

Mind's Eye Theatre

THE REQUIEM™



live-action rules
for playing vampires

Mind's Eye Theatre

THE **REQUIEM**™



A Modern Gothic Love-Action Storytelling Game



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the World
of Darkness

Mind's Eye Theatre

Vampire
THE REQUIEM



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No man ever became extremely wicked all at once.

—Juvenal

Vampires: blood-drinking creatures of the night. Horrors born of darkness, whose sole purpose in life – unlife, actually – is to slake their unholy thirst on the blood of the living. Without doubt, vampires are monsters.

Monsters, though, need not always be unthinking, unfeeling terrors empty of remorse, or even compassion or other human traits. Indeed, vampires can exceed their deathless curse, themselves becoming antiheroes or even heroes.

Then again, some vampires truly remain monsters.

This is the purpose of **The Requiem**. What you hold in your hands is a Modern Gothic Storytelling game, a live-action roleplaying game that allows you to build chronicles that explore morality through the metaphor of vampirism. In **The Requiem**, you “play the monster,” and what you do as that monster both makes for an interesting story and might even teach you a little about your own values and those of your fellows.

A MODERN-GOTHIC WORLD

The setting of **The Requiem** borrows greatly from gothic literature, not the smallest amount of which comes from the “set dressing” of the movement. Key to the literary gothic tradition are the ideas of barbarism, corruption and medieval imagery. This World of Darkness can be said to be our own seen through the looking glass darkly.

With regard to barbarism, the world of the vampires is like our own, but with a significant upturn in violence and decay. The streets are more brutal, with the desperate eyes of the unfortunate ever watchful for someone more privileged from whom they can steal something to make their own bleak lives more comfortable. Gangs are more active and violent; vagrants are bolder or they oblivate themselves even more. Even those with vast resources are more fearful of those who would harm them – or more jealous of those who rival their own wealth or power. Their actions can turn fierce with the slightest provocation.

Corruption goes hand in hand with the idea of barbarism. The world is nasty and brutish, and anyone who can get ahead had best avail himself of the opportunity. This is a world of indulgent clergy, avaricious businessmen, cops looking for a payoff and gangsters who have no other options than crime. Even those who don’t fit into such neat iconic archetypes face corruption of their own, such as an unwed mother who finds herself addicted to drugs and sells her child for a few grams of crank, or an otherwise honest journalist who finds out that his brother has become a bloodthirsty creature of darkness and must keep the secret for kinship’s sake.

Medieval imagery adorns all of the visual elements of the setting, and it can even bleed over into other aspects. Buildings soar heavenward, supported by flying buttresses, gilded when the architects can afford it and studded by gargoyles that scare away evil spirits that are all too real. Streets have fallen into disrepair. Even cities themselves are like medieval bastions, isolated from the outside world, xenophobic and cut off. Anachronisms abound, from antique decorations in otherwise ultramodern buildings to forgotten catacombs beneath bank vaults and subway tunnels. Honest-to-goodness castles might exist in the World of Darkness where none stand in the real world. Moss and vines cling everywhere. Torches and candles light hallways and anterooms. Walls bear breaches, cracks or other signs of disrepair. *Ars moriendi* punctuate works of art. A sense of dread and fear looms visibly on the face of every passerby.

Is it so strange, then, to believe that such a world hosts the Damned, as well?

A TIMELESS CURSE

Most vampires believe that their kind didn't just pop into existence one night to scare a cowering mortal populace. Most of the Kindred, as vampires call themselves, believe that vampires have existed for as long as they have had men to prey upon, and that they have followed mortal civilizations since humankind first formed them. Others believe in a vampiric genesis not unlike that of Adam in the Bible, and that the Kindred have been chosen by whatever power makes the decision to let them stalk the night. Still others believe that vampires are part of the natural but hidden order of the world, attaching vampiric origins to pagan beliefs and ancient mythologies. Many vampires don't care at all, believing the mystery to be as demonstrably unknowable as the question of mortal life's origin. Whatever the case, whatever the truth, it is known that vampires have preyed upon the world since ancient times. Kindred society's admittedly fallible memory marks the undead as active during the height of the Rome, if not before. Even those unreliable stories suggest that Kindred activity might have existed further back in time.

TRADITION AND BREAKING FROM IT

The Kindred, the unique vampires of **The Requiem**, have certain differences from the vampires you have encountered throughout literature and popular culture. This game assumes that most stories involve a domain of vampires — a city's Kindred population — as opposed to the more solitary stalkers of seminal fiction. From the Dracula of Bram Stoker's novel to Lord Ruthven of John Polidori's "The Vampyre," the undead are often depicted as lone figures. On the other hand, the vampires beneath the Theatre des Vampyres in Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* functioned as a group, as did *The Lost Boys* and the nomadic fiends of *Near Dark*.

None of those visions of vampires really serves the purpose of **The Requiem**, however. Those groups of vampires are inherently antagonistic in their stories, while the solitary vampires don't really accommodate the group dynamic of Storytelling games. As such, for the sake of the game, we've adapted the cultural notions of the vampire to one more suited to a troupe of players. We've added our own mythologies and social structures to the mix, the better to highlight the highs and lows of the undead condition. Our — *your* — vampires have the selfishness of the solitary predator, but also the social urges of creatures who fear the malaise of being left to their own company for eternity. The result is a conspiratorial blend of horror and suspense, a truly gothic mixture of madness, corruption, sensuality, mistrust and violence, all set against a backdrop of livid moodiness.

CLANS

Each Kindred is a member of a clan. A clan is a group of vampires who all share common characteristics. Popular Kindred mythology suggests that all vampires are assumed to have descended from one common Kindred, the founder of that clan, though no one knows who those founders might be. When a vampire Embraces a new Kindred, the progeny is of the same clan as the progenitor. Certain "sub-clans" of vampires also exist, known as bloodlines, but a vampire can never change her clan.

COVENANTS

Covenants are like clans in that they are distinctions of vampires. The difference between clan and covenant, however, is that one chooses his covenant. If clan is family, covenant is political, philosophical or even quasi-religious membership. Indeed, some vampires choose to belong to no covenant at all, acknowledging no authority higher than themselves.

MYTHS AND FACTS

Where does **The Requiem**'s mythology diverge from popular belief? Where do the conceits ring true? The following statements outline real-world legends of the undead, clarifying their truth or falsity in the World of Darkness.





Vampires must sustain themselves on the blood of the living: Fact. For the Kindred, the act of feeding becomes highly sensual. The vessel feels ecstatic when it happens, and the feeding vampire undergoes a heady rush as well. Certain vampires sustain their undeath by drinking the blood of animals, but rarely for long, as either their tastes or the needs of their cursed bodies force them to seek human blood.

Vampires are “immortal”: Myth and fact. Although vampires do not appear to age, and some survive for centuries, the Kindred use the word “undead” rather than “immortal.” Vampirism is a curse, not a blessing. It does carry with it great power, but the state of being a vampire also brings with it numerous detriments, not the least of which include the internalized rage of the Beast and feeding on human blood.

A vampire’s prey becomes a vampire: Myth. You do not *necessarily* become a vampire if you’re bitten or killed by a vampire. It takes a conscious act of will, known as the Embrace, to create a new vampire. Indeed, a vampire leaves little to mark her passing if she is careful. All a vampire must do to hide the wound left by her feeding is to lick it when she’s done.

Vampires have every manner of supernatural power, such as turning into animals, flying and wielding the strength of a dozen men: Fact. While these powers are not universal, vampires have unique abilities known as Disciplines, which can grant individual undead capabilities such as these and more.

Vampires can have sex: Fact. While the act of feeding replaces all physical urges, vampires can still indulge in sex and even take pleasure from it. Curiously, however, the emotional aspect of sex vanishes after the Embrace. A vampire might enjoy the physical sensation of sex, but no more than she enjoys a particularly savory smell or the touch of a luxurious fabric.

A wooden stake destroys vampires: Myth. Vampires aren’t destroyed upon being staked, they’re held in stasis. A vampire’s body slowly withers and turns inward while trapped in this state, desiccating and becoming ever more corpse-like.

Vampires don’t show up like normal people on camera or in mirrors: Fact. Vampires show up with their features obscured in photographic media (including video footage) and in mirrors. They can temporarily counteract this effect, but the “default” is a sort of occlusion. The same is not true for voice recordings; vampires’ voices are captured normally on those.

Sunlight burns vampires: Fact. As part of their curse, vampires recoil at the touch of the sun, its vital rays scorching their undead flesh. Vampires typically spend the daylight hours in the cold sleep of undeath, and only the most resolute can shake off the weight of the day’s forced slumber for even a short time.

Garlic and running water repels vampires: Myth. Such notions are nothing more than old wives’ tales, cultural biases or perhaps the banes of certain bloodlines of Kindred.

Vampires are repulsed by crosses and other holy symbols: Myth — almost. While such is not generally the case, the devout sometimes do affect the Kindred with miraculous aspects of their faith.

Vampires’ souls are as dead as their bodies after they become undead: Myth and fact. While a vampire might believe that he feels an emotion, what he actually feels is the echo of mortal emotions that the remnants of his soul apply to his current experience. That is, a vampire who feels angry might indeed be angry at the subject of his ire, but the resonance of the emotion actually comes from some situation the vampire dealt with in life. This condition results in many strange situations. A vampire who has never experienced a given emotion before becoming Kindred might be emotionally confused, while a vampiric artist might create a work of “art” that is awkwardly devoid of any true emotional insight.

THEME AND MOOD

While each story you and your troupe tells will have its own unique theme and mood, **The Requiem** itself has a certain theme and mood built into it. While you can certainly play against type or push the overarching themes and moods into the background, they are present nevertheless.

THEME

Many Kindred define their existence as an unanswerable riddle: “A Beast I am, lest a Beast I become.” This idea makes morality the core theme of **Requiem**. What will a vampire do now that she’s become a vampire? Will she exult in the Beast’s passions? Will she fight to retain her ties to what she knew in her mortal life? Is her unlife a lie, played out falsely under the pretense that she never became a vampire? Is her unlife a hellish maraud through the dark side of evil wiles indulged? Most Kindred’s unlives fall somewhere in between. That’s the crux of the riddle, however. How much leeway does a vampire allow her Beast in order to acknowledge it and yet keep it from overwhelming her?

MOOD

In some senses, **The Requiem**’s mood corresponds to key elements of the setting. The world is grim and brooding, with shadows hiding ugly secrets and terrible threats. Play this up as much as you wish — make the game a fount of boundless angst if you choose. Secrets and espionage are part of the setting too, though, so a conspiratorial mood is also very appropriate. A blend of the two serves the game best. A certain amount of woe regarding the Kindred condition highlights the game’s personal horror and gothic roots, while schemes and secrets give the world a degree of creeping horror above the personal level, revealing the true depth of its malignance bit by bit, much like a darkening sky blanketing the world in night.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is broken up into numerous chapters, each covering a certain set of topics that relate to the information as it will be used over the course of the game and in your chronicle.

This **Introduction** exists to give you a quick bit of exposure to the world of **The Requiem**’s Kindred, as well as a few ideas on what the game is designed to do.

Chapter One concerns itself with Kindred society and the world in which the Kindred hide. It examines everything from covenants and customs to domain politics and hoary secrets of the Danse Macabre, the never-ending struggle between Kindred for supremacy.

Aspects of character are the focus of **Chapter Two**, from details regarding creation of an alternate persona to the characteristics of the clans to the mechanics of the Kindred’s unholy powers themselves.

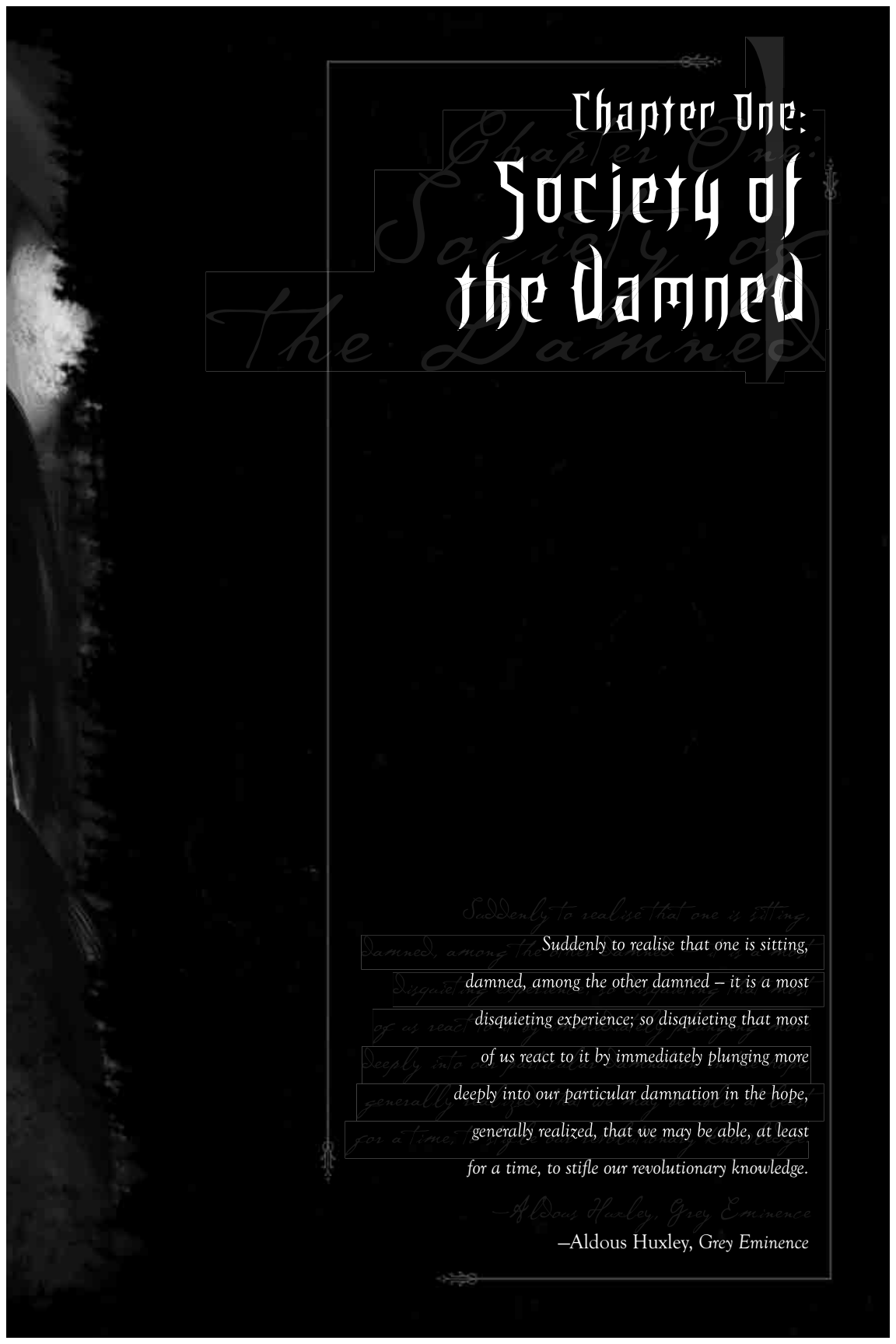
The game’s systems and card-drawing concerns make up **Chapter Three**. These mechanics govern all of the aspects of chance that occur during the course of a story, handling everything from characters threatened by frenzies spawned by the Beast to suffering physical damage to losing one’s Morality and sanity, and even more.

Advice is offered to the Storyteller in **Chapter Four**. This includes everything from suggestions on how to handle the setting to considerations to make when structuring a chronicle. The chapter includes a variety of pre-made antagonists for use in stories as well.

The Appendix comprises bloodlines and new Disciplines. One of the features of **The Requiem** is a customizable lineage system by which characters can create their own unique broods and families of vampires, as well as the unique powers to which they lay claim. This chapter includes systems by which players and Storytellers can generate new ones.







Chapter One:
Society of
the Damned

Suddenly to realise that one is sitting,
damned, among the
damned, among the other damned – it is a most
disquieting experience; so disquieting that most
of us react to it by immediately plunging more
deeply into our particular damnation in the hope,
generally
generally realized, that we may be able, at least
for a time, to stifle our revolutionary knowledge.

—Aldous Huxley, *Grey Eminence*
—Aldous Huxley, *Grey Eminence*



Try though they might, the Kindred are not, and never can be, truly a part of mortal society. Regardless of their feelings, their wishes or their intentions, vampires are always separate from those around them. They are wolves amid the sheep, and their very nature prevents them from ever forgetting or ignoring that fact. No matter how much one of the Kindred might love a mortal and wish to stay with him, the Blood calls constantly. The Beast threatens a frenzy that all too often results in the violent death of those held dear. The Kindred inability to withstand the gaze of the sun separates them irrevocably from the greater portion of the culture, the society and the *life* that surrounds them. They are provincial creatures who think almost solely on a local level, because the greater portion of the world is well beyond their reach.

Mortals create communities, almost despite themselves. They portion off nations, celebrating cultures that have evolved over centuries, if not millennia. They are all part of something greater than themselves, even if they fail — or choose not — to acknowledge it.

The Kindred, however, are bound to the cities that the kine — the living — have created, and each of those cities is a distinct domain. The Kindred have no nations, no overarching government; the local ruler is the only ruler. Although a vampire retains a sense of identity or memories from her mortal life, she does not belong. She is no longer a part of whatever greater body with which she identified. Rather, any loyalty or sense of belonging she has is limited to local circles: fealty to the Prince, membership in a covenant or clan. These are the only connections the Kindred can truly maintain, the only cultures of which they are truly part, and it is upon them that the entirety of their society is built.

The Embrace

It begins with death — a torrid rush of blood spilling from the throat or wrist of the victim. At the right moment, the vampire tears her own skin and places a few drops of precious Vitae on the lips of the victim. The dark magic works its blasphemous miracle then. The vessel dies... yet he doesn't. While his natural processes cease, his sire's Vitae infuses him with the force that sustains him beyond death. This is the Embrace, the first step from existence as a mortal into the modern-gothic world of the Damned.

What is the secret? What causes vampires to rise from beyond their natural life, to consume the blood of their erstwhile mortal fellows? Even the most erudite of the vampiric race do not know. Origin stories trace vampirism back to the Bible, to pagan ways and witchcraft, to the infamous Vlad Dracul, to the Devil himself and to any number of other sources. Every culture in the world has vampires in its mythology, and likely among its populace as well. "The Kindred condition" is an utter mystery, with an unknown number of members but no shortage of would-be prophets and philosophers with their own dogmas, theories and heresies as to the meaning or genesis of damnation.

If anything is certain, it's that the Embrace is not some kind of blessed immortality. Existence as a vampire is a curse, and quite possibly a curse handed down by God Himself. While being one of the undead certainly has its advantages — Disciplines (the mystical and eldritch powers of the Damned), deathlessness, the potential to transcend mortal boundaries — the drawbacks easily outweigh them. The price of undeath is steep, as foolish romantics infatuated by the myth of the vampire occasionally learn. One is forever apart from the world into which he was born, unconsciously shunned by it. Indeed, he can only pretend to be a part of it, and even that for only a short while, as the vampiric state forces him to prey on that world. It is his sustenance now, rather than his company. Never again shall a vampire see the light of

the sun without feeling it burn him. Never again will he know the vital pleasures of life. The Requiem is a forced ostracism that can literally last forever. No wonder, then, that so many of the Kindred blind themselves to it with their petty schemes and rivalries. Their endless war, the Danse Macabre, might be the only way to escape their damnation, and even then, it is only a distraction and not true redemption.

THE REQUIEM

It is curious, if not unfitting, that the most common name for unlife among the Kindred is a musical reference, the Requiem. The word itself means a mass or musical composition for the dead. In some cases, a requiem is a dirge. In other cases, it is a chant intended for the dead's repose. In still others, it is a gesture of respect.

No surprise, then, that the word has taken on its own meaning among the Kindred. The word has connotations of its own, suggesting that the Kindred must have adopted it in a more enlightened or sophisticated time. Tonight, however, all but the most cloistered Kindred knows that the word bears its own specialized meaning. The Requiem is the Kindred's unlife, the grand, doomed waltz through which every one of their kind dances every night, urged on by metaphorical strains of music that represent the hidden powers that guide, manipulate and inspire them.

BUT WHY?

The reasons for Embracing are many and varied, and every Kindred who exists in the world tonight probably has a host of her own for why she'd Embrace a childe. First and foremost is loneliness, as becoming Kindred imposes an isolation that many vampires seek to combat. Of course, the Embrace creates another Kindred — who is then himself alien and isolated, continuing the desperate, doomed cycle. Some Kindred Embrace to preserve a mortal's talents, only to find that the Embrace renders that childe unable to reach the apex of her living abilities. Other Kindred Embrace out of a sense of duty or to prevent disaster, such as when accidentally killing a vessel and then “saving” her with the curse of undeath — whose existence will then possibly doom other mortals on down the road. The trend is inevitable but irreversible. Despite its intentions, the Embrace never causes anything but damnation.

Whatever the reason, no vampire is Embraced recklessly or without some degree of thought on the part of the vampire making a new childe. Creating a Kindred requires an act of immense will, and even a vampire who says she created a childe “just because” is certainly hiding her reasons.

THE DANSE MACABRE

If an individual vampire's existence is the Requiem, the way she interacts with her fellow Kindred is the Danse Macabre, through which any number of individual Requiems play, conflict and resolve.

To many Kindred, the Danse Macabre has negative connotations. Relationships between Kindred are forced, at best, as vampires are seemingly designed to be solitary predators. The Embrace doesn't completely deny the urges the individual knew as a mortal, however. Inevitably over the course of undeath, all but the most withdrawn yearn for contact among those who might be able to understand them. Is it so unnatural to seek fellowship among others who have experienced the same pains and sorrows inflicted upon them (and inflicted by them) throughout the Requiem?

Indeed, the notion has undeniable risks. Although the Embrace doesn't strip the Man from the individual, it leaves the Beast — the urges and wiles of the facet of personality inside all



Kindred that thrives on blood and doesn't care who it hurts. When Kindred come in contact, they innately fear or see each other as a challenge. Indeed, all Kindred vie for limited resources and secrecy, and other Kindred threaten both. In a world where Kindred must skulk and kill to survive, how trustworthy is any other vampire?

The Requiem weighs on the Kindred soul. When one knows he will never truly die, he has no sense of urgency. Over the course of forever, what can sustain a vampire's interest, or even a Kindred of a century of unlife? In the interests of fighting off their own timeless malaise, the Kindred plot and scheme against each other. Once they've exhausted all of the sources that legitimately brought joy or interest to their unlives, many turn to treachery in hopes of provoking any response at all from their jaded emotions.

This last, then, is the true Danse Macabre, the "dance of death" orchestrated by vampires to elevate themselves above their peers. It is a dangerous dance, punctuated by vampiric traps, scheming elders, ambitious neonates and ruses that can take decades, centuries or even millennia to come to fruition. The Kindred potentially have forever to concoct their master plans and hatch their vendettas — they have no need to rush. For many vampires, revenge is best when left to grow cold, prompting another turn in the Danse Macabre in response. Thus the cycle continues indefinitely.

The Danse Macabre is equally a saving grace and a resignation to damnation, for it distracts the Kindred from their nihilistic, introspective Requiems, but only by causing conflict that jeopardizes those very Requiems.

CLANS

A clan is a vampiric lineage. The Kindred acknowledge five clans, and all Kindred belong to one clan or another. The most widely accepted theory regarding clans is that they are like "families" of vampires. Members of clans all inherit certain mystical commonalities, from acumen with certain Disciplines to traditional shortcomings for their particular type. One of the failings of the "families" theory is that none of the clan progenitors are reliably known, and only a few are guessed at with any degree of confidence. Certainly, the clans came from

somewhere – but where? In a modern context, only two Kindred are known to have no clan, and they haven't reliably demonstrated that they've been able to Embrace over the course of their Requiems. These vampires, the legendary Dracula and the Roman centurion Longinus are responsible for the creation of certain covenants, not clans, but might they be on a path toward clan creation themselves? And if the origin of clans doesn't lie with certain progenitor vampires, from what source do clans originate? If Longinus and Dracula have no clan, who's to say that other, more secretive Kindred haven't also suffered the curse in the same way?

Tonight, the influence of the clans is felt almost everywhere. The five clans have a presence throughout the Western world, or so it is believed. The Kindred definitely came to the New World along with the early colonists, suggesting that these vampires are European in origin, or that they grew out of the civilizations that first populated the world and followed the movements of mortal men. Oral histories and sparse records indicate that some vampiric presence existed among the tribal cultures of North America before its colonization, but whether these creatures were members of clans or solitary, unique beings – or even if they were truly vampires at all – cannot be determined. While information on the Far East is fleeting, members of the five clans are known to be active there, as they are in Africa, South America and much of the Middle East. Still, little is known about how indigenous culture shapes the understanding of clans in all these regions, and anyone attempting to study the phenomenon is probably wise to take no presuppositions with him.

A bloodline is like a clan, but its characteristics are not so universal. It might help to think of a bloodline as a “sub-clan.” Not all vampires are members of bloodlines. Each bloodline has a parent clan from which it distinctly diverges, yet claims descent. Kindred scholars have no reliable estimates of how many bloodlines exist in the world tonight, because bloodlines can arise at any time and few of them would stand up to be counted, even if some formal roster of them were made.

DAEVA

The Daeva are emotional, sensual and desirable. Sexual predators and sensual hedonists alike populate the ranks of these succubi-seducers.

Among Kindred historians, the Daeva are suspected of being one of the oldest clans of the Damned. Their moniker suggests a Persian mythological origin, and their abilities suggest they could be related to the demons from which they take their name. A few ancient writings suggest that the progenitor of the line was a Kindred known as Aesma Daeva, but vampiric scholars debate whether this individual was actually undead or the writings merely draw comparisons to the Persian demon of lust and anger.

The name “Daeva” predates the commonly accepted origin point of Kindred society, generally understood to parallel the ascension of Rome. Certainly, some incarnation of the Daeva existed before then, but whether they had their own society or were merely a rabble of lust-crazed revenants is unknown. After the rise of Rome, the Daeva had become an inextricable part of Kindred society, and vampiric history shows that they were very active in the Camarilla, the first known social contract of the undead.

GANGREL

The Gangrel are primal, hardy and savage. They embody the myths of vampires turning into animals or otherwise changing form (into wolves, bats or mist, for example).

Many Kindred believe that the Gangrel clan is an old one, but due to the Gangrel's bestial nature, few records exist that can connect their origins to any specific time period. While the murky pre-history of the Kindred contains any number of legends about bestial vampires, not all of these tales coincide with the hallmarks of the Gangrel.





Geographically, the Gangrel seem to hail from what is tonight Eastern Europe, where they came in contact with the nascent Camarilla and were reluctantly drawn into that society. As Rome's holdings moved westward, so, too did the Camarilla and thus the Gangrel. Historians also theorize strong Gangrel roots in what is modern Scandinavia. Since those early nights of society, the Gangrel have chosen the outlying borders of domains for their own territories. As such, Gangrel are often seen as pioneers, eking out an existence where domains will later form, or as scavengers, clinging desperately to territories and refusing to yield once domains have fallen.

MEKHET

The Mekhet are quick, discreet and wise. Legends of vampires hiding in shadows, preying secretly on victims and even learning secrets no one else is supposed to know probably refer to Mekhet activities.

Some of the oldest Kindred known to the vampiric world are members of Clan Mekhet, though most spend their time harrowed by the cold sleep known as torpor. While most are predisposed toward solitude, some have traveled with mortal armies and are even suspected of forming undead mercenary factions of their own. As with most other clans, nothing verifiable is known about the progenitor of the Mekhet line. Many stories depict reclusive Mekhet cult leaders or masters of schools of stealthy soldiers, so the clan might have origins that abut the Pharaohs or philosopher-kings of the Classical or Ancient worlds.

The name Mekhet itself gives some clues as to the clan's origin, as it is an Egyptian word for "amulet." Some of the most venerable elders certainly bear features that might be described as Egyptian, while a few have classical Hellenic complexions, which isn't surprising, considering Greece's proximity to Egypt. The commerce between the Egyptians and Greeks, and later the Romans, corresponds with the legendary travels of members of this clan, as well as their formative role in the nascent Camarilla. Since that time, the Mekhet have traveled wherever shadows have fallen, wherever secrets lay hidden and wherever Kindred call upon others to give them counsel.

NOSFERATU

The Nosferatu are stealthy, strong and terrifying. Their very presence unnerves people, whether by physical ugliness, foul stench or nebulous personal malignance.

Studies of Nosferatu legend suggest that the clan is relatively young, possibly originating not too long before the rise of Rome, and possibly among the peoples it conquered. Certainly, the Nosferatu were active among the clans of the Camarilla, but proof of their presence before then is spotty at best. And yet, claims occasionally surface about very old Kindred who, if not Nosferatu, are strikingly *like* the Nosferatu. Whether these vampires are indeed members of the same clan, are Kindred of some "proto-clan" that became the Nosferatu or are entirely unrelated can only be guessed at.

Legends of the *nosferatu* are historically heaviest in central Europe, particularly in Germany, northern Italy and eastern France. Early records describing what seem to be broods of Nosferatu also originate in modern Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, with some indication of presence in north Africa as well. Like the Gangrel, Nosferatu tend to either seek out territories before or after most of Kindred culture bothers with them. Unlike the Gangrel, though, the Nosferatu adapt relatively quickly to the presence of other vampires, relying on their monstrous nature to make a place for them in the society of the Damned.

VENTRUE

The Ventrue are regal, commanding and aristocratic. Vampires as everything from Eastern European lords on the mountain to gentrified nobles to modern corporate raiders belong to this clan.

Surprisingly, the Ventrue are understood to be the youngest of the clans, almost certainly originating in Rome itself, probably in tandem with the formation of the Camarilla. While their history is relatively short (in vampiric terms), it is also distinguished, as the Ventrue are made to rule. Although none remember the name of the first Ventrue, various vampiric histories do ascribe the origin of the clan, which was believed to once be a covenant, to a single female vampire. A darker history implies that this Kindred was not the first of the Ventrue line, but that she consumed the soul of her own sire, and in so doing founded a new bloodline that rose to the status of a proper clan.

As might be surmised, the Ventrue have historically been strongest in Europe, from which they grew into North and Central America, but their presence elsewhere in the world has been relatively minor. As a clan, their numbers are probably fewer than those of any other clan, but such things vary by domain, as one vampire community might consist of nothing but Ventrue – likely all the preeminent Kindred's progeny.

COTERIES

Decades and centuries ago, when cities were smaller and technology far less advanced, the Kindred could afford to remain solitary predators, moving alone through the massed ranks of humanity. Tonight, the world has changed. Both mortal and Kindred populations are substantially larger than anyone could have dreamed even a few score years ago. Kindred, particularly young ones with no political clout and minimal influence in the mortal world, need allies in ways their elders never did at their age. Combined with the lingering desire for companionship left over from their mortal days, this need inspires modern Kindred to gather in small social groups called coteries.

The coterie, which normally consists of anywhere from three to six Kindred, with a few unusual groups growing as large as a dozen, has existed as an ideal for centuries. In ages past, coteries tended to assemble for a specific purpose, such as the taking of an important road and the construction of a lair, or perhaps defending a domain against outside aggression. The notion of a coterie that assembles and remains together for long-term goals, or even more strangely for social purposes, seems alien and artificial to most elders tonight. Their positions in society are already secure, their havens well hidden from enemies and unsuspecting kine alike. They dismiss the formation of coteries as youthful foolishness, or even worse as the behavior of animals.

For those Kindred not considered elders, however, coteries are just common sense. Some modern coteries do assemble for a particular goal, as they did in years past. It might be an objective that members wish to achieve, or they might be assembled at the behest of a Kindred leader, faction, their sires or by any others with the authority to demand some service of the group members. In most cases, coteries are purely social constructs, with no purpose other than the long-term benefit and mutual protection of their membership. They provide allies and support that young Kindred haven't yet managed to find anywhere else. At the very least, such community provides someone to watch one's back, to aid in the hunt and to corroborate any accounts that might have to be given to elders or authorities – advantages not be underestimated in the world of the Damned.

That said, coteries aren't happy bands of friends rollicking through a domain. The mistrust endemic to all Kindred doesn't end with the formation of a group. Coteries are subject to the same internal squabbling, double-dealing and, on occasion, outright betrayal as any other Kin-





dred institution, especially owing to the fact that most coteries are cosmopolitan with regard to members' origins. In fact, almost every coterie ever formed is temporary; even if it lasts decades, it eventually falls apart. The more time that passes, the more opportunities for advancement by betrayal come up, and some member is almost certain to succumb to temptation eventually. Even on the off chance that nobody leaves or turns against the group, Kindred tend to grow increasingly paranoid as they age. Considering the sort of society in which they "grow up," this reaction isn't unreasonable. What it means, however, is that most vampires beyond a certain age aren't willing to trust their former coterie-mates, even if nobody has engaged in any direct treachery. Those coteries that don't tear apart due to dishonesty or ambition inevitably separate out of mistrust that someone will turn traitor.

Exceptions exist, of course. Some elders still operate in, or at least maintain contact with, their former coteries, if only to maintain longstanding networks of contacts, allies and the like. These long-lasting groups are rare, though. For the most part, elders continue to mistrust the notion of coteries — even those who, in their youth, were members of one — and, by extension, they often mistrust those fledglings who form them. In fact, though few admit it, many elders fear the spread of the coterie phenomenon, concerned that it will provide future rivals with a base of power they themselves cannot exploit.

DEAD CULTURES

The society of the Damned is a mysterious and alien thing. After all, Kindred nature — the innate paranoia, distrust and animosity that vampires often hold toward one another, to say nothing of their constant squabbles over hunting territory — would seem to suggest that they were intended to be lone hunters.

Some believe that Kindred society exists now as it has for thousands of years. Legend has it that vampires once ruled as kings and that their feudal domains have simply passed down through the centuries. Of course, no vampire who walks the Earth tonight, or at least none known, can truly recall the details of events so long past. The memories of those Kindred who have slept away the decades grow uncertain. Dreams intrude on reality, and none of them can truly know what *was* from what they simply *believe* to remember.

Some Kindred, particularly among the neonates, believe their society is a more recent development, at least in historical terms. They maintain that only in the modern era, when hiding from the kine has truly become difficult thanks to rapid communication and other technological advancement, has Kindred isolation from humankind become complete. Only now, they claim, has the need for a separate society developed.

The primary purpose of Kindred society, Kindred philosophers believe, is regulation. Kindred gather not merely in physical proximity, but socially, under a local government because enough of them recognize the need to police their own. Were the Kindred to dwell in the crowded cities with no overt authority, nothing would prevent the indiscrete or foolish from waging war on one another openly, feeding indiscriminately or otherwise threatening each other's vitality. A figure known as the Prince (or whoever represents the local government) is an enforcer, first and foremost.

Beyond this, Kindred claim that their kind cleaves together socially for reasons far more personal and ingrained than the need to protect themselves from each other. Kindred society grants its members something they could never have among mortals: a sense of belonging, of community. Vampires might despise the greater portion of their fellows and their Prince or governor — and a great many do — but this is nevertheless their community, their city. Where mortals turn to family, the Kindred have clans. Where mortals form nations and cultures, the Kindred have covenants. These social constructs allow the Kindred to feel as

though they're part of something, to counter the extreme isolation they would otherwise suffer for all eternity.

The Kindred are still outsiders, proponents of this idealized state, but at least their domains and clans and covenants allow them to be outsiders together.

Many elders, of course, consider such theories a heap of mealy mouthed, revisionist, self-indulgent effluvia spewed by idle childer with no knowledge of the way the world works. As they cannot provide any evidence for their conservative, "society has always existed thus" attitudes, however, elders aren't likely to silence the social theorists any time soon. And thus the Danse Macabre continues on one more front.



THE COVENANTS

A covenant is a social unit of vampires. Each is an artificial group comprising Kindred with similar philosophies, ideals, political aims and even religious notions. Vampires can usually belong to only one covenant at a time, as members are somewhat exclusionary about their principles, but Kindred sometimes leave one covenant to join another, evade notice of membership in multiple covenants, or actively concoct false identities with which to spy on other covenants. Some vampires belong to no covenant at all. While all of these groups receive greater treatment elsewhere in this book, it helps to familiarize yourself with some of their basic notions.

The Carthians seek to reconcile Kindred society with modern governmental structures and social systems. In any number of cities across the world, the Carthian experiment is in some stage of its inexorable cycle, running from naive idealism to "the revolution eats its children."

The Circle of the Crone venerates a variety of female figures as an amalgamated creator of vampires, the Mother of all Monsters. Regarded as pagans by some of the more conservative Kindred factions, the Circle relies more on holistics and redemption than on the penitence and guilt of other ideological covenants. Its members are sorcerers and blood witches.

The Invictus is the aristocracy of the night. Neofeudal and corrupt from within, it is nonetheless a powerful covenant that draws strength from tradition. The Invictus claims to trace its roots back as far as ancient Rome, if not before.

The Lancea Sanctum looks to Biblical history for its spiritual outlook. The covenant seeks to influence Kindred society with the strictures of Longinus, who was believed to be a progenitor turned into one of the Damned by the blood of Christ. The covenant practices a magic that draws on elements from Biblical times, when God's will was manifest.

The Ordo Dracul is a neo-Victorian faction not unlike a secret society. It commands mystical knowledge and rituals that allow members to transcend their vampiric state. The covenant claims descent from the historical Vlad Tepes — Dracula himself.

Kindred who belong to no covenant at all are known by many names, but among the most universal are "the unaligned" or "the unbound." They have no formal structure, and many just want to handle the Requiem on their own terms, rather than those of covenants or other institutions.



THE BODY COUNT

So how many Kindred are there? They must exist in pretty substantial numbers if they've got a society, yet they've managed to keep themselves more or less hidden from the majority of the mortals around them.

The truth is, Kindred numbers vary from city to city. In most small cities, the proportion of undead to mortals tends to be relatively low: One vampire per 100,000 or more mortals is not uncommon. In large cities, the ratio is usually nearer one vampire per 50,000 mortals. In some cities that seem to draw the Kindred for whatever reason — cities such as New York,





London, New Orleans and Chicago – the ratio can be substantially higher. Most Princes don't particularly keep track. As long as the population doesn't grow so high that people take notice of the predators among them, numbers don't matter.

If one were to take a worldwide average, the ratio is probably around the one-per-50,000 mark. It fluctuates so thoroughly from domain to domain that one should never assume that any given population corresponds to that figure.

A GILDED CAGE

Perhaps the single greatest reason vampire society has developed as it has is the Kindred's unbreakable tie to the city. The undead are bound to the cities of the kine as tightly as they are to the Blood itself. For them, the city is really a cage, gilded though it might be, and the Kindred could no more abandon it than they could become vegetarians.

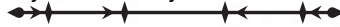
It would be foolish, of course, to suggest that Kindred never travel. If they did not, they could never have spread as humanity has, and they would still be restricted to select areas of the Old World. Despite all the reasons not to, reasons that have literally shaped Kindred society as it's known tonight, travel is sometimes necessary. It's not that Kindred don't travel, it's that they don't travel casually.

What is it, then, about cities that holds the Kindred? Why does each city exist as its own fiefdom, with little if any congress between it and its neighbor?



TRAVEL AND VAMPIRIC GATHERINGS

For live-action play, especially in chronicles with more than a handful of games, travel becomes an interesting conundrum in and of itself. As vampires communicate between domains, alliances and hatreds develop as covenants and clans establish relationships. Although **Requiem** is city based, such relationships inevitably result in travel and larger gatherings. Although they still consider each other to be potential enemies, vampires in such a setting see perceive travel and meetings more as an opportunity rather than an immediate danger: the benefits of gaining allies and securing one's position often outweigh the risks of making the trip. With the optional mechanics for *Predator's Taint* being inactive at these meetings (see page 237), Storytellers can portray a more dynamic vampiric society that doesn't shun travel as much as one would expect. Remember that violence and lethal combat are still the very last resort in the Requiem, however: you shouldn't make a trip to another city for the purposes of torporing or killing a vampiric enemy. It is virtually unheard of for vampiric travelers to visit a domain and willfully breach its Elysia, for instance.



STAYING NEAR THE WELL

Perhaps the most obvious reason for the Kindred to gather in cities, and to remain there, is that that's where the people are. Ultimately, no matter what sort of religious, cultural or mystical face the Kindred wish to put on it, blood is all that matters. It's at the core of everything they do. While hunting is never a sure thing, a Kindred can be relatively certain that, with care and effort, she can find someone on whom to feed in a city without attracting too much attention. Cities have slums, clubs, drug dens, hospitals and, if it comes down to it, dark alleys. Even when Kindred can find people elsewhere, they don't always present a viable opportunity for feeding.

Certainly, it might be possible for a particularly hardy or desperate vampire to eke out an existence outside an urban center. A rustic town of 500 people out in the middle of nowhere might provide enough Vitae to support a particularly careful Kindred for a short time. In a population of that size, however, someone would eventually discover his depredations when he

inevitably loses control and frenzies. At best, the vampire has a frightened, angry population of mortals on his hands, all of whom move on or look for the culprit with shotguns. At worst, the elaborate charade that hides the Kindred from the world's awareness is compromised, at least on a local level.

Some few vampires take the idea of escape a step further and attempt to survive in the wilds, feeding on animals. Many give it up after a relatively short time, though. Not only do they face a relative paucity of available blood, Kindred eventually reach the point at which animals are no longer sustaining. Why scavenge and scrounge in the yard when they can simply stay nearer the table and feast?

In addition to the difficulties involved in feeding, existing outside a city invariably leaves a Kindred subject to the other hazards and difficulties inherent to travel.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

The paradox of the Kindred is that they possess both the solitary nature of the predator and the social leanings of humans. They gather in groups, though their competitive and aggressive nature often renders such gathering dangerous, or at least uncomfortable. They compete against one another — plotting, scheming, backstabbing — yet they find themselves unable to function in other environments. Even if the Kindred could easily acquire blood outside the urban sprawl, few would be willing to leave cities behind, for both Kindred and mortal society supports them.

The Kindred gain most of their power and strength not from their innate abilities, but from the influence they wield in the mortal world. No matter how old or powerful a vampire is, someone is always older and stronger. Why risk one's potentially eternal existence, miserable as it might be at times, when one can manipulate pawns into taking those risks instead? Rare is the Kindred without some influence, or at least a few contacts in government, business, organized crime or some other potentially useful element of kine society. And for the most part, those connections are all within the city because that's where the people are.

A Kindred without contacts is largely helpless. He certainly has his innate powers — the strength and abilities inherent in the Blood and his undead nature — but so do his enemies, and he no longer has any help on which to call.

Even Kindred society serves as something of a safety net, as long as everyone involved is willing to follow the rules. For the most part, any given vampire is unlikely to attack another openly within the city. All but the most desperate Kindred think twice before blatantly violating the Traditions of their kind or the local law for fear of reprisal from the Prince and other authorities. Away from the reach of the Prince, however, all bets are off. For the Kindred, anything beyond the city limits is lawless territory, lacking any supreme authority to whom grievances can be brought. As most wise Kindred stay inside their cage, those who do not have no undead allies on whom to call, just as they have few or no mortal pawns.



PLAYING THE DANSE MACABRE

The need to build up both mortal influence and Kindred allies is a vicious cycle that constantly feeds into itself. Young, unattached Kindred who are new to the Requiem quickly find that they need some degree of leverage in order to make a place for themselves in the world of the Damned. Maybe a fledgling vampire has accidentally angered another neonate, someone holds a grudge against her sire, she needs to convince an elder to allow her to feed in his territory, or maybe she simply runs across someone who dislikes her covenant, clan, bloodline or hair color. She needs allies among the local Kindred, or at least something to offer or with which to threaten her rival. The greatest asset most Kindred have is access to their ties and connections in





mortal society. Certainly, some particularly skilled Kindred provide other services, and a Prince can offer territory or other special privileges, but influence is the currency with which most Kindred barter. One elder with leverage at the local airport might agree to smuggle something for another, if the other will use his own contacts to make sure that the police don't break up the first's drug-trafficking operation. Without some measure of influence in mortal society, most Kindred have little to trade.

So the young vampire discovers that she must develop mortal allies and contacts if she wishes to cultivate Kindred allies. The more Kindred allies she has, however, the more attention she draws. The enemies of her allies become her enemies. Other Kindred who might have left her alone suddenly see her rising in power and decide to cut her off at the knees before she becomes dangerous. Suddenly, her allies aren't sufficient. She needs more connections, more influential sponsors. For that, she needs to develop more contacts and influence in kine society.

Despite the amicable-sounding name they have chosen for themselves, the "Kindred" don't particularly see themselves as family unless they're forced to do so. The bonds of friendship are all but nonexistent among vampires, and those relationships that do form against all odds rarely survive as long as those who enter into them. Kindred who attempt to remain aloof, who try to avoid entangling themselves in mortal or Kindred affairs, usually find that society won't permit them to sit the game out.

And so it goes, an endless loop making sure that few Kindred ever manage to haul themselves out of the quagmire that is the modern city.



The bonds of clan, bloodline or covenant also provide ample ties to make common cause between vampires. Kindred who dwell among a large population of their clanmates and covenant members have an undeniable advantage over those who do not. Almost by definition, these social bonds are found entirely within cities. Leaving them all behind might seem like a liberating notion to young Kindred, as they wouldn't have to worry about upsetting their brethren, angering elders, hunting on the wrong ground or speaking to the wrong person. Too many Kindred have found, however, that the inherent difficulties of surviving away from population centers are greater than expected, and they have no assistance on which to call.

LONELINESS

One of the most ingrained reasons to remain in cities is loneliness. Kindred are no longer mortal, but the transition is relatively recent for most. Not even the eldest can fully shake the last lingering traces of what they used to be. Predators tend toward solitude by nature, but people are gregarious in the extreme, and the Kindred's waning sense of community, of belonging, helps tie them to their remaining Humanity. Vampires certainly feel lonely as often or as easily as mortals do (if not more so), and some who remain apart from the masses too long discover they can no longer blend in when they attempt to return.

Some young Kindred have recently attempted to survive in the wild as coterie, rather than as individuals. Doing so goes a long way toward alleviating the loneliness of such isolation, but many of these coterie run into difficulties finding enough sustenance upon which to feed. It's hard enough for a lone Kindred to feed herself on animals and the occasional hitchhiker. For a group, the task is extremely challenging in the long run.

ELYSIUM

One of the most ancient and honored surviving Kindred customs, and one whose importance many modern neonates drastically underestimate, is that of Elysium. In essence, a Prince may declare specific locations of his city to be Elysium, places free of violence, safe for all Kindred. Most official Kindred business takes place in Elysium. The Prince's court is most frequently held in one such location, and most young vampires who need to speak with a leader or elder come to Elysium to seek them out. Politics and intrigue are as common



here as rats on the street outside, with debate and negotiation heard as frequently as casual gossip. Many elders spend entire nights here, and while neonates are usually welcome, they are expected to remember their place.

Most areas of Elysium are cultural or artistic centers, conducive to intellectual pursuits and the sense of calm reflection that most Princes hope to maintain. Such places include everything from theaters and opera houses to museums and galleries to university halls and libraries. As more Princes come to accept the ways and conveniences of the modern world, and as young Kindred ascend to positions of power, the number of nightclubs and restaurants declared Elysium grows as well. In any case, wherever an Elysium is, attendees are expected to dress and comport themselves appropriately, for the sake of the secrecy, if not simple courtesy.

While refreshments are often provided at Elysium, especially during court or other formal gatherings, such is not always the case. It is considered bad manners to show up to Elysium hungry, as not only does doing so lead to short tempers and potential violations of the laws of nonviolence, but most Princes forbid hunting within several blocks of Elysium. After all, these locations are centers of Kindred activity. If hunting were permitted in the region, it would only be a matter of time before the number of strange occurrences and deaths attracted attention. Kindred who bring guests to Elysium — be they blood slaves, mortal retainers, new childer, vampires from outside the city or even local Kindred who were not invited to a given event — are responsible for their guests' behavior, and they can be punished severely for violations committed by companions.

Any sort of physical or mystical confrontation is strictly forbidden within Elysium (though social conflict has risen to both an art form and outright war). Violators of this rule are inevitably banished or executed posthaste. When tempers flare beyond words, the Prince, Sheriff or Master of Elysium might ask those involved to leave and cool off elsewhere in hopes of heading off an explosion that would result in violence and punishment. Elysium is strictly neutral ground, and Kindred are expected to leave their conflicts — or at least any physical continuation of them — outside. That said, elders are experts at holding grudges. While a neonate might get away with mouthing off to an elder while inside, he'd better have reliable transportation home and learn to sleep with one eye open. Many Kindred conflicts that have eventually erupted in violence began with a single misspoken word in the corridors of Elysium.



OPTIONAL RULE: THE FOURTH TRADITION

Sometimes, the tradition of Elysium takes on an almost mystical significance of its own, such is the power that Kindred invest in this notion. It becomes a kind of “fourth Tradition,” a place where vampires can seek refuge from the violent predations of their own kind. To reflect this, Storytellers may rule that taking any sort of overtly violent action against another vampire within Elysium requires the would-be assailant to spend a Willpower point each turn. This does *not* count toward the normal limit of one Willpower point per turn. Actually attempting to kill or diablerize another Kindred requires the expenditure of a Willpower *dot* to go through with the act. This even applies to characters in frenzy. They might destroy the surrounding area or wreak their vengeance on nearby mortals, but without spending Willpower, they will not focus their fury on another vampire.

Mortals and other supernatural creatures are immune to these effects, and vampires may likewise attack them freely, and it should be noted that ghouls are still affected due to the fact of the curse flowing in their veins. Vampires may always defend themselves normally, though if they desire to destroy a vampiric enemy they must still pay the cost normally. After all, this “tradition” merely makes it hard for them to openly prey on each other in Elysium. It doesn't pacify them to the point where





they become helpless targets. Likewise, a vampire whose ghoul or mortal ally attacks another vampire within Elysium is still expected to answer for the behavior of her “guest,” which usually means suffering the same punishment as if she had committed the act herself.

Needless to say, while it cuts down on the amount of violence during sessions, this rule must be closely monitored to forestall abuse. An area of Elysium that enjoys these unique benefits must be well-known and publically declared, to the city at large if not to all the characters involved in a fight. Part of the power of this unspoken Tradition derives from the air of barely enforced civility that hangs over the location, after all. A Prince cannot declare her immediate presence to be Elysium, for example, or hastily announce Elysium on the spot to avoid an ambush. Nor can the Elysium contain a character’s personal Haven. At the same time, the Storyteller should enforce the spirit, not the letter of these guidelines. For instance, a character cannot sabotage Elysium by setting up a sleeping bag somewhere in the building and then claiming “Well, I have my haven here, so it’s no longer Elysium, and I can shoot him all I want.”



HAVENS

Any discussion of Kindred safety and security from zealous enemies must eventually turn to the concept of the haven — at once a vampire’s resting place, personal domain and private inner sanctum. A haven is the place (perhaps the only place) where a vampire can reliably find shelter from the sun while she sleeps the day away. Therefore, the selection and administration of one’s haven can often be (or quickly become) one of the most important aspects of a young vampire’s unlife.

The vast majority of neonates do not begin their unives with an established haven of their own. As a rule, mortals do not keep their domiciles in a condition well suited to a vampire’s needs, so the Embrace often forces an immediate change of environs upon a newly created fledgling. More often than not, a Kindred’s sire provides his new progeny with a haven, even if only temporarily. Once a neonate has grown accustomed to the rules of his new existence, he may then — often with his sire’s assistance — procure a haven of his own somewhere in the domain. Once in a while, the neonate merely returns to his former, mortal residence with the intent of renovating, and indeed, some types of homes need surprisingly little work in order to become functional havens. Most of the time, though, the sire advises against such a move, as it invites questions from one’s former life and generally complicates a young vampire’s existence unnecessarily.



A SIRE’S HOSPITALITY

A strange, unofficial tradition has arisen over time concerning havens, and it has caused no small measure of ill will between sires and childer over the centuries. The tradition is seen most often among the Ventrue clan, and many believe that the custom’s origins can be traced back to an ancient Eastern European mortal convention. Regardless, some Kindred follow a tradition that says a sire is responsible for housing his progeny until such time as that protege is released into the world. After all, they argue, once a neonate has a haven of his own, he technically has his own personal domain, and many old-fashioned sires do not believe that childer are entitled to the rights of domain until such time as they are released. Therefore, the waiting period for receiving a haven of one’s own can be much longer than a neonate expects, depending on his sire’s sense of convention. Many bitter neonates are quick to point out the fact that being beholden to one’s sire for protection from the banes of one’s existence, as well as for one’s political station in vampiric society, puts one’s entire unlife in the sire’s hands, and that’s just how many sires like it. Thankfully, this tradition is practiced less frequently as time marches on. Tonight, few sires would even want their fledgling childer dwelling under the same roof with them for years on end.



A haven itself is a very personal affair. Given the sheer amount of time a Kindred must spend within — at least 12 hours a day, for all eternity — a haven can become the only thing its owner will see in any real sense as his own. One does not have to be aesthetically obsessed to appreciate a level of personalization in the home, and even the most Spartan vampire eventually develops some sense of individual style (or at least efficiency) in the design, decoration and layout of his haven.

Technically speaking, a haven is nothing more than a vampire's home. At least, that's all it has to be to fit the definition. As such, there exist just as many different kinds of havens as mortal domiciles, or even more, considering the options at a vampire's disposal. The average mortal can't stand living under extreme weather or pressure conditions, but such considerations mean very little to the undead. Some Kindred (especially the Gangrel and some Nosferatu) enjoy the solitude offered by inhospitable surroundings, and they elect to make havens in areas deep underground, atop dizzying heights or even underwater. Others opt to blend in as much as they can, preferring the warm comforts of modern high society to the cold comforts of the grave. Daeva and Ventrue in particular are known for their rarified tastes in havens (and all associated trappings), and some well-to-do Kindred maintain lavish homes and penthouse suites that would make the wealthiest mortal green with envy.

Security, of course, is of paramount concern, and Kindred possessed of any degree of material resources usually spare no expense in making sure that a haven is well protected from both the sun and from daytime intrusion. Such security might come in the form of high-tech alarms, a bank of cameras, pressure-sensitive floor plates and the like, or it can come merely from locale. A haven buried deep underground or in an old vault is going to be very secure by nature alone, without any further security measures.

DOMAINS OF THE DEAD

Without a doubt, isolation and the attitudes and practices spawned by it have resulted in the current forms of vampiric government, culture and society. While humanity has developed enormous countries, world-spanning faiths, multi-national cultures and even the tentative beginnings of a world community, the Kindred have been left behind, as unchanging as they are undying. Exceptions certainly exist, but for the most part, when it comes to government and sociological development, the Kindred never left far more primitive times.

No Kindred domain is governed exactly like any other, but the vast majority of them resemble the feudal nations of ages past. This doesn't mean that the Kindred ignore modern conveniences or dress like the cast of a Shakespearean tragedy. It does mean that their power structure is usually hierarchical and largely inviolate.

Consider the details. A given city is isolated by Kindred standards. It's a walled sanctuary with barbarians roving outside the gates. The population usually consists of Kindred of drastically different ages, influence and power. And, perhaps most importantly, no higher authority exists outside the city. Nobody can step in and tell the locals they're doing it wrong.

Add all this up, and the result is a "government" in which anyone strong enough to take and hold power is, by default, entitled to it. In most cases, this is a single vampire, usually one of the eldest and most powerful in the city. The standard term for the Kindred who rules a given domain is gender-neutral "Prince," though many choose alternate titles that more accurately reflect their personalities and styles of rule. A few cities are ruled by allied groups of Kindred, and an even smaller number actually attempt to emulate more modern political styles of governing, but these cities are by far the exception, not the rule.

By and large, the Kindred have no choice but to accept the dictates and leadership of a given Prince, no matter how tyrannical his reign is or odious his laws are. After all, what are the other





options? Petition for help? To whom? No higher authority exists. Overthrow the regime? Odds are, no single faction in the city has the strength to wrest power from the Prince, else it would have happened already. One might be able to rally several different factions, multiple powerful elders or simply a great portion of the Kindred population behind the goal, but for this tactic to work, a great many Kindred with their own ambitions and fears must put aside their differences and work together. This simply doesn't happen often enough to provide much hope. The only way such is likely to occur is if the Prince is so truly horrible and abusive that nearly every vampire in the city believes that she has something to gain by ousting him. Sometimes a single powerful elder does succeed in scheming her way to authority, ousting a weaker Prince in the process, but doing so requires years of machinations, numerous alliances and many decades of experience.

So if no appeal is available and revolution is unlikely to succeed, what's left? Leave the city, begin anew somewhere else? The Kindred are acutely aware of the hazards of that course of action. For the great majority of Kindred, the only way to survive is to keep one's head down, grin and bear the current Prince no matter how awful he is, and hope one night to accumulate enough personal power and influence to take steps at that time.

It must be said, though, that not all Princes are sadistic, iron-fisted tyrants. Few Princes rule so absolutely that they can do everything they want. Other elders most likely dwell in their domains. Certain vampires (known collectively and individually as the Primogen) might advise the Prince, but that doesn't necessarily mean they share all his goals and desires. Few Princes are so secure in their positions that they can afford to completely ignore the wishes of their cities' elders. This isn't necessarily a good thing – no guarantee exists that the desires of other elders are any better for young Kindred than those of the Prince – but the need to make occasional concessions is still the only check on the Prince's power, other than the Traditions (see p. 91).

Many domains take the feudal model further still. One method the Prince has of both mollifying the other elders and delegating responsibility is to parcel out portions of his city to other Kindred as personal feeding grounds. Only a very few Princes parcel off an entire city. Most focus only on the best areas: downtown, specific slums, hospital districts, club and bar areas. (In many cities, an area of this sort is called the Rack.) If the Prince grants such a territory to an elder, that elder then decides who, if anyone, may feed there. This grants the elder substantial power, as many Kindred rely on Racks for easy feeding. If they wish to continue hunting in those areas, they must offer favors or concessions to the current landholder. Of course, some Kindred choose to ignore the fact that the territory is no longer open. Many get away with it, but a vampire caught poaching on another's territory can be taken before the Prince and judged as a criminal.

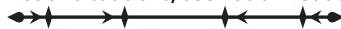


DEPENDENT DOMAINS

Precisely how much power individual elders have over those in their territory varies city by city. In some domains, they have very little. They might offer to trade feeding and haven rights for boons or services, but anything beyond that is considered stepping on the Prince's toes.

In other cities, elders rule their territories as domains within domains. Here, an elder may set his own laws and enforce his own dictates, as long as they do not blatantly contradict those of the Prince. This is particularly common in cities where an elder is nearly as powerful as the Prince himself. In some cases, the Prince doesn't even grant territorial rights to the elder in question. Rather, that elder goes to him and says, "I'm claiming this portion of the city for my own. Do you care to dispute it?" Weak Princes (at least in comparison to other local elders) sometimes accept such arrangements in order to avoid conflict.

For more information on such situations, see "Subinfeudation" on p. 34.



So, as in a feudal kingdom, the domain is divided into smaller territories, each of which is metaphorically ruled by its own landowner, who has power over those who would hunt or dwell in his territory. That power, however, still ultimately belongs to the Prince, who might withdraw his grant or offer it to someone else. Thus does a wise Prince placate those who would otherwise be his enemies, while simultaneously granting himself leverage over them for future use.

In some cities, the process continues further still. Those who control a given territory might subdivide it further, granting portions of their own holdings to favored childer or allies. Doing so works only in the largest cities, of course, and not always in those. When it does, the local rule often has three or even more layers, resulting in a chain of authority that even the Byzantine-minded Kindred can find confusing.

RULE BY FEAR

Niccolo Machiavelli wrote, when speaking of wielding and maintaining political power, “...one ought to be both feared and loved, but as it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting.” This is a theory by which the Kindred have ruled for as long as any surviving vampire can remember. It is fear, after all, more than any other factor that holds Kindred society together.

In most cases, any social or political action the Kindred take is motivated by fear. The Prince fears losing power, so she cracks down on those who rebel against her word. Elders fear the loss of status, so they squabble among themselves to tear down their enemies while exalting themselves in the Prince’s eyes. Neonates fear the tyrannical political machine, and they react either by becoming part of it or by striking against it in hopes of changing the system before the system catches up with them. Covenants as a whole fear mortals and young Kindred. The Invictus fears savvy young Kindred who can react to the modern world better than staid elders can, and it fears staid elders who have had decades or centuries to hoard power and influence. The Lancea Sanctum fears the changes and secular nature of the modern world. The Carthians fear the current power structure. The unbound fear being bound by the laws of others. The Circle of the Crone seemingly fears the very nature of the Kindred condition. The Ordo Dracul fears that which it cannot quantify or understand. All of the Damned fear being cut off from access to blood or being forced to leave their home cities.


It would not be wholly inaccurate to say that the Kindred who would be Prince must simply make herself the most feared, more than she must be the most powerful or the best connected or the eldest. This, then, is why the majority of Princes are far more despotic than, perhaps, their situations require. They know that it is only their subjects’ fear that keeps them in line. Some Kindred are loyal to their Prince due to some personal attachment, however, or perhaps in repayment for past favors. As always, the rare exception does exist.




ANACHRONISM ASCENDANT

Some young Kindred, particularly those who are not particularly familiar with the feudal model, are utterly confounded by the shockingly outdated nature of Kindred society. Even when established in a context they can understand, it makes for a horrifying juxtaposition with the comparatively progressive modern world from which they have been drawn. Kindred society has various cliques, all of which tend to cling together and snub anyone outside their own incestuous ranks. It has a proliferation of petty grudges, backstabbing and overblown squabbles over minor or even imagined slights. And, like many factionalized populations, vampire society is ruled with an iron fist by one individual (or, in a few cases, a cadre) who has managed to become the most popular, largely by manipulating everyone else’s fear of being left out or seen as different.





Needless to say, the society of the Damned is far from perfect. The fact that such vicious and barbaric customs ring true even in general terms goes a long way toward showing how petty and deadly many Kindred personal and political struggles can be.



Another factor shaping and steering Kindred society, and one that ties back into the notion of rule by fear, is the proliferation of vendettas and feuds among the undead. The Kindred have developed the ability to hold and inflate a grudge to an art form, and most of them never forget even the most minuscule slight. Part of this is physiological. As the Kindred cease to age, so too do they cease to grow mentally and emotionally. Therefore, a vampire of 200 probably knows a great deal more than she did when she was 20, but she is unlikely to be any more mature or truly any wiser. And as the majority of modern Kindred are Embraced at the prime of life – and therefore relatively young – few of them ever develop the maturity that would have come with but another decade or so of actual living.

Perhaps the greater part of it, however, comes back to fear. Kindred respond to minor offenses by holding grudges and working to humble or destroy the one who slighted them because they are scared of doing otherwise. They fear losing face, and therefore status and power, in the eyes of their compatriots, so they must show that they can give better than they receive. They fear appearing weak before those who slight them, thus inviting further and ever-escalating scorn and political attack. Certainly, the infamous Kindred capacity for rage enters into it as well, but fear is, ultimately, the strongest motivator.

These grudges often greatly influence the entirety of society. Factions in a given city, and even entire domains, have struggled and engaged in cold wars with one another purely over an incidental remark or some other minor transgression by one party against another. Many elders seek their positions and offices for no other reason than to wield power against rivals.

These disputes often leave the realm of the personal and grow to far-reaching proportions. A feuding vampire might call upon clanmates or fellow covenant members for support, and while not all of them respond, a few usually do. He might involve allies in the city power structure, which transforms the struggle into a political one, even if political power was not the initial subject of disagreement. It's an open question as to whether the conflict between covenants, which so concerns and even defines those groups in the modern nights, truly began as cultural disagreements at all, or if they were spawned from personal feuds that swiftly grew out of hand.

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES

The previous description of Kindred domains as usually feudal can give the impression that they're all similar in construction. In truth, while the practical result is often the same, the specifics of government differ from city to city. Discussed here are just a few of the possibilities for governmental models found across Kindred domains. All the descriptions assume rule by a single individual, a Prince or the like, but rule by Primogen or other council is also a possibility. Plenty of other types of Kindred governments exist; those listed here represent some of the most common (or, in the case of the democracy, the most frequently attempted and failed). Although the forms vary wildly, the ultimate results – a dictatorship swayed by the powerful few, with little to no recourse available to those beneath – are almost universal.

Remember also that all these governmental models apply to *Kindred society only*. No Prince on the face of the Earth is so powerful that he has the mayor, police chief and local congressman all dancing to his tune. No entire city answers to the whim of a vampire. Even were such a thing possible, it would inevitably lead to a Masquerade breach, for someone would

eventually notice something amiss. Powerful Princes and other Kindred leaders likely have substantial influence among the mortal elite. They are necessary contributors to a mayor's campaign, or they can lean on certain lobbyists who in turn lean on the city council. The Kindred must remain hidden, and even the most brutish Prince knows that his touch must be light indeed when applied to the mortals who dwell within his domain.



DRESSING THE PART

Note that when one of these descriptions says a court or assembly “resembles” something from the past, it doesn't mean the Kindred involved dress in cloaks, hose and powdered wigs. While some truly eccentric or anachronistic elders might maintain the look they preferred back in their mortal days (at least in private), most aren't too many years behind the modern fashion. Dressing as an obvious anachronism is a great way to attract attention, and the Kindred know all too well that attention can bring their whole kind low. Whether he calls himself a Prince, an Archbishop, a CEO or a Don, the ruler of a given domain is far more likely to wear Armani than ermine.



FEUDAL MONARCHY

One of the most common societal models, and the one considered the “default” when discussing a city about which details are unknown, is also the one that most closely resembles the medieval kingdom. A single ruler holds absolute power and makes no attempt to hide that fact. His word is law, enforced by other elders to whom he has chosen to grant titles, authority or territory. Princes of these sorts of domains often hold formal courts and usually decree various laws limiting the movement of other Kindred through their domains, and they demand that all newcomers present themselves for approval. These courts often involve substantial pomp. A Seneschal announces members or petitioners as they arrive, titles that would never see use on the streets are wielded and bestowed, and so forth. This sort of government is found most frequently in Invictus- and Ordo Dracul-dominated cities, but also forms a significant minority among those domains ruled by the Lancea Sanctum and particularly tyrannical Circle of the Crone domains.

THE BOARDROOM

The result of modern sensibilities, this sort of city is run almost like a corporation. The Prince sits in a position much like a board chairman, with other elders in power serving as co-executives. The ultimate result is largely the same as that of the more obvious feudal system, but the Kindred involved like to appear more enlightened. Most decisions are made by a vote of the ruling elders (unless the Prince chooses to overrule them, of course), policies are decided in committee, and the elders make at least a show, if not an honest practice, of rewarding loyalty and ability among underlings. Unlike a true corporate board, presiding vampires rarely have the power to vote their chairman out, and those below them cannot often look forward to a death or retirement opening up a managerial position. Both the Invictus and the Carthians make frequent use of this governmental model.

THE DIOCESE

The Church has influenced both mortal and Kindred history more than any other single entity or organization in the West, and many Kindred model their domains on Church hierarchy even tonight. To uninformed outsiders, this system often appears identical to a feudal system with new names. The Prince — who usually takes an ecclesiastical title such as Archbishop or Cardinal — rules absolutely, assisted by a council of advisors (variously called Priests, Bishops or the like) who serve as enforcers and landowners. The vast majority of





Church-modeled domains tend to swing toward one of two extremes. Many of them — particularly those dominated by the Lancea Sanctum, who make greater use of this system than any other covenant — truly do enforce a rule by religious doctrine. They demand observances and certain behaviors of those who dwell in their domains, or at least of those who would hold offices therein, and truly believe the faith they espouse. At the other extreme are those Kindred who seek to use the trappings of faith and the beliefs of others for their own ends. In these domains — usually found in cities held by the Invictus, the Ordo Dracul, the Circle of the Crone or the unaligned — the overt religious nature of the government is either deliberately mocking, or meant to inspire a loyalty among faithful Kindred that leaders themselves do not honestly share. In either domain, merely questioning the rule of leaders is often a greater crime than in more overtly feudal domains, for the “criminal” does not merely challenge a secular authority, but the rule of God (or Longinus or the Crone or whoever). These domains usually hold official functions with as much pomp as do monarchies, but such gatherings are usually devoted to religious pursuits, including prayers and hymns or rituals and ceremonies, rather than celebrations of the rulers themselves.

BY THE KINDRED, FOR THE KINDRED

Found almost exclusively within Carthian domains (though some of the unbound have tried it, and some Invictus Kindred have tried to appear as though they try it) are those recent attempts at imitating modern governmental systems. These Kindred want to take the lessons of mortals to heart, to eliminate rule by the eldest or most powerful under which they’ve always suffered, and to grant all Kindred an equal say in what happens to them, or at least an equal opportunity to attain power. To date, few of these attempts have lasted, as those Kindred who do obtain power eventually decide they don’t care to give it up when their brethren tell them they should. Those few domains that do remain often resemble the worst aspects of mortal government. They are mired in rules, regulations and red tape designed to prevent any single vampire from wielding too much power, and they are paralyzed by squabbles among various officials, all of whom are convinced that their own vision for the city and government is the way to go. Their courts usually resemble either chaotic public forums or very orderly (and difficult to obtain) private meetings with high officials.

COMMON LAW

While the Traditions (see p. 91) form the basis for all Kindred law, they do not represent the extent of that law. Every Kindred domain has its own rules and regulations. Some have more than others, some enforce them more severely than others, and some are downright bizarre, the results of an eccentric or insane Prince. They all have them, though. Some of the most common laws, those found in many domains, are listed here.

PRESENTATION

Many Princes demand that any Kindred newcomers to their cities present themselves formally at court. This is partly to make sure that the Prince has a solid grasp on who’s in his city at any given time, and partly to make sure that the new arrival understands who holds power and what she’s supposed to do while she’s there. Of course, following this custom can be difficult, since new arrivals rarely know how to find the Prince in order to report, but that, frankly, is their problem. In domains with this law, Kindred who go for more than a few nights without presenting themselves are likely to be dragged before the Prince upon being caught. If the Prince is understanding, he might simply issue a warning. Just as likely, he banishes the offender from the domain without allowing any time to prepare, which is tantamount to a death sentence.



WEAPONRY AND THE DANSE MACABRE

Given the heavily armed nature of the modern age, it's worth noting that vampires often must be very careful about where they carry weapons within the domain. While wandering one's own territory armed is seldom a problem, bringing a weapon into another vampire's territory unannounced can cause some problems, as it's very easy to interpret as a threat in the eyes of suspicious Kindred. Even more importantly, smuggling a weapon into Elysium or into any sort of audience with the Prince is typically seen as a serious if not outright deadly insult. After all, Elysium is supposed to be a neutral territory — sneaking a weapon into that situation is therefore seen as either an intent to violate the peace of Elysium, or an implication that the ruling authorities are not powerful enough to enforce the peace, a slight few such influential Kindred will tolerate. Likewise, entering the presence of the Prince with a concealed weapon implies either an assassin's intent, or simply that one does not feel enough respect for the Prince to go unarmed. Neither message is particularly healthy for the reputation or well-being of the Kindred in question.

Of course, exactly how strictly this practice is enforced depends on the Prince and the domain in question. Since they know many Kindred will try to go armed whenever possible, one solution favored by many Princes is to decree that weapons are forbidden at Elysium and other Kindred gatherings, then grant permission to carry a weapon as a political favor. This not only rewards those who display obedience, but also subtly stacks the deck against those who would threaten the Prince's interests. Officers such as the Sheriff and the Hound are typically assumed to be allowed to carry weapons in the course of their duties, and other officers may receive it in deference to their power or personal standing. Lastly, in domains or territories that are under siege or where Kindred are frequently in danger of attack (witch-hunters, Lupines, etc.), carrying a weapon may be far more common and accepted, especially if those forces have actually attacked Elysium in the past. Even the most tyrannical Prince knows that attempting to needlessly disarm Kindred who fear for their existence is tantamount to inviting rebellion.

Princes that forbid vampires from being armed in Elysium or other specified areas typically require that all weapons be checked at the door, where they can be secured until the vampire decides to leave. Even if a vampire is permitted to carry a weapon, most of the time they must still declare its presence to the Master of Elysium, so that there are no unpleasant surprises later. Note that while it may be relatively easy for Kindred to smuggle weapons in using Touch of Shadow or mundane methods, the penalties for being caught with a weapon later on are typically much harsher, as not only has the Kindred defied the prohibition, but actively attempted to conceal this violation as well. Suffice it to say that the punishment is seldom worth the dubious security of carrying around a gun or a knife, especially since such weapons are typically little threat to the Kindred.



CLAN, COVENANT OR BLOODLINE RESTRICTIONS

In some cities, the powers that be have a particular aversion to one particular clan, covenant or even familial bloodline and have decreed that group a pariah. In these domains, merely being Nosferatu or Carthian or whatever is a breach of the domain's social contract. A member of said group is forced to leave the city, but some truly vicious or hateful Princes call blood hunts on fugitives.

While a city might be dominated by a single covenant, almost no city belongs entirely to one faction over the others, and most contain members of at least three or four, if not all five, of the major covenants. Even rarer, almost to the point of nonexistence, is a city where one specific clan holds absolute power.





FEEDING RESTRICTIONS

Some Princes declare certain types of mortals off-limits to the Kindred population. The restricted type can be anything as narrowly defined as a single family (“None shall touch the descendents of Philip Danforth, for he once saved my life when I was mortal”), a profession (“I need the police to hold back the criminal gangs employed by the unbound”), or even an entire demographic (“As I am a Catholic, and I believe that only we have seen the true way, you shall not touch any of the faith, that we may spread the Word to others”). Of course, the Prince’s reasons for declaring any particular group off-limits might well be entirely selfish — maybe he himself feeds only on that type, and doesn’t want the competition — but that doesn’t make the law any less valid. Violators of such laws are usually banished, but some are slain.

TITLE, RANK AND POSITION

So who holds all the power in Kindred society? What, really, defines a Prince or a member of the Primogen or a Sheriff? Are they all the same? What do they really do?

Presented here are the primary ranks and positions found throughout Kindred domains. Not every city has one of these positions — in fact, the smallest of communities might have only two or three of them — but they are common enough that all are worth discussing. Note that while each position is listed by its most common title, all of them are known by various terms throughout the world.

More on these positions and how they function in game terms can be found in Appendix Two: The Danse Macabre.

PRINCE

The single most important and ubiquitous figure in Kindred politics, the Prince normally rules her city with nearly absolute power. Some are weaker than others, of course, and some are mere figureheads for powerful Primogen or other elders. For the most part, however, any given Prince holds that position for no other reason than that she was strong enough to take it in some way. She might be a consummate politician who attained her post by accumulating favors from all the other elders, and who now manages her domain through diplomacy and compromise. Alternatively, she might be a veritable warlord who gained power by intimidating or “disappearing” her rivals, and now maintains power through the simple expedient of slaughtering anyone who questions her. Most Princes, of course, fall somewhere in the middle, but nearly all boast some advantage or trait that keeps them on top.

Of course, a Prince must do more than bark orders and issue death sentences. Her job is not merely to govern, but to regulate. A Kindred domain is a boiling pot, full of personal and sectarian conflicts, petty grudges and endless political maneuvering, all topped with the innate and inescapable violence of a race of predators who feed on blood. The Prince’s job is to keep a lid on that pot — or, perhaps more accurately, to be the lid on that pot. The reason most Princes eventually become dictatorial is that they must keep so many powerful and easily agitated vampires in line.

Note that in some rare cities, normally those largely dominated by the unaligned and the Carthians, the Prince may attain power through means other than sheer personal ability. Such a Prince might be selected by local elders. The Carthians have even attempted open elections. Most often, such Princes are either overthrown by more powerful Kindred or themselves become tyrants to make sure they are not overthrown.

Other Titles

While Prince is the most common term by far, Kindred leaders refer to themselves as Cardinal, Bishop, Archbishop, Don, President (usually in the case of those rare elections



mentioned earlier), Sultan, Lord, Duke or whatever title strikes their fancy, depending on the nature of their government. A few self-styled “Queens” exist, but most Kindred leaders avoid use of the title King.

SENESCHAL

The Prince’s right hand, the Seneschal is responsible for many of the night-to-night details of running a government. While the Prince concerns himself with conflict in the city and making certain the Masquerade goes unbroken, the Seneschal makes sure that things run smoothly in the government itself. He is responsible for keeping track of the Prince’s assets (and possibly those of the Primogen or other ruling bodies). He makes schedules and appointments and handles the many logistics required so that no elder feels that another is given preferential treatment. The Seneschal holds substantial power in the domain, for he often decides whose petitions are passed on to the Prince, who receives a court audience, and in what order. In some few but noteworthy domains, the Seneschal’s power is so complete, and he is so much better informed of happenings among the elders than the Prince himself, that it’s unclear who the true ruler is.

Other Titles

Although Seneschal is the most frequently used term by far, the position is also sometimes referred to as Amanuensis, Chamberlain, Majordomo, Secretary and, in some of the most informal domains, simply as an assistant.

HERALD

The Herald is the Prince’s mouthpiece. When the Prince makes a decree, the Herald’s job is to make sure that all of the city’s Kindred hear of it (assuming it’s meant for all ears...). When the Prince convenes an unscheduled court, the Herald is responsible for alerting those who must attend. The Herald hands down judgment, represents the Prince in proxy when she cannot (or will not) make a personal appearance, and otherwise serves as something of a “secretary





of state.” The Herald is assumed to speak with the Prince’s voice at all times. Some treacherous or ambitious Heralds use this fact to direct other Kindred to their own liking, making suggestions that others assume carry the weight of the Prince’s orders. Some Heralds who were less subtle than they believed have been executed for this very thing, so wise Heralds remain more or less honest.

The Herald position is often absent in small cities. In many such cases, the Seneschal (or less frequently the Sheriff) handles these duties in addition to his other responsibilities.

Other Titles

In addition to Herald, this position is sometimes called Minister, Runner, Mouthpiece, Spokesman or Secretary (not in the domains where the Seneschal bears that last title, of course).

PRIMOGEN

If a single position can be considered nearly as ubiquitous and representative of Kindred politics as the Prince, it is the Primogen. The Primogen (singular as well as plural) officially serve as the Prince’s advisory council on matters of policy. The precise nature of that council varies from domain to domain. If the Prince is strong and especially tyrannical, the Primogen might be little more than a formality, a conclave of elders who serve to rubberstamp whatever the Prince wishes to do. In most domains, they serve as true advisors, and most wise Princes try to take that advice into account whenever possible. Some Primogen are powerful enough (or the Prince they advise is weak enough) that they can actually overrule the Prince on certain matters. A few Primogen actually rule their cities, either through a figurehead Prince or openly as a governing body.

The precise size and nature of the Primogen varies. Some are informal, meeting in shadowy back rooms when the situation requires, arguing out whatever issue brings them together. Others cleave to a schedule and procedures for speaking, often appearing much like a governing board, a congress, an old-fashioned Greco-Roman senate, an ecclesiastic council or any other form of organization imaginable. Said councils can range from a mere three or so vampires in small communities to large advisory bodies, which may consist of a dozen or more Kindred.

For the most part, the Primogen consist of those local elders who have sufficient power to claim a seat. Also common are those Primogen who decide among themselves whom to admit into their ranks. More rarely, a Prince might select members of his advisory council, but this occurs only in cities where the Prince is especially strong and the Primogen especially weak. Most Primogen contain a mix of members of various clans and covenants, though some are more homogenous, depending on the domain. That is, the Primogen in a city largely dominated by Carthians is likely to have more Carthian members than any others, and the Primogen in a city where the Gangrel are persecuted is unlikely to have many Gangrel members.

Other Titles

The vast majority of these councils (and council members) go by the title Primogen, but they are sometimes known as Boards, Circles, Senates, Tribunals or simply as advisors.

PRISCUS

A Priscus (Prisci in plural) is the informal “head” of a specific clan in a domain. This position is not an official one in the local governmental structure. Rather, it evolves organically as a single powerful Kindred takes responsibility for his clanmates. This can be a choice he himself makes, to seek power, or it might result from others of his clan coming to him with problems. As an informal position, the Prisci have no institutional power or rank. That said, the position does convey a substantial amount of status, and because it’s usually powerful and well-respected Kindred who attain the position, the Prince and other elders are wise to at least consider their opinions. Many Prisci also sit on the Primogen, but the two bodies are

not synonymous; not all Prisci are Primogen, and not all Primogen are Prisci. Many cities have no Prisci, and many more have Prisci for some clans and not others.

WHIP

Perhaps one of the strangest of Kindred positions, the Whip is as informal a position as the Priscus. She is responsible for “inspiring” her clanmates to present a united face on major issues and to make their voices heard on local issues, to make sure that the other clans take them seriously. She is both a leader and a taskmaster, a figurehead and a bully. Many Kindred make the mistake of thinking of the Whip as an assistant to the Priscus. In point of fact, the two positions are independent, and oftentimes at odds with each other. A Whip succeeds only as long as she has sufficient power or leverage to force her clanmates to do as she wishes. Whips exist only in those cities with fairly large populations of a given clan, and even then only if a particular member of that clan feels the need to take the position.

Other Titles

Whips are often referred to, informally and angrily, as taskmasters, slavers, headmasters and many other far less polite terms.

HARPY

Unusual in that it is both an official and unofficial position, the Harpy is, at its simplest level, a member of the “Kindred elite.” Harpies represent a who’s who of Kindred affairs, the celebrities and fad-starters. Other Kindred look to Harpies to see who’s in and who’s out, and what positions and opinions are popular this season. A well-known Harpy can sway public opinion faster with a biting comment than some Princes can with a solid decree.

Harpies who attained their influence and position unofficially, through nothing more than personal power and charisma, are often more respected than those who are appointed by Prince or Primogen. An unofficial Harpy probably calls things as he truly sees them, whereas an appointed Harpy is usually considered a shill or even propagandist for the Prince.

SHERIFF

A combination police investigator, enforcer and inquisitor, the Sheriff is responsible for enforcing the Prince’s laws and dictates, for bringing outlaws before the Prince for judgment and – at times – for carrying out sentences. Some Sheriffs truly believe in the rule of law and believe that they serve their society and fellow Kindred by keeping the city as orderly as possible. Others love the position for the power it offers, as they are permitted to bully and push around other vampires, even those who would normally be too dangerous to touch. Some Sheriffs are clever, subtle investigators, while others are little more than bruisers with rank.

Other Titles

While Sheriff is the most common title, the position is also sometimes called Reeve or Constable.

HOUND

Quite simply, the Hound is the Prince’s (or Primogen’s) muscle. If the Sheriff is a policeman, the Hound is an assassin or a leg-breaker. He doesn’t investigate, he doesn’t question. His job is to punish anyone he’s told to punish. In some instances, the Hound and the Sheriff are at odds due to their overlapping responsibilities. In other cities, the two are combined into a single position. While the Hound might be asked to carry out the official and public chastisement of a lawbreaker, that duty more often falls to the Sheriff. The Hound is normally employed when the Prince wishes to skip over normal (and possibly public) procedure.

Other Titles

In addition to Hound, such an enforcer is often called Assassin, Archon, Scourge or Templar.





MASTER OF ELYSIUM

In essence a combination master of ceremonies and groundskeeper, the Master of Elysium is responsible for maintaining a city's Elysium, ensuring its readiness for court or other official functions, cleaning up afterward and making sure that word of specific Elysium-related events reaches those who must attend. The Master of Elysium is also responsible for enforcing the custom of nonviolence at such gatherings, and he often works hand-in-hand with the Sheriff or Hounds for such purposes. In many cities, the duties of Master of Elysium fall on the Seneschal or Herald. In particularly large cities, more than one Master of Elysium exists, perhaps even one for each declared Elysium.

SUBINFEUDATION

While the feudal model upon which Kindred society is based has its roots in similar historical mortal practices, only the most oblivious Kindred would refuse to acknowledge that governmental feudalism is all but dead in the world of mortal politics. Some of the realities that brought feudalism to an end in the mortal world plague the Kindred world. Unlike many mortal governments, however, the Kindred have found a way to work around such problems.

Quite simply, cities are too big, populaces too large, and minutiae too overwhelming for a single Prince to truly rule an entire domain. Only in the smallest communities can a solitary Prince hope to lay sweeping claim to all of a domain. As a result, the process of domain subinfeudation occurs, which is the breaking down and parceling out of different sub-domains, each of which becomes the responsibility of a "sub-Prince" who answers to the true Prince's ultimate authority. Such figures of authority are known as Regents, and their sub-domains are known as tenurial domains.

For all intents and purposes, a Regent is a Prince in everything but name, with a single, significant difference. The Regent has no praxis in his tenurial domain, no claimed "right to rule." Rather, a Regent is awarded his position by the Prince herself, who can unmake a Regent just as easily as she made him. Appointment to a Regency is almost always accompanied by a formal oath of subservience, particularly among the Ventrue and in domains with a powerful presence of the more traditional covenants such as the Invictus or Lancea Sanctum. Even among more "progressive" clans and covenants, Regencies do not come lightly, and the wise Prince ensures loyalty through some vow, contract or other defined agreement.

How much power a Regent has over a tenurial domain depends on the power of the city's Prince and why the Prince assigns the domain in the first place. One of the benefits of the Regency is the ability to set one's own rules, as long as they also enforce the Prince's dictates. Of course, some Princes specifically restrict the actions of their Regents (such as, "You may not designate an area Elysium" or "Only the true Prince may grant the right to Embrace"), but the title itself comes with near autonomy unless the Prince specifies otherwise.

Regents come in all varieties. Some are themselves loyal or respected elders, gifted with certain domains in which the Prince acknowledges their status, influence or expertise. Prisci and Harpies are prime examples of candidates for this sort of Regency, but one does not necessarily beget the other. Other Regents are upraised ancillae or even neonates who are tasked with the upkeep and maintenance of certain tenurial domains (whether as reward, opportunity, trial or punishment...). Some Regents are important figures among their own clans or covenants, granted tenurial domains to reflect that status much as a Church bishop or archbishop might have been granted political territory in mortal history. Deposed Princes who haven't been sent to their Final Deaths upon a new Prince's claim of praxis often find themselves made Regents, either to prove their loyalty to the new regime or so the new Prince can keep an eye on them. Granted, these last instances are rare.

TENURIAL DOMAINS

A great many Kindred tend to confuse the concepts of tenurial domains and feeding grounds (see p. 101). Indeed, the two are often intertwined, though one doesn't necessarily encompass the other. A tenurial domain is simply an area ruled by a specific Regent, inside a larger region. For instance, a particularly powerful elder might claim a specific neighborhood, and the Prince of the city might legitimize the elder's claim. The Prince might do so because he wants the elder in his debt, or it might simply be that the Prince doesn't have the power to challenge the elder. In other circumstances, the Prince of a small city might retain power even after her erstwhile domain is annexed by a larger city and thereby made tenurial.

Alternatively, the Prince might grant a favored servant or ally tenurial rights over a small area. The Prince wins all ways. He makes the smooth running and customs enforcement of a part of his domain someone else's responsibility, he grants a favored ally enough power to make her grateful, and he has the ability to strip that power away at a single word if the underling proves treacherous or otherwise dangerous.

At other times, the Prince doesn't really intend to grant the Regent quite so much power, but only "feeding rights" to a given territory. Shrewd Kindred are able to transform feeding rights into true power by trading permission to feed for favors or even further subinfeudation. (After all, the Regent has every power of a Prince in her tenurial domain.) Wise Princes take advantage of the opportunity to let others shoulder the responsibility for running portions of the city. Less wise and more fearful Princes attempt to curtail the development of all such domains. Most of these would-be tyrants are ousted from power when the Kindred beneath them grow sick and tired of the lack of opportunity.

UNCONVENTIONAL DOMAINS

Hand in hand with the evolution of tenurial domains came the advent of less tangible notions of domain. Whereas a Prince might once have granted an ethnic ghetto or prestigious neighborhood to a Regent, some Princes now grant dominion over spheres of influence under the auspices of domain, both their own and tenurial. A Prince who acknowledges one of his subjects' sway among the authorities might grant "law enforcement" as a tenurial domain. A Kindred who owns significant property among trading ports might be granted rights to "the docks," both as a geographical region and in reference to shipping commerce.

These sorts of domains are just as valid as any other tenurial domain, but they're harder to be wary of. After all, when one steps into a region known to be the territory of another Kindred, he knows he crosses a physical, tangible line of demarcation. On the other hand, how far does a grant of an unconventional domain go? If the health-care infrastructure of a city is one Kindred's tenurial domain, does that include hospitals (surely), independent practitioners (maybe), and even drug stores (likely not)? Unless the Prince specifically outlines the extent of the Regent's domain — which makes for awkwardly wordy titles and occasionally incenses the Kindred who's ostensibly being honored with the grant — boundaries remain vague.

An unconventional domain is a double-edged sword. The Regent arguably has to be more vigilant in his tenure's dimensions than a Kindred granted domain over a physical region. After all, how can a Kindred granted tenurial domain over "the police" be sure that somewhere in that organization, someone's not answering to another one of the Damned? Further, if other Kindred recognize the tenure too broadly, the esteem can work against the Regent, as those excluded from the domain can use the Regency as an example of a stranglehold over a particular aspect of unlife and rally others against the Regent. A Regent of Fine Arts would likely face significant opposition, as would a Regent of Finance. This isn't to say such things





don't happen, but rather that those positions are either embattled or held by Kindred with such enormous personal power that they can maintain broad tenurial domains.

TERRITORIAL DISPUTE

Trouble arises occasionally between the Prince and his Regents, and more frequently between Regents themselves. A rare few Regents are so powerful that they can pass laws in opposition to the Prince's decrees or at least refuse to enforce the Prince's decrees. Domains occasionally overlap, as well, especially when unconventional domains come into conflict with geographical ones. For instance, if a crime occurs in a Regent's neighborhood, is that her issue or does it fall under the auspices of the Regent of Law Enforcement?

In many of these cases, the only clear winner is the Prince, as the resources that rival Regents devote to foiling each other take their attention from him. Indeed, if things turn ugly and one of the Regents ends up meeting Final Death, that leaves a potential position open for another Kindred's reward.

As might be expected, conflict over tenurial domains is common. It rarely escalates beyond the boundaries of grudges and vendettas, but such feuds can be bitter and long-lived, as with any interaction between Kindred. Indeed, some cities have been plunged into veritable civil war over domain disputes, but most savvy Princes know to step in and reevaluate their Regents before things become so dire.

SOCIETY HIGH AND LOW

While many of the Kindred's actions seem to be politically oriented, that's certainly not the full extent of their interactions with each other. Indeed, the bulk of Kindred interactions occur in social venues, but as is the case with such relationships, the outcomes are not so rigidly defined. The Kindred power structure is formalized. The Kindred social structure has many more facets that can't possibly be explained in a single book.

Kindred Requiems are curious things. As noted before, vampires are solitary predators, yet they crave the social contact that keeps their deathless loneliness at bay. Every Kindred has some reason or another to attend social functions. For the Daeva, the sensuality of such contact is first and foremost. The Ventruue enjoy opportunities to display their grandeur and munificence. The Gangrel certainly enjoy cutting loose under the right circumstances. And even the Mekhet and Nosferatu need to emerge from the shadows and forget that they're monsters, if only for a short time.

The following are just a few examples of the many ways in which Kindred gather and meet without the formalities of domain politics imposing themselves. Of course, what happens in these venues can certainly affect politics (and only the most naïve Kindred think such things happen only rarely), but at least those politics aren't the order of the night in every exchange between Kindred.

Nightlife: The Damned are no strangers to the dance clubs, bars, lounges, pool halls and numerous other places where mortals go to enjoy themselves. For most Kindred, visiting such places serves two purposes. It allows them to seek prey who are comfortable in their own element, and it allows that longed-for contact with someone other than themselves.

Cultural Events: To be sure, any time an art gallery shows an exhibit, an opera or ballet is staged, a museum hosts a ceremony, or any other affair that represents the uniqueness of the human condition takes place, the Kindred are there, drinking in its magnificence and making their own known. These needn't even be high-society affairs, as art shows can take place in starving artists' bohemian galleries, and not every play is a Broadway production.

Parties: What better way to forget the pain of Damnation than to celebrate something — anything — else. From lavish soirees hosted in grand hotel ballrooms or private mansions to

warehouse parties, underground raves and countercultural festivals, a party can be a grandiose affair or a reckless revel. Some Kindred even throw their own parties, with socialites hosting high-Victorian engagements, lowlifes rousing the rabble and everything in between. Among parties hosted by the Kindred, sometimes mortals are invited and sometimes not, depending on the scale and purpose.

Religious Ceremony: In nights long past, churches formed the center of communities. While these faithless times make that less common, it is still true that a community that prays together stays together. In those domains that host strong religious or spiritual presence among covenants and individuals, centers of faith form the basis of relationships and interactions that eclipse their clerical foundation. The anointing of a new child, for example, or the formal adoption of a new member into a religious covenant can serve to draw Kindred of many stripes together. Indeed, some religious ceremonies involve mortals, whether as sacrifices, or more openly, such as with blood cults or groups that blend mortal and Kindred dogma.

Salons: Salons are usually intellectual affairs, where invited Kindred gather to discuss a particular idea. In some cases, the matter to be discussed might be a new philosophy, point of debate or emerging new theory. Other salons reinterpret classical or even ancient ideas. Salons can be formal, high-society affairs akin to their historical namesakes, debates only the smallest step away from political gatherings, or even informal rants where a Kindred with a pet passion puts it forth to whomever will listen. Salons usually bring great prestige to their hosts – when they come off well, that is.

Elysium: Not every gathering of Elysium is a political affair convened by a Prince with matters of policy to discuss. Some are purely social, venues where Kindred can meet and not have to worry about the... unpleasantness that occasionally occurs among their kind. Most sites of Elysium in a given city are open (to the Kindred only, of course) at any time after dark, maximizing the number of places where Kindred can congregate in relative safety.



The Danse Macabre

Throughout their long history, the Kindred have engaged in an endless struggle – the coldest of cold wars, fought in the shadows of mortal society. This internecine conflict is known as the Danse Macabre, and it nightly threatens to tear the entire race of the Damned apart.

This secret war is both the beginning and the end for the undead. As a race, they are destined to blood and violence, yet their survival depends on peace between them. They are consumed nightly by the possibility that the war will consume them, and they toil ceaselessly in fear of having to forever struggle against their own kind. The conflict is perhaps the greatest, saddest paradox of the Kindred world, and as such, it is a fundamental aspect of unlife among the Damned.

DEUS VULT

Perhaps ironically, Christianity signaled the dawn of the Danse Macabre. Factionalism spread like wildfire through the mortals of Europe and the Holy Land, and for the first time, parallel ripples of dissonance emerged from Rome herself. Emerging from the wake of the events of the Crucifixion, the “Childer of Longinus,” as members of that covenant insist on calling the earliest recorded vampires, were hardly content to sit huddled in their candlelit chambers, speaking prayers to a father whose very actions had damned them, while wordlessly and thoughtlessly accepting everything their sires had taught them. No, the world was changing, and with it changed the undead. Some vampires likened Christ’s resurrection to the mockery of their own, and many fell to bickering about the nature of his divinity. Indeed, some blasphemous Kindred even suggested that Christ was either some kind of vampire or Longinus, himself! And, naturally, these and other social fissures only further entrenched elders and sires.

During the Dark Ages, what had long been seen as a heretical movement grew to become the order of the night. Many believed that God had forsaken the world entirely, and they left their ancient traditions behind in favor of the whims of appetite and petty egotism. Hostilities between Kindred reached an all-time high as sires struggled to keep childer in line amid an endless sea of darkness and fire. Several religious orders emerged among the Kindred, each possessed of a different slant on the nature of the Damned and their place in God’s world. Many vampires latched onto the fringes of the Church and its scions, and the Damned were some of the most active supporters of the early Crusades. Indeed, God Himself became the foil that vampires would use upon one another, each more deftly than the last, in the name of either power or righteousness.

All their bluster came to a head during the burning times of the holy Inquisition. Vampiric infighting had grown so great, the Kindred’s arrogance so complete, that they drew the attention of the mortal world. Although the effect was the widespread violation of the First Tradition, the greater cause was the growing violation of the Blood-borne prohibition against kinslaying and a decrease in the overall level of respect and love for God (or anything resembling Him).

After the fires of the Inquisition died down, the Kindred discovered that their numbers had dwindled, their fortunes had crumbled, their society had shattered and new factions rose almost nightly. When they looked upon what their conflict had wrought, they neither learned from what they saw nor endeavored to trace the disaster’s origin. Instead, the Kindred all secretly blamed one another for the downfall of the system, and the species as a whole turned inward. Where there had once been overt moves and periodic salvos into the domains

and affairs of other Kindred, there were now hidden schemes and patient plans that took years to unfold. The Damned still moved against one another, and they still engaged in the Danse Macabre, but now they savored it more, learning the art to a carefully played game. The Kindred were a patient breed — when one's mentor is undeath, patience is the first lesson one must learn — and they learned how to utilize that patience.

THE BLOOD WILL TELL

The coming of the Industrial Age saw a nearly paradoxical dichotomy emerge in the world of the Kindred. Cities expanded at astronomical rates, and with each technological advancement came more opportunities for influence in the mortal world. By the same token, however, the localization of power and money made each new resource that much more prized among the undead. Territory in cities became a serious issue, and for the first time, political groups emerged as major factors in Kindred society. The times called for some major adaptations in the ways the undead did things, but as is endemic to a selfish and predatory species, very few Kindred took up the mantle of responsibility with the intent of making sure that everyone adapted together.

Even with the expansion of the mortal world, the Kindred continued to play their local games of love and hate, point and counterpoint. The nature of vampiric existence no longer allowed for extensively planned movements of units or forces across multi-national battle maps. Vampires were no longer generals governing legions of childer and blood thralls, ready to sail off to battle at a moment's notice as a few had been in earlier times. They were humanoid jackals, territorial scavengers with nothing but their food and land. And at the end of the night, each vampire was a prisoner of that land, whether he called it home or not. And when faced with that realization, many vampires tried to make themselves the wardens of their prison homes, each bucking for superiority over the other inmates. Only when one was the warden could he be sure of how the prison would operate from night to night.

This notion in particular, the concept of control, is central to the Danse Macabre as it is known tonight. Through the passing of years upon years, many Kindred feel the reins of control slip ever so slowly from their clutching talons. Despite their temporal power, they must sit by, unable to build or create or evolve as they once did, watching while the world moves on around them. So they seek to amass as much mortal power and influence as possible in the hopes of feeling vicariously through their connections to modern reality. They vainly seek a glut of material power hoping somehow to make up for the spiritual and creative impotence of their existence.

To make matters worse, other Kindred are often the only barometer by which an out-of-touch vampire can measure his own surrogate success. If his brothers and sisters of the night do not fare very well, then logically, he must be truly successful. The entire system feeds on its own illogic until, at a certain point, only the struggle for dominance remains. Some Kindred even see this existence for what it is and claim that it is the only way their accursed kind can progress with any peace through the ages. After all, they reason, only when one has control over everything does one not need to resort to diablerie or kinslaying. The Danse Macabre, they dare claim, is actually the salvation of the Kindred race! Needless to say, many vampires would disagree vehemently, but it does go to show the degree to which the undead try to rationalize what they have become.

THE FOG OF ETERNITY

Some modern neonates are surprised to learn just how little is known for sure among their kind. Like many others before them, they make the mistake of assuming that creatures who exist forever must likewise remember forever. The shock is even greater for those Embraced in the last three decades, due to the prevalence and availability of information in the world.





Upon being informed of just how old the Kindred truly are, many grow eager – giddy, even – to find really old vampires and pick their brains about people, places and events of ages past.

They quickly come to learn, however, that history is an inconstant companion for the Kindred. Even if a single (formerly) mortal mind could conceivably retain all it saw, learned and experienced over a period of centuries, the very physiology of the Kindred form forbids such clear and detailed recall. A vampire's blood increases in potency the longer he stays awake and active in the mortal world, and the more potent a vampire's blood is, the more difficult it is for him to remain at ease with the world around him. Potent blood is demanding, indeed. It calls out for the *Vitae* of other Kindred – an urge potentially leading to the terribly sinful act of diablerie. Failing that, it calls out for sleep, so that the blood at least has a chance to thin over time and return the vampire to a semblance of his more composed self. To make matters worse, certain vampiric activities can cause a Kindred's blood to concentrate prematurely, thus leading to further mental distortion, frustration and anguish.

This fact alone would call into question any elder vampire's ability to remember specific details of centuries past, but the Blood is neither the only nor the greatest contributor to the eternal inconstancy of history where the Kindred are concerned. When an elder finally does succumb to the call for rest, she enters a state known as torpor, a comatose sleep during which her vampiric essence thins out. While in torpor, the Kindred does not need to feed to keep her unnatural form in its static state. She merely sleeps, rejuvenating her body.

The difficulty comes in the quality and nature of torpor-induced sleep. Being in torpor is akin to lying prostrate through a decades-long waking dream. Visions, memories and images of events past (and possibly even future) plague the addled mind of the torpid Kindred, and that's just a mild torpor experience. For some, torpor is a protracted nightmare, fraught with horrific visitations of past atrocities and failures. Imagine all the most intense qualities of a powerful drug high, combined with the lucid displacement of the deepest sleep, and the result is what every passing hour of torpor is like. Now, try to imagine such a mental state stretching on for 50 years. How about 100 years? The results can be harsh.

Not even the strongest mortal mind could withstand such psychic duress for more than a few days, let alone years. Waking from such a state would leave the average mortal psychologically scarred, if not entirely catatonic. And yet, the Kindred must endure this punishment regularly and repeatedly in order to survive the passage of centuries. Is it any wonder, then, that their concept of time and the sequence of events is distorted? Indeed, some are simply too weak to bear the brunt of the mental onslaught of repeated torpors. Their minds eventually shatter from the strain, leaving them incapable of rising of their own volition. It is whispered that hundreds, if not thousands, of such Kindred lie beneath the Earth's surface, their sanity stripped from their undead minds like husks from corn. Some believe that these insane Kindred will rise one night and be like unto an army against the Damned society from which they were driven.

Wise Kindred take steps to make sure that their precious thoughts and memories stay fresh, and more importantly, fixed. Many use journals and other mundane means of recording events and dates, while others resort to more drastic and often mystical means. One group in particular, a faction known as the Agonistes, has taken it upon itself to catalog some of the knowledge that has been lost to Kindred over time and in torpor, while simultaneously looking for ways to ameliorate the worst of the great sleep's effects. So far, the scholars of the Agonistes have made little headway in the latter objective, but they have made such advances in the former as to be "in demand" around the world. Indeed, many elder Kindred, in expectation of impending torpor, summon one of the Agonistes to oversee his transition, as well as to assist in various other record-keeping tasks. The group takes the "confidentiality" of patrons' activities and memories very seriously, and there have been few accusations of impropriety to date.



USING THE FOG OF ETERNITY

Though the fog of eternity might seem harsh for players who wish to portray centuries-old vampires, it is often much more of a blessing than a curse. For one thing, it can be very useful in legitimately masking a player's ignorance of specific historical facts that his character "should" know. After all, even if his character was active in 1483, thanks to the dreamlike nature of torpor, his memory of the time is likely to be quite sporadic at best. So if he happens to get a name wrong or fails to remember important events, he can always explain it away in-character as a result of his long sleep. That way the player can focus on what is important for his character to know — personal details, events he was directly aware of or involved in, a general "feel" of the period, etc. — without having him feel foolish or put on the spot if he doesn't know every last detail.

Another advantage of such clouded memory is that it can be a fertile ground for character development and roleplaying. If a player would like to introduce a particular subplot or take a certain direction with his character development, he can always have his character "remember" an incident from his past that spurs a change in the present. Perhaps a cruel and heartless vampire suddenly recalls a love affair or an act of kindness from the past, and seeks to atone for his crimes (raise his Humanity). Or maybe the sight of a building burning reminds him of battles long past, causing him to take up the sword again for the first time in centuries (raise his Weaponry). Just remember two guidelines for such recollections: First, ask the Storyteller and any other players involved if the memory might have some relevance to other characters or the current story. Second, don't try to use such sudden recollection to justify using out-of-game knowledge.

Of course, the fog of eternity is not just a tool for players to use. Imaginative Storytellers can find all sorts of ways to play with the long stretches of time rendered hazy, altered by dreams or even now utterly blank in a character's past. False memories, dream sequences, invented incidents, altered journals, coerced witnesses, forgotten crimes, impostors posing as old friends, long-lost relatives (or even childer), ancient feuds... the list of possible tricks and plot devices is quite extensive, not to mention extremely versatile.

For all its uses, however, the fog of eternity should never be used solely to screw a player over. Players are very sensitive about their characters' histories and personalities, and with good reason. If you plan to use the fog of eternity to introduce an element that changes a character's whole history or paints him in a very different light, it's best to talk about it with the player first. Many players are willing to run with such ideas in the interest of drama, even if they present a hardship in the short term. Failing that, you can later reveal that the twist wasn't really what it appeared to be at first, thus leaving the player's original sense of his character and history intact.



THE WAY OF ALL FLESH

It is both in and against Kindred nature to plot, scheme and ultimately bring to ruin the unives of their own kind. It is both fate and personal choice. Even those who seek to bring about a better world for their kind (or at least a sub-set of their kind) merely further the mistaken beliefs and ideals that lead to greater Kindred calamity. Some believe it is simply the way of things: God's will, inherent spiritual evil or the most natural aspect of an unnatural species.

Others see the way the Danse Macabre is going and legitimately fear for the future. In recent years, more evidence emerges about the vampires of old — the long-forgotten elders who might have been the original progenitors of the modern clans. Elders of advanced age are feared greatly, and rightly so, and the most common position to take is one of wishful thinking. Pretend it's not a threat, and it will go away.





Just the same, puppets and sinners continue to bring news to the scattered domains of the Kindred. Stories of another burning time yet to come, when a reckoning shall fall upon the wayward Damned. Some believe that various harbingers of some great accounting will rise, that the prophecies in various Kindred holy or occult texts will come true, that Longinus or the Crone will take an accounting of the sins of their lines, that Dracula will return to find his covenant in disarray and enact a culling or that only the purest of the pure will remain safe from whatever form this portentous justice takes. Many still study the old ways and texts, searching for signs and omens of when this dark time might arrive. They believe in the words of prophets and madmen among the Kindred, and God help those who have forsaken them. Others believe the stories to be nothing but rumor — another political ploy hatched from among the distempered minds of the young and foolhardy. Others believe that some concordance among all the myriad tales, or the cryptic nature and format of the stories themselves, indicates the return of a bloodline or covenant known as the Moirai — one believed long dead yet still spoken of every night in hushed whispers.

What is agreed upon, at least by those who have stopped to pay attention, is that the Danse Macabre is headed into yet another era. Advancements seen in the last 30 years alone have allowed Kindred-versus-Kindred conflict to blossom into never-before-seen arenas. Young and savvy vampires use the Internet as often as they use any other tool of manipulation and deceit, and with the advent of fiber optics, digital networking and a host of other inventions, the possibilities are endless. Never before has there been so much potential in the art of war, and despite the quiet nagging of what remains of the vampiric conscience, it all sounds pretty good to the average vampire.

And so, childer continue to plot and scheme against their sires, and sires continue to plot and scheme against their childer and their rivals. The covenants continue to plot against each other, and the unaligned continue to buck the authority of them all. The Carthian experiment shows no sign of slowing down around the world, for good or for ill, and beside it all, the Circle of the Crone remains, vigilant and secretive. The stage is set for the next act in the Danse Macabre, and all the players have taken their places. There isn't a doubt in their minds that they are ready for the play that awaits.

After all, they've played these roles before.

IN VITAE VERITAS

While possessed of many curious properties, the Blood reacts in special ways between vampires. Details as to why this happens are unknown. No blood-specialist or vampiric hematologist has studied the phenomena extensively enough, and no mystics understand the nature of the Curse so well. Certainly, though, these situations occur often enough and widely enough to be known to all Kindred.

PREDATOR'S TAIN

Vampires instinctively know other Kindred upon sight, as the Beast seems to call to other Beasts in its vicinity. Hackles rise, fangs extend and a sense of fear or territoriality overtakes a Kindred upon meeting another vampire for the first time. The urge is primal and bestial. The more potent Kindred sees the interloper as a threat to his superiority, while the less potent vampire instinctively feels a desire to flee this greater predator. Both Kindred potentially risk frenzy at the overwhelming surge of instinct — the aggressive vampire feeling the urge to attack the lesser to assert his dominance, and the “subordinate” vampire feeling a pressing urge to flee. Kindred of equally potency both feel the desire to attack each other and settle the matter of primacy once and for all. True, such compulsions abate once two Kindred are familiar with each other, but the initial experience can be terrifying — or perversely thrilling.

THE SWEETEST SIN

The blood of the Kindred is both savory and sweet, scintillating the tastes with its heady, forbidden flavors. Those who consume Kindred Vitae, especially other Kindred, find that they long to taste it again. While the Damned would never stoop so low as to suggest that their blood is addictive, the reality defies their semantic pride. Dependencies can develop, longings make themselves felt, and full-blown addiction is certainly not out of the question.

As a result, the sharing of blood between Kindred is looked down upon by Kindred society as a whole. Although it is occasionally forgiven in light circumstances, such as a lover's tryst or another symbol of affection, those who make a habit of drinking other Kindred's Vitae are considered degenerates at best and potential diablerists at worst.

THE VINCULUM

Part of the Kindred's ill regard for tasting the blood of other vampires is the Vinculum, sometimes known as the blood bond. Those Kindred who consume the blood of another single vampire three times become subjected to a unique state of emotional control. This Vinculum creates a powerful but artificial love for the vampire from whom three draughts are taken.

A thrall is any being currently under the influence of a Vinculum. The vampire to whom a thrall is bound is called the regnant or domitor. In social situations, the term thrall is applied to bound Kindred, as most undead think of blood-bound mortals solely as ghouls (see p. 99). This delineation, however, is not entirely accurate. It is possible to have a mortal thrall who is not a ghoul, as mortals who have tasted Vitae do not automatically become ghouls. Those who do, retain the powers and traits of the ghoul only as long as Kindred Vitae remains in their system, but the power of the Vinculum far outlasts any such limits. Rumor has it that the Vinculum can subvert the will of even the wildest supernatural entities, but little hard data has come forth to verify this.

Thralls are not complete slaves, but they come close. They constantly feel the artificial love, affection and loyalty imposed by the bond, even if they simultaneously hate their domitors for demeaning or enslaving them. Among those who are weak-willed, naïve, mentally unstable or even willing, the blood bond creates a feeling of singular devotion. Most Vinculums result in this condition, as most thralls subjected to them either know what they're getting into or have some turgid notion of their relationship with their domitors-to-be. Ghouls who see their masters as dark angels, Kindred lovers expressing their devotion to each other through mutual blood bonds, even wayward "blood dolls" who readily give of their own blood to please their undead patrons... All of these at least initially enter into Vinculums willingly. Others aren't so enthusiastic, as with unbound Kindred brought to heel under a Prince through the Vinculum, or truculent childer forced to bond themselves to their sires "for their own good." It truly is a blasphemous love, for it is unnatural and the conscience often rebels against it. Thralls are normally incapable of blatantly disobeying or working against their regnants, but some are sufficiently strong willed to sabotage their masters in subtler ways.

Some very rare coteries attempt to overcome the inevitable growth of mistrust between members by engaging in a web of Vinculums. Reciprocal bonds wouldn't work to hold a coterie together; rather, it would engender loyalty between pairs. Instead, these coteries engage in a practice that some Kindred youth have rather crudely dubbed a "circle jerk." That is, one neonate bonds herself to another, who bonds himself to a third, who bonds himself to a fourth, who in turn bonds herself back to the first. The amount of trust required to enter into such an arrangement is incalculable, and the results are inevitably painful for those involved, as they must spend much of their time watching the object of their affections fawn over someone else. Many coteries that attempt this process eventually tear themselves apart out of obsession and petty jealousy. Those few that manage to make it work are remarkably cohesive.





Kindred Covenants

If the clans represent family and perhaps culture among the Kindred, and cities are their domains, then the various covenants represent the closest vampiric equivalent to nations, political parties and even religions. The covenants form a cornerstone of undead society and — as far as is possible to determine — are ancient traditions that have been part of the vampiric world for centuries. The covenants that are (supposedly) oldest hold a more respected “pedigree” than others, but none is truly modern. Even those young vampires who believe that Kindred society as it exists tonight is a relatively recent development admit that the covenants almost certainly predate the Industrial Revolution in some form or another.

The covenants serve as nations, for they provide the Kindred with a sense of community that they can find nowhere else. Kindred are Embraced into a clan, with no say of their own. Like many mortals, even if they feel a loyalty to their blood and their family, they often differ with one another in their opinions and beliefs. For the most part, they are trapped in their home domains, and their loyalty toward the local regime is usually purchased with fear and enforced by ambition. Covenant allegiance, however, is something over which Kindred have personal control. They are drawn toward factions that espouse doctrines in which they can believe (or at least to which they don’t object). Here, more than anywhere else, they are likely to encounter other Kindred who share at least some of their ideas and objectives.

The covenants serve as political parties, for they provide ambitious Kindred with built-in support. Most covenants seek as much influence in the local Kindred power structure as possible, either to advance their own goals or to simply prevent rivals from gaining power. For the most part, politically active Kindred would rather have a fellow covenant member in power than any other rival (though many would certainly rather hold the power themselves, when at all possible). A vampire with many elder allies working to aid his ascendance has an undeniable advantage over rivals with less support.

Perhaps most strangely, the covenants even serve as a religious body for some members. While some of the covenants are overtly religious, all of the factions have strongly held beliefs and attitudes that often reach the level of dogma. While some young Kindred flit from ideology to ideology, either in search of a place to belong or trying to figure out their own attitudes, many other vampires cling so completely to the doctrines of their chosen covenants that they are unable to comprehend any other viewpoints. While only a few covenants declare outright that their way is mandated by Longinus, God or some other higher power, most of them claim zealots who certainly seem to act that way.

Further distinguishing them from clans, covenants have a fluid membership. A Kindred’s clan never changes, but a Kindred’s covenant may. Certainly, it is difficult to forswear one’s covenant and join a new one, but doing so is not impossible. An expected lack of trust often accompanies such behavior, but only the most severe members of either the renounced or the new covenant stoop to leveling claims of treachery against a convert. In many cases, a Kindred’s philosophies simply change over the course of the Requiem. Most covenant members would rather lose a dilettante whose heart doesn’t truly belong to the cause any longer than have her lack of faith undermine the rest. Granted, those who repudiate all covenants usually lose significant esteem in the eyes of erstwhile peers, but sometimes a Kindred just grows... away.

Such being the case, it is with raised eyebrows that the Damned allow others of their kind to move from one covenant to another. Oddly, neonates and under-accomplished ancillae

have the easiest time of it, as their lack of tangible ties to covenants occasionally allow them to escape notice. Some Kindred even count themselves as members of multiple covenants – but only until they’re found out and forced to stop playing all sides against the middle. More accomplished Kindred have difficulty changing sides, usually because of the contacts they’ve made or secret knowledge they’ve accumulated as a member of their original covenant. Highly visible “defections” are usually the source of much gossip, and more than once have been the foundation for ill will or even bloody vendetta.

The covenants are not necessarily in constant conflict. Most cities contain members of all of the major groups (or at least a few), and Kindred governments operate effectively with officers and advisors from multiple factions. Like rival churches in ages past or political parties in modern mortal government, the covenants often manage to coexist, yet they rarely agree on any salient points.

Still, the simple fact that these covenants exist at all inevitably leads to discord. Even those few Kindred who don’t want power for themselves understand why it’s in their best interests to make sure that fellow covenant members hold as much authority as possible. Every faction wants to be in control, and every covenant has different views on how the Kindred should rule (and even behave). In most cities, this conflict is covert, taking the form of political maneuvering, espionage, sabotage, bribery, blackmail and the occasional assassination. In select domains, this ongoing cold war heats up and covenants engage in open conflict (as open as possible for the Kindred). Much like mortal gang warfare, these conflicts are usually short but exceedingly bloody. Such conflicts usually do not end so much as fade out when one or all parties involved grow too exhausted to continue. The shaky peace that appears to result, as the covenants are forced through attrition to coexist once more, often lasts only until one of them regains sufficient strength to begin the process anew.



COVENANTS AROUND THE GLOBE

The Kindred exist everywhere humanity builds cities and extends cultures. Vampires cover the globe, and while their numbers are few in comparison to those on whom they feed, their population is not so small that it can easily be regimented into neat factions. The covenants described here differ somewhat from domain to domain. That is, a member of the Invictus in London probably shares most of the primary attitudes of a fellow Invictus in Detroit, but they likely differ on a great many of the details.

More importantly, other covenants beyond the major ones exist in various regions throughout the world. The factions described here are the largest or most powerful, at least in the West, but others exist in other cultures, in smaller communities and in Third-World nations. The covenants here represent the majority of Kindred, and the greater portion of Kindred power, but they do not account for the entirety of either.



It’s important to note that, while members of a given covenant tend to agree on certain basic principles (and often ally with one another against outside rivals), plenty of tension and enmity exists between members of a single covenant. In fact, in those cities where any given covenant dominates, intra-covenant rivalry is actually more common than inter-covenant rivalry. Invictus Kindred compete with others in the Invictus, Carthians struggle with rival Carthians, and so forth. A vampire’s covenant allegiance is a good indicator of certain political and philosophical beliefs, but anything else is questionable.

THE CAMARILLA

In nights long past, all of vampire society united under one common banner, at least as far as the Western World was concerned. This organization was known as the Camarilla, cor-





responding roughly to a later Spanish word meaning “power group” or a cabal of confidential advisors. The Camarilla’s might was unchallenged — anywhere Imperial Rome held sway, so did the Camarilla. It is even suspected that many Kindred customs that survive to this very night had their roots in Camarilla structure, such as the notion of Princes who govern autonomous domains. While proof of pre-Roman vampirism is rare or incomplete, almost all Kindred accept that pre-Roman vampires probably existed. They are commonly understood to have been savage, monstrous and completely disorganized. If anything, their “society” was probably little more than scattered, vague domains populated by a single vampire and any broods he chose to foster. The now-defunct Camarilla was the first successful attempt at a true Kindred society.

As the Roman Empire collapsed, however, so did the support structures of the Camarilla crumble. As Kindred require the blood of mortals to keep them vital, they rely on mortal society as a foundation for their own. With Europe fragmenting into isolated, feudal domains during the Dark Ages, Kindred society had little choice but to do the same or fall entirely into the barbarism of old.

The nature of the Kindred themselves hastened the ruin of the Camarilla, as well. Ever scheming and jealous, few vampires who rose to prominence in the Camarilla social order did so out of a sense of altruism or justice. The Kindred then as now craved power and influence, and such could be obtained by crippling rivals’ access to the same.

It comes as no surprise, then, to see that from the remains of the shattered Camarilla came several different factions, each espousing a different policy or philosophy upheld by like-minded elders and charismatic demagogues. Where once a single organization had stood, a handful of distinct covenants emerged from the bleakness of the era. This development even set the standard for later covenants to distinguish themselves from established Kindred society.

Many of these covenants perished through the centuries, destroyed by opposing factions, absorbed into similar ones, rooted out as heretics or simply abandoned as invalid. Vampires cast about for covenants with which they could align themselves in hopes of achieving power, but they remained ever wary that those factions would demand too much in return or limit them too greatly with dogma.

As history progressed, two groups of European Kindred formed an alliance. As mortal society’s strength hailed from the twin pillars of the Church and the state, these covenants formed their own version of the balance between temporal and pious power. The Lancea Sanctum, a dire and evangelical covenant claiming a Biblical origin for vampires, rose to claim a position of prominence as the spiritual leader of the Kindred. Its counterpart, known as the Invictus (a reference to the group’s Roman origins), positioned itself as the vampiric nobility. In domains where the alliance was powerful, the Invictus served as political ruler of the Kindred, while the Lancea Sanctum made sure residents were duly worshipful of God and mindful of a vampire’s place in the world.

The alliance between the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum was an effective model and was easily hidden among the layers of mortal society it emulated. The allegiance experienced great success, and it soon spread across Europe not unlike the feudal model from which it drew its structures.

Not all Kindred supported the alliance’s supremacy, however. Many old domains that harbored Kindred who observed pre-Christian and even pre-Roman rites and mythologies dissented. Although they never formed a unified front, given that their beliefs and geographical locations were too disparate, an undercurrent of rebellion occasionally prevented the alliance from taking hold in numerous places. Magic drawn from the Old Ways held the Lancea Sanctum’s dark miracles at bay, and the pagans held their own in many cases. These faiths survive tonight as a loose coalition of factions, rarely organized but definitely powerful, and

with their own spheres of influence. United only by common belief in a female progenitor or patron of the race of Kindred, the covenant known as the Circle of the Crone cultivated power through appeal to less overwhelming policies than the alliance's conquering tactics.

Another Kindred covenant eventually reared its head in Eastern Europe, fronted by an infamous and popular leader drawn from the ranks of the mortal nobility. This covenant's founder claimed that no vampire had Embraced him, but that he had been abandoned by God. Thus forsaken, he became one of the Damned. Teaching a philosophy of vampiric transcendence, this leader and his followers, the Ordo Dracul, upset the balance of power between the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum and rushed in to seize what it could in the resulting instability. The idea of transcendence appealed to many Kindred, so the ideals of the Ordo Dracul took root and spread outward. From the covenant's foundation sometime during the 15th or 16th century to the nights of the 21st, the Order continues to grow in power and increase in influence.

Time passes externally for the Kindred, even if their own bodies remain locked in stasis. To many vampires, the feudal model upon which the alliance had built its power was an anachronism by the 18th century. As the mortal world rallied to the cause of new forms of government, many young vampires adapted new systems of politics to the society of the Damned. These Carthians don't always agree on what sort of political system is best, but they find common disillusionment with the outdated modes of governance to which so many other Kindred cling unquestioningly. Such philosophy finds a home especially in the New World, whose own sovereignty was won from the clutches of aristocratic nations. The Carthians believe that it can be won for the vampiric order as well.

As the modern nights unfold, a strange state of balance exists. In the Old World, many domains still honor the rule of the alliance. Here and there, small pockets of resistance cleave to the ways of the Circle of the Crone, while the Ordo Dracul still reigns in Eastern Europe. In the New World, however, something much more resembling an equal footing exists. The Carthian cause attracts new followers, especially among the young, who have never known noble rule and who have no reason to suspect one exists as the world of the Kindred opens up to them. The Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum still wield power, but the alliance is far more tenuous. Individual domains often belong solely to a Lancea Sanctum Prince or an Invictus Prince, with little effort made to preserve the customary relationship that survives between the two in the Old World. The Ordo Dracul and Circle of the Crone each has no small support, too, though their New World incarnations are steeped less in the traditions from which they hail and more in the mindset of viable (if somewhat arcane) alternatives to the undying atavism of the crumbling alliance.

It is under these circumstances that modern vampires find themselves Embraced. Covenants that have long been allies fragment, while new alliances form nightly to oppose the existing powers that be. The Lancea Sanctum and the Invictus are strange bedfellows — except where their differences have driven them to factional war. Seemingly opposed covenants such as the Circle of the Crone and the Carthians feud over ideology — except when they bury the hatchet to face mutual oppression. The world of vampires is truly gothic, with barbaric anachronisms still in place where they had been centuries if not millennia before. At the same time, technology and the world's cultural Zeitgeist manifests in a spirit of rebellion that offers a chance to cast the old shackles aside and replace them with new and exciting ideals. The world is at once medieval and modern, and the society of the Damned embodies every aspect of that paradox.

On occasion, a group of historians, unification-minded Kindred or downright conspirators makes some effort to reestablish the Camarilla as it was in the nights of old. To date these efforts have been doomed to failure, fracturing under the weight of whatever high-minded (or underhanded) politics spawned the idea. That's not to say that some future attempt at consolidation wouldn't work, just that it has yet to.





THE CARTHIAN MOVEMENT



Undeniably the youngest of the major Kindred covenants, the Carthians are fire-eyed reformists, eager to bring the establishment to its knees if that's what it takes to facilitate positive political change. If the unbound are the irritable loners and individualists, then the Carthians are the Young Turks who seek to shake up the status quo with the honesty of their passion and the ingenuity of their ideas. Due to the prevalence of young Kindred in the modern age, the Carthian Movement sees quite a bit of support worldwide.

OVERVIEW

Carthians are full of ideas. They see brave new possibilities and models for Kindred self-rule that they believe were unimagined before they arrived on the scene, and they long to share those ideas with others. Few stop to wonder whether the existing status quo has endured for a reason. Most are content to challenge it for the sake of trying to accomplish something positive in a world as bleak as the Kindred's.

If the Carthians have a single enemy among the Damned, it is calcification. Change is vital to all social systems. Therefore, many Carthians fear the elders of their kind. They don't think elders pose a direct threat, but that elders are the most stagnant members of their race, the least capable of hearing or accepting new ideas. For this reason, many sub-movements of the Carthian cause have some strict policies about who can join, as they fear their dreams might become the target of some elder's crusade.

For the most part, they're right. Most elder vampires have little interest in seeing a bunch of neonates summarily rearrange the power structure that's been in place for centuries. Vampires are nasty, predatory creatures who only grow nastier and more predatory with age, and few elders appreciate this latest "fad" among neonates. As a result, the Carthian Movement has become the scapegoat of choice for powerful elders. Were it not for the presence of some great minds within the Movement (as well as a few elders of other covenants), the faction might well collapse under the weight of tradition. All the same, the Movement has met with limited success in some areas, and much like a persistent union, the Carthians have begun to show some marked gains simply by remaining patient and playing the game as it must be played. Their democratic notions don't appeal to everyone, but what the Carthians lack in wisdom and support, they tend to make up for in passion and unity.

MEMBERS

The Carthians embody the youngest generation of Kindred, even more so than the unaligned. The vast majority of self-proclaimed Carthians are neonates, with a smattering of wily ancillae who have either achieved some measure of power or satisfaction from their efforts

as part of the covenant, or who are simply too afraid to abandon the faction after so many years and relations forged (or destroyed). Once in a while, the rare elder emerges with ties to the Carthian Movement, but most elders simply scowl at the very idea.

When a vampire comes to the Carthian cause, he typically does so out of a genuine desire to see some radical changes implemented in the secret world of the Damned. As might be expected, the most numerous (and vocal) clan in the Movement is the Mekhet, many of whom are drawn by the opportunity the covenant presents. Many consider the covenant to be the last and best chance for positive relations between Kindred and kine, and as such, a few are willing to do anything to make sure the Movement thrives and survives. While most Ventrue normally shy away from anything Carthian, a number of Nosferatu and Daeva can be found at Carthian gatherings. The former attend out of appreciation for a venue in which fear can motivate, and the latter do so from a vampiric desire to involve themselves in the affairs of others.

PHILOSOPHY

The foundation of the Carthian Movement is the notion that vampires needn't blindly accept the status quo. While these Kindred recognize that they're being Embraced into a world with its own secret history and traditions, they don't feel they have to accept it all simply because someone older than them says so. Rather, they believe that everyone can and must have a voice, in death as he did in life, and that voice *must* be heard.

This philosophy revolves around two core concepts that give the cause its fire.

Power to the People

The primary tenet of the Carthian cause is that any model of government that works for mortals is applicable to Kindred. Democracy in particular is the cornerstone of Carthian thinking, because it gives each individual a say in the affairs and administration of the people as a whole. Socialism is a popular model, too. Due to the relatively small scale of vampire society, many consider socialism more feasible for Kindred to adopt than it might be for mortals. Carthians detest the notion of rule by divine mandate, and they strive to convince those in power that existing structures should be examined thoroughly, and then modified or torn down as necessary in order to create a better world for all Kindred. Needless to say, few vampires in positions of power are immediately agreeable. They understand vampiric nature well and know that even when Carthians "succeed," the result is often little more than the undead equivalent of a labor union. Such artificial contrivances are inherently dangerous to Kindred society.

Change Is Necessary

If part of the curse of undeath is stagnation and stasis, then the Kindred must be willing to change and adapt to the times if they are to endure. Dismissing new ideas out of hand simply because they are not what has been done before is the folly of ignorance, and such folly drives the Carthians to bloody tears. If they, at so young an age, can recognize the truth of vampiric existence, then why can't the elders of their kind? Or is it that those elders have long since forgotten? Regardless, the Carthians take it upon themselves to remind their hoary sires and grandsires that no kingdom is forever, and that change comes to every thing in every system in time.

RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES

While the Carthians are considerably less ritualistic than either the Lancea Sanctum or the Circle of the Crone, they still have their share of sacred practices. More often than not, Carthian "rites" revolve around politics, and what starts as a debate can easily turn into a ritual depending on the Kindred involved.





The Chain

At almost every Carthian gathering, some Kindred (usually the Prefect) steps forward and requests that everyone present take part in the custom Carthians call the Chain. The entire rite ends in a matter of moments, so even the most turbulent of Kindred usually acquiesce to their involvement. The idea is simple. All the Carthians present gather in a circle, and following a few inspirational words from the Prefect, each passes a single artifact that is esteemed by the local Carthians to the Kindred beside him, thus forming a symbolic chain representing that what one Kindred does affects all others. The symbolism is blunt but effective. Each vampire in the circle is beholden to the next and responsible for another, but not directly. Thus do the Carthians remind themselves of their outlook, common goals and objectives. Artifacts can be anything, such as a relic of a fallen Carthian leader, an effigy of an enemy or a personal possession of someone soon to be drawn into the Carthian ranks.

Independence Day

The Carthians, being fans of democracy in all its forms, hold a special fondness for Independence Day. The term can be misleading, however, seeing how the celebration day itself is not always on the American holiday, the fourth of July. In countries other than the United States, such as Mexico and France, Carthian vampires typically celebrate on the same date mortals do, so the fifth of May is nearly as common a date of observance, for example. In actual Carthian-dominated domains, the Kindred celebrate the night their dream of a new world came to pass. The victory of an alternative political model is both rare and wondrous in the world of the Damned, and the Carthians revel in remembering the night of its advent. When free to do so, Carthians can get quite rowdy, and their parties are truly legendary.

TITLES AND DUTIES

Unlike the other covenants, whose titles often coincide with those of standard positions of authority, the titles of important figures in the Carthian Movement denote levels of responsibility and respect, rather than true authority.

Prefect

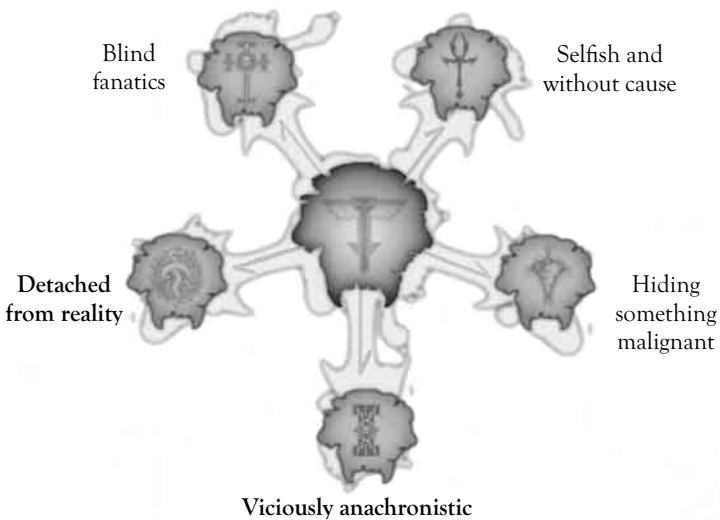
The Kindred in charge of much of the night-to-night running of Carthian operations in a given city is known as the Prefect. In most every case, the Prefect is elected (in whatever form that takes) by a majority of other Carthians, with the exception of any active Myrmidon, who traditionally abstains from such voting. The Prefect is at once the spokesperson for the Movement in his domain, the “chair” and organizer of Carthian events, and the one responsible



for making sure that no single faction member's actions jeopardize the others. Therefore, the Prefect must have some public relations savvy, as it is to him that the Prince inevitably turns when a Carthian is suspected of some wrongdoing. While the Prefect carries considerable sway among his confederates, he is not their leader in either name or truth. Most prefer the relationship that way.

Myrmidon

The majority of incarnations of the Carthian experiment involve Kindred getting together and democratically parceling out both feeding rights and potential dispute resolutions. As such, the need quickly arises for an entirely "neutral party" to help maintain order. A Carthian known as a Myrmidon fills this role. Although the Myrmidon works very closely with the Prefect, he is not the Prefect's "right-hand man," despite appearances to the contrary. Rather, he is the one who often acts as intermediary between two quarreling Carthians or between a Carthian and a non-Carthian of no political importance. Given the Prefect's duties to the cause, the Myrmidon often ends up enforcing the Prefect's duties, simply by virtue of the fact that nobody else could do it without cry of foul.





THE CIRCLE OF THE CRONE



Few vampires outside the Circle of the Crone have a complete understanding of the group's secretive beliefs and behaviors. As a covenant, the Circle is as devoted as the Carthians, more tightly organized than the Invictus, and often more feared and misunderstood than the Lancea Sanctum and the Ordo Dracul. For many neonates, these mysterious Kindred are the “bogeymen” of vampire society – those who gather in sequestered cabals, where they practice ancient and eldritch rites in reverence to bloody gods and goddesses of cultures forgotten or shunned. These are the vampires about whom elders warn their childer: the political outcasts, iconoclasts and, to some, heretics of the Damned.

OVERVIEW

The Circle of the Crone decries what are the most widely accepted creation myths of the vampire. To these cultists, the Lancea Sanctum's progenitor is not to be revered, worshipped or even heeded. Nor is the Ordo Dracul's nigh-mythical founder anything but a grand ruse. Instead, the Circle of the Crone claims a more naturalistic origin for vampires, that they have always been a part of the world, spawned in the dark places where mortals fear to tread and where guarded suspicion yields to open fear. Their origin stories invoke such names as the Russian witch Baba Yaga, the horned god Cernunnos, the Thracian goddess of moon and magic Bendis, the animal-god Pashupati, bull sacrifices in the name of Mithras, and the bloodier incarnations of the Morrigan. Members of the Circle of the Crone occasionally even incorporate elements predating Lancea Sanctum dogma into their philosophy through Lilith, the first wife of Adam. Acolytes, as members of the Circle are often known, reject vampiric notions of penitence entirely. Instead, they take a more organic approach to unlife, one that allows for all creatures – even the living dead – to continue to learn, grow and find enlightenment over time. While much of Kindred tradition places emphasis on guilt and penance according to the Judeo-Christian model, the Circle of the Crone sees itself as outside that framework.

Members of this covenant maintain that the primary lesson to be learned from any origin myth of the undead is that a vampire is never more or less a victim than he chooses to be. Empowerment and enlightenment are both well within the reach of any creature, vampire or otherwise, who is truthful and dedicated enough to attain them. Although the Circle is primarily a vampiric phenomenon, its ideology extends beyond the worldly borders of the Kindred plight and is attractive to non-Kindred as well. As such, the Circle boasts some of the most extensive and unusual contacts among similarly inclined creatures, including mages and even werewolves.

As might be expected, Acolytes are none too popular with the fervent Lancea Sanctum, which takes great offense at the Circle's "corruption" of its dearly held ideals. Some truly hard-line Kindred, especially those in power in conservative domains, go so far as to outlaw the practice and spread of what they call "demon worship," and they lay heavy penalties down upon those caught in violation of the decree. Most of the time, however, even the most stalwart Prince or Archbishop satisfies himself with making sure that those around him are free of any Acolyte heresy, thus cutting off any potential threat at the source.

MEMBERS

The Circle of the Crone boasts a diverse collection of Kindred among its adherents. Members of every clan and those of any age are drawn to the Circle's particular ethos, and the covenant is certainly stronger because of it. If the covenant is weak in any one demographic, it is likely in the number of Ventrue who share in its beliefs. The Ventrue are childer of tradition, and among the more conservative members of the clan, tradition suggests that core Acolyte ideology is foolishness at best and heresy at worst. Conversely, the Gangrel (who are known for their disregard of both mortality and Kindred convention) are perhaps the perfect fit for the covenant's mindset. Many Acolytes do indeed hail from the ranks of the Savages, who can find a symbolic resonance between their nature and those of the many gods and spirits in the Circle's pantheon.

Given the radical nature of their philosophies, Acolytes are understandably preoccupied with the continued growth of their membership. In recent years, many have begun to actively seek converts, particularly from among the downtrodden and dispossessed of Kindred society. This search often leads to the door of unaligned Kindred, many of whom are somewhat more tolerant of Acolytes than they are of the Lancea Sanctum or Invictus. And there are others who view the Acolytes' ideology as compatible with their own political outlook. As a result, the Circle's missionary efforts have been rewarded, and the number of former independents who have become members grows with each passing night. After all, if vampires are real, who's to say that the blood gods and deities of the Old Ways aren't?

PHILOSOPHY

At the core of Acolytes' belief sits the Crone, a sort of vampiric mentor and lover of mythological "monsters" during various stages of history and among innumerable cultures. Obviously, reverence for the Crone is the source of the Circle's name, and she's either an amalgamation of spirits or gods from whom vampires originated, or a literal figure not too vastly different from the Lancea Sanctum's own progenitor. Acolytes revere the image and teachings of various mother-goddesses, who were cast out of the company of fellow gods for seeking to better herself by consuming the blood of those whom the gods had made in their image. Through trial and pain, the Crone managed to uncover the secrets of creation and to survive the harsh wasteland that was life outside the gods' own paradise. All on her own, the Crone is said to have created form, shape and beauty out of the barren nothingness that lay beyond the ken of men and gods, and her Circle seeks to emulate her experience so that it too might achieve her wisdom and power.

Branching out from this core precept are two underlying themes.

Creation is Power

Vampires of this covenant are perhaps the most honest with themselves about what they consider the truth of the Kindred condition. They recognize that the Requiem tears them from the natural world and suspends them in a state of eternal stasis, forever unable to create life. For those who let the truth of this realization destroy them, existence becomes an unending spiral of manipulation toward destruction, with resources being allocated merely to fuel the perpetuation of the cycle. Creation, then, becomes both the source of true power and the only





way a static creature can otherwise remain a vibrant part of the earthly order. Some Acolytes practice this ideology in small ways, tending gardens or breeding animals, while others take the broader view, seeking instead to create things of lasting beauty or utility such as art or invention. Whatever form it takes, all Acolytes strive to emulate creation in their own way.

Tribulation Brings Enlightenment

Acolytes believe that any creature can overcome its own weakness and moral failings by continually testing its physical, mental and spiritual limitations. Only through ongoing tribulation can one's consciousness expand, and thus true understanding be reached. Cultists empower themselves by alternately exciting and challenging the senses, and through the newfound comprehension that results, they finally transform the static nature of undeath into the miracle of creation. Many cultists take this to a literal level, engaging in bouts of flagellation and other self-abuse that would make a mortal's stomach churn. Others simply put their bodies in new and difficult situations so that they may better understand themselves and their fears and limitations. Whatever the motivation, the results are undeniable: Those who endure are tempered by their experiences, making them ever more capable of enduring whatever comes next.

RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES

The Circle of the Crone is a rigidly ceremonial covenant. It claims a variety of different special rites, many of which are unique to the Acolytes of a given coterie or domain. Of those that see more widespread observance, three stand out.

The Crone's Liturgy

One of the most frequently heard recitations at cultist gatherings, this observance takes the form of passages read from various accounts of mythology or creation stories. The Liturgy has become the ceremonial opener (or closer) for the regular meetings of assembled Acolytes. The passages themselves tell the tale of the Crone's perseverance through adversity after banishment from the company of the gods. The text has a lyrical quality to it, due to the action/reaction nature of the Crone's life, and many Acolytes have taken to employing the Greek method of call and response when reciting the Liturgy. (This has the effect of making everyone present feel involved, as opposed to just the speaker.) Since many passages are fairly long, most Acolytes prefer to limit each recitation to whatever sub-section of the Liturgy is most appropriate to the subject of the meeting at hand.

The Winnowing

Acolytes claim a great many holy nights, adapted from the mythologies with which they most closely associate, and they tend to observe them with great sincerity and respect. The most important event to the covenant is an annual rite known as the Winnowing. The night itself falls upon a different date every year and is dependent upon a host of variables, including the alignment of the stars and the phase of the moon. On the whole, though, it usually falls some time around the winter solstice. On this night, Acolytes take stock of the trials they have bested, the pains they have endured and the things they have either created or destroyed in the intervening year. Since these matters are specific to each cultist, this ritual is always a highly personal one, and it is usually conducted in absolute silence under starlight. During the rite, each participant offers some of his own Vitae to the ground, in the hopes of cleansing his spirit before the coming year. The rite concludes with the Hierophant placing a wreath of laurel around the head of each participant, to represent the reestablishment of each Acolyte's connection to the natural world.

Other holidays associated with the Winnowing and observed in their unique formats punctuate the Circle's calendar. The Feast of Samhain (October 31) represents the Crone say-

ing farewell to the world in preparation for winter, and is celebrated with much revelry and orgies of blood. Latha Lunasdal (near August 1) commemorates the time of year when the nights grow longer than the days, and when the Kindred may claim more time as their own. Those Acolytes who choose to Embrace often do so on Walpurgis Night (February 25) in observance of the custom of fertility associated with that holy day. The Pyanepsion Noumenia (September 26-27) marks the honoring of the Crone herself, and is celebrated in all manners, from vampiric celebrations that resemble wild marauds to contemplation on what it means to be a creature of the night.

Crúac

The Circle of the Crone holds the mystical ways of Crúac, the “bloody crescent,” in high regard. A form of ritual magic, Crúac draws as much on shamanic systems of belief, druidic practice and even arts that resemble “black magic” in its performance. This magic is uniformly sanguinary in its practice, involving blood sacrifices at the very least and occasionally mortification of the flesh, scarring of the vampire’s body or even the death of a ritual victim for its most powerful effects. As fearful as the practice’s trappings are, none who have seen its powers in action can deny its effectiveness. Those outside the covenant might deride Crúac as “witchcraft,” but Acolytes themselves would never stoop to using such base terms for their spiritual sorcery.

TITLES AND DUTIES

The ritualistic nature of the Circle of the Crone seems to lend itself to a hierarchy of titles and roles, each fulfilling some unique niche or aspect of the covenant’s esoteric dealings, but such is not the case. In fact, only a single “official” title sees much use throughout the covenant. The rest are either titles pro-tem, city-specific titles or simply convenient descriptors for duties that almost any Acolyte might fulfill.





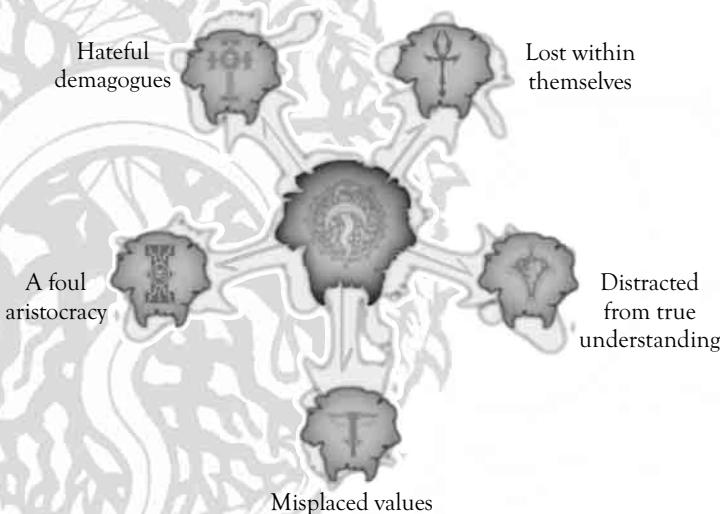
Hierophant

In domains where the Circle of the Crone has a significant enough presence to warrant it (that is, in cities with three or more members), the wisest take on the equivalent role of high priest. Such a spiritual leader is called a Hierophant and is charged with a number of duties. The Hierophant is responsible for calling meetings to order and for leading various rites and rituals (such as the Crone's Liturgy). The Hierophant also oversees the induction of new members to the Circle, and no Acolyte may be granted full status without his leave. "Hierophant" is also a term of respect, and even elders who no longer lead rituals may continue to bear the title as a "badge of office" or a sign of enlightenment.

Among the Hierophant's responsibilities is the actual formation of dogma observed by the covenant in a given domain. For example, some Hierophants call extensively upon the Celtic pantheon in interpreting the Kindred condition, while others invoke "demons" who are actually nature spirits in certain Eastern European followings. Still others might have an outlook that draws heavily on Judeo-Christian myth, substituting Lilith for the Crone, while other groups see themselves as incarnations of the Native American *wendigo* or *manitou*. Still others blend a variety of religions into their own unique view of the Kindred. This body of dogma almost always grows organically over time, incorporating new Acolytes' beliefs, changing when the covenant's tastes dictate, or taking into account new information or discoveries. More so than any other covenant, the policies of the Circle of the Crone morph and adapt, and the responsibility of keeping it all cogent rests in the hands of the Hierophant.

The Chorus

The chorus is not an actual title in the covenant, but rather a descriptor for a certain type of member. The chorus is the collective "new converts" to Acolyte ideology, and a probationary member of the Circle. Few would-be converts are capable of grasping the often painful truth of the Acolytes' mindset, so most new members go through a period of "apprenticeship" during which they slowly acclimate to existence in the Circle of the Crone. As a point of order, covenant secrets such as Crúac are never revealed to the chorus, and they are watched just as much as guided for the duration of their probation. This introductory period exists as much for the chorus' security as the covenant's, for once members are fully inducted, there is truly no turning back.



The Invictus



In the eyes of those who don't understand it, the Invictus is the despised aristocracy of the undead, the gentry who did nothing to earn their position but who would do anything to maintain it. They're landlords, overseers and dictators. The Invictus might not truly hold much more authority across the domains than the other covenants do, but it makes such a big deal about what power it does have that many Kindred often associate it with the highest offices. The Invictus tries to portray itself as among the oldest covenants, yet oldest or not, the covenant is certainly tenured. It has vast interest – and influence – in mortal affairs, and many outside the covenant see it as the guardian (sometimes excessively so) of the Masquerade.

Overview

To an extent, the common perception of the Invictus is accurate as far as it goes, but it leaves the greatest depths of the covenant unexamined. The so-called First Estate is, at its heart, still rooted in the feudal system. It was purportedly during some stage soon after the collapse of the Roman Empire that the Invictus developed into what it is tonight, cementing a dogma that its elders claim actually predates the fall. Call it divine right, the natural order, rule by the strong or whatever you like – the Invictus operates entirely as a system of linked monarchies. Everything is about power. Those who don't have it want it, while those who have it want to keep and increase it.

To hear the Invictus tell it, the covenant represents a meritocracy. The Kindred with the greatest skill, the greatest ambition and ultimately the greatest claim to leadership eventually rise to dominance. In the process, they are tempered, learning to deal with all manner of impediments, political, social or martial. If the Invictus is ruled by Princes, they are Princes of their own making.

It's a nice conceit. In many select regions, it's even true. For the most part, however, the First Estate is like any feudal government – those at the top stay there, and those at the bottom are crushed. If personal strength determines political power, how can young Kindred possibly advance? After all, their elder rivals already have the advantage of decades if not centuries of head start. They're stronger. They're wiser. They're far more experienced in the political arena. And unlike mortal aristocracies, in which the up-and-comers could count on positions eventually opening up, Invictus elders aren't likely to die naturally anytime soon, and those who fall to torpor have time to set their allies and pawns up to take their place. The Invictus, then, represents the pinnacle of achievement for the aristocracy: the illusion of equal opportunity





without the reality of it. Many young Kindred aren't fooled, but many others are – and just enough of the young really do manage to carve out their own niche to make the covenant appealing. After all, despite the apparent dearth of opportunity, the Invictus really is one of the most powerful and influential factions. Sure, it's hard to move up the ladder, but if you can, you're going to be far more powerful than, say, someone of equivalent standing among the Carthians or some would-be tyrant among the unaligned.

The Invictus claims to have popularized the use of many of the common titles and ranks in Kindred society, particularly that of Prince. In all ways, the covenant thinks in terms of aristocracy, or at least gentry. In the Old World, the image remains of the noble holding court. In America, that image has evolved in some regions into industrial barons and old-money families, an unofficial yet no less effective elite. In either case, one thing remains the same – those who have it, have it; those who don't, don't.

Ultimately, then, the Invictus exists in part to maintain order among the Kindred. Like any aristocracy, the First Estate suffers in lawlessness. Only through an ordered existence and the rule of law can the leaders of the covenant maintain their power. With the possible exception of the Lancea Sanctum, which has religious motivations for its actions, the Invictus is the most draconian covenant when it comes to enforcing the letter of the Traditions and Kindred law. It maintains the illusion of freedom and opportunity within the covenant, cloaking its tyrannical system in metaphors of “government by the fittest,” in hopes of appealing to those outside its ranks, but the group is truly more concerned with keeping order among its own ranks. If the masses don't behave, then all the power the elders have built upon their backs must crumble.

And that, of course, leads to the First Estate's unstated (but hardly secret) second purpose: not merely maintaining order, but keeping the elders who already hold power in charge of that order. Let them speak all they want about expanding the rule of law and the noble cause the Invictus represents. At the end of the night, it's all about Princes, Primogen and other elders keeping themselves at the top of the pile by stepping on the heads of those beneath them.

Most disturbing of all to young Kindred, be they members or potential members, is the nagging thought that the Invictus might have the right of it. Horrific as it sounds, this notion of keeping all power in the hands of a select few undying elders, one must ask the question: If not them, who? Who else would have both the knowledge and the power necessary to fill such a position and to keep a covenant of inherently selfish predators functioning? If the Invictus' oppressive and tyrannical nature has lasted this long, maybe that's because it works.

Members

For what should be fairly obvious reasons, the Invictus often appeals far more to elder Kindred than to neonates. In the incestuous political arena that the Invictus favors, age and experience are of far greater value than anything youth might offer. Young Kindred outnumber elders, and they have a much better grasp on the changes the modern world has brought about. Many elders face those facts with a dread akin to that inspired by open flame, and the notion of a government specifically designed to keep the established strong and their childer weak is one that appeals immensely.

That said, a surprising number of ancillae and even neonates belong to the Invictus. In some instances, this is purely a matter of the Embrace. Traditionally, childer are obligated to serve their sires' interests, at least for a time. More than any other covenant, the Invictus enforces an astonishing degree of servility. The offspring of many Invictus Kindred remain in the covenant, first out of duty, and then because they have either managed to eke out some status for themselves, or because they know no other way.

Other neonates join out of sheer ambition or self-confidence (or arrogance). True, most young Kindred have little chance of any real advancement, but the luckiest and most capable

few do indeed manage to make their mark, to obtain positions of power or to even carve out their own little fiefdoms. It might be challenging to advance within the ranks of the Invictus, but the rewards for doing so are great.

The Invictus makes it easy for them. After all, the covenant wants as many members as possible. Not only do more members equate to a wider base of power, but even the most fearful elders acknowledge that they need young vampires to understand and take fullest advantage of the modern world. Of course, as with all lords, what Invictus elders really want are servants and vassals, not equals. Kings don't build roads, they inspire and command others to do so. The larger a king's retinue and army is, the more power he holds, and the Invictus desires to hold all the power. Members of the covenant actively seek out other Kindred for membership, expounding the strengths and benefits of the covenant while glossing over the rather substantial downsides.

No procedure or test exists for joining the Invictus. A prospective member must often take an oath of loyalty before either a covenant or local official (a Prince, Primogen or a lesser "patron," for instance). Of course, the covenant has members and the covenant has *members*. A new recruit can expect to be carefully observed for years, possibly even decades, before other Invictus members even deign to listen to him or allow him access to any sensitive information.

Given all this, the two common threads that run among almost all Invictus members, elder and neonate alike, are burning ambition and a belief in the rule of law. Those who are unwilling to work for every scrap of power — and to be constantly on guard against their rivals who do the same — have no place in the courts and corporate boardrooms of the First Estate. Those who aren't prepared to operate within the unspoken rules, to play the games of politics and trading of favors, will never acquire enough allies to succeed (or, perhaps, even survive).

Philosophy

If the Invictus is devoted to a single philosophy, it must be the notion that power among the Kindred must remain in the hands of those most worthy of wielding it. In and of itself, that's not unreasonable. The Kindred are a violent, paranoid, ambitious race. If their society is to have any hope of survival and secrecy, someone has to be in charge. Where other covenants differ with the Invictus' philosophy is largely in the notion of what "worthy" actually means.

The Invictus believes in keeping as much power as possible in its own hands, and in constantly acquiring more. A good member is one who either advances his position in society, or who aids other Invictus Kindred in advancing theirs. Apathetic or ineffective Kindred are tolerated only as lackeys and pawns.

The covenant's overarching philosophy has spawned several other guidelines, all on the level of unwritten rules. That is, nobody's going to write them down, but everyone who's been in the covenant more than a short while knows better than to casually ignore them.

The Invictus Must Be Respected

Without a doubt, the Invictus prefers to announce its presence, yet it isn't stupid about it. Members of the First Estate are experts at backroom deals and covert schemes, and they keep a secret as well as anyone. If the Invictus holds power in a region, though, it wants the Kindred to know that it's in charge. Doing so inspires others to flock to its banners; after all, everybody likes being where the power is. Making a public show also helps squash any opposition to the faction's local goals, since many Kindred are reluctant to take on a member of so powerful a covenant while they would have less objection to challenging, say, a Carthian leader. Finally, displays of power are simply a social convention. The Invictus is extremely hierarchical and very formal. Its members often demand the respect and status they feel they're due. Many Invictus Princes and other leaders who choose to hold formal courts announce their covenant allegiance without ever saying the word "Invictus."





The Invictus, alone among covenants, considers itself to be an actual entity, worthy of admiration. The Carthians tend to eschew oaths of fealty, and the Lancea Sanctum and Circle of the Crone swear oaths to higher powers such as a god or spirit, first and foremost, with obedience to the covenant second. The Invictus not only demands oaths of loyalty to local covenant leaders, but considers them paramount above all other allegiances.

It's probably this practice that creates the illusion that so many Princes are Invictus. Because Invictus leaders often make such a point of their covenant affiliation, more so than those of other covenants, the First Estate is associated with the position.

Mortals Are Power

While all the covenants understand the need for the Masquerade, the Invictus focuses most heavily on not merely infiltrating but manipulating and influencing mortal society. In the covenant's quest for political dominance, it wastes no opportunity – and six billion kine represent quite an opportunity. Most elder Kindred of all covenants wield some amount of influence in local affairs or among businessmen, but when one pictures the vampire sitting at the heart of a web of corporate, political, criminal and social connections – a rare but extant stereotype – one probably pictures a member of the Invictus.

Rituals and Observances

The Invictus has few covenant-wide observances. As a whole, the First Estate is concerned more with traditions of general behavior than with specific activities. Still, certain social customs and mores have survived to the modern era, though they have become such a standard part of the Invictus Requiem that many Kindred no longer recognize them as such.

Oaths of Fealty

Due to its largely feudal structure, nearly every layer of interaction within the Invictus has a corresponding oath of fealty or loyalty. Followers swear oaths to leaders, childer to sires, thralls to regnants. And this, of course, doesn't even count the oaths that Invictus-aligned city officials often demand from all their subjects, Invictus or otherwise. Rare indeed is the Invictus Kindred who does not labor under at least three or four oaths.

Recitation of Lineage

Despite its claims that leaders are made, not born, the Invictus puts substantial social stock in its members' parentage. The farther back a member can recite her blood, the more respect she is offered. Descent from a particularly notable Kindred confers great status in the covenant. Descent from a notorious ancestor, or an inability to recite a vast portion of one's lineage, is grounds for scorn. Being able to claim membership in some of the more respected bloodlines (such as the so-called Mithraic Ventrue) is very nearly the equivalent of royalty, and the Invictus maintains a healthy regard for any bloodline or family capable of distinguishing itself from the parent clan by word or deed.

Formality of Presentation

Most Invictus Princes hold very formal courts and rule very structured domains. Whether a domain is ruled like a corporate boardroom, an old South plantation or a literal feudal court, it almost certainly has formalities and procedures that must be observed. Invictus Kindred, on average, make use of more of the local titles described previously in this chapter than members of other covenants do, precisely because of their preoccupation with position and formality. Many Invictus Princes have a Seneschal announce arriving guests by name, title (if any) and lineage (if known). They insist on specific forms of address and possibly even styles of wardrobe from those who attend their courts. They might even insist on a certain degree of refinement when it comes to social interaction at court (vulgar jokes and coarse language could be forbidden). Mouthing off to a Prince, a Regent or any other elder is grounds for severe chastisement, and more than one rebellious neonate has found himself subjected

to a Vinculum, banishment or even been faced with the sunrise when initial warnings proved insufficient.

In some cities where the Invictus wields a majority of the power, this formality extends even beyond Elysium. Kindred in such domains are expected to keep very close track of social status among all those with whom they interact, and to act accordingly. In such a city, failing to show proper deference to one of higher status can result in punishment, and showing too much deference to one of lower status results in substantial mockery and loss of face. Harpies hold nearly as much power in these cities as the Primogen, for they can grant or rescind social status at whim.

Old-Fashioned Communication

As an offshoot of the formality issue, many elder Invictus insist that most of their correspondence be conducted through the use of messengers or written letters. Telephones and email are considered gauche, the tools of an unlettered and ill-mannered youth. (Additionally, many elders are rightfully concerned that they don't know enough to protect themselves from outside eavesdropping.) Most elders aren't foolish about this protocol. When it comes to vital news or emergencies, they don't object to receiving a call or an email (though even then, Princes often prefer their Seneschals or other servants to receive the information then deliver it in person). Using these techniques for any other purpose, however, is grounds for a social snubbing at the very least. (Some young Kindred claim that this "tradition" actually exists only so that elders aren't forced to reveal how uncomfortable and incompetent they are with modern appliances. They rarely make this claim in front of their elders, though.)

Monomacy

Tradition states that, in years gone by, the Invictus used formal duels, contests and trials by ordeal to settle otherwise unsolvable disputes. These duels and ordeals are known collectively as Monomacy. Some members of the covenant believed, as did many mortals in





the Middle Ages, that God stepped in and ensured that victory went to the righteous party. Other members simply wanted a means whereby elders could settle personal issues without dragging pawns and even entire domains into the conflict. By the modern nights, the Invictus has largely abandoned its claims of divine right – even the most devout souls have difficulty believing that God takes a direct hand in duels – but it is still practiced by the staunchest supporters of the First Estate when a just cause arises.

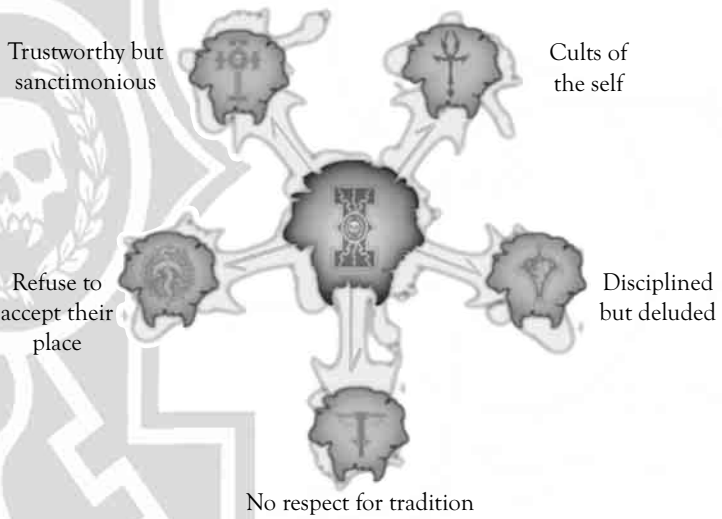
Titles and Duties

Kindred who don't fully understand the Invictus are often surprised to discover that the covenant actually has relatively few official titles and positions. What these outsiders don't realize is that the Invictus doesn't need many new titles, because it considers the standard offices described previously to be its own creations. Most officers hold the same approximate rank in the local Invictus as they do in the domain's government. That is, an Invictus Prince is likely the leader of the local Invictus, as well. Invictus Primogen and Prisci hold power in the city and covenant. An Invictus Sheriff likely enforces order in the local Invictus as well as in the domain as a whole.

In fact, only two titles that do not correspond to political positions are commonly found in Invictus domains.

Inner Circle

In some domains where the Invictus is not fully in control, or at least where many domain offices are held by members of other covenants, the covenant needs a body of leadership that does not consist entirely of officers of the city government. This is called the Inner Circle. Its members can be anyone, from the Prince and some of the Primogen to Kindred who hold no official position in the city at all. They set policy for the local Invictus and are always on the lookout for opportunities to advance their own positions. Strongly Invictus-dominant cities rarely have an Inner Circle. An Inner Circle exists only where the city government and the faction power structure are not one and the same. Further, this Invictus-specific "sub-Primogen" is possible only in the largest domains, where the Kindred population can support such a gathering.



Judex

Sometimes members of the Invictus come into conflict with one another. Under such circumstances, most members agree that turning to outsiders (such as city officials) for resolution is a poor idea, as it makes the covenant appear divided. Monomacy is reserved for only the gravest disputes, since few elders are willing to put their unives on the line just to settle a disagreement. Therefore, most cities with more than the tiniest Invictus presence have a Judex, whose job is to rule on disputes between Invictus Kindred. Once the parties involved agree to such mediation, the Judex's ruling is binding, even over those Kindred who would normally hold greater authority (such as a Prince). Judices are chosen from among city officials (in Invictus-dominant domains), members of the Inner Circle or, at worst, from among the most respected Invictus present. Some cities have a standing Judex, and the position is usually filled by a candidate on whom the Prince and Primogen can agree (or whom the Prince can force the Primogen to acknowledge). Other domains choose their mediators on a conflict-by-conflict basis. Tradition states that the Judex in such instances must be chosen by a respected Kindred who has no obvious ties to either party. Doing so is often more difficult than it sounds, and many such domains have adopted the custom of allowing a Judex, as his final act, to appoint the next Judex, well before anyone knows what problem may arise next.



The Lancea Sanctum



To members of the Lancea Sanctum, the self-proclaimed heralds of undead morality, their origin defines everything they are and everything they do. Indeed, the modern sobriquet “Sanctified,” by which the covenant is sometimes known, incenses many elders and traditionalists of the covenant, who prefer to use the Latin “Lancea Sanctum” when referring to the collective covenant. They are the religious and even moral backbone of the Kindred, yes, but they are also self-appointed priests and inquisitors. The most inhuman of an inhuman race, they exalt the role of predator. Universally respected yet universally feared, this covenant constantly seeks power over all Kindred everywhere, not for political rule, as the Invictus does, but to enforce the dictates, attitudes and even thoughts that they believe have been handed down to them from their originator Longinus, and by extension from God Himself.

The catechism of the Lancea Sanctum is that they are the ideological descendants of the Roman centurion who used his spear to prod Christ on the cross. According to the covenant’s dogma, some of Christ’s blood dripped onto the soldier, and this blood gave the centurion eternal life. It also carried with it, however, divine retribution, and though Longinus’ act revealed Christ’s divinity, it did so after an act of faithlessness on the soldier’s part. Thereafter, Longinus was cursed to live eternally, but he could walk only at night and subsist only on the same blood that had proved his undoing. As the creation myth blends into covenant philosophy, vampires are a form of “original sin,” though God allows them to exist, and indeed even charges them with the task of representing the risks of His divine displeasure.

Overview

Perhaps one of the single most fundamental differences between the Lancea Sanctum and the Invictus is that members of the Invictus want to be the rulers of all Kindred while members of the Lancea Sanctum believe that their covenant already does rule in all ways that matter. The fact that its members claim dominance over fewer domains than the Invictus does is of no concern. They speak for God and represent the pinnacle of what the undead should be. Clearly, in the final analysis, true power is theirs.

If the Invictus represents the nobility and aristocracy, then the Sanctified are the priests, bishops, paladins and the religious and spiritual advisors. (Members of the Invictus occasionally refer to the Lancea Sanctum as the Second Estate, in extension of their own metaphor, itself a perversion of the historical first and second estates.) Most of the covenant’s members take their

role as ecclesiastical guides to their fellow undead very seriously. Many of the Damned – the Lancea Sanctum prefers the older and more severe term to the more recent “Kindred” – advise Princes and other leaders on religious and moral matters. They discuss theological ramifications of decisions, and point out how a proposed action or an alleged crime violates (or fails to violate) the Traditions as interpreted by Longinus. Some members of the Lancea Sanctum take their duties further still, counseling younger Sanctified on what it means to be a vampire, educating them about the mythology and spirituality of the race, and even advising them on how to be more effective predators. This, they feel, is part of their duty as decreed by their founder – to make sure that all of the faithful understand their place in God’s creation.

And if this were all the Sanctified did, it’s unlikely the Lancea Sanctum would wield the fearsome reputation it has acquired. The Sanctified are determined that all their brethren should follow Longinus’ philosophies. And more specifically, that they should all follow the Lancea Sanctum’s interpretation of those laws. The covenant does not merely advise, it enforces. Its members do not merely preach, they demand. Members of the faction are known for their zealotry not only because Longinus himself was cursed by God, but because they maintain that violence and bloodshed are perfectly acceptable means of conversion.

The Lancea Sanctum is not mindless in its devotion to covenant principles, however, or at least most of its members are not. Violence is not necessarily their first resort. It is far better to convince other vampires of the wisdom and righteousness of their cause than to cut down a potential brother or sister. Nor is the covenant anxious to deplete its numbers in hopeless or unnecessary conflict. In domains where other covenants hold clear dominance, the Lancea Sanctum is often willing to work with them. Sanctified members advise the current leadership in hopes of both steering its decisions and gaining their own status. They also circulate among the Kindred on the streets, preaching their message of a better way, drumming up support for future activities. The Sanctified are as patient as a cult of the undead can afford to be. Violence is not to be avoided, but neither is it to be engaged in without purpose. Once the Lancea Sanctum has determined that bloodshed is the best route to an objective, however, God be merciful to anyone who stands in the way.

Of course, as frightened as many Kindred are of the Lancea Sanctum, they can take comfort in the notion that mortals have it even worse. The Sanctified have a reputation for being vampires in the truest sense of the word. They are not the mindless, bloodthirsty vandals who represent the worst of the unbound. Nor are they the brooding erstwhile generals of the Invictus, sending followers to their deaths on a whim. No, Sanctified are so frightening because they are so matter-of-fact, even reverent, about their vampiric nature. Ever since the covenant’s founding in the nights following Longinus’ curse, one of their fundamental precepts stated that the true Sanctified must fully acknowledge that he is no longer mortal. Vampires occupy a higher level. They are predators, feeding on mortals as those same Canaille do upon cows and sheep. To be true to the teachings of Longinus and the purposes of the Almighty, a Sanctified has to be a predator and no longer even pretend to be one of the kine from which he came. The Lancea Sanctum has no particular love of cruelty (or at least most of its members do not), nor do their beliefs or laws permit them such wantonness. They simply treat their prey as no better than animals, and this cold ruthlessness is often far more disturbing than any random outburst of conscious malice.



FROM THE TESTAMENT OF LONGINUS

One: That though you are Damned, your Damnation has purpose. It is the will of God that you are what you are, and the will of God is that the Damned exist to show the evils of turning from Him. The evil become Damned; God has taken those worthy of His love to His own side.





Two: That what you once were is not what you now are. As a mortal is a sheep, so are the Damned wolves among them. That role is defined by nature — wolves feed on their prey, but they are not cruel to them. The role of predator is natural, even if the predator himself is not.

Three: That an ordained hierarchy exists. As man is above beasts, so are the Damned above men. Our numbers are fewer so that our purpose is better effected.

Four: That with the power of Damnation comes limitation. The Damned hide among those who still enjoy God’s love, making themselves known only to exemplify fear. The Damned shall make none of their own, for such is a judgment of soul that is the purview only of God. The Damned shall suffer yet more should they slay a fellow to take his soul from him.

Five: That our bodies are not our own. Our purpose is to serve, and when we stray from that purpose, we are to be chastened. The light of the sun excoriates; the flames of a fire purify fleshly evil. The taste of all sustenance other than Vitae is as ash upon the tongue.



Members

Unlike the Invictus, which appeals more to elder vampires than young, or the Carthians, who tend toward the reverse, the Lancea Sanctum projects an equal appeal to undead of all ages. What an elder looks for in the covenant, however, is often not the same as what interests a neonate.

Most elders join for religious or spiritual reasons. Some come to the Sanctified seeking enlightenment and understanding. They have walked this Earth for many mortal lifetimes and have come to see that they — and their race — must have some higher purpose. They believe that God must have had some reason for making them what they are, and that Longinus’ philosophy offers them at least the first few steps on a path toward answers. Others join the covenant not to seek answers, but to provide them for others. Religious zealots often believe that the entire world would be better off if everyone simply turned to their own way of thinking, and the fanatics of the Lancea Sanctum are no exception. Many elders join (or remain with) the Sanctified not for their own sake, but for the sake of others. They would make all vampires everywhere understand what they are, what they should be and what they must do. They’ll all be better off, then — and those who must suffer and die in the process, well, it’s all for the best of reasons.

Of course, it would be foolish to imply that all Sanctified who seek the conversion of the entire undead race do so for altruistic reasons. Some want to convert their brethren only to exalt their own position. Surely God will eventually reward them. All they must do is prove themselves worthy by converting just a few more nonbelievers.

The majority of young vampires who are drawn to the covenant are enticed not by any deeply held religious convictions, but by a lack of those selfsame convictions or any other solid sense of identity. The Lancea Sanctum, more than any other covenant (except possibly the Circle of the Crone), allows and even demands members to accept what they are. For a neonate seeking direction in something so drastically different from mortal life — casting about not only for someplace to belong but for someone who can provide answers for “Why?” and “How?” — few things are as comforting as being told that it is acceptable to be a monster. Even if the newcomer doesn’t believe it yet, being told that she has become something greater than she was is comforting in an unlife otherwise punctuated by new and alien urges.

Obviously, these are generalities, not hard-and-fast rules. Many neonates join the covenant because they already hold certain religious convictions, and many elders seek the same sense of belonging that attracts childer. And, of course, Sanctified of all ages join simply out of ambition, as advancement is often easier among the Lancea Sanctum than in other covenants.

New members of the covenant are required to make many gestures of commitment to Longinus, to God and to the goals of the faction. They engage in many rites and rituals, and undergo trials to test their fortitude and faith. These tests consist of everything from torture to theological debate. Trials aren't necessarily used to determine whether a recruit may join the Lancea Sanctum, but those who make a good showing earn the respect of their new fellows. Those who do poorly face months, if not years, of derision and mockery, often sufficient to drive a new member away.

Philosophy

The Lancea Sanctum believes that its members are the chosen of God. Sanctified are not inherently superior to other vampires, but they exalt themselves by accepting the teachings of Longinus wholeheartedly. One night, all vampires will come to worship God and venerate Longinus as the Sanctified do. The Lancea Sanctum maintains that it is the duty of all good and faithful Sanctified to hurry that night along. Thus do they constantly proselytize, seeking converts to their way of thinking long past the time that other covenants might give up and move on.

Longinus himself occupies the position of Dark Messiah. While he is not the "first of the undead" according to sect beliefs, he was certainly one of the first to be something other than a self-motivated monster, little more than an animal. With Longinus arose a code of ethics. His act of prodding Christ with the spear is more important than the man or vampire — Longinus' import follows that act, not vice versa. He is a "sin eater," representing the evils that man commits in the absence of faith, and his punishment is its just repayment.

This philosophy leads to a strange dichotomy of beliefs that rivals the most extremist and even bizarre of mortal faiths. The philosophical precepts governing members of the Lancea Sanctum seem almost mutually exclusive, yet the covenant has managed to hold them together for what might be centuries or even millennia.

Commandments and Traditions

The first and foremost rule the Lancea Sanctum observes is that the Traditions are absolute and inviolate — mostly. The covenant seeks to encourage all vampire society to adhere strictly to those precepts, for only by doing so can the Lancea Sanctum honor its progenitor and bring the rest of the undead closer to understanding him.

At the same time, however, most Sanctified are pragmatic, and their leaders know that the covenant will never succeed at its divinely appointed task if they allow themselves to become weak. Therefore, Sanctified Embrace childer, although it flies in the face of the Traditions. They prefer to convert other vampires where possible, but they know that the covenant would atrophy without the occasional infusion of new blood. Similarly, the Lancea Sanctum does not hesitate to kill those who threaten its objectives (though again, Sanctified would often prefer to convert or circumvent such enemies where possible). Murder, too, is permitted because the covenant could not survive otherwise. True believers among the Lancea Sanctum do not claim that they are exempt from the Traditions they break, though. Rather, they maintain that they willingly risk God's displeasure for the sake of the larger community, much as Longinus himself was cursed for making the mark on Christ that proved his divine nature. They accept whatever judgment is finally levied upon them for doing so.

The Lancea Sanctum will not choose to violate the Tradition of Secrecy, however, at least not in the sense that it lets mortals know exactly what vampires are. Members of the covenant understand how vital the Masquerade is for the survival of the race, and thus the satisfaction of their divine charge. Of course, having taken philosophical lessons of superiority over the kine to heart, violent members consider killing witnesses to vampiric acts an acceptable means



of maintaining secrecy. Covenant leadership frowns on such brazen behavior and has been known to chastise or dispose of Sanctified who draw too much attention. They know, however, that to rein in the entirety of the young generations would vastly curtail their recruiting power — assuming they could do it at all — so they grit their teeth and make every effort to clean up after careless childer.

Guidance

All Sanctified are worthy of spiritual guidance. True believers in the covenant's cause never turn away any vampire, of any affiliation, who seeks aid or advice on religious matters. In fact, covenant law prohibits members from refusing any such petition. Obviously, this stricture allows for reasonable interpretation. A Sanctified need not invite a known enemy into her haven with open arms, nor must she stop in the middle of a gun battle to comfort a companion who's having a crisis of faith. Where possible, however, the Lancea Sanctum serves the entirety of vampire society as priests and advisors, and it is through this reaching out that the group gains many of its most faithful adherents. Even if conversion is not viable, the covenant believes that by providing aid, it can only bring other vampires that much closer to God.

Conversion

Those who will not voluntarily open their eyes must be forced to see. Violence is never the first choice, but if the undead refuse to come to the Lancea Sanctum, and if the Sanctified believe they can do so with minimal danger to their own standing, they have no qualms about shedding blood. Strictly speaking, conversion by the sword is impossible. A vampire can easily claim to have converted, and then flee at the first opportunity. Those who do not die can afford to wait for their chance. In regions where the covenant holds dominance, the Lancea Sanctum can enforce its laws and the Traditions with the most dire and horrifying of penalties. Other vampires in the territory might not actually believe as the Lancea Sanctum does, but by God they're



going to act as though they do! And who knows, maybe when they've been forced to behave like Sanctified for long enough, they'll see the wisdom in such an unlifestyle.

Rituals and Observances

Few organizations, be they Kindred or kine, can match the Lancea Sanctum for sheer quantity of rituals. As the primary religious faction among the undead, the Sanctified have a rite, an observance or a tradition for many aspects of the Requiem. It would be impossible, even in many times the space available, to describe them all. Presented here, then, is a small selection of some of the more important or common rites and traditions. It's important to note that while these practices are observed wherever the Sanctified can be found, they often differ in detail from domain to domain or even from coterie to coterie. Like all religious ceremonies, they are defined as much by their performers as by their intended meaning. Note that the use of the term "Priest" in these descriptions represents a formal position, not the more general concept that all Sanctified should "serve as priests" to their brethren.

Theban Sorcery

To hear the Sanctified tell it, its members are capable of no less than miracles themselves. In truth, the Lancea Sanctum does possess a potent form of spiritual magic, though whether it performs literal miracles is up for debate. At some point after the covenant formed — purportedly in the third century AD — some of its members followed a Roman army into Thebes ("Thebias" according to fragments of a journal supposedly recovered from the march). There, a legion of Christian soldiers was drawn from the local ranks. When members of the covenant accompanied the Theban legion on its march to Gaul, one of their number brought with her the secrets of this magic, which she claimed to have learned from an angel on the journey. To this night, the covenant studies and practices this sorcery, which it uses to demonstrate its power, "prove" its chosen nature and punish transgressors against its dictates.

Creation Rite

The induction of a new childe to the Requiem is a powerful event for the Sanctified. On one hand, it symbolizes the continued growth of their covenant and the birth of another disciple of the faith. On the other, it is a violation of the very Traditions that the Lancea Sanctum has sworn to uphold. The Creation Rite, then, is a combined celebration of the new childe and an act of penance for his sire. It must be conducted as soon as reasonably possible after the childe is Embraced, ideally at the very time of that Embrace. A Priest or other high-ranking member of the Lancea Sanctum conducts the rite, which involves substantial prayers and recited litanies. The childe is then anointed and blessed with a burning brand. The brand does not touch the flesh of the childe. Rather, the Priest waves it over her not unlike the Catholic christening. The sire, however, is exposed to the brand, which is placed directly against his chest. Contact lasts only a moment, but crying out or lapsing into a fear frenzy from the flames is a mark of shame. Only when this rite has been completed is the childe considered "truly" Sanctified, and a childe whose sire holds up well is accorded more respect than one who does not.

Multiple variations on this rite exist, as few Lancea Sanctum domains and coterie operate in exactly the same fashion. Some Creation Rites involve the sire exposing herself to the rising sun or to night-long sessions of flagellation with barbed whips. One particularly dangerous variation involves the childe (after being blessed) staking his own sire and then setting one of her extremities alight. The purpose is for the childe to let his sire burn just long enough to leave a wound, yet not so long as to risk Final Death. If the childe performs well, the sire is lauded for her choice. If the childe does not perform well, the sire usually isn't concerned with anything else said on the topic.





Anointing/Blood Baths

Used whenever a Sanctified obtains a new rank or position, the Anointing, which must be conducted by a Priest or recognized covenant official, involves little more than a recited litany, a series of formal responses offered by the supplicant and the drawing of any one of several religious symbols on the supplicant's head. The drawing is done in blood, and the supplicant is forbidden from washing it off until the next night. (Recently Anointed Sanctified do not frequently go out among kine.) This ceremony is why many Lancea Sanctum officers, officials and agents are referred to, collectively, as the Anointed.

Among some young Sanctified, the Anointing assumes a more primal form. They celebrate such events not with a simple touch of blood but with what is called a Blood Bath. The Blood Bath serves the same purpose, but the subject (often along with the other participants) is literally drenched in blood. Those who do not enter frenzy are accorded great respect, while those who succumb are mocked for their lack of control. Elder Lancea Sanctum members consider the Blood Bath a corruption of an ancient tradition, but as long as young Priests do not conduct it in such a way as to threaten the Masquerade, critics bite back their distaste and "let the whelps play."

Midnight Mass

Led by one of the highest Lancea Sanctum officials in a city, a Midnight Mass is simply that: a prayer service to God, held in the dark of night. Some truly devout Sanctified domains hold such a mass several times a week, but they occur only once or twice a month in most Sanctified-dominated cities. All covenant members in the region are expected to attend on at least a semi-regular basis. Many other rites, rituals and celebrations, often including Creation Rites and Anointings, occur at Midnight Mass.

Others

Among the dozens if not hundreds of other rites not listed here are the Fire Dance (a ceremony popular among young Sanctified in which they dance around or even through fire to prove that they can master the vampiric weakness), the Mysteries (a yearly festival of celebration and thanksgiving that all local Sanctified are expected to attend), and acceptance and allegiance rites (trials and sworn oaths when first joining the covenant or a particular coterie). In addition to those rites that are more or less universal, domains and even individual coteries often have their own rites, developed internally and not shared with the rest of the faction.

Titles and Duties

As with the Invictus, many of the Lancea Sanctum's titles overlap with local positions of authority. Many do not, however, and those that appear common often have a unique take on them.

Bishop

The religious leader of the Lancea Sanctum in a domain is called the Bishop. The Prince may rule the city, but the Bishop is the highest authority where the Lancea Sanctum is concerned. Many Bishops hold other positions in the city power structure (such as Regent, Seneschal or Primogen), even if that power structure is not Sanctified-dominated, as most Princes are wise enough to recognize the substantial power a Bishop holds.

Bishop duties include all those of a Priest, but he is also responsible for managing the local activities of the covenant as a whole.

Archbishop

This is simply the title that most Sanctified Princes choose for themselves, as Archbishop fits the Lancea Sanctum mentality far better than the secular title of Prince. The Archbishop, surprisingly enough, is usually not the same person as the Bishop, as the responsibilities of



running a city usually do not leave time to serve as Bishop as well. The Archbishop does outrank the Bishop, however, so he can overrule the Bishop when necessary.

Cardinal

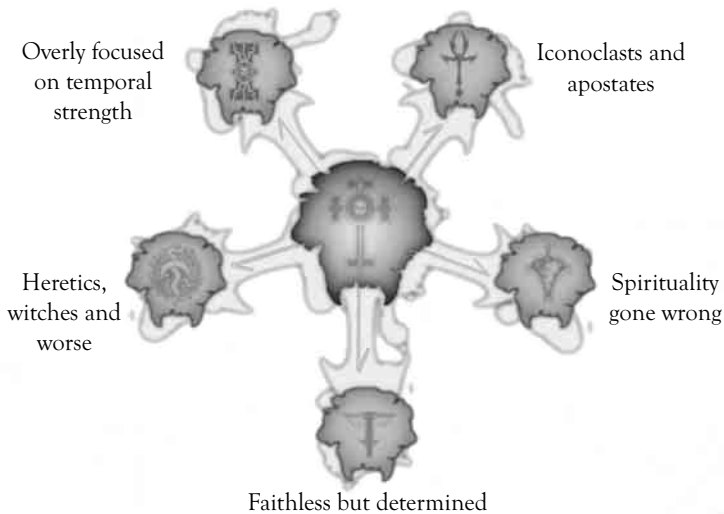
In those few cities where a single leader is powerful enough to serve as both Archbishop and Bishop, she often chooses to take the title of Cardinal. Cardinal isn't a "formal" covenant title the way the other two are, though. It's really just a vaunted way of saying, "I hold greater office than any two of you. Who would dare challenge me for it?"

Priest

A Sanctified responsible for the spiritual teaching and guidance of other vampires is known as a Priest. Some Priests serve as advisors to their local government. Others serve as Priest to a specific coterie (and many coterie larger than three members have one). This position is largely informal, but occasionally has the formal recognition of Lancea Sanctum leaders behind it.

Inquisitor

Answering only to a Bishop or Archbishop, an Inquisitor is responsible for hunting down heresy, disobedience and treason within the covenant. He has power to investigate anyone or anything, and all wise Kindred fear him. Although he technically has only low rank, his authority while conducting an investigation borders on absolute. In cities where a separate Sheriff exists, these two are often at odds. If an Inquisitor is not supported by the local Prince, he had better be careful how he handles relations with other covenants. The Inquisitor might find himself isolated in accusations or charges levied against vampires of other followings.





THE ORDO DRACUL



The curse of vampirism is but an obstacle, a hurdle before achieving true power. Granted, it's a daunting hurdle, and one that most Kindred are ill equipped to even see as surmountable. For those with the necessary devotion, tenacity and intelligence, the Ordo Dracul, the Order of the Dragon, can provide the means. The vampires of the Ordo Dracul run the gamut from dogged fundamentalists with just as much zeal as any fanatic to coldly secular theosophists simply seeking the means to destroy an enemy. The covenant as a whole welcomes both mentalities, for both have much to teach.

This faction claims an infamous founder – Vlad Tepes, Dracula himself. Dracula is noteworthy because he acknowledges no sire. According to Dracula's account of becoming a vampire, God turned His back on him and cursed him with undeath in order to punish him for his wicked acts. The most widely accepted story of Dracula's origin is that God punished Vlad Tepes for his abuse of faith in mortal life. According to certain historical records, Tepes was appointed as a “defender of Christianity,” a charge he then used as a means of advancing his own political agendas and as an excuse for atrocities. In addition to all his crimes against humanity, Dracula ultimately put his own desires before his holy oath, the act that Damned him.

The veracity of these statements remains unproven, of course, not the least obstacle to which is that Dracula himself hasn't been seen in over a century. Legends of Dracula also ascribe to him strange circumstances. By knowledgeable members of Kindred society, he is suspected of siring a very few childer – but if Dracula wasn't Embraced himself, what clan could he possibly be, and what does that make his get? By other accounts, he has never sired childer at all, or those he has sired are somehow “failed,” little more than hideous horrors doomed to slake their thirsts in a constant state of mindless rage.

Indeed, the organization that has grown up surrounding Dracula's teachings is easily as enigmatic as its founder.

OVERVIEW

The Order's roots are something of a matter of debate – even within the covenant itself. It is undoubtedly one of the youngest of the major Kindred factions. The Dragons, as they are fearfully (or hatefully) known, have records of apprenticeships as early as the 16th century. With the advent of the printing press, the covenant was better able to disseminate the vast

amount of archaic and arcane writings that members require in order to learn and perform their transcendental studies. The covenant experienced a sudden jump in power and membership during the Industrial Revolution, then another in the late 19th century, then yet another in recent decades. It is believed that the covenant grew to power in Eastern Europe, its philosophies traveling with the development of transportation technology, but just as credible theories place the group's origins in Victorian London and even early New York.

The Ordo Dracul reveres its founder, but in a very different way than, say, the Lancea Sanctum honors Longinus. The Dragons believe that the curse of vampirism can and should be surpassed, that the Embrace is a judgment that can be overturned and even exceeded. Nothing is permanent, the Order argues, not even the lingering undeath that all Kindred experience. Of course, no known vampire has ever escaped the Requiem through the Order's rites in a manner that others would find satisfactory. (It's quite possible to reduce oneself to a pile of ash or a torpid wretch through an ill-performed observance, though.) Regardless, Kindred are perfectly willing to admit that such things take centuries, if not millennia. Some crucial piece of knowledge must yet be missing, and with the world growing smaller and more integrated as technology uncovers more of it, that knowledge won't be long in coming.

In that regard, the Ordo Dracul is much more comfortable with the modern world than the Invictus is, though not nearly so comfortable as the Carthians are. Technology isn't something to be feared, but another tool to be used, and since the covenant prizes mental evolution as much as spiritual progression, elders who wish to retain their standing must shake off the inertia of years and learn how to use a telephone or a scanner. Hidebound traditionalists aren't overtly snubbed, but they do tend to be left alone in their havens to experience the Requiem and perform their research in solitude.

The search for knowledge is a commonly stated goal of the Order, but it's deliberately vague. Members of the Ordo Dracul are interested in knowledge, true, but that has more to do with the kind of personality the covenant attracts than with its actual goals. The Dragons seek information about the truth of the vampiric condition, and to that end, they enjoy talking to other Kindred about their experiences, their feelings upon receiving the Embrace, how their bodies have changed, and how their attitudes toward morals have progressed. (The Gangrel in particular interest the Order, and those Savages who join the covenant quickly become some of their most respected members.) The Dragons seek to establish patterns in God's plan, in the curse of undeath and in any other facet of the Requiem that will lead them to the answer they seek — how to transcend the limits of vampirism.

The Ordo Dracul has a hierarchical structure unique to it, known internally as the Dragon's Tongue. The Order involves numerous rites and initiations, the completion of which symbolizes the member's passage from one "circle of mystery" or level of achievement to the next. Progression through the hierarchy seems to correspond to mastery of the Coils of the Dragon, but whether this is true or simply a non-member's misunderstanding remains uncertain. This structure also serves to protect the covenant's secrets. The Ordo Dracul is loath to let anyone, even low-ranking members, leave the faction. The higher one's rank in the covenant is, the more she has invested and accomplished and, thus, the more reluctant she will (theoretically) be to leave. Yet, defections and renunciations occur with more frequency than the Order would have outsiders believe.

MEMBER

The Ordo Dracul doesn't need to proselytize. While it welcomes new members, it isn't as open as the Invictus because its strength depends on the intelligence of its Kindred, rather than on their loyalty. The Order isn't out to overthrow the existing status quo or to enforce



it, nor does it mean to adhere to an ancient set of laws or to venerate a god. Its members seek simply to move beyond, and that attracts a certain class of vampire. Kindred who are dissatisfied with their lot but who attribute that dissatisfaction to a spiritual or mystical state rather than to a political or temporal one make good candidates for the Ordo Dracul. Vampires who believe in some sort of origin for the Kindred, but who lack the zealotry or dogma necessary to join the Lancea Sanctum do so as well. The most accomplished Dragons of the Order tend to come from those Kindred who are open-minded and realistic before the Embrace. They see what they have become and do not immediately accept that the Requiem is the ultimate end of their existence. These sorts of Dragons are the cream of the crop.

Most, however, join the covenant to cheat the curse of undeath, pure and simple. The lure of the group's high rites draws all clans, and even members of the Lancea Sanctum have been known to leave their covenant, thus committing unthinkable blasphemy, to join the Ordo Dracul. The reverse is also true. Occasionally a member of the Order decides that the ceremonies she observes are sins against nature or a higher power and resolves never to call upon her hard-won knowledge again, passing the rest of her nights in quiet penance for her dabbling in forbidden mysteries. The Order has even noticed that certain specific areas of study induce this response more than others, and these texts and formulae offer a tempting target for young Dragons looking to make names for themselves.

The Ordo Dracul boasts members from all clans. The covenant hasn't seen that any one widespread lineage has any particular advantage over another. Of course, a given bloodline might spawn members of the Order as one sire trains his childe in the ways of the covenant, and that childe does likewise, but on the whole, the Dragons look past clan when considering members. The decision process has more to do with temperament and intellectual ability. While not all or even most members of the Ordo Dracul are bookish or scholarly, the vast majority are literate and educated at least moderately well.

The hardest part about joining the covenant is finding members who trust other Kindred enough to be willing to teach. That in mind, the first task a prospective Dragon has is to get a potential mentor to notice her. Investigating the Ordo Dracul, experimenting with the vampiric form and with the various Disciplines, and trying the limits of the Requiem are good ways to go about gaining attention. If an entire coterie wishes to attempt to find a mentor, its members' chances improve dramatically. The Order approves of this approach for a number of reasons. Aside from the obvious advantage of having peers with which to trade ideas, a coterie can protect itself better than a lone vampire can, from both enemies and potentially disastrous mystical errors. Also, a bit of healthy competition is ultimately good for the covenant, as it weeds out members who are only in it to cheat undeath for its own sake.

Once a prospective Dragon finds a mentor, the apprenticeship period begins. This period never really ends. Since all members of the Ordo Dracul are meant to learn constantly, all members can teach constantly. The Order observes "graduation" ceremonies of the most elaborate kind. Indeed, it relishes the fact that even an elder might still be able to learn at the feet of a wiser and more powerful member of the Order (a fact that frightens the other covenants more than they'd ever admit).

Just as it performs graduation ceremonies, the Ordo Dracul also performs initiations as a covenant (though individual mentors might elect to test would-be pupils privately before fully introducing them). It becomes clear within the first few weeks of training whether a student has the right mettle to learn the Coils of the Dragon, which the Dragons regard as the first necessary step in joining the covenant. If the pupil cannot learn at least the basics of this esoteric body of ceremonies — and the reasons for doing so range from simple lack of intelligence to an unwillingness to surrender their souls to spiritual study — the mentor

simply stops the training. The pupil might continue to practice what she has already learned, but advancement without instruction is profoundly difficult.

PHILOSOPHY

The Ordo Dracul is as much a religious society as a secular one, but only insofar as the vampiric condition cannot be explained without the existence of God. According to members' beliefs, Dracula was himself cursed by God, much as the Sanctified of the Lancea Sanctum claim that their progenitor was. The difference, of course, is that Dracula became a vampire long after many other vampires had already existed in the world. The Ordo Dracul doesn't require the fanaticism of the Lancea Sanctum or the Acolytes, because its tenets do not demand it. The Dragons' philosophies are as rigorously tested as any of their ceremonies, so they work their miracles without worship or reverence to a higher power. Respect, they feel, is enough.

To the uninitiated, the philosophy of the Ordo Dracul is a mire of theosophical and even neo-Victorian postulation. Some Kindred liken the order to a secret society such as the Masons or the Golden Dawn, and such speculation isn't far from the truth. One cannot argue the facts, though. Those who achieve rank in the Order certainly gain benefits and are able to perform acts that other vampires cannot.

The main tenets of the Order of the Dragon are as follows.

Nothing Is Permanent

Members of the Ordo Dracul know better than to consider themselves "immortal." Vampires do indeed die, and without benefit of plotting enemies or slaving werewolves. All it takes is a fire burning out of control or a miscalculation in determining the exact time of sunrise, and centuries of unlife and experience can come to an end. But the Dragons don't look at this fragility as a vulnerability. They regard their condition as mutable. After all, they reason, if God had truly wished for vampires never to change, He wouldn't have made the means of their destruction so readily available, and He certainly wouldn't have given any of them ability to change their forms. As such, the Order looks at sweeping change, even change that seems to harm more than it helps, as ultimately beneficial. A building burns, a plane crashes, the Prince of a city falls, covenants scheme, werewolves attack, and the Ordo Dracul simply reminds its members that nothing lasts forever. This isn't a bleak, fatalistic lament so much as a challenge. "What can we take away from this change?" If nothing else, every change is a reminder that change is possible.

Change Must Have a Purpose

Central to transcending the vampiric condition is an understanding of why it is necessary to do so. The Order looks at the Requiem as a challenge more than a curse, but its members never forget or deny that it is a curse. In researching and realizing the Coils of the Dragon, the Dragons work toward their ultimate goal of leaving their vampiric shells behind.

This tenet has a broader application, as well. Every action has a reaction, and until a Dragon can understand the reactions that a given course causes, she is discouraged from taking action at all. This lesson is reflected most keenly in the Order's spiritual power. The Coils of the Dragon distinguish members from their peers quickly, providing a superb object lesson in the nature of causality. The more power you gain, the less power you understand. Young members of the covenant, eager for the benefits that the Coils can grant them and enthralled with the notion of going beyond the limits of their state, don't usually understand that paradox. Many Ordo Dracul mentors regard it as the harshest, but most necessary lesson of the Requiem. If every action isn't guided by purpose, it soon spirals into entropy and eventually destruction. The Order doesn't believe in causing foolish chaos and then shirking responsibility for its actions by saying, "Change is good."





RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES

The most important relationship in the covenant is that of the mentor and pupil. Rites and practices vary greatly among mentors. While one might keep lessons extremely informal, another might treat her pupils like novitiates in a monastery, forcing them to copy manuscripts or perform menial tasks for most of the night and instructing them in the ways of transcendence for only the last hour before sunrise.

The covenant as a whole does observe a few important rituals, however, and some individual teaching methods have become widespread enough to mention.

The Coils of the Dragon

Central to the Ordo Dracul is the philosophy of transcendence, the desire to rise above the limitations of the cursed vampiric form. Learning the Coils of the Dragon allows a Kindred to “cheat” certain aspects of the Requiem. For instance, a vampire might be able to slow his mystical metabolism, consuming less blood than normal when he rises each night. Another aspect of transcendence might allow a Kindred to slake his thirst on animal blood, no matter how potent his own blood is. By defeating these incarnations of vampirism, the Order believes it is on the right path toward eliminating or escaping vampirism entirely – with the goal of attaining the next level, whatever form that takes.

The Dragon’s Tongue

A forked line of progression, the Dragon’s Tongue is the structure through which covenant members progress as they learn more secrets and master greater aspects of their condition. While comprehension of the hierarchy by those outside the covenant is cloudy at best, it appears that all members follow a single path of progression up until a certain point, after which the member chooses a specialty to follow. Various members of the covenant lay claim to numerous titles, but whether these are actual functions and responsibilities or mere honorifics has yet to be ascertained by outsiders. The Dragon’s Tongue is an oblique concept. It is distinct from the Coils of the Dragon, but knowing the Coils of the Dragon seems to be requisite for advancement in the Dragon’s Tongue. In layman’s terms, the Dragon’s Tongue seems to roughly equate to rank while the Coils of the Dragon are similar to capability or potential.

Finding the Wurm’s Nests

The world is constantly in flux, on levels that not even the Kindred can perceive. Long ago, the Ordo Dracul noticed that certain places hold magic better than others. These areas, variously called “nexuses,” “holy sites” or “dragon nests” by different cultures, don’t stay static. They migrate as flows in the mystical energies of the world push them. Likewise, new sites of power spring up every year. The Order has determined that many places that mortals consider haunted or cursed (or blessed) are simply the result of this energy being “washed” into a new locale. Every few years, then, the Dragons re-draw the mystical maps of the world, plotting sites and the current of mystic power toward them (sometimes called “ley lines”). This practice takes place over the course of weeks and months, normally beginning with the week preceding the winter solstice, as it gives the map-makers the most time to work. A certain amount of reverence, if not outright ritual, accompanies these mapping efforts. The mystical cartographers are treated with the utmost respect, and being sent to verify the existence of a nexus is considered something of an honor among the Order. It’s generally accepted that any mystical artifacts discovered at such an investigation remain property of those who find them (after the covenant has a chance to catalog and examine them, of course).

Following the Dragon’s Tail

A teaching technique that has become popular as mortal populations increase, Following the Dragon’s Tail is meant to illustrate that no change happens in a vacuum. The mentor

accompanies her student on a hunt, and instructs her to kill one mortal in the course of feeding (not usually a problem, especially if the student has taken well to her studies). The mentor then instructs her to follow the innumerable chains of events that death causes. Who does the mortal leave behind? What does her obituary say? Does anyone mourn her? Who shows up at her funeral? Does a police investigation ensue? How much effort do the police put into it? Do other vampires become involved? Reportedly, the first Kindred of the Order to enact this lesson still follows the effects that the murder he committed had on mortal society... more than 200 years later. In less formal terms, a member of the Ordo Dracul said to be “following the dragon’s tail” takes care of loose ends, or plots some scheme and attempts to predict results for every stage of the plan.

Honoring the Mentor

Not required, but certainly not discouraged, the practice of annually honoring one’s superior(s) among the Ordo Dracul hierarchy has become commonplace. Every covenant member who chooses to partake in this custom has a different method of showing reverence, and of course it very much depends on the mentor in question. For some teachers, a gift (books, a favored type of vessel, an archeological find stolen from a museum) is best. For others, a demonstration of what the pupil has learned in the past year makes the best present. Coteries of Dragons who study under the same mentor sometimes collaborate on a way to honor their teacher... but just as often they compete to decide who can elicit the most appreciation from her.

TITLES AND DUTIES

As mentioned previously, the mentor-student relationship is the backbone of the Order of the Dragon. Many members introduce themselves as their mentors’ protégés (if a mentor is well respected), and an elder Dragon with an especially promising student might even reverse the compliment, calling herself “[so-and-so]’s master.”





Not all members of the Ordo Dracul are constantly embroiled in the process of learning, however, and the covenant has great respect for those who take up the other duties that the Dragons consider important.

Guardians

Among the reverent Ordo Dracul, the Guardians are responsible for looking after the aforementioned mystical sites. The covenant has several reasons for wanting to keep other beings out of these nexuses. First, an uninformed fool with a bit of mystic talent but no proper training (by which the Dragons mean any magical being who is *not* a member of the covenant could destroy the site's power and wreak havoc on an entire area. In fact, vampiric urban legend perpetuates tales of ill-performed rites on a particularly powerful site, courtesy of covens of mortal wizards, Lupine shamans and satanic cults. Second, places of power are valuable resources, and when the Order possesses one, that is both an asset for itself and an asset denied to rivals. As counterpoint to this, the Ordo Dracul knows that many of the other covenants of Kindred would destroy such sites rather than let the Dragons make use of them, or at least make them bargain for access. Third, such mystical sites are always changing, and while they normally change over the course of years or decades, sometimes magic takes a great leap forward and the Order likes to know about such events as soon as possible. Finally, the covenant asserts that some sites are truly symbolic or spiritual and deserve protection from defilement as well as from simple destruction.

Guardians are usually those Dragons with a bent toward martial prowess and stealth. They are rarely prepared to end their unives in pursuit of their duties, however. After all, nothing is permanent, and throwing away an unlife over something that might change in a mere 50 years is just foolish.

Kogaion

Every city with a significant Order presence has a pre-eminent Guardian known as a Kogaion. He protects the city's maps of ley lines and nexuses, the locations of its greatest mystical treasures (if not the treasures themselves), and a roster of all Dragons in the area. Most often, the Kogaion memorizes this information or records it in riddles, codes and dead languages to keep it from falling into enemy hands. The title itself seems to be of Thracian origin, meaning "the magnificent's head." A new Kogaion is elected only when an old one dies, steps down or becomes untrustworthy (and being declared untrustworthy requires a

Emphasize
order instead of
improvement

Usually
beneath notice.
Usually.

Idolaters without
enlightenment

Strong out-
side, hollow
within

Cannot comprehend
the value of self

statement to that effect from at least seven other Kogaions). Being declared a Kogaion is one of the greatest honors of the covenant, but it also effectively cuts the vampire off from other members of the Order. Everyone respects the Kogaion, but since she is an obvious target for enemies of the covenant, no one wants to associate closely with her. Kogaions are frequently hermits, sought for consultation and advice but very rarely for long-term apprenticeships. Kogaions also tend to be frighteningly powerful with regard to the Coils of the Dragon... though some simply believe they are.

The Sworn of Dracula

Little is known of the Sworn – from the outside, they appear to be sub-factions or sub-covenants within the Ordo Dracul. A few Kindred suspect that the Sworn of Dracula number three distinct groups, each of which is associated with some higher branch of the Dragon's Tongue. Most vampires outside the covenant don't even know the names of the Sworn, though three distinct titles do seem to be consistent where the Order grows to any appreciable numbers: the Sworn of the Axe, the Sworn of the Mysteries and the Sworn of the Dying Light.



The Unaligned



When one hears a vampire refer to the existing Kindred order as the “despised aristocracy of the undead,” the speaker is probably one of these free-thinking spirits — those whom the vampire world has dubbed “unaligned” or “unbound.” They are the rebels, outlaws and iconoclasts of vampire society, those who freely flout the rule of the elders among their kind. Independent Kindred can also simply be apolitical vampires, those who acknowledge only their own authority but who don’t necessarily make a grand show of defiance against Princes and Regents. There are as many reasons to renounce the notion of covenants as there are Kindred among the unbound, everything from paper-tiger rebellion to acknowledging no greater authority than the self to free will to downright bizarre mystic philosophies and even heresies.

The unaligned are fiercely independent, and many would sooner face the rising sun with a smile than spend eternity in submission before another creature of the night. While they do not truly compose a covenant, the unbound are often overlooked individually and considered in a collective rabble with others of their mindset, despite the fact that they have no shared organization. Still, enough commonalities occur that they can be discussed as a phenomenon, even if their status as a formal covenant is nonexistent. If a vampire disdains the prevailing governmental structure but doesn’t belong to any structured covenant, the rest of Kindred society almost always considers her one of the unaligned.

Overview

“Independent” Kindred resent or otherwise reject the neofeudal establishment of modern Kindred society. They’ve been around as long as any of the covenants by virtue of the fact that as long as a political movement is going on, someone will oppose or take no interest in it. In nights past, some politically independent vampires were occasionally known as “anarchs” or “autarkis,” a reference to their disregard for ironclad laws and orders among the Kindred. Those vampires cared nothing for the proclamations and decrees of heavy-handed Princes, and to a great extent, wished nothing more than to be left alone. In those nights, the unaligned were considered foolish, but ultimately harmless, as long as each individual member was smart enough not to jeopardize himself and his kind through his lawless actions.

The spread of an informal unbound sympathy would change all this. Many lawless, practically careless Kindred did much to shake up the world of vampire society in a very short time. Lines were blurred, boundaries crossed and dreadful decisions made, all in the name of

independence from the established order, and that was the part that caused a stir. Although what passes for an unaligned “movement” has since settled down a bit (or at least retreated to the shadows), the damage wrought upon the unbound was done. Tonight, more than a few elders among the covenants have taken the actions of particularly truculent unaligned as representative of the gestalt... or at least capitalized on the aftermath thereof in an attempt to clamp down on such rogues.

Members

Just as the Invictus is plainly attractive to elders, so too is unaligned existence a magnet for the young and downtrodden among the Kindred. Neonates make up the preponderance of the unbound, and new believers discover independent urges with every passing night. Many would-be unbound renounce their affiliations following eye-opening or humiliating experiences in one of the covenants. Sometimes this occurs early on, with a bitter neonate loudly claiming independence for succor and release. Other times, the taste for freedom attracts ancillae who tried for decades to play the vampiric political game but were simply outmaneuvered or disgusted by the toll it took on them over time. The independents probably see more “converts” than any of the covenants, which is yet another reason why these outcasts are often held in such low regard by the established covenants.

Although a great many unaligned Kindred are neonates or young ancillae, this is not to say that no elders renounce sectarian ways. A number of older Kindred, primarily those of the Mekhet and Gangrel, prize the unbound for their freedoms, and might even seek to turn their influence toward uniting local unbound under a common banner in hopes of forming a neo-covenant that advances their own agendas. In fact, these few manipulative elders are responsible for the hostile attitudes that certain cells of independents harbor toward more formalized groups of Kindred. This isn't to say that every elder goes independent in hopes of building a private army. Many elders among the unbound are quite content simply to ignore social strictures that they personally find distasteful. In the eyes of many “established” Kindred, with elder power comes responsibility, and interpersonal pressures occasionally force into covenants those elders who would be more satisfied if they were freed from such duties.

Philosophy

The guiding philosophical principle behind the unaligned mindset is the fundamental conceit that every vampire — like every man — is free. Regardless of clan or age, no Kindred should be forced to bow like some lowly serf before the feet of a provincial undead governor. Not surprisingly, the unbound find the notion of vampiric titles and duties contemptible. They recognize no “Prince” to whom they should show self-effacing obeisance, and they regard the entire notion of formalized social debts as wholly unnecessary. Each of the Damned is an individual, removed from the brotherhood of mankind and thrust into solitude for all eternity. The unaligned tend to feel that vampire-kind needs no phony system of forced indenture to make sure that each Kindred keeps his word and honors his promises. As alone as they are, vampires realize that all they truly have is their word — without the aid of unnatural and artificial hierarchy — and they act accordingly. Those who don't are weeded out naturally, and not by the arbitrary will of an elder.

This sole idea forms the approximate basis of the independent ideology, but like any solid foundation, it embodies itself in a number of night-to-night practical principles. These trends of the unbound mindset give individual Kindred a sense of self, while providing a necessary grounding in the realities of unlife.

Again, note that these aren't formalized codes of belief among the unbound. Each independent Kindred is her own Prince, or at least wishes to be. These are simply the most common points of agreement among a non-covenant of ruggedly individual vampires.





Vampiric Nature Is Solitary

To the unbound, the twin notions of vampiric freedom and individuality have their roots in the simple truth that vampires are solitary creatures. The soul of a Kindred is solitude. It is shut out from the world it knew before the Embrace and forced to survive the Requiem as a wolf among the flock, dipping in and out of the fringes of mortal society while never truly integrating with it.

The same applies to the new world into which a Kindred is thrust upon his Embrace. While many view vampire society as a sub-level resting beneath and within mortal society, the unaligned tend to reject this view on the whole. To them, the notion of a “vampire society” is a shamefully forced contrivance, a deliberate attempt by power-hungry elders to enforce structure and order where none exists. Vampires are bestial, undead predators. Forcing them to coexist under fabricated pretense is a recipe for disaster. Only by respecting the natural Kindred state — that of isolated, independent equality — can harmony be found among the Damned.

Power Corrupts

The unaligned see how terribly power corrupts among the living. Compound the problem with undeath, literal bloodthirst and the prospect of an eternity of the same, and the result is disaster waiting to happen. The unbound can believe that the Kindred are the last creatures who should be in a position to wield great power over themselves, let alone over one another. They’re called “the Damned” for a reason, and the Damned should not be leading the Damned. That’s a caravan that can only travel straight to the gates of Hell, and the unbound know better than to fall into such an ill-fated line. Better that each vampire concern himself primarily with his own progress along his own road.

This is not to say that independent Kindred eschew power and influence. They are still vampires, and many feel that the only way to fight fire is with fire. Even those who don’t can still appreciate the benefit of amassing great amounts of wealth or sway



in various mortal circles. The important distinction is how and in what manner their power negatively affects those of their kind. Being aware of one's solitary nature does not mean pretending that other Kindred don't exist. This very mistake has earned more than one well-intentioned unbound her share of trouble. The trick is to learn how to balance the acquisition of power with the legitimate needs and desires of one's neighbors. And, of course, the acquisition of vampire-specific power and influence is considered dangerous ground among the unaligned, which is why many prefer to stick to mortal spheres of influence.



Belial's Brood



Not every covenant is as fully structured as the rest. Indeed, some covenants are local phenomena or simply too small to merit the elaborate systems that the larger ones have in place. With Belial's Brood, however, covenant law is unnecessary because, "Do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the law."

A loose confederation of Satanists, demon-worshippers and overt miscreants, Belial's Brood claims that the origin of the Damned is literally from Hell itself. Vampires are not their own unique species, they are "demons" given mortal form or devils who have found passage from the Pit's sulfurous depths to the surface of the world. The purpose of the Damned, in the opinion of this covenant, is to indulge the dark urges that the Beast imparts.

The Brood is truly a hellish faction of Kindred. Members exult in their wickedness, inflicting pain and misery with no remorse and even less discretion. While Belial's Brood is about, buildings burn, mortals die under overturned cars, and shocked victims covered in blood stagger down streets before collapsing. The Damned should be the Beast incarnate, they preach. Vampires serve none but the Devil himself!

Belial's Brood rarely survives long in any given domain. Its behavior is antithetical to the continued existence of the Kindred, both under literal and interpretative understandings of the Masquerade, so few Princes suffer its ilk to establish havens or stay in their demesnes. Even if Princes didn't rally entire domains against them, members of the Brood would probably bring their own Final Death about sooner rather than later. Their overt acts and blatant wickedness tend to earn them the attention of witch-hunters, mortal authorities and other groups who don't want the demoniacal murderers threatening them.

The truly remarkable aspect of Belial's Brood is that, even with all right-thinking Kindred efforts to stamp them out, the same Satanic ideology survives to take root elsewhere. Belial's Brood is seldom sophisticated enough to remain secret or hidden for long, and Princes who have destroyed cells to their last member are often surprised to see the phenomenon return a score of years later. The group's chaotic philosophy is too manic for the covenant to truly have a center anywhere, but if that's the case, how does the same sectarian philosophy keep resurfacing if the covenant's many enemies are so vigilant in rooting it out and destroying it?

VII



One “covenant” among the world of the undead has no name. Although this faction comprises vampires, those beings seem to hate all Kindred who are not part of their mysterious order, and literally attempt to destroy them on sight. The notion of this group as a covenant might even be mistaken, as it is unknown whether the group is a true covenant, its own insular clan or just a particularly zealous cult. “Seven,” the name by which other Kindred recognize the sect, comes from occasional iconography that its vampires leave behind after particularly heinous or noteworthy attacks — the Roman numeral seven.

By all accounts, members of Seven are few, and not every city harbors their genocidal population. What they lack in numbers, however, they make up in fervor and burning hatred of the Kindred. A few of their organization have been captured by other vampires, and from their testimonials (most gleaned under pain of torture or through supernatural means), more than a few shuddersome details arise. Members of Seven reportedly do not suffer the same pangs of possible frenzy upon seeing other undead for the first time. They can, however, identify other vampires on sight, as they claim to be able to see “the mark of the Betrayer” upon the Kindred. Even the artificial understanding of the group’s “name” is a murky translation at best. When asked under supernatural compulsion to speak the truth, these creatures cannot define what they are, and probes into their minds yield only mental images of the Roman numeral “VII” or a character from what seems to be an unknown alphabet that the vampire so questioned cannot properly explain.

Despite the mysteries of their origins and purposes, one thing is certain: Members of Seven are fanatical in their drive to destroy other vampires. Seven believes it is the lost legacy of a king who was wronged centuries or even millennia ago, and that its purpose is to destroy the Damned. Only by removing the taint of the Kindred from the world can they achieve their “Sabbath,” which they understand as the ability to reclaim that lost kingdom. Details differ. Some members believe that the kingdom shall emerge from a mystic curse, while others believe the kingdom is metaphorical, and they are the chosen workers of God’s will to remove the scourge of the Kindred from the world. Without a doubt, Seven consists of vampires. Its members consume blood just as other undead do, and the true nature of their fanatical mission remains unknown.

Whatever the cause of its caustic hate for the Kindred is, Seven isn’t stupid. It knows that the world at large sees no difference between it and its hated foes, so it practices what amounts to a Masquerade. It doesn’t blindly leap into conflict if it feels it would be doomed





– it chooses its fights carefully in order to gain as many advantages as possible. Given its relatively small numbers, overt conflict with groups of Kindred is rare, but not unheard of. Assassinations, murders and stealth tactics are more suited to the covenant's capabilities, but considering Seven to comprise nothing but fiendish skulkers sorely underestimates its abilities. Too many Kindred have met their end at the claws of a coterie of Seven after thinking the killers destroyed.

Kindred Mythology

Undying, blood-drinking predators with abilities that defy the laws of science as mortals know them, the Kindred are creatures of myth, legend and folklore. Most mortals would undoubtedly be surprised, then, to learn that vampires themselves have their own myths and legends. In fact, the greater portion of Kindred history is known only in the blurred and distorted form of myth. Mortal civilization by and large understands its past far better than the Kindred do their own.

It seems illogical, at first glance. For all intents and purposes, the Kindred are undying. Surely, some of them experienced these historical events firsthand. Mortals must rely on written records and archaeological evidence to piece together bits of the past, but it should be possible for the Kindred to simply ask someone who was there. Shouldn't it?

No. As the Kindred age, they find they need far more potent blood to survive, until finally they can feed only on other vampires. This inevitably drives the Kindred into torpor, either voluntarily, with the intention of slumbering long enough for the blood to thin, or involuntarily, due to simple lack of available sustenance.

During torpor, the Kindred dream. Whether it is due to some mystical link through the Blood that connects all the undead, or something inherent in the vampiric mind, all Kindred tend to experience similar dreams. That is, they experience all they have done and all they have seen over and over again. The images continue, unending, inescapable – and ever-changing. The Kindred dream of events past, but never see them exactly as they were. At the end of a mere two or three decades in torpor, a vampire has a slightly skewed memory of his entire Requiem. After centuries of slumber, an elder's memory might bear little more than a coincidental resemblance to historical fact.

This means that for every Kindred who witnessed an event firsthand, there exists a slightly (or not so slightly) warped accounting of that event. No single Kindred can possibly know the entire truth of a specific era or occurrence. Nor can outside investigation ever piece together the actual truth from many different events, as each Kindred is absolutely certain that his version of events is the correct one and is highly unlikely to accept anyone else's as more accurate.

The Kindred must therefore turn to mythology, ancient beliefs and written records passed down through the ages and generations, even as mortal writings have been. Some of these records contain elements confirming the memories of many elders, sufficient commonalities to suggest that at least some of those memories are partially accurate, as with the beginnings of vampiric society in Rome. Others come from times and places that no modern vampire can claim to have witnessed, thus forming the only surviving record. As to whether they should be believed, well, only the most shamelessly naïve individual would hope that the Kindred might ever come to universal accord on that score.

These ancient texts are essentially the basis for various Kindred religions or at least creation myths, as the Bible, the Koran and others form the basis for many human faiths, and are

exceptionally difficult for some Kindred to accept. The Kindred relationship with faith is an odd one. Their existence serves as sufficient proof, at least to most of them, that something must exist beyond the realms of science. Most vampires do believe that, yes, some sort of God or higher power exists. To attribute to Him an innate benevolence and sense of order, however, as most religions do, is something else entirely. Few vampires truly accept what they are, or even the very existence of their race. Can this be the work of a kindly deity, one who wants only what's best for His creations? Many Kindred believe in God, in some form or fashion. Not so many of them consider Him worth worshipping, however.

Consider as well the inherently deceptive and manipulative nature of the Kindred. Rare is the vampire who hasn't made lying and deceit a common practice. So what if *The Testament of Longinus* says what's true or how the Kindred should behave? *Rites of the Dragon* says the exact opposite. Who's to say who actually wrote any book that puts forth an origin for the Damned? The Kindred have nothing but the word of other Kindred to trace any rumor or writing back to a given source. Few Kindred accept even the most minute piece of information at face value if it was given them by another vampire. Why should something so major as the origins, beliefs and even purposes of their race be any different? Of course, as with many things in the Requiem, the final arbiter is the Blood itself, which enforces the Traditions more thoroughly and efficiently than any institution ever could.

Thus are the majority of Kindred divided into distinct camps. The Lancea Sanctum and the Invictus believe that *The Testament of Longinus* represents a good approximation of the truth, and they modify their behavior and religious beliefs accordingly. (It must be said, however, that the Invictus pays these beliefs lip service when they come into conflict with members' own interests. Most of the time Invictus Kindred seem not to care at all.) The Ordo Dracul has its own writ, *Rites of the Dragon*, that, while it doesn't rule out the possibility of the Longinus theory, certainly doesn't require it to make its own position valid. The Circle of the Crone rarely bothers with formal works of vampiric origin, relying instead on oral traditions far older than either the Sanctified's or the Dragons'. Others reject such postulation on the origins of their kind as utterly meaningless, fiction or propaganda penned by manipulative elders for their own inscrutable purposes. Very few vampires fall into the middle ground. As a whole, Kindred tend to either believe strongly in one myth or none at all.

MYTHOLOGY, FAITH AND KINDRED BEHAVIOR

The faith espoused by Kindred who do find one of the many theories particularly poignant or resonant is so prevalent that it has spawned many of the vampire laws, acknowledged and obeyed even by those who don't accept a given philosophy's dogma as gospel. For instance, the three formal Traditions by which almost all Kindred society operates are mandated and spelled out in (purportedly) Longinus' own words as well as those of the now-defunct Camarilla. Many local traditions are also inspired, though less directly, by passages from the *Testament*. (See p. 91 for more on the Traditions.) The Masquerade in particular is often touted as a prime example of Longinus' wisdom and foresight. His followers maintain that if the progenitor could foresee the need for the Kindred to hide from mortals, even back when the living did not outnumber the undead to nearly the extent they do now, then surely his other commandments are equally wise.

On the other hand, many regional groups of the Circle of the Crone draw precepts from cultures and mythologies that existed long before the Crucifixion, or entirely independently of it. Their own theologies have developed concurrently with the same limitations of the Kindred form that members of the Lancea Sanctum experience. To their mind, even if Longinus did exist, his only claim to fame was setting his commentary down in written form, not explaining the genesis of the Kindred.





Likewise, the Ordo Dracul doesn't deny the Longinus theory but rather corroborates it, if its own creation myth is true. If Dracula's entrance to the Kindred world happened without a sire, so could Longinus' — and so could that of anyone before them whose name or deeds the Kindred do not remember.

Further muddying Kindred's proof of origin are the clans. Whence did they take their names? Who were their progenitors? Did they all hail from the same place, or did they arise independently, mingling only in the relatively recent memory of a world that is far older than anyone suspects? Clans obviously predate the covenants, but do they all hail from the same period?

These questions have no answers, of course, just like those seeking the origins of the Kindred themselves. None of the matter is eminently provable — or so it has been to date. Certainly Kindred with faith, drive or the burning desire to *know* ceaselessly research the origins of their kind. Hidden temples in forgotten lands, domains older than history acknowledges, abandoned havens beneath cities ruined long ago... All of these and more house relics that have the potential to answer the ultimate question of why the Kindred exist. Then again, they may simply engender a different question... or perhaps the answer was never meant to be known.

REASONS AND RATIONALE

The Lancea Sanctum, of course, is the most closely and obviously linked to the creation story of a messianic founder. Members of the covenant usually interpret *The Testament of Longinus* in its most literal sense, and Sanctified Priests often carry copies of passages, if not the entire text itself, for conducting rituals. The covenant's warriors often quote from *The Testament of Longinus* before (or even during) battle, enhancing their reputation among the other factions as fervent champions.

The Invictus' interpretation of its origin is less rigid but no less important to the covenant. The elders of the First Estate use frequent passages from *The Testament of Longinus* — references to rule by eldest, accomplishments of some clans over others, and the like — to justify their position as leaders of the Kindred community. It is nothing less than divine right that they rule their domains and will eventually rule others. It is unlikely that few believe in this canon with any degree of true faith, but faith certainly was the hallmark of the era from which more than a few elders hail, and belief in a higher power answers many questions that an unnatural, deathless existence provokes.

The Carthians (and many independent Kindred) often share a somewhat cynical interpretation of the origin of the species. Namely, that it is a tool used by those in power to oppress those who are not. This isn't to say that no members of the covenant believe in a creation myth, or that they don't believe in it devoutly. A great many of them do. They simply believe that the Kindred can't necessarily explain who the first vampire was, or that even if a single Kindred proved the origin of the species, it came as a result of divine intervention. Longinus most likely did not even scribe "his" book itself, and even if he did, systems of order that worked at the dawn of civilization are simply inapplicable to the modern world. They point to various other mythologies, particularly those upheld by local Acolytes, and their own inapplicability to the modern state of the world, as proof that the Kindred must change with the times despite their inherently unchanging natures.

The Circle of the Crone, naturally, goes its own way in an almost limitless number of old mythologies and new amalgamations of existing and new ones. *The Testament of Longinus* is little more than a corruption of the older ways, much as the Church adopted pagan rites and observances into its own body of holy days. In covenant members' eyes, the abuse and impious invocation of

whatever faith they choose to invoke is a travesty perpetrated upon the Kindred by blasphemous elders. They cannot ignore the faiths or philosophies of other Kindred, for they have shaped so much of Kindred society, but many consider them the epitome of everything that's wrong with Kindred both past and present. Other Kindred believe that vampires have existed since Creation, that they were part of God's plan from the beginning. More shamanistic or even necromantic vampires often believe that the first Kindred were spirits of the dead who, due either to hostile sorceries or some sort of spiritual turmoil, could not depart their bodies after death.

For the Ordo Dracul, the question represents both power and limitation. Many of the mysteries mastered by the covenant certainly have their echoes in the times reflected in the various creation myths, but the group as a whole is a bit more secular than many of its counterparts. The Coils of the Dragon and Order philosophy don't rely on passages from any document, much less one that requires supplication to a power higher than the self. All mythologies contain their share of wisdom, but in an era of miracles performed by creatures as mysterious as the Kindred, who's to take any account purportedly written by any of them at face value? *Rites of the Dragon* can be taken literally or figuratively, and the result is still the same.

Of course, groups far smaller than the great covenants shape themselves according to the precepts of the largest of their kind. Just as all religions have their factions and cults, so too do the Kindred divide themselves further still. Some vampires, fanatics even among the Lancea Sanctum, spend every waking moment behaving only as they believe the *Testament* commands them to, accepting its authority even over that of the local Prince or Archbishop, or even insisting that Longinus was the first vampire, historical evidence to the contrary. Many Invictus vampires, for whom religion would otherwise be a minor concern at best, congregate with those who share their interpretations of convenient philosophies as a means of finding common ground among potential allies. Some religious groups, often derided as doomsday cults by other Kindred, are drawn together solely by their belief that the ancient Kindred progenitors will arise some night and destroy the Kindred race. Of course, no evidence exists to indicate that such an event will ever occur, let alone that it might happen soon. Most Kindred tend to view these covenants with much the same exasperated disdain that the average mortal views people carrying "The End Is Extremely Fucking Nigh!" signs on street corners.

Still others are determined to find some sort of scientific rationale for the existence of the Kindred. These last are normally found among fairly young Kindred, and many shift from such a belief system when they finally accept what they are and what they can do.

Coteries, factions, clans, covenants (at least on a local level) and even entire domains often ally with, or oppose, other such groups based solely on religious doctrine. These disagreements rarely erupt into open conflict, but when they do, they are no less fanatical and no less violent than any religious wars among mortals.

It's important to note that most Kindred mythology is not a replacement for religion, but rather an addition. Acolyte mythologies add to or adapt from extant pantheons observed by mortal cultures. Those Kindred who honor Longinus as an object lesson also believe in the God of the Abrahamic religion. Kindred are usually observant of their own faiths and philosophies as well as Buddhist, Christian, Hindu or Muslim beliefs, rather than instead of.

GOLCONDA

One concept that appears only briefly in both *Rites of the Dragon* and *The Testament of Longinus*, but more frequently in other texts (including the *Rakta Veda* and *The Cycle of Demeter*) is the notion of Golconda. According to myth, Golconda is something of a vampiric state of enlightenment, in which a Kindred perfectly balances the needs of the Beast and his Hunger with his conscious mind. A Kindred in Golconda does not frenzy, does not succumb





to Röttschreck, and can even access abilities that are normally available only to vampires of surpassingly potent blood. Some legends even suggest that a vampire who attains Golconda can become mortal once again. The specific details have not ever been set down, because Golconda is not only rare, but it's unique to those who achieve it. The exact effects of this higher state of vampiric existence likely vary from one vampire to the next.

Few Kindred tonight believe in Golconda, considering it a myth, a mistranslation or an indicator of how religious Kindred should conduct themselves, as opposed to an actual goal to be achieved. Still, a select few Kindred strive to find this legendary perfect state of balance, seeing in it the promise of redemption, or at least escape from an eternity of need.

To those who see beyond the pleasant-seeming connotations of Golconda, a frightening consideration lies beneath the surface. A vampire in this state doesn't necessarily become "nice." Indeed, almost the opposite might be true. A vampire who achieves Golconda might well be one of the most fearsome creatures another Kindred could hope to meet, as her soul is in a perfect state of balance *with regard to vampirism*. Golconda might not be a state of natural serenity, but could instead elevate one to the status of a consummate predator. In nature, a wolf and shark are both in tune with what they are, and a creature with more cognitive ability than these killing machines might be more terror than saint.



PROPHETS AND ORACLES

No discussion of vampire mythology would be complete without a mention of a particular group of Kindred occultists, scholars and prophets who might be little more than myth.

They are called the Moirai and are said to be a bloodline unto themselves, though from which clan they might descend is open to serious speculation. (Common mythology ascribes their lineage to either the Mekhet or the Daeva, but more obscure legends link them to other clans, or even to a Kindred familial group now long forgotten.)

It is said that the Moirai have somehow kept records from before the nights of Christ, that they have found some way to resist the dreams of torpor and have maintained their elders' memories of ages past. They possess hidden libraries of occult lore to

arouse the envy of any Mekhet or Dragon. And strangest of all, it is said they have the gift of prophecy and oracular vision. They know not merely the past, but also the present and future of every Kindred to walk the Earth. Supposedly far more common in ages past, they were deemed mad by other vampires due to their visions and prophecies, and allegedly exterminated. Indeed, few Kindred awake tonight earnestly claim to have knowingly met anyone of this mysterious bloodline, and most vampires consider them long gone or a myth that never existed at all.

And yet, some Kindred maintain that the Moirai were true prophets. Surely they would have seen their own end coming, and surely they would have taken steps to hide themselves away, where none could ever find them...



The Traditions

Vampire society, such as it is, would have collapsed under its own weight long ago were it not for the ties that bind it. Like any society, the Kindred world survives on the rules established and agreed upon by its residents. Vampire “laws” are even more essential to the society they concern because of the nature of that society. The Kindred are manipulative killers whose mutual survival depends on their ability to get along well enough to remain sufficiently hidden from the eyes of their prey. As conservative covenants are fond of saying, lawlessness among the undead is perhaps the greatest threat facing the Kindred tonight.

As a result, the Kindred have a body of vampire laws known as the Traditions. The three most important of these laws are curiously universal, given that no common origin story is accepted for the Kindred. They are immutable rules of the Blood, passed down as liquid truth by way of the curse of undeath, and are hardwired into the very physiology of the Damned. Upon the Embrace, each Kindred knows each of these laws intuitively.

Beyond the Traditions are the less official, more fallible customs that arise within Kindred society over time. After weathering centuries upon centuries of nominal adherence, a few of these customs have become unofficial traditions of their own. Some of these latter-day laws are provincial in outlook or unique to a particular clan or region, while others are observed only within a particular covenant of Kindred. Three of them in particular are considered nearly as important as the Traditions themselves, but without the fundamental connection. They merely serve to further gird and bolster society as the Kindred know it. Each of the Traditions gave rise to one such custom, and each is discussed after the relevant law.

A great many of the Kindred take the Traditions to heart. Others justify them beyond “That’s how things have always been,” while still others accept them blindly as part of the Kindred condition. Kindred who have studied such things often suggest that though these physiological conditions have existed for as long as the Kindred themselves have, the actual wording of the Traditions as they are understood tonight was one of the efforts of the now-defunct Camarilla. This is the most widely accepted theory. Particularly fervent members of the Lancea Sanctum, unsurprisingly, sometimes claim that the actual codification of these customs is part of Longinus’ original dogma. Other scriptural, quasi-religious or philosophical wordings also exist, such as those held by the members of the hoary Circle of the Crone and the Ordo Dracul, but the core ideas of the Traditions remain unchanged. True “heretics” against the laws of all Kindred were few and far between in the early nights of the Damned. Despite their differences (and they had many), most of the Kindred were in agreement about what was and was not a good idea for their kind, especially when their own bodies told them it was so. They might disagree on theory or implementation, or even on basic precepts, but few argued with the wisdom of such incontrovertible laws.





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 child, the weight is your own to bear.

THE THIRD TRADITION: AMARANTH

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



THE FIRST TRADITION

Arguably the single most important aspect of Kindred society worldwide is the first Tradition: that of the Masquerade. Without it, the existence of vampires among the Canaille would quickly come to light, putting the unlife of the entire race in jeopardy. Given Kindred feeding habits, the world of mortals would never understand or permit their continued presence. It would be a pogrom the likes of which has not been since the fiery nights of the Spanish Inquisition, when mortal witch-hunters first proved how unity and faith were a match for even the undead.

Before the dawn of the modern era, this Tradition was significantly less enforced, and in some cases, even scoffed at by the more haughty (and foolish) among the undead. Vampires of old could freely roam their demesnes, flaunting their damnation before the terrified mortals who huddled in the dark at their feet. No phones existed with which the kine could call for help, with nobody to call even if there were. Once upon a time, the Damned truly were lords of the night.

But it is a different time now, a different world. Mortals could not run in fear of the predators among them forever. As the living world grew and advanced, the world of the undead shrank. Tonight, it is a small world indeed, for the Damned — but only from the outside. Although the planet itself is largely unchanged, the mortals upon it are smarter, more advanced and more numerous than ever before. And now, the advent of the Internet and wireless communication has brought each mortal that much closer to the rest, putting the entire Masquerade at risk with but the touch of a button. The Damned, as powerful as they are, have never been so exposed or vulnerable.

Given this precarious state of affairs, breaching the Masquerade is usually viewed as one of the most grievous transgressions one of the Kindred can commit. Depending on the Prince, more damaging breaches can be viewed as grounds for the Final Death of the transgressor, and a number of Princes have amassed no small amount of notoriety for their unwavering enforcement of this rule. This, then, has become a source of heated debate in Kindred circles, due to the subjective nature of such determinations. Some Princes are not above using the Masquerade as justification for the removal of political opponents, and those who displease a Prince must be careful about how they act in public and what company they keep.



THE LOST VISAGE

Despite the terrible fate that would befall the Kindred were their existence to be uncovered, the Masquerade continues to hold fast. Part of the reason lies in the fact that the Curse itself has given the Damned a means by which they can better uphold the Masquerade (and, thus, hide themselves from mortal scrutiny). Upon

receiving the Embrace, a fledgling vampire's reflection begins to fade away. After rising for the third night in a row as a vampire, the change is complete, resulting in a sort of blurry occlusion of the Kindred's image in any reflective surface or medium. Therefore, vampires' features do not appear in photographs or on video (though vocal recordings are unaffected). Kindred can counteract this aspect of the Curse through an effort of will (which "solidifies" their image in any reflective surface), but the effect usually lasts only for a brief duration. A vampire's visage may be filmed or recorded during this time, but in most cases, the image will blur immediately thereafter. The potency of a Kindred's blood seems to factor into just how long his image remains on photographic media, with less robust Vitae indicating a longer duration. Exceptions do occur every now and then, but Kindred scholars are at a loss to explain why or under what circumstances they'll repeat.



DOMAIN

Another long-standing tradition is the right of domain. In nights past, when they were more spread out than they are now, Kindred staked claims to vast amounts of territory. When disputes arose, the results were often bloody, as the undead squabbled with one another over slights both real and perceived. Over time, civility demanded that the notion of domain become a universally respected aspect of Kindred society. Vampires needed to come to some basic accord, if for no other reason than to avoid infighting and unnecessary destruction of their fellows. The accord that was reached (informally and over time) was the right of domain.

According to the tradition, a vampire may claim a given area — one that is not already under the purview of another Kindred — as his personal domain. Within that domain, his word is law among the undead, and he can expect not to be challenged. If another vampire wishes to stake a claim to some part or all of the domain, he must either negotiate the terms under which the owner will cede control or else take the entire domain by force. This situation was the norm for centuries upon centuries of Kindred existence, and though it, too, often led to infighting and kinslaying, the custom itself was largely respected.

Come the modern era, the old ways have seen a significant pattern shift. As the Kindred huddle together in increasingly more claustrophobic environs, the concept of domain has split and polarized into two extremes. Tonight, the Kindred recognize only two definitions of domain (as per the traditional sense). First is the notion of domain in the larger sense — the domain of a Prince, for example, which generally includes one city or metropolitan area. The Prince is the final arbiter of all issues arising within this area, including who will and will not receive feeding grounds and official protection. Within the larger domain, however, exists the smaller "individual" domain, the modern remnant of the old ways. Each vampire's personal haven benefits, as per custom, from the protections established by this tradition. Therefore, even though a given Kindred's haven may be situated within the larger domain of the Prince, that Kindred might still invoke the customary protections of tradition. A vampire's home is his castle — even if that castle sits on the lands of a powerful elder liege. Only in the most savage domains will a Prince attempt to claim one of his subjects' personal havens once those havens have been granted and established.

THE SECOND TRADITION

The Second Tradition is the one that causes perhaps the most debate, confusion and consternation among the Kindred. According to the wording of the Tradition, no vampire may create a childe. And yet, look how many Kindred exist! It is, perhaps, the greatest paradox of the Kindred as a species (at least to those who keep faith with the Traditions).

The Kindred world cannot even agree as to the origins of the Tradition itself. To this very night, no satisfactory answer has been put forth to the simple question of, "Why?" If what-





ever figure responsible for the creation of the undead was so adamant about ensuring the earthly lack of propagation of the Damned, why did it create one itself and give it the ability to propagate? Many speculate that the first Kindred, cursed to forever walk the night alone, grew lonely, as all creatures do, and that he took for himself a mate, as many creatures do. Some maintain that it is this mate, the world's second vampire, who betrayed his or her sire's wishes and created the first actual brood of the Damned. Some consider this first brood to be the true progenitors of the modern Kindred. In most cases, those who believe in various origin stories yield the principle that God (in whatever form) intended for the first Kindred to suffer in solitude, a lesson the Damned have had to learn through betrayal and loss.

Whatever the Tradition's origins are, the fact remains that its message has been corrupted in the time since. While few Kindred would deny that it is wrong (or at least complicated) to perpetuate the race of the Damned, many take issue with how the Tradition is enforced tonight. Many among the unbound (and a few members of formal covenants) believe that the Curse itself is enough to limit the numbers of new undead in the world, naturally and without need of politics or hierarchy. For their part, the Carthians generally take the stance that the issue should be one for the entirety of Kindred society to debate and decide upon, rather than be the purview of an outdated Tradition. Naturally, some in the Invictus believe in the right of the "elder" of a domain to decide upon such matters, and the Sanctified point to key passages of *The Testament of Longinus* as proof of their claims. The Order of the Dragon sometimes Embraces for the sake of bestowing its secrets upon an apprentice in order to perpetuate its knowledge. Of all the Kindred, followers of the Circle of the Crone are perhaps the most defiant of the Tradition, and are occasionally known to create new childer as part of their sacred beliefs.



THE SHAKEN WILL

Every time one of the Kindred plans to create a childer, he intends to willfully violate one of the understood commandments of the Damned. Like the Masquerade, this edict is an aspect of the Kindred condition, and it cannot be summarily ignored by vampires. The act of damning another to undeath is a strain on the Kindred soul, requiring the sire to invest a significant amount of will over the course of the Embrace.



TUTELAGE

A societal by-product of the Second Tradition, the tradition of tutelage has its roots in antiquity, when the Kindred's numbers were fewer and the social system more rigid. In such times, if a vampire was going to violate Kindred physiology by propagating the numbers of the Damned, he was expected to make sure that his progeny understood all the rules and customs of the Requiem (not the least of which was the Second Tradition, itself). Siring progeny is merely the bestowal of responsibility, granting one vampire the right to take a considerable burden upon his own shoulders. Until such time as the new vampire is released from his sire's tutelage, his education (or miseducation) is the responsibility of the sire. There is no "village" among the Damned. It takes an individual to raise a neonate, and any mistakes the young one makes until he reaches the time at which his sire releases him need not be forgiven by society at large. Otherwise, what would be the point of releasing him in the first place? This same rationale is often abused by controlling sires as justification for the excessive periods of indenture or servitude they require of their progeny: "I can keep you safe only as long as I don't release you." Needless to say, some childer would rather take their chances with the Prince.

From the moment of his release, a childer's sins are his own to endure. No ill may befall the sire as a result of the childer's deeds (except in a looser social sense). As such, the childer no

longer benefits from the sire's protection, at least not in any official societal capacity. He is his own Kindred and must stand as such. Such, however, is also the benefit of release. Once a childe is on his own, he is no longer beholden to the whim, desire or name of his sire. For good or ill, he is now free.

THE THIRD TRADITION

Given the predatory and deceitful nature of the Kindred, the third and final “commandment” – the prohibition against the diablerie of other Kindred – is the one most often violated and warped to serve the interests of the individual. Indeed, this single law has been the cause of more controversy in and around the halls of power than any other, and its interpretation and administration are two of the most fiercely contested issues facing the Damned tonight.

As with the Second Tradition, the phrasing of this tradition is the primary cause of complaint, as well as the primary justification for use and abuse. Many believe that the original intent of the law was to give sires the right and responsibility to destroy the childer they had made (in violation of the Second Tradition) when those childer ran afoul of those same Traditions. Destruction, however, does not necessarily entail the consumption of the destroyed Kindred's soul. Those who destroy their enemies utterly often claim to drink their fallen foes' essence “to be sure” that those enemies never return, though this practice is at once primitive and false, at least in the context of modern Kindred society.

Mortal death is both inevitable and necessary, but only God Himself may judge those He has cursed. Therefore, the Kindred condition inhibits the finality of diablerie in all its forms. According to some versions of *The Testament of Longinus*, Longinus' final words to the collected brood he left behind were a simple but sobering warning: “Teach your progeny to heed my word, and tell them to likewise teach their own. When my line can no longer contain the blood it spills – the night the broods of your broods can no longer hear their brothers' heartsblood cry unto them from the ground – that is the night when all hope for you is lost.”

As a parenthetical result of this passage, many Kindred use the words of the *Testament* as support for the custom of the Lextalionis – the blood hunt in modern parlance. These Princes claim the title of “elder” mentioned in the text and use it to invoke the “right” of destruction upon any Kindred who sufficiently rouses their ire. They rarely perform the deed themselves, of course, for the act itself is damaging to the spiritual strength of a vampire. Thus has the custom of involving every Kindred in the domain in the hunt arisen (rather conveniently) over time. In many domains, all Kindred are expected to do their part in consummating a blood hunt.



THE LOST HUMANITAS

As with the first two Traditions, the Third Tradition is thoroughly hardwired into the psyche of all Kindred. In fact, most Kindred agree that the prohibition against diablerie is one of the most fundamental aspects of being Damned, due to the steep toll exacted on all those who violate it. Each time a vampire consumes the soul of another vampire, his morality erodes significantly. The corrosion of the self is automatic, as with cold-blooded murder it is assumed that the killer feels no immediate remorse about the act. (If he did, he wouldn't have committed it.)



DEFERENCE

A natural outgrowth of this tradition is the custom of vampiric respect. When the race as a whole endeavored to bring itself up from savagery with the notion of domain (and the rights





granted therefrom), the next step was to ingrain the idea that every aspect of the existence of Kindred domains must be respected. From this effort arose the notion that a vampire should present himself whenever he travels into the domain of another vampire. After all, one doesn't really respect the tradition of domain if one hunts on another's land without permission. One doesn't have to actively challenge the rightful claim of another vampire in order to disrespect both the domain and its owner.

Of course, even this seemingly well-intentioned tradition has its controversy. Modern Princes invoke this code as a means by which to keep track of who is and who is not within their demesnes at all times, by asking that each visitor or would-be resident present himself upon entering. Once the visitor does, the Prince either acknowledges him — in which case he may remain in the domain (under the Prince's protection) — or refuses to acknowledge him — in which case, he is expected to depart the domain immediately. As a result, this tradition has come to be ignored the most by young Kindred, many of whom don't even know of its existence (usually because they were not properly educated after their Embrace).

One of the most common reasons for these violations is the gray area that defines visitors and would-be residents. Kindred who just pass through often feel no obligation to stop just so they can potentially put themselves at risk by coming before the local Prince. Only those who intend to remain for any length of time are required to present themselves, and some feel that it is up to personal interpretation just what a "length of time" might involve. Some Princes have been known to specify a duration (in terms of nights), so that there is no confusion when the Prince's Scourge or Sheriff brings newcomers forward for questioning. As a result, this practice tends to complicate already complex social dynamics while further widening the gulf between elder and neonate.

Technically, this tradition applies to only those who intend to hunt within a domain. If a vampire can establish that he'll not be a drain on the domain's resources (by demonstrating access to a private blood supply, for example), then he could argue that the tradition doesn't apply to him on any practical level and that presentation before the Prince is merely a social courtesy. Obviously, this situation does not arise very often, and when it does, most Princes aren't thrilled with the idea of being snubbed by the letter of the law. To them, it is better to just present one's case during rather than instead of presentation.

For a less formal interpretation of the tradition of deference, see "Presentation" on p. 28.



THE MARK OF DAMNATION

Many wonder about the true nature of the Curse, given the way the Traditions interact with it. The Traditions are tied so closely to the vampiric condition that each one actually carries with it a physiological expression. The Tradition of the Masquerade is reflected in the fact that no Kindred appears in any recording device or reflective surface unless he wishes to be seen that way. The Second Tradition, the prohibition against the profligate creation of vampires, manifests in the difficulty with which vampires create new progeny. A considerable investiture of personal will and energy is required to even consider violating the decree.

Perhaps most interestingly, however, is the third restriction, the Tradition prohibiting the destruction of another Kindred with the intent of consuming his heartsblood and soul. Unlike the physiology of the first two Traditions, which are preventive in nature, the true weight and message of the third manifests only after it has been violated. Some suspect that the prohibition is tied to the divine or diabolical origin of the Kindred. Obviously, the element of personal choice remains for the undead. By the same token, removing the onus of a decision to kill from vampires would, some might argue, defeat the purpose of vampires in the first place. Historical accounts of vampires, even among the Kindred, depict them as cursed for the terrible and selfish decisions they have made.

No, the Third Tradition's power manifests after a vampire has already made the choice to engage in diablerie, the Kindred's name for this act. Upon consuming the soul of another vampire, one's sense of moral control — the spiritual compass that keeps a being from falling to his Beast — wavers considerably. He is not pained by the experience, and indeed, he might even relish the newfound "freedom" he sees in no longer being as restrained as he once was. But this illusion is the nature of the Curse. The vampire has made his choice, and by forcing him to regret that choice, the higher power responsible for vampires would encourage the idea that personal choice was not the issue's crux.

To this night, many believe that the telltale black streaks in a diablerist's aura do not come from any lingering effect the victim's heartsblood may have on the killer's soul, but are rather a spiritual reflection of the mark of damnation. Due to the First Tradition, vampires cannot be branded upon the forehead or otherwise visibly marked for their crime. No, it is a far more secret and subtle mark that exposes them to their brethren for the monstrosities they truly are.



THE BLOOD HUNT

Sometimes, when a Kindred outlaw is considered too dangerous to be allowed to survive, and the Prince's own agents prove unequal to the task of locating and capturing or executing the criminal, the Prince is forced to resort to the ancient Kindred tradition of Lextalionis, the law of justice stating that those who violate the laws must die, and all Kindred of a domain are responsible for carrying out that sentence. This results in the blood hunt, when the Kindred of a domain set out to locate and destroy a specific quarry.

Only the Prince or other city leaders can formally call a blood hunt (though some Primos or Prisci have the political strength to do so over the Prince's head). The blood hunt is a powerful political tool, and a vampire must have matching influence to use it. If the Kindred evoking Lextalionis has sufficient clout or personal power that local vampires will respond, and he can do so without the Prince coming down on him, he may call the hunt. If he doesn't, he won't survive to repeat his impertinence, nor will many of those who answer his call.

Failing to participate in a blood hunt, particularly one called by a Prince, is not normally a crime, except in the most extreme circumstances, but it frequently results in a loss of status in the eyes of the court. Actively aiding and abetting a subject is a crime, however, and it can result in banishment or execution.

The Masquerade is still paramount during a blood hunt, of course. Indeed, the Kindred spread out across the city in something not unlike a police dragnet, coordinating their efforts (at least officially) with the Sheriff or other representative of the Prince. The hunters converge on suspected sightings, and things often get quite messy if and when the quarry is finally run to ground. The hunt is rarely carried out openly, with Kindred racing down the streets leading barking dogs, guns held aloft. While some Princes prefer to retrieve the subject intact, most blood hunts contain a provision stating that no participating Kindred will be charged or punished if the subject is slain or, in the case of truly dangerous criminals or truly desperate Princes, even diablerized. In this fashion, the Prince skirts the issue of the Third Tradition — after all, he himself is hardly guilty of diablerie if a subject carries it out.

The Kindred use all the tools at their disposal when engaging in a blood hunt, including influence in the mortal world. Police might put out an APB on the subject, he might find himself on "no fly" lists at airports, and his financial accounts might be frozen. In recent nights, some Kindred have begun using the Amber Alert system — a coordinated barrage of radio announcements and electronic roadside signs intended to alert the public to a kidnapping or missing child — as a means of slowing a fugitive's escape. A few truly powerful (or foolish)





Kindred even use connections in the local religious community to attract Church-sponsored vampire-hunters, which is an exceedingly risky move.

Ultimately, very few criminals ever escape a blood hunt unscathed. They are either tracked down and slain or manage to flee the city, which is often a death sentence in and of itself.

Technically, a Prince is not supposed to call a blood hunt for personal reasons, only when a truly heinous lawbreaker is on the loose. Some Princes are better about following this tradition than others, and a few of the most dictatorial ones actually use the hunt as a means of squashing dissent. Sure, it flies in the face of tradition, but who are the Kindred going to complain to? That said, some Princes have found the calling of an unnecessary blood hunt to be the spark that finally triggers revolution among their subjects, so even the most tyrannical Kindred ruler doesn't invoke the Lextalionis lightly.

Very rarely, if a fugitive is considered an enemy of a specific covenant, a blood hunt might extend to more than once city. For instance, all the Invictus-dominant cities in a specific area might exchange information via email and phone in an attempt to run a criminal to ground. For the most part, however, a blood hunt is strictly a local thing, and no hunt that has expanded beyond the borders of a single domain has ever lasted more than a few nights. Multiple cities simply cannot maintain cooperation for longer than that, especially since each Prince has her own issues to deal with, the wishes of her covenant notwithstanding.

Strains of the Requiem

These overarching concerns of the Kindred condition aside, the world of the Damned is complex even in the minutiae. Whether an issue involves Kindred from one Prince's domain to the next is not the question. Myriad small concerns potentially face every vampire from the moment she rises at nightfall.

SLAVES TO THE BLOOD

It's a simple, fundamental fact that no vampire, however determined or powerful, can escape: The Blood is all. It defines everything the Kindred are, and ultimately everything they do. It also defines many of their relations with mortals and the Kindred around them.

VESSELS

By its most basic definition, a vessel is simply a source of Vitae. The vast majority of the time, Kindred use the term to refer to mortals, but those elder Kindred who can feed only on the blood of other vampires use it to refer to undead fodder as well. Mortal vessels are often called "Licks" by young Kindred.

As much as the Kindred might prefer to deny it, vessels are often far more than merely a covered dish. The act of feeding is extremely intimate, perhaps the most intimate experience either participant will ever have. For the subject, the vampire's Kiss brings exquisite pleasure, comparable to or even greater than the pinnacle of sexual release. Some mortals become literally addicted to the experience and – if they can ever piece together precisely what happened through hazy memories and the cloak of the Masquerade – they even seek out vampires, or the particular Kindred who fed on them, in hopes of repeating it. For the undead, the act of feeding is the sum total of who and what they are, the very purpose for which they exist. Mortals simply cannot comprehend the need the Kindred feel or imagine the satisfaction, relief and release the Kindred experience in fulfilling that need.

Therefore, while some are able to separate the experience from the individual, many Kindred become emotionally attached to their vessels. They return to the same specific people continuously, growing ever closer to them. Sometimes, if the individual is properly cooperative, this behavior can result in the formation of a herd, but it's also dangerous, as it increases the vampire's risk of exposure. These Kindred are often extremely protective of their stock, even to the point of challenging anyone else, mortal or vampire, who threatens them.

HERDS

A herd is a group of vessels, usually but not always mortals, from whom a vampire can feed regularly with minimal difficulty. A herd might be a group in the literal sense of the word, an assembly of Licks who gather for whatever reason. It might be a religious cult that worships the Kindred as an angel, members of a bondage club who consider biting and blood drinking kinky, or any other assembly in which the Kindred can hide or pass off her activities. On the other hand, a vampire's herd might be scattered farther abroad, consisting of multiple unconnected but willing vessels across the city. Some herds might not involve people at all, instead comprising multiple accessible animals. Some Kindred even consider access to stores of donated Vitae in blood banks or hospitals to be part of their herd in the loosest sense.

Not all Kindred have herds, but those who do find it much easier to hunt. Few vampires have herds so large that they can afford to feed from them all the time, so most hunt anyway, but it's always good to have them available to fall back on when one is in a hurry or otherwise unable to hunt. As with lone vessels, many Kindred develop a reciprocal attachment to members of their herd, due to the emotional power of the Kiss.

THRALLS AND REGNANTS

Kindred society treats thralls differently depending on the domain. In some cities, elders use their thralls as proxies, and a thrall is considered to speak with her master's voice at court and on other matters of import. In other domains, thralls are messengers and pawns but are not permitted to wield any of their domitor's authority. In some particularly dictatorial domains, Kindred are not even permitted to subject one another to the Vinculum without the Prince's permission (though secret trysts and abuses of the system occur). In any event, a regnant is held responsible for the activities of his thrall and may be punished along with the thrall if the servant misbehaves.

GHOULS

Far more common than Kindred thralls are mortal ghouls, kine who have been imbued with the mystic power of Kindred Vitae. In mortals, the blood of a vampire spawns not merely the artificial love represented by the Vinculum, but also substantial physical strength and stamina. The ghoul does not age as long as at least some Kindred blood remains in her system, and old or strong-willed ghouls can even develop some other Kindred Disciplines beyond brawn and hardiness.

Ghouls are quite common in some Kindred domains, and are often considered essential servants. A vampire might choose a ghoul for a specific skill or position the mortal possesses, or he might select a mortal simply out of some obsessed affection. Kindred use their ghouls as messengers, bodyguards, soldiers, proxies at court, fronts through which they can influence mortal institutions, butlers, drivers, menservants, travel planners and daytime security – potentially anything the Kindred himself cannot or would prefer not to do himself. Given the quantities of blood ghouls require to maintain their abilities, most vampires have only one or two such servants, and only a very rare few Kindred can maintain more than a handful. As with Kindred thralls, some ghouls bitterly resent the tasks they are forced to perform, but few have the willpower to protest.





Rumors suggest that some few ghouls do manage to escape their bonds, whether through the Final Death of their masters or by other means. These ghouls typically become rogues, seeking out vampires from whom they can acquire blood. These ghouls serve adopted Kindred briefly and then depart for greener pastures, or physically assault vampires for their precious Vitae. Rogue ghouls are sufficiently rare that most Kindred never worry about them — many doubt they even exist — but when they find occasion to travel in groups, they *can* be dangerous to lone neonates or even elders who aren't prepared to deal with them. A handful of ghouls sometimes find themselves subjected to a Vinculum by a subsequent vampire, but many don't, either becoming true rogues on their own, or meeting their end in the process of seeking “unattached” blood to support their ghoul states.

REGIONS AND TERRITORIES

The average Kindred domain is not a single, monogamous entity. As cities have districts and neighborhoods, so too do the Kindred divvy up their domains into smaller regions. Many of these divisions are entirely artificial or political in nature, but that makes them no less real, and the petty lord of a tiny territory granted her by the Prince might punish trespassers or violators more strictly than does the Prince himself.

THE BARRENS

The Barrens are those areas of the city unfit for or otherwise absent of human habitation — and, by extension, Kindred habitation. These regions include industrial wastelands, certain abandoned buildings, graveyards and the like. Some truly desperate Kindred hunt the Barrens, hoping to encounter the occasional homeless person or lost tourist. For the most part, however, “beating the Barrens” is an expression that has come to mean that a Kindred is horribly down on her luck and attempts desperate and largely doomed measures.

Some Princes have been known to grant the Barrens to other Kindred as personal feeding grounds as a form of public chastisement for wrongdoings that were unworthy of more serious punishment. More than just a humiliation, this “award” can lead to worse problems for the unfortunate Kindred down the road. As lord of the Barrens, she is now responsible for everything that goes wrong there — and as the Barrens attract only those Kindred in desperate straits, things go wrong with remarkable frequency.

THE RACK

The opposite of the Barrens, the Rack is that portion (or those portions) of a domain most suitable for hunting. It includes bars, nightclubs, high-crime neighborhoods, crack houses, brothels, homeless shelters. Basically, it's any place where the kine are distracted or discomposed, where strange behavior can be hidden or passed off, and where mortals go missing on a frequent basis. Hunting the Rack is nearly effortless, and any “accidents” are easily disposed of. Many Kindred treat the Rack as fine restaurant or wine cellar, where they can go if they seek a particular “vintage” of Vitae. Sooner or later, all sorts of Licks pass through the Rack.

In those domains where the Prince parcels out feeding grounds, elders are in constant competition for the right to the Rack. Most Princes refuse to grant anyone exclusive rights to the Rack, preferring to make it available to the entire city. Others keep such feeding rights for themselves, demanding favors from any who would hunt there. Still others choose to offer portions of the Rack as territory to favored allies, granting them substantial power among lesser Kindred.

Because the Rack attracts so many Kindred, and because vampires are at their least alert when feeding, many potential Masquerade breaches occur there. The very nature of the region often

covers such violations naturally — people expect odd behavior from meth-heads, for instance — but wise Princes and Sheriffs have eyes and ears in the Rack at all times. These agents watch for any breaches to stop them before they occur, or move swiftly to cover them up.

FEEDING GROUNDS

As rewards for service, or bribes to those whose power the Prince wishes to either exploit or mitigate, many Princes grant portions of their city to other Kindred. In these territories, only the “landholder” is permitted to hunt. She may, of course, grant permission to hunt to anyone she chooses, but those who poach in her territory are considered criminals. Most Princes demand that any such lawbreakers be brought before them, but some permit a landowner to levy her own punishment. Needless to say, this is rarely a good thing for the poachers.

Hunting rights over a particular region do not necessarily convey any additional political power. In practical terms, however, many Kindred parlay control over territory into a web of substantial influence. Obviously, if a vampire holds title to an unimportant area, there’s not much he can do with it. On the other hand, a Kindred who holds the rights to a portion of the Rack, or an area of town where many vampires make their havens, has considerable influence. She can demand favors or tasks in exchange for permission to feed in her territory, and many Kindred agree if the price is worth the privilege.

SECURITY

Given the precarious nature of the Kindred in the scope of the World of Darkness, the issue of security is paramount. While the tacit arrangement among all Kindred addresses some of this concern, a great deal more remains. After all, no such arrangement, tacit or otherwise, exists between the Kindred and the natural world around them. Indeed, it can be said that the greatest threats to the security of the Damned come not from the Danse Macabre, but from the realms of the ordinary, the routine and the mundane.

THE DAMNABLE HUNT

As powerful as they are, the Kindred play a most dangerous game. It is their lot to hunt among the kine, to prey on and feed from the mortal world. Yet they must also realize that they are not always as wolves among a flock of sheep, but are often as jackals among a pack of wild dogs. The individual dog is usually no match for the scavenging jackal, but should the entire pack turn its attentions toward the predator in its midst...

Such is the case with the Kindred among the kine. If the eye of Man was to turn its baleful stare upon the monsters skulking in the shadows, the resulting pogrom would very likely wipe the Damned from the face of the Earth. Therefore, the most powerful assets in Kindred hands are the complementary tools known as ignorance and belief. These weapons do more to keep vampires safe than any combination of unholy powers ever could.

In the world of the kine, ignorance truly is bliss. In the world of the Kindred, it is power. The bid to keep humanity ignorant of vampire existence is known as the First Tradition, the Masquerade. The Kindred condition itself mandates that this must be the single most important goal of the race, lest discovery shatter the existence of mortal and Kindred alike. Whoever created vampires clearly intended for the Damned to be a part of the world, but that entity also clearly intended for them to remain forever separate from those upon whom they prey. Such is the nature of the Requiem. And so, each scion of the Kindred line endeavors to make sure that mortal ignorance remains a top priority of unlife.

The flip side of this, and the weapon that helps the Kindred ensure continued ignorance, is belief and the nature thereof. Ironically, it was belief that nearly spelled doom for the Kindred during the burning times of the Inquisition. Yet the Age of Reason (and the subsequent Indus-



trial Revolution) arrived not long thereafter, which turned belief itself into the very tool with which the Kindred might reinforce the Masquerade. By cultivating belief in logic, science and reason, the Kindred subtly support humankind's weaning itself from belief in the supernatural. In the modern era, the mortal world views the existence of the undead as an unthinkable notion. Vampires are things of fancy — big-screen entertainment or novel fare, at best, and the ramblings of frightened children or pathetic lunatics, at worst. And why? Belief in reason has stolen from them the capacity to fathom even the possibility of the existence of the undead.

Despite these brilliant campaigns, however, despite all the considerable resources devoted to maintaining the Masquerade worldwide, mistakes happen. Even vampires get sloppy on occasion, and when they do, the results are nasty. Sometimes it's a careless feeding error. A slip of the mind, where a vampire forgets to lick a wound he's made, thereby beginning the chain reaction of curiosity leading to investigation leading to action. These occasions, while certainly not desirable, are often at least manageable given the resources of many Kindred domains. But sometimes a careless error leaves witnesses — mortal witnesses — and in almost every case, it leaves such witnesses with two of the most damning banes of the undead: hatred and a little knowledge.

Arising from "mistakes" such as these is the phenomenon known as witch-hunters. Whether by accident, Kindred error or simple mortal moxie, these ordinary men and women take up the struggle to beat back the darkness to which their minds have been exposed. For whatever reason, they're onto the Kindred and they mean business.

These individuals, often known simply as "hunters," are often more dangerous to the undead than anything else. As mortals in a mortal world, they're under no compunction to remain hidden themselves (except from the eyes of certain authorities who might not understand their calling). Unlike werewolves or other supernatural creatures, hunters need be concerned only with the hunt, and that gives them a distinct advantage in a shadow conflict such as this. In addition, hunters can move by day, and they aren't nearly so restricted in their activity cycles as are the creatures they hunt.



As might be expected, the Kindred don't take too kindly to finding themselves on the reverse end of the predator-prey dynamic. Most are taken by surprise, as they have grown accustomed to being the ones to startle mortal prey with savage revelations before the moment of consummation. Indeed, some vampires are so taken aback that they never have a chance to recover from the shock — all it takes is one well-aimed strike, even against a vampire. Those who survive their initial encounter with a hunter (or group of hunters) often descend into panic, unless they've experienced such a situation before. The first thought to race into a vampire's head is, "Do they know the location of my haven?" Until there is a satisfactory answer, that question continues to occupy his mind, while awake and asleep.

The other danger that hunters pose is that they can organize, often in a disturbingly short amount of time. A single hunter created after one encounter with the Damned might lead an entire cell of well-informed, well-equipped vampire-hunters after six months. To the Kindred mind, which remains static and patient as the years wear on, this nearly ant-like level of cooperation and efficiency is startling.

KINDRED IN A WORLD OF DARKNESS

Despite the fervent wish of some to the contrary, the Kindred have more with which to be concerned than their fellow Damned. The World of Darkness might be the consummate nesting ground for the Kindred, but it is hardly a private paradise. The world contains much that would trouble a vampire, including the likes of other supernatural creatures, mortal witch-hunters and even time itself. If the World of Darkness is a home to the Kindred, then it is a home they must share grudgingly and cautiously with horrors both internal and external.

CELLMATES IN THE GILDED CAGE

The fact of the matter is, most Kindred with more than a few years behind them are aware that the undead are not alone in the world. An equal fact is that most of them care only as much as they absolutely have to. Vampires are damned creatures, most of whom have an eternity's worth of problems to sort out, on top of the night-to-night struggle of continued existence. As any Prince can attest, maintaining the Masquerade is a full-time job, and any activity that jeopardizes the success of that endeavor is either a waste of time, far too great a risk to Kindred society, or both.

As a result, even the most erudite Ordo Dracul scholar knows better than to preoccupy himself with the affairs of other supernatural beings. Study? Yes, where possible. But prying into the activities of creatures known for their savagery is considered unwise by all but the most powerful of Kindred. Given this mindset (on both sides, as best the Kindred can figure), a sort of détente has been reached over time, a tenuous understanding that amounts to a universal wariness of the other supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness. By and large, the Kindred know that there are angry, shapeshifting beasts out there. They've even given them a name — Lupines. But they don't really want to know a whole lot more than that, because once they open that door, the next step is to go inside.

The same applies to the wonder-makers, the ones the scholars call mages. What little the Kindred have seen of these enigmatic beings has scared them enough to recognize that discretion is the better part of valor. No one knows the full extent of these beings' powers, motivations or capabilities, and finding out the hard way is just reckless. Sure, rumors of mortals calling down sunshine at midnight are probably just that, but what if they're not? What if some Kindred actually saw one of these mages ignite a member of his coterie like a piece of kindling? In that case, would a vampire actually want to pursue the matter further? If mages don't actively come after the Kindred (and most of them probably don't), then the Kindred are bound to return the favor. By and large, Kindred know little about such creatures, so until something gives them reason to worry, they're content to leave well enough alone.





Exceptions exist, of course. Every now and then, a vampire sets up shop in the wrong part of town and irritates existing occupants, with predictably unpleasant results. Likewise, a werewolf or mage might decide to dip his toe into a domain that a particular Kindred has claimed as his own private sphere of influence. In these cases, conflict is likely inevitable, but more often than not, both sides know better than to let a true blood feud ensue. What usually happens is that once the initial matter has been settled (whether by peaceable means or by someone's demise), the case is closed. Those most likely to violate this arrangement are the Lupines, whose pack mentality demands restitution on occasion, but even they tend to stop short of all-out war against the entire race to which the offender belonged. No, the supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness are significantly (and perhaps surprisingly) more realistic about the nature of conflict than are the mortals who surround them.

Learned Kindred also know that werewolves and wizards are not the only creatures with whom the undead share the night. Certain Kindred are known for trafficking with the spirits of the restless dead, though they remain tight-lipped about the hows and wherefores of it. These beings surely know of the Kindred, but only the mediums themselves can say with any surety what feelings, if any, the dead have toward the undead. Upon learning of the existence of the restless, some concerned Kindred grow obsessed with them, eager to discover just what makes one soul pass on to its final reward but forces another to stay behind. (Surely no earthly crime deserves such punishment, so some Kindred say.) Alas, the curiosity of such individuals is rarely if ever satisfied, as few necromancers are known for their open discourse.

And then come rumors of even stranger cohabitants amid the Kindred's strange land. Sorcerous vampires tell of eldritch beings from the hoary host of Hell itself – demons, with whom no sane Kindred would ever knowingly interact. Most believe such tales to be nothing more than the Order of the Dragon's macabre sense of humor, an attempt on the part of one damned race to terrify its kin by means of an even more damned race. If so, the irony is lost on most Kindred, who would just as soon prefer the Dragons stopped talking about it. All the same, stories surface with just enough regularity to be generally disconcerting about entities to whom Kindred can go for assistance, if the conviction is strong enough. Creatures who carry the promise of power, prestige and anything else one desires.

Although all of these entities (and more) are known to vampires, it is important to note that the Kindred don't truly understand any of them. Vampires are an insular, self-absorbed lot, and most are too preoccupied with their own schemes, fears and apprehensions to even be put in a position where they might glean some true understanding of these other creatures. No, most undead are content to adhere to their ordained role as participants in the Danse Macabre, moving to the somber sounds of their own private Requiem.



Lexicon

The secret world of the Damned commands its own entire subculture, and this subculture includes language. In addition to the various proper names and titles that exist only among the undead, a complete lingual set of vampire-specific words and phrases has arisen over time, resulting in a sort of Kindred “dialect.” Like all language, this dialect grew and expanded, resulting in the eventual break-off of another, more modern style of speech. These two vampire dialects are referred to as “old form” and “common parlance.” A third vocabulary, the language of the Kindred “street,” is new to most everyone and is considered vulgar by all but the most brash of neonates. Being creatures of stasis, the Kindred loathe unnecessary change, and one can often tell the age if not the vampiric origins of a speaker by the way in which he uses the terms of his kind.

COMMON PARLANCE

The following terms are used freely and frequently by both neonates and those elder Kindred familiar with vernacular (or who wish to disguise their true age). Some of the newer words have come into circulation only in the last few years, but due to their utility or style, they are not considered vulgar argot. The common parlance lexicon includes a pronunciation guide for its uncommon vocabulary.

Acolytes: A common nickname for members of the Circle of the Crone.

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 term is ancillae (an • SILL • eye).)

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. (See p. 366.)

Barrens: Portions of the city unfit even for hunting.

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

Belial’s Brood: A raucous, reckless covenant of vampiric Satanists.

blood hunt: A citywide hunt for a particular Kindred fugitive, in which most if not all local Kindred are expected to participate.

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.

Carthian (KAR • thee • enn): A vampiric idealist who believes in reconciling the Requiem with the politics and society of modern mortals.

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

clan: One of five families of Kindred whose lineage links back to times beyond Kindred memory.

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

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

coterie: A group of allied Kindred.

covenant: A faction of Kindred who share certain political and theological beliefs. The covenants exist worldwide, though details differ 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, sensual and desirable.

Damned, the: The race of Kindred; vampires.

Danse Macabre: The state of eternal infighting between and among the Kindred of different clans, covenants and age distinctions.

diablerie (dee • AHB • ler • ee): Kindred “cannibalism”; draining another vampire of not only his blood but his soul.

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

domain: A region ruled (ostensibly) by a single Kindred authority. The largest domains correspond to cities and often contain smaller domains within them.

Dragons: A common nickname for members of the Ordo Dracul.

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 Prince.

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

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

First Estate: A common nickname for the Invictus.

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) or by a special term (*Rötschreck* or *Wassail*). 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.

Harpy: A Kindred in a position prominent or estimable enough to raise up or put down others in vampire society.

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

Herald: A spokesman for the Prince.

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

Hierophant (HI • row • font): A ranking member of the Circle of the Crone.

Hound: A personal agent of the Prince; assassin, leg-breaker, capo.

Invictus (in • VICK • tuss): One of the largest of the Kindred covenants, which believes in rule by a vampiric “elite” made up mostly of elders.

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

Kogaion (KO • guy • on): A ranking member of the Ordo Dracul.

Lancea Sanctum (LAN • kay • uh SANK • toom): A covenant of vampires, consisting of vampiric religious zealots who honor the Roman centurion Longinus, whom they have adopted as a form of “patron saint” for the act of testing Christ’s divinity.

Lupine: A werewolf.

Man, the: The humanity a vampire maintains (or tries to); the spark of mortality that distinguishes him from the *Beast*.

Masquerade: The efforts and system of laws required by the Tradition of Secrecy to hide Kindred existence from the mortal world.

Master of Elysium: The Kindred responsible for places of Elysium, who also makes sure that everything is prepared, that nobody fights and that word gets out about events.

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

Myrmidon (MER • meh • don): A negotiator of the Carthian Movement.

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 condition.

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

Primogen (PRIM • oh • jen): An elder who advises the Prince of a domain (also plural).

Prince: The ruler of, or most powerful Kindred in, a domain.

Priscus (PRISS • kuss): The informal "head" of a specific clan within a domain. The plural is Prisci (PRISS • key).

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

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

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

revenant: A vampire who has lost all Humanity and exists in perpetual frenzy.

Sanctified: A common nickname for members of the Lancea Sanctum, singular and plural.

Seneschal: The Prince's right hand and assistant.

Seven: A clan, covenant or other group of vampires that detests the Kindred race and seeks to destroy it, its own members excepted.

Sheriff: The Kindred responsible for enforcing the Prince's laws and dictates.

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 Sanctum.

thrall: One who is bound to a regnant; the enslaved member of a Vinculum.

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 observed inviolate due to the Kindred condition.

unbound: A vampire who refuses to accept the local rule of a Prince or other governing Kindred body. Also known as an unaligned 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): Blood, particularly the blood of a vampire.

Vinculum (VIN • cue • lum): The artificial love and loyalty spawned by feeding from the same vampire three times. Also known less formally as a *blood bond*.





Whip: One who keeps his clanmates in line in order that they be taken seriously.

witch-hunter: A mortal who seeks out Kindred and destroys them.

OLD FORM

The following terms have been in circulation for as long as most elders can remember, and they are still considered the “proper” usage for the ideas they describe.

abactor: Literally, a “cattle thief;” a *poacher*.

Amaranth: Diablerie; the act of consuming another Kindred’s blood and soul.

anarch: Historically, a Kindred rebel who opposed vampiric tyranny. Some anarchs sought to tear down the feudal systems of Kindred society in nights past, but many merely wished to be left to their own devices. Arguably the forerunners of the modern unbound.

blood oath: The *Vinculum*.

caitiff: A vampire of unknown clan. Usage: *Am I to understand that this caitiff is truly a Nosferatu of Wellington’s brood? How could I not have guessed?*

Canaille: The masses of humanity, especially the uncultured or unsavory. Typically connotes a reference to sources of sustenance.

cauchemar: A vampire who feeds solely on sleeping victims.

cockalorum: A loud-mouthed iconoclast, or any weak vampire who acts the big shot.

comprador: A vampire who works for some other creature, such as a mage or even a mortal organization willing to uphold the Masquerade; also indicates the reverse (a supernaturally awakened creature in the service of a vampire).

consanguineous: Literally, “of the same blood,” especially regarding lineage. Usage: *That vampire is consanguineous with the Ventrue Prince.*

co-sanguineous: Being brothers in the Blood; sharing the same sire. Usage: *We’re rumored to be co-sanguineous but my sire is actually Maxwell, whereas his is not.*

cunctator: A Kindred who avoids killing whenever feeding from mortals.

draugr: The term for *revenants* in antiquity; still widely used by some Gangrel.

fief: A domain; still the favored term among many Ventrue, even numerous young ones.

footpad: One who feeds from vagrants, derelicts and other dregs of society.

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

gallant: A vampire who feeds from other vampires out of necessity or perversion.

gentry: The collective group of Kindred who prefer to prey at nightclubs, bars and other “red-light district” establishments.

Golconda: A fabled state of complete oneness with the vampiric condition; the true comprehension of both Beast and Man within a vampire’s soul, wherein balance can be found. Rumored to be similar to mortal Nirvana, Golconda is only very rarely achieved.

inceptor: The founder of a new Discipline, a new bloodline or both. Such feats carry some measure of prestige among the Kindred.

Leech: A mortal who drinks vampire blood but acknowledges no regnant.

Lextalionis: The tradition of the blood hunt.

lineage: A vampire’s bloodline; one’s sire and the line of sires before him.

Osiris: A vampire who builds a mortal cult following around himself, as a means by which he can better feed or influence the mortal world.

Papillon: The red-light district; an area of a city that is punctuated by bars, whorehouses, gambling casinos and other places of debauchery. Also refers to a city’s prime hunting grounds, where mortal disappearances go largely unnoticed.

praxis: The right of Princes to govern; one’s claim to domain. Can also refer to a Prince’s matter of policy or individual edicts.

retainer: Any individual who serves a vampiric master (whether under thrall or not). The term

hails from a time when many vampires kept large estates with entire entourages of servants.

Rötschreck: The “Red Fear”; a fear frenzy, usually instigated by the presence of fire.

siren: A female vampire who seduces mortals in order to feed from but not kill them.

Suspire: The rumored moment of epiphany a vampire experiences just before attaining (or failing to attain) Golconda.

Wassail: Hunger frenzy, during which a vampire seeks to feed until sated.

whelp: Derogatory term for a young Kindred, originally used in reference to one’s own progeny.

whig: Contemptuous term for a vampire who retains interest in mortal trends.

VULGAR ARGOT

The newest of terms, those rising out of the grime and crime of the modern-gothic streets, reflect both the times and the attitudes of tonight’s brash neonates.

alleycat: A vampire with no permanent haven, who sleeps in a different place each day. Also refers to one who feeds exclusively from the homeless.

banking: The practice of “withdrawing” blood from blood banks and hospital reserves. Such refrigerated blood has very little taste, but it provides some small nourishment nonetheless. Banking is frowned upon by older or more refined Kindred.

blister: A vampire “Typhoid Mary” who contracts a mortal disease and spreads it to the vessels upon whom she feeds.

blood doll: A mortal who freely gives blood to a vampire, gaining a perverse satisfaction from the Kiss and actively seeking out vampires to give it to them.

butterfly: A Kindred who mingles among mortal high society and prefers to feed from the rich and famous.

Casanova: A vampire who seduces mortals to feed but does not kill them. Most prefer to erase the memory of their presence from their vessels’ minds, if possible.

Cleaver: A vampire who tries to maintain the illusion of a human family life.

donor: Sarcastic term for a vessel, typically a mortal.

farmer: Derogatory term for vampires who prefer to feed from animals alone.

head: A vampire who feeds on drug or alcohol-laced blood. Those with a fondness for specific drugs have their preference added as a prefix (e.g., crackhead, pothead, smackhead).

headhunter: A Kindred who hunts and feeds on other vampires.

juice: Human blood, often modified by a descriptor, usually one indicating either the origin of the blood or some chemical within the blood (e.g., “cranberry juice” indicates Irish blood, while “happy juice” is mortal blood laced with stimulants).

juicebag: Contemptuous term for mortals.

Lick: A mortal, especially one from whom a vampire feeds.

lush: One who feeds regularly from drugged or drunk mortals to experience the euphoria or inebriation in the blood.

pedigree: A sarcastic term for *lineage*, typically used to make fun of another vampire’s Kindred family tree (or the self-importance drawn therefrom).

rake: The newest euphemism for *gentry*; a habitual visitor to the *Rack*.

ripper: Modern term for a revenant, based upon the condition in which such creatures typically leave their victims.

sandman: A *cauchemar*.

slumming: The practice of feeding from derelicts and other dregs of society.

tease: A *siren*.

turf: Modern term used in reference to a domain; can also refer to the area under one gang or coterie’s influence.





Chapter Two: Character

He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn
with his natural passions. His virtues are
not real to him. His sins, if there are such things
as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of
some one else's music, an actor of a part that has
not been written for him.

—Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
—Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*



Now that you're familiar with the setting of the Kindred's World of Darkness, it's time to take a look at the traits and systems that bring vampires to vital unlife. This chapter details the systems by which you create your character to participate in stories and chronicles. It also includes information on the five clans from which all vampires claim descent. Finally, it thoroughly explains Disciplines, the supernatural powers upon which vampires can call to aid them in their Requiems.

Character Creation

The character-creation system offers a set of tools with which players can craft fictive personas rather than a mechanical device that churns out generic, assembly-line stereotypes. The development of a vibrant back story and a true depth of character takes precedence over dots on a page, but some framework must be established so that players' characters can interact in a meaningful way with regard to the game.

Try not to look simply at a character's traits in black and white, gauging how higher scores in certain areas afford her greater success in the coming chronicle. Don't chase a fictitious notion of "perfect" stats, or attempt to make a character who has everything. Instead, make an effort to understand the character's history and persona, then choose those traits that most accurately represent her personality and abilities. Always let her story dictate the dots she receives, not the other way around. Storytellers should work closely with their players during character creation, making sure that choices made involving game mechanics have justification and rationale in terms of a character's developed persona.

In the end, remember characters who have absolutely everything they want and have no fear of losing it are dull, one-dimensional and static. Stories about such characters are the height of tedium, because with all their needs already satisfied, those characters don't have to go anywhere or do anything of interest. They're already fulfilled, and frankly quite boring to play. Rather, remember that need creates action, action creates conflict, and conflict creates drama. Good characters should always *need* something, even if it's just to hold on to what they have already in the face of some (perceived) threat.



CHARACTER-CREATION PROCESS

Use the character-creation rules from the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook, and add the following template to Kindred characters during Step Five.

Choose a clan (see p. 136)

For beginning Disciplines, allocate three dots, two of which must be spent on clan Disciplines.

Vampires can have additional Merits from a special list (see p. 128).

Morality is now called Humanity in **The Requiem** (see p. 258).

Draw a card to determine how much Vitae your character has at the beginning of the story.



STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Concept is the stone from which well-developed characters are sculpted. Before thoughts of game mechanics focus a player's attention on microcosmic details of his character's personality, it is important to hammer out a rough-hewn form, seeing the whole before concentrating on the parts.

Concept need only to be a general idea – renowned socialite, musical prodigy, heroic savior – but it should be enough to spawn ever more complex ideas about the character’s motives, environment and relationships. Of course, a concept can be far more complex: “My character was a disenchanted New-Age believer who was tired of the watered-down rites she was exposed to there, and went looking for more visceral practices in some scary places. Her Embrace into the Gangrel clan and initiation into the Circle of the Crone has connected her with the kind of primal magical traditions she feels she’s been seeking for so long and transformed her into a confident, powerful mystic and predator.”

As shown in that example, some players might want to include clan and covenant at this time. Information regarding clan and covenant is detailed in Step Five. Players creating prelude characters would forgo the selection of clan and covenant entirely, instead arriving at those choices through play.

STEP TWO: SELECT ATTRIBUTES

After the more qualitative aspects of a character have been solidified, players must assign numbers that support their decisions. The first step in determining a character’s numeric traits is to prioritize his Attributes. Attributes represent raw, natural ability. How strong is the character? How smart? How agile? What impression does he make as he enters a room? Attributes take these questions and more into account, ultimately providing the foundation upon which a character is built. Characters have nine Attributes, divided into three categories: Mental (Intelligence, Wits, Resolve), Physical (Strength, Dexterity, Stamina) and Social (Presence, Manipulation, Composure).

First, you must decide in which of these categories your character excels the most (primary). You then select the group of Attributes in which your character is average (secondary). Finally, the remaining category is designated as the character’s weakest area of natural talent (tertiary). Is your character a scrawny intellectual, or possibly a brute lacking in social graces? Your character concept should provide insight into where to assign your priorities, but you may decide to break with that mold – say, by creating a short, sinewy mob enforcer whose intensity and rage more than make up for his lack of size.





All characters begin with one dot in each Attribute, reflecting the basic capabilities of all human beings. The priorities established in the preceding paragraph determine how many dots are allocated for each Attribute cluster. Five additional dots are added to the primary group, four additional dots to the secondary group and three dots to the tertiary group. For example, the scrawny intellectual mentioned previously would have five dots in his Mental category, four in his Social and three in his Physical category, while the tactless brute would have five dots in his Physical category, four in his Mental and only three in his Social category.

The fifth dot in any Attribute costs two dots to purchase. So, a player who wants his character to have a Dexterity of 5 needs to spend five dots. (He starts with one free dot, spends three more to achieve a score of 4, and then spends two more for the fifth dot.)

STEP THREE: SELECT SKILLS

Skills are divided into the same three subcategories as Attributes: Mental, Physical and Social. Mental Skills rely on knowledge of the world and are improved through study and practical application. Physical Skills rely on training, improved mainly through practice and repetition. Finally, Social Skills rely heavily on interpersonal experience and improve through interaction with others or through trial and error.

Like Attributes, Skill groups must be prioritized during character creation. Players should select primary, secondary and tertiary categories for their Skills. The primary group receives 11 dots, the secondary group gets seven, and the tertiary group receives four. Note that, unlike Attributes, characters do not begin the game with an automatic dot in any Skill, as Skills dots are obtained through dedication to a field, not natural talent alone. As before, the fifth dot in any Skill costs two dots to purchase.

STEP FOUR: SELECT SKILL SPECIALTIES

While characters might have considerable training in Firearms or expertise in Medicine, they excel in certain aspects of these Skills more so than in others. For instance, Shane might have a special proficiency with pistols but not with rifles or mounted guns. He might understand the basic principles of using these firearms, but the bulk of his training has been with his favorite pistol. Represented in game terms, such a character may have three dots in Firearms, with a Specialty in 9mm automatic pistols.

Players choose three Skill Specialties during character creation. These should be very specific, though players may choose more than one Specialty for any given Skill. So, using the previous example, Shane might have Specialties in both 9mm automatic pistols and 12-gauge shotguns.

STEP FIVE: ADD VAMPIRE TEMPLATE

Here is where your character sloughs off her mortal coil and truly becomes a creature of the night. The Embrace changes a character into something no longer mortal, endowing her with special abilities and unique advantages unimagined in her previous existence. Aside from entering a new world based on clan and covenant, supernatural changes affect her Attributes and allow her access to the powers of the Blood.

CLAN

A character's clan serves as a sort of extended family of the night, bound by lineage and responsible for certain similarities among its members. Vampires are always of the same clan as the sires that Embrace them, though it is possible to later start a new bloodline that deviates slightly from other close blood relations. Examine the five clan descriptions presented (see pp. 136-150), and determine which clan to which you want your character to belong. Your Storyteller may place restrictions on your choice at the start, depending on the limitations

of her planned chronicle. Preludes concerning the Embrace might take this decision out of your hands entirely, basing it solely on the Storyteller's discretion.

When choosing a clan, you might wish to choose a specific bloodline that deviates slightly from the norm, a subset of your vampiric family that holds to different ideals and behavioral standards. Be sure to confer with your Storyteller before making such a decision, as certain bloodlines might not be allowed in her chronicle, or might not exist at all. Alternatively, it is possible to create an entirely new bloodline, provided your Storyteller approves.

COVENANT

A covenant is more social than familial, concerned with a character's worldview and relationship to other Kindred rather than the advantages and bonds of the Blood. Each of these societies seeks different goals using (sometimes dramatically) diverse methods, all sure in the knowledge that their way is "right," or at least more right than all the others. Covenant is not governed by clan or sire, though childer often begin their Requiems in the covenants of their sires, either out of familiarity or promise of Status.

If a covenant is chosen during character creation, there is no reason it can't be changed as a character comes to more fully understand her place in the world. While a character's covenant is not set in stone, those who change allegiances are often viewed with suspicion and might have difficulty gaining trust or status within the new social hierarchy. Characters who attempt to "covenant hop" in order to learn the proprietary secrets of each covenant discover very quickly that as much as different covenants may dislike each other, they all share one common hatred: traitors. And that is exactly the label applied to characters who attempt to change covenants solely in pursuit of power. If there is one thing no Kindred will permit, it is traitors in possession of their secrets. So while switching covenants is by no means an automatic death sentence, characters can certainly expect reprisals as harsh as they are swift against themselves and their students if they dare to teach outsiders their old covenant's secrets. Discretion is therefore essential for those who have switched covenants, if only to reassure members of their former covenant that they are not sharing any information they shouldn't be.

So in the end, don't come crying to your Storyteller if your "clever" scheme to have your character repeatedly switch covenants in order to become an über-vampire with mastery of all their proprietary secrets like Crúac, the Coils of the Dragon and Theban Sorcery instead results in your character being destroyed by a vampiric lynch mob long before your master plan is close to complete. After all, the members of these covenants are perfectly within their rights to attempt to discredit or destroy those who seek only their powers and disregard their actual teachings. Covenants are social groups of Kindred with their own rules, beliefs and traditions — they are not simply the means to provide your character with cool superpowers. *You have been warned.*

Your character's covenant need not be chosen at character creation, though your concept should give some clue as to which covenants are most or least comfortable. Storytellers may disallow this choice at the start of a chronicle, intending characters to handle this decision during play. A character who chooses not to have even nominal membership in a covenant at all is considered unaligned. These apolitical Kindred receive no special benefits, but neither are they beholden to superiors or bound to act according to a particular dogma.

Covenants grant certain benefits to their members. A character must have at least a single dot worth of the Status Merit in a covenant (see p. 133) to avail himself of its benefits. Note that a character may still be considered a member of the covenant without purchasing the Status Merit. While part of the covenant, he is simply not fully trusted or initiated yet. Covenant advantages are as follows:





- **The Carthians:** Members of the Carthians may purchase the Allies, Contacts, Haven and Herd Merits at half the normal experience-point costs (rounding up). This cost break does not apply to purchases of these Merits during character creation.
- **The Circle of the Crone:** Members of the Circle of the Crone may learn the Discipline of Crúac.
- **The Invictus:** Members of the Invictus may purchase the Herd, Mentor, Resources and Retainer Merits at half the normal experience-point costs (rounding up). This cost break does not apply to purchases of these Merits during character creation.
- **The Lancea Sanctum:** Members of the Lancea Sanctum may learn the Discipline of Theban Sorcery.
- **The Ordo Dracul:** Members of the Ordo Dracul may learn the Coils of the Dragon.

FAVORED ATTRIBUTES

The Embrace forces drastic changes upon the human body, altering its aspects to that of a vampiric predator. While all vampires possess the same vulnerability to fire and the need to consume blood, their bodies adapt more subtly based on the blood of their sires. Each clan has adjusted somewhat differently to the rigors of the Embrace, choosing a divergent path of development toward becoming a more successful predator breed. These adaptations are carried through the blood of the clan, altering the natural abilities of newly Embraced childer.

Each clan has a pair of favored Attributes, enjoying a more acute development of certain natural aspects of the body. Once a clan is chosen, choose one Attribute from a clan's favored pair and add one dot to it.

2.1 – FAVORED ATTRIBUTES BY CLAN	
Clan	Favored Attributes (choose one)
Daeva	Dexterity or Manipulation
Gangrel	Composure or Stamina
Mekhet	Intelligence or Wits
Nosferatu	Composure or Strength
Ventrue	Presence or Resolve

DISCIPLINES

When vampires are Embraced, their sires teach them certain blood-based mystical powers known as Disciplines. Disciplines are those mysterious and often terrifying capabilities that the Kindred can manifest at will. Taking the shape of an animal, running at superhuman speeds or bending a victim's will to one's own are examples of Disciplines in use.

Each character begins with three dots of Disciplines, which can be allocated as the player chooses. At least two dots must be devoted to a character's clan Disciplines, however, before any thought is given to an out-of-clan or bloodline Discipline. (That is, you may choose to spend two dots on clan Disciplines and a single dot on an out-of-clan or bloodline Discipline, but not two dots on out-of-clan or bloodline Disciplines and only one on a clan Discipline.) Each clan description that appears later in this chapter lists the Disciplines practiced by that lineage, along with some of the more prevalent bloodline variations.

BLOOD POTENCY

A character's Blood Potency represents how much innate, mystical power has concentrated within her dead veins. Characters with high Blood Potency possess both great mastery over their Vitae and much inherent potential in that Vitae. Characters with low Blood Potency are either unpracticed or their Blood is so young or inert as to have little connate potential.

All vampire characters receive the Blood Potency advantage at one dot for free. Blood Potency can be increased with Merit-point expenditure at a rate of three to one at character creation. That is, a player may spend three of his character's seven Merit points for Blood Potency 2, or spend six of his character's seven Merit points for Blood Potency 3. Blood Potency is described on p. 127.

STEP SIX: SELECT MERITS

A beginning character has seven dots worth of Merits, which may be distributed at the player's discretion. These traits should fit the character concept – a Daeva socialite isn't likely to have the Stunt Driver Merit, for example, unless her background involves it somehow. A Storyteller may encourage or disallow certain Merits, or even provide a dot for free (perhaps representing a political contact crucial to the chronicle). The fifth dot in any Merit costs two dots to purchase.

STEP SEVEN: DETERMINE ADVANTAGES

Rules regarding advantages can be found on pages 43-54 of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook. What follows concerns itself less with game mechanics and more with the importance of certain advantages to vampire characters.

WILLPOWER

Vampires lead unlives of constant struggle, fighting against their base, predatory natures to retain control of their slipping connections to humanity. Fighting the Beast within them calls for a measure of self-reliance often lacking in ordinary mortals, making large amounts of Willpower a great value. Vampires' dangerous emotional situations can lead to violent, mindless frenzy (p. 253), and they hold their bestial tendencies in check through sheer force of will.

Vampires' experience points can be spent to recoup lost Willpower dots. See p. 121 for more information on spending experience.

A player may spend Vitae in the same turn in which he spends a point of Willpower. For more on spending Vitae, see pp. 218-221.

HUMANITY

After the Embrace, a vampire begins to lose touch with those elements of her nature that make her human. These qualities erode over time as the vampire becomes more jaded and the world evolves without her. For this reason, the concept of Morality as outlined in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook is replaced with Humanity here.

As an optional rule, Storytellers may allow those players applying the vampire template during character creation to trade dots of Humanity for experience points. This trade-in reflects some heinous past behavior the vampire engaged in and learned from (accounting for the added experience points), but which also scarred her deeply (explaining the loss in Humanity). At the Storyteller's discretion, players may sacrifice one dot of Humanity for five experience points, dropping their characters' Humanity scores to as low as five (for a maximum of 10 extra experience points).

VIRTUES AND VICES

The Virtues and Vices available to mortal characters are the same as those available to vampires, though they manifest in different ways. For instance, a character who suffers the Vice of Wrath might be prone to frenzy, while one indulging in Gluttony might leave a trail of exsanguinated bodies in her wake, finding it difficult to stop feeding before victims' hearts stop. On the other hand, a character with the Virtue of Hope might dedicate his nights to achieving Golconda, while a character with the Virtue of Justice might carefully choose his victims from among those deserving punishment (such as rapists or murderers), becoming a crusader of the night.



OPTIONAL RULE: I WASN'T EMBRACED YESTERDAY

Storytellers may choose to allow players a certain number of experience points to spend before play begins to represent the portion of the Requiem between the Embrace and the start of the chronicle. Large multi-venue games may have additional creation rules to enable distributed play. Receiving additional points, for instance for experienced characters, doesn't allow you to buy more Merits marked as creation only during this step.

Rank neonates	0 experience points
Up-and-comers	35 experience points
Established Kindred	75 experience points
Movers and shakers	120 experience points
Elders and other linchpins of undead society	180-300+ experience points



STEP EIGHT: SPARK OF UNLIFE

At this point you should have a character, at least in a purely mechanical sense. You have all you need to use your character as a playing piece in your Storyteller's chronicle, combining Attributes with Skills and drawing points as necessary.

Roleplaying, however, is not simply pitting cards against cards, or using spiffy powers left and right. The previous steps have created a basic framework, a rough sculpture of a character hammered out in the most simplistic of terms. Now is the time to break out the fine tools, refining the crude figure with details and nuance. Examine the dots on your character sheet and figure out why they're there. What in your character's life made him pick up his first firearm and begin training? How did he learn so much about the ways of the street or the methods of intimidation? When did he pick up his rudimentary medical skills? How will this background come across in the story? What parts *don't* you know yet about your character? Just like working a fine sculpture, shape and polish your character's physical, psychological and background details to make him one of a kind, even among the undead.

Just what exactly does having a Presence of 3 mean? Does your character possess the chiseled features of a runway model, causing all eyes to turn his way as he enters a room? Or does he have the hardened look of a dockyard worker who isn't to be trifled with? Perhaps he exudes an air of old money and confidence from behind his tailored suits and fine jewelry. What features cause others to react to him with such intensity? What color are his eyes, his hair, his skin? Does he have a clean cut, refined look or perhaps a nasty scar running from his scalp down between his eyes to his neck? Is his voice harsh and raspy, silky smooth or does he stutter, relying wholly on his looks to carry him?

While these final touches might seem the least necessary, they are the most important. Otherwise, your Ventrue with Presence 3, Manipulation 4 and Composure 3 will be just like every other Ventrue with Presence 3, Manipulation 4 and Composure 3. You want to avoid such two-dimensional characters and strive for something unique, fascinating and memorable.

Finally, the unlife of a vampire is certainly a place for ironies and fate. You've done all the work so far, choosing which traits you want your character to possess and arranging dots on the character sheet. As the final step of character creation, make a single draw, with the ace counting as a one for this draw. This is how much Vitae your vampire has in her system when the chronicle begins.

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS...

The questions that follow can be used to flesh out a character's background, providing insight into areas a player might gloss over during character creation. Even if there is no time for a sufficiently detailed prelude, you should answer as many of these as you can, either by writing out a brief back story and description or talking about these issues with the Storyteller. The devil is in the details, as they say, and these specifics help make your character far more real once the story begins.

- **How old are you?**

When were you born? How old were you when you were Embraced? How long have you existed as a vampire? How old do you look to others? Are you more or less mature than you seem?

- **What was unique about your childhood?**

What do you remember about your early years? What forged your basic motivations and attitudes? Where did you go to school? Were you a good student? Who were your immediate family members? What is your clearest childhood memory? Did you go to high school? College? Did you have a hometown, or did your family move often? Did you run away from home? Did you play sports? Did any of your childhood friendships last until adulthood?

- **What kind of person were you?**

Were you a kind and gentle person or an arrogant bastard? Were you popular or a social outcast? Did you have a family? How did you earn a living? Did you have any real friends, or just acquaintances? What kept you going from day to day? Will anyone miss you?

- **What was your first brush with the supernatural?**

When did you first realize you were being stalked? Had you dabbled in the occult at all before your Embrace? When did you first meet a vampire? Were you afraid? Disbelieving? Curious? Angry?

- **How did the Embrace change you?**

How did your sire catch you? Was the Embrace painful? Did you get perverse pleasure from it? Did the Hunger tear at you? Were you frightened? Did it somehow feel right? Are you grateful to your sire? Do you want to kill her for what she did to you?

- **Who was your sire, and how did she treat you?**

What do you know of your sire? Was she seductive, forceful, abusive, cryptic or open? Why do you think she chose you? Did you even know your sire? How long did you stay with your sire? Did she teach you anything at all? How long was it until your sire released you? Where did you stay? Where did you go? Did you meet any other vampires during that time? Did your sire Embrace another? Do you judge other vampires by your opinion of your sire?

- **Were you presented to Kindred society?**

Did the Prince welcome you? Was he reluctant to accept you? Did prominent Kindred need to be bribed or threatened before accepting you? Did your sire have permission to create you? Are you on the run from Kindred authorities? What do you suppose your domain's preeminent Kindred think about you?

- **How did you meet the others in your coterie?**

Were you brought together by chance or design? Are you all of one covenant or clan? Are you united in purpose, working toward the same goal? How long have you been together? Did you know any of the others before your Embrace? Do your sires cooperate, or are they rivals? Do any of you share the same sire? What holds your coterie together when the situation is at its worst?

- **Where is your haven?**

Where do you sleep during the day? Do you have any permanent home, or do you migrate from place to place? Do you stay in or near the place you inhabited in your mortal life? Do you hide in an abandoned building? Is your haven above or below ground? Do you have anyone to protect you during the day?

- **Do you retain any connections to your mortal life?**

Have you been presumed dead? Do you still watch over old friends and relatives from afar? Do you pretend to still be alive? Have you abandoned your mortal existence entirely?



VAMPIRE TEMPLATE QUICK REFERENCE

This sidebar summarizes the changes that apply to vampire characters. Use it in conjunction with the summary of character creation on p. 28 of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook.

CLAN

Choose a clan to which your character belongs. There are five clans from which to select.

Daeva: Emotional, sensual and desirable.

Gangrel: Primal, hardy and savage.

Mekhet: Quick, discreet and wise.

Nosferatu: Stealthy, strong and terrifying.

Ventrue: Regal, commanding and aristocratic.

COVENANT

Choose a covenant in which your character claims membership. There are five covenants from which to select. If you wish to choose no covenant, record “unbound,” “unaligned” or “independent” on your character sheet.

The Carthians seek to reconcile Kindred society with modern governmental structures and social systems.

The Circle of the Crone venerates a variety of female figures as an amalgamated creator of vampires, the Mother of all Monsters.

The Invictus is the aristocracy of the night.

The Lancea Sanctum seeks to influence Kindred society with the strictures of Longinus, who is believed to have been turned into one of the Damned by the very blood of Christ.

The Ordo Dracul commands rituals and mystical knowledge that allows the Kindred to transcend their vampiric states.

FAVORED ATTRIBUTES

Based on your choice of clan, select one of the clan's two favored Attributes and give your character an additional dot in that trait.

Daeva Dexterity or Manipulation

Gangrel Composure or Stamina

Mekhet Intelligence or Wits

Nosferatu Composure or Strength

Ventrue Presence or Resolve

DISCIPLINES

Choose three dots of Disciplines, at least two dots of which must come from the clan's favored powers.

Animalism: Power over animals and even the Beast of Kindred.

Auspex: Preternatural senses and perception.

Celerity: Superhuman speed.

VAMPIRE TEMPLATE QUICK REFERENCE

This sidebar summarizes the changes that apply to vampire characters. Use it in conjunction with the summary of character creation on p. 28 of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook.

DISCIPLINES (CONTINUED)

Coils of the Dragon*: The Ordo Dracul's secrets of transcendence.

Crúac*: Blood magic practiced by the witches of the Circle of the Crone.

Dominate: The ability to overwhelm the mind.

Majesty: Tremendous force of personality.

Nightmare: Manipulating fear itself.

Obfuscate: Hiding aspects of one's self, even one's body.

Protean: Shapechanging and adjustments of the vampiric form.

Resilience: Legendary toughness.

Theban Sorcery*: The Biblical "dark miracles" of the Lancea Sanctum.

Vigor: The epic strength of many men.

* Available to covenant members only.

BLOOD POTENCY

A character's Blood Potency begins at 1, but Merit points may be spent to increase it.

MERITS

New vampiric Merits include Haven (• to •••••), Herd (• to •••••) and Status (• to •••••); most characters cannot start with Status higher than •• (see p. 131).

EXPERIENCE POINT COSTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	New dots x 5
Skill	New dots x 3
Skill Specialty	3
Clan or Bloodline Discipline	New dots x 5
Other Discipline*	New dots x 7
Theban Sorcery or Crúac Ritual	Ritual level x 2
Merit	New dots x 2
Blood Potency	New dots x 8
Humanity	New dots x 3
Willpower	8 experience points

* Includes Theban Sorcery, Crúac and Coils of the Dragon. See p. 209 for more information in increasing Coils of the Dragon, as it functions somewhat differently than other Disciplines.



- **What are your habitual feeding grounds?**

Do you frequent a particular place to feed? Do you consider this territory yours alone, or do others use it? Do you compete with others to feed? What is your preferred prey? Will you risk hunger to find this type of prey? Do you ever kill when you feed? Do you have a specific herd? Do you seduce your prey? Kidnap them? Intimidate or beat them? Do they come to you?

- **What motivates you?**

Are you bent on revenge? Do you long for your mortal life, or to again look upon the sun? Do you have ambitions within Kindred society? Do you wish to Embrace any childer? Are you involved with inter-covenant conflict? If you could have any one thing in the world, what would it be?

A FINAL NOTE

Those without motivation are likely not to have survived the Embrace at all, or to struggle for survival in subsequent nights. Although a vampire's values often differ greatly from those of a human, stemming from his experience with death and rebirth, he must still have something worth existing for, or he would likely watch the next sunrise and be done with it. Give thought to where your character has been and where he's headed. Is there some overarching, ultimate goal or possibly several small ones? While **The Requiem** is a Modern Gothic Storytelling game, these beings do not sit around each night lamenting their sad existence and wishing it would all just end. Once you have an idea of what it is that your character wants to achieve, you have come one step closer to making him a complete, realistic personality.

EXAMPLE OF CHARACTER CREATION

Alyson plans to participate in Peter's **Requiem** chronicle. Peter tells Alyson that the chronicle focuses on a struggle to defend the sovereignty of Philadelphia from a number of different external forces, each attempting to destroy the city's independence as part of their own power plays. He then informs her that even while the city's vampires are defending their territory against these outsiders, the different clans and covenants within the city are making their own moves to establish dominance in this valuable territory when the dust settles. He has designed his chronicle to be a delicate balance between the ruthless politics that divide the different factions in the city and the need to confront these mysterious external threats as well, so characters will have to watch their backs even more so than normal. He suggests that Alyson develop a character who has some fierce loyalties, but who also knows how to play the amoral political game when she must.

Peter hands Alyson a copy of the character sheet, and informs her that he will be allowing the players to choose their own clans and covenants, since he will not be running the Embrace during play. He also tells her that he wants to keep such elements as bloodlines and sorcery rare, so she should consult him if she wants her concept to go that direction. Alyson agrees, puts on an inspirational CD and spends a few minutes brainstorming.

STEP ONE: CONCEPT

Alyson's first responsibility is to come up with a concept for her character. She decides that she wants to play a modern pagan priestess who was Embraced when she became dissatisfied with the "tame" practices she was involved in, and delved a bit too deeply into darker and bloodier rites. Alyson decides that the Embrace was given to her by her sire as a test, to see if she was really a true believer. Not only did she pass, but now she revels in her predatory nature. Alyson's character has turned her back on her mortal life, using her former friends as a food source and taking every opportunity to study her newfound supernatural powers.

Not wanting to name her character after herself, Alyson decides to eschew more sinister or pretentious names and figures her character still goes by her mortal nickname, Maggie. She has deliberately kept this deceptively harmless sounding name to put others at ease so she

can take their full measure. Of course, while she is conducting services, she will likely use a title of some kind, but for the most part she is simply Maggie.

STEP TWO: ATTRIBUTES

Alyson must now prioritize and assign Maggie's Attributes. Based on her concept, Alyson decides that Mental Attributes would be Maggie's strong suit, so she sets them as primary. Of course, in her role as a priestess Maggie also has a need to conduct rituals and relate well to others, so Alyson selects Social Attributes as her secondary category. This leaves Physical Attributes as tertiary, which doesn't make Alyson very happy. She envisioned Maggie as a bit more rugged and athletic than that, but decides she will simply focus on improving those Attributes later.

Alyson now has five dots to allocate among Mental Attributes. She decides that Maggie has always had extremely keen senses, which have only improved following her Embrace. She allocates two dots to Wits, raising the total to 3. She sees Maggie as having a very strong devotion to her beliefs, and spends another two dots on Resolve, raising that to 3 as well. That leaves one dot for Intelligence, for a total of 2. Maggie's no idiot, but she's still relies much more on instinct and intuition than analytic reasoning and book learning.

With four dots to assign to Social Attributes, Alyson decides that Presence is the most important quality for Maggie — she sees her as having a very striking appearance as well as a compelling personality, a natural leader of other Kindred and an excellent priestess as well. She therefore allocates two dots to Presence, raising it to 3. She spends one dot each on Composure and Manipulation, making her average in those areas — Maggie is reasonably well-centered and good enough with words, but primarily uses her appearance and sheer personal charisma to win over others.

Finally, Alyson turns her attention to the Physical category to finish off her Attributes. She decides that Maggie kept herself in decent if not excellent shape throughout her life, but her studies have kept her from being as active as many other members of her clan. She therefore decides to allocate one dot to each Physical Attribute, making Maggie thoroughly average across the board, with a total of 2 in Strength, Dexterity and Stamina. Again, she'd like to improve these numbers somewhat, feeling that Maggie would be a bit more athletic than this, but that will have to wait for now.

STEP THREE: SKILLS

Like Attributes, Skills must also be prioritized and chosen. Alyson decides to go with a slightly different prioritization as she used for Attributes, placing Social as primary, Physical as secondary and Mental as tertiary. Maggie has balanced herself quite well in life, allowing training and natural talent to bolster her weaker areas while using her strengths to bolster what would otherwise be fairly normal abilities.

With 11 dots to assign in Social Skills, Alyson tries to imagine what would be most important to Maggie, both from her breathing days and since the Embrace. Three dots go to Persuasion — Maggie is a very strong personality and very hard to argue with when she puts her mind to it. Looking over the rest of the list, Alyson decides to make Maggie well-rounded socially, and puts two dots each into Expression, Intimidation, Socialize and Subterfuge. If her formidable skills at debate and seduction don't win someone over, she's got a potent arsenal of other skills at her command as well, and knows quite well when to switch from one approach to another to get what she wants. Given her clan's rather savage and unsophisticated reputation, this is bound to give her an unexpected advantage when dealing with many of her fellow Kindred, and Alyson intends to take full advantage of it.

Perhaps to compensate for her somewhat average Physical Attributes, Alyson decides that Maggie has plunged into the more visceral practices of her clan, asking her sire to train her



in a number of practical talents. She has seven dots to spend in this category. Alyson puts two dots each in Brawl and Survival, explaining that her sire took her into the wild early on and taught her the basics of combat and wilderness lore. She then puts one dot each into Athletics, Stealth and Weaponry. Maggie still runs with her clan members from time to time and has also learned when to keep still or move quietly when she must. Alyson says that her knack for Weaponry comes mostly from her mortal days, when she was fascinated with all things ancient and used to belong to a medieval re-creation society. She's a bit rusty, but she still remembers the basics.

Finally, Alyson needs to assign four dots to the Mental group. Seeing Peter's quizzical look, Alyson explains that although she considered herself quite studious during her breathing days, most of what Maggie learned turned out to be completely wrong, especially regarding the supernatural. Maggie has been attempting to re-learn a lot of material, but fortunately her Social Skills have kept other people from spotting the gaps in her knowledge for the time being. She puts two dots into Maggie's Occult Skill, reflecting what she's been able to absorb since her Embrace and her subsequent mystical studies. She's no rube when it comes to the unnatural, but she's still got a lot to learn. She puts another dot into Academics, reflecting the incidental forays into history, theology and sociology that Maggie has taken in the course of her lessons. She'd like it to be a little higher, since Maggie was pretty scholarly in life, but reconciles it with the knowledge that Maggie has let her other pursuits lapse in favor of her Occult leanings. Her last dot goes into Investigation, which Alyson sees as a combination of Maggie's new vampiric senses and her natural curiosity more than any kind of formal training.

STEP FOUR: SKILL SPECIALTIES

Now that Alyson has assigned Maggie's Skill dots, she needs to decide where to place her three Skill specialties. Glancing over the Skills she has chosen, she singles out Occult, Academics and Persuasion as the most refined. Focusing on Occult first, Alyson decides that Maggie has devoted a lot of time to Celtic mystical traditions. This, indeed, will be the framework for her new belief system, so she notes "Celtic Mysticism" for her Occult specialty. Likewise, Maggie has also done a lot of mundane research on the lives and epics of the ancient Celts, so she makes that her specialty in Academics as well. Regarding Persuasion, Alyson thinks for a while, and then suggests "Religious Oratory" as her specialty, explaining that Maggie is normally very convincing, but when she's speaking from her faith, she's even more compelling. Peter looks over these choices and approves them, and Alyson moves on to the next step.

STEP FIVE: VAMPIRE TEMPLATE

Since Peter is allowing his players to choose the circumstances of their Embrace, Alyson now has to decide what clan and covenant Maggie will belong to. Starting with her clan, Alyson thinks about choosing Clan Mekhet for Maggie, figuring it would suit her mystical studies very well, but instead settles on Clan Gangrel, deciding to focus more on her character's primal passions and the deep-rooted sense of self-reliance that has driven her throughout her life and unlife.

Next it's time to think about her covenant, or where Maggie fits into Kindred society. At first she thinks about the Ordo Dracul – their teachings about vampiric evolution appeal to some of her character's beliefs – but on closer inspection, she decides that the pagan mysticism of the Circle of the Crone fits Maggie even better. Aware that all too many games suffer from a very muddled idea of what is really Celtic, much less Celtic mythology, Alyson assures Peter that she'll do her homework and make sure Maggie is no stereotype. She has already settled on the fact that as her chosen face of the Crone, Maggie will venerate Morrigan, a powerful Celtic goddess, so Alyson resolves to do the requisite research to speak on the subject with some authority, or at least enough to sound convincing in game.

The favored Attributes of the Gangrel are Composure and Stamina, and Alyson feels that Maggie's personality would more naturally lend itself to an increased Stamina. She adds one dot to that Attribute, and explains that Maggie's Embrace has heightened her primal hardiness and given her a certain restless power that she never had in life. Maggie relishes her newfound reserves of energy and enjoys going for long runs all across the city and the wild when she can risk it.

Alyson has three dots to spend on Disciplines, which she may spend in any way she chooses, provided at least two of her dots go to Gangrel clan Disciplines. She decides that with Maggie's intense occult studies and her rising status as a priestess of the Morrigan in the Circle of the Crone, she would naturally pursue Crúac sorcery. Reading the description of that Discipline, she finds she is limited to one dot of Crúac as a starting character. Covenants do not entrust their secrets to members lightly, even to the faithful. (Alyson also makes a note that she will have to purchase at least one dot in Covenant Status in the Circle of the Crone during the next step of character creation, the minimum requirement for learning Crúac.) Since Peter informed her in the beginning that sorcery required Storyteller permission, Alyson presents her evolving picture of Maggie to him and asks if it would be an acceptable purchase. Liking what he sees, he approves the decision, and Alyson spends one dot on Crúac, making it the one out-of-clan Discipline dot she's allowed to take during character creation.

Since she must spend her two remaining dots on Disciplines favored by the Gangrel, she chooses to put a dot in Resilience. Already toughened by the Embrace, it makes sense that Maggie would be able to call on extra reserves of fortitude when she must. Alyson now has one dot remaining to spend, and ultimately decides to purchase one dot of Protean. Maggie finds that the Aspect of the Predator power allows her to hold her own even against older or more experienced vampires, and thus naturally suits her role as a rising leader in her covenant.

STEP SIX: MERITS

Alyson must next spend seven dots on Merits. Looking over the list of suggested Merits in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook, she tries to find those that might reflect both Maggie's old life as well as her new existence. Alyson leaves Blood Potency at 1, as Maggie is still relatively new to the rigors of the Requiem. She looks over the list and decides to spend four points on the Inspiring Merit. Having already established that Maggie is quite compelling in her role as a priestess, Alyson wants to really reinforce that image by giving her some extra oratorical prowess. She explains that Maggie routinely gets her fellow Acolytes fired up during invocations, and she's developed quite a knack for it. Peter approves the decision, looking forward to seeing Alyson roleplay this rhetorical intensity. That leaves her with just three more dots of Merits, though.

Alyson decides to spend one dot on Haven, and informs Peter that she's going to try to pool this Merit with several other Acolytes in game. For now, she allocates the point to Haven Security. Maggie wants a place that's reasonably well-protected, given the rigors of the Danse Macabre. Because she wants to pool this Merit with other players, however, she'll have to wait to talk to them about exactly what they want their Haven to be, where it is located and exactly how it is defended. Alyson then spends another dot on Herd, reflecting how Maggie callously uses her friends from her old neo-pagan circle as a food source, disguising the worst of her feeding habits as highly "ecstatic" rites. Given the Vitae-intensive demands of Crúac, Maggie intends to develop this cult further in time (i.e., raise the Merit), but she's content for now with a few followers.

Lastly, Alyson puts a dot into Covenant Status (Circle of the Crone). She justifies this by saying that although Maggie is still relatively new to the Danse Macabre, her intensity and compelling personality has already brought some initial favorable attention from her fellow Acolytes. This also fulfills the requirement for the dot of Crúac she purchased earlier. Given



her formidable personality and the supernatural talents to back them up, Peter agrees that it is likely she would have made a strong impression by now, and approves this purchase of Covenant Status. Not seeing any Flaws that she likes, Maggie is finished purchasing with this section.

STEP SEVEN: ADVANTAGES

Once the numerical statistics have been decided upon, Alyson must determine her character's advantages. Adding her Resolve and Composure, she records a Willpower score of 5 on her character sheet. Her Humanity score starts at the standard 7, and Alyson chooses Fortitude as Maggie's Virtue and Wrath as her Vice. (A true believer, Maggie is willing to endure a great deal in the name of her faith. When angered, she has a nasty tendency to exhort her followers to destroy that which displeases her.)

Adding her Size factor of 5 to her Stamina, Alyson determines that Maggie has eight dots of Health, and draws a dark vertical line to the right of the eighth box on the Health Chart. Combining her Dexterity with her Composure, she determines her Initiative to be 4, and notes her Defense of 2, as her Dexterity is lower than her Wits. Finally, she notes the standard Acting Speed of 5, and adds her Strength + Dexterity + 5 to find her Running Speed, which she records as 9.

She asks Pete if he is using the optional rule regarding awarding additional experience during character creation, and he tells her that he doesn't plan on doing so. He wants the characters to be relatively weak when the game begins, the better to intensify their scramble for power.

STEP EIGHT: SPARK OF UNLIFE

Alyson has a pretty good grasp of her character at this point, at least conceptually, but the specific details of appearance and relationships are still a bit hazy. She looks over the questions on p. 119 to further round out some of the specifics regarding Maggie's background.

She decides that Maggie was an only child who came from a relatively normal middle-class family. She grew up in a suburb across the river from Philadelphia, where she developed from a bookish child into a rather serious student of the occult. Enduring the usual fights with her parents over what they saw as her increasingly deviant beliefs, she was eventually kicked out of the house and went to live in a small communal home with a number of her pagan friends. Always interested in learning for its own sake, she managed to scrape together enough money working various jobs to go to community college part-time, and was close to getting her degree in history when she was Embraced. Finding the time to finish school and receive her degree is still one of her goals, though the harsh demands of the Requiem are rapidly smothering that particular flame.

From early adolescence on, Maggie's defining relationships have been in the context of her pagan beliefs. Although at first an avid reader and practitioner of many well-known modern texts, she became increasingly disillusioned with the rites she encountered. Her search led to her meeting Daron, the woman who would eventually be her sire, whom she first spotted sitting away from the fire at a drum circle one summer night. Though somewhat necessarily distant due to the fact that Daron is a Carthian with only passing interest in the Old Ways, Alyson decides the two still keep in touch from time to time, and may even do favors for each other every so often. As for romance, Alyson figures that Maggie always avoided any serious relationships in favor of pursuing her studies as a priestess, a decision she regrets now that her mortal life has ended. She tries to make up for this by throwing herself into the politics of her clan and covenant and telling herself it was for the best.

As the chronicle starts, Maggie has altered her previous life to suit her undead condition, keeping those friends and resources she needs to fuel her occult studies while discarding many of her unnecessary ties to her old life. Alyson notes that combined with her rising interest in Crúac, this callous attitude toward her mortal friends and contacts does not bode well for Maggie's Humanity.

Regardless, she looks forward to the dramatic potential inherent in staving off such a decline. Maggie is eager and inquisitive regarding her new powers, and she revels in her role as a priestess to her fellow Acolytes. As for costuming and makeup, Alyson decides that Maggie has raven hair like herself, with several Celtic designs tattooed on her arms and back from her breathing days. She also tends to wear jewelry with a similar theme, though never anything gaudy or kitschy. Maggie's everyday wardrobe is quite casual and utilitarian, but her ritual garb is impressive, consisting of flowing black and silver dresses embroidered with Celtic symbols and a luxurious hooded mantle trimmed with black feathers. That last item will be particularly fun to design and make, and Alyson looks forward to costume shopping for Maggie in the near future.

Peter hands Alyson a player survey to see what she's looking for in a chronicle (see *Mind's Eye Theatre*, p. 264). Alyson fills it out in the following fashion: Action/Adventure 7, Politics/Intrigue 9, Mystery/Suspense 8, Personal Subplots 4 and Supernatural Elements 8. Explanations for most of these interests are immediately evident in her concept as detailed so far — Maggie is interested in building her “church,” is fascinated by the mysteries and the supernatural, and doesn't have much time for her mortal ties these days. Maggie isn't a very physically oriented character, however, so Peter asks why Action/Adventure is rated so high. Alyson explains that she's hoping events will force Maggie to “toughen up” a bit physically, which she's looking to use as a way of exploring Maggie's feral side.

And that's it. Alyson takes a final look over her character sheet to make sure everything is exactly the way she wants it and informs Peter of her final decisions. Once Peter looks it over and approves what he sees, Maggie is ready to be thrust into the chaotic World of Darkness.

Traits

After the Embrace, vampires gain unique traits that separate them from their mortal lives. While many of them represent internal, physical changes that mark the loss of life and the start of the Requiem, social conditions after the Embrace also cause changes in behavior, marking more external adaptations to the night.

NEW ADVANTAGE: BLOOD POTENCY

Although the Kindred each call upon the Blood in different ways, not all wield the same levels of power. Blood Potency determines the degree of power the Blood bestows upon a vampire. Having more dots of Blood Potency allows characters to learn more advanced Disciplines and to develop their traits to superhuman levels. Further, vampires with more dots in this advantage can hold more Vitae within their bodies, as it is more potent and concentrated. In short, the higher a character's Blood Potency is, the greater her vampiric potential becomes.

All newly Embraced vampires start at Blood Potency 1, regardless of their sire's potency, with nowhere to go but up. Two dots of Blood Potency can be purchased during character creation as a Merit (at three Merit-equivalent points per dot), but after play begins, it can be increased only by experience, diablerie or age. The purchase of additional Blood Potency at character creation needs to be rationalized before play begins. Perhaps the character engaged in diablerie or had already spent many years as a vampire before the start of the chronicle. Players who want their characters to start with more dots of Blood Potency must thoroughly explain what in their character's history justifies the additional dots and have it approved by the Storyteller before play begins.

As Blood Potency increases, feeding requirements become more stringent. Only blood of potency a certain degree lower than a character's can provide sustenance (see the accompa-





nying chart). In fact, some elders' blood is so potent that they can't feed on mortals at all, requiring the Vitae of other vampires to nourish them. Only those with the fewest dots of Blood Potency can feed from animals.

Eventually, a vampire's blood becomes so potent that he is unable to find regular prey. At this point, he falls into torpor, the duration of which is based on his current Blood Potency and Humanity (see p. 249). While in torpor, a thinning of the blood occurs. Torpor also causes fever dreams and a general distortion of the mind.

2.2 — EFFECTS OF BLOOD POTENCY

Blood Potency	Attribute/Skill/ Discipline Maximum	Max Vitae/ Max Vitae per Turn	Vampires can feed from...
1	5	10/1	Animals +
2	5	11/1	Animals +
3	5	12/1	Humans
4	5	13/2	Humans
5	5	14/2	Humans
6	6	15/3	Humans
7	7	20/5	Vampires
8	8	30/7	Vampires
9	9	50/10	Vampires
10	10	100/15	Vampires

A vampire's Blood Potency increases by one every 50 years. In torpor, however, it decreases by one every 25 years. As Blood Potency is rated on a 1-to-10 scale, a vampire will more than likely fall into torpor in about 500 years — as blood requirements grow ever more refined and hard to fulfill — sooner for those who engage in diablerie. Characters who diablerize several vampires in a short span of years can remain active through seven to nine diableries before the potency of their blood causes them to succumb to torpor. Such Kindred tend to have short but violent bouts of activity between long periods of torpid idleness.

When Blood Potency decreases (through torpor, for example), any traits that exceed the character's new capacity disappear. If Blood Potency increases again during the chronicle so that a character could once again gain access to them, the player must spend experience points a second time to "re-learn" what was lost.

Example: *Rachel of Clan Daeva has achieved a Blood Potency of 8 after repeated success at diablerie and has subsequently raised her Presence to 7. Unable to find any vampires of sufficient Blood Potency to feed upon, she slips into torpor for a period of 80 years. In this time, Rachel's Blood Potency drops three dots (one for every 25 years) to 5.*

When she wakes, her Presence is reduced to 5, the trait maximum for a Blood Potency of 5. Over time, especially if Rachel continues her practice of diablerie, she will have the opportunity to increase her Presence again. Her player, however, needs to spend the experience points to raise these dots as though Rachel had never possessed them.

Rumors persist of truly ancient vampires who have found a way to stave off torpor, seemingly defying the effects of Blood Potency. Some swear that such a thing is possible through intensive study of blood magic. The believe with faith akin to the belief in Golconda, creating a sort of religious fervor in those seeking to attain transcendence.

MERITS

Merits represent advantages a character may have due to circumstance and opportunity. They include material possessions and social networks, elements external to the physical changes



brought on by the Embrace. While the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook describes Merits in greater detail and provides lists of examples, vampires are removed somewhat from mortal society and often require unique or specialized Merits.

What follows are traits designed solely for vampires, allowing players to further distinguish their characters from ordinary mortals and other nonhuman beings. These Merits are available at character creation and during the course of the chronicle. The first instance assumes that your vampire character is already Embraced at the beginning of play or is Embraced very soon afterward. (It's not possible for a strictly mortal character to have the following traits as presented here.)

HAVEN (• TO •••••; SPECIAL)

Effect: A haven is a place where a vampire sleeps, protected from the sun during the deadly daylight hours. Legends tell of vampires in dark, twisted citadels on high mountain peaks, complete with labyrinthine catacombs, but the reality is far less grandiose. In truth, a haven can be as simple as a sewer or an abandoned warehouse or a crate in a forgotten storage closet, as long as it is undisturbed between dawn and dusk.

All havens are not created equal. A warehouse might have plenty of space and proximity to a significant amount of prey, but it might not be secure against unwanted visitors. An abandoned subway car in a long-forgotten tunnel has space and adequate security, but it might be so far out of the way that finding prey is difficult. Great time and effort is spent finding suitable havens, and their value is represented by three factors — location, size and security. Players who choose this Merit must also choose how to allocate these three factors when spending points. For instance, two points may be spent on Haven Location, with a third spent on Haven Security.

A good Haven Location makes it easier for a vampire to feed. A haven with many dots in this category might be close to several nightclubs or bars that do considerable nighttime business, while one with few dots might simply be close to a bus or train station that brings travelers on a regular basis. Each dot of Haven Location grants a +1 bonus on hunting draws for the character who controls it and any whom she allows in. Havens without any dots in Location are sufficiently secluded so as to not provide any bonus.

Haven Size is important to characters who need a place to safely store their possessions and valuables. A haven with no dots in Haven Size is just large enough for its owner and perhaps a single companion, with minimal if any storage capacity — the aforementioned crate in the forgotten storage closet, or a cramped apartment. By spending points to increase a haven's size, a player allows for accoutrements and personal effects. Larger havens can be anything from mansions to mountain hideaways to vast subterranean catacombs. Note, however, that havens of considerable size are not necessarily easy to maintain.

- A small apartment or underground chamber; 1-2 rooms
- A large apartment or small family home; 3-4 rooms
- A warehouse, church or large home; 5-8 rooms, or large enclosure
- A abandoned mansion or network of subway tunnels; equivalent of 9-15 rooms or chambers
- A sprawling estate or vast network of tunnels; countless rooms or chambers

Of course, Haven Location and Haven Size do not prevent rival vampires from attempting to find and steal choice havens, nor do they prevent intrusion by mortals (police, criminal organizations, social workers). Players of characters who wish to ensure privacy and safety may choose to spend points on Haven Security, thus making it difficult for others to gain entrance. Havens with no dots in Haven Security can be found by those intent enough to look, and offer



little protection once they have been breached. Each dot of Haven Security subtracts one point from efforts to intrude into the haven by anyone a character doesn't specifically allow in. This increased difficulty may be because the entrance is so difficult to locate (behind a bookcase, under a carpet) or simply difficult to penetrate (behind a vault door). Also, each dot of Haven Security offers a +1 bonus on Initiative for those inside against anyone attempting to gain entrance (good sight lines, video surveillance). Lastly, each dot of Haven Security generally gives the characters inside one turn of warning before any kind of attack on the haven, allowing them a chance to prepare themselves or flee. This benefit may be reduced or negated by particularly powerful or clever infiltration efforts, however, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Characters whose players spend no points at all on Haven might have their own small, humble havens, or perhaps they share the haven of a sire or Prince. In any event, they simply do not gain the mechanical benefits of those who have spent Merit points improving the quality of their homes.

Each aspect of the Haven Merit has a limit of 5. In other words, Haven Location, Haven Size and Haven Security may not rise above 5 (to a maximum of 15 points spent on this Merit).

Special: It's possible for the Haven Merit to be shared among characters in a close-knit group. They might simply be devoted to one another and willing to pool what they have, or perhaps their mutual reliance on an individual or trust could bring them together to share what they have in common.

To share this Merit, two or more characters simply have to be willing to pool their dots for greater capability. A shared Haven Merit cannot rise higher than five dots in any of the three aspects of the trait. That is, characters cannot pool more than five points to be devoted to, say, Haven Size. If they wish to devote extra points to the Merit, they must allocate those dots to a different aspect of the Merit, such as Location or Security.

Shared Haven dots can be lost. Coterie members or associates might be abused or mistreated, ending relationships. Group members might perform actions that cast themselves (and the group) in a bad light. Money might be spent or lost. If any group member does something to diminish the haven, its dots decrease for all group members. That's the weakness of sharing dots in this Merit. The chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The Storyteller dictates when character actions or events in a story compromise shared Haven dots.

Characters can also leave a shared haven. A rift might form between close Kindred. A character might meet Final Death. Or one could be kicked out of the haven by the others. When a character leaves a shared-Haven relationship, the dots he contributed are removed from the pool. If the individual still survives, he doesn't get all his dots back for his own purposes. He gets one less than he originally contributed. So, if a character breaks a relationship with his coterie, his two Haven dots are lost by the group, but he gets only one dot back for his own purposes. The lost dot represents the cost or bad image that comes from the breakup. If all members agree to part ways, they all lose one dot from what they originally contributed.

The Storyteller decides what reduced dots mean in the story when a character leaves a shared haven. Perhaps no one else picks up the character's attention to Haven Security, leaving that to drop. The haven might not be tended as fastidiously, causing a drop in the Haven Location value. Maybe a portion of the haven falls into disuse or even collapses, causing an effective drop in Haven Size. Whatever the case, a plausible explanation must be determined.

A character need not devote all of her Haven dots to the shared Haven Merit, of course. A Kindred might maintain a separate haven of her own outside the communal one represented by the shared trait. Any leftover dots that a character has (or is unwilling to share) signify what she has to draw upon as an individual, separate from her partners. For example, three characters share a haven and expend a group total of five dots. One character chooses to use



two other dots on a private haven for herself. Those remaining two dots represent a haven entirely separate from what she and her partners have established together.

To record a shared Haven Merit on your character sheet, put an asterisk next to the name of the Haven Merit and fill in the total dots that your character has access to thanks to his partnership. In order to record his original contribution, write it in parentheses along with the Merit's name. It is not important to note which aspect of the Haven Merit on which those points are spent, as this allows greater flexibility should a character ever decide to withdraw from the community arrangement. The result looks like this:

MERITS

<i>Haven*</i> (2)	●●●●
<i>Haven</i>	●●●○
<i>Retainer</i>	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

In this example, the character shares a Haven Merit dedicated to the coterie's communal shelter. He contributes two dots to the relationship, and the group has a total of four dots that are made available to each member. The character also has his own private Haven Merit rated ●●●, which he maintains by himself. And, the character has Retainer rated ●● that is also his own Merit.

HERD (● TO ●●●●●)

Some vampires tire of the hunt and seek to develop a small group of mortals upon whom they can feed without fear. Such a herd may take many forms, from a brothel of prostitutes to a blood cult worshipping a vampiric god. These mortals provide nourishment without the difficulties of the hunt. Typically, herds are not very controllable or closely connected to the vampires who use them, nor do they possess great skill in any one area. (For effective agents, the Allies or Retainers Merit is more suitable.) Each dot of Herd adds one to hunting draws (p. 230).

STATUS (● TO ●●●●●; SPECIAL)

While certain Merits detailed in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook focus on recognition in mortal society, certain Status concerns itself with the social orders of the night and represents recognition among other vampires. Status is divided into three areas – City, Clan and Covenant. Players must choose one of these three areas for each Merit point spent. (Enterprising Storytellers may come up with additional types of Status, and clever players might have unique applications as well. Status is designed as a sort of “umbrella” Merit, under which new types can be created.) Unless the Storyteller specifically declares otherwise (perhaps to simulate some more established characters already in the city at the start of the chronicle), no starting character may purchase more than two dots of Status in each category. This limitation applies even if the optional rule of beginning with additional experience points is in effect.

City Status

City Status represents a vested responsibility and according acknowledgement in the affairs of a particular domain. Regardless of clan and covenant, certain individuals rise to the top of the social or feudal strata, exemplary because of their efforts in the name of the domain





as a whole. Princes, Regents, Primogen, Harpies and other “officers” of a given domain fit this description.

Additionally, City Status represents those Kindred who aren’t part of the prevailing social structure, but who nonetheless have significant esteem, sway or reputation among the Kindred. Examples include bosses of powerful gangs, Kindred who have considerable influence in specialized areas (prominent businessmen, city government, health care and hospitals, religious communities), or even just those who are powerful in their own right but largely apolitical, as with a potent elder who abstains from city responsibilities but whose territory is respected by all other local Kindred for fear of her raw power and ferocity.

Although somewhat more flexible within a given domain than the other two types of Kindred-oriented Status, it should be noted that City Status does not “travel” well. That is a character cannot use it for any mechanical benefit outside the domain where it was earned, and even her sheer reputation quickly erodes as she travels (for more details, see p. 283). On the other hand, while less flexible within a domain, Clan and Covenant Status do travel. In fact, a Kindred journeying to a distant city is likely to call on his fellow clan or covenant members to offer him some measure of protection from the other native Kindred. Therefore, a character may use Clan and Covenant Status normally, even when visiting an unknown city.

A character generally may have City Status only in his own primary domain of residence. The Damned are highly territorial, suspicious beings who naturally distrust outsiders, especially those who come and go between cities. As another component of City Status is regular attendance and participation at city functions, it is nearly impossible even for a Kindred who has managed to be accepted in multiple domains to keep up with their social calendars. Indeed, nomadic life is less likely to earn a Kindred Status in different cities, because the Kindred of those domains know that there is nothing holding that vampire back from wrecking their city and then skipping town.

At the Storyteller’s discretion, a character may earn City Status in more than one city, but each additional city reduces the amount of Status that can be earned in any of them (not counting any other limitations in place). So a character who earns Status in two cities has a maximum of City Status 4 in each. A character with Status in three cities has a maximum of City Status 3 in each. In addition, to prevent player abuse, a character with Status in multiple domains cannot hold any sort of office in any of these cities. He simply is not trusted enough to be granted a position, even by his allies in a domain; after all, he has a “backdoor” if anything goes wrong. Allowing Status in multiple cities should be rare, however, if the option is ever used at all.

In some cases, City Status is very much a chicken-and-egg situation — does Prince Anne have City Status 5 because she’s Prince, or did her accumulated City Status result in her claiming praxis? In other cases, City Status obviously reflects accomplishment, as with a political activist who has many mortal supporters — but those supporters obviously didn’t join his cause because they knew he was a vampire. Harpies, in particular, make much of these distinctions, but some speculate that that’s because their own Status falls under the definition of City Status.

Note that these Status levels are *not* the minimum required to hold the named positions, nor are these dots automatically granted to anyone who assumes the listed title. Rather, they are merely an indication of the ideal level of City Status a Kindred should possess to accept the position comfortably and hold it with a minimal amount of gossip about his worthiness to carry out its duties. A relatively young or untested Prince might only have City Status •••, for example, reflecting that while he is Prince, he still hasn’t completely solidified his reputation or climbed to the top of the ladder yet. If she manages to hold on long enough

and not commit too many mistakes, it's quite possible he'll be able to rise that high, given the power of the Prince. It's also possible that a Prince with low Status might even be kept as a figurehead or puppet ruler by other vampires in the city with higher Status, who use their standing to call all the shots behind the scenes.

City Status is unique among Kindred Status Merits because it cannot normally be purchased with experience points after character creation. Instead, once a character enters play, all gains (and losses) of City Status dots are entirely handled by the mechanics of the Status system itself (see pp. 286-290 for details).

- Hound or “rising star”
- Sheriff or “accomplished individual”
- Harpy, Seneschal, Master of Elysium or “much-deserved reputation”
- Regent, Primogen, Herald or “cornerstone of Kindred society”
- Prince or “true paragon”

Clan Status

Clan Status is concerned with lineage and the Blood. At the outset of a chronicle, a Kindred's standing often reflects the prestige her sire has gained and passed along, such as with regard to the Ventrue. Many assume that childer who were Embraced by powerful and influential members of the clan have already shown some special quality or excellence, otherwise they would not have been chosen by so great a sire. This kind of recognition is short lived, however. A neonate might enjoy prestige by association under the purview of her sire, but such a favored childe is expected to make a name for herself.

Vampires who truly embody the ideals of their clan and who establish themselves in positions of power and influence (often as Prisci) gain the respect of others in their clan, being perceived as models for success. While the Daeva tell tales of particularly vicious Harpies of distant cities, the Gangrel speak of brooding hulks who confidently brave the Lupine-infested wilds alone. Those who diverge from the expected behavior of the clan in remarkable ways gain renown (or notoriety), as well, perhaps founding bloodlines that become known to vampire society as a whole.

A character may have Clan Status only as a member of his own clan. For instance, a Nosferatu never gains Clan Status (Gangrel) no matter how many favors he does for the Savages. His aid of the Gangrel may certainly earn him their esteem, but such concern is better handled on a case-by-case basis by the Storyteller, not in the form of Clan Status.

Clan Status is not so rigidly defined as City Status. While individual clan titles might arise, the notion of esteem is more general in this context.

Covenant Status

Covenant Status represents rank, achievement and responsibility. It's less concerned with clan ideals and more with covenant actions, philosophies and accomplishments. The various covenants are not bound by any supernatural means or governed by clan lineage. They find a commonality of goals and ideologies, instead. It is not enough to be powerful or exemplary of clan ideals; a covenant is concerned with what its members have done to benefit its cause and combat its rivals.

Those Kindred who enjoy the greatest covenant-based esteem are often the core members of their factions in a given city, those around whom others rally. These Kindred instigate or mediate conflict with other covenants, generally looking to further certain idealistic goals and establish themselves or other members in positions of influence in the local hierarchy. A Mekhet in command of a massive spy network might have status within his clan, but the lowliest of his spies might risk her unlife to gather a specific piece of information that helps oust the Invictus Prince, subsequently enjoying far more status with, say, the Ordo Dracul than her master.



A character must have at least a single dot of Covenant Status in order to gain the benefits of any special abilities of that covenant. In other words, a character must have at least one dot of Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) in order to learn Theban Sorcery. Or a character must have at least one dot of Covenant Status (Invictus) to take advantage of the experience point break on the Herd, Mentor, Resources and Retainer Merits. If a character leaves a covenant after learning some of its secrets, he does not lose any of those traits for which he paid experience points, but he may not learn additional dots of those traits (or additional dots at that particular price break, as with the Invictus and the Carthians). See p. 116 for the complete list of which covenants grant which benefits.

Covenant Status is unique in that a character may, on occasion, have more than one form of it. This occurs almost exclusively at low levels, where a character is beneath the notice of most other members of his covenants. A character may never have more than three dots total in Covenant Status among multiple covenants. A double-agent, for example, might take two dots worth of Covenant Status (Carthians) and a single dot of Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum), representing the character's true allegiance to the Carthians as well as the fact that he's in on the ground floor of the Lancea Sanctum so that he can feed information back to his Carthian fellows. A character may even have a single dot of Covenant Status in three different covenants. Perhaps he's somewhat accomplished in each, but has yet to determine where his true loyalties lie. Naturally, a character with Status in only one Covenant is not beholden to the three-dot limit.

A character with dots in Covenant Status through multiple factions does indeed gain access to those covenants' special benefits. Covenants expect certain contributions of their members, however, and if other Kindred find out that the vampire in question is playing multiple sides against the middle, he might see that Status vanish in a single night when he's called upon to account for his treacheries. Such is also the reason that cumulative Covenant Status is limited to three dots. By the time a character gains a certain degree of Status in a single covenant, he sticks out like a sore thumb if he turns up among another covenant's members. (An exception to this might occur if a character is truly some sort of deep-cover agent or other mole, but that circumstance is best handled at the Storyteller's discretion).

Like Clan Status, Covenant Status is not so specifically tied to certain titles. It is more a notion of an individual's accomplishments. A Lancea Sanctum Priest, for example, has a greater title than, say, a noted ethicist of the covenant, but that ethicist might have written numerous treatises on the state of undeath and the soul, according her more esteem among her peers than the Priest who rides solely on the weight of her title.

- The character is known to a select subset of the clan/covenant — a spy network, perhaps.
- The majority of the clan/covenant in the city recognizes the character's face and can recall her exploits.
- The character's deeds are known to all in the local covenant, even in other nearby cities; many members of other covenants recognize her face.
- Word of the character's exploits has traveled far, and her name is known in cities around the country.
- The character's name and face are synonymous with her clan/covenant; her exploits are taught to new members of the clan/covenant.

Status can serve as a mixed blessing, however. Those who enjoy the most might be able to use it to their advantage, but they are also visible targets for their enemies. High levels of Status make it almost impossible to pass unnoticed by those even remotely familiar with a particular group, even while they open doors that would otherwise remain closed.

Status works like a “social tool” in that it adds to test pools for social interactions between members of the sub-group in question. That is, Covenant Status adds to test pools for interactions with members of the same covenant, Clan Status enhances interactions with members of the same clan, and City Status affects those who are recognized residents of the given domain. City Status, however, may be ignored by those who are among the unbound, as one of their few benefits.

Example: *Fever wants access to the Mekhet Priscus, but the Priscus is already occupied with an envoy from Clan Nosferatu. He instead finds himself dealing with one of his aides, another Mekhet. Fever, a Mekhet himself, tries to convince the aide that he has important business to discuss with the Priscus. His player adds Clan Status to a Manipulation + Persuasion test pool. Fever has Manipulation 4, Persuasion 3 and Clan Status (Mekhet) 3, creating a test pool of 10 for the task.*

Status does not add to test pools predicated on supernatural powers. For example, a Prince’s City Status is not added to a test pool for use of his Mesmerize power.

Dealing with Status can be a mire of responsibility, though clever characters can turn it to their advantage. They may actually have a variety of Status. It is not unheard of for a character to have City Status, Clan Status and Covenant Status.



OPTIONAL RULE: TRUE COVENANT STATUS

Your type of chronicle may necessitate a slightly different approach to Covenant Status. Maybe the game is sufficiently large to require and distributed to require a clearer delineation of covenants than the multi-covenant membership provides. In those cases, adopt the approach that a character by default can only be a true member in one covenant, the group that represents his true calling. He may still hold status in other covenants, but he receives no mechanical benefits such as cheaper Merits or sorcery. You can also use this optional rule in games where players use covenants more as a means of gaining access to unusual abilities rather than to pursue political or spiritual goals.





Daeva

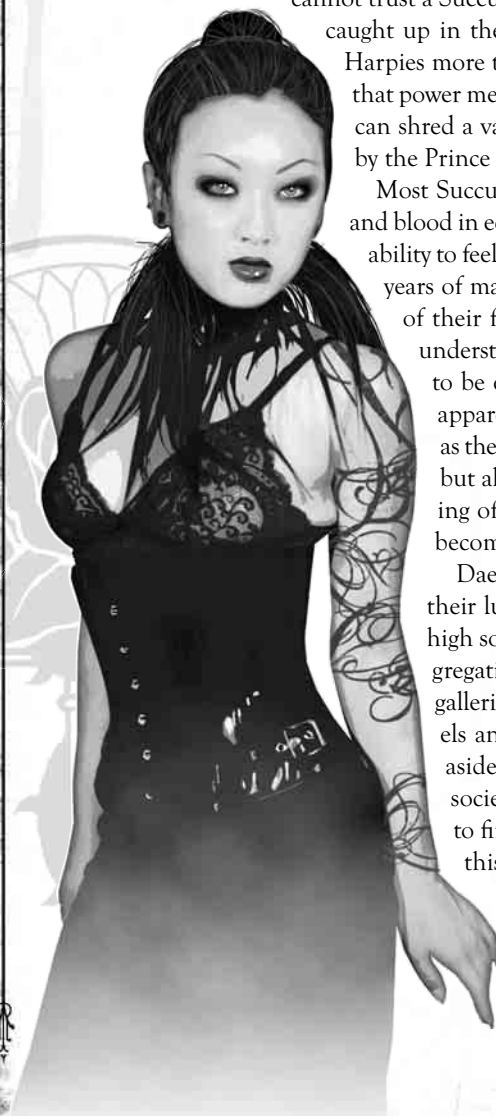
Other Kindred envy their beauty and grace, their ability to incite passion in mortals, the ease with which they glide through the masses — and that envy is almost as potent a draught to the Daeva as blood itself. These Kindred are consummate predators, and they would seem to be the perfect vampires. Alas, most are too dead inside to enjoy it.

Called Succubi by other clans, the Daeva are experts at making their prey come to them, practically offering themselves not merely as food but as playthings. No self-respecting Daeva resorts to attacking transients in alleyways. Rather, these are the Kindred who accompany a smitten young mortal back to her place, leaving her languid and sexually spent by morning (if she's fortunate) or an exsanguinated husk (if she's not). Seducers and sensualists, the Daeva could practically charm the unease off a Nosferatu. When the fancy strikes them, they play politics like a finely tuned instrument. Even allies and coconspirators who know they

cannot trust a Succubus find themselves lulled into doing just that, caught up in the Daeva's personal magnetism. Daeva become Harpies more than Kindred of any other clan, and they wield that power mercilessly. A stinging rebuke from a Daeva Harpy can shred a vampire's reputation faster than a denunciation by the Prince himself.

Most Succubi are overtly sensual beings, drawn by beauty and blood in equal measure, but it's an artificial passion. Their ability to feel true attachment to other people atrophies over years of manipulating the love of mortals and the respect of their fellow Kindred, until the Daeva can no longer understand those emotions as anything other than tools to be exploited and motions to imitate. For all their apparent fervor, most Succubi are as dead spiritually as they are physically. They claim to understand desire, but all they truly know is need, and it is this deadening of emotions that causes so many jaded Daeva to become depraved in their efforts to feel again.

Daeva move through the circles of society in which their lustful natures best serve them, whether among high society or low culture. Drawn to beauty and congregations of mortals, they often frequent theaters, galleries, trendy clubs, whiskey dives, drug dens, brothels and everything in between. Personal preferences aside, the Succubi are found through all strata of society. Their seductive natures allow these vampires to find willing vessels no matter where they go, and this ability has enabled them to thrive, to become arguably one of the most numerous clans. No single social class has room for them all, so newcomers and losers of political and social games often find themselves dwelling among



the poor and unwashed — or at least the middle classes, which, since their blood is as red as any other, means basically the same thing to most Succubi. Few Kindred are as desperate as a Daeva trying to claw his way into his own niche. Wise Kindred know better than to take advantage of a Daeva in such a position, for fear he'll one night achieve the position and privilege he seeks. The Succubi never forget a slight.

Nickname: Succubi (male Daeva are sometimes called Incubi, but the clan itself is referred to by the more common female sobriquet)

Covenant: The majority of these Kindred are found within the Invictus. They are well suited to the political game, and here they can surround themselves with lessers, becoming ever more jaded and inhuman as they grow older. Most Daeva are too self-centered to feel the religious calling of the Lancea Sanctum, but those few exceptions who are able to channel their sensual drive into matters of faith often obtain positions of prominence, making the clan seem more numerous in the Lancea Sanctum than it really is. Few Daeva bother with the Carthians. Why fight for an egalitarian society when the current system favors the Daeva? The Ordo Dracul covenant is home to a small number of devoted Daeva, and it would have more if the rigors of the covenant's policies didn't make being a hedonist among its ranks less than rewarding. The Circle of the Crone has few Daeva for much the same reasons as the Lancea Sanctum, and those who do join often do so more out of a debased and jaded sense of rebellion against societal mores than any real belief in the Pagans' teachings. A surprising number of Succubi fall in among the unaligned, convinced, in their own self-perceived superiority, that they have no need for the laws and restrictions of society.

Appearance: Daeva often Embrace out of infatuation — or at least going through the motions of passion — and they rarely choose to involve themselves with unattractive mortals. Therefore, most Daeva are surpassingly beautiful. The clan is also highly in tune with trends and fashion, the better to prowl among and attract prey.

Havens: Daeva havens vary, but they're almost universally comforting... in a subtly alarming way that suggests an artificial appeal to whatever vessels a Kindred favors. Most are convenient to social or political centers. The specific aesthetics vary, but most are intended to impress any compatriots, allies or victims who might be invited in. Penthouses and condominiums are particularly popular. Many Daeva don't bother to keep up appearances if they don't think they'll bring prey home, meaning that some havens are sloppy or cluttered with unsettling reminders of previous vessels' presence.

Background: With a growing number of exceptions, Daeva are Embraced from the ranks of society's elite. Succubus sires look for some combination of charm, culture, seductiveness, desire to achieve, passion and physical beauty. Many Daeva Embrace mortals to whom they have become attached, but this attachment almost invariably proves false, a mixture of lust and simple hunger. Few relationships are as euphoric as those between a Daeva and a newly Embraced child, and few grow cold as swiftly.

Character Creation: Social Attributes and Skills are of primary concern, particularly those that aid in making good first impressions, in persuading and in seducing. Social Merits are equally common, representing the character's connections to both mortal and Kindred society. Given that most Daeva feed almost exclusively through manipulation and betrayal, a high starting Humanity score is a good idea, since it's likely to fall precipitously.

Favored Attributes: Dexterity or Manipulation

Clan Disciplines: Celerity, Majesty, Vigor

Weakness: Perhaps out of some deep longing for the true passions they lost after the Embrace, the Daeva have difficulty steeling themselves against the hedonism they allow themselves as members of the Damned. Any time a Daeva has an opportunity to indulge



STEREOTYPES

Gangrel: They are beasts, to be sure, but their animal bodies contain a terrible ferocity.

Mekhet: They confine themselves to the shadows, but out of comfort or fear?

Nosferatu: They wear on the outside what all Kindred are within.

Ventrue: Which is the greater curse to bear, weakness of mind or the responsibilities of keeping one's fellows?

Lupines: No thank you. The Gangrel are quite feral enough.

Mages: The idea of a mortal with that sort of power is... fascinating. Surely they wouldn't mind *conversing* for just a bit.

Mortals: Such simple creatures. I'm grateful not to be one any longer. Still... I do wish I could remember just a bit more clearly what it felt like.

her Vice but does not do so, she loses two points of Willpower (as opposed to gaining one by partaking in its pleasures).

Organization: Status among the Daeva is entirely a social issue, and many young ones resemble squabbling cliques more so than undying creatures of the night. Not even elder Daeva are strangers to petty vendettas and long-nursed grudges. While a Succubus is likely to join with one of her own in the face of an outside threat, they compete with one another as much as they do with other Kindred, if not more so. The Daeva therefore have no true formal structure. Those who are dominant in the Danse Macabre's social and political scene are dominant among the clan as well.

Bloodlines: Duchagne (an aristocratic but degenerate European bloodline that seems to have the ability to directly manipulate the senses and sensations of others), Toreador (a branch of the clan that has recognized its loss of passion and tries to re-create it by inspiring mortals either to creative pursuits or extreme emotions; they invariably grow bored and move on, leaving their former wards desolate), Xiao.

Concepts: Bored socialite, club hopper, club owner, cult leader, cultured serial killer, full-time Harpy, jaded vampire who gets off on being a creature of the night (a fairly melodramatic attitude found only among the very young before the weight of the Requiem fully settles on them), Kindred politico, local covenant spokesman, patron of the arts, professional "escort"

Quote: *What a silly thing to say, my love. Of course you can't live without me.*

Gangrel

While vampires give mortals a reason to be afraid of the dark, there exist things that give even vampires reason to fear — creatures like the Gangrel, the predators among the predators, the most savage of beasts. Perhaps the only clan whose mere mention almost always elicits a chilled shudder or a reverent nod, the Gangrel are, in many ways, the “noble savages” of the vampiric race. Upon their Embrace (and sometimes before), the Gangrel seek to sever their ties with everything pertaining to their mortal lives. Many prefer the counsel of animals and other beasts, and some eschew contact with the mortal world entirely. While many retain and even value their humanity, they do so within the bounds and context of their newfound existence, and not as an attempt to hold onto what’s been lost, for no other option is practical to a clan whose very soul is so intimately intertwined with its Beast. While others delude themselves about what the Embrace “truly means,” the Gangrel know what they’ve become, so they strive to make peace with it. On the whole, they spend more time in communion with their bestial side than other vampires do, and though such activity more than accounts for their nickname and reputation, few would disagree that the Gangrel truly benefit from their introspection.

Their special bond with the Beast seems to give many Gangrel a unique insight into the Kindred condition, and some of the wisest vampires to be found in all the world hail from this clan. Whereas other Kindred try to become scholars or philosophers, collecting endless data and positing on the theoretical, the Gangrel are its yogis and medicine men, its bodhisattvas and whirling dervishes. The unequivocal and irreplaceable benefit of first-hand experience flows through them, supplanting the theoretical with the practical, and making the Gangrel widely respected among those who recognize the primeval nature of the Kindred soul. This insight makes the clan invaluable, but also makes it dangerous, and some would just as soon silence the Gangrel as hear their frank wisdom.

Nickname: Savages

Covenant: Many Gangrel are largely unconcerned with matters of Kindred politics, but that’s not to say they don’t have their own views. Perhaps surprisingly, a significant percentage of the





clan is active in the Circle of the Crone, which provides spiritually minded Gangrel with a ready-made forum for their rituals and beliefs. A great many of the Circle's leaders hail from the clan's ranks. Some of the more proactive Gangrel find the Carthian mindset appealing, and a number of highly motivated Savages have taken up the cause in recent years. A few Gangrel fall in with the Lancea Sanctum and Invictus, due to the nature of each covenant's beliefs. Those who are active in the latter group usually work for important elders or are elders themselves, while the few Gangrel of the Lancea Sanctum are among the most frightening and relentless Kindred anyone would ever (not) want to meet. Likewise, the Ordo Dracul sees few Gangrel, though some who join do so not to learn the blood magic of the covenant but to pursue mysteries of their origin without the hauteur of the Lancea Sanctum. A great many Gangrel also find their place among the independent and unaligned Kindred, whose lack of structure and love of freedom are attractive to Savages who prefer that elders of other clans keep their politics to themselves.

Appearance: The archetypal Savage is rarely concerned with his appearance, though most recognize the need to both blend in and put potential prey at ease. As a rule, Gangrel prefer function over form, and are rarely caught clad in anything that restricts movement to any great degree. Due to their clan weakness, they must always be wary of just how bestial they seem to others, and some Gangrel learn some amount of Obfuscate to avoid potentially disastrous situations.

Havens: One of the clan's greatest strengths is its deft maneuverability, a good portion of which stems from its Discipline of Protean, which allows the Gangrel to take rest in any natural soil. Sleeping in the ground does, of course, have its drawbacks, and even the most feral of Savages comes to appreciate having an actual place to hang his hat after a while. Therefore, a number of the more urbane (or at least urban) Gangrel elect to take traditional havens, though their restless spirits and mistrust of other Kindred tends to keep them moving.

Background: Potential Gangrel can come from nearly any former life, but few Savages would choose a mortal who did not possess a strong survival instinct. Beyond this, most are quite particular about those they sire. Gangrel loathe personal weakness and those who are soft of body or mind (especially given their weakness), particularly those with a paper-thin or disconnected sense of being. Clan members most admire those whose greatest strengths are the strengths of the self – self-awareness, self-confidence and self-reliance. While it is not unheard of for a Gangrel to Embrace someone who lacks these qualities (usually as a cruel test to see whether the Embrace will sufficiently toughen the person up), most Gangrel hold to their standards, as not doing so is often more effort than it's worth.

Character Creation: Gangrel are very honest with themselves about what is and is not their forte, and they seek to improve those things to which they are especially or innately suited. Many Gangrel come off seeming hyper-specialized, their players having devoted significant dots to those Attributes and Skills in which they are focused. This rule is a very general one, however, and numerous exceptions apply. Due to temperament, the aptly named Savages are rarely very strong in the Social department (though entire bloodlines of sociable Gangrel probably exist somewhere), preferring instead to hone body and reinforce the mind. An even mix of Physical and Mental Skills is always good, erring toward the Physical side.

Favored Attributes: Composure or Stamina

Clan Disciplines: Animalism, *Protean*, Resilience

Weakness: As befits their sobriquet, the Gangrel are more closely tied to their Beasts than are other Kindred. The more they feel the call of the Beast, the more bestial they become, and the more their minds become those of less principled animals. With regard to test pools based on Intelligence and Wits Attributes, the 10-again rule does not apply. This weakness

STEREOTYPES

Daeva: Primp and preen all you want, but you're more like us than you imagine.

Mekhet: Fine. Stay hidden.

Nosferatu: Proof that not all Kindred are created equal; some are way more fucking scary than others.

Ventru: I'll piss blood on their boots and wear their skins as a trophy.

Lupines: Next time you think you're the shit, I'll show you one of these and we'll settle the matter for good.

Mages: Under that mask of power lies a human face, warm and flush with blood.

Mortals: They move in flocks, so never forget what they are to us wolves.

does not apply to test pools involving perception or reaction to surprise (see p. 48 of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook), or to the Resolve Attribute.

Organization: The Gangrel are perhaps the least organized of the clans. They have no hierarchy per se and are largely disinterested in either clan structure or intra-clan activity for its own sake. The only nod they give to such matters comes in the form of an event called a Gather. These meetings serve a twofold purpose. First, as an opportunity for Gangrel to unite and update one another on the events of the intervening time. Second, as a forum for official intra-clan dispute resolution. Before this practice began, ferocious Savages visited their rage upon one another at will and without process, and the clan as a whole suffered. Thus began the practice of settling disputes at gatherings of the clan before a Priscus or Primogen, where any conflict (or combat, if necessary) could be moderated and monitored by the peers of both Savages. As a result of this practice, the clan has grown more cooperative over time, leading to markedly fewer intra-clan kills. The majority of such disputes now stop short of Final Death.

Bloodlines: Anavashra (mysterious ritualists who claim domains in India and Bangladesh); Anubi (Egyptian cultists who have long feuded with the Lancea Sanctum); Bruja (a rogue biker gang that slakes its thirsts at will and terrorizes Baja Mexico and Southern California); Matasuntha (a bloodline of warriors descended from an ancient warlord of the Huns); Taifa (sociable and sophisticated, these Middle Eastern Gangrel are known for their political savvy and social aptitude).

Concepts: Archeologist, bodyguard, bumpkin, circuit rider, guru, mercenary, nomad, shaman, survivalist, urban predator, zookeeper

Quote: *Go tell this Prince of yours that this is my domain... if you've got the guts.*



MEKHET

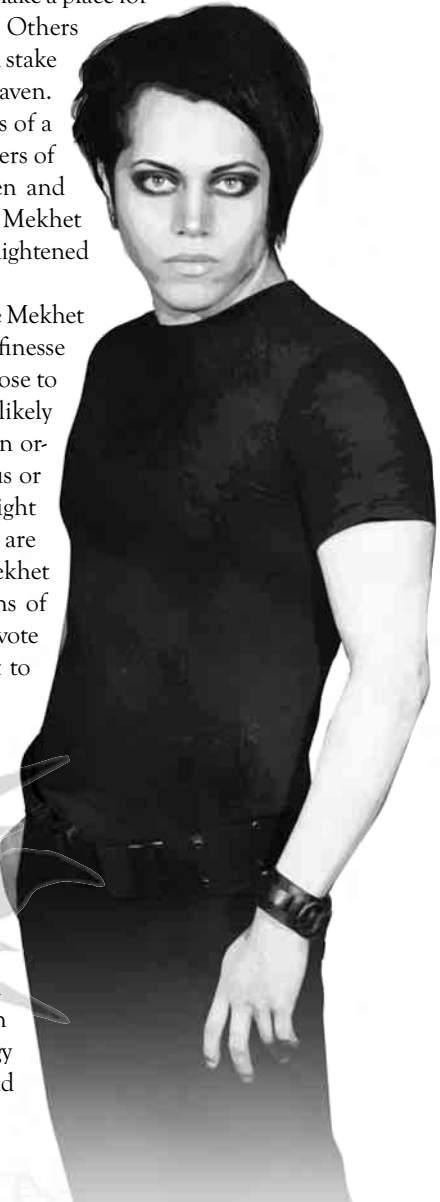
Vampires have always been creatures of the night by design, but none more so than the dwellers in darkness who compose Clan Mekhet. Darkness is the hallmark of this lineage, and its members surround themselves with it like a corpse wears a shroud. The hallmarks of the clan are stealth and wisdom, so it is entirely fitting that they are associated with darkness – the better to hide them and the source of the knowledge they exhume.

Clan Mekhet comprises one of the most cosmopolitan memberships among the great families of the Kindred. Although they compose a clan born of darkness, these Shadows, as they are known, interpret that darkness in many ways. Some of the clan's members are masters of the night, using their gifts and undead powers to make a place for themselves within the aristocracy of the Damned. Others are literal skulkers in the shadows, ready to plant a stake in a rival's heart or steal the wealth from a rival's haven. Still others are poets or painters, heirs to darkness of a more personal nature. Yet more Mekhet are diviners of secrets, questing after information itself forgotten and thus relegated to the darkness of memory. Clan Mekhet runs the gamut from filth-streaked murderers to enlightened philosopher-Princes and everything in between.

While the clan certainly has coarse members, the Mekhet are, by and large, marked by a certain degree of finesse with whatever aspect of tenebrous unlife they choose to pursue. A Mekhet bodyguard, for example, is unlikely to be a brawling brute, but more likely to know an ornate fighting style. A Mekhet infiltrator is gracious or invisible, not a sloppy vandal. A sage or scholar might have such supernatural acumen that his abilities are downright oracular instead of merely archival. Mekhet Kindred very much consider themselves paragons of the vampiric state, so whatever they do, they devote themselves to it and refine their capacity almost to the point of second nature.

Nickname: Shadows

Covenant: A great many Mekhet fall in with the Carthians or the Lancea Sanctum, both of which have strong traditions of politics and secrecy to which the Shadows can lend their talents. The same can be said of the Circle of the Crone, which typically draws Mekhet by virtue of its underlying message of redemption and meaning in the unlives of the Damned. Less philosophical and more viscerally impassioned Shadows are often drawn to the ranks of the unaligned, whose ideology of freedom (or anonymity...) is an easy fit for the wild



at heart. This is not to say that the clan is weak within the Invictus, though. Invictus Shadows are simply quieter about their covenant affiliation than their boastful brothers, or are more reserved about the reasons for their affiliation, which typically coincide with those of the Carthians or Lancea Sanctum. More than a few Mekhet find themselves among the Ordo Dracul, as the study of its esoteric principles often coincides with artifact-finding expeditions or secrets to be gleaned from other Dragons.

Appearance: Of all the clans, the Mekhet are perhaps the least uniform in the way they appear to others. Some play the clan archetype to the hilt, dressing in black clothing and adopting styles that allow them to blend into the scenery. Others choose from popular mortal styles and fashions, attempting to blend in with the crowd by evading individual notice. This practice is particularly common among Mekhet who associate with one particular subculture, thereby becoming an iconic, though rarely outstanding, example of that group's tastes.

Havens: Of all the clans, the Mekhet are typically the most polarized by their preferences and proximity to the mortal world. Some Mekhet prefer to keep close to where the action is. In large cities, where their numbers are strong, many take flats in the downtown core, or at least within short distance of various urban hot spots or the Rack. Older or more withdrawn Shadows are often preoccupied with security, and many elect to dwell in large homes on the outskirts of populated areas. Such Kindred often keep dogs and other servitors, made strong by the cursed Vitae of their masters. A few paranoid Shadows even take havens underground, where they cohabitate (or compete) with Nosferatu for shelter from the sun.

Background: Prospective Mekhet can come from just about any walk of mortal life. The only common thread linking potential candidates is an affinity for the night itself or some metaphorical darkness, such as a pained soul or a thirst for knowledge. Many Mekhet are tutored heavily by their sires post-Embrace, in order that they understand the nature of the clan and its duties. A Mekhet sire who leaves a new childe to the misinformation of other Kindred is a rarity indeed. Some prefer to let their progeny discover the Kindred world on their own, but not even these sires stray so far that they can't watch a protégés' progress.

Character Creation: Most Shadows prize those traits that best assist them in furthering their passion or their cause. Violent or politically motivated Mekhet typically favor Physical and Social Attributes and Skills, to improve their dealings with others and to allow them to strike from their namesake. Scholarly or philosophical clan members tend to acquire as many dots worth of Mental traits as they can. For many Shadow players, the process of assigning new traits is like being a kid in a candy store — just about everything looks good, but you don't have a whole lot to spend. The best solution is to keep your character's personality in mind when deciding what to take.

Favored Attributes: Intelligence or Wits

Clan Disciplines: *Auspex*, *Celerity*, *Obfuscate*

Weakness: As creatures of darkness even more sensitive to light than most of the Damned, the Mekhet suffer certain banes of vampiric existence more acutely than do their fellow Kindred. Whenever Mekhet suffer damage from sunlight or fire, they take an additional point of aggravated damage from that source (see p. 243 for more on sunlight and fire damage). Just as shadow cannot exist without light, so too does light banish shadow.

Organization: While this clan is not the most tightly organized, it does have some structure. The majority of it falls in line with the clan's various bloodlines, which are generally more independent than those of other clans. Nonetheless, some clanwide structure does exist. In addition to the Primogen in any Mekhet-heavy city, the Shadows often give more deference to a Priscus in clan affairs than do members of other clans, particularly if a Priscus has earned a reputation for wisdom.





STEREOTYPES

Daeva: They thoughtlessly despoil what they once were, and shamelessly mock what they've become.

Gangrel: Noble in their own way, but sadly disconnected from their roots.

Nosferatu: Brothers in darkness — but beware sibling rivalries.

Ventru: Great company until events conspire to put one of you in an elevated position, at which point they quickly grow intolerable.

Lupines: I suspect there is more to them than the savagery we witness from afar.

Mages: Some secrets the Kindred should not know, yet the mages wield them with such grace.

Mortals: See them for what they are: the source of our sustenance and the bane of our existence.

Bloodlines: Agonistes (Mediterranean historians and philosophers who seek to record and retain the knowledge Kindred lose over time and in torpor); Mnemosyne (fervent vampires who possess the ability to share memories and experiences through blood ties); the Morbus lineage of European origin that suffers the Requiem with tainted Vitae; Norvegi (an inbred, degenerate cult of spies and thieves); Sangiovanni (Venetian necromancers who maintain a tight family structure that Embraces exclusively from its own mortal stock).

Concepts: Antiquities scholar, assassin, Casanova, diplomat, enforcer, fence, ghetto Harpy, pilgrim, policeman, power behind the praxis, seer

Quote: *Sure, I can find that out for you, but you better make it worth my while. I'm sure he'd love to know you were asking about him.*



NOSFERATU

Not all curses are created equal, and even the Damned have outcasts. These are the Nosferatu, the most overtly disturbing of the undead. Only sometimes able to pass as human, the Haunts are horribly warped by the Embrace, either physically or... otherwise. They dwell in shadows that other vampires would not dare. Even other undead fear the Nosferatu, for their unsettling seemings are constant reminders that those Kindred who look mortal are not. They grudgingly respect the Nosferatu as well. These blighted creatures have incredible powers of stealth, terrifying strength, and they embody the monstrous destructive force that every one of the Damned can muster if pushed too far. If they had their druthers, most other clans would prefer never to associate with the Nosferatu at all, yet the Haunts' inarguable talents and brute force make them too dangerous to ignore. So other Kindred offer them a tense hospitality, hide their unease behind wary diplomacies and pray that the Nosferatu leave as soon as possible.

Many Nosferatu conceal their loneliness and resentment behind masks of indifference. They scoff in turn at those who recoil from them, belittling pretty vampires with soirées and silly political games, all the while seething at their exclusion. This isolation has fostered strong familial bonds among the Nosferatu. To those outside their ranks, they put on a unified front, creating the impression of a single extended network. The truth, of course, is that Nosferatu squabble and compete with one another as much as members of any other clan — but when faced with an outside threat, they close ranks.

The Nosferatu's inability to blend in with society forces them to dwell apart, often congregating in places others shun. Some find sanctuary in the sewers, using influence with mortal government and construction, as well as their own substantial strength, to expand simple maintenance tunnels and sluiceways into vast underground warrens. Others lurk in cemeteries, sharing aboveground crypts with sedentary occupants. Still others prefer abandoned homes, often giving rise to neighborhood urban legends of haunted houses, or exist in the basements or boiler rooms of modern office buildings. Tradition holds that any Nosferatu is welcome





in any warren until she provides her brethren reason to expel her. The Haunts might not all get along, but they recognize their common bond — not that they have any choice, since it follows their aspect like a miasma.

Fear'd by and ostracized from society, many Nosferatu become as alien as their demeanor. Others choose the opposite path, becoming surprisingly cultured, well mannered and well spoken to compensate for their unnerving seeming. The latter are the Haunts most frequently found playing politics with other Kindred. The Nosferatu are also known as purveyors of information. Not only do their supernatural powers make them foes to be reckoned with, but many elder Nosferatu are keepers of ancient lore, rivaling anything preserved by the Ventrue or Mekhet. Sophisticated Haunts trade knowledge the way other Kindred trade favors, and if a Nosferatu doesn't know something, he can probably scare someone who does into telling him. It is this trade in terror, more than anything else, that makes the Nosferatu too valuable — and too dangerous — to ignore. After all, one never knows what the horrid Haunts tell one's enemies, or how many of them wait in ambush.

Nickname: Haunts

Covenant: The Nosferatu are everywhere. The Invictus nervously welcomes them as enforcers, informants and soldiers. Those Nosferatu who obtain power in the First Estate tend to extremes. They become relatively benevolent rulers, remembering what it was like to be downtrodden, or they attempt to make up for the anguish they suffered by heaping it upon others. Haunts who seek to understand why God has done this to them, and those penitents who feel that they must atone for whatever sins drew the curse upon them, find solace in the ranks of the Lancea Sanctum. Haunts often find a place among the Ordo Dracul, where their disturbing bearing has little immediate effect on their achievements in the covenant (and might even aid them, as it discourages casual social calls). The Carthians appeal to those who are concerned with constructing a society in which everyone, no matter how unsettling, has a voice. Those Nosferatu who truly suffer beneath the weight of their curse often find the redemptive teachings of the Circle of the Crone far too tempting to resist. Even the unbound attract those who accept their terrifying nature and who want to tear down the system that quakes at their passing — or those who just want to get away.

Appearance: No two Nosferatu have exactly the same air, though troubling characteristics often follow patterns within “families.” Discolored leathery skin, gaping maws, rubbery skin, misshapen heads, odors like grave earth, bulging eyes, queasy stares and personal habits, gnarled hands, ineffable feelings of dread, sagging flesh — all these and more are the hallmarks of the clan. Not every Haunt is physically deformed. Indeed, many are not, instead discomfiting those who look upon them with indescribable unease. The darkness and filth in which many Nosferatu dwell make their foul miens (and fouler odors) even worse.

Havens: Most Nosferatu dwell in places far from mortals, such as abandoned warehouses, graveyards, basements and of course the ever-popular sewers and subway tunnels. That said, some few Nosferatu choose to flout tradition and take their havens in penthouses, fantastic manors — anyplace where they can enjoy the luxuries of wealth yet still count on substantial privacy.

Background: Nosferatu normally choose progeny from among society's castoffs, such as the homeless, the mentally ill and criminals. Many Nosferatu Embrace out of spite, using the curse to punish vanity, cruelty or other such “sins.” Assuming a sire wants a childe to survive — which isn't always the case — Haunts tend to choose self-reliant individuals who might actually be able to manage their new condition. Few Nosferatu Embrace out of love or affection, though even this is not unheard of. Rare but heartbreaking are the tales of a Nosferatu determined to “gift” his love with the Requiem, only to find himself the object of his beloved's loathing when she learns what's been done to her.

STEREOTYPES

Daeva: Got themselves fooled into thinking they can fuck the pain away.

Gangrel: They think they understand us, because they live with the animals and might some night be ugly. Just pat 'em on the head, pretend you're grateful, and whatever you do, don't call 'em on their idiocy. You may be a creep, but your face looks better on the front of your head than hanging from some animal's claws.

Mekhet: Moths are drawn to flame just like shadows. Do shadows burn, too?

Ventrue: They want to play king of the mountain? Fine. Haven't seen one yet willing to come over here and enforce his "rule."

Lupines: Scarier than *this*? I sure fucking hope not.

Mages: They know something... I'm just not sure I want to know what it is.

Mortals: Yeah, it sucks having to hide from your food. Yeah, you could take any mortal out without thinking about it. When you can take out a few thousand of 'em, then come talk to me. Until then, keep your fucking head down.

Character Creation: Physical and Mental Attributes are more useful to most Haunts than Social. Nosferatu frequently make use of Skills such as Stealth and Survival. It's unwise to begin with too high a Blood Potency. Until a Nosferatu has obtained some experience in the Requiem, he might be forced to rely on animal blood. Although Nosferatu aren't social creatures, certain Social Merits such as Contacts can be useful for gaining information from inaccessible areas.

Favored Attributes: Composure or Strength

Clan Disciplines: *Nightmare*, *Obfuscate*, *Vigor*

Weakness: All Nosferatu are repulsive or at the very least uncomfortable to be around. The cause need not be a physical deformity. A palpable aura of menace, a charnel odor or the undeniable manner of a predator is just as compelling as a twisted body. With regard to test pools based on Presence or Manipulation Attributes in social situations, the 10-again rule does not apply. This weakness does not apply to test pools that involve the Intimidation Skill, or to the Composure Attribute. Appropriate roleplaying, narration, makeup or description cards should be used at all times to alert other players to the Nosferatu's disquieting looks or manner.

Organization: The Nosferatu have little formal organization, but they do tend to band together in the face of outside threats. The clan is almost tribal, with differing "families" of Nosferatu often sticking together or warring against one another. Clan hierarchy, such as it is, is usually determined by a combination of seniority and actual merit.

Bloodlines: Acteus; Baddacelli; Noctuku (violent cannibals who dwell near rural areas and who prefer to feed on other Kindred); Yagnatia (a Russian family that claims unbroken lineage from both ancient nobility and witches); Burakumin (an Asian lineage that might possess necromantic powers, but information on Asian vampires is regrettably scarce even by Kindred standards).

Concepts: Bogeyman, circus freak, crude sadist, guardian angel, leg-breaker, parvenu, petty thief, rat king, reclusive eccentric, snitch, sycophantic servant

Quote: *Wow, you haven't flinched for almost two minutes. I must get prettier when you want something.*



Ventrue

The Ventrue offer a very simple boast: They win. They *always* win.

Other Kindred often despise the Lords, but they seldom dispute the clan's boast. All too often, a Kindred works and schemes to win some prize, only to find that a Ventrue owned it all along. The officers who lead a city's Kindred almost always include several highly placed Ventrue. The Lords acknowledge no defeats, only setbacks. The clan shares a ruthless will to power and the power to enforce its will.

Their favored Disciplines account for some of their success. The Ventrue learn to command the thoughts of other beings almost by instinct. Their mastery of lesser animals harks back to nights of domains in which the Lord was a master of beasts as well as men. Although they do not especially cultivate the arts of combat, they often prove remarkably hard to kill. Ventrue regard their supernatural gifts, however, as merely a tool to begin the acquisition of real power — the power of money, property, corporate stock, political contacts, rank in Kindred society and large numbers of mortals, at every level of society, begging to lick their boots and fulfill their commands.

The Ventrue take the feudal nature of Kindred society very seriously. Every sire tells her child that some people rule, and some are ruled. As Lords, they should strive to place themselves among the rulers. Most Ventrue neonates already believed this before their Embrace. Throughout the clan's history, the Ventrue have sought power in whatever forms mortals offered. Kindred historians say that in ancient Rome the clan Embraced senators and patricians. In the Middle Ages, they brought knights and churchmen into the fold. As commerce became an avenue to power, they cultivated merchant princes, bankers and magnates. When states grew more bureaucratic, the Lords Embraced high-ranking civil servants. The rise of organized crime brought mob bosses and drug kingpins into the clan. At the start of the 21st century, Ventrue elders ponder the merits of Embracing scientists, engineers and computer wizards. No matter where in society the power lies, the Ventrue vow to exploit it before other Kindred even know it exists.

Nickname: Lords

Covenant: Many Kindred see the Ventrue as almost synonymous with the



Invictus. Indeed, Ventrue tend to rise to leadership positions within that covenant. Almost as many find a place in the Ordo Dracul, acquiring immediate power of a different stripe, which the Lords ultimately turn toward the same ends. They also rise to leadership among the Sanctified, however, and some Ventrue find the power they crave within the Carthians, the Circle of the Crone or even amid the ranks of the unbound. Some Ventrue neonates hardly bother to hide their intent to use a gang of unaligned Kindred as a stepping-stone to power within another covenant.

Appearance: Ventrue often adopt a conservative, low-key appearance that expresses high status without being flashy. Young Lords sometimes favor a “preppy” look, the timeless suit-and-tie uniform of business, or (for female Lords) elegant gowns or business skirt-suits, with unobtrusive jewelry. Ventrue elders might keep the styles of long ago, at least in their own havens, and in public they still tend to look decades out of date. Even rebellious young Ventrue wear their metal-studded jackets like a uniform, asserting their dominance. A Lord surrounds himself with other trappings of wealth and status, too, from the big, fancy car in the garage to the wine cellar full of vintages he will never again have the opportunity to enjoy.

Havens: If a Ventrue did not possess great wealth before the Embrace, she often becomes rich afterward. Ventrue select their havens to reflect their wealth and power. Many Lords dwell in mansions or actual walled estates. Few would settle for anything less than a classic townhouse or penthouse apartment (with secure curtains, of course).

Clan tradition holds that any Ventrue may claim sanctuary from the sun at any other Lord’s haven and not be refused, but few Lords ever invoke this right. Not only do proud Lords hate to beg another Kindred’s aid, a supplicant henceforth owes a debt of honor to the Ventrue who provided refuge. Great shame would befall any Lord who denied a clanmate or who could not provide a comfortable rest, however, so a prudent Ventrue makes sure his haven can accommodate a Kindred guest or two.

Background: The Ventrue most often seek childer among the ranks of professionals or the cream of high society. Some Lords prefer childer from “old money” families or political dynasties, as the closest the modern world comes to feudal nobility. Other Lords prefer self-made leaders such as millionaire entrepreneurs, politicians, military officers or even crime bosses. As new professions and new forms of power arise, the Ventrue bring them into the clan. The rise of the computer industry, for instance, has prompted a wave of tech-sector childer.

Character Creation: Ventrue favor Social Attributes and Skills – the traits needed for leadership – though they also value Mental Attributes and Skills such as Politics and Academics. The clan excels at Social Merits such as Resources, Contacts and Status. Most Lords possessed great social influence in life, and they acquire more in undeath.

Favored Attributes: Presence or Resolve

Clan Disciplines: Animalism, *Dominate*, Resilience

Weakness: Power corrupts, and among the Ventrue, even the thirst for power can corrode an ambitious Kindred’s moral bearings. Over time, some Ventrue grow paranoid, ever more wary of rivals’ desires (real or imagined) for their own holdings. Others become willing to do whatever it takes to acquire the smallest iota of additional power. Still others turn inward, delude themselves as to their ability and importance, or trouble their minds with other maladies. Ventrue Kindred suffer a -2 penalty to Humanity draws to avoid acquiring derangements after a failed degeneration series.

Organization: The Lords track their ties of blood and obligation through an old-boy network that extends across generations, bloodlines and continents. A respectable Ventrue knows his fellow Lords’ ancestors, their broodmates, allies, enemies and Kindred owed and owing favors (though the information might be a century out of date). Two Ventrue often compare



STEREOTYPES

Daeva: Our only serious rivals. Watch them as you would a deadly viper.

Gangrel: Stray dogs with sharp teeth. Train them when you can.

Mekhet: Acknowledge their wisdom, but be sure they know they have their place.

Nosferatu: What was it Machiavelli said about love and fear?

Lupines: You can no more rule their kingdoms than you can rule a wildfire. Treat them with care — or avoid them if you want to see another night.

Mages: Do not try to understand their powers. You cannot. Do not use your powers upon them. Their revenge, should you fail, will be terrible. Their fears and desires, however, remain human, so you can bend them to your will.

Mortals: Rule them, use them, feed upon them without pity. They are born to serve and suffer and never know why.

lineages and acquaintances when they first meet. Thus do they establish their relationships and status within the clan.

The Ventrue also take clan offices very seriously. Ventrue Whips, Prisci and other clan leaders often try to hold monthly meetings of all clanmates, regardless of covenant. The Lords use these meetings as opportunities to brag, size up the competition, cut deals and chide clanmates who seem to show insufficient ambition. After all, the Ventrue have a reputation for steel-fisted power to uphold. One does not want other Kindred thinking that any Lord might go soft.

Bloodlines: Much of the clan consists of lineages that claim descent from famous Ventrue of the distant past, such as the great Mithras. These “bloodlines” merely express pride in ancestry: A Mithraic Ventrue, for instance, does not differ greatly from other Lords. Other prestigious lineages include the Licinii, the Beni Murrahim and the Rötgrafen. The comparatively new Malkovian lineage suffers even more debilitating madness than the parent clan.

Concepts: Corporate CEO, crooked cop, gang chief, military officer, old-time ward boss, patron of the arts, political consultant, rave promoter, realtor, society matron, technical wizard

Quote: *Let me be clear. You will accept my offer now or later. You will like it much less later.*

Disciplines

Much debate occurs over the nature of Disciplines among the Kindred community. Many young vampires, as yet unfamiliar with the price that the Embrace demands of their souls, see only the upside of Disciplines, thinking of them as powers they can wield over lesser creatures such as mortals. Penitent vampires, as well as those of traditional or theological bent, often see Disciplines as edges granted by whoever created vampires so that the terrible race of the Damned can more effectively fulfill that individual's plan. Still others consider Disciplines their own ends, as with the Ordo Dracul and its proscribed but powerful Coils of the Dragon.

The truth, of course, remains as unknown as any of the answers to the Kindred condition. What leaves no doubt, however, is the terrible efficacy of vampires' powers.

USING DISCIPLINES

You'll note from character creation and the clan write-ups, presented previously in this chapter, that among each clan's three "Clan Disciplines" is one that is listed for no other clan. These individual powers are presented in italics in the five clan descriptions. For example, the Daeva is the only group with Majesty listed as a clan Discipline. Meanwhile, Ventrue is the only one with Dominate listed as a clan Discipline. Such special Disciplines allow members of each clan immediate access to a particular vampiric power. That Discipline is one of the things that makes each clan unique. These capabilities are not wholly exclusive to their respective clans, however. Characters of other clans can learn them through the expenditure of experience points, but these specialized Disciplines are considered "out of clan" and are expensive to acquire (as explained on p. 121). If a Discipline is not favored by your clan, you can learn it with the help of a vampiric teacher who has that Discipline in-clan who can teach up to and including his own mastery of it, with two exceptions: no teacher is ever required to learn Celerity, Resilience and Vigor and no bloodline-specific Disciplines may ever be learned by anyone not belonging to that bloodline, even through diablerie. Adopting a bloodline may allow access to another clan's signature capability, as explained on p. 364. And of course, there's the option of acquiring the capabilities of another clan's Disciplines by committing diablerie on vampires of that lineage. Gaining these powers by such horrific means is explained on p. 223.

The basic system for using a Discipline is a bit different from the standard test pool mechanic. The Attribute that governs a certain power's use is included in the system subsection of the capability's description. In conjunction with that Attribute is a specific Skill that lends finesse or emphasis to the power. Additionally, the character's mastery of the Discipline as a whole adds points to the pool. The result is a test pool composed of three traits instead of the usual two for mundane Skill or Attribute tasks. For example, the first Discipline power in this chapter is Feral Whispers, under Animalism. The power lists Manipulation as its requisite Attribute and Animal Ken as its requisite Skill. If a character has Manipulation 2, Animal Ken 3 and Animalism 4, his player has a test pool of nine to determine the margin of success of using Feral Whispers. The fact that Feral Whispers is a one-dot power isn't important; the character's ultimate potential with Animalism as a whole is what's key.

Other information contained in the system subsection includes the following:

- Trait costs, if any, such as Vitae or Willpower expenditures.





- Bonuses or penalties to test pools based on circumstance. These lists are not exhaustive, just a few commonly encountered situations that a character using the Discipline might experience. As always, the Storyteller is free to modify these circumstances in any additional ways he sees fit.

- Other specific details that need to be described in game terms.

A character may use only those Discipline powers that are available at her level of mastery of a given Discipline, and below. Therefore, a character with Dominate 3 can use the Discipline's one-, two- and three-dot powers.

Elders speak of mighty powers becoming available once a Kindred's Blood Potency reaches a certain degree. The one- through five-dot powers of a given Discipline always produce the listed effects, but some elders insist that once a vampire's potential with a Discipline reaches a certain point, she may break from the static incarnations of a given Discipline and manifest powers with her own personality invested in them. That is, mystic wisdom suggests that there is no hard-and-fast six-dot power for Auspex, for example, and that a Kindred who masters Auspex at such a high level creates her own unique application. Tales of such powers are unreliable, though. The nature of Blood Potency is fluid enough that what a Kindred masters one night can vanish if he sinks into torpor and forgets what he once knew.

Discipline Options

Some Discipline descriptions include sections marked "Discipline Options," which present alternate ways of handling a particular power, whether in terms of system mechanics, game flavor or some combination of the two. These should be considered optional rules. Therefore, players should not assume they are in effect unless they receive appropriate confirmation. The rationale behind the use for an individual Discipline option is provided in many cases, in order to help indicate when Storytellers might wish to consider implementing it, as well as some potential complications.

In many instances, Discipline options are concerned less with mechanics and more with flavor, giving players alternatives designed to further customize their concept and help make their Kindred characters as memorable as possible. While options should be open to any character who meets the requirements, players should think hard before they decide to use an optional rule. Do they really want it because it's what their character would have developed, or are they after it simply because it's new and different?



RECONCILING LIVE-ACTION AND TABLETOP

Troupes familiar with **Vampire: The Requiem** will notice some differences in the Disciplines presented here and those in that volume. This is not done to create dissonance, but simply to take into account the differing realities of play involved in the two systems. What works very well in a tabletop setting could take on completely different dimensions in live-action, while a power that functions well in live-action might prove of very little help in a tabletop environment. For example, in tabletop play a power that affects everyone in the room isn't usually a problem — it only affects perhaps one or two other players, if that. The rest of the people in the room are created and played entirely by the Storyteller. However, in live-action play that same power has a much bigger scope, since it can potentially affect the roleplaying of twenty or more other players in addition to any Narrator characters present. Since players' characters are by definition rather exceptional, this could make the power a great deal more potent than it was originally intended to be, and so a rules adjustment would be made to account for this sort of difference.



Roleplaying

Included in certain Discipline descriptions is a brief section marked “Roleplaying.” This section provides players with a quick reference for any special roleplaying requirements for that power: particular behaviors, specific hand gestures or description tags, et cetera.

Yet in no way should the absence of this section in any power’s description imply that it can simply be flicked on or off like a light switch. Players are encouraged to develop all manner of roleplaying quirks for their characters when they use their Disciplines, whether it’s something as small as drumming their fingers on a nearby surface to concentrate for Telepathy or as obvious as shouting a war cry when activating Celerity. Doing so not only gives Disciplines more flavor and makes them seem less like static game mechanics, but it also helps make characters more memorable than other vampires with those same powers.

Just be mindful of one rule: The Kindred are still *vampires*, not action movie characters or professional wrestlers. While a vampire might hold some irreverent views about her condition, it is extremely unlikely that any Kindred would be so gauche as to engage in vulgar, nonsensical behavior.



SUPERNATURAL CONFLICT

It’s inevitable that the undead come in contact with the other terrifying and bizarre denizens of the World of Darkness. Vampires might clash with werewolves, mages or stranger *things*. When such contact can’t be resolved peacefully, supernatural powers and capabilities can be brought to bear to decide which creature prevails.

In this book, Disciplines are applied against mortal human beings and other vampires. In those cases, the rules operate as written. There’s little question as to what protection a target might have. A mortal probably has little protection other than his relevant Resistance Attribute, and another vampire has the protection described for the power in question. For example, a vampire who’s made the target of Dominate has a contested test pool composed of Resolve + Blood Potency. Meanwhile, a mortal target of Dominate has only his Resolve to apply in a contested draw against a vampire’s Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate. (After all, a mortal has no Blood Potency.)

So what happens when a vampire encounters a supernatural being and is subjected to the powers that creature wields? How do the vampire’s inherent nature or capabilities protect him? In cases where a contested draw is made to determine the power’s effects, the vampire’s relevant Resistance Attribute + Blood Potency is drawn. The Resistance Attribute is any one of the vampire’s Stamina, Resolve or Composure. Stamina is used against powers that have a physical effect, Resolve is used against powers that have a mental effect, and Composure is used against powers that have an emotional effect.

For example, if a mortal mage seeks to transform your vampire’s body, draw Stamina + Blood Potency in a contested action to resist. If a werewolf tries to use spirit magic to alter your character’s mind, draw Resolve + Blood Potency to resist. If a mysterious creature seeks to strike terror into your vampire, draw Composure + Blood Potency to resist.

Otherwise, follow all the other rules that apply to the power used. The main difference here is that vampires benefit from their Blood Potency in resisting supernatural phenomena.

The Storyteller can invoke this general rule whenever he confronts your character with monsters of his own creation — weird beings that might never have been seen before. Or he can allow you this kind of contested draw when your chronicle overlaps with **The Forsaken**, **The Awakening** or any other **Mind’s Eye Theatre** live-action Storytelling game. When the Gifts, spells or other powers from those games are turned upon your character, you know that his inherent potency as a creature of the night may afford him some protection.





Note, however, that such protection doesn't apply when no contested draw is allowed against the power in question. Say the Storyteller draws to determine the effects of a witch's spell cast on your vampire, and the rules say your character's Resolve is simply subtracted from that pool. In that case, your vampire's Blood Potency is not subtracted from the pool. Since no contested draw is involved to fight off the power, your character's Resistance Attribute alone applies as a test pool penalty.

Be prepared! Just as vampires get special defenses against the powers of other supernatural entities, so too do those beings get extra benefits against vampire Disciplines. When Disciplines are combated with contested draws, creatures such as werewolves and mages get special test pools based on their own otherworldly nature. Their extra protection is addressed in **The Forsaken**, **The Awakening** and other Storytelling games.



ANIMALISM

Although most look human, all the Kindred conceal within them a feral predator, a Beast that divides all others into only two categories: threat or prey. Some Kindred feel their affinity with the animals of the world, and their connection with their own animalistic nature to a greater degree than others. These Kindred often develop the Discipline of Animalism, which allows them to bond with the beasts — and the Beasts — around them. They can not only commune with lower creatures, but project their will upon them, forcing them to obey. As the Kindred gain power, some develop the ability to join with animals or to influence the Beast lurking with their own souls or the souls of other vampires.

Most Kindred are repellent to animals. Lesser creatures grow agitated in the presence of the undead and normally flee the scene (or, in some cases, attack the vampire in question). Kindred who possess Animalism are a very different story. Animals are often attracted to such Kindred, and their presence is soothing even to restless beasts.

Unless otherwise noted, other sentient, supernatural beings such as shapechangers who have animal form or who can assume animal form are not affected by Animalism. Their intelligence makes them the purview of the Dominate Discipline. Therefore, a Ventrue can try to ply his will on a werewolf — even a werewolf in wolf form — by using Dominate. Similarly, Animalism is useless on another vampire who assumes wolf or another bestial form. Animalism is of no avail to the vampire in regard to such intelligent beings.

Note that any Animalism power that requires eye contact is made more difficult if the subject does not stand still or is not otherwise immobilized. If the animal in question moves about, the draw to initiate the relevant power suffers a -1 penalty in addition to all others listed.

2.3 – OPTIONAL MODIFIERS FOR ANIMALISM

Modifier	Situation
+1	The animal is a predatory mammal (wolf, cat, insectivorous bat).
+1	The character is able to assume the same animal form via the Protean Discipline as the creature with which he tries to communicate (though he need not actually make the transformation).
+1	The character attempts to communicate with an animal in its "native tongue" by hissing, squeaking or what have you (assuming the player is willing to attempt to roleplay such actions).
—	The animal is another sort of mammal, a predatory bird or a large reptile (rat, owl, alligator).
-1	The animal is another sort of bird or a small reptile (pigeon, snake).
-3	The animal is an insect or fish.

Storytellers are advised to remember that due to its reliance on nonhuman targets, this Discipline can be difficult to capture in live-action play. They are encouraged to work with players whose characters possess this Discipline in order to make sure they feel it was a worthwhile acquisition. Animalism is a very potent Discipline, but one that's easy to lose in the shuffle of live-action play. Both players and Storytellers should try to strike a balance of making it useful without overly favoring it.

• **FERAL WHISPERS**

The Kindred with this ability has learned to understand the lesser creatures that surround her, and to speak with them and make herself understood. It is the foundation upon which all other Animalism abilities are built, for there can be no obedience without understanding. The vampire must initiate eye contact with the animal in question. Doing so forges a strong empathic bond between Kindred and beast, allowing communication. This contact is at least partially mental. The vampire may either whisper to the animal in a human language, or she may choose to hiss, bark, chirp or make whatever sounds the animal might use to express itself. (Some Kindred prefer the latter, feeling that it joins them more closely with the animal in question, though many others deride them for it and consider the practice vulgar.) The animal, in turn, might make some sort of noise while responding. The precise nature of the sound is irrelevant, as the meaning is conveyed mostly via the empathic link. Most animals instinctively respond quietly when answering Feral Whispers, unless the situation is a very tense or violent one. The Kindred must maintain either eye contact or a constant dialogue with the animal. If she fails to do so for even a single turn, the link is broken and she must reinitiate contact if she wishes to speak further.

Because Feral Whispers requires initial eye contact, animals that cannot see cannot be affected. Additionally, the simpler or less intelligent the animal is, the more difficult it is to link with it. Mammals, raptors and certain large reptiles are relatively easy to communicate with; insects, invertebrates and most fish are very nearly impossible. While most uses of Feral Whispers require a member of the Storytelling staff to portray the animal in question, it is also possible that Feral Whispers may appear as a task card as well, representing that there are animals in the vicinity that Kindred with this Discipline can communicate with in order to learn relevant information.

Note that while Feral Whispers makes sure that the animal communicates with the vampire, it does not compel the creature to obey commands or perform tasks. Further, the nature of the information conveyed by the animal depends largely on its intelligence and awareness. A cat might be able to explain that a large number of humans scared it out of a nearby building, but it's unlikely to understand questions such as, "Was one of them wearing a green baseball cap?" or to have any real concept of numbers. When in doubt, always assume that an animal does not understand an abstract concept.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Manipulation + Animal Ken + Animalism

Action: Instant

Roleplaying: Initial eye contact and then conversation, possibly also making appropriate animal noises.

Draw Results

Failure: Failure indicates that the character cannot communicate with the animal.

Success: Success indicates that the character can fully communicate with the animal, to whatever degree it is capable.

• • **OBEEDIENCE**

Having mastered the ability to commune with beasts, the Kindred's connection with his own feral nature now allows him to command them as well. No longer need he beg, threaten or cajole animals into doing his will. He demands, and they obey as best they can.





The vampire must make eye contact, as with Feral Whispers, and convey to an animal precisely what he wants it to do. The animal obeys to the best of its ability, but its nature and intelligence might cause it to interpret its orders in unusual ways. Once it has received an order, the animal carries it out, assuming it can be completed before the following sunrise. At dawn, the compulsion ceases, regardless of whether the task is complete or not.

It is extremely difficult to order an animal to do anything blatantly against its nature (such as ordering a sparrow to attack someone) or obviously self-destructive (such as forcing a guard dog to lie down in front of a moving truck).

A vampire can give single orders to only one animal at a time, but he may have as many animals currently under his control as circumstances allow, as long as he can give each one its orders individually. As with Feral Whispers, the Kindred may choose to give commands either in plain language or by making appropriate animalistic sounds, as desired.

At the Storyteller's discretion, a vampire may use this Discipline during downtime to hand off a downtime action to an animal servant, provided the animal is capable of performing it. (A regular Discipline draw must be made to see if the command takes hold, but the result is considered to apply throughout the downtime if several uses of this Discipline would be normally required to perform the action over a number of days.) For example, the vampire could call a crow to tail a target and see where he goes, but not to hack a computer network or even tell him what the target says, since those tasks are not within the crow's capability. Regardless of how many servants he might possess, a vampire may not hand off more downtime actions to animal servants during a single downtime period than he has dots in this Discipline.

Cost: –

Test Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism – animal's Composure

Action: Instant

Roleplay: Same as Feral Whispers.

Obedience also requires a contested draw if the animal is already under the control of another Kindred with this power (in which case Obedience successes achieved must exceed those drawn for the original vampire).

Draw Results

Failure: Failure indicates that the character cannot command or communicate with the animal.

Success: Success indicates that the animal obeys the character's orders to the best of its abilities.

• • • CALL OF THE WILD

The Kindred is so fully in tune with her own Beast that she can call out in a feral voice – howling, hissing, cawing or the like – that beckons all creatures of a specific type. Any animal of that sort within a given area is compelled to respond, immediately moving toward the Kindred at its fastest possible speed, via the most direct route it can find. Only animals that can hear the call are summoned, so creatures that have been deafened or that are insulated from the sound by thick walls or other barriers do not respond. Animals that respond to the Kindred's call are not automatically under her control, but they are more easily subjected to other Animalism powers. Lastly, only natural animals respond to this call – no hell hounds or gargoyles (see p. 349), for example, answer it.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism

Action: Instant

Roleplaying: Calling out appropriate animal noises loudly and clearly.



Draw Results

Failure: On a failure, no animals appear.

Success: The area of the call is one suburban block, one large city building or about 100 paces of wilderness for every success on this draw. That is, a single success when summoning rats calls all rats within a suburban block, a single city building or roughly 100 paces of wilderness.

Sample animal traits are provided in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook, p. 323.

•••• SUBSUME THE LESSER SPIRIT

By locking eyes with an animal, a vampire may psychically enter the creature's body and possess it as though it were his own. Some Kindred believe that doing so actually transfers the vampire's soul into the beast, though other, less mystically minded Kindred disagree. Regardless, the animal's own mind and instincts are completely subsumed, allowing the Kindred free reign to take whatever actions he chooses in the creature's body. The vampire's own body falls into a torpor-like state and appears for all intents and purposes to be a corpse.

Until the character returns, his body cannot be awakened by any means, though some Kindred urban legends tell of ghosts possessing such "vacant" bodies and wreaking havoc. Also, it is whispered among certain circles that some vampires, addicted to the sensations of life they experience while riding an animal, remain too long in that form and forget their true nature.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Manipulation + Animal Ken + Animalism versus animal's Composure

Action: Contested

Roleplaying: If successful, the player must adopt suitable costuming, hand gestures or description tags to indicate his animal form, as well as leave behind a card or other indicator where his body lies. Additionally, some of the animal's mannerisms may need to be adopted, or even retained after the power ends.

Draw Results

Failure: The character loses or ties the contested action and fails to bond with the animal.

Success: The character wins the contested action and occupies the animal's body. He can use Animalism but no other Disciplines while doing so.

If the draw made for the character wins the contested draw *and* gets successes in excess of the animal's Composure dots, the character is in total control and his mind remains clear. If his draw succeeds but garners a number of successes equal to or lower than the animal's Composure dots, a Willpower point must be spent for the character to take any actions contrary to the animal's instincts. Otherwise, bestial urges and impulses cloud the vampire's mind.

Additionally, if the player wins the contested draw but gets a number of successes equal to or lower than the animal's Composure, his character's consciousness is so closely intertwined with the beast's that he maintains some bestial behaviors even after returning to his own body. Until the player spends a total of three Willpower points specifically to overcome this effect — the points can't, say, be spent to gain bonuses in unrelated draws — the character continues to think and feel in an animalistic manner. This effect has no "hard" mechanical applications, but it should be roleplayed. If the character doesn't indulge in animalistic activity, the Storyteller should feel free to either dock the character future experience points or spend Willpower automatically for the character when a particularly bestial response is appropriate but not displayed.

While possessing an animal, a character can travel as far from his own body as he wishes and is unharmed by daylight, but he must still force himself to stay awake during the day (see Humanity on p. 264). The vampire may choose to end the possession and return to his body at any time, regardless of distance. This occurs automatically if the vampire fails to remain



awake. Any injuries inflicted on the animal also affect the vampire's body. If the animal dies while the vampire is still present, the Kindred falls into torpor immediately. (Some believe that the soul attempts to find its way back to its own body during this time.) If the Kindred's physical form is destroyed, his psyche remains trapped in the animal until he finally fails to remain awake, at which point his spirit is lost to oblivion and is unrecoverable. The vampire is unaware to damage being done to his body while his spirit is inside the animal.

It is possible, though uncommon, for a vampire to neglect his physical body long enough for it to starve into torpor while he's "out." If a vampire's dormant body slips or is forced into torpor, the vampire's spirit automatically returns to its body.

••••• **LEASHING THE BEAST**

The vampire's connection with the Beast is so powerful that she can manipulate not only the lesser creatures around her, but her own Beast and that of other Kindred.

This is not overt control, as with Obedience or the Dominate Discipline. Rather, the Kindred learns to rouse the Beast's instincts, inspiring it — and thus the vampire within whom it lurks — to behave in a certain manner. Of course, communing with the Beast is dangerous even under the best of circumstances, and a few unfortunate Kindred have been destroyed by their own failed attempts to manipulate others' Beasts.

The subject must be a vampire and must be within the character's line of sight. (If the character makes herself the subject, she need not be able to see, so she can do so even in complete darkness or when otherwise blinded.) The player must decide to invoke a rage frenzy or Röttschreck, or to alleviate either of them. While not required, many Kindred find it helpful to speak to their target as well, either urging them to give in to their animal instincts or talk them down from their feral state, as desired.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Animalism versus Composure + Blood Potency (to affect another); Manipulation + Empathy + Animalism (to affect oneself)

Action: Instant (to affect oneself) or Contested; resistance is reflexive (to affect another)

Draw Results

Failure: The character fails the instant action, or loses or ties the contested action and the power fails.

Success: The instant action inspires or calms rage frenzy or Röttschreck in the character herself. Or, the character gets the most successes and manipulates another's Beast. Frenzy or Röttschreck rules apply as normal for the remainder of the scene if either is induced.

AUSPEX

This potent Discipline grants a character superlative sensory capabilities. At the lowest levels, it sharpens a Kindred's mundane senses. As one progresses in mastery, entirely new avenues of insight open up before the user. Ultimately, this is the Discipline of gleaning information, whether that data comes from sights and smells, from auras and patterns of energy or directly from the mind of another creature. In addition, Auspex can be used to pierce the veil of powers that cloud, dissemble and deceive (see the "Clash of Wills" sidebar). Indeed, precious little can be kept secret from a true master of Auspex.

Once in a while, this uncanny Discipline provides extrasensory and even precognitive visitations. Such premonitions might come as quick flashes of imagery, overwhelming feelings of empathy or even as an ominous sense of foreboding. The Kindred has absolutely no control over these insights, but he can learn to interpret their significance given time and experience.

Such potent sensitivity can have its drawbacks, however. When a vampire actively uses any power of Auspex save the fifth (Twilight Projection), he runs the risk of his delicate senses



being overwhelmed by excessive stimuli. Sudden or severe occurrences such as a gun report or flash bulb in the eyes can distract the character unless the player succeeds on a Resolve draw. Failure disorients the character, making him effectively unaware of his surroundings until the end of the following turn.



CLASH OF WILLS

Although Auspex is a potent Discipline, especially at high levels of mastery, a given Kindred's execution of it is not always flawless. Other supernatural powers and abilities can cloud or contest the power of Auspex, the most common of these being Obfuscate — the direct opposite of Auspex, in many ways.

The heart of any Auspex-versus-Obfuscate contest is a clash of mighty wills, for both powers stem from and rely upon the power of the Kindred mind. When a character with Auspex uses his acute senses to see through another's Obfuscate, make a contested draw of Wits + Investigation + Auspex versus Resolve + Stealth + Obfuscate. Whoever accumulates the most successes wins the battle of wills. Ties go to the defender, usually the Obfuscate user. Most of the time, ties result in the Obfuscated character remaining hidden (as the Auspex-user is the initiator), but not always. In the event that a vampire uses Obfuscate right in front of a Kindred with Auspex, the hiding character is the challenger, as it is he who tries to hide in plain sight.

To activate Obfuscate, perform the appropriate test with your Storyteller. For as long as you maintain that first invocation of Obfuscate, indicate the number of successes gained on that test by the number of fingers extended as part of the invisibility symbol. Similarly, on the first invocation of Auspex for the purposes of looking through invisibility, run the appropriate draw with your Storyteller and display a number of fingers equal to your successes in the symbol for supernatural sight. When trying to see through an Obfuscated character's invisibility, indicate your Auspex successes to her; she will in turn indicate her number of Obfuscate successes. Obfuscate and Auspex users cannot re-test for their powers if they are dissatisfied with their number of successes: Obfuscate users test again only after dropping and re-establishing Obfuscate. Auspex users must make another Auspex test every hour to find their current number of successes. For larger games, the Storyteller running the Obfuscate or Auspex test should write the number of successes gained on Auspex or Obfuscate on a card for the character to ensure that no miscommunication with other Storytellers takes place.

Obfuscate is not the only supernatural ability with the potential to foil the clarity of Auspex. For example, a character using the Twilight Projection power might be seen by a character using the Heightened Senses power. The general rule of thumb is to apply the same system, but in regard to whatever mechanic is used: Wits + Investigation + Auspex is still drawn for the perceiving character, and Resolve + an appropriate Skill + the Discipline in question is drawn for the defender.



• HEIGHTENED SENSES

When this power is activated, all of the vampire's senses sharpen to a razor's edge, effectively doubling both the range and clarity of all stimuli received. Heightened eyesight allows the vampire to perceive the most minute details of objects at great distances, while a heightened sense of smell might alert a character to the presence of trace amounts of alcohol on a mortal's breath. Kindred with this power also have the option of magnifying a single sense, as opposed to all five, in order to better block out unwanted stimuli from other sources. Note, however, that the risk of sudden distraction remains, regardless of how many or how few senses are currently heightened. (Note that vampires do not breathe. As such, the Kindred do not smell unless they actively will themselves to do so, and thus cannot be overwhelmed suddenly by smells unless they are actively smelling at the time.)





In order to avoid potential problems, players with active Heightened Senses should use the standard hand signals to indicate heightened hearing, vision or other senses when they first enter a room or meet another character, or else simply make an out-of-game announcement when they raise or lower their Heightened Senses.

Cost: —

Test Pool: This power typically involves no draw. The player simply activates the power and explains to the Storyteller what his character is doing and with which sense(s). The Storyteller responds by relating whatever information can be gleaned. The only time a draw comes into play for Heightened Senses is when the Storyteller wishes to permit the character a chance to perceive an imminent threat. In this case, the Storyteller may allow the player to add her character's Auspex dots to a surprise draw (Wits + Composure — see the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook, p. 48).

Heightened Senses may also come into play with task cards marked “Heightened Senses” or “Heightened Sense X” (where X is a particular sense), which allow users of this Discipline a chance to glean extra information beyond what characters with lesser senses can obtain.

This power allows a vampire to see in pitch-black darkness.

Roleplaying: Appropriate hand signals.

Action: Instant

• • AURA PERCEPTION

With this mystic power, a vampire can open his perceptions to the psychic auras that surround all sentient creatures. Numerous and often-shifting hues and patterns compose these auras, and it can take many years before a vampire becomes truly proficient at reading them correctly with any degree of regularity. Although the strongest emotions predominate, almost every individual has more than one color to his aura at any given time, and an observer can see any number of streaks or flashes of these other colors.

“Psychic colors” change with the subject's mental or emotional state, creating an ever-moving pattern that is as unique to each person as a fingerprint. As a rule, the more powerful the emotions, the more intense the colors, but even this guideline is betrayed by any number of circumstantial mitigating factors. All the same, practice makes perfect; a true master aura-perceiver learns to understand the significance of each whorl and eddy.

Due to the peculiar nature of such creatures' auras, this power can be used as a means of detecting other supernatural entities. Vampire auras, for example, tend to be extremely pale, regardless of the colors. Werewolf auras are quite the contrary, nearly frantic in their intensity. Mage auras sparkle with power. Ghostly auras flicker like guttering candles.

A table has been provided detailing the correspondences between different moods and the colors of the aura, as well as the different auras of various supernatural creatures. Auspex users are expected to learn these colors as part of using the Discipline, as well as to help others answer correctly. It is recommended for flavor and atmosphere that other players learn these colors whenever possible. Failing that, however, if a player does not know the proper aura colors, it is certainly permissible for them to answer just by naming their emotions and/or the differences in their aura, if any.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Intelligence + Empathy + Auspex – subject's Composure

Action: Instant. Though this power is an instant action, it takes more than just a fleeting glance to see the detail in an aura. A character must scrutinize her subject's aura uninterrupted for between two turns and one minute to glean information from it, though only the single, immediate draw is necessary to determine if she can read it successfully.

Roleplaying: An uninterrupted, penetrating gaze directed at the target. The Discipline user may move slowly, perform simple actions or make small talk during this time, but cannot perform complicated actions or engage in very deep or meaningful conversation.

Draw Results

Failure: The character can distinguish no information at all.

Success: The character perceives a number of colors or degrees in the subject's aura equal to the number of successes obtained on the draw. The player asks the subject of the power if a given color, emotion or other indicator is present in his aura. She cannot ask blanket questions such as what type of supernatural the subject is or whether any negative emotions are present in his aura.

An Auspex user who observes a target with this power may also try to recognize the telltale flickers that indicate a subject is lying. This applies to outright misstatements as well as carefully worded phrases, intentionally misleading for the purpose of deceit. Intelligence + Empathy + Auspex is drawn versus the subject's Composure + Blood Potency in a contested action. The Auspex user recognizes the lie if the most successes are drawn for him. A separate test has to be made for detecting every lie.

2.4 — AURA SIGNIFIERS

Condition	Color
Afraid	Orange
Aggressive	Purple
Angry	Bright Red
Bitter	Brown
Calm	Light Blue
Compassionate	Pink
Conservative	Lavender
Depressed	Gray
Desirous/Lustful	Deep Red
Distrustful	Light Green
Envious	Dark Green
Excited	Violet
Generous	Rose
Happy	Vermilion
Hateful	Black
Idealistic	Yellow
Innocent	White
Lovestruck	Bright Blue
Obsessed	Bright Green
Sad	Silver
Spiritual	Gold
Suspicious	Dark Blue
Confused	Mottled, shifting colors
Daydreaming	Sharp, flickering colors
Diablerist	Black veins in aura
Dominated/Controlled	Weak, muted aura
Frenzied	Rapidly rippling colors
Psychotic	Hypnotic, swirling colors
Vampire	Aura colors are pale
Shapeshifter	Intensely vibrant aura
Ghost	Spotchy, intermittent aura
Magic Use	Myriad sparkles in aura





A Kindred may only read a subject's aura once per scene (though if successful she may observe it for as long as she concentrates in the manner described), so wise vampires observe their targets for a long time while astute players learn to choose their questions very carefully.

Lastly, applied toward reading the mood of potential combatants, this power also grants its user a bonus to Initiative equal to the number of successes drawn in activating the effect. Doing so requires that the vampire speaks to or is in the proximity of intended combatants and reading them for at least one turn before a fight breaks out. That period of interaction allows the reading vampire to recognize that events are about to turn violent, so he can react with advanced knowledge.

Aura Perception attempts performed on a vampire with whom the user shares a blood tie benefit from a +2 modifier (see p. 228).

A situation may occur when the aura of a being is read that is supernaturally possessing another creature, for instance a ghost or spirit who has taken over a body or a vampire who has possessed someone using a Discipline. In those cases, the aura of the dominant soul who is in control of the being is visible to Aura Perception – a possessed mortal would thus show up as vampiric and even display diablerie stains if the possessor had committed the Amaranth.



OPTIONAL RULE: DECEITFUL CREATURES

In a thoroughly social environment where lies are the common currency, allowing for Aura Perception to conclusively reveal a lie can be deeply problematic. Intricate webs of deceit are revealed by nothing more than a test. Complex machinations can be uncovered by the Prince's goons almost effortlessly. Storytellers may use this optional rule: instead of conclusively showing that the subject is lying, Aura Perception merely shows flickers of deceit in an aura. It becomes impossible to clearly deduce whether the last statement was a lie, or precisely what the character is trying to hide. Considering the often-paranoid nature of the *Danse Macabre*, Aura Perception thus becomes a useful indicator of deceit rather than an infallible lie detector.



••• THE SPIRIT'S TOUCH

The Kindred's powers of perception have progressed to the point that he can pick up psychic impressions from objects simply by handling them for a moment or two. Such impressions can tell the vampire who last held the object, when it was last held and even what was done with it in the past.

These psychic impressions typically come in the form of quick and cryptic images, and as with other Auspex powers, learning how to decipher the information gleaned can be a task all its own. Most impressions (and therefore, most visuals stemming from them) pertain to the last person who handled the object in question, but two circumstances usually preclude such a reading. First, a long-time owner or handler of the object leaves stronger impressions than someone who handled it briefly, if more recently. Second, experiences associated with great emotion – be it hate, passion or fear – often linger in the form of intense psychic impressions on objects. It is these impressions that likely come to the fore over anything more recent or, in all likelihood, far less emotionally significant.

All that is required in order to glean information from an object by using this power is that the vampire turn the item over in his hands (or otherwise handle it) for a few moments, during which he enters a shallow trance. This trance is the gateway through which psychic snapshots arrive, and anything that prematurely disrupts the trance likely prevents any useful information from being received. The character is aware of his surroundings enough that he can react immediately to danger and suffers no penalty to do so, however. Needless to say,



this trance is also an excellent time to contact a member of the Storytelling staff in order to have them ready to answer the necessary questions derived from this power's use.

Like other Auspex powers, The Spirit's Touch may also appear as a task card attached to a prop or item card, indicating that valuable information can be gained from using this power on a particular in-game item.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Wits + Occult + Auspex

Action: Instant

Roleplaying: Light trance state. The character is dimly aware of surroundings, but he cannot move, speak about anything other than visions being received or use other Disciplines without breaking the trance.

Draw Results

Failure: Failure indicates that no impressions come through.

Success: Success yields a sense of the previous handler or owner's identity, as well as a reliable vision or sense of the memory in question. Generally speaking, one solid fact or past event is recalled per success, though this can be adjusted as the Narrator desires.

This power can also be used to glimpse the past of another character. The subject must be touched, which could require a draw if the subject is resisting (see the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook, p. 217). A contested draw of Wits + Occult + Auspex versus the subject's Resolve + Blood Potency is made. The subject's draw is reflexive, and he does not know that past events in his existence are perceived. If the reader gets the most successes, a vision is received of the subject's past, all from the subject's perspective. With no timeframe or criteria for the event witness, the last dramatic, tense or passionate act performed or experienced by the subject is glimpsed. If a specific timeframe or event is focused on, the Auspex user's draw suffers a -1 penalty for each night that has passed since the event. Therefore, witnessing a feeding that the subject performed three nights before imposes a -3 penalty to the contested draw made for the reading vampire.

Draw Results

Failure: The contested draw is lost or tied. No impressions come through.

Success: The most successes are drawn for the reading character. A distorted and blurred glimpse of the event or situation in question passes through his mind. He is left with an intuitive, general understanding of what transpired.

2.5 – SPIRIT TOUCH MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228)
+1	The character has drawn a psychic impression from the object or person before.
—	Recent and intense (a murder weapon used four hours ago, or a murder was committed).
-1	Recent but mild, or old and intense (a dusty family heirloom in a chest).
-2	Emotionally shallow or long forgotten (a leisure suit found at a secondhand clothing store).
-3	Disconnected or spiritually muted (a set of keys found several weeks ago).
-3	Object or person read amid a fight or other stressful circumstance.





•••• TELEPATHY

At this level of advancement of one's extrasensory perceptions, a vampire may project his consciousness into a nearby individual's mind. Doing so creates a mental link whereby the Kindred can communicate silently or even scan the surface of the target's subconscious. The user senses any thought picked up as a voice inside his own mind, and the data can hardly be considered unobtrusive. Nevertheless, this power has the potential to be one of the most potent of the abilities in any vampire's mystical arsenal. With enough practice, a vampiric telepath can uncover nearly any secret from any sentient being around him.

Telepathy is most effective on the mortal mind. When used on ordinary people, the character can maintain a link as long as he keeps concentrating, and as long as the mortal target does not leave his line of sight for more than moment or two. Trying to breach the supernatural mind, however, is a more difficult prospect. A given link is good only for the moment and must be reestablished each time the character wishes to send or dig for thoughts.

Telepathic messages are assumed to use the character's "voice" unless the player specifically chooses (and announces) that her character is communicating in a totally "neutral" tone. A vampire cannot imitate another person's "voice" telepathically. Targets of "neutral" telepathic messages are aware that their mind is being contacted, but they can't automatically identify who is doing it. Note that a vampire reading a target's mind instead of sending messages is assumed to be neutral, since she is merely reading instead of communicating.

Cost: None for a mortal; 1 Willpower for a supernatural subject unless the supernatural subject is willing. To be willing, a supernatural must be aware that Telepathy is about to be established.

Test Pool: Intelligence + Socialize + Auspex - subject's Resolve

Action: Instant.

Roleplaying: Telepathic communication is best simulated through passing notes marked "Telepathy" or sending text messages or other already private means of communication. If necessary, the player may place two fingers to their temple, announce "Telepathic message, <recipient's name>" and then ask the questions they want answered or say what they want the target to receive. Regardless, all other characters present should ignore these communications.

Draw Results

Failure: Failure results in no link being established, and the character cannot try again for the remainder of the scene.

2.6 – TELEPATHY MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228)
—	Attempting to project a single thought/message into the subject's mind.
-1	Trying to probe the subject's surface thoughts for whatever idea is there at the time.
-1	Each derangement the subject possesses.
-2	Digging for one piece of data about which the subject isn't currently thinking.
-3	Searching for a specific memory or event buried deep in the subconscious.



Success: Success allows a character to read a thought from or add a thought to the subject's mind. See the suggested modifiers list that follows for specific applications of the Telepathy power.

Note that the player of any subject who is aware that he is being probed or "ridden" may spend a Willpower point to eject the telepath. Each time the telepath sends a message, the subject instantly becomes aware that the thought didn't originate from his own mind. Each time the telepath digs out a piece of data, Intelligence + Composure is drawn for the subject to detect the intruder.

Suggested Modifiers

••••• TWILIGHT PROJECTION

Commonly seen as the pinnacle of Auspex achievement, this power allows a vampire to project her perceptions out of her physical body. Her senses take on an existence of their own, traveling the material world like a spectre. Such a form, called a "ghost body," is immune to fatigue and physical harm, and it can fly at great speeds. Ghost bodies can even go underground at will — anywhere within and below the limit of the lunar sphere.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Test Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Auspex

Action: Instant

Roleplaying: The player should use the standard hand signal for "On Another Plane of Existence", holding up one finger to signify they exist in the same state as the restless dead.

Draw Results

Failure: The character cannot separate her consciousness from her body, but may try again at her next opportunity.

Success: The Kindred separates her ghost body from her physical body and may venture throughout the world.

Interacting with the physical world or spirit world while using Twilight Projection is impossible. The character has no substance at all, not even spiritual substance — she is merely a projected consciousness. This state can be both a benefit and a drawback, in that the character is unimpeded by obstacles, but is also unable to affect any threats she encounters. It might come to pass that two vampires' ghost bodies or a projected vampire and a genuine ghost encounter one another. They can communicate as if they were in the real world, but no sorts of physical or mystical exchanges can occur between them.

A projected vampire's psyche is invisible to most physical beings. A child or animal might intuitively sense the vampire's presence, or even see him. Another Kindred using Heightened Senses or Aura Perception might spot the projected being by getting the most successes in a Wits + Investigation + Auspex (spotter) versus Resolve + Occult + Auspex (projector) contested draw. Both draws are made reflexively.

A projecting vampire's other Disciplines do not work. Her spirit can certainly observe things, but its temporal connection to the body that serves as the conduit for the Kindred's mystic curse is too tenuous for other mystical powers to manifest.

While her consciousness roams, a vampire's body lies in a torpor-like state on the spot where she left it. As long as her ghost body is active, the character remains ignorant of what's going on around her physical body. If the body is subjected to either torpor or Final Death, the projected psyche is pulled back immediately.

A vampire's body continues to expend Vitae nightly for the purposes of sustaining itself. The player must succeed on a standard Humanity draw for the ghost body to remain awake



during the daytime (see p. 264). The consciousness of a vampire who falls asleep returns to her body and she rises the next night as normal, entirely within the physical world.

A ghost body appears naked and with no possessions. Artifacts that are composed entirely of spirit matter *might* be employed in this form, but no physical objects transfer over. Likewise, any objects found during the wraithly endeavor cannot be manipulated or return with the character when she finally rejoins her physical body.

A projecting vampire can potentially be barred mystically from returning to her body, or she might become lost and incapable of finding her body again. Rumors also speak of other spirits that can enter a vampire's vacant body, stranding the Kindred as a ghost body. Denied her own body (or perhaps another one to possess), each night that passes for the ghost body removes a dot of Blood Potency from its essence. When those dots are reduced to zero, the ghost-Kindred suffers Final Death and fades into oblivion.

Suggested Modifiers

Typically, no modifiers are necessary, but the Storyteller may penalize the activation draw by up to two in the event of a hastened projection, such as when a vampire abandons her body at the moment of Final Death (after all, a ghost body is better than no body at all).

CELERITY

Tales and legends of vampires ascribe to them inhuman speed, the ability to move faster than the eye can see, and even to appear in two places at once. While some of those accounts are exaggerated, Kindred with the Discipline of Celerity can indeed move far faster than any mortal. They appear to blur into nothingness, all others moving as if in slow motion in comparison.

Note that Celerity is obviously superhuman in use. Few Princes smile upon uses of Celerity that leave too many curious mortal witnesses unaccounted for.

Cost: 1 Vitae per turn

Test Pool: Celerity is unlike many other Disciplines in that it is not actively drawn. Rather, it provides a group of benefits, many of which affect other draws.

Celerity cannot be invoked more than once per turn. That is, you may not spend a second Vitae and double the benefits of Celerity in a given turn, though you may spend Vitae across multiple turns to enjoy the benefits over those turns in a continuous burst of speed.

In turns when a character activates her Celerity, her dots in the Discipline are subtracted from *any and all* attacking characters' test pools to affect a character physically, as the vampire moves much more quickly than normal and is harder to hit. This penalty to attackers' pools applies in addition to any armor the Celerity-using character has, as well as to Defense (though note, like armor, Celerity's benefits do not diminish based on how many attacks the character faces). Celerity's protection even applies against firearms. For example, if a character has Celerity 3 and activates the Discipline, a -3 penalty is applied to any assailants' test pools.

Celerity also adds to a character's Initiative during the turn in which it is active. The aforementioned character with Celerity 3 and Initiative 5 would have a basic Initiative modifier of 8 during turns in which his Celerity is active.

Finally, Celerity acts as a modifier to a character's Speed while it is active. His Acting Speed increases by one step for each dot of Celerity he possesses. Should a character choose only to run for his turn, he may add his Celerity rating to his Running Speed, then double that. So if a sample character with Celerity 3 has a normal Running Speed of 12, while Celerity is active his Running Speed becomes 30.

Action: Reflexive. A character may "pre-empt" her own action in a turn to activate Celerity

if an opponent acts before her and the vampire wishes to call upon Celerity before the rival's action is performed. Doing so, the vampire receives Celerity's protection bonus early in the turn. Celerity's Initiative bonus is also added immediately in the turn, potentially moving the vampire's action before her attacker's in the Initiative roster. The vampire also gains the benefit of additional Speed adjustments for the turn. If one Vitae is spent to keep Celerity active into the next turn, all of these benefits carry over. Celerity may not be invoked in a turn in which a character is surprised.

Example: *Favian's Initiative total for a fight is 10. His opponent Joshua's is 13. Favian wants to activate Celerity in order to avoid his opponent's attacks and react more quickly. The Discipline can be activated on 13 in the Initiative roster as a reflexive action. Favian has Celerity 2, so attacks staged against him automatically suffer a -2 penalty throughout the turn, in addition to penalties from her Defense and any armor he's wearing. His Initiative for the turn also increases by two, to 12. That doesn't allow him to act before Joshua, but he is right on his heels.*

If a vampire doesn't activate Celerity until his stage of the Initiative roster in a turn, previous actions taken by others that turn aren't invalidated. (They aren't re-done because the vampire suddenly has a higher standing in the roster.) By activating Celerity "late" in the turn, the vampire forfeits his Initiative bonus that turn. The vampire also gains Celerity's protection only against attacks that come after his place in the Initiative roster for the turn. If Celerity is kept active into the next turn, the vampire's Initiative bonus and full protection applies throughout. Celerity grants its user the ability to invoke the fair-escape clause; only a creature with more Celerity or comparable supernatural speed can prevent such a declaration of fair-escape. If a character with supernatural speed has to be evaded to get to the only available exit, the escapee requires more supernatural speed than the 'blocker' since he needs to go around him. It's not possible to declare fair-escape using Celerity if the only exit is completely blocked: it usually takes two normal-sized characters to fully block a doorway in this fashion, since Celerity would otherwise allow the fleeing character to swiftly wriggle by a slow single blocker. In combat turns, resolve movement of steps as normal and invoke Celerity fair-escape depending on your positioning in respect to any blockers.

DOMINATE

Some Kindred are capable of overwhelming the minds of others with their own force of will, influencing actions and even thoughts. Use of Dominate requires a character to capture a victim's gaze. Therefore, the Discipline can be used on only one subject at a time, and is useless if eye contact is not possible.

Dominate does not grant the ability to make oneself understood or to communicate mentally. Commands must be issued verbally, though certain very simple commands (such as "Get out!" indicated with a pointed finger and a forceful expression) may be conveyed by signs at the Storyteller's discretion. Telepathic communication does not function to issue commands. No matter how powerful a vampire is, she cannot force her victim to obey if she cannot make herself understood — if, for example, the victim doesn't speak the same language, she cannot hear or the orders simply make no sense.

Note that victims of Dominate might realize what's been done to them. That is, they do not automatically sense that they are being controlled, but they might subsequently wonder why they suddenly acted as they did. Wise Kindred, especially those familiar with Dominate, are likely to figure it out very quickly, and few vampires take kindly to being manipulated in such a fashion. Most Kindred who develop Dominate are forceful, controlling personalities, and they can make an unsavory reputation for themselves if they use this Discipline wantonly.





This is especially true if the user is seen as relying on Dominate too heavily, as it indicates a weakness of character — and the Kindred are nothing if not quick to exploit weakness. Routine Dominate users must therefore either develop a very light touch with other vampires, or conversely be in a position of such overwhelming power or authority that other Kindred cannot voice their complaints openly.

Dominate is far more effective against mortals than it is against other Kindred. Most Dominate abilities described here allow the victim to struggle against the effects; that is, a contested draw is made against the Dominator's player. As no mortal has Blood Potency, the vast majority of humans are at a serious disadvantage when dealing with the Discipline.

Dominate is also more effective against those whom the user has subjected to a Vinculum. A regnant may use Dominate powers (with the exception of Conditioning) on a thrall without the need for eye contact. The thrall merely has to hear the regnant's voice.

Other sentient, supernatural beings such as shapechangers who have animal form or who can assume animal form are affected by Dominate rather than by Animalism. Therefore, a vampire can try to ply his will on a werewolf — even a werewolf in wolf form — by using Dominate. Similarly, Animalism is useless against another vampire who assumes wolf or another bestial form. Animalism is of no avail to the vampire in regard to such intelligent beings.

Note that any Dominate power requiring eye contact is made more difficult if the subject is not standing still or otherwise immobilized. If the target moves about, the draw to initiate the relevant power suffers a -1 penalty in addition to all others listed.





LOOK INTO MY EYES...

Since an entire Discipline revolves around it, but it can frequently be a rather gray area in live-action roleplaying, a brief clarification of what constitutes fair eye contact deserves mention. A player must make actual eye contact with another player — not look at his forehead, not stare at one of his cheeks or the bridge of his nose, but actual eye contact — for any use of Dominate to occur. Only at this time can he initiate a Dominate test. If he cannot make eye contact, he cannot use this Discipline. What's more, out-of-character eye contact does not count for this Discipline. Yet Dominate-users can try all manner of dirty tricks *in character* to get other players to look them in the eye, and such targets are expected to be fair and honest about when they make eye contact.



• COMMAND

Once he has established eye contact, the vampire issues a single, one-word command that must be obeyed instantly. The order must be clear and straightforward — freeze, jump, run, stop, fall, cough, blink and so forth. If the command is ambiguous or confusing, the subject might respond slowly or perform the task poorly. Further, commands are always interpreted (within reason) in the subject's best interests. For example, if the victim stands on the edge of a roof and the character commands "Jump!" the victim might jump up and down, rather than leap off the roof. Of course, the victim would probably not leap off the roof even if the character could find a way to order it. Subjects of Command cannot be made to directly harm themselves, so an obviously suicidal order such as "Die!" is ineffective. "Sleep" and the like causes the subject to follow the order only if she does not believe herself to be in any mortal danger. A character seduced by a Kindred might sleep if so instructed, but one in the middle of a combat or interrogation certainly does not. In such dangerous situations, the character is merely senseless for a turn. Creatures that have no natural means of performing the Command, such as Kindred instructed to sleep, would also be unable to act on it.

The vampire may include the command word in a sentence, in order to conceal her use of the power from others. The command itself must be stressed, and the character must make eye contact precisely when that word is spoken. Observers may notice the unusual emphasis, but only the most alert — and those familiar with the Discipline — are likely to realize what has occurred.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate versus Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Draw Results

Failure: The character loses or ties the contested draw and the subject does not obey.

Success: The character wins the contested draw by getting the most successes, and the victim obeys literally and with appreciable self-preservation.

Assuming the commanded action is one that can be carried out for some time, such as "wait" or "sleep," the subject obeys for a number of turns or minutes equal to the successes obtained on the Command draw. In the event of sleep or similar states, a subject is immediately awakened on being moved or attacked, and receives their Defense for the turn, though they may not Dodge.

If this power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228), a +2 bonus applies to the user's draw.





• • MESMERIZE

The source of many legends of the vampire's hypnotic gaze, Mesmerize allows the Kindred to implant a false thought or suggestion into the subject's subconscious mind. The power requires not only eye contact but intense concentration and precise wording, so both the character and the subject must be free from distraction (especially combat). The Kindred may activate the imposed thought or command immediately – “Walk over here and open the door” – or he may establish a stimulus that activates the suggestion at a later date – “When you see a man in a blue suit with a red rose in his lapel, you will spill your drink on him.” The victim must be able to understand the vampire. The Kindred need maintain eye contact only as long as it takes to implant the suggestion or idea.

Mesmerize can deliver truly complex and long-term commands, such as following someone, taking notes on her activities and reporting back on the first of the next month. A subject can have only one suggestion implanted at any given time. Mesmerism suggestions wear off one month after being implanted.

Cost: –

Test Pool: Intelligence + Expression + Dominate versus Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

If this power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228), a +2 bonus applies.

Draw Results

Failure: The character loses or ties the contested draw and the subject does not obey.

Success: The character wins the contested draw by getting the most successes, and the victim obeys to the best of his ability.

This power lasts for as long as it takes the subject to carry out the required task, or until the character is destroyed or enters torpor. Impossible actions such as, “Count every grain of sand on this beach,” or any instructions that are obviously futile in terms of sheer magnitude automatically fail to take root in the subject's mind. Similarly, commands that are impossibly broad such as, “Never disobey me,” will not work. Orders given with Mesmerism have to be sufficiently narrow to be understood as a single set of instructions that can be performed in a normal span of time. Mesmerism also cannot force a subject to directly harm himself, so an order of “Stake yourself next week,” would fail. If, during the course of carrying out the implanted suggestion, the victim realizes he puts himself in danger or acts completely contrary to his normal moral code, a Resolve draw may be made to shake off the compulsion. This is a contested draw. Successes drawn must exceed the number of successes obtained for the dominating character when the individual was first mesmerized.

Failure: The victim must continue to carry out the command as ordered.

Success: The victim escapes the suggestion.

No matter how strong the dominator's will is or how many successes he obtains, he cannot make a subject harm himself directly. Any command to commit obvious suicide is ignored, although commands that are likely to lead to harm – such as, “Walk into that crack house and shoot the man in the red shirt” – are enforceable, subject to the aforementioned Resolve draws.

If a vampire attempts to Mesmerize a subject who is already under the influence of a previously implanted directive, compare the successes drawn in the attempt against the successes gained during the implantation of the first suggestion. If the character obtains more successes than the previous Kindred, the new command may supplant the old one. If he does not, the original command remains active and the new one fails to take root. In case of a tie, the original command takes precedent over the new one. A vampire seeking to supplant an old suggestion with a new one must also acquire successes in excess of those drawn for the subject in his contested Resolve + Blood Potency draw.

• • • THE FORGETFUL MIND

A vampire with this power can literally delve into a subject's mind, stealing or reshaping memories at whim. The power, as with all uses of Dominate, requires eye contact. The Forgetful Mind does not allow for telepathic contact. Instead, the vampire acts much like a hypnotist, asking direct questions to draw answers from the subject, and then describing in detail any new memories she wishes to impose on the victim. Simple alterations, such as blurring brief and recent memories, are easy enough (and very effective for eliminating evidence of feeding or other Masquerade breaches). More comprehensive alterations, up to and including a complete reconstruction of the victim's past and even identity, are possible albeit substantially more difficult.

The victim's subconscious struggles to resist false implanted memories, so the degree to which the vampire details new memories has direct bearing on how fully the subject assimilates them. An incomplete or simplistic false memory shatters much more swiftly and easily than does one with more attention to detail. For instance, "You drove home after work and had a very bad evening" is not likely to hold up. Far more effective would be an account such as, "You left work late, due to a last-minute change ordered by the client. You still managed to get stuck in rush hour for an extra 25 minutes, and you were seriously frustrated by the time you pulled off the freeway. There weren't even any good songs on the radio. Three blocks from home, a cop pulled you over for coasting through a stop sign. At least he only gave you a warning, but it was still just one more hassle. The frozen dinner you microwaved was awful, the TV movie starred some has-been you didn't like, and the news was depressing. You finally turned off the TV in disgust and went to bed."

Truly effective use of The Forgetful Mind, then, requires substantial finesse and patience, as well as the ability to carefully and thoroughly think things through ahead of time. It's fairly simple to sift through a victim's memories and strip out recent events without even knowing precisely what happened, but doing so leaves a gap in the memory that can lead to further problems. Most people aren't comfortable realizing they've lost a few hours or a night's worth of memories, and they're likely to try to find out what happened. Even new memories that the character imposes rarely have the same strength as the originals, and they can be broken or at least contradicted through investigation. For instance, a victim might not recall that she was attacked by a vampire, but she might remember being bitten, chalking it up to an animal attack or a spider. More vivid memories can return as snippets in dreams or be triggered by an unusual olfactory stimulus or spoken phrase. The process might take weeks or even years before the victim can begin to make sense of these flashes, but even the most effective memory manipulation is far from perfect – or truly permanent.

A vampire may also use The Forgetful Mind to sense whether someone has had her memories altered in this fashion, and he can sometimes use his own power to draw forth and restore the original thoughts. No Kindred may use The Forgetful Mind to restore his own lost or altered memories, however.

Cost: –

Test Pool: Wits + Persuasion + Dominate – Resolve

Action: Extended (1-100+ successes, based on the detail and complexity of memory; each draw requires one minute of conversation with the subject)

Draw Results

Failure: The attempt fails.

Success: The character makes headway toward altering a block of memories.

Even a single success pacifies the victim for the length of time it takes to complete the process. Both vampire and subject must be safe and relatively composed when this power is used; it cannot be used to calm someone already in combat, for example.





To restore stolen or false memories, or to sense when memories have been altered, a character must possess Dominate at a level equal to or greater than that of the vampire who first tampered with the subject's mind. If such is the case, the player then makes a contested draw in each stage of the extended action, to be compared against the initial user's attempt, and must score more successes than the predecessor did.

2.7 – FORGETFUL MIND MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228).
-1 to -3	The character's description of the new memories is lacking in detail.

•••• CONDITIONING

Through constant veiled whispers, subtle hints and frequent sustained manipulation, a vampire can slowly render a particular victim substantially more suggestible. Conditioning is normally used only on favored or valuable servants and, over sufficient time, makes the character's efforts to Dominate a subject far easier while making it harder for any other Kindred to do so. Acquiring such complete control over even the weakest mind is no easy task, however, and it normally takes weeks or even months to accomplish.

While they are undeniably loyal, most servants subject to Conditioning lose much of their ability to think for themselves, their own personalities blotted out by the will imposed on them. They follow their orders literally and to the letter, rarely showing any imagination or judgment, or taking the initiative to act on their own. Some Kindred have remarked that, after a sufficiently lengthy period of Conditioning, their servants actually resemble the walking dead more so than their masters.

Mortals, thralls, other vampires and other supernatural creatures are all subject to Conditioning, if it can be performed on them over the required period of time.

Cost: 1 Willpower per draw

Test Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Dominate versus Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested and Extended (6-15+ successes; each draw represents one week of mental manipulation); resistance is reflexive.

Draw Results

Failure: The character loses or ties a contested draw and the attempt fails.

Success: The character wins a contested draw and makes progress in his efforts to suborn the subject's will.

Conditioning does not have any mechanical effect until five more successes are accumulated in excess of the victim's Willpower dots. (If the subject has Willpower 6, Conditioning begins to take effect once 11 successes are achieved.) Once this benchmark has been reached, all future attempts by the character to use any Dominate ability (including further uses of Conditioning) on the victim receive a +1 bonus, and all attempts by other Kindred to Dominate the subject suffer a -1 penalty. For every additional five successes that are accumulated, the bonus and penalty each increase by one, to a maximum of +5 and -5. The Storyteller, not the player, should keep track of the number of successes accumulated.

Once the character's bonus reaches +3, he no longer needs to make eye contact with the Conditioning subject to use any Dominate abilities, though giving orders through artificial or impersonal means (such as by phone) imposes a -5 penalty to that particular attempt.

Subjects of Conditioning are oblivious to the process being inflicted upon them unless they also possess the power. The Storyteller *may* allow a victim or someone close to him a Wits + Occult draw to recognize that something is wrong. If the draw fails, the process may continue unaffected. If the draw succeeds, an effort may be made to interrupt the process. If the Conditioning vampire is particularly careful about how suggestions and messages are conveyed, the Wits + Occult draw might suffer a -1 penalty. Interrupting the process could mean fleeing the vampire or restraining the subject from meeting the vampire before all the required successes are accumulated.

It is possible, albeit extremely difficult, to break a subject's Conditioning after the required successes are gathered. If the victim is completely isolated from her master for a number of weeks equal to twice the master's current Conditioning-granted bonus, the bonus drops by one. For example, a subject has been Conditioned for a long time, and her master has achieved a bonus of +4 to Dominate her. If she is kept completely isolated from her master for eight weeks, the bonus drops to +3. Six more weeks, and it drops to +2, and so forth. The subject's own personality and creativity slowly reawakens during this period, though she still experiences periods of listlessness, depression and desperation. For at least the first few weeks, the subject most likely makes every attempt to return to her master. Until the subject is completely free, it is horrifyingly easy for the vampire to reassert his dominance, as he likely has at least some bonus to Dominate the individual for a long while. The Storyteller may adjust these times to reflect the regularity of chapters.

If the subject of Conditioning is also the thrall of the vampire, all successes on a Conditioning draw are doubled. So, if a vampire seeks to Condition his own ghoul, and he gets three successes to her two in one draw to program the subject, he actually accumulates six successes in that Conditioning session.

If this power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228), a +2 bonus applies.

Turning minor extras into zombie-like minions is one thing, but many players will become extremely disheartened if this power is used on their characters, finding this blank state a tedious chore to roleplay. Therefore, with the consent of their Storyteller, the Dominate user may choose not to turn players' characters and important Narrator characters into zombie-like automatons; rather, they become "Manchurian candidates," who think and act normally in every way - unless they are directly carrying out an order issued by their master. At those times, they do not become emotionless automatons, but instead gain some measure of the master's personality, quirks or mannerisms. For each bonus point the master has accumulated on Dominate attempts, the victim picks up one of her master's notable quirks or habits, which is then actively roleplayed whenever the master issue a direct order to the victim. Prominent behavioral habits to mirror include accents, vocabulary, favorite expressions, distinctive laughs, common gestures, body posture, nervous habits (biting one's nails), etc. Long-term servants or those carrying out lengthy commands may even unconsciously start to dress or act like the character. Indeed, heavily Conditioned targets appear almost like eerie reflections of their master when carrying out applicable commands, especially to anyone familiar with the controlling Kindred. If a master does not have many distinctive habits, the Storyteller may instead allow a victim to heighten the portrayal of one or two existing ones by degrees for each bonus point. Thus, if the only really notable quirk a Kindred has is biting his nails, at a +1 bonus the target might only absently chew on them during applicable scenes, but if the master Conditions his target up to a +4 bonus, the target might bite her nails savagely right down to the quick, even if the master does not take that behavior so far himself.

It is important to note that the victim is not any more aware of these habits than she would be of any other Conditioning effects, and will typically dismiss them as momentary fancies



or accidents unless more compelling evidence is provided (i.e., the kind of proof normally needed to help a target recognize and shake Conditioning). Unless they have been Conditioned to a truly extensive degree, players who attempt to grotesquely overplay these quirks in order to send up a distress signal to their fellow coterie members or other Kindred should be disciplined. After all, ultimately they should be grateful this option was used in the first place and they got to roleplay their character rather than a bland, emotionless zombie. The Dominate user must implant specific triggers in the Conditioned mind to indicate how the subject recognizes commands that must be obeyed. These usually include a safeguard that the subject will always obey orders if his master appears to be in severe distress or in any immediate danger. Extended time spent rummaging in the subject's mind with Telepathy and Forgetful Mind may very well unearth those triggers, revealing the extent of the manipulation.

Given the long-term requirements for this power, it is recommended that the target, the Storyteller and the Dominate user take the time involved to work together to establish what quirks are notable enough to mirror, and perhaps suggestions on how to mimic them correctly. Note that Conditioning should be no less effective in game terms if this option is used; only the way its effect is roleplayed really changes.

• • • • • POSSESSION

By this point, the Kindred need not rely on spoken commands and limited understanding. With the mere locking of the victim's gaze, the vampire can utterly supplant the subject's own psyche with her own, possessing the subject like a malevolent spirit.

Once the Kindred has crushed the victim's will, she literally takes over the body, inhabiting it and controlling it as easily as she does her own. The mortal enters something of a fugue state while possessed, and he is aware of events only in a dreamlike, distorted fashion. The Kindred suffers the opposite effect. Her mind now resides within the victim, and her own body falls into a torpor-like state, becoming indistinguishable from a true corpse. The vampire may choose to break the possession and reflexively return to her body at any time, over any distance, but until and unless she does so, her true physical form is utterly helpless.

Kindred cannot possess other Kindred in this fashion, regardless of force of will or differences in Blood Potency. Mortals alone are subject to possession, although whispers of possessed Lupines and mages sometimes circulate. If such supernatural beings were to be possessed, their powers would not be at the vampire's disposal since they are completely alien to her.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Test Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate versus Resolve

Action: Contested and Extended; resistance is reflexive

Roleplaying: A description tag, costume change or other arrangement should be made to indicate the body switch. Meanwhile, the character's helpless body should be designated with an item or description card for anyone who might stumble across it.

Draw Results

The vampire locks eyes with the victim and begins the process of utterly stripping away the subject's Willpower. The vampire must obtain a number of successes in excess of the victim's Willpower. The victim is held, trapped in this psychic struggle, as long as the vampire's player continues to win each contested draw. Each draw occupies a turn's time.

Failure: In any turn in which the vampire loses or ties a contested draw, the victim may attempt to escape. If the vampire succeeds in restarting the process during the same scene, the contest picks up from where it left off.

Success: The character wins a contested draw and accumulates successes in her attempt to exert ultimate control over her subject.



Once the character has exceeded the victim's Willpower in number of successes, she may take control of his body. The character may take any actions she chooses, travel as far from her own body as she wishes, and is unharmed by daylight while possessing the subject, but she must still force herself to stay awake during the day (see Humanity on p. 264). The vampire may choose to end the possession and return to her body at any time, regardless of distance. This occurs automatically if the vampire fails to remain awake. Any injuries inflicted on the subject also affect the vampire's body although Kindred can't be incapacitated through damage to a body they are possessing.. If the subject dies while the vampire is still present, the Kindred falls into torpor immediately. (Some believe the soul attempts to find its way back to its own body during this time.) If the Kindred's physical form is destroyed, she remains trapped in the mortal body until she finally fails to remain awake, at which point her psyche is lost to oblivion and is unrecoverable. Any attempt to "re-Embrace" a vampire's spirit trapped in a host body results only in Final Death.

When finally freed of vampiric possession, some mortals recover almost immediately, while others lie comatose or suffer trauma-induced psychoses for days or even weeks before recovering.

Because a vampire experiences everything her physical body does – tasting food, soaking up the sun – many become addicted to the sensations and spend more time possessing mortals than inhabiting their own bodies. It is possible, though uncommon, for a vampire to neglect her physical body long enough for it to starve into torpor while she's "out." If a vampire's dormant body slips or is forced into torpor, the vampire's spirit automatically returns to its body. No Disciplines or Sorcery – whether the host's or Possessor's – can be used in Possession; the vampire takes over the host body completely, only retaining her own mental Attributes and mental Merits in addition to her Mental and Social Skills. The host body retains all other traits as well as any Merits that the Possessor also has himself, i.e. if the Dominate user is Ambidextrous, then a possessed Ambidextrous ghoul will retain that Merit while Possessed.

MAJESTY

One of the most legendary powers of the undead is the ability to attract, sway and control the emotions of others, especially those of mortals. Majesty is perhaps the most versatile of Disciplines, for its potential uses and applications are both varied and multitudinous. The more savvy the practitioner is, the more use he can get out of each of the Discipline's powers. Unlike some other Disciplines, Majesty can be used on entire crowds of targets simultaneously, making it even more potent – in the right hands. The only requirement for use of most Majesty powers is that any potential targets see the character. Eye contact is not required, nor is the ability to hear the character (though it certainly doesn't hurt).

The downside to Majesty, such as is it is, is that its subjects retain their free will. Unlike victims of Dominate, who follow the commands of the Kindred nearly mindlessly, those acting under Majesty are simply emotionally predisposed to do whatever the power (or its user) suggests. While retention of personality makes victims more useful in the long run, it also means they require more care in handling than targets of Dominate. An abused victim of Majesty certainly subverts or represses what his emotions suggest in order to behave in the most appropriate manner. Meanwhile, subjects treated well might be persuaded to act against even their own interests.

Any mortal can resist Majesty for one turn if a Willpower point is spent and a successful Composure draw is made (though the Willpower point does not add the +3 bonus to the draw). This draw is reflexive. If the draw fails, the Willpower point is lost and the target remains under the effects of the power(s). If the draw is successful, the mortal probably spends his turn of "freedom" fleeing the vampire's proximity, lest he continue to be affected.





Refusing to pay attention to the vampire, rather than fleeing, can allow a mortal to resist the spell for a turn, but the power resumes effect if the mortal remains in the Kindred's vicinity. Vampires resist Majesty in much the same way (by spending a Willpower point), but Blood Potency is added to Composure draws made for them. In addition, vampires of higher Blood Potency than the character invoking Majesty are able to resist his power for the entire scene with the expenditure of one Willpower point and a successful Composure + Blood Potency draw.

Fortunately, by and large the Kindred who choose to develop their Majesty abilities are those who recognize that one achieves more with honey than with vinegar. Those who swear by Majesty often find Dominate, seen as "the flip side of Majesty," to be both boorish and crass, and they would swear to calling upon it only in times of dire need.

• **AWE**

This power makes the user seem exponentially more charismatic and magnetic than he normally is. The force of his personality issues forth in waves, drawing people to him like moths to a flame. Perhaps the greatest use for Awe is its ability to facilitate public speaking or debate. Whatever the vampire says, people are likely to lend serious credence to his position and views, and even the staunchest opponents gladly hear him out. Awe can often turn the tide in a tense negotiation, tipping the scales from "potentially" to "definitely."

As with other Majesty powers, Awe ceases to be useful when more pressing matters come to the fore. Personal safety always takes precedence, and any serious commotion pulls even the most rapt listener from his reverie of attention. Those subjected to the character's stature likely remember how good they felt around him, and tailor future reactions accordingly.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Presence + Expression + Majesty

Action: Instant

Roleplaying: To properly indicate this power's use, the player should announce "Awe" at the beginning of a speech or scene where she intends to use this power, and quickly count the number of targets. Any nearby onlooker is a potential target.

Targets of Awe should pay attention to the user, listen closely to what he says and laugh at his jokes for the duration of the conversation in which Awe was successfully used against them. For the rest of the night, they should pay some special attention to the Kindred but need not fawn over him.

Draw Results

Failure: The character's supernatural charisma fails to take hold. The Kindred may not target these subjects with Awe again until the next scene.

Success: The character succeeds in dazzling his intended audience with his overwhelming charisma. For the rest of the night, any social tests he engages in with the Awed subject gain a bonus equal to the number of successes drawn to activate the power. This bonus applies only to mundane social tests — say to intimidate, seduce or persuade the target. Disciplines and other supernatural abilities that use Social traits in their test pools gain no benefit from Awe. Once successfully Awed, a target is immune to further attempts from the same Kindred for the rest of the evening.

The user must Awe whoever is present (see the modifiers table, below). He cannot single out an individual subject in a crowd, but must simply "turn on the charm" for all. If a crowd of observers includes persons who are immune to the Kindred's use of Awe, these people still count toward the size of the crowd (for purposes of the modifiers). The power simply has no effect on them.



2.8 – AWE MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
—	Character attempts to Awe one person
-1	Character attempts to Awe two people
-2	Character attempts to Awe six people
-3	Character attempts to Awe 20 people
-4	Character attempts to Awe a vast number of people in the vampire's immediate vicinity (an auditorium, a mob)

• • REVELATION

The allure and reassurance of a Kindred with this power is enough to make others forgo caution and share their innermost feelings and secrets. A few complimentary or compassionate words or a heartfelt look from the vampire can break down a person's prudence and fear, inspiring a desire to share deep feelings or dark secrets in an upwelling of affection or release. This power can only be used in fairly intimate situations. A target could not be made to confess in front of an entire room full of people, but would very easily spill his guts to a small group in a secluded corner booth.

A target must be engaged in some kind of voluntary social contact with the vampire for this Discipline to be effective. While it might cause an evasive target to speak more plainly about a certain subject, it cannot wring a confession out of a target who's deliberately avoiding conversation or staying silent. Of course, the vampire may still use her natural talents or other Disciplines to try to draw a target into conversation so she can invoke this power, but that's another matter entirely.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Majesty versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

Draw Results

Failure: The character loses or ties the contested draw. He may try again later.

Success: The vampire wins the contested draw and the subject bares his soul. One major fact is revealed per success gained.

2.9 – REVELATION MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+3	The subject is a thrall to the Kindred, under a full Vinculum to her.
+3	The subject is already under the influence of Entrancement.
+2	The subject is already under the influence of Awe.
+2	The subject is under the second stage of a partial Vinculum to the Kindred.
+2	Power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228)
+1	The subject is affected by the first stage of a partial Vinculum to the Kindred.
-1	The subject is an obvious enemy.
-2	The Revelation user has inflicted violence upon the subject in the scene.





This power may only be used on a target once per scene per Revelation user.

While a vampire can gain all manner of information he seeks by use of this power, he must be prepared for a litany of confessions from a particularly guilty or tormented subject. A longtime criminal might have many sins to confess, for example, only one of which is important to the character using Revelation. Should the confession go on for more than a single secret, and the subject turns to particularly deep, dark or dangerous secrets, a Willpower point may be spent and a Composure draw made for the subject to break the spell for a turn (see p. 228).

The subject remembers what he confessed after the effects of the power have passed. He undoubtedly can't explain his lack of discretion, and depending on what he said he might do anything in his power to compensate for his "lapse in judgment."

• • • ENTRANCEMENT

This power is perhaps the closest thing that Majesty gets to serious command over the thoughts of another. Its power warps the emotional state of the subject, making him a willing servant of the vampire. Subjects retain their sense of identity and free will, believing that every instinct to serve and admire comes of their own volition. When the duration of an Entrancement ends, however, confusion and displacement arise, often leading to mixed feelings. Similar to falling out of love, re-entrancing a former "lover" is difficult at best.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Majesty versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Draw Results

Failure: The character loses or ties the contested draw. The Entrancement fails and the subject reacts to the vampire normally.

Success: The character wins the contested draw by getting the most successes, and brings a mortal under his sway for the rest of the month. Kindred and other supernatural creatures fall under his sway for a scene — at least long enough to complete a single task or set of tasks. A character may be entranced by multiple people at the same time; if conflicts occur, she will follow the lead of the character with the most successes on the Entrancement draw, or in the case of a tie, the character with the higher Blood Potency.

When a period of effect wears off, the subject remembers everything but does not necessarily bear the vampire any ill will. After all, he has no idea that something unnatural has taken place. He merely comes to the conclusion that he no longer feels the way he once did for the character (even if "once" was an hour ago). At this time, he likely returns to going about his own life, content with never seeing the vampire again. Typically, a vampire who wishes to retain the attention of an affected subject calls upon more reliable (or stringent) methods of indenturing, such as the Vinculum. Subjects will defend the character who entranced them and even perform mildly dangerous tasks if the situation appears sufficiently dire to threaten the Entrancement user, but they will defend themselves and flee if it appears that they are about to die or be incapacitated themselves.

2.10 – ENTRANCEMENT MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228)
-3	The Kindred has already successfully Entranced the subject within a week.



•••• SUMMONING

This rather potent power allows the vampire to call any individual he knows personally to his side. In short, the vampire reaches out with the force of his personality and makes a colleague, acquaintance, rival or outright enemy *know* without doubt that he wishes that person to attend him at once. There is no limit on the distance or range of this power, but summoning someone halfway around the world takes time, even under the best of circumstances. The subject of Summoning takes the most direct possible route to the vampire's location and intuitively knows when the vampire moves, though doesn't necessarily know the final destination until he gets there (it's a sort of direction sense).

The summoned individual knows to whose presence he is traveling, and he may pause to make necessary arrangements before departure. In other words, the compulsion is strong and the subject doesn't dilly-dally, but he is hardly a single-minded drone in his desire to reach the vampire. The subject does, however, use any resources at his disposal to see that he arrives both safely and punctually.

The call of a summoning fades with the first rays of the sun at dawn. Therefore, if a subject is truly far away or a sufficiently fast means of transportation is not available to him, he can deny the compulsion to attend the summoner at dawn. Indeed, he could return home and go about his business. If the subject is predisposed toward the summoner, however, he may continue the quest of his own accord. During the day, he is under his own power to find the vampire and loses his "direction sense." Another vampire is not compelled to seek the summoner to the very light of day, causing his Final Death. The seeker finds shelter beforehand. Unless the subject already knows where and how to reach the summoning vampire, the call must be repeated each night until the subject arrives. If, as in the preceding case with the resistant subject, the distance is too far or available transportation is too slow, the subject might never arrive. He falls into a cycle of being drawn to and fleeing from the summoner. If the subject has to travel through apparently harmful environments or into very dangerous territory to reach the summoner, the summoning fades. An example would be a hunted





diablerist being summoned into a known gathering place of Kindred, or a mortal enemy of the Lancea Sanctum being summoned to a visible group of sanctified Inquisitors.

If a Willpower point is spent and a Composure + Blood Potency draw is made for a subject to resist this power, as explained on p. 176, any success defies a summons for a whole night, not just a turn or a scene.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Majesty versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Instant

Draw Results

Failure: The character loses or ties the contested draw. The subject remains unaware of the Summoning, and nothing happens.

Success: The character wins the contested draw by getting the most successes. Complete success brings the subject as quickly as possible within the space of one night, without questioning the motivations or origins of the summons.

••••• SOVEREIGNTY

One of the most potent of all Kindred abilities, Sovereignty augments the power of a vampire's personal deportment to incredible levels. The newly empowered mien inspires devotion, respect and fear in those who stand in the vampire's proximity. The weak-willed (and cunning) supplicate themselves for the chance to serve, and the stout of heart find themselves at a loss to do anything but acquiesce. Sovereignty's power influences decisions, breaks hearts, cripples confidence and shakes the ambitious to the foundations of their determination.

The vibe the vampire gives off makes others quick to surrender, and the thought of risking his displeasure quails even the heartiest souls. Raising one's voice to a sovereign Kindred seems unthinkable; aggressing upon him seems impossible. This power is a terrifying thing to behold, and a difficult thing to rein in once it's let loose. Elders are wise not to abuse it or use it too flippantly, as its power is most effective when used both sparingly and exactly. Despite its mighty prowess, Sovereignty is a finely honed tool — a scalpel, rather than a sword.

Cost: 1 Willpower per scene

Test Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Majesty versus Composure + Blood Potency.

Action: Instant to activate; contested, and reflexive

Roleplaying: The user must employ the standard hand gesture for "Imposing Presence" when this power is fully active. Those under the sway of Sovereignty should roleplay awe and deference toward the user. Even hated rivals show respect and cannot so much as speak ill of the vampire unless they resist as outlined.

Sovereignty is considered "always active" during scenes in which it is invoked, though it may be turned off at the Kindred's discretion. Activating the power requires an instant action. Its capacity is tested whenever somebody challenges the Majesty user. When the power is at its "normal" level, people can speak freely around the vampire as long as they don't try to openly defy or criticize him, though their demeanor is marked by an obvious obeisance to the Kindred invoking Sovereignty. Anyone wishing to attack the vampire, however, whether physically, mystically or socially, calls the user's Sovereignty into question. A reflexive and contested draw is made for presiding vampire and would-be attacker.

Note also that, unlike other uses of Majesty, Sovereignty may not be overcome with the expenditure of a Willpower point and success on a Composure + Blood Potency draw (see p. 176). The power is defensive and overwhelming, and it must be countered by a determined foe as described here.



Draw Results

Failure: The sovereign character loses the contested draw in which the attackers gets more successes than her; attacks, Discipline uses or criticisms proceed without penalty, but the attacker feels the weight of his action in every movement.

Success: The sovereign character wins or ties the contested draw, and the assault cannot be carried out this for as long as the would-be attacker is in her presence. A subsequent attempt calls for another contested draw.

Note that a contested draw must be made every time someone wishes to make a new attack, use a Discipline or criticize the vampire who uses Sovereignty.

The power applies against physical attacks as well as intended uses of Disciplines that could harm or affect the reigning vampire negatively. Intentions to speak an ill word about or at the sovereign vampire invoke the same contested draw. If the effort fails, the would-be critic cannot bring himself to say what he wishes to.

If the presiding vampire responds to aggression by physically attacking back, he breaks his Sovereignty with respect to that subject alone. Use of a Discipline in a damaging or negative way against a would-be aggressor also breaks the spell against that individual alone. All other would-be combatants, Discipline users or naysayers must continue to overcome the reigning vampire's power if they wish to turn aggressor. If the Sovereign vampire launches an attack with the obvious intent to kill (such as wielding large weapons, using claws or deadly magic, or taking a paralyzed victim away with the apparent intent to destroy), close allies of the victim may come to his aid defensively, but not in a manner that could severely injure, incapacitate or kill the Sovereignty user.

The sovereign vampire does not break his spell over a subject by disparaging him publicly.

2.11 – SOVEREIGNTY MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+3	The challenger is a thrall to the sovereign Kindred, under a full Vinculum to her.
+2	Power affects a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228).
+2	The challenger is under the second stage of a partial Vinculum to the sovereign Kindred.
+1	The challenger is affected by the first stage of a partial Vinculum to the sovereign Kindred.
—	The challenger seeks to attack the sovereign Kindred.

NIGHTMARE

There's no question that one of the foremost powers of legendary vampires is the ability to strike fear in the hearts of mortal men. Also born of mortal existence, other now-supernatural beings are susceptible. Fear is a fact of existence that transcends any origins.

Vampires who delve into the dark side of their being — often exploring the Beast or what it means to be monstrous — invest in the Discipline of Nightmare. They learn to bare that which is terrifying or unholy about their spirits, manifesting their inhumanity in their appearance or letting unfortunate onlookers peer deep into the creatures' depraved souls. The results can take a jaded individual aback or subject an unsuspecting victim to a fatal physiological reaction (to literally be frightened to death).

Practitioners of Nightmare explore this route to power for different reasons. One vampire might exult in his inhuman nature and enjoy lordling over lessers. The Discipline offers im-





mediate gratification, and these Kindred display what is hideous about themselves to everyone, hiding it only insofar as they must in order to observe the secrecy of the Traditions. Other undead recognize the wisdom or even benevolence that fear affords. What better way to deal with a problem or avoid a confrontation than by frightening away an opponent? How better to protect someone from harm than by scaring her off? And if one seeks solitude, striking fear is certainly more effective than issuing threats, trying to reason with would-be intruders or orchestrating ever more elaborate means by which to hide.

Note: All uses of Nightmare gain a +2 bonus if the individual power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228). Naturally, this bonus does not apply to the subject's resistance.

• **MONSTROUS COUNTEenance**

The true face of a vampire is a frightening thing, indeed — made all the more terrifying by the assistance of this entirely unsubtle Nightmare power. When a Kindred activates Monstrous Countenance, he does so in conjunction with a ferocious baring of fangs and a feral, malevolent hiss. This horrid display may be enough to shake the confidence of any onlooker, but the supernatural revelation of the vampire's Beast terrifies beyond the flesh, into the soul. The result is an experience most terrible, one that can make stalwart foes cower at the vampire's feet.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's draw.)

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

An activation draw is made for the vampire, and a reflexive and contested draw is made for the subject.

Even if witnessed by several onlookers, Monstrous Countenance can only affect a single target (of the user's choice). All others see a fearsome, but mundane display. The onlooker must see the vampire in person; the character's appearance is frightening on a television or video camera, but no more so than any special effect.

Roleplaying: Bared teeth, loud hiss.

Subjects of Monstrous Countenance should roleplay shock and terror. They need not scream and shout if that is wholly out of character, however. A hurried, nervous retreat can be as effective as screaming bloody murder.

Draw Results

Failure: The subject's successes exceed or tie those drawn for the vampire. The subject is a bit shaken, but otherwise unaffected.

Success: Successes drawn for the vampire exceed those drawn for the subject. The victim flees the vampire's presence entirely, using all available means at his disposal to do so. He continues fleeing for one turn per success drawn and will not come within sight of the vampire for the remainder of the scene.

• • **DREAD**

While an outward, physical manifestation can strike fear in onlookers, it is an overt, blunt means by which to prey upon the weak. More insidious and subtle is a general sense of unease, rising panic and paranoia that a vampire can engender with this power.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Nightmare versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's draw.)

Action: Contested

Roleplaying: Victims must roleplay a rising sense of anxiety coupled with fear and a slight touch of paranoia.



Gloom, disquiet and uncertainty creeps into the hearts of people around the vampire. Anyone within three steps per Willpower dot that the vampire possesses can be affected. One contested draw may be made reflexively to represent a crowd of prospective victims – probably mortals – based on the highest Composure among them. Players' characters and important Narrator characters should always test to resist this power individually.

Draw Results

Failure: Successes drawn for the subject exceed or tie those drawn for the vampire. The subject feels no ill effects.

Success: The most successes are drawn for the vampire using Dread. See the following for results.

The atmosphere of fear persists either as long as the vampire concentrates on it or until the end of the scene, whichever comes first. If the vampire does anything else drastic such as attacking someone, performing a dodge maneuver or activating another Discipline, the effects of Dread cease. Record the number of successes drawn for the vampire when this power is activated, and compare it to any drawn for newcomers to the power's area of effect.

Those who lose the contested draw suffer a -2 penalty on all actions out of an inexplicable rising panic. Nor can they spend Willpower to gain the standard +3 bonus on any draws, or +2 to any Resistance traits. (Willpower can be spent to activate capabilities or powers that require it, however.)

Dread cannot be used selectively on some people surrounding the user, and not on others. Its effects are all or nothing. Nor can it be used more than once on any subject in a single scene. The vampire must be visible and within line of sight to affect others with Dread.

• • • **EYE OF THE BEAST**

The terrifying nature of the Beast is a horrific reminder of the fundamental predator-prey dichotomy of existence. Shown the Beast, another being is reduced to the most primal of instincts, forgoing all reason and cunning in the face of primeval horror. The vampire makes eye contact with a subject and reveals the inner core of the Kindred's being. The Beast looks hungrily upon the subject and invokes a reaction appropriate to that person's nature. Direct eye contact is required between vampire and target; looking at someone over a satellite transmission does not apply.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Presence + Empathy + Nightmare versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's draw.)

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Roleplaying: Eye contact

Draw Results

Failure: Successes drawn for the subject exceed or tie those drawn for the vampire. The onlooker is taken aback, but no effect is triggered.

Success: The most successes are drawn for the vampire against a mortal. The victim is paralyzed with fear, incapable of moving or taking any action. If the victim is attacked or targeted with offensive Disciplines, his Defense applies that turn and he may act normally in the next turn and thereafter, but he must dedicate all his efforts to escaping the vampire's proximity. Therefore, he doesn't take time to attack anyone unless doing so is necessary to escaping. Unmolested, a mortal remains paralyzed as long as the vampire remains in his presence. If the spell is broken with an attack, the victim spends the remainder of the scene trying to flee the creature.

Alternatively, the most successes are drawn for the character against another vampire or another supernatural being that is capable of frenzy. The victim must flee the vampire for the remainder of the scene as per the frenzy rules (see p. 253). Another vampire is subject to



Rötschreck, for example. In this case, if successes drawn for the subject tie those drawn for the character, the subject simply frenzies for the remainder of the turn without fleeing, attacking anyone near him. That might include the user of Eye of the Beast. Fleeing vampires are capable of using mundane and supernatural means of defense, such as Obfuscate or Sovereignty.

•••• SHATTER THE MIND

No description can be given to this level of Nightmare mastery other than inhumane brutality. And yet, the power is horribly insidious for affecting only a victim's mind, leaving the body untouched. The vampire confronts a subject with her greatest fear, driving her mad.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Test Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Nightmare versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's draw.)

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Roleplaying: Target must roleplay suffering intense personal fears, as well as the behavior required by a new or more severe derangement.

Draw Results

Failure: Successes drawn for the subject exceed or tie those drawn for the vampire. There is no effect.

Success: The most successes are drawn for the user of the power. The victim loses her next action (aside from reflexive actions) as she reels from the vision with which she is confronted. Her Defense still applies, but she cannot perform a dodge maneuver. All other actions for the remainder of the scene incur a -1 penalty, and she loses one Willpower point. The victim is subject to a mild derangement (see the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook, p. 110) for a number of weeks equal to the successes drawn for the Discipline user. If the victim already has a mild derangement, the Storyteller can upgrade it to a severe one for the power's duration.

The Storyteller decides what the derangement is, based on the subject's worst fear (related in private). A subject afraid of losing control might manifest Hysteria, for example, while a Kindred who fears being outmaneuvered by his enemies might display Paranoia. Note that the user does not necessarily know what the subject's worst fear actually is, unless the victim's speech or behavior somehow gives it away.

By use of this power, a vampire actually inflicts no physical harm upon the subject. He simply awakens her thoughts to the most horrific thing that she can imagine befalling her, and her subconscious mind proceeds from there. The victim imagines that a doomed fate befalls her, regardless of how implausible or nonsensical it might be under the circumstances – drowning while walking down a city street, for example. And yet, she imagines and is convinced that the situation occurs all the same.

Once used successfully on a victim, Shatter the Mind cannot be applied against her again for the rest of the night by anyone.

••••• MORTAL FEAR

At this point, the vampire is able to inspire fear as a weapon unto itself. A victim is so thoroughly and intensely frightened by the vampire that he suffers physical damage. He ages prematurely, his hair turns white and his heart stops temporarily – or permanently. Even other vampires can be affected. They're reminded of what fear meant back during their breathing days, no matter how long ago those days might have been. The subject must be able to see the vampire employing this power for it to take effect.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Test Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare – Composure (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's draw.)



Action: Instant

Roleplaying: Targets should roleplay fear-induced pain, and possibly adopt new makeup or description cards to indicate the change in their appearance as their hair turns white, premature wrinkles appear, et cetera.

Draw Results

Failure: No successes are achieved. While the subject is taken aback, he suffers no pain or other effects.

Success: Each success inflicts a point of lethal damage on a living being, whether mortal or supernatural in nature, including ghouls. Each success costs another vampire a Willpower point.

The power can be used on only one target at a time. A crowd of onlookers may see the activating vampire, but he wracks the body and soul of only one of those people. Other onlookers see nothing particularly frightening. Once used successfully on a victim, Mortal Fear cannot be applied against him again in that scene by any vampire.

OBFUSCATE

Night-dwellers, predators by nature and keepers of the Masquerade, vampires are inherently (and necessarily) creatures of secrecy and stealth. From hiding minute objects to the ability to appear as someone else to the power to fade from sight entirely, the Discipline of Obfuscate grants the Kindred uncanny powers of concealment, stealth and deception.

Obfuscate clouds the mind in practice. For example, a character hiding an object by using this Discipline doesn't actually make the object disappear, nor does someone using the Discipline to hide himself truly vanish. Rather, the mind sees "around" the Obfuscated object, refusing to acknowledge it, even if that requires a bit of filling in mental blanks. To continue the example, if a character Obfuscated a large sheet of plywood and tried to hide behind it herself, those looking at the plywood would, indeed, see the character lurking behind it but not see the plywood itself.

The shroud of Obfuscate is very difficult to penetrate. Few Kindred or other supernatural creatures can see through it, and only under the rarest of circumstances do mortals have any hope. Because they operate on a less conscious and mostly instinctual level, however, animals often perceive a vampire's presence — and react with appropriate fear or hostility — even if they cannot detect him with their normal senses. Similarly, children, the mentally ill and others who see the world in ways not quite normal might pierce the deception at the Storyteller's discretion. They do not detect the precise location and nature of the vampire but they feel anxious and uncomfortable, like an animal scenting an approaching predator.

Some Kindred with *Auspex* are able to see through Obfuscate, or at least sense the presence of a supernatural deception. Refer to the "Clash of Wills" sidebar on p. 159 for details how you should establish Obfuscate around other vampires and how others can pierce it.

It's important to note that Obfuscate affects the viewer's mind, rather than making any true physical change to the vampire or other items or individuals affected. Therefore, the Discipline is not effective at cloaking a character from mechanical devices. Photographs, video cameras and the like record the normal blurred image that all vampires leave in such media, not the assumed appearance. Obfuscate *does* affect any individual currently using the recording device, however, so someone videotaping an Obfuscated vampire sees the illusion when looking through the lens, discovering the truth only later when he reviews the tape itself.

Unless stated otherwise, Obfuscate powers require very little concentration to maintain once invoked, and they last for the duration of a scene. Obfuscate powers cannot be layered, as each individual power only has a single effect on a character or object. Even if somebody extends



their Cloak to an individual who has already Cloaked himself, the second layer of invisibility adds no additional successes and doesn't need to be pierced in addition to the first Cloak.

• TOUCH OF SHADOW

This first power of Obfuscate allows the vampire to conceal small items, either in her grasp or on her person. If she is skilled enough, even a thorough search fails to turn up a hidden object.

A prominent card marked "Touch of Shadow X" should be attached to any item hidden with this Discipline, where the X is the number of successes obtained on the test to hide the item. Other information such as the user's total dots of Obfuscate or test pool may be included at the Storyteller's discretion, to facilitate easy testing later on. Multiple uses of this Discipline do not add to the number of successes required. Only the most recent use of the Discipline applies.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Wits + Larceny + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

Draw Results

Failure: The attempt fails.

Success: The character can hide a single object from sight, unless someone is actively searching for that specific item. Indeed, "specific" is very literal here. A character looking for "an Obfuscated book" does not find it, though she does if she's looking for "the Ordo Dracul Kogaion's handwritten and leather-bound copy of 17th-century rituals" and has seen it before.

The player must declare which specific item is concealed and the power must be invoked separately for each item.

If the draw succeeds, the item goes undetected. Perhaps a careful search such as a thorough pat-down or close examination reveals it, along with a Wits + Composure draw, successes from which must exceed those drawn for the activation of the power. As with all Obfuscate abilities, a character with *Auspex* might be able to see through Touch of Shadow, though he would still have to find the object normally if it were inside a pocket or otherwise physically concealed from view as well.

Once the character does anything to draw attention to the object — such as deliberately showing it to someone or using it to attack or threaten another character — Touch of Shadow immediately ends. If someone successfully detects the item, he can point it out to others. A Wits + Composure draw is made for each such person, and successes achieved must exceed those acquired in the Wits + Larceny + Obfuscate draw made for the Discipline user. If an onlooker's successes aren't high enough, he still doesn't recognize the item, even when it's pointed out.

Note that this power affects only the item in question — it is not intended to hide other items as a byproduct. A character could not, for example, conceal a mailbox and then hide behind it or conceal a computer and hide a stake beneath it. The mailbox or computer would indeed be concealed but the character or stake would not.

Once invoked, Touch of Shadow lasts for a scene or until ended prematurely.

Touch of Shadow cannot be used on well-traveled areas such as the main entrance to a location, a connecting hallway that links a number of rooms throughout the play area, or the only entrance to a room that a character has just entered in the same scene. In other words, you can't lure a target into a room, use Touch of Shadow on the door behind you and thus trap the target in the room, because their mind knows they had to enter somehow and refuses to believe the illusion.



2.12 – TOUCH OF SHADOW MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+2	A tiny item, one easily concealed in the palm of a hand.
+1	An item that can be hidden in a pants pocket.
—	An item that can be squeezed into a pants pocket or easily hidden in a jacket pocket.
-1	An item that can only barely be squeezed into a large jacket pocket.
-2	An item that can be concealed under a jacket without too obvious a bulge.
-3	An item too large to be naturally hidden, but still small enough to be carried.
-4	An item as large as the vampire herself or just a bit bigger, such as a motorcycle or a door.
-5	An item bigger than the vampire herself, such as a car or large shipping crate, but smaller than five times the vampire's Size.



A NOTE ON HIDDEN OBJECTS

Touch of Shadow can provoke some pretty bizarre arguments in a live-action game session. Should it become a question, troupe members should remember that it does not make anything invisible in the sense of becoming transparent. Using Touch of Shadow on a door does not mean that people will walk into it thinking the doorway is open, nor do they imagine they can see into the room beyond. Rather, it makes things easy to overlook. A door that has Touch of Shadow used on it doesn't literally vanish, people just fail to notice it. Likewise, using Touch of Shadow on a coat and then wearing the coat doesn't conceal what else you're wearing or carrying, nor does it render you invisible by proxy.



• • MASK OF TRANQUILITY

The Kindred masters the art of hiding himself to such a degree that he may subvert some of the stains that undeath leaves upon his soul. A vampire who knows this power can mask his Kindred nature from onlookers, leaving them without the impression that the Predator's Taint inflicts.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Wits + Stealth + Obfuscate. This power can be activated as an Instant Action at no cost at any point and is considered “always on” until sunrise or until the character enters torpor. A character with this power does not trigger the Predator's Taint (see p. 237). Therefore, the character doesn't appear as a vampire to other Kindred who see him. Kindred who can discern auras fail to register the vampire as undead; his aura is no different from a mortal's (the colors are not pale like a normal Kindred's). This too can be pierced with Auspex, as usual. Note that this power doesn't render the user immune to the Predator's Taint himself, he merely doesn't cause the reaction in others. Diablerie stains can't be hidden in this manner: the vampire merely appears to have a mortal aura with streaks in it that are remarkably close to those left by diablerie or a similar vile act.

The character may turn off this power if he wishes, but such is an all-or-nothing proposition. He may not turn off certain aspects of this power and keep others active. Note also that uses of Auspex may call this power into question — see the “Clash of Wills” sidebar on p. 159 for details. In those cases, the Auspex user — while performing the test for Aura Perception





- indicates that she wishes to use her Auspex versus Obfuscate successes to test for Mask of Tranquility. The Clash of Wills test is then run as normal.

Action: N/A

••• CLOAK OF NIGHT

An essential expression of the Kindred’s secretive nature, Cloak of Night allows a vampire to literally fade from sight, becoming completely invisible to observers. Though it’s easiest to invoke the capability out of sight, Cloak of Night is so potent that it allows the vampire to vanish even under direct observation.

The actual process of fading away is subtle, but its effect on witnesses might not be. Mortals are likely to panic and flee the area, or to find some way to justify what they’ve witnessed, even if it means constructing new memories of the event. (“I glanced away for a moment, but when I looked back, I *think* I saw him leave through that back door.”) Some especially weak-willed mortals might simply forget the vampire was ever present at all.

Kindred, of course, tend to be less strongly impacted than mortals, though even an experienced and knowledgeable vampire might find the experience somewhat startling. Attacking an individual from behind using the invisibility bestowed by such Obfuscate powers usually requires the defender to test for surprise. Attacks from the front or the sides are less susceptible to require a surprise test.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Intelligence + Stealth + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

Roleplaying: Cloaked characters should employ the standard “Invisibility” gesture from the *Mind’s Eye Theatre* rulebook: arms crossed over the chest, thumbs touching either side of the neck.

Draw Results

Failure: The character does not vanish at all, and knows it.

Success: The character vanishes from sight. Mortal witnesses reconstruct the scene in their memory to justify the character’s disappearance if successes achieved on the invocation draw exceed their Willpower dots.

Successful use of Cloak of Night renders the character invisible until and unless he does something to draw attention (launching an attack, smashing a window, shouting a warning), in which case the cloak drops.

Hiding oneself with this power even accounts for a character inadvertently revealing himself through other means. A vampire doesn’t accidentally bump into bystanders, as they subconsciously move out of his way. No one hears when he steps on a squeaky floorboard unless they have somehow already pierced his Obfuscate.

2.13 – CLOAK OF NIGHT MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+1	Character is by himself when he activates the power.
—	Character vanishes before a single witness.
-1	Each witness after the first present when a character invokes the power.

•••• THE FAMILIAR STRANGER

This power preys on the natural tendency of the mind to quickly categorize people based on very few superficial details, allowing the Kindred to project a powerful subconscious suggestion that makes everyone he meets believe they are looking at a member of a profession or social group of the vampire’s choice. Vaguely defined identities such as “doctor” or “club



kid” are easy to assume with this power, but more specific roles like “chief resident of neurosurgery” or “ultra-hip Goth scene queen” require a great deal more effort to enact. Likewise, the features of a vampire using this power become generalized as well, to the point of being essentially unrecognizable to those that know her. She retains the impression of any notable beauty or ugliness she might possess, but her overall appearance becomes so thoroughly generic that a positive identification is impossible.

This new role is projected so strongly that targets actively try to accept the vampire’s identity so long as it doesn’t contradict any hard facts they know. For example, if the vampire using a “doctor” role is confronted by a veteran hospital security guard, the guard won’t believe it if the vampire tells him has worked there for years (since the guard knows otherwise), but he will be naturally inclined to buy the disguise if the vampire tells him that he is a new resident or a visiting physician. Likewise, a vampire who assumes a “gang member” role and runs into a local set won’t be able to convince them he’s a member of their particular crew, but he’d probably be able to pass himself off as a member from another crew.

Indeed, the suggestion created by this power is actually strong enough that it allows the the vampire to use some small props to reinforce her identity – for example, if she’s impersonating a police officer and a mortal asks to see her identification, assuming the power is used successfully he would look at her regular driver’s license and see a police badge, because that’s what he’s expecting to see. However, the prop used must be at least roughly similar to what the target is expecting – it doesn’t conjure a fake badge out of thin air, for example, nor would it allow the vampire to hold up a small stuffed animal and claim it was a police badge. Likewise, a vampire could pass off a replica or toy gun as the real thing while impersonating a police officer, but not a banana or a stick.





Lastly, with considerable effort a vampire may attempt to make minor alterations to her features as part of assuming a role, rather than simply “blurring” them into more generic ones. She may only change simple features like hair or eye color, skin tone, hairstyle, and perhaps some slight voice modifications. She cannot appear to be of the opposite gender, mimic hideous Nosferatu features (unless she is already somewhat disfigured herself), display a significant shift in apparent age, or make any other major body changes. She also cannot appear to radically alter her body type, so a six foot vampire cannot appear to be a small child. Any such changes must be made with makeup or noted on the description tag.

Note: While the vampire can change her appearance, she cannot actually attempt to impersonate a specific individual or voice, even if she actually resembles a target already. The power ultimately relies on the tendency of individuals to make generalized assumptions about other people in order to function. Convincingly imitating specific individuals is therefore completely against the power’s nature. She may end up looking or sounding *vaguely* similar to a person, but no one with even casual knowledge of that person will be fooled, nor will witnesses ever point to the original person as being the same individual they encountered if they met the character in disguise.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Obfuscate versus subject’s Resolve + Blood Potency to activate in front of another individual; Wits + Investigation + Auspex versus the user’s Resolve + Stealth + Obfuscate to see through it as per Clash of Wills

Action: Instant and Contested; resistance is reflexive. The character activates The Familiar Stranger as an instant action; if he acts in an unusual manner while using his new persona, other characters may make reflexive draws to resist as per the Clash of Wills description on p. 159.

Roleplaying: Adopt makeup and costuming suitable for new identity, or use a description tag describing the role being adopted. If tags are used, it is recommended that characters using this power wear tags with a distinctive color, size or shape, to make it very clear when this power is active.

Draw Results

Failure: The vampire loses or ties the contested action. The character’s apparent identity does not change, and the vampire is aware of the failed attempt. Onlookers see the vampire for who she is.

Success: The vampire wins the contested action and is recognized as her chosen role for the duration of the scene. Mortal targets will do their best to accept the vampire’s identity, provided the vampire doesn’t make a major faux pas, do something wholly inappropriate for their role (such as a priest beating someone up) or claim something that directly contradicts facts the targets are well aware of. (“Hold on a second, ‘Father,’ there’s no Catholic church on 8th street — who are you, anyway?”) Kindred and other supernatural creatures see what the vampire desires, though they do not necessarily buy the role any more than that. Most likely, supernaturals will simply perceive a ‘generic’ individual and give no special attention to him.

A character can only adopt one role at a time. A character may switch roles if he desires, but cannot do so in front of witnesses; she must somehow leave sight before she can change her appearance again.

A character with Auspex can potentially see through this disguise, as per the normal rules for Auspex versus Obfuscate (see p. 159).

Once fooled, an onlooker cannot attempt to pierce the vampire’s disguise again unless he does something that would betray his identity, in which case the subject performs a standard Clash of Wills test.



Note that a character cannot use this power as a shortcut to higher Presence by choosing a role like “supermodel.” She is still considered to be limited by her own base Presence in terms of how striking her overall appearance can be, though vampires with high natural Presence may choose to lower their effective rating if they do not wish to attract undue attention. So if a Kindred is attempting to pass as a supermodel but only has an average Presence, onlookers might think that she’s a model trying to go incognito, or perhaps that they’ve caught her on an “off day.” Conversely, she might appear superficially beautiful to the eye, but up close there’s something flawed about her looks or mannerisms that betrays the vampire’s true Presence level underneath.

2.14 – FAMILIAR STRANGERS MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+2	Character is adopting a role that is well known to him (a vampire with medical training passing as a doctor, a veteran scenester imitating a typical local club patron).
+2	Power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228).
-1	Character displays an emotion or undertakes an action not entirely appropriate to the circumstances.
-3	Character tries to assume a more specific role, such as trying to appear as a “homicide detective” instead of just a generic “police officer.”
-3	Character makes slight changes to his appearance, such as a different hairstyle and eye color, or a slight change to skin tone.

••••• CLOAK THE GATHERING

A more powerful manifestation of Cloak of Night, Cloak the Gathering allows the vampire to extend her powers of vanishing from the mind’s eye over others.

Cost: —

Test Pool: Intelligence + Stealth + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

Roleplaying: Cloaked characters should employ the standard “Invisibility” gesture from the *Mind’s Eye Theatre* rulebook: arms crossed over the chest, thumbs touching either side of the neck.

Draw Results

Failure: The characters do not vanish at all.

Success: The characters vanish from sight. Mortal witnesses reconstruct the scene in their memory to justify the characters’ disappearance if successes achieved on the invocation draw exceed their Willpower dots.

A vampire can hide one extra individual per dot of Obfuscate she possesses, not counting herself. She may attempt to hide more, but in doing so invokes a penalty to the player’s draw.

While under the effects of this power, each individual must obey the rules of Cloak of Night. That is, anyone who draws attention through loud or brash actions likely becomes visible. If the Discipline user herself becomes visible for any reason, the effect fades away utterly, exposing everyone involved. Vampires under the effects of Cloak the Gathering can see each other, but if an individual ever leaves the immediate area of the vampire extending “invisibility,” the power ceases for him. He becomes visible while the rest of the characters remain hidden.





2.15 – CLOAK THE GATHERING MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+1	Character is with only those to whom she extends this power when she activates it.
—	Characters vanish before a single witness.
-1	Each witness after the first present when a character invokes the power.
-1	Each person Obfuscated beyond the number equal to the character's level of Obfuscate, not counting the character herself.

PROTEAN

Easily one of the most overtly spectacular of the gifts of the Damned, the Discipline of Protean is the study of physical metamorphosis and transformation. The nature of this power is hotly debated among the Kindred, for its abilities are so varied while simultaneously stemming from no obvious aspect of the Curse. Whatever its cause or origin, Protean allows its masters to assume virtually any form or shape.

Since the core of a vampire's self doesn't alter with his shape, a transformed Kindred can generally take any action or use any Discipline that his new form can reasonably allow. Gangrel in the form of a cloud of mist, for example, could read auras (as the sense of sight doesn't vanish), but couldn't Dominate someone effectively (as the prerequisite eye contact can no longer be established). A vampire's clothes and personal effects change shape with him, but he cannot normally transmute especially large objects or other creatures.

Unless stated otherwise, Protean powers — being permanent physical changes — last as long as the vampire wishes them to, or until he is forced into torpor. Any state that prevents the character from taking action (such as being staked) likewise prevents transformation; the vampire needs the freedom to invoke his will. Reverting from any alternate form is an Instant Action and takes a full turn unless otherwise specified. The character reforms on his Initiative and may not act during that turn.

• ASPECT OF THE PREDATOR

The most basic ability of this Discipline allows a vampire to project a supernatural mien of savage predatory ferocity.

Cost: —

Test Pool: This power involves no draw. A character is not subject to the usual relationships of Blood Potency upon meeting an unknown Kindred for the first time. If the character's Blood Potency is lower than that of the unknown Kindred, he treats it as equal. If the character's Blood Potency is equal to or higher than the unknown Kindred, this power has no effect. In the event of two or more Kindred using this power simultaneously, treat them all as equals.

A character may choose to suspend this power if he so desires, but if he does, it ceases to function for an entire scene. He may not selectively apply it to individual vampires he meets within that scene.

Action: N/A

• • HAVEN OF SOIL

The vampire who has achieved this much-prized level of mastery over Protean has learned how to meld his form with that of any natural substance. One can blend his form only with simple soil at first, but with time and experience, he can eventually learn how to conjoin with other elements. While so interred, the character is immune to threat of harm from the

sun's rays, or to any physical attack as his corporeal form is actually merged with that of the substance itself. Some Gangrel rely on this ability while traveling from domain to domain, as its power gives them the ultimate freedom to do so.

This style of rest is the method of choice for many Kindred who must enter torpor. Whiling away the decades in a largely protected state, free from risk of detection or Final Death, is an attractive prospect. While such a character cannot be dug up, any significant disturbance to the area in which he resides alerts the vampire to the presence of intruders, though not necessarily to the details of their intrusion. If enough damage is done to the sleeping Kindred's resting place, he returns immediately to corporeal form (and full wakefulness) in a shower of whatever substance he had taken for his haven.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: No draw is necessary. Becoming one with a natural substance is automatic and takes a character's action in a turn to complete. While in this state, the character's consciousness hovers slightly above the torpor level (unless the vampire is both in torpor and in this state, in which case he is unaware), making perception of his surroundings distant at best. A player must succeed in a Humanity draw in order for his character to be aware of the presence of others in or around his place of rest (barring significant alteration to the vampire's haven, of course, in which case he becomes aware automatically).

Since the character is literally part of the earth, all attempts to locate him (via his scent, his aura or even through mystical methods of tracking) suffer a minimum of a -3 penalty to their test pools. Indeed, unless he is aware of exactly what he's searching for, a searcher is likely to be confounded a bit even if he is successful. No attack can harm the interred vampire while he is in this state; a significant disruption of his surroundings can only cause him to resurface.

When this power is first acquired, the character can meld his form only with natural earth or soil. If any other substance — including asphalt, wood or concrete — lies in the way between the vampire and natural ground, he cannot activate this power. (He must dig his way to natural soil or else find a way to stand thereupon.) With the expenditure of an additional three experience points, however, the vampire can select another natural substance from the following list: wood, water, natural stone or processed stone. "Processed stone" includes varieties of prepared surfacing materials such as concrete and asphalt. He can now meld into soil and this extra substance with equal ease. Therefore, if his player spends 12 experience points, a vampire can rest in all five materials — virtually anywhere. Note that there must still be enough of a substance to accommodate the vampire's form in roughly his natural Size. (A large tree trunk might suffice, but a small branch does not.) Those who meld with water leave a barely visible, humanoid-shaped outline just below the surface, but are otherwise just as protected and concealed as though they were inside soil.

Action: Instant

• • • CLAWS OF THE WILD

Upon activation of this power, the vampire's nails grow into long, fearsome talons, capable of rending bone and flesh alike. This power makes many Gangrel truly fearsome combatants, and other Kindred tend to give them a wide berth. Note that not every vampire's claws look the same. Some seem to be modeled after real-world animals', such as wolves', tigers' or the talons of birds of prey, while other claws seem to have no natural correlative at all. As might be expected, when these last vampires unsheathe their claws, they tend to greatly unnerve those around them.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: This power involves no draw. The wicked claws grow by silent act of will on the part of the vampire, and they can be sprouted from both a vampire's hands and feet as desired.





Imbued with the unholy power of Vitae, these ferocious weapons offer a +1 bonus to attack pools in unarmed close combat, and they inflict aggravated damage. In addition to their combat potential, the claws add a +2 bonus to any climbing-related draws as long as they remain invoked.

The claws remain for the entire scene, though the vampire may retract them prematurely. Characters may not use Claws of the Wild with Fighting Styles.

Action: Reflexive

•••• **SHAPE OF THE BEAST**

The canon of vampire legend is filled with stories of undead lords taking the semblance of the “children of the night.” This power is the source of those legends. With it, a Kindred can take the shape of an ordinary animal, most commonly a bat or a wolf. While in this form, the vampire retains his mind and temperament, but he can call upon the physical qualities of his newfound body (increased speed and senses as a wolf, sonar sense and flight as a bat).

With time and experience, the character can learn to adopt the other form (bat or wolf) or others.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: This power requires no draw to activate. The transformation from human to animal or back again requires a character’s action in a turn. All clothing and small possessions shift with the vampire, and he can remain in his animal state until he chooses to shift back. A vampire can even sleep the day away in animal form, but must still avoid sunlight, which always affects vampires regardless of form. In addition, sleeping in animal form is taxing on the vampiric state, requiring the expenditure of an additional Vitae upon awakening.

While in animal form, a vampire can use any Discipline in his repertoire except for Theban Sorcery, Crúac and Dominate (which becomes impossible when one tries to bark and yip commands). Each animal form conveys a separate host of benefits. As a wolf, the vampire’s claws and teeth inflict lethal damage and add a +1 bonus to attack pools, Running Speed is doubled, and a +2 bonus is added to any Wits + Composure draws to be aware of events that happen in the wolf’s environment. As a bat, the vampire’s Strength becomes 1, but he can fly at a Running Speed of 20 (plus five more per dot of Vigor activated); a +3 is added to all hearing-based draws, and Defense increases by two. Adjust the vampire’s Health to reflect the Size of the new form.

(At the player’s discretion, he may spend another Vitae and allow a character in wolf form or any other suitable form as described here to activate Claws of the Wild. As with normal uses of that power, these claws are obviously supernatural or otherwise remarkable, and even those unfamiliar with the world of the Damned will know that something is *not quite right* about the animal in question. A character who has assumed Shape of the Beast and also activates Claws of the Wild gains a +1 bonus to attack pools and inflicts aggravated damage instead of gaining a +1 bonus to attack pools and inflicting lethal damage with claw attacks.)

When this power is first acquired, only bat or wolf form is available. With Storyteller permission, every three experience points spent allows a character access to the other form, or to an altogether different animal, usually a mammal, although it’s rumored that Kindred in far-flung lands can assume the forms of predatory and scavenger birds. Storytellers are encouraged to use the models given here and on p. 323 of the **Mind’s Eye Theatre** rulebook as examples of animal traits.

A vampire in animal form is not subject to the Animalism Discipline. Dominate may still be used on him in whatever form — human or animal — he assumes. Characters using Shape of the Beast cannot use any Fighting Styles and most combat-related Merits.

Action: Instant



••••• BODY OF SPIRIT

The pinnacle of most vampires' achievement in the transfiguring art, this power enables a Kindred to transform his entire body into a fine, chilling mist. As a small cloud of vapor, the character can float along above the ground at his normal Acting Speed, slipping under doors and in between screens with ease. Although especially strong winds can divert him from his desired course for a time, not even gale-force winds can fully disperse his misty essence.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: This power involves no draw to invoke. The full change takes one instant action to complete.

If a strong enough wind picks up, the character's vaporous body could be subjected to unwanted direction change if he does not resist successfully. Draw Strength, plus any Vigor that the vampire activates. There's no modifier for a light wind. A strong one imposes a -1 penalty, and a gale-force wind imposes a -3 penalty. A success allows the vampire to travel in any direction desired for the turn, even against the wind. Four or more successes allows him to travel in any direction for the remainder of the scene. A failure indicates that the vampire is pushed by the wind for one turn at the speed it travels. And a failure on a chance draw (under particularly windy conditions) causes the vampire to blow out of control (but still as a cohesive whole) for the entire scene.

While in mist form, the character is immune to all physical attacks, which merely pass through his gaseous body. Mystical attacks, however, still affect him normally, though mystical attacks that use mundane methods of delivery are similarly ineffective (such as claws or enchanted physical weapons). Even fire and sunlight inflict one less point of damage than normal. The trade-off, of course, is that a vampire in this state cannot physically attack anyone (not even another vampire using this power). Disciplines that do not require a body might still be effective, though. A vampire in gaseous form can use any Discipline he knows except for Theban Sorcery, Crúac, Celerity and Dominate (which is useless when he has no true eyes with which to make contact and no mouth with which to speak commands).

A vampire in mist form cannot be "bottled" or otherwise trapped in part by someone trying to contain or disrupt his form. Bottling a portion of a vampire's mist doesn't cause him to resume human form without an arm, for example. A vampire's entire mist form can be contained in a room or other large space that is airtight. Of course, the question arises of how one can lure a vampire in mist form into an airtight room, or how one even has access to a truly airtight room.

Action: Instant

Roleplaying: Players whose characters have entered mist form should adopt appropriate costuming, description tags or postures to indicate their mist form state. While different troupes may certainly adopt more extensive requirements as they desire, the default hand gesture for mist form uses the symbol for being on an alternate plane, extending the pinkie and index finger.

RESILIENCE

Legends abound of vampires who are able to withstand even the most brutal punishment to their unliving forms. While all Kindred possess a certain degree of the toughness of which these tales speak, those with the Discipline of Resilience are commensurately more stalwart. Vampires with several dots of Resilience are capable of walking through a hail of bullets, shrugging off even the most punishing blows, and even resisting the deadly claws and fangs of supernatural foes.

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene to provide "downgrading" benefits; additional Health levels are permanent once bought





Test Pool: Resilience is unlike many other Disciplines in that it is not actively drawn. Rather, it provides an augmentation of physical potential that lasts for the scene in which it is activated, and which affects other draws.

Each dot of Resilience permanently increases the character's Stamina by one. This bonus also increases the character's Health (a character with Resilience can thus surpass his normal Attribute maximum for Stamina). Additionally, once invoked Resilience also "downgrades" a number of aggravated damage points per scene equal to a Kindred's Resilience dots. This damage becomes lethal instead. Aggravated wounds suffered in excess of the character's Resilience dots remain aggravated, however. This downgrade doesn't apply to any aggravated wounds that the vampire already possesses, just to newly acquired ones suffered while Resilience is active.

Example: *Michael is engaged in combat with a witch-hunter, who clubs him with a flaming torch. The torch inflicts five points of aggravated damage – but Michael's Resilience of 4 downgrades that to four points of lethal damage, with one point of aggravated damage remaining.*

Also, if a character suffers damage that upgrades her Health chart, Resilience does not downgrade it. For example, if a character with seven Health dots and a single dot of Resilience suffers nine points of lethal damage, that ninth point stays aggravated. The other eight points are recorded normally as lethal (seven for the Health dots plus one for the Resilience), but the ninth stays aggravated as it upgrades the leftmost box on the character's Health chart.

Action: Instant

VIGOR

Nearly every vampire legend across the globe expresses the preternatural strength possessed by the undead. In truth, not all Kindred possess such inhuman might, but the Discipline of Vigor makes those who do far more powerful than any mortal could ever hope to be. Vigor allows Kindred to strike opponents with the force of a falling boulder or speeding car; to lift enormous weights as though they were paper; to shatter concrete like glass; to leap distances so great that those elders with obscenely high levels of Vigor may, in fact, be responsible for legends of vampiric flight.

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Test Pool: Vigor is unlike many other Disciplines in that it is not actively drawn. Rather, it provides an increase of physical strength that lasts the duration of the scene in which it is activated, affecting other draws.

Each dot of Vigor increases the character's Strength by one while the Discipline is active. Vigor cannot be invoked more than once per scene. That is, you may not spend a second Vitae and double the benefits of the power. Note also that certain derived traits (such as Running Speed) might also be affected by the use of Vigor.

Note: When used in combat, such as to modify Strength + Brawl or Strength + Weaponry test pools, Strength dots gained from Vigor are applied *only* once a successful hit is determined. In other words, this Discipline does not make it any more likely that the vampire will hit her target, but it makes any hits she lands much more devastating than normal. Likewise, Vigor does not increase the maximum amount of damage that can be inflicted with a successful attack, it only makes it more likely the vampire will hit her existing maximum (see "Damage Limit" in *Mind's Eye Theatre*, p. 210).

Example: *Rachel has Vigor 3, Brawl 3 and Strength 4. She is surprised to find a mortal creeping about her haven after she returns from a meeting with the Prince. Rachel decides to teach this ghoul a lesson and activates her Vigor – her Strength increases to 7 for the duration of the scene. Her test pool for a Strength + Brawl attack is still 7, however, not 10. She doesn't hit any more often than normal, but when she does, it hurts a whole lot more. She adds the extra +3 gained from Vigor only if she hits.*

Vigor does not affect a character's ability to jump.

Action: Instant



EXTENDED ACTIONS AND SORCERY

Many rituals and sorceries require extended actions to accumulate successes. During downtimes and outside of game sessions, use the normal time constraints for extended actions. During a game, gaining a success on an extended action for any type of sorcery or ritual requires a full turn outside of combat and three full turns if performed during combat.



CRÚAC

Crúac is the common name for the pagan blood sorcery practiced by the Circle of the Crone. A type of ritual magic, Crúac, meaning “crescent,” is a mixture of pre-Christian and pagan magic from across the globe whose only common element is a reliance on blood sacrifice. Crúac is denounced by many traditional Kindred as “black magic” or “witchcraft,” and in areas where the Lancea Sanctum holds sway, Crúac’s known practitioners are occasionally persecuted as heretics. Of course, it is such very derision and fear of Crúac that leads many to the Circle of the Crone and, by extension, to this Discipline’s study. The Circle of the Crone’s message of empowerment speaks to many a neonate, and, for some, there is no greater expression of that empowerment than this Discipline.

Crúac is one of the central mysteries of the Circle of the Crone’s belief structure, as well as a potent weapon in the covenant’s arsenal. As might be expected, knowledge of the different rituals that comprise this Discipline is a closely guarded secret. New initiates are not usually trusted with its mysteries. As a new member in a quasi-religious Kindred faction, a vampire might well have to prove his loyalty to the Circle through tests and ordeals before its adherents are willing to share their knowledge. Although vampires who leave the Circle of the Crone for other covenants take their knowledge with them, many find it all but impossible to increase their knowledge of Crúac outside the Circle’s structure. A character must have at least one dot of Covenant Status (Circle of the Crone) in order to learn Crúac. A player who buys at least one dot worth of that Merit at character creation may spend one of his character’s three Discipline dots on Crúac if he wishes. This expenditure does not count as an in-clan Discipline expenditure, however. Any time a player wants to increase his character’s Crúac score, the character must still have at least one dot of Covenant Status (Circle of the Crone) to do so.

Because of myriad cultural differences within the Circle of the Crone, many rituals exist that approximate the following ones in effect if not in name. Thus, the level-one ritual Pangs of Proserpina may be known as the Appetite of Limba in New Orleans or the Curse of Tawrich in Tehran. Other **Vampire** books offer new Crúac rituals, and players and Storytellers are encouraged to create their own using those presented here as models.

Cost: Uses of Crúac always cost at least one Vitae. Unless the text for a specific power (known as a ritual) specifies otherwise, assume that the cost is one Vitae. Vitae plays a very important role in the use of Crúac — it literally calls upon the power inherent in the Blood to fuel supernatural effects. Use of Crúac requires that the Vitae be “spent” in a visible or otherwise significant manner. For example, when a Vitae is spent for a character to activate a ritual, he likely has to cut himself with a dagger and bleed on the ground, activating the magic with the spilled Vitae (or through some other direct appeal to the power of the Blood). Unless noted otherwise, any use of Crúac breaks Obfuscate. If a character is already under the effects of Crúac, the same ritual can’t be used on her again for added effect.





Crúac does not have the same linear progression that other Disciplines do. A character's mastery dictates the highest level of rituals that he may learn. Rituals are bought with experience points. For example, a character with two dots of Crúac can know an unlimited number of level-one and level-two rituals (provided the experience points to learn each of them are paid). He may not learn any level-three Crúac rituals until his Crúac dots increase to 3. Each time a character acquires a dot of Crúac (including at character creation), he gains a ritual of that level at no additional cost.

Crúac is insidious. It demands a certain degree of subservience and even cruelty from its practitioners, possibly in deference to the dire old gods whence the Discipline is rumored to come. For some power-hungry sorcerers, Crúac indulges the will instead of enlightened use of the Discipline. A character's dots in this Discipline, subtracted from 10, is the maximum to which his Humanity may rise. For example, the Gangrel Roland Gentry possesses three dots of Crúac. His maximum Humanity is therefore 7. If a character increases his Crúac score higher than his Humanity would normally allow, his Humanity immediately drops to the appropriate level and the player makes a Humanity draw to see if the character acquires a derangement in the process of heightening his occult knowledge. (See pp. 258-266 for more on Humanity draws and derangements.)

Test Pool: Manipulation + Occult + Crúac. Because of its sanguinary nature, Crúac doubles any bonuses that a vampire's blood ties might apply, such as in a ritual performed on a sire, grandsire, childe or grandchilde. Also, the Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's draw. Occult Specializations can only apply to individual rituals, not all of Crúac.

Action: Extended. The number of successes required to activate a ritual is equal to the level of the ritual (so a level-three ritual requires three successes to enact). Each draw represents one turn of ritual casting. Note also that each point of damage suffered in a turn is a penalty to the next casting draw made for the character, in addition to any wound penalties that a caster might suffer.

Costs to activate Crúac rituals must be paid before the draw can be made. Normally this isn't an issue, as a ritual that costs one Vitae can have its activation draw made in the same turn (as spending Vitae is a reflexive action). In some cases, though, a ritual costs more Vitae than the caster can spend in a single turn. In cases like these, the caster's player makes the draw on the turn he (reflexively) spends the last Vitae necessary to invoke the ritual.

If a character fails to complete the ritual in time (such as by being killed before accumulating enough successes) or decides to cancel the ritual before garnering enough successes to activate it, the effect simply fails. Any Vitae expenditures made are not recovered, however.

Roleplaying: Crúac is not the sanitized version of the Old Ways that most mortals think of when they think of "pagan" practices. Whether wild and ecstatic or grim and vengeful, Crúac rituals are seldom very subtle, and the primal power and raw emotions on display are often as unsettling as they are intriguing for onlookers to behold. (This is a largely unintended but not entirely undesirable side effect, as far as the Circle of the Crone is concerned.) Ritualists frequently chant in a variety of old tongues, employ items of ancient ritual significance such as wands or prepared animal skins, and invoke the many different names of the divine beings Crúac pays homage to in its many forms. Ritual bloodletting over sacred designs or to create mystical patterns is also highly common.

Draw Results

Failure: The ritual fails entirely, but not dangerously. Vitae is consumed as normal, but the ritual has no effect.

Success: The ritual takes place as described.



Unless specified otherwise, rituals last for the duration of a scene or until the next sunrise, whichever comes first.

2.16 – CRÚAC MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+4	Power is turned on or applies to a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228).
—	The character is unaffected by threats or distractions.
-1 to -3	The character is rushed or distracted, such as by invoking a ritual in combat or while being harried by pursuers. This penalty is cumulative with multiple distractions (such as by casting a ritual in combat during a hurricane). Successes gained on a meditation draw for the night (see p. 55 of the <i>Mind's Eye Theatre</i> rulebook) offset interruption penalties on a one-for-one basis.



A CAUTIONARY NOTE ON SORCERY

Always remember that **The Requiem** is just a game. While roleplayers are grounded enough to know that they are not really performing real magical rituals, outsiders might not see it quite the same way. Even some fellow players might be uncomfortable with particularly vivid depictions of vampiric sorcery. Therefore, while we encourage roleplaying the use of these Disciplines as part of players portraying their characters, remember that real-world concerns like scandalized neighbors or offended troupe members aren't worth that extra bit of "realism." If it comes down to it, just perform some more low-key, inoffensive actions and save the more elaborate or controversial stuff for times when you're away from the eyes of others who might disapprove.



PANGS OF PROSERPINA (LEVEL-ONE CRÚAC RITUAL)

The sorcerer causes feelings of intense hunger in a subject, who must be within sight. The afflicted subject feels the desire to eat or feed. Activation involves a contested draw against the subject's Composure + Blood Potency, and resistance is reflexive. If the performer gets the most successes, the victim avails himself of any sustenance available. A mortal even eats raw meat, though he doesn't resort to such dire acts as cannibalism or drinking blood. Kindred might attack nearby vessels or even fellow vampires if their hunger is severe enough to make them frenzy. Even after he eats or feeds, a subject's rapacity does not subside until the effects of the ritual pass. (Vampires affected by this ritual are considered "starving" for the purposes of resisting frenzy; see p. 255.)

RIGOR MORTIS (LEVEL-ONE CRÚAC RITUAL)

With the power of this ritual, a vampire may temporarily interrupt the reanimating effect of vampiric Vitae, impairing a Kindred's movements as the stiffening of muscles common to dead bodies takes hold. The number of successes garnered on the Crúac draw determines the number of points by which the victim's next Physical test pool is penalized. This applies only to test pools for actions, and does not affect Physical resistances. Rigor Mortis is useless against mortals, ghouls, Lupines, mages and most other beings, since they don't depend on the power of vampiric Vitae to animate their bodies. A vampire may only be affected by the effects of one Rigor Mortis ritual at any given time.

The draw to activate this power is penalized by the subject's Composure.





CHEVAL (LEVEL-TWO CRÚAC RITUAL)

This ritual allows the performer to “ride the senses” of his subject. The subject must be within direct sight when the ritual is performed, but the subject can stray from the caster to any distance thereafter. At any time he wishes for the duration of the effect, the performer may see or hear through the eyes or ears of his subject. No other senses can be substituted — if the subject is blind or deaf or both, all “riding” yields is blackness and/or silence. A subject so “ridden” is unaware that his senses also report to another.

While riding another’s senses, the ritualist is only dimly aware of her own body, which falls into on a trance-like state. She is unaware of minor environmental stimuli affecting her own body (such as an insect crawling across her skin or drops of water falling on her head), but more aggressive actions perpetrated against her body such as moving it more than a few inches or attacking it immediately draw her consciousness back to it.

This ritual remains in effect for one night per success on the invocation draw, though the caster may end the ritual at any time. The performer can therefore indulge in a subject’s senses and return to her own body as often as she likes throughout the rite’s duration. Generally speaking, the ritualist may leave behind a note indicating where her body is and directing would-be assailants to seek her out, and then follow the target of the ritual while adopting an out-of-game pose to indicate that she is not actually there.

The draw to activate this power is penalized by the subject’s Composure.

THE HYDRA’S VITAE (LEVEL-TWO CRÚAC RITUAL)

By invoking this ritual, the performer protects himself from would-be diablerists and from those who would otherwise feast upon his blood. This ritual transforms the sorcerer’s Vitae into a kind of poison.



Kindred who drink it suffer one point of lethal damage for every Vitae consumed; mortals who imbibe suffer two points of lethal damage for each Vitae. When a Kindred consumes a quantity of venomous Vitae, she earns no nourishment from it.

Vitae altered by this ritual is poisonous only so long as it's in the performer's body (or until the next sunrise). If the Vitae leaves, it becomes as any other Vitae spilled from a Kindred's body. Thus, it cannot be used to create poisoned weapons, and if one consumes the Vitae from a container after it leaves the body, it is simply normal, non-poisonous Vitae.

DEFLECTION OF WOODEN DOOM (LEVEL-THREE CRÚAC RITUAL)

The performer invokes a mystic protection against attempts to impale her heart with a stake. If the ritual succeeds, any attempt to stake the vampire fails for the duration of the spell. Stakes used in this manner rot or disintegrate as wielders attempt to use them against the performer, leaving no useful pieces behind. An attempt to stake the Kindred in question must be made for this ritual to take effect. (It does not simply rot all stakes and would-be stakes in her presence.) This power cannot be invoked to protect others; it works only on the sorcerer herself. This ritual fades at sundown of the subsequent night, though it may be invoked again immediately thereafter.

TOUCH OF THE MORRIGAN (LEVEL-THREE CRÚAC RITUAL)

The caster performs this ritual (Manipulation + Occult + Crúac is drawn) and channels his righteous ire into a tangible force. If the performance draw is successful, the user's mere touch becomes deadly. The sorcerer must then touch a subject with his open palm. (See "Touching an Opponent," p. 217 of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook.) Contact inflicts an amount of lethal damage equal to the number of successes gained on the activation draw. (The power cannot be delivered through a punch or other unarmed close-combat attack.) This harm can be delivered only once per performance of the ritual, and this rite lasts for one hour for every success drawn. If that period of time passes without a touch being made, the power fades.

The mark made by contact is physically manifest in accordance with its severity. A Touch of the Morrigan that inflicts one point of damage looks like a minor scar or livid bruise, while one that delivers five points of damage leaves the subject almost entirely blackened and charred looking. The visible injury fades as the damage is healed. This power affects only vampires, ghouls and other supernatural creatures. It seems that Kindred cannot inflict their viciousness on mortals in this manner.

At the Storyteller's discretion, victims of particularly powerful uses of this rite may acquire penalties to relevant appearance-related draws until the damage is healed or be forced to adopt appropriate make-up or description tags to simulate their ravaged looks.

BLOOD PRICE (LEVEL-FOUR CRÚAC RITUAL)

The sorcerer mystically claims one third of the Vitae that a subject imbibes. The subject must be within sight when this ritual is performed. Every time the subject feeds, a third of the Vitae he consumes is denied him and transfers invisibly to the sorcerer, regardless of either vampire's location. (In other words, every third point of Vitae consumed is passed to the caster.) This Vitae is always "neutral," which is to say that the feeding Kindred does not subject the sorcerer to a Vinculum in this manner, and neither does feeding from a third-party vampire apply any blood bonds to the sorcerer (though it certainly does to the feeding vampire). The effects of this ritual expire after one feeding or the next sunrise, whichever comes first.

A contested draw is made to activate this power, pitting the sorcerer's Manipulation + Occult + Crúac versus the subject's Composure + Blood Potency, and this resistance is reflexive. If the most successes are drawn for the caster, the subject has no idea where some of the Vitae he consumes disappears to, yet he knows that he goes slightly undernourished.



WILLFUL VITAE (LEVEL-FOUR CRÚAC RITUAL)

The performer makes herself immune to the Vinculum and blood addiction when another Kindred's Vitae is consumed. After this ritual is performed, if another vampire's blood is imbibed in the same night, no step is taken toward a Vinculum with the provider of the blood, and no addiction to blood forms for the character. Of course, the blood donor has no idea that the recipient is immune. The ritual cannot be performed on another vampire, only on the caster's self. The ritual does not countermand or alleviate any existing Vinculum to which the caster is already subject.

BLOOD BLIGHT (LEVEL-FIVE CRÚAC RITUAL)

This potent ritual taints the blood of its target, whether mortal or vampire. draw Manipulation + Occult + Crúac in a contested action against the target's Stamina + Blood Potency (resistance is reflexive). If the draw for the caster gets the most successes, that number of successes is inflicted as lethal damage to a mortal target.

A vampire target immediately loses the equivalent of Vitae in his system and could be subject to frenzy as a result. Indeed, a vampiric victim might be forced into torpor. The caster must be able to see the intended victim when the ritual is performed.

FEEDING THE CRONE (LEVEL-FIVE CRÚAC RITUAL)

When the performer calls upon the power of the Crone herself (by whatever name is used), and a Vitae is spent, the vampire's mouth transforms into a maw of wicked, gnashing teeth. The vampire need not perform a grapple attack in order to bite a victim; the attack is made directly. The number of successes achieved on the ritual's activation draw is added as a bonus to attack draws, and aggravated damage is inflicted.

In addition, these teeth are so vicious that feeding cannot occur when they are borne; too much blood is wasted in the gory slaughter to get any real nourishment. Feeding the Crone remains in effect until another Vitae is spent to revoke the change, or until sunrise. In addition, appropriate makeup or a highly visible description tag should be worn to alert others to the use of this ritual, as it cannot be concealed from even casual inspection. Feeding the Crone cannot be used in combination with any Fighting Styles and the character does not receive bonuses from any weapons held as this is a brawling attack.



OPTIONAL RULE: GUARDED SECRETS

This optional rule allows Storytellers to have a greater measure of control over what characters are able to safely learn and practice regarding the various forms of vampiric sorcery, without placing an artificial cap on the learning process. With this rule, a character may learn any amount of sorcery or number of rituals as he has the requisite experience points to master, but if he wishes to use this knowledge without fear of reprisal, he must also possess a level of Status in the appropriate covenant equal or greater than the level of the ritual in question. If he does not have sufficient Status, he is considered to have somehow learned the ritual(s) illegitimately, thus risking stiff punishment by other members of the covenant.

This rule provides a social restriction to help curb potential misuse of sorcery, especially by relatively weak and untested characters. It also encourages characters in sorcerous covenants to play the games of Status and reputation in order to gain full access to the choicest secrets, rather than merely purchasing one dot of Status simply to serve as a springboard for mystical wisdom. Of course, in-game exceptions can be made on an individual basis when it comes to learning and using particularly common or useful rituals, especially if doing so will help serve the covenant's goals in the region. After all, this rule is merely meant to reflect how jealously secrets are guarded within each covenant and how much trust a character must earn before he is allowed to openly demonstrate more advanced mastery.

If the Storyteller desires an even stricter limitation on sorcery, he may choose to say that a character simply cannot have more dots in a particular sorcery than her current Status rating within that covenant. Thus, if a character has Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 2, she cannot learn Theban Sorcery 3 at all until she first improves her Covenant Status by at least another dot. She is simply not well known or trusted enough within the covenant to be granted access to those secrets. This variant of the rule allows strong Storyteller control and ensures that sorcery does not become too powerful too quickly, but it comes at the expense of some player freedom and might also weaken the balance between the covenants to a degree.



THEBAN SORCERY

Theban Sorcery is the miraculous magic practiced by members of the Lancea Sanctum. According to the covenant, it is a tradition of magic taught (or stolen, depending on to whom one listens) by an “avatar of God.” The practice is said to have been received when early members visited Thebias in northern Egypt with a contingent of Christian soldiers during the reign of Diocletian, after Longinus had vanished from the world. The Discipline has decidedly judgmental overtones, combining a focus on Biblical elements (rains of blood, plagues of locusts, the vengeance of God) with a very overt and occult reliance on righteousness.

Theban Sorcery is as jealously guarded as anti-Sanctified factions widely believe, if not more so. While few Lancea Sanctum hit squads lurk in the shadows to whack non-Sanctified vampires who seem to be able to use the Discipline, few covenant members want to see their divinely inspired powers taken for granted. The Lancea Sanctum isn’t foolish. It makes its mystical knowledge available “on loan” if the covenant has something to gain.

Vampires who leave the Lancea Sanctum for other covenants invariably take their knowledge with them, but find it all but impossible to increase it, no matter what occult connections they might have. A character must have at least one dot of Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) in order to learn Theban Sorcery. A player who takes at least one dot worth of that Merit at character creation may spend one of his character’s three Discipline dots on Theban Sorcery if he wishes. This expenditure does not count as an in-clan Discipline expenditure, however. Any time a player wants to increase his character’s Theban Sorcery score, the vampire must still have at least one dot of Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) to do so.

Cost: Uses of Theban Sorcery always cost one Willpower point. Willpower is critical to use of the Discipline. It invokes the soul of the Kindred who performs a ritual. Willpower spent in this manner does not add the +3 bonus to activation draws. Indeed, because one may spend only one Willpower point per turn, a Willpower point may *never* be spent to augment Theban Sorcery draws unless specified otherwise. Willpower merely makes the magic possible.

Additionally, Theban Sorcery rituals require certain items to be used or consumed to activate the powers. These components are known as offerings. Practitioners believe these items are offered in sacrifice to God, Longinus or to whomever provides the actual manifestation of the power. Attempts to invoke Theban Sorcery without suitable offerings simply fail outright. Offerings are completely consumed upon the invocation of a ritual, leaving behind nothing but a handful of nondescript ash or dust. Unless noted otherwise, any invocation of Theban Sorcery breaks Obfuscate and the sacrifice of the ritual offerings has to be made in plain sight. If a character is already under the effects of Theban Sorcery, the same power can’t be used on her again for added effect until the first use has worn off.

Like Crúac, Theban Sorcery does not have the same linear progression that other Disciplines do. A character’s mastery dictates the highest level of rituals that he may learn. Rituals are bought with experience points. For example, a character with two dots of Theban Sorcery can





know an unlimited number of level-one and level-two rituals (provided the experience points are paid to learn each), but he may not learn any level-three Theban Sorcery rituals until his base Theban Sorcery dots are increased to 3. Each time a character acquires a dot of Theban Sorcery (including at character creation), he gains a ritual of that level at no additional cost. More rituals may be acquired with experience points. Other **Vampire** books offer Theban Sorcery rituals, and players and Storytellers are encouraged to create their own using those presented here as models.

Test Pool: Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery. Unlike Crúac and its relationship to the Nosferatu, the Gangrel clan weakness *does* apply to the Discipline user's draw on attempts to invoke Theban Sorcery rituals. Academics Specializations can only apply to individual rituals, not all of Theban Sorcery.

Action: Extended. The number of successes required to activate a ritual is equal to the level of the ritual (so a level-three ritual requires three successes to enact). Each draw represents one turn of ritual casting. Note also that each point of damage incurred in a turn is a penalty to the next casting draw made for the character, in addition to any wound penalties suffered.

If a character fails to complete the ritual in time (such as by being sent into torpor before accumulating enough successes) or decides to cancel the ritual before garnering enough successes to activate it, the effect simply fails. Any Willpower expenditures made are not recovered, however, and offerings are still burned to ash.

Roleplaying: Like Crúac, performing a Theban Sorcery ritual is generally not a subtle process. Unlike Crúac's intensely primal rites, however, the practice of Theban Sorcery itself is much more controlled and precise. While individual casters have styles that diverge widely from each other, Theban Sorcery rituals tend to resemble dark, quasi-religious ceremonies on the whole. Solemn chanting, candle arrangements, mystic inscriptions and readings from ancient texts in classical languages are common themes. This is not to say that Theban Sorcery rituals are plodding, monotonous affairs — simply that what Crúac achieves through a more spontaneous ecstatic communion, Theban Sorcery achieves through rigid ritual invocation and force of will.

Draw Results

Failure: The ritual fails entirely, but not dangerously. Willpower and offerings are consumed as normal, but the ritual has no effect.

Success: The ritual takes place as described.

2.17 – THEBAN SORCERY MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is turned on or applies to a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228).
—	The character is unaffected by threats or distractions.
-1 to -3	The character is rushed or distracted, such as by invoking a ritual in combat or while trapped in a burning building. This penalty is cumulative with multiple distractions (such as by casting a ritual in combat during a hurricane). Successes gained on a meditation draw for the night (see p. 55 of the <i>Mind's Eye Theatre</i> rulebook) offset interruption penalties on a one-for-one basis.

BLOOD SCOURGE (LEVEL-ONE THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

The vampire transforms a portion of his own blood into a wicked instrument of punishment. For each dot that the character possesses in Theban Sorcery, he may create a stinging



whip of Vitae with which to scourge his foes. An attack with the weapon has a test pool equal to the character's Strength + Weaponry + the number of lashes created, and inflicts lethal damage. The Blood Scourge lasts a number of turns equal to the player's successes on the invocation draw. At the end of that time, the Vitae whips turn to dust.

A character can invoke Blood Scourge only once until its duration expires. He may thereafter invoke another whip, however. A character may voluntarily terminate a Blood Scourge if he does not want to keep it for the full duration of the power.

Offering: The Kindred's own blood is the offering. In enacting the ritual, the vampire must slice open his wrist with a sacrificial knife. The scourge created — regardless of its number of lashes — costs one Vitae.

VITAE RELIQUARY (LEVEL-ONE THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

The character takes an ordinary object that can be carried in one hand and stores an amount of Vitae in it that may be called upon later (whether as sustenance or for any other purpose that requires Vitae). Any Kindred or ghoul can call upon the stored Vitae, not just the caster, though the person using the Vitae must know that it's there. The amount of Vitae that can be stored in the object is equal to the amount of successes the player achieves on the invocation draw, although the caster may infuse the object with less if he wishes. The Vitae to be stored comes directly from the caster's own body. This ritual can be cast only once on the item in question. The nature of the object to contain the Vitae doesn't really matter, though the item must be at least the size of a person's fist. The Vitae remains indefinitely until consumed. The act of consuming the blood might involve taking it to one's lips, or holding the item tight and willing the blood to pass from object to body. This Vitae is "neutral," which is to say that the feeding Kindred does not subject the sorcerer to a Vinculum in this manner, though blood addiction is still a risk.

Offering: The vessel of infusion itself is the offering, and must be something the caster can lift with one hand. The offering crumbles to dust after the last Vitae is removed. The offering crumbles to dust. Prior to that point, the item functions as it normally would (a knife may still be used to attack, a book may still be read).

CURSE OF BABEL (LEVEL-TWO THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

This ritual leaves a victim speaking in tongues, unable to communicate. Even his written word is rendered nonsensical; both handwritten and typed messages come out as gibberish. Not only is the Curse of Babel an effective means of controlling the spread of blasphemy (and gossip), it proves an effective limit to a subject's use of the Dominate Discipline. The number of successes achieved on the invocation draw determines the duration of the ritual's function: one hour per success or until the next sunrise, whichever comes first. The subject must be within earshot when this ritual is performed.

The draw to activate this power is penalized by the subject's Resolve.

Offering: An animal's or person's tongue

LIAR'S PLAGUE (LEVEL-TWO THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

The character curses her subject so that if he speaks any lies over the course of the scene, beetles swarm from his mouth. Needless to say, the effects of this ritual must be announced loudly any time they apply — there is simply no way to hide the swarm that emerges.

The ritual involves a contested action, pitting the sorcerer's Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery against the subject's Resolve + Blood Potency. Resisting this power is a reflexive action.

Offering: An insect's carapace, whole and uncrushed.





BLANDISHMENT OF SIN (LEVEL-THREE THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

The subject of this power suffers increased damage the next time any harm is inflicted on him. That wound is upgraded one degree of damage. Three bashing damage becomes three lethal, and three lethal damage becomes three aggravated. (Aggravated wounds do not increase to any other sort, and the effects of the ritual are wasted.) If, at the end of the night, the subject has not suffered any damage, the ritual ends, though it may be invoked against him on the following night.

If the subject has Resilience, that Discipline offsets the benefits of this ritual for the next wound he suffers only if the damage upgrade would make the next wound aggravated. The injury in question inflicts its upgraded, aggravated damage, which Resilience downgrades again.

The action to activate this power is contested, pitting the sorcerer's Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery against the subject's Resolve + Blood Potency (resistance is reflexive). The subject is initially unaware of the power applied to him and doesn't know why his next injury is so severe.

Offering: A scrap of paper, upon which the subject's name must be written. The paper is then burned in sight of the subject as the ritual is cast.

MALEDICTION OF DESPAIR (LEVEL-THREE THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

The sorcerer curses his subject with regard to a specific action. The next time the subject engages in that action, her normal test pool is not drawn. A chance draw is made, instead. The curse can be as general ("Your next attack in combat is doomed to failure!") or as specific ("When next you feed upon a blind Christian at midnight...") as the caster chooses. The curse remains until its conditions are met. If the subject suspects that she is cursed by this ritual, the player may spend a Willpower point and make a Composure + Resolve draw. If this draw yields more successes than were achieved to invoke the malediction, the curse ends without ever coming to pass.

The action to activate this power is contested, pitting the sorcerer's Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery against the subject's Resolve + Blood Potency. Resisting in this manner is reflexive.

Offering: A lock of hair from the subject.

GIFT OF LAZARUS (LEVEL-FOUR THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

A successful invocation of this ritual brings the dead back to a semblance of life, though it is a pale echo at best. While the rite certainly reanimates the dead, it does not return a being's soul, nor does it halt the body's slow decline into rot and putrescence. The power effectively creates a painfully self-aware zombie, who most likely just wishes to be allowed to rest in peace. Initially, all of the former person's faculties may be intact (retaining access to its former Skills, but having no Willpower). The pathetic wretch can neither heal damage nor feel physical sensations in any true sense, however, so it suffers no wound penalties. The length of time in nights that the creature remains animate equals the number of successes on the Theban Sorcery draw made to create it. A Theban Sorcerer may create a number of simultaneous walking dead equal to his Willpower.

For every day that the creature was dead prior to the invocation, subtract one dot of the Storyteller's choosing from an Attribute in each of its Physical, Mental and Social categories, and also do the same for every day it is animated by this ritual. When any Attribute is reduced to zero, assume that any draws involving that trait fail automatically. Multiple animations of the same corpse are possible but sequentially more disturbing and less useful. A walking corpse of this sort that loses all of its Health dots to lethal damage is too wounded to move, but still aware and possibly even capable of communication (depending on the type of damage sustained and to what portions of its body).

The vampire who enacts this ritual is the only one who can command the zombie. That vampire may, however, instruct the corpse to accept direction from other individuals. A corpse-creature left to its own devices takes no actions of its own volition; it must be given direction, and undoubtedly laments being forced to carry them out.

A corpse suffers damage – lethal, bashing and aggravated – as it did in life. It remains active until its rightmost Health box is occupied with aggravated damage. A zombie does not bleed to death upon suffering lethal damage in its rightmost Health box, and must be attacked repeatedly until utterly destroyed. Needless to say, appropriate makeup or (failing that) prominent description tags are a necessity to portray this ritual's use correctly. Zombies can be affected by the same Disciplines that would have affected them before their death although they cannot become vessels for Dominate or Animalism or become possessed by ephemeral beings. Vampires and ghosts, despite being technically speaking deceased, can not be turned into walking corpses.

Offering: A Communion wafer placed under the dead person's tongue.

STIGMATA (LEVEL-FOUR THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

Although the majority of Theban Sorcery's rites have a decidedly Old Testament flavor, Stigmata takes the very suffering of the New Testament's Prince of Peace and turns it into a weapon of divine punishment. The victim of this ritual must be within sight when it is cast. He bleeds from the wrists, feet and side, the traditional five wounds of Christ. Mortals suffer one point of lethal damage per turn from blood loss, while Kindred lose one Vitae each turn. If a vampire runs out of Vitae during the course of the ritual, she proceeds to suffer lethal damage and is likely to frenzy (see p. 253). A vampire whose rightmost Health box is filled with lethal damage by this means falls into torpor (see p. 248).

The draw to activate this power is penalized by the subject's Stamina.

The number of turns the subject suffers from Stigmata equals the number of successes achieved on the Theban Sorcery draw.

Offering: A crucifix, which crumbles to ash as the ritual is enacted.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION (LEVEL-FIVE THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

The character transforms one substance or object into another. It can be water into blood, for example, or a tree branch into a snake, or a person into a pillar of salt. The object or substance transformed becomes a generic, perfectly normal, mundane version of whatever it is. Transubstantiation cannot turn a frog into a Lupine or a human into a Kindred, for example, though it could change a frog into a wolf or a human into a bat. There are a few additional limits on the transformation. It works only on targets of an equal or smaller Size than the caster, and the result cannot simulate human or supernatural intelligence. In addition, the result also cannot be larger than the caster unless several sorcerers participate. That is, the same frog could be transformed into a child, but the child wouldn't be able to have any intelligent discourse or even perform many complicated activities since it's just a frog turned into the simulacrum of a child. Vampiric Disciplines cannot be used to possess simulacra of living creatures. Lastly, unless the Storyteller specifically rules otherwise, this ritual cannot be used to create sophisticated devices, extinct animals, rare elements or other exotic creatures and substances. The ritual must result in a relatively mundane species or material which appears in its normal state. Transubstantiating something into rock would not for instance create lava. The substance or object reverts to its original form when the sun next rises (though a person transformed into, say, ice and whose arm is broken off has both portions of herself turn back to normal in different locations, and swiftly bleeds to death). Supernatural creatures are unaffected by Transubstantiation.



If this power is used to affect another creature, the invocation is contested, pitting the sorcerer's Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery against the subject's Stamina (resistance is reflexive). The sorcerer must be able to see the subject to be changed, be within arm's length of it, and in the case of an unwilling target, the victim must be completely restrained or otherwise subdued for this ritual to work. Even sleeping targets will immediately awaken to fight the power of this ritual. Objects held or worn by other characters cannot be changed and attempts to use Transubstantiation on near-intangible objects such as air or ongoing chemical reactions such as fire usually fail.

At the Storyteller's discretion, larger inanimate objects (but not living ones) may be transformed using this ritual, but summoning the requisite mystical strength requires a number of additional casters to participate in the ritual. Additional casters are defined as voluntary participants who spend a Willpower point and somehow take part in the rite itself — holding candles, drawing mystical symbols, chanting, et cetera. For every additional caster who actually knows the ritual, every three casters who have at least Theban Sorcery 1 or every five additional casters who do not have any knowledge of Theban Sorcery (but still actively participate), the maximum Size of the targeted object (or the resultant one) rises by two. No matter the number or sorcerers, however, Transubstantiation can never affect objects larger than Size 15.

Offering: A drop of liquid gold

WRATHFUL JUDGMENT (LEVEL-FIVE THEBAN SORCERY RITUAL)

This ritual metes out divine punishment by turning a Kindred's own Vitae to fire in his veins. The ritual is unlike other Theban Sorcery practices in that the sorcerer "charges" the ritual before the player makes the final draw, and that charge can consist of multiple points of Willpower. (Remember, though, that a player may spend only a single point of Willpower in a single turn, so invoking this power can take multiple turns.) Each point of Willpower invested in this ritual deals one point of aggravated damage to the subject and consumes one Vitae from her as the victim's blood burns away in a conflagration of divine fire. For more on fire damage, see p. 243. If the sorcerer has some personal object of the subject's, he may invoke this ritual from anywhere in the same domain as the subject. Otherwise, the vampire must be able to see his subject. The object must be of some importance to the intended victim — a picture of his dead wife works, while his car keys or cell phone might not. For a vampire or ghoul, a pint of their blood would be satisfactory.

This ritual has no effect on mortals or other supernatural beings. It does affect ghouls, however. In addition to other damage limitations, the invocation of this ritual can never inflict more than the Theban Sorcerer's permanent Willpower rating in damage, and an individual can only be targeted once every twenty-four hours by Wrathful Judgment. An attempted Wrathful Judgment — whether successful or not — also destroys the personal object used in it. This ritual can't be used during the day or in downtime.

The draw to activate this ritual is penalized by the subject's Stamina + Resilience. If no successes are drawn for the ritualist, all Willpower invested into the rite is lost.

Offering: One of the casting vampire's eyes or hands, either plucked out or cut off. The Kindred suffers two points of lethal damage in the process.

THE COILS OF THE DRAGON

The Requiem presents Kindred with a number of advantages that no mortal can attain, but the curse of vampirism far overshadows these petty powers. The vampires of the Ordo Dracul, however, believe that such doesn't have to be the case. Through the Coils of the Dragon, this covenant strives to cheat the curse levied upon its founder, stripping away the limitations and requirements of undeath until members achieve purity.



The Coils of the Dragon include three distinct philosophies, each of which has three tiers. The Coils of the Dragon, like Crúac and Theban Sorcery, truly belong to no one clan. Members of the covenant can study any or all of the coils, but they recognize that no vampire has ever truly achieved mastery — at least, not to the Order’s knowledge. A character must have at least one dot of Covenant Status (Ordo Dracul) in order to learn any Coils of the Dragon. A player who takes at least one dot worth of that Merit at character creation may spend one of his character’s three Discipline dots on the Coils of the Dragon if he wishes. This expenditure doesn’t count toward his in-clan Discipline expenditure, however. Any time a player wants to increase his character’s Coils of the Dragon score, the character must still have at least one dot of Covenant Status (Ordo Dracul) to do so.

Activating a tier of the coils requires no draw or asset expenditure in and of itself (though some tiers augment draws or permit certain abilities when they might not otherwise be allowed). A character always has the option of using a tier available to him, and the benefits of the tier may be “turned off” at the Kindred’s discretion.

New dots of the Coils of the Dragon are purchased like a Discipline, with the number of tiers the character already commands serving as the current level and the “new level” being the next to be achieved. For example, a character knows five tiers of the Coils of the Dragon. For him to learn a sixth, his player has to spend 42 experience points (6 [the new level in the coil] times 7 [the experience-point multiplier for out-of-clan Disciplines]). Tiers must be learned in order in each coil, though a character need not advance one coil to completion before he can advance another. That is, a character with two tiers of Coil of Blood could learn the first tier of Coil of the Beast without learning the third tier of Coil of Blood. Because the Coils of the Dragon do not constitute a true Discipline, they are not limited by Blood Potency trait maximums. A character need not have a Blood Potency of 6 to learn six different tiers of coils, for example. Yet, increasingly more dots in a coil are always bought as if they’re out-of-clan Disciplines.

THE COIL OF BLOOD

Vampires must feed on living blood to survive, and only the weakest of the Kindred can draw sustenance from the blood of animals. The Coil of Blood seeks to lift this requirement, allowing the Kindred to feed on their own terms, rather than forever be slaves to their hunger.

First Tier: Blood Seeps Slowly

The Dragon’s undead body doesn’t demand as much Vitae to animate itself as do those of other, less enlightened Kindred. The player need spend only one Vitae for his character to wake for a number of nights equal to the vampire’s Resolve. So, a Kindred with a Resolve of 2 loses a Vitae every other night for rising. This slower Vitae loss also makes it easier to keep a character’s Vitae levels high, since he can hunt at a slightly more leisurely pace. Rather than make a hunting test before a chapter to determine how much Vitae he has when it begins, the Dragon simply draws a single card from a standard deck. If it’s black, he enters play with his Vitae pool full, minus the one point required to wake that night. If it’s red, he still enters with 1/2 of his pool, rounded up. He need not risk the usual problems and complications of failed hunting test, at least before play begins.

Second Tier: Blood of Beasts

No matter what the vampire’s Blood Potency is, she can take sustenance from animals and humans.

Third Tier: Perspicacious Blood

The character gains three Vitae for every two Vitae she takes from a human, and receives double the Vitae consumed from Kindred or other supernatural vessels. It is not possible to “cycle” blood between two or more supernaturals to infinitely increase the Dragons’ Vitae supply in this manner.





THE COIL OF BANES

The two major banes of the Requiem are fire and sunlight. Any attempt to conquer the curse of vampirism must overcome these two obstacles. While no vampire has yet managed to truly surmount them, the Coil of Banes provides a place to start.

First Tier: Conquer the Red Fear

The character gains a +2 bonus to resist fear frenzy triggered by fire or sunlight. Fear frenzies triggered by other stimuli occur as normal.

Second Tier: Surmounting the Daysleep

The player can spend a Willpower point for the character to remain awake for an entire day without penalty (though the character must still take precautions to remain out of the sunlight and “waking” the next night still costs a Vitae). Test pools during the day are still limited by Humanity (see p. 263). If the character does sleep and is disturbed, add three points to the player’s wake-up draw.

Third Tier: Sun’s Forgotten Kiss

Sunlight at twilight and dawn causes only bashing damage to the Dragon, rather than aggravated. After the sun has fully risen, however, its rays cause aggravated damage as usual. At sea or on a mountaintop, the sun might fully rise within a mere five minutes and take some time to set (10 minutes). In a dense forest or deep in a city, the sun might rise slowly (10 minutes) and set quickly (five minutes).

THE COIL OF THE BEAST

The Beast seeks always to subsume the Man, which is probably the most serious impairment on the Coils of the Dragon. If legends are true, the order’s founder struggled with his Beast even before his Embrace, so it only makes sense that he would have pioneered a means to control it.

First Tier: Chastise the Beast

The player spends a Willpower point for his character to resist a frenzy of any kind automatically. The player may choose to draw Resolve + Composure as usual for his character to resist frenzy, spending the Willpower only if the draw fails.

Second Tier: Lure the Beast

“Riding the wave” does not cost a Willpower point, and it requires a base of only three successes, not five. All other rules still apply (see p. 257).

Third Tier: Exhaust the Beast

The character may spend an hour per night in frenzy (usually doing so under controlled conditions such as in a locked room or far from mortals). For the sake of game balance, this hour generally must be taken from play time. For example, the character must arrive at the game an hour late, or take an hour out of the game later on. For the rest of the night, the character does not enter frenzy unless she wishes to do so, no matter how strong the trigger is.

DEVOTIONS

The rote Disciplines that are common to all Kindred are not the only supernatural capabilities at their disposal. Every so often, an entirely new Discipline “technique,” formed by a curious combination of two or more standard powers, emerges from the ranks of the undead. Like standard Disciplines, these techniques – called Devotions – can be learned from or taught to other Kindred in much the same time frame and manner as the broader powers from which they originate. Any vampire with the appropriate prerequisite Discipline dots can, in theory, develop the Devotions for which he qualifies. It’s simply a matter of time and effort.

Some claim to have truly secret Devotions, however, and the claim does have some basis in truth. Kindred may find themselves incapable of developing some of the more esoteric techniques without a learned mentor at their side. Indeed, not all Kindred have even heard

of Devotions. By their nature, they are far rarer than the common Disciplines are, and knowledge of them is a bit more fleeting than the understanding of the unique Disciplines that sometimes accompany the creation of new bloodlines. Only a relative handful of Kindred possess Devotions, and fewer still have been wise enough to create their own. Kindred may learn of them through a “secret knowledge” a sire wishes to pass on to them, the confidences of a mentor, stolen wisdom in the hands of rebellious vampires, or by any other manner in which they come up in a story.

Although any Kindred can potentially learn any Devotion as long as she has the Discipline prerequisites, some measure of “creator’s pride” exists pertaining to each, depending upon who claims to have developed the power first. Most of the Devotions stemming from and involving the Protean Discipline are known as Gangrel Devotions, for example, while those involving Theban Sorcery are referred to as Lancea Sanctum Devotions.

The following are sample Devotions that vampires might encounter and learn. Remember that if a Devotion is turned against or applied to a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 228), a +2 bonus is gained on the power’s activation draw. For information on creating one’s own Devotions, see p. 380.

PERFECT STRANGER (AUSPEX ••••, OBFUSCATE ••••)

The Familiar Stranger is a versatile and useful ability, but its use can become frustrating when the vampire’s rather generic identity or limited disguise talents aren’t sufficient to allow him to achieve his goals. Perfect Stranger serves as a short-term fix to that problem, allowing the character to transcend the rather generic identities The Familiar Stranger is normally limited to, and instead create the façade of a specific individual. The character may use this power to mimic an existing individual, or they may simply craft an illusory appearance entirely of their own devising.

This Devotion allows the vampire to circumvent the many of the restrictions of The Familiar Stranger. The Kindred can make any changes to her appearance that she likes: alter her apparent age, modify her voice to suit her needs, adopt a different illusory wardrobe, change her facial features, switch apparent genders, etc. She can even appear as a radically different body type than her actual form. Thus, with this Devotion a six foot vampire can appear to be a small child. However, the form must still fall within basic human parameters — the vampire can now mimic a hideous Nosferatu (even if she is not deformed), but she cannot disguise herself as an animal, nor can she appear to be some sort of nightmarish four-armed demon or other similarly outlandish or impossible shapes.

However, it should be noted that because this power does not work on quite the same supernatural principles as The Familiar Stranger, it does not share all of that power’s benefits either. While a vampire can appear to change her clothing with Perfect Stranger, she does not have the ability to pass off one object for another. For example, if she appears to be a police officer, a target will not see her driver’s license as a police badge as he might if she were using The Familiar Stranger to assume the role of a police officer. On the other hand, with some research or even some quick Telepathy she could potentially use this Devotion to take on the appearance of a particular officer the target already trusts, which might avoid the need to show a badge in the first place.

A role adopted with The Familiar Stranger is thus typically less influential or imposing with regard to onlookers, but it’s also a lot easier to maintain since targets are naturally inclined to accept the vampire’s presence and don’t tend to expect much from her specifically. By contrast, creating an identity or impersonating an individual with Perfect Stranger carries a much greater risk of discovery, but in return it gives the vampire the capability to fool targets in a much more precise and devastating way. Both powers therefore have advantages and disadvantages to consider.





Like all Obfuscate-based powers, a façade created by Perfect Stranger does not appear on video equipment, nor will any apparent voice changes carry over on recording devices. Immediate observers using such devices are still fooled normally.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Intelligence + Subterfuge + Obfuscate versus Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

A failure on this test means that no change takes effect, though the vampire is aware of this failure. Success means that the vampire is perceived as having the appearance she desires for the rest of the scene.

Once fooled, an onlooker cannot attempt to pierce the vampire's disguise again unless he does something that would betray his identity, in which case the subject may test Wits + Awareness + Auspex against the vampire's own test pool.

A character with Auspex can potentially see through this disguise, as per the normal rules for Auspex versus Obfuscate (see p. 159).

Perfect Stranger lasts for one scene, until the vampire drops the façade or the disguise is prematurely dispelled somehow.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

ARCANE SIGHT (AUSPEX ••, CRÚAC •)

Those who know this Devotion have learned how to expand their mystical sight by incorporating rudiments of blood magic. Kindred with this power can use their Auspex to scrutinize the auras of objects, as well as people, and may glean information from the eddies of power that whorl through the world.

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Test Pool: Wits + Occult + Auspex

Action: Instant

Rather than sensing patterns of emotions as with Aura Perception, the user sees the ebb and flow of magical power. A Kindred possessing this Devotion can learn a variety of information, including the following: whether an object (or person) has any magic of its own or is currently under enchantment; whether the magic comes from the object or creature directly or from an external source; the nature of the magic (beneficial, harmful, illusory); even detailed information as to the type and level of magic employed. Scrutinized individuals who are capable of any sort of magic (vampiric or otherwise) always glow with sparkling crackles of energy.

Although this Devotion does identify sources of magic or items possessed of enchantments, it does not reveal magic effects in action (such as a magical fireball or an illusion). Each success on the activation draw yields one piece of information from the list above about the magic in question. If use of this Devotion becomes reasonably common, the Storytelling staff may even place task cards labeled "Arcane Sight" on important items or locations, which can only be attempted by characters with this Devotion.

This power costs 10 experience points to learn.

BODY OF WILL (RESILIENCE •••, VIGOR •)

Truly tough Kindred can call upon personal reserves of will to shore up their toughness in the face of adversity. By means of this Devotion, a vampire learns how to funnel his strength of will through his supernaturally altered form, allowing him to shrug off the deleterious effects of his wounds – for a time.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Composure + Athletics + Resilience

Action: Reflexive

Each success gained on the activation draw allows the character to ignore any current wound penalties, as well as any penalties he acquires from new wounds, for one turn. Therefore, if three successes are drawn, the character is wound-penalty-free for the duration of the existing turn and for two turns thereafter. A new Vitae expenditure and draw is required each time the vampire wishes to reactivate the Devotion.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

INSTANTANEOUS TRANSFORMATION (CELERITY ••, PROTEAN ••••)

Sometimes the shift into animal (or otherwise inhuman) form simply takes too long. Developed by the Gangrel, Instantaneous Transformation allows such a shift to take place, not over the span of seconds, but literally in the blink of an eye.

Cost: 1 Vitae (in addition to other costs required by the transformation)

Test Pool: Stamina + Survival + Protean

Action: Reflexive

Success on the activation draw indicates that the character transforms from his natural human form into an alternate shape instantly—so fast, in fact, that he may still take a normal action in that turn. If the draw fails, the character still transforms normally for the Protean Discipline used (in the space of one turn). He simply loses the one Vitae for this Devotion, and any other points must still be spent for the change itself. If a character is already in an alternate form, changing again requires a normal instant action.

Note that this Devotion is most useful to those vampires who can exhaust multiple Vitae in a single turn.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

IRON FACADE (OBFUSCATE ••, RESILIENCE ••)

Sometimes intimidation is a vampire's best weapon, particularly when facing an opponent who is unaware of the Kindred's true ability. Through the use of this power, the vampire appears to shrug off even the mightiest of blows, to ignore wounds that should cripple even one of the undead. Kindred with this power have been known to rout far more capable foes, for the enemy truly believed that such vampires were invulnerable.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Intelligence + Survival + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

With a successful invocation draw, the character can hide the full extent of his injuries. Wounds are invisible, and he does not appear to slow down, limp or grow weary. He seems to function at full capability, regardless of how badly injured he actually is. Iron Façade does not actually heal wounds or reduce test pool penalties. It simply *appears* to do so, making it impossible for any observers to determine the character's true condition. A player whose character is using this Devotion need not announce any apparent injury as the result of an attack, nor adopt any of the usual makeup or description tags associated with his wounds.

Once activated, Iron Façade lasts for a scene or until the character is sent into torpor by his wounds. A vampire with Auspex might be able to see through this power, as per the standard Auspex-versus-Obfuscate rules (see p. 159).

This power costs 10 experience points to learn.

LESSONS IN THE STEEL (AUSPEX •, RESILIENCE •••)

Some rather intrepid Kindred develop the ability to gain insight into a foe's combat prowess by willingly subjecting themselves to opponents' attacks. Knowledge is power, after all, and any vampire wounded in this way is gifted with power that can then be used against the enemy.





Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Resolve + Investigation + Resilience – opponent’s Resolve

Action: Instant

In order to activate this Devotion, the vampire must first suffer an attack from an opponent that successfully inflicts at least one point of damage of any type in close combat. Upon suffering this wound, the vampire’s player makes the requisite draw. His test pool decreases by one for each piece of information sought about the attacker (up to a maximum of five) beyond the first. The information the character seeks must be related to combat or other martial prowess. For example, Joe’s character wishes to learn two bits of relevant information about the Kindred who just hit him, so Joe draws Resolve 3 + Investigation 2 + Resilience 3, minus one point for the second piece of information sought. One success is achieved and the Storyteller reveals that the attacker has great prowess with a blade (Weaponry 4), but rather poor follow-through (Strength 1).

This power has no effect on ranged attacks, nor on attacks that are themselves manifestations of other Disciplines. Theban Sorcery’s Blood Scourge, for example, provides no information, but an opponent invoking Vigor for a pummeling attack does.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

PARTIAL TRANSFORMATION (PROTEAN ••••, RESILIENCE •)

With this power, any vampire who is capable of assuming a bestial or inhuman shape may choose to stop the process partway through, granting herself a single aspect or trait of the animal. The nose of a wolf allows for tracking prey, and the wings of a bat or bird – while unable to provide true flight, as the Kindred simply aren’t built for soaring – are useful for breaking falls or gliding short distances. Technically, this power can also be used for sprouting claws, but as the Protean Discipline already allows for that effect such a use would be somewhat redundant.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: This power involves no draw to invoke.

Action: Instant

Once the transformation begins, the character halts it, granting herself only those animalistic features that she chooses. Obviously, the character may take on only the qualities or features of an animal she can already become through use of Protean. Thus, a character with two alternate forms – a wolf and a bat – could assume wings or a wolf’s nose, but not the tail of a scorpion or the eyes of a hawk. Partial transformations of this sort last for the duration of the scene or until the character chooses to remove them.

Use of this power provides a bonus of +1 or +2 to the circumstances in question, as determined by the Storyteller. A character using a wolf’s nose might gain +2 to attempts to track something by scent. Combat applications of this power add one die to attack draws and inflict lethal damage. Needless to say, this power’s use should be marked with suitable makeup or description cards.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

QUICKEN SIGHT (AUSPEX •, CELERITY •)

With this power, the Kindred is able to combine her Heightened Senses and superhuman reaction time to see fast-moving objects in detail that neither Discipline alone can reveal. She can follow a specific card in a deck as it’s shuffled, track the loaded chamber in a game of Russian Roulette, pick out subliminal messages in a film or on television, and even read the headline on a newspaper as she drives past the newsstand at 60 miles per hour.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: This power involves no draw to invoke.



Action: Reflexive

Any time the character wishes to observe, follow or examine something that moves too quickly to follow with normal sight, the player may add +5 to a Wits + Composure test pool while this Devotion is active. (Especially fast-moving or small items might impose a penalty of -1 to -3 on the draw, at the Storyteller's discretion, for a net +2 to +4 bonus.) Quicken Sight lasts for the duration of a scene.

This power costs five experience points to learn.

TOUCH OF DEPRIVATION (AUSPEX ••••, DOMINATE ••)

With a simple touch, the Kindred can temporarily shut down one of a victim's five senses. This Devotion is most frequently used as a combat or interrogative tool to blind or deafen a subject, but it can just as easily be used to negate one of the other senses. In fact, a vampire who is immune to pain does not suffer wound penalties, so some Kindred have been known to use this power on their allies in a crisis.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Test Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Auspex versus Resolve + Blood Potency (if the subject is unwilling)

Action: Contested; instant if the subject is willing

The character must touch the subject (see "Touching an Opponent" in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook, p. 217) or an unarmed attack might be made. Once contact is established, the contested draw is made if the subject is resistant. If the player gets the most successes, the vampire chooses which of the five senses is negated. The victim goes blind, deaf or is otherwise impaired. If an equal number of successes is drawn or the subject gets more, the power has no effect. This effects of this power last for a scene. (See "Fighting Blind" in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook, p. 227.)

If the vampire possesses a higher Auspex than the subject, she may negate a supernatural sense (such as The Spirit's Touch), rather than one of the mundane five.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

VERIDICAL TONGUE (DOMINATE ••, MAJESTY ••)

With this power, a character is able to sift through the tide of Kindred lies by rendering one subject unable to speak anything but the entire truth as he knows it. Lies cannot escape his mouth, nor is his tongue able to utter them. Targets may choose to remain silent, of course, but when they speak, they simply can't lie, even by omission. The subject must be in the Discipline's user's presence when this power is invoked.

Cost: 1 Vitae

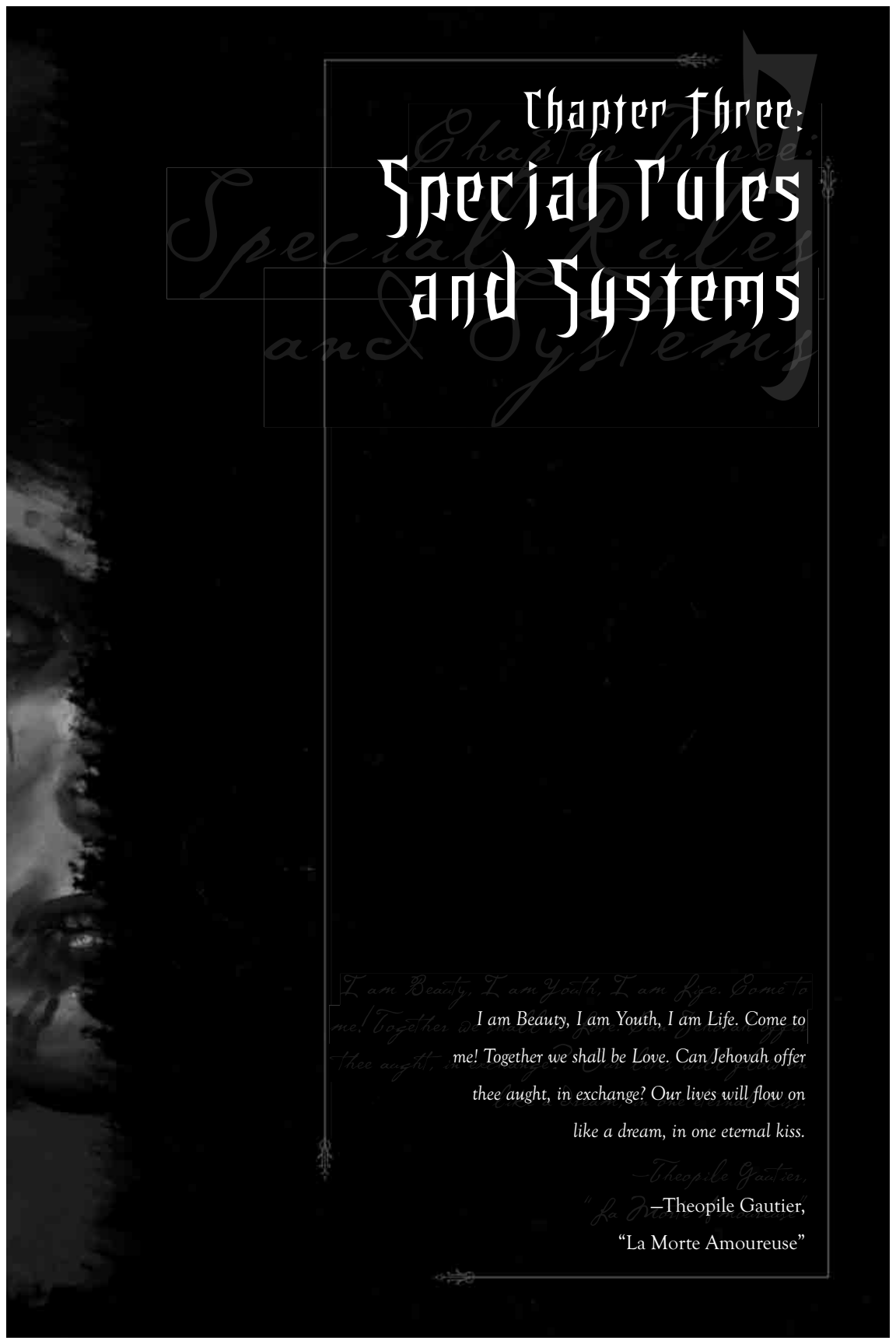
Test Pool: Presence + Subterfuge + Majesty - Composure

Action: Instant

If the draw is successful, the target must speak the truth for a number of minutes equal to the successes gained. He may choose not to speak at all, but silence often equates to guilt among the Kindred.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.





Chapter Three: Special Rules and Systems

I am Beauty, I am Youth, I am Life. Come to me! Together we shall be Love. Can Jehovah offer thee aught, in exchange? Our lives will flow on like a dream, in one eternal kiss.

*—Theophile Gautier,
"La Morte Amoureuse"*



In addition to the powers and advantages provided by such aspects of the Requiem as Blood Potency and Disciplines, vampires are subject to certain physical, mental and emotional states outside those of the mortals through whose world they secretly move. This chapter describes and explains a number of special rules and conditions that apply to Kindred characters alone, or that affect the undead differently than they affect mortals.

Topics covered in this chapter include the following.

- **Properties of the Blood:** How the Kindred acquire and use Vitae, in addition to the unique effects it has on vampires.
- **The Predator's Taint:** How vampires instinctively react to one another.
- **The Traditions:** How the physiological laws of being affect the undead, as well as the restrictions (and protections) it places on them.
- **Damage, Wounds and Healing:** Suffering harm is inevitable when one becomes a vampire, and recovering from it is paramount. Torpor is handled herein as well.
- **Frenzy:** From fear frenzies to hunger frenzies to berserk rampages, the Kindred are given to fits of uncontrollable passion.
- **Humanity:** How the Kindred stave off the wiles of the Beast Within, and the toll its actions take upon their sense of morality.
- **Derangements:** When a Kindred's mental or moral state erodes, she sometimes exhibits dangerous psychological quirks.
- **Golconda and Other Means of Transcendence:** Some Kindred believe that vampirism itself can be overcome, its curse overturned by good works or a greater understanding of the Kindred condition.
- **Status and the Danse Macabre:** Kindred jockey endlessly for position in their gilded cages, trading favors and drawing strength from their clans and covenants.

Properties of the Blood

More than anything else, blood defines the Kindred. Within seconds after a vampire consumes blood, the vital fluid changes into something quite different that the Kindred call Vitae. Vampire Vitae looks like mortal blood, but it doesn't flow like mortal blood. A vampire's Vitae moves through her body at the behest of the character's will, not because of a beating heart. Kindred don't bleed when they are wounded; Vitae might pool slightly in the wound, but it does not flow forth unless the vampire wills it to do so.

Vitae retains its supernatural properties for a few minutes after it leaves a vampire's body and is exposed to air, then it reverts to ordinary blood. A scientist who examines a sample of former Vitae would find a mixture of blood from many sources, with some of the cells broken down. Some Theban Sorcery practitioners know procedures to preserve the supernatural power of Vitae outside a vampire's body, and blood that came from a vampire always retains a mystical connection that ritualists can exploit.

Kindred employ their Vitae for many purposes. As a vampire calls upon the occult power in her stolen blood, the actual mass and volume of Vitae in her body decreases. As a character uses up her Vitae, her skin tightens and blanches and her body shrinks slightly. She looks less alive. Feeding enables her to restore her lifelike appearance – as lifelike as the character can manage, anyway.

A player may spend Vitae in the same turn in which he spends a point of Willpower. Spending a Vitae is *always* a reflexive action. Even if the actions that doing so enable might not always be reflexive themselves (such as with certain Disciplines), the act of spending the Vitae is.



USING BLOOD RESPONSIBLY

Please remember that **The Requiem** is just a game. No actual bloodletting or blood-drinking of any kind should ever occur during play. Likewise, no quantity of real blood should ever be brought to the game in any sort of container, even as a prop. Such practices are not only highly disturbing to onlookers, but pose a health risk as well. Lastly, be aware that excessively bloody makeup or costuming may cause bystanders to summon the authorities. Even if used well out of sight of non-players, fake blood can still stain costuming, carpeting, props and other essentials, so make sure to apply and monitor it very carefully.



WAKING UP

A vampire expends one Vitae in the course of his daily slumber. If a Kindred falls asleep without any Vitae in his body (an unlikely event, but it could happen), he enters a longer torpor for a duration set by his Humanity and Blood Potency, just as if he had lost all his Health points to lethal damage. See the rules for torpor that follow.

For accounting on the character sheet, mark off the Vitae when the character awakens. Usually, the Vitae is counted as being spent at nightfall, the normal time for vampires to rise. If a Kindred forces herself to wake up during the day, the character must expend a Vitae. If the vampire lets herself sleep again before night falls, she expends another Vitae when she rises again that evening.

COUNTERFEITING LIFE

Although vampires are dead, they can imitate some of the things that living people do. The Damned know this process as “the blush of life.” A Kindred can force Vitae into his outer tissues to give his skin a lifelike flush, or to force his heart to beat and his lungs to inhale and exhale in a normal rhythm. Kindred who want to engage in sexual intercourse — perhaps to feed upon a suitably distracted mortal vessel, or perhaps for simple pleasure — can force blood to the appropriate section of anatomy as well.

Normally vampires vomit up any food or drink they consume immediately. If a Kindred wishes to consume food or drink, her player must spend a Vitae. This is in addition to the “blush of life” a character may have already paid during the scene, though a character need not invoke the blush of life to be able to consume food. At the end of the scene, the character noisily, messily and bloodily eliminates the consumed matter by way of regurgitation, so it’s best to make sure that no one’s around to see the Kindred afterward.

Imitating the appearance and functions of life or the ability to consume food for one scene costs a character one Vitae, and both expenditures are reflexive.

Players whose characters employ the blush of life may forgo applying makeup to portray a suitably vampiric countenance, since they can pass for human at casual inspection. Indeed, some troupes may even *require* players to have their characters spend Vitae on the blush of life if they do not wear some sort of vampiric makeup, to balance things with the other players who made the effort to look appropriately undead.

PHYSICAL AUGMENTATION

A vampire can call upon his Vitae to enhance his muscular power, speed and agility, or ability to withstand harm. In rules terms, for each Vitae the player expends, he adds two points to one Physical test pool — one based on Strength, Dexterity or Stamina. This boost lasts for one turn and is a reflexive action, ignoring Initiative. Enhancing Attributes with





Vitae does not change a character's damage limits in any way and only changes test pools, not the actual Attributes themselves.

Example: *Eamon is beset by three foolish street thugs who think they can mug him walking through the park one night. Eamon feels reluctant to endanger the Masquerade by using Disciplines, so he resolves to give the thugs a thorough but still mundane thrashing. Picking up a stout branch from the ground nearby as the young toughs advance (and wishing he had his broadsword instead), Eamon calls on the Blood.*

Thanks to his Blood Potency of 6, Eamon can expend three Vitae in each turn. He fed earlier in the night, so he has a full 15 Vitae. Eamon sees that all three punks carry guns, so he decides that his first priority is to not get shot. Three Vitae are pumped into his Strength, raising his test pool by six. This tremendous boost deals quite a drubbing to one of the thugs. The additional Strength (Eamon's player turns over three Vitae slips to the Narrator.) On the next turn, Eamon's player spends two more Vitae, again boosting his damage as he pounds another one of the hooligans senseless. The stoic Gangrel doesn't mind expending so much Vitae on the fight. After he batters the punks unconscious, he plans to restore his losses from their veins.

HEALING WOUNDS

A vampire can also use Vitae to heal wounds. See p. 244 for details, as the subjects of wounds and healing are significantly different for Kindred than they are for mortals. Spending Vitae to heal wounds is a reflexive action that doesn't require a character to wait for her Initiative.

DISCIPLINE USE

Most Disciplines do not cost Vitae to use. Some of the most formidable powers do, however, as do the rituals of Crúac, Devotions and the rare, exotic Disciplines known to some bloodlines. See each power or ritual to see how much they cost.

BLOOD ADDICTION

Even mortals can taste the stolen life that charges them with power and turns them into ghouls (see p. 233). That power makes Vitae the most delicious taste in the world. What could satisfy more than life itself? Stolen fruit is always sweetest. Anyone — mortal, animal, vampire or other — who drinks a vampire's blood risks becoming addicted to it. They want to taste that power again. A character might know perfectly well that this bloodthirst could enslave him, maybe even destroy him, but knowing doesn't make the thirst easier to resist. Just like an alcoholic offered a shot of whiskey, it's all too easy to swear that you'll quit — after this one.

In rules terms, any time a character who has imbibed Vitae receives a chance to do so again, the player draws Resolve + Composure. A single success allows the character to resist the temptation.

The more one gives in, the harder it is to exercise self-control. Each time a character gives in to the thirst for Vitae, subsequent attempts to resist temptation suffer a cumulative -1 penalty on the Resolve + Composure draw. Eventually, the character's Resolve + Composure test pool drops to zero and a chance draw is all that's left. At that point, the character is completely addicted. Not only does he have very little chance to resist the thirst, he doesn't want to. A derangement (see p. 268) is imposed instantly if the player draws an Ace on a Resolve + Composure draw to resist the temptation of the Blood.

Addicted mortals and animals often become obsessed with drinking mundane blood, thinking that they might gain some power by doing so. They also frequently grow obsessively dependent on any vampire who supplies their Vitae, becoming willing to do anything — any-

thing! — for another fix. The Kindred exploit such addiction, but doing so carries its own risks. Obsession can take many strange forms. Ghouls might preemptively punish themselves for imaginary infractions, to show “the master” the depth of their loyalty. Two ghouls might become insanely jealous of each other, and do their best to sabotage each other without disobeying their domitor’s plans in the process. A ghoul might think that his master speaks in his mind, telling him to do things. Others suffer even stranger varieties of insanity.

Addicted Kindred have been known to wound themselves to lap at their own blood. Vitae addicts also often turn to diablerie in their search for an even greater rush. The connection between Vitae addiction and diablerie is so strong that many Kindred simply assume that a known Vitae addict is also a diablerist and blame him for any unexplained disappearances of local Kindred. If no one has disappeared, the Prince and Primogen might still order the Vitae addict to be chained and driven into torpor. Twenty-five years of torpor — long enough for a vampire’s Blood Potency to drop by one — cures Vitae addiction... or at least the physical craving. The memory of pleasure can start the cycle all over again, but at least the character’s test pool to resist Vitae is reset to the standard.

If a mortal or Kindred character can resist the lure of Vitae, a +1 bonus is gained to subsequent attempts to deny the thirst. The character can beat her nascent addiction if the player ever scores four successes on a single Resolve + Composure draw. It’s as if the character never tasted Vitae at all. If she drinks vampire blood again, however, she feels the thirst once more.

When a character falls short of complete addiction, the thirst for Vitae can fade with time, as long as the character avoids temptation. For each year in which a character stays away from any exposure to Kindred blood, one point is added to Resolve + Composure pools to avoid temptation.



SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

In certain special cases, Kindred can drink another vampire’s blood without risking Vitae addiction. Most importantly, the Vitae consumed during the Embrace does not provoke a further thirst for vampire blood. Compared to the shattering power of the Embrace itself, the addictive qualities of Vitae are as a light breeze compared to a hurricane.

Some rituals also require one vampire to drink another’s blood. Such blood rites do not addict participants. In such cases, however, the Kindred use small quantities of Vitae, and the ritual channels the blood’s power to a specific goal. The ordinary Vitae-junkie just lets the power roll over him. It’s the difference between a doctor prescribing an opiate and a fiend shooting up. The drug is the same, but the application, the effects and the dangers are very different.



ELDERS, ADDICTION AND DIABLERIE

Vitae addiction does not seem to become a problem for vampires who are so old and potent that mortal blood no longer sustains them. They must feed on other Kindred, but they do not seem to suffer the derangements and lack of control of most Vitae addicts... unless they commit diablerie. In that case, the elder risks diablerie addiction. (Indeed, merely drinking vampire blood is different from the act of diablerie — described momentarily.) Diablerie addiction works just like Vitae addiction, but a player must draw her character’s Resolve + Composure for her to resist the urge to diablerize another vampire, even if the character knows her crime could be discovered in a short time and bring her destruction. Few threats inspire as much terror among the Kindred as the possibility of such a diablerie-crazed elder.





DIABLERIE

The act of diablerie, sometimes known by the poetic name of Amaranth after a flower that never fades, is the process of drinking not only a Kindred's Vitae, but her very soul. Needless to say, diablerie is a heinous crime, much feared and punished by elders, and much misunderstood and mystifying to young Kindred. If drinking Kindred Vitae is looked down upon by other Kindred, the act of diablerie is held as an ultimate sin against both the Damned as a whole and their society proper.

To call it a crime doesn't do it justice, as diablerie provides a host of benefits along with its detriments and social stigmas. This is why the elders fear it — it is potentially an equalizer for young Kindred looking to cheat their way toward power, instead of letting time and experience hone the power of the Blood.

COMMITTING DIABLERIE

Diablerie itself is a fairly straightforward act. Most importantly, the potential victim must be staked or in torpor, when the soul is sluggish enough to be caught off guard, and the body is placid. Most would-be diablerists attempt their crimes on Kindred who are already staked or already in torpor, and little ignites the passions of power-hungry neonates like the rumor of a torpid elder. It is not unknown, however, for particularly violent Kindred to beat their victims into torpor themselves.

The diablerist must drink all of the Vitae the subject has in his system. Thereafter, the diablerist must keep drinking, sucking at the blasphemous essence that animates the Damned. Diablerie can benefit only one vampire; it is not possible for a coterie of diablerists to consume the soul of a single Kindred and spread it among themselves. In the event of multiple Kindred attempting diablerie on a single target, the first one to win the draw series outlined as follows is the only one who reaps the benefits — and penalties — of diablerie. Should multiple vampires tie during this draw series, whoever has the highest natural test pool is victorious. Should this continue to result in a tie, any randomized process should suffice to determine the outcome.

Consuming the soul requires a Resolve + Stamina draw on the part of the diablerist's player. This is an extended action. A number of successes must be accumulated equal to the Willpower dots of the Kindred being diablerized. Each draw represents one turn of effort. It is advised that the Storyteller does the record keeping, so the player doesn't know exactly what happens to his character, at least immediately. Circumstance penalties (such as those associated with wounds and supernatural curses) apply to Resolve + Stamina draws. Furthermore, if the attacking character is in frenzy or "rides the wave" (see p. 247) when attempting diablerie, draws suffer an additional -3 penalty. Attempting diablerie has a limit of draws equal to the diablerist's Willpower dots. If the required successes haven't been accumulated in that many draws, the victim's soul is just too potent or resistant and cannot be consumed. The victim is consigned to Final Death, instead.

A player may not spend a Willpower point on a diablerie draw, nor do any augmentations of his character's Attributes (through blood expenditure, Disciplines or mystic artifacts) apply. Only the character's natural Resolve and Stamina are relevant.

Failure: The character makes no further progress in consuming the soul of the victim, as the soul fights to elude consumption. In the case of two consecutive failures, the victim's soul wrenches free at the moment of its consumption, inflicting horrific trauma on the mind of the diablerist. The diablerist suffers the normal Humanity loss (see p. 251) and gains an appropriate derangement of the Storyteller's choice. The victim succumbs to Final Death and cannot be diablerized.

Success: The character continues to draw the soul of the fallen Kindred into his own.

After all of a victim's Vitae has been taken, but before all successes are achieved in consuming the subject's soul, a diablerist in possession of his faculties can cease to feed at any time and allow the victim to reach Final Death in (relative) peace.

Upon diablerie's completion, the Humanity of the diablerist drops by one automatically. He also gains the benefits and drawbacks described here. A diablerized Kindred crumbles to ash immediately, regardless of how old her body actually was upon the Amaranth.

BENEFITS OF DIABLERIE

If the diablerized vampire had a higher Blood Potency than the Kindred committing the Amaranth, the diablerist's Blood Potency immediately increases by one. Blood Potency increases by only one, regardless of the difference between the vampires' Blood Potencies. This increase need not be paid for with experience points, though it still must be properly verified and recorded by a member of the Storytelling staff.

In consuming the fallen Kindred's soul, the diablerist actually consumes some of her knowledge as well. The diablerist acquires a single dot of either a Skill or a Discipline that the diablerized vampire possessed *at a higher level than the diablerist does*. This adds to the diablerist's dots in that Skill or Discipline, even if he didn't have any dots at all in the Skill or Discipline before. For example, if a neonate with Obfuscate 3 diablerizes an elder who has Obfuscate 2, the neonate may not take an additional dot of Obfuscate. He already knows more than the elder with regard to that Discipline. The diablerist may not take a dot in a bloodline's unique Discipline unless he is also a member of that bloodline (see p. 373). Also, a diablerist may not exceed the trait maximum imposed by his Blood Potency (although if that Blood Potency now increases to a level that allows a higher level of those traits, he enjoys the benefit of that newly raised Blood Potency when deciding which dot of what to acquire). This increase need not be paid for with experience points, though again it must be verified by the Storytelling staff.

It should be noted that the only benefit to diablerizing a vampire of lower Blood Potency is acquiring an extra dot in a Discipline or Skill. All of the detriments still apply, however.

DRAWBACKS OF DIABLERIE

As noted prior, when a vampire commits diablerie, his Humanity decreases by one automatically. The Humanity draw that follows this loss to check for a derangement occurs normally; see p. 260.

A vampire committing the Amaranth risks blood addiction as normal when he consumes his fallen foe's Vitae and soul. See p. 220 for more information on blood addiction. This risk isn't redundant — the vampire need not check for addiction right as he tastes his victim's Vitae and then again as it turns into diablerie.

Finally, the act of Amaranth stains the diablerist's own soul upon its commission. The character's aura acquires telltale black veins that reveal her crime to those who can scrutinize such things (see p. 161). These black veins remain in the diablerist's aura for one year per dot of Blood Potency the victim possessed. This time is cumulative; a vampire who diablerizes two Kindred of Blood Potency 6 has veins in his aura for 72 months. If a character diablerizes his victims months apart, the additional months add on to the end of last. For example, if a Kindred diablerizes a vampire of Blood Potency 4 and a year later diablerizes a vampire of Blood Potency 5, the black veins appear in her aura for 42 months following the second diablerie — or perhaps even longer, if she keeps to her wicked ways and diablerizes again.




OPTIONAL RULE: DIABLERIE DURATION

The standard diablerie duration listed was designed to suit an ongoing chronicle expected to run between two to four years, which holds chapters roughly once a month or every other month. Consuming the souls of powerful Kindred will likely stay with the character for the rest of the chronicle (as it should), but a wily vampire might be able to get away with a less potent meal if she's careful. If this standard diablerie duration does not suit the game, however, the Storyteller may use the short diablerie rules: This option is designed for shorter chronicles, or chronicles of any length where the Storyteller does not mind having diablerie be slightly easier to hide. With this option, tell-tale black veins persist in the diablerist's aura for six months per dot of the victim's Blood Potency.

OPTION RULE: SOUL SHARDS

If a Kindred diablerizes another vampire with a Blood Potency at least two points higher than her own, the overwhelming strength of the older vampire's mind may crush the weaker soul, resulting in the body being taken over by the diablerized vampire after a successful diablerie. The diablerized character makes a reflexive contested draw of Willpower vs. the diablerist's Stamina + Blood Potency without any bonuses from Willpower, Vitae, Disciplines or sorcery. If both get an equal number of successes, additional draws are made until a winner emerges. If the diablerist gets more successes, nothing unusual happens. If the diablerized character gets more successes then her soul takes over the diablerist's body, destroying that soul entirely. The resulting vampire gets no benefits from the diablerie and retains all of the diablerist's dots as their minds merge - with one exception: Any Discipline and sorcery dots not possessed by both vampires are permanently lost. A point of Humanity is lost in the process of the bestial act that includes the destruction of another soul. Her Advantages are then recalculated. The Storyteller should assign an appropriate Derangement, signifying the traumatic act of having one's mind crushed and then freed in such an inhumane fashion.



LIMITATIONS

Only vampires can commit diablerie. Ghouls, werewolves, mortals and the like aren't Kindred, so they lack the ability to consume the souls of the Damned. Furthermore, only vampires can be diablerized. Those selfsame ghouls, werewolves or mortals do not have the same spark of undeath animating them, so their souls cannot be consumed in this manner.

A vampire in Golconda cannot be diablerized. A would-be diablerist can certainly try, but the Kindred's soul eludes the consumption. In a situation like this, make the draws as normal (in this case, it is certainly better for the Storyteller to draw for the player), but tell the player that the character feels that something isn't quite right as she commits the baneful act.

A diablerized vampire never leaves behind a ghost, as the diablerist consumes the soul that might become one of the lingering dead.

AN EXAMPLE OF DIABLERIE

Danny the Ventrue is supposed to deliver a message to a Daeva contact. When he arrives at the meeting place, he finds nothing but a trail of blood and a torpid Nosferatu in bad shape. Danny figures that he has a golden opportunity before him – he'll diablerize the Nosferatu and if anyone raises a fuss, he can implicate the missing Daeva.

The torpid Nosferatu has only one Vitae remaining, which Danny quickly devours. Thereafter, the process of diablerie begins, and Danny has seven turns in which to succeed, as his Willpower is 7. The Storyteller draws Danny's Resolve + Stamina, gaining two successes. The Nosferatu also has a Willpower of 7, so Danny needs five more successes to complete the deed, but he doesn't know this. Danny chooses to continue, so the Storyteller draws again, this time acquiring three more successes. Danny presses on,

determined to complete the deed in spite of this tough old Haunt's tenacity. The Storyteller yields two more successes in the third turn, signifying that the diablerie is complete.

Danny's Humanity automatically drops from 5 to 4 to pay for his base treachery, so his player draws four times to determine whether Danny gains a derangement. Sure enough, he fails, and the Storyteller decides that Danny acquires the derangement of narcissism. Flush with his new power (but secretly afraid someone will expose his scheme), Danny feels on top of the world and has trouble hiding his supremely confident demeanor from others around him. On the other hand, the Ventrue feels a rush of power. The Nosferatu had a Blood Potency of 3 and Danny's was only 2, so it now rises to 3. In addition, he chooses to acquire a dot of *Obfuscate*, which he didn't know at all before.

Now all Danny has to do is hope that no one studies his aura for the next , as the black veins therein will remain for that long. With any luck and his new knowledge of *Obfuscate*, he'll be able to lie low long enough to allay any undue attention. Helping him in that aim will be Kindred suspicion of the *Daeva* contact.

THE VINCULUM

The addictive power of Vitae takes a special twist if a mortal or Kindred repeatedly tastes the blood of a single Kindred. In this case, an emotional dependence on that specific vampire adds to the general thirst for Vitae. The Kindred call this dependence the Vinculum, the blood bond or the blood oath. The vampire who created the bond is called the regnant; the bound Kindred or mortal is the thrall.

Some Kindred say that the Vinculum is the closest the Damned come to true love. If such is accurate, it is a terrible letdown, as the Vinculum is artificial and empty. It is not true love; it is simply a supernatural approximation. For many Kindred, it is a painful reminder of what they once had available to them as mortals, while the emotions they experience in the Requiem are little more than echoes of those lost feelings. The victim of a blood bond feels utterly devoted to his regnant and does nearly anything she asks. Dominate cannot overpower the thrall's feelings for his regnant. Majesty imposes feelings for other Kindred, but it cannot negate the Vinculum's hold.

The Kindred most often apply the Vinculum to mortals. A ghoul is, necessarily, blood bound after a period of days, weeks or even months. Kindred can also bond other Kindred. No one, however, can be thrall to more than one regnant. A Vinculum to one Kindred precludes the character becoming bound to another vampire, as long as the regnant still exists.

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE VINCULUM

Most Kindred feel a healthy fear of the Vinculum. They know how their kind treats its slaves, and they shudder at the thought of becoming the pawns of one of their fellow monsters. In most cities, the Prince or other dignitaries threaten to apply the Vinculum only as a punishment for misbehavior. A Prince who too often orders other Kindred to submit to his regnancy might provoke a rebellion. Kindred who believe that love can be eternal (if not entirely natural) might drink each other's blood to form a mutual bond. They also recognize that their mutual bond protects them from ever becoming bound to anyone else.

The Invictus tolerates the Vinculum more than any other covenant does. Its elders see the blood oath as another tool by which they can rule over their juniors. In some cities, elders routinely blood bond their childer and all of their line. In most cities, however, a sire may not subject her childe to the Vinculum without special permission from the Prince. Princes do not like Kindred who love their sires more than they fear their rulers. Invictus elders accept such prohibitions because opposing them would turn too many Kindred against the covenant and would too blatantly contradict the covenant's pretense of meritocracy.

The other covenants generally disapprove of Vinculums, or at least their members say they do. The Ordo Dracul sees Vinculums as distractions, emotional baggage that diverts atten-





tion best focused elsewhere. The Lancea Sanctum holds that Kindred should serve only God and Longinus. The Carthians see Vinculum as the acme of antidemocratic elder tyranny, while the unbound simply loathe submitting to anyone else. The Circle of the Crone merely notes that while Kindred should accept the Vinculum as one more aspect of their existence, forcing a Kindred into a blood oath serves no spiritual purpose. Political or spiritual dogma seldom prevents members of these covenants from blood bonding other Kindred when it suits their purposes, though.

GAME MECHANICS

Each time a character drinks another Kindred's blood, the character's emotional bond to her grows stronger. A character may have several partial Vinculums to any number of Kindred. Once an actual third-stage Vinculum forms, however, all other partial Vinculums vanish.

The first taste generates a mild interest, but the delicious power in the Vitae outweighs any personal interest. The character knows that the other vampire tastes good. The donor of the blood gains no particular hold over the character.

The second drink generates a stronger connection between the two Kindred, quite apart from potential Vitae addiction. The imbibing character considers the blood's donor an important figure in his unlife, though he is hardly enslaved. The character's interest might take the form of affection, trust, admiration or protectiveness, depending on the character's personality. The Storyteller might ask the character's player to attempt a Resolve + Composure draw if the character tries to attack the nascent regnant, or seriously harm her interests. The other vampire's player, meanwhile, receives a +1 bonus to all Social draws directed at the nascent thrall.

The third drink *probably* creates the complete Vinculum. Usually it does, so most Kindred believe "three drinks, you're bound." Strong-willed or strong-blooded Kindred sometimes resist the third drink, though. The third time a character drinks a potential regnant's blood, ask the player for a Stamina + Resolve draw (using the character's natural dots in those Attributes only). Adjust the draw by the difference between the two Kindred's Blood Potency dots. If the potential thrall has the higher Blood Potency, add the difference. If the potential regnant has the higher Blood Potency, subtract the difference. If the adjusted Stamina + Resolve draw generates four successes, the Vinculum doesn't "take," though the potential thrall still feels great affection for the would-be regnant. If the character drinks the other vampire's blood a fourth time, call for another adjusted Stamina + Resolve draw to see if the bond forms this time. Eventually, any vampire must succumb.

In the case of multiple Kindred's blood being consumed simultaneously (such as through commingled blood in a group ritual, for example), if the potential exists for multiple third-stage Vinculums being formed, the most potent Blood takes precedence. If that Vinculum fails to form, move down to the next most potent blood, and so on. If multiple vampires' blood is equally potent, determine randomly which of those equally potent Vitae takes precedence. For example, Armand the Gangrel is two steps toward a Vinculum to the other two members of his coterie. They all share blood in a chalice passed around before a night of raising hell. Since this is Armand's third taste of both of his coterie-mates' Vitae, he might become subject to a Vinculum to either of them. He makes his first check for a Vinculum toward the coterie-mate with the highest Blood Potency. If that Vinculum doesn't form, he checks for a Vinculum with the other coterie-mate.

A character whose Blood Potency is higher than that of the blood donor has a chance to resist the formation of that blood bond. Once at each stage of the Vinculum, the player may spend a Willpower point for the opportunity to make a Stamina + Composure draw (the Willpower point does not add the +3 bonus to this draw). If the draw succeeds, the Vinculum doesn't take root at that stage. This does not, however, cancel any previous partial

Vinculums. For example, a player who succeeds on the second draw doesn't negate the presence of the first stage of the Vinculum. If the character drinks again from the same vampire, his player might choose to draw again (with the expenditure of another Willpower point) to see if the second stage does occur. Vampires who have the same Blood Potency still threaten Vinculums as normal. No Stamina + Composure draws are allowed to resist the steps toward a blood bond.

Subjecting a thrall to the Vinculum certainly offers some benefit to the regnant. The regnant can use certain applications of Dominate on a thrall without the need for eye contact (see p. 168). The thrall merely has to hear the regnant's voice.

Regnants are the objects of their thralls' love, artificial and unwilling though it might be. A regnant gains a +2 bonus on all Social draws affecting her thrall. Further, thralls are subject to a Resolve + Composure draw at a -3 penalty any time they want to take an action (or engage in inaction) that might result in indirect harm to their regnants. For example, a ghoul thrall who tries not to run to her regnant when she sees obviously hostile Kindred breaking into his haven would be subject to this draw. A thrall who directly tries to act against her regnant — say, the same ghoul trying to stake her regnant as he slept — is subject to the Resolve + Composure draw at a -5 penalty. Failing either of these draws means the thrall cannot act against the regnant (or allow her to engage in the dangerous inaction).

BREAKING VINCULUMS

The Kindred know of a few ways to break a Vinculum. The most certain consists of the regnant's Final Death. Torpor does not suffice. Some Kindred tell how they felt their blood oath break like a chain snapping and knew their regnant was no more. In other cases, Kindred have continued to work their regnant's will for years after their thralldom should have ended. In such cases, the thrall had an unusually dependent personality or an unusually kindly regnant, so the former thrall genuinely wanted to complete his master's last commands... or what he thought his master might command.

Simple time can erode a Vinculum. A mortal loses her blood oath if she goes for a full year without tasting her regnant's Vitae. One taste a year can preserve a mortal's thralldom indefinitely.

For the Kindred, a Vinculum takes much longer to fade. Some Kindred have remained blood bound through decades of their regnants' torpor. More dubious tales speak of regnancies lasting through centuries of separation, after everyone else had forgotten that one elder labored beneath a Vinculum to another — until the regnant reappeared and invoked the blood oath once more.

Generally, a successful Resolve + Composure draw can free a character who goes 50 years without tasting her regnant's Vitae. The character's player attempts another draw for every 50 years of separation thereafter. This guideline becomes important in a century-spanning "chronicle of ages."

Mistreatment can also weaken a Vinculum. If a regnant gives his thrall reason to hate him, that hatred can prove stronger than forced devotion. When love, hate and terror roil within a thrall's heart, the conflict might resolve itself with a murderous assault on the regnant. Succeed or fail, the thrall probably goes mad as well. We cannot provide a system for such hatred or madness, though. Too much depends on the details of how the regnant treats the thrall, the thrall's personality and the specific events that cause his mind to snap.

ROLEPLAYING THE VINCULUM

Portraying such intense feelings can be a challenge for many players, especially if their character isn't fond of their regnant and had to be somehow forced or tricked into the





bond. (Willingly bonded characters seldom have trouble displaying their devotion.) Regardless of the character's frustration, however, players should remember that ignoring how their character is supposed to feel is against the rules. A character who badmouths his regnant at every turn, constantly urges others to work against her and splits semantic hairs to find ways to undermine her interests without actually violating the letter of the rules is not playing the Vinculum correctly. Just because a thrall might be painfully aware that his feelings for his regnant are artificially created doesn't make them any less potent. It eventually might help him rebel, especially if his regnant treats him particularly cruelly on top of it, but for the time being, he's bound and should play accordingly.

Indeed, a thrall might despise his regnant and wish for his freedom with all his might, but he still finds himself powerless to resist when his regnant calls for aid or he sees her interests in danger. Even when he tries to do nothing more than speak ill of her, he will often present her side of an argument in rebuttal to himself without realizing it, or apologize profusely for his temerity, even if everyone present agrees with his assessment. This has no strict game mechanic, but should be roleplayed.

Lastly, players should remember that not all Vinculums need to be portrayed as romantic love. An older or more powerful Kindred might view his regnant like a favored child or treasured protégé, while a younger or less potent vampire might look up to her regnant like a revered parent. A peer could see his regnant as an admired comrade or close sibling instead of a lover. As a rule of thumb, whatever kind of relationship would inspire the most love, loyalty and devotion in the thrall is what the Vinculum creates, even if the thrall no longer believes herself capable of those sorts of feelings.

Indeed, this is not to say that these alternative models don't have the normal potential for sour feelings as a "regular" Vinculum. After all, a thrall whose feelings place his regnant akin to a sibling might not be very fond of his "sister." He might even hate what he does on her behalf, but he still finds himself compelled to look out for her interests because of the bond he feels with her. Different as they might be from their mortal counterparts, the dysfunctional "families" created by the webs of the Vinculum are still a part of Kindred society.

BLOOD TIES

Vampires call themselves "Kindred," but some are closer kin than others. The connection between sire and childe carries supernatural power. Kindred can affect their immediate, linear "family" with their Disciplines more easily than they affect other vampires.

For this purpose, all Kindred within two Embrace "steps" of each other count as immediate family and are subject to this effect. Therefore, a character receives the blood-tie bonus to affect her sire, her sire's sire, her childer and her childer's childer.

The character receives a +2 bonus when she tries to affect these close "relatives" with certain Disciplines. These Disciplines include Auspex, Dominate, Nightmare and Majesty. Others state when such bonuses apply in their write-ups in Chapter Two. Certain bloodline Disciplines might apply as well (and Storytellers should consider this when allowing a player to create a new Discipline; see Appendix One for more details). A character must try to affect a "relative" directly with the Discipline in question. The bonus is not gained by a character for using a Discipline on herself and then doing something to another Kindred.

For example, a character does not receive a bonus to hit a relative while using Vigor. Likewise, indirect powers don't enjoy the bonus. A character employing the Auspex power The Spirit's Touch does not receive the bonus. That Discipline affects the character herself, and what she does with the capability is incidental. Powers that affect targets automatically without the need for a player to make a draw do not gain any bonus. Further, the blood-tie bonus does

not apply to any resistance to which a subject is entitled (logically, if the user gained a bonus and the subject gained the same bonus, that bonus would be effectively negated). The bonus is awarded only to the proactive user of a given power.

Example: *Sir Edward decides he doesn't want to continue an argument with his childe, Jane, so he orders her to forget about it – and backs up his command with Dominate. Edward's player would normally have a test pool of 12 for this effort. Because Jane is Edward's childe, however, Edward's player has a test pool of 14 instead.*

THE TASTE OF FAMILY

Kindred can tell how closely they're related to another vampire by tasting their blood (with all the hazards of addiction that entails). The blood of one clan tastes a little different than the blood of another; a discriminating undead palate can tell the blood of a Kindred "relative" from that of a more distantly related clan member.

When a Kindred tastes Vitae, the player can draw Intelligence + Occult. Having active Heightened Senses (Auspex) grants a +2 bonus to the draw. One success is enough to tell whether the blood comes from the character's own clan, or to recognize the blood as coming from his immediate Kindred "family" – that is, in the taster's own line of sires and childer (see "Blood Ties"). Two successes enable the character to recognize the clan (assuming the character has tasted Vitae from several clans). Or two successes tell the character if the subject is within two generations of him in the line (that is, if the subject is a grandsire or grandchilde).

The character can also mystically recognize blood from his mortal relations, if he should happen to drink it without his knowledge, with one success on the Intelligence + Occult draw.

Example: *Ethon, a Nosferatu, tastes the Vitae of a Kindred whom he plans to diablerize. Ethon's player obtains four successes on the Intelligence + Occult draw to determine if Ethon has any insight into the blood's origins. With four successes, Ethon determines that the individual he's about to diablerize is, in fact, his sire's sire! If Ethon's player had obtained only one success, Ethon would know only that this Kindred was closely related to him in the sequence of Embrace. If no such connection existed, one success would have confirmed that the other vampire was a Nosferatu.*





BLOOD SYMPATHY

On some occasions, Kindred can feel the proximity of their Kindred “relatives” (as specified by the blood-ties rules) or know what’s happening to them. This normally happens spontaneously, when a “relative” feels some strong emotion or sensation such as frenzy, a grave wound or the pleasure of diablerie.

On such occasions, the Storyteller may simply announce that a character or character(s) have these feelings for the sake of drama, or she can ask a player to draw the character’s Wits + Occult. The number of successes tells how much information the character gains from this flash of sensation. Active Heightened Senses (Auspex) adds a +2 bonus to this draw.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The character has a strong feeling of what the other Kindred experiences and has a general notion of the direction and distance to his relative.

A character can also try to force this psychic awareness of a relative and so learn the other Kindred’s activities. Doing so costs a point of Willpower, which may not be used to add the +3 bonus to the Wits + Occult draw. A character can also expend a point of Willpower to try to make a relative know what the character herself feels. The other character’s player draws Wits + Occult, but the first character has no way of knowing whether the attempt to “transmit” succeeds. The blood sympathy does not seem to extend further than about 50 miles, or beyond a metropolitan area. This 50-mile limit applies to affecting relatives with Disciplines, too. For example, if a character uses a far-flung Theban Sorcery ritual on a blood relation who’s 500 miles away, she loses the bonus.

The Kindred bless and curse this blood sympathy. If a Kindred sends another vampire to Final Death or diablerizes him, his victim’s sire, childer or other “relations” might feel it. The chances are small that any of them will know exactly what happened and who did it, but would-be murderers (and diablerists...) must consider the possibility. Kindred also sometimes fret that their relatives might spy on their own moments of strong emotion, be they benign, criminal or merely shameful. A proud Prince who holds court at the opera might not want his childer knowing that he breaks down weeping when he hears songs about lost love.

FEEDING

It is the undeniable, dreadful truth of the Kindred condition: Vampires must hunt, and vampires must feed. In many cases, Storytellers will detail individual hunts themselves. In other cases, the details of the hunt are less important than the larger story. The Storyteller must strike a fine balance. Too little attention to hunting makes the story little more than a “dark superheroes” game, in which vampires simply need to recharge their “blood batteries,” forsaking horror for displays of supernatural power. Too much attention to feeding, however, can slow the story’s pace to a crawl, derailing it from its plot direction and making it a series of feeding vignettes in between which other things happen.

Unfortunately, we can offer no perfect solution. Storytellers must find the perfect balance that suits their troupes’ tastes. To that end, we offer an abstract method by which vampiric feeding may take place. The system is relatively simple. Have a player describe the method in which his character wishes to feed, a Narrator determine which test pool applies to the effort, and then the player makes the draw.

As a rule of thumb, the amount of Vitae a character has at the beginning of a given chapter is determined by a single card draw, where the ace counts as a one. Add one Vitae to this draw result for every dot a character has in the Herd Merit. If characters wish to increase the amount of Vitae they enter play with, they must use the feeding rules presented here. Needless to say, in no instance can this result in the character having more Vitae than her Blood Potency allows.

Example: *Fever seeks to feed by seducing a vessel at a rave, going off to a dark corner and slaking his thirst during a feigned act of passion. The Storyteller decides that the appropriate test pool in this situation is Presence + Persuasion. The Storyteller decides on Presence over Manipulation because Fever's not being too terribly subtle – he wants his prey to know that he intends for her to take him someplace private.*

Example: *Thomas Bain is ravenous after a physical conflict in which he has barely triumphed. He staggers out of the gallery where he was ambushed and grabs the first derelict he can find, intending to drink him dry. The Storyteller decides that Strength + Subterfuge is the appropriate test pool. Strength represents the fact that Thomas's plan is to simply trap his prey in his clutches, but Subterfuge is necessary to keep potential victims from discerning his malign intent and fleeing him immediately.*

Draw Results

Failure: The character is unable to find a suitable vessel, or the vessel proves somehow elusive.

Success: The character obtains a vessel and may take as much Vitae as he wishes. (Wise Kindred don't take too much, though. The risk of harming the vessel increases with the blood consumed – see “Blood Supply”).

Unless otherwise noted, each hunting draw requires half an hour of real time during a chapter. During this time, the player is required to sit in an out-of-game area to simulate the time her character spends out hunting. If a player wants her character to hunt before entering play, perhaps to ensure that she has enough Vitae for any potential surprises, she must enter at least half an hour after the game has officially begun. Needless to say, this is an excellent time to encourage players to roleplay or at least imagine the circumstances of the feeding, so it doesn't just seem like a “time out.”

If this proves too troublesome for the sake of game efficiency – say, everyone routinely wants to make a feeding test before the chapter begins – allow all the players to make a feeding draw before the session, and don't penalize anyone any time. If a character doesn't like the results, however, or needs to go out and feed during the game, each subsequent feeding draw requires half an hour, as normal.

Hunting times may be increased to represent characters taking a lot of time to feed carefully or who are hunting in desolate locations. The minimum time should not be reduced below half an hour, however.

3.1 FEEDING MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+2	The character seeks an animal vessel or some other source of Vitae that poses less risk than active human prey (such as a blood bank).
+2	The character hunts in the Rack or some other place where vessels are both plentiful and comparatively willing.
—	Vessels are neither especially numerous nor reckless with whom they share their company.
-2	The character takes efforts to hide his identity from other Kindred (whether present or through secondhand accounts).
-2	The character hunts in the Barrens or some other place where vessels are scarce or particularly suspicious of others.
-3 to -5	The character seeks a very specific vessel, such as “brunette women less than 40 years old” or “children of Eastern European descent.”





BLOOD SUPPLY

When a vampire takes blood from a vessel, he may take one Vitae per turn. A vampire need only lick the wound when he's done to hide the marks left by feeding. This effect applies to only bite marks made for the purposes of feeding from prey, not to aggressive bites intended to cause damage. Further only the vampire's own bite marks are affected thus — a Kindred may not lick a wound left by another vampire and heal it.

A vessel has a number of Vitae equal to its Health dots. In game terms, an average adult human contains seven points worth of Vitae. When a vampire feeds from a vessel, each Vitae taken inflicts one point of lethal damage on that vessel. (Special effects that augment a character's Stamina or add temporary Health dots do not add to the quantity of Vitae in a character's body. A character always has a number or Vitae equal to her unmodified Health dots.)

In most cases the vessel doesn't resist, as the ecstasy of the Kiss overwhelms the shock the Kindred inflicts on the mortal's system. Players of mortals and other living victims who wish to resist the Kiss must gain three or more successes on a Resolve + Composure draw. This depends on the environment, however. A vessel seduced or even surprised and subjected to the Kiss may lose herself in it, while a foe bitten in combat (or even one who feels threatened or otherwise at risk) never need yield to pleasure just because the Kiss feels good. Note that vampires are immune to the Kiss of other Kindred, as they know exactly what's going on and can fight back.



THE VAMPIRE'S BITE

According to p. 218 of the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook, a character attempting to bite as a combat action first has to achieve a grapple hold on a target. On the following turn, the attacker can try to inflict damage by biting. If the victim has an action between the attacker's grab and bite, he can try to break free. The system uses Strength + Brawl – the victim's Defense to attack, but then Strength + Brawl – the victim's Strength to bite for damage. If the attack comes by surprise, the victim's Defense does not apply in the initial grab.

If the vampire wishes to bite a foe in combat, he goes about the procedure as normal, except that his bite causes lethal damage, not bashing. Instead of biting to inflict damage, however, the vampire may choose to consume Vitae that turn. In this case, the vampire inflicts harm caused by blood loss: one point of lethal damage.



A vampire can take a few Vitae without harming a mortal unduly. Taking all the blood (inflicting points of lethal damage equal to the victim's Health dots), of course, risks killing the vessel. Remember that a mortal character reduced to zero Health points goes into a coma when her last Health box is crossed off. She isn't actually "bleeding to death," as the vampire has already taken all her blood, but the state represents her remaining will to survive. (Note that this progression affects the Embrace, too. If a vampire waits too long to give some of his own Vitae to his freshly exsanguinated childe-to-be, that potential fledgling might die before the sire is able to curse him with undeath. A Kindred cannot just place Vitae on the lips of any old corpse and cause it to rise as a vampire. The potential childe must have had all his blood removed, but be given a taste of Vitae before he's truly dead and gone.) For more information on bleeding to death, see p. 212 of the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook.

Note that it takes two days for a mortal character to recover from a single point of lethal damage. A vampire expends a single Vitae to rise each night. Assuming the vampire does nothing other than rise — that is, his player spends no Vitae to power Disciplines, augment physical Attributes, etc. — a vampire still depletes a single vessel of Vitae faster than she can recuperate from him slaking his thirst on her. In other words, even if the vampire takes only

one Health point worth of blood from her each night, the victim recovers from that feeding completely only after *two* days. This is the reason why many Kindred vary their vessels (to avoid killing them, ultimately), and also the source of tales that involve vessels feeling woozy, sickly and exhausted when a vampire feeds from them.

Animals provide less Vitae. An animal that's smaller than an adult human often contains less blood to begin with. Animal blood also carries less vital force than human blood does, or at least it isn't as useful to the Kindred. An animal whose blood the Kindred consumes still suffers one point of lethal damage for each quantity of blood taken, it simply doesn't nourish the Kindred as much. Most animal blood is worth only half as much Vitae as an equivalent amount taken from a human being. Kindred who feed on mammals other than people receive only half the value in Vitae that they actually take from the vessel, rounded down. For example, a dog has 7 Health dots. Even if a Kindred drank all of the dog's blood, he would gain only three Vitae (the dog's 7 Health divided in two and rounded down). Lesser beasts such as vermin (including rats and bats), fish and other aquatic creatures yield only one-quarter Vitae per Health point of blood taken, again rounded down.

Kindred can also drink stored blood such as plasma reserves or the contents of a blood bank, but this, too, contains less vital force than the hot blood of a living person. Kindred find it much less satisfying. Stored blood yields only one-eighth the Vitae of a similar quantity taken from a live source. For example, a Kindred would have to consume an amount roughly equal to 86 percent of the blood in a human body to glean a single Vitae if the blood in question was stored.

Vampires feeding from other Kindred do not inflict damage on those Kindred, they simply drain a direct quantity of Vitae. (Vampires may, however, choose to aggressively bite another vampire with the express purpose of causing damage.) Note that feeding from other vampires comes with its own host of other problems in the form of possible Vinculums and blood addiction.

Kindred rumor holds that Lupine blood is far more potent than mortal blood. Werewolf Vitae yields two-and-a-half times the equivalent amount taken from a human source, rounded down; two Health points of blood taken from a werewolf equal five Vitae. The tales also say, however, that Kindred who drink werewolf blood become prone to frenzy for several nights afterward. Vampires who drink Lupine blood suffer -2 penalties to their draws to resist frenzy for two nights per Health point (not the multiplied Vitae) so consumed. Therefore, taking two Health points worth of blood from a werewolf causes a vampire to suffer a -2 frenzy penalty for four nights.

Mortal mages, meanwhile, contain no more blood than any other human, but legend says their Vitae can induce strange hallucinations in Kindred who drink it. At least, they'd better be hallucinations. If these Kindred actually see aspects of reality known only to mages... well, most Kindred would not like to think that they know so little about the World of Darkness. Still, few Kindred feel much desire to test the truth of such stories. Kindred who take at least one Vitae from a mage suffer a derangement as chosen by the Storyteller for one night per Vitae so consumed. Storytellers are advised to take mages' mystical abilities into account when deciding what derangement is most appropriate.

GHOULS

A ghoul is a creature somewhere between the deathless state of the Kindred and the normal state of most mortals. In fact, ghouls are mortals, with the added condition that they have been fed Kindred Vitae and invested with some aspect of the curse of undeath. Not every mortal who simply tastes vampiric Vitae becomes a ghoul, though. It takes a specific devotion





on the part of the Kindred to create ghouls, but once they do, those creatures can become as independent or reliant as their masters wish.

Creating a ghoul is an endeavor laden with risk. Ghouls are, by their nature, threats to the Masquerade, as they are mortals who have knowledge of the existence of vampires. Kindred who use ghouls argue that this knowledge also protects the secret, since a ghoul depends on vampiric Vitae to sustain that very state. Ghouls (and other mortals) suffer the same potential for blood addiction that the Kindred do, and since a single ghoul is rarely a match for any given vampire, most willingly suffer whatever eccentricities or cruelties their masters inflict on them as long as the promise of that precious Vitae is delivered.

Of those Kindred who create ghouls, most use them as agents for their agendas during the daytime, or as extra aides, muscle or specialists during their own active hours. Ghouls can and do come from all walks of life, from menservants of high-class Kindred to gangsters under a vampiric crime lord's sway to crooked cops or valued informants. In most cases, ghouls are utterly dependent on their Kindred masters. Many of them are codependent, addicted to blood or their masters' attention, or otherwise trapped in abusive, horrible relationships with their lords. And yet, stories travel through Kindred networks now and again concerning ghouls who go rogue, beholden to no particular master. They creep into sleeping Kindred havens to steal valuable Vitae.

Not every mortal who is a vampire's thrall is a ghoul. At the same time, not every ghoul labors under a Vinculum to a single vampiric regnant. It takes an act of will to create a ghoul, but a ghoul must drink from the same vampire three times to be subject to the Vinculum, just like everyone else.

GHOUl CREATION AND SUPPORT

A vampire who wishes to create a ghoul must feed a mortal at least a single Vitae. In addition, the vampire's player must spend a point of Willpower to invest the ghoul with some degree of the mystic state with which she is cursed. If a vampire simply gives a mortal Vitae but no Willpower point is expended, the mortal does not become a ghoul (though he is potentially subject to the Vinculum and blood addiction). This Willpower expenditure represents the creation of an artificial state, inflicting some of the benefits and detriments of undeath on the ghoul.

Upon becoming a ghoul, a mortal stops aging. Although time still passes normally, the ghoul's body doesn't become any more decrepit with age, nor does a ghoul child continue to grow. (Pregnant ghouls almost universally miscarry after the change, and if any have ever carried children to term, it is unheard of among the Kindred.) As long as the ghoul obtains regular feedings of Vitae, this state of static age continues.

A ghoul requires at least one Vitae per month to sustain the state of ghouldom. When receiving this monthly "upkeep," either the vampire or the ghoul player must spend a point of Willpower. The Vitae need not come from the Kindred who initially created the ghoul. For the Kindred, this is a gamble. If the vampire player spends the Willpower point and/or Vitae herself, and the vampire never lets the ghoul know he can spend his own Willpower, the ghoul acquires a sense of expense associated with using that Willpower and Vitae. On the other hand, if the Kindred lets her ghoul know that he can spend the Willpower himself, she sets herself up for possible betrayal. If a vampiric master relies upon other Kindred to supply her ghouls' Vitae, those ghouls may eventually become subject to a Vinculum to another Kindred, which isn't always in the first Kindred's best interests.

A ghoul who does not receive his monthly infusion of blood slowly returns to his previous mortal state. The erstwhile ghoul ages one year per day that he is overdue for his monthly draught. If the ghoul does manage to procure more Vitae, he does not revert to his original

age of ghouldom, but rather, suspends his aging from the point at which it has caught up with him. A ghoul deprived of Vitae who has outlived a normal mortal lifetime rapidly ages and dies as time catches up with him after having been cheated for so long.



STORYTELLER'S OPTION: GHOUL DERANGEMENT

At the Storyteller's option a ghoul who falls behind on his monthly Vitae requirement might gain a temporary derangement. This derangement should be mild. Alternatively, if the character already has a mild derangement, the Storyteller may upgrade it temporarily to the severe form. This temporary derangement or temporary exacerbation of an existing derangement ends goes away when the ghoul procures his necessary Vitae.

We include this as an option because the ghoul might already be functioning under the mind-altering effects of a Vinculum and possibly blood addiction as well. If you as Storyteller choose to make the debilitating effects of blood withdrawal even more horrifying for ghouls, use this system.



If a ghoul doesn't have any Vitae in her system, she doesn't suddenly cease to be a ghoul. Rather, the transition back to the mortal state begins only when the mortal comes due for her monthly sustenance. In other words, if a ghoul misses her monthly feeding and has no vampiric Vitae in her system, she's no longer a ghoul. She loses all powers associated with being a ghoul and begins aging. If she later acquires more Kindred Vitae, she resumes being a ghoul, but this does not reverse any aging effects that might have occurred in the interim. Ghouls who go through this "wayward" state do not forget any Disciplines they might have known. Without Vitae to employ them, however, those powers are useless — even those Disciplines that have no Vitae costs associated with them. Once the ghoul loses that state, supernatural powers are no longer available to her.

Note that once a mortal has become a ghoul and lapsed from that state, becoming a ghoul once more does not bestow another a free Discipline dot on the mortal. This rush of power only occurs the first time a mortal is ghoulded. Being ghoulded again at a later date simply allows him to once again access any Disciplines he might have learned in the past.

ABILITIES AND POWERS

Once the ghoul imbibes Vitae, he may use it in several ways similar to a vampire. One primary difference, however, is that the ghoul does not eliminate any quantity of his own blood when he expends Vitae. Similarly, when a ghoul consumes Vitae, that Vitae does not add to or replace his own blood. "Vitae" in a ghoul is merely the lingering cursed power transferred from the vampire. A ghoul with seven Health dots still has seven dots after taking one Kindred Vitae — the Vitae does not add Health dots to him, nor does it add any volume to the ghoul's own quantity of blood. A ghoul is still a mortal, and Vitae he consumes goes into his stomach as does anything else he drinks. A ghoul calling upon Vitae uses the power inherent in it, not the mass of liquid itself (which is eventually digested and otherwise eliminated). When using Vitae, a ghoul's player may spend only one per turn. A ghoul may have a total number of Vitae in his system equal to his Stamina. If the ghoul's Stamina drops for any reason and would leave a surplus, that extra Vitae is lost immediately. Examples of such situations include becoming sick or ending a scene in which the ghoul had activated Resilience.

Upon becoming a ghoul, the individual immediately gains a single dot in a physical Discipline (Celerity, Resilience or Vigor). Which Discipline manifests depends on the clan or bloodline of the vampire who creates the ghoul. If that clan or bloodline has two physical Disciplines, the sire — not the ghoul — chooses which Discipline to impart. For example,





a Ventrue ghoul gains a single dot of Resilience, while the ghoul of a Daeva obtains either Celerity or Vigor as decided by his master.

Ghouls may use Disciplines, if they have them. A ghoul may learn Disciplines by spending experience points, which costs twice as much as it does for a vampire (10 times the new level in experience points for a clan or bloodline Discipline, 14 times the new level in experience points for an out-of-clan or -bloodline Discipline). In most cases, a ghoul must have a teacher to learn a Discipline or advance in level, with the exception of physical Disciplines. As long as the ghoul knows the first level of one of the physical Disciplines, he may learn other levels without a teacher (although he must be taught the first level). A ghoul may learn a unique bloodline Discipline if his master hails from the bloodline in question, though this is very rare.

A ghoul may expend Vitae to augment physical Attributes, just like a vampire (see p. 219). A ghoul may also use Vitae to heal wounds, again like a vampire. If a ghoul doesn't use Vitae to heal wounds, he recovers in the same amount of time that a mortal does, as described on p. 240 of the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook.

Ghouls do not use Humanity to measure their morality. Instead, they use Morality as described on pp. 101-107 of the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rules.

Ghouls may spend one Vitae per turn. They have no Blood Potency.

Embraced ghouls keep all of the Disciplines they learned as ghouls when they make the transition to the ranks of the Kindred; however, any Disciplines dots they already have count against the three dots they receive during the Embrace. (Thus ghouls with three or more dots of Disciplines receive no Discipline dots from the Embrace). Vinculums and blood addictions the character has survive into undeath as well.

ANIMAL GHOULS

Animals may be made into ghouls, but no animal is intelligent or aware enough to fully know what changes Vitae imposes upon its body. Animal ghouls suffer all of the detriments of being a ghoul (such as blood addiction, Vinculums, dependency on Vitae for survival) but gain few of the benefits. Ghoul animals may learn only Celerity, Vigor and Resilience by way of Disciplines. Further, they can use Vitae only to fuel these powers. They may not use Vitae to heal themselves or augment Physical Attributes. An animal ghoul may never spend its own Willpower during its sustenance feedings. It relies on the vampiric master to do so. Indeed, ghoul animals are relatively rare, and most Kindred with animal companions merely subject them to Vinculums to ensure loyalty rather than to make ghouls of them.



THE BLOOD AND OTHER SUPERNATURAL CREATURES

Kindred Vitae, while potent, does have its limits. When the other supernatural creatures with whom the Damned occasionally cross paths come into play, certain realities of the World of Darkness supersede the mystic strength of the Blood.

Werewolves, mages and other supernatural beings are immune to the Embrace. If a vampire is somehow able to extract all the blood from a werewolf or mage and attempt the Embrace, that Embrace fails automatically. Likewise with Vinculums and attempts at creating ghouls — they simply do not work with regard to Lupines and mages. Other supernatural creatures are subject to blood addiction, however, the absence of other supernatural effects notwithstanding.

Naturally, this physiological situation doesn't deter rumors of such things from spreading. Savvy Kindred who hear of such things, however, wisely dismiss them as the efforts of inexperienced vampires trying to codify something they don't understand.



The Predator's Taint

Despite the predilection some Kindred have for describing each other as parasites, the truth of the matter is that vampires are finely suited to the roles of predators. Their supernatural abilities allow them to hunt with great efficacy. Their mesmeric personalities draw people to them. Even their hideous or off-putting weaknesses can reduce their prey to impotent crying wretches from whom blood can be taken at will. The Kindred are consummate solitary predators, keenly able to procure their own sustenance without the aid of others of their kind.

It is no surprise, then, that when such perfect predators meet each other, the Beast inside each attempts to determine whether the other is a threat or an encroaching lesser. Indeed, when Kindred meet for the first time, the Beast rages within, wishing to flee in terror of a greater predator or to conquer a less able creature in hopes of protecting one's own territory.

SYSTEM

When a vampire sees another vampire for the first time (and only for the first time), compare the characters' Blood Potency. Both players should count to three, and then display either a card or a number of fingers equal to their Blood Potency.

The player of the character with the lower Blood Potency must immediately check for Röttschreck (see p. 256).

The player of the character with the higher Blood Potency must immediately check for frenzy (see p. 254).

If the characters have the same Blood Potency, both players check for frenzy.

Characters risk frenzy and Röttschreck only when they are aware of the presence of the other Kindred. It is entirely possible, say, for a vampire to see another, unknown vampire feeding in an alley and thereby cause her own frenzy check as her Beast senses the rival Beast. While the other vampire is preoccupied with feeding he remains oblivious; only when he becomes aware of the other Kindred does his Beast respond to the presence of the first.

One minor benefit of the Predator's Taint is that, due to the presence of the Beast, vampires instinctively know other vampires upon seeing them. Even if a vampire has met another Kindred before, the initial "surge" of the Beast takes place every time the two make contact, though it is far more manageable than the initial contact of the unknown. This also, unfortunately, explains the tense and mercurial nature of relations between vampires.

VAMPIRIC GATHERINGS

Stories abound of the undead holding grand balls in decrepit castles as the midnight hour approaches, and even modern interpretations of the legend often depict vampires holding large parties of their own kind. Whether in the form of formal soirees or underground raves, it's likely that players find the idea of such events quite appealing, and it certainly makes the Storyteller's life easier if all the local Kindred have good cause to gather in one spot for a regular meeting or a special event. Faced with Predator's Taint, however, what can a Storyteller do to keep the game from devolving into an endless series of frenzy checks as new vampires enter?

Simple. With this optional rule, the harsher aspects of Predator's Taint — namely the possibility of frenzy responses — are completely muted whenever the Kindred choose to gather in a particular location. While players are naturally encouraged to roleplay a bit of restlessness on the part of their Beasts when an unknown vampire enters, as a game mechanic no Blood





Potency comparisons or frenzy tests need to be made. This rule applies to all gatherings, whether it's a formal affair with engraved invitations or just a casual hangout at a local haven. In short, if vampires are gathering with the expectation of seeing other vampires there, they need not worry about Predator's Taint rearing its ugly head. What's more, this rule applies even if other Kindred unexpectedly "crash" the affair — no one present has to check for Predator's Taint in response to the intrusion, unless they choose to do so. Even if they do, the other party does not necessarily have to follow suit — it's possible that the intruders can frenzy while the invited guests retain their composure, and vice versa.

Think of this rule as a way of representing the fact that the undead, for all their viciousness and barely suppressed animal instincts, still have some measure of human social habits, and what's more they recognize the necessity of meeting in numbers from time to time. This rule therefore captures their willingness to put on masks of civility and cordiality in order to function as a society, however savage and treacherous it may be. After a time, restraining the Beast in this minor but critical way becomes second nature, an accepted part of how the Kindred interact with each other. The same rule can be applied for situations where vampires expect to meet each other, for instance if you are invited to another vampire's haven or if you meet and clearly recognize another vampire on the street without hostile intentions.

3.2 – THE PREDATOR'S TAINT MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
—	The character witnesses another vampire in a potentially threatening capacity for the first time.
-2	The character perceives the other vampire as an intruder or unexpected threat, such as by coming back to her haven and finding an unknown vampire there.

STORYTELLING THE PREDATOR'S TAINT

Important: *Use of the Predator's Taint should be based on the dramatic potential of the situation.* Storytellers need not employ it every time a new vampire enters the chronicle. They should not feel that they have to incorporate the Predator's Taint into every interaction between Kindred.

This rule exists to highlight the xenophobic world of the Kindred, as well as to reinforce the local phenomenon of Kindred domains. After all, even in a domain where one is on poor terms with the other local vampires, at least one knows them. In a new domain, the Predator's Taint threatens a would-be immigrant so as to make a "fresh start" in a new domain a very dangerous affair.

Storytellers, don't use the Predator's Taint to be adversarial. Use it only to drive home the notion that a particular vampire is strange, threatening and, most important, unknown. Storytellers may assume that players' characters have met most of the other local Kindred in their domains during their period of indoctrination or protection under their sires. By the time the actual chronicle begins, characters are familiar, at least in the back story, with most Kindred of at least minor acknowledgement in their home domains. Characters have probably met the Prince. They are likely to have spoken with their Prisci and at least have been introduced to their Primogen.

Where the Predator's Taint comes into play most effectively is when a new Kindred shows up on the scene. Maybe this unknown vampire is a prophet of Golconda, but her unknown nature prompts a hostile, immediate response from the Beast. Perhaps a rabble-rouser drum-

ming up support in the characters' domain spurs the Beast to a violent action. The envoy from a nearby domain might have the best of intentions, but the Beast instinctively causes the locals' hackles to rise. With high emotions charging the encounter, Kindred grow confused as to whether they can trust this interloper or must eliminate her as a possible cunning threat to their own well-being.

Most times, the result of a frenzy caused by the Predator's Taint is a violent confrontation. In a few rare cases, however, other avenues may be pursued. Frenzied vampires may play a dangerous game of cat-and-mouse across a city's rooftops, for example, or they exert their dominance by engaging in some test of mettle such as running through a burning building, withstanding the impact of a speeding car or other gesture of power or endurance. As with other considerations regarding the Predator's Taint, let the drama of the situation dictate the results, rather than rote adherence to the letter of the rules.

Note also, Storytellers, that the general guidelines need not always apply. In a plot development that should cause the characters to mistrust their Primogen, maybe they *haven't* yet made her acquaintance. A pretender-Prince or some similar archetype might not have met everyone in the domain, particularly at early stages of his rise to power. On the other hand, it might just bog everything down to check for frenzy with *every* new vampire a given character sees.

For example, there's probably no reason to check for frenzy if a character walks down the street and a vampire passes by in a car. But if a character comes creeping home just before dawn and sees a foreign vampire hunched over the body of a bloodless vessel left lying in her doorway, a frenzy check is almost certainly in order. The situation should be taken into account as well. Two vampires catching each other's eye in a nightclub may not provoke an outright battle, but it definitely sets both of their nerves on edge and makes them a bit more alert to their surroundings than they might otherwise be. They might even "compete" to see who can take home the most desirable vessel, or some other form of contest within the bounds of their surroundings. A vampire seeing another vampire through binoculars, however, would almost never suffer a frenzy check.

Certain Storytellers might wish to adapt the Predator's Taint to other circumstances as well. A hungry Kindred might not see another vampire but might catch the scent of her on the wind as she prepares for the hunt (assuming her player states that the character searches for scents on the wind, as Kindred don't normally breathe), causing the Storyteller to call for a frenzy check. A Kindred might slide along a wall in utter darkness, only to abruptly touch a cold, clammy hand — and realize the hand belongs to another of the Damned, risking frenzy in the shock of the situation. These examples and environments are far less concrete, but might serve as good dramatic opportunities, anyway. Certainly the range of other senses doesn't apply as universally as vampires recognizing each other on sight, but given the proper story criteria, they can be just as valid.

The bottom line is that the Predator's Taint is certainly a downside to being a vampire, as well as one more thing that makes being a new vampire that much more difficult. Don't antagonize players' characters with the rules, though. Use them to heighten the drama of a situation when the aspect of the unknown comes to the fore.





The Traditions

According to numerous Kindred legends, three laws have governed the Damned since their first nights: that they should hide from mortals, that they should not sire any childer, and that they should not slay each other to consume the souls of the fallen. The Kindred break all three laws, but they find that the metaphysical limitations governing them are not easily flouted. Meanwhile, players learn that each Tradition has a tangible effect within the game.

THE TRADITION OF MASQUERADE

The Tradition of Masquerade, sometimes known as the Tradition of Secrecy, commands the Kindred not to reveal their presence to mortals. Clearly, Kindred walk among mortals every night, but the Masquerade defends itself in a subtle way. Indeed, the Kindred discovered the full implications of this Tradition in recent nights. What they once took to be a self-defeating curse upon them now stands revealed as a blessing granted millennia in advance. Of course, any blessing on the Damned carries its own price.

The Kindred appear as blurry images in mirrors, photographs, video monitors and other media that capture or transmit visual images. This mystic distortion protects the identity of individual Kindred. As security cameras become more common, the odds increase that a camera will capture the image of a vampire feeding, committing some other crime, surviving a gunshot that would slay a mortal, or using a Discipline to perform some impossible feat. Anyone who looks at a photograph or camera image might tell that something strange, criminal or impossible has taken place, but they cannot identify the Kindred in question. Without a person to attach to the deed, the distorted image becomes just one more insoluble mystery in a mysterious world.

In some ways, this blurring endangers the Masquerade. Kindred need to stay away from large mirrors, lest mortals notice the one distorted reflection. Canny witch-hunters have identified vampires by glancing back and forth from the people around them to a small mirror hidden in hand. A security guard watching a monitor might be puzzled by why one person looks like a blur when everyone else shows up crisp and clear. Characters walking around with a portable video camera, trying to spot hidden or otherwise masked characters will fail: even if the recording eventually shows a blurred shape, the onlooker's mind will still be fooled – even if a minor delay is built-in.

A Kindred can turn off this blurring effect for a scene by expending a Willpower point. With regard to lasting media, such as video tapes, photographs and digital film footage, spending a Willpower point allows a vampire's image to remain intact on that media for a number of days equal to 11 minus the Kindred's Blood Potency. A player may choose to spend a Willpower dot on behalf of the character when she is photographed (or filmed) to make that particular image permanent. As such, with an effort of will, a Kindred can have a photographic identification or “prove” to a vampire-hunter that of course she's not a vampire – she shows up in photographs just like anyone else! Although new and inventive means of visual recording may appear, the magic blurring effect will continue to exist on them as well.

The strange occlusion that occurs to vampire images does not apply to voice recordings. Kindred voices are recorded normally, without the expenditure of Willpower.

THE TRADITION OF PROGENY

The Tradition of Progeny commands the Kindred not to curse any other mortals with undeath. Here, surely, the Kindred have most egregiously disobeyed whatever unholy force has spawned them.

The act of creating a new Kindred exacts a steep price from those who break this law, requiring a supreme effort of will. Kindred who sire childer seem to pass part of their souls to their offspring. Their force of will weakens slightly, a debility that can remain for years. A Kindred who sires several childer in a short time could render himself so weak-willed that his enemies would surely ruin him — if his conniving spawn didn't get to him first.

In rules terms, a character must sacrifice a *dot* of Willpower in order to sire a childer. Nothing can restore the lost Willpower dot except increasing the trait with experience points.

THE TRADITION OF AMARANTH

As a sort of final commandment, the Damned find it difficult to commit diablerie upon each other. Any time the Kindred disobey their undead natures, they learn that their defiance carries a price.

Kindred rarely feel sorry when they kill each other. Or if they do, their regret seldom lasts long. Any Kindred, from the most ethical to the most jaded, finds herself a little more callous and ruthless after killing a fellow vampire and consuming his heartsblood. No contrition or atonement can avert this erosion of the Man and strengthening of the Beast. Vampires become less able to pass for human with mortals, they find that temptations to vice increase, and deeds that once repelled them no longer prick their conscience.

In rules terms, the Humanity dots of a character who commits diablerie decrease by one. The loss happens automatically, with no need for a degeneration draw (though the Humanity draw that follows to check for a derangement occurs normally; see p. 260). The circumstances don't matter, either. No matter how much another vampire deserves to die, none may be judged except by God, and the Tradition of Amaranth allows for no exceptions. A Kindred who diablerizes another Kindred can recover her lost Humanity in time... but once again, doing so requires accumulating and spending experience points.

Damage, Wounds and Healing

The Kindred dwell in a dangerous world. Aside from the threats they face from each other, werewolves and other supernatural creatures, they can run afoul of muggers or thugs just like mortals do. Although the Kindred possess a few advantages over mortals in dealing with such dangers, they are not invulnerable. Kindred can also encounter disease, poison, electrocution and other hazards. Players and Storytellers need to know how Kindred suffer damage, and how they can heal it back.

TAKING DAMAGE

Kindred encounter many of the same hazards that mortals do. They have less to fear, perhaps, from ordinary combat involving fists, broken bottles, guns and the like. On the other hand, as supernatural creatures, vampires suffer from anathemas — conditions benign to mortals but deadly to the undead, or that present special dangers and difficulties in healing. Kindred anathemas are fire and sunlight. In addition, sufficient damage of almost any kind can trap a vampire in a deathlike trance called torpor, or it can destroy him.

It is important to note that vampires are subject to the same wound penalties that mortals are when injuries are marked in one of their last three remaining Health boxes. See “Health” on p. 235 of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook for more information.





BASHING DAMAGE

Fists, clubs and falls are all examples of bashing damage. Anything that inflicts bashing damage on mortals also inflicts bashing damage on Kindred.

Unlike mortals, vampires are never knocked unconscious by bashing damage. The vampiric body just doesn't have the same limitations that a living one does. A Kindred still feels the trauma and still suffers test pool penalties, though. When your character's rightmost Health box is filled with a slash for bashing damage, any further points of bashing damage inflicted on the character upgrade the least severe of his existing wounds, from left to right. Remember: Draws for unconsciousness are not made for a vampire when his rightmost Health box is filled with a slash for bashing damage.

LETHAL DAMAGE

Knives, axes, chainsaws and other sorts of melee weapons that inflict lethal damage on mortals also inflict lethal damage on vampires. Chopping and slicing is almost as bad for the undead as for the living. Vampires can protect themselves from lethal damage by wearing body armor, just like mortals can.

Unlike mortals, however, the undead take bashing damage from firearms. A vampire has only two vital organs, the head and heart, and their importance is as much supernatural as physical. The other organs in a vampire's body don't actually do anything, so it doesn't matter if a bullet drills a hole through them. This does not apply to archaic weapons, however. If an arrow from a bow (even though Firearms is drawn to make the attack), a thrown knife or anything of that sort impales a vampire, the weapon still inflicts lethal damage.

The exception for firearms has its own exceptions, though. If someone puts a high-caliber gun to a Kindred's head and blows most of his brains out, that's certainly lethal damage. Storytellers should exercise their own judgment in cases like this.

The undead do not bleed to death like mortals do when their rightmost Health boxes are filled with lethal damage. If a Kindred's last Health box has an "X" in it, he is in torpor. (See the chart on p. 249 to find the duration of this death-like state.) Any further points of lethal damage inflicted on the character are converted to aggravated damage.

To mortals, of course, an incapacitated or newly torpid Kindred seems dead. This appearance might save the vampire if the mortal did not mean to kill his foe. The mortal might run away, call an ambulance or do something else that gives the Kindred time to recover. If the mortal meant to kill the character but did not know he fought a vampire, he probably stops attacking, which can also give the character time to regain consciousness. If the mortal knows about the undead, though, the Kindred probably faces Final Death anyway, as an unconscious vampire is as easy to kill as an unconscious mortal. Prudent Kindred do not take lethal or even bashing damage lightly.

AGGRAVATED DAMAGE

Certain weapons such as magically enhanced werewolf claws or those that Kindred can grow using the Protean Discipline inflict aggravated damage to vampires. Various rare Discipline powers, rituals and other magical effects might deal aggravated damage as well. Such special cases are explained in the description of the relevant power or ritual. Attacks that deal large quantities of lethal damage can also be "upgraded" to aggravated damage if they would destroy large chunks of a character's body. For example, if a vampire throws himself on a hand grenade, the Storyteller has every right to declare that the character suffers aggravated damage from the explosion. For the most part, though, Kindred suffer aggravated damage because of the special anathemas to the undead: sunlight and fire.

Remember that aggravated damage is also inflicted when all other Health boxes are filled with lethal injuries, and more harm of any kind is incurred; lethal wounds are upgraded to aggravated from left to right.



If a Kindred's rightmost Health box is marked with aggravated damage — having suffered the harm either directly or by converting damage dealt to the torpid character — she suffers Final Death. Her body rots, dries and withers in minutes, and crumbles to dust within an hour. The longer a Kindred has spent undead, the more rapidly the final dissolution occurs.

Countering damage from sunlight and fire works differently than other sources of aggravated damage, in that fire and sunlight inflict automatic points of damage. The Resilience Discipline does offer some protection, allowing a character to downgrade this damage (see p. 196). Ultimately, though, even the oldest and toughest vampire has no chance to withstand extensive exposure to fire or sunlight. The Kindred have abundant reason to fear these phenomena more than anything else.

FIRE

Fire presents an even greater danger to vampires than it does to mortals. Fire inflicts aggravated damage on Kindred. Only Resilience can shield a vampire from the flames, and that to a limited degree.

A fire's size and heat determines how much damage a character endures per turn. A small, very hot fire can deliver as much damage as a large but cooler fire. The Storyteller decides how much damage a particular fire can inflict, based on the fire damage table:

3.3 – FIRE DAMAGE FOR KINDRED	
Size of Fire	Damage
Small fire (example: torch)	1 point
Large fire (example: bonfire)	2 points
Inferno (example: burning house, blast furnace)	3 or more points
Heat of Fire	Damage
Feeble fire (example: red-hot coals, candle flame)	No modifier
Normal combustion (example: wood fire, red-hot stove)	+1 point
Hot fire (example: gasoline fire, Bunsen burner)	+2 points
Very hot fire (example: molten metal, welding torch)	+3 points

Remember that normal armor can protect Kindred for a few turns, but only specialized suits of heat-reflective fabric, such as those used by oil-well firefighters, can shield a vampire for longer. (See the rules for fire in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook, p. 246.) Meanwhile, the character must also withstand the supernatural terror called Röttschreck (see p. 256).

- **Clinging Fire:** Note that some burning substances stick to a character and continue burning for quite some time. Napalm is the most notorious example, but burning plastic is the most common source of clinging flames. Burning plastic inflicts damage at the same rate as a wood fire.

- **Disfigurement:** Characters who are damaged by fire but who still manage to survive (through first aid or mystical healing) might suffer a permanent impairment (reduced Physical Attribute), nerve damage (reduced Mental Attribute) or severe and disfiguring scars (reduced Presence), at the Storyteller's discretion. Such impairment can be defined as a Flaw (see p. 311 of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook) gained during play.

SUNLIGHT

The Kindred fear sunlight even more than fire. After all, fire doesn't suffuse half the world, making half of each diurnal cycle deadly for vampires. Even the weakest sunlight presents





danger. Sunlight filtered through a heavy curtain can still burn. Only the Resilience Discipline can protect a vampire from the daystar's rays, and then only against dim, faint exposure. Direct sunlight can sear even the mightiest Kindred to ash.

The amount of damage a Kindred suffers automatically from sunlight per turn depends on the intensity of the light and how much of the vampire's body is exposed. The brighter and more direct the sunlight is, the more quickly a Kindred's undead flesh burns. The more of a vampire's body that is exposed to sunlight, the more extensive the damage is. For characters, little practical difference exists between an arm completely burned off in a second and losing most of one's skin from diffused exposure. Damage is damage.

3.4 – DAMAGE FROM SUNLIGHT

Intensity or Exposure	Health Points/Turn
Faint, filtered sunlight (Example: light through heavy, closed drapes; heavy cloud cover; twilight)	1 point
Filtered or weak sunlight (Example: light through thin drapes; outside on a cloudy day; daylight through a window; reflection of sun in a mirror)	2 points
Direct sunlight	3 points
Exposure	Damage
Small part of body exposed (Example: one hand; part of the face; wearing heavy clothes, sunglasses, gloves and a broad-brimmed hat or balaklava)	+0 points
Large part of body exposed (Example: a leg; an arm; whole head)	+1 point
Much of body exposed (Example: whole torso; wearing thin clothing)	+2 points

Exposing specific body parts to sunlight can cause special, additional harm to a character. A Kindred who looks directly into sunlight is instantly blinded as the rays burn away her retinas and boil her eyes. A narrow beam of sunlight burns a Kindred's arm off, leaving him unable to do anything that requires two hands. Storytellers must judge such situations for themselves.

It is true that moonlight consists of reflected sunlight. Fortunately, however, moonlight is faint enough that it cannot cause damage to the Kindred. At most, a few exceptionally sensitive Kindred might suffer a mild sunburn from exposure to the light of the full moon.

RECOVERING FROM DAMAGE

Mortals heal wounds through time, rest and medical treatment. The undead heal supernaturally, using their stolen blood to repair their bodies. Ordinary medical treatment offers them no benefits whatsoever.

Kindred heal bashing damage quite easily. In one turn, a Kindred character can expend one Vitae to heal two Health points lost to bashing damage. Kindred who are able to spend more than one Vitae per turn may heal two points of bashing damage per Vitae spent per turn. For example, a character with Blood Potency 4 can spend two Vitae per turn (see p. 128), so he could spend two Vitae and heal up to four points of bashing damage in one turn.

Lethal damage heals less easily, since it requires building new tissue to replace and rejoin parts of the character's body. In one turn, a vampire can expend one Vitae to heal one Health point lost to lethal damage. As with bashing damage, vampires who are able to spend more than one Vitae per turn may heal one point of lethal damage per Vitae spent



per turn, up to their limit. Both bashing and lethal damage could even be healed at the same time if you can spend all the Vitae required to do so.

A character can perform other actions while healing bashing or lethal damage, as this recovery is a reflexive action. An undead character can therefore take as much damage in a fight as a mortal does and heal the damage back while the fight continues. Of course, a Kindred carries a limited supply of blood, but she can replenish herself from a defeated foe. (Although bloodless corpses or the addictive taste of a fellow Kindred's Vitae pose their own problems.)

Aggravated damage presents much greater difficulties. Each Health point lost to aggravated damage costs *five* Vitae to heal, and the process takes two nights per Health point. Those five Vitae must be spent over the course of the two nights it takes for the character to heal the wound, though they need not be spent together. For example, a player might spend three Vitae after the character rises on the first night, and two Vitae after she rises on the second night to heal the wound.

Note that characters can never heal more Health points than their Health trait. For example, a character with 8 Health who has suffered five points of damage (of whatever type) can not heal six points of damage and raise her Health to 9.

When vampires heal themselves, the rightmost wound of the kind recovered is erased from your character sheet. So, if two bashing wounds are healed, the rightmost ones on your character's Health chart are erased. If a lethal wound is healed, the rightmost one is erased. The same applies for an aggravated wound. In the case of lethal and aggravated wounds, however, if any other wounds remain to the right of the healed one on your character's Health chart, those injuries shift left one square. No blanks are left in your character's chart.

Say your character's Health chart looks like this:

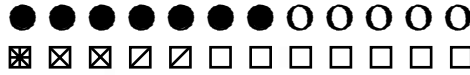




A Vitae is spent to heal one lethal wound. The rightmost one is erased, and all injuries to its right shift left one square to “close ranks.” Your character’s Health chart therefore looks like this:



Now, let’s say you spend five Vitae over the course of two nights for your character to recover from one aggravated wound. His rightmost aggravated injury is erased and all to the right of it shift to the left, like so:



OTHER SOURCES OF DAMAGE

Now and then, characters encounter other things that can damage or debilitate them. The developed world abounds in toxic and corrosive chemicals, from industrial acids to household cleaners. Kindred might encounter electrical shock, either through lightning strikes, carelessness with machinery or electric fences. Characters might even deliberately introduce mind-altering drugs into their bodies. These hazards and others require special rules, chiefly to distinguish their effects on Kindred from their effects on mortals.

CHEMICALS, DRUGS AND POISONS

Most venoms and toxic chemicals do not harm the Kindred at all. Many snake venoms form a notable exception. Snake venoms often dissolve blood cells and body tissues. They not only inflict points of damage, they destroy Vitae, usually one Vitae per point of damage. Cobra venom also causes heart spasms. Storytellers can treat snake venom as inflicting lethal damage within several minutes of a bite. The amount of damage depends on the snake, but many cobras and African vipers routinely kill mortals with a single bite. Their blood-destroying venom should not inflict quite as much damage to Kindred (mortals are more fragile, what with their need for a metabolism), but enough to make a snakebite a bad experience. Kindred, like kine, seldom encounter deadly serpents in modern cities, but it might happen under various unusual circumstances. A tyrannical Prince might keep a terrarium of vipers for their sheer intimidation value.

Acids and other corrosive chemicals damage Kindred as easily as they damage kine. They typically inflict points of lethal damage. The amount of damage depends on the corrosiveness of the chemical and the quantity and length of exposure. Quicklime, for instance, burns away bodies rather slowly, but thoroughly, and it’s available cheaply in large quantities. One lethal point every few turns adequately represents a large exposure to most corrosive industrial chemicals.

Drugs such as alcohol, marijuana and heroin affect Kindred just as they do mortals. A Kindred who wants to use a drug can either feed on an intoxicated mortal, or expend a Vitae to absorb the drug directly and suffuse it throughout his body. This capability puzzles some scientifically minded Kindred. How can a drug affect the undead when they don’t have a metabolism? Especially when medications have no effect? The Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone supply the simple, rather obvious answer: It’s magic.

Lancea Sanctum theologians explain in more detail. They say that God wants the Childer of Longinus to suffer the same temptations of gluttonous self-indulgence and addiction that mortals feel. The Kindred may therefore damn themselves by choice, as well as by the curse of undeath. Praise God for His terrible justice!

ELECTRICITY

By itself, electricity does little harm to the undead. Electrocutation doesn't stop a Kindred's heart from beating, because it doesn't beat in the first place. Electricity doesn't interfere with brain function or nerve impulses, because vampire bodies work mystically. The heat generated by lightning or high-tension electric current can cause internal burns, however.

If a Kindred suffers some electric shock that could wound or kill a mortal, ask the player to draw the character's Stamina + Resilience. If the draw succeeds, the character suffers no damage at all unless the electricity is supernatural in origin. If the draw fails or if the electricity is supernatural, the electricity inflicts bashing damage. Assess the damage based on the strength of the current or at random. So many factors can influence the lethality of an electric shock, from the soles of a character's shoes to the humidity in the air, that any attempt to provide a "realistic" system is futile. Only in the rarest of circumstances, such as with certain magical attacks or overwhelming amounts of electricity, does a shock result in lethal or aggravated damage. These circumstances, when not detailed by specific rules, are determined by the Storyteller.

Kindred remain subject to the muscle-locking effect of electrocutation, though, just like mortals. Use the system for pulling free from electrocutation presented on p. 244 the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook.

EXTREME PRESSURES AND TEMPERATURES

Since vampires do not actually live, they suffer only minor discomfort from temperature and pressure extremes that would kill a mortal. For instance, Kindred cannot suffer from hypothermia or heat prostration. Being dead, they do not need to maintain a steady body temperature. Kindred can descend deep underwater and return to the surface quickly without worrying about decompression sickness ("the bends"). Gas bubbles in a Kindred's blood might cause a few aches and twinges, but they do not really harm his undead flesh. Altitude sickness means nothing to creatures that don't need to breathe.

In some of the most extreme cases, Storytellers might impose penalties of some sort for the most extreme conditions. Temperatures over 200°F might count as feeble fire (or at least set the panic of Röttschreck crawling in a character's mind). Then again, mortals routinely stick their hands into 400°F ovens without the hot air burning their skin. Prolonged exposure to freezing temperatures might force a character to expend a Vitae or two to avoid frostbite (-1 or more to Dexterity-based draws). In the most extreme case, a Kindred could freeze solid and immobile – not harmful in itself, but eventually the character starves into torpor if she doesn't burn from exposure to daylight. The pressure at the bottom of a deep-sea trench (what sort of chronicle are you playing, anyway?) might crush an unfortunate vampire who lacks Resilience to endure it. Some fish live in those awful depths, but they have evolved to adapt to those conditions. Total vacuum (good God, what sort of chronicle is this?) could inflict bashing or, at most, a few points of lethal damage as blood vessels rupture. Since the undead don't need to breathe, a character could survive in a vacuum indefinitely once the pressure within his tissues drops.



DISEASE AND THE KINDRED

No mundane disease can affect the Kindred in any way. From cancer to the common cold, undeath "cures" them all and renders a character immune forever after. Kindred don't get allergies, infections or ulcers.

The Kindred do care about disease, though. A Kindred can still *spread* a disease from one mortal to another. A vampire drinks from an infected mortal, and like a mosquito carrying malaria or yellow fever, he injects the disease organism into anyone he feeds upon afterward. Diseases that are normally carried by contact between body fluids, such as HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, prove especially likely to take





permanent residence in a vampire's body. A few Kindred read about African outbreaks of ebola — a disease specifically and only spread by contact with an infected person's blood — and wonder if some African vampires have become careless.

In centuries past, the Kindred did not care much if one of their numbers became a plague-dog. Mortals got sick and died so often that no one noticed a few more victims every week. As more people went to doctors, however, the covenants all encouraged their members to avoid the diseased. Cases of doctors who became witch-hunters because of patients talking of strange people biting them convinced the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum, in particular, to declare plague-spreading a breach of the Masquerade. The rise of modern epidemiology and institutes such as the WHO and CDC increase the danger even more.

In a few cities, the Prince and Primogen execute Kindred found guilty of spreading diseases from vessel to vessel. More often, Kindred leaders settle for locking up a plague-dog until they can find a practitioner of Theban Sorcery who knows how to cleanse Kindred of disease (one of the rare occasions when Kindred deliberately seek to bring a foreign vampire to a city). Of course, they don't bother feeding the imprisoned Kindred. Let the pain of starvation be his punishment, they figure, and then let him wait in torpor until the sorcerer comes to set things right.

If one ever comes.



REVERSION AND SCARRING

Normally, vampires revert to the state in which they were Embraced while they sleep during daylight hours. Hair cut during the course of the night grows back, a shaved five o'clock shadow returns if the Kindred was Embraced while scruffy, and minor wounds correct themselves. In some cases, however, this reversion is prevented. If a vampire suffers damage, those wounds persist until the vampire heals them.

In a few instances, a vampire might actively wish to change his appearance in a lasting fashion. Such is the case with hair dye, tattoos or piercings that would normally expel the ink or push themselves out of the skin while the vampire slumbers. A few vampires even like to force their bodies to permanently exhibit a scar after a particularly significant battle or physical ordeal.

If a vampire wishes to keep a scar or other change to his body, the player must spend a Willpower point to do so.

Truly severe modifications, such as permanently losing a limb or other extensive modifications cost a Willpower *dot*, and the Storyteller is the final arbiter of what constitutes the distinction.

TORPOR

The ancients called sleep the brother of death. This is even more true for vampires than for mortals. Every day, the Kindred enter a sleep that mortal senses and science cannot distinguish from death. The Kindred experience it much as mortals experience sleep. The Kindred can also enter a deeper sleep, however, in which their souls come even closer to death. The Kindred call this state torpor. A vampire's daily sleep lasts a few hours, but torpor can last for centuries.

WOUNDING

Wounds sufficient to kill mortals send the Kindred into torpor, instead. If a vampire's rightmost Health box is occupied by a lethal wound, she enters torpor instead of dying. (Recall that sufficient bashing damage can convert to lethal damage, so a good beating with, say, baseball bats can still send a Kindred into torpor.)

The duration of this torpor depends on the character's Humanity and her Blood Potency. A high Blood Potency extends the torpor's duration; so does having a low Humanity. High-Humanity vampires spend much less time in torpor than Kindred who have given most of themselves to the Beast.

To calculate the length of time a wounded Kindred spends in torpor, consult the following table. The character's Humanity score determines a base time spent in torpor. Multiply that span by the character's Blood Potency to find the total duration of the slumber. (Note that should it become a necessary distinction, the times on the torpor chart refer to in-game time, not always literal real time.)

During the time their characters are torpid, players are encouraged to play alternate characters, perhaps ghouls or retainers, or even assist the Storytelling staff by taking on the role of a Narrator character for a time. Of course, Storytellers should take care that players do not use such an opportunity to try to get vengeance for fallen characters or otherwise carry on old agendas without good cause.

Example: *Fever has a Blood Potency of 2 and a Humanity of 6. (He became one of the Damned relatively recently, and since he has only begun to increase the potency of his blood, he hasn't lost much of himself to the Beast either.) A rival Shadow, jealous of his rising status, ambushes him and viciously beats Fever into torpor, but Fever's loyal retainer arrives and drives the attacker off before he can finish the job. Humanity 6 gives a base duration of two weeks; multiplying this by Fever's Blood Potency dots gives a total duration of four weeks. At the end of that time, Fever wakes up hungry and wondering what the hell just happened.*

For contrast, the *Unholy* has a Blood Potency of 7 and has certainly earned her moniker with a Humanity of 2. For all her power, though, a pack of bold *Lupines* gives her a good thrashing. The *Lupines* think they kill her, but they actually leave her in torpor. Her Humanity of 2 gives a base time of 50 years. Multiplying this by her Blood Potency of 7 gives a total duration of 350 years, give or take a few. Given such long spans of time, we don't need to set an exact date for when she wakes. The point is, the *Unholy* stays out of circulation for a long, long time.

Zero-Humanity vampires form an important exception to this system. When they enter torpor from wounding, they sleep for an even millennium, regardless of their Blood Potency.

3.5 – TORPOR DURATION

Humanity	Base time*
10	One day
9	Two days
8	Three days
7	One week
6	Two weeks
5	One month
4	One year
3	One decade
2	Five decades
1	One century
0	One millennium†

* Total time = Base Time x Blood Potency

While in torpor, a wounded vampire can expend Vitae but can take no other action. His undead body still expends one Vitae per night as it tries to restore itself to its post-Embrace condition. The character can also expend Vitae to heal himself—a good idea, since otherwise the Vitae just trickles away without doing anything useful. Any damage that the vampire cannot heal remains on the character's withered body until he can rise and feed again.

If the vampire lacks sufficient reserves of Vitae to heal at least three points of the damage (whether lethal or aggravated) that sent her to torpor, that torpor lasts longer than usual. Calculate the torpor's duration as if the character's Blood Potency were one higher than it actually is.





If the character succumbs to torpor with no Vitae left and has lost all of her Health points to lethal damage, she awakens having recovered one Health point as a result of the torpor, which she doesn't have to pay for with Vitae. In effect, the character recovers this Health point for free, as a result of the stabilizing sleep of torpor.

Example: *Alexis is beaten into torpor by a pack of Kindred enforcers under Ian's command. When Alexis sinks into torpor, she does so with only two Vitae in her system. Her Humanity is 6 and her Blood Potency is 3. Normally, this would result in a six-week torpor. Because she lacks the Vitae to properly heal herself, however, Alexis's Blood Potency is treated as if it were one higher. This results in an eight-week torpor for Alexis, and when she rises, the wounds from her right two Health boxes are erased – wounds recovered from the Vitae she had in her system and spent reflexively.*

STARVATION

A Kindred who sleeps during the day and who has no Vitae – but who is not truly in torpor – fails to rise. All Vitae in him has been exhausted, so he has none to spend to rise the next night. For every night that passes under these circumstances, the character suffers a point of lethal damage in lieu of spending Vitae. In this state, the character is incapable of functioning at all, yet is not in torpor. This is important because this vampire does not need exceptionally potent Vitae to be roused yet – see p. 252. At this point, any Vitae given to him allows him to rise as normal (fed only a few Vitae, the character probably rises in a hunger frenzy). Denied any Vitae from an outside source, a starving character continues to suffer one lethal wound a night until he slips into torpor.

The character sleeps in torpor for a duration determined by the preceding chart: the base duration set by the character's Humanity, multiplied by a number one higher than the character's Blood Potency. At the torpor's end, the character awakens with only one Health point restored, as discussed previously.

VOLUNTARY TORPOR

Kindred can also enter torpor deliberately. Sometimes unlife just gets to be too much and a Kindred decides to sleep in hopes that some of her problems will be solved by the time she wakes again. Elder vampires also sometimes use torpor to reduce their Blood Potency when feeding becomes too inconvenient.

Vampires seldom enter voluntary torpor lightly. An extended torpor usually requires abandoning all responsibilities in the Kindred world and all the influence so painstakingly built in the mortal world. A Kindred might hope that his childer remain reasonably loyal and greet him with respect when he rises again. He might also hope that his centuries of experience bring him honor among other Kindred and win him at least a minor title in his covenant and city's undead community, but he cannot realistically hope to resume his old offices as if he'd never left.

Voluntary torpor lasts at least as long as the base duration set by the character's Humanity. At the end of that time, the character wakes if his player makes a successful Resolve + Composure draw. If the draw fails, the character remains in torpor for another increment of time, and so on. The player may choose not to make the draw to rise after each increment if he wishes his character to remain in torpor for another increment.

Example: *Lucius finds himself stymied by the presence of too many enemies and decides to lay low for a while, seeking refuge in voluntary torpor. His Humanity is 4, so he spends at least one year in torpor. After that year, Lucius's player decides Lucius wishes to stay out of sight and chooses not to draw Resolve + Composure. Lucius remains torpid for another year, at which point the player chooses to draw and succeed; Lucius is free to rise.*

After the first increment passes, the character can also try to wake up if something disturbs his body. The character can recognize a disturbance if the player succeeds at a Wits + Auspex

draw (if he has that Discipline) at a -2 penalty. If he recognizes trouble, a Humanity draw is made for the vampire to rouse himself. If the disturbance is at night, a successful draw means the character wakes completely. During the day, the character can stay awake for one turn per success drawn.

The player can also make extended Humanity draws to prolong the character's period of activity (see p. 265). The character achieves full wakefulness if the player accumulates five successes in the extended action, but the character falls asleep again if the player fails any of these draws. (This is the same as the normal system for a character to wake up during the day, but under more challenging circumstances for rousing from voluntary torpor rather than from normal sleep.)

Note that no Vitae is spent upon waking from torpor, as it is upon waking from a day's sleep.

STAKING

Finally, a vampire enters torpor when a wooden stake penetrates his heart. Only wood has this effect. Rods of metal, plastic or other substances can damage the vampire by piercing the heart, but only wood induces torpor. Kindred mystics offer a number of religious and occult theories for why wood has this power. Most Kindred simply accept it as a fact of unlife.

Driving a stake through a vampire's heart is extraordinarily difficult. The feat requires a melee or ranged attack with the stake. In combat, the attacker suffers a -3 penalty to strike so precisely. Then the attacker must inflict at least three points of lethal damage for the stake to actually thrust through the vampire's body and into the heart. The staked vampire immediately collapses into torpor, appearing stone dead for all that a mortal could tell.

A staked vampire remains in torpor indefinitely. The Kindred awakens only when someone or something removes the stake from his heart. An unwary mortal might remove the stake from what looks like a mummified corpse. A rat might gnaw at the stake enough to dislodge it, or termites might eat the stake away completely. Until something like this occurs, however, the vampire sleeps. Characters that seek to avoid Humanity loss by simply torporing or staking characters indefinitely are effectively committing murder, since they are destroying the consciousness of another sentient being without any chance for recourse. The same Humanity tests should take place if a character tries to dispose of another vampire in this fashion, a murder by any other name.

EFFECTS OF TORPOR

During torpor, a vampire's body seems utterly inert. Over the decades, it slowly shrivels in on itself until it seems like a mummified corpse. This happens more quickly if the character lacks the Vitae to heal all the damage he suffered when forced into torpor. A vampire starved into torpor looks withered already.

The vampire dreams slowly during torpor. These dreams tend to reflect the Kindred's state of mind when he entered torpor. If he slumbered willingly, his dreams remain largely peaceful, if not particularly sensible. If the Kindred entered torpor during a struggle (as is often the case), his dreams are full of wrath and terror. His mind can stay frozen on one thought or emotion for centuries. Kindred might awaken obsessed with Kindred or kine who became dust long ago.

Then there's the culture shock. Most of the world has changed more in the last century than it did in the previous thousand. Kindred who awaken from centuries of torpor often seem out of their minds, just because they are so out of touch with the modern world.

Decades or centuries of torpid dreaming scramble a Kindred's memory. Events from his past lose order. Fantasies and nightmares from dreams mix into real memories, so a vampire cannot tell which is which. Did he really hear two Primogen plotting against him — or was that just what he feared was happening? Did unbound Kindred really destroy his hated sire,





or did he merely wish they had? Some Kindred write diaries and memoirs to refresh their memories in case they must endure a long torpor, but no memoir can capture everything. Some Kindred also wonder if open or hidden rivals might have found their diaries and re-written them as part of subtle schemes to manipulate them. Other Kindred rise from torpor to find their memoirs gone, looted by savvy witch-hunters who used the notes to hunt down other Kindred — a Pyrrhic victory at best over one’s enemies, and a considerable risk to one’s progeny and allies. Such is the paranoia bred by the Danse Macabre.

No matter what causes torpor, a vampire still loses one Vitae per day. Any Vitae the Kindred uses to heal wounds does so in the normal order. After torpor of any length, therefore, a Kindred wakes up with no Vitae at all. Hunger frenzies are extremely likely after a vampire rises from torpor. The Storyteller may call for a Composure + Resolve draw to resist frenzy the first time the character encounters any creature upon whom she can feed.

Example: *When Ian’s brute squad sent Alexis to torpor, Alexis had two Vitae left. Upon reaching torpor, she spent those two Vitae, thereby healing two of the lethal damage points she had suffered. That left her with no Vitae remaining in her system, so she begins shriveling at the end of the next day, when Alexis would normally have spent the Vitae to sustain herself. She is starving when she rises, but at least she has those two Health points back.*

Example: *Lucius voluntarily went into torpor to evade the wrath of his many enemies. As he had no wounds to heal when he did so, he had no need to immediately heal Health points, so all of his remaining Vitae went toward sustaining his body (at the normal expenditure of one point per day). Since Lucius’s torpor was going to last at least a year (see the example on p. 250), he wouldn’t have enough Vitae to tide him over for that complete length of time. If someone with more potent blood (see the “Forced Revival” sidebar) found him after only a few days of cold sleep and revived him, he might still have unused Vitae in his system.*

For every 25 years in torpor, a Kindred’s Blood Potency drops by one dot, though never to less than 1. This decrease does not affect the length of torpor, though. The total duration of the slumber depends on the character’s Blood Potency when torpor begins, no matter how the trait changes during the long sleep.

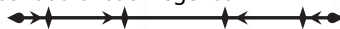


FORCED REVIVAL

Kindred can awaken early from torpor if someone feeds them sufficiently potent blood. One must force at least two Vitae into the torpid vampire’s mouth. If the blood comes from a Kindred with a Blood Potency at least two dots higher than the torpid vampire’s *current* Blood Potency (taking into account time already spent in torpor), the sleeping character awakens, no matter how much longer her torpor would have lasted on its own. If the vampire is fed Vitae that isn’t potent enough, she remains in torpor, and the taste of blood likely permeates her dreams. In either case, blood fed to a vampire to revive her counts toward a Vinculum over her as well as potentially creating blood addiction.

Blood fed to a torpid vampire that’s not potent enough to rouse her can still be useful to the slumbering Kindred. The Vitae can be spent reflexively to heal wounds. Any Vitae that isn’t spent to heal is exhausted at the normal rate of one for each night that follows.

Some Kindred believe that certain Theban Sorcery rituals can rouse a Kindred from torpor... or force one into the long sleep. Rumor has it that the potent blood of Lupines can also bring a vampire out of torpor early. As always, Storytellers must decide on the truth or falsehood of such legends.



Frenzy, Wassail and Rötschreck

Vampires work hard to hide the Beast Within. The politics of the Invictus and Carthians, the mysticism of the Ordo Dracul, Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone, even the bravado of the unbound — all are masks that vampires wear to hide the rage and bloodlust of the Beast, most of all from themselves. Hunger, wrath or fear, however, can weaken the Man enough that the Beast escapes restraint. Then a vampire becomes a monster and menace to every creature that crosses its path. The Kindred call this awful state frenzy.

THE NATURE OF FRENZY

During frenzy, a vampire no longer acts according to any rational plan. The Beast doesn't think. It acts based on raw instinct, with no thought for the future or memory of the past. The Kindred no longer recognizes friends, foes or family. Any creature with blood in its veins is reduced to obstacle or prey. While in frenzy, hungry vampires try to feed without restraint from whoever is nearest. Angry vampires do anything possible to destroy the cause of their anger. Frightened vampires flee the source of their fear and kill anyone who gets in the way. They care nothing for the consequences of their actions, only for the immediate satisfaction of a primal drive.

When the Kindred refer to “frenzy,” without any qualifier, they usually mean an outburst caused by anger. Kindred give special names to frenzies caused by hunger and fear. The former, they call Wassail; the latter, Rötschreck. Young Kindred who think it's pretentious to assign fancy names to ugly rampages simply speak of “hunger frenzy” and “fear frenzy.”

All these forms of frenzy have certain aspects in common. A vampire who succumbs to the Beast no longer pays attention to wound penalties, except perhaps to rage even more fiercely. Injuries that would leave a sane vampire crawling on the ground don't bother a frenzied vampire a bit — the Kindred keeps fighting until he is forced into torpor or is destroyed. The vampire also becomes resistant to mental influences such as Dominate and Majesty. A frenzied Kindred routinely pushes his physical abilities to the limit, performing extraordinary feats of strength, agility and toughness. Kindred can employ their Disciplines while in frenzy, but only for the most rudimentary ends. For instance, a vampire can grow Claws of the Wild to attack prey, or use Nightmare to drive people away who interfere with her flight, but she cannot command anyone using Dominate because that Discipline requires speech and a focused mind.

A vampire can slide from some kinds of frenzy to others. Yet, some forms of frenzy protect the vampire from others. Hunger frenzy is the weakest. A Wassailing vampire can be driven into a rage frenzy if he is kept from his prey, or a sufficient threat can drive him into Rötschreck. Self-preservation takes precedence over hunger, but sheer rage can overpower self-preservation if someone fights too hard to stop a fleeing vampire. While in a rage frenzy, a Kindred becomes immune to Rötschreck, but she can slide into a hunger frenzy as she guzzles the blood of a victim.

SYSTEMS FOR FRENZY

The Storyteller decides when a character runs the risk of frenzy. Anger can cause frenzy, but not every moment of irritation stirs the Beast. Hunger provokes the Beast, but most of the time characters can feed without going berserk and killing their vessels. Rötschreck — the “Red Fear” — usually occurs only when Kindred face the two forces most able to destroy them, fire





and sunlight. Other sources of fear seldom provoke frenzy, though it can happen, as with meeting a new vampire of higher Blood Potency for the first time. These guidelines are vague because the relative strength of Man and Beast can fluctuate for many reasons. One time, a character might shrug off an extreme provocation. Another time, the Kindred might feel a weight of accumulated frustration or anxiety and lose control over a small matter. We offer examples of circumstances that can trigger frenzies, and how hard they might be to resist, but the Storyteller has final say.

In rules terms, frenzy has the following effects on a character:

- A frenzying vampire ignores wound penalties to test pools, until wounds become severe enough to render the character torpid or destroyed outright.
- All attempts to influence the frenzying character's mind, by Dominate, Majesty or other means, take place at a -2 penalty, while draws for the character to resist or throw off mental influence receive a +2 bonus.
- Of course, a frenzying character cannot perform any action that requires much thought.
- The character receives a +1 bonus for any Physical Attribute draw. The Beast goes all-out, all the time, and its blinding rage shuts out all distractions and doubts.

RESISTING FRENZY

Resisting frenzy is an extended action. Whatever the cause of frenzy, Kindred may try to resist the Beast and maintain control. When a character is on the verge of frenzy, the player draws Resolve + Composure. If any successes are achieved, the character resists the frenzy for one turn per success. At the end of those turns, the player draws again in hopes of winning a few turns more of self-control for the character. If the player can accumulate a certain number of successes, the Beast subsides and the character completely avoids the frenzy. If any of the draws fail, however, the character goes ber-

serk and spends the rest of the scene in frenzy. If the player suffers a failure on a chance draw, the character stays in frenzy for as long as the Storyteller thinks is appropriate. The character also gains a derangement related to whatever caused the frenzy (see p. 268).

The greater the provocation to the character, the more successes the player must accumulate. Five successes suffice for most frenzies. Higher numbers represent the most extreme humiliation or peril to the vampire's unlife. The Storyteller may also impose bonuses or penalties to Resolve + Composure test pools to reflect a trigger that's especially easy or hard to resist.

The rule doesn't change any, but it bears repeating: A Willpower point earns a character a +3 bonus on the draw to resist frenzy, as it does with most other draws.

ANGER FRENZIES

Here are some typical events that can spark an anger frenzy, with sample numbers of successes needed to resist them, or modifiers to the Resolve + Composure test pool.

3.6 – ANGER FRENZY TRIGGERS

Trigger Event	Successes to Resist
Harassed by a panhandler	2 successes
Idiot scrapes your new car	2 successes
Insulted in public	3 successes
Hours of frustration and delay	3 successes
Reviled by someone you dislike	5 successes
Betrayed by a partner in a deal	5 successes
Shot by a mugger	5 successes
Loved one in danger	5 successes
Betrayed by someone you love	7 successes
Lose everything you own	7 successes
Loved one slain	10 successes
Reviled and humiliated by someone you love	10 successes
Situation	Modifier to Draw
Provocation aligns with your Virtue or Vice	±2
Provocation attacks your Virtue or Vice	±2
Hungry	-1
Starving	-2

Virtues and Vices can work either way. Someone who gains strength and purpose from Justice, for instance, might feel extra anger at some crime that she cannot correct, but she could resist the Beast more effectively when someone takes her to task and she knows that person is in the right. Someone beset by Pride might have extra trouble dealing with humiliation, but he could make an extra effort not to embarrass himself in other cases. The Storyteller decides when a Virtue or Vice can influence the difficulty of the Resolve + Composure draw.

Kindred also find it harder to resist the Beast when hunger adds to rage. A hungry character, defined as one who has no more than four Vitae in her system, suffers a -1 penalty to Resolve + Composure draws. A starving character, defined as having only one or no Vitae left, suffers a -2 penalty. These penalties are not cumulative with each other. You do not suffer a -3 penalty for being both starving and hungry.

HUNGER FRENZIES

Wassail can occur whenever a character feels hungry and encounters blood. Hunger frenzies are most dangerous when a character actually feeds. Kindred who care about their vessels adopt various strategies to reduce the danger to their loved ones, such as never letting themselves become too hungry, or having a favored vessel drain blood into a bowl instead



of submitting to the Kiss. Few modifiers apply to hunger frenzies, and loss of control is less likely once a character has imbibed blood. See the foregoing for the definition of “hungry” and “starving” for vampires.

3.7 – WASSAIL TRIGGERS

Trigger Event	Successes to Resist
Sight or smell of blood (when hungry)	2 successes
First taste of blood (when hungry)	3 successes
Sight or smell of blood (when starving)	4 successes
First taste of blood (when starving)	5 successes
Situation	Modifier to Draw
Has tasted vampire blood before	-1
Hungry	-1
Starving	-2
Addicted to vampire blood	-2

FEAR FRENZIES

In some ways, the undead have less to fear than mortals do. Vampires are hard to kill, and they can hope to make up for any minor loss, given time. Injuries are also more likely to anger a Kindred than frighten him.

Sunlight and fire, however, provoke a soul-deep terror among the Kindred. The Beast knows that these forces can cause its destruction. It instinctively flees sunlight and fire in a blind panic. While in Röttschreck, a vampire wants to do nothing but run away and hide, and she lashes out at anyone in her way. If a character cannot escape the cause of her fear frenzy, she might gain a derangement from such sublime terror.

Exposure to small amounts of sunlight or fire, at a safe distance or under the character’s control, hardly ever provokes Röttschreck. Nor does a TV or movie image of a sunny day rouse her Beast... much. If someone jabs a lit cigarette at the character or a flashbulb goes off in her face, however, it might be a different matter.

Nothing about a character’s personality has much effect on resisting Röttschreck. It’s the quantity of fire or sunlight, or the degree of control, that makes resisting a fear frenzy more or less difficult.

3.8 – FEAR FRENZY TRIGGERS

Trigger Event	Successes to Resist
Lighting a cigarette	1 success
Sight of a torch	2 successes
Flashbulb in the face	3 successes
Bonfire	4 successes
Burning building	5 successes
Obscured sunlight	7 successes
Direct sunlight	10 successes
Situation	Modifier to Draw
Fire/sunlight at a safe distance	+2
Surprised by fire/light	-1
Surrounded by fire/light, but not immediately harmed	-1
Burned by fire/sunlight	-3

ROLEPLAYING FRENZY

It's important to remember that a frenzied character ignores all morals or loyalties in her blind compulsion to destroy her enemy, slake her thirst or escape sunlight or fire. She attacks friends, family members, lovers and even — most to the point — other players' characters if they get in her way. For instance, a vampire raging in anger frenzy prefers to attack the person who rouses her ire, but she just as readily tries to kill any friends if the enemy is not available as a target for some reason. The character probably feels utter horror when she emerges from her frenzy to find that she slaughtered her own mother, but the Beast does not know or care about such things. Atrocities committed during frenzy often lead to degeneration draws (p. 260) as a character tries to deal with remorse. Repeated frenzies can certainly grind down a vampire's Humanity.

Some players might not want to roleplay frenzy, but the Beast is part of being a vampire. Storytellers should encourage players to portray the frenzy in its full, brutal horror. If a player cannot do this, the Storyteller is fully within her rights to have him transfer control of his character to the Storytelling staff, who dictates his actions until the frenzy ends.

If a player wants, he can spend a Willpower point for a character in the throes of frenzy. Doing so permits the player to control one of the character's actions for one turn. In this way, a frenzying vampire might manage to give her soon-to-be victim a chance to run away, or a person who gave offense a chance to make a hasty apology. This moment of control does not actually avert the frenzy, but the changing circumstances might redirect the focus of the character's rage. For instance, the frenzying character might throw the furniture around instead of ripping apart the mortal whose injudicious word uncorked several nights of building frustration. In addition, if a player ever has a character perform an action that the Storyteller thinks just isn't possible or appropriate for a frenzying character, the Storyteller can rule that the character expended a Willpower point to take that action.

The Storyteller decides how long a frenzy lasts. One scene is usually long enough, but keep in mind that a scene is a very flexible unit of time. A character trapped alone, or running wildly through empty streets, might not calm down for hours. A character who meant to take "just a sip" from her boyfriend and drank him dry instead might recover just in time to hear his death-rattle... and have a chance to Embrace him instead of letting him die a true death. Reducing a Kindred to torpor always ends frenzy.



A FINAL WORD ON FRENZY

Players must remember that all of the Only Rules That Matter still apply while a character is in frenzy, perhaps more so than many other times. Just because a *character* has lost control is no excuse for the *player* to forget the basic rules of safety and conduct. While players in private venues or among close friends might be allowed to get away with a bit more in terms of frenzy behavior, players are *never* allowed to destroy scenery or props, touch other players or actually run around the play area in an unsafe fashion. Any potentially dangerous or suspect actions should be handled with tests, pantomimed or just simply narrated. Also, even if other players don't mind having the frenzied character scream in their face or make threatening gestures, bear in mind that bystanders might not be aware that a game is going on. This warning is not meant to limit roleplaying, but to avoid potential hurt feelings within troupes or trouble with outsiders due to frenzy actions.



RIDING THE WAVE

Under some circumstances, characters might want to frenzy on purpose. For all the horror of what a character might do in frenzy, succumbing to the Beast carries power. The great difficulty lies in controlling one's actions so that the Beast achieves something useful. Young





Kindred call such a temporary, negotiated surrender to the Beast riding the wave. Older Kindred call it damnably foolishness.

If a character wants to ride the wave, the player makes Resolve + Composure draws and tries to accumulate successes as an extended action, just like fighting back frenzy. In this case, however, the vampire tries to goad the Beast while supplying it with a target of the Man's choice. The player also expends a Willpower point for trying to direct the frenzy in advance. Riding the wave always requires accumulating at least five successes. The Storyteller may ask for more, or modify the Resolve + Composure draws depending on how well the desired task accords with the character's personality or existing emotions. For instance, a character probably has little trouble deliberately frenzying when he faces the Lupine that murdered two of his Kindred allies, his Virtue is Justice, and his Vice is Wrath. On the other hand, frenzying so he might have a better chance to climb up a building almost certainly doesn't work. If the player fails any one of the Resolve + Composure draws before enough successes are accumulated, the character falls into an undirected frenzy.

Riding the wave allows a character to end the frenzy at the point of his choice, rather than suffering its passions until the Beast rages itself to exhaustion. Note that if a character riding the wave faces other stimuli that might cause a frenzy, he must still deal with those stimuli as normal after ending the intended frenzy, quite possibly frenzying again.

A character who tries to ride the wave multiple times in a single night suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to Resolve + Composure test pools for each time after the first time that he attempts to direct frenzy (regardless of whether or not he was successful at those attempts).

Example: *Favian faces two unbound Kindred who taunt him for being a slave to the rules of Invictus high society. He feels the turmoil of frenzy deep inside him, but he knows that he can't lose himself completely to the Beast. Desiring to teach these punks a lesson but not wanting to relinquish control utterly, Favian decides to ride the wave. His player spends a Willpower point and makes a Resolve + Composure draw, gaining two successes. The next turn, Favian's player draws again as the jeers of the unbound continue, this time accumulating three successes for a total of five. Favian directs his rage toward the unaligned Kindred, suffering no wound penalties for the damage they inflict on him and gaining an extra +1 to his attacks. After he sends them fleeing in bloody fear, he coaxes the Beast into calmness, rather than allowing it to continue unabated until it exhausts itself.*

Humanity

The change from life to undeath affects more than a person's body. It changes the soul. A Kindred shares his human consciousness with a force completely opposite to humanity — a thing devoid of reason, conscience or any emotions except hunger and rage. Kindred call it the Beast.

The presence of the Beast changes the very nature of morality for vampires. The Kindred can pretend to be human, but they are not. Even the most evil and monstrous mortal does not have a Beast. A vampire's existence is a constant struggle between the Man, the aspect of a Kindred that can make moral choices, and the Beast, which cannot.

The Beast follows a simple plan: Hunt. Kill. Feed. Sleep. Repeat. It feels no pity, only thirst for blood. It cannot even speak.

The Man consists of everything that resists the Beast: rational thought, a conscience, and most of all the ability to relate to other people. The Beast does not understand what other people think or feel, and it doesn't care. They are just food.



When a Kindred treats other people as prey or tools or inconvenient obstacles, the Man weakens. When Kindred make an effort to interact with mortals as fellow people, to care about their lives and happiness, the Beast... waits. The slide toward the Beast is easy. It comes naturally for creatures that must take blood from the living to survive. Strengthening the Man is very difficult. Most vampires slowly degenerate. Mentally, they become less and less human, more callous and brutal.

Most Kindred “stabilize” as monsters with some degree of self-control. They give the Beast some of what it wants and fight it just enough to preserve their existence. The Beast doesn’t know how to hide the bodies; the Man does. These vampires hunt and feed and sometimes kill, but they try not to get caught.

Some Kindred cannot strike that balance. Each crime makes the next one easier. They no longer care if they kill their vessels. They show less discretion in who they feed upon, where or how. They might start... playing with their food. When the Beast nears total ascendance, the Man becomes little more than a psychological appendage, adding human perversity and cruelty to the Beast’s predation. Even that remnant of mortality finally goes in time, and the vampire becomes a killing machine as mindless and ruthless as a shark that scents blood in the water. The vampire retains just enough self-preservation to hide from the sun, flee fire and fight back when attacked.

The Kindred call such creatures draugr, from an old Norse word for a reanimated corpse that viciously stalks and kills its living relations. A draugr leaves a trail of corpses and public attacks that attract mortal attention. Even bitter enemies put aside their struggles and cooperate to stop a draugr before it breaks the Masquerade beyond repair.



ISOLATION AND HUMANITY

The rules for degeneration checks take into account Kindred who actively encounter other individuals, and therefore have opportunities to transgress against them. Storytellers are certainly within their rights, however, to call for degeneration draws for



Kindred who spend too much time in solitude, for their connection to humanity (and Humanity) can easily atrophy. No hard-and-fast system exists, but a good guideline can be obtained by subtracting the Kindred's Humanity from 11. Every time the resulting number of years passes in a game without the character making any significant human or Kindred contact, the player must make a degeneration draw.



HUMANITY AS MORALITY

In rules terms, a trait called Humanity represents the balance of power between the Man and the Beast. Humanity is the specific form that the general Morality trait takes for vampires. The trait measures the connection a Kindred feels to her leftover mortal feelings and to her capacity to empathize with other beings. The lower a character's Humanity goes, the less she cares and the more brutally she tends to act.

Humanity uses the same order of sins presented in the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook (which is reproduced here for your convenience). Just as with mortals, when an undead character performs an act that carries an equal or lower rating than his Humanity, the player draws a certain number of times equal to the level of the sin as indicated to find out whether the character suffers moral degeneration. If the draw series succeeds, the character manages to feel shame, regret or at least some human response. If the draw series fails, the character feels nothing except satisfaction at getting what he wanted... and a little more of the Man slips away and the character has less with which to fight the Beast in the future. His Humanity drops by one. For what it's worth, the threshold for further moral crises drops too, so the player might not need to draw for degeneration as often – if the character can resist committing more heinous acts in the future.

As a character's Humanity degrades, he grows less concerned with the world, yielding ever more to the Beast. He becomes capable of virtually any depraved act against another person. When Humanity is lost because of a sin the character committed, draw the character's new Humanity as a test pool. If the draw succeeds, the Kindred finds some kind of bulwark of sanity at his new level of Humanity. If the draw fails, a derangement manifests in the character's mind. Derangements are mental and emotional "scars," in this case brought on by the character's stress, grief or even remorselessness over acts performed. Derangements are detailed at length on p. 268.

3.9 – HUMANITY AND SINS

Humanity	Threshold Sin	Draws made
10	Selfish thoughts (e.g., hurting someone's feelings)	Draw 5 times
9	Minor selfish acts (e.g., cheating on taxes)	Draw 5 times
8	Injury to another, accidental or otherwise (e.g., physical conflict)	Draw 4 times
7	Petty theft (e.g., shoplifting)	Draw 4 times
6	Grand theft (e.g., burglary)	Draw 3 times
5	Intentional mass-property damage (e.g., arson)	Draw 3 times
4	Impassioned crime (e.g., manslaughter)	Draw 3 times
3	Planned crime (e.g., murder)	Draw 2 times
2	Casual/callous crime (e.g., torture, serial murder)	Draw 2 times
1	Utter perversion, heinous acts (e.g., combined rape, torture and murder; mass murder)	Draw 2 times

DRAW RESULTS

Degeneration draws are handled slightly differently than normal draws. Instead of making a single draw and adding it to a test pool, a number of straight draws are made equal to the value indicated on the chart above. So a character that commits a callous crime makes two such draws, while a character who commits a minor selfish act makes five draws. This sequence of draws is known as the degeneration series.

A draw of an 8, 9 or 10 counts as a success, while a draw of an ace removes one success from the total. If even one success remains at the end of the series, degeneration is avoided. If no successes remain, the character loses a dot of Humanity and may even have to check for derangement.

Example: *In the midst of a heated stand-off, Justin's character Shane lashed out in anger and accidentally killed a ghoul, which the Storyteller counts as an impassioned crime. Since this sort of sin is lower than Shane's Humanity rating 6, he must test to check for degeneration. Consulting the chart, he sees that this crime allows for three draws. His first draw is a 9 – success! His second draw, though, is an ace, which removes that one success. He has only one draw left, but manages to draw an 8, for another success. Shane manages to feel enough remorse for the crime that his Humanity rating doesn't drop... this time.*

It is possible for a player to gain bonus draws to a degeneration series if his character is truly contrite or takes action to try to rectify his sins. Conversely, a player can be penalized by having draws removed from the series if his character clearly enjoyed what he did and/or made no effort to make amends. Bonus draws are optional and need only be used if the player desires, however. For example, if a player has already accumulated successes in the regular series, she may waive any bonus draws earned to avoid possibly drawing aces that cancel out existing successes. It is intended to be a benefit, after all.

In no instance can a character be penalized below one draw, however. There's always some chance to retain a vestige of Humanity, however slim. Of course, if the player voluntarily chooses to automatically fail the degeneration series and lose a dot of Humanity, the Storyteller may certainly permit her to do so.

Lastly, when drawing Humanity to check for a derangement, do not add other Attributes or traits. You may *not* spend Willpower to gain a +3 modifier on either kind of draw, though other situational bonuses or penalties may apply.

Degeneration draws can be made with a Narrator immediately following the sin, to help guide a player's roleplaying from that point. If this proves too disruptive to the flow of play, however, the Storyteller may instead request that any players whose characters committed sufficient crimes to warrant degeneration tests come see her at the end of the night. Degeneration tests are performed at that time, with results recorded by the Narrator.

Failure: For a degeneration series, failure to retain even one success by the end of the series means your character loses the struggle to maintain his standards of morality when faced with the reality of his sin. He loses one dot of Humanity. On a Humanity draw, he gains a derangement.

Success: Your character emerges from his crisis of conscience with his sense of right and wrong intact. His Humanity is unchanged, and he remains as sane as before.

Roleplaying Degeneration Draws

Success on a degeneration draw means that a character feels guilt and remorse for what she has done, but ultimately manages to keep her personal sense of morality intact. She may have sinned, perhaps even rather grievously, but it's not normal or desired by her own standards, and she can put the crime into proper perspective with her overall sense of self. She need not be weepy or dramatic upon succeeding at a degeneration draw, and may even make a public





show of bravado as a show of strength to other Kindred, but she feels some genuine remorse and regret for her actions, no matter how far down she tries to bury it. Many vampires also make some active effort at atonement after a successful degeneration draw, whether as grand as public recompense or as small as an anonymous donation to a victim's family.

Likewise, a failure on a degeneration draw can mean many different things, depending on the vampire and the circumstances in question. Some vampires still feel genuine guilt for their actions (particularly if they still have a high Humanity rating), but all of their remorse just isn't sufficient to prevent them from suffering a fundamental sense of loss or horror at the crime they committed. They've shaken their own moral foundations with their actions and lost part of themselves because of it. Of course, some vampires' reactions are much more cold and callous. They may realize distantly that they're supposed to feel something like guilt, but the feeling never really materializes. Others find themselves rationalizing the act to a degree that they no longer care anyone got hurt, because it served their goals to do so. And a small minority (usually those on a rapid trip down) might actively enjoy the experience.

RESISTING DEGENERATION

Storytellers do not have to leave resisting degeneration as nothing but a straight draw series. Aside from any relevant roleplaying the player might have already performed, ask the player to describe how the character feels about her sin, and what she intends to do about it.

Short answers that don't suggest much thought, like, "My character feels real bad about doing that," receive an unmodified draw series. So do defensive answers, such as, "Well, he was asking for me to beat him up, mouthing off like that." At least the character tries to rationalize her actions. It isn't a great example of humanity at its best, but it's still very human.

Answers that show the character engages in extravagant but cost-free contrition, such as, "I return to my haven and scourge myself until dawn," also don't quite pass muster. There's no real loss or suffering involved. If you really want to encourage that sort of melodrama, give the player a bonus draw for the degeneration series (but not the Humanity draw if they fail). If you think the character is lying to herself, don't give the bonus at all.

Serious answers that show the character engages in some soul-searching or an attempt to do better in the future could receive a bonus draw to the degeneration series. For instance, one character might go to her sire and ask how she can better resist the Beast when she's angry, because she hates the results when she loses control. Another might pray for forgiveness. Don't automatically reward that, though, unless the player has previously established the character's religious feeling, or she does a good job of roleplaying the crisis that leads the character to a faith previously neglected or scorned.

Attempts to find some good or at least necessity in the character's actions might be worth a bonus draw to the degeneration series. "Sure, killing that guy was wrong... but the way he beat his girlfriend? Eventually, he probably would have killed her, and she didn't deserve that. Better that he died than she did." Or: "I tried every other way to stop that journalist from running the story, but the bribes, threats, Dominate attempts and schemes to discredit him all failed. He had to die to protect the Masquerade. I feel horrible about it, but how many people would die if mortals found out about the Kindred? He would have started a war."

At most, a player should receive up to two extra draws when checking for degeneration, when his character shows deep regret and — more importantly — acts on it. Does the character try to make up for his sin? The character could apologize to someone he injured or secretly try to help the family of someone he killed in a Beast-driven rage. Anyone can "feel sorry," but really acting on that regret is something special. Of course, the very acts that bring him into contact with people he tries to help may endanger the Masquerade... or enemies might

threaten those people to extort concessions from your character... or he might unintentionally hurt them himself. The Damned seldom find it easy to atone for what they've done.

At the other extreme, a player might say his character feels no remorse at all. She intended to commit the sin, enjoyed it and would do it again. In that case, you might remove one draw as a penalty. Such a Kindred doesn't even try to resist the selfishness that's so characteristic of the Beast. Don't assess this penalty to a player already drawing only once for a degeneration check. The fact that the character's Humanity is so low that she has only one draw for the check already signifies that she's beyond caring and remorse.

Note that modifiers here apply to the degeneration series alone, not to Humanity draws to determine if derangements are gained.

DEGENERATION AND VICES

The transformation from mortal to undead does not excuse a character from suffering his Vice as his Humanity drops. Characters who want to retain their Humanity need to resist their Vices as well as the Beast. Giving in to Vices can speed degeneration by eroding the self-control that a Kindred needs to fight the Beast. The lower a character's Humanity drops, the more often he feels tempted by his Vice.

At first glance, this would seem to put all Kindred on an accelerating death-spiral. Less Humanity means a more prominent Beast, which means more sins, which eventually means still less Humanity and an even more recalcitrant Beast.

That's not actually true, because a character can sink below the level of his Vice. A Vice drives a character to do something bad, but not the worst thing possible. A lecher might feel driven by lust to seduce, but he doesn't have to commit rape. An avaricious money-grubber might have trouble passing up a shady business deal, but she doesn't have to rob banks. At low Humanity, the Kindred can find many ways to indulge his Vice without committing the most heinous acts. For instance, a Kindred who feels his pride insulted doesn't have to murder the offender. He might satisfy his pride by Dominating the offender into making a fool of himself, use Majesty to turn other people against him or simply spy on him under cover of Obfuscate to learn damaging secrets for blackmail or humiliation. These are all sleazy, selfish acts — but not as bad as murder (probably). Make no mistake, though: Kindred who stabilize at a low Humanity become deeply unpleasant characters.

DEGENERATION AND DERANGEMENTS

Derangements usually make it harder for characters to retain Humanity. Some derangements can cause characters to lash out in wild fury under certain circumstances, or make them believe they face deadly danger when they do not. Such outbursts can lead a Kindred to commit acts he later regrets — or not, resulting in Humanity loss.

Some derangements can help preserve Humanity, however, if a character genuinely cannot understand the significance of his acts. He might not realize what he actually did. For instance, the player of a paranoid vampire who believes that all banks are part of a Ventrué conspiracy might receive a bonus to any degeneration draws that happen because of assaults on banks or bankers. In his cracked mind, the vampire thinks a greater good justifies his acts.

Players and Storytellers should remember, however, that derangements are expressly disadvantages that always cause more harm than good. Storytellers should allow a derangement-based bonus to Humanity checks only if a player has steadfastly roleplayed the disadvantages of madness, and then only in very specific cases where the character's delusions apply.

At best, madness helps a character stabilize at a low Humanity, as a last-ditch attempt by the Man to protect itself from the Beast. Indeed, a character doesn't get "better," he simply mires himself ever deeper in insanity.





REGAINING HUMANITY

Kindred who make a deep and prolonged effort can regain lost Humanity or even become more ethical creatures than they were in life. It isn't easy, though.

In rules terms, a player can spend experience points to buy dots of Humanity for her character. In story terms, the character *must* do something to show that he really tries to become a better person and more able to resist the Beast (see p. 101 of the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook). If the player announces her intent to buy Humanity for her character, the Storyteller can examine the character's recent actions. Has he tried to atone for past crimes? Has he tried to avoid committing more sins? Has he resisted his Vice and upheld his Virtue, even when he cannot harvest Willpower from it? Has the character associated with mortals and cultivated relationships with them? If the character genuinely tries to act more human, the Storyteller should certainly permit the purchase.

Why demand an experience-point cost for an increased Humanity when characters lose the trait so easily? Shouldn't highly moral acts receive an immediate reward of restored Humanity?

Sorry, no. One moment of grace does not reverse the habits built through years, perhaps centuries, of abuse. Enduring gains against the Beast require a heroic struggle that never fully ends. Note that this contradicts statements made about regaining lost Morality for free in the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook. This contradiction is intentional. Humanity is so central to the themes of **The Requiem** that we want to reinforce characters' dangerous footing on the path of Humanity by being that much more stringent with the rules.

Example: *Maggie feeds from a vessel and is unable to stop herself, accidentally taking too much Vitae and killing her victim. Her Humanity is 7, so this bloody transgression causes her to test for degeneration. This amounts to "manslaughter," so Maggie's player draws three times, achieving no successes. Her Humanity drops to 6.*

*Maggie's player then draws has a test pool of 6 (because her new Humanity is 6) for her Humanity draw, to see if she gains a derangement. Again, the player draws no successes. The player and the Storyteller confer for a bit, deciding that the mild derangement sanguinary animism (see later in this section) is appropriate here. They come up with the rationale that Maggie has been thinking too deeply about the arcane properties of blood in her studies of the *Crúac* Discipline. Add to that her guilt over the killings, and the two factors combine to "convince" her that part of his soul and indeed the souls of others she feeds on will mystically linger with her after the feeding has stopped. Remember, this is what Maggie thinks, not the objective truth. That's why it's a derangement!*

The player writes "sanguinary animism" on the character sheet next to Maggie's Humanity of 6. When and if the player buys Humanity back up to 7 with experience points, Maggie overcomes her sanguinary animism derangement. Yet if her Humanity continues to drop, she might develop a more severe ailment, or even manifest some other type of derangement.

GAME EFFECTS OF HUMANITY

Why struggle against the Beast? Why not compromise with the Beast and one's own desires and stabilize as a callous but self-controlled monster?

Many Kindred accept that logic. They sacrifice more than abstract ethics when they compromise with the Beast, though. Preserving Humanity offers tangible benefits. The more a vampire cultivates mortal feelings and ethics, the less tightly the curse of undeath binds him, at least in some ways.

DAYTIME ACTIVITY

The Kindred have trouble staying awake during the day. The lower a character's Humanity score is, the harder it is to be active.

If a character wants to stay awake when the sun rises, the player draws a test pool of the character's Humanity. The character resists sleep for one turn or minute per success drawn.

If a character tries to remain active for an entire scene, the Storyteller can make the effort an extended action and require the player to accumulate five successes, though a failure at any point means the character immediately falls asleep despite his intentions. If the vampire is still awake at the end of the first hour of daytime, he can attempt another extended action to stay awake for another scene, repeating that extended action again and again. Any failure results in immediate sleep, however. A vampire might remain active during the day to undertake extensive research, to perform a lengthy ritual or to keep a vigil or to stand guard. Attempts to go out possessing an animal or mortal with Animalism or Dominate almost always fail as the vampiric curse overwhelms a character's mind. Remaining active for a whole day doesn't preclude the normal Vitae cost for "waking" that night. In this case, the Vitae is spent for the vampire to continue functioning for the remainder of the night.

A Kindred can also try to wake up during the day if something disturbs her sleep. The player draws Wits (+ Auspex, if the character has that Discipline) to determine if the sleeping vampire notices the disturbance. If the draw succeeds, the player makes the above Humanity draw to find out if the character can force herself awake. Rousing from sleep during the day also costs a Vitae, regardless of how long the character remains active thereafter. (Staying active during the day without ever having slept costs no Vitae.) If a vampire is roused from sleep during the day, a Vitae is spent for her to be active, and if she resumes sleep thereafter, another Vitae is spent that evening for her to rise for the whole night.

A Kindred has trouble putting forth her full effort when the Beast's instincts tell her to sleep. While a Kindred acts during the day — whether having remained active since the night before or having been awoken from slumber — test pools for any task cannot exceed the character's Humanity dots. For example, Thomas stays up well into the day to puzzle out a few clues to a threat against his Requiem. Normally, Thomas's Intelligence + Investigation test pool is seven, but since his Humanity is only 4, only four of that 7 can be used in the Investigation draw.

RELATING TO MORTALS

The more human a vampire feels, the more human he can act. Every second, mortals send and receive tiny cues that they pay attention to each other, that they care and respond — that they're alive. They look at each other's faces, mimic each other's flickers of expression, shift their weight when another person does so, nod slightly as another person talks. The Man does all that, the Beast doesn't. A Kindred with low Humanity can put great effort into acting like a living person. He can force himself to breathe and remind himself to blink now and then... but he can't fake that subtle, unconscious dance of nonverbal interaction. Mortals soon pick up on this. They cannot consciously spot the problem, but their instincts tell them that something is *very wrong* and they should *get away*. They sense the predator behind the human mask.

Kindred can suffice their flesh with Vitae to look more alive. Vampires with high Humanity do so almost reflexively to preserve the illusion for themselves that they are still people, not monsters. Low-Humanity vampires do so less often and achieve less lifelike results. As the Man weakens, the Kindred tend to look paler and more corpse-like.

When a Kindred interacts with people other than vampires, that character's test pool in Empathy, Persuasion or Socialize can rise no higher than his Humanity dots. For instance, if a character has a Humanity of 5, his player cannot have a test pool of more than five when attempting to use Wits + Empathy on a mortal, no matter how high the character's Wits and Empathy scores might be. This limitation does not apply to Discipline powers that call for Empathy, Persuasion or Socialize in their test pools, as these powers are supernatural in effect and therefore outside the normal realm of experience governed by Humanity.



If a situation imposes penalties on a test pool, assess the penalties after the Humanity limit is applied. Continuing the previous example, if the character suffers a -2 penalty on his Wits + Empathy pool, the player draws with a test pool of three. Bonuses cannot raise a player's test pool over his character's Humanity limit, so add them before comparing a pool to a character's Humanity.

The subtle repulsion that mortals feel toward low-Humanity Kindred does not influence a character's actual Presence score. Kindred look different than they did when their Humanity was higher, but that change can be subtle. Mortals might perceive a low-Presence Kindred as bestial, while a high-Presence Kindred could have a deadly, frightening taint. The warmth that once attracted the eye chills to a reptilian fascination. Mortals who try to recount the look of a low-Humanity Kindred might describe an image quite different from the vampire's actual appearance, as unconscious fear shades their memory. Even someone captivated by a good-looking, low-Humanity Kindred might use phrases like “deadly beauty.”

SUMMARY: THE DESCENT

Humanity tends to drop. All Kindred must face this stark, unavoidable truth. Their existence as predators forces them to commit abhorrent acts, if not deliberately, then when the Beast overpowers them. A Kindred might begin his unlife vowing that he'll never succumb to the Beast. Well, he'll never succumb to the Beast and not feel bad about it afterward. Well, he'll never succumb to the Beast in a *really* terrible way... and so on. As the years and decades pass, Kindred find it hard to muster the same revulsion to a crime they have committed many times before. Humanity wears away from sheer weariness. High moral codes bend, then break, and are forgotten in time.

Kindred tend to live down to their Humanity. As the trait drops, less and less seems objectionable. What once caused horrified repentance seems expedient – maybe even thrilling. That way, however, leads to destruction.

So how can a Kindred survive the Requiem? How can he preserve some shred of human conscience when the Beast never tires? What limit can he set to his own monstrosity?

The characters must answer that question for themselves. That's what **The Requiem** is all about.

HUMANITY 10-8

Kindred with Humanity scores this high can seem “more human than human.” Neonates might recoil from their own monstrosity and take up ethical codes stricter than any they followed in life. They usually try to feed only from animals or seek other alternatives to victimizing mortals, and feed as little as possible in any case. They don't have to act preachy or passively accept everything that unlife and their fellow Kindred throw at them, but they must work hard to avoid harming anyone else and to atone for any sin they commit. Interaction with mortals often matters a great deal to such Kindred, as interacting with the living helps them remember what life was like. They can also pass for mortal almost without effort.

Few mortals can maintain such high ethical standards, and even fewer Kindred succeed for long. A vampire eventually loses control and kills someone, and then kills again. Kindred harden themselves to this awful truth or destroy themselves to prevent further harm to others. Few Kindred find reason to both continue their existence and remain this moral.

Older, more jaded (or realistic) Kindred often find highly humane vampires insufferably naïve. They take dour satisfaction in the thought that the whelps will learn better, just as they did. Some elders are not above foisting “lessons” in callousness, selfishness or deceit on a neonate who thinks he can be a “good vampire.”

HUMANITY 7-6

At this Humanity, Kindred have ethical standards like those of most mortals. They feel that killing, theft and cruelty are wrong, but they don't go all weepy if they shade the truth a



little, hit someone who tried to hit them first, or take opportunities for a little fun that don't really hurt anyone else. Such a character has a Vice that she probably indulges in small ways with only minimal regrets. These Kindred can still easily pass for mortal, and they probably have mortal acquaintances.

HUMANITY 5

It's a tough world, and Kindred with this Humanity score accept that they need some toughness as well. Such characters can recognize and reject deliberate atrocities... but shit happens. If some happens to them, they throw it right back. Why should they act better than anyone else?

At this Humanity, a Kindred starts to show the eerie unpleasantness that puts mortals on their guard. A skilled dissembler can still persuade mortals to ignore their instincts, though.

HUMANITY 4

Most Kindred eventually stabilize at or around this Humanity. Characters with Humanity 4 become genuinely callous and selfish. Murder no longer shocks them. Violence, theft, treachery, lies — these are all just tools to help a Kindred get what he wants, to gain power and to protect his all-important self. Expedience becomes sufficient justification for nearly anything. A character suffers from his Vice and indulges it with little restraint. He can still recognize the practical, legal consequences if the mortal world discovers his crimes, however, so he takes care to hide his offenses.

Such a low-Humanity Kindred has a distinctly corpselike appearance, though makeup can compensate. Beauty carries a predatory taint or shows the bland, sterile attractiveness of a manikin. Only the inability to conceive of such a thing keeps mortals from recognizing the character as a walking, talking cadaver.

HUMANITY 3-2

A vampire does whatever he can get away with. Only the most remarkable sadism or perversion can bother Kindred with such a low Humanity... or at least seem too dangerous to justify the pleasure they would bring. All other creatures are tools, toys or food. Anyone who says otherwise has proved he is too stupid to deserve consideration. A character this inhumane feels the pull of such a potent Vice, on top of the Beast and his own ruthlessness, that he barely qualifies as sane.

No amount of dissembling can help such a character pass for human for long. Mortals know within minutes that they are in the presence of a monster, even if they don't realize what kind.

HUMANITY 1

Forget sanity — at this Humanity, a Kindred can barely function as a sentient being. Little except a deranged obsession or direct threat to existence can focus the vampire's mind against the hungers of the Beast and the drive of an overwhelming Vice. The character even has trouble mustering the cunning needed to hide her crimes and debauches from mortal authorities or other Kindred. Rotting corpses strewn about a gore-spattered haven is a perfectly typical setting for such degenerate vampire. Mortals instantly recognize the Kindred as a monster whom they should flee, or at least a psychopath in the last stages of mental disintegration.

HUMANITY 0

Hunt. Kill. Feed. Sleep. Repeat.

At Humanity 0, a character possesses no shred of free will and cannot be played any longer. From this final degeneration, there is no return. The character must be turned over to the Storytelling staff, perhaps to be used as a recurring villain.





Derangements

The human mind has its limits. People retreat into madness when they can no longer cope with extreme guilt, grief, terror or conflicting demands. A person might seek an illusion of self-control through elaborate private rituals, fantasies of power or emotional fixations. In more severe cases, the mind succumbs to stress, crumbling and losing nearly all contact with reality.

Kindred suffer from derangements even more often than mortals do in the World of Darkness, and no wonder. Their entire existence is one long battle between a human conscience and the drives of the Beast. Many neonates still think of themselves as mostly human, but they must feed upon mortal blood to survive. How can they commit assault – potentially murderous assault – night after night and still think of themselves as reasonably good people? As the decades pass, Kindred face other grief and traumas. Either they abandon all the people they love, or they watch them age and die. Society itself changes. What mortals once found unthinkable becomes accepted without question, and the old standards become quaint, rustic or crude. Kindred can also suffer more specific horrors. They include the stark terror of Röttschreck or killing loved ones during frenzy. Most insidious of all, the Danse Macabre takes its own slow toll. As Kindred enmesh themselves in the endless struggle for power, they can trust fewer and fewer of their fellows. Other people are the greatest of all reality checks. Denied any sort of healthy emotional connection to other people, Kindred lose themselves in their own thoughts and fears.

Ghouls are also prone to derangements. They love masters who regard them as slaves. They must move between a secret, supernatural world and mundane society. They are tainted with undeath while they yet live. Of *course* their situation can drive them crazy.

GAINING DERANGEMENTS

Undead characters can fall into madness through several methods. Some are automatic. Others are largely a matter of the Storyteller's discretion. We have mentioned some triggers for madness elsewhere, but include them here for your convenience.

- **Failures :** The character gains a derangement if the player fails the degeneration series and the subsequent Humanity draw; or if he suffers a failure on a Resolve + Composure chance draw to resist frenzy, Röttschreck or Wassail. The Storyteller chooses a derangement that has some connection to the situation that leads to the draw.

Example: A Kindred who suffers an extreme Röttschreck (the player gets a failure on the Resolve + Composure chance draw as he had suffered a number of penalties to his test pool) incurs a permanent phobia about fire. He tries to prevent the slightest chance of any flame coming near. He checks power cords every half-hour to make sure they aren't overheating, and searches through his haven to make sure no one left an oily rag anywhere. He demands that known smokers turn out their pockets to prove that they aren't carrying matches or lighters. He might not even ride in a car with a working cigarette lighter.

- **Extreme Pain, Frustration or Horror:** Truly shocking events can topple a character's reason. Examples include killing loved ones in frenzy, a long period of torture by a witch-hunter, or (for elders) perhaps seeing centuries of work and scheming suddenly crash into ruin. Under such circumstances, the Storyteller may ask the player to draw the character's Resolve + Composure (at whatever penalty seems appropriate) to avoid a derangement.

- **Very Long Torpor:** Kindred who spend decades or centuries asleep wake up with confused minds. Sometimes a Kindred's mind clears, sometimes it doesn't. Very long torpor is not common among players' characters in most chronicles, so the Storyteller can use such a penalty to justify a crazed elder without worrying about draws.

- **Impossible Conflicts:** Some Kindred find themselves under Vinculums to extremely cruel regnants. This condition can create a tug-of-war between love and hate that tears a subject's mind apart. Ghouls with loathsome or abusive domitors might also suffer derangements.

ROLEPLAYING DERANGEMENTS

Derangements present a great challenge to players. Most sane people have difficulty portraying crazy people. More often, the result is a giggle-producing caricature. Real mental illness isn't funny, marginal or cute. The mildest forms can annoy other people. More severe cases can rip one's heart out with pity. Full-blown psychosis, however, is seldom less than scary as hell.

Nor are crazy people happy in their madness. Derangements are an attempt to deal with pain, but they often cause as much suffering as their root cause ever did. More often than not, insane people are desperately unhappy and would like to end their madness but don't know how.

The actions of the deranged often make no sense to other people, but they always make sense to the subject himself. Other people don't see the reasons for the madman's behavior. Sometimes you can tell what "missing information" explains erratic behavior. When a schizophrenic rages against unseen presences, well, the hallucinations are plenty visible to him. Other times, the reason lies in a system of associations that the deranged person might not understand himself. For instance, an obsessive-compulsive might refuse to carry \$20 bills. How does this refusal help the person? Perhaps he went to the bank just before he learned of his wife's death, and had received a stack of \$20 bills. Therefore, he associates \$20 bills with the death of loved ones. Or the chain of associations might be far more obscure than that. When playing deranged characters, players should come up with such hidden associations as a guide to portraying madness.

Regardless of the type of madness being portrayed, players must remember the Only Rules That Matter and never attack others, topple furniture, break props or frighten non-players with their behavior.

CURING DERANGEMENTS

Removing a derangement is even more difficult for Kindred than it is for mortals. Modern psychiatry chiefly relies on drugs and "talk therapy." Some forms of mental illness, such as schizophrenia and manic-depression, seem to happen because of some defect in a person's brain chemistry. Various drugs can ameliorate the effects, and maybe a therapist can then teach the patient to think in healthier ways. Other illnesses, such as phobias and hysteria, seem to be created entirely by thought and stress. Finding and relieving the base anxiety can cure the disorder, though modern psychiatry generally prescribes antidepressants and other drugs.

Kindred cannot turn to drugs to relieve derangements. Talk therapy becomes feasible only if the city has a Kindred psychiatrist, as talking to a mortal would break the Masquerade. Anyway, most of the causes of stress in Kindred existence cannot be relieved.

For derangements acquired through degeneration, Kindred are much like mortals. A derangement is considered overcome once the character regains one more dot of Humanity than the one at which he gained the derangement. So, if a character gains an addiction at Humanity 6, she needs to rise back to Humanity 7 to overcome that addiction.

After a character successfully resists a derangement 10 *consecutive* times, the Storyteller can declare the derangement cured. This method does not work on severe derangements. A true psychotic cannot control his own mind. Storytellers must decide for themselves whether extended use of Dominate or other mind-influencing supernatural powers can cure derangements. No method of treatment can ameliorate derangements acquired through moral degeneration. Those must be overcome by regaining Humanity. At the Storyteller's





discretion, a character may resist such derangements for a scene, but he can never overcome them through sheer quantitative endurance.

SAMPLE DERANGEMENTS

Some of these derangements have already been described in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook. These descriptions focus on how Kindred (or, in some cases, ghouls) experience the ailments. We also add a few new ones.

Some derangements are severe forms of other conditions, but different from those discussed in the *Mind's Eye Theatre* book. In such cases, after a character acquires the mild derangement, he and the Storyteller may choose what severe ailment might set in. For example, a character who already has the irrationality derangement gains another. According to the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook, multiple personality is the severe form of that derangement. The character and Storyteller may decide, however, that the character is better suited to delusional obsession. Of course, as the *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebook also states, sometimes a single act or scene is so mind numbing that only full-blown insanity and dysfunction can result. In these cases, Storytellers may decide that a character acquires a severe derangement whether or not she already has the mild form.

Some of the following derangements are mild in and of themselves, and have no progression to the severe form. These are marked as “mild only.”

Bulimia (severe; follows Fixation): People with this neurosis try to drown their anxiety through activities that comfort them, especially food. Doing so leads to a binge-and-purge cycle. The bulimic stuffs himself to relieve stress, then self-disgust at his own gluttony drives him to vomit out what he's eaten. The bulimic soon seeks to feed again, though, and the cycle repeats.

Vampires face a special temptation toward bulimia because feeding is the strongest physical pleasure left to them. A bulimic vampire relieves his fear and guilt by gorging himself on blood, perhaps feeding several times a night and burning the Vitae as fast as he can. The character can augment his traits for frenetic activity or wound himself as a form of punishment, then heal the wounds so that other Kindred won't see his weakness and self-loathing. At severe levels, the vampire might even will himself to expunge Vitae by vomiting — no small feat and a noteworthy act of will, since vampires don't store blood in their stomachs.

Effect: A bulimic vampire becomes hungry more easily than other Kindred and has a harder time resisting the urge to feed. Whenever the character feeds, the player must succeed at a Resolve + Composure draw or the vampire feeds until full, whether or not he really needs the extra Vitae. Additionally, the character must use that Vitae frequently. The player must spend at least one Vitae per scene for the character until the character rests for the day, even if circumstances wouldn't otherwise warrant it. A player may, for example, devote Vitae to Strength for a turn in which no Strength draw is necessary, or spend a Vitae to heal a single point of bashing damage even though Vitae normally heals two points of bashing damage. A bulimic character also suffers an automatic -2 penalty to resist hunger frenzies. Forcibly preventing the character from drinking his fill might provoke a rage frenzy (no modifier to difficulty).

Delusional Obsession (severe; follows Irrationality): This derangement can emerge because of centuries of torpid dreams, or simply a strong desire for the world to be the way a character wants. Delusional obsession consists of a fanatical belief in something that just isn't true. Lots of people hold beliefs that other people find absurd, of course, but a delusional obsessive structures his life or unlife on them. Classic examples include the survivalist holed up in a cabin with canned beans and a shotgun, the street-corner preacher ranting that “The end is near,” and the dotty old lady with a hundred cats. Nearly any hobby, belief or interest

can seem dangerously crazed when it takes over a character's existence. Delusional obsession might be dismissed as fanaticism, but it is even more extreme.

Effect: A Willpower point must be spent to resist whenever an opportunity arises to act in accordance with the character's obsession, or whenever he must act in direct opposition to his obsession. For instance, a gardening fanatic might have to expend Willpower to stay out of a florist's shop. A Kindred who believes that every instance of a crescent or lunar reference indicates Lupine activity might need to expend a Willpower point to step into an Islamic cultural center or to stay in the same room as someone named Moon.

Dependent-Personality Disorder (severe; follows Irrationality): This emotional derangement most often afflicts ghouls or blood-bound Kindred. The character becomes utterly dependent on his regnant or domitor. He resists making even the most trivial decision for himself. This disorder might arise from fear of abandonment (especially strong in the case of ghouls who know that sudden aging or death awaits them if they lose their supply of Vitae). It might also grow from an exaggerated fear of displeasing a harsh or demanding master.

Effect: If a character has this derangement, the player does not include Resolve in contested test pools when the domitor attempts to Dominate him (although Blood Potency still applies). Indeed, the character often follows up on any statement that might be construed as a request for the character to do something.

Phobia (mild): A person who suffers from a phobia has an unreasoning fear of something. A phobia can result from a traumatic experience associated with an object or condition, or might be a purely neurotic way of hiding from a real source of anxiety. Common phobias include a fear of open spaces, leaving one's home, of enclosed spaces or germs, but nearly anything can become the focus of a phobia. Kindred are especially prone to phobias of fire, sunlight or hunger. A phobic vampire might avoid going outdoors for fear of sunlight, even if she knows dawn is hours away.

Effect: Your character moves away from the object of her phobia. If she must be near it, she can tolerate being no closer than her Acting Speed in steps. If it approaches her, she must move away at least her Acting Speed in distance in her next action. She cannot easily target the trigger with close combat or ranged attacks. Such attacks suffer a -5 penalty as your character shakes just looking at it. If space or circumstances don't allow her to maintain her distance, she freezes like a deer in headlights until she finds an opening by which to escape. (Her Defense still applies if attacked and she can choose to dodge and can take cover from Firearms attacks, but she can take no other actions while "frozen.")

A successful Resolve + Composure draw must be made for a phobic Kindred to simply approach the subject of her fear. Any sort of shock or surprise associated with the subject of the phobia can cause Röttschreck. Draw normally for the character to resist, suitably modified by the degree of exposure.

Hysteria (severe; follows Phobia): Kindred hysteria operates much like that of mortals, except it rises to new heights, as would be expected for a mental ailment of the undead. The vampire's emotions run high and stressful situations can cause fits of rage, weeping, fainting or other emotional displays.

Effect: This condition operates as a phobia, but on a failed Resolve + Composure draw your character cannot be in the same room with the object of her fear. She must run away from it immediately, and cannot tolerate being within sensory range (sight, sound, smell) of it. If the trigger comes within sensory range, she must move away at full running speed as soon as she can take an action. She cannot target it for an attack under any circumstance. If it touches her, make another Resolve + Composure draw for her to not freak out and run as far away as she can, thinking of nothing else until she's left the subject far behind. (Even if



this draw succeeds, your character must still leave the room or area.) If any of your Resolve + Composure draws suffer a failure on a chance draw or your character is unable to escape, she faints and loses consciousness for the remainder of the scene. If your character is unaware of the object's proximity until it touches her, a Resolve + Composure suffers a -3 penalty. If it touches her where she can't see it but she can feel it — a spider dropping on her neck or in her hair — the penalty is -5.

For a Kindred character, you must roleplay most aspects of hysteria but also suffer a -1 penalty on all draws to resist frenzy that relate to the object of fear. Any action that relates to the object and that results in a failure on a chance draw automatically causes your vampire to frenzy.

Manic-Depression (severe; follows Depression): Severe mood swings characterize this derangement. It occurs in two forms, one psychological and one a defect in brain chemistry.

The psychological form is a modified form of hysteria. The victim can swing from an enthusiastic, confident, even ecstatic state to lethargy and despair. The mood swings can happen any time, but any success can push the manic-depressive into exaltation, and any failure can plunge the person into depression.

The second form of manic-depression is an organic disorder. It follows a regular cycle that can range from hours to weeks. The manic phase begins with an excess of energy and confidence, then proceeds to a sort of ecstatic frenzy as the person's mind races faster and faster. Eventually the person calms down and then slides into a depression as lethargic as the manic phase was energetic. This form of manic-depression can mimic the effects of schizophrenia, and lead to a near-suicidal state.

Effect: Whichever form of the ailment your character has, whenever he fails a task, the Storyteller may secretly draw his Resolve. A failure means the character lapses into depression for the rest of the scene. The character also goes into depression whenever the player makes a failure on a chance draw, or the character has less than two Vitae.

While depressed, the character loses half his Willpower points (rounding fractions down), to a minimum of 1. A depressed vampire cannot expend Vitae to gain bonuses for Physical tasks, either.

Each scene thereafter, the Storyteller draws once. On a draw of 8, 9 or 10, the character throws off the depression and becomes upbeat, energetic and obsessively active for as many scenes as he was depressed. He regains the Willpower points he lost before, and all draws to resist frenzy suffer a -1 penalty.

Megalomania (severe; follows Narcissism): Clinical megalomania can consist of a delusion that the individual is some famous and powerful person, contemporary or historical, or even that he is God. A megalomaniac vampire might imagine that he is some famous or infamous Kindred, or the Devil himself.

A romantic form of megalomania might be called "James Bond Mastermind Syndrome." This sort of megalomaniac obsessively seeks ever-greater wealth and power. Such individuals hide their anxiety (even from themselves) behind a mask of arrogance and supreme self-confidence. The character may seek power by means ranging from intricate conspiracies to brutal murder and terror. To this sort of megalomaniac, everyone is a minion who should do what he's told, or a competitor who must be destroyed. This belief extends to even members of the vampire's own coterie.

Effect: If your character ever loses a contest to someone he feels is socially inferior, he loses one point of Willpower due to shame and self-loathing (which is at the heart of his megalomania, as he secretly fears that he's a fraud).

Multiple Personality (severe; extreme; follows Irrationality): Multiple-Personality Disorder (MPD) results from traumas so severe and prolonged that the victim's mind splits into several



personalities. When a vampire suffers this derangement, the Storyteller and player need to agree on a set of alternative personalities for the character, as well as on what situations call each personality to the fore. Each personality should have some connection to the trauma that fractured the character's mind. Alternate personalities might believe they belong to different clans, bloodlines or covenants, or even not be aware that they are undead.

Effect: A character with multiple personalities can manifest different Skills or perhaps increased or diminished Social Attributes for each identity (the number of dots allocated to your character's Social Attributes are rearranged by anywhere from one to three). The character does not actually possess more Skills than other characters, he merely switches personalities when he needs to use certain Skills. For instance, a tough-guy "protector" persona might emerge whenever the character needs to fight, so the baseline identity doesn't need to face the moral and emotional stress of combat. The "protector" persona takes possession of the character's combat Skills, while the other personalities don't admit that they know how to fight.

This is an extreme derangement. The character must experience a life-altering trauma or supernatural tragedy to manifest it. The ailment cannot normally be acquired by failing a Humanity draw unless the sin performed is truly ghastly. MPD is an elaborate derangement, and even more of a challenge to roleplay than most derangements. Its symptoms are frightening, and the suffering it exacts from its victim is monumental. It should not be an excuse for slapstick, wacky, foolish or childish behavior.

See the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rulebook about purchasing different traits for different personalities.

Obsessive Compulsion (severe; follows Fixation): A character with this derangement focuses her attention on a single repetitive behavior or action as a way to distract herself from feelings of anxiety or inner torment. The compulsive character turns everything into a ritual and feels utter dread of any disruption of her behaviors.

Many European vampire legends say the undead suffer from an obsessive need to count collections of small objects, so a mortal can protect himself by leaving piles of grain where he sleeps. A marauding vampire feels compelled to count the grain before he feeds, legends say, and this can keep the vampire occupied until dawn. Kindred who believe in the stories mortals tell about them might suffer from this kind of fixation.

Effect: Determine a set of specific actions or behaviors that your character follows to the exclusion of all else (even if doing so interferes with his current agenda or endangers his existence or others'). The effects of obsessive/compulsive behavior can be negated for the course of one scene by making a successful Resolve + Composure draw at a -2 penalty. If your character is forcibly prevented from adhering to his derangement, he might lose control among enemies or allies and attack either (or both) indiscriminately. An obsessive-compulsive vampire is subject to a frenzy draw in this situation.

Paranoia (severe; follows Suspicion): Paranoia is a species of delusion. The paranoid believes that enemies persecute her and make her miserable. As a paranoid's delusions intensify, she spins out elaborate conspiracy theories to explain who's doing the persecution, and why. Everything goes into the conspiracy. Do the neighbors stay up late? They must be spying. Does she have headaches? Her enemies have dosed her with some insidious toxin. Did she lose her job? The conspiracy arranged it... and of course, they want other people to believe she's crazy. As paranoia deepens, the sufferer might plot to strike back at her persecutors, whomever she imagines them to be.

This derangement can be hard to diagnose among the Kindred because they really do have enemies in the Danse Macabre. A paranoid vampire, however, can't tell a real enemy from one that exists only in his head. Imagined enemies can range from the CIA to Satan





himself. Paranoid Kindred often turn obsessive compulsive as well and adopt complex feeding precautions to prevent their enemies from “tainting their blood supply.” They also parse every question or comment for hidden motives and meanings. Suspicion extends even to progeny and thralls subjected to Vinculums. (Maybe they’re only pretending to be loyal!)

Effect: A paranoid character has difficulty with all social interactions because of her reflexive suspicion of everyone. A character who suffers from paranoia automatically suffers a -2 penalty on Social draws. The character is distrustful and wary of everyone, even close friends and family. The slightest hint of suspicious behavior is enough to provoke a Resolve + Composure draw to retain control (made at a -2 penalty). A failed draw indicates that your character flees or attacks an offender. Additionally, among Kindred, the slightest hint that someone might be an enemy can provoke a frenzy check, with the number of successes required set by how threatening the trigger event seems. A casual remark that seems to show someone knows a bit about the character’s activities might require only one success to avoid frenzy. Finding an intruder in his haven would almost certainly require five.

Power Fetish Obsession (mild only): Although Kindred value their supernatural powers, their Disciplines and Vitae expenditures remind them of their undead state. Some Kindred project their powers onto an object, so they don’t have to take responsibility for them. Other Kindred develop the “power fetish” delusion as a stronger form of good-luck superstition. Whatever the reason, the character believes she cannot use her supernatural powers without the help of a special object. In folklore, for instance, the Swiss vampire called the Alp became powerless without its hat. A character with this derangement might believe that she cannot use her undead powers without the dress she wore when she was Embraced, her lucky bracelet or some other article.



Effect: Any attempt to use Disciplines or expend Vitae without that object reduces any test pools for an activity by three.

Sanguinary Animism (mild only): Only Kindred can suffer from this special derangement. This delusion grows out of a vampire's fundamental awareness of guilt about feeding on mortals. Kindred with this delusion believe that they take part of victims' minds or souls along with their blood. For hours after feeding, the Kindred hears a victim's voice in his head, berating him, begging for mercy or making demands. The vampire even experiences ersatz memories from his victim's life, all concocted by the vampire's unconscious mind, but seeming very real. Weak-willed or especially guilt-stricken Kindred might even carry out actions on behalf of their victims. Whenever a sanguinary animist feeds on a mortal, the player makes an Intelligence + Composure draw. If the draw succeeds, the imaginary voice and memories of the victim torment the character for the rest of the night but the character can function adequately. If the draw fails, the images in the character's mind are so strong that the other personality can influence the vampire's actions. The angry victim-personality usually means to harm the character, but the vampire might silence the victim's voice by doing something he imagines the victim would like. If the player cannot roleplay the possessing victim's personality, control of the character can pass to the Storytelling staff for short times. Control automatically reverts to the vampire just before dawn.

For all the anguish that sanguinary animism causes, it illustrates how derangements work (badly) to relieve guilt and stress. As long as the victim's voice continues, she isn't really dead – or so it seems – while the vampire supplies her own punishment.

Effect: Sanguinary animism becomes particularly severe when a vampire kills his vessel. In this case, the Intelligence + Composure draw suffers a -3 penalty. A failure on a chance draw means that the ersatz personality of the victim becomes a permanent fixture in the vampire's mind. Under stress, the victim's voice becomes more insistent. The Kindred might distractedly respond aloud to the voices in his head. Further shocks could drive the vampire into multiple-personality disorder, with the Kindred taking on the fantasized personalities of victims. Diablerie is an especially bad idea for sufferers of this derangement!

Schizophrenia (severe; extreme; follows Vocalization): Schizophrenia is the most severe of all derangements. This mental illness includes hallucinations, delusions, radical mood swings, manic or obsessive babbling on certain themes, and outbursts of violence. The victim constantly hears strange hums, roars or voices in his head. People on TV or passing by seem to look at and threaten him. Delusions of grandeur are common: The schizophrenic thinks he's Jesus, Napoleon (no, really, it happens) or the president.

Unlike most lesser derangements, schizophrenia has a proven organic cause, an imbalance of brain chemistry that drugs can treat in mortals. Stress also plays a role in sending a latent schizophrenic over the edge, though, and mortals need both drugs and psychotherapy to recover from the disease (if they can at all).

Schizophrenia presents a formidable roleplaying challenge. The player must decide on a general set of delusions, hallucinations and behaviors that relate to the trauma that causes the derangement. The Storyteller, meanwhile, should prepare to include hallucinatory details in her scenes and any descriptions given to the player, and possibly even enlist the other players to help as well. The character doesn't know what's real, so the player shouldn't either. The player can probably guess that when the TV weatherman looks at the character and says, "Your sire wants to kill you. You have to kill him first," that isn't real. When he waits at a bus stop and another character pulls a dagger from under a coat, however...

Effect: A character with this derangement is unpredictable and dangerous. His player automatically suffers a -2 penalty on all Social draws, and he might be aggressive or violent toward





people who confront him with trauma such as accusations, disturbing truths or heated arguments. Make a Resolve + Composure draw for your character to avoid escaping or attacking the source of trauma. The player and Storyteller should also designate a set of conditions that trigger the character's mood swings and delusions. Under these conditions, a -2 penalty applies to resist frenzy and Röttschreck as the vampire's mind is racked by imaginary horrors.

Your character must experience a life-altering trauma or supernatural tragedy to acquire this extreme derangement. It cannot normally be acquired by failing a Humanity draw unless the sin performed is truly gut wrenching or horrific.

Golconda and Transcendence

The burden of undeath weighs heavily on most Kindred. Not only are they denied the sun, food and all the other simple pleasures of true life. Not only are they trapped in a Danse Macabre with no beginning or end, but in the eyes of many, God Himself has cursed them. But why? Why punish thousands of mortals for an individual's crimes or bad luck? This bitter mystery forms the crowning injustice of their damnation.

The Lancea Sanctum gives the orthodox answer: original sin. Every son of Adam and daughter of Eve is born in sin, and what is mortal history but a tapestry of violence, greed, lust and deceit? Every man and woman deserves damnation a thousand times over for the crimes of their ancestors, and the crimes they did not oppose when they lived. It is not for mortals or Kindred to question the Almighty's will. The Kindred should bow their heads and accept their fate as sinners in the hands of an angry God. They have earned Hell, be it the fires of the afterlife, the torments of the Beast or the hunger and the sheer ennui of centuries of existence.

Not all Kindred can accept this grim catechism. A few dare to hope that they can escape damnation. Some Kindred believe that they can win a pardon from God. Others hope for a more secular salvation, achieved through mysticism, self-discipline, drugs or alternative philosophy. Tantalizing rumors slowly spread through the Kindred race of vampires who became mortal again or who master the Beast. Elder Kindred scoff at such tales... but they still listen.

Of all these tales and legends, the most common theme is a mystical state called Golconda. The term's derivation is both simple and mysterious. Golconda is a town in India where diamonds were mined in ancient times. Its name became associated with anything distant and difficult to reach, but of immense value — a fitting name for the mystical transcendence that legend describes.



THE COVENANTS ON GOLCONDA

Individual views about Golconda vary widely, but Storytellers can take the following opinions as typical of the various covenants.

The Carthians: Fairy tales like Golconda serve only to distract the Kindred from political action.

The Circle of the Crone: Golconda may be real. We do not, however, pretend to know the secret ourselves.

The Invictus: Golconda is a childish fable for the weak-willed and weak-minded. Such a blessed state could not exist. Anyone who gives credence to such tales deserves mockery.

The Lancea Sanctum: Golconda is a cruel delusion at best, a wicked heresy at worst. Such tales lead Kindred away from accepting their place in God's plan.

The Ordo Dracul: Why bother with Golconda when transcendence can make one more than a vampire, instead of just enabling her to settle for what she is?



THE NATURE OF GOLCONDA

According to the tales, vampires who achieve Golconda defeat the Beast or pacify it in some way. They no longer suffer its relentless drive to rage and feed. They no longer require blood, or at least not as much. These spiritual masters retain all their Kindred powers, though. In fact, they can achieve the greatest heights of Kindred power without suffering the deadly thirst for the Vitae of other Kindred that afflicts the mightiest of the Damned. They abandon the Danse Macabre. They walk unharmed through the wilderness and Lupines bow to them. They walk through cities and the Kindred do not know them, for God has forgiven and blessed them.

Of course, no one can prove to have actually met such a redeemed vampire. Like any urban legend, the tales always come second or third hand, at least. A Kindred known in another city says his sire's broodmate met a vampire who worked wonders and talked of Golconda — that sort of thing. On rare occasions, Kindred claim to have achieved the blessed state and say they will teach others of their kind. Elders always expose these self-styled gurus as fakes working some sort of scam... at least, that's what the elders say.

Golconda legends describe a number of methods to achieve redemption. Cynics might observe that the purported methods tend to reflect the mystical ideas that were popular when the tale-teller lived. Older tales about Golconda emphasize the need for prayer, receiving sacraments, pilgrimages to holy places, tests of faith and resolve, and physical asceticism — fasting, flagellation and the like — to gain visions from God. In the Age of Enlightenment, philosophy and self-control became prominent in the stories. In the 19th century, the stories acquired Eastern elements such as meditation and paradoxical riddles. The 20th century gave the stories a quasi-scientific air, with drugs (or magic) to pacify the Beast, and a period of study with a mentor that sounded very much like psychoanalysis.

Most stories agree, however, that a Kindred who wants to find Golconda must pursue an existence of unblemished virtue and humanity. He must feed as little as possible to sustain his existence, and he must avoid any sort of harm to mortals or other Kindred. He must fight frenzy with all his might, never giving a moment's control to the Beast. Most of all, he must do penance for all his sins. If he cannot atone directly to a victim, he must perform some deed to compensate a victim's family, community or all humanity. Only then does he even have a chance that God might grant him forgiveness. The quest certainly takes years, decades or even centuries.

Most of the stories also say that Kindred cannot find Golconda on their own. They need a teacher who can guide them along the correct path, preferably a Kindred who has already achieved salvation. These undead spiritual masters hide themselves well, but a determined seeker can find one... or one of them mystically knows that a ready student emerges and finds the seeker himself. Some stories say that a Kindred who pursues Golconda might encounter other seekers. He might study under a series of tutors, each one more advanced, and he might teach other novices himself as he gains wisdom.

At the end of this long quest, a vampire experiences a mystical vision called the Suspire. Perhaps a mentor guides the Kindred through this ultimate spiritual test. Perhaps the seeker learns to conduct the test himself. Or perhaps the vision takes the seeker by surprise. In the Suspire, the vampire encounters God, the Beast or his own soul. As usual, stories differ.





The visionary encounter ends with a judgment passed on the Kindred. Not every seeker survives this judgment. Failure might also leave the seeker insane or merely wracked with despair at failing his one chance at salvation. The legends all agree on one thing: A Kindred experiences the Suspire only once. A seeker never gets a second chance. If the seeker passes the test, he achieves enlightenment and liberation from the curse of undeath.

STORYTELLING THE QUEST

We deliberately avoid specifying too much about Golconda and how to achieve it. By definition, Golconda pushes a character outside the rules that govern normal Kindred existence. Nailing down a state of mystical transcendence with trait scores and test pools would cheapen the whole idea. Still, we offer a few suggestions on incorporating a quest for Golconda into your chronicle, assuming you want to include it at all. If you choose, the scoffers could be right and Golconda could just be a wishful fairy tale.

Before anything else, a character needs to learn that Golconda might exist. Stories about the blessed state are neither terribly rare nor brutally suppressed (in most cities, anyway), but they are not exactly common knowledge. Before a character can even think of seeking Golconda, she must hear a story or two about it.

If the character takes an interest in stories of salvation for the Damned, she can search for more information. Doing so involves broaching the subject with other Kindred who might not want to admit that they pay attention to such things, and it might expose the character to Harpies' derision. As the character hears more, she learns that attacks on her reputation are the smallest danger brought by the search. Not everyone survives the quest. The character also learns that the search takes a long time. As Storyteller, make it clear to players that if their characters seek Golconda, they commit to a long, ongoing subplot, if not a whole new direction for the chronicle. Salvation for the Damned is an epic story that one does not tell briefly.

Early in the quest, a character has nothing but tales to guide her. She doesn't know if Golconda really exists or exactly what she must do to achieve the state. She must proceed on faith and try by reason and intuition to sift truth from the cryptic hints available. As Storyteller, you need to supply those hints in the form of rumors and riddles. Some of these hints should contradict or just be mystical-sounding gibberish. The character might try to track a story to its source, asking each teller where he heard it. With luck, skill and perseverance, she might find a Kindred who says he personally encountered someone he thinks was a Kindred in Golconda, and he remembers a riddle or parable that was told. Another story might lead to an obscure mystical tract written by someone who claimed to know the secret, or a meeting with another seeker who can pass on his own beliefs and research. Tracking legends to their source in this way certainly involves travel, with all the dangers it entails for Kindred.

The character soon learns the importance of remorse and atonement. The greater a vampire's sins, the greater the penance she must perform. The legends and rumors might suggest ways that Kindred can make amends for their crimes, but this is an opportunity for characters (and players) to explore the nature and limits of atonement. How do you make amends to the dead? Are some injuries beyond repair? Should a vampire even try to atone for some crimes or should she simply accept punishment, even unto Final Death?

Along the way, a character should also try to protect those weaker than herself and try to make the World of Darkness a better place. Through her efforts, she atones on behalf of all Kindred. If the Biblical metaphor is valid, Longinus' act that confirmed the faith of others proved his own damnation. Surely, any Kindred who seeks release from the curse of undeath must show that she is aware of the significance of that burden. Doing so necessarily involves maintaining (or recovering) a high Humanity, upholding every Virtue possible on

every occasion possible, and resisting frenzy and Vice whenever those damning forces arise. Indiscriminate feeding, using one's powers to manipulate mortals and the cruel intrigues of the Danse Macabre are anathema to the sincere seeker.

If a character can consistently show penitent, abstinent and honorable behavior over many stories, she might be ready for the next stage in the quest. The character can finally locate a mentor, or one might locate her. This mentor tests the resolve, wisdom and ethics of the postulant through moral quandaries, enigmatic puzzles, strange tasks and dangerous missions. A Kindred who won't risk body and soul for salvation doesn't want it enough to earn it. Sometimes the challenge might be to teach another Kindred and help him begin the quest for Golconda.

The climax of the chronicle comes when a worthy character experiences the Suspire. To be ready, a character needs a Humanity of at least 7. No other traits really matter. As Storyteller, you decide upon the nature of the Suspire. It may be some sort of ritual. It may be a riddle or a seemingly innocuous task that nonetheless has its own metaphorical (or metaphysical) gravity. It may be a dream that comes over the sleeping character. Follow whatever scheme suits your sense of the mystical.

Tailor the Suspire to reflect the character's personality and whatever themes and conflicts evolved in the course of the chronicle. Potential themes for a Suspire include the character's greatest hatred, fear or sorrow, an overwhelming Vice, how much she wants to be mortal or a challenge to justify the existence of the Kindred and all their sins. This is entirely a moral challenge. Do not use any situation that calls for draws. Work in a few hints, through references to past stories, what choice the character should make to pass the test. After all, the player isn't a spiritual master, to pluck enlightenment from nowhere. Generally, this kind of intense experience is worth an entire side session, with other players playing the roles of different elements of the quest or perhaps even their own characters (as seen through the seeker's distorted personal view). The Suspire should be difficult, even cryptic, but try to make it a *fair* challenge — one the player really has a chance to figure out.

If the character fails, that's it. The quest is over. The character can never try again. She can remain a highly moral vampire, but she can never hope to transcend that state. Maybe she can find a way to accept that, maybe not.

If the character succeeds and achieves Golconda... you have to decide what the legendary state actually is. Once again, we can offer only suggestions, which you may accept or reject as you will.

For a simple option, the character becomes mortal. She triumphs over the curse of undeath, so it no longer troubles her. Any Kindred who guided the character were vampires who failed their own Suspires or who had not yet dared to take the ultimate test, and who chose to guide other Damned.

For a more complicated option, the character remains undead, but is free from many of undeath's restrictions. The character never suffers frenzy again. The Beast no longer has the power to drive her into evil deeds. She may sin of her own volition, but never because the player failed a draw. A vampire in Golconda still needs to drink blood, but she need never fear taking too much because of the Beast's hunger.

Also, the character does not need to drink as much blood as before. The character loses one Vitae per week, instead of one Vitae per night. Her player still spends Vitae normally to heal wounds, augment Physical test pools and power Crúac or any Discipline powers that require it. Perhaps best of all, the Kindred's Blood Potency can increase without the need to feed on stronger and stronger blood. Her feeding requirements are those of Kindred with half her Blood Potency. If she finds even that too much of a burden, she can voluntarily reduce her





Blood Potency to a level where she can feed on animals. She cannot restore a higher Blood Potency, though, without using the normal means to do so.

All these benefits last only as long as the vampire keeps her Humanity high. Should her Humanity slip below 7 for any reason, the character falls from grace, loses the benefits of Golconda and can never gain them again.

OTHER WAYS OF BECOMING MORTAL

The Kindred tell stories about vampires who became mortal by other means than Golconda. Some tales are distinctly sentimental. They tell of Kindred who became mortal through true love for a living person; through miracles performed for exceptionally pious Kindred by mortal holy men and women, or holy relics; by nobly sacrificing their unives for others (and becoming mortal as they died). Most Kindred cynically scoff at such stories. Then again, true love, perfect faith and selfless sacrifice seldom happen among the Damned (which might be part of what damns them).

Stranger and more sinister rumors speak of Kindred who became mortal by destroying their sires, their sires' sires and their sires' sires' sires, perhaps by diablerie or by drinking a potion of their dust. Other tales speak of powerful spirits who grant mortality for a price, or of blessed artifacts that can end the curse of undeath.

As with Golconda, Kindred never seem to have personal experience of such things. The legends are remote and dubious. The Storyteller must decide if any of these tales are true.

OTHER FORMS OF TRANSCENDENCE

Another class of legends deals with other ways in which Kindred may gain powers denied other vampires, or to escape the limitations of undeath. As usual when the Damned discuss supernatural matters beyond their direct experience, tales tend to be so vague that no one can guess if they could be true. Or they supply a mass of spurious detail, and no one can guess what aspects might be true.

The most reliable stories concern the genesis of new Disciplines. Knowledgeable Kindred agree that many more Disciplines exist than the familiar powers known to all the clans (as described in Chapter Two). Rare, little-known Disciplines are most often invented and practiced by special bloodlines that arise among the clans. One popular theory attributes the invention of new Disciplines to occult contamination from other denizens of the supernatural world, such as werewolves and mortal mages. (See Appendix One for more information about Disciplines and bloodlines.)

Other stories speak of Kindred who gain special powers by selling their souls to the Devil. These legends say that demons can teach sorcery, confer unusual powers (another explanation given for new Disciplines), and release vampires from frenzy, the deadly effects of sunlight and other aspects of the curse. Lancea Sanctum leaders rigorously condemn all these stories. They insist that no Kindred ever profited from dealing with demons. The Lancea Sanctum's Inquisitors stand ready to expose and chastise any vampire who dares to take on a second damnation.

Sheer age might grant more powers. The Kindred know that their race has existed for many thousands of years, but vampires Embraced more than 500 to 1,000 years ago vanished into legend. Many of them certainly met Final Death, but what happened to the ones who didn't? Did they all succumb to the Beast? Do they sleep in millennial torpors? Such long sleeps should reduce the potency of their blood to that of mere neonates, but... the Kindred don't really know. Rare undead horrors such as the Unholy suggest that some elder Kindred escape the traps of their thirst for ever-stronger blood and the slow erosion of their *humanitas* to become something else, a creature that preys on the Damned as the Kindred prey on mortals.

Few Kindred would admit that they seek to become such monsters to monsters. In secret, however, many old (and not-so-old) Kindred pursue scraps of rumors in hopes of achieving a *verboden* transformation into something mightier, more fearsome and less limited. Among the Kindred, each is enemy to all. They spend their unlives learning to be wolves, and for all they profess to hate their condition, few accept the thought that other creatures still regard them as kine to be devoured at will.

Status in the Danse Macabre

Rule or be ruled. In the Danse Macabre, nothing is as much a measure of control, manipulation and desire as the esteem granted a Kindred by his peers. The various Status Merits described in Chapter Two (see pp. 131-135) quantify that respect and regard for individual characters. Status is fluid, however. Once play begins, a character's actions (and the reactions of those around him) have as much to do with his standing as any expenditure of experience. This flow of esteem and rank is one of the clearest manifestations of the Danse Macabre.

In any large chronicle, Status acts as the essential measure of standing, respect and reputation accorded to a vampire by undead society. As explained in Chapter Two, Status can take several forms: Clan, Covenant and City. These Merits collectively determine reputation and renown in Kindred society as a whole. Characters with very high Status traits are so well known that most socially aware vampires know their names, even far from the celebrities' own domains.

Status is not a blunt weapon, though. It is a scalpel that must be used carefully. Apply too much pressure and the tool breaks. Relying on Status to open all social doors is likely to establish a Kindred's reputation as boorish and unworthy of his high standing. At the same time, failing to cultivate the respect of one's peers by participating in Kindred society leads to deteriorated Status. High standing is a mantle that requires constant care. Those who wield it are under attack from those below, as well as under close scrutiny by those on the same level and above.

This section details a variety of systems related to Status, but it is the players, Storytellers and the chronicle that provide a context for these systems. The in-game means through which two Kindred achieve the same Status dots can vary greatly. A social wallflower who is the progeny of the Prince, and an unbound rabble-rouser who has proved effective, might have both City Status 2, but they aren't treated the same. Similarly, a high Status does not mean a "better" vampire, simply one with more respect in a certain group.

Status is somewhat rigid among the clans and covenants, but each group has its own standards and its own ways to appoint leaders. The Ordo Dracul values research into arcane knowledge above all else, and holds the most advanced scholars in high esteem. The Circle of the Crone emphasizes a Kindred's spiritual nature, and the most fervent priestesses hold the highest positions. The Ventrue prize temporal achievements such as political influence, favors owed and material resources. Clan and Covenant Status thus rarely carry over to Kindred outside of those group. Few Ventrue know or care if a particular Mekhet is famed in her clan as a big-shot hacker, for example.



SPEAKING ABOUT STATUS

"Status" is an out-of-character game term. It quantifies perceptions that exist in character, but no Kindred would describe herself (or anyone else) as having "Status"





2," and players should avoid using such terms as much as possible. Chapter Two's description of City Status provides a few terms that correspond with the trait's various dot levels (see p. 133), but a few other phrases can be of use. The terms below can be woven into in-character conversation seamlessly and can even be used in out-of-character conversations between players to remain in the habit. These words are generally capitalized so that their system implications are clear. The phrases in quotations are other ways to convey the same information.

- Acknowledged (or "of low standing or rank")
- Recognized (or "of some standing or rank")
- Valued (or "of significant standing or rank")
- Respected (or "of high standing or rank")
- Admired (or "of pre-eminent standing or rank")

For Example: For declaring Status, one would state that "William Scott is Acknowledged by Clan Gangrel," "Dillon Radley is Respected in the domain of London," and "In the eyes of the Invictus, none is more Admired than Joshua Musgrove himself."



STARTING PLAY

As described in Chapter Two, characters entering an established chronicle cannot begin with City, Clan or Covenant Status dots above 2. Even these scores are appropriate only if a new character enters with an established connection to the city or faction in question. Clan and Covenant Status increases occur as normal through experience expenditures, adjudicated by the Storyteller, as explained below.

Increases in City Status occur entirely as a result of in-character actions and interplay, as explained below, and no further experience expenditures are required. Players should note that characters starting with no City Status (zero dots) can quickly earn their first dot at no cost so long as the Prince accepts them in the city.

Storytellers setting up play in a new area should allocate some additional dots of City Status to create the Kindred hierarchy of the domain. The Prince receives City Status 4 and each of the first three Prisci start with City Status 3. The Prince can name his Primogen and the first three each gains City Status 2. As outlined on p. 287, the Prince can also freely grant City Status 1 to any character he acknowledges as a resident of his domain. Players need not spend any Merit dots or experience for these starting scores, but the Storyteller is likely to turn to them to ensure that stories start off right. The Storyteller may strip these City Status dots (without refunding any experience) if characters are portrayed in ways that would weaken their standing in their city.

This allocation of City Status dots is usable regardless of the in-character history of the city, whether Kindred have recently arrived from elsewhere or have been present in the shadows all along.

Storytellers should be very selective when allowing characters to gain City Status by founding a domain in play. There must be a significant and differentiated population center of some relevance in the new area. A Kindred shunned in his own city who goes to the nearest small town and declares himself Prince won't get any respect.

In the rare case when, after play begins, a domain goes without a Prince (or ruling body) for a year or more, a new Prince establishing himself benefits from the same free City Status dots. The first Kindred to successfully hold Praxis for at least 30 consecutive nights gains City Status 4 for free at the end of that period. As above, the first three Prisci to step forward similarly gain City Status 3, and the first two Primogen named receive City Status 2.



DETERMINING ANOTHER'S STATUS

Kindred are social predators; most struggle for station from the moment of their Embrace until their destruction. But knowing ones' own standing is useless without being able to tell how esteemed others are.

The best way to determine social standing is certainly through roleplaying and interaction, but the degree of attention Kindred pay to discussions of and clues to social position can have a role. When one Kindred meets another, the first player may make a reflexive Intelligence + Occult draw to recall if her character has heard of the other in a particular context. Trying to recall City Status, Clan Status or Covenant Status are all separate actions.

This draw can occur only when the observing character reasonably determines the observed Kindred's identity. An introduction certainly qualifies, but overhearing a name is just as good. If the observed character is never identified, no draw is possible. If he presents himself under an assumed name, then the draw is possible but can determine only the Status of his false identity.

For City Status, Kindred can determine only the effective City Status of visitors, not strangers' true status back home. For their part, visitors who size residents up suffer a penalty equal to that imposed on their own City Status (see below).

For Clan and Covenant Status, the draw fails automatically if the observer has no Clan or Covenant Status of her own or she tries to determine Status across clan or covenant lines.

Failure: The observer has no sense of the subject's standing. After a failed attempt, the observer cannot try to determine the same Status type for the same subject until a full hour has passed.

Success: The observer recalls the Kindred's standing (the player knows the other character's dots of Status). In the case of characters with the relevant Status at zero, the observer knows if the subject has not earned any standing in the domain, clan or covenant, or has somehow been stripped of Status. If the latter case, the observer does not learn how Status was lost unless it was in a blood hunt.

STATUS AND TRAVEL

Kindred are predominantly sedentary creatures and their ranks and privileges do not travel well. Still, the clans and covenants do provide means to send word from domain to domain, and a powerful Prince traveling abroad is still afforded respect.

Clan and Covenant Status do not change as a character travels. A Cardinal of the Lancea Sanctum abroad still outranks a local parish priest. The visiting worthy may not have the local resources to enforce his will, however, so respect of domain remains a wise move for traveling Kindred, even among clan and covenant mates.

City Status is the most bound to the conditions of a particular domain. This specificity makes it an effective tool in that locale, but also makes the trait highly unsuited to travel. Characters visiting a domain have no true City Status, but do gain an effective rating based on their reputation back home and how far they have traveled. A visitor's effective City Status is equal to her City Status in her home domain, modified as follows:

3.10 – EFFECTIVE CITY STATUS WHEN TRAVELING

Character Is...	City Status Modifier
In his home region, but not city	-1
In his home nation, but not region	-2
Outside his home nation	-3

These penalties are levied on a character's City Status when he leaves his home city, and don't reflect on any bonuses for being part of the eminent clan or ascendant covenant (in either his home city or the one he visits). If a character is under a blood hunt in his home





city, his City Status in his home city is considered zero (and so is effective City Status is also zero). What's more, a visitor's effective City Status can never be higher than 3. The above penalties also apply to any attempts a visitor makes to determine the City Status of a resident in a visited domain (see "Determining Another's Status," above).

Effective City Status does not grant any special powers or privileges and cannot be used as a "social tool" as native City Status can (see p. 135). Instead, it denotes a level of respect that a character's reputation reasonably carries outside his home domain.

Visitors are largely immune to the games of Status in a city through which they pass. The worst a Prince and his Harpies can do is strip a newcomer of effective City Status in the visited domain. This has no effect on the visitor's City Status back home. Even the effects of a blood hunt are only local. The Prince or a Harpy may send word of an infraction, praiseworthy deed or blood hunt back to the visitor's home domain, but any result is dependent on officials back home taking action.

Princes cannot flatly refuse to acknowledge Kindred who have any effective City Status (one or more dots). They may, however, use their powers to reduce visitors' City Status down to 1 and to strip that last dot, revoking any welcome. Doing so is trivial in the case of those who arrive with an effective City Status of 1, accomplished with a simple princely fiat that the outsider is unwelcome in the domain. Dealing with those with grander reputations can be harder and requires a Prince to strip the visitor's legitimacy through concerted effort, usually through a series of public insults or reprimands. (For more on the Prince and Harpy's Status-related abilities, see p. 286.)

If a visiting character decides to stay in a new domain, the effective City Status she would have as a visitor to the city becomes her new City Status dots. Status in her former domain is lost (although she can return as a visitor). Kindred may only consider one place their home domain.

CHANGING CLAN OR COVENANT STATUS

Clan Status and Covenant Status increase with experience expenditure, but such spending has to be approved by the Storyteller. Some limits exist simply to prevent everyone in the, say, First Estate from having Invictus Status 5 in short order. A character must demonstrate particular dedication to his clan or covenant to earn high standing in that group. The following table is generic, but a useful guideline when adjudicating such matters; it functions just as the table for City Status does (p. 290).

3.11 – PRAISEWORTHY DEEDS FOR CLAN OR COVENANT

Status	Deeds
•••••	Acting to position the clan or covenant to achieve eminence or ascendancy
••••	Defining an overall goal for the clan or covenant and organizing members to achieve it; assuming a position of recognized leadership within the clan or covenant
•••	Designing plans or removing obstacles in ways that advance the goals of the clan or covenant; serving the clan or covenant significantly above and beyond the expected
••	Recognizing clan or covenant leaders and obeying their edicts; promoting loyalty among fellow members of the clan or covenant
•	Regular attendance at clan or covenant gatherings; active participation in regular clan or covenant activities

STRIPPING CLAN OR COVENANT STATUS

Removing dots of Clan or Covenant Status occurs when enough fellow members of the faction get together to reprimand a character. To strip a dot of Clan or Covenant Status, a

group of Kindred with a sum total of the appropriate Status Merit (in the clan or covenant in question) of at least 20 times the target's dots must publicly announce that they are stripping Status from the subject. At least five of those Kindred must have Clan or Covenant Status (as appropriate) equal to or higher than the targeted character's before the loss. The victim cannot be tricked or coerced into being one of the Kindred who reduces his own Status. Similarly, participants in the action can't be forced into it by Discipline use, although the application of boons and similar social coercion is permissible. The same subject cannot be stripped of Status by the same clan or covenant a second time until 90 nights have passed, even if the second group of assembled Kindred is wholly different from the first.

The public announcement must be reasonably accessible to all members of the clan or covenant—a large society gathering is typical, often followed by some sort of veiled pronouncement through the faction's means of communication. A sanctioned in-character mailing list can serve this purpose.

Before acting, Storytellers and players involved should make sure that the targeted character truly has committed a sin against his group. The following generic table can be a useful reference.

3.12 – SINS AGAINST CLAN OR COVENANT

Status	Deeds
•••••	Deliberately disrespecting, lying to or giving bad information to a clan or covenant member of equal standing
••••	Deliberately disrespecting, lying to or giving bad information to a clan or covenant member of equal or higher standing
•••	Unintentionally stealing from, betraying or otherwise directly harming a clan or covenant member; unintentionally betraying a clan or covenant secret
••	Deliberately stealing from or directly harming a clan or covenant member; unintentionally destroying a clan or covenant member
•	Deliberately betraying or destroying a clan or covenant member; deliberately betraying a clan or covenant secret

Example: *The Respected Inquisitor Malachi of the Lancea Sanctum has long angered many of his covenant mates, and adds insult to injury when his lack of caution leads to a group of Carthian rable-rousers learning of the Lance's plan to purge infidels in Malachi's city. Malachi has Lancea Sanctum Status 4 and has committed an appropriate sin against the covenant. Messengers and legates travel from city to city, gathering the support of an impressive group of Sanctified (whose total Lancea Sanctum Status adds to 80), including five prominent members (Lancea Sanctum Status 4 or 5). The players involved clear matters with the Storyteller, who makes sure everything is legitimate. These assembled worthies then issue an edict that Inquisitor Malachi has sinned against his church and deserves to be reprimanded, but is still Valued by the Holy Spear. (Malachi's Lancea Sanctum Status is now 3.)*

COVENANT EXPULSION

The two covenants with highly authoritarian power structures—the Lancea Sanctum and the Invictus—have a mechanism for expelling Kindred entirely from their ranks. Ejection immediately reduces a subject's Covenant Status to zero. Blackballing functions exactly like stripping a single dot of Covenant Status, save that the assembled group must gather 40 times the target's Covenant Status, and must include 10 Kindred of equal or superior rank as the target. A former member of these covenants loses his true membership if that rule is in effect (see p. 135).

The Carthian Movement, Circle of the Crone and Ordo Dracul have no mechanisms for such expulsion. They can reduce a member's Covenant Status dot by dot until it's zero, but can't strip him of true membership (if appropriate).





CHANGING CITY STATUS

City Status is the most fluid of the three Kindred Status traits. Starting characters can have up to only two dots in City Status. Once play begins, all changes result from the following systems. Losses and gains in City Status occur through the intermediary of a small number of Kindred officials in a domain: the Prince, his Harpy, the Harpy named by the Prisci, and the Master of Elysium. Other positions – such as the Hounds and the Seneschal – do not have the power to award or strip City Status. City Status can also gain a boost (or be protected) by the overall position of a clan or covenant in a city. Kindred who remain active in their domains also accumulate City Status over time.

POWER AT THE TOP

Only so many undead can be influential in a single city, so there is a limit to the number of active characters who can hold high levels of City Status. At any one time, only a single Kindred in a domain may hold City Status 5. This is usually (but not always) the Prince. Likewise, a maximum of five Kindred may hold City Status 4 at any one time. These are usually the Prisci, covenant heads or Primogen. If the maximum allowable characters already have a certain level of Status, the City Status of one of the incumbents must first be reduced somehow before another can take his place.

These limits do not apply to Kindred whose City Status temporarily rise thanks to bonuses resultant from a clan or covenant's eminence (see p. 291). Thus, a Kindred with City Status 2, whose clan is eminent and who receives two bonus dots, is not counted among the five Kindred holding City Status 4, nor does he displace someone at that level. Instead, for the duration of the clan's eminence, the character simply has as much social standing as those who have earned City Status 4 without their clan being so prominent – this doesn't grant them any official title, but can make it difficult for others to move against them.

Note that holding an official position in a domain does not grant dots of City Status or any guarantee of esteem. However, the rough equivalencies between City Status and the positions provided on p. 133 can serve as guidelines. Characters in official positions and with significantly lower City Status than suggested are unlikely to rest easy in their roles. A Primogen with only two dots of City Status has to tread carefully, lest he anger the Prince and find himself stripped of all rank. The actual naming of positions other than those described here occurs purely through roleplaying.

The Prince and Harpies (and to a more limited degree, the Prisci and Master of Elysium) are the most immediate adjudicators of City Status. Actual City Status dots and in-character favors and rights create a vicious circle of sorts. City Status can translate into access to the Prince and to favors, but to gain City Status, a Kindred must do favors for the Prince or Harpies. Such is the give and take of the Danse Macabre.

STATUS POINTS

The Prince and the two main Harpies of a domain are unique in that they have points as well as dots of City Status. Like those of Willpower, these points can be spent for a variety of effects. They replenish on the first night of every calendar month. If for some reason an individual stops holding a position that grants Status points, the character immediately loses access to their effects. If another character ascends to the vacant position, the new officer may use only the points that remain unspent for the month. An election or appointment doesn't refresh the pool until the beginning of the next month.

To see how many Status *points* a Prince or Harpy has, see the sections on the individual positions, below. Note that in cities that use different names for equivalent Kindred officials, those officials follow the same basic rules.

Points of City Status can be spent to award another character a permanent dot of City Status, or to remove one. No Prince or Harpy can grant more than one dot to a single character within the same calendar month, but the official can remove more than one dot at one time (at a cost of one point per dot in either case). No Prince or Harpy can affect her own City Status with these points. They can affect each other's traits, however. Granting each other more than one dot over the course of a year is a sin against the city, see "Status Sins and Deeds," p. 289.

A character's last dot of City Status cannot be removed due to the expenditure of a Prince or Harpy's Status points. Only the Prince and the Master of Elysium have the ability to strip that last dot and they do so without any expenditure of Status points (see below).

- **The Prince:** The Prince's Status points are equal to his personal City Status (after taking into account any bonuses provided by the position of his clan and covenant, see below). In addition to spending Status points to grant or remove dots of City Status (as described above), the Prince has special power over the first dot of City Status that another vampire has. Granting that initial dot represents the Prince's sanction of a Kindred to hunt in the city. The Prince can grant that first dot to any character who otherwise has no City Status, and at no cost to the newly Acknowledged vampire (in experience) or to himself (in Status points).

The Prince can similarly strip a character who has (or has been reduced to) City Status 1 of her last dot. He does so by casting the character out of the city or by clearly implying he no longer cares for her fate (this is distinct from an actual blood hunt; see below). In the very rare cases when he feels an entire group has betrayed the city (or his rule), a Prince may declare an entire clan or covenant unwelcome in his domain. All members of the group who have City Status 1 immediately lose that dot at no cost to the Prince's Status points, but those with higher City Status must be stripped of it dot by dot as usual. Eminent and rival clans and the ascendant and contender covenants are immune to such sweeping declarations (see below).

- **Too many or too Few Princes:** There can usually be only a single Prince in a city, but there are instances when two or more rival Princes claim domain over a city and they refuse to recognize one another's claims. In this case, calculate the total City Status dots of all active characters who support each contender. The contender with the highest total gets Status points and their related abilities. Other contenders cannot grant Status and their supporters are liable to face loss of personal Status by the winner's decree — one reason why Kindred contenders for the throne usually keep their ambitions closely guarded.

In cities with no single point of authority, the highest City Status of any of the individual Kindred involved in the ruling council (or similar body) equals the points that are at the disposal of the council to spend. Allocating them usually requires a prior arrangement among council members and the Storyteller. Say, a majority vote is needed, or anyone may access the points whenever they want to, without consultation.

- **The Prince's Harpy:** The Prince can appoint a Harpy at his discretion, empowering a Kindred to grant his esteem (or to remove it). The Prince's Harpy retains her own personal City Status dots, and gains Status points equal to the Prince's own City Status (even if that means she has more points than dots). The eminence or ascendancy of the Prince's clan or covenant affects his Harpy's Status points, while her own affiliations affect only her City Status dots. Although the Harpy's pool of points starts at the same number as the Prince's, it is distinct — the Harpy and Prince do not share points. The Prince's Harpy can spend them to bequeath or remove City Status dots from others, and can also act as an arbiter of prestation (see p. 295). She cannot serve as Prince, Priscus or a Primogen.

- **The Prisci:** The eldest (or most respected) members of each clan stand as the domain's Prisci. No Kindred without appropriate Clan Status can serve as a Priscus, and if there is a dispute over who a clan's Priscus is, the contender with the highest combined amount of





Clan Status and City Status is the victor for the purposes of all Prisci votes. If only a single member of a given clan has been visible or active in a domain over the previous three months, the other Prisci do not have to accept a Priscus from that clan.

The Prisci have no impetus to agree or cooperate, other than that they can empower a Harpy of their own. For a domain to have a second Harpy, there must be at least two Prisci who do not also hold the title of Primogen. Without that number, the city is simply too weak to support a second Harpy. A character must gain the support of a majority of the Prisci who are not also Primogen to be named their Harpy. If a majority of such Prisci cannot agree, they cannot name a Harpy. No Priscus can serve as a Harpy.

- **The Prisci's Harpy:** Once selected by the Prisci, their Harpy retains her own Status dots and gains Status points equal to the highest City Status among the Prisci supporting her (even if that means having more points than dots). She can spend them to grant and remove City Status dots to and from others in the domain, and can also act as an arbiter of prestation (see p. 295). The Prisci's Harpy cannot serve as Prince, Priscus or a Primogen.

- **The Master of Elysium:** The Master of Elysium has no City Status points of his own, but can remove dots from Kindred who perpetrate violence within Elysium or who otherwise violate the institution. He does so at his sole discretion and may remove up to one dot per week from any single Kindred (and may do so to as many Kindred as he sees fit as long as they have violated Elysium in some manner). The Master of Elysium can remove a Kindred's last dot of City of Status in this manner.

THE CASE OF BLOOD HUNTS

The Prince can call a blood hunt on any Kindred in his domain. Doing so temporarily removes all of the subject's City Status dots until the matter is settled – usually with the target's destruction. The Prince (or his successor) can reinstate a hunted character's City Status (thus ending the hunt) at his discretion and at no cost in Status points.

The succession of a new Prince (whether through peaceful means or not) immediately ends all ongoing blood hunts, unless the new Prince explicitly announces any of them to be still active. This does mean that one way out of a blood hunt is to eliminate the Prince, although a formerly hunted Kindred publicly revealed to have ended the hunt by such means immediately loses all of his City Status dots. These dots return after a full year has passed since the revelation. Note that the hunt on such an offending character is not restored, but the current Prince can call a new one.

A Primogen or Priscus can effectively call a blood hunt on a character who doesn't have any dots in City Status (who thus doesn't enjoy the Prince's official protection). If the Prince disapproves, however, he may take steps to protect the target and punish the Primogen or Priscus (perhaps by granting and stripping Status dots as appropriate).

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

City Status is highly contingent on remaining socially active in a domain. A Kindred who has been present at every ball and court or whose name comes up a great deal is likely to have significant standing. Conversely, one who vanishes from sight for months on end or who slips into torpor sees her position erode very quickly.

- **Activity:** For every 12 consecutive calendar months that a Kindred has been active in a particular domain, acknowledged by its Prince, and has called it her home domain, she gains a dot of City Status. This automatic gain can never raise City Status above 3 and does not apply if the Prince refuses to grant acknowledgment. A Kindred may consider only one place her home domain.

- **Inactivity:** A Kindred who is not visibly active in her home domain for six months has her City Status halved (round down). Remaining inactive for another six months results in another halving, and so on. Long-gone Kindred become irrelevant and are forgotten in the fog of time.

The Storyteller overseeing the domain determines activity. If a player attends a game in character, that character is clearly active. Posting on in-character mailing lists or other remote activities may also qualify at the Storyteller's discretion. Players can maintain several characters so long as activity requirements for each are upheld.

ADJUDICATING STATUS CHANGES

City Status is very fluid and changes largely at the discretion of the players portraying the Prince and Harpies. Storytellers always have the right to step in if they feel an official's player is being abusive, however. Favoritism and pettiness among characters is altogether appropriate, but is unwelcome among players. To help players and Storytellers adjudicate when an increase or decrease in City Status is justified, the following table presents a series of sins and praiseworthy deeds ranked by dots in the Merit.

In general, Princes and Harpies are justified in stripping City Status from characters who commit sins at their rank of City Status or below. Meanwhile, a character who regularly does a praiseworthy deed of a rank higher than his current City Status can qualify for an increase. Avoiding sins and praiseworthy deeds can also justify changes in Status. Those who stalwartly avoid Status sins (especially those above their current rating) may be worthy of an increase, while those who fail to accomplish the deeds associated with their current dots or below may well be in for a loss of Status. As always, individual judgment should come into play.

When referring to these tables, Storytellers and players can take into account the bonus City Status dots awarded by eminence or ascendancy. Members of a city's leading clan or covenant gain extra standing, but they must also hold themselves to high standards.

Example: *Santini the Nosferatu has City Status 4 and is thus a very important member of the domain. He finds out that the Daeva have organized a party, inviting all the local Ventrue and Mekhet – but no Nosferatu or Gangrel. Annoyed at this display of snobbery, Santini crashes the party, appearing with a number of uninvited guests, and proceeds to let them trash the place – tipping over tables, prodding guests into frenzy, and so on. The Prince's Harpy, outraged that someone who is held in such high esteem would dare act so boorishly, strips him of a point of City Status right then and there (since "Actively disrupting a gathering of the area Kindred" applies). The Harpy doesn't think in terms of "Santini committed a level-4 sin," but rather states that "Santini didn't display the grace expected from one held in such high esteem in the domain."*

3.13 – SINS AGAINST THE CITY

Status	Deeds
•••••	Speaking ill of the city or its leadership in public
••••	Failing to attend regular gatherings of the local undead; actively disrupting a gathering of the local Kindred
•••	Hindering a local industry or resource; killing a local mortal in a suspicious manner without good cause; a Prince and Harpy exchanging City Status awards with one another more than once a year; ordering about or sanctioning a Sanctified character when the Lancea Sanctum is ascendant (unless the one doing the ordering is Sanctified, a Prince or a Harpy, see p. 292); refusing to change one's vote among the Prisci or Primogen as a result of Nosferatu or Ventrue eminence (see p. 293)
••	Accidental public violations of the Traditions; deliberate private violations of the Traditions; murdering prominent local mortals without dire need; actively disobeying city elders
•	Deliberate public violations of the Traditions; wanton slaying of mortals or destruction of property; betraying resident Kindred to outsiders (Lupines, foreign vampires)





3.14 – PRAISEWORTHY DEEDS FOR THE CITY

Status	Deeds
•••••	Significantly expanding the city's overall power, resources or reputation; assuming a position of leadership in the city
••••	Expanding the city's overall power, resources or reputation in a minor way; removing a significant obstacle or threat to local Kindred
••••	Devising and implementing plans that further the goals of city elders; carrying out specific plans beyond the norm on behalf of city elders
••	Actively promoting loyalty to the city's elders; obeying the edicts of all city elders
•	Defending the city against outside threats; regularly attending local Kindred functions (without being disruptive)

CLAN EMINENCE AND COVENANT ASCENDANCY

Whereas Clan and Covenant Status measure an individual's standing within a lineage or society of the Damned, eminence and ascendancy measure a faction's overall position within a domain. Being a prominent member of the Circle of the Crone won't grant much local influence if the domain as a whole is caught in the iron-gloved fist of the Lancea Sanctum.

The eminence of clans and ascendancy of covenants is measured by the sum total of all the City Status dots of active members of those groups. Those clans and covenants in the best positions – wielding the most influence – gain benefits.

At the beginning of every calendar month, the domain's chief Storyteller tallies the City Status dots of every character who has been active in the previous month (see above for definition of active) to determine the relative influence of each clan and covenant. The Storyteller uses the following guidelines:

- An individual character's City Status dots count toward the tallies of both her clan and covenant (they are not split between the two, both get all the dots).
- The City Status of characters in a bloodline is counted in their parent clan's total.
- The City Status of characters acting as infiltrators and impersonators is counted in the *impersonated* clan or covenant's total.
- The unaligned are considered a sixth covenant that can (very rarely) be ascendant.
- City Status dots earned by a character as a bonus for being in the previous month's eminent clan or ascendant covenant do not count in this tally.
- Any gains or losses of City Status dots imposed by the Prince, Harpies or Master of Elysium affect this tally.
- The Prince and Harpies' Status points do not factor into this count.
- If a player has multiple active characters in play, only her primary or main character is involved in the tally; all others are ignored.
- Storyteller characters do not factor into this tally – only active characters portrayed by players do.

Once this tally is complete, the five clans and the five (or six) covenants are all ranked in relative influence. The two top-ranked clans are termed the eminent and rival clans, respectively. The two top-ranked covenants are termed the ascendant and contender covenants. (Kindred can and do use these terms to refer to the overall standing of their clans and covenants.)

EMINENT/ASCENDANT BONUS

The eminent clan and ascendant covenant receives several benefits. First, all members receive a number of bonus dots of City Status based on the total number of active members in the domain.

3.15 – EMINENT/ASCENDANT BONUS TO CITY STATUS

Active Members	Bonus
1-4	No Bonus
5-9	+1 City Status
10-19	+2 City Status
20+	+3 City Status

These bonus dots are the same as those earned in any other way (and grant the Prince and Harpies additional Status points if appropriate), but do not count in the next month's tally. They vanish on the last night of the month and are recalculated on the first of every new month. The bonuses do not travel at all (see p. 283).

Each character is likely to be part of both a clan and covenant and can benefit from a City Status bonus from both his clan and covenant in the same month. The modifiers are cumulative. These bonuses can bring a character's City Status above 5 for the month, but characters with such inflated Status dots do not count toward the normal limits on the number of Kindred at City Status 4 and 5 in a single domain (see p. 286).

ASCENDANT COVENANT BENEFITS

When a covenant achieves ascendancy, it is the dominant socio-political entity in a domain. Its ideology, organization and administrative methods imprint themselves on the city, and members find it easier to obtain certain common benefits from being in charge.

Ascendant covenant and eminent clan benefits (see below) are cumulative – a single character can benefit from both in the same month. If they ever come into conflict, the covenant benefit always takes precedence.

- **The Carthian Movement:** Ascendant Carthians find it easy to interact with the mortal world and co-exist with the mortals in the domain. By calling in a favor or otherwise greasing mortal wheels, Carthians can find an improvised haven somewhere in the city on very short notice, not needing to return to their normal homes. They cannot be left without a shelter unless they are taken outside the city. Such improvised havens do not grant any of the benefits of the Haven Merit, however.

Once per month, every ascendant Carthian can also call on her resources to attract a small crowd of mortals (between 8 and 15 people, depending on how many would be available in the area). These humans help out in an activity of the Carthian's choice, whether staging a protest outside an elder's haven or building a simple structure for a community group, so long as the activity is fairly innocuous and in line with the Carthian's rhetoric. This activity cannot involve anything immediately illegal beyond what might be expected of non-violent protesters. A sit-in is reasonable, but an armed uprising or robbery is not. The mortals also have no particular loyalty to the Carthian in question, so do not risk their lives or a lengthy jail sentence unless other means are used to convince them.

- **The Circle of the Crone:** Circle members find it very easy to develop small groups of mortal followers. Most of these people are typically convinced that they're involved in nothing more than a pagan worship circle. By making requests for help in ritual research or observances, a Circle member can use these mortals to help out with large rites (provided they don't violate the Masquerade), or to perform tedious and mundane research and acquisition of materials involved in rites. Ascendant Acolytes thus gain the equivalent of two dots of the Allies Merit in the field most useful to pursuing their research. So, an Acolyte whose occult studies focus on the lessons of the plant world might gain an Ally in the park service or the city's botanical garden. This is a separate instance of the Allies Merit and does not combine with any similar Merits a character may already have. This Merit cannot be used for tasks that are overtly supernatural or illegal.





While engaged in rituals and similar observations, Acolytes also gather great spiritual strength from their faith. The knowledge that their covenant is dominant in a city — represented by ascendant status — strengthens the faith of those in the Circle of the Crone, allowing each member to regain a spent point of Willpower each week as they perform their rituals (during downtime).

- **The Invictus:** When the Invictus is ascendant, members of the First Estate are protected from the vampiric games of rumor and innuendo. An Invictus Prince cannot lose any City Status dots during a month in which his covenant is ascendant, and Harpies who are not themselves members of the First Estate must spend three points of Status for every dot of City Status they wish to remove from a member of the Invictus. Finally, no member of the Invictus can have his last dot of City Status stripped from him, unless the Prince or Master of Elysium doing so is herself a member of the covenant.

- **The Lancea Sanctum:** When the Lancea Sanctum is ascendant, the covenant's deep-seated belief in the righteousness of its cause combines with its influence in the city to strengthen the Sanctified ability to carry on the fight. Once per week, a Sanctified character may pray to Longinus and regain a spent point of Willpower. This prayer takes a full minute if done during a game session and approximately an hour if performed during downtime.

In a city where the Lancea Sanctum is ascendant, all Sanctified characters are further considered exempt from the authority of all Kindred officers save the Prince and Harpies — unless the officer in question is also Sanctified. The Master of Elysium cannot strip covenant members of City Status and the Sheriff cannot order them about. This exemption doesn't provide any supernatural protection — it is merely considered unthinkable (and a sin against the city, see p. 289) to attack an ascendant Sanctified.

- **The Ordo Dracul:** When the Ordo Dracul is ascendant, the Dragons' confidence in their mystical abilities and the supremacy of their territory is so unshakeable that they are socially unflappable. For every dot of City Status she has at the beginning of the month (before any ascendancy bonus), a Dragon may ignore the result of a single Social (instant or extended) action performed against her that is not supernatural in nature.

What's more, each Dragon can select a discreet territory (no more than a few city blocks) and claim it as her personal fiefdom when the covenant is ascendant. The Dragon effectively becomes regent of the area. Others who hunt there must either pay some tribute or leave at the Dragon's discretion. The Dragon may not lay claim to a place already claimed by another unless she has a higher City Status (after the ascendancy bonus). The Ordo normally uses this privilege to ensure that members have access to all the best wurm nests at which to perform their mystic rites, though it has certainly seen more petty application. When the covenant falls from ascendancy, all claims to territories are lost unless individual Dragons can defend them.

- **The Unaligned:** Should the unaligned somehow become ascendant, the domain is effectively an outlaw paradise. Until they cease being ascendant, no boons involving members of that domain are valid. Other Kindred recognize the lawlessness of the domain and the futility of expecting the Traditions or Elysium to be upheld.

EMINENT CLAN BENEFITS

Kindred in the eminent clan gain more than an increase in Status. They gain access to certain special, unique resources.

- **Clan Daeva:** Daeva almost never fail to get invitations to the most exclusive parties, and as a matter of course, eminent Daeva are automatically welcome at any social occasion — either mortal or undead — that they wish to attend.

Sometimes the most useful invitations, however, are to the sorts of soirees where emotions run high, intoxicants flow freely and no one is likely to notice a bit of indiscretion in a dark corner. If the Daeva are eminent, Succubi are never considered without a ready source of blood in their home city and require no tests to hunt to full capacity during downtime. Unless a Daeva character is under particular pressure, she begins a session of play with her full capacity of Vitae.

One game session per month, a player of a Daeva character may also send her character out of play for a full hour and return with her maximum capacity of Vitae. The character must not be followed or otherwise molested for this effect to function and the player must stay out of the game for a full hour.

- **Clan Gangrel:** When the clan is eminent, the Gangrel effectively turn their combination of human wariness and animal cunning toward the games of politics. This makes it very difficult to trap, surprise or isolate them in Kindred society. The Prince, the Master of Elysium, nor anyone else can strip a Gangrel of her final dot of City Status. The Prince can still call a blood hunt, however. What's more, any attempt to gain all but the most obvious and public information about a Gangrel through use of the Animalism Discipline fails automatically. Once per month, a Gangrel's player may ask the Storyteller if a situation his character is about to enter appears to be a trap. Only direct attacks or uses of supernatural powers targeted at the Gangrel are detected as "traps" for the purpose of this benefit. Attempts to lure the Gangrel into a socially scandalous situation are not detected, for example, nor are meetings that are designed to weaken the Gangrel politically.

- **Clan Mekhet:** When the Mekhet are eminent, the Shadows' knowledge of secrets and sharing of useful information achieves a high. Each resident Mekhet receives a number of free information snippets about other members of the domain equal to her City Status. The player should ask for this information from a Storyteller. This information is restricted to a subject's dots in certain social Merits: Resources, Status (each type counts as a separate snippet), Herd and Retainer. A Mekhet can learn a character's dots in Clan Status or Covenant Status, even if the Mekhet isn't part of the clan or covenant in question.

Example: *Elijah is a Mekhet with City Status 3 and his clan is eminent this month. He learns the Lancea Sanctum Status of a zealot who has made his existence hell, the wealth (Resources dots) of his Ventrue ally Javier, and the Nosferatu Status of Javier's enforcer Cross. All this could be very useful information, indeed.*

- **Clan Nosferatu:** When his clan is eminent, the Nosferatu Priscus may use his clout to force a single other Priscus to abstain from voting in any matter to be settled by the assembled Prisci (such as naming a Harpy). A Nosferatu recognized as a Primogen may do the same in a meeting of the Primogen council. Refusal to abstain is a sin against the city (see p. 289) and usually results in punishment from the Harpy or Prince. This ability can be used only once per targeted Kindred per meeting.

In addition, the city's Nosferatu gain effective regency over the sewer system, so any clan member may travel unseen to most urban locations, as well as safely go to ground from most city locations. The Nosferatu Priscus may extend this free passage to any number of Kindred from other clans in the domain, but must do so explicitly and in such a way as the rest of the clan is aware of it. Nosferatu (but not other allowed Kindred) automatically succeed in feeding attempts in the sewers during downtime (so long as they feed on animals or mortals), but not during a game.

- **Clan Ventrue:** When his clan is eminent, the Ventrue Priscus may demand to change the vote of another Priscus in any Prisci votes. A Ventrue Primogen may do the same on the Primogen council. Refusal to change one's vote is a sin against the city (see p. 289) and





usually results in punishment by a Harpy or the Prince. This ability can be used only once per targeted Kindred per meeting.

In addition, Harpies may remove only a single City Status dot from the Prince (if a Ventrue), the Ventrue Priscus, and the Ventrue with the highest City Status sitting on the council of Primogen (if any). Harpies may remove only one dot from each over the course of the month.

Finally, any dots in the Resources Merit held by a Ventrue character are largely inviolate while the clan is eminent. The actions of other characters cannot reduce an eminent Ventrue's wealth. (The Storyteller adjudicates this, telling others who attempt to undermine a Ventrue's wealth that their efforts fail.)

CONTENDER/RIVAL BENEFITS

Being the member of a group that is perceived as the legitimate threat to the throne has its benefits. Above all, it is harder for the powers that be to act against you. The members of a contender covenant and rival clan are thus somewhat protected from their ascendant and eminent opponents.

If an ascendant or eminent Prince or Harpy wants to remove a dot of City Status from a contender or rival Kindred, he must spend twice the Status points he normally would. This usually means spending two points per dot, but this effect can combine with the protections offered by some clans and covenants. This extra cost applies even when crossing clan/covenant lines — a Harpy of the ascendant Invictus still finds it more challenging to put a rival Ventrue in his place.

PRESTATION

Boons are a means of openly formalizing agreements of debt between Kindred; the system of boons is known as prestation. Owing a boon is a formal acknowledgment that one Kindred owes another a service. When and how that service is performed is at the discretion of the Kindred holding the boon (i.e. to whom the favor is owed), within the limits of the type of boon.

BOON TYPES

Prestation is a very formal affair among most Kindred and boons come in different types. Each type reflects the importance of the favor that creates the debt; repaying a boon requires an act of similar weight. Kindred revealed to have engineered dangerous situations — either to vampiric survival or to the Traditions — to attain boons are likely to see those boons invalidated by a Harpy.

- The simplest type is a *trivial boon*, which represents a minor favor. Examples include an introduction to an influential Kindred or granting feeding rights for a short period.
- A *minor boon* denotes a notable favor, such as protecting or saving a treasured property or valuable Retainer, or granting feeding rights for some time. A minor boon is roughly equivalent to three trivial boons.
- A *major boon* represents a considerable favor, such as protection from near destruction or a long period of service above and beyond the call of duty. It is roughly equivalent to three minor boons.
- Above all stands the *life boon*, which is granted only in the most extreme cases — usually when a Kindred saves the existence of another without having any formal obligation to do so. Allies don't owe each other life boons; such a debt is owed only under exceptional circumstances. A life boon cannot usually be repaid through multiple lesser boons.

DISPUTES AND FORMALITIES

Kindred who owe each other any sort of debt often seek to formalize it by having a Harpy record the type of boon owed, which is then made known to the Harpy (or Harpies) of any

city where the Kindred in question intend to reside for an extended period. This procedure protects the vampires involved as the Harpy acts as arbiter. When disputes arise, the Harpy decides whether a particular service is appropriate to repaying a favor and can act (using her Status points, see p. 286) to punish an offending party. A Harpy usually acts to compel those who refuse to repay boons owed, but can also restrain those who demand service out of proportion with what they are owed.

Kindred holding or owing boons can petition the Prince in defiance of a Harpy, although doing so is usually only likely to lead to complication or embarrassment. Harpies and Princes cannot arbitrate boons that they hold or owe; those matters are supervised by another Harpy.

The boons of blood-hunted Kindred are voided until the blood hunt is either called off or they are destroyed.

TRANSFERRING BOONS

A Kindred who holds a boon (to whom a favor is owed) may transfer it to another Kindred. Such a change is usually done to repay a debt owed to the recipient or to incur a debt from him, but can also be a particularly vicious means of bringing someone into disrepute. While a Sanctified Cardinal may not object to owing a boon to a member of the First Estate, the debt might be shameful if it was known that the Invictus transferred the boon to a Hierophant of the Circle of the Crone. Domains that do not honor boons are considered disreputable, usually held by revolutionaries or the unaligned.

If a Kindred owing boons is destroyed or sent to torpor for a very long time without having been guilty of a vampiric crime, the holders of the boons may justifiably petition the Harpies to transfer those boons to any Kindred who put the unfortunate vampire down.

Example: *Cornell holds a minor boon and a major boon over Barnard. One night, Barnard accidentally interrupts Emilio and Madryn as they are feeding. As a result of their ensuing frenzy, Barnard enters torpor. Cornell demands that the boons he is owed – which are now useless – be transferred. The Harpy agrees, ruling that Madryn owes Cornell a major boon, and Emilio owes him a minor one.*



Chapter Four: Storytelling

Ex Ungeum Leorum

(Know a lion by its claw)

(Know a lion by its claw)

-Latin proverb

-Latin proverb



Knowing the proper application of the rules for a **Mind's Eye Theatre** session is only part of the process for putting together a truly memorable and immersing experience. Some might even argue that the rules are actually the least important part of successfully holding such an event.

By now you are familiar with the mechanics of adjudicating a game session. You are prepared to handle combat situations, rules altercations and properly judge whether the actions of the player's characters succeed or fail in a fair and just manner. But what comes next is the understanding of how to craft a grand story around the bare skeleton of those rules. And that's really the heart of any chronicle — the story itself.

Specifically, these stories center on the society and nightly affairs of the walking dead. They are stories about a relentless hunger that makes you a monster. It's about having power and control over others, but ultimately not over yourself. Oh, it's true that these characters can concentrate their abilities into some really amazing feats, but in the end they are all just slaves to that hunger that never really leaves them. Despite the fancy clothes, calm demeanors and secrets within secrets, they all hear the call of their own monstrous hunger. In order to distract themselves from that gnawing need they imbed themselves in a world of secrets, madness and treachery. These are stories about making choices when none of your options are good, safe or easy. Most of all, it's a story you don't tell by yourself. You tell it in partnership with other players. One of you takes the role of Storyteller, but all of you work together to make the story complete.

The Requiem is subtitled, "A Modern Gothic Live-Action Storytelling Game." This chapter serves as a guide to you on how to run such a game. Storytellers have the most need to read this chapter, of course, but some topics most definitely will concern conscientious players, too.

The **Mind's Eye Theatre** core book already told you what a Storytelling game is. So, what is a "Modern Gothic Storytelling Game"?

The concept of what makes a good horror story has shifted with exposure to present day media. Most commonly what is labeled as "horror" comes in the form of the blood-splattering shocks such as those presented in a modern slasher movie. For the purposes of this game setting, however, it is important to remember that horror also applies to the eerie mysteries of a classic ghost story. **The Requiem** can incorporate any sort of horror, but the game focuses on what is commonly referred to as gothic horror. For our purposes what this represents is a more personal sense of horror and revulsion. It is not being momentarily startled as a hooded man with an axe jumps out of the closet, but rather the horror whose source is one's own deeds, of one's own self.

In most horror stories, the protagonists are victims. Something bad happens to them; you're scared on their behalf. They innocently wander into a situation that places them in some sort of physical or emotional danger, most often at the hands of some sort of supernatural force. In **The Requiem's** particular brand of gothic horror, characters fill the roles of victim and monster at the same time. They do the bad things and suffer the consequences, or they try not to do bad things, and suffer the consequences of that choice. The personal horror of **The Requiem** is about realizing, beyond all doubt, that *you* are the monster. (Or at least your character is!)

You can tell all kinds of stories in a **Requiem** chronicle. There are others themes to these stories that can range from dark romance to gritty war stories. Your stories, however, should offer characters a chance to discover just how difficult their existence as Kindred can become, especially if they are seeking to tame their dark appetite. It is their payment for the abilities they can possess — it is the cost of immortality. Can the characters withstand the hunger and rage of the Beast and still function within the ruthless demands of Kindred society? Can they



maintain some moral standard when no mortal law can bind them and the Beast constantly goads them to assault and murder? If they do chose to give in to their dark urges and throw away all sense of conscience, what will be left to keep them from sliding down into a feral state that renders them no better than a rabid animal? Even if characters can affirm their humanity this time, well, there's always tomorrow night, the night after that, and the night after that...

Forever.

Getting Started

As Storyteller, you create a dark reflection of the real world for the players' characters to inhabit, including all the other people they meet and the locations they may visit. You also help guide the stream of events that these characters will find themselves confronted with and present the challenges they must inevitably overcome. This can sometimes seem like a daunting task given how much effort can be involved. Fortunately, you don't have to create it all at once.

The Requiem presumes that most stories take place within one metropolitan area. This location serves as the launching point and active staging ground for your stories. So in the beginning, you don't have to worry about Kindred, mortals or other supernatural creatures elsewhere in the world. For now, you only have to concern yourself with the little pieces of the world that affect the characters involved in your game setting — and for Kindred, that's a lot less than it is for most mortals.

Even more fortunately, your players can help. Once a chronicle begins, every choice the characters make has consequences, good and bad, that can spark new stories. If you've managed to fully engage the players' interests, they'll move beyond reacting to situations you create, to initiating stories themselves. It's when this interactive element comes into play that a chronicle truly becomes a shared work of Storytelling — and, very probably, the most fun.

Building the story that serves as the framework for your chronicle starts with discussions with your players. What sort of chronicle do they want? Personal horror and a modern-gothic setting permit a wide variety of different plots and styles of play. A **Requiem** chronicle can range from a desperate struggle against implacable, marauding Lupines to elegant intrigue in Elysium. Do the characters want espionage, mystery, love stories, black comedy? Do they want to play neonates (the default chronicle), elders among the Primogen or something else? Does any aspect of the game or setting especially appeal to them? There's no point in running a chronicle that bores or irritates your players.



PLAYER SURVEYS

When attempting to write a **Requiem** chronicle, one of the first things to consider is what type of game your players would prefer. There is no sense in preparing a chronicle centered around murky conspiracies and political intrigue if most of your players are looking to explore the morality of undeath or throw down against some rival Kindred. So how does a Storyteller get a sense of what the players are looking for? As discussed in **Mind's Eye Theatre**, one method is to hand out a survey. It is a simple and reliable method of learning what your troupe wants without having to sit down and interview each player. There are many different types of stories that can be covered in a **Requiem** chronicle, and while you can't please everyone, you can at least get an idea of the sort of game your players are expecting.





In addition to the categories presented in **Mind's Eye Theatre**, you may wish to add or replace some Kindred-specific categories such as: "The Struggle Against the Beast," "Internal City Politics" and "Vampiric History." Another category that might deserve special addition for **Requiem** chronicles (and perhaps **Mind's Eye Theatre** in general) is "Player vs. Player." Quite simply, some players love competing against their friends in a game environment, while others would rather focus on external threats and battling Narrator characters instead. **The Requiem** can easily become extremely cutthroat in ways that some players love but others find uncomfortable, so don't underestimate the importance of this question. If a lot of the players enjoy being pitted against each other, they're likely to be fine with a chronicle that revolves around wresting control of the city from other players. If most of the players would rather go up against Narrator characters, you could run the same story and simply put all the players on the same side against a Narrator faction.

If your players have previous knowledge of **The Requiem** you might inquire as to which clans, covenants and political factions appeal to them the most (and least). Cover some of the themes that go along with **The Requiem**, perhaps asking players to choose one or two they'd like to see the most. Also, a player survey is an excellent place to put a space for players to list any kinds of topics or stories they find uncomfortable or objectionable.

Remember, this isn't an examination to get into a university, but rather a poll of your player's interests in regards to the Danse Macabre. Keep your list of questions short, but urge your players to take your survey seriously. After all, this is helping to personalize the game to best entertain them. It's in their best interests to be forthright and thoughtful.



Also, another consideration to keep in mind in the early planning stage is how long a chronicle you and your players want. A short chronicle of four to six episodes demands quite different planning than a chronicle meant to continue indefinitely, through dozens of sessions and multiple story arcs. In a story with a prior set limited running time, the players might try to give their characters every trait, Merit and personality quirk right away since the chronicle won't have many opportunities to grow and change. On the other hand, players might generate more singularly focused characters, with less attention paid to their chances of surviving a long chronicle. As a Storyteller, meanwhile, you need to devise plots with clearly defined endings. While some loose ends might exist, your own characters and story elements need to make an impression quickly. They might not be on your imaginary stage very long.

Once you have some idea of what sort of chronicle you plan to run, you can flesh out vague notions into characters, a setting, plots, a theme and other details. Remember, if you are planning on maintaining a staff of Narrators and Assistant Storytellers, seek their input in this process. Different perspectives are extremely useful in plotting out a long running story that will maintain the interest of its players.

You might start with a particular theme, and choose plots to illustrate it; you might begin with a character or set of characters, and build the chronicle around them. Sometimes it's best to simply start with a strong visual image that captures the essence of what you want your story to be about: A vampiric lord of a city whose normally casual demeanor begins showing signs of a growing insanity. A circle of malcontents meeting and conspiring in hushed tones in a crowded bar surrounded by unsuspecting mortals. A revel of the undead — showcasing the contrast of the twisted hypocrisy of displaying polite behavior among blood thirsty monsters. Don't be too quick to settle on just one idea, either. A good method of helping plot out events is to just jot down ideas as your fancy wanders, and look for connections between them. Brainstorm with a list of images that best reflect what you want to see in your story. Eventually, bits of inspiration will coalesce and you will know what your chronicle is about.



PERSONAS – WHO WILL JOIN THE DANCE?

Your players' characters are the most important part of the chronicle. What sorts of characters do they want to play? How can you assist them in polishing their ideas? How do they relate to the ideas you have percolating?

As an example, let's suppose you want to build your chronicle around the meteoric rise and equally spectacular fall of a vampire Prince in a large city. You envision the characters as hip-deep in the political intrigue surrounding the Prince's career, with themes of treachery and the corruption of power. One of your players, however, has her heart set on playing a member of the clan of Nosferatu who's chiefly interested in protecting his mortal family (without letting them see him, no less), while another player wants to play an apolitical Mekhet who seeks mystical enlightenment through the Circle of the Crone. Neither seems very compatible with your concept. So what is to be done?

First, you shouldn't force the players to abandon characters they love and play characters they don't want. This statement certainly ties into the earlier topics of polling your players for their thoughts during the planning stages of your chronicle. You want players to become your co-creators, not passive or resentful spectators.

So negotiate. Maybe you can shift the emphasis of your chronicle, so the Prince's rise and fall plays out in the background and the characters deal with its side effects. Perhaps the central challenge that faces the characters is to avoid the machinations of the elders so they can pursue their personal goals. Maybe, however, the players hadn't fully considered how their characters could become involved in politics, and they'll adjust their characters to suit the chronicle idea. The Nosferatu could be interested in the Prince's rise if he sees a chance to help his family through his political connections. The Mekhet could sympathize with a Prince who is also involved in the membership to the Circle of the Crone. Mature players usually want some notion of a chronicle's premise so they can create characters that are suited for the story. This sort of give-and-take helps both sides, as players and Storyteller get a better idea of who will take part in the chronicle and what they will do.

This process of cross-fertilizing ideas continues as the players write up their characters and flesh out the details of their personalities, backgrounds and social connections. As they build characters, you build a world the characters can inhabit. At the same time, you can help suggest ways the characters might fit into your world.

For instance, suppose one of your players wants her character to have been some sort of government agent before his Embrace – something in law enforcement, but maybe espionage. As you bounce ideas back and forth, you agree that an FBI agent in an organized crime task force could fill the bill: law enforcement, but with espionage too, thanks to undercover and surveillance work. The player gives her character Allies and Contacts in the form of other FBI agents, snitches and criminals who never knew he was really a G-man. The G-man character also receives suitable Skills, such as Streetwise, Larceny, Subterfuge, Firearms, Academics (for law) and Crafts (to use electronic surveillance gear).

You, meanwhile, ponder how to fit an Embraced G-man into your chronicle. Perhaps one of the city's Primogen has secretly placed a mole inside the FBI task force and uses her to gain information about a rival's mob allies. That Primogen could be the character's sire, using him as part of his schemes to manipulate the task force. Or perhaps the character doesn't know about the Primogen's subversion, and is in for a nasty shock when the elder Kindred turns his ally against him! Perhaps the Primogen, or some other Kindred, plans to Embrace another person on the task force, a friend from the character's mortal days. Maybe someone plans to Embrace a mobster who hates the character for sending him to jail.





As the player develops more details about the FBI task force, then, she does some of your work for you. Each personality at the task force (or the criminals it builds cases against) becomes another character for you to blend into your world, and another hook to draw the character into stories. You gain allies for the character to protect, hide from, exploit, betray or slaughter in frenzy; enemies to hunt him or to reconcile with him; rivals; potential helpers – all story material waiting for you to use it.

As the example suggests, Social Merits can play an important role in defining a character and providing impetus for stories. Newly Embraced neonates still have many connections to their mortal existence they left behind, so encourage players to buy these Merits for their characters. Brainstorm the details of each Merit and how the character acquired it. Why, for instance, does a character have high Resources? Does she come from a wealthy family? Did she make a fortune in business, or through some well-paid profession such as medicine or law? Did she win the lottery? Does her money spring from darker sources, such as dealing drugs? Never let these Merits sit as abstract dots on a character sheet. Tie them back to something concrete.

Don't forget to ask how the Embrace affected the character's social connections. Did she somehow keep her mortal friends, relatives or co-workers from realizing she became a vampire? Does she maintain a completely false existence as a mortal, or does the world think she's dead and only a few people know she isn't? (Well... not *quite* dead.)

On the other hand, did the character try to walk away from her old existence, perhaps to the extent of faking her death? If so, how does she feel about this break with everyone she knows and loves? Can the character really stay away from her old home, family and friends, maybe even a spouse and children? Yet how can she not, knowing what could happen if the Hunger overwhelms her? Do the character's loved ones accept her disappearance, or do they try to find out what happened to her? Such broken connections offer their own opportunities for wrenching drama, pathos and horror.

Most dangerous of all, do some of her contacts, allies or other people know what she really is? Such breaches of the Masquerade open wonderful Pandora's boxes of story opportunities. The character must prevent these people from telling anyone else. He must hide or defend them from other Kindred who would kill them to keep the secret, or justify her own connection to them. For their part, how do these other people react to learning that vampires are real and the character is one of them? Does a person turn against the "monster," freak out some other way, try to ignore the character's undeath or try to come to terms with it? Does one ask to be made a vampire too, because he sees the power and none of the horror?

Make sure that players don't ignore the Embrace itself as part of their characters' background. It is important to emphasize to your players that the Kindred don't sire childer lightly or often. What made this particular mortal so important to one particular vampire that he sacrificed part of his soul to bring her into the darkness? Such a deed suggests a great need for the character's abilities, great love... or great hatred. Odds are, the character dwells in the same city as her sire, too. If not, the character (or sire) made an extraordinary and dangerous effort to move to a different city. What drove the character to this desperate deed? Has she found acceptance by other Kindred despite her lack of a sire to vouch for her? More likely, though, the character's sire still plays an important part in her unlife. Even if both of them think the Embrace was a ghastly mistake and never want to see each other again, other Kindred see them as linked. Each character's deeds reflect on the reputation of the other. Each character's enemies might oppose the other (and if the character and her sire are themselves hostile, the opportunities for opposition, alliance and treachery between them and their various enemies become downright Byzantine).

It's always tempting to gloss over a character's background and "get on with the plot," so the game can begin. Some players also feel reluctant to develop social or emotional connections for their character, out of fear that those connections may be turned against them. To be human, however, involves contact with other people. The struggle to hold onto a fading humanity loses much of its poignancy and horror if no one else cares what happens to the character, and she doesn't care what happens to anyone else.

Also, as a Storyteller, you should find a careful balance between keeping your players' characters involved in the story and showing too much favoritism. In the example mentioned before, if your story focuses around the events of the local branch of the FBI then the character with the background in that organization may seem to be getting too much attention. The story may seem to be focusing too much on his background alone, and other players may be resentful of such direct attention being given to just one player. There are a lot of voices in your game, though, so don't focus on just one or two.

As a Storyteller, do your best to spread the attention to backgrounds as evenly as possible. Or connect certain backgrounds so that multiple players can be involved. Rely on your Narrator staff to assist you in keeping track of everything that is going to be involved. Or perhaps assign specific staff members to keep an eye on the activities of certain coteries so everyone involved in the sessions can have a chance to shine.



ONE COVENANT OR CLAN?

You might ask your players if they want to use the full range of clans. A chronicle in which the coterie draws members from any clan provides the "default setting" for **The Requiem**, but coteries in which everyone belongs to the same clan have their own points of interest. The same goes for covenants: A coterie can have members from more than one covenant, if that's what the players want, but a coterie that stays within one covenant has possibilities too.

For one thing, it allows you and a Storyteller an easy explanation for why the characters came together and stay together. The players' characters may be all the neonates of that clan or covenant in the city, drawn together by shared inexperience or pushed together by clan or covenant superiors who want them all in one group. For instance, a coterie could consist of reclusive Ordo Dracul members who've formed their own lodge to share their occult knowledge and collectively bargain with other aspirants for tuition, or young Gangrel broodmates striving to wrest recognition of their independence from hoary and corrupt elders of the covenants. It might even serve as a mystery. Perhaps the characters all awake from their Embrace at the same time, with no trace of the vampire who created them to be found. This is a departure from the standard chronicle setting, but it provides an excellent reason for the players to cooperate — at least in the beginning.

A coterie based on a single clan or covenant also gives your players a chance to delve into the inner workings of that particular group and explore the range of possibilities it holds. How many ways can one challenge the social order as a Carthian? How many ways can one seek power as a Ventrué?

A limited coterie may also help players who have trouble deciding on a character concept, and helps players to get away from just the statistics of a character. Simply saying, "Make a character" can overwhelm some players — the possibilities might seem too wide. "Make a Daeva" or "Make an Invictus character" might help such players, by giving them a clear point at which to begin.



SETTING

Where will you set your chronicle? Predators in nature follow the trail of their prey and vampires are no different. The Kindred usually dwell in cities. The larger the city, then the





more Kindred it can sustain. The size of the city and the amount of players in your story, therefore, has implications for you're where you are choosing to set your chronicle.

Vast urban conglomerations such as New York, London or Mexico City might hold hundreds of Kindred, with every office of vampire governance filled. Every clan and covenant has well-developed social structures with their own offices. No Kindred can claim to know all other Kindred, though. The politics of the undead start to resemble old-time mortal machine politics, with influence brokers promising the support (or enmity) of whole groups of Kindred, in return for largesse from the leaders. The characters must work to stand out from their fellows. On the other hand, they may be able to hide out or forge an alliance with a whole new faction if their current situation becomes too dangerous.

There are some grand advantages to maintaining a large city as the center of your story. The Storyteller can always justify some new character appearing in her chronicle. He just moved from across town, or the characters just didn't happen to meet him until now. Of course, the characters don't know if that stranger is telling the truth... unless they investigate the stranger's claimed background, which could be a whole story in itself.

Second-tier cities such as Houston or Toronto sustain fewer Kindred, so the social structures are sparser. A large percentage of the Kindred claim some sort of title, or else many offices go unfilled because they aren't needed (this is often the case in smaller chronicles). Even if every clan and covenant finds representation, the numbers of Kindred within each group might be low enough that clans and covenants need little internal organization. Individual personalities, grudges and influence can matter just as much as clan or covenant allegiance.

Middle-sized cities offer sufficient scope for Byzantine Kindred intrigue, while not overwhelming the players' characters. It's easier to make a name for yourself when your coterie is itself a noteworthy interest group. On the other hand, if every coterie is worth cultivating for its support, every coterie is worth crushing, to deny its support to one's rivals. The characters also have little trouble learning about other Kindred in town.

A third-tier city such as Las Vegas or Venice can support only a few dozen Kindred. Such cities might not contain members of all the clans and covenants, which can make their societies highly idiosyncratic. Actual clan and covenant politics hold little sway, however, compared to the personal relationships between the Kindred. Everyone knows everyone else. This type of setting is an excellent choice for placing restrictions on clan or covenant in relation to character creation.

In a small city, the players' characters form a major demographic of the Kindred population. This keeps the characters in the center of plots, but the setting could feel constricted in play. If the players want to explore constantly evolving relationships between a limited cast of characters, though, a small city can work just fine.

Give thought to the city's age, too. In the New World, many major cities are less than a century old. The first Kindred to settle in the city probably still dwell there and most other Kindred are their descendants within two or three generations. The alliances and rivalries between those founding Kindred probably still dominate undead politics.

In the Old World, by contrast, many cities are very old indeed. London and Paris have been metropolises for several centuries (and significant towns long before that). Rome and Alexandria have flourished for more than 2,000 years; Baghdad is only the latest city in its location, in a series stretching back to ancient Babylon. Equally long Kindred histories can generate local bloodlines, bizarre customs, elaborate traditions, ancient secrets and vendettas whose origin is lost even to Kindred memory. Having younger Kindred begin their unlife in such a location provides them with a plethora of story ideas, as they learn the secrets and histories that surround them. Players who are new to the **Mind's Eye Theatre** experience, however, might find themselves somewhat overwhelmed by too much background material all at once.





Many players and Storytellers like to set their chronicle in the nearest large city — perhaps the one they live in themselves — or some metropolis they know through books, movies and TV shows, such as Chicago or New York. Such a setting has the advantage that the players already know a fair bit about it and can easily learn more. Visits to the library can turn up all sorts of famous, notorious or merely eccentric people from the city's history, which might have influenced Kindred history as well. Every significant city also has weirdness in its past and present, from mass murders to quirky monuments, that can inspire supernatural mysteries.

On the other hand, you may want to invent a fictional city. This has the advantage that you can create whatever history, geography, local celebrities and colorful locations you want. That's a lot of work, though, and a lot to keep straight. Players do notice inconsistencies and may catch you in one if you don't take adequate notes during play.

Daring troupes may want to try out more unusual settings. In a small city, the coterie could be the only vampires in town. Such a chronicle consists entirely of their interactions with each other and the mortals around them. Here, especially, the players and their characters drive the chronicle. Indeed, the first story could be about how and why they came to the town.

The Kindred abhor both travel and the countryside. That doesn't make a travel-based or rural chronicle entirely impossible, though — just very difficult. The hazards of travel could fill a chronicle with suspense, as the characters juggle the logistics of their journey with hunting and staying safe during the day. They almost certainly need ghouls or other Retainers, who for this purpose might be played as full-fledged characters. Unlife in a small town or in the wilderness might also be possible, if the characters possess the right blend of Disciplines and a great deal of care.

For a very unusual chronicle, perhaps the coterie tries to turn an isolated, small town into its collective herd. Even if these Kindred can succeed in conditioning, blood bonding or otherwise subverting the mortal community leaders, how do they persuade or frighten the rest of the populace into accepting their role as a food source? If they can do that, then how do they keep the secret from the rest of the world? A wilderness chronicle, meanwhile, would



focus almost entirely on raw survival: hunting for animals to feed upon, avoiding the sun, possibly even dodging other supernatural creatures who also hide far from mortal eyes.

THE SHADOWY REFLECTION

Once you decide where to set your chronicle, take that location and translate it into the World Of Darkness. Exaggerate the negative in a real-world city to turn it into a hellhole.

Make the slums, barrios and other low-income neighborhoods poorer and more dilapidated. More buildings are vacant, except for the squatters. Gang tags and other graffiti are everywhere, the only new paint any building has seen in decades. Many buildings, even people's homes, have broken windows covered with boards or plastic sheeting. The streets glitter with broken glass while garbage chokes the alleys. The only evidence of money comes from the pimps and drug dealers who cruise around in flashy cars. Most people won't meet another person's eye and talk as little as possible, as they try to avoid the notice of the young toughs who swagger about in gang colors. Boomboxes, screaming arguments, car alarms and the occasional gunshot provide the soundtrack.

Affluent residential neighborhoods hold their own inhumanity. Blocks of apartments or condominiums are built like fortresses. Suburban homes look like they were cloned, with no trace of individuality. Anyone who can afford it lives in a gated community, behind high concrete walls topped with barbed wire or broken glass, and an armed guard at the gate. The very richest people, however, can live in luxurious penthouse suites or private, walled estates — rather more common in the World of Darkness than in most real, contemporary cities.

Strip away any trace of beauty or humanity from the business districts. Skyscrapers become brutal monoliths faced with blank, featureless steel, stone, concrete or glass, or fearsome gargoyles jut from their crenellations. At night, the streets are deserted except for the homeless person huddled on a grate or in an alley. Let a business person have to walk a ways, though, instead of driving into and out of a skyscraper's guarded, underground parking garage, and human wolves appear like magic to demand money. Away from the financial towers, some businesses stay open: bars, strip clubs, nightclubs and X-rated video parlors, with the occasional convenience store or gas station. Out in the suburbs, meanwhile, massive iron security grills turn the closed shops and offices of the strip malls into lines of prison cells.

The industrial district becomes a barren wasteland of crumbling brick and concrete factories and warehouses. Most of the industries shut down long ago, leaving towering machines to rust and collapse onto poison-soaked dirt or asphalt.

Now and then, one comes across relics of a more gracious past, or at least a past with more ornamental tastes. An old church might nestle in between grim office blocks, its stained glass and carved stone more astonishing by the contrast. Older retail blocks still show fancy brickwork and molded concrete, albeit grimy and eroded by time and neglect.

As you design your World of Darkness city, think of places where Kindred might dwell or congregate. Museums, opera houses and other "cultural" locations work well for Elysiums, but so do old rail or bus terminals built in elegant Art Deco or earlier gingerbread style. Feel free to change your urban landmarks to make them more atmospheric: a derelict train station instead of a new one, for instance. Ruined churches are too perfectly symbolic of the World of Darkness for you to ignore. Buildings left unfinished and abandoned also convey the despair of the World of Darkness.



WHY IS THAT EVEN THERE?

There is another advantage to understanding what your player base wants out of a chronicle. It allows you to plan out what in-game locations are going to be used



in your story and how you can use what space you have reserved for your game to represent these places.

Most live-action stories are limited by what real-world space a Storyteller and the staff has to work with. Some folks are blessed with a sizable game location and plenty of free space that is away from prying eyes. Most have to make do with what they have at hand, however, especially in urban areas where games can be held only in apartments or townhouses.

If you find that none of your players are interested in any kind of occult themes in their story then don't waste the space on converting the living room into a mysterious arcane library. If your players seem like they are not going to traffic the local sewer systems with any kind of frequency, do not designate a room for the sewer warren or forgotten subway system. Not every typical facet of a city populated by vampires needs to be represented in your setting — especially if you are greatly limited in your playing space.

Find out what types of places your players' characters would frequent and see how these places fit into your game setting. A compromise can be reached and you can use these locations to your best advantage when planning out spatial relations with your staff. If it's not going to be used, don't bother even mentioning it.



GENERAL FEATURES OF THE WORLD OF DARKNESS

As a guiding principle, keep the ambience of the World Of Darkness in mind as you design your setting. For the Kindred, this world is even darker and deadlier than it is for the mortals. Vampires are not the only predators out there. There are dangers and threats that the mortal world is completely ignorant of that hungrily wait in the shadows for hapless vampires as well. Also, one of the largest sources of antagonism may come from the self-destructive nature of the characters themselves. Consider these following guidelines for setting the tone of your chronicle:

- **The Death of Virtue:** People in the World of Darkness know they live in a decaying, vice-riddled world. They learned from centuries of greed and lies from leaders in business, government, religion and every other institution. Cynicism and despair saturate the culture, from the tags on the walls to the movies in the theaters. Everyone knows that virtues such as compassion or charity mark you as a sucker, ready to be victimized, while justice and faith are words used by scoundrels to hide their sins. True selflessness, love or honor is more rare and precious than diamonds.

- **No More Good Guys:** Did they ever really exist at all? Modern mortals certainly have no one to inspire them. The media caught them in sex scandals or taking bribes, or maybe destroyed their reputations just to make a good story. Local community leaders sold out or died in the endemic urban violence. The precious few people who genuinely seek to make the world a better place remain voices in the wilderness, their good works obscured by the torrent of cynicism and sleaze.

- **Violence and Fear:** Crime is omnipresent and life is cheap, especially for the young. The poor lash out from frustration and greed, with well-heeled criminals as their anti-heroes. Bored rich kids look for thrills through violence and drugs. At every level of society, people find no shortage of other groups to blame — other races, other classes or just people who like other things.

- **Isolation:** Many families and neighborhoods adopt a siege mentality against the rest of the world, convinced that they live surrounded by enemies who want to strip them of whatever they have. The well-to-do hide behind walls, gates and security systems, sending their children to private schools, careful to avoid anyone outside their class. The less affluent watch out for gangs and stay away from windows, especially at night, lest they become





a target. Everyone watches TV instead of talking to their neighbors. Churches, clubs and other social groups merely give people a chance to hide from the world together, with a few people who think like them.

- **Madness:** In a mad world, why not go mad yourself? Insanity takes many forms in the World of Darkness. Sometimes it's obvious, like the bag lady talking to herself as she roots through the dumpster, or the junkie ranting through his withdrawal on a street corner. Some forms of madness hide themselves, like the affable family man who molests his daughters. Other lunacies grow from isolation and fear, such as fanatical racism or other forms of bigotry. Many people seek escape through the temporary madness of drugs.

THEMES

This is a world in which virtue cannot count on a foreordained triumph. In fact, most of the evidence suggests that virtue hasn't got a chance. The only question left would seem to be whether the world will choke and die on its own corruption, or just grind on the same vicious round forever – a horrible ending, or horrors without end.

Most people have given up. They merely want a little comfort in the short life allotted to mortals. Only blind fanatics seem to care about the world's future, and they would rather cast the world into fire than bend one inch on their ideologies. The few people who achieve real power have chosen to reign in Hell instead of struggling to make the world a better place.

As a race, the Kindred fall in that last category. In some ways, their unnatural state gives them great power. In other ways, it makes them weaker than the mortals they prey upon. Deep down, they know this. If the mortals give in to despair, why would the Damned hope they could make a difference?

Regardless of clan, covenant or setting, the players' characters face this choice between striving for virtue or surrendering to vice. The choice doesn't have to be stated openly, but it lies at the heart of **The Requiem**. Can the characters strive to become something more than monsters? Especially when they know that sometimes they must fail? "Doing the right thing" is difficult from within the Requiem. Often it is dangerous. Sometimes it's hard to tell exactly what the right thing is. Nevertheless, they may achieve heroism during their tragic unlives by struggling to find courage, compassion or other virtues within themselves.

Within that broad theme of moral choices and their consequences, you can develop a variety of other themes for your chronicle. A theme gives your chronicle a central idea that organizes your stories and ties them together. This isn't a "moral to the story" – nothing so cut-and-dried. A good theme is a question. The characters supply their own answers, through the choices they make as they react to the situations you present. Suitable themes for **Requiem** chronicles include:

- **The Danse Macabre:** Kindred existence is a ghastly, undercover war of each against all, with power over mortals as both weapon and prize. Young vampires struggle to gain some power and security despite the greed of their elders; the older vampires struggle to keep the power they've acquired and gain more, to use against their own rivals. Young and old are both willing to betray other Kindred of their age in order to better their own position, striking alliances of convenience.

Can the characters avoid the Danse Macabre, or must they participate for their own survival? Can they escape the vicious cycle of needing still more power to deal with the enemies they made through their past gambits? Can they use their power for virtuous ends? Do virtuous ends even exist in the World of Darkness? Most importantly, can they trust each other, or will they betray each other for the sake of individual power?

- **Bound by Invisible Chains:** The Requiem brings power and freedom from mortal laws and limitations... or does it? Many Kindred believe they are the undying masters of the night,

at least within their cities, but they bind themselves through favors owed and their own laws — especially the authority of the Prince and the need to observe the Traditions. The intrigue of the Danse Macabre traps them as well, though the tar-baby makes a better metaphor here than chains. Kindred grab for power, and find themselves caught by the need to direct and defend their mortal pawns from their jealous rivals. Their own nature binds them even more thoroughly. The Kindred cannot escape the Beast Within, only struggle to restrain it lest it capture and destroy them. Their vices provide another level of entrapment, and few Kindred manage to escape the grip of their own selfish passions. In view of all this, is even a Prince truly the master of his fate?

This theme works best in a chronicle about a group of ambitious neonates who want to win offices and titles in their covenant, clan or the city's general Kindred hierarchy. Perhaps they want power for its own sake. Perhaps they merely want to escape the Danse Macabre by winning it, achieving sufficient rank and influence that no one dares to command or threaten them. They must scheme to escape the grip of their sires and parry the attacks of their equally ambitious peers. Eventually they must challenge the influence of the elders they hope to supplant. Along the way, however, the characters must cut deals and incur debts, make and break alliances, acquire short-term partners and long-term enemies. If the characters ever reach the pinnacle they seek, they may find that they are still not free. They have simply raised the stakes by entering a higher realm of competition. Of course, they also must defend themselves against younger Kindred who want to supplant them in turn.

- **Dark Redemption:** Undeath horrifies some newly Embraced Kindred. They struggle to reclaim as much of their lost humanity as they can and redeem themselves to their own consciences, if not necessarily to God. Characters who seek redemption might try to use their Kindred powers to do good. This could be anything from destroying a predatory street gang of mortals to intriguing for the power to shape the mortal city government's policies toward the poor and homeless. Of course, such characters find plenty of other Kindred to oppose as well: Most vampires find such altruistic campaigns foolish at best, a threat to their own power and food supply at worst. The characters' own nature presents the most immediate and ineradicable threat, however. One moment of surrender to the Beast could turn a mission of mercy, justice or other virtue into a horrific bloodbath. Can the Damned truly do good in the world, or are they doomed to corrupt and destroy everything and everyone they touch? Can any number of good deeds make restitution for the evils that Kindred inevitably commit?

Working with this theme will require a lot of extra work on the part of you and your Narrator staff. Those players involved with this type of story will require a large degree of attention in order to make the story meaningful. The payoff for them and for your chronicle in the long run, however, makes the effort worthwhile.

- **Home Lies the Heart:** A vampire's existence is lonely and full of horrors. A coterie makes a poor substitute for true friends and family. Some neonates try to cling to the relationships of their mortal lives. Can a vampire really go home and reclaim her mortal relationships, or does she merely set herself up for worse tragedy and desolation?

This theme examines the Kindred's separation from humankind. Vampires can never reclaim some aspects of mortal existence, such as daylight and becoming a parent. Their hunger presents a constant danger to any mortal around them. Other Kindred will surely condemn the characters for endangering the Masquerade. If a character clings to mortal family and friends he may have taken for granted in life, is he just being selfish? Or has he found the only thing in the Requiem that really matters? As for the character's mortal loved ones... well, what sort of choices do they make, and what are the consequences? Are they blind to their danger, or bravely risking their lives to help the character hold onto his humanity?





Themes help you focus the events and actions of your stories around a single idea. Your chronicle gains consistency and emotional resonance as the characters see your theme from different angles. As the chronicle reaches its resolution, you can provide a climax by presenting the characters with a situation that forces them to answer, once and for all, the questions raised by the theme.

A chronicle can explore more than one theme. In fact, it's best not to tie every story too closely to a single theme, at least in a long chronicle. If you make your theme too omnipresent, or spoon-feed particular answers to the players' characters, the chronicle can seem forced or preachy. You might choose one major theme, but build occasional stories around other themes. You can also combine themes. For instance, the members of the coterie might hope to resume as much of their mortal lives as possible, with all the difficulties that entails, but find themselves drawn into the *Danse Macabre* by the need to defend their loved ones from the machinations of other Kindred. Quite possibly, each character might explore his or her own theme. You are limited only by how much work you and your players are willing to place into developing themes.

DRAMA 101

Most roleplaying games could fairly be described as “action-adventure.” Characters pursue goals and face dangers along the way. It doesn't much matter whether the game bills itself as high fantasy, science fiction, western, wuxia, talking animals, or even horror. The characters have a problem; they try to solve it.

You can run **The Requiem** that way, too. The *World of Darkness* offers characters no shortage of dangers to get in the way of the characters' goals, from mortal authorities that must be kept ignorant to crazed Lupines out to destroy all Kindred. As a Storytelling game, however, **The Requiem** was designed with drama in mind. Drama differs from action-adventure in that characters must make difficult decisions. “How do we stop the Lupine?” is action-adventure. “What should we do about the Lupine? Kill it, hide, try to reason with it, steer it at our enemies?” is drama.

In drama, there's no obviously right answer, or it's one that characters don't want. For instance, maybe the characters discover that the witch-hunter who's destroying the Kindred is also somebody's best friend from his mortal days. Do they try to stop him, and maybe kill him in the process? The hunter is a murderer: He kills mortal retainers as well as their Kindred masters. On the other hand, he used to be a friend. So do they try to reason with him and invoke old ties of friendship? That would be a more humane and forgiving approach... but it would deny justice to the slain mortals, aside from being incredibly dangerous if the witch-hunter sees his former friend as just another vampire. On top of this, the Prince will certainly ask hard questions if he learns that the characters have some connection to the hunter. He might think they planned the murders together.

One simple way to generate drama is to figure out what situations the characters least want to be in – not for reasons of danger, but based on their fears, shames, ambitions and other emotions. Place the characters in those situations. As the chronicle proceeds, your list of emotionally taxing situations changes as the characters themselves grow and develop. Old situations drop off the list as the characters resolve personal issues, and new situations join the list as the characters make decisions and form new relationships.

A character's Virtue and Vice provide a shortcut for designing dramatic situations. You might want to create a situation in which a character must sacrifice his cherished Virtue to uphold some other aspect of his unlife, such as Humanity or a social debt. Less virtuous characters can find their Vice in conflict with similar other aspects of character. For



instance, a vampire known for pride, might find that to achieve revenge (driven by pride) he must humble himself before a rival (going against pride). With a little work, you can devise situations where characters must indulge Vices in order to achieve Virtuous goals, or even stranger juxtapositions.

For the climax of a chronicle, or at least a story arc, pick the most dramatically extreme situation possible – the situation you think the character would least like to face. Pit the character against her greatest fear, or tempt her with multiple rewards offered by different parties – possibly including herself. If your players are willing to face such situations, they might have the most intense roleplaying experience of their lives, and a story they'll relish repeating for years to come.

CHRONICLE OUTLINE

As the examples show, themes often suggest plots all by themselves. Your chosen themes can also help you turn a vague notion for a chronicle into a complete plot, by suggesting what sort of choices and challenges the characters face. Like a movie or novel, a chronicle should have a beginning, middle and end, so the players know their characters' actions build to some sort of climax and resolution. You'll have a better idea of how to design individual stories if you start with a clear idea of where the entire chronicle should go.

For instance, let's take another look at that idea of a chronicle built around the rise and fall of a charismatic Prince. The premise sounds political, so you might select "Bound by Invisible Chains" as the chronicle's theme. The neonate characters would see the apparent freedom and power of the older Kindred, compared to the oppression they experience in their own unives. Then the would-be Prince offers them a chance to grab that power and freedom for themselves. The attempt at revolution draws them into an ever-deepening mire of intrigue, favor-trading and deceit.

Once in power, however, the new Prince turns out to be just as despotic as her predecessor. Some of the characters have gained the power and influence they sought, but at the price of obligations to the Prince and her other allies. Others might have broken those promises and alliances, but become hunted outcasts as a result. As the Prince's rule becomes harsher, these characters must decide where their loyalties lie. Who will join the new crop of rebels who arise, and risk their power and perhaps their lives? Who will stick with their Prince and try to improve the regime from within? Sell out their old principles? Run away? As a Storyteller, you have to decide if you want the chronicle to end in a blazing finale of a Kindred civil war, or allow for a prolonged power struggle with factions of characters within your chronicle choosing sides.

In a larger chronicle, the drama could be even higher. What if the majority of the characters decided to support the older Prince? What if a few players worked to restore the old power, or at least remove the current power structure? Who will seek a position of neutrality? Or will some players take a mercenary position, working for whatever side offers the sweetest deal? Bargains will be struck and broken, power will shift in unpredictable ways, and everyone in the game will be affected by the result.

For those who support the Prince they helped into power, they have some choices to make. They now must either they must burn with her, or combat the efforts of their fellow Kindred who are in many ways just as idealistic as they were in their efforts. If they turn on the Prince, there is a chance they will lose all of the influence they built within the city. They also gain a reputation as turncoats and fair-weather allies; not unheard of among the undead, but often difficult to live down as well. Such a reputation ensures that no one will trust them for a long time, no matter how principled they feel their choice was.



Now you can go through this skeletal plot and block out its beginning, middle, climax and end, along with the sorts of choices you present to the characters. Remember that your actual stories may change from what you plan; this is still just a slightly more detailed outline.

Opening

The story should start simply, if only because the characters need some time to learn about the city, the other Kindred and the relations between the groups in town. (New players would also need time to get comfortable with the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rules, as well as the special powers and weaknesses of vampires.) It would be best to center the first stories on the characters' Embrace experiences, as well as their relationships with their sires, other members of their coteries and the remnants of their mortal lives. Depending on how much time you have to devote to it, you might want to have prelude sessions, where one or two players experience the Embrace on an individual basis — especially if they have the same sire. Use your Storytelling staff and perhaps even other players as background personnel (perhaps offering experience points for assisting).

The characters' reactions to undeath and the Kindred they meet can give rise to conflicts and goals that you develop in later subplots. The players will establish where their loyalties lie (or lack thereof), and the usual backroom deal-making will begin. Along the way, you can use Narrator characters and Storyteller-controlled events to show the characters how much power the older, better-established Kindred have over them — especially the iron hand of the Prince. You and your Storytelling staff can arrange to show the unrest growing among some the city's Kindred as they chafe under a tyrant's reign. This calls for stories, scenes and encounters that give the characters firsthand experience of tyranny.

For example, one character might try to continue running a business he started as a mortal, only to have one of the Prince's cronies seize it under the pretext that the character's continuing involvement risked the Masquerade. Another character might see his sire, who has tried to treat him fairly, forced to abase himself before the Prince in order to gain some trifling favor. To cement the image of the Prince as a despot, have the characters ordered to take part in a blood hunt against another neonate, whom they've already met. They know the victim well enough to realize the charges are trumped-up or even false, or at least other Kindred mutter this to the characters. Older Kindred might find ways to weasel out of the blood hunt, but they make clear to the characters that any neonates who refuse to join the hunt will be suspected of collaboration with the "criminal," and could face blood hunts themselves some night.

This introductory phase of the story ends with the characters' first big decision, their response to the Blood Hunt. In the end any that join in harrowing or murdering the fugitive will have to deal with the fallout of their actions, as well as potentially the consequences to their Humanity. It is possible that some of the more sympathetic players will turn away but let other Kindred kill the fugitive, or they try to find some way for the fugitive to make the dangerous journey out of town, with full knowledge that if anyone else finds out they, too, face a sentence of Final Death.

Unrest

Some time in the introductory phase, some of the characters might meet an ancilla — a Carthian is a natural choice, but any covenant will do — who cautiously opposes the current regime. She speaks eloquently about how the Kindred should govern themselves, while barely avoiding direct accusations about the Prince's deeds. She helps neonates cope with the trials of joining the undead, such as giving advice on setting up a new identity, or getting permission to hunt in an older vampire's territory.

After the blood hunt, this ancilla becomes bolder and sounds out the characters about forcing changes in the policies of the Prince and Primogen. In this middle phase of the



story, the characters may join the ancilla in seeking ways to undercut the Prince's clique and gain power at its expense. Or other factions of players might try to set her up against the Prince directly — or seek to gain favor with the Prince by revealing her subversive ways. Eventually, it becomes clear that the ancilla wants to become Prince herself, and promises her fellow conspirators that her new regime will be far more humane than that of the current Prince.

In this phase, the major choice facing the characters is whether to join the ancilla's conspiracy, denounce her, work both sides or back away and try to avoid the conflict. Becoming a revolutionary sounds more heroic, but as Storyteller, your job is not to force the characters in a particular direction, merely to present them with choices.

If enough of the characters denounce the ancilla, she goes into hiding and the building revolution is quelled... for the moment. The Prince rewards those characters who were loyal with hunting territories, minor titles and other privileges. Of course, they also gain a reputation as snitches and toadies, and they keep their new privileges only as long as they continue to please the Prince. The ancilla continues her agitation from hiding, and perhaps the revolution eventually comes anyway. The characters just happen to be on the other side.

If the characters join forces with the ancilla, they face the challenge of lining up support from other Kindred who might feel dissatisfied with the current regime. They might find, however, that other Kindred want more than a promise of better leadership. Everyone says they want some more immediate reward or guarantee before they risk their status, influence and possibly their unives on a coup. These characters must do a series of favors for other Kindred in the city. Most of these favors have nothing to do with political reform and may involve the characters in sleazy dealings. One potential ally, for instance, might want the characters to help him enslave a prominent mortal bureaucrat or businessman. Another might want the characters to sabotage the plans of her rival. They both want assurances of more favors in the future. They might even insist on oaths to that effect, backed up by curses or Vinculums if the characters or their ancilla patron default on their word.

At this point you might want to assign Narration staff to keep track of the different factions and their webs of intrigue. If it's possible, separate the tasks of adjudicating the supporters, the revolutionaries and the in-betweens to different staff members so you can concentrate on running the story as a whole.

Revolution!

The climax of the story's middle phase comes with the revolution against the Prince. Here, you may have already decided that the revolution succeeds whether the characters join it or fight it (or you may leave it entirely up to the actions of the characters to decide the fate of the city). Since the revolution involves most of the other Kindred in the city, you can justify its success through the deeds of other characters. Of course, it's best from a dramatic point of view if the characters play some vital role in the coup's success, whether it's a lightning raid to capture the Prince or a dangerous negotiation to secure the backing of a powerful sorcerer. Even if the characters defend the Prince, the ancilla generously offers them a chance to redeem themselves in the new order. It need not even come to a direct conflict. Many Kindred seek to avoid actual physical confrontations. It might be a matter of pulling together enough political muscle with the city's elders to force the Prince from power.

A great deal of the outcome — indeed, the entire outcome — rests on what the characters decide to do on these critical nights. The Prince's power structure might be able to weather the storm and send the revolutionaries packing (or at least shame them out of the political game). It might even happen that both sides wipe each other out, politically if not literally, and a third group assumes power.





A New Beginning?

The final phase of the story deals with the new regime's fall from idealism into a new tyranny. Your first thought might be to have the new Prince simply reveal the full extent of her ambition, and that the whole coup was simply a cunning scheme to seize power. The famous dictum about power corrupting also springs to mind. The story's theme, however, is supposed to be one of disillusionment and entrapment. Instead of simply revealing the new Prince as a villain equal to the one before, you could lure the characters themselves into becoming part of the "corruption" and "abuse of power."

In the previous phase of the story, the characters made a lot of promises. Now the Kindred who supported the coup want payoffs. Whatever reforms the Prince and the characters propose, someone whose support they need says, in effect, "What's in it for me and what's it worth to you?" Someone else finds that the reform hurts his own interests and opposes it no matter what sweetener the characters offer. Those characters who supported the rise of the new Prince also find that fulfilling their earlier promises means bending their reformist principles a little... then a lot, as other Kindred test the limits of what they can claim or extort from the new Prince. The various demands and promises inevitably conflict, too: What do you do when you find that you've promised two Kindred your help in circumventing the other one?

Eventually the new Prince might decide that she needs to make an example of the most troublesome and demanding Kindred in the city, to show the rest that her administration won't be pushed around. You can make the target a real sonofabitch, so the characters don't feel so bad about hauling him in for a forced Vinculum or some other penalty. Loyalties might be divided if that character is one of the players — and is part of a group of characters that is active in your setting. That makes it easier when they find that two Kindred have irreconcilable differences and one of them has to go, for the good of the community. Let each story show the Prince giving a harsher response to challenges to her power, and a more abrupt, less diplomatic answer to disputes. For a sub-climax, let her order something very much like a command of the old Prince's that especially offended the characters: Maybe she orders a blood hunt against some neonate who made himself inconvenient, or as a way to pay off a political debt.

Once the characters realize that the new regime is turning as bad as the old one, they face their final tests of loyalty and integrity. Will some characters stick with the new Prince as a firm investment? Perhaps another starts lining up support for another coup, using the same techniques that worked for the previous political maneuver, while avoiding its mistakes. After all, it's been shown how it could be done. You as a Storyteller might even face multiple coup plots, as ambitious Kindred think, "Why shouldn't I be Prince?"

Thus does the story come full circle. Some of the characters may have become the authority figures they once hated and envied, except they are less powerful since they lack their predecessors' age and experience. How do they respond to the new revolution? Try to fight it? Join it, try to convince the new young firebrands that it isn't a devious plot to destroy them, and hope that they can do it right this time? Say, "A plague on all your houses!" and try to trip-up all the Kindred scrambling for power? Where, finally, does honor lie in the world of the Damned?

Summation

This is an example of a simple framework for your chronicle's main plot, with the main challenges and choices that all of your players' characters will face. As you play through the chronicle, the characters' individual goals and backgrounds will spawn smaller plots. You can tie some of these subplots in to your main plot. Other subplots will surely remain separate,



but providing added conflict and character development. For instance, while the would-be usurper gathers support, she might decide that she could undercut the Prince's power by Embracing a key mortal at a company under the Prince's sway — a company that supplies much of the Prince's wealth and other social connections. That mortal, however, is also close to one of the players' characters. Alternatively, the characters might oppose the Embrace on grounds of principle, even though they support the idea of overthrowing the tyrant Prince. At least one character faces a significant choice with far-reaching consequences no matter what he decides.

Stay alert for potential subplots, both at the start of the story and as it develops. Incorporate them when you feel they enhance the chronicle, and resolve them quickly when you feel they distract the characters too much. Of course, you may find that a number of subplots unexpectedly converge into a new, major plot that the characters follow on their own. If that happens, don't be afraid (or too proud) to chuck your carefully planned plot and follow the new story to its own conclusion. If you and your players find the new story entertaining and dramatic, you have still done your duty as Storyteller.

OTHER SAMPLE CHRONICLES

Other ideas for potential chronicles, and the themes they incorporate, include:

- **The Search for Truth:** Secrets and lies permeate the World of Darkness, and the Kindred possess more than their share. Seeking the truth can be both difficult and dangerous.

Some secrets are straightforward: The law-and-order Prince once committed diablerie, and as a result, he doesn't like anyone probing too deeply into his past. Indeed, the Kindred of other cities form a mystery few Kindred dare to investigate.

Other secrets are more arcane: What is the nature of the Beast, really, and can it be tamed or excised? Even the most metaphysical inquiry can feed back into the game's moral and political themes if someone else thinks that the characters should not ask such questions, or doesn't like the answer he finds. For example, the leader of the local Circle of the Crone won't be pleased if the characters find that some cherished mystical notion she espouses simply isn't true.

Such a chronicle centers on mystery and deception. Themes include the conflict between truth and social harmony, the past not being dead after all, and discovering the truth about oneself.

- **Liberty or Death:** The characters are unaligned Kindred who rebel against the heavy hands of their sires. They cannot tolerate the idea of remaining beholden to a sire for decades or centuries. Their sires, of course, insist that the characters toe the line for the common good because they insist that only strict order and obedience can protect the Masquerade, or keep the Lupines at bay, or some other overwhelmingly important goal.

By going independent, the coterie drives its sires to put aside their own differences to support the traditional order. The characters find most of the city's powerful Kindred against them, or at least unwilling to help them because they don't want their own childer getting notions of rebelliousness. The Carthians might help them, if the city has any, or the local Carthians might want to drag the characters into some agenda they don't want. Can the coterie carve out a niche for itself despite the hostility they face?

Relevant themes for such a chronicle include the price and nature of freedom, self-will versus the common good, and how far one will go to get one's way.

- **Golconda:** Rumors spread of a mysterious new vampire in town, who claims she knows the secret of salvation from the Beast, Golconda. Does the stranger speak the truth, or is she spinning lies to lure local Kindred into some diabolical scheme? Is it all just big talk in hopes of conning the Prince and Primogen into letting her stay? The characters decide to find out.





Along the way, they face the temptation of Golconda, and the intrigues of Kindred who feel threatened by the message of salvation.

Potential themes include faith justified or betrayed, the search for redemption, and trust.

- **Angels of Death:** Horrified at what they have become and how they were drafted into the Kindred race, the characters set out to destroy their sires and all other Kindred; or at least all others who dwell in the city. They fight against their fellow Kindred for the sake of mortals, yet may find themselves feeding on mortals, too – and of course the mortal populace would destroy the Angels of Death as readily as the monsters they hunt. Other Kindred might even mistake them for members of Seven, and fight fire with fire.

Suitable themes include honor and betrayal, the nature of humanity and monstrosity, the limits of justice, prejudice and becoming what you oppose.

SUPPORTING CAST

Unless you plan a quite unusual chronicle, the players' characters will interact with many other people, both Kindred and kine, in the course of your stories. Before you begin the chronicle, you need to define at least some of these people. Of course, it's not possible (or necessary) to write up everyone the characters might meet. If you set your chronicle in a large city, you probably need not bother detailing every vampire in town, at least not right away. The Kindred and kine that matter most for your plot, however, should be designed with as much care and detail as the players' characters. Boring Storyteller characters can weaken the cleverest plot, while interesting, three-dimensional characters can make even the oldest, most familiar story into something that seems fresh and new.

Start with the Storyteller characters who matter most to the coterie, and who appear in the earliest stories of your chronicle. This probably includes the sires of the players' characters. The relationship between sire and childe is one of the deepest, strongest and most enduring connections among Kindred, whether they like it or not. Even if a character and his sire loathe each other, Kindred society won't let them avoid each other forever. Give considerable thought to the characters' past and present mortal associates, too. Remember that your players can help you brainstorm the histories and characteristics of their characters' loved ones, acquaintances, relatives or important social contacts. The city's Prince and a few other prominent Kindred also probably play important roles in the chronicle. As the chronicle progresses, you can fill in other characters as needed.

When you design important Storyteller characters, keep these guidelines in mind:

- **Envision the Role:** Each character performs one or more functions in your chronicle. Establish what role you intend the character to play in a story, and figure out what qualities the character needs to fill that role. In the given sample plot, for instance, the old Prince needs to seem both tyrannical and powerful, so the players' characters have reason to hate him while believing they must garner widespread support before they dare to attack him. The ambitious ancilla revolutionary, on the other hand, needs to show sufficiently admirable qualities that the characters believe she would make a better Prince. She must seem compassionate to the characters' problems, sincere in her devotion to reform, and smart and strong enough to pull off a coup and govern the other Kindred afterward. Even a minor role such as the anonymous clubber or vagrant who falls to a character's hunger should receive a few moments' thought. When the characters feed, you want to remind them that they are committing an ugly deed against people with lives and feelings, not cardboard cutouts or "blood batteries" there for their own power-ups.

- **Paint a Picture:** Try to form an image of what each Storyteller character looks like. A character's appearance can evoke the qualities you assign to the role, or surprise by their ap-



parent inconsistency. For instance, if the tyrant Prince is a tall, broad-shouldered man with crew-cut gray hair, wearing a gray silk suit, with a retinue of younger men in black suits and sunglasses, you evoke the contemporary image of power and authority. If he looks like an aging hippy or a young Jazz-Age dandy, you might have to work a little harder to convince the players that their characters should fear him. On the other hand, sometimes the contrast between appearance and reality forms the point of the character. Consider the image of a burly man with a square jaw and a prominently broken nose. This image suggests strength and aggression. Now make this man a member of a character's herd and shift the image to this powerfully built man on his knees, submitting to the Kiss from a smaller vampire. The new image evokes the power and horror of the Kindred.

- **Choose a Name:** Carefully chosen names can enhance the image and role of a character, while inappropriate names can detract from a character. Avoid names that make the players giggle; it spoils the mood of horror. For instance, if you name the tyrant Prince Aloysius, he sounds more pretentious than frightening. A common, abbreviated name like Tom or Billy might make him sound too ordinary, though. A slightly unusual name such as Brandon or Lorimer helps this important character stand out.

Before you run your chronicle, spend an hour flipping through the phone book. Write down any memorable names you find. Not only can you assign these names to the Storyteller characters you've designed in advance, you have a supply of names ready for the Storyteller characters who appear without warning. If a member of the coterie suddenly decides to talk to the gangbanger instead of eating him, or chats up a clerk to gain access to city records, you aren't left fumbling for a name.

- **Age:** Both mortal age and the length of time spent undead can matter for Kindred characters. An appearance of either callow youth or enfeebled age can lead characters to underestimate one of the Kindred. Most importantly, however, the time since a character's Embrace has bearing on her attitudes to mortals and other vampires. As the decades pass, everyone the Kindred cared about in life grows old and dies. Eventually the character has spent more time among the undead than among the living, and her attitudes inevitably shift



to match. What insights can a mortal who has seen just a few decades offer to a creature who considers World War I a recent upheaval and the rise and fall of Communism a short-lived fad? After a century or so, Kindred tend to regard mortals as domesticated animals. They have their uses, and you might even like some of them, but they remain creatures of limited life span and awareness... and you don't feel too bad when you turn them into food. Elder vampires become inhuman. Not only does their Humanity drop; they develop a detached, ruthless sense of expedience that renders them more alien than any mortal stranger. An elder's passions grow from hopes, fears and habits that have had decades or centuries to grow into obsessions that would seem insane to mortals.

- **Personality:** Pick a few words to describe each character's personality. To make your characters more interesting, pick personality traits that don't obviously fit together, or that run against the players' expectations for their role in the chronicle. For instance, if you plan an adversary who will dog the coterie at every turn, you might make him cunning, ruthless... and affable, or even compassionate. Sure, he believes that he must destroy the characters, but he regrets the necessity and hopes he can persuade them to cease their opposition to his plans.

- **History:** Every major character needs a background, just like a player's character. What conflicts has this character already faced? Who has she loved, hated or feared? Could former friends or enemies appear to complicate her unlife and that of the players' characters? If she's a vampire, why was she Embraced? How did she reach her present status, whatever that is? Design as much of the character's past as you feel her role demands. A character who fills a limited role in the chronicle, such as a street contact or the mortal pawn of a Kindred character, might not require much background. The unlife of a 200-year-old Priscus who will play an important role in a story arc deserves a fair bit of attention.

- **Quirks:** Little quirks of behavior can help the players remember a Storyteller character. Kindred, like kine, accumulate odd habits over time. A mortal who picks his nose while talking to the characters stands out as a disgusting slob; a Kindred who enjoys feeding on mortals to the strains of *Die Fledermaus* establishes himself as a twisted creature of the night.

- **Flaws/Weaknesses:** Everyone has some sort of flaw or weakness that he struggles against... or that he cannot perceive and refuses to admit exists. At the very least, everyone in the World of Darkness suffers temptation from at least once Vice. Define it for major Storyteller characters.

In particular, you need to establish a few weaknesses for the major adversaries of the coterie. An enemy who fears nothing and never makes mistakes is not only discouraging to the players, he's as boring as a hero who never does anything wrong. The players will enjoy discovering and exploiting an enemy's blind spots, obsessions or other flaws, while a well-chosen weakness adds pathos or tragedy to a hero who must battle inner demons as well as outer dangers.

- **Traits and statistics:** Do these last. They're just numbers, and if your characters aren't unique and interesting, the best trait ratings in the world won't help your chronicle. For many Storyteller characters, they won't even come up. (You don't need to supply traits for every herd member or the snitch who tells characters the world on the street.) Only important Storyteller characters deserve the same detail you would apply to the players' characters. Most of the time, you can settle for writing down ratings for the traits that matter most, such as, "Jackson the Snitch: Intelligence 2, Streetwise 4, Contacts (Street) 4."

Always try to avoid leaving Storyteller characters as nothing more than stereotypes. It's easy to get lazy and fall back on a few well-worn images such as the Ventrue businessman or the unbound Gangrel. Sure, many Ventrue are in business, and it's hardly rare for Gangrel to become independent. All too often, though, every Ventrue businessman or unaligned Gangrel starts to look and act the same.



Defy your players' expectations. The stereotypes for each clan exist for a reason: The clans do tend to select certain sorts of people, from certain walks of life. Those are only tendencies, though, not ironclad rules, and even the tendencies are vague enough to hold many variations in the details. Even a character who seems to fall squarely in the mainstream of a clan's image can be personalized to become a unique and interesting individual.

Consider, for instance, that stereotypical Ventrué businessman who wields a controlling share of one of the city's major corporations. He (of course a he) should be cool and arrogant in his power, refined in his tastes. Yawn. Now let's put a few spins on the stereotype:

Ventrué One spent most of his mortal life as a surfer. Daddy dragged him to lead the family business's branch office in the city, and then a Kindred turned him into a vampire to strengthen his stranglehold on local industry. Ventrué One still has long, sun-streaked hair and lounges around in shorts and a T-shirt whenever he can escape the office... and when the wind blows strongly at night, he's out with his board again, riding the waves.

Ventrué Two is a woman. She graduated from business school and clawed her way up the corporate ladder until she hit the glass ceiling. Her sire saw her as an eternal secretary, but she had other ideas. Now she has her own company and ruthlessly competes to crush every former boss she feels held her back. Her herd consists of her own secretarial pool... all young, male, fit, tanned and looking scrumptious in identical bespoke slacks and sport jackets.

Ventrué Three made his fortune in real estate. He became successful enough that his sire saw him as a way to become the one-stop supplier for Kindred in need of havens. The fact that Ventrué Three already had a wife and children did not matter to his sire. Some years later, Ventrué Three's sire suffered an unfortunate accident that resulted in his destruction. Ventrué Three now holds back from political machinations, though many Kindred still request his help in securing havens. Ventrué Three's great secret is that he drank his young son dry in frenzy... and, mad with horror and remorse, Embraced him immediately afterward. The rest of his mortal family now serves as his ghouls and conditioned retainers, hiding and protecting his undead son.

Yes, they are all Ventrué businessmen, but players would never forget who's who.

When plotting out your cast of support characters, keep in mind that all of these parts will have to be played out at one time or another. Do not arrange for so many characters that you and your staff have to continuously change hats throughout the long evening of the game sessions.

Talk to your staff and decide the minimum of supporting cast roles that need to be filled. Make arrangements with your staff of Narrators to fill these roles but try to remain in positions outside the flow of action. If you become so enmeshed in the web of deceit going on in your chronicle, some might accuse you of bias toward certain other characters and events. Also, if you are so busy interacting with players as a strong character, you will find yourself distracted from adjudicating rules and other Storyteller concerns.

Crafting Stories

You've outlined the chronicle you want to tell, designed a setting and detailed the major Storyteller characters who inhabit your World of Darkness. For their part, your players have created their own characters and made suggestions you incorporated into your plot and setting. It's time to begin play and turn this mass of notions into actual stories. Now all that background work starts paying off because you know your World of Darkness well enough





to concentrate on telling stories, and to improvise when the players' characters do something you didn't expect.

PRELUDES

As an introduction to your chronicle, you might want to run a brief, solo story about each character's Embrace — a set of preludes. Some Storytellers prefer just to talk over these details with their players, so they can launch straight into the plot. The Embrace is perhaps the most important event in a character's unlife, though. It deserves a little extra attention. A prelude helps players get to know their characters before the chronicle really begins. It's a chance to establish relationships with the Storyteller characters who matter most to each character, especially the character's sire, and to find out how the character feels about his Requiem.

It's also tremendously dramatic. Indeed, you can't get much more dramatic than your own death. The Embrace begins in a moment of hot pain and spurting blood as the sire bites the character. Did the character accept the Embrace willingly, seduced by his sire's promises? Did he even ask for it? Or was he taken by force? Whether the character wanted to become a vampire or not, however, the Kiss quickly turns terror into ecstasy, wiping away any resistance. As the character's blood drains away to feed his sire, he feels himself dying, but it's far too late to struggle, assuming he could think past the pleasure of the Kiss. He sinks into darkness and death — as if it were the most perfect sleep. And then...

...he's back. Back in a body turned cold, with his sire's blood in his mouth. And he's so empty. So *hungry*. He smells blood in the air, warm blood of the living. Driven by instincts he cannot yet name, he rises to attack his first prey, to feed for the first time, perhaps to make his first kill. And then what does he do? By playing out the story of the Embrace and the character's first victim, you can show the conflicts and urges that set the Kindred apart from the kine.

ASSEMBLING THE COTERIE

After launching the characters into their unlives, you need to bring them together into a coterie. Since **The Requiem** is so much about the interactions between the characters, you can't just have the characters meet in a bar (or an Elysium) and decide to go on an adventure together. That works just fine in some genres, but not here. The characters need some reason to associate with each other. Establishing this reason could form the subject of the first story in the chronicle, though you can begin a chronicle with the characters already together. As with preludes, however, playing out the characters' meeting can help the players develop greater insight into their characters and how they interact. It can lay the groundwork for possible conflicts in the future.

How you bring the characters together depends in part on the type and purpose of the coterie. Internal factors such as camaraderie, belonging to the same clan or running a business together can pull together the members of a coterie. External factors such as a common enemy or a shared duty assigned to them by the Prince can push them together. Some examples include:

- **The Gang's All Here:** The characters knew each other before the Embrace, so they stay together afterward. This decision does raise the question of why a number of vampires would choose to sire childer more or less at the same time, and pick a particular group of mortals. (The Willpower cost of the Embrace almost guarantees that no Kindred would Embrace all the characters together, though a creative Storyteller can devise a justification for such a deed.) If the characters form a group with impressive abilities, perhaps a whole faction of Kindred could agree to recruit them as childer and minions, as in...

- **The Sire's Ready Hand:** A group of allied Kindred carefully choose the characters to form a group of elite agents. Each character brings special skills and mortal connections to the coterie. The characters probably had little choice about their Embrace, or about working together. They might have been manipulated, deceived or coerced outright. Such a situation can link all the character preludes into one tale of terror, while introducing the characters to the goals and conflicts that will drive the chronicle.

- **As The Prince Commands:** For a variation, the characters might be Embraced for personal reasons, but the city's Prince calls them together some time later and assigns them a particular task or responsibility. The characters might be tied by nothing more than a handshake or by the power of a common Vinculum to the one who assembled them. Aside from this shared duty, however, the characters do not need to have anything in common. In fact, they might hate each other. Such a coterie can be difficult to play. If the players and Storyteller work to find ways for the characters to set aside or work through their differences, however, it can lead to some intense roleplaying and Storytelling.

Both of these two premises for a coterie have the advantage that they can accommodate characters of any clan or covenant. The players and characters also receive a well-defined goal. (Of course, the stated goal might turn out not to be the real challenge at the heart of the chronicle.) On the other hand, some players deeply dislike playing characters who have to take orders. If that's the case, either don't use this premise at all, or quickly lead the characters out of their subordinate position. The Kindred who oversees them might meet his Final Death, or the characters might find a reason and opportunity to rebel.

- **Outcasts:** The characters are pariahs in Kindred society. Perhaps each character did something so shameful that other Kindred despise them. Perhaps a character's sire was destroyed for some crime, and her childer inherit her disgrace. Perhaps a character exiles himself to escape a tyrannical sire. Whatever the reason, the characters have no one to rely on but each other, at least among their fellow vampires. Some characters might seek to acquire enough power or prestige to rejoin Kindred society, or clear their names of a false accusation. Others might simply band together to carve out their own hunting turf and defend it from other Kindred. A coterie of outcasts might even declare war on the other Kindred. For instance, a coterie of diablerists becomes outcast the moment any other Kindred discover their goal. Stalking and slaying older Kindred offers such a coterie a fast track to supernatural power, at least in terms of their Blood Potency, but it carries grave risks and exacts a terrible price on the character's souls.

- **Spirits of Like Mind:** The predatory and territorial nature of the Kindred does not prevent them from forming relationships based on shared experiences and common interests. A shared belief or goal could draw together Kindred from diverse clans, and perhaps even from different covenants (though the covenants are themselves based on common interests).

A coterie might share a relatively straightforward goal, such as the aforementioned outcasts who work together to seize a common hunting ground against the opposition of more powerful but solitary Kindred. Common enemies, such as a force of Lupines or mortal mages systematically destroying the city's Kindred, offer another simple reason to work together. A coterie could also follow political goals, such as the sample plot's revolt against a tyrannical Prince, or protecting mortal society from undead manipulation. Characters might feel conflicts of loyalty between their common goal and any ties to their clan, covenant or sire.

CONFLICT WITHIN THE COTERIE

Some of these coterie premises assume a greater or lesser degree of conflict between the characters. Both you and your players might want to discuss the degree of internal conflict





and treachery you can accept in a chronicle. Tastes differ. For some players, having characters at each other's throats (when they aren't stabbing each other in the back) offers unparalleled roleplaying opportunities. Other players prefer characters to cooperate, considering betrayal among the characters an insult to the other players. They would rather see treachery limited to Kindred outside the coterie, while their characters remain honorably loyal to each other.

Ambition and manipulation, however, are built-in parts of the Kindred condition. While you should never force betrayal on characters (and players) who don't want it, the mere possibility of treachery, deception and hidden agendas are powerful themes a Storyteller can draw upon to evoke the ultimately lonely, isolated horror of being a vampire. It's enough to assemble a group of characters with potentially opposing goals. In proper dramatic fashion, you offer choices: At various points in the chronicle, set up situations when characters could follow personal agendas at the expense of the group's objectives, and let them decide what to do.

Consider a coterie in which one character sees diablerie as a way to take revenge on other Kindred for being dragged into undeath. Another member has political ambitions and wants to curry favor with the city's older and more powerful vampires. A third member thinks he's fallen in love with one of the city's Primogen. Each of these three might face some temptation to exploit another member's goals. The diablerist could pretend to help the would-be lover pursue his passion, in hopes of gaining unguarded access to the Primogen. The lover could feel bound to expose the diablerist for the sake of the Primogen, or might see the social climber's shmoozing as a way to get close to his love. The political aspirant, meanwhile, could see a chance to manipulate the other two, first assisting in the destruction of the Primogen and then betraying the diablerist in hopes of winning a place among the city's elite. Or they could keep faith with each other: All three of them might decide that their personal goals aren't worth hurting an ally. The choice is theirs.



FIGHTING WITHIN THE RANKS

In live-action games, players often compete openly against one another for resources, position and power. So how do you prevent the aggressive nature of vampire society from crossing over into the real world feelings of your players? After all, most vampires are complete bastards to each other. Are your players mature enough to leave game events at the door?

A good Storyteller should be up front about the nature of the chronicle from the beginning. The actions of a character should not be an out-of-game reflection of the player herself. If you feel that some players are starting to take aspects of in-game events personally, take them aside privately and politely address your concerns. If it continues to be a problem address it with your staff.



INTERLOCKING BACKGROUNDS

Whatever the justification for bringing a coterie together is, the Storyteller can strengthen the ties between characters by interweaving the people and events of their backgrounds. For instance, two players might say that their characters worked for a major corporation before their Embrace. Could it be the same corporation? One character's sister could be the woman who broke another character's heart. The drug dealer who ruined one character's life worked for another character's sire.

You can overdo this, making it seem like a city contains only a dozen people apart from the characters, and too many soap-operatic interconnections can make the players roll their eyes. Still, it can be convenient to give each character an indirect link to one or two other characters. For instance, you can use one Storyteller character as a hook to draw two players' characters into

a story, instead of just one. In the end, the more that the characters feel they have a personal stake in a story, the better the chances are that the other characters will go along.

PLOTS

The plot is the chain of cause and effect that links the events of the story.

Just like the chronicle as a whole, each story needs a central idea that you develop through a beginning, middle and end. In the story's beginning, you present a situation that drives the characters to act. The middle consists of what the characters do about the situation, and how other characters respond to their actions. The situation resolves itself at the story's end.

A good plot needs focus. You should be able to sum up a plot's premise in a few sentences. For instance:

- The leader of the coterie's covenant asks the characters to convey a gift to the Mekhet Priscus, with whom he wants an alliance. The Nosferatu Primogen, however, wants to block the alliance by stealing the gift.
- Members of a character's herd are disappearing. A Carthian whom the coterie has never met approaches to say he has a clue.
- A character's mother, who thought he was dead, discovers that he still exists and wants him to come home — but she doesn't know he's a vampire.

If you cannot explain a plot in a sentence or two, you are probably trying to do too much at once. Very likely, you actually have two or three plots in mind. Pare your idea down into one or two central actions. Then work out what causes these central events, and what happens once the characters get involved.

PRIMARY PLOTS, SECONDARY PLOTS AND SUBPLOTS

Not all plots serve the same function. Primary plots help to advance the overarching plot of the chronicle. They form chapters in a longer story. Secondary plots are more self-contained. They may have nothing to do with the chronicle's main plot, but provide entertaining diversions. A subplot is a smaller story that runs alongside other plots and concerns just one or two of the characters.

A chronicle should intersperse primary and secondary plots, with a few subplots now and then. Unless a chronicle is very brief and focused, it just doesn't make sense that *everything* that happens to the coterie revolves around one conflict or situation. Secondary plots and subplots let you develop aspects of the characters that the main story might not call upon. Diversions from the main plot also keep the players on their toes, because they don't know whether a particular story has some wider significance. Events that look unconnected to the main story might later turn out to be very important indeed — maybe even if you didn't plan them that way. For instance, the coterie could make an enemy in a secondary story who returns to oppose them in a primary plot.

For your primary plots, refer back to your chronicle outline. Where are the characters in this overarching story? What's the next step the characters must take to advance the plot, or what special challenges or decisions should they face? At the start of a chronicle, most primary plots might involve meeting the city's other Kindred and deciding upon their allies and enemies. Returning to the "Revolution" sample story, one primary plot might involve one character's sire bringing the coterie on a visit to another influential vampire. In the course of this meeting, the characters incur the jealousy of the other vampire's childe, who will become an ongoing rival to one character, but they also see the first hint of unrest at the Prince's heavy-handed rule.

Anything goes for secondary plots. They might serve as a change of pace. If the characters have sweated through a series of grim and difficult moral dilemmas in the primary plots, maybe it's time to break the tension with a simple brawl or something darkly humorous. Perhaps





they meet a band of enthusiastic, would-be vampire-hunters who possess more weaponry and enthusiasm than skill, knowledge or sense? The challenge becomes to survive these lunatics and maybe, if the characters feel generous, persuade them to quit before they kill themselves with their extremely unsafe improvised weapons. On the other hand, if the characters have become a bit complacent about their undeath, maybe it's time to hit them with a story about a mortal family member or lover who becomes a victim of cutthroat Kindred intrigue. Secondary plots also offer a chance for you to experiment with different Storytelling styles and techniques, and as transitions between one major story and another.

Subplots are good for character development. They provide extra conflicts and obstacles that may complicate the resolution of a main story. For instance, one character's subplot about her attempt to provide for her mortal children without revealing that she still exists as a vampire might conflict with her obligations to the coterie or to her sire. Another character's attempt to gain favor within a particular covenant may draw her into conflict with a clan leader with whom the coterie seeks an alliance. Such conflicts provide more chances for characters to make decisions that influence the course of the main story.

If you and your players developed characters in sufficient detail, many of your stories will easily spin off additional complications for individual members of the coterie. Use subplots based on a character's background or current activities to further enmesh the character in your setting. Subplots also give players a chance to contribute more ideas and deeds into how your World of Darkness develops. One subplot per character at a time is usually enough, though, and you don't have to bring every subplot into every story. If your subplots don't leave enough time for the main story to advance, trim a few subplots or put them on hold for the time being.

CONFLICTS

Stories usually revolve around some sort of conflict. A conflict consists of some obstacle or opposing force that characters must overcome to achieve their goals and resolve the plot. This doesn't have to mean a fight, though that's one possibility. Some conflicts take place within characters, rather than between them. For instance, suppose that the characters' patron, a member of the Primogen, asks the coterie to eliminate several key mortal servants of a rival Primogen — without revealing who did it, of course. The characters face external conflict in the form of the mortals' bodyguards and security systems, the need to preserve the Masquerade and the equal need to conceal their involvement from the rival Primogen. They might also face internal conflicts. Characters with a high Humanity could balk at cold-blooded assassination, which could spark another layer of conflict within the coterie, or between the characters and their patron. Even if murder *per se* no longer bothers the characters very much, a character might object if he has a personal connection to one of the victims.

Storytellers should watch closely for chances to present the characters with such ethical conflicts. More than any other sort of conflict, an internal conflict presents the coterie with a problem it cannot solve through brute force. Indeed, the very point of an ethical dilemma or internal conflict might be that characters must decide what constitutes an acceptable solution. It makes the players think, and it can produce superb drama and roleplaying.

The usual sorts of conflicts break down into a number of categories:

- **Kindred vs. Himself:** The character faces divided loyalties or conflicting desires. A character can follow two goals, but achieving one means abandoning the others. Therefore, the character must decide where his priorities lie: Keep faith with one ally or the other? Seek power, or preserve his Humanity at all costs? Protect mortal loved ones by staying close to them, or protect them by staying away? Even a character's Vices can produce conflicts. For instance, a character who known for Pride (as a personality aspect) and Greed (as a game trait, via his Vice) might

encounter a situation in which he can make a lot of money but only if he abases himself to another person, or in which he can humiliate a rival but at great expense to himself.

- **Kindred vs. the Beast:** Vampires cannot avoid this conflict, and they never know when it might erupt. Storytellers can exacerbate the conflict with the Beast by creating situations where a character must resist frenzy, Röttschreck or Wassail to achieve their goal, or in which surrender to the Beast could destroy something (or someone) the character holds dear. In the longer term, the struggle to retain or recover Humanity — maybe even to seek Golconda — can form the basis of an entire chronicle.

- **Kindred vs. Kindred:** Individual Kindred may oppose each other because of clashing ambitions, competition for hunting grounds, moral differences, or because they just don't like each other. We've already given several examples of reasons why characters within a coterie might disagree and need to resolve differences.

- **Weak vs. Strong:** Differences in status and power can drive conflict between Kindred. Younger Kindred fear and envy the power of their elders. Unaligned Kindred with more attitude than experience chafe at the rule of the Prince, Primogen, covenants and clan leaders. On the other hand, older Kindred fear their resentful childer — but what can they do? If they give away any of their own power and influence, their rivals might gain an edge. The powerful also stick together out of conviction that their childer lack the prudence that comes with experience and could endanger the Masquerade if they were not ruled with a firm hand.

- **Clan vs. Clan:** Each of the clans has its own culture, interests and viewpoint that give them grounds to disagree as groups. The Ventrue tend to think they should be in charge; other Kindred often disagree. The unnerving nature of the Nosferatu frequently makes them unwelcome in polite society; they seek to claim the power and status they feel they deserve. All too often, though, the conflict between clans within a city grows from some personal slight that one clan member offered another. Both clans close ranks out of pride, the members of one clan demanding an apology and the other clan refusing to knuckle under.

- **Covenant vs. Covenant:** Each covenant espouses a particular ideology of how vampires should organize and comport themselves, from the strict hierarchy and formality of the Invictus to the modern populism of the Carthians. Believing that you are right usually involves believing that people who disagree with you are wrong, so that gives any covenant grounds for conflict with any other covenant. Any alliance between covenants is most likely temporary, at least as Kindred reckon such things, but a covenant that shows too much hostility could unite the other covenants in a coalition against it. Within covenants, conflict can arise between different interpretations of the covenant's doctrines and practices. Most obviously, some covenant members might be more willing to compromise with other Kindred, while other members demand strict adherence to ideology.

- **Clan vs. Covenant:** Although Kindred of any clan might join any covenant, each clan favors some covenants over others. The leaders of a clan and covenant within a city might oppose each other, and drag their followers into conflict. That becomes awkward for any character who falls within both groups. You can build a conflict between any other factions or centers of power, too: Prince vs. clan, covenant vs. Primogen, and so on.

- **Individual vs. Society:** Kindred society, like mortal society, has its rules. Some rules, like the Traditions or the prerogatives of sires and Princes, are explicitly stated. Some are not. Even the Carthians, who deny the traditional primacy of Princes, and the unaligned, who deny any authority beyond their own coterie leaders or even themselves, follow their own standards of conduct. Anyone who challenges the rules of his society, be it Kindred, kine, covenant or clan, gets into trouble with the people who believe in those rules and have a stake in enforcing them. Kindred who endanger the Masquerade by letting mortal associates know





they are vampires violate the most important taboo of Kindred society and set up themselves and their loved ones for a potentially deadly conflict. So do any characters who try to change the nature of Kindred society itself, or at least the current regime of the city's vampires.

- **Kindred vs. Mortal World:** The Kindred defend the Masquerade with such zeal because they know that in a concerted war between Kindred and kine, the mortals would easily win. Kindred power depends on mortals not knowing how the undead manipulate their lives. Therefore, the Masquerade imposes serious restraints on a coterie's actions. Sure, maybe a group of Kindred can use its supernatural powers to subvert, work around or kill any mortal who gets in its way... but every use of supernatural power is potentially a Masquerade breach that its members must cover up later.

Some mortals do know the Kindred exist, and hunt them. Some of these people support the Masquerade in order to preserve their own secrets, to prevent panic or to prevent a far more dangerous fascination with the power of the undead. Other vampire-hunters simply lack credibility in the public eye. All sorts of vampire-hunters pose an obvious threat to the unives of any Kindred they encounter. Hunters who want to expose the existence of the Kindred present a further challenge, in that characters must discredit or silence them as well as survive their attacks.

The most gripping conflicts, however, arise when Kindred come into conflict with the mortals they once loved. How do you explain to your parents, your best friend or your spouse that you are worse than dead? How do they react if they discover what a monster you have become? When it comes to mortal loved ones, the options for Kindred range from bad to worse.

- **Kindred vs. Other Supernatural Creatures:** The Kindred share the World of Darkness with a variety of other supernatural creatures. They know that ghosts, Lupines and mortal mages exist. Dubious rumors tell of everything from elves to demons to creatures of pure nightmare. Very few Kindred actually meet other supernaturals, and most would like to keep it that way. Now and then, however, Kindred find themselves challenged by encounters with other dwellers in the hidden world. Sometimes the challenge consists of surviving and escaping the encounter (the usual course with Lupines). Sometimes the challenge consists of recognizing the very existence of a supernatural force, figuring out its powers and motives and carefully working out boundaries that both sides can respect.

DEVELOPING THE STORY

You have an idea for your story; you know which players' characters and Storyteller characters will be involved; you've decided what challenge or conflict the characters will face. Now it's time to plan the structure of the story and block out possible scenes. Most importantly, you need to figure out why the characters get involved.

CHARACTER HOOKS

"Hooks" are story jargon for factors that draw a character into a plot. In some games, the players readily accept that their job is to throw their characters into whatever situation is presented for them, but a Storytelling game demands a little more attention to the characters' motivation. Kindred don't go haring about, possibly risking their unives, because some mysterious sixth sense tells them a story has begun. As a Storyteller, however, you possess a vast arsenal of ways to draw characters into stories. Here are some of the more common sorts:

- **The Carrot:** A character sees a chance to get something she wants. This might be anything from blackmail information about a Priscus to meeting her favorite writer at a bookstore signing. The character tries to acquire what she wants, so she places herself in the middle of the story as it begins. For instance, the person who has the blackmail information wants \$10,000 in return, which the character doesn't have; a fan who's a mage also comes to the bookstore, and realizes the character is a vampire.



- **The Stick:** Some external threat forces the characters to take action. Typical examples include the Prince telling the coterie to perform a mission or suffer the consequences. Or an enemy attacks the characters (physically or by slander, personally or by proxy, or attacks someone close to the characters). The characters get involved to prevent something worse from happening to them.

- **It's My Job:** The character has a professional obligation to get involved. A Sheriff, Whip or Scourge doesn't ask for a motivation when her Prince, Priscus, covenant leader or other superior gives an assignment. This being the World of Darkness, the job could turn out to be something quite different than the character initially thought. For instance, does the Invictus Prince really want the Circle of the Crone Hierophant's murder solved?

- **Curiosity:** If a character possesses a special interest in some subject, any event that relates to that subject might attract the character's attention. For example, a Circle of the Crone blood sorcerer might want to investigate strange events that hint of magic at work.

- **Personal Connections:** Someone close to the character — a mentor, rival, or one of those mortal friends, relatives, partners and other contacts you made the player define — is already involved. This person needs help or has attracted attention that extends to the character. The person might want something from the character, or the character might want something from the person. For instance, a character might learn that his old girlfriend is deeply in debt to a loan shark, who now demands that she work as a prostitute, or the character's sire draws him into her plot against a rival.

Early in the chronicle, you need to work especially hard to provide hooks for all the characters. Character One wants to investigate the museum burglary because one of the stolen items might be magical. Character Two helps because he used to be a cop and still doesn't like thieves. Character Three has a contact who works as a museum guard and was injured in the burglary. The coterie is still new, so the characters might not have very strong reasons to work together. As the chronicle progresses, the characters probably build up some trust and a sense of obligation to each other. If the characters don't especially like each other, they might still accept that they have to help with each other's problems and schemes in order to receive help in return.

In the longer term, you need to give characters a reason to care about the challenges that drive the chronicle as a whole. That was the whole point of negotiating with the players about their characters and the rough premise of the chronicle. It couldn't hurt, though, to review the chronicle now and then and ask yourself how well your stories have drawn the characters into the overarching plot. Using the "Revolution" sample plot, for instance, if the characters don't already loathe the tyrant Prince by the time they meet the revolutionary ancilla, you haven't made the Prince's tyranny matter enough to the characters. Its past time you had the Prince do something truly vicious to maintain his power at the coterie's expense.



OPTIONAL RULE: THE PRICE OF BLOOD

The acquisition of blood occupies a great deal of time and attention for vampires. Most spend years cultivating potential donors or locating areas where a potential missing person is not going to be noticed. In a **Requiem** session, a character has traits that help determine how difficult it is to acquire an evening's meal. Storytellers can use this optional method, however, to reduce draws and really drive home how harrowing this activity can be. This method requires some additional planning on the part of the Storytelling staff, but it can be very rewarding to players and Storytellers alike.

The only props required for this method is an opaque bowl or other container and some glass or plastic beads of varying colors. The suggested variation should be no more than four colors; for this example we will use red, purple, green and black. The beads represent the amount of Vitae available in a given city setting. Each time a





player wants to attempt to feed, he must find the member of the Storytelling staff who is in charge of the bowl. He informs this person of his desire to have his character feed and explains the method he intends to use. The player then reaches blindly into the bowl and draws a bead. The color will dictate how successful he is.

Red would normally be the most plentiful color in the bowl as it represents that the feeding went as planned. That player is out of game for the appropriate amount of time of his feeding as required as set by the Storyteller. If another color is drawn, however, some complication arises, the degree of which is dictated by the color of the bead drawn. These complications are worked out in advance by the Storyteller staff so they can easily be modified to fit the appropriate circumstance of feeding. The vampire must then resolve these issues before returning to regular game-play. For example, if a purple bead (the second most plentiful color of bead) is drawn, then a minor difficulty has come up in the attempt. Perhaps the victim was on some sort of hallucinogenic substance that now translates over to the vampire feeding from her. If a green bead (a major difficulty) is drawn, then a friend of the victim shows up unexpectedly and interrupts the feeding.

If the final type of bead — in our example the black bead — is drawn, then there is a large crisis the character must deal with, which could lead to a potential breach of the Masquerade. Perhaps a police vice raid is occurring at the location where the character is feeding, or the character sees the flash of a camera at the other end of the alley then watches as a car speeds away. (Or perhaps the feeding goes off without a hitch... as far as the character knows.) Obviously, the black beads are to be employed sparingly.

By adding and removing different colors of beads in different amounts, the Storyteller can simulate problems in feeding as the city dictates. If there is a police crackdown in the city, then more red beads would be removed and replaced with more purple and some green to simulate enforced curfews and stepped-up police patrols. If players start to use their influence to reduce the police presence in the city, then the other colors can be replaced with more red. Characters with certain backgrounds might be able to negate or lessen a bad draw, as dictated by the Storyteller.



SETTING THE STAGE

As you pique the characters' interest, you need to draw them into the story and set out the challenges they face. You shouldn't reveal everything at once, though. Give them only part of the situation. The players need some goal for their characters to accomplish. To accomplish that goal, however, they need to follow leads that you plant. For example, if you present them with a mysterious death (that, for some reason, they cannot leave to the police), they can interview people who knew the victim and search for physical clues. If they try to forge an alliance with an influential Kindred, they need to figure out what she wants and how they can serve each other's interests. Clever players can look ahead and anticipate where the coterie's actions might lead. If they don't, they leave their characters open to all sorts of complications and plot twists.

Early in the story, you also present the important characters, if only by implication. For instance, if the point of the story is the search for an unknown person who kidnapped one character's mortal brother, the characters might never have met the kidnapper before. They know they're after someone, however, so the mystery kidnapper counts as "introduced."

After the first hour of play, the players should have a pretty good idea what challenge the characters face, what conflict awaits them, and what other characters matter for the story, even if they haven't met all those characters yet. They could, of course, be mistaken on several counts. In the World of Darkness, matters are seldom how they seem. The characters have a direction, though, and the story is well begun.

BUILDING THE ACTION

The bulk of the story consists of the characters' initial actions to deal with the situation they discovered in the introduction, other characters' responses to those actions, and the coterie's



deeds in return. The characters learn more about the situations, including a few surprises. They meet other characters, gather information, implement plans and face minor challenges.

Not every surprise necessarily comes because someone lied to the coterie. Storyteller characters might be misinformed, ignorant or outright deluded themselves. Other characters might blunder into someone's careful plan and disrupt it. For instance, the mystery kidnapper might demand that the coterie rob a certain art dealer in order to get the abducted brother back safely — only when the characters open the dealer's vault, they find no trace of the art treasure they were told to steal. Was the whole situation a complicated setup? Was the kidnapper misinformed about the art dealer, or the item? Did someone else buy the art treasure the day before? Whatever your devious mind has planned, the characters just experienced a plot twist. The challenge they thought they would face (burglary) was replaced by another challenge (where is the art treasure, and what the heck is really going on?), though the main challenge of the plot (secure the brother's return or rescue) still needs resolution.

When you design the middle portion of a story, you need to decide who knows what and is doing what, but leave room for the characters to make their own decisions, including multiple possible courses of action. Storytelling the middle of a game demands some flexibility since everyone is reacting to everyone else and you don't really know what actions the characters will choose. You can (and should) furnish hints that some courses of action are more useful than others. Just as you should try to surprise the players at least once in a story, you can also expect they will surprise *you* now and then. If you know your World of Darkness and your Storyteller characters, however, you can work out how other people respond to unexpected choices by the characters.

CLIMAX

At the story's climax, all the chains of cause and effect come together. The characters face the biggest challenge and succeed, fail or decide what, indeed, constitutes success. Their decision and actions resolve the central conflict. Mysteries are explained. They find the missing art treasure and exchange it for the brother. Or they go after the kidnapper directly, to succeed





or fail in a rescue attempt. Or they discover who pulled the kidnapper's strings, or whatever the real story turned out to be.

Make sure your climax is worth the effort that the players and characters invested to get there. This is a golden rule for Storytelling. Arty modern novels can get away with anticlimax now and then, but a group of players who spent hours trying to achieve a goal feel cheated if they learn it was all for nothing. Give them something spectacular at the story's climax: the most wrenching ethical decision, the most dangerous fight, the most enigmatic puzzle, the most difficult social challenge. The rewards, of course, are proportionally great, whether that reward consists of money, victory over an enemy, social prestige or a brother rescued. Conversely, the price of failure becomes higher as well.

AFTERMATH

After the climax, the story probably still has a few loose ends. The characters learn the consequences of their choices. Other people react to their deeds. Remaining questions might find their answer. The aftermath phase might not need much intensive roleplaying. Much of it could be downtime, which you simply describe. You might include a question-and-answer period in which the characters can explore points of special interest, such as, "What does my sire say about this?" or, "What can we find out about that art treasure's history?" Some scenes, such as receiving a reward (or dressing-down) from the Prince, should still be roleplayed – but briefly.

The aftermath connects the coterie's actions back out to a wider world. Doing so reinforces the sense that the characters' actions matter to other people too, and they dwell in a wider world. This, in turn, sustains the players' interest and curiosity. Meanwhile, you can also plant the seeds of future stories. Not every question is necessarily answered, and some Storyteller characters might react to the coterie's achievement by setting their own plans in motion. Such connections between stories turn a series of events and challenges into a chronicle. You already know how your stories fit together into a greater whole. The ties between one story's aftermath and another story's introduction show your players how it all fits together, too.

Technical Matters

There you have the basics of constructing stories and chronicles. Storytelling is a performance art, however. It's not enough to have a great plot. You must also try to present the story in an interesting, exciting way that draws in your players and makes them feel the horror of their characters' existence.

You learn the craft of Storytelling by doing it. Just as with stories and chronicles, however, you can prepare for your "performance" by practicing some simple techniques that make your story more vivid. This section also tells how to avoid a few of the pitfalls that can make your chronicle less enjoyable.

DESCRIPTION, SETTING AND MOOD

Horror, especially personal, gothic horror, depends on what you feel more than what you do or what sort of props surround your character. How you present people, places and events goes a long way to making your chronicle a World of Darkness instead of a World of Action Movie With Vampires or, even worse, a World of Campy Humor. (If you *want* an action-movie or camp humor style, go ahead. You bought this game; you can play it how you choose. We assume, however, that you bought **The Requiem** because you thought a "Modern Gothic Storytelling Game" sounded interesting – so that's what we tell you how to do.)



All this goes for characters, too. Show some detail that individualizes each Storyteller character and suggests how the players should feel about them. You have a harder job with this than the players do, since they have to create only one vivid character each, while you have to manage a world (or at least a city). Minor characters who appear only once need only one or two details to keep them from seeming like identical drones. Important Storyteller characters should receive all the detail you can gracefully convey to the players. Get inside their heads to work out how they talk and react to the players' characters. Give them quirks in how they dress or how they talk. For instance, one character might always wear immaculately polished black shoes and tap the side of his nose whenever he makes a point.

Above all, remember that Kindred characters are vampires. Their bodies are pale and cold, they don't breathe except to talk, they don't eat, and they might not have seen daylight in a long, long time. The older a vampire is, the less contemporary — maybe even the less human — her personality will seem. Your description can include manners of speaking, clothing or customs that the character acquired in her mortal life and went out of fashion decades or even centuries ago.

ACTION AND VIOLENCE

Remember that these are not the same. Do try to keep the pace fast and the characters busy doing something, whether they are running through alleys or discussing the significance of an enigmatic postcard. You won't achieve much horror with one fight scene after another, though.

Violence is an important part of the World of Darkness. Vampires are consummate predators in a cold and brutal world. They can't avoid violence, whether it takes the form of grappling with struggling mortal prey or an assassination attempt from an enemy's hired knives.

Combat is seldom an optimum way for Kindred to resolve their differences and other challenges. Leaving aside the game-mechanical effect of Humanity loss, fighting is dangerous. Kindred can look forward to centuries of continued existence. Should they risk those centuries and all they have built and may yet achieve? This is especially true for older Kindred who have spent decades or centuries acquiring rank, alliances and mortal influence as means to get their way.

Even in the World of Darkness, open violence also tends to attract the notice of the police. If a vampire slaughters a punk in an alley, the cops probably shrug and put it down to gang vendettas. If gunfire erupts in the home of an eccentric tycoon (who doesn't come out during the day...) and he is never seen again, the cops ask questions. Cops asking questions can endanger the Masquerade. Heaven help the vampire who kills a cop: The police *never* stop hunting a cop-killer. Again, such a pursuit can endanger the Masquerade... and in the World of Darkness, police who catch up to a suspected cop-killer might decide to decide to save the taxpayers the cost of a trial by killing the quarry themselves.

Most of all, **The Requiem** is a game of drama. Characters face challenges that are meant as tests of, well, character, not their ability to rack up a body count. Having someone trying to kill you tends to inhibit moral questioning.



THE HORROR OF MANY

So how does a Storyteller convey a sense of personal horror in a chronicle that consists of perhaps dozens of players? With so many stories, plots and people running around, some details can be pushed to the sidelines. As the Storyteller, however, you should definitely make the effort to bring home the inhuman themes of the game. No matter how your players view the subject, their characters' inhuman nature should become an issue at several points.





One idea of how to do so is to arrange for smaller sessions during downtime, whether it's as important or a private clan meeting or as intimate as playing out the nightly interaction a character has with the humans around her. These smaller sessions offer a chance for characters to get some spotlight time for themselves, but it also allows a Storyteller to get up close and personal. Read over your notes on a character's background, and look for elements that can be used to contrast what the character has become as opposed to what he once was. These events should never feel as though they are being forced on the player; they should play out as normal responses to events that have taken place in the chronicle or that were set up in a character's history.

Perhaps an old friend recognizes the character as he visits one of his contacts, who happens to live near the neighborhood in which the character grew up. Or a bereaved relative catches a glimpse of the character at a family funeral and attempts to follow him. If these examples seem a bit too direct or heavy-handed, feel free to try something a bit more metaphorical or symbolic. For instance, a character might run into a mortal who is much like he might have become had his sire not found him, providing a glimpse of the road not taken. Or an elder who discovers that her old family estate is about to be torn down might work to save it out of pure vanity, only to find herself confronted with sunny childhood memories that haven't surfaced in centuries.

Regardless, do your best to really bring home the concept that these characters were once part of something natural and living, even if they never really realized it before. Even if you only do so for a particular character once in the course of a chronicle, that once will be more than enough if it's memorable and well executed.



MYSTERY AND INTRIGUE

In the World of Darkness, few people, Kindred or kine, are entirely what they seem at first glance or seek exactly the goals they say they do. Much is hidden, whether because it's criminal, shameful or just because someone wants an edge by deceiving the people around him.

So never show the characters everything that's going on. Keep them guessing through plot twists, betrayals, hidden complications and surprising revelations.

Running an actual mystery story presents challenges to Storytellers as well as players, though. Your players might not know how to look for clues, gather testimony and construct a chain of reasoning and evidence. As the Storyteller, you need to make an extra effort to give the characters leads so the stumped players don't just sit around in frustration, spinning theories without knowing how to check them. Know your players: If you have a group of Agatha Christie fans, feel free to present them with challenges to their logic and insight. If they prefer the Mike Hammer approach, make the deceptions a bit less cunning and ensure that the characters can find the answer if they show the determination to follow one lead to the next.

Intrigue among the Kindred demands discretion, too. If the characters feel they cannot trust *anyone*, you have overdone the hidden agendas and betrayals. After all, a betrayal only becomes shocking when trust existed before. Before one character's treachery can outrage another, the first character must have shown faith in other matters, so the reversal comes as a genuine surprise. An excess of hidden agendas can also convince players that they can never predict anyone's motives or actions. In the most extreme case, the Storyteller characters become "plot-bots" whose only motive seems to be to do whatever the Storyteller wants at the moment, with no regard for any sort of consistency. One moment a character helps the coterie, the next he's screwing it over for no apparent reason. Make sure your Storyteller characters have consistent motives in the various intrigues, even if those motives have more than one layer.

PLOT DERAILMENT

Now and then, the players throw you a curve by making a choice that takes their characters beyond anything you planned. Perhaps they ignore the clue you thought would be obvious. Perhaps they decide to change their relationship to an important Storyteller character without warning, or to each other. Maybe one of the players has a brainstorm and guesses the central mystery of your plot long before you thought anyone could – or maybe the players come up with a completely wrong theory and refuse to accept any evidence of what’s really going on. Maybe a freakishly lucky draw lets them kill a character who was supposed to remain an adversary for the next several stories.

Such situations have no easy or consistent answer. When the characters’ choices take the chronicle in an unexpected direction, you should probably let them follow the new story while watching for chances to nudge them back to the plot you had planned. Since you did all that preparatory work to invent the details of your World of Darkness and your Storyteller characters, you should be able to improvise something to keep the characters occupied.

Changing your plot in mid-story so the characters can’t jump to the resolution pleases some players and angers others. Some players don’t really want to short-circuit the *sturm und drang* of their characters’ unives. As long as you provide a gripping story, they don’t care if you cheat. Other players want the Storyteller to act as a strictly neutral arbiter of an objectively defined world. If they anticipate the plot, they want their characters to profit by their lucky guess, even if it means ending the story on an anticlimax. Likewise, if they blunder or completely miss what’s really going on, they want their characters to suffer the consequences of their mistake, even if it means their characters completely fail.

The same goes for draws and game mechanics. Some players don’t mind if you fudge the mechanics to keep the plot moving, whether it’s to save the unlife of an adversary not yet scheduled to die or to help the characters find an important clue. They simply don’t want *systematic* fudging to thwart or help their characters. Other players find such fudging outrageous and insulting.

Talk to your players about rule-fudging and plot-shifting before you start the chronicle. Give them a story they consider both fair and entertaining. If you ever feel you absolutely must violate the standards they want for your chronicle for the sake of their entertainment... make sure they don’t catch you at it. Even if the players don’t mind you cheating now and then, make sure you exercise this privilege as seldom as possible. If you use it too often, the players will soon feel that their characters can never really accomplish anything because success or failure was foreordained.

THE COMMANDMENTS

Like any artistic endeavor, Storytelling is a process and a skill you develop with practice. At first, the task can seem overwhelming. The main elements to remember, however, break down into these ten commandments:

- **Involve the Players Whenever Possible:** Work their ideas and their character backgrounds into your city and chronicle. Not only does this reduce the amount of work you have to do to build your World of Darkness, it gives the players a greater sense of involvement in the story.
- **Work with the Players’ Expectations:** Remember that it’s their game too. Try to get some idea of what sort of game your players want before you throw them into your chronicle.
- **Work Things out in Advance:** The better you know your setting and characters before game time, the more attention you can pay to telling the story and presenting interesting characters. When the players throw you a curve, you’ll be better prepared to respond if you’ve already worked through your story’s twists and turns and pondered possible alternate events.





- **Story First, Rules Second:** The rules are there to help you tell the story, not to get in the way or to turn the game into a tactical exercise. Use the rules you need, when you need them. When you can get by with narration, cooperation and common sense, do so. It saves time that you can spend on more interesting things.

- **Design, Stagecraft and Action:** Bring your world to life with as much careful stagecraft execution as you give to your plot design. Craft immersive environments that make your players really *feel* as though they're somewhere else (or at least remove elements that remind them they're not). Experiment with lighting, music, sound. Make your Narrator characters memorable with interesting mannerisms, histories, costumes, props, accents and makeup. Keep something happening at all times, and give the characters important choices to make. Make sure there's something to keep everyone involved, and check on things throughout the night to get the pulse of the game.

- **Avoid Stereotypes:** An endless parade of identical, cardboard characters can drain the interest from your chronicle.

- **Keep the Focus on the Players:** Don't let your Storyteller characters take over the plot, leaving the players' characters with nothing important to do. Remember that the players' characters probably aren't the most powerful or important characters in the world, but they must be the most important characters in their own story.

- **Don't Forget the Payoff:** If the players work hard and make smart decisions, their characters can overcome challenges and achieve something. If the characters' success is not in proportion to their effort and the challenges they faced, the players will feel cheated.

- **Don't Tell Them Everything:** One of the biggest "hooks" in a story is actually for the players, not the characters. They want to discover what's going on! Part of the fun of any story is the suspense of not knowing how it will turn out. Make the characters work to figure out who's really doing what.

- **Don't Abuse Your Power:** As the final arbiter of events, your word is law in your chronicle. Don't use this power to beat the characters into doing what you want, though. You're playing a game, it's for fun and everyone wins if they have a scary, good time, whether they follow your script or not. If the players pull the rug out from under your story, call a break to collect your thoughts. This may happen a lot at first, but with practice, you can handle every surprise they throw at you.

CHARACTERIZATION

There are few things as truly terrifying as the idea of encountering an actual vampire. Strip away the romance and aura of mystery that springs from movies and books, and what you have is a monster of the Old World. It is a shark, cruising through dimly lit waters, searching for a meal. The vampire catches you unaware, moving along with the crowd, blending in to the background. As you idly wander home after a hard day's work, they mark you as prey and begin stalking. Oblivious to the danger, you ponder what's on television that night, what bills have to be paid or what you are going to make for dinner. All the while, there are eyes on you that see you as one thing — food. What you carry in your veins is fuel for a body that has lived past its time. It has already judged its own existence to be substantially more important than yours, if it considers your life at all. In a snap, suddenly it's next to you. A cold hand holds you by the neck and lifts you off the ground. Its eyes shine in the dark, but it has no mercy. You babble, maybe you plead, you forget all about television or food. Suddenly its mouth is at your throat, and as you slip away, you are left praying that it's all just a bad dream.

What sort of creature lives only by taking life from others? Does it even remember what life was like? Has it existed so long past it's lifetime that it's forgotten all the sensations of being alive? Have all of its emotions died along with its long stilled heart?



In **The Requiem**, these questions aren't academic — they're the essence of what the characters are really all about. Exploring this alien mindset is a challenge, but the reward allows a player to move beyond the limits of conceptions like “pale superheroes” or “Goths with problems” and really understand what the *Danse Macabre* is all about. This section includes some discussions aimed at helping players get more into the mindset of the Kindred, as well as some practical tips for bringing vampire characters to (un)life in live-action play.

THE MIND OF A PREDATOR

Every vampire must learn to adapt to the passage of time. If one cannot, then the sheer weight of years will wear him down until he can only end his unlife in despair. The weak are quickly removed from the playing field, leaving those strong enough to seize what they will. Learning to roleplay this predatory (and often alien) nature is all part of personal horror that is at the heart of **The Requiem**.

NEONATE

Younger Kindred have to adapt quickly to their new state of being. Once they are brought into the community of the undead, they have precious little time to adjust (and possibly no time at all to make real mistakes). Once they learn the basics of their unnatural existence, however, they attempt to define themselves as individuals, just as they did in life. They cannot see themselves simply as slaving monsters, so they find some purpose or identity to keep from succumbing to the Beast. Many seek comfort in what they know — holding on to the practices of their mortal lives. They might find a seat at the diner, go to the movies, watch some television — anything it takes to allow them to reconnect with their previous life. As much as people complain about the banality of modern living, they often become very upset when it is disrupted because there is comfort in routine. Now, with all they once knew fading with their memories of the sun, younger Kindred often seek to embrace the little things that once made them human.

Others find solace in their newfound powers and seeming invulnerability. After all, they can now muster abilities that were only fiction to them in their breathing years. The beasts of the earth can be theirs to command. They can impose their will on complete strangers. They can shrug off grievous wounds that would have been deadly to their mortal selves. Now they are *vampires*, and even the most reluctant Kindred eventually revels in his power sooner or later, though it might fill him with shame down the road. This heady rush often leads to certain cockiness in the younger vampires. They take risks and flaunt their power. They make use of their abilities at a moment's notice. After all, if you were suddenly gifted with a range of supernatural powers and the ability to heal back the damage from all but the worst mistakes, what would you do?

Although the nature of the Beast means such efforts almost always end in tragedy, neonates haven't learned this lesson yet. They might try to fight for their Humanity, stopping petty crimes, feeding only on criminals and trying to do right when they can. They might even try to restore order to their old lives by doing the things they could not before. They might think they can walk into a local street gang's territory with impunity. After all, the worst they have is guns, right? Why should one of the walking dead be afraid? Many try to do good things with their new state. But more often than not, this attitude leads only to disaster.

ANCILLAE

Older undead are a different matter. The ancillae (singular: ancilla) are the middle children of the vampire community. They know the Traditions and understand what it takes to make sure the Masquerade remains intact. They have been accepted into undead society, but it's still acknowledged that they do not have the weight of years behind them. They often have





an easier time adapting to the changes in mortal society, but their trade-off is that they do not have their elders' power. These creatures have typically found their comfortable niche in the society of the Damned (at least as much as any position among their fellow Kindred might be considered comfortable). They hold offices of responsibility and most likely have done so for years or decades. They have made connections and set down roots in a given domain, or (failing that) learned how to travel in relative safety.

These Kindred are still plagued by memories of their former lives. While the world has likely changed drastically at this point, much of what they knew from life still exists, if in a slightly worn state. Yet, while they do not often try to recapture their breathing days as neonates do, it is uncommon for an ancilla not to have at least a few attachments to places, items or fashions from their mortal years.

By this point, most ancillae have entered torpor on at least one occasion. They understand the level of extremes that is the nature of their existence. They are unchanging, yet they're starting to recognize that all that they have built up can be torn down and restructured while they sleep. The idea of the inevitability of the long sleep that comes with age (if not before) is still too far off to seem like a real concern to most ancillae, however.

Most ancillae have at least the beginnings of the consuming paranoia that plagues the elder vampires. They fear making too many waves in consolidating their power. When the situation warrants it, though, they are still young enough to take the kind of calculated risks that many elders are incapable of accepting. They are fearful of losing all they have gained, so they begin to formulate longer-reaching plans. These plans often involve manipulated neonate vampires doing the dirty work or taking the fall for the ancilla when the deed is done. They have only begun to see the patterns of the plans the elders have laid in the years gone by, however.

ELDERS

The elder Kindred are frightening monsters. They are no longer thrilled by the supernatural abilities they have long possessed, seeing them merely as tools in their considerable arsenal. They have seen enough of the world to know that their power comes at a heavy price and that their Disciplines alone cannot protect them against clever and intangible threats. As there are typically too strong to be confronted directly, their opponents move around them instead, using mortal ties, Kindred allies and political pull to circumvent a physical attack whenever possible. As such, most elders become quite paranoid, seeing any shift in their world as a sure sign of their enemies preparing to act against them. Indeed, it's quite puzzling to many younger Kindred that most elders will choose to flee direct physical confrontations, whereas younger vampires with much less raw power will typically rush in with fangs bared. This behavior stems from the fact that elders have endured long enough to value their undead existence and are unwilling to take rash chances with it, even against an apparently minor foe. After all, elder Kindred are canny creatures, and apart from the inherent uncertainty of armed conflict, they also realize that things are seldom what they seem in the *Danse Macabre*. What might seem like an easy victory is just as likely to be a disastrous trap. After all, it's the kind of thing they would do in the same position.

Yet whether it's a physical fight or a political struggle, an elder who's forced into a confrontation will end it with all the power and swiftness at his command. Unlike neonates and many ancillae, who often retain enough Humanity that they still hold some human notions of "fair play" or "compromise," elders will not leave an enemy in any shape to confront them again. This does not mean elders always kill their enemies, especially when it comes to other undead, though few hesitate to do so if they must. Aside from attracting too much unfavorable attention, such simplistic solutions waste potential resources, after all. Having achieved the true perspective of immortality, most elders are content to wait for good openings rather than

trying to force their will on an unsuitable moment. They choose their battles carefully, but when they do finally make a move, their actions are so brutal, efficient and all-encompassing that enemies seldom know what hit them.

Indeed, the key to portraying an elder is often found in one word: observation. Since elders tend to be cautious and abundantly prepared, it benefits the player to act accordingly. Don't always dive right into the thick of things, whether it's a heated debate in Elysium or a firefight on the edge of town. Hang back, take in what you can and make the move that will net you the most gain. Note the persistent use of the singular in that sentence. While elders certainly won't abandon their social groups needlessly, these Kindred understand better than any others that the only way to play the games of the undead is to play for yourself first. Anything else is cruel self-deception or dangerous foolishness.

Of course, elder status has its own drawbacks as well. These older Kindred often have a difficult time dealing with the nuances of modern culture, whereas those who have not yet outlasted their own natural life span will be able to better understand the pulse of the mortal world. That doesn't mean that older vampires are easily taken advantage of, however. While they might not fully understand the modern lingo and most technology just fills them with dread, all but the dimmest elders have learned to recognize basic patterns over time. Mortals are very fond of saying that some things never change, and being static creatures themselves, the undead certainly agree. In any age there is greed to be exploited, lust to be slated and hunger to be satisfied. This is true of vampires and mortals alike, from the dusty streets of ancient Rome to the dirty alleys of modern Los Angeles. Elder undead understand and cling to these simple themes that run through the mortal world, using them to make sense of what is in front of them. This is why so many of them take mortal or ghoulish assistants — not only as protection but to help them translate what the world is saying to them. Many younger vampires who seek to move against the “fossils” that hold rank over them find themselves surprised when they are outmaneuvered in the simplest manner possible.

Last but not least, all elders have a touch of desperation to their actions, because they know that the long sleep of torpor draws closer all the time. The thought of awakening in a new world, less powerful than they were before and with all they've carefully worked for potentially lying in ruins around them, haunts the minds of elders around the world. Most spend at least as much time developing strategies, alliances and contingency plans to cover their impending torpor as they do on controlling events in the present, which is perhaps the single largest reason that elder Kindred do not control undead society to the same degree they might otherwise. Even if all goes as planned, they will be like unto neonates in many ways upon their awakening. While they recognize on a simple level that their supernatural potency will decrease, elders also recognize that emerging from torpor means re-learning a whole new world and facing the new Kindred who are in control. That last thought alone is enough to fill the hearts of elders with unease, and send them hurrying to cement the plans necessary to ensure their existence eternally.

HUNGER

Some truths about being one of the Damned cannot be ignored. There is the hunger that is ever present in the back of one's mind, and that hunger can be satisfied only by taking something vital from another person. Eventually it must be done, or the vampire risks losing all semblance of control over himself. Even those vampires who have established feeding methods know that they are slaves to their hunger. It's only a matter of time before they must strike again, and if any Kindred claims to have existed for centuries without committing some atrocity in the name of feeding, one can be certain that he is lying. This need taints every social interaction a Kindred has to one degree or another — no matter how innocent its intent.





When portraying one of the Kindred a key element in capturing their nature is gaining an understanding of this need for blood. In becoming a vampire, the character is seemingly rendered immortal. As long as he takes care to avoid certain physical difficulties and finds ways to distract his mind from some of the realities of his existence, he can exist for quite some time. This survival hinges on maintaining his supply of blood, however — just as we need food to keep ourselves alive. But while all we have to do for food is call the local pizza delivery place or walk to the corner store, the undead don't have it that simple. In order to gain his sustenance, the vampire must place its own existence in jeopardy.

Imagine that every time you needed to eat you had to risk your own well-being in some way — maybe by crossing a very dangerous highway. That risk might be calculated and you might have taken steps to prevent things from going wrong, but you could still be run over by a car. Feeding is never a sure thing. Yet the other option is to sit and starve, which is no option at all. And if they wait too long between feedings the Kindred increase the risk that they will be unprepared if something goes wrong.

This is what the curse of their hunger means to the Kindred.

SOCIALIZATION

Unless they actively go to lengths to avoid it, human beings enjoy a certain natural level of socialization. We're social animals in the most literal sense. We tend to form social groups almost despite ourselves, based on a variety of factors ranging from geographic location to shared hobbies and everything in between. There are some true lone wolves, but for the most part, we look to others to share our lives. Doing so allows us to receive validation for the many joys and triumphs that life holds for us and to find help when we are in pain or in need. One of the most jarring results of the Embrace — and one of the most underestimated — is that the new vampire suddenly finds himself completely disconnected from that social herd. He can't risk being too close to anyone he once cared about, for fear his hunger will make him do something he will regret. Even if he tries, his innate predatory nature makes it impossible for most people to be at ease around him, especially as his Humanity begins the slow, inevitable decline. Cut off from the thousand tiny things that human beings do to recognize and reassure each other on a daily basis, the vampire feels truly alone in a way he never did as a mortal. This is why younger vampires often seek out coterie or other groups. It's a way to ease the creeping, pervasive loneliness that the undead feel.

Of course, it doesn't take long for most Kindred to realize that there is no true comfort to be found among their own kind — only usurpers, tyrants, rivals and spies. Alliances are momentary, but grudges span centuries. Elders hunt the blood of the young for their own survival, but they also fear the prey they feed on, since the thirst for power leads many young Kindred to hunt the eldest for the might of their Vitae. For as much as young vampires style themselves so, vampires can never be wolves in a pack; they are sharks swimming alone in an endless sea of night. They lend their fidelity to one group or another, but most vampires realize they can only truly rely on themselves. Experienced Kindred know that even trusted coterie members might betray them to win a position of power and favor in the domain, and the savagery of the Beast can turn ordinary disputes into savage, bloody conflicts.

As vicious as it sounds, however, most vampires cling to the perverse society of the Danse Macabre with unnatural ferocity. As horrifying as it is, the only alternative is the utter loneliness they ran away from upon the Embrace. At least among their own kind they can find some measure of power and social acceptance, as tenuous and transient as it is. Playing the petty games of the Danse Macabre provides some diversion from the endless nights stretching out ahead of them. Therefore, all but a rare handful of vampires eventually accept their disconnection from the social herd and comfort themselves with only their alien kind for company.

COSTUMING

In the *Mind's Eye Theatre* session, what you see is usually what you get. While there are always methods of presenting an illusion of a thing, not to mention a certain suspension of disbelief that is commonly held in a roleplaying game, people often assess things visually. A first look at a person or even a scene can set the tone for all future interactions. This is important to keep in mind when preparing to dress as one of the undead.

There are certain practical financial factors that obviously affect the nature of costuming selection. Character portrayal doesn't have to be a strain on one's wallet, however, if one is smart in seeking out costume requirements. As discussed in *Mind's Eye Theatre*, local thrift stores are excellent places to hunt around for that shirt or find a bargain on a pair of shoes that would serve perfectly for a character concept. Items in such stores are varied and can be bought with a minimum of expense. And since costumes purchased at the thrift store are not very expensive, it's no great loss if they need to be modified to accommodate a character concept.

For example, a pair of blue jeans can be torn or washed repeatedly to give them a more faded look, such as for a Gangrel who has little use for such social concerns as propriety. Although they might not be the height of fashion, business suits can also be found at these locations to help represent those well-to-do persons of high society — maybe even those vampires who still attempt to hold onto the control they have of mortal institutions. After all, while the specifics of clothing have changed, the severe blacks and whites of formal wear haven't changed radically.

But how does one dress a creature who's newly risen from the grave, especially when that vampire last saw the world several centuries ago? Begin by avoiding the clichés of wearing nothing but black, accompanied by some sort of long cape. Darker colors can give the unconscious impression of being sinister, but monochromatic clothing makes the character stand out without giving the eye anything to catch on. If a character has just awakened from a long sleep, avoid the trappings of modern clothing, such as blue jeans, sneakers or T-shirts. Elder vampires would feel more comfortable in more formal clothing anyway — as is only proper given the way their world was when they last entered torpor.

A close group of players can look inward for costuming. If a player is having poor luck with finding robes to serve his concept of an old monk who became a Nosferatu, perhaps he should be polling the group for suggestions. Maybe someone else in the game has something perfect for his needs? An electronic message board or an email list can serve as a valuable resource to your game in this regard.

It's a fact that with such secretive characters as the Kindred, many players will doubtless desire to give off an impression of mystery. Shoddy scarves wrapped around the lower half of the face and multi-pocketed vests can be donned for those more mysterious characters. The attempt at concealing one's identity or appearance is sometimes enough to get the point across that you are a possessor of secrets. Dark flowing clothing can alter the usual shape of one's body, concealing your movements and adding to your sense of misdirection. As a rule, the more clothing you have on, or at least appear to have on, the better the chances are that you could be hiding something. It's hard to look mysterious in a T-shirt and shorts, but it becomes a lot easier with a long coat, vest and trousers.

Remember also that many predators who survive in the wild invoke some kind of camouflage. This simple rule applies to the older undead as well. Many have been forced to adapt to a constantly changing world, lest they find that their disguises do them no good. And after a good number of lifetimes these creatures can accumulate a staggering number of enemies. As such, advertising that you are an elder vampire by dressing in the regalia of times long ago is just putting a target on your chest. If an elder can buy himself even a split second of





confusion or underestimation by “dressing younger,” then he’s have won himself a victory. Using preconceived notions against one’s opponents becomes just another way to assert dominance and maintain an edge.

This isn’t to say that your players’ vampires can’t enjoy some extra costuming flourishes now and again, especially in their private sanctuaries far from prying mortal eyes. If Elysium is held in closed quarters away from mortal eyes, the fashions of the modern era can certainly give way to what Kindred knew in lifetimes past. Just because the mortal world demands certain concessions from them, that doesn’t mean the Kindred won’t find their own way to express themselves in the styles they once adored. If part of the vampiric experience for your players is having the occasional session where they can wear archaic clothing, so be it.

VOICE

Many vampires are walking relics from times and places long past, but how does a someone portray a creature of great age without resorting to the clichés of film narratives? There are a few simple tricks to convey the weight of years. For example, a player can speak slowly and precisely, leaving out all colloquialisms and modern phrasing. While this might leave a person’s speech somewhat bland, it can be balanced by not taking every opportunity to speak.

It is important to realize that while accents can often betray the origin of a person, many vampires in the World of Darkness have existed for half a dozen mortal lifetimes or longer. Even an ordinary person who moves to the other side of a country can return home with a noticeable accent change. Now imagine a person having lived in several different places over the course of many years. The vampires can often be so far removed from whatever their homeland might have been that their former speech patterns have been obliterated in the process of constantly gaining and losing accents and languages. This allows players to portray elders from different times and places without feeling obligated to construct entirely consistent or encompassing accents to do so.

Other options can include simply throwing in a few words from the character’s native language in their dialogue. Sometimes certain ideas can only be expressed in the language that a person first learned them. Instead of attempting an accent for the full run of a chronicle, a player may prefer to simply learn a few choice phrases in a separate language and use them from time to time — especially in moments of great stress.

BODY LANGUAGE

Getting the message across that your character is something other than human doesn’t just stop at speech patterns and costuming. How a person moves and acts can also deliver a powerful performance of its own. Remember that vampires are no longer human, sometimes not even outwardly. Aside from basic sensory features and the muscular/skeletal use of their limbs, they no longer have true biological functions, but have been mystically animated into a semblance of life. It stands to reason that some of their casual movements can be made to seem inhuman.

Players seeking models to base their movements on might find it very instructive to study the movements of animals — either in real life or on television nature programs. Ordinary people move and act much differently than animals. We tend to be sloppier and make a lot of unnecessary movements, while animals rarely move unless they have to. Even at times of play, animals are often learning survival skills necessary to keep themselves alive. Likewise, vampires are devoid of most casual motions. Unless they choose to mimic them to put their prey at ease, they don’t need to breathe, blink or perform many other automatic functions that living things do all the time.

Likewise, animals that live in social groups often seek to secure their location among their peers through the use of body language and posturing, strengthening their position while



subjugating those below them in station. Vampires can be much the same way. Speak to others from a position of superior height. Stare down those who seek to challenge you without flinching. Keep your back straight, your chin level and your arms close to your body without covering it. Don't close up your body language, as that suggests weakness or timidity, but don't overextend it either, as that looks brash and draws attention. Do not waste energy on movement that is not required, unless it's part of your camouflage among the mortals. And when you do move, waste no energy. The name of the game here is subtly. Most vampires learn to mask their nature, but some things slip through the façade. That doesn't mean that you necessarily have to be an extra in a ballet or a black belt in karate to acquire the right kind of smooth predatory grace, but there are a few things that you can do even to display otherworldly attributes without a depth of experience in how the human body can move.

Also, while using some of your character's vampiric Disciplines and other supernatural powers, use your body to explain what process you are going through. Don't simply state that you are using Vitae to heal your character, roleplay it with your body movements. When using healing, flex that part of the body that requires it. Close your eyes and grimace as the Vitae works over your character's arm and unnaturally pulls the skin and muscles back together. While you should never break the Only Rules That Matter to do so — don't actually run around to simulate Celerity or throw your back out lifting an object to indicate Vigor — an extra bit of action can make for a much more dynamic and intense performance.

MAKEUP

Highlighting a character's undead nature through the use of make-up and other cosmetic products is an excellent method for players to add a very personal touch to the chronicle. After all, make-up is usually reserved for special occasions or formal environments in most cases. This is another subtle way to make your game sessions special in the minds of your players. There are generally two schools of thought on the subject of makeup. On one hand are those who want to go all out for characters, skillfully applying their powder and cream to get just the right shade of pale. They seek to create just the right look for a gaunt creature of the night. On the other hand are those players who just can't be bothered with makeup at all and don't take kindly to being forced to do so for the sake of a game they play for fun.

There are arguments to support each stance. After all, vampires are creatures who are adept at passing for ordinary people when they need to hide their presence. Some vampires and their servants intentionally do all they can to look human to the casual observer, whether with raw application of their Vitae or more nuanced Disciplines. If a player doesn't see the need for makeup, this could be an excellent reason why they are not as pale as the rest of their community. On the other hand this is a game where the main characters are monsters attempting to pass their long years in the shadows of society. But no matter how they might try to disguise themselves, they are still just not human. Some of these creatures of the night are so far removed from their humanity that their otherworldly nature is evident even in a dark room. And honestly, sometimes simply tacking a card to a player's chest proclaiming the character's undead appearance just doesn't do it justice.

As a Storyteller it's a good idea to bring up the topic of makeup to your player base before your first session. If you are concerned with the overall look of your chronicle you might want to work out some kind of uniformly agreeable position on the subject. If cosmetics are going to be allowed, then you should set ground rules for how much or how little should be used. If and your players are unconcerned about half of your characters being pale as the grave and the others having a nice rosy skin tone, then allow each player to decide how he will approach the subject.





Whenever using makeup always give yourself plenty of time to finish your work. As a Storyteller nothing is worse than attempting to set the mood for the opening of a game session while a gaggle of players are still crowded around the bathroom mirror applying those final touches. A really elaborate effect with makeup can easily take up to 30 minutes to apply. If you are going for the dramatic cosmetic effects, have the courtesy to the staff and your fellow players to not hold up the start of the game while you finish powdering your face. Simple tips for makeup use include starting with the lighter colors first, and then accenting with darker colors and shading. Feel free to ask fellow players or cast members on their advice or for their assistance in applying cosmetics to hard to reach locations. It's all for the good of the game after all.

If you are going for total body cosmetic effects, do your best not to miss exposed areas of skin. Spending hours on a pale facial look can be lost if your neck, arms and hands are all your usual skin tone. If you apply a powder to keep the make-up in place, then you shouldn't have too many problems with leaving traces of yourself all over. If you don't feel like extending your make-up to all parts of the body, however, adjust your wardrobe accordingly. Add a pair of gloves to cover your hands, or a high-collared shirt to cover that tan neck.

Acrylic paint can provide some easy makeup effects for use in your chronicle. It's cheap, it's effective, and unless you have a serious allergy to it, it comes off with the simple application of soap and water. It is important not to apply the paint too thickly, though, because the skin cannot breathe well through it. A way to prevent flaking or cracking is to mix in a little hand moisturizer with the paint. And again, always check the labels and test out anything that you are going to apply directly to your skin. Grease makeup can also be used to lighten up a ruddier skin tone and is also a relatively cheap resource. Powder should be applied carefully, however, to prevent smearing or rubbing off onto everything. And again, the key here is to go with a subtle look. No player wants to be trapped in a world populated by bloodthirsty mimes.

To achieve a gaunt appearance, you can apply black or dark gray makeup around the eyes (leaving them looking sunken in), accented by some pale coloring on the highlighted areas of the face. For an alternate look, however, skip the usual black and use a darker shade of



your own skin tone, or even a deeper red. Once again, less is often more, and subtle effects are often the ones that give the greater effect.

For scar tissue, there are a few methods to use. The cheap but effective method is to apply some white glue or rubber cement to the skin, which can then be properly colored through the use of over-the-counter cosmetics. Theatre supply stores and costume shops sometimes sell liquid latex, however, which can effectively be molded to give the appearance of gruesome wounds. This material can be used in greater quantity for burn effects as well, but if used too much it can flake off over the course of a night.

Sometimes a character just needs to look a little roughed up. Halloween outlet stores and shops often sell makeup kits specifically designed to handle bruises. They come with palettes with a vast array of colors including greens, yellows, blues, purples and reds. If these kits are beyond the means you are willing to spend on a chronicle, a cheaper alternative is to carefully apply women's cosmetics. Dark lipsticks, blush and eyeliners can be combined into convincingly real bruising effects in a pinch. Experiment a little and find a method that you think works best for your story needs.

Regardless, whenever your game session is going to be viewed by the public it's best to do the bare minimum of make-up, if you're even using it at all. Avoiding wearing makeup in public spares your game sessions the inevitable intrusions from curious bystanders that are in no way related to your chronicle.

Fangs

There are a few thoughts to consider when equipping oneself with a pair of actual fangs. First is affordability. Modern dentistry can do some marvelous work in creating fake fangs fitted precisely to your teeth, but professional-looking fangs can prove somewhat expensive. Most players will look to costume shops instead, which can provide much cheaper alternatives. The tradeoff here is that they might fall out after an evening of chatting it up with fellow players. While some fangs simply snap over the teeth and can be inserted or removed quickly, many other fangs require an adhesive to apply and stay in for a certain amount of time once it has set. And it's worth noting that most fake fangs are made perfectly white, so unless you have that exact shade of white teeth, they'll seem out of place in your mouth.

Given that the heart of live-action play is social interaction, the other consideration when wearing actual fangs is how it will effect your conversational ability. Though some fangs do not interfere with speech, many can give you a pronounced lisp or even a spitting problem. Players should make sure to try out their fangs before the chapter begins. After all, a Kindred's fangs are normally retractable, so they can naturally conduct eloquent conversations without tripping over their own teeth. Unless you're a hideous Nosferatu whose fangs are a permanent feature or a similarly disadvantaged Kindred, the fangs only really come out when a vampire is trying to scare off an enemy or feed. If you are costuming yourself with fangs, however, they are most likely going to stay in for the rest of the evening once they are in. And while this might suit dreadful Nosferatu, having these long teeth in your mouth can sometimes have the opposite effect of what you were trying to achieve.

And what happens if you then have only one or maybe two vampires in your player base with fangs. What about the others? Do you restrict the use of fangs for the sake of character consistency, or do you simply allow players to costume as they like in regards to fangs? It is quite possible to portray a domain full of vampires without actually having any players wear fangs at all. As stated previously, it's not often that most Kindred bare their fangs. Consider these options and talk them over with your player base to see how they feel on the issue. Some like fangs for the same reason they like pale makeup. Even though Kindred can retract their fangs and flush their skin with Vitae, to them it's more "vampiric" to see a roomful of pale players sporting fangs than it is to have everyone with



normal skin tones and no fangs. Others go the opposite direction, feeling fangs interfere more than they help. As a Storyteller, ultimately it's your call to make. If you decide you don't want them, it's your prerogative to ask players to refrain from using them in your chronicle.

As a side note, the treatment of representing claws is similar to fangs in that they can be an excellent accessory to costuming if a player is willing to put up with the inconvenience of wearing them. A Nosferatu character can use gloves with finger extensions that seem to give him eerily long fingers as part of his unsettling appearance, or a savage Gangrel can sport a set of jagged costume claws. Press-on nails and fake fingernails can be carefully whittled to blunted points with a razor and then applied to the actual fingernail with adhesive. With the addition of some makeup and fingernail polish, the new nails will blend in with the rest of the hand. It should be noted that these nails should *never* be altered to highly sharp points. There are simply too many ways that an accident can happen. As with using fangs, use your discretion before allowing these into your game.

Another slightly safer alternative is to use rubber or plastic “costume hands” available at many costume shops, and which come in a variety of styles ranging from rotting undead to feral beast and beyond. The down side of these gloves is that they make fine manipulation almost impossible — which sometimes simulates the difficulty of using of claws anyway — and that they can look a bit too cartoonish or over-the-top for some troupes.

Blood

As Vitae is such a crucial part of the Kindred experience, fake prop blood will come up sooner or later in **Requiem** games. The science of making the best fake blood is almost like the art of making the perfect omelet — everyone who does it is convinced they have the best method. Various websites specialize in this kind of theatrical effect offering different recipes for realistic blood, including recipes that are used on actual movie sets. Many of these recipes are quite complicated, but offer a great deal of realism as well. It should be noted, however, that most of these are not edible. Indeed, it bears repeating that no player should ever actually consume any kind of prop blood unless they are fully aware of exactly what ingredients are involved in making it. Even with normally edible recipes, some players might have allergies to ingredients that others are not aware of, and the safety of players should always be a major concern.

Also, great care should always be taken when utilizing any kind of fake blood around costuming, props, furniture or carpeted floors. Most formulas for fake blood stain fabrics and other surfaces, and are very difficult (if not outright impossible) to remove. Last but certainly not least, remember that outsiders might not realize that a game is being played, and over-react accordingly. Therefore, Storytellers should take care that the use of realistic fake blood is strongly limited, and only used in private sessions away from the casual view of bystanders. It should never be used when sessions are held in public locations.

With those cautions and caveats out of the way, here is a simple formula for creating edible, non-toxic prop blood suitable for most uses: one part dark corn syrup, one part chocolate syrup, red food dye and a few drops of green food dye. (Never use more than six drops of green food dye unless you're making over a gallon.) Since it's mostly just sugar and chocolate, players might actually be able to enjoy the taste somewhat, though it's still not likely to be a beverage of choice any time soon. Be advised, however, that the blood created with this formula can stain things that it touches.

Note that at some times, you may wish to increase the subtle horror of an event by having the Kindred drinking Vitae “refreshments” during the chapter, whether its from wine glasses offered at an Invictus soiree to a chalice passed around at a Circle of the Crone rite and beyond. This seldom calls for actual fake blood, but Storytellers may simply offer a few

varieties of red-colored beverages. (Sodas, sports drinks, vegetable juices and even fortified water all can be found in different shades of red.) If suitably colored beverages can't be found or some players wish to drink other beverages, red glasses or bottles can give a liquid a more Vitae-like appearance, or at least distract from the fact that the player isn't actually drinking something resembling Vitae.

PROPS

There are a variety of different props appropriate to a **Mind's Eye Theatre** session. Many of the common props have been covered in other volumes, but you might want to look toward more specific items for a **Requiem** chronicle. While a few items can be substituted with items cards and imagination, the more a Storyteller can do to bring the story to life for the players, the greater of the sense of immersion you can expect from your game. And for players, props are tools to further express their character concepts beyond the game traits. By whatever means you use them, props can add an essential element to your chronicle and really make it a memorable experience for all those involved.

Once again, thrift stores and goodwill stations are invaluable in searching for personal props. Costume jewelry and odds and ends can be found for relatively low prices. Antiques stores can also provide a potential player with items to highlight their character's background, though the prices range a bit higher. Another option is checking online stores and trading posts. Specific items can be located through the Internet, though prices can vary greatly.

Game props should only really be used if an appropriate physical representation can be found. Cliché or cheesy items should be avoided if at all possible. Halloween costumes pieces and party store plastic props should be left behind if at all possible. If it can't be done right, simply using item cards and descriptions instead. As a Storyteller, feel free to require a certain standard for props from your players.

While searching for props for a **Requiem** game, you should keep in mind the themes that underlay your chronicle. Vampires are creatures of frozen passion. They are left cold and timeless, watching the world drift past them without really having solid roots in it. They are removed from the natural rhythm of the world. Clocks and old pocket watches are an excellent example of props that drive home the importance of passing time. Old photos and paintings are captured images that do not change — much like the characters themselves. Candles often give off warming light to hold back the darkness, but they're also sources of flame that can harm them — much like the societies of the Kindred themselves. Using simple props like these can add deeper meaning to your stories. Consider carefully the symbolism that surrounds certain objects before making them focal points of your game.

Designing and Using Antagonists

When creating antagonists for a **Requiem** chronicle, it's best to keep a few key principles in mind. This section explores those points. It's important to know *why* we recommend certain practices, as well as *how* to implement them. Also remember that you will need to make some adjustments of your own, based on your troupe's style of play, your chronicle's theme and other concerns. If your troupe likes action-oriented stories and your chronicle's theme is "violence is its own vicious cycle," creating an antagonist who never leaves his Edwardian mansion and prefers to fight by stealing his foes' assets out from under them will likely leave your players frustrated.

And that's as good a place to start as any.





Suit Antagonists to the Chronicle

Antagonists need to be a vital part of the story in which they appear. They should help tell that story, not work at cross-purposes to it. A story about back-room deals needs to have a suitable back-room dealer as one of its antagonists. A chronicle that emphasizes the age differences between different groups of Kindred should have an antagonist who's notably older (or younger) than the players' characters. The antagonist is the vehicle by which a story's conflict occurs, and conflict is what makes the story exciting. Mismatching an antagonist with the type of story only weakens the significance of both.

Vary Antagonists' Methods

Only a fool tries the same methodologies time after time, especially if they fail. Allow your antagonists to learn from their mistakes. If the players' characters soundly thwart your antagonists in one scene, have those opponents wait in ambush the next time. Have them hire additional muscle. Have the antagonists lead with a ruse, hoping the characters move to foil it — and then have them make a well-prepared counter-move. These tactics need not apply only in physical combats. An effective ruse can be a political feint made before Prince and Primogen that the antagonist really *wants* to fail, but that tricks the characters into wasting their efforts. An ambush can be a high-politics situation in which the antagonist reveals he has more support than the characters thought, and he wins the vote.

Vampires are Rare

While enough Kindred exist to necessitate a society in which they operate, and to facilitate the formation of various factions, not every antagonist in a **Requiem** chronicle needs to be one of the undead. In fact, it's generally better if they're not. It takes a conscious act of will to create a Kindred, so most sires have chosen childer who have something to offer the world of the Damned. While your main antagonists are probably vampiric, there's little need for a gun-wielding thug to be Kindred. "Extras" probably shouldn't be Kindred. Rare is the vampire who has so many Willpower dots to spare that he surrounds himself with undead cannon fodder. Ghouls, vampire-hunters, mortal vigilantes and regular people who are in the wrong place at the wrong time can all run afoul of vampires, as can other supernatural creatures with whom the Kindred share the shadows. The more the condition of vampirism remains mysterious and rare, the more special players feel as their characters are members of that exclusive culture. No one should ever be "just another vampire."

The Value of Undeath

Antagonists want to improve their lot in unlife. That's why they're antagonists. Their efforts to do so intrude upon the protagonists' own desires. Such being the case, not every conflict with an antagonist should result in a showdown to the death. Vampires almost certainly want to survive until another night — they potentially have forever in front of them. Likewise, minions don't necessarily put their lives or unlives on the line for the master. Even the most devoted ghoul who *is* willing to die for his regnant knows the difference between dying when it wouldn't help the situation, and dying in an effort of helpful sacrifice. Attackers can make tactical retreats. Political enemies can withdraw from the arena for a while to secretly cultivate influence and return to threaten the characters again. Generic guardians and other extras probably aren't paid well enough to take a bullet for some cruel or aloof employer.

Do the Math

Make sure that you take the protagonists' abilities into account when assigning traits to antagonists. Antagonists shouldn't necessarily mop the floor when they come in conflict with the players' characters, but neither should they be pushovers. It's fine for an antagonist to exceed the characters' abilities (as challenge makes for interesting stories), but she shouldn't be unassailable on all fronts. In her realm of expertise, a good antagonist is probably more



capable than two or three of the players' characters combined, but when other members of the coterie come into play, the odds even out or possibly favor the players. Such is the value of teamwork – which lets you mine the inherent untrustworthiness of the Kindred to add tension to the story.

Beware Incongruous Antagonists

Incongruous characters serve a few purposes, some of which are bad while others are good. Regarding the poor use of incongruous characters, they're either thrown in at the last minute to create some sort of conflict where none existed before, or they're “swerve” characters, whose only purpose is for the Storyteller to lord over the players by saying, “Aha! You fell for the red herring!” Incongruous characters can fit into a story if their alien status helps the story along or illustrates some aspect of the chronicle by way of contrast. Consider an antagonist sent by a greater rival to confound the characters. The rival knows the characters and attacks them where they're weak. The incongruous character initially seems out of place, but some relevant characteristic makes him very apropos. An apolitical character in a very political chronicle might seem out of place, but his defeat at the hands of the better-connected characters reinforces the theme that politics are important, and those who exist outside them will be overrun.

Sample Antagonists

The following sections contain profiles of a number of Storyteller characters that you can drop into your stories as you need them, or as models for creating your own characters. As with the antagonists in **Mind's Eye Theatre**, non-combatant characters are individuals who fill minor or “walk-on” roles. They serve as contacts, they sell secrets and they become vessels. They have a basic description, Storytelling hints to help you convey them as distinct characters, and a basic description of their pertinent abilities. Combatant characters are individuals who could pose a threat to the main characters of the story. They can be all sorts of physical threats. In addition to a basic description and roleplaying hints, they also have a much more detailed breakdown of their relevant abilities. Note that combatant characters do not always have to be involved in combat. The encounter might have a nonviolent resolution, or the contact between characters might result in some resolution other than bullets and fangs.

These antagonists complement those in **Mind's Eye Theatre**. The antagonists found there help round out a cast of enemies whom characters can encounter during the course of a chronicle. Remember, however, that meaningful interactions between characters make for satisfying dramatic situations. These antagonists and those in **Mind's Eye Theatre** aren't meant to be the central foes in a game, or even major figures. They're just here when you need an archetype quickly and on the spot. A wise Storyteller builds his chronicle's central antagonists long before play begins, custom-tailoring them to the chronicle he wants to tell.

ANIMALS

The following examples list some animals found in urban or rural environments. Note: Unlike humans, Defense for animals is determined by selecting whichever is *highest* between Dexterity and Wits.

Specialties are listed in parentheses following their associated Skills. Add one extra die to a test pool whenever a Specialty applies. Each animal's attack is listed with a total test pool (including natural weapon modifiers) for the Storyteller's convenience.





HELL HOUND

Description: Hell hounds originate as normal dogs who gain supernatural prowess over the course of their lives. In most cases, this is due to being fed Vitae (thus turning them into ghouls), but in other cases, certain magics of the undead twist them into these brutish beasts. Hell hounds have far shorter tempers than their normal counterparts, except toward their masters. Hell hounds are fanatically loyal, even more so than most canine companions.

The Attributes listed here represent a large guard dog (80-100 pounds) as the base stock from which the beast is created.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 4, Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics (Running) 4, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Stealth 1, Survival (Tracking) 3

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Running Speed: 14 (species factor 7)

Size: 4

Disciplines: Vigor 2

Vitae/per Turn: 2/1 (this is just Vitae usable for a creature's Discipline; it does not represent the entirety of the blood within a hell hound's body)

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Test Pool</i>
Bite	2 (L)	9

Health: 7

HOMUNCULUS

Description: A homunculus is a magically conjured servant that might be found in the service of a Acolyte or some other sorcerous type. Its appearance varies. In some cases, homunculi are stunted, impish likenesses of their masters. In other cases, they're animal "familiars" with an outstanding degree of intelligence or loyalty. In still other cases, homunculi are wholly freakish things — disembodied hands that scramble about doing their masters' business, small tentacled horrors that scuttle from sight when the lights come on, or even things less describable with words.

Homunculi can take simple orders and even communicate on a limited basis with their masters. They're not capable of meaningful communication with other intelligent creatures, however.

The following Attributes are typical for a small homunculus, perhaps 10 pounds or so. Storytellers should come up with physical descriptions for exactly what each homunculus looks like. For animal "familiars," Storytellers may wish to consult the **Mind's Eye Theatre** book and use the animals presented there instead of an artificial description.

Non-animal homunculi are not designed for heavy-duty tasks. They have a -1 dot penalty to their Health.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 2, Crafts 1, Investigation 3, Stealth 3

Willpower: 3

Initiative: 7

Defense: 5

Running Speed: 10 (species factor 2)

Size: 2



Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Test Pool
Bite or Claw	2 (L)	2
Throttle or Strangle	2 (B)	2

Health: 4**GARGOYLE**

Description: Gargoyles are large, man-shaped creatures that look like their namesake architectural features. They have minimal intelligence, being mostly designed for the purposes of serving a master or sorcerer. Indeed, some gargoyles truly are architectural features, perching atop their masters' havens and coming down only when beckoned or when they've seen something about which a master might wish to know. Gargoyles are unliving automatons, crafted from stone or some other substance.

Gargoyles are dense, heavy creatures, with rocky skin and features. A gargoyle might weigh anywhere from 250 to 1,000 pounds. This entry assumes a man-sized gargoyle, weighing about 450 pounds.

Not being truly alive, gargoyles are immune to being knocked out, bleeding to death, disease and wound penalties caused by damage.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Occult 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry 1

Merits: Danger Sense

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 4

Defense: 3

Running Speed: 10 (species factor 3)

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Test Pool
Slam	2 (B)*	10

* Special: Knockdown (See **Mind's Eye Theatre**, p. 230.)

Certain gargoyles can also use weapons, whether by design or their masters' instruction.

Health: 10

NON-COMBATANTS

The following are examples of non-combatant characters commonly encountered over the course of a typical story.

BLOOD DOLL

Quote: "Why do you only call me when you need something? Wait — don't get mad. I need you. Do you hear me? *I need you!*"

Background: Some people know about vampires without truly knowing about the Kindred. Of these, some actually yield up their blood to those who would drink it, craving either the thrill of the taboo or genuinely experiencing pleasure from the act. People like these who are subsequently drawn into the vampire scene are known as blood dolls, and they unknowingly walk a dangerous line. As close to real vampires as they are, they are only ever a Prince's decree away from destruction as a possible Masquerade breach.

Description: Blood dolls can have any appearance, but many find themselves among those subcultures traditionally associated with vampires, such as goths, punks, rivetheads and the



like. Among these, many wear heavy makeup to accentuate the deathly pallor that their lack of blood produces.

Quick Costume: Black clothes (Goth optional), fake blood on hands.

Storytelling Hints: Although they represent great boons to vampires who are in dire straits for sustenance, few vampires truly like to hang around blood dolls. Most don't like the notion of consorting with their food too closely, while others find blood dolls whiny and effete. Not surprising, given that many dolls are addicted to the feeling they receive from the Kiss. Many also become codependent, feeling that they share a bond with "their" vampires, at which the Kindred usually sneer. And yet, a vampire who drinks from the same vessel frequently might genuinely have an affection for her — or the vessel might be part of a certain vampire's preferred feeding stock. Given that many vampires hide their blood-drinking activities with acts of passion, some degree of "pillow talk" occasionally happens, and another Kindred's secrets might not be as safe as he thinks, even if the one who holds the secrets doesn't know that her paramour is a vampire.

Abilities:

Expression (test pool 6) — Many blood dolls come from performing arts backgrounds, or are otherwise "creative types" with whom the Kindred can stoke their feelings of vitality.

Occult (test pool 4) — Some blood dolls dabble in "black magic," pagan faiths or other sources of eldritch lore, often bunkum, but occasionally valid.

Socialize (test pool 5) — Blood dolls are often well read, very experienced or have specialized knowledge that makes for good conversation. Many of the subcultures from which blood dolls hail have Byzantine social structures and pecking orders not unlike the Kindred's own, giving them an edge, or at least a bit of practical understanding.

DOTING THRALL (GHOUL)

Quote: "Whatever you want, my love... whatever you want."

Background: The Vinculum wreaks havoc on those subjected to it. In the case of ghouls, they have little choice, given that they rely on the same domitor to provide them with Vitae. They don't know that their love is artificial — and even if they do, many don't care. Doting thralls are almost like lapdogs to a master, hanging on his every word and doing their best to please him in the weird, codependent, surrogate-sexuality submission fantasies their lives have become. Still, their love has limits. The dotting thrall is presented as a non-combatant because, even though her love for her regnant is extreme, she won't throw herself at impossible odds if she believes she can run away and help her master from afar. Master doesn't want her dead, after all. He wants her... he *needs* her alive.

Description: Thralls come from all walks of life, but almost all have weak wills (the better to be suborned by the Kindred). More than anything else, a dotting thrall's appearance suits her purpose. A perverted domitor who simply wants a ghoul to provide sustenance might make a thrall of a kidnapper. A refined Ventrue who uses his thrall as an aide and chamberlain might deck his ghoul in tailored suits. A thrall can appear as anything or anyone, and often does.

Quick Costume: Similar clothing to their domitors, but slightly faded or worn.

Storytelling Hints: As might be expected, many ghouls know more than their share of secrets regarding their domitors. In fact, many Kindred regard their ghouls affectionately and possibly even lovingly. As such, thralls make for excellent moles (almost always unwittingly) or hostages.

Abilities:

Investigation (test pool 5) — Ghouls seek to look out for their masters and protect them from harm.

Socialize (test pool 5) — Those Kindred who bring their servants to Kindred functions find that their ghouls are eager to learn about the ways of Kindred society, and often pick up the nuances of its relationships rather quickly.

RACK VISITOR

Quote: “Buy me a drink!”

Background: Rack visitors are those nightlifers who prowl the hip, trendy bars, or who while away their lives in the less glitzy but no less popular drinking joints.

Description: Rack visitors fit a wide range of descriptions depending on the local culture and the kind of establishments they frequent. They can range in age and appearance from teenagers with fake IDs to salty old drunks, from glamorous club-wear to blue-collar shirts and denims.

Quick Costume: Stylish clothes, nice jewelry, drinking glass in hand.

Storytelling Hints: Rack visitors aren’t in it for deep conversation or epiphanies of enlightenment. Most of them go out primarily to socialize or to booze themselves numb. Still, much “networking” goes on in bars throughout the Rack, and gossip is the nightlife scene’s stock in trade, whether among countercultures or in mainstream whiskey bars. Secrets and leads might issue from Rack visitors’ mouths as little more than idle chatter, and enough of them are looking to hook up that the scene is practically a buffet for Kindred looking to feed.

Abilities:

Carousing (test pool 5) — Rack regulars know how to party, and most are well versed in the art of drinking the night away. These characters are adept at dragging others along on their club-hopping escapades, often to the detriment of hangers-on.

STREET PREACHER

Quote: “I look, and here before me stands a pale horse! Its rider is named Death, and Hell follows close behind in his wake!”

Background: Among the ranks of the homeless, some find salvation from their desperate lot by turning to religion. Granted, their notions of religion don’t necessarily correspond to those of any organized denomination, but as long as it gives them a bulwark for their humanity, few of these street-corner prophets care about the regularity of their “congregations.” Heavy on doom, brimstone, fire and damnation, many preachers rant about the imminent end of the world. Others preach a neo-Gnosticism, ranting against the evils of material things and the soulless fools who pursue them.

Description: Wild-eyed and filthy, the street preacher has a windburned face. He might wear a sandwich board proclaiming that the apocalypse is nigh, or he might clutch a tattered Bible close to his chest.

Quick Costume: Once nice but now ragged clothes, Bible, wild hair.

Storytelling Hints: Because they’re homeless and often insane, street preachers frequently find themselves ignored. Therefore, they might be witness to certain events to which those witnessed don’t even consider a prophet a credible witness. When a street preacher speaks about “darkened angels who have fallen to walk among the living,” there might just be something to it.

Abilities:

Survival (test pool 4) — Many homeless people have learned to be acutely aware of their environment, quick to take advantage of whatever opportunities fate tosses their way.

Occult (test pool 3) — The homeless witness some strange stuff amid the streets, and the preacher is attuned to weirdness and events of Biblical significance. His skewed insight might be just what’s needed to gain a fresh perspective on a problem for which the jaded Kindred think they already have all the answers.



Streetwise (test pool 5) — Homeless people develop an intimate knowledge of who and what goes on in their territory, mostly as a matter of personal survival. With the right incentive, they can be persuaded to share what they've observed.

COMBATANTS

The following are examples of combatants whom your principal characters might come up against at one time or another during a story.

ROGUE GHOUL

Quote: "You can give me what I need or I can take it from you. It's your choice."

Background: The rogue ghoul knows what it's like to serve a vampiric regnant as a thrall — and she's had enough. Somehow, she escaped thralldom to her master and made it out on her own. The problem is, she's addicted to or dependent on what being a ghoul does to her. As such, she's taken to a lonely path. She seeks out vampires, either to slay them or barter with them, but always to take their Vitae for her own use. She's savvy and quick and more than a little paranoid, but that's what her path demands.

Description: The rogue has a haunted, hunted look about her. She might go days without a shower, or even longer without access to a mirror. She spends her life hunting vampires, but knows she is weaker than her prey, and she looks it. While she's not frail by any means, she's no match for a vampire in a fair fight, so she skulks about the shadows and dresses the part.

Quick Costume: Durable clothing, equipment, fatigued makeup.

Storytelling Hints: The rogue ghoul's story hooks are as broad as one might expect a soldier of fortune's to be. She's probably under Lextalionis in at least one domain, so helping her probably means courting disaster in more ways than one. Still, she probably knows a great deal about individual Kindred and travels more than most vampires do, so she might have news of outside territories and domains. Is her information worth the danger, though?

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Brawl 2, Crafts 3, Drive 2, Investigation 1, Larceny 1, Persuasion 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Merits: Resources 2

Willpower: 6

Morality: 6

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Vitae/per Turn: 4/1 (this is just Vitae usable for the ghoul's Disciplines; it does not represent the entirety of the blood in her body)

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Test Pool
Stake	1 (L)	1	Must target heart	1

Armor: None

Health: 9

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Vigor 3

BELIAL'S BROOD FANATIC

Quote: "Burn, motherfucker!"

Background: Members of the demonic undead faction known as Belial's Brood despise the established social order and do whatever they want, the Prince's will be damned. Their methods vary from the subtle to the blatant, but their recklessness never wavers. While a few members of Belial's Brood will speak with more "civilized" Kindred, no peaceful resolution between the two groups has ever been corroborated. Sooner or later, any interaction between these disparate vampires turns bloody.

Description: Because they are on such poor terms with the other covenants, the vampires of Belial's Brood are almost always seen dressed for a fight. Their demeanor varies from furtive to aggressively hostile, but they're always ready for a conflict to begin. On the other hand, members of Belial's Brood rarely carry modern weapons, because they rarely have the connections to procure such things. Whether this is a matter of personal preference or because melee weapons tend to harm the Kindred severely is a matter of academics.

Quick Costume: Black clothes, numerous weapon item cards.

Storytelling Hints: While Belial's Brood might be a numerical minority, its activities are not so easily overlooked. This group lends itself to a search-and-destroy type of Storytelling, one in which an obvious enemy fits the bill rather than the more shades-of-gray intricacies of most vampire stories. Belial's Brood members serve as excellent enemies, or as the impetus to forge alliances with previously rival groups in the face of a common enemy.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Weaponry 3

Merits: Allies (Satanic Cult) 3

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Running Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 2

Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Test Pool
Machete	2 (L)	2		8
Stake	1 (L)	1	Must target heart	3

Armor:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Reinforced/thick clothing	1/0	0

Health: 8

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Resilience 2, Vigor 1

TROUBLESHOOTING

This section discusses some common problems and concerns that can arise before or during the course of a **Requiem** chronicle, as well as how to deal with them. When handling these topics, troupes are encouraged to stress communication and understanding by all parties involved. In the end, **The Requiem** is just a game, and while certain matters demand atten-



tion to avoid upsetting other players or bringing the game to a halt, it's seldom justified to publicly dress down a player. Handle these matters quietly and politely but firmly, and don't let them ruin the game for the other players.

UNDEAD DENIAL:

“I'M NOT A VAMPIRE, I'M A SUPERHERO WITH AN ALLERGY TO SUNLIGHT.”

There are some players – not characters, but *players* – who do everything to downplay the fact that their character is a vampire, making him as human as possible and otherwise ignoring the facts of vampiric existence in favor of being a pale superhero. They breeze over slight inconveniences like having to feed on human blood and their lack of true emotion. They relegate these things to simple game mechanics and get back to focusing on the powers available to them. While it's fun to have a vampire character in denial of his bestial side – some famous literary and television vampires come to mind – it's quite another to have a player mechanically minimize every monstrous aspect of the Kindred experience. Remember, even the Ordo Dracul isn't trying to become human, it's simply trying to transcend ordinary Kindred limits to become better vampires. Don't let players create a character who's essentially completely human with a slightly different appetite and an allergy to sunlight. That's not the point of the game.

Rather, players should remember that this is a game about playing *monsters*. Sure, some are more in control of themselves, but even the most “noble” Kindred are still monsters with an unnatural thirst for the blood of the living. They're forever a mere sliver of sunlight or lick of flame away from a horrifying burst of frenzied violence. If a player really wants to play a human with some of the powers of vampirism that badly, well, they can play a ghoul. Kindred characters have fantastic abilities, but everything they have comes with a price – and a steep, terrifying one at that. It's rarely a good thing that a character was made into a vampire. Even if he's secured a relatively nice position, he's still given up much to do so, from family and loved ones to real emotions and the feel of the sun. Most Kindred don't ask to be what they are – they just try to deal with it as best they can.

If a player starts to just gloss over the more personal aspects of the game, talk to them about it. Politely ask why they are missing out on this part of playing their character. No one should be forced to play a part that makes him uncomfortable out of game, but at the same time, you can point out that that playing up a character's faults often leads to some of the best roleplaying. If the problem persists, maybe that player isn't quite suited to the mood of the game you intended.

POLITICAL BURNOUT:

“I CAN'T TAKE ALL THE BACKSTABBING IN THIS GAME!”

Vampires are not nice. Most of them were not nice people even when they were alive, and even the best of them acquire savage predatory instincts and an eternal, unholy hunger upon the Embrace. Kindred society and the basic psychology of the Damned promotes a certain amount of paranoia and treachery in characters. Characters are encouraged to use politics and dirty deeds to survive in the harsh world of the undead. If treated with maturity on the part of all parties involved, these mature attitudes and tactics can actually be a large part of the fun of playing a **Requiem** game.

That doesn't mean that certain characters can't seek out something better for themselves – or that honest loyalties between vampires can't be established. But for the most part, players and Storytellers can be prepared for some knock-down, drag-out nastiness once the politics of a game get moving. For some people though, this treachery can be a source of frustration rather than roleplaying. While most of them can still enjoy the game by playing less politi-

cally minded characters, some of them grow frustrated upon finding themselves on the short end of the stick following one particularly nasty intrigue. Or it might be that they don't feel comfortable exploring the nature of characters of questionable morals. Some players might not be able to easily distinguish the line between what the characters are doing and what the players intend, and start taking out-of-game offense at in-game plots and tricks.

If your chronicle prominently features political and social scenarios that pit group against group, character against character, your players should be warned about the underlying social drama and cutthroat attitudes of the game. Players should be encouraged to have a healthy attitude toward this from the get go. Promote an attitude of more cheerful thoughts that separate character and player attitudes ("Good move — your character got mine this time, but she'll be back!") as opposed to more negative ones or attitudes that don't draw any clear distinction between the two. While you might not be able to expect complete good will at all times, a clear line should always be drawn between what characters do, and what players' feelings are. As long as players remember that distinction, they can have more fun and focus on building a great story as opposed to personal vendettas.

If one or two players have problems with this aspect of the game later in the chronicle, talk to them about it. Maybe they have a legitimate reason to be concerned, like they feel an in-game incident was actually based on some out-of-game hard feelings and don't know what to do about it. Or perhaps the majority of your players find too much intrigue distasteful, and your game isn't suiting their preferences overall and might need to change direction. Discuss such concerns with your players, and see if a compromise can be reached. It's only a game after all, and it's designed for the enjoyment of everyone involved.

Chronicles that involve players who normally do not get to socialize often out of game are particularly prone to these kinds of feelings, simply because the players don't know each other well enough to separate in-character behavior from out-of-character intentions. In such chronicles, it might be a worthy investment to arrange for occasional social gatherings or group activities outside of the game itself, so that the players can get to know one another. Even a troupe of friends can benefit from this kind of "collective decompression" from time to time, as *The Requiem* can stir up some very fierce, competitive feelings that might need to be bled off.

BLOODLINE MANIA:

"EVERYONE HERE BELONGS TO A DIFFERENT BLOODLINE!"

The bloodlines are intended to allow players a certain degree of variety when creating their characters, but these types of characters are meant to be fairly rare. Bloodlines are not highly populous, and they often have to struggle to find their place in Kindred society. Yet sometimes you and the rest of your Storytelling staff will be approached by players who all want their characters to be from different bloodlines. If you grant them all your approval, almost no one will be left from the regular parent clans.

Before you say yes to anyone, however, it's generally best to find out exactly why the players want to play bloodlines in the first place. Sometimes several players want to play something they feel is outside the norm and the easiest way they see to accomplish this is to play something unique. Alternatively, they might want to avoid stereotypes or want their character to be viewed as "special." It must be understood, however, that these bloodlines are rare and have little power on their own.

Encourage players to seek their roleplaying from the established clans; by contrast, bloodlines are best used in the hands of experienced players who can be trusted to handle the increased roleplaying demands of these unique Kindred families. Players should not need a bloodline to make a character complete. In the end, characters are not defined purely by





their clan affiliation or by what covenant they own loyalty to, but by their personalities and histories. A character can fill a unique niche in a game and still be part of one of the larger clans. Bloodlines should be reserved for those concepts that would heighten the drama and enjoyment of your game, not serve the whim of a player who just wants to try something new. Use bloodlines and other exotic lineages for the spice in the soup, not the stock.

POWER BLOCS:

“THIS IS AN INVICTUS DOMAIN. OTHER KINDRED NEED NOT APPLY.”

The Status systems in *The Requiem* encourages clans and covenants to gather and secure power for their own protection, and that should remain a strong element of the game in order to give politics real value. Never let the game get to the point, though, where players who aren't part of the dominant parties can't find any point in playing. It might come to pass that a certain single group or affiliation holds full sway over a city setting. Maybe chance provided that opportunity, or maybe the group earned it through hard work and dedication to achieving the prize. Regardless, it now finds itself firmly in control. But what happens to everyone else? Some players might begin to question why they even bother showing up, particularly if the group in power begins throwing its weight around in petty or vicious ways.

Players on both sides should remember that even those groups who do not have a dominant role in a city setting are still important to the political atmosphere. While vampires of different groups might not fully trust or support each other, they realize that each clan and covenant has certain advantages. It is very possible to have a city setting controlled by one group, which still allows other groups to flourish there. There are things that other groups have access to that benefit a city as a whole, even if Kindred from opposing factions don't like to admit it. Once power is secured within, a city can still be in peril from without. And protecting one's holdings from all takers requires every advantage a city full of Kindred can muster.

Of course, the Storytelling staff should also make sure there isn't some out-of-game truth to reports to gloating, mockery and other player abuse. While it can sometimes be hard for players to separate in-character rants from out-of-game attitudes, few things can kill the fun of the Status system faster than having a group of players use in-game authority as justification for making everyone else miserable out of game. It's quite possible to have fun and enjoy the game without acting superior to the other players just because of a matter of in-game faction supremacy. It's only a game, after all. Momentarily achieving some sort of position of power might indicate some cleverness and dedication, but it doesn't entitle those players to rub their opponents' noses in it out of game.

Lastly, players should also remember that dominant factions are often a part of the Kindred experience, even when the optional Standing rules aren't in effect. To a certain degree, they should accept the behavior of the characters in power as part of the *Danse Macabre*, and not take out-of-game offense at it. If a certain group has so much control of the game that other players feel paralyzed and helpless, encourage the minority to seek out other strategies. Have those players use other resources to materialize their goals. Show them that their characters still have an important role in the story even if their clan or political group is not in the majority. After all, if the majority group is really being vicious and petty at every turn, it's likely that lesser factions will have a lot of allies ready to help them unseat these tyrants.

MINDLESS REVOLUTION:

“THE PRINCE MUST DIE! WHY? WELL...”

Some players generally dislike authority. For whatever reason, these players always seek to have their characters undermine the established power in a game setting. Even if that power

is all that is holding back the savage hordes at the gates, certain players can't overlook the chance to take down the establishment. It can be very difficult for players born and raised in free democratic societies founded on individual freedoms to get into the very neofeudal mindset of the Danse Macabre. Most players are not used to being given orders or expected to show deference to someone they don't like, and it becomes even harder when the person playing the character giving orders is just another one of the gang out of game. While there are certainly rebellious and insubordinate characters, most of the time it's relatively easy to tell the difference between when the character is rebelling against an unjust order and when it's simply the player out to cause trouble.

While many Princes and Kindred rulers are complete bastards, this is by no means the rule. And even if they are, often their best interests are tied into the best interests of those other vampires in their city. Given the choice, most Kindred would rather have a strong Prince who rules with a heavy hand but keeps the domain pacified and the territories clearly defined, as opposed to a Prince who's everybody's friend if he cannot keep the peace or protect the borders. Therefore, keeping a strong Prince in power might require characters to swallow their pride from time to time or endure what they consider to be petty commands. Some players still might not see the wisdom in this. They will look toward political leaders as sources of antagonism. They do not understand that Kindred society is not the democracy that so many people enjoy. It is an Old World rule, where might makes right. This offends the sensibilities of some players who will use it as an excuse to challenge authority at every turn.

Remember to inform your players that outright murder and open treachery in vampire society comes with a harsh punishment, especially if the accused is a known troublemaker and rabble-rouser. Princes are in their positions because they earned them, usually by fighting off all other takers (one way or another). Point out to them that sometimes working within the system is much more productive for vampires than constantly moving upstream. The Prince has a target painted on his chest, so why not just let a Prince stand out there and take the bullets of public opinion and assassination attempts, while the disgruntled characters work in the shadows to complete their goal? After all, the Prince's eyes can't be everywhere at once. If a character makes himself a nuisance – or worse, loudly marks himself a threat – then that Prince's attention will focus squarely upon him. It's often better just to keep a low profile in Kindred society. You don't get the perks that come with offices, but you don't attract the same attention, and you can often accomplish quite a bit that way. If players continue to insist on mindlessly attacking the establishment, then feel free to allow them to get what's coming to them as the reward for their character's rash actions.

Although it has received relatively little attention so far, it should be noted that sometimes players whose characters mindlessly attack the establishment really do have a legitimate gripe. Namely that they feel some players are abusing their in-game powers to ruin other players' fun. This is worth checking out, in the interest of fairness if nothing else. Remind everyone that while Kindred society is not designed to be fair, that doesn't mean those players have free reign to take their power out of game and otherwise treat fellow players badly. It also doesn't mean that a character should start taking actions just because the player feels another player needs to be taught a lesson. All actions taken in game should be based on roleplaying and a character's goals and motivations.

For more on titles, Status systems and positions, see Appendix Two: The Danse Macabre.

CLANS AS CONCEPTS:

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN, WHAT DO I DO? I SAID I'M A DAEVA.”

The Requiem's mythos allows for an incredibly wide variety of characters for a player to portray. There are many choices to be found amongst the clans, bloodlines and covenants





associated with the Kindred. Pretty much any kind of concept you can think of can be somehow translated into this **Mind's Eye Theatre** system. And while established stereotypes give your players a starting point for how to grasp some parts of the world, don't feel the need to be locked into those molds. Clans and covenants are starting points for generating good character concepts, not destinations that indicate the journey is over.

Some players define their characters by what group or clan they belong to. A player might make the mistake of reading a description of a certain group and decide that this is what their character needs to be. This is often the case with inexperienced players who are still looking to get a handle on what **The Requiem** is all about.

Yet not all vampires are the similar just because they happen to belong to the same certain clan. Very few had a choice of which clan Embraced them, relying instead on their choice of covenant (or no covenant at all) to define their identity among the Damned. At the same time, each clan and covenant brings members into the fold for various reasons. Most realize that by favoring diversity they can take opponents by surprise and open up avenues of advancement that were previously closed. While it's true that a group can have an image of being a certain way that can be summed up in a few sentences, your players should realize that the world just isn't that black and white.

As a Storyteller, don't feel the need to restrict your players by enforcing the examples presented in this book. There is no "right" way to play a Nosferatu. There is no "correct" method of being a member of the Circle of the Crone. Encourage your players to explore new ground by throwing some surprises in the mix and breaking with the stereotype associated with a concept. A clan label does not completely define a character's nature. It is the personality and mannerisms of a person that makes up what a character is.

LOSING TOUCH:

"I AM A VAMPIRE."

Some players can get so wrapped up in the romance of the undead nightlife they actually start lose themselves in the fantasy of it. They begin to identify a little too much with the character they are playing, and may begin to take the character's setbacks as their own. While it is important to give some kind emotional investment into your character, there is also a need for a certain emotional distance from that character. Some players might develop too much of an attachment to their characters. Certain people are looking for something missing in their own lives and think they can find it in a story involving mature themes.

If there is an occurrence of this in your own game, or even a suspicion that some players might be getting a little too wrapped up in what's going on, deal with it quietly but firmly, and preferably as soon as possible. Yet don't go in with metaphorical guns blazing and assume the worst — drastic action is seldom necessary. It might be that a player didn't realize he was making that kind of impression (particularly if it's a new player who isn't familiar to the rest of the group), or even just that a player needs to "tone it down a little." If there is a problem, however, don't hesitate to be firm with the players in question; humoring the fantasy even a little generally does more harm than good.

NEVER ENOUGH:

"AS SOON AS I GET MY OWN BLOODLINE AND SOME MORE OUT-OF-CLAN DISCIPLINES, I'LL BE ALL SET!"

Some players think that in order to create a good character, they need to be a master of whatever niche they are seeking to fill. In deciding their characters must be unassailably powerful, these players feel they are required to have their character gain the most power as





quickly as possible. Their characters quickly become little more than the sum of their parts – or in this case the sum of the dots on their character sheet. If players start equating power with character success and good roleplaying, you might need to take a look at the direction your game is heading. Collecting vampiric abilities and Disciplines can become an arms race among your players. Once one person gains a capability or strength that others lack, those players might feel that they need to make that kind of investment in order to “keep up” and the race is on. They start to abandon all other concerns and stockpile dots until soon the game has devolved into He Who Has The Most Powers Wins.

If this becomes an issue simply ask players, “Why?” Why do they really need more power? Why not just use the powers they have more efficiently? Point out to them that emotional investment and a dedication to making a better story is really what brings a character to life. The game is about exploring the nightly existence of these beings called the Kindred, not about having the ability to obliterate all that stands in one’s way. While it can be argued that vampires can grow paranoid when it comes to matters of personal protection, the wise ones understand that power takes many forms. While raw physical might can be handy, it’s a last resort at best. After all, if your enemies have gotten so close that you need your physical powers, you’re in deep trouble already.

If players are turning to their vampire Disciplines for character fulfillment, address the direction your chronicle is taking. Has it become the type of an environment where this is somehow necessary? Perhaps you need to include more scenarios where roleplaying and politics is more important to solving the issue at hand. You might want to consult your Narrators to establish a few goals and scenarios where the players’ vampire Disciplines serve no real use, or at least do not offer instant solutions to the problems coming their way. After all, the ability to turn into a bat does a character little good when the Elysium has been purchased by a company that is sending a mortal wrecking crew over on a sunny Tuesday afternoon.

Indeed, Storytellers should be aware of one critical component in preventing an arms race of Disciplines and combat Skills – their role in making that characters do not *need* these traits to survive and prosper. If the players know that combat characters can simply walk up to them and destroy them no matter what amount of political power or social influence they have, then there’s no reason for them to build those connections in the first place. If you want politics, rumors and intrigue to be the primary ways the Kindred strike at each other, you have to do your best to make sure that physical power can seldom be used to bully or destroy characters. By presenting an alternative system to strike at other characters and build their own power, and highlighting the strict in-game penalties for Kindred who engage in violence, diablerie and wanton destruction, you can craft a game where characters approach conflict with precious information, dirty secrets and political pull.

This is not to say that making a physical- or combat-oriented Kindred character is automatically a useless concept, much less an automatic mark of bad roleplaying. Someone has to be the Hound, for one thing, and among such apolitical or nomadic vampires as the unbound, the social graces that other Kindred rely on often don’t mean much compared to the raw ability to survive. Likewise, many vampires spend time studying the nuances of the Disciplines, whether with a scholarly mind intent on plumbing the secrets of how they function or simply seeking to push the limits of their new existence. And let’s not forget the many other threats to the Damned that might require swift and brutal action, such as mortal witch-hunters, foreign Kindred or marauding Lupines. Physical power is not useless in **The Requiem**, nor should it be completely discouraged. After all, any traits can be part of a good character, if the player develops a strong personality and history.

All that having been said, however, players who are used to the combat-oriented reality that exists in many other roleplaying games should take note that in **The Requiem**, the primary



focus is on social interaction and political maneuvering. What's more, the Kindred have many strict and serious rules about attacking each other, which combine to make it the worst possible choice to simply enter a room and open fire as a means of getting things done. Characters who rely on brute force can easily find themselves permanently banished from a domain or even executed outright, regardless of whether it is a first offense or not. Make no mistake, violence still has a role in the world of the Kindred (and always will), but unless a Kindred is so powerful she fears no form of reprisal, force must be applied quietly and selectively. Even the best Kindred bruisers and assassins also act with the understanding that being caught can spell their doom. It also means that physical powerhouses are more likely to use the *threat* of violence rather than violence itself if that will achieve their goals.

So unless the troupe would like a more action-adventure feel for the chronicle, **The Requiem** has been designed to move bullies and bruisers to the shadows and let politics and intrigue take center stage. Not only does it better suit the rhythms of the *Danse Macabre*, but it also fits the highly social and roleplaying intensive world of live-action gaming. Troupes are highly encouraged to remember this when they create chronicles and characters, so that no player feels useless in the political reality of **The Requiem**. In the end, it's not a bad idea to have some physical power, but if that's where your character is trying to achieve dominance in the domain, she's almost certainly in for some rude surprises. One of them might even be her very last mistake.





Appendix:
Bloodlines

*It was, he said,
a constitutional
and a family evil,
and one for which
he despaired to find a remedy.*

—Edgar Allen Poe,

The Fall Of The House Of Usher
—Edgar Allen Poe,
The Fall Of The House Of Usher



While every vampire belongs at least ancestrally to one of the five great clans, some Kindred diverge from those lineages into their own unique bloodlines. Also, Disciplines favored by those five clans don't exhaust the possibilities of Kindred power.

Some bloodlines exist as purely social divisions. Certain Kindred prefer to identify themselves as descendants of some esteemed vampire from centuries past, instead of being just an ordinary Mekhet, Nosferatu, Gangrel or whatever. Other bloodlines come about because of shame. A Kindred suffers some disgrace in the eyes of clanmates, and that disgrace passes to his childer and their childer in turn. An elder who joins a covenant that isn't usual for his clan, and draws his childer in likewise, might also cause other Kindred to call his descendants a bloodline. Although the social consequences of hailing from these lineages can be substantial, such "bloodlines" have no consequence in terms of game mechanics.

When most Kindred talk about bloodlines, they mean a lineage whose nature or inclination genuinely differs from that of its parent clan. True bloodlines stand out because their members favor at least one different Discipline than their parent clans, they suffer an additional different blood-borne weakness, or both. Most remarkably of all, some bloodlines practice Disciplines known to few other Kindred. Some bloodlines actually introduce new Disciplines that have never been seen before.

Using new bloodlines and Disciplines is a way to customize your World of Darkness. The five clans and their Disciplines portray vampires more or less as they appear in fiction and pop culture: the sinister aristocrat, the sensual predator, the deformed monster and so on. Bloodlines can embody narrower or more exotic images of the vampire, whether inspired by folklore, fiction or your own imagination. Most importantly, new bloodlines and Disciplines add mystery to your World of Darkness. Even players who read every supplement cannot assume they know it all.



PLAYING A BLOODLINE MEMBER

Being part of a bloodline allows a character access to that lineage's Discipline (which thereafter counts as a fourth "clan Discipline"). It also adds that bloodline's weakness, which complements a character's existing clan weakness. If a Discipline is specific and unique to that bloodline, only its members and their ghouls may ever access it. If a ghoul is embraced into a different clan or bloodline, he loses access to any bloodline-specific Discipline dots he may already have. Similarly, a ghoul may only access one unique Discipline at any given time, the powers inherent to his Regnant's blood.

For more information, see p. 372.



Story Functions of Bloodlines and Disciplines

Bloodlines fulfill a number of story functions within a chronicle. Most simply, they expand the range of options for players. Five clans might not be enough for some troupes. Perhaps a character concept just doesn't fit specifically enough within one of the standard clans. Bloodlines offer a chance to play "something different," as well as a way in which players and Storytellers can customize the setting to their own tastes. Each clan focuses on a particular aspect of vampire

mythology – vampire as secret master, as tragic counterculture icon, as bestial predator and so on. With a bloodline, you can create an undead subculture that explores other aspects of vampirism, or you can just create an interesting new Kindred group to add to your chronicle.

Bloodlines can also specialize in narrower aspects of a clan's basic concept, throwing them into sharp relief.

New Disciplines can play a similar role. Some players like to give their characters unusual powers. Sometimes they do so to give their characters some edge over other characters. Sometimes they use powers as a substitute for personality. Those are not reasons to forbid new Disciplines, though. As Storyteller, you can help players use bloodlines and Disciplines to make their characters individual and unusual while retaining play balance.

Bloodlines and Disciplines make the World of Darkness more mysterious. Kindred who think they know it all are in for a shock when a new vampire in town leaves pestilence in his wake, or he confronts them with the ghosts of their parents.

This is especially true for bloodlines from distant lands. Since vampires do not travel much, the clans often striate into bloodlines. Just as each city has its own political structure of covenants and personalities, so each region of the world might have a special bloodline or two. Regional bloodlines can highlight cultural or historical elements.

As you create new bloodlines, think about where they come from and what regional quirks they can embody. If you like, read up on a region's vampire legends. Every part of the world has its own stories about blood-drinking witches, ghosts and demons that can help inspire new bloodlines. Other parts of the world, such as Africa and Asia, almost certainly include different covenants. When characters encounter Kindred from other parts of the world, with strange customs and powers, they realize just how little they know about their World of Darkness.

New Disciplines, like new bloodlines, expand the range of stories you can tell. Each Discipline enables vampires to perform certain feats; a new Discipline results in a character who does things that no one else can. Such a character can set events in motion that no one else could, provide novel mysteries and challenges for other characters, and generally shake up a chronicle. What happens when one character can talk to the dead? Kindred high and low realize that secrets they thought were lost and scandals they thought were buried have become accessible again. You could build an entire story arc around learning what a new Discipline can do and how it shakes up a city's Kindred.

Clan and bloodline weaknesses, on the other hand, supply a challenge to players' ingenuity and roleplaying. A different weakness imposes different challenges for players and Storytellers to explore.

Storytellers can feel the same temptation as players to use bloodlines and Disciplines as substitutes for personalities. Keep in mind that you don't need to invent a whole new bloodline to justify one unusual character. Many Kindred simply don't act the way other vampires expect from members of their clan, and vampires can learn unusual Disciplines without belonging to a bloodline.

Watch out for "super-bloodlines," too. You might feel tempted to create a bloodline with the most ass-kicking kick-ass set of Disciplines you can devise. This temptation can become especially strong if you intend for the members of a bloodline to serve as adversaries to the characters. Resist this temptation. **The Requiem** presumes that *all* undead lineages are equally worthy for players' characters. No vampire lineage in this book or any supplement receives a black hat and an "Enemy – Do Not Play" stamp along with the Embrace. We recommend that you stick to this rule as well. If one bloodline possesses clear advantages over other lineages, however, a character from that bloodline holds an intrinsic advantage over other players' characters. That might seem fun for one player, but the other players will probably object.





Creating a Bloodline

Designing a bloodline has two parts. The first consists of the “story” aspects of the lineage: the clan from which it emerged (even if characters could not know this aspect of its history), how the bloodline came to be, its distinctive culture and its interaction with other Kindred. The second part consists of the “game” aspects: the Disciplines favored by the bloodline and the special weakness that all members of the line inherit from their sires.

Players might want to invent bloodlines. Not only might a player want to play a character from a bloodline she created, a character can establish a bloodline in the course of the chronicle. As always, the Storyteller has final say on whether to allow a bloodline. Founding a lineage is one of the greatest feats a Kindred can achieve, however, so we do not recommend that Storytellers forbid this deed. Instead, work with the player to make the new bloodline interesting and balanced with the standard Kindred clans.



JOINING OR REALIZING A BLOODLINE

A character's ability to join a bloodline or create one of her own depends on several factors, including her clan, specific lineage and Blood Potency.

JOINING THE SIRE'S BLOODLINE

At Blood Potency 2, a character may “activate” his sire's bloodline, becoming a part of it. Doing so allows him access to that bloodline's Discipline (which thereafter counts as a fourth “clan Discipline”) but also saddles him with that bloodline's weakness (which also complements his existing clan weakness).

Joining a sire's bloodline requires the expenditure of a Willpower dot.

JOINING ANOTHER BLOODLINE

At Blood Potency 4, a character may align himself with an existing bloodline to which his sire *doesn't* belong. The character must belong to the bloodline's parent clan, however.

Normally, a character needs the permission and patronage of a vampire who is already a member of that bloodline to join it. This patron is known as the Avus (from the Latin for “grandfather”). When the Kindred seeks to join the bloodline, she must drink at least one Vitae from the Avus (though drinking at least one Vitae from any member of the bloodline will suffice, including acts of diablerie...), so that she knows what mystic form she must force her blood to take. Cruel, domineering or overly careful Avuses occasionally subject their proxy “childer” to Vinculums, just to be sure that no later treachery occurs. At no time does the Avus directly become a blood-relation to the Kindred in question (unless he already is...). The Avus is not subject to blood ties or blood sympathy as described on p. 228 (again, unless he already is). Without the support of an Avus, it is almost impossible for a Kindred to join a bloodline to which she is not directly connected or that she creates on her own.

Becoming part of the Avus' bloodline allows a character access to that bloodline's Discipline (which thereafter counts as a fourth “clan Discipline”) and also bestows upon her that bloodline's weakness (which complements her existing clan weakness).

Joining the Avus' bloodline requires the expenditure of a Willpower dot on the character's part, and the expenditure of a Willpower point and at least one Vitae on the Avus' part.

CREATING A NEW BLOODLINE

If a player does not “activate” a sire's bloodline or join another clan bloodline, she may create a bloodline for her character at Blood Potency 6. Many bloodlines have a unique Discipline, and all have a unique weakness. As with activating prior bloodlines,

the Discipline becomes a fourth clan Discipline and the weakness layers on top of the existing clan weakness.

Creation of a new bloodline costs a Willpower dot.

UNIVERSAL CONCERNS

A character can engage only one of these options: become a member of his sire's bloodline, join another clan bloodline or diverge into his own unique bloodline. He cannot do two or all three.

Any time after a character achieves Blood Potency 2, he may "activate" his sire's bloodline. That is, if a character has Blood Potency 6 and hasn't started his own bloodline or joined another, he may then join his sire's latent bloodline. Any time after a character reaches Blood Potency 4, he may join a clan bloodline (provided he has the proper patronage or is willing to commit diablerie). For example, if a character has Blood Potency 6 and hasn't started his own bloodline or joined his sire's, he may join a clan bloodline. The same holds true with regard to starting a character's own bloodline and Blood Potency 6.

Joining or creating a bloodline doesn't "just happen." The character actually forces her Blood to take on new characteristics or to conform to the characteristics of another. Needless to say, effecting a change like this in the static Kindred takes time, to say nothing of entreating an Avus for the distinction of joining his bloodline. Creating a new bloodline or joining an existing one isn't something that should happen overnight. Storytellers are recommended to allow players' characters to transition to new bloodlines between chapters of a chronicle, not simply between scenes, or even in the same game session (unless some unconventional pacing takes place). Alternatively, a Storyteller may allow characters to begin play as members of existing bloodlines, so long as those characters have the requisite Blood Potency of 2 or more.

A character who has met bloodline requirements and whose Blood Potency later drops due to torpor does not lose those bloodline privileges. For example, a vampire who creates a bloodline at Blood Potency 6 and later drops to Blood Potency 5 does not have his bloodline, Discipline, et cetera suddenly vanish. He has already forced his Blood to take on the bloodline characteristics, so even if his Blood later loses some of its inherent power, the deed has already been done. At the Storyteller's discretion, it may be difficult for a character to learn further levels of the bloodline Discipline when Blood Potency drops, but this is usually suitable only if the Discipline isn't yet known completely or has yet to be codified.



HOW BLOODLINES APPEAR

Bloodlines do not appear from nowhere. Someone has to start them, and that someone can shape the entire identity and culture of the lineage. New bloodlines can appear in a number of different ways. Storytellers can devise any number of variations on these basic stories and combine them to form a unique and interesting background for a line.

DELIBERATE INTENT

Any Kindred can work a change in her Vitae once she achieves sufficient age and power. In game terms, any vampire can start a bloodline once her Blood Potency reaches 6 or higher. The process does not require any special ritual, but it does cost the character a dot of Willpower and some amount of time during which her Blood takes on the new characteristics. A new weakness also arises, adding to that of her original clan. Any childer the character sires after that point have the potential to inherit her new weakness and new set of favored Disciplines.

A Kindred might change herself to reflect some special interest. The founder might prefer some Discipline outside the roster of her in-clan capabilities. By changing herself, she makes that Discipline easier to learn. Her childer may then inherit the altered set of bloodline Disciplines. A founder also suffers some special flaw in addition to the normal weakness of her





clan, and she passes that weakness on to her childer when they “activate” the line.

The Bruja (a Gangrel bloodline) provide an example of a deliberately created bloodline. The founder of the lineage wanted to remain true to his outlaw biker gang roots, not serve as a pawn in some other Kindred’s maneuverings in the Danse Macabre. The line acquired Vigor, a Discipline considered most applicable to a pack of blood-drinking, hell-raising, ass-kicking outlaws who had little to depend on other than their own capabilities. The creator’s choices defined the strengths of his new bloodline.

Exactly how “deliberately” a lineage’s founder changes the Blood varies from character to character. One might change her Blood in a calculated attempt to secure greater advantages for herself or her childer. Another might act unconsciously, her Blood responding to her obsessions. Kindred scholars suspect that the Toreador split from the Daeva through an unconscious but undeniable sense of self-esteem. The bloodline’s founder developed closer ties to the society to which he found himself drawn while honing his tastes and predilections to a level of indulgence that exceeded the main clan’s predilection for vice. In some cases, more than one member of a clan decides to change her Vitae and begin a bloodline. A number of bloodlines began as cults or secret societies within a clan.



ACCIDENTAL BLOODLINES?

You might wonder how a Kindred could exert an act of will so great that we represent it by the loss of a Willpower dot, yet not know it. Please remember that Kindred do not have access to their character sheets. Game mechanics might suggest that a character has a Willpower dot one minute and does not the next. The change must take place during downtime, when we do not track time minute by minute. During downtime, it’s quite possible for an action that we represent with a single draw or a quick pencil-stroke on a character sheet to actually take several nights. A character can therefore engage in the prodigious effort of will needed to change her Blood a little at a time, and no one can say — not even the character herself — exactly when the change took place.



CURSES

A vampire might change because someone else changed him through magic. Kindred refer to this as “cursing,” no matter how the magical alteration occurred.

Sometimes the change happens because of an actual curse. At its highest levels of mastery, accessible only to Kindred of the most potent blood, Theban Sorcery includes curse-rituals that can impose flaws on a Kindred and all her descendants, even childer who have already been sired. The most powerful mortal mages might also be able to curse Kindred in this manner.

Curses can also happen because a bloodline’s founder meddled with the powers of other supernatural beings. Wise Kindred warn their fellows to avoid the blood of Lupines, mortal mages and the stranger creatures that stalk the World of Darkness. Some Kindred develop new powers through contact with such beings, but that power usually comes with an unexpected price in the form of some new flaw that adds to the character’s existing clan weakness.

Any character can suffer the effects of a curse, no matter how high his Blood Potency, and the curse can be passed to any childer. If the character achieves a Blood Potency of 6, he might be able to throw off the curse... or maybe not. At least, he can mitigate and select the effects on himself and his childer.

TAINED EMBRACE

Some mortals are touched by the supernatural before their Embrace. No mortal mages are known to have suffered the Embrace, but some reputed “witches” or other aberrations of the

supernatural world have founded bloodlines from the moment they became undead. Mediums and possessors of other spiritual gifts can also join the Kindred with Blood differing from their sires'. All such instances are quite rare, though. More often, a mortal mystic simply becomes a Kindred with an unusual talent.

VERY OLD BLOODLINES

In some cases, a bloodline has existed so long that no one remembers how it began. A bloodline's derivation might be a matter of pure guesswork based on a characteristic weakness, the Disciplines that its members favor, or just an indefinable similarity between cultures. That, in itself, is an important factor in the bloodline's history and character. In its home region, Kindred might consider the bloodline equal to any clan, especially if its numbers are large. Storytellers should pay special attention to how the bloodline selects and trains childer, so as to explain why its culture has lasted so long.

Indeed, the clans themselves might be nothing more than "bloodlines" of ubiquity. In the extreme case, perhaps a bloodline isn't really a bloodline at all. Perhaps it is a fading clan, once numerous and widespread but now shrunken and confined to a particular locale. A supposed "clan of origin" might actually be an offshoot that grew to supplant an older lineage. The ancient history of the Kindred hints at many such mysteries that undead scholars despair of ever solving.

THE FOUNDER

Design the founder of a bloodline with as much care as you would any other character in your chronicle. Even if the founder is destroyed or in torpor, he remains the most important figure in the bloodline's history.

Work out why someone Embraced the founder in the first place. What attracted his sire's notice? What did his sire want from him? Is the founder a player's character?

How did the founder feel about his parent clan? If he felt out of place, that supplies a motive to split from the clan.





What circumstances led this Kindred to found his bloodline? Was it deliberate, accidental, completely unasked for? Did any other Kindred react to the event in any notable way?

Why did the founder sire childer? What does he want from them? What demands did he place? How did his childer react?

Does the founder still exist? Does he still wield any influence over the rest of his bloodline? If he's been destroyed, how did it happen, and how did it affect the bloodline?

Not only do the answers to such questions help you make the bloodline's background seem more real, you probably find story hooks popping up. To give the simplest example, a surviving bloodline founder might take an interest in the remarkable achievements of a descendant — a player's character. The founder might become a mentor, a patron, a jealous enemy or anything in between.

Of course, the founder becomes especially important if she is a player's character. In this case, the bloodline's origin is an ongoing subplot within the chronicle. Storytellers can build stories around the circumstances that lead to a character's change, the reaction of other Kindred (especially those in the character's clan) and the choice whether to sire a childe or not.

RECOGNITION OF A BLOODLINE

Any Kindred might say that he founded a bloodline, but do other Kindred believe him or care? Bloodline founders can receive a fair bit of prestige in Kindred culture. It takes more than an odd power — or a signature weakness — to win respect.

A Kindred must prove that her special aptitudes pass to her childer, and to their childer in turn. Kindred tradition holds that no change in the Blood can be certain until two generations pass. One generation of childer might learn a new set of Disciplines because their sire drove them to make a special effort. If a second generation shows similar aptitude, the Blood has surely changed. Inherited weaknesses can be even harder to detect, especially if they produce no overt mark such as the Nosferatu's palpable otherness.

If they want, the Kindred can consult a sorcerer to establish whether a self-proclaimed founder has truly changed her Blood and that of her childer. Hiring a blood magician to perform occult tests means owing that sorcerer a boon, however, and prudent Kindred do not promise favors lightly. Anyway, what if someone bribed the sorcerer to lie? Prudent Kindred do not take another vampire's word for anything.

More simply, Kindred can taste the Vitae of an alleged founder's childe and compare it to the parent clan. (See "Blood Ties" on p. 228 for more about this.) Vampires who drink the blood of fellow Kindred risk addiction and take the first step to a Vinculum, however, so wise Kindred would not perform this test themselves. In another few decades, the matter will sort itself out.

A bloodline's founder also needs to amass enough power that other Kindred fear and respect — or at least acknowledge — her. Two generations of childer who retain some connection to their forebear form an impressive reserve of power all by themselves. A would-be founder can also establish her power through the normal means available to vampires, such as wealth, mortal minions and high office among a city's Kindred. Garcilaso de Castillejo possessed more than a fourth Discipline and a few childer to back up his assumption of a founder's rank. He also "possessed" a unique subculture that grew around him, and inspired an *esprit de corps* that was fervent enough for his lineage to claim its own under penalty of crushing social retribution.

Mere time also plays a role. The undead see many small upsets in their long existence. They do not waste much attention on the short term. So what if a Kindred wants to say he's founded a bloodline? Will he still make that claim in a hundred years? Will he still exist in

a hundred years? A new bloodline must persist for decades, if not centuries, before other Kindred consider it worth serious attention. The slow pace of communication among Kindred of different cities also makes sure that word of a new bloodline takes centuries to reach vampires who dwell far away.

For much of their history, the Kindred did not especially care about bloodlines in distant lands. Foreign vampires could not affect them, so most Kindred did not bother learning about them. Modern travel and communications have changed that to some degree. Travel remains difficult for Kindred, but a journey across continents is not much harder than a trip of a few hundred miles. As a result, rare Kindred visitors to a city might include members of bloodlines formerly limited to distant regions, such as the Burakumin. Some elders now want very much to know who or what might come to their city, so that they can exploit, avoid or destroy an intruding member of a foreign bloodline.

Therefore, when you design a bloodline, give thought to how much other Kindred know about it. Do they consider it a minor, idiosyncratic group within an existing clan, or do they recognize it as a distinct lineage? How many Kindred even know that the bloodline exists? Has word of the bloodline spread very far? If so, how? The Kindred react in different ways to an envoy from a known bloodline than to a wholly mysterious vampire threat.

Just as importantly, how much information on a bloodline is accurate? Rumor might ascribe any sort of strange powers and horrible customs to an obscure and distant line. Consider that 500 years ago, educated Europeans seriously believed that central Asia held one-eyed giants, dog-headed cannibals and pygmies who lived off the smell of apples. The Kindred travel less than their mortal ancestors did 500 years ago. Any “foreign” Kindred might be suspected of diablerie, sanguinary sacrifice to strange gods or any other foul practice, just because someone’s great-grandsire said it was the custom of Kindred in that part of the world or among that bloodline.

SIZE AND POPULATION

Approximately how many members does a bloodline have? The Tradition of Progeny keeps Kindred from siring childer very often, so a bloodline’s numbers probably do not grow quickly. A bloodline might take centuries to build up respectable numbers.

Cultural factors and historical events can slow a bloodline’s growth even further, or actually reduce its numbers. The bloodline’s founder might not want to sire many childer, or he might forbid progeny to his childer in reverence of the Traditions. A bloodline’s members might think that very few mortals deserve the Embrace. Conflicts with other Kindred, other supernatural beings or with mortal witch-hunters might result in the destruction of many members of a line. For example, the Toreador Embrace only those who fit into their social clique, and they limit their numbers to maintain a sense of rarity and therefore significance and uniqueness.

Storytellers should not say exactly how many members a bloodline has unless it’s so small and localized that every member can appear in a particular story arc. Rough estimates, such as “a pittance,” “a few dozen” or “maybe a hundred,” preserve the setting’s sense of mystery and the unknown.

Age and population also tend to correlate with how far a bloodline has spread. Since vampires seldom travel, a bloodline could take decades to spread from the domain in which it began, and centuries to reach other nations or continents. A populous, old bloodline might have spread through several countries, and the odds are better that some member takes the risky step of moving far away to the young cities of the New World.





THE RULES STUFF

At some point, you must define a bloodline's favored Disciplines and inherited weakness. This is usually the easiest part of designing a bloodline, and it's very often the point of inspiration. Storytellers shouldn't let a Discipline be the *only* inspiration, though.

BLOODLINE DISCIPLINES

A bloodline favors *at least* the same Disciplines as the parent clan. In case it doesn't, a bloodline may replace one or two favored Disciplines, and one of them is usually a somewhat similar Discipline. For instance, the three "physical" Disciplines of Celerity, Resilience and Vigor easily substitute for each other. So do the "psychic" Disciplines of Animalism, Auspex, Dominate, Majesty, Nightmare and Obfuscate, which all affect the mind in some way. The Bruja, for instance, seem to have decided that they'd like to wield brute strength in addition to the supernal hardness of their parent clan.

A bloodline has four favored Disciplines. Of them, three almost always remain the same as the parent clan's. The fourth is either unique to the bloodline — unable to be learned by Kindred who are not of the bloodline — or is one of the "common" Disciplines practiced by vampires across clan lines. Ghouls can never access more than one unique Discipline at the same time: if their Regnant changes, they lose access to any unique Discipline dots they may have learned under his tutelage. If embraced, such a ghoul would only be able to access a unique Discipline if they joined that specific bloodline.

Theban Sorcery, Crúac and the pseudo-Discipline of the Coils of the Dragon may never be a bloodline's fourth Discipline.

The change to a bloodline never replaces all three clan Disciplines. The Blood just doesn't change to that degree, no matter what influence works upon it. If you design a bloodline and find that you want to replace all three of the parent clan's Disciplines, re-examine your reasons for choosing that particular clan. Some other clan is probably more appropriate.

This goes for players, too. A player whose character has developed all three clan Disciplines to the limit set by his Blood Potency might want to move the character onto a bloodline so that the character gets an experience-point break when learning another Discipline. We recommend that Storytellers not allow this because it's cheap and tacky point-mongering, instead of serious character development.

We also recommend that you do not allow any bloodline to favor more than one unique Discipline. This is a point of story design, not an innate property of the Blood. Special Disciplines should relate to the core idea of a bloodline — its very reason for existence as part of your chronicle. More than one exotic Discipline suggests a lack of focus in the concept of the line... or an attempt to create a "super-bloodline" or a simple desire to be strange for the sake of strangeness.

Under no circumstances can a character have more than four bloodline Disciplines. Changing the Blood to favor a new Discipline always means honing one's affinity for *one* other Discipline. No power in the World of Darkness can change this iron law.

BLOODLINE WEAKNESS

A bloodline may keep the same weakness as its parent clan. Additionally, bloodlines develop new flaws or focus the clan's existing weakness. The Morbus, for instance, have very specific tastes while the Malkovians suffer from a refined madness even more crippling than that of members of their parent clan. Storytellers should examine proposed weaknesses closely, to make sure that they actually handicap a character. Compare the new weakness to the standard clan weakness. Does the new weakness limit or hinder the character just as much?

We recommend that any new weakness include some aspect that you can objectively represent through a draw or some other game mechanic. Good players roleplay their characters' weaknesses, but a well-designed weakness does not depend entirely on the player's willingness to roleplay or the Storyteller's fiat for when it affects the character. Arguing slows down your story and usually isn't much fun. Make sure that player and Storyteller agree when the weakness affects the character, how it affects the character and what the character can do to resist or compensate for its effects.

Creating a Discipline

New Disciplines, like bloodlines, don't appear from nowhere for no reason. Just as with bloodlines, give thought to both the origin of the Discipline and what role you want it to play in your chronicle. Sure, every exotic Discipline is a mystery, an opportunity and a threat to all the Kindred who don't have it and who don't know what it can do. What sort of an opportunity or threat do you want the Discipline to present?

When you invent a new Discipline, however, try to think of different ways to apply its powers and what implications it holds for other Kindred and your chronicle. What at first seems like just a cool trick might actually prompt many Kindred to change their nightly unlife.



PROPRIETARY KNOWLEDGE

Unique Disciplines are impossible for anyone to learn unless they belong to the bloodlines that created them.

In some cases, similar Disciplines arise among different bloodlines. Even the "common" Disciplines might manifest a similarity among certain bloodlines. A snake-themed lineage might speak with a forked tongue whenever it uses its powers of Dominate, for example, while members of a bloodline renowned for divinatory abilities might lapse into an oracular, trance-like state when they put their *Auspex* powers to use. Players should feel free to make a certain aspect of the "common" Disciplines a signature of their own bloodlines, if they so wish.

NOT-REALLY-NEW DISCIPLINES

Some "new" Disciplines are not really new or unique to a bloodline. A Discipline might have existed for millennia but remained little known because no surviving lineage carried it. When a bloodline that favors the Discipline grows in number, however, other Kindred have a better chance of seeing the Discipline. By the same token, not every new Discipline needs a bloodline to practice it. If you think that a particular Discipline would improve your game and your stories, bring whispers of it into your chronicle. You don't have to invent a bloodline if you don't want to — let the tales of the Discipline carry the mystery. You can invent the bloodline later as rumors of the Discipline circulate, or you can use them as very effective red herrings. Don't overdo it, though. Too much abuse of rumor without enough to substantiate it can make players feel misled, and it smacks of smoke and mirrors rather than good plot design.



ORIGIN STORIES

New Disciplines appear along with new bloodlines, so the stories of their origins usually bear some connection. A curse or contamination from some other supernatural race can provide the stimulus for a new Discipline as well as a bloodline. The effort to invent a Discipline might





change a Kindred's very being, thus resulting in a bloodline, rather than stemming from it. Two broad patterns turn up again and again, with many possible variations. You could work either of these patterns into the history of a bloodline.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

A rare or new Discipline might be a variation on a more familiar Kindred art. Such a variation could appear because a Kindred wanted to use the original Discipline for some unusual or specialized purpose. He might even develop unique Devotions or six-dot+ powers, so the Discipline would perform more of the feats he really wanted. Such a Kindred might find that his childer learn his idiosyncratic variations instead of the more common version, creating a new Discipline.

CROSSOVER CONTAMINATION

Kindred can also develop new Disciplines based on the powers of other supernatural beings, such as Lupines, mages or ghosts. A vampire who sets out to do so deliberately certainly needs to study the other supernatural race — a precarious activity, to say the least. His research subjects surely object, since Kindred tradition holds that one must drink another being's blood to claim its power, as with diablerie. Still, a Kindred manages to pull it off now and then and manifests a Discipline, the effects of which resemble one of the magical gifts of another supernatural creature.

Such "crossover" Disciplines can also appear spontaneously. Embraced mortal magicians might manifest novel Disciplines based on the sorcery they practiced in life. More dubious rumors speak of exotic creatures of legend giving rise to novel Disciplines. In rare cases, Kindred can also manifest strange powers if they repeatedly feed upon other supernatural creatures or survive deadly encounters with their powers. When different supernatural powers clash and end in death, anything might happen.



WHO INVENTED IT?

When you work out the back story for a Discipline, give some thought to who invented it, or at least who made it more widely known. This is usually the founder of the bloodline that uses the Discipline. Not only does this character set the style for the bloodline, he might still exist. Quite possibly, a character who wants to master the last one or two powers in the Discipline needs to learn them from the inventor himself. This requirement might lead to a travel story as the character searches for his bloodline's founder, with all the difficulties and dangers that travel always holds for the Kindred. Once he finds the Discipline's inventor, the character still faces the challenge of persuading him to share his secret. What compensation, threat, bribe or plea can be offered?



SELECT A THEME

Creating a Discipline is rather more complicated from the point of view of a player or Storyteller. First, give thought to what the Discipline is about. Every Discipline sticks closely to a theme or effect, such as "strength" or "fear" or "concealment." Be careful that you don't just create a grab bag of cool powers, even if they would all be useful for a certain purpose. Remember that a Discipline is really just one linear progression of power that a character learns to use better and in different ways.

Not every theme or effect is really appropriate for the Kindred. Can you tie a Discipline to some aspect of the undead condition? Is it something a vampire could really use? The Kindred are undeniably powerful, but they aren't superheroes. Think about creepy, moody,

gothic ways that the secret lords of the night could use a proposed Discipline to maintain their power, not how the Discipline would work in a flashy monster smackdown.

Very few Disciplines directly cause damage to an opponent. Of the “old standards,” only Protean, Vigor and one specific power of Nightmare increase a character’s capacity to deal physical damage. Vampires can already harm each other (or mortals) using their claws and fangs... or plain old guns and knives. They don’t need much more. Instead, most of the standard Disciplines enable the Kindred to influence the actions of other creatures (Animalism, Dominate, Majesty, Nightmare), gain information (Animalism, Auspex), enhance their own physical capacity (Celerity, Protean, Resilience, Vigor) or hide themselves from threats (Obfuscate, Protean).

Don’t feel too constrained by existing legends and fiction about vampires. Like bloodlines, Disciplines offer a chance to extend the vampire myth. Your new Discipline might affect some common aspect of Kindred experience. For instance, vampires are creatures of darkness, barred from the light of day. A new Discipline for a member of the Mekhet bloodline might help a vampire thrive in darkness and master it. Other Disciplines might show a more symbolic link to undeath. Vampires exist in a state between life and death.

New Disciplines should probably be less powerful than the familiar Disciplines. The “old favorites” became the standards because they were especially useful. The Kindred spent thousands of years learning how to use them to great effect. A new or obscure Discipline has not received such unilateral refinement. From a story point of view, a rare Discipline’s value lies in its ability to surprise other characters, not in its raw power. A character with a new Discipline is a mystery to other Kindred. Perhaps she’s a resource to exploit or a menace to destroy, but no matter what, she’s someone to watch.





Although novel Disciplines might be more specialized than the “old favorites,” don’t let them be *too* specialized. Think of how many ways you can use increased strength, influence over people’s emotions, or communication with animals. Since discovering clever uses for a Discipline is part of the fun of having them, a Discipline that’s too narrowly focused might be boring.

Make sure new Disciplines do not have levels that render earlier powers useless and/or redundant. For example, if a fictitious Discipline creates a small bank of fog at one dot, you shouldn’t have it create a much larger bank of otherwise identical fog at four dots. That makes the initial dot effectively pointless and weakens the Discipline’s utility overall besides. Instead, allow earlier powers to get better as the character improves, and introduce new effects or variations as the Discipline advances. For example, if one dot creates ordinary fog, four dots might create a smaller area of mystically impenetrable fog that renders even supernatural senses useless.

While it may appear that the first dot is now obsolete, in truth both dots still have utility – the fourth dot may render supernatural enemies relatively helpless, but it covers less ground and also immediately alerts foes that there is a supernatural enemy nearby. What’s more, if the character is known locally as the only wielder of fog-based powers (and new Disciplines are often easy to track), any survivors of the attack are sure to seek her out for revenge. By contrast, the first dot not only covers more territory (and is still quite effective against mortals and others without supernatural senses), but since the fog registers as nothing more than ordinary weather, if used cleverly enemies might not immediately connect its presence to the character either.

Another good tip is not to invent a whole Discipline if one or two new Devotions would work just as well. A lot of players start off with a couple of good ideas for new vampiric powers, but can’t quite get a whole Discipline concept out of them, and wind up padding the rest of their Discipline’s ranks with redundant or unrelated powers. Rather than going to that all trouble, consider abandoning the levels that don’t work and just creating a new Devotion or two that accomplish the same things instead. This is particularly true if the powers of the proposed new Discipline could theoretically be derived from existing ones without stretching the imagination too far in the process.

Another temptation to avoid with Disciplines is designing one centered around the idea of making Kindred seem more human again, or similarly one that is specifically designed to help them retain their Humanity and suppress the Beast. Vampiric powers may draw on, exaggerate or play off of different aspects of life, but they can never truly allow a Kindred to get closer to it even temporarily. Even the evolutionary advances of the Coils of the Dragon are designed to make vampires better at their role as predators, not return them to their humanity. If all it took was developing a Discipline to allow a Kindred to really conquer the Beast or even come close to approximating true humanity once again, these powers would have been created by penitent vampires long ago. Characters who wish to return to their mortal life or find victory over the Beast can look to Golconda or any other spiritual truth they like, but new Disciplines will *never* provide the answers they seek.

On the other hand, watch out for Discipline arms races. New Disciplines might come from a desire to build characters who are more powerful than anyone else’s. If a player succeeds, other players could want to play characters of the same bloodline or create their own super-characters with even more powerful Disciplines. Such escalation can ruin your chronicle.

Alas, Storytellers can fall into this trap just as easily as players. You can feel a great temptation to create a bloodline of Kindred that is tougher than the standard clans, especially if you intend a member to oppose the players’ characters. This falls into the category of adversarial Storytelling, which gives you reason enough not to do it.



KILLER DISCIPLINES?

One form of specialized Discipline presents a special danger. You might feel tempted to create a Discipline geared toward combat, which enables its possessor to slaughter all opposition. Resist this temptation. *This goes for Storytellers as well as players!*

“Killer Disciplines” really aren’t as much fun as they sound. For one thing, they usually aren’t good for anything *but* killing enemies. They don’t offer many opportunities for the devious cunning and intrigue that forms so great a part of Kindred existence.

Slaughtering your enemies is also not a great strategy for characters. A Kindred who racks up a body count of other vampires — or even mortals — will almost certainly frighten his elders enough that they plot his elimination. Elders have lots of ways to destroy a loose cannon without getting into a fight.

Most importantly, **The Requiem** is a Storytelling game. Combat has its place, but it’s fundamentally a game about making choices, not about how many foes one kills before being destroyed.

SELECT THE POWERS

Assuming your Storyteller likes the concept of your Discipline, you can move on to defining the specific powers gained with each dot. Your Storyteller might not let you design the whole Discipline. She might want to leave some of the powers a surprise for your character.

The first power is always the weakest, though it can be very useful. Look at the initial powers in the standard Disciplines. Extra-keen senses (with occasional psychic flashes) or issuing one-word commands does not crush all opposition and establish one as a blood god of the night. They can be awfully handy, though, and give your character a crucial edge in her endeavors.

The first power in a Discipline tends to be subtle. These capabilities add a drop of the supernatural to some natural ability, or at least to some feature common to all Kindred. For instance, the first dot of Majesty makes its user seem very interesting and attractive... but some people are that way naturally. A single dot of Celerity lets a Kindred be frighteningly quick, but anyone can try to be quick. It’s simply difficult for those who aren’t inherently inclined toward it.

As a Kindred masters a Discipline, its applications often become flashier and more explicitly supernatural, as well as more powerful. No one could mistake the effects of Sovereignty for anything less than a magical effect, while no mortal could ever achieve the blinding speed of five dots of Celerity. Ordinary people certainly don’t summon waves of plague or conjure legions of walking corpses, either.

The fourth and fifth powers are, naturally, the most formidable. At this point, a Discipline should grant some crushing advantage over mere mortals. Kindred who possess four dots in a Discipline are deadly fiends whom mortals defeat with difficulty. This potency does not need to involve combat, either. A Kindred with four dots of Auspex, for example, can learn a mortal’s secrets and goals by listening to his thoughts — very useful for extortion, temptation or for getting the hell out of the way before the mortal attacks.

Try to avoid overlap with existing Disciplines unless you explicitly design your new Discipline as a variation on one of the old standards. If a Discipline leaves players thinking, “I’ve seen that before,” it just doesn’t seem very exciting.

In particular, don’t make your new Discipline better at something that a standard Discipline already does, especially at the same level. If your new Discipline is better at concealment than Obfuscate, why would anyone learn Obfuscate? If it permits greater changes of form than Protean, who needs Protean?





Watch out for redundant powers within a Discipline, too. Unless you run an “elders” chronicle, you have to define the Discipline with just five powers. That’s not many. If one power is merely a stronger or more complete version of an earlier effect, players might feel that the lesser power is a waste of experience points.

GAME MECHANICS

After you work out the general effect of each Discipline level, work out the details by assigning game mechanics.

- Does the power require a test pool? Not all of them do. Some Discipline powers have fixed effects. Vigor, for instance, simply adds points to Strength-based test pools, Speed and jumping distances.
- If the power does require a draw, what traits go into the pool? A Discipline’s powers usually all stem from the same Attribute category, be it Mental, Physical or Social. Attribute + Skill + Discipline dots is the basic combination. You should have a strong and cogent reason for ever using Resolve, Composure or Stamina proactively as part of the user’s invocation draw, though it can happen.

Note that most Disciplines use the same category of Attributes throughout. Mental Disciplines use Mental Attributes, social Disciplines use Social Attributes. If you break with this custom, address the fact and give a sensible reason other than, “My character has lots of dots in that Attribute.”

- What modifiers apply? As noted previously for many Discipline powers, you add or subtract a modifier from the test pool to reflect how some Kindred (or other supernatural creatures) might be harder to affect than others, situational distractions, how much information is sought, or other concerns. The power might receive other modifiers, increasing or decreasing the test pool, to reflect special circumstances. Is the power affected by the presence of blood ties (see p. 228) between user and subject?

- Does the number of successes drawn have any influence on the power’s effect? Some Disciplines have all-or-nothing effects or effects in which the difference between a single success and many successes is merely a matter of degree. Others can unpredictably produce greater or lesser effects on a target. One success, as always, indicates a weak, marginal effect on the target. Three successes indicate a more pronounced effect. Five or more successes represent an amazing success with greater than normal effect. Failures on a chance draw always results in something bad happening to the character if any potential for it exists. Resistance Attributes usually modify the activation draw based on the Discipline’s function as a Mental, Physical or Social power, or they serve as the basis for a defensive test pool in a contested draw. (Unless some overwhelming circumstance applies, any draw to resist a power should be reflexive).

For example, a power that uses Intelligence as the invoker’s base Attribute is modified by Resolve. This means the subject’s Resolve is subtracted from the user’s test pool or is drawn as a contested test pool. The rule of thumb is that if a power has gradations of effect, in which each success individually accounts for increasing results, the subject’s Resistance trait is subtracted from the user’s test pool. If the power has an all-or-nothing effect, the subject’s player gets a draw of his own that is compared to the user’s activation draw. See p. 25 of *Mind’s Eye Theatre* for more on this design principle. (Note that mortals typically have limited capacity to resist the supernatural abilities of the undead, as the living are traditional victims of Kindred power. It’s part of their job in the chronicle. At the very least, they have no Blood Potency to bolster contested draws. Even if they are entitled to a contested draw, it’s probably a test pool of a single trait because their Blood Potency is effectively zero.)

- What subjects does a power affect? Some Disciplines, such as Celerity, Resilience and Vigor, affect the user herself. Others affect a single person, a number of people or everyone in an area. Still others might change a Kindred's surroundings in some way. See the following for a set of standard tables that relate a Discipline's effect to the number of successes drawn.

- Does the power cost Vitae? Many powers of the standard Disciplines do not cost Vitae to use, or one Vitae fuels the power for a full scene. Disciplines that only one faction favors, such as Crúac or unique bloodline Disciplines, generally cost Vitae to use. The powers of a novel Discipline should probably cost Vitae, too, to reflect their lack of development. Only the most lethal or efficacious powers, or powers that never fail to have full effect should cost Willpower points.

STANDARD MODELS FOR DISCIPLINES

As a convenience, we offer some of the more common design models for Discipline powers. These tables can help a new Discipline stay roughly equal to the “old standards.” The successes drawn indicate a character's degree of success.

The effects of a power can vary in several ways. Most simply, they can cause damage in proportion to successes drawn, just like a mundane attack. Discipline powers can also vary in duration, the number of targets they affect, and their area of effect.

DIRECT, SINGLE-TARGET ATTACKS

Discipline powers that inflict actual points of damage work just like mundane combat. The player draws for the character to strike the target, which determines the amount of damage dealt.

Disciplines, however, can employ traits other than the Strength or Dexterity used in mundane combat, and can call upon various traits for the subject's protection. For instance, a “psychic attack” power might use Intelligence + Skill + Discipline dots for the “attack” or invocation draw, with the target's Resolve for the Resistance modifier. The invocation draw may succeed, fail or yield disaster, with appropriate effects.

Failure: The power doesn't activate, or it doesn't affect the target.

Success: The power causes damage normally.

If the attack succeeds, each success indicates one point of damage.

The ability to inflict aggravated damage should never be less than a three-dot power.

You can also use this system for attacks that reduce a target's combat abilities in some way other than Health. A power might reduce one of a character's Attributes for a time or strike him blind. Dominate and Majesty are examples of “attacks” that do not cause harm at all – they just change the target's thoughts or emotions.

DURATION

Duration can be a factor for a power in one of two ways. The invocation draw of a power might indicate a duration. Alternatively, the player can modify an invocation draw. Attempting a longer duration than normal means subtracting from the pool. Sacrificing duration may add to the pool.

A.1 – TYPICAL DISCIPLINE EFFECT DURATIONS

Successes	Normal Duration	Subtle Duration
1	two turns	two turns
2	five turns	one hour or scene
3	five minutes	one chapter
4	10 minutes	one month
5+	one hour or scene	one month





An attack might have a fixed effect on the target, regardless of successes drawn — for instance, a power to strike a foe blind. You can't make someone *more* blind, so successes on an effect draw indicate a duration instead of a degree of damage.

Powers that affect the target in particularly subtle or non-damaging ways may last much longer.

No handicap is ever permanent — at least not for vampires. If nothing else, a victim can restore lost traits with experience points. A vampire can remove many other indirectly damaging effects if she is willing to suffer lethal damage. A Kindred could cure his blindness by putting out his eyes and re-growing them, for example.

If a character wants to try for an extra-long duration for a power, the player subtracts one from the effect draw for every step up the duration table that he wants. If a character wants to try to blind a foe for a full minute (two steps up the duration table), the player subtracts two from the activation test pool. If he succeeds at all, he's sure the blindness lasts at least one minute.

MULTIPLE-TARGET EFFECTS

Some powers affect a number of people or other targets — potentially as many as are within range. The power's effect is otherwise fixed. See the Majesty power of Awe for an example. The player can draw for the power's effect and hope that many targets succumb, or the player can subtract points and hope for an all-or-nothing effect on the desired number of people. Additionally, affecting more than three vampires or six mortals ought to incur additional penalties: subtract one from your test pool for every additional subject to be affected.

Successes	Targets Affected
1 success	one person/other target
2 successes	two targets, or a quarter of targets
3 successes	six targets, or half the targets
4 successes	20 targets, or almost all targets

DOUBLY VARIABLE EFFECTS

In certain rare cases in which a power's effect can vary in two ways — number of targets and degree of effect — Storytellers may choose to use an invocation draw and an effect draw. Doing so breaks with custom, so it shouldn't be used frequently, but it can make for some interesting and dramatic powers, and is especially suitable to those at high levels. One factor modifies the invocation draw, and the effect draw describes the second factor. For instance, a power could blind multiple people for a varying length of time. The Storyteller could apply a penalty to the invocation draw based on the number of targets the character wants to affect. Say, -1 for two targets, -2 for six targets, and so on. If the attack succeeds, the effect draw could use the duration table to determine how long the targets remain blind. In other cases, the Storyteller might prefer to modify the invocation draw based on the severity of the desired effect, and let the effect draw determine how many people succumb to the power.

DESIGNING DEVOTIONS

Devotions are combinations of Disciplines that yield unique effects based on the interactions of those powers. Unlike regular Disciplines, Devotions do not progress — they're single-purpose capabilities that stand by themselves. For more on Devotions, see p. 210.

Designing a Devotion works much like designing a Discipline and is subject to Storyteller approval. The guidelines for designing other Disciplines in this section can help you with Devotions, at least as far as power and function are concerned. The first step is to decide



what a Devotion does. The second step is to decide which Disciplines are necessary to create the effect. The final step is translating the Devotion into the rules and deciding its costs.

You don't need any help in satisfying step one. If you want to create a Devotion, you need an idea for its function. Where this transitions to step two is in deciding how to break the Devotion down into two or more Discipline influences. Use the Disciplines themselves as guidelines. A Devotion that involves preternatural senses probably requires some degree of Auspex, while a Devotion that invokes the power of personality likely requires Majesty or Nightmare, depending on what the power is designed to do.

This process is imprecise, more art than science. Because Disciplines generate linear, static effects, sometimes a bit of guesswork has to be done. Take Auspex, for example. If your Devotion focuses on supernatural perception, how much Auspex is necessary? If perception is the focus of the power, one or two dots worth of Auspex probably suffice, based on the first two dots of that Discipline's powers. If projection of the senses or consciousness is required, three or more dots are likely required. A simple but uncanny projection of senses is probably three dots, an overt application of sense or awareness is probably four dots, and a full, revelatory condition probably requires five dots. Again, you have a lot of leeway here. Devotions are very much instinctual, so go with what you both determine to "feel right."

Most Devotions are combinations of only two Disciplines, but that precedent shouldn't limit you. It's not unheard of for vampires to have Devotions that require knowledge of three or even four Disciplines. More than that, however, and the power becomes so obtuse or specific that it's probably outside the Kindred realm of potential.

As with creation of Disciplines, be wary of players attempting to design Devotions just to create "killer combos," or that allow them to circumvent major restrictions placed on an existing power or even an entire Discipline. A Devotion that allows the Kindred to telepathically issue Animalism commands to any ghouléd beasts under his control over a range of several miles is probably acceptable. While a highly potent trick, its restrictive usage requirements means it must be carefully planned, and it does not usurp the role of Animalism in general. On the other hand, a Devotion that eliminates the need to make eye contact to use Dominate powers is not acceptable. It takes away a signature element of the Discipline, which also happens to be one of the major balancing factors surrounding its use.

As a rule, any Discipline restrictions removed by the use of a Devotion should be replaced in some fashion. For example, the Perfect Stranger Devotion allows the Kindred to circumvent the usual restriction of the Obfuscate power The Familiar Stranger and impersonate a specific individual. However, it also loses some of that power's utility with props and other objects in the process. While it offers a new capability, it does not make The Familiar Stranger obsolete by any means. Devotions should be logical extensions of how different Disciplines might combine to solve a problem, not simply ways for players to patch together unstoppable power combinations to defeat their enemies.

Devotions *always* have an activation cost, usually one Vitae unless their effects are particularly grandiose for their ease of learning.

The experience-point cost to learn a Devotion is roughly three times the total number of Discipline dots among its prerequisites. A Devotion that requires Dominate 2 and Vigor 3 of its would-be possessor costs about 15 experience points. Particularly powerful Devotions might cost as much as three experience points more, while particularly limited or specific Devotions might cost as many as three experience points less. As always, the Storyteller must be consulted throughout this process.

Also, Devotions that require activation draws use the power's highest-rated prerequisite Discipline as the basis for those draws, depending on what the power is designed to do.





That Discipline is the most advanced needed to master the Devotion's intricacies. So, the aforementioned power that requires Dominate 2 and Vigor 3 probably calls for Strength in its test pool. If the Dominate aspect of the power were higher than the Vigor requirement, it would likely call for Intelligence or Wits. If the highest requisite Disciplines are the same, decide which is most important to the Devotion's function and choose that one.



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Mind's Eye Theatre
THE REQUIEM™



Name: _____

Player: _____

Virtue: _____ Vice: _____

Clan: _____

Covenant: _____

ATTRIBUTES

Intelligence	●○○○○
Wits	●○○○○
Resolve	●○○○○
Strength	●○○○○
Dexterity	●○○○○
Stamina	●○○○○
Presence	●○○○○
Manipulation	●○○○○
Composure	●○○○○

MENTAL SKILLS (-3 unskilled)

Academics	○○○○○
Computer	○○○○○
Crafts	○○○○○
Investigation	○○○○○
Medicine	○○○○○
Occult	○○○○○
Politics	○○○○○
Science	○○○○○

PHYSICAL SKILLS (-1 unskilled)

Athletics	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○
Drive	○○○○○
Firearms	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○
Stealth	○○○○○
Survival	○○○○○
Weaponry	○○○○○

SOCIAL SKILLS (-1 unskilled)

Animal Ken	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○
Persuasion	○○○○○
Socialize	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○

MERITS

_____	○○○○○
_____	○○○○○
_____	○○○○○
_____	○○○○○
_____	○○○○○

FLAWS

EQUIPMENT

Size: _____
Speed (acting/running): ____ / ____
Initiative Mod: _____
Defense: _____ Armor: _____

HEALTH

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

WILLPOWER

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

VITAE

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

BLOOD POTENCY

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

HUMANITY

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

DERANGEMENTS

FAVORED ACTIONS

Action/Power	Traits	Pool
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		

CHARACTER TRAITS & POOLS

BASIC TRAITS

Perception Pool
 (Wits + Composure) = _____
 Defense
 (Lower of Wits or Dexterity) = _____
 Initiative Modifier
 (Dexterity+Composure) = _____
 Speed (Acting/Running) = _____ / _____

ATTACK POOLS

Unarmed Attack
 (Str + Brawl) = _____ (RES by Def + Armor)
 Melee Attack
 (Str + Weap + Dmg) = _____ (RES by Def + Armor)
 Firearms Attack
 (Dex + Firearms + Dmg) = _____ (RES by Armor)

MERIT BONUSES

FAVORED ACTIONS

Action/Power	Traits	Pool
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		
_____ (___ + ___ + ___) =		<input type="text"/>
(CONT/RES by _____)		

KEY RULES

ACTIONS & SUCCESSES

Instant Actions: Each character gets one per turn. Consist of a single draw.
Reflexive Actions: Take no time and occur as per the trait's description. Consist of a single draw.
Extended Actions: Take place over several turns or more; and consist of several draws.
CONT(ested) Draws: Both attacker and defender form a pool, draw, and then compare successes. Ties go to defender; otherwise subtract defender's successes from attacker for final number of attacker successes.
RES(isted) Draws: Subtract the defender's traits from attacker's pool before drawing.
Successes: A total of 10 is one success; every increment of 5 above that (15, 20, etc.) is an additional success.

COMBAT SUMMARY

Step 0: Mediate: Can the players resolve things without cards?
Step 1: Initiative: Draw one card + Initiative Modifier; lasts the whole combat
Step 2: Attack: Character with the highest Initiative attacks. A character may choose to hold his action until later in the turn.
Step 3: Resolve: Apply damage or other effects. Damage = attack successes.
Step 4: Repeat: Follow Initiative roster and repeat Steps 2 and 3 for every character until everyone has acted (this is the end of the turn). Then repeat again for the next turn (do not redraw Initiative).

*There's Music
In the Night*

*As the sun fades into memory
and the world falls into darkness,
the haunting notes*

*of the Danse Macabre echo,
calling the undead to play
their nightly games.*

*From turf wars in the streets
to cutting remarks at society parties,
old grudges spill fresh blood
as the Damned vie
for power and prominence.*

*It's a world without pity,
a world of predators.*

*Now that you're one of them,
it's your world too.*

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Vampire
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