those questions to suit the building background, use the principle of that step as a guide.

After the principle, each step has several questions that look inside your character, his past, and who he is slowly becoming. Pick one, answer it. You can answer more than one if you want, but don't let that slow down the process.

After those internal questions, each step asks you to look outside your character, look around at moments in his life and see who's standing there in proximity to your character. Who's getting cut by shrapnel, who's being pulled into the chaos, who's being murdered? In this part of each step, you'll be establishing a person within the city, or embellishing on one already on the table. Every time a player establishes a person during a step, the Storyteller writes down the person's name, makes any important notes you decide on as described in the step, and puts that information on the pages, index cards, or whiteboard the group is using as described earlier.

Keep in mind a few things as you go.

You do not have to do the steps in any particular order. As people are bouncing ideas around the table, you may move forward and backward in your character's life, you may add or embellish things that have been established before or after, but don't contradict anything you or another player established.

Each time you complete a step, answering an internal question and establishing or embellishing on someone in your city, you get one Experience you may spend at the end of character creation.

You don't have to complete all 12 steps. If some of the steps just aren't working for you, it's taking too long, or whatever reason you feel the need, you can finish character creation without completing all the steps. Just keep in mind this will leave you a bit under the curve as far as both Experiences and narrative hooks go compared to players who went through all twelve steps.

A Storyteller can, if she likes, add a step or two, take some away, or change them completely. Additionally, she can have the players answer only some of the steps during character creation, holding the other steps to be asked at the end of game sessions in the future. Likewise, any of the character concepts suggested for the Storyteller characters created in each step can

But My Character is Old...

So you've put together a concept that suggests your character is old. You've figured everyone they've ever loved, known, or screwed over is long dead. That's kind of dull.

If age is important to your character concept, there's a few ways to work around the relationships built during these steps.

Keep it modern. Worry about the past 10 years. Who have you come across? Treat your Requiem as a cycle of highs and lows, and examine the most recent set of lows. Who have you confessed to lately? Who were you convinced could save your rotten soul tonight? Who gave you a taste of hope for the first time in decades?

Dig up ghosts. Who were these people a hundred years ago when you were still breathing, and how do their ghosts, literal or figurative, haunt your nights even now? Do their children's children still curse your name? Do local history books still have portraits of you next to the word "monster" or "benefactor"?

Danse Danse Danse. Shift your relationships all to the other Kindred in the city. Some steps will call for you to build relationships with Kindred in the city already, so changing a mortal relationship or two to a Kindred one won't break anything.

be shifted. The Body might be replaced by The Dependent for example, a concept built on a person who is holding you down but it's your own fault.

As you're building the inhabitants of your city, you may find one of them would make a perfect Touchstone. When that happens, put a star next to their name and a line from your character's name to them with the word Touchstone on it.

Keep your body count low. While a few steps could include dead mortals in your life, you don't want to do too much of this. There is no reason mortals who have passed on can't still interact with a character's Requiem in a number of ways. But by working the steps, you're building a living city, coping and trying to get by. Corpses are people you don't have to face, don't have to deal with, and don't (usually) have to make amends to. That cuts down on the drama.

If you're a group that meets online, or has scheduling trouble, these steps can also be done quite easily in a group email, so long as the Storyteller makes sure no one is getting lost in the shuffle.

Confront Vulnerability

In this step, you examine a point in your life when you were at your most vulnerable — or, alternately, when you had the most to lose. This moment in your background lets you know when you attracted or were attracted to the supernatural. While this may not have been your first real brush with vampires yet, it is a turning point where you were open to and became an ideal target for the contamination of the Blood. It may be a moment of incredible weakness, or a moment of unbelievable hubris.

Looking Inward

Tell the group about the time you hit rock bottom. What does the bottom look like for you? Tell us about the important part of your life you thought you had under control. How was it spiraling out of control? What does it look like on the inside, behind the mask, when everything you are is falling apart but you can't let them know?

Looking Outside

The Abandoned: You let it get out of control, you got owned by the chaos and you left someone out in the cold in the process. Was it a business partner? A political ally? A teen child well on their way to a bitter adulthood? Who did you abandon when you lost yourself and your life started its out of control spiral? Who wasn't there to pick up the pieces when you hit rock bottom? Who, lucky for them, didn't get hit directly by the shrapnel?

Pick a name, write it down, draw an arrow from your name to theirs. Write "I abandoned" on the line so everyone can see your shame. As soon as there's another human character on the papers, draw a line from your abandoned to them, fill it in later with how they connected after you left your abandoned behind.

Believe Someone Has Answers

Sign up, tune in, join up. At this point in your life you have questions and no answers. This step is all about exploring who you went to and where you looked. This step can also examine who, at first, your character turned to for help when shit went sideways. During this step, the character is dizzy with questions she has no answers for. Someone has to have them if she doesn't. This step covers the desperate reason a character hooks up with people or groups on the off chance that maybe they can help with the chaos and the fear. Most importantly, this step covers how they probably can't.

Looking Inward

Tell the group about the worst friend you made because they promised you answers, what were those promises? Tell us about the cult (even if it didn't look like a cult at first). What did it worship? How did you get hooked up with the gang, and what did they ask you to do to prove yourself before they'd help you out? You didn't know you were looking for answers when you dug into the books, but you thought you found something in them anyway — how were you wrong?

Looking Outside

The False Prophet: Someone sold you a line. Someone, in your time of need, saw you were in trouble and fed you their sales

pitch. For a while, you even bought it and you probably got in pretty deep with your prophet. The false prophet is, naturally, another Kindred. One who isn't another player character. They'll be someone you have to interact with, so lick your wounds and keep an eye out for more of their falsehoods, real or all in your head.

Pick a name and a covenant for this character. Write it down. Draw an arrow from them to your character name and write "Fooled" on the line. Draw a line from one of the other player characters to your prophet, let them write something on the line.

Meet Your Maker

The veil's been pulled back and the your eyes have been thrown open. This is the moment you've crossed the precipice and have seen the world for what it is. This step may cover the literal Embrace, or it may cover the moment someone exposed you in a way you couldn't deny any longer.

Looking Inward

How long were you able to lie to yourself about what you began to know, and what lie did you tell yourself? If you didn't deny what was happening, but absorbed it in awe, what's the first self-destructive thing you did? You were so afraid, so very afraid, how did you lash out to try to save yourself? How did you respond to the Beast, how did you establish your relationship with this powerful monster inside your skin?

Looking Outside

Your Maker: This might be your sire, or it might not be. But this is the Kindred you can point to and say, "This is the first vampire I really identify as my Kindred." Going forward, you'll compare every other Kindred (yourself included) against the model this Kindred created in your head. This person is how you define the Danse Macabre for good or ill. They may be a direct mentor or else a terrible warning.

Write down this character's name and covenant on the paper. Draw an arrow from your name to theirs and write "This is what a vampire looks like." Ask another player or the Storyteller to draw an arrow from the maker to another Kindred on the sheet and write "This is what a vampire looks like," as well.

Find Fear

There's something dark inside you. Whoever you want to blame on it, all vampires have something rotten in their core, something dangerous, something that wants blood and dreams of murder. This step explores your character's relationship with what's terrible inside of her. This step

also asks the player to create a thing their character is truly afraid of, something in themselves.

Looking Inward

What's the thing you keep dreaming about doing, the thing you know you're capable of, but that you find so reprehensible you sometimes wish you didn't dream? You can't take the idea that there's something inside you willing to do things you can't and won't — how do you blame an outside source? Who do you blame the most for the need inside you, yourself or others, and how do you take it out on them?

Looking Outside

Your Nightmare: Pick a Kindred in the city who wears her monster on her sleeve, by your reckoning anyway. Tell us about the Kindred in the city who embraces and celebrates the thing you see, deep in yourself, as terrible. Tell us about the one Kindred in the city you're afraid to become.

Once you've decided, write down a name and covenant on the paper. Write an arrow from your name to the nightmare, and on the line, write a one-word description that tells everyone what it is that scares you the most about this character. Now, draw an arrow from them to a mortal on the page already connected to you. Write on the line "Wants something from," and put that mortal in peril.

Leave a Witness

Sooner or later, you're going to let it slip. This step examines the one time you let too much of your nature out, and someone else saw. You couldn't or didn't cover it up, just this one time, and this step explores the fallout from that. How can you control the secret once it's out, and more importantly, do you even try to?

Looking Inward

It was an accident, you keep telling us that, but tell the group — who didn't "take care" of your accident in any of the traditional ways? With premeditation, you went to someone important to you and confessed. Tell the group what you told them, what happened to them. Tell the group what possessed you to tell the whole thing to a complete stranger, and why that stranger is still in your life.

Looking Outside

The Breach: Stranger, loved one, hunter or something else, you told or otherwise let slip your nature to someone who very much isn't a vampire. They know, at least some of it, and it's a thing you're going to have to deal with someday.

Write down the name of the breach, the person who knows, and draw an arrow from your name to theirs. On the line, write a short sentence or one word description that will remind you they're your breach. "Didn't kill after a mess," or "Confessed," works great. Now, draw an arrow from the breach to any other Kindred on the sheets, and write the word "Suspects" on the line.

Suffer Your Defects

It may not have been the first time that you were confronted with the limitations of the Kindred condition, but this step explores the time it cut the deepest. In this step, we look at the moment you really saw the curse for what it was, and how you decided to cope with it, if you could at all.

Looking Inward

Tell the group about the time that your condition stopped you cold in your tracks. What was the important thing you needed to do that you failed at because of a Kindred weakness? Tell us about the time you almost died, that your immortality was nearly ripped away from you — how was it the fault of your new body? Tell the group about the time you did something you never ever wanted to do because you had no control: How did you feel, betraying yourself?

Looking Outside

The Victim: Vampires have a funny way of reshuffling their own morality to justify so very much of what they do. But even with that in mind, what you did to this person was wrong. He is your victim. You can be obvious with this, but subtle is better. Did you let him live when you shouldn't have? Did you give him just enough of a glimpse that he isn't quite a breach, but is now obsessed and his life is effectively over?

Put his name down and what he does for a living. Draw an arrow from your character's name to him. On the line, write a one-word reminder of what you did to him. Now, pick another human inhabitant of the city, draw a line from her to your victim. Write the phrase, "Will avenge," on that line.

Beg Someone, Anyone, to Fix You

You've looked inside, or been a victim of your own weakness. You've made terrible choices, and now you know you need help. This step explores your character's quest for answers from other monsters, or at least those who appear to be in the know. In the best cases, you run into a mentor or sponsor who helps you find you place in Kindred society. At worst, you end up with a new master and even fewer answers.

Looking Inward

At your time of greatest need you called out to your divinity of choice: Tell the group about the terrestrial voices that answered your call. What were they selling? You saw them, the group of them, looking so capable, so comfortable with what they were; what did they tell you when you threw yourself at their feet?

Looking Outside

The Opportunist: When shit gets out of hand again, this person was there to offer you some kind of help. The problem is, that help, those answers, whatever it was you needed badly came with strings attached. Time's ticking down, and you're about to be in this person's pockets deep. Unless you do something.

Write down the name of the person you owe. If she's a vampire, write down her covenant. If she's human, write down what her field of expertise is. Draw an arrow from your name to hers, and write "Owes big" on the line. Now ask another player to draw an arrow from the opportunist to another person in the city, Kindred or kine. On the line write "Cashing in."

Remember Your Victims

You've been at this a while; over the years, your character has made mistakes, dozens of them or more. You've killed — it's impossible to avoid forever. This step asks you to take account of that first kill, accidental or otherwise.

Looking Inward

It was an accident, you didn't mean it, and you still have nightmares. Tell the group what those nightmares consist of. You've killed, but there was something worse than the killing itself. Tell the group what. Maybe you weren't directly responsible for the death, not really, but you still blame yourself, so tell the group why.

Looking Outside

The Body: You killed. Maybe it was a human, maybe it was a vampire, but the important thing is that a life ended because of you. And that life wasn't just a smudge of blood on the pavement, it was a person who had a life and family and friends; People who know that the body was once a person, even if that body is long missing, buried, or ash.

Write the name of the body on your sheet of paper. Pick two other names on the sheet, and draw arrows from them to your body. On each line, write "Friend."

Embrace a Wrong

Somehow, sooner or later, you're not just going to have to just accept what you are, but accept what you've done. There's something, or multiple things, that you've now done in your Requiem that you would have once considered wrong and now don't cause you any grief. This step explores acceptance at its very worst.

Looking Inward

How did you justify it to yourself, the first time your broke a rule you'd made to yourself? You obliterated an important cultural taboo from your mortal life — tell the group how good it felt. What you did was wrong, but you're sure you did it for the right reasons. Tell the group what part of doing "good" you regret the most.

Looking Outside

Your Bête Noire: Someone blames you for everything that's wrong in his life. You probably don't even know he exists…but he's probably right. So he wants revenge; and even if he doesn't know directly and specifically who you are, he's going to find you eventually.

Write his name down, and the thing he used to have before you ruined his life. Write an arrow from his name to yours, and in as short a sentence as possible, write down what you took from him. Ask another player to write a line from your bête noire to another human inhabitant of the city. On that line, write "Willing to help."

Find Like Minds

In this step, we're examining the choices, or lack of choices, that led you to join a covenant. Or the events that left you outside of one. At this point in your background, you've more or less accepted you're a vampire and are now deciding what sort of vampire you're going to be.

Looking Inward

You weren't offered alternatives as far as allegiance goes, maybe you don't even know there are other covenants at this point. Tell how you struggle to swallow their ethos, and if it's a disconnect for you. You had some choice, more or less, but you didn't go with your first pick, so tell us why you couldn't or wouldn't fit? As soon as you started talking to the charismatics, you bought deep — tell the group the crime you committed to get them to love you.

Looking Outside

Your Dupe: Now that you're a part of a covenant, you've settled into a role in your Requiem. Congratulations. Now, you're going to have to use some people to fulfill that role. It's probably nothing personal, it's just a part of getting your job (or your calling) done.

Write down the name of your dupe. She may be a young Kindred or a human, your call. Write an arrow from your name to her name, and write a short sentence that describes how you use your dupe. "Gopher" or "Bullet catcher" are fine examples. Draw an arrow from her name back to yours; ask one of the other players to write on the line a one-word description of how or why she worships you.

Seize the Night

Once you've found your place, accepted your condition (more or less), and have something akin to control, things change. This happens faster for some vampires than others, but ultimately, you'll start looking for power, control, or authority. This step explores the grab for power every Kindred must occasionally make. It may not be obvious to the world at large how you make that grab. It may be subtle, like the way you covet hidden knowledge. It may be some attempt to be the most perfect form of whatever kind of Kindred you've embraced being. Or your

grab for power may be the way you control the movements of your ghouls and blood dolls. Not everyone wants to be prince.

Looking Inward

You had to have it. How else could you be sure you are the Kindred you claim to be? So tell the group what it was that you took. You got yourself in close, close enough to have a real bond with another Kindred, and they never saw it coming when you betrayed them. Tell the group about it. You can't be the big boss, yet, but it's not a hierarchy without middlemen, right? So tell the group about the underlings you're grooming to put yourself on top of.

Looking Outside

The Enabled: You need someone to believe in you, and to do that, they have to buy your line. You're repeating a cycle done to you, but this time you'll do better, right? If you're going to use someone, educate them, or just cling to them to fill some empty part of you, you're going to do it better than was done to you. Of course you will.

Write down the name of the Kindred you're grooming, the one you've enabled. Write down her covenant, assuming she's picked one yet. Now draw an arrow from your name to hers. On the line, write a short sentence describing what you need from her: "Love," "Power," or "Feeling in control" are all great examples. Now, ask another player to draw an arrow from the enabled to another Kindred and write the word "competition" on the line.

Winding Up

Once everyone's worked through their choice of steps (we've included a checklist to help you keep track), you'll be left with a sprawling sheet of interconnected stuff. It'll look a bit chaotic. Mine it for the most immediately exciting relationships (most of which will have multiple connections), and then keep it on hand for when your chronicle needs more characters and drama.

Checklist

Step	Notes
☐	Confront Vulnerability
☐	Believe Someone Has Answers
☐	Meet Your Maker
☐	Find Fear
☐	Leave a Witness
☐	Suffer Your Defects
☐	Embrace a Wrong
☐	Find Like Minds
☐	Seize the Night

Total Experiences: _____

appendix one
The Living

"I been thinking," she said, "how you better commence to tremble when the Lord, He gives you your heart's desire." She paused. "I'd been wanting you since I wanted anything. And then I got you."

--James Baldwin, "Go Tell It On The Mountain"

Vampire stories aren't just about the vampires. Just as important to most great vampire books or movies are the humans who get caught up in the world of the dead. Those who fear the vampires. Those who love them. And those bound with them by ties stronger even than blood.

Accordingly, playing human characters in a **Vampire** game can make for great drama. Stories about tragic losses, but also about illicit thrills. Stories about the intense friendships and conflicts that only form when worlds collide. Combined with **The God-Machine Chronicle** or its free **Rules Update**, this appendix helps you create the characters you need to tell those stories.

So let's talk about why the dead might bring the living into the fold, shall we?

Handling the Masquerade

The big boogeyman for the Kindred is Them finding out. Who are They? The newspapers, the FBI, maybe even late-night radio fodder like Majestic 12 or Task Force Valkyrie. Some Kindred worry that a single mortal who knows about the existence of the Kindred is going to blow the whole thing wide open.

As discussed in Chapter 2, that isn't really how the Masquerade works...even when the Invictus are particularly brutal. In practice, the Masquerade's about making sure individual Kindred don't get caught. Treat the little cases, so the theory goes, and vampires will develop a sort of herd immunity to hunters and mortal authorities.

But there's always a reason not to play it safe.

- The city's ruler has charged the coterie with keeping an eye on an investigative reporter following the case of a local serial killer. The killer isn't Kindred, but this reporter has had brushes in the past in other cities. They're to keep her in line and appease her curiosity in whatever way is best to keep the Masquerade safe. Killing her is out of the question. She's too high profile.
- Someone told him everything. Kindred. Clans. The city structure even. He knows where a haven or three is. The whole nine yards. He doesn't know who told him, though, and digging into his mind has revealed almost nothing. The city has a strict ban on creating new ghouls. You don't have the clout for it, but discovering who spilled the beans to him could give you more than clout.
- She's human, basically. It's her family that isn't. They're prophets. Instruments of God's great mechanism. Whatever that means, they have a dangerous amount of power and influence. They don't want much. They claim they'll leave you alone if you simply let her observe. Let her study you like some kind of anthropologist. What she, or they, are after is impossible to tell. Any corruption of her, they claim, will have dire consequences.

Blood Dolls

You are what you eat. For Kindred, what you eat is also you. The blood doll is the perfect expression of this. Addicted to the Kiss, these humans have been inadvertently drawn into the Danse Macabre. Their stories are highs and lows, thrills and tragedy.

- He stood out, not because he was better looking or more charming. Rather, he stood out because he smelled so much better than any other kine in the bar. He didn't put up any kind of fight when you lured him back to the bathrooms, he tried to talk to you, tell you his name, personal details. He told you about his family like he thought you were going to kill him. When you found all the scars on his neck you began to understand why. "There are a dozen of them." A dozen Kindred violating territory and feeding rights, apparently. He tells you, "And I can identify them, if you keep me alive."
- She found you. That was the weird part. "I can spot the tells. I've always been able to sort of sense you people." She doesn't offer her neck, so much as demand your fangs. If she's an inferior in the exchange, it doesn't show. Her energy, her confidence, her fire would be crushed by Vitae, and that would be a damn shame.

Dressage Kine

Some human beings, no matter what they do, are destined to die a horrible death. Worse still, some humans will come back from that horrible death to face an eternity as one of the Damned. For those humans groomed for the Embrace, the last nights of their life may be the most dramatic and powerful stories they've ever known. Telling the stories of those about to die can be challenging and rewarding.

- She wasn't meant for the Embrace. Rather, her son was supposed to be the childe of your grandsire, a Kindred of considerable standing. Somehow, she's caught wind of her son's impending doom, and will do whatever it takes to prove that it should be her instead. That her son should be spared. Stranger still, she may be right.
- Your job is to keep him alive. There are great things in his future, so you're told. Prestige. Wealth. Authority. The only problem is, he's kind of a suicidal prat. He lives too close to the edge, and already thinks he's immortal. You don't question your superiors that he has a destiny. Rather, you're going to take it upon yourself to shape him into the man they expect to Embrace...if you don't wind up killing him.
- They jokingly call her the Princess, the girl who will be the Prince's childe. He lets her flit about his estate, Elysium, Kindred gatherings as if she owns the place. Functionally, she does. Of course, she's loyal to her would-be sire, but she's not bound to him. He wants her Embrace "untouched." Problem is, she ain't keen on waiting. And she's in love with you.

Family and Friends

Folk wisdom is that it's wrong to Embrace for love. Or that it's unwise to maintain ties with your mortal life. Kindred, it seems, are not especially good at listening to wisdom. Kindred history is littered with those who risked their Requiems in the name of love or to preserve family ties.

- An Embrace would mean the end of the Watson line, a tragic coup to the once-proud patriarch of a powerful family. Ghouling could mean a delay in the line. No, the patriarch's only hope is that he can convince you, wild and free as you are, to settle and rebuild his mortal dynasty. Your rewards, he says, will be vast.
- The class of 1989 was an ill-fated one, with most of the graduates dying before their time. Bad luck, early disease, even murder. The sole survivors are one human and you. And just about everything might depend on keeping him alive.

Shadow-Crossed Lovers

If interacting with mortals who were once family or friends is a bad idea, loving a human is the seed of a thousand more bad ideas. But as long as there have been Kindred, passions have defied logic, reason, and a whole legion of secrecy-conscious legbreakers. The Kindred and kine romance is the story of moth to flame. Who plays which role, hapless insect or fast-burning fire, can change from story to story and even night to night.

- Before the Embrace, he'd been honor-bound to take her in an arranged marriage. They lived separate lives in the same house. It was a business arrangement, in many ways. But since he was Embraced, things have changed. He's changed. And she's noticed. For both their sakes, they keep up appearances; but now that he's a monster, is she falling in love? Is he?
- After she was murdered, he thought about giving up. When, three days later, she crawled out of her own grave and came back to him, and they realized things would never be the same. Now they have to cling to each other as she tries to discover what she is, and he tries to shield her from the monsters who want to pull her into their fold.
- They'd lived as a triad happily for years when one arm of the family got Embraced. Rather than break them apart, it's made the bonds between all three even stronger. Now the two living members have doubled-down, taking on a White Picket Fence life in the hopes of shielding their partner's new existence. How long will his doubly jealous sire stand for it?

GHOULS

THE ONES WHO CAN NOT STOP

It's the rush, really, the freight-train running through your veins, the way your skin's sensitive to every little thing except pain, the feeling that you're just on the edge of death and have never been so alive.

That's what the Blood does. That's why ghouls keep coming back for more. There have always been ghouls. Whatever vampire first thought to give a drop of his blood to a living paramour is lost to history. Maybe nobody was human back then. Maybe that's how far back it goes.

Doesn't matter. What matters is now. The now of the need. The now of the fix. The way now becomes forever when you're never going to age.

Why you want to be us

Being a ghoul is incredible. You've got the best parts of being a vampire. The youth, the supernatural edges, the knowledge you're just better than everybody else.

Then there are the parties. The Elysium and everything else. Being surrounded by the beautiful and the eternal, being part of a world that only comes to life after dark. All that for just a few ugly little favors.

Except none of it's really yours. Miss a dose, and the train rushing through your veins derails. The withdrawal's bad, so bad. But there's something worse. All of a sudden, with just a missed taste of Vitae... you're normal. Mundane. Prole. Rat in a cage.

So don't miss a dose.

Why you should fear us

Ghouls aren't just mortals with a taste for Vitae. They've got a little bit of Kindred will in them, and the Kindred will is nothing if not an urge to treachery. As a ghoul, you're simultaneously the most trustworthy and most dangerous of servants. A vampire who doesn't respect his ghouls is a fool. A vampire who trusts them too far is a mark.

Why we should fear ourselves

You want to be a ghoul, yes? How much more do you want it than anything else? How much do you value your career? Your partner? Your kids? Even your life... would you really want it anymore if it meant getting off the red?

Sure you want blood. But don't you want it all? Fear how far those wants will take you.

"Spare me your pity. Give me your blood."

Ghouls in the Danse Macabre

It is a mistake of the highest order to see the ghoul as a lesser thing than the vampire. This is to say that the stomach is a lesser thing than the heart.

No. Indeed, a ghoul is simply a part of the vampire, as real and as connected as the fang or the skin or the heart.

It is important to consider the heart when considering the ghoul, as there is an unquestionable connection there. The ghoul lives from the blood, an extension of the circulatory system. My more romantic associate suggested that the ghoul keeps the heart intact. Of course, the ghoul is bound and hopes to keep his master alive and safe. But by having a connection, the ghoul gives the vampire a reason.

A reason to act. A reason to interact. A reason to resist sleep. It is not always a good reason, but at times it may be the only reason the vampire has. And what's more, it is one that can be biological rather than physical. A vampire need not know she keeps herself about for the sake of a ghoul, but her body knows. Her blood knows. Her heart knows.

-Seeker Parson, Illuminus of the Carnal Terror

I remember the first time I felt the blood, it was different. It wasn't like the cocaine I'd tried, or the spirits I couldn't quite shake. There was this connection. Do you understand, I was connected to this crazy beautiful dangerous monster and I knew he was connected to me. Neither of us was alone anymore. Not exactly. I wasn't like him, and I think that made him feel safe. I loved him from the second his blood touched my tongue. He loved me just as soon as he realized it was safe to love me back.

-Harry Grover, 116 years a ghoul.

This is a lot of fun, you know? A real blast. We go wherever we want. She lets me do her daytime work, burning down houses, shit like that, and at night we fuck, (not each other) and party or hang out. She's like fire, you know? I know she's cold, but she burns hot when she does burn. But I don't want to do this forever, you know? I got plans. Big plans. When I'm done with this shit, the parties, when I've got some money set aside, I'll put it down, you know? I don't have to do this. It's just fun for now.

-Litta "Firebug" David , 1 year, four months, one week, three days, seven and a half hours a ghoul.

Ghouls and the Vampire Body

The theory goes like this: Vitae doesn't stop being Vitae just because it leaves your body. This is the truth behind the infectious nature of the Kindred condition. They taint what they touch. They taint what they bite. They taint any thing their Vitae comes in contact with.

And if that's true, then a ghoul is not disposable. That would be to say that an arm is. A hand. A finger. To save the whole, you could sacrifice a limb, but it would leave you incomplete.

When you infect a thing with your blood, and the intention is to change its nature, you create a new limb. A new extension of yourself. It's a powerful feeling that many Kindred are drawn to, eventually. Even to the point that once you have extended your existence past the boundaries of your own body by creating a ghoul, you will do it again. Perhaps often. It's a new form of immortality or at least, omnipresence.

-Seeker Parson, Illuminus of the Carnal Terror

Mine are eyes, you see? I've eyes all over this city. I've eyes that can stare unflinching into the sun and protect me the way I would myself. We're not even a pack, me and them, we're a thing, a network that shares blood. It's just that they eat and shit, and I drink and kill. I think it's so funny, how these clean pretty Kindred pretend there's this big line between them and the ghouls they made just on account of their ghouls having minds. Mine got minds and instincts. Just instincts that grow together when we're together long enough. I know it's no different with human ghouls. I know.

-Brute, the Ratmaster of Berlin

I can hear her whisper wherever I am. That sounds crazy, and some of the others think I've lost my mind, but they're wrong. She feeds me the most, you see, keeps me the closest. Our bond is the strongest. I see her in my reflection in the mirror, like she's looking through my eyes. I can feel her under my skin, and when I touch my arm, I know she's feeling my touch. When I'm in danger, and it's happened, she's come to me. From clear across the city. She said "I just knew." I'm safe, we're connected.

-Elizabeth Grace, sculptress and blood addict

Story Seeds

The ties of blood are as present between ghoul and regnant as they are between sire and childe. Different, but very much there. The nature of the blood and its effect on ghouls is so strange that it's worth examining in your game, either as a Storyteller or with your character.

- A city sees a change in the old behaviors, with ghouls slowly growing to take on their regnant's physical characteristics. Stories are even circulating of a poor ghoul losing a hand at the same time as her mistress, across town, and with no clear cause for the injury. What is causing it, and can the spread be stopped?
- A handful of ghouls have broken away from their previous masters, and rumor has it they've found a new source for their fix. The Kindred of the city can't account for it, though the ghouls have shown strange behavior. Knowing secrets long buried. Buried, in fact, with the remains of the slumbering prince. But if it is her blood, how are they getting it? Her childer claim she's dead and gone. If she were still around, they'd know.
- One of the Kindred characters has a very specialized, very well-trained ghoul, played by one of the other players. When a stranger rolls into town, claiming rights over the ghoul in question, what will the characters do? Could it be some kind of blood magic that pulls the ghoul to the stranger? She doesn't remember him, and yet, she has to struggle to resist him. What will her current regnant do when his blood ties are somehow canceled out? Is the stranger stealing other ghouls this way too?

Society and the Treatment of Ghouls

There was this unpleasant fellow in the court for many years. A diseased mind and a troubled soul. I recall how he used to drag a new lovely arm piece in with him whenever Elysium was called. How, by the end of the evening, he would make such a spectacle out of taking his frustrations out on the ghoul. It was disgusting, really. Like watching a disturbed man bang his head into a wall over and over again until he knocked himself cold. His self-abuse, in public no less, made him a laughingstock, which I imagine only caused him to injure more ghouls. When he was taken first by the Owls, we weren't surprised in the least. He was an incomplete and broken sort of monster. No predator, just a thug.

-Mother Superior Mary Ignacio, Archbishop of Canterbury

It is a mistake to believe that the "traditional" story of one Kindred and one or several ghouls is the only system in place. The sharing of ghouls among broods happens more commonly than most Kindred ever speak about. While I was traveling through Europe, I came across a

Dragon stronghold, a string of closely related villages in a region of Germany. There, ghouls were treated as a common property, their upkeep and maintenance was considered a civic duty, after a fashion. As a result of carefully maintained feeding schedules and perhaps some Dragon alchemy, most of the local humans are bound by blood in loyalty to the villages themselves. They remain fiercely loyal to the land and the Kindred there, without really knowing who their real masters are.

-Seeker Parson, Illuminus of the Carnal Terror

Erasinus got very tired in the past ten years or so. He's still thoughtful, you understand, and he'll talk to you for hours if you give him the time. (That isn't my job. Maureen has that honor.) He cares about the world, which we figure is why he hasn't fallen into sleep yet. He just doesn't move much. He sits very still in his library, except to turn a page in a book every hour or so. We change books for him when he's ready. But he still cares about the Movement, you understand. It's still important to him. That's where I come in. I act with his voice and am his ears. I don't make decisions for him often, but when I do, it is with his blessing and his support. The Movement seems okay with it. They say I sound like I'm checking with him, and that's good enough for them. Even some of his former allies in the Invictus, old smoking buddies, listen to what I have to say when I'm empowered with his words. They get it. It took some convincing, but they get it.

-Alan, Voice for Titus Eprius Erasinus the Eldest

Story Seeds

The way a society treats the lowest within it says more about the society than almost anything else. How Kindred society interacts with its human blood-addicted servants says a great deal about the Kindred, and could be a source of endless conflict. Deciding how a city interacts with ghouls can help further themes and moods a Storyteller is trying to cultivate. How player ghouls interact with Kindred society can likewise bring up themes and mood not regularly explored in a straight Kindred game.

- You and your buddies don't have much in the way of patience when it comes to the abuse of "your cousins" whether that's personal or systematic. And you've empowered yourselves to do something about it. With a nice handful of other mostly-independent ghouls like yourself, you travel cross country "liberating" ghouls from abusive regnants, and disrupting political regimes built on the exploitation of ghoul labor. Real "kick in the door, fucking heroics." Some of you do it for justice, some for chaos, and some, well...because why stop now?
- Rumors have persisted for years that the powers-that-be in the city have practiced something called the Fox Hunt. It was always hushed up, or whispered about. If you heard about it, it was only in hints or teasing. When word hit the streets last month what the Fox Hunt really was, riots threatened. Turns out, city authorities have been grooming and raising ghouls, for years in some cases, for the express purpose of releasing into the streets, the countryside, or the suburbs so that they might chase the unfortunates down and murder them. Covering up the murder was always a part of the "fun"! Is it barbaric enough to force a regime change? Is it a thing that can be stopped? Or is a thing to be profited from? Each character will have to weigh their understanding of humanity against the Fox Hunt, and the city will change for better or worse because of it.
- You and the other city ghouls have started a movement. You've made demands that the city must either outlaw the creation of more ghouls, or else, give ghouls all the same rights and protections as Kindred. At first, it was laughed off, but you "kids" (young Kindred backers included) have been playing a pretty savvy political game. Social pressure, rousing speeches, and maybe even blackmail and political shenanigans are in your tool box. Every night it becomes more and more likely the city powers are going to have to make a choice. Something's got to give, it's just a matter of who gets crushed in the fallout.

The Unique

In one hundred or so years, I had failed to see a man quite like him. It had been that long since I'd seen male beauty celebrated in the way he possessed. His features were smooth, clean, angular. He carried himself with such poise, such perfection, I knew in that moment that there was no way I could let him go. I had to have him, and make him a part of me. I needed to preserve that beauty for all time. Selfishly, I also knew that were I to Embrace him, he'd leave me someday, he'd go off and be a Kindred all his own. Not mine, but a potential threat to me. And so I keep him, now, and forever, as a part of me. His perfect beauty will never fade, and he will always be mine.

-The Violinist of Clermont-Ferrand

It is a mistake to look at what I'm doing as preserving or even advocating a barbaric practice that rightfully died out a century ago. I'm characterized that way often. But the fact is that Orlando's voice is so perfect, so complete, that while what has been done to him is beyond reprehensible, the angels would crash from heaven, gnashing their teeth and pulling the feathers from their wings should he die. The world needs his voice. The heavens need his voice. We have discussed the Embrace, he and I, from time to time. He is afraid the fangs would change the sound of his voice in his mouth. It's difficult to argue with perfection.

–Antonia Barbucci, Cardinal of Naples

Character Ideas

As a character, the unique ghoul is one-of-a-kind. He was chosen to become a part of the Kindred's Requiem because of vanity, curiosity, or obsession, but this is not a ghoul selected lightly. His uniqueness will draw attention to him at every turn, and power plays could happen between she who is his regnant and those who would be his regnant. He may be on the path to Embrace, but the question should remain, will the Embrace destroy him? The infection of Vitae has not, at least not yet, but is it a risk worth taking with such a marvelous rarity?

- The disease is incurable, but it means her blood is especially potent when a Kindred drinks from her, or when she expends her borrowed Vitae. There have been maybe three cases, recorded, officially in modern medicine. If only her existence weren't so painful, because she's so very precious to her regnant.
- He knows a secret. It's one that has been passed along mystically, or in his blood, or by his kin. So for as anyone knows, he's the last alive in the whole of the world who knows the secret. It's too important a truth to risk writing down. Or ever speaking aloud. If he's Embraced, the secret could be lost. Better to preserve him with Vitae but keep him otherwise untarnished.

screens and false leads we laid out while covering up that unfortunate series of feeding mishaps my childer had created. I marveled, from a comfortable distance, watching his mind work. I let myself into his office and read his notes, even spent time in his bedroom watching him dream. They said he was the best of the best. But when he walked into my office, holding his badge like a shield against evil, when he tied much of the carnage, or at least the cover up, back to me, I knew. I knew that I had to have him and spend the rest of my nights watching his mind tick away. Someday, I may even tell him the truth about all this.

–Sanjay Abdullah

I'm not one of her favorites, you understand. I know she's got better-looking, more charming men in her life. I don't see her except when I'm on duty or when I'm fed, often right before a night's work. But on those nights, everything is different. I'm the single most patient and dedicated sniper around, that's what she says. So when she's out on the town, at events, I watch. I might be in a storm drain, a roof top; I might be all sorts of places watching her. Half a mile away, farther, my job is to watch her through my scope and if anyone, anyone is stupid enough to try anything, I blow their empty head wide open. I never want to have to fulfill my duty, and see her afraid for even a moment; but I feel like I'm dying, not having the chance to show her how much I love her. So I'll keep watching. I'm patient.

–Pietr, sniper and romantic

The Specially Trained

I had heard he was the best of the best. I'd observed the hell his career put his wife through and felt a real pang of guilt when she left. I watched from the shadows as he puzzled his way through the smoke

Character Ideas

The well-trained ghoul is one specially selected to fulfill one role, to live that role, and to do very little else. This may put them in a position of privilege among any other servants in the Kindred's stable, or it may mean that the lines between duty and relationships are very clear and very thick. It can be one of the most comfortable or most painful ghoul-to-Kindred relationships, sometimes simultaneously.

- No designer this side of Paris does lines like you. As soon as your regnant saw your spring collection, he knew he had to have you. Not because he wanted to wear your clothes, though he did, but to ensure that no other Kindred could afford to wear your designs without his approval. You're rich, well-staffed, and maybe a bit spoilt as a creative, but you've lost the limelight. It's worth it, for him, though. Isn't it?
- You had the privilege of ghost-writing the memoirs of an ex-president, two war heroes, and an aging starlet. You have a knack for capturing the voice, the spirit of your clients. How your regnant found you, you'll never know. But she insists your talents are squandered on the "tame and fleeting." Since your first taste of her blood, you've chased her tail as fast and as dangerous as a comet. And you've chronicled every moment of her impossible existence. Immortalizing the immortal, of course, presents a new set of challenges for you, and that's its own reward.

The Well-Connected

A spider is only as successful as the web she spins. One such creature that spins poorly, whose strands aren't sticky enough, or who otherwise cannot be bothered to keep track of the delicate vibrations of that web, is doomed to starve. So in this way, the network of ghouls a Kindred collects, weaves together, and spreads out into the world is that web. A ghoul of particular quality and talent can be a great boon to the Kindred's survival. Many such strands of the web end up spiders themselves someday, to abuse the metaphor.

-Seeker Parson, Illuminus of the Carnal Terror

I once again most humbly beg your patience on this matter. For the last time, while I appreciate your situation, the Mistress does not operate her e-mail account. I understand you think it vital, of the utmost importance to communicate with her, and in this method. For reasons that remain perfectly unclear to me, she simply won't do it. I have expressed your demands to her on eighteen different occasions, and have been switched severely since the thirteenth request. She does not seem to think your message is important enough to "bother" with e-mail communication.

- Maureen, PA

Character Ideas

The connected ghoul is the nerve center of any influential Kindred. The very need to sign papers, have a legal ID, and appear in court during the day means that no matter how clever the Kindred, she will need a human proxy. This may be the most "business-like" of any of the traditional ghoul-to-Kindred relationships, but that neither erases the bond nor relieves the pangs the bond creates.

- You thought your only motivation in life was success. The cold hard joy of putting a criminal in prison for the rest of his life. A jury bowing to your oration. You were all show, and all success, and you were going somewhere. Until you met your regnant. For her, you'll do anything. Even lose.
- He didn't know how to dance when you met. You saw him in the crowd, dressed a little funny, staring at the other men in the club, the women too. But he didn't know how to dance. You introduced yourself and taught him how to dance. Then what to drink. Then who to fuck. Later you showed him how to dress. You dragged him out of the dark ages and into society today. He's grateful. He needs you. And it is beautiful to be needed by him.

Traveling Companions

I'm the one what makes this whole thing possible, right? The boys, they bring in money a lot, sure, but I'm the one who makes it possible. I drive about a day ahead, use the truck and the CB to keep the path clear of Highway Patrol and rival gangs. Hell, I can spot a wolf pack a mile away, these days. I'm always watching. I get their spots ready. Sometimes I hire the girls if things have been dry. The boys could probably survive without me, but they don't. I figure that's for a reason.

- Lazy Rider

When my Lady saved me from sin, she was in one of her ecstasies. I got her safely out of the road and into a dingy motel. She told me about our Father, and his wishes for her. How she was an eternal pilgrim. I swore then to spend my life in service. She resisted at first. I wept and begged. She left anyway.

I followed her for three nights until she nearly got hit by a truck. She told me the Father wanted to test me, and I passed. I have since been her helpmate. Assuring her travel from city to city is safe. Spreading the word. Loving her as the first part of her Black Gifts.

– Hillard Stockton, Scribe to the Lady of the Ruthless Miracle

Character Ideas

Not all Kindred stick to the cities. Maybe the Danse Macabre doesn't pull at them. Maybe their Beast makes settling down impossible. Maybe the pull to the open road is mystical or religious. Whatever the reason, very few Kindred do it alone. Without the aid of their tainted companions, many nomadic Kindred wouldn't survive a month.

- When you broke your leg during Olympic trials, they told you you'd never run again. Oh how wrong they were. Now you run. You move through the city and countryside, from one city to the next, with only your legs and the power of his blood to sate you. There is no form of communication he trusts more than you. The running is killing you, you know it, but so long as he sustains you, you'll keep running his messages all across the region.
- Your regnant's not a hero, that's the thing to understand. She's just got a real problem with a criminal who won't face a judge. She plucked you special, right out of Federal Marshal training. "Help me catch crooks, live almost forever." You're a bounty hunter now, both legally and morally; and between you and her, no one gets away no matter how far you have to chase them.

Ghoul Families

There are some curiosities of the blood neither you nor I can ever hope to understand or explore the depths of. In my decades of research, I have come across no more than a handful of examples of the ghoul family. And yet, we know that they exist. I have no answer, biologically or even mystically as to their existence. They simply are. And they carry the same variety and diversity as any human family would hope to express. And yet, is it fair to even call them human? Would it be fair to call them anything else? The idea of our infectious nature leaving its taint even when we are generations removed from our victims is chilling, even to me. And fascinating.

-Geeker Parson, Illuminus of the Carnal Terror

I find it charming when the Mistress comes into the gardens in a huff. We look up from our work and wait quietly. She sometimes yells and screams. She makes demands. She tells us what of her grapes we've ruined. She throws her hands about. What she doesn't do is raise a hand to us. Because she's not so foolish as that. My family has tended this garden and our grapes for hundreds of years. We were tending these grapes before her grandsire was turned, and we will tend them when her great-great-grandchilde is dust. She is the temporary part of this equation, not us. Not our family line.

-Mother Margret

Like so many secrets about the Kindred condition, vampires are conflicted on exactly what a ghoul family is, how they come to be, and what keeps them going.

There are some things that are largely agreed upon. They age more slowly even without the benefit of Vitae. Normally, ghouls have great difficulty having children; this seems to be less extreme in the case of ghoul family members. Similarly, they tend to be very good at "finding" Kindred. (See the Unseen Sense Merit on page 124.)

A group of Night Doctors studying ghoul behavior in Shanghai say that Vitae behaves strangely in the bodies of ghoul family members, giving them abilities unlike those of normal ghouls. They can retain the Disciplines and other qualities of their regnant's blood even after the last of it is spent. It's even possible that some members of such family lines can pass down these gifts to their offspring, without any Kindred involvement at all.

Character Ideas

The reasons that ghoul families exist are as varied as the number of ghoul families. Dark magic or careful breeding are common claims among Kindred. But that may only be because those are methods a vampire can claim to control. There are families who don't fit into those neat boxes. Here are two examples.

- The Cranes are an old family, tracing lineage back to the founding of Nantucket. So far as anyone can sort out, they've never had direct contact with Kindred. However, their ties to several secret societies, and family links to a number of famous occult spots in the Northeast, make one wonder.
- George and his family have half a dozen Kindred on tap in a basement of their farm house. They send the young and pretty cousins out to rest stops and all-night diners, hunting hunters. While George never meant for his family to be so special, since they been around for so long, he's taken to notice the teenagers don't need so much Vitae to stay special. He's got plans. The next generation, he figures, they'll need even less Vitae. If he plans it right.

Playing a Ghoul

Creating a Ghoul

Your character becomes a ghoul when a vampire feeds her a point of Vitae, and invests it with a point of Willpower. The ghoul receives both the point of Vitae and the point of Willpower to use as her own. The feeling is supremely invigorating; the ghoul feels reenergized and capable of anything.

To create a ghoul player character, first follow the character creation instructions in **The God-Machine Chronicle**, p. 150. Save some room for the Merits later in this chapter, then come back here.

Add Ghoul Traits

Clan: Your ghoul has a regnant, usually the vampire who first gave her Vitae and spent a point of Willpower on her. Think about who this regnant is (maybe one of the other player's characters), and decide on his clan.

Disciplines: Select two dots of Disciplines that are in-clan for your character's regnant. At least one physical Discipline dot is recommended, but not required. (You might want to look at the ghoul Discipline rules below first.)

Blood Potency: Your character gains the Blood Potency trait at 0, allowing him to store and spend Vitae. This trait cannot be increased with Experiences or time.

Effects of Being a Ghoul

Aging: Ghouls do not age so long as they remain ghouls. Hair and fingernails continue to grow, but they don't go through puberty or develop crow's feet. Even better, any disease they suffer from stops in its tracks, progressing no further from the point the character becomes a ghoul.

Physical Intensity: Ghouls are able to use Physical Intensity (see p. 91) in exactly the same way as Kindred. The physical sensations are a bit different, with the ghoul feeling his heart pumping and his muscles burning in a way a vampire never will.

Healing: Ghouls can heal much like a vampire. For one point of Vitae, a ghoul may heal two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage. Given two consecutive nights and five Vitae, a ghoul may heal a point of aggravated damage. (The ghoul does not have to spend all five points at once, meaning that the expenditure is not affected by the ghoul's Blood Potency.)

Endurance: Like Kindred, ghouls do not fall risk falling unconscious when their Health tracks fill with bashing damage.

Refined Palate: Although ghouls do not possess Kindred Senses, they may attempt A Taste of Blood (as described on p. 91).

Disciplines

Ghouls can use most Disciplines, including bloodline Disciplines, but suffer some restrictions.

Learning Disciplines: Ghouls may learn Disciplines under the same rules as Kindred. They may not learn Coils or Scales of the Dragon.

Contests and Resistance: When a Discipline would be contested or resisted by one of the Kindred, the ghoul may not add his Discipline dots to his own roll. If he has any stage of blood bond to the vampire, the Discipline fails automatically.

Spilling Blood: If a Discipline power requires the user to spill blood or feed it to someone (such as Raise the Familiar), the ghoul may not use it. You as a player may buy the power on the way to purchasing another one, however.

Fixes and Withdrawal

A ghoul needs his fix. He needs it to feel right, even to feel normal. And it goes without saying he needs it to maintain his supernatural powers.

A ghoul automatically spends one point of Vitae per month to maintain his ghoul state. If, at the end of the month, he has no Vitae to spend, he must somehow acquire more. Any Vitae a ghoul imbibes becomes part of his Vitae pool.

If a ghoul doesn't get his fix, he gains the Deprived Condition (see p. 302). In withdrawal, he begins to age towards his natural age, at a rate of one year per week. This aging remains even if he gets his fix and resolves the Deprived Condition.

To end his withdrawal and resolve the Deprived Condition, he must ingest a number of Vitae equal to the Blood Potency of the last vampire he dosed from. If this is more Vitae than his

Ghouled Animals

Animals can be contaminated by a Kindred in much the same way that humans can, though their access to and uses for Vitae are quite limited.

They gain one dot in a physical Discipline from their regnant's clan. They can spend Vitae to boost physical abilities and power their Disciplines. Ghouled animals act on instinct and survival, and will not spend their last Vitae unless it is to heal a potentially deadly wound.

Stamina dots allow him to hold, he retches the rest up violently, but resolves the Condition and is no longer in withdrawal.

A ghoul in withdrawal cannot use any Disciplines (even those that do not cost Vitae or which have persistent effects), but retains knowledge of them if his withdrawal ends.

The Blood Bond

When discussing the blood bond, Kindred often speak of total domination, witlessness, and complete servile, submissive behavior. This is a popular image, but very far from the truth.

The mechanics are outlined on page 99. The blood bond does not leave you without free will or helpless. Rather, it means you are more likely to agree with what your regnant wants, or at least argue your points less. It also means that you have trouble thinking about bringing harm to that person, and actually acting on the desire to do direct or indirect harm to them requires a heroic effort. A thing most ghouls will never accomplish, or want to.

How the relationship builds from there depends on the Kindred and the ghoul. Is it a relationship based on a distant, paternal, heroic figure the ghoul sees only on occasion but worships none the less? Is it hot and intimate? Are there cycles of honeymoon and rage? Those are choices only players can make for their characters, and consent on the player side is very important if everyone is to have fun.

Ghoul and Mortal Merits

Many of these Merits suggest a unique character, and a Storyteller should strongly consider character intersection and spotlight before allowing more than one character to take them. Likewise, while a vampire might be able to justify some of these Merits, it's generally best to leave them to living characters as a means to give them a stronger role in the chronicle.

Taste of Shadow (••)

There is a voice in your head, a shadow whispering secrets of the Blood to you. It knows a great many things about Disciplines, bloodlines, and even secret sorceries. It thinks you ought to know too, and delights when those secrets are too tempting to ignore and too powerful to keep to yourself.

Prerequisite: Ghoul, Mekhet Regnant

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult

Effect: Once per scene you may let the shadow in your character's head out for a time.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The shadow is silent. Your character suffers a –2 die penalty to all Perception-related rolls thanks to the distraction its whispers create in her head.

Failure: The shadow whispers, but your character can't piece together anything meaningful from its ramblings.

Success: Ask one of the questions below.

Exceptional Success: Ask all three of the questions below.

Questions

- What family's blood taints this situation?
- Name one vampire in the scene. What's a quality of their blood I do not already know?
- What's one sin staining this line of Kindred?

The Storyteller is obligated to answer these questions honestly and clearly, though the information she provides may not be suitable to have a full understanding of the shadow's intent. For now.

Taste of the Serpent (••)

Your regnant's blood has changed you. You are a living vessel of indulgence. A gleeful enabler. It doesn't make you a bad person, but it does mean people should be careful seeking out your advice. Not that you associate with the sort of person who's careful.

Prerequisite: Ghoul, Daeva Regnant

Effect: If your character helps a human fulfill his Vice, the human gets the Swooning Condition toward your character.

Taste of the Wild (••)

The Vitae in your system has given you a closer connection to the beasts of prey that your regnant understands so well. You are a pack animal, in many ways, and have a unique method for grooming your own pack. You may use your precious Vitae stores to create ghoul animals. They behave, after three tastes, as if they are bound to you. Your Vitae cannot affect humans in this way, nor can it be used to bond Kindred to you. It is a unique relationship with animals. (This is an exception to the restriction on ghouls passing along Vitae.)

Prerequisite: Ghoul, Gangrel Regnant

Effect: By spending Vitae, your character may create an animal ghoul exactly as a vampire does, and enjoy the benefits

of having a blood-bound servant. You must purchase each ghoul created this way as a Retainer, just as a vampire's player would. If your character loses her ghoul nature, so too do her animals. Though your character regains any Merit points spent this way, you may find a pack of angry, confused wolves who no longer see your character as master.

Taste of Gold (••)

Your regnant picked you because you are the best of the best. Other ghouls pale in comparison. Humans can't even rate. There's only one creature greater than you — that's her. For now, you're happy showing her your quality in an endless series of contests proving your worth.

Prerequisite: Ghoul, Ventrue Regnant

Effect: Beating someone in competition is considered a second Vice for your character.

Taste of Fear (••)

Fear floods your blood; and while you aren't quite on a walking nightmare, you carry a darkness inside of you. Letting it out, in whispered threat or vulgar secret, is enough to chill the blood of your average person.

Prerequisite: Ghoul, Nosferatu Regnant

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene

Effect: When your character reveals, often in a hushed whisper, some terrible secret about himself to his victim, he can chill the blood of even those beyond death.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The victim is afraid, afraid enough to seek out the nearest authority figure to tell him about the monster she's interacted with.

Failure: T, the victim is afraid., Tthe next attempt to engage with them socially will be met with a –-2 die penalty. (This includes further attempts to intimidate them, as they are already "'on to you"' and your character has lost some element of surprise and shock. For now.)

Success: Your character gives the victim the Broken, Fugue, or Guilty Condition. These Conditions are not persistent.

Exceptional Success: The victim gains the Broken, Fugue, or Guilty Condition and further, she cannot spend Willpower against you for the rest of the scene.

Producer (•)

You may suffer a medical condition that means you produce a higher blood volume, or suffer from a thickening of the blood caused by too many red blood cells. Or your condition may be completely mystical and never show up under a microscope. However it manifests, you produce extra Vitae when a Kindred drinks from you.

Prerequisite: Human or Ghoul

Effect: For every point of lethal damage caused by feeding, Kindred gain two Vitae from your character.

Weakened Bond (•••)

You might be strong willed, or pure of heart. Conversely, you may be the sort of character who makes people cross the street when you walk by them. Whatever the reason, you are hard to bond. You simply don't get attached the way other people do.

Prerequisite: Ghoul or Human

Effect: When determining the effect the blood bond has on your character, Willpower expenditures and social rolls, treat your bond as one step lower. For all other purposes, like blood sorcery for example, your character is considered bound at her full level. As a general guideline, this makes you immune to effects based on the way your character responds to the bond, but not on effects based on the way the bond affects your character.

Clear-Sighted (••)

Kindred deception doesn't work on you. You see through the lies.

Prerequisite: Human Only

Effect: When you spend a point of Willpower, Obfuscate and Nightmare do not function on you for the rest of the scene. You also see through similar illusions created by other Disciplines or supernatural powers.

Drawback: Seeing the truth in a way no other person does may lead to breaking points. If you are ghouled or turned into a vampire, the ephemeral gift vanishes. (Though your merit points return to you. See Sanctity of Merits, p. 109.)

Source Sympathy (•)

You feel the bonds of blood in a way similar to Kindred. You can take part in blood sympathy with your regnant as if you were your sire's cousin. It isn't the intimacy of direct family, but it's more connection than many ghouls ever know with their masters.

Prerequisite: Ghoul

Effect: Your character experiences blood sympathy as if she were thrice removed from her regnant. See Blood Sympathy, (p. 98.)

Protected (••)

Having tasted your blood, a Kindred has developed a strong connection to you as a result. Further, he has some vested interest seeing to your long-term survival. If you're in danger, he knows about it, and he may come to you as quickly as possible.

Prerequisite: Ghoul or Human

Effect: If your character is in danger, her regnant senses it, and can spend a Willpower point to coincidentally arrive on the scene in time to save you.

Empowered to Speak (•)

You are recognized as an official mouthpiece for your regnant. If he isn't present, you are empowered to speak on his behalf. You may answer questions to the best of your abilities and even make minor decisions on your regnant's behalf.

Effect: When speaking on behalf of your character's regnant, your character may act as if she had his level of City Status. Your character is treated as a member of the city when acting on behalf of her regnant.

Vitae Hound (•)

You are an aficionado of Vitae, and can sense what you need in much the same way your regnant can sense blood. You may act as your regnant's prized hunting companion, or even receive a minor city position pursuant to this talent if you play your cards right.

Prerequisite: Ghoul

Effect: Your character can use the rules for Kindred Senses, (p. 90). For the purposes of searching by smell, she adds one half of her regnant's Blood Potency, rounded up.

Beast Whispers (••)

You have a unique ability to soothe the Beast and speak to a vampire normally lost to the Beast during a frenzy.

Prerequisite: Ghoul or Human

Effect: Your character can talk any Kindred down from frenzy as if he were the Kindred's Touchstone (see p. 87). Because he does not necessarily have the same connection to the Kindred as her Touchstone, if things go poorly, they may go *very* poorly for your character directly depending on what the Beast wants.

Beloved (•)

No matter how it manifests, the Kindred to whom you are a Touchstone has powerful feelings for you. So powerful that the Beast lies down to be calm for you. You are a soothing influence that may one day save her soul.

Prerequisite: Ghoul or Human, Touchstone

Effect: A vampire for whom your character is a Touchstone has a +2 die bonus to resist frenzy when in your presence. Furthermore, when trying to talk her down from frenzy, your character treats the Kindred's Blood Potency as two lower, (to a minimum of 1.)

Watch Dog (••)

For those who ramble, living nomadically with their regnants, staying awake and alert during the long day shifts and parting most of the night can take supernatural skills. The mutual need for survival that runs back and forth through Kindred and ghoul allows this gift to manifest.

Prerequisite: Ghoul, Regnant has Auspex

Effect: During the day, your Regnant can give up her ability to use her Auspex Discipline. If she does, you may use it as though you had it at whatever level she possesses.

appendix two
conditions

The list below includes a range of common Conditions that can be applied to characters through events in the story.

ADDICTED (PERSISTENT)

Your character is addicted to something, whether drugs, gambling or other destructive behaviors. Some addictions are more dangerous than others, but the nature of addiction is that it slowly takes over your life, impeding functionality. If you are addicted, you need to indulge your addiction regularly to keep it under control. A specific addiction should be chosen upon taking this Condition; characters can take this Condition multiple times for different addictions. Being unable to feed your addiction can result in the Deprived Condition (see below).

Possible Sources: Alcoholism, substance abuse, Vitae Addiction.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: Your character chooses to get a fix rather than fulfill an obligation.

AMNESIA (PERSISTENT)

Your character is missing a portion of her memory. An entire period of her life is just gone. This causes massive difficulties with friends and loved ones.

Possible Sources: Physical or psychological trauma, the Dominate Discipline.

Resolution: You regain your memory and learn the truth. Depending on the circumstances, this may constitute a breaking point.

Beat: Something problematic arises, such as a forgotten arrest warrant or old enemy.

BESTIAL

Your character acts on primal, physical impulses. Frightening things make him run. He meets aggressive threats with violence and anger. Take a –2 die penalty to all rolls to resist frenzy or physical impulse. As well, take a –2 die penalty to Defense due to impulsive action. Any rolls to compel your character to impulsive, aggressive action or escape achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five. This could apply to Disciplines such as Nightmare, or Dominate under the right circumstances.

This Condition fades naturally after a number of nights equal to the Blood Potency of the vampire who caused it. In the case of the predatory aura, this is the vampire who won the conflict. In the case of testing for detachment, this is the vampire's own Blood Potency.

After resolving Bestial, your character cannot be subject to this Condition again for a full month.

Possible Sources: A monstrous predatory aura conflict, facing a breaking point.

Resolution: Cause damage in someone's last three Health boxes.

Beat: n/a

BROKEN (PERSISTENT)

Whatever you did or saw, something inside you snapped. You can barely muster up the will to do your job anymore, and anything more emotionally intense than a raised voice makes you flinch and back down. Apply a –2 die penalty to all Social rolls and rolls involving Resolve, and a –5 die penalty to all use of the Intimidation Skill.

Possible Sources: Tremendous psychological trauma, the Nightmare Discipline, some Ghoul Merits.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: You back down from a confrontation or fail a roll due to this Condition.

CHARMED (PERSISTENT)

You've been charmed by a vampire's supernatural force of personality. You don't want to believe that anything he says is a lie, and you can't read his true intentions. The vampire adds his Awe successes to Manipulation rolls against you, and any Wits + Empathy or Subterfuge rolls you make to detect his lies or uncover his true motives suffer a penalty equal to his Majesty dots. Using supernatural means to detect his lies become a Clash of Wills.

You want to do things for the vampire, to make him happy. If he asks, you'll do favors for him like he was one of your best friends — giving him a place to crash, lending him your car

keys, or revealing secrets that you really shouldn't. You don't feel tricked or ripped off unless you resolve the Condition. It expires normally (without resolving) after one hour per dot of the vampire's Blood Potency.

Possible Sources: The Majesty Discipline.

Resolution: The vampire attempts to seriously harm you or someone close to you, you make a significant financial or physical sacrifice for him.

Beat: You divulge a secret or perform a favor for the vampire.

COMPETITIVE

Your character must assert dominance and superiority. Either she gives it her all, or she falters. Any time she's in direct competition with another character, she suffers a –2 die penalty on any rolls where she doesn't spend Willpower. This includes contested and extended rolls. As well, any rolls to tempt or coerce her into competition achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

This Condition fades naturally after a number of nights equal to the Blood Potency of the vampire who caused it. In the case of the predatory aura, this is the vampire who won the conflict. In the case of testing for detachment, this is the vampire's own Blood Potency.

After resolving Competitive, your character cannot be subject to this Condition again for a full month.

Possible Sources: A challenging predatory aura conflict, facing a breaking point.

Resolution: Win or lose a competition where someone reaches a breaking point.

Beat: n/a

CONFUSED

Your character cannot think straight, either because of some mental power or good old-fashioned cranial trauma. You take a –2 die penalty on all Intelligence and Wits rolls.

Possible Sources: A blow to the head, dramatic failure when using some Auspex powers.

Resolution: Take half an hour to focus and clear your mind. Take any amount of lethal damage.

Beat: n/a

DELUSIONAL (PERSISTENT)

You believe something that isn't actually true — maybe you think that someone is poisoning your food, that a doppelganger has replaced your daughter, or that something lives in the shadows of your apartment. You don't actually hallucinate images that reinforce your delusion; you may believe that you're covered in spiders, but just looking at yourself is enough to clarify matters. Germs, on the other hand....

You can't truly repress your belief, but spending a point of Willpower lets you come up with an explanation (albeit one that sounds psychotic when you explain it to someone else) as to why your delusion does not apply to a specific situation.

Possible Sources: The Nightmare Discipline.

Resolution: You completely disprove your delusion, or destroy the vampire who is the source of your paranoia.

Beat: You adhere to your paranoid belief despite evidence to the contrary.

DEPENDENT (PERSISTENT)

Your character has become obsessed with a mortal. This obsession is for both attention and for blood. She suffers all the effects of a second-stage blood bond (see p. 302) as if she were bound to the mortal.

Possible Sources: Daeva clan bane.

Resolution: Death of the mortal.

Beat: Your character suffers loss because she avoided responsibility for her obsession.

DEPRIVED

Your character suffers from an addiction. She is unable to get her fix, however, leaving her irritable, anxious, and unable to focus. Remove one from her Stamina, Resolve, and Composure dice pools. This does not influence derived traits; it only influences dice pools that use these Attributes.

Possible Sources: Your character is Addicted but cannot get a fix.

Resolution: Your character indulges her addiction.

Beat: n/a

DISTRACTED

Constant confusion and distractions buffet your character from all sides. She cannot take extended actions, and suffers a –2 die penalty to all rolls involving perception, concentration, and precision.

This Condition does not grant a Beat when resolved.

Possible Sources: Being in a swarm.

Resolution: Leaving the swarm .

Beat: n/a

DOMINATED

A vampire has given your character a specific command that she cannot go against. You don't have a choice whether or not to follow the command — your will is no longer your own. If your task has a natural end, such as "Follow that man until he enters an apartment then call me with the address," you resolve

the Condition once you complete it; otherwise it ends at sunrise. Once you resolve this Condition, you can't quite remember what happened while you were under the vampire's spell.

Possible Sources: The Dominate Discipline.

Resolution: Take more bashing or lethal damage than your Stamina. Experience a breaking point when following the command, and succeed at the related Resolve + Composure roll. Follow the vampire's command.

Beat: n/a

DRAINED

Your character has been fed from extensively, and suffers from blood loss. He suffers a –2 die penalty to any physical actions, and rolls to stabilize and survive injuries. As well, after any scene where he exerts himself physically, he must make a Stamina roll or fall unconscious for an hour or more. The Drained penalty does not apply to the Stamina roll, but any wound penalties do apply. Taking damage, being fed from, or spending Willpower on a physical roll applies as physical exertion for this Condition.

Possible Sources: A vampire's feeding.

Resolution: All lethal damage healed through normal means.

Beat: n/a

ECSTATIC

Your Beast has been temporarily sated through the use of blood sorcery. For as long as the Beast is quiet, the character may feed as though her Blood Potency were three dots less than her rating (minimum one), and has a +2 die bonus to avoid frenzy.

Possible Sources: Exceptional success on a Crúac ritual.

Resolution: Feeding, sleeping, or resisting a frenzy.

Beat: n/a

ENERVATED (PERSISTENT)

The character is in the second stage of soul loss. Her instinctive efforts to shore up her Willpower by giving into her urges have failed, her Integrity has gone and her Willpower is now fading. In addition to the effects of Soulless, she can no longer regain Willpower through her Virtue, only her Vice. Indulging herself brings diminishing returns — whenever she does so, her permanent Willpower drops by one dot before she regains Willpower points to the new maximum.

Possible Sources: Soul loss.

Resolution: The character regains her soul.

Beat: Lose a dot of permanent Willpower.

ENSLAVED (PERSISTENT)

You're totally in thrall to the vampire who inflicted this Condition. You can no longer tell when her instructions end and commands issued by Dominate begin. She tells you to do something and you do it. She tells you what you remember, and you remember it. This Condition counts as the Mesmerized Condition for the purpose of the Dominate Discipline. She doesn't have to look at you to issue a command as long as you can hear her voice. You do not apply your Resolve as a penalty to the vampire's dice pool for Entombed Command and Possession.

Possible Sources: The Dominate Discipline.

Resolution: Kill the vampire who controls you. Undo her mental control by supernatural means.

Beat: You're made to do something that you wouldn't normally do.

ENTHRALLED (PERSISTENT)

You're fanatically loyal to a vampire, willing to go to any length for him. You'll happily take actions that threaten your own life — ramming a speeding truck head-on, jumping in front of a gun-wielding psycho, or handing over your spouse and children for the vampire to play with. The compulsion lasts for one night for each dot of the vampire's Blood Potency.

You need to spend a point of Willpower just to take an action that goes against your master's commands. Doing so is an immediate breaking point. If you fail, you chicken out at the last minute; only if you succeed can you do something that the vampire doesn't want you to do.

Possible Sources: The Majesty Discipline.

Resolution: You take serious harm (more lethal damage than your Stamina) when protecting the vampire, or you succeed at a breaking point roll related to the Condition.

Beat: You put yourself in harm's way to protect the vampire.

FALSE MEMORIES (PERSISTENT)

The way you remember things doesn't match up with how they happened. You might remember a son who didn't exist, your alcoholic father abusing you despite being raised an orphan, or never getting married. You believe your memories to be true no matter what; even conclusive proof has a hard time getting through to you. Being faced with proof that your memory is fake is a breaking point for you.

Possible Sources: The Dominate Discipline

Resolution: Face proof that your memory is false and succeed at the breaking point.

Beat: Your character trusts someone or takes a risky action based on his faked memories alone.

FRIGHTENED

Something's scared you to the point where you lose rational thought. Maybe you've just looked down at a hundred-story drop, or seen a tarantula the size of your fist crawling up your leg. Whatever the case, you need to leave right now. Your only

priority is getting the fuck away from the thing that's frightened you — the hell with your stuff, your friends, and your allies. If someone tries to stop you from escaping, you'll fight your way past them. You can't approach the source of your fear or act against it — and if the only way out involves going near the source of your fear, you'll collapse on the ground in terror. Supernatural creatures prone to loss of control, including vampires, must roll to avoid frenzy. This Condition lasts until the end of the scene; suppressing its effects for a turn costs a point of Willpower.

Possible Sources: The Nightmare Discipline, coming face to face with a phobia.

Resolution: The character escapes from the source of his fear.

Beat: n/a

FUGUE (PERSISTENT)

Something terrible happened. Rather than deal with it or let it break you, your mind shuts it out. You are prone to blackouts and lost time. Whenever circumstances become too similar to the situation that led to the character gaining this Condition, the player rolls Resolve + Composure. If you fail the roll, the Storyteller controls your character for the next scene; your character, left to his own devices, will seek to avoid the conflict and get away from the area.

Possible Sources: Psychological trauma, encountering a breaking point, some Ghoul Merits.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: You enter a fugue state as described above.

GUILTY

Your character is experiencing deep-seated feelings of guilt and remorse. This Condition is commonly applied after a successful detachment roll, p. 108. While the character is under the effects of this Condition, he receives a –2 die penalty to any Resolve or Composure rolls to defend against Subterfuge, Empathy, or Intimidation rolls.

Possible Sources: Encountering a breaking point, some Ghoul Merits.

Resolution: The character confesses his crimes and makes restitution for whatever he did.

Beat: n/a

HUMBLED

Your character has felt the touch of the divine and trembled. She feels unworthy and wretched. For as long as the Condition lasts, she suffers a –2 die penalty to Resolve rolls and may not regain Willpower from her Requiem.

Possible Sources: Dramatic failure on a Theban Sorcery ritual.

Resolution: The character regains Willpower using her Masquerade.

Beat: n/a

INSPIRED

Your character is deeply inspired. When your character takes an action pertaining to that inspiration, you may resolve this Condition. An exceptional success on that roll requires only three successes instead of five and you gain a point of Willpower.

Possible Sources: Exceptional success with Crafts or Expression, the Inspiring Merit, the Auspex Discipline.

Resolution: You spend inspiration to spur yourself to greater success, resolving the Condition as described above.

Beat: n/a

INTOXICATED

Your character is drunk, drugged, or otherwise dulled to the world around her. While she's probably not hallucinating, her inhibitions and reactions are both lower than they should be. Your character suffers a –2 die penalty to all Dexterity and Wits dice pools. Characters using Social maneuvering against her face two fewer Doors than usual.

Possible Sources: Heavy drinking or drug use.

Resolution: You sleep it off, or face a breaking point.

Beat: n/a

JADED

Your character has no interest in the ways of the living. He eschews mortal society and only acts to better himself. Because of this, his Beast takes tighter hold on his actions. Any rolls to resist frenzy suffer his Humanity dots as a cap, and he cannot spend Willpower to hold back frenzy. He may still ride the wave.

Possible Sources: Detachment failure.

Resolution: Meaningful interaction with a Touchstone.

Beat: n/a

LANGUID

Your character feels the draw of torpor. His actions grow sluggish each night that passes, until eventually he falls to the sleep of ages. Every night that passes with this Condition, levy a cumulative –1 die penalty on all actions. As well, rising from daysleep requires a point of Vitae for each dot of Blood Potency.

Possible Sources: Losing a Touchstone.

Resolution: Falling to torpor.

Beat: n/a

LETHARGIC

Your character is drained and lethargic, feeling the weight of sleeplessness. With this Condition, your character cannot spend Willpower. As well, for every six hours he goes without sleeping, take a cumulative –1 die penalty to all actions. At every six-hour interval, make a Stamina + Resolve roll (with the penalty) to resist falling asleep until the sun next sets.

Possible Sources: Fighting daysleep.

Resolution: Sleeping a full day.

Beat: n/a

MESMERIZED

Your character's will is subordinate to that of a vampire. You're not obviously hypnotized — you're a bit quiet and reserved compared to normal, but nothing out of the ordinary. When the vampire who inflicted this Condition gives you a command, you cannot resist. If it's something that you wouldn't normally do, you might look like you've been hypnotized or that you're sleepwalking, but otherwise you look and act normally. If you resolve this Condition, gain a +3 die bonus to resist further attempts to Mesmerize you in the same scene; you also can't quite remember what happened while you were under the vampire's spell. This Condition fades naturally after a scene, which does not count as resolving the Condition.

Possible Sources: The Dominate Discipline.

Resolution: Take any amount of bashing or lethal damage. Experience a breaking point as part of a vampire's command.

Beat: n/a

OBSESSION (PERSISTENT)

Something's on your character's mind and she just can't shake it. She gains the 9-again quality on all rolls related to pursuing her obsession. On rolls that are unrelated to her obsession, she loses the 10-again quality. Obsession can be a temporary quality per Storyteller approval.

Resolution: The character sheds or purges her fixation.

Beat: Character fails to fulfill an obligation due to pursuing her obligation.

RAPTURED

Your character is filled with the glory of God's admonishment, the grace of her damnation. She finds an unsettling harmony with her Beast, due to the fire of Longinus's words. She does not need to use Willpower to ride the wave, and can ride the wave on three successes instead of five.

Possible Sources: The Anointed Merit.

Resolution: Falling to frenzy or riding the wave.

Beat: n/a

SATED

Your character gave her Beast an outlet that stopped it from driving her to frenzy. Until she resolves this Condition, she has a +1 die modifier to rolls to resist Frenzy.

Possible Sources: The Animalism Discipline.

Resolution: Frenzy, or resist significant provocation to frenzy (a situation with a modifier of –3 or more to resist).

Beat: n/a

SCARRED

Your character was subject to a violent bite from Kindred fangs. He's disturbed, angry, paranoid, and prone to lashing out. With this Condition, take a –2 die penalty to any rolls to resist fear, such as with the Nightmare Discipline or the Intimidation Skill. As well, any creature exhibiting a predatory aura attempting to frighten or intimidate your character receives a +2 die bonus.

Possible Sources: A violent bite from a vampire.

Resolution: Lash out physically, causing three or more levels of lethal damage to someone.

Beat: n/a

SHAKEN

Something has severely frightened your character. Any time your character is taking an action where that fear might hinder her, you may opt to fail the roll and resolve this Condition.

Possible Sources: Facing a breaking point, the Auspex Discipline.

Resolution: The character gives into her fear and fails a roll as described above.

Beat: n/a

SPOOKED

Your character has seen something supernatural — not overt enough to terrify her, but unmistakably otherworldly. How your character responds to this is up to you, but it captivates her and dominates her focus.

Resolution: This Condition is resolved when your character's fear and fascination causes her to do something that hinders the group or complicates things (she goes off alone to investigate a strange noise, stays up all night researching, runs away instead of holding her ground, etc.).

Beat: n/a

SOULLESS (PERSISTENT)

The character is in the first stage of soul loss. Without a soul, she can't attempt abjuration, warding, or binding (see **The God-**

Machine Chronicle, p. 231). She is also more susceptible to possession — any dice pools to resist being taken over by another entity are at a –2 die penalty. The effects on Integrity and Willpower, though, are more severe. For as long as she has this Condition, she does not regain Willpower through surrender or rest, and her use of Virtue and Vice is reversed — she may regain one Willpower point per scene by fulfilling her Virtue without having to risk herself, and regains full Willpower once per chapter by fulfilling her Vice in a way that poses a threat to herself. Regaining Willpower through Vice, though, is now a breaking point with a –5 die penalty unless the character has reached Integrity 1.

Possible Sources: Soul loss.

Resolution: The character regains her soul.

Beat: The character loses Integrity because she indulged her Vice.

STEADFAST

Your character is confident and resolved. When you've failed a roll, you may choose to resolve this Condition to instead treat the action as if you'd rolled a single success. If the roll is a chance die, you may choose to resolve this Condition and roll a single regular die instead.

Possible Sources: Encountering a breaking point

Resolution: Your character's confidence carries him through and the worst is avoided; the Condition is resolved as described above.

Beat: n/a

STUMBLED

Your character has hit a complication while attempting a blood sorcery ritual. Each successive roll in the extended action is at a –3 die penalty.

This Condition does not grant a Beat when resolved.

Possible Sources: Dramatic failure on a blood sorcery ritual.

Resolution: The ritual ends.

Beat: n/a

SUBSERVIENT (PERSISTENT)

A vampire has pressed down on your will, and you find it hard to resist doing what she wants even when she doesn't use her supernatural powers of command. She can give you commands as though you were Mesmerized even when you do not have that Condition. You can spend a Willpower point to resist her commands, but she can just Mesmerize you and order you that way. She still needs to use Dominate to alter your memory. This Condition fades naturally after a week unless the vampire applies it to you again during that time.

Possible Sources: The Dominate Discipline.

Resolution: Take more lethal damage than you have Stamina when following the vampire's command. Experience a breaking point when following the command and succeed at the roll.

Beat: The vampire makes you do something that you wouldn't normally do.

SWOONING

Your character is attracted to someone and is vulnerable where they are concerned. He may have the proverbial "butterflies in his stomach" or just be constantly aware of the object of his affection. A character may have multiple instances of this Condition, reflecting affection for multiple characters. He suffers a –2 die penalty to any rolls that would adversely affect the specified character, who also gains +2 die bonus on any Social rolls against him. If the specified character is attempting Social maneuvering on the Swooning character, the impression level is considered one higher (maximum of perfect; see p. 174).

Possible Sources: Be on the receiving end of an exceptional success of a Persuasion or Subterfuge roll, dramatic failure on using the Majesty Discipline, fed on non-violently by a vampire, have another character help you fulfill your Vice (if mortal).

Resolution: Your character does something for his love interest that puts him in danger, or he opts to fail a roll to resist a Social action by the specified character.

Beat: n/a

TAINTED

Your character committed diablerie, and now retains traces of her victim's soul. Once per chapter, the victim can come back to haunt your character and try to force her destruction. This brief burst penalizes any one dice pool by the victim's Blood Potency dots, or adds to a dice pool opposing your character. This takes the form of subtle manifestations, or whispers that urge and distract. Your character may have multiple instances of this Condition, reflecting different victims.

Possible Sources: Diablerie.

Resolution: A number of months pass equal to the victim's Blood Potency score. Every level of aggravated damage your character takes reduces this time by one month.

Beat: n/a

TASKED

Your character's clan, covenant, or family tasked her with a duty, and the responsibility carries weight. Take the 8-again quality on all rolls relating to the task. Any rolls not pertaining to the task lose the 10-again quality.

Possible Sources: Dynasty Membership Merit.

Resolution: Complete the task; fail the task.

Beat: n/a

TEMPTED

Your character came close to losing control. Her Beast came at her, and she refused the call. Now, the Beast remains close to the surface. She gets a –1 die penalty to any rolls to resist frenzy. Until she sheds this Condition, each time she resists frenzy, the penalty increases by one. For example, after three successful resistances, note this Condition as "Tempted –3" on your character sheet.

Possible Sources: Successfully resisted frenzy.

Resolution: Kill. Fall to frenzy. Have a meaningful connection with a Touchstone.

Beat: n/a

THRALL (PERSISTENT)

The character has fully succumbed to the effects of soullessness. She may not spend Willpower points for any reason, may not use her Defense in combat, may not spend Experiences, and suffers all the effects of the Broken Condition (p. 301) as well. The player should only continue playing a character with this Condition if there's a chance of regaining the soul.

Possible Sources: Soul loss.

Resolution: The character regains her soul.

Beat: The character is victimized as a result of her Condition.

WANTON

Your character wants, for the sake of wanting. He's distracted with temptations of excess and indulgence. Any Composure or Resolve rolls to resist temptation suffer a –2 die penalty. As well, the character that brought forth this Condition achieves exceptional success on three successes instead of five when making any rolls to tempt your character. This could apply to Majesty rolls as well as mundane social rolls.

This Condition fades naturally after a number of nights equal to the Blood Potency of the vampire who caused it. In the case of the predatory aura, this is the vampire who won the conflict. In the case of testing for detachment, this is the vampire's own Blood Potency.

After resolving Wanton, your character cannot be subject to this Condition again for a full month.

Possible Sources: A seductive predatory aura conflict, facing a breaking point.

Resolution: Indulge in something that constitutes a breaking point.

Beat: n/a

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD

EPILOGUE

Edie

The town and the girl were sweet enough, I guess. Colder than I was used to, with wet icy winters and soft fall rains that kept her snuggled indoors with me. Alice loves me, in her loud anxious way. All noise and color and too-public declarations; a cup of sweetness that never seems to run dry. And I'm safe here, as it goes. Dad's never even looked for me. Maybe. No one's smelled familiar, at least.

But just when wallowing didn't seem like it could ever be punishment enough, I met Alice. Somehow it was better and worse to see Thao's imperfect reflection every day. First watching her during her evening shifts; then curled outside her window, listening to her fight with her boyfriend (that had to stop). Night after night, until I knew her inside out. Then sliding into his constructed absence like an accident.

And for a little while, it was enough. To guard her sleep and catalog all the little ways Alice wasn't Thao. But I didn't want to change her. She had turned out to be so clever, and so warm; funnier than Thao, and more innocent. So I just made little suggestions. Grow out your hair, wear these suits, trade your contacts for big circular wire rims, curl up in my arms tonight. Gilding the lily of her almostness; slowly shaving away the things that made her a little less perfect.

Deciding to keep living meant I was going to need a way to fill the hours I wasn't with Alice or watching Alice or reading the messages I copied off her phone while she was sleeping. So I joined up again. Working again was a kind of betrayal; but "wasting my talents" would have been a bigger one. Maybe that was a rationalization, but I wanted to impress Thao...Alice. She wanted to be a lawyer; so I told her I work in law enforcement. It's true enough, and in a college town, no one really cared enough to check my pedigree. She never told me what to do, and learned not to ask questions a lot faster than I had; but sometimes I wanted to make her tell me to make something of myself. Just for old time's sake. And for a little while, that was enough too.

She was perfect just the way she was. But it seemed like the closer we got to paradise, the more...trouble I had with her. She sang on-key. She wanted to be out. She liked the wrong music. She called me the wrong names when we fought. And her kisses were wrong, ever so subtly. The shape of her lips seemed right; thin and golden, set high in her long, round face. But they weren't her kisses.

And I was haunted.

what will you do
to make it through tonight?

what will you do
to make it through tomorrow night?

and what will you do
for the rest of your nights
to make those sins worthwhile?

– mrs. robinson

This book contains:

- A complete guide to playing a vampire in the World of Darkness. No other rulebooks are required, and the rules are fully compatible with The God-Machine Chronicle.
- Reimagined clans, covenants, and supernatural powers to create your perfect monster… and her friends and foes.
- A first-ever look at vampire domains around the world, from Tokyo to Berlin.
- Twenty unique Strix, as well as complete rules for building your own.

Tonight, you become one of the Kindred, the beautiful and the damned who hide behind our ordinary world. Driven by a hunger like fire, you will struggle to maintain your humanity while immersed in a vicious society of monsters.

But the sharks you swim with aren't the only ones out there. Your Kindred are the smart, sexy vampires of pop culture, but you are haunted by the Strix -- the grisly, demon-possessed corpses of folklore. They slaughtered the Night-Senate of Rome, drowned the tombs of the Princes of Alexandria, and warred with the Plague Lords of Transylvania.

Tonight, they're loose on the streets of your city. Time for the sinners to become the saints, and the hunters to become the prey.

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