

Anger is momentary madness, so control your passion or it will control you.

— Horace, *Epistles*

BLOOD RED + ASH GRAY

An adventure for Vampire the Requiem using the Storytelling Adventure System

by Will Hindmarch

STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

SCENES 12	MENTAL ●●●○ PHYSICAL ●●●○ SOCIAL ●●●○	XP LEVEL 35-74
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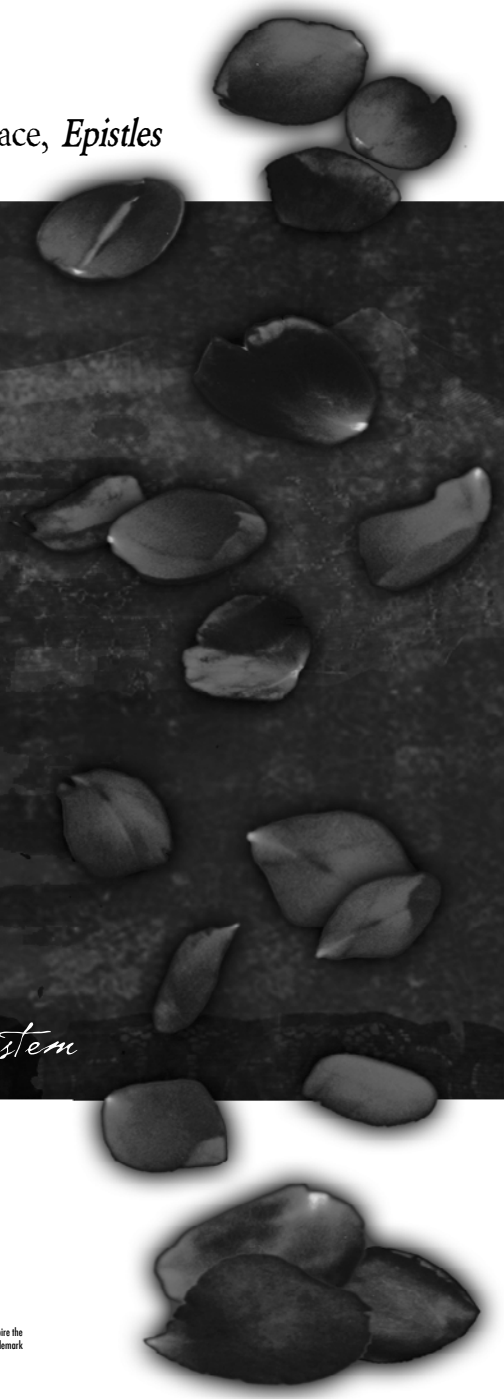
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“192. Manslaughter is the unlawful killing of a human being without malice.

(a) Voluntary--upon a sudden quarrel or heat of passion.

(b) Involuntary--in the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to felony; or in the commission of a lawful act which might produce death, in an unlawful manner, or without due caution and circumspection.”

— From the California penal code

“Thou shalt not kill.”

— The Sixth Commandment

Someone’s Requiem is over.

A vampire is dead — forever dead — and it’s the fault of a Beast from your coterie. Last night ended with the blinding red rush of frenzy and the Beast carrying hunger and teeth off into the night in search of trouble. This night begins in a dank concrete stairwell, underground, in the bloody and ashy remains of a fellow Kindred. Now this twisted murder mystery begins. You know who did the killing — it was one of you.

But who is the victim?

Introduction

“Blood Red and Ash Gray” is a complete, playable crime story for your **Vampire: The Requiem** chronicle. It’s partly an investigative procedural episode and partly a tale of tangled motives among a cast of criminal monsters. Only you, the Storyteller, should read this guide to the story initially. What follows is a frank how-to guide — containing characters, scenes, clues — which you and your troupe will assemble into a dramatic story unique to your own imaginations and choices, using the game rules found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and **Vampire: The Requiem**.

Think of this product as a story kit, as if you’d bought a piece of modern furniture and brought it home in a big flat box. Inside, you’ll find all the parts you need to build this story at home, through play. The tools you need to put this story together are in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. When you get your troupe together, you’ll use all these parts to build something together. It might not look quite the picture on the box, but that’s fine. Your troupe doesn’t get together to look at a story, it gets together to build them.



PAGES TO PRINT

For your convenience, here are the page ranges that you’ll find especially valuable to print. We’re assuming that you’ll read most of this on your computer screen, and only want to print out the vital in-play reference material, like character sheets, charts and scenes. Here they are:

Relationship Diagram	17
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So this is a nuts-and-bolts thing. The parts in this kit are designed to make the actual job of being a Storyteller easier, to make the craft of Storytelling fast and fun for you. The heavy artful majesty you’ve read about — the transcendent game experiences that shock and satisfy as well as any novel — those come simply from doing a great job. Everything in here is intended to take up the slack so you can focus on doing that great job.

The basic parts that make up this story are simple: Storyteller characters and scenes. Each of them can be used in different ways to keep the story building towards its climactic end.

Blood Red and Ash Gray

Characters

This story pits the troupe’s characters against an ensemble of undead low-lives, each with their own motives and goals. Managing these characters is the key to making this story work. The scenes that make up this story unfold according to the motives and wills of the players’ characters and these. No matter what happens, it’s the characters who determine why things happens.

Scenes

All that said, a story is ultimately about what characters do, not just why they’re willing to do them. Every scene in this story is motivated by a decision made by a character. The motivating character might be one of the players’ vampires or one of yours.

Some scenes happen because the characters go out and make them happen. Others happen because one of your Storyteller characters happens to be in the same place — or because she seeks out the troupe’s coterie in pursuit of revenge.

Don’t be afraid to rearrange the scenes in your story, activating one twice and skipping another completely, if it jives with the constantly changing motives of the characters interacting with the players’ coterie. In this story, what happens is essential, but so are the reasons why these things happen. In every scene, strive to get across one or more of the Storyteller characters’ motivations to the players.

Overview

This is a story about consequences, about finding answers and paying for them. The story begins with one or more of the characters waking up at the scene of a grisly crime where, in the throes of frenzy, they brought Final Death to one of the Damned. The story ends when those wronged by the characters are finally satisfied, whether that means the characters pay the price (fair or not) for committing this crime or they utterly destroy every soul that might seek out revenge.

There’s no arch-criminal behind the scenes here, pulling the characters’ strings. No convoluted conspiracy was organized to dupe them into performing a frenzied hit on another of their kind. No one wanted this to happen.

This is a story about how the secrets and conspiracies of the Danse Macabre get interrupted and broken down by the chaos of the street and the brutality of the Beast. This is a story where the fate of the city is not at stake, but the fate of the characters’ allegiances and reputations might be, and the fate of a broken heart surely is.



WHAT’S A TREATMENT?

treatment: *n.* In Hollywood parlance, a treatment is a short prose description of a movie’s story, written before production begins. A treatment describes all the major dramatic “beats” of the story and sometimes includes directorial or developmental information, too (i.e., it doesn’t necessarily restrict itself to relating the story).

In Storytelling terms, the treatment is the Storyteller’s core overview of the story, from authorial notes on subtext all the way to frank narrative tips. Nothing is implied in a Storytelling treatment; this is where the author breaks it all down in brief for the Storyteller at home.



Treatment

A member of the coterie fell into frenzy last night. Because of fear, anger or hunger, the vampire’s Beast pulled him screaming into the night. After that, for the frenzied vampire, there’s nothing to recall except a bloody blur.

That frenzied vampire wakes up, with his humane mind back in his skull, at the bottom of a windowless concrete stairwell, on the lowest level of an underground parking garage. His clothes are caked with a cracked paste of grainy soot and blood. Across from him, heaped on the floor, is a desiccated corpse — dried up like an exhumed body — dressed in clothes too young to match the body’s dead hide. From underneath the brown, split lips peek a pair of yellow fangs.

This is a dead vampire. The frenzied vampire — whom we’ll call the Killer for the rest of this story — killed him during his blackout, when the Beast was at the wheel. The Killer may deny it, may not want to believe it, may not accept that it’s true, but it is.

The sound of footsteps coming down the stairs is what woke the Killer. It’s the rest of his coterie, who’ve finally found him. So it begins.

The action opens here, with the gore of the crime scene underfoot, and the clock ticking. The characters are standing in the middle of a Masquerade breach, up to their ankles in evidence. They must make the age-old choice at the heart of so many great criminal tales: What to do with the body?

After that, the story expands to include a half-dozen other vampires. Do the characters investigate the truth about what happened to the corpse?

Overview of Treatment

(It's not a "who done it?" but a "who'd we do it to?") Or do they simply hide their trail as best they can and try to forget it ever happened?

Whatever the players' characters do, the Victim's allies notice the dead vampire is missing and seek out help to find him. A freelance Hound — they call him the Eye — is dispatched to find answers, and this puts him on the trail of the characters. Meanwhile, the victim's lover — named Sash — seeks out only as much truth as she needs to get revenge.

The middle of the story finds the cast of characters on each other's trails, circling and plotting, meeting by chance, meeting by design, and lying all the while. The Eye investigates the Victim's murder. The characters may investigate the Victim. Sash puts out word that she wants revenge. And all the while the Killer is haunted by his Beast's memories in the form of gruesome flashbacks.

Once all the pieces are in motion, the story unfolds how it unfolds. The characters and your Storyteller characters are in the mix, now, colliding and ricocheting in the dark city, until someone finally gets what he or she wants. If the players want the story to turn out in their favor, they have to manipulate your characters, getting all the pieces into the right spots on the board so they can make their climactic move.

Broadly speaking, though, the story — raising the question of whether or not the characters get away with murder — ends one of two ways: They do or they don't. Both of the endings of this story assume the possibility that they do not (the odds are against them), but include details for the event that the players pull the characters' asses out of the fire.

How it ends depends on the choices the players make, and how those choices provoke or placate the other vampires in the mix. Because **Vampire** is a tragic horror game, a happy ending is impossible. The question, however, is who gets stuck with the unhappy ending? Is it the characters, who suffer official punishment at the hands of a powerful Kindred or are brought down by the revenge of a heartbroken lover? Or is it that heartbroken vampire, whose lover goes unavenged? Or is it the Kindred landlord who finds himself forced to pardon and protect criminal vampires — the characters! — who have politicked their way to a happy ending?


But if the troupe's coterie wins its happy ending, it has done so through blind, inhuman murder. The murderers have won. They are indebted to the Beast. And they should expect little justice when some other frenzied vampire happens to slay one of them in some dank concrete corner of the city.



THE KILLER AND HIS VICTIM

In this guide to the story, we refer to the character (or characters) responsible for the Final Death of Hooper, the victim at the heart of this tale, simply as "the Killer."

Sometimes, you'll see Hooper referred to simply as "the Victim." This is just a reminder that every character in this story is potentially a placeholder for whatever preexisting character from your ongoing chronicle you would like to drop into the role.



Telling the Story

"Blood Red and Ash Gray" is a dynamic story with a lot of presumed freedom for the players and their characters. If you're not an experienced Storyteller comfortable with improvising in response to unexpected player choices and character actions, this can be intimidating. Even guru Storytellers have stories that get away from them.

In the case of this story, the scenes and the Storyteller character that follow are your tools for keeping the story within the play-space you want. That play-space might cover physical territory within the World of Darkness (e.g., just the domains of Cicero and Sol), a time period (e.g., you want the story to unfold in fewer than four or five nights), or a dramatic frame (e.g., you want to give the story a particular theme). These are all fair game. As the Storyteller, it's not in your best interest (or the best interest of fun) to force any of these factors into play, but it is your right to strive for these. (See "Just Say It," p. 5.)

The scenes in this guide are probably not the only scenes, or kinds of scenes, that'll play out in your version of "Blood Red and Ash Gray." If the characters try to get away from the Eye rather than be interviewed by him (in the scene, "Interviewed," p. 51), you might play a scene dramatizing a foot chase (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 65). If the characters try to follow Sash back to her haven, you might play out a suspense scene using the "Shadowing" mechanism on p. 76 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. The story goes where it goes.

But the scenes in here represent the heart of this story, the scenes that define it as a play experience, and the scenes you should fall back on when the players have escaped the Eye or found Sash's haven.

Think ahead, before it's time to play this story, about how you might connect such unexpected scenes back to those in this guide. If the



SCARY VS. FUNNY

During one of our playtest sessions of this scenario, the story took a noticeable turn from horror-suspense, passed by intrigue, and arrived at a comedy of errors. Some horrific (and even grotesque) scenes unfolded — mostly centering on strong-arm “interview” tactics turned bloody through frenzy — but the players’ choices led them from one unfortunate situation to another.

Rather than coming across with the tense scheming and backstabbing of, say, an episode of *The Shield*, our version of the story this time came out a little closer to the flavor of a Guy Ritchie crime tale, like *Snatch*. The players got their good time out of the story by owning that atmosphere and boldly proceeding along whatever course their characters believed was smart, even though the vampire they tried to extort — Sol — knew more about what was going on than they did.

On the one hand, this session was a failure, insofar as we had intended to create a creepy atmosphere of suspense and gruesome intrigue but ended up with something quite different. In hindsight, though, the story could be seen to be much more macabre than it felt in the moment. Some situations seem funny in the moment because the players intuitively get a comic shock when they realize their own mistakes, and because it’s sometimes just funny to think about the preposterousness of hiding a body in a refrigerator. (“How did we get ourselves into a situation where, when we get home, we’re *hoping* there’s still a body in our refrigerator?”)

Vampire is robust enough that it can survive the occasional digression into gallows humor and still come out with a horrific feel. If comic relief is fair game in a horror story, working as a pressure valve to let you and the players prepare for the next stretch of harrowing drama, then a whole story that turns out more grotesque than macabre can serve the same purpose in the bigger picture of the whole chronicle. Don’t try to strong-arm your version of this story into something it’s not. You can coax, encourage, entice and provoke, but you cannot force it. At that point, you might as well just write a story, rather than playing one.

Ultimately, you end up with the story that unfolds. In one telling of this story, we aimed for the macabre and ended up hitting something merely morbid. So it goes.



characters flee the Eye, they might end up running into Cicero’s Crew (use the scene, “Face to Face”) or they might force their way right into Sash’s secret haven (use the scene, “Confrontation”).

If nothing else, the scenes in this guide can inspire you when it comes time to improvise. Strip out the action descriptions for Sash or Joe Coat or anyone else, and use them in whatever scenes emerge naturally over the course of your tale. Refer back to our scenes to get yourself into character.

Starting with Act Two, most of our scenes emerge from the motivations of the Storyteller characters provided herein. So even if the troupe’s characters start to wander away from the story, one of these scenes can unfold whenever you decide Sash has found out about the coterie and gotten her people together to hurt them (“Revenge”) or when the Eye comes calling (“Interviewed”).

Defining the Play-Space

What is the play-space? It’s the settings, time period and thematic tone under which your story unfolds. A play-space can be as big as a city or planet, or as small as a single room. In a completely free-form, improvisational storytelling session, the players might be able to send their characters anywhere, from the court of the local Prince to the Tokyo airport. In other stories, such as this one, the play-space is meant to be a little tighter.

Think of the play-space as the game level, the mission objectives and the atmosphere. This story is designed to unfold in a few urban neighborhoods, involve the simple objective of resolving the consequences of the Killer’s actions, and have an atmosphere of paranoia and desperate suspense. But you can change all of that.

If you’re comfortable handling all of the options that come with total freedom, you could follow the characters to a new city as they flee the wrath of Sol or Cicero. The purpose of defining the play-space in a Storytelling game is simply to make the process of playing out the story easier to manage. You sacrifice a degree of freedom for the sake of protecting the fun. In our experience, it’s usually a good exchange.

This is also how you help make a story be *about* something. This is one way you define a story as a “high concept” drama: It’s a story about four vampires who try to get away with murder. Do they succeed or fail? That’s determined by the players’ choices. But if the characters skip town right at the start of the story, then the whole premise of the

Blood Red and Ash Gray

Telling the Story

story has changed. Now it's something like, "a story about a bunch of vampires who go on the run after committing murder." That could be a great story, but it's not this one.

So how do you define the play-space for the players?

Just Say It

You'll find no more reliable method for defining play-space than this one: Just say it. Tell the players, "This is a story about the consequences of [the Killer]'s frenzy, and finding out how your coterie fares in the neighborhood over the nights that follow." You might read them the italicized blurb at the top of page 1.

The point is, don't be afraid to frame the story frankly. You're not putting on a show for the players, exactly. You're putting on a show for them *and with them*. Keeping the core premise secret from them doesn't do any of you any real good.

In a Storytelling game, the suspense comes from finding out how the story unfolds and ends, and maybe what morals, allusions or allegories emerge — it does not come from discovering what the premise is. You can't get anywhere without putting the key in the ignition.

If the players start to wander too far from the play-space, say it point-blank: "If Edgar goes off to hide out in the suburbs, he'll be off-stage until he comes back." You might still let him contact Allies or spend Resources or whatever, but it'll all happen "off-screen." (You can always make exceptions to reward compelling ideas the troupe comes up with, or to follow the story in whatever direction it goes, if that's where the story that you and the troupe want to follow is headed.)

That said, "Blood Red and Ash Gray" is a story that can survive some substantial tangents. These scenes might happen weeks apart, as the story moves back and forth from plot to subplot in your chronicle. See the section called "Plotting," p. 7.

Theme

Theme is a tool for defining the play-space, too. By keeping your story's theme in mind during play, you can infuse it into scenes and characterizations to evoke a tangible tone that the whole troupe can plug into. This can help the troupe stay together, portraying their characters through the same dramatic filter.

The story's themes are premises and questions. The answers to these questions, and the variations you play on the thematic premises, are whatever emerges organically through play. The best thematic ques-

tions for a Storytelling chapter don't have a single answer. Rather, the choices the players make for their characters offer provocative answers worth thinking about on the drive home.

For example, consider this thematic question: Would you rather exist under an ugly truth or a comfortable lie? Different characters will answer in different ways. Each answer reveals something about the character — maybe even something that surprises the player who created her!

Built-In Themes

Naturally, you can use this story to explore other themes, but here are two that have been built into this story for you:

- **Secrets cause strife.** All the major agents in this story have some secret motivating them to make choices that put them in conflict with other characters. Maybe if these Kindred could be more honest with each other, their relationships wouldn't be so self-destructive, but that's not the way things are in the Danse Macabre. Secret threads get tangled around your legs, tie you down and hang you until you are dead.

- **Guilt.** Is it something human or something more base? Is it the Man that feels guilt, or does the Beast know it, too? Does the Beast torment the vampire with it, or is it the remains of the mortal psyche that does that? Is guilt something we choose to feel or is it a force like gravity, pressing down on our conscience? Is a crime without guilt a greater sin than the crime that's regretted? Is ignorance an antidote for guilt? Would you rather know an ugly truth or go on under a comfortable lie?

Raising the Thematic Questions

Evoking your story's themes may be easier than you think. Just keeping them in mind may cause you to plant symbolic and thematic elements into your descriptions of characters and settings. Certainly it will implicitly influence the choices you make for the Storyteller characters.

But a solid, reliable way to intentionally raise your story's thematic questions is through the dialogue of Storyteller characters. In this story, you might have Calla outright ask the Killer, if she uses Auspex to "read" the truth of Hooper's death, "Would you rather hear an ugly truth or stay with your comfortable lie?"

A character's Retainer or Mentor might suggest that "Guilt isn't human; it's animal. Damnation kills us, but not guilt."

Before the scene, "Punishment," you might roleplay a simple scene in the tense quiet of the drive to the site of punishment. Along the way,

Val or some other Kindred might look out the window at the mortals walking by beggars on the street and ask, “Do you think the Beast can guilt-trip us? Or is that something we do to ourselves?”

It’s heavy-handed, and sometimes inelegant, but effective.

Mood

Mood is, for many Storytellers, both easier to evoke and more useful for keeping the troupe within the same tonal range. Mood is worked into every description you share with the troupe, to varying degrees, whether you mean for it to happen or not. That is, whatever mood you give your narration becomes the mood of the story.

Using mood is more intuitive than intellectual. You know how to sense the mood of a scene you read or watch, and you can recreate those moods by imitating them. (It’s the highest form of flattery.)

Put a lot of forlorn people — beggars, drug seekers — in the background of a melancholy scene. Describe the loud noise and flashing lights of the nightclub in a scene where the characters are barely restraining themselves, where panic is in the air. Punctuate a character’s dialogue with flickering fluorescent lights or the roar of a passing fire truck.

The thing about mood is that, while you can hone your ability to create it, it’s difficult to teach. Experience is the best way to learn. Look to the descriptions in each scene for fuel in your own narration for creating mood. Read it aloud, directly, so you can focus on other things.

A Chapter in Your Chronicle

This story was written with the expectation that you would play it as a part of your ongoing **Vampire: The Requiem** chronicle. If that’s not how you’ll be putting this story to use, see “As A Stand-Alone Tale,” below.

The trouble with designing a story for your chronicle, of course, is that we have no idea what’s happening in your chronicle. What are the laws as dictated by the Prince of your city? What are the dominant covenants? Who’s controlling them? What’s the penalty for ending the Requiem of another Kindred?

You’ll have to make some alterations to this story to make it fit seamlessly with other chapters in your chronicle. For advice on adapting the characters and settings of this story to your chronicle’s city, see “Background and Setup” on p. 9.

To fit this story into the timeline or overarching plot of your

chronicle, you have only to wait until one of the troupe’s characters falls to frenzy.

“Blood Red and Ash Gray” is written to create a meaningful, complex consequence to the act of frenzying. Tie this story into your chronicle by setting it immediately after a character in your troupe’s coterie falls to the Beast in a frenzy of any kind — anger, hunger or fear. Be sure to refamiliarize yourself with the nature and game mechanics of frenzy. See **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 178-181. As the Storyteller, you decide how long a frenzy lasts and may take the reigns of the character’s Beast if he is not willing or able to portray the full horror and peril of its power.

For guidelines on setting up this story with the right kind of frenzy, see “Act One: Crime of Passion,” p. 34.

Player Control and Frenzy

Is it fair play to steal control of a player’s character and make him responsible for the Final Death of another Kindred? The simple answer: Yes.

The more meaningful answer is also more complicated. Some players may be upset to have their character usurped and steered into great danger, and rightfully so. Some players may resent having their character’s delicately preserved Humanity assaulted without their direct input — “But [my character] would never do that!” they cry. These are fair complaints.

You, as the Storyteller, have to gauge your own troupe’s willingness to participate in a story hook like this one. You get to decide which player’s character becomes the Killer, after all. Beyond that, you have ample ways to dial up or down the seriousness of the actual crime — the blood-clouded memories of frenzy are intentionally mined in Act One to provoke the horror of the unknown. The Killer, and even her player, don’t know the truth about what she has done. You get to decide that. The truth of the Killer’s crime is yours to decide. Was it self defense? Did the Victim beg for his life or dare the Killer to bring it on? (Does that matter?)

The doubt this generates not only in the character’s mind, but in the player’s, is an essential part of this story’s suspense. Does the player risk her character’s Humanity to find out what happened during that frenzy and satisfy her own curiosity? Does the character dare look her Beast in the eye during the scene, “Flashback?”

All that said, the overriding truth is this: **Vampire** is a horror game about personal responsibility, immorality and consequences,

and macabre monsters who do terrible things for the sake of their own survival. Frenzy and the Beast are key elements in this game, and vital expressions of its theme. Beyond that, all drama is based on conflict, and conflict isn't happy or fair. **Vampire** is a game about self-control, and being lost to the Beast is one of the costs that Kindred (and the players who decide their fates) pay for immortality.

Vampire can be nasty. The Requiem is a bitch. These are stories about monsters.



FLAW: AMNESIA

The Amnesia Flaw appears on p. 218 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. If it helps mitigate the hurt of having his character put at risk as the Killer is in this story, give the character that Flaw. This states, plainly, that the player gets something (an experience point or two) in exchange for having his character's frenzy turn into such a clusterfuck.

The period covered by this instance of the Flaw is very brief and may, through use of the "Flashback" scene, eventually be completely revealed to the player and his character. So this may be the only story where it's relevant. This gives the player good reason to draw out this story over multiple sessions, to maximize the payout he gets in the end. If this coincides somehow with the character's motives (maybe he has the Avoidance derangement and tries to ignore his problems until they go away, or maybe he has the Sloth Vice and puts off the inevitable confrontation with the truth in the hope that something will happen in the meantime to exonerate him), then drawing out the story in this way might be no big deal. To keep it from getting ridiculous, though, activate any of the scenes that stem from a Storyteller character's motivations — "Interviewed," "Brought In" or "Revenge," for example — to push the story into the third act and into its dramatic conclusion.



Adapting the Story to Your Chronicle

Most of the work involved in adapting this story to your ongoing chronicle surrounds the specifics of your setting's Kindred laws and the Storyteller characters presented later. Before you can do that, you'll have to understand who these characters are — and why. To blend the edges of these characters and their histories into the clay of your chronicle, see "The Cast," p. 14. For advice on measuring the stakes of Kindred laws in your city, see "State of the City," p. 10.

As a Stand-Alone Tale

Playing "Blood Red and Ash Gray" as a stand-alone story is even easier than integrating it into an ongoing chronicle. Without a previous story to provide the frenzy that kicks off this tale, this story simply begins *in media res* — in the middle of things — like lots of great suspense do. The protagonist who wakes up with a hole in his memory, next to a corpse, is a tested and true noir beginning.

You can use this same trick as part of an ongoing chronicle, too. If the chapters in your chronicle are episodic, rather than flowing steadily one into the next, you could use this story as the self-contained thriller it is. You'll have to worry about the same issues of player control described earlier, but the rush of suddenly being plunged into the heart of a bloody mystery might overcome that for some players. (Other players may simply be frustrated that their character is setup in this story without any choice on their behalf; avoid casting the character of such a player as the Killer.)

System: If you want a system for determining which character is the Killer in this story, when you don't have an earlier scene's frenzy to base this on, try this. Have every player roll Resolve + Composure, modified by the character's current Vitae (−1 if hungry, −2 if starving, as per **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 179). If two players tie for the fewest successes, have them each roll again until the tie is broken. The character with the fewest successes is the Killer.

Plotting

Don't confuse plot with story. The story is what happens. The plot is how you tell it.

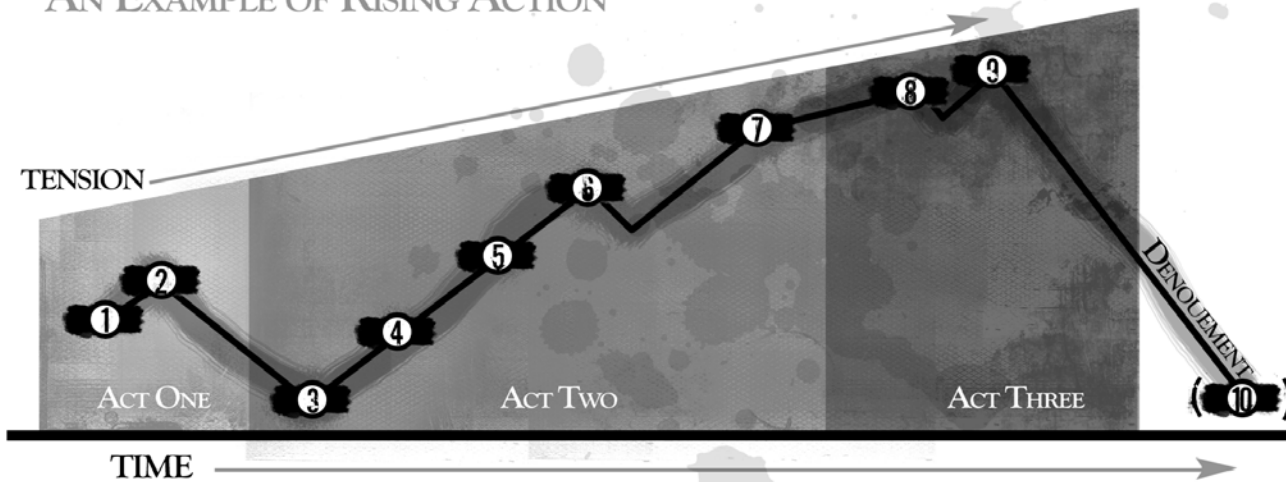
In "Blood Red and Ash Gray," the story is simple, but the plotting of the various scenes provided might get complicated. Some scenes may happen more than once. Some scenes may happen at unexpected times or at unexpected points in the plot. And time doesn't just move forward — some earlier parts of the story get told later through flashbacks, which are about as classic an example of plotting versus story as you're likely to find. The action shown through flashback isn't played out when the action took place (before the story), but when the flashback takes place (during Act Two).

In practice, plotting this story is easy. You'll do it on the fly in reaction to the player's choices and the need for action, suspense and drama.

What you really need to be aware of during play is the dramatic ten-

The Drama Escalates

AN EXAMPLE OF RISING ACTION



Object Lesson

Let's look at one example of how this story might play out, relative to the rising action. The story begins with "Crime Scene" (1), which is shocking and mysterious, but trumped immediately by the tension of the next scene, "The Evidence" (2), in which the characters try to dispose of the body without being caught — so the stakes are high.

Act Two begins with "Investigated" (3) when the characters catch wind that a Hound called the Eye is looking into the dis-

sion in every scene of the story. Regardless of what order the scenes happen in, they must have a dramatic potency that syncs with their place in the overall story. You may not know what the plot is until you play out the story, but you know roughly what its dramatic structure will be: Tension rises over the course of the story, with most scenes dialing up the suspense and the stakes as the action rises towards the climax of the story. You might play out a few moments of relief or dramatic setbacks (e.g., the space between scene 6 and scene 7 in the example above), but the overall track is the same: upward to the peak of practically unbearable tension.

When the climactic scene is done, and the characters are either triumphant or beaten, you get that final exhale — the denouement. The falling action.

This is when the characters (and the players) look back and take stock of what's happened and how they've changed. In a storytelling game, this is often absorbed into a part of the game: You award experience points and discuss, and dramatists, how the story went.

Scenes can happen during the denouement, too. Maybe the coterie returns to its haven to lick their wounds. Maybe they seek out their Sanctified confessor for spiritual aid. Maybe they report back to a covenant Mentor, to whom they reveal what they think the moral of the story is.

appearance of a Kindred on the night of the crime. The characters begin their own investigation, playing through two instances of the "Investigation" scene (4 and 5). Each step of their investigation more Kindred out to find the Killer and punish him, and so each scene cranks up the tension and the consequences. The characters put it all together in the scene "Revelation" (6), when they learn about Hooper's deal with Sol and the permission he's granted Sash to punish the Killer. Act Two ends when the players spin their wheels for too long trying to think their way out of the situation and you push things forward. The Eye finds them at the Rack, instigating the scene "Interviewed" (7). The Eye concludes that the characters are the culprits, and they know that he's leaving to turn them into someone.

Act Three begins with a "Confrontation" (8); the characters try to stop the Eye from reporting, but are too late. Knowing this, though, they are ready for Sash when she comes for "Revenge" (9) and, after getting her pinned down, turn her mind with Dominate. They assumed Sash was there to kill them — but through Dominate discover they were wrong.

The final scene (10) is a quiet, ominous meditation: Sash, in her grief, still only intended to hurt them less than the Killer hurt her. Her mercy reveals a Humanity that the Killer couldn't hold onto in the throes of his Beast. But will her broken heart break through her altered memories and bring her back some other night, without that Humanity?

Plot or Subplot

The scenes in this story can happen over the course of a few nights or a few months. Pull them apart and play out other scenes from other stories in between these scenes if you like. Let this story hum in the background while other stories unfold in the foreground for a few chapters.

If you have an ongoing chronicle, you might run “Blood Red and Ash Gray” as a long story arc, over the course of several chapters. Act One could be a whole session of play, after which the scenes of Act Two unfold here and there, as diversions during other stories, over several weeks of play. The characters’ investigation unfolds slowly, or they give it up altogether, thinking that they’ve gotten away with murder... until the Eye shows up asking all the questions they don’t want to answer. The characters try to hold out, hoping to stall the Eye until he gives up, but once the action drives the characters to the end of the second act — the point-of-no-return scenes called the Hinge — and the dramatic tension is at the right height, this story comes back to the fore. Act Three unfolds in one night of tense and passionate scenes, and the final chapter of this story is closed.

Alternately, you could cut this story down to one or two chapters of short, panicky chaos. If you want to abbreviate the action, Act Two can be easily compressed to one or two scenes prior to the Hinge. Play out just one instance of “Flashback” and maybe “Interviewed,” to give the players enough information that they can proceed to “Confrontation” or “Brought In” with an appreciation for what’s at stake and a sense of the Storyteller characters’ motives.

Don’t force the timing of this story by railroading the players to speed up during this scene or slow down during that one. Remember that the order of scenes — the plot — is *your* tool to use. You are not obligated to play any scene. Use those you want, when you want, and discard the rest (or save them for later).

Scene Flow

Even when accounting for player freedom and your control of the plot, the scenes in this story have a natural, logical flow to them. This flow can be overcome by choices you and the troupe make, but the story’s intuitive course is likely to stay more or less intact. The characters can’t be punished until they’re caught, for example. For convenience, the Scene Flow Diagram is on p. 32, near the scenes themselves.

Background and Setup

The intrigue at the heart of this story emerges from the internecine motives, loyalties and lusts of the cast of Storyteller characters. Yet these are not the main characters in your story — the players’ characters are. But, since we don’t know anything about your characters, we can assume anything about their loyalties or motives. Likewise, without knowing anything about the city where you’ll set this story, we can’t tell you exactly how this story’s cast of antagonists fit in there.

So, the Storyteller characters and their relationships are designed to be largely self-contained. These are isolated Kindred caught up in their own affairs... until the players’ characters get in the middle of it all and change everything.

Throughout this section, compare what you find written here with what you know about your troupe’s characters. They are the protagonists of your story — everything happens because of them and the tale must ultimately be about them. The Storyteller characters and relationships described here are dramatic tools for you and political tools for the troupe’s vampires. Some of these characters will end up being enemies of the players’ coterie. Other might end up being allies or co-conspirators. It all hinges on the choices the players make.

Background

If the Killer hadn’t frenzied and encountered the Victim, everything would have gone on pretty much the same in this neighborhood. The background you’ll find on the local domain, its inhabitants and its politics was the status quo until that night. Use it to inform your descriptions and the decisions you make on behalf of the Storyteller characters.

Setup

Unless you have a spare corner in your city where ten vampires can play together at the Danse Macabre, you’ll probably have to replace some of the key Kindred in this story with those already in your chronicle’s supporting cast. Each character’s description contains advice on what’s really important about each character, so you can find another vampire that matches up well enough with the role. Otherwise, you might just squeeze this whole supporting cast into a few blocks of the city and treat it as a village within the Prince’s lands — isolated, self-involved and unimportant, until the Killer runs screaming in there in the night.

The State of the City

The laws, customs and politics of your chronicle's city interact with this story in some important ways. On the surface, they'll seem to determine the stakes that all the characters are playing for. But in practice, you have veto power over any precedent you've set before, as long as you can offer an explanation for any change that at least satisfies the troupe's criteria for suspension of disbelief.

Here are some key issues you'll want to consider before running this story, and suggestions for how you might explain exceptions to the norm for the sake of this story:

- **The penalty for slaying another vampire is...**

If might makes right in your city, then the consequence for destroying any vampire depends on the might of his cohorts and the weight of their revenge. The insular domain where this story is set suits that situation just fine.

If the Prince has set a standard penalty for causing the Final Death of another Kindred, and it's more potent than you want to subject the characters to in this story, explain that the Kindred Regent over this domain (called simply X in this document) prefers that crimes within his domain not be made public at the Prince's court, and so authorizes his vassals (Cicero and Sol) to resolve such matters as they see fit.

- **The covenant in charge is...**

The two major covenants at work in this story are the Invictus and the Carthians, but even that's a trifling detail. What really matters is that Sol and Cicero are members of different covenants (and so are not privvy to the same gossip and secrets). That one or the other of them has knowledge of an Invictus Blood Oath (see p. 57) could be evidence of past allegiance or intrigues.

Calla wants to join the Circle of the Crone, but doesn't have access to their ranks to be able to pursue that goal. In Cicero's domain, that might simply be a result of him keeping Val's coterie so insulated from the rest of Kindred society (so that Cicero can groom Val with whatever lies he likes). But if the Circle of the Crone is omnipresent in your city, you'll have to accentuate the isolation of Cicero's turf. If the Circle of the Crone is absent in your city, Calla might want to join the Ordo Dracul, or even start her own Acolyte cult from scratch. (Maybe she wants to join a visionary bloodline?) Because it's her aspirations we're concerned about, rather than the status quo, use any group you like.

- **Sharing Disciplines with Kindred of other clans is...**

Is there a standing law or custom in your city regarding the Prince's policy on sharing vampiric powers with others? If not, then the plot of Calla and Hooper is simply worth keeping secret because of the edge Cicero is losing and the money they're making behind his back. The consequence if they're caught is Cicero's (considerable) wrath, but not something as terrible as a Blood Hunt.

If sharing Disciplines is illegal, or simply verboten, then the consequences for Calla (and possibly Sol) may be substantial if their deal is revealed. Fortunately, the Eye's service to Sol (and his value to the city at large) explains why Sol would take such a risk to learn Auspex, and then pass it on to the Eye. Once the Eye couples his investigative knack with the mystic sight, he becomes a valuable asset for Sol to share with the rest of the court, in exchange for new respect and status.

Issues and Motive

Each of these issues affects the intensity of the Storyteller characters' motivations, and the ability of the coterie to influence them (and vice versa). In play, it's enough for you to simply keep the stakes for each character in mind, and grant bonuses or penalties to dice pools as you see fit to describe the leverage that any particular threat or argument has for the particular target.

In case you'd rather have more strict guidelines showing you the way, use these modifiers as examples:

Circumstance	Modifier
Penalty for murder is death	±5
Penalty for murder is torpor	±4
Penalty for murder is subjective, ...	
... determined by survivor	±2-3
... determined by lord or patron	±1-3
Character's covenant is in charge	±3
Character's covenant is an underdog	±3
Changing covenants is scandalous	±4
Changing covenants is seen as weak	±2
Sharing Disciplines is illegal	±4
Sharing Disciplines is taboo	±3
Getting foreign Disciplines is an admirable coup	±2

The Domain

The domain where this story is set is an simplistic archetypal example of the Kindred neo-feudal hierarchy in action. For simplicity, this story is only concerned with two tiers of power within the domain: the vassals (Cicero and Sol) and their tenants. This is as far as the ripples of Hooper's Requiem traveled, and is still be plenty for the players' coterie to juggle.

Above these two tiers is a vampire overlord who, for the purposes of this story, is left anonymous. Herein, he is called simply the Landlord. The Landlord is presumed to be a Regent, who has been given his domain by the Prince, and subdivided it over his vassals, Cicero and Sol. The Landlord can be any vampire of sufficient Status that you like from your chronicle's current cast. The Landlord might well have more vassals than just the two described here; Cicero and Sol might just be two neighboring vassals in their own corner of the Landlord's domain. They are each responsible for the control and management of their own turfs within the domain.

This domain is wherever you say it is. It is as large or as small as you declare. The physical makeup of the domain can be easily modified to fit into any major city (we're intentionally vague on whether the streets are dotted with pines or palms). To use the scenes as written, the domain needs to believably contain the following locations:

- Two high-quality havens, one each for Sol and Cicero.
- A bungalow or crappy townhouse to serve as the haven for Cicero's crew (Haven Size ●●●, Haven Location ●●)
- A burnt-out or abandoned factory, school or municipal building (something with fire doors) where Sash and Hooper make their secret retreat (Haven Size ●, Haven Security ●●●●).
- A high-class townhouse or condo where Cicero can receive visitors, tutor Val, and intimidate criminal vampires.
- A storefront with a downstairs office where Sol meets with visitors, whether they're his tenants or Kindred he's conspiring with (e.g., Hooper).
- Bars or nightclubs, whether they're local dives or grungy destination venues, where Cicero's crew are regulars and characters can gather information.
- A parking garage with underground levels.

Actual distances aren't particularly relevant in this story; the social and informational gaps between characters are more important.

The State of the Domain

The relationships between the vampires of this domain are a mix of formal and personal, public and private. Discovering the relationships between these vampires, and then exploiting them, is the best leverage the characters can get in the domain, presuming politics and intrigues are the order of the night. Even if they intend to somehow fight their way out of their problems in this domain, the characters would be smart to learn who'll come to whose aid before they start biting.

What Players Know, What Characters Know

Particularly in tales of mystery and politicking, the question of who has what information haunts so many gameplay choices. In this story, the players certainly know things their characters do not. But, strangely, the imaginary monsters they control should know things that the *players* do not, as well.

The players have presumably read **Vampire: The Requiem**, and so may well know more about vampire physiology and the nature of frenzy than the characters do. The Damned have no manual to check telling them how long a frenzy might last or how to fight past it for a few seconds at a time. The characters cannot look at the total number of successes they've accrued and gauge how well they've searched the crime scene.

The trickier prospect, though, runs in the other direction. The players' characters reside in the World of Darkness full time. They are a part of the Kindred culture that we only imagine now and again. They know things the players do not and, presumably, hear more rumors and gossip than you can possibly trickle out during play without either boring the troupe or blatantly highlighting what should be subtle hints ("Oh, by the way, you've heard that Cicero's got more than a strategic interest in his apprentice."). The characters are entitled to know things the players do not — the question is when should the players become aware of what their characters know?

The answer is, as soon as it is dramatically relevant. Withholding information for the sake of creating an aura of mystery is folly. The lack of clarity that comes from playing in a shared, imaginary world and trying to keep a half-dozen Storyteller characters straight is enough puzzlement. Don't antagonize the players and add drag to the story by giving them too little information to make decisions with. The dramatic questions we're interested should be moral and tactical, not trivial.

Knowing when to reveal in-character knowledge to a player is one of the skills in the Storyteller's kit. It's part of dramatic timing. You'll find no hard-and-fast rule explaining just when this fact or that detail or the other hunch should be shared, but here are two simple guidelines:

Reveal in-character knowledge when...

1. Something happens in play that would reasonably jog the character's memory. ("Seeing him adjust his coat like that makes you think of the stories you've heard about Joe Coat and his meat cleaver...")
2. The player is about to make a decision for her character that would make either or both of them look incapable or foolish, when the character's traits suggest she should be above such mistakes. ("I've got three dots in Politics, shouldn't I have known I'd be shunned for doing that?")

In-Character Knowledge and Skills

For the purposes of this story, assume that the character with the most dots in Politics knows a number of the facts listed under "What's Public" equal to her dots in Politics. Likewise, the character with the most dots in City Status knows one fact per dot. Unless the players of these characters specifically reject the idea, assume their characters share this information with the rest of the coterie. (Otherwise, the players can choose to reveal this information's exposition when they see fit.)

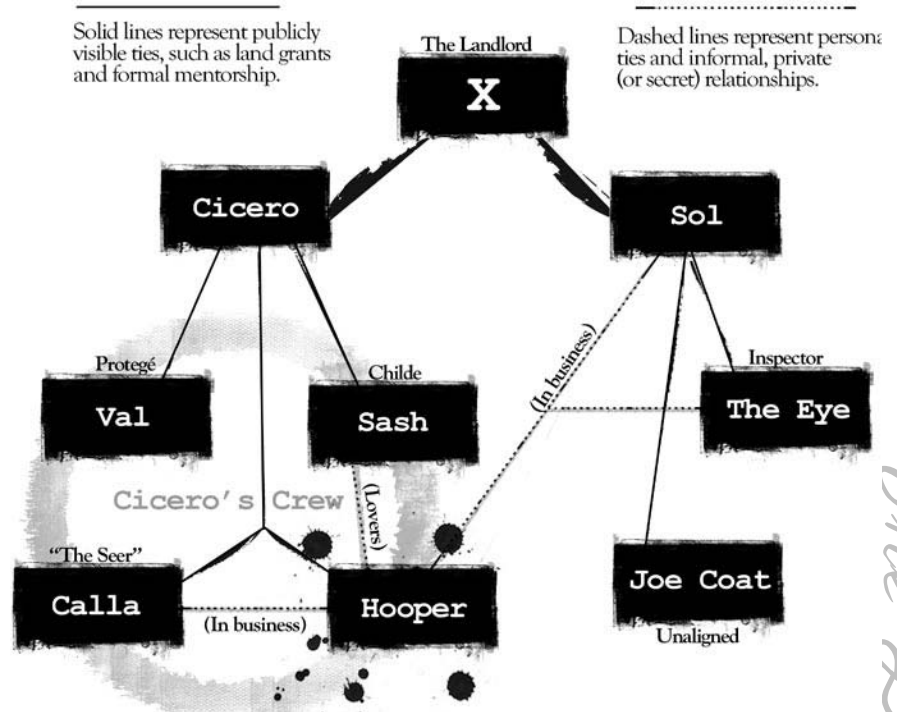
Other Skills may intersect with the public knowledge that follows. If a character has the number of dots indicated, or more, in the relevant Skill, she knows that fact about the domain. (Secret facts are uncovered only through play.)

What's Public

- Cicero and Sol were each granted their turf by the Landlord within a few weeks of each other. Technically, Cicero is the senior vassal, though that doesn't mean much in practice.
- Cicero and Sol serve as the Landlord's scapegoats in their turf; whatever happens there is their fault rather than his. In exchange, they have a chance to make something of themselves in the Danse Macabre.
- Sol's domain is home to a cunning freelance Hound called the Eye. He's an inspector on good terms with many Kindred among covenant leaderships, and respected for his investigative talent and reliability.
- Cicero's got a vampire medium as a tenant. She's called the Seer.

Blood Red and Ash Gray

SCHEMA: KINDRED RELATIONSHIPS



She's part of a coterie nesting in his turf. [Occult ••, Politics •]

- Cicero made a vampire named Val his tenant so he would have some Kindred under his employ, to give him an edge over Sol. Val came as a package deal with two other Kindred. [Socialize ••]

- The Eye has served Regents and members of the primogen in the past, but makes his haven somewhere in Sol's backwater blocks to keep himself on the edge of the Danse Macabre and as neutral as possible. [Investigate ••, Politics ••]

- Cicero has a childe, but she left the nest years ago. Her name is Sash, and she's a part of Val's coterie (called Cicero's Crew, casually). [Politics •••, Streetwise ••••]

- A wandering vampire nests somewhere in Sol's turf, like gutter trash. He's a big, bearded, wild-eyed military-vet-looking creature in a big green Army jacket. They call him Joe Coat. Smart Kindred steer clear of him. [Streetwise •••]

Public knowledge and common rumor aren't going to give the characters the edge they need to get away with murder. In this kind of political play, what they need is leverage, and that comes from having information others don't want them to have. This story is about digging up secrets — the characters dig up the secrets of the Victim and his allies, while the Eye digs up theirs.

The secrets in play with the Storyteller characters presented are designed to change the relationships between characters if they are revealed. Certainly, you could add more secrets to the mix as you adapt these characters to your city, but avoid stirring in red herrings or petty shames that don't help the characters change the political arrangements in the domain (e.g., Calla thinks Cicero is a pederast; it would be embarrassing, but it wouldn't change Cicero's plans for Calla). The players have enough to manage without sorting out wheat from chaff.

Note: This is the only place where some of this information appears. This is your omniscient view of the relationships in the domain. After this, in the individual character write-ups, you get a look at some of the character's individual opinions and perceptions of these secrets — many of them clouded by emotion or pain. Filter all of that through what you find here.

Not everything here is known by everyone involved in these secrets. Just how much is known by whom is ultimately for you to decide — it's another tool you use to dial challenges up or down. Val might resist the suggestion that Cicero is willing to sacrifice Sash, or he might say, "Don't you think I know that? I just... can't do anything about it, can I?"



GETTING AND USING SECRETS

The purpose of all this information is to give the players and their characters the instruments they need to move the Storyteller characters around like pawns on a board — pawns with their own motives, mistakes and schemes. Manipulating the Storyteller characters makes up some of the most important action in Acts Two and Three, but these secrets can be revealed at any time.

You're under no obligation to dole these out in accordance with strict rules. Share one to reward relevant roleplaying when one character gets Calla talking. Reveal one in response to an exceptional success in the scene, "Investigating." Let one slip out, subtly, during a "Face to Face" scene. Use these to keep things moving — new information is another step forward.

For a simple mechanism to use when the characters manipulate Storyteller characters, see Act Two.

- **Cicero Embraced Sash** because he thought her passion and take-no-shit attitude would serve him well. He expected her to become his protégé, but her laziness let him down. Cicero scraped her off and left her to stagnate in his domain, in case she could be useful later — and she was. Sash attracted **Val**, which is how he met Cicero.

- **Val** was once in love with **Sash**, and he played nice with **Cicero** the way one does with a potential father-in-law. But Sash never picked up on Val's feelings, so when he eventually fell into Cicero's orbit, Val took it as a consolation prize.

- **Sash** and **Hooper** (the Victim) were lovers. She started it. They planned on leaving **Cicero's** domain when they found somewhere else to go. In the meantime, they keep a private little haven of their own, away from Val and Calla.

- **Hooper** and **Calla** plotted to sell Calla's knowledge of **Auspex Sol**, in exchange for new tenancy in his turf. Hooper planned this as a surprise for **Sash**. (Calla knows they're together.) Sash had no idea what Hooper was planning.

- **Val** knows that **Sash** and **Hooper** were close, but not that they were lovers. Val would support them, if only to be the kind of guy he wishes he was, in hopes that it'd win Sash's affections.

- **Cicero** will trade **Sash** or her happiness without a second thought. She's served her purpose and Cicero doesn't need any more liabilities. With Hooper and Sash gone, Cicero could absorb **Calla** and **Val** and grant tenancy to some other coterie (even the characters').

- **The Eye** has no loyalty to **Sol**. He's just a rube landlord who poses minimal risk and charges minimal rent.

- **Joe Coat** would accept a haven in **Cicero's** turf without telling anyone — he doesn't care who his landlord is. **Sol** is only valuable as long as he's easy to handle.

- **Sol** wants **Auspex** out of greed and a desire to sweeten **the Eye's** incentives to stay. But Sol's in business with **Calla** and **Hooper** because it could be embarrassing for **Cicero**. Sol will give up the truth if it'll hurt Cicero. He doesn't care what happens to Calla, Hooper or the rest of their coterie.

- **Sol** will accept Kindred from Cicero's Crew into his turf and tenants if it will hurt **Cicero**, but not if it'll hurt Sol. Sol wants to seem tough, and that includes being tough on criminal vampires.

- **Sol** was once **Cicero's** protégé. He left because Cicero disgusts him, and landed his own turf soon after. **No one** knows this but Sol and Cicero.

The Past

The following pages give you a complete rundown on the Storyteller characters in “Blood Red and Ash Gray.” Some of these are major characters, or “leads,” which you can think of as guest stars. In addition to them you’ll find simplified descriptions for Cicero’s and Sol’s ghouls and other thugs. No matter how important these Storyteller characters are to the background of the story, or how much space they take up in this guide, remember:

The players’ characters are the main characters in the story.

The Roles of the Storyteller Characters

The lead Storyteller characters we’ve created for this story may not be the ones to actually appear “on stage” in your story. To make the story feel like a natural part of your chronicle, recast the roles of our examples with established Storyteller characters from your own chronicle. This may move some of the relationships around a bit, or push the cast out over a larger area of the city, but it’s worth it to make the story feel like a part of your ongoing tales.

The decisions the players are called on to make become much more compelling — and challenging — when the fates of characters they already know and have experience with are hanging in the balance.

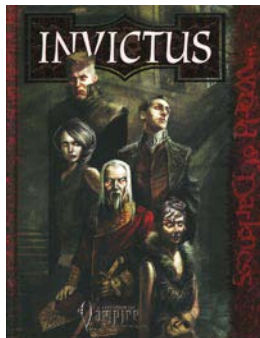


PRODUCT LINKS

“Blood Red and Ash Gray” was written using the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and **Vampire: The Requiem**. You can play the story using just those two books, or you can expand on it using any of the books that expand on the covenants of which the Storyteller characters are members, especially **Carthians** and **The Invictus**.

The Oath of Blood Knives, described in the scene, “Punishment,” is a variation on a Blood Oath of the same name, drawn from the covenant book, **The Invictus**.

The simple feudal schema on p. 12 was drawn based on the guidelines in **Damnation City**. The core political dynamic in this story’s stock domain is based on the basic neo-feudal structure covered in that book in much greater detail than we have room for in this adventure.



These broad sketches of the lead Storyteller characters tell you what purpose these characters serve in the dramatic situation surrounding the protagonists. Use them to identify which of your established Storyteller characters would be a good fit for each role:

- **Hooper** (the Victim) is a vampire who wasn’t that important while he was still walking but, in Final Death, reveals weaknesses and emotions in the Kindred who knew him. His name, Hooper, is meant to seem mundane, unthreatening, even weak — he’s specifically not named something tough. It’s probably best if the players never encounter this vampire before one of their character’s ends his Requiem.

- **Sash** is the survivor, the grieving widow (or something like it). By design, she’s a pedestrian, self-indulgent vampire with little plans for the future beyond whatever band’s playing at the bar this weekend. She shouldn’t be infamous or respected. Use her lack of Status to tempt the players to leave her alone until it is too late.

She, alone, should seem like a vampire the coterie could take down, but who can also be used other vampires who choose to turn her grief into a weapon. She wants revenge, but may not get away with it without help (or a go-ahead) from more powerful vampires (like Sol or Cicero). She must be the vampire most hurt, emotionally, by the death of the Victim.

- **Val** is a vampire made vulnerable by his loyalty and his Humanity. He’s soft, able to be manipulated, but he’s in the palm of a more powerful vampire’s hand, so the consequences of using him must be serious (at least from the perspective of the coterie). Val can be well-known among the Damned or a relative nobody, but he shouldn’t be respected. To outsiders, he’s just Cicero’s pet hunk. He must be a character the coterie can get to — but using him should be easier than it is safe or smart.

- **Calla** is a withdrawn, apolitical spiritualist, the asset who wishes she could just spend her nights without all the courtly bullshit. What’s important is that her reputation (in this case, as “the Seer”) radiates further than her image, and much further than her current power. She should be unhappy where she is, but reliant on an outside motivator (i.e., the characters) to activate her.

- **Cicero** is a self-serving, petty creature with a reputation for emotional decision-making and political failure. He’s gross, blatant and conniving, with an unrealistic sense of his own place in the Danse Macabre — he doesn’t realize how unimportant and disrespected he is, despite whatever technical Status he might have.

What's important is that Cicero is powerful enough to be threatening, but not necessarily fearsome. Somehow beating Cicero can get the coterie ahead, but only hurting him merely sets them up for a nastier revenge later on. Cicero should have enough Status that he can justify an act of revenge by Sash or order the punishment of the Killer (who is assumed to be a vampire of less Status) within his turf.

- **The Eye** is a respected and feared Hound, known more as an investigator than as a lawman. Think of him as a vampire private detective, hiring himself out to whatever wealthy and influential Kindred can pay. He's removed from the political process enough that his loyalty is uncertain.

He should be feared. His presence should raise the stakes in any scene — he has the ear of important vampires, after all — and the idea that he's on the coterie's trail is a driving antagonism of this tale. But can he be manipulated? Can he be bought? You want the players to wonder, but not be sure.

- **Joe Coat** is the X-factor. His purpose is to provide fearsome, in-human muscle to whoever pays for him. He may also be a potential candidate for the identity of the Victim early on in the coterie's investigation. He can be of any clan, any covenant, any bloodline.

What matters here is that Joe Coat is mysterious, a potential danger lurking in the darkness through rumor, until he appears and becomes a genuine threat. He's the element of brute force, with a minimum of secrecy. Joe Coat is easy to get information out of, but it's dangerous even to talk to him — he repeats what you say to someone else in exchange for money. For a little more money, he kills.

- **Sol** is the sleaze-bag bookie, slum lord and gutter-level criminal boss. But he's just the boss of a few drug dealers and extortionists. He's not an important vampire, and he knows it. That let's him get away with his occasional failures. Sol's not important, but he's not disliked the way Cicero is; you might not be hurting people by getting rid of him, but you're not doing anyone any favors either.

Sol's primary virtue to the players is that he is less despicable than Cicero. His primary risk is that he has good reason to be angry about Hooper's death. This collision of motives and attitudes is what makes Cicero and Sol difficult to choose between. So Sol doesn't have to be likable or admirable, he just has to be a less gross, more dangerous choice than Cicero.

- **The Landlord** is the higher-up Kindred casting a shadow down on all of this. He needs to be the dreaded consequence of taking the story outside of this little pond.

Supporting Characters

The traits of these ghouls are designed primarily to show how Sol and Cicero are different, and how they bring different risks to the final Act of the story. (Do these thugs even have to be ghouls? Make them human victims of addiction, corruption or Disciplines, if you like.)

Bump these traits up or down as necessary to threaten your troupe's characters, if you like, but the better method is to adjust the *number* of ghouls Cicero or Sol can bring to bear in the final scenes. Numbers are the ultimate trump card in a fight — more enemies means more hurting. When numbers are the big edge the ghouls give to Sol and Cicero, the troupe has another possible plan to pursue: whittle down the number of ghouls before the time comes for the "Revenge" scene.

How many ghouls are there? That depends on how much you want to threaten the characters, but about one per character is a good place to start. Keep this in mind when modifying the ghouls:

Cicero's ghouls are more numerous and, in a straight fight, more dangerous, but they're quick to bail out of a fight that goes badly.

Sol's ghouls, though fewer, are tougher and have practiced hurting vampires. They don't fight, they subdue, capture, torture and execute.

Cicero Ghouls

Quote: *They don't say anything. They nod. They stare. They chew their peeling lips.*

Storytelling Hints: Cicero's ghouls are whipped, whimpering dogs of men. Without him, their futures are just years of psychotherapy; in his shadow, at least they don't know any better.

Many of Cicero's servants have had their tongues cut out — an Old World Invictus custom for protecting the Masquerade — with the promise that, if eventually Damned, they would be provided with new tongues. If such a power exists in the ranks of the First Estate, Cicero certainly doesn't have access to it. But when he's selecting potential living candidates for his service, he certainly isn't seeking out people who are smart or personally motivated. He wants empty vessels he can fill with his own will and impulses. These are broken, twisted, empty men. Cicero gives some of them the age-halting grace of his Vitae because it protects his investment. He doesn't teach them anything of the vampiric Disciplines beyond the basic rush of Celerity that his blood activates in their accursed flesh.

Description: Cicero's thugs wear whatever mismatched black suits they could pull together from second-hand shops and muscling the local dry cleaners. They move with this weird, bony gait that makes them look a little like puppets in a Tim Burton movie. They don't say anything; many of them don't even have teeth. Instead of screaming or cussing they let out these whining vowels, like beaten dogs.

Traits

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Skills: Crafts (Repair) 2, Politics 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Knives) 2

Willpower: 3

Morality: 3 (on average)

Health: 7

Initiative: +5

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Vitae: 3

Disciplines: Celerity 1

Attack	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Knives	2 (L)	1	—	7

Quote: "Get his legs."

Sol Ghouls

Storytelling Hints: Sol's ghouls are boorish thugs willing to take mediocre pay in exchange for getting to live the criminal life and not being responsible for rent and all that shit. They like feeling more powerful than ordinary people.

Sol's ghouls that get the Blood are given it only to keep them in line, like a retinue of junkie bodyguards. Sol protects the truth about vampires (though, it must be said, not the actual existence of them) with constant lies — most of his thugs are, to their minds, on drugs, not drinking blood. His muscle stays in his employ because the money is good, the work is easy and the hours are light. These are petty, awful people with not one credible witness in the bunch.

Sol doesn't bother indoctrinating his hired hands in the ways of the Kindred. They know that vampires are real, and Sol's given them some pointers on how to hurt them, but they're not even sure that Sol is a vampire. These aren't the types that can manage a lot of suspicion in the face of a one-inch stack of \$20 bills or a bag of rock.

Description: They're a bunch of thick-necks in work boots, wife-beaters and sweat jackets, all underneath worn-down leather jackets. They might be out of work construction guys. They smell like pomade, liquor and cigarettes — and lighter fluid.

Traits

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl (Grapple) 2, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Weaponry 2, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 1

Merits: Strong Back

Willpower: 4

Morality: 3 (on average)

Health: 8

Initiative: +4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Vitae: 2

Disciplines: Vigor 1

Attack	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Brawl	(B)	0	—	4
Torches	1(A)	2	Fire damage	5

Lead Storyteller Characters

The next few pages detail the major Storyteller characters you've read so much about already. Each lead Storyteller character is described in two pages:

- A page of background information, storytelling guidelines, quotes, and advice for understanding and adapting the game traits given to the character.
- A combination character sheet and bulleted list of things the character knows, wants and will do to get them; a handy reference during play.

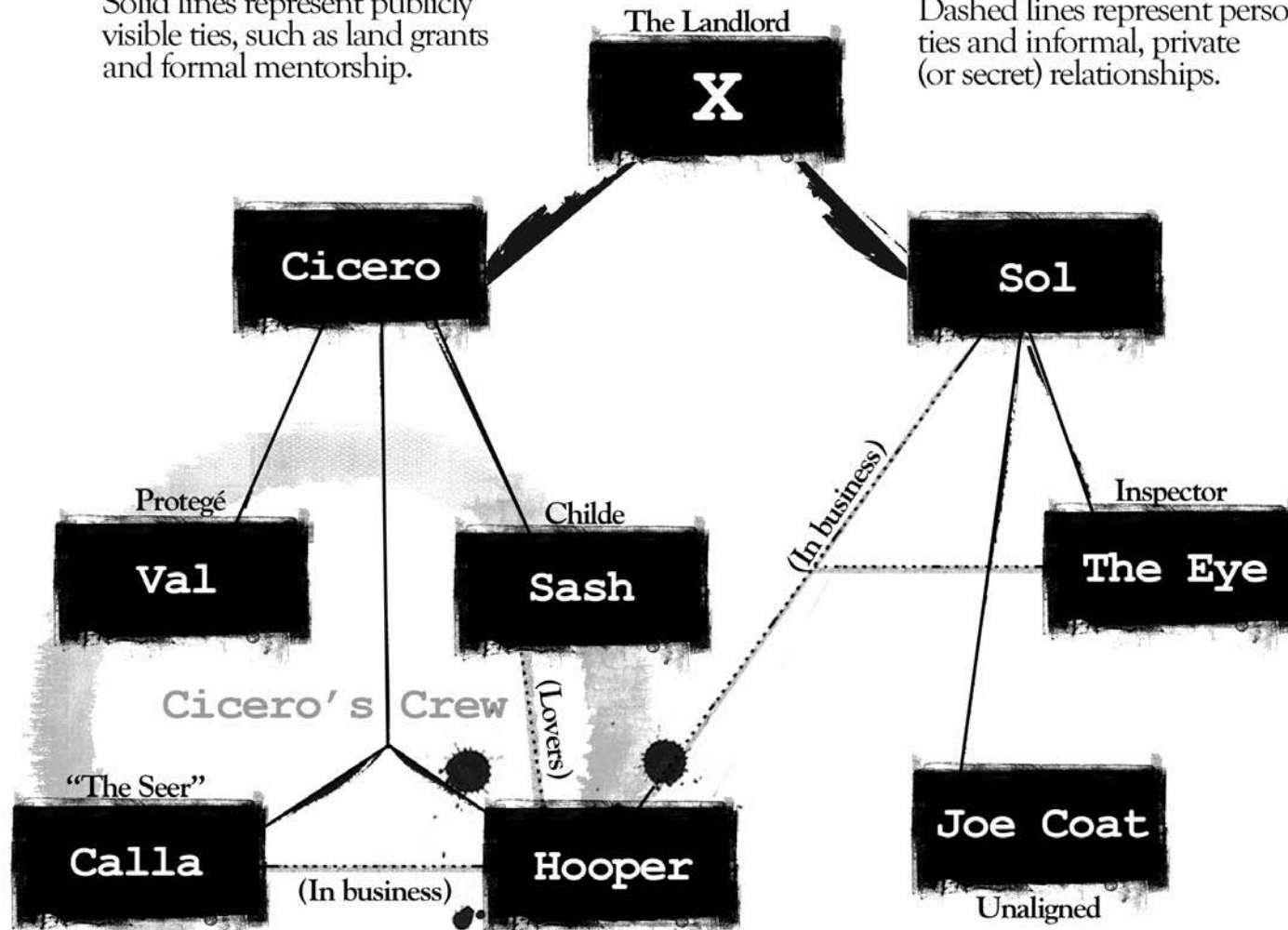
This can't be said enough, so read it again: Make these characters your own. You know what motivates your particular players and their characters better than we do. Refine Val so he draws them in like an easy target. Play Sash so the players feel bad treating her like a villain. Make Cicero the kind of vampire they hate; make Sol mad and mean enough to be feared. Turn the Eye into something wicked.

Blood Red and Ash Gray

SCHEMA: KINDRED RELATIONSHIPS

Solid lines represent publicly visible ties, such as land grants and formal mentorship.

Dashed lines represent personal ties and informal, private (or secret) relationships.



Blood Red and Ash Gray

Val



Quotes: “Don’t talk like that. It’ll be fine. We’ll just deal with it later.”

- “You: quiet. We’ll get the facts, then we’ll decide what needs to be done about you.”

Storytelling Hints: Val is the voice of reason in Cicero’s Crew, their official leader and the official source of most of the coterie’s advantages, like money and the communal haven. Val is the yoke on Sash and the soft spot on Cicero. Appealing to Val’s sense of order and civil conduct can help the characters as long as there’s still some doubt about their involvement in Hooper’s destruction and the cover-up. Once Val is sure that the players’ coterie is involved, though, he joins his coterie-mates in getting revenge on the characters — not because he thinks it’s right or smart, necessarily, but because Sash and Calla want it bad enough and Val wants to keep them happy with him.

Cicero is Val’s sugar daddy and mentor. Val finds Cicero’s lustful staring and flirty touching a small price to pay if it means he’ll be given a good seat at the long Invictus table. Play Val as the safe caregiver of the coterie. He keeps it together and mediates between his pack and the elder who thinks they’re a bad influence. Before he talks, he weighs his words.

Val’s dots in Haven are shared by the rest of his coterie, but Val and his mentor, Cicero, acquired all those dots. The rest of the coterie resides there on Val’s say-so, because he likes them. Cicero sees the coterie as Val’s tenants and staff. The coterie feels Cicero’s assessment of them as juvenile slackers through Val’s words. But Val just wants to keep himself surrounded by loyal allies as he climbs toward power on Cicero’s heels. Val believes having a circle of old compatriots will help protect him from betrayal later on. He also doesn’t want to be alone in his Requiem with Cicero.

Description: He’s handsome — the kind of bland, shoulder-length-haired, clean-shaven handsome that suggests a musician whose work is safe and even forgettable. He could be a catalog model for department store khakis. In his worn brown shoes, V-neck sweater and garden variety leather jacket he blends right in with the whitebread condominium masses. This resemblance to the herd can make him smell vulnerable to other bloodsuckers. He talks with the careful hesitance and practiced measure of a compromising politician. This is a guy who wants things to stay in order.

Val: Mechanics

Val’s derangement, Avoidance, represents his reluctance to deal with the internal problems of his coterie. Rather than straighten out the ugly disagreements, he avoids them.

Val learned the Political Theory Specialty, a dot in Majesty, and a few other traits from Cicero. He’s inherited (or been given) some of his Merits from Cicero, too — like a sugar daddy and his pet.

Notice that Val’s good at socializing but is only getting up to speed compared to the rest of the domain when it comes to persuasion, intimidation and subterfuge — he’s a compromiser, not a leader.

In Play

Val is one your most flexible tools for telling this story. His motivations are intentionally divided to afford you a viable, believable tie-breaking voice in the story. Val can be influenced, persuaded and even intimidated by the players’ coterie or by Sash, Cicero, Sol or the Eye to act in ways that help you crank up the drama or call certain dramatic questions to the fore.

In general, the tactic that should most help characters to change Val’s position or focus is to provide him with new information — to redraw the social and political landscape as he knows it. That is, the more information the characters discover, the better able they are to influence Val. (If you want to put that in game terms, you might grant a +1 bonus to Persuade or Intimidate actions for every 3 successes accrued during the scene, “Investigation.”) Of course, the information that’s put before Val doesn’t have to be true — it just has to be convincing.

You can shift Val’s loyalties through his own internal conflicts, too. Use his internal conflict — loyalty to his peers or his Mentor?, a comfortable and feckless pedestrian existence or a dangerous and disturbing existence with great power? — to help frame the moral or ethical themes you want to evoke. If, for example, you want to accentuate the issue of moral culpability versus cold political advantage, Val says something like, “Show her that she’s hurt you — make her feel like she’s got her revenge — then we can keep our shit together. Except, how can I fucking trust you? You are the ones who fucking killed Hooper!”

Val’s purpose is to be vulnerable, but also valuable to Cicero and Sash. If you dial up Val’s traits to make him compatible with your troupe, be careful not to make him too smart or capable with Social Skills. He should be in over his head here.

Blood Red and Ash Gray

Val

What he knows:

- Sash and Hooper were close [but not that they were lovers.]
- No matter what she says, Sash won't be able to get over Hooper until she gets some kind of closure — meaning vengeance.
- Calla counted on Hooper to help her engage people in social situations. Without him, Calla goes back into her shell, so it's up to Val to keep Sash from making a mistake that hurts the coterie.
- A mistake that hurts the coterie hurts Val the most, because he's the one who really has to answer to Cicero.
- Sol and Cicero aren't outright enemies, but only because each of them would rather get ahead of the other one without provoking real trouble. They each have their own private schemes to protect their domains.
- Cicero won't protect Sash unless Val can make it worth his while.
- Cicero won't protect Calla so much as take her in and use her as his own personal diviner.

What he wants:

- Stay under Cicero's wing.
- Keep the coterie together.
- Do it without losing too much juice with Cicero.
- Find a way to fill the hole left behind by Hooper.
- Punish whoever hurt Hooper, just because that's the way things are done.

What he does:

- Keeps Sash from doing something the coterie will regret...
- ...until it becomes clear that patching holes with Cicero will be easier than keeping Sash on a leash.
- Help Sash get her revenge, quietly, if he can do it without Sol or Cicero getting pissed. Otherwise, turn the Killer over to them.

Vampire

THE REQUIEM

Name: Val *Concept:* Naive, Loyal Protégé *Clan:* Ventrue
Player: Storyteller Character *Vitae:* Faith *Servant:* Invictus
Chronicle: Blood Red, Ash Gray *Vice:* Sloth *Set:* Cicero's Crew

Attributes

Power	<i>Intelligence</i> ●●●●	<i>Strength</i> ●●●●	<i>Presence</i> ●●●●
Finesse	<i>Wits</i> ●●●●	<i>Dexterity</i> ●●●●	<i>Manipulation</i> ●●●●
Resistance	<i>Resolve</i> ●●●●	<i>Stamina</i> ●●●●	<i>Composure</i> ●●●●

Skills

Mental
(-3 unskilled)

Academics	●●●●
Computer	●●●●
Crafts	●●●●
Investigation	●●●●
Medicine	●●●●
Occult	●●●●
Politics Political Theory	●●●●
Science	●●●●

Physical
(-1 unskilled)

Athletics	●●●●
Brawl	●●●●
Drive	●●●●
Firearms	●●●●
Larceny	●●●●
Stealth	●●●●
Survival	●●●●
Weaponry	●●●●

Social
(-1 unskilled)

Animal Ken	●●●●
Empathy	●●●●
Expression Oratory	●●●●
Intimidation	●●●●
Persuasion	●●●●
Socialize Fraternize	●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●
Subterfuge	●●●●

Other Traits

Merits

Covenant Status:	●●●●●
Invictus (Protégé)	●●●●
Haven Size	●●●●
Haven Location	●●●●
Haven Security	●●●●●●●●
City Status: Crofter	●●●●●
Resources	●●●●
Allies: City Works	●●●●●
Allies: Drug Dealers	●●●●

Health

Covenant Status:	●●●●●●●●●●
Invictus (Protégé)	□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

Haven Security	●●●●●●●●
City Status: Crofter	□□□□□□□□

Vitae

Allies: City Works	□□□□□□□□
Allies: Drug Dealers	□□□□□□□□

Flaws

Disciplines

Animalism	●●●●
Dominate	●●●●
Majesty	●●●●
Resilience	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●

Humanity

10	○
9	○
8	○
7	○
6 Avoidance	○
5	●
4	○
3	○
2	○
1	○

Equipment

Size	5
Defense	2
Initiative Mod	+5
Speed	9
Experience	_____
Armor	_____

Light Pistol +2

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 bonus Attribute; see p. 92) • Covenant • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be in-clan) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lower of Dexterity or Stamina • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity +5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Vitae = d10 roll

Sash



Quotes: “Aw, you’re a miserable fuck, you know that? You have a good night, I’ll see your sorry face tomorrow.”

- “You say that and you say that, but you’d better fucking hear me when I say: If something’s happened to Hoop, there’s going to be blood. There’s going to be fucking blood.”
- “Shut up. Get on your knees.”

Storytelling Hints: It’s pronounced sort of like “mosh,” short for Sasha. By design, Sash is an underachieving go-nowhere vampire who would’ve been sedate and content to go on boozing, fucking, dancing and brawling for decades. She’s tough like a bar-room shit-kicker, but she’s not a trained warrior or anything. She’s always been afraid of being vulnerable, and now she’s learned her lesson again — she’s hurting, and she’s embarrassed to be hurting so bad.

The whole point of Sash’s threatening presence is not her expertise but her investment — she’s willing to spend whatever Willpower and Vitae and favors it takes to get what she wants. And what she wants is to make someone else hurt like the does.

That’s what makes her scary. Determination. Wrath. And a broken heart.

Description: She might clean up nice, but it’s not something she’d be interested in doing. Her long dark hair is unwashed, and she casually throws it around and ties it back like it’s something she’ll get around to putting away, like laundry on the floor. She’s not wearing makeup, her lips are cracked and she’s not afraid of the few small scars on her hands and face. She’s lived in her body and she knows she’s never going to be a dress-wearing prom date, so what does she care about that stuff? Every night it’s the same jeans and the same ratty jacket and one of a handful of metal-band or beer-logo t-shirts.

She puts her hands near her face a lot — it’s leftover body language from her living days as a chain smoker. She tugs on her hair, she plays with the ring in her lip, she curses and laughs out loud and tells people to fuck off, all without thinking about it. She was the arty, defiant teenager who read Marx and played bass in a crap metal band — smart, but couldn’t care enough. Since she died, she’s swapped out greasy spoons and drinking in empty lots for blood and barrooms, but not much else has changed.

Sash: Mechanics

Sash is an Invictus peasant, bound to the land given to her by her sire, Cicero, until he or the covenant frees her. She’s a villein—a loudmouthed blue-collar laborer, by the standards of the Estate. Her Merits reflect the circles she travels in; that one dot of Mentor is left over from the nights when Cicero thought she had potential.

Sash’s Suspicion is why she jumps to conclusions when Hooper doesn’t come home. Her Succubus hedonism means she can’t get peace of mind (of Willpower back) unless she gets revenge or takes out her anger on someone or something.

That haven is the secret nest she shared with Hooper.

In Play

If Sash is going to have the gravitas necessary to make your players’ characters nervous, she’s going to need some weight she can throw around. More than any other character in this story, Sash has been given to you with fewer dots than she probably should have. Fill in more as needed to make her combat dice pools (e.g. Strength + Brawl + Vigor) about equal to your troupe’s second-best combatant character, but keep the ratio of her traits about where they are now. Sash isn’t persuasive, she’s intimidating. She isn’t exactly fun to casually hang out with, she’s fun to watch mess with people, and even then only if you’re already on her side.

- Sash favors Brawl, then Weaponry. She doesn’t have much use for the headaches that come with firearms.
- She has shallow relationships — lots of Contacts, no Allies. (Hooper was unique in her Requiem; the only person she really opened up to.)
- She’s more of a hedonist, less of a Succubus (hence Cicero’s disappointment with her). She’s much more Vigor than Majesty.

Blood Red and Ash Gray

Sash

What she knows:

- Hooper is missing. She was expecting him back at their private haven the night of the Frenzy.
- Hooper was in business with Sol to sell Calla's secrets of Auspex with him and the Eye.
- Hooper's not important enough to wage a war over for Cicero or Sol. Calla and Val are both more important to them than Sash is.
- Val would back an unsanctioned beat-down if it meant keeping the coterie together.
- Cicero's thug will do what Val tells him to do.
- Sol would look the other way while Sash gets revenge on the Killer if it means keeping his deal for Calla's teaching.

What she wants:

- Revenge. Sash isn't stupid — she knows that a frenzied killing may not be enough to excuse her execution of another vampire — but she is hot-blooded, vengeful and rash. She wants to take out her grief on the Killer, but could very well work herself into a frenzy while doing it. Her aim is to make the guilty vampire feel pain, like she feels pain. So it's about Pride; if the target of her wrath is willing to accept the social hit of taking a beat-down from another vampire, Sash can be placated.

What she does:

- Sash's deranged Suspicion leads her to think, initially, that Hooper's troubles must be a part of some design by someone out to hurt him, her, or the both of them. She suspects Joe Coat might be jealous of Sol helping out the Eye, or even just pissed that Hooper's been crossing the local turf. She begins by trying to look into Joe without attracting the attention of Sol or the Eye (and doesn't find out much). Thus, she can give the troupe's characters enough room to meet her without her flying right off the handle. Use that opportunity to have her soliloquize about how thirsty for revenge she is to the characters before she knows who the Killer is.

Vampire

THE REQUIEM

<i>Name:</i> Sash	<i>Concept:</i> Vengeful Alpha Female	<i>Plan:</i> Daeva
<i>Player:</i> Storyteller Character	<i>Virtue:</i> Fortitude	<i>Servant:</i> Invictus
<i>Chronicle:</i> Blood Red, Ash Gray	<i>Vice:</i> Wrath	<i>Patron:</i> Cicero's Crew

Attributes

Power	Intelligence ●●●●●	Strength ●●●●●
Finesse	Wits ●●●●●	Dexterity ●●●●●
Resistance	Resolve ●●●●●	Stamina ●●●●●
		Presence ●●●●●
		Manipulation ●●●●●
		Composure ●●●●●

Skills

Mental

(-3 unskilled)

Academics	●●●●●
Computer	●●●●●
Crafts Auto Repair	●●●●●
Investigation	●●●●●
Medicine	●●●●●
Occult	●●●●●
Politics	●●●●●
Science	●●●●●

Physical

(-1 unskilled)

Athletics	●●●●●
Brawl Grapple	●●●●●
Drive	●●●●●
Firearms	●●●●●
Larceny	●●●●●
Stealth	●●●●●
Survival	●●●●●
Weaponry Clubs	●●●●●

Social

(-1 unskilled)

Animal Ken	●●●●●
Empathy Fear	●●●●●
Expression	●●●●●
Intimidation	●●●●●
Persuasion	●●●●●
Socialize Carousing	●●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●●
Subterfuge	●●●●●

Other Traits

Merits

Covenant Status:	●●●●●
Invictus (Vilein)	●●●●●
Haven Size	●●●●●
Haven Security	●●●●●
Barfly	●●●●●
Contacts:	●●●●●
Bars, Drug Dealers	●●●●●
Cops	●●●●●
Mentor	●●●●●

Health

Covenant Status:	●●●●●●●●●●
Invictus (Vilein)	□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

Barfly	●●●●●●●●●●
Contacts:	□□□□□□□□□□

Virtue

Bars, Drug Dealers	□□□□□□□□□□
Cops	□□□□□□□□□□
Mentor	□□□□□□□□□□

Blood Potency

●●●●●●●●●●

Humanity

10	○
9	○
8	○
7	○
6	○
5 Suspicion	○
4	●
3	○
2	○
1	○

Disciplines

Celerity	●●●●●
Majesty	●●●●●
Vigor	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●
	●●●●●

Equipment

Size	5
Defense	2
Initiative Mod	+4
Speed	11
Experience	
Armor	1/0 (Leather clothes)

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 bonus Attribute; see p. 92) • Covenant • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be in clan) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health • Stamina • Size • Willpower • Resolve • Composure • Size -3 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity +5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Virtue = d10 roll

Calla



Quotes: “Don’t look at me.”

- “Why are you lying?”
- (squinting) “No. Never mind, forget it. ‘s not worth mentioning.” [Auspex]

Storytelling Hints: If you stay quiet, people will think you know more than you do. People might mistake you for knowing what’s going on, for being a deep thinker, for being bored by the obviousness of it all.

The truth is that Calla’s smart and perceptive. She just doesn’t feel that way. She thought the Requiem would be exciting, exhilarating and mind-opening, but more than anything it’s scary as hell. Calla sees much more than she used to — she sort of an Auspex prodigy — but she’s not quite sure how to make sense of what she sees all the time.

Calla engages with the world through intellectually. The social current of Val, Sash and Hooper pulled her along, and she’s never really learned how to swim in those waters. Calla doesn’t trust people, but she wants to.

When portraying Calla, venture questions, then back away from whatever conversation might grow from them. (“Do you think that could happen?” she asks, then retreats, saying, “No, I was just thinking out loud.”) Wait to be asked questions, to be invited into conversations. Escape social situations and major confrontations if you can — but have Sash’s back, because she’s hurting and you want to be better than you think you are.

Remember, though: Calla’s not a whimpering cartoon child looking for an action hero to rescue her. If she could reasonably believe she could survive among the Damned on her own, she’d give it a shot.

Description: That big coat she’s got on makes her look tiny. Her close-cut curls and jagged eyebrows make her look serious, scrutinizing. She’s real still. She moves her eyes more than she moves her head. She’s always watching who’s talking. She moves her head like she’s measuring everything she hears.

She walks like it’s cold outside, all the time. When she thinks something’s funny, she doesn’t show her teeth. She’s comfortable in her skin, settles right into the room with a casual simplicity, but seems like she’d rather be somewhere else.

Calla: Mechanics

Calla was reasonably well read before the Embrace. Since then, she’s developed quite a bit of knowledge about the history and folklore surrounding mediums, diviners and prophetesses. Her Mental Specialties are the result of her interest in her vampiric perception (she calls it “the sight”), but most of those Mental dots are left over from her living days. The Writing Specialty (under Expression) is something she’s been working on as part of her and Hooper’s deal with Sol.

Her Covenant Status is a formality. She’s a subject of Cicero’s, she helps Val’s coterie pay the rent, so she’s technically a Society vampire. Her Clan Status is raw reputation — her innate knack for Auspex has earned her nickname, “the Seer,” and it comes with a bit of vague prestige, but no authority. She’s not plugged into Mekhet society, if such a thing even exists in this city.

Those two dots in Resources are new; that’s what Sol is paying her and Hooper in exchange for her teaching.

In Play

Obviously, Calla’s defining trait is her affinity with Auspex. The scale of this story isn’t meant to be one of an epic struggle over a unique prodigy who will change the face of the city forever, though. Calla’s an asset, but she’s not the bomb. The fact is, she’s valuable in the kind of personal schemes that go on at the level of her coterie, but if she were really the city’s great master of Auspex, she might not be allowed to languish in such a low-class bunch.

Calla needs to be impressive enough to warrant a reputation in your city, but don’t confuse that with fame. She needs to be better than the average, but that doesn’t mean she has to have more dots in Auspex than the vampires in your troupe’s coterie. You can make up the difference with dots in Wits and Empathy, to bump up the right dice pools. Calla’s a seer, but she’s not a mystic astral traveler and she doesn’t need to be telepathic. (That can add an interesting element to the equation for the coterie to deal with, but it can also render the story’s obstacles into one short scene of telepathic scrutiny.)

The point is that Calla needs to be threatening — evidence taken to her can do the characters in. If they’re in her presence, can she smell their lies? Remember, above all: The players and their characters don’t know what Calla’s capable of — let them make assumptions and scare themselves..

Blood Red and Ash Gray

Calla

What she knows:

- She and Hooper were selling her knowledge of Auspex (she calls it “the sight”) to Sol, even though Cicero (and Val) wouldn’t have approved.
- Sash didn’t know this.
- Hooper and Sash were lovers.
- Hooper was out meeting with Sol the night he disappeared. [She doesn’t know if Hooper ever got to Sol’s or not, though.]
- Sol would eventually teach the Eye how to use the sight, and recoup whatever he paid Hooper and her.
- Anyone investigating Hooper’s disappearance might eventually come to her to get her help as the Seer.

What she wants:

- To avoid trouble. She intends to see as much time go by as possible by laying low and not giving too many vampires reasons to hurt her. (She knows she’s screwed up by dealing with Sol behind Cicero’s back.)
- To get out from under Cicero, even if that means leaving Val (who she doesn’t feel that close to) and Sash (who she likes for being all the things that she isn’t).
- To be seen as more of a wise-woman and prophetess, rather than a tool of the Invictus or the Carthians. She wants to find a way to become unaligned or join the Circle of the Crone without raising the ire of the other covenants.

What she does:

- Plays tight. Keeps her mouth shut, except for little hints that she’s not happy and is afraid.
- Helps anyone who comes to her respectfully, treats her like an equal, doesn’t get “weird” about her ability with the sight, or is capable of really hurting her (like Cicero, who doesn’t qualify under any of the other criteria).

Vampire

THE REQUIEM

<i>Name:</i> Calla	<i>Concept:</i> Mousy, Diviner	<i>Plan:</i> Mekhet
<i>Player:</i> Storyteller Character	<i>Virtue:</i> Charity	<i>Covenant:</i> Invictus
<i>Appearance:</i> Blood Red, Ash Gray	<i>Vice:</i> Sloth	<i>Patron:</i> Cicero’s Crew

Attributes

Power	Intelligence ●●●●	Strength ●●●●
Finesse	Wits ●●●●	Dexterity ●●●●
Resistance	Resolve ●●●●	Stamina ●●●●
	Presence ●●●●	Manipulation ●●●●
		Composure ●●●●

Skills

Mental

(-3 unskilled)

Academics	History	●●●●
Computer		●●●●
Crafts		●●●●
Investigation		●●●●
Medicine		●●●●
Occult	Divination	●●●●
Politics		●●●●
Science		●●●●

Physical

(-1 unskilled)

Athletics		●●●●
Brawl		○○○○
Drive		●●●●
Firearms		○○○○
Larceny		●●●●
Stealth	Hide	●●●●
Survival		○○○○
Weaponry		○○○○

Social

(-1 unskilled)

Animal Ken		●●●●
Empathy		●●●●
Expression	Writing	●●●●
Intimidation		○○○○
Persuasion		●●●●
Socialize		○○○○
Streetwise		●●●●
Subterfuge	Play Cool	●●●●

Other Traits

Merits

Clan Status: Mekhet ●●●●

Contacts: ●●●●

Drug Dealers: ○○○○

Community College: ○○○○

Covenant Status: ○○○○

Invictus: ●○○○

Language: German ●○○○

Meditative Mind: ●○○○

Resources: ●○○○

Flaws

Aloof: _____

Disciplines

Auspex ●●●●

Obfuscate ●●●●

_____ ○○○○

_____ ○○○○

_____ ○○○○

_____ ○○○○

_____ ○○○○

_____ ○○○○

_____ ○○○○

Health

Clan Status: Mekhet ●●●●○○○○○○

Contacts: ●●●●○○○○○○

Drug Dealers: ○○○○

Community College: ○○○○

Covenant Status: ○○○○

Invictus: ●○○○

Language: German ●○○○

Meditative Mind: ●○○○

Resources: ●○○○

Willpower

●●●●○○○○○○

□□□□□□□□

Vitae

□□□□□□□□

□□□□□□□□

Blood Potency

●○○○○○○○○

Humanity

10 ○

9 ○

8 ○

7 ○

6 ○

5 ●

4 ○

3 ○

2 ○

1 ○

Equipment

Size _____ 5

Defense _____ 3

Initiative Mod _____ +6

Speed _____ 10

Experience _____

Armor _____ 1 (Heavy parka, sweaters)

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 bonus Attribute; see p. 92) • Covenant • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be in-clan) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 3 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Vitae = d10 roll

Cicero



Quotes: “What benefit does lying get any of us at this point?”

- “The sun is coming up eventually, we all know it, so let’s sort this like adults, take our beatings, and be on to the next night.”
- “Breaking our laws is the same as betraying me when you’re on my ground, little thing.”

- “When the animal gets out, we punish the zookeeper, don’t we?”

Storytelling Hints: Cicero is a selfish, manipulative creature with limited Status in the Invictus and a petty desire to move up in the Danse Macabre. He’s not afraid to use people, abuse people, abandon people, lie, cheat, intimidate or seduce to get what he wants. He’s good at all those things — but he feels cheap, slimy and somewhat obvious to his peers. He’s good at manipulating individuals in the moment, but he’s a weak politico.

When playing Cicero, remember that Val is a prize, exaggerated in Cicero’s mind from a handsome face into an Adonis. Cicero fancies himself as Emperor Hadrian and Val as his Antonious. Calla is a thing — a magic artifact — that he’s left in Val’s safe keeping. If that goes sideways, take Calla away, bring Val in close, and spend Sash to buy whatever safety or appearance of responsibility you can.

If that means sending Sash to get staked or destroyed in pursuit of her own revenge, that’s what it means. If it means giving Sash up to Sol, who can promise her the revenge she wants, that’s what it means. If it means helping Sash get her revenge in exchange for saving face (and keeping Val and Calla, the precious toys), that’s what it means.

Description: He’s short, with dark curly hair and a practiced posture of exaggerated casualness. He crosses his legs, stretches out his arms, lounges around, not in the way that people do, but the way that they do when advertising pills on television. Practiced behavior made into habit, designed to make you feel comfortable but so fake that it feels like he’s fucking with you.

He looks away when he talks then, just when his sentence ends, makes eye contact. He touches his face when he talks. He tries to touch your hands when you talk.

He smells like olives and gin.

Cicero: Mechanics

Cicero, despite his low Humanity, has no derangements. He’s been lucky in his Requiem. But he’s not a humane or moral creature. The lack of derangements is meant to remind you that none of Cicero’s cold and self-indulgent behavior is a result of the Beast. Cicero was like this in life; he’s always been like this. Changing his ways, if that were possible, wouldn’t sort him out. Gaining Humanity wouldn’t make his personality go away.

Look at his traits. Cicero’s a pretty capable vampire. His dots imply a creature of considerable age or active experience. Exactly how old Cicero is (at Blood Potency 4 he must be at least 200 years old) depends on what purpose he needs to fulfill in the rest of your chronicle. His age isn’t relevant in this story, only his capability.

What all those dots can’t tell you, though, is that Cicero’s prime ability is his knack for saving his own skin above all others. But many of the circumstances he’s escaped over the years have been quagmires of his own creation. Three dots in Intelligence and four dots in Academics tell us that Cicero is smart and informed, but they don’t preclude the larger fact that he makes bad decisions based on his own fear and self-loathing. Those bad decisions got him where he is, despite all his Skills.

In Play

Cicero is surmountable. He is skilled, but he is still a fool in the face of his own spastic judgment. The ultimate vulnerability he should display to the characters is his desire to benefit from the crime done to the Victim. Cicero reaches for too much — it’s not enough that he use this as an opportunity to unravel Val’s coterie, he also wants to lord his authority over the criminal(s), turn Calla into a prize others will covet, and get rid of Sash without provoking any blowback. He can only make all that happen if the characters are utterly passive.

The characters should want to hurt Cicero after they meet him. They should loathe and pity him. To counterbalance that, he should offer them things (like Val’s old turf, a milder punishment, a tip-off about Sash’s ambush) that make tolerating him something worth considering. The choice between Cicero and Sol shouldn’t be a no-brainer.

Cicero isn’t gay or straight. He’s so desperate for physical attention and adoration that gender is not a factor. He can hardly be bothered to notice someone else’s gender. He doesn’t look that deeply.

Blood Red and Ash Gray

Cicero

What he knows:

- Val's loyalty to his coterie outweighs his other loyalties. He stays with Cicero out of fear and opportunism.
- Sash is trouble, and one of Val's weaknesses. Cicero and Val are better off without her.
- Sash and Hooper are closer than Val thinks.
- Sol keeps a close eye on Val's coterie and may have plans for them.
- Joe Coat is not just a vagrant monster — he owes Sol a rent of service that has, in the past, included brutal violence.
- The Eye has gone directly to Calla, the Seer, for help with investigations in the past, even though he's supposed to go through Cicero for such business.

What he wants:

- For Val to favor Cicero over the coterie.
- To separate Val from the coterie and keep him to himself.
- For Calla to be brought further inside the Invictus, so her mystic perception can give the covenant an edge — or so they can sell her services.
- To find a coterie to replace Sash and Hooper once Calla and Val are put to new use.
- To maintain more subordinate vampires than Sol has.
- To gain Status in the First Estate and be respected by his peers.

What he does:

- Lie, go behind people's backs, abandon, bribe, cajole, intimidate, seduce, extort and bargain to make any of the above happen.
- Sell out Sash and the liability of her wrath.
- Forgive the death of Hooper to make any of the above happen.
- If forced to choose between Val and Calla, he actually picks Calla. He can find another Val. (But he won't let Val get into a position to get revenge on him.)

Vampire

THE REQUIEM

<i>Name:</i> Cicero	<i>Concept:</i> Distracted Landlord	<i>Plan:</i> Daeva
<i>Player:</i> Storyteller Character	<i>Vitae:</i> Hope	<i>Covenant:</i> Invictus
<i>Appearance:</i> Blood Red, Ash Gray	<i>Voice:</i> Ervy	<i>Interests:</i> None (Patron of Cicero's Crew)

Attributes

Power	<i>Intelligence</i> ●●●●	<i>Strength</i> ●●●●
Elegance	<i>Wits</i> ●●●●	<i>Dexterity</i> ●●●●
Resistance	<i>Resolve</i> ●●●●	<i>Composure</i> ●●●●

Skills

Mental

(-3 unskilled)

Academics	●●●●
Computer	●●●●
Crafts	●●●●
Investigation	●●●●
Puzzles	●●●●
Medicine	●●●●
Occult	●●●●
Politics	●●●●
Political Theory	●●●●
Science	●●●●

Physical

(-1 unskilled)

Athletics	●●●●
Brawl	●●●●
Drive	●●●●
Firearms	●●●●
Larceny	●●●●
Contraband	●●●●
Stealth	●●●●
Survival	●●●●
Weaponry	●●●●
Swordplay	●●●●

Social

(-1 unskilled)

Animal Ken	●●●●
Empathy	●●●●
Spot Lie	●●●●
Expression	●●●●
Writing	●●●●
Intimidation	●●●●
Persuasion	●●●●
Enthusiasm	●●●●
Socialize	●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●
Drug Market	●●●●
Subterfuge	●●●●

Other Traits

Merits

Allies: Drug Dealers	●●●●
City Status: Vassal	●●●●
Covenant Status:	●●●●
Invictus (Lord)	●●●●
Domain: Fields	●●●●
Resources	●●●●
Retainer: Bodyguard	●●●●
Retainer: Valet	●●●●
Status (Criminals)	●●●●

Health

●●●●●●●●●●
□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●●●●●●●●
□□□□□□□□□□

Vitae

□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□

Blood Potency

●●●●●●●●●●

Humanity

10	○
9	○
8	○
7	○
6	○
5	○
4	○
3	○
2	●
1	○

Flaws

Disciplines

Celerity	●●●●
Majesty	●●●●
Vigor	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●

Equipment

Size	5
Defense	2
Initiative Mod	+5
Speed	10
Experience	_____
Armor	_____

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 bonus Attribute; see p. 92) • Covenant • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be in clan) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health • Stamina • Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 3 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Vitae = d10 roll

Joe Goat

Quotes: “The fuck you want?”

- “Shut up talking to me.”
- “I know how I look. I know how you look, too.”

Storytelling Hints: Joe Coat is a simmering crazy street vampire with the wary alertness of an experienced homeless man (which he is) and the grim fortitude of a frontiersman (which maybe he was). Joe spends his nights on the street like a man in the wild — its all about protecting himself and surviving another night.

If he had a house and a nicer demeanor, he might be thought of as senile. But he’s a wild-eyed, filthy vagrant who mutters to himself and lashes out with spit and curses at anything he even thinks of as disgust or danger. A few nights on the street and any local learns to give Joe some space, but he’s not so monstrous that locals have him carted off; he’s a fixture of the street, as ubiquitous, vaguely ominous and indecipherable as the coded cant of gang graffiti.

To be clear, Joe is some kind of crazy, but he’s not a lunatic. He can take care of himself, but he’s lost his ability to connect with others as humans do. Other people, living or undead, are like stray dogs to him — he can develop a rapport, but not trust. And if the dog acts up, Joe puts it in its place for the sake of his own safety.

When playing Joe, imagine that everything is out of focus, like he’s not wearing his glasses. Everyone might seem like they think or feel a certain way, but how can he be sure? Is that what “normal people” body language means? He doesn’t know anymore.

Description: He smells like sweat and rain and mold, like an unwashed towel. His long ratty hair is tangled into knots and held into little bundles with rubber bands. The cuffs of his Army jacket are stiff with dry, caked stains. Blood? His teeth are little yellow beads, separated by gaps so big he could slot coins through them.

He speaks in calm, low breaths, just above a whisper, the way you might threaten somebody in public. He shakes his head when he yells, his spit landing cold in your face and dangling in strings from his mouth.

With a casual move he pulls a rustling plastic grocery bag out of his coat. A wooden handle sticks out of it. He pulls the bag away like he’s unsheathing a sword. But it’s not a sword. It’s a meat cleaver.

Joe Goat: Mechanics

Joe is meant to be tough, a combatant worth being afraid of, but not a climactic monster by himself. He’s a dangerous creature on the street, not the boss at the end of this level. He’s a resource. By the end of this story, Joe Coat should be working as muscle on somebody’s behalf — if the players don’t persuade or pay him to stay out of things (or even work for them), then Sash does, possibly through Sol.

You have to make Joe into just the right danger for your troupe. Use the dots on his sheet as minimums. Add dots and equipment to dial up his combat dice pools until they’re equal to the toughest combatant in the troupe’s coterie... or even higher. To keep those dots in line with Joe’s character and methods, give him better equipment (maybe a fire axe?) rather than Weaponry dots. Give him as many dots in Brawl as you like. Pump up his Vigor or Resilience, and don’t underestimate the value of Iron Stamina. The aggravated damage from his dots in Protean make him a menace.

In Play

So Joe’s not a combatant on his own. He doesn’t have enough at stake until another character makes it worth his while. Once he’s teamed up with Sash or working with someone else, though, he becomes a lethal component of revenge.

Keep in mind, too, that Joe’s not willing to die the Final Death for Sash or anyone else in this story’s cast. He’ll back out of any fight when it gets to the point that it’ll cost him eternity or a century of torpor. If he’s in a position to suffer blowback from that decision — like if the characters want to get revenge on him for leaving them dangling — he becomes a stealthy, dangerous foe. He offers no apology and no regret. Joe creeps up on a character, ideally when they’re alone, knocks him on his ass and tells him, “I don’t die for you or nobody. You want me to help you again, you come to me knowing that.” Then he leaves.

Use Joe as a volatile tool, like a propane tank that might explode. His mad eyes and feral attitude should keep people nervous. What happens if someone else makes Joe a better offer, the characters should wonder.



Blood Red and Ash Gray

Joe Coat

What he knows:

- Sol is gradually turning the Eye into his own private Hound. The higher-ups might not like that.
- People don't know much about Joe and think of him as a lost cause. (Including, to some extent, Sol.)
- Cicero's coterie isn't loyal. They're a bunch of juvenile, selfish punks with the emotional refinement of teenagers.
- Hooper and Calla have been coming into Sol's turf once or twice a week. More than once, they've even gone to Sol's office.
- His mind isn't quite right. Real relationships — personal, political, strategic — are a thing of the past for Joe.

What he wants:

- To be feared.
- To keep people guessing, but without seeming silly or eccentric.
- To develop a bit of a rapport with local vampires, so he can stay informed, just for the sake of his protection.
- To be left alone the rest of the time.

What he does:

- Cooperate with any vampire that can make it worth his while with Vitae, money or a safe, private, haven of his own.
- Avoid betraying Sol (or, at least, getting caught doing it) and losing his freedom to wander the neighborhood.
- Lie, steal, threaten or kill for Sol if it'll pay off a few months rents of service.

Vampire

THE REQUIEM

Name: Joe Coat *Concept:* Burly, Laconic Vagrant *Clan:* Gangrel
Player: Storyteller Character *Vitae:* Temperance *Covenant:* Unaligned
Chronicle: Blood Red, Ash Gray *Vice:* Pride *Gifts:* None (Loner)

Attributes

Power	<i>Intelligence</i> ●●●●	<i>Strength</i> ●●●●	<i>Presence</i> ●●●●
Finesse	<i>Wits</i> ●●●●	<i>Dexterity</i> ●●●●	<i>Manipulation</i> ●●●●
Resistance	<i>Resolve</i> ●●●●	<i>Stamina</i> ●●●●	<i>Composure</i> ●●●●

Skills

Mental

(-3 unskilled)

Academics	●●●●
Computer	●●●●
Crafts	●●●●
Investigation	●●●●
Medicine	●●●●
Occult	●●●●
Politics	●●●●
Science	●●●●

Physical

(-1 unskilled)

Athletics	●●●●
Brawl	●●●●
Drive	●●●●
Firearms	●●●●
Larceny	●●●●
Stealth	●●●●
Survival	●●●●
Weaponry	●●●●

Social

(-1 unskilled)

Animal Kcn	●●●●
Empathy	●●●●
Expression	●●●●
Intimidation	●●●●
Persuasion	●●●●
Socialize	●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●
Subterfuge	●●●●

Other Traits

Merits

Contacts	●●●●
Shopkeepers, Wait-staff, Homeless	●●●●
Haven Size	●●●●
Iron Stamina	●●●●
	●●●●
	●●●●
	●●●●
	●●●●

Health

●●●●●●●●●●
□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●●●●●●●●
□□□□□□□□□□

Vitae

□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□

Flaws

Disciplines

Animalism	●●●●
Celerity	●●●●
Protean	●●●●
Resilience	●●●●
Vigor	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●
_____	●●●●

Blood Potency

●●●●●●●●●●

Humanity

10	○
9	○
8	○
7	○
6	○
5	○ Irrationality
4	○
3	○ Anxiety
2	●
1	○

Equipment

Meat cleaver	+2
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Armor 1/0 (Army jacket, sweaters)	_____

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 bonus Attribute; see p. 92) • Covenant • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be inclined) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity +5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Vitae = d10 roll

The Eye

Quotes: “Brother, you’re right about that. I’m sorry, I didn’t get your name, though.”

- “I can understand why you’d lie, but from here on, you’re done with that.” [Veridical Tongue]
- “Your ears on? What are you hearing lately?” [Streetwise]
- “You don’t have to call me anything. But I’ve only got what I’m given, so ‘the Eye’ is fine.”

Storytelling Hints: The Eye is calm and cool. He’s smart like a professor, streetwise like a hardening detective, serene like the Buddha. The Beast is brutal and blunt and tempermental, but not the Eye.

Level with people. Speak frankly. If you have to withhold information or keep a secret, you’re up front about it. “Sorry,” says the Eye, “I can’t talk about that,” or “You know, I’ve got to keep that kind of thing under wraps or nobody’ll trust me anymore.”

Listen carefully. Don’t interrupt. Keep your eyes open. Everyone is lying, all the time. They don’t always know it, they don’t always know why, but they’re doing it all the same. You can use that. The things people choose to lie about reveal what they think is important, and what they’re ashamed of. The intersection of shame and investment is the most vulnerable part, living or undead. Land a sentence right there, and you can drive somebody to talk — or at least act without thinking, which gives you more power.

Description: You wouldn’t guess he had any time on the street by looking him. You certainly wouldn’t guess he was a vampire. He’s clean-cut, with neat hair, a sharp brown jacket and V-neck sweater. He’s got a casual comfortability, though. He’s not afraid to talk to anyone, and he doesn’t carry himself like the whitebread commoner he looks like.



THE EYE’S COVENANT

The Eye’s covenant is left deliberately vague. He may be unaligned, he may be secretly affiliated with multiple covenants, or he may be ideologically and socially involved with any covenant of your choosing. Put him in an antagonistic covenant to play up the threat he represents, or put him in the same covenant as a player character to give them a bit of an edge when dealing with him. You don’t even have to reveal his covenant until you decide the characters need an edge or a steeper challenge. Adapt.



The Eye: Mechanics

When you look at his traits, it’s easy to see that the Eye isn’t the best investigator a vampire could be if he had access to every trait in every book. But the Kindred don’t get to shop for powers out of books, and their allies don’t get to compare their traits to the ideal, abstract maximum that would be possible. No vampire lord can say, “Why should I hire you when this other guy has five dots in Investigation?”

In game terms, the Eye might be lucky, as far as imaginary dice rolls in his background go. His reputation might be the result of getting a bunch of successes on dice pools that aren’t shockingly huge.

The Eye’s method isn’t to put clues together using Investigation, but to ask the right questions of the right people, observe everyone carefully, and be patient. The Eye is relentless. His dots in Contacts, his Wits and his Manipulation are his big guns. His Disciplines and the Veridical Tongue Devotion are his secret weapons.

We’ve withheld the fourth dot of Obfuscate to maintain the Eye’s style as an old-school detective, asking questions and turning over rocks on the street to see what crawls out. The supernatural mystique that might come from being able to pass as anyone a suspect expects is powerful, but it’s not the Eye’s style. He’ll pretend to chat with someone like a friendly stranger, but if he’s recognized he won’t deny who he is. He doesn’t need to — whether you answer his questions or not, he gets information from the way you act.

In Play

The subtlety that surrounds the Eye is essential. To keep the characters’ situation morally complicated and political rather than strictly moral — gray, rather than black and white — remember that the Eye is an antagonist, not a villain. He’s a threat, capable of exposing things the characters want to keep secret, but he’s not a judgmental prick. He knows that everybody’s an asshole and everybody’s got someone they’re sweet to, so he doesn’t judge bloodsucking monsters by the mistakes they (or their Beasts) make. But he does report them.

For the Eye, this is work. That’s it. It keeps him valuable, which keeps him safe, and it keeps him informed and out of the shitstorms that come with political attachments and ambition. To maintain his security and stability, he has to make sure that the monsters he investigates feel caught by his employers and not him.

The Eye

What he knows:

- Everything Sol knows.
- Cicero is a pathetic sham of a vassal lord, and everyone knows it. His value lies in his obviousness. Cicero is a known quantity; replacing him simply creates an opportunity for some new lord to disrupt things.
- The identity of one characters' sire.
- The Covenant Status of one or more characters.
- The Resources of the wealthiest character.
- The highest Mental, Physical and Social Skill in the troupe's coterie.

What he wants:

- Independence.
- The security that comes with knowledge.
- To learn Auspex.
- To make future Contacts and Allies.

What he does:

- Keeps secrets until someone pays sufficiently for them in services, other secrets or comaraderie.
- Plan everything ahead. The Eye avoids situations he hasn't thought out in advance.
- Stay cordial. The Eye is polite as long as the Beast lets him stay that way. "Cool it," he says, tightening his hold. "Are we done?"
- Pace himself.

Vampire

THE REQUIEM

Name: The Eye *Concept:* Renowned Inspector *Clan:* Daeva
Player: Storyteller Character *Vitae:* Prudence *Covenant:* [By Allegiance]
Chronicle: Blood Red, Ash Gray *Voci:* Gluttony *Stance:* None (Lone Hound)

Attributes

Power	<i>Intelligence</i> ●●●●●	<i>Strength</i> ●●●●●	<i>Presence</i> ●●●●●
Finesse	<i>Wits</i> ●●●●●	<i>Dexterity</i> ●●●●●	<i>Manipulation</i> ●●●●●
Resistance	<i>Resolve</i> ●●●●●	<i>Stamina</i> ●●●●●	<i>Composure</i> ●●●●●

Skills

Mental
(-3 unskilled)

Academics Anthropology ●●●●●

Computer ●●●●●

Crafts ●●●●●

Investigation Kidnappings ●●●●●

Medicine ●●●●●

Occult ●●●●●

Politics Kindred Turf ●●●●●

Science ●●●●●

Physical
(-1 unskilled)

Athletics ●●●●●

Brawl ●●●●●

Drive ●●●●●

Firearms ●●●●●

Larceny Concealing ●●●●●

Stealth Tailing ●●●●●

Survival ●●●●●

Weaponry Stake ●●●●●

Social
(-1 unskilled)

Animal Ken ●●●●●

Empathy Motives ●●●●●

Expression ●●●●●

Intimidation Interrogation ●●●●●

Persuasion ●●●●●

Socialize ●●●●●

Streetwise ●●●●●

Subterfuge Spot Lie, Lie ●●●●●

Other Traits

Merits

Allies: City Hall ●●●●●

Barfly ●●●●●

City Status: Hound ●●●●●

Common Sense ●●●●●

Contacts ●●●●●

Covenant Status ●●●●●

Fame (Kindred) ●●●●●

Resources ●●●●●

Status: P.I. ●●●●●

Flaws

Disciplines

Celerity ●●●●●

Dominate ●●●●●

Majesty ●●●●●

Obfuscate ●●●●●

Resilience ●●●●●

Coil of the Beast ●●●●●

Devotion: ●●●●●

Veridical Tongue ●●●●●

Size 5

Defense 3

Initiative Mod +7

Speed 10

Experience _____

Armor 1/2 (Kevlar vest)

Health

Allies: City Hall ●●●●●○○○○○

Barfly ●●●●●

City Status: Hound ●●●●●

Common Sense ●●●●●

Contacts ●●●●●○○○○○

Covenant Status ●●●●●

Fame (Kindred) ●●●●●

Resources ●●●●●

Status: P.I. ●●●●●

Vitae

Blood Potency

●●●●○○○○○○○

Humanity

10 _____ ○

9 _____ ○

8 _____ ○

7 _____ ○

6 _____ ○

5 Fixation _____ ○

4 _____ ●

3 _____ ○

2 _____ ○

1 _____ ○

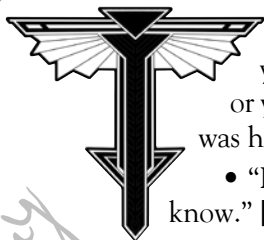
Equipment

Knife +1

Stake +1

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 bonus Attribute; see p. 92) • Covenant • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be in-clan) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lower of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity +5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Vitae = d10 roll

Sol



Quotes: “Things get away from someone like you, I can understand. But when those things get in my yard I expect a little *fucking responsibility*. You step up or you get dragged in. Don’t like it, too fucking bad. Life was hard, this is worse.”

• “I didn’t ask how you felt. I told you to say what you know.” [Intimidate]

• “Are you listening? Good. You go and you find out who did this and you bring me his name.” [Dominate ••]

Storytelling Hints: You’ve got better things to do than be miserable. You had enough of that early in your Requiem. Getting ahead, to the top, is just too fucking hard, and it’s not worth the headaches and the backstabbing anyway. The higher you climb, the more asshole vampires and treacherous Kindred can see you up there. Better to keep a little pond for yourself and be the big fish in it.

Without those big goals, what’s left? What the hell is the Requiem for if not extending the time you have to climb to the top? Simple: To enjoy this simple, earthly existence in all the ways that come along. To have a good fucking time in the dark.

But Sol doesn’t really believe all that. Not completely. A charming or persuasive creature with a plan could persuade Sol to reach up, provided the risks were minimized and it wouldn’t come with a bunch of joyless duties.

Play with people. Talk nice, then turn your voice serious to throw people off guard. Be blunt, even crass. But cautious, not stupid. He may have to throw some chairs or break some shit to get there, but Sol’s able to look past wrath to get to Greed. But double-crosses are for scum and pussies. Fair deals are how you tell men apart from animals.

You know Gramma from *Rounders*? Like that, but better dressed and not so angry all the time.

Description: He’s slimmer than you expect a back-room baron to be, but he’s got the oily top and noncommittal facial hair you’d expect. He’s got rings, a gold bracelet and gold chains, too, but not so many that it’s absurd. His gray suit and red tie give a sort of serious air, but he looks like he’s been wearing it for a straight week.

He looks you right in the eye. When you stop talking, he looks away, taps his lip. Once he’s found the words, he looks back you and lays it all out for you with his hands and voice. He knocks on wood.

Sol: Mechanics

The thing about Sol is that he’s capable — more capable than anyone would expect based on his small-time aspirations and modest outfit. If Sol were motivated, he could be a real player in the Danse Macabre, and a real threat to Kindred who oppose him. Don’t confuse his healthy Resolve and Willpower for drive — Sol is resolved to stay safely installed where he is, with a degree of power that lets him feel like he has some juice but could survive the fall if he made a mistake.

Sol’s traits are among the most specifically measured of all this story’s characters’. As it stands, he’s a formidable Social force with a potent array of Merits. Dial him up or down to make him suit the power level of your chronicle, but be careful that you don’t declaw him.

In Play

Sol is Cicero’s opposite — modest, measured, restrained and more competent than he appears.

Depending on how things unfold, Sol can be the characters’ antagonist or a valuable potential ally. He reacts, he protects his investments and he takes advantage of the situations that the night provides him — and all in moderation. He doesn’t bet more than he can afford to lose.

The exception to this is Cicero. Sol hates him. Sol’s willing to take some bruises if it means hurting or humiliating Cicero.

Sol’s willing to let things slide — politically, ethically, morally, tactically — to gain other benefits later on. He’s willing to let the Victim’s death slide if what he gets in return is worth it. He willing to temper Sash’s vengeance, he’s willing to call the Victim’s disappearance a disappearance, he’s willing to call off the Eye — in that order, from cheapest to most expensive — if the characters can make it worth his while. They’ll have to put themselves in his pocket if they want to use his resources to protect themselves. It’s a choice they have to make. They might even be able to turn a relationship with Sol into a real benefit, a real advantage — but at the time they’re faced with the decision it should be a rough one: Take punishment for the Victim’s death, or go into debt with Sol.

If Sol isn’t their main antagonist, if they get into bed with him, then you have to crank up Cicero’s motivations to keep the story’s sense of peril. This is why you’ve got two potential villains to work with.

Blood Red and Ash Gray

Sol

What he knows:

- Hooper and Calla are in business with Sol, behind the backs of Cicero, Val and Sash.
- Hooper met with Sol the night of Hooper's disappearance. They talked about arranging another lesson for Sol, and argued over money. Hooper left Sol's office with the promise of a new deal for more money, then headed back to his haven.
- Sol had Joe Coat follow Hooper that night.
- Joe noted that Hooper wasn't heading back towards the communal haven he shared with Val, Calla and Sash. [He was heading for his secret haven with Sash, but Sol doesn't know that.]
- Cicero is basically done with Sash and wants Val for himself.
- Sol was once Cicero's golden boy protegé, and Cicero tries to keep that a secret.

What he wants:

- Keep the truth of his relationship with Cicero secret for as long as possible, so he can slowly twist it like a knife.
- Get all of Cicero's tenants, so that old freak will be left alone with his creepy servants.
- A private land of his own where he can feel like a more important Kindred than he knows he is.
- To look and feel like a capable landlord — he doesn't want Kindred walking all over him or taking advantage of his generosity.

What he does:

- Use the Victim's murder for political gain, regardless of "justice."
- Pretend to care about vampires he doesn't care about, for his own benefit. E.g., support Sash in her revenge just to get her and her coterie to leave Cicero.
- Investigate the Victim's disappearance to the extent he can, and deliver that information up or down the food chain.

Vampire

THE REQUIEM

<i>Name:</i> Sol	<i>Concept:</i> Conniving Landlord	<i>Plan:</i> Ventrue
<i>Player:</i> Storyteller Character	<i>Virtue:</i> Justice	<i>Covenant:</i> Carthian Movement
<i>Appearance:</i> Blood Red, Ash Gray	<i>Vice:</i> Greed	<i>Entire:</i> None (Vassal of X)

Attributes

Power <i>Intelligence</i> ●●●●●	Strength ●●●●●	Presence ●●●●●
Finesse <i>Wits</i> ●●●●●	Dexterity ●●●●●	Manipulation ●●●●●
Resistance <i>Resolve</i> ●●●●●	Stamina ●●●●●	Composure ●●●●●

Skills

Mental
(-3 unskilled)

Academics	Business	●●●●●
Computer		○○○○○
Crafts		●●○○○
Investigation		●○○○○
Medicine		○○○○○
Occult	Kindred Clans	●●○○○
Politics		●●●●●
Science		●●○○○

Physical
(-1 unskilled)

Athletics	●●○○○
Brawl	●●○○○
Drive	○○○○○
Firearms	○○○○○
Larceny	●●○○○
Stealth	●●●●●
Survival	●●○○○
Weaponry	Axes ●●●●●

Social
(-1 unskilled)

Animal Ken	Dogs	●●○○○
Empathy		●●○○○
Expression		●●○○○
Intimidation		●●●●●
Persuasion	The Take	●●●○○
Socialize		●●○○○
Streetwise	Illegal Venues	●●●●●
Subterfuge		●●●●●

Other Traits

Merits

Allies: City Hall	●●●○○
Allies: Club Owners	●●●●●
City Status: Vassal	●●●○○
Covenant Status:	○○○○○
Carthians	●●○○○
Domain: Fields	●●●○○
Herd: Party People	●●●●●
Resources	●●●●●
Retainer: Jon	●●●●●

Flaws

Disciplines

Animalism	●●○○○
Auspex	●○○○○
Dominare	●●○○○
Resilience	●●●○○
Vigor	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Health

Allies: City Hall	●●●●●○○○○○
Allies: Club Owners	□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

Carthians	●●●●●○○○○○
Domain: Fields	□□□□□□□□□□

Vitae

Resources	□□□□□□□□□□
Retainer: Jon	□□□□□□□□□□

Blood Potency

	●●●●●○○○○○
--	------------

Humanity

10	○
9	○
8	○
7	○
6	○
5	Suspicion ○
4	○
3	●
2	○
1	○

Equipment

Size	5
Defense	3
Initiative Mod	+6
Speed	10
Experience	
Armor	

Big, Ugly Axe (4L, Size 3,
Cost ●●●, 9 again)

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 bonus Attribute; see p. 92) • Covenant • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be in clan) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health • Stamina • Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 3 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Vitae = d10 roll

CRIME SCENE

[M...P—S—]

THE EVIDENCE

[M..P..S..]

ACT ONE

Blood Red and Ash Gray
SCENE FLOW DIAGRAM

INVESTIGATED

[M...P—S...]

INVESTIGATING

[M...P•S...]

FLASHBACK

[M..P—S..]

INTERVIEWED

[M..P•S...]

FACE TO FACE

[M..P•S....]

CONFRONTATION

[M..P...S...]

REVELATION

[M...P—S...]

BROUGHT IN

[M..P•S....]

PUNISHMENT

[M•P...S...]

REVENGE

[M•P....S...]

END

END

- ↓ = ONE-WAY PLOTTING. The story unfolds in this direction only. Action cannot go against the arrow.
- ↻ = REPEATABLE SCENE. Variations on this scene may be played out multiple times.

ACT TWO

THE HINGE

ACT THREE

Getting on With It

The previous page shows all the scenes in this guide, broken down by Act and laid out according to their likely flow. In general, these scenes are in the order they're most likely to happen, based on the logical ways that information and motivations will develop over the course of the story (and the needs of rising tension, as mentioned on p. 8). You want to get familiar with all the scenes in this story before you play, though, so you can use them in whatever order strikes the right harmony between reacting to the players' choices and pulling the tension of your tale higher and higher toward the climax.

But to begin the story, you need to be comfortable with all the details of the fateful night that sets this story off. We don't know what your characters were doing when one of them went screaming off into the night, but you will. At the same time that was happening, this story's supporting characters and antagonists were also moving through the nighttime landscape of your city, unaware that their Requiems were about to meet the characters' and create either discordant noise or a haunting harmony.

If you have the time before you begin this story, you can use the details in the Back-Story Timeline to establish a bit about the Storyteller characters in your city, so that this whole cast doesn't emerge oddly from nowhere the night after the fatal encounter. Reveal some information about the domain in advance, if you can, to create the sense that this story is emerging from ongoing actions in the background of a living city. The more naturally you can reveal this story's complex exposition, the better.

Here are some details you can sprinkle into earlier stories to set up "Blood Red and Ash Gray:"

- The Domain (whatever it's called in your city) is home to several lower-class vampires, but also to the measured Hound called the Eye.
- Auspex is coveted among some vampires of the city who want to learn it. Rumor has it that some seeress in the Domain has a knack for it.
- This crazy, Grizzly Adams-looking hobo who wanders the streets in the Domain, wearing an Army jacket and big knapsack, is actually a Savage. Nobody's sure who he's working for or if the local lords are just letting wild vampires roam the streets down there now.
- The place is a decent feeding ground, even if you don't have official permission to be poaching down there.



BACK-STORY TIMELINE

The actual time of night when each of these things happens depends on the setup of this story in your own chronicle. Likewise, the time between these events is for you to determine, to fit the pace of your chronicle and the distances between locations in your World of Darkness. Rough guidelines are given for each event.

- **A Month Ago:** Hooper convinces Calla that, if the coterie is to survive without Val, they'll need new allies with clout. They devise their plan to sell her knowledge of Auspex to Sol as the first step of a plan to become his tenants.
 - **3-4 Weeks Ago:** Hooper goes to Sol's office and proposes his plan. Joe Coat sees Hooper go into Sol's office.
 - **2-3 Weeks Ago:** Hooper escorts Calla, on foot or by cab, to Sol's office for the first lesson. Calla and Hooper make one trip per week, until Hooper's Final Death. Joe Coat witnesses about half of these trips.
 - **1-2 Weeks Ago:** Sol tells the Eye about his arrangement with Hooper. At the next (and final) lesson, Sol and the Eye are both in attendance.
 - **Last Night*:** Hooper goes, alone, to Sol's office to renegotiate his deal with Sol. If two Kindred are going to learn from Calla, she and Hooper need to be paid more money. "Otherwise," says Hooper, "the lessons stop." If the lessons stop, replies Sol, "Cicero will find out what you've been up to and you'll have both of us as enemies."
 - **Last Night*:** Hooper leaves his meeting with Sol, none too happy about how things have turned out. Sol summons Joe Coat and tells him to follow Hooper.
 - **Last Night*:** The Killer frenzies and runs off into the night under the influence of the Beast.
 - **Last Night*:** The Killer and Hooper encounter each other on the street — Hooper has wandered off the beaten path to try and shake his tail, and the frenzying Killer happens upon him. They hiss and struggle, but between the Predator's Taint and the Killer's Beast, the encounter devolves into a brawl. The fight careens into a nearby parking garage and down the stairs, where the Killer drains the last of Hooper's Vitae and leaves him finally dead.
 - **Last Night*:** Joe Coat loses Hooper's trail, but gets close enough to hear the fight between him and the Killer. Joe Coat is sure that Hooper's been kidnapped or killed by another vampire, but doesn't know who. (To Joe's ears, it sure sounds like vampires in frenzy.)
 - **Tonight:** The Killer's coterie finds him and Hooper's body, by following evidence of the fight. Begin Act One, "Crime Scene."
- (*Note: "Last night" could very well be "tonight," if this story emerges from the actions of another story, already in progress. How long it takes the rest of the coterie to find the Killer depends on whether you play out their pursuit of him or if you being the story *in media res*.)



Act One: The Crime

The story begins with a crime scene. The crime scene holds a mystery. The identity of the Killer is clear. The question is, who is the victim?

Frenzy

This whole story follows on the heels of a profound, mind-clouding frenzy. This tale dramatizes potential consequences of submission to the madness of the Beast. Without that inciting incident, this story doesn't take place.

Whichever character it is that succumbs to the inciting frenzy becomes the Killer.

To properly set up this story the Killer's frenzy must send him charging, scrambling, dashing or careening into the night. This isn't typical behavior for all kinds of frenzy, but thanks to the chaotic and unpredictable nature of the Beast, any of the three types can believably send a vampire spriting into the dark and succumbing to murderous rage. It is, on some level, the quintessential risk that comes with the Beast.

So what kind of frenzy does all this follow, and how does that change the circumstances of your story?

Anger

Of all the types of frenzy, the act of rushing off into the night is most difficult to explain for anger frenzy. Typically, the violence and rage associated with this madness leads a vampire to lash out in the immediate area. That said, a sudden sprint into the night can easily be characterized as an act of the fiercely chaotic insanity of frenzy.

Through your antagonists and flashbacks, ask the players: How does the Killer's act of violence affect his culpability or Humanity if it is an act of anger? Is it a greater sin to kill out of rage than fear?

Consider these options for launching this story after an anger frenzy:

- The frenzied vampire runs off into the dark in pursuit of the man or monster that provoked the fury of his Beast. The vampire might catch this prey, or he might not, but his rage goes on, eventually bringing him to the fateful confrontation with the Victim.
- The player of the frenzied vampire spends a point of Willpower to escape the immediate consequences of frenzy — such as tearing a friend to tatters — and flees the scene to avoid hurting someone he loves. Minutes later, the frenzy of the Beast takes hold again and the

character pursues the scent of a nearby Kindred into the fatal encounter with the Victim. (Is this an unfair punishment of the player who spent Willpower to avoid trouble in the first place? No. The player successfully avoids hurting the character he wanted to spare, and gains an opportunity to gain additional experience points, which is only possible by engaging in stories anyway. Besides, **Vampire** is a game of horror and drama — horror comes from the loss of control, drama must be invoked if there's to be any game to play.)

- Simply wait to launch this story until a character succumbs to Wassail or the Red Fear.

Wassail

When the Beast goes hungry, it seeks out blood, whether kine or Kindred. A hunger frenzy can propel a vampire out into the public streets, drooling and snarling like a madman, in search of Vitae. For the Victim, this means the pounding, sprinting footfalls echoing ever closer in the dark signal the end of his nights on Earth.

Is it survival of the fittest when a vampire destroys another in pursuit of food? The Beast is a feral creature. It obeys its nature as a bestial predator at the expense of all civilized concerns. But does this make the clash between Kindred a Darwinian exercise? The Beast is an unnatural monster; this is not the natural struggle for survival. Does an inability to control one's hungering Beast temper the crimes one Kindred inflicts on another?

Rötschreck

Like Wassail, the Red Fear is a profound bestial instinct for survival. It carries a vampire on Blood-fueled feet as far from fire and Final Death as possible, without any rational measure of just how far is far enough. In the case of the Killer, this might send the vampire in search of a safe place to hide from fire or the sun — like the bottom of a concrete stairwell. Does the Victim pursue the Kindred trespasser to his hiding place, or does the terrified vampire smash into him on the street and doom one of them to Final Death by happenstance?

Is a Kindred responsible for his actions when gripped by the madness of fear? Is intent necessary for a kill to be murder? Unlike Wassail, which may result from negligence (the Beast must be fed, and every vampire knows it), Rötschreck is the result of an outside force. Does this pardon the Killer? Does it relieve his practical culpability? His moral guilt?

Scene: Prime Scene

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL — SOCIAL —

Overview: This scene begins the story with a dramatic and surprising scenario — the Killer awakens next to a corpse, in a crime scene, without any memory of how he came to be there. This is the scene that sets up the tone for the rest of the story: grisly and mysterious. Depending on the characters' choices, this scene either leads to the coterie dealing with the evidence at the crime scene, or simply trying to escape into the night.

Description: To ensure that the whole coterie is around not just for this scene, but for the vital kick-off of the whole story, begin the action with the coterie arriving on the scene, and the Killer still subdued by a Blood-binged sleep. The coterie, which has been searching for their frenzied cohort, finds him here, triggering the story.

This is the scene when they arrive. Read it to the rest of the coterie when they arrive or the Killer when he awakes:

Something bad happened here.

The square spiral of concrete steps bottoms out in a cold pit of spent cigarette butts, beer bottles and flattened paper cups. [The Killer is/You are] at the bottom of the stairs, laying on a concrete slab. It smells like mold and ash and piss down here. On the other side of this dead-end stairwell a corpse sits up, with his back to the wall. His skin is dry and taut, stretched over his face, split and rotten at the cheeks, at the brows, at the chin. His eyes are empty slits. The front of his green army coat is soaked, almost black, with blood and ash that have run out from his torn throat.

Between the mummy-like corpse and [the Killer/You], the concrete floor is sticky with blood. A toppled public ashtray has spread crunchy sand into the gunk. Where the ashes fall out of the corpse's clothes, it all makes a gritty, nasty paste. Even from here you can see, snagging the split limp lip of the corpse, a pair of yellow fangs. That body was a vampire.

Dried lines of thick, ashy paste run down from [the Killer's/Your] mouth. Goopy lines of dried blood stretch from lip to lip. [His/Her/Your] hands are crusted with blood and flaky ash. The killer is clear. But who's the corpse?

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Establish the dilemma. Get the characters (and the players) wondering: Who is the Victim? What happened at the crime scene? What'll it cost the coterie to get answers and what'll happen if (when) word gets out?

Character Goals: Find out who the Victim is and what happened here.

Actions: The key action here is a simple investigation of the scene, identifying evidence and developing what detectives call a "theory of the crime." How this action plays out depends on how well the vampires in the troupe's coterie really understand about the nature of the Requiem and the Kindred body.

Before beginning the key action of the scene, establish (for your own understanding) what information the characters (not the players) can infer from the environment and the corpse, with or without the use of Skills, as described below.

Facts About Damnation

How much do the characters know about vampires and what happens to them when they are finally slain? Can they tell the difference between a torpid vampire that looks like a corpse and a finally dead vampire that is never coming back? Do they know because they've heard tell, or because they've seen this kind of thing before?

If you want to mechanically establish the kind of knowledge the characters have at their disposal from potential experience in their background, a single reflexive Intelligence + Occult action is enough. If successful, the character can tell that the damage to the Victim goes beyond torpor. With an exceptional success, the character gains a +1 on rolls to collect evidence in this scene and "The Evidence."

The better thing to do, though, is to simply gauge the amount of experience the characters have with the Requiem and describe the scene accordingly. Only make the players roll to obtain information that grants a bonus to their investigation, not information that is essential to moving the story forward.

Here are two facts about Kindred bodies and the Requiem which are likely to come up at the crime scene:

- The longer a vampire has been undead, the faster her body decomposes upon Final Death and the more ruined it is. In general, neonates

leave rotten or dried out corpses, ancillae leave broken and mummified or skeletal remains, elders leave nothing but ashes or debris.

• Diablerie does more than just “kill” a vampire. A diablerized corpse leaves remains that are unnatural — a skull but otherwise ashes, or a heat-blackened patch of asphalt, or a papery sheath of hands around burnt bone — and unpredictable. Though no two diablerized corpses are necessarily the same, a diablerized corpse and one that is simply Finally Dead are difficult to confuse. [Thus, in this story, it should be clear that the Victim was not diablerized.]

Be careful not to withhold too much information! It’s one thing for the players not to have all the answers, and quite another for them to misunderstand the question at hand. In the first playtest of this story, with inexperienced neonates as the protagonists, the players wasted a lot of time and Vitae attempting to awaken the Victim, just in case he was in torpor. This led the story down an interesting path, as they struggled to keep the body hidden and treat it like a hostage they could ransom back rather than an incriminating corpse, but it carried us away from the story’s dramatic questions about the meaning of murder among the Damned.

Key Action: Searching For Clues

A certain amount of information is obvious to any character who takes the time (about 10 minutes) to examine the scene, without the player rolling any dice. These are the details necessary to establish the scenario:

- The Victim is a caucasian male vampire.
- The Victim’s corpse is dried, curled and gray like burnt paper, around torn flesh from the jaw to the collarbone — his throat was torn or bitten out. [This suggests the Victim’s age: a neonate.]
- The corpse’s chest is split like a spoiled pumpkin, the flesh having shrunk, and the insides have fallen like ash between rotten ribs. This is not torpor. This is Final Death.
- The Victim is dressed in a green army jacket, worn-out jeans and black work boots. He had brown hair.

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + equipment

Action: Extended (6 successes). One roll represents 10 minutes of activity. (See the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 59-60.) This is, more or less, a typical crime scene action. Multiple characters can

attempt this action at once, but unless they are using teamwork they each uncover the same clues based on the successes they achieve.

Unlike a typical crime scene, however, the characters cannot preserve the scene for long, and so cannot conduct the kind of investigation the police might. They don’t have time to bring more experienced help, and can’t call Contacts or Allies unless they’re willing to spread word of their presence in the domain and their participation in the crime. Besides, they know who the Killer is and presumably don’t want to lead authorities to him.

Obstacles/Penalties: The scene is a mess of dried blood, caked ashes and regular public stairwell filth (–3 to –5). Once the body is moved, the crime scene becomes difficult to reconstruct (–3). Additional contact with the crime scene contains the evidence (–1 per character who touches the body).

“Someone’s coming!” — non-investigative characters may have to deter (through Social or Physical action) an approaching non-combatant character to keep them away from the crime scene. This is a contested action against a dice pool of 4 or an instant action against a Resistance trait of 2, depending on what approach the characters take (whether it’s Intimidation to scare someone off, Brawl to grapple them into submission or unconsciousness, or a Discipline to manipulate them). Until this interloper is successfully dealt with (thus, for at least one roll), this action to investigate the crime scene suffers a –3 penalty from the pressure of possibly being caught.

Aids/Bonuses: A knife, pen-knife or scalpel and the willingness to use it helps a character interact with the body without damaging it too much (+2). Once the body is moved, the lockets become two successes easier to find (from 6 to 4).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character mishandles the body or missteps in the crime scene, making things harder to sort out (–2 to all following Investigation rolls in the scene).

Failure: “It’s all sticky blood and smeared ash, how is anyone supposed to make sense out of this shit?”

Success: Each success on a roll in this extended action turns up one of the following pieces of evidence, in order:

1. Both the Killer’s and the Victim’s clothes are ruined with blood and ash — they must have been tangled, grappled together, when the Victim was finally slain.

2. Based on small blood spatters and a kicked-over ashtray, the fight started upstairs, at street level, and sprawled down the concrete stairwell to the bottom.

3. The Victim's face, though shrunken and slashed beyond recognition, still sprouts rough brown hairs — he had a beard. His teeth are yellow, like a coffee-drinker's, but otherwise unremarkable.

4. The Victim's skin is black in long, serpentine shapes from his elbows, up his arms and across his back. They're tattoos, barely visible in the dried and rotten flesh, of the stylized and so-called "tribal" variety that's popular these nights.

5. Inside the corpse's left boot is a brass-colored key, like a house key, on a simple metal ring.

6. There's something inside the corpse. It's a silver pendant, round and carved with a Celtic knot, on a cheap and busted gold chain, stuck to the inside of the body and tangled up in rough straws of dry gristle. It must've come free in the fight and fallen into the body during Final Death. [Sash gave this to Hooper, and recognizes it reflexively if she sees or handles it.]

Exceptional Success: The character puts on a terrific show, taking in and making sense of the crime scene in a few short minutes, like an expert television detective.

Guilt and Humanity

Under normal circumstances, the Killer might be expected to roll for degeneration in a scene like this. The question in this case, however, is just what sin the Killer has committed and, therefore, how many dice he should roll. This is the heart of the story — where on the Hierarchy of Sin does this crime fall? Does the character seek out the truth even though it may mean eroding his Humanity, or does he hide from the truth as long as he can, if just to keep hold of another shred of his soul for one more night?

These are complex questions — or they should be if you're going to explore them with several hours of gameplay. If the players or their characters arrive at easy answers to these sorts of questions (such as whether or not the circumstances of the crime make it plainly "premeditated" or "passionate"), use this story's other scenes to complicate the question and see if the answers change before the degeneration roll is finally made.

Whatever happens, do not allow these dramatic questions to be answered with any real closure until Act Three. See "The Big Questions," in that Act, for more information.



AUSPEX: THE SPIRIT'S TOUCH

The Spirit's Touch (Auspex ●●) is a profound tool for investigation, but it can also seem like the bane of an investigative story. Doesn't Auspex spoil the mystery? Simply put: No. It doesn't. Auspex doesn't reveal anything you don't want it to. It is not a precisely calibrated bit of forensic technology; it's a supernatural power, unpredictable and frightening even when as it's powerful.

In the case of this story, the sudden rush of unnatural ferocity that comes with frenzy contaminates the psychic "data" of all the objects present for the fight between the Killer and the Victim. Every meaningful object in this scene — the Victim's clothes, the key, the pendant — is psychically tainted with the screaming, desperate fear of his death. This is your dramatic excuse to give up only those clues that you think are appropriate for your troupe's telling of this story.

If you want to cut straight to the politics and deceit that come later in the story, the power works as usual, revealing the Victim's identity (and possibly Sash's). The question for the characters is then, "What do we about this crime?" rather than, "What crime did we commit, exactly?" Note that, if the characters choose not to investigate the crime — maybe because they think the smart thing to do is to distance themselves — then this cut past the investigation happens anyway.

If you want to protect the mystery of this scene and send the characters out to investigate the Victim's identity, reward a successful use of the Spirit's Touch with unique clues, rather than full-on spoilers. The key yields a glimpse of the secret nest Sash and Hooper kept together (potentially a vital clue!), while the pendant gives the Auspex user the hyperreal sensation of kissing Sash, of brushing hair out of her face and feeling her skin come alive with the spreading warmth of spent Vitae. (You can also draw imagery for Auspex visions from the "Flashback" scene.)

Using The Spirit's Touch to glimpse the Killer's memories of the frenzied fight with the Victim is difficult (-3 penalty) because the Beast doesn't think or remember quite like the Man does. To add an element of horror to the experience, exposure to those memories may also provoke frenzy in the seer as his own Beast is stirred by the echoing snarls of other snarling monsters. To avoid this frenzy requires an extended Resolve + Composure roll, as usual, with a target number of 3 successes. (See p. 178-181 of **Vampire: The Requiem** for the rules on frenzy.)

An interesting dramatic question is tucked into this power. If the vampire using Auspex at the crime scene is someone other than the Killer, she has a choice to make: Does she tell the Killer what she knows? If she does tell him, is it with compassion, fear, anger or something else?

Tell the Auspex user straight up: Telling the Killer may be enough to force him to make the degeneration roll for his actions. (Your call.)



Blood Red and Ash Gray

Crime Scene

Consequences: The choices made in this scene (and the next scene, “The Evidence”) determine how easy or hard it is for the Eye’s investigation to lead him to the coterie. Likewise, the coterie’s actions here affect how easy it is for them to identify just what the Killer has done, and to whom.

At the end of this scene, the coterie should have some or all of the following evidence to work with. Some of these articles serve as tools during the subsequent investigation, granting the listed equipment bonus:

The Victim...

- ...was a male, caucasian vampire.
- ...was in the neighborhood when the Killer frenzied.
- ...was a neonate.
- ...wore a green army jacket (+2), old jeans, black boots.
- ...had brown hair.
- ...had a beard.
- ...had spiny, serpentine black tattoos on his upper arms and back (if the characters manage a decent sketch of the tattoo with a Wits + Crafts roll, each success grants a +1 bonus, up to the maximum of +3 — unnaturally, a photograph fails to capture it)
- ...had a small brass door key (that is otherwise nondescript)
- ...wore a silver pendant (+4).

Notes

Prime Scene

Scene: The Evidence

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL ••

Overview: This scene dramatizes the efforts of the characters to deal with the evidence at the crime scene, follows immediately after “Crime Scene,” and ends Act One of the story.

This is a scene with substantial consequences later on, and a lot of activity gets covered quickly during this part of the story. The consequences of these actions are more interesting, and more vital to the tale, than the actions themselves. With the Skills, Merits and Disciplines available to the typical **Vampire** character, covering up a crime scene (at least to the extent that it blends into the background suffering of the World of Darkness) is not the climactic act of this story — if only because no one involved with the Victim is going to go to the mortal authorities.

If the characters simply flee the crime scene, all you have to do is identify what modifiers will apply to later investigative dice pools based on whatever evidence the characters leave behind or take with them, then move on to Act Two.

Description: This scene can unfold in countless ways, depending on the player’s methods and where you’ve chosen to set the story. What’s at the top of the parking garage staircase where the Killer is found? Your city is — we don’t know if it’s Chicago, London or Newcastle. Just what perils lurk in the night at the top of those stairs depends on the level of difficulty you select for this scene’s key action. You have to bring this scene to life with the various details provided for you. But ultimately this scene is not meant to be a moment-by-moment exploration of the character’s actions. Think of it more as a montage or dramatic sequence summarizing their actions.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Create a sense of pressing paranoia and rising tension — have the characters covered the Killer’s tracks? Are they going to get away with murder?

You can make this scene as difficult or as simple as you feel is necessary to entertain the troupe and make them feel relieved when they

are finally away from the crime scene. If “Crime Scene” played out as an especially heavy, atmospheric scene, you may need to do nothing more here than get a sense of the coterie’s tactics for dealing with the scene and their success in accomplishing those tactics — possibly as simple as a single dice pool and short montage describing their success or failure.

A lot of information is contained in just a few (or even one!) rolls of the dice in this scene. Your job is to turn that information into a vivid scene. Don’t get hung up on the little things now. If a failed roll means some piece of evidence was left behind for the Eye to find, don’t let the players take another action to fix it — that roll failed, and the result is part of the story now.

Resist the temptation to draw out this scene; remember that you have two more acts worth of tension to build. Besides that, the more involved the players get at this stage, the more cheated they may feel when the Eye catches wind of the crime anyway. Remember, they don’t know (yet) that no matter what happens here, complications from the Killer’s crime are inevitable. (The Victim will be missed and the Eye *will* come to investigate.)

Just determine how well the coterie covers itself (or how badly it screws itself) in this scene and then move on.

Character Goals: Clean up the crime scene, hide the evidence, protect the Masquerade.

Key Action: Dispose of the Evidence

This is a dynamic scene with lots of built-in options for you to use. Depending on your tastes, timetable and the needs of your chronicle, you can easily alter the dice pools, action types, length and difficulty of this action. Here we’ve provided guidelines to make it easy for you to select dice pools and run the scene with extended or contested actions.

Dice Pool: Varies. Let the players chose the approach their characters take to getting rid of the body and assign dice pools to match. Here are some examples:

- *Hack up the body:* Strength + Weaponry or Strength + Medicine, to know how to chop or where to do it.
- *Scrub down the stairwell:* Wits + Strength, to do it well and not miss a spot.
- *Bury the body:* Intelligence + Streetwise to pick a spot that won’t be found, or Strength + Stamina to bury it deep

• *Have the body taken care of:* Presence or Manipulation + Street-wise to know how to best get rid of it and convey the seriousness of doing it right to the help; this assumes the character has successfully persuaded his Allies to help in the first place. (If the coterie wants the body burned, they may not want to risk frenzy by doing it themselves.)

Extended Action: 5-15 successes. Each roll represents about 30 minutes of work, not counting things like acquiring tools, driving to dump spots or waiting for Allies to show up. As with a crime scene, the players shouldn't know when they've achieved all the successes possible. Rather, you select a target number (we recommend 5-8 successes) that lets them deem (accurately) that the obvious evidence, like the body, is taken care of. Then, define an upper limit (about 10-15 successes), at which point the characters become confident. If they stop before the maximum number of successes is reached, so be it.

The more successes you choose to require, the longer the scene takes. Fewer necessary successes describe a crime scene that's easy enough to clean up and an environment that's easy to hide a body in. More necessary successes describe a sticky, messy crime scene and an environment that makes it hard to move a body in secret.

The overarching guideline you want to follow here, though, is that no dice pool can be used twice. So, if the coterie wants to hack up the body, and you decide that's a Strength + Medicine roll, they have to live with their successes. If that doesn't do the whole job, they'll have to gain more successes by trying something more, like scattering the parts or burning them.

This version of the action adds the characters' successes to the target number of successes the Eye has to achieve during his extended investigation if he's to find any of this evidence. (Once the characters have reached their target number of successes, they cannot add more.) At your discretion, however, it's quite possible that the characters make some of the evidence impossible to find, at least with the Eye's resources. He's not going to be able to do DNA testing on the Victim's ashes, for example.

Contested Action: For a simpler, faster version of this scene, simply have the players select a single method for hiding or destroying the evidence, determine the dice pool, and roll that once. The action chosen should require somewhere between 90 minutes and two hours to carry out in full, and focus on the crime scene more than where the body ends up.

The Eye is going to assume the Victim's not going to surface once he can find the crime scene with the assistance of Joe Coat. It's unlikely that the Eye's going to find the body unless it is left at the crime scene or he has good reason to believe it is somewhere specific and accessible, like if he can follow a blood trail to a nearby dumpster.

The characters roll their dice pool, including any modifiers you choose to grant for aids, obstacles, and teamwork, during this scene. The Eye contests their result in the scene, "Investigated," when you're tracking his progress on their trail.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: This result is only possible if you choose to reduce the key action to a single dice pool, or if the characters simply do nothing and leave the crime scene as they found it. A dramatic failure grants the Eye a +5 bonus on his first roll in the scene "Investigated."

Failure: Failure at either the extended or contested action means some obvious, substantial evidence was left behind, which the Eye can use against the coterie during his own investigation. See this scene's Consequences.

Success: Success at the extended action means the Victim's body and other substantial evidence of the crime has been removed or destroyed and cannot be used against the coterie by the Eye.

Exceptional Success: An exceptional success doesn't just deny evidence to the Eye, it actively contaminates the scene to such an extent that the Eye develops an erroneous theory of the crime. This changes the way he approaches the coterie in the scene, "Interviewed," but does not derail his investigation (or the story).

Obstacles/Penalties: The number of potential obstacles and hindrances between the coterie and their success is up to you. None, any, or all of these factors might come into play in your story:

- Passersby (-1 to -3)
- Surveillance (-2 to -4)
- Good visibility in the area (-2)
- Gruesome complications, stains, debris (-2 to -4)
- Bad access to a dump site (-1 to -5)
- Talkative Accessories: If the characters enlist the help of Contacts or Allies, it's possible that word spreads of their actions. If you think these Storyteller characters are at risk of leaking what they know (maybe down at their local bar), have the vampire whose Merit is in question roll Presence + Intimidation or Manipulation + Persuasion

to convince his Contacts or Merits to stay quiet. Add relevant Allies dots but no Contacts dots to the dice pool. Each success imposes a -1 penalty on any attempt by the Eye to get information out of those same Contacts or Allies during the scene “Investigated.”

Aids/Bonuses: The higher the target number you select for the extended action, the more rolls will be necessary and the more tools, aids and resources the players will be able to involve in their plan.

- Particular tools can help make the body easier to move — an axe makes the body more portable (+3), while a garbage bag or two makes it more discreet (+2). Each kind of tool can be used only once, for one roll in the extended action. Either it is used well or it isn’t.


- Bribes are just another kind of tool for moving people. In this scene, dots in Resources can simply be added to a single roll to deal with human obstacles like passersby or a “problem witness,” at your discretion. Resource dots can also be used to help secure silence from Allies and Contacts, at your discretion. For the purposes of this scene, however, be strict with Resources dots; one expenditure per character is good. You want the players to carefully consider how they’ll use their Resources dots. Does the Ventrue use hers to bribe a cop or rent a truck to move the body in? Does the Gangrel use his to buy an axe or a bunch of lighter fluid?

- Contacts can help the characters spread disinformation, but are not usually the kind of close associates you’d want to tell that you’re moving a body.

- Allies can be very helpful in this kind of situation, depending on the coterie’s plan. Allies in the police department might be able to dismiss the significance of a bloody stairwell if there’s no body to find, while Allies in the Sanitation Department might know where things can be dumped without being found. Allies you deem appropriate can be called on for one additional roll in the extended action. This is a Manipulation + Persuasion + Allies roll, modified by the nature of the favor being asked. (See the sidebar.)


Consequences: The approach the players (and thus their characters) take in this scene determines the circumstances under which the Storyteller characters first appear in Act Two — but so does the way you choose to frame this scene.

Every choice the players make now impacts the attitude of the Eye later, and the situation the coterie finds itself in with the Storyteller characters in Act Two. But **you** decide *what* choices are put before the



MODIFIERS FOR CALLING ON ALLIES

Situation	Modifier
Reveal a dump or pickup schedule	—
Lend tools	-1 to -3
Scout a dump site	-1 to -3
Grant access to a furnace or dump site	-1 to -3
Lie for the coterie	-2 to -4
Turn off a security system	-3
Falsify paperwork	-2 to -5
“Take care” of the body	-5



players and their characters in this scene. If you don’t put it on the table that there’s some possibility of the characters being seen dragging a body, that can’t happen.

Don’t let this scene get bogged down! This isn’t meant to be a story of vampires on the run from mortal homicide detectives. Don’t let things get so far gone; simply don’t make the stakes of any roll that high. Don’t make the consequence of any roll something like, “an old lady sees Hooper’s severed head roll down the street and calls 911.” Keep a firm hand on the tiller here.

Aside from simply choosing not to try, the characters cannot actually fail the extended action to dispose the body. The worst-case scenario is that they make the Eye’s job easier. Everything they do here impacts the Eye’s investigation in the scene, “Investigated.” The Eye finds any evidence the characters leave behind before police do, and he uses Sol’s resources to protect the Masquerade if the characters fail to do so.

Whatever the Eye can learn later about what the characters do in this scene now may be used against them by anyone the Eye shares his information with. If the characters failed to protect the Masquerade, they may have to answer for that, too.

Not every detail can be accounted for by tracking successes or comparing die rolls. Make a note of particular details, like the location of key pieces of evidence, for use in the Eye’s investigation and throughout the story. The scene, “Investigated,” has a table you can use to track the evidence.

Blood Red and Ash Gray

The Evidence

Act Two: The Investigation

Here's where things get complicated.

Once the characters have cleaned up their mess at the crime scene, to whatever extent they've chosen to do so, they get a level of freedom that can be difficult for a Storyteller to handle. That freedom is just as difficult for a story kit like this one to interact with, so you have to prepare yourself for the fact that whatever **Blood Red and Ash Gray** may look like in your head as you're reading these pages may end up bearing little resemblance to the story you tell with the rest of the troupe come game time. Don't shy away from that — use and abuse the tools you're given in this kit to make *your* story come alive.

You'll know the second act of the story has begun when the players exhale and reflect on what happened at the crime scene, or when their characters attempt to re-enter their typical nightly activities. The scenes in this act are highly flexible, taking place when the choices of the players suggest to you that they should, or when something needs to happen in the name of rising tension.

Most, but not all, of the following scenes are triggered by contact between the players' characters and Storyteller characters, but that contact can happen at the behest of the players or yourself.

Investigation & Suspense

Many of the scenes in this act center on investigation and, therefore, suspense. But investigative suspense is typically about getting answers, and that's not necessarily the case here. In some of these scenes, it's entirely likely that the suspense will come not from the characters trying to get information, but from them trying to hide it.

Resist the temptation to make the stakes of every scene involve the complete truth coming out. Raise the level of tension one scene at a time, twisting the dial hotter and hotter. A terrific amount of tension comes from a scene that ends with the characters (and their players) suspecting that an antagonist knows the truth, but with neither party being ready to tip their hand... yet. Remember that you can raise the tension even higher for a more nail-biting climax later.

And yet, you can't sacrifice the players' ability to choose the actions of their characters. Influencing them as a narrator, and as a fellow game player at the table, is one thing, but forbidding them is too much. You



STORYTELLER'S OPTION:

WHEN DOES THIS HAPPEN?

Act Two follows Act One, obviously, but how far behind? The second act can begin the same night that Act One finishes, if you choose to run an instance of the scene, "Flashback," right away. If the characters immediately seek out some information about the Victim, they may trigger an instance of "Investigating" almost immediately.

Ideally, however, a momentary pause falls between the acts, when the coterie catches its breath or lays low. Then they hear word that some Kindred called the Eye is investigating the disappearance of a vampire in the Domain, and the calm is broken. The sudden tension creates a real "oh, shit" moment. But that may not be the way it works out — follow the players into the story they create by making choices for their characters.

If you're playing **Blood Red and Ash Gray** as part of an ongoing chronicle, you might slip a scene from another story, or even a whole other story, between Act One and Act Two. Give the players enough time to think they got away with an anonymous murder. You might even play out your first instance of the scene, "Face to Face," letting the coterie meet Sash before they really understand who she is. Maybe this conversation is how they find out — or fearfully suspect — who the Victim is. That's a gut-wrenching moment, for sure, when Sash says something like, "He went missing almost a week ago, and already it seems like everybody's given up looking for him. Sol's got the Eye looking for suspects now, instead of my... friend."

If you're playing this story as a stand-alone experience, that same scene can still work, but the implications change for the players. While their characters might believe they've encountered Sash by chance, the players will almost certainly suspect the scene plays some important part in the story. The characters may think they're just subtly collecting information on another local vampire, while the players are scrutinizing every detail of the scene for some hint of its dramatic purpose. Let them be suspicious.

The dissonance created when an audience (the players) has information about a situation that the characters *in* that situation do not have is a form of dramatic tension called tragic irony. It's not a technique that often works in a roleplaying game — because the informed audience directly influences the actions of the characters and not all players are good at separating their knowledge from their character's — but it is a great tool for suspense when it does.



have to strike a balance. Thus, if they make the decision early in this Act to confront an antagonist outright and bring the story to a head, go with it. Proceed immediately to the scenes in the Hinge (see below) and draw on whatever resources you can from Act Three to provide one or more climactic scenes for the tale.

See Act Three for advice on finding a dramatic ending beyond the rush of a violent climax.

Antagonism & Motivation

The freedom the characters enjoy in this act makes the specifics of these scenes difficult to predict. Does the coterie come face to face with Sash and Val in a sweaty, pulsing goth club or along the sullen, smokey bar in some biker dive? Does the Eye find the coterie at the gallery owned by their sire or on the street in some gloomy Rack? Those sorts of details have to emerge naturally from the city where your chronicle is set. Since it's their motivations tangled with the coterie's, rather than the layout of some haunted house, that defines what happens and when in this story, you can trust that things will unfold when the players' characters and yours intersect.

What we've done, to help inspire you and arm you with vivid details, is base our scenes on the kinds of locations where the built-in Storyteller characters are likely to be found. That's how you influence the atmosphere and setting of the story, is by placing your Storyteller characters in dramatically appropriate places.

Think of television detective shows, and how the cops go and interview people in places that tell us, in the audience, about them. When the players say, "We go see Calla," (or Sol, or whomever), you say, "You find her hidden behind a curled paperback textbook and tucked into a corner booth at that sticky bar with the peeling red paint."

The motivations and knowledge of the antagonists are just as important as the collection of scenes in this story. The pages for each Storyteller character, when put with the following scenes, can make fire. Remember that none of the Storyteller characters wait to act until they know what *you* know — they go from where they stand, knowing what they know and wanting what they want.

This might mean Sol wants the Killer to teach him *Auspex*, not knowing that he's essentially asking the Killer to confess. This might mean Sash tries to get revenge on the coterie based on faulty information, even though she ends up attacking the right vampire. Whatever happens, it should mean dramatic conflicts.

How to Use the Scenes

The freedom afforded to the players in Act Two may make it difficult for you to use pre-defined scenes in the ways you plan on using them. It's inevitable. Rather than try to steer the players into taking actions that fit neatly with one of the seven scenes we've provided for Act Two, adapt these scenes in response to the players' choices, using whatever you can from within them to help color the coterie's interactions with the Storyteller characters.

You've got to keep the fire going, so break apart the table and chairs for firewood if you have to.

If we try to anticipate every possible outcome, each scene swells with "if, then" statements that ultimately wasting space and time, because most of all the possibilities we might explore, as few as none of them might be relevant in the actual play of your story come game-time. So, the scenes in this act strive to give you the vital tools and bearings you need to make this part of your story dramatic, tense and compelling.

The first meeting between the troupe's coterie and Cicero's Crew may end up bearing little resemblance to the kind of scene we present in "Face to Face," but such is the nature of play.

These scenes are meant to represent a few core conflicts that emerge organically from the basic scenario — the coterie knows they've killed someone and they probably don't want people to find out. If nothing else, they are apt fuel for this *kind* of story. If your version of **Blood Red and Ash Gray** ends up looking nothing like what you imagine while reading these pages, you still have these scenes available in your toolbox should a suitable spot for them reveal itself later.

But these aren't just reactions to what the characters do, anyway. While the players' characters are stalking the night, hunting hobos and stealing jewels (or whatever it is they do), the Storyteller characters are moving *this* story forward, because it's important to them. Eventually, they'll push this story right into the player's characters. If they don't, you can. Maybe the Killer and Sash end up next to each other in a local bar by chance (that is, because you set up the scene, "Face to Face," to keep the themes of this story in play) — now these scenes are unfolding, even if the troupe doesn't head there instinctively.

The scenes in Act Two are pretty focused. Only one or two actions are described in each. These are exemplars of the kind of action the scene was meant for, but they describe something worth emulating — they don't restrict the action to a script. Sash is expected to use a Skill like Persuasion or Socialize in "Face to Face," but she can take whatever approach is right in your circumstances.

Though the following scenes are written with particular dramatic goals and moods in mind, here are the bare-bones underpinnings supporting each scene, so you can revise them easily on the fly:

- **Investigated:** This is a scene just for you, the Storyteller. It covers the Eye's investigation of the crime scene and the coterie. The central action here is an extended Investigation action, which the coterie may become aware of as word spreads that someone's asking around about them. Keep this scene running to give you an idea when the Eye and the coterie should meet each other even if the characters stay passive.

- **Investigating:** The premise of this scene assumes that the characters will try to find some information on the Victim and his Requiem, and so describes some of what the characters find in their investigation. If they don't investigate, the secret haven revealed in this scene might be discovered if the coterie shadows (WoD, p. 76) Sash (or someone else?) there.

- **Flashback:** The players don't trigger this scene, under most circumstances, but if psychology or psychic mysticism is how they go about investigating the Killer's fateful night, the visions in this scene are what things like Auspex, Dominate and Majesty might uncover.

- **Interviewed/Face to Face:** These scenes are meant to dramatize a situation in which the characters try to avoid tipping their hands to Kindred who may or may not suspect what the Killer did. Alternately, you could use these scenes to support any encounter between the coterie and the Storyteller characters that's less volatile than a violent confrontation.

- **Revelation:** This scene stands in for whenever it is that the Killer realizes what he (and his Beast) has done and confronts his Humanity. As written, the assumption is that this dramatic moment happens in the presence of other characters, late in the story, but this scene can be absorbed into another one if the moment emerges organically out of, say, a flashback or a conversation with Sash.

- **Confrontation:** This is simply a sketch of what a suddenly sparked fight with Sash or her cohorts might be like. Should this kind of fight break out sooner in the story, you know where to look for details.



CHEATING?

Is it cheating for you, as the Storyteller, to grant your own characters automatic successes behind the scenes? Is it cheating for you to decide the Eye makes some phenomenal deductive leap that prompts him to seek out the coterie and question them? Is it cheating for you to decide during play that Joe Coat knows more than he let on at first — that maybe he actually **saw** a glimpse of the Killer and the Victim wrestle into the parking garage stairwell — and eventually comes clean because, say, Sol made him an offer he couldn't refuse?

No, it's not.

Your first responsibility is to the players, not their characters. These kinds of story tweaks don't screw the players out of an important gameplay decision for the players or undermine what should be a fair victory for their characters — they explain dramatic events that may be necessary to keep the story moving at the right pace for play. You have the narrative authority to decide that the city's Prince is a master of Majesty, that Cicero is actually blood-bound to Val but doesn't know it, that Calla falls in love with a player's Daeva prostitute, or that Joe Coat knows the truth. Use that to tell a great story. It's better for something dramatic to happen than for your story to fade away.



Repeating Scenes



Most of the scenes in Act Two are repeatable, as indicated by the looping arrow on the Scene Flow Diagram. These are scenes that can be played through multiple times, representing several different encounters or experiences. The coterie might be interviewed by the Eye more than once, or encounter Sash several times at a local bar popular for hunting, for example. These scenes might happen nights or even weeks apart, though the motivations of the Storyteller characters should keep them moving enough to prevent the story from cooling for too long.

Use variations on these scenes to raise the dramatic tension throughout the Act, or to explore thematic questions by seeing how similar encounters play out differently as the tension rises and new information is revealed.

The Hinge

The final two scenes of this Act represent what's called the Hinge, which is the turning point for the story. Once a Hinge scene is triggered, there's no turning back and no repeating the scenes. The story now moves inexorably to its climax.

Storyteller Scene: Investigated

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL — SOCIAL •••

Overview: This unusual scene doesn't get played by the players. Instead, you use this scene to track the Eye's investigation of the troupe's coterie. Eventually, the characters may catch wind of his investigation through their Contacts or Allies or some other channel, but by default this scene is just for you.

Alternately, if it better suits the kind of chronicle you've got, you could use this material to generate short cutaway scenes, as described in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** (p. 195). The risk there is that the Eye may appear to the players as the central antagonist, but more complex moral and strategic conflicts, suitable to **Vampire's** Danse Macabre, emerge when the players and their characters must choose their enemies and risk temporary alliances. If you give them a straight-up villain to oppose in this story, you're missing out.

Description: Bringing this scene to life for the players relies not on narration but on dialogue. If the characters are to learn what's going on with the Eye's investigation, they'll have to hear second-hand, from someone the Eye's been in contact with. This might be someone the characters know through their Merits or even one of the other major Storyteller characters in this story — if Sash doesn't realize she's talking to the Eye's prime suspect, she might drop some hint that she's heard about "Sol's private dick is out following leads, and sooner or later he's going to find the Beast that... killed Hooper."

This information might come to the characters by chance (as above), as a tip from a Contact, or as a political play by a major Storyteller character. When the characters get these tips is up to you. These might surface during the scene, "Investigating," as the coterie accrues successes, or they might come up in conversation during "Face to Face." When the coterie interacts with Contacts or Allies, they might hear word of the Eye.

Here's some sample dialogue you can use to hint at the Eye's investigation and the peril it means for the coterie if they weren't careful back in Act One:

• "Be careful who you talk to, huh? There's some bloodsucker on the street asking questions about a missing neonate in [the Domain]. He acts like a Hound, you know? But I don't know who's leash he's on."

• "You seen this PI guy around town? Always asking questions? He asked me, two nights ago, about Kindred in your neighborhood. Did I know them? Where do they hunt? Do they ever go to [the Domain]? That sort of thing."

• "Somebody's been asking questions. Just this guy. Not a cop, maybe a PI, but... I *think* he was Kindred. I mean, just a gut thing. He was, you know, nice enough, but nosy."

• "Listen, I heard this guy asking around about you, your coterie, last night. He was talking to the kine in bars up and down the block, I guess, asking for you guys. He described you. I told him I didn't know shit, and he moved on, but... I have to tell you, I don't think he believed me."

• "Yes. Yes, he asked me. I didn't want to tell him anything. I mean, I tried not to. I *told him* he was wrong and that I didn't know what he was talking about, but he kept asking, you know, but always, like, calm. Polite, even. And... I didn't mean to, but the words just came out. I think. I'm not even sure what I said. But he said he'd talk to you, just to straighten things out. I'm sorry."

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Determine what the Eye finds out about the Killer and his encounter with the Victim, so you can gauge what the Eye (and anyone he tells) will do about it. If possible, also establish the Eye's investigation as a kind of shadowy deadline lurking over the coterie's shoulder. Will they be found out? How long do they have?

Character Goals: Whatever goals the characters may develop for this scene are more aptly handled in their scene, "Investigating." Generally speaking, they want to stay at least one step ahead of the Eye and his investigation.

Investigating the Victim's Disappearance

The Eye is called in once Joe Coat tells Sol that Hooper got jumped by what sounded like a frenzied vampire. Sol puts Joe and the Eye in a room together to get the Eye started, then sends him out into the Domain to find Hooper or the vampire that attacked him. Sol plans to punish Hooper's attacker, but also to spin the situation to his own benefit, if he can — a guilty party has good reason to deal. Sol doesn't tell all of this to the Eye, but the Eye knows it anyway.

So, almost immediately after the coterie is done there, the Eye goes to the parking garage, where Joe Coat sent him, and starts poking around. Eventually, inevitably, he finds the stairwell and, with patience and a practiced sense, finds something to go on.

Just what the Eye finds depends on the coterie's success in Act One. Even if they masterfully covered up the crime scene, the Eye has something to go on — cover-ups leave their own kind of evidence, and there's no such thing as a perfect crime. No remaining evidence may point to the coterie, but the Eye quickly becomes sure that the Victim is not going to turn up. If he's going to find a culprit for Sol to work with, he's going to have to start poking around those Kindred who might of been close to Hooper or close to the parking garage.

Eventually the Eye will get around to the characters. That's inevitable. But if they were meticulous and smart in Act One, they may not be suspects at all by the time the scene, "Interviewed," comes around.

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation, for the crime scene and other areas of physical evidence, or Manipulation + Subterfuge, for subtly drawing information out of background characters without seeming too conspicuous.

Action: Extended. 12+ successes necessary. Each roll represents one night of investigation or information gathering. The Eye might not make a roll every night, as he pursues leads other than the characters. Assume the Eye makes one roll immediately after "The Evidence," and then continues making these rolls once you begin Act Two.

If you used an extended action to play out "The Evidence," the coterie's successes on that action add to the target number of successes the Eye needs to accrue for this action.

If you used a contested action to play out "The Evidence," the Eye makes a Wits + Investigation roll opposing the coterie's roll. If the coterie wins the contested action, their successes serve as a penalty to the Eye's rolls in this scene. If the Eye wins, his dice pool is not affected by the contested action.

This action describes only the Eye's success at tying the players' characters to the crime, not the overall course of his investigation. If the Eye fails to achieve many successes on this action, he is either pursuing leads that point to other suspects or, more likely, finding one dead end after another. Because the truth will eventually lead him to the coterie, the only way for the Eye to not focus his investigation on them eventually is for him to give up the case. We offer you no mechanism for this. The Eye's decision to give up the investigation is

a choice you must make for him, based on the Eye's motivation and the incentives put before him.

Each roll brings the Eye closer to the characters. Each success makes him more suspicious of them. Once the Eye has made six rolls (that is, roughly five nights after you start Act Two), he seeks out the coterie for questioning. His level of suspicion depends on the number of successes he's achieved after those six rolls, as described in "Interviewed."

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: A dramatic failure on any roll subtracts one success from the Eye's ongoing total, putting him even further away from the truth.

Failure: The Eye fails to find any evidence or leads tying the characters to the Victim's disappearance, at least tonight.

Success: The Eye finds some evidence — footprints near the crime scene, testimony from Joe Coat about a familiar voice, whispers from an untrustworthy Contact, etc. — that keeps the coterie on his suspect list.

Exceptional Success: A breakthrough, more likely based on intuition than fact. Without the strict formalities of the legal system to restrain him, though, a hunch or two may be all he needs.

Hindrances: The Eye's investigation of the characters is greatly impacted by the actions they've made thus far, for better or worse:

- The coterie wins the contested action against the Eye (penalty equal to coterie's successes, -5 maximum)
- The coterie are regular visitors to the Domain (-1)
- The coterie doesn't investigate the Victim's identity themselves (-2)
- The coterie resides in the Domain (and thus are a common sight) (-3)
- The coterie's Contacts or Allies have been instructed not to talk about the night of "The Evidence" (-1 to -5)

Help: What's bad for the characters is good for the Eye:

- The coterie suffers a dramatic failure in "The Evidence" or leaves the crime scene as-is (+5 to first roll only)
- The coterie are strangers in the Domain (and thus stand out) (+2)
- The Eye has Allies or Contacts in common with those used in "The Evidence" (+2 for Contacts, add Allies dots as a bonus)
- The Eye gets physical evidence: army jacket (+2), tattoo rendering (+1 to +3), Sash's pendant (+5)

Consequences: See "Interviewed"

Scene: Flashback

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL ••

Overview: The Killer's sleep is haunted by his encounter with the Victim. His Beast won't let him forget it. Bloody images, animal snarls and desperate screams pick at his Humanity. He wakes at dusk, frightened and exhausted, even if he thinks of himself as being hardened against such feelings. This scene occurs whenever you need a dose of horror or a way to provoke the story's thematic questions. Highlight the moral questions of the Killer's act with this scene. Don't let the characters downplay the moral ramifications of the Killer's actions. Don't let them forget that his Beast is torturing him.

Description: This scene represents a series of potential flashbacks, taking the Killer through his own memories from the moment of the Victim's death back to the moment of the attack. Share these flashbacks with the Killer's player, adding the next element to the beginning of the vision with each subsequent flashback.

- *His hands are pulling on your clothes, trying to lift you off of his chest. Your hand is on his face, pushing his head back and down, against the concrete wall. His eyes flutter under your fingers. You can't hear him snarling anymore — not once his throat splits and gives like an apple rind, gushing blood through your teeth, out over your lips, and down your chin. You move down to catch the falling flow and skin peels away, down his neck, following your fangs.*

- *You hit the slab at the bottom of the stairs with the army jacket in your grip and slide him across the floor with it. The shrieks echoing off concrete sound like a zoo. His head strikes the wall with a heavy clop. His face is scratched and pocked with black holes from your fangs.*

- *You feel yourself sway and your weight give way. You're spinning away him, toppling over the metal railing. The spiral of the stairs wobbles below you. You scramble, get a fistful of green jacket as he's lurching for the door, and you both fall, clattering off railings and stairs.*

- *Banging on metal. Human screams. Your shoulder, your head, your fists clatter on a metal door. You get one foot through the crack when your weight hits the door, then your arms, then you're inside, biting at flailing hands and a screaming, fanged face.*

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Frighten or creep out the players, inject a dose of Vampire's personal horror into play, and dramatize the moral bruising the Killer is suffering where his human psyche meets his Beast. Present the Killer (and the player) with a choice between a painful truth or a comfortable ignorance. Use this scene to reinvigorate the players' interest in the story and add weight to the characters' unease. If the characters don't take actions sufficient to trigger the scene "Investigating," use this scene to supply them with clues or dramatic incentive to keep going.

Character Goals: Avoid an emotional breakdown, frenzy or derangement and learn the truth about what happened in the stairwell.

Weathering the Flashback

Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure (This dice pool cannot be modified by Willpower)

Action: Reflexive. This roll measures the character's success at weathering the psychological effects of the flashbacks. Repeat this action every time the character experiences a flashback.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Killer wakes exhausted and fights against the Beast's impulses to sleep for the rest of the night — his dice pools for any action cannot exceed his dots in Humanity, unless modified by Willpower.

Failure: The Killer wakes feeling emotionally drained and panicked. He loses one Willpower point.

Success: The Killer wakes one step closer to understanding what exactly happened in that bloody stairwell, and one step closer to facing the toll on his Humanity. If he wishes, the Killer can spend a Willpower point to shake off the memory of the flashback and move no further through the flashback memories this time. It's a choice between facing the truth and hiding in ignorance.

Obstacles/Penalties: Genuine remorse (if the Killer's Humanity is 4 or higher he suffers a penalty equal to half his Humanity dots)

Aids/Bonuses: Mesmerism instruction to sleep (bonus equal to user's dots in Dominate), counseling (Manipulation + Empathy as teamwork, +5 maximum), meditation within 8 hours of sleep (+2)

Consequences: The consequences of this scene are largely in the hands of the Killer's player to realize through roleplaying. If the flashback sequence is completed and the Killer finally faces his degeneration roll, genuine remorse may impact him in later scenes. For the consequences of the degeneration roll, see "Revelations."

Scene: Investigating

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ...

Overview: In this scene, the coterie probes the Domain for information about the identity of the Victim, as well as his allies, coterie-mates and loyalties. What does everyone else know that they don't?

This scene takes place when the characters go probing into the Domain's vampire culture, asking veiled questions at clubs and bars, eavesdropping on conversations, or anything else they do dig up information without coming face to face with one of the major Storyteller characters. (For that, see "Face to Face.")

This scene is a counterpoint to the Storyteller scene, "Investigated." The players use this scene to gain more information and strengthen their ability to make smart choices in the Domain.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Gradually reveal new information about the Domain and its local power dynamics, giving the characters an idea of what they've gotten themselves into.

Character Goals: Gain enough information to identify the victim or gauge the fallout for his destruction without arousing suspicion.

Gather Information

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion or Socialize, to use Contacts. Wits + Socialize or Streetwise - 5, to eavesdrop and "absorb" local gossip. Presence + Intimidation vs. Resolve + Composure (4 dice), to strong-arm locals. (Intimidation has its own consequences for failure and success.)

Action: Instant or contested. Each roll represents one night of information gathering.

The Eye's action in the Storyteller scene, "Investigated," is extended because he is on a trail towards a particular destination: the truth. It's a simple abstraction for simplicity.

The coterie's action is an instant action that be performed several times, by playing this scene over again, but the successes do not accumulate over time. The characters simply collect whatever information they can and put it to use as they see fit.

Obstacles/Penalties: Talkative locals make casual questioning take forever (-1 to -3), the characters are known for being dangerous (-2 to -5), foreign-language neighborhood (-4)

Aids/Bonuses: Character is a local in the Domain (+1 to +2), Barfly (+1 or +2), Bribes (+1 to +3, based on Resources; no one trusts a wad of cash worth more than ●●●, though), threats (+3 to this roll, and +3 to one roll for the Eye in "Investigated," because bullied people gripe)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character is given dangerously false information by someone who may even believe it to be true. For example, a ghoul claims Joe Coat has been destroyed or Cicero's ghouls are planning to turn on him. Devise your own misinformation based on the Storyteller character write-ups. If the character used Intimidation, either Cicero or Sol (your choice) is informed that someone is muscling around in his territory — the intimidating characters suffer a -2 penalty when dealing with that lord during "Brought In." The Eye gains a +3 bonus to his next Investigation roll.

Failure: The streets give up the same old whispers and gossip, but no new information. If the character used Intimidation, the Eye gains a +1 bonus on his next Investigation roll.

Success: The character overhears or coaxes out a murmur about the state of Kindred affairs in the Domain. Select a piece of information from one of the Storyteller character reference pages and share it with the character's player. The information you give can be as earth-shaking or revealing as you like — make your selection based on the pacing you're trying to achieve and the amount of motivation you feel the players need.

Exceptional Success: The character finds a drunken or malcontent ghoul who says more than he'll wish he had. Select two pieces of information to share with the player.

Details: Use these short lead-ins to add a bit of color to whatever pieces of information you give out:

- "Look, man, I'll deny telling you this, you understand?" His fingers shake while he takes a drag off his cigarette, but it's chemical, not fear. His fingers are yellow. "But I have it on good, ah... Look, let's just say I know..."

- He's peeling the silver sheet off his gum and scratching his nose when he says, "I'm sure it's old news on the block, but the way I hear it..."

- "I'll assume you don't know, I guess," she says, doing that look around that just says she's proud of what she's got to share, "We're not supposed to know, but everybody basically does, that..."

• He puts his hand up in the air between you, cranes his head around the corner... and waits. Finally, he exhales and looks back at you. "I can't be telling you this shit, man. Nobody should even know that we've been talking about this. You shouldn't be asking. But..."

• ... Then she downs the rest of the vodka and turns the empty tumbler. "But, whatever. I don't know. It's the same shit you hear about everybody, right?"

In the Secret Haven

One major source of information, good for a tactile investigation scene, is the secret haven Sash shared with Hooper. It's little more than a storage room in the basement of a condemned office building, hidden away behind a fire door and a pile of metal desks, but it contains potentially vital information that could provide valuable leverage when dealing with Sash, Calla, Val, Sol or Cicero.

The trick is in finding the place. The haven is rated at four dots of Haven Security, reflecting how unlikely it is to find in the basement of a decrepit building, but that won't stop the most diligent searchers. Perhaps the most likely way to find the place is to tail Sash back there. Ultimately, just how (if!) the characters get there is up to you — use this nest as a reward for clever players or as a boost in the story. Here you'll find a few things to do in the secret haven.

The brass-colored key in the Victim's boot opens the door to this room. Calla has the lockbox key.

Obstacles/Penalties: The room is low-ceilinged and cramped (-2), ratty loose carpet curls off the floor (-2), it's dark (-2), stacks of wet newspapers are all over the place (-1 to -3), well-hidden (-4)

Aids/Bonuses: The whole building is serenely quiet (+2)

Details: *The cinderblock corridor ends in a pile of metal desks and deformed folding chairs. A gap underneath one of the desks leads back behind the pile... to a metal door. Waterlogged newspapers are stacked two, three and four-feet high around the desks. Inside, the place feels like it should hold a water-heater — it's not suited for much else. A naked bulb hangs on a cord from the ceiling. Three stained mattresses are stacked in the middle of the room. A wood-colored mini-fridge sits between them and the wall. The concrete floor wears a curled, moldy rag of carpet like a bad toupee.*

Shadowing Someone to the Haven

Dice Pool: Wits + Stealth + modifiers vs. Wits + Composure + modifiers

Action: Contested. (WoD, p. 76)

Lockpicking (Haven Door)

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny + equipment

Action: Extended, TN 5 successes. (WoD, p. 75)

Fire Door: Durability 3, Size 5, Structure 6, Damage 3

Lockpicking (Lockbox)

Inside the mini-fridge is a steel lockbox about the size of a loaf of bread. It's brand new. Inside it is a ledger and a notebook, laid on a pile of green dollars. There's about \$5,000 here, worth a ●●● purchase.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny + equipment - 2 (lock is small, stiff)

Action: Extended, TN 6 successes. (WoD, p. 75)

Lockbox: Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4, Damage 2B

Analyze the Ledger

The ledger is Hooper's record of appointments and cash transactions with Sol. It's not coded, but it is intentionally unclear, so what would ordinarily be obvious to make sense of requires a little work. This is physical evidence of Hooper's dealings with Sol (+2), good for social leverage.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Academics - 2 (The ledger is vague)

Action: Extended, TN 3 successes. Each roll represents about 30 minutes of work. Success reveals that the ledger is tracking scheduled meetings and payments, as though someone is paying for one- and two-hour sessions of time with... someone.

Analyze the Notebook

The notebook is a common, blank composition book with handwritten notes and thoughts in a clean, bold style (Calla's). Parts of it seem like a diary, recording experiences with "visions" and "images," but other parts are more analytical and speculative. This is physical evidence of Calla's dealings with Sol (+2) and could be passed off as a resource for learning Auspex if unexamined (+2), good for social leverage.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult (Disciplines) + Auspex - 2 (The notebook uses new-age terminology and unfamiliar jargon that's difficult to understand without having a strong sense of the workings of Auspex)

Action: Extended, TN 6 successes. Each roll represents about 30 minutes of work. The notebook contains Calla's notes on Auspex, which she prepared between lessons and left with Hooper for safety's sake. These notes aren't enough to teach Auspex, but they are enough to demonstrate how scary it can be to see the world through it.

Scene: Face to Face

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL — SOCIAL •••

Overview: When the characters meet one of the major Storyteller characters, other than Cicero or Sol, use this scene as your guide. This scene can be triggered by a direct, intentional meeting (“Let’s go down to Ashland Avenue and see if we can’t get whole sentences out of Joe Coat.”) or by Storyteller-driven happenstance (“Sash! I wouldn’t have expected to see you off of a barstool tonight.”)

(Sol and Cicero are more likely to act through immediaries like Val and the Eye until they appear in person in the scene, “Brought In.” This is a suggestion, meant to preserve their mystique and add weight to their eventual entrances, not a strict statement of what Sol or Cicero might choose to do as characters.)

Description: Where this scene happens depends on who you pit the characters against. See the Storyteller character sheets for ideas on where they might be found. This scene is written with the assumption that the whole of Cicero’s Crew — Val, Sash and Calla — will be present for this scene, if not actively participating.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Provoke guilt or fear in the characters, and suspense in the players, by portraying an emotional encounter with the Victim’s coterie and associates before they know about the coterie’s involvement in the Victim’s disappearance. Make the Domain’s vampires appear both human and monstrous.

This scene is built around a tense encounter rife with emotional deception. Hopefully, the characters are human enough that murder and the pain it causes others still affects them in some way. Obviously, that may not be the case. If the characters are so monstrous that another’s suffering doesn’t affect them emotionally, that’s still a viable hook for your scene — can you make the players realize just how monstrous their characters are by shining a lot at their cold inhumanity in this scene?

Or does Sash’s grief — the grief of a bloodsucking monster herself — not count when measuring one’s humanity? (Obviously it does count in game terms, for determining the particulars of a degeneration roll.)

Character Goals: Get through the encounter without exposing the coterie to more trouble.

Guise of Innocence, Air of Guilt

This action dramatizes the effectiveness of the characters’ efforts to hide their complicity, whether they feel remorse or not. It’s your job to characterize the scene in reaction to the approaches the players have their characters take. Ask them, “How does your character feel when he’s saying this?” or “Does he mean it?” and gauge bonuses or penalties based on their answers.

This same action works for any of the Storyteller characters. Multiple instances of this action might be played out at once, using cutaways (WoD, p. 195), by pairing off characters and Storyteller characters.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge vs opponent’s Wits + Empathy (once she becomes suspicious, the opponent may substitute Subterfuge). A character can also attempt to gauge the opponent’s suspicion with an instant Wits + Empathy – subject’s Composure, but this requires the character to ask questions or look at the subject with a noticeable intent (“Why are you looking at me like that?”) that might give him away — every time a character measures the opponent’s suspicion he accrues a cumulative –1 penalty to the contested action.

Action: Contested and extended for the cover-up, Instant for the assessment. Each roll represents about 10 minutes of conversation. The target number of successes for each participant is their opponent’s Willpower. If the character wins the contest, the opponent doesn’t become dangerously suspicious... in this scene. If the opponent wins, she becomes suspicious enough to start acting against the coterie in later scene.

Obstacles/Penalties: Sash cries (–3 to –5), Calla is creepy (–2 to –4), Val is overly friendly (–2 to –3), the conversation may be overheard (–3), genuine guilt (–1 to –5, one-half of the character’s Humanity), character’s Humanity is 3 or 4 (–2), character’s Humanity is 1 or 2 (–4)

Aids/Bonuses: The antagonist is distracted by a TV or recurring conversational thread or some activity in the background (+1 to +3), character has a fabricated alibi (+1 to +3, as determined by a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll at a –2 penalty, with each success worth +1 die, +3 max), genuine sympathy (+1 to +5, one-half of Humanity)

Consequences: This scene establishes the characters’ images in the minds of the Storyteller characters. The less suspicion fostered, the more forgiving Sash is in Act Three — unless the characters demonstrate no remorse in “Revelation,” “Confrontation,” or “Punishment.”

Scene: Interrogated

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •••

Overview: In this scene, the Eye comes to the characters, looking for information. He might be here just to be thorough, he might be turning over rocks to see what crawls out, or he could outright suspect that the characters had something to do with the Victim's disappearance. When the Eye comes calling, play this scene.

Description: "Evening," says the Eye. "Listen, we've got to talk about some troubles in [the Domain] lately. I'm here on behalf of the powers that be, and this is just one step in a long staircase I'm climbing, so I promise I won't waste your time. Where can we talk?"

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Create unbearable suspense through a tense clash of wits and subterfuge. Let the Eye use Veridical Tongue at least once before he tries to get a character to say something truly damning — you want the characters to realize that he's got that power in his arsenal before he hits them with it where it hurts. This way, they'll be faced with a challenging obstacle to overcome: How to get out of the interview/conversation without making the Eye more suspicious?

Remember, also, that the Eye doesn't have to get a character to be honest about the Killer or the Victim for him to be a threat to the coterie. He can use Wits + Empathy to feel out a subject that's sensitive enough for him to probe for the truth. Surely the characters are hiding something.

The coterie might simply spring into bloody action in the hopes of taking the Eye out of the equation altogether. They're entitled to try that tactic — jump to "Confrontation." Destroying the Eye is not so difficult, particularly when he's outnumbered. The risk is in the consequence: They've gotten themselves into another awful mess, and whoever it is that's close to the Eye (e.g., Sol) is going to want answers... and revenge. The cycle of violence continues.

Character Goals: Diminish the Eye's suspicion or simply get through the meeting without making things worse.

Interrogation Dance

This action has a lot in common with the action in "Face to Face," but its stakes and consequences are different. The key action of "Face to Face" is also a key action in this scene, though the Eye is a much more formidable opponent. The action detailed here, though, describes the Eye's secret weapon in the interrogation: Veridical Tongue (V:TR, p. 153)

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Subterfuge + Majesty – subject's Composure (This is the Eye's dice pool to invoke Veridical Tongue)

Action: Instant. For the purposes of absorbing this action into the interrogation action, this roll must substitute for one of the Eye's rolls in the extended action of that conversation. If the Eye successfully invokes the Devotion, the extended action is suspended and the scene becomes about raw roleplaying and strategy on the players' part.

If a character offers up any truthful answers that would incriminate them, the interrogation is over and the Eye politely leaves to set things in motion against the characters. If the character remains silent, he gives the Eye a +2 bonus for every question that goes unanswered, and the character's target number of successes in the interrogation increases by 1.

Obstacles/Penalties: Surprised by the Eye (-1 to -3), the Eye has physical evidence like the coat or the pendant (+1 to +5 for the Eye), the interview is held near the crime scene (-2), the interview setting is formal or isolated like an interrogation room (+2 to +3 for the Eye)

Aids/Bonuses: Interview is on the character's turf (+1 to +3), character was expecting the interview (+2), character has physical evidence in support of a fake alibi (+2), character is not alone (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure/Failure: "Listen, I can appreciate why you might be hesitant to tell me the truth, but that's not an option you have in this conversation," he says. He's got this look, like he's expecting something... and you can feel his words land in your chest like bad news. He's... is he trying to push his will on you?"

Success/Exceptional Success: "That's enough. We're done with the lying now." He says it and your throat moves, contracts, choking on a confession that you lock down. It's like you're trying not to cry. "What do you know about [the Victim]?" he asks, and you can't get any words out but the truth, but you can hold your tongue. You feel like a child being punished.

Consequences: The Eye sets things in motion against the characters or chooses to file them away as "suspects, but not bastards."

Scene: Revelation

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL — SOCIAL •••

Overview: This short scene dramatizes the moment when the characters either come to understand exactly what happened in the stairwell, or the moment when one of the major Storyteller characters learns the truth, too. This revelation might happen in this scene, in the moment, so the characters can see the raw transition in the Killer or Storyteller characters (that's the ideal way for this scene to play out), or it can happen when a Storyteller character comes to the coterie, knowing the truth, and demands, "What do you have to say? What should I fucking do to you?"

Depending on how things go when a Storyteller character is present for this scene, things may very accelerate to "Confrontation" in short order.

This scene leads either to "Confrontation" or to Act Three.

Description: *The Beast unlocks its jaw, releasing its hold on your memory. Images come. They arrive like spliced seconds of overexposed film, punctuated by white flash frames of animal fury — the blinding pulse of the Beast's frenzy.*

You remember the washed-out blue cast by fluorescent lights near the garage. [The Victim]'s shadow stretched out ahead of him, flickering with the crappy light. Your shadow stretching away from you, closing on him, your vision shaky and rushed. He spins around when your footfalls get too close. His eyes flash. It's the fear of the living, a memory of the mortal fear of death, exploded onto to his corpse's face by the sight of you, feet off the ground, hands out, head cocked and mouth reaching for his throat.

You collide, you scramble and roll across the sidewalk, you knock over a trash can, you see his white eyes vanish behind a closing metal door, you feel your fingernails bend when you scratch at it, you feel his weight slide as you pull on the door, as you get your foot into the crack and pry yourself inside, onto him, fingers slitting flesh.

Then it's falling, aching, a wild animal roar echoing off concrete, your throat soar, your hands sticky, your knees burning, your throat full of hot blood.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Reveal the Victim's identity to the characters or the Killer's identity to the antagonists, and expose the truth about that ill night. More than that, determine how that night morally affects the Killer and his coterie. This should be a humane scene of dramatic

pathos, not the tense dance of "Face to Face" or the rough encounter of "Confrontation." The heart of this scene is roleplaying and the exploration of the story's thematic questions.

It's fine if a discussion of the issues wanders into a conversation between the players rather than their characters — no, it's ideal. Vampire's personal horror is most compelling when it inspires players to consider dramatic questions. If a discussion of dramatic questions helps any player clarify the position her character would have in the situation, or inspires her portrayal of her character, it's worth it.

Character Goals: Face truth and survive the consequences.

Truth and Degeneration

Dice Pool: Varies based on Humanity and the troupe's assessment of the sin. This is a degeneration roll (WoD, p. 91), followed by a derangement roll (WoD, p. 92)

Action: Reflexive, though the build-up to the roll and the determination of the dice pool may take much longer. Consider the following questions and gauge the Humanity ratings of the character's sins based on your troupe's answers. Aim for a consensus if you can. If the answers, and a character's attitude, make it clear that degeneration is a foregone conclusion, that character suffers a -3 penalty when dealing with grieving Storyteller characters in later scenes.

- Is a Kindred morally culpable for the actions of his Beast? When frenzy drives a vampire into the night in search of blood or hurt, is that impassioned or is that the Beast's twisted premeditation? Is it callous? Does destroying a vampire count as murder?

- Are the other characters complicit in the crime for helping to cover it up? What are the moral ramifications of that? Is it a sin for them?

- How do the Vices of the Killer and his coterie affect the way their human minds accept their role in murder or their acceptance of the inhuman supernatural monster within them?

Obstacles/Penalties: The Killer refuses to accept responsibility or justifies his actions (-1 for Killer, -3 for antagonist)

Aids/Bonuses: The Killer displays genuine remorse and guilt (+2 for antagonist), the Killer's guilt jibes with his Virtue (+1 for Killer)

Consequences: Once the characters' feelings about that night settle and calcify in their dead hearts, their human remorse or cold, dead acceptance becomes apparent to the Storyteller characters, who react with anger tempered by compassion, or unapologetic vengeance.

Scene: Confrontation

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL •••

Overview: It can't be put off any longer. Let's get to the bottom of this. No flirtations with the truth, no subtle questions, no pussyfooting around.

This scene happens when the characters confront a major Storyteller character like Sash, Val, or the Eye, with the intention of stopping their investigation, ending all the threats, finally coming clean... or when things just escalate out of control and passion trumps reason.

Alternately, this scene happens when one of the major Storyteller characters pushes things to the same point, perhaps as a result of "Revelation," or maybe because your story just needs an action beat to keep things hot.

What sets this scene apart is its potential for violence. This isn't intended as a climactic, story-ending fight, but the bloody, angry skirmish that makes it impossible for the coterie and the major Storyteller characters to avoid their conflict any longer. After this, the crimes of the Killer must be dealt with... somehow. This scene leads to Act Three.

Description: *Her body relaxes, she looks down and away, then leans her head back like she'd let out an accepting exhalation if she still breathed. With her head back like that you can see her fangs slowly slide. She looks back down at you, her eyes rimmed with the sore red lines that come with tears, but no tears come. Then she slams, hissing, into you.*

or

"Fuck you. Fuck you! Bastard!" She comes at you, pushing the table out of the way, flinging glasses and chairs aside. "You're gonna fucking die! You hear me? You're over! You threw him away and you're gonna fucking feel it!" Val grabs at her arms, holding on to her as best he can, but she's flailing, reaching, spraying flecks of blood as she screams. "We're supposed to get time! That's all we fucking have! Motherfucker!"

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Create an emotionally raw conflict that frightens and compels. Avoid spending all your dramatic tension

here. Avoid a fight that ends the story. The Storyteller characters pull back here to grieve, or seethe, or plan a smarter, harsher retribution (see "Revenge").

Character Goals: Choose between violent defense, escape and surrender, and the consequences that come with each.

Fury and Wrath

Actions: Attack rolls are likely, but so is the possibility of frenzy. At this point in the story, Cicero's Crew isn't yet willing to pursue outright revenge, so if Sash is in danger of succumbing to an anger frenzy — which seems likely if she has just come face to face with her lover's killer — her coterie-mates do their best to drag her away from the scene.

Obstacles/Penalties: The characters are outnumbered or surprised, bad lighting (-1 to -3), hateful onlookers spit and throw bottles and cheer on the antagonists (+1 to +4 to antagonists), characters feel genuine remorse (-1)

Aids/Bonuses: Antagonists are outnumbered, the characters expected the fight (+1), peaceful onlookers try to break up the fight (-2 or -3 to all attacks by both sides of the fight)

Details: Some examples of the brutal, desperate violence here:

- [Brawl] *She gets your jaw in her hands and pries, pulling your mouth down, stretching your cheeks and cracking your lips. Her eyes, wide open inches from yours, want to see you hurt. They say, "You see this? You're going to feel this!" She's trying to rip your mandible out.*

- [Firearms] *Loud snapping flashes of light reveal an overexposed slideshow of snapping human jaws, flashing yellow teeth and reflecting eyes. At this range, the smoke curls around him when he reaches you. Did those rounds even hit anything?*

- [Weaponry] *She rips the hanging lamp down, smashing it once against you, but it gives, leaving shards of glass in your clothes but not making it through to your clothes. She's left with a broken metal frame and jagged edge of glass, and she swings it like a scythe, cutting across cloth and flesh.*

Consequences: Hurting or destroying vampires in this scene doesn't come without repercussions. Sol seeks retribution for Calla or the Eye. Cicero avenges Val in grief, or Sash and Calla in Val's honor. A fight that merely leaves Kindred in search of blood to heal their wounds hurts everyone's position to bargain in Act Three, but isn't condemning.

Act Three: The Consequences

This is where you push past the core **Vampire** dynamic of examining sin and Humanity and look at the political consequences — maybe immoral, maybe harsh — of their actions.

In Act Three, the characters confront Storyteller characters who do not care about the coterie's Humanity or remorse. The coterie faces the possibility of being punished for their actions by monsters no different than they are, save for the benefit of political power and Status. They also face the possibility of benefitting from their sins by making savvy deals with those powerful monsters.

The Big Questions

But is it an additional sin to benefit from one's sins? Can ritual atonement restore the soul some degree of its humanity? Or does the only thin degree of salvation come from the selfless humility that comes from surrendering one's self to the vengeance of the wronged, in the hopes that forgiveness will come, too?

Those questions that the coterie explored in "Revelation" should resurface in Act Three. When the coterie is faced with political and physical consequences to their actions and their Humanity, do their answers to those questions change? Do they betray the part of their humanity that held their grief for the sake of earthly benefits? Do they regain a sliver of their souls by choosing their Humanity over their social station?

These questions won't come up if the players' characters are simply let off the hook after Act Two. Whatever they've done to date, someone must come for them looking for closure... or a chance to use the character's actions as leverage to manipulate the coterie.

Archetypal Scenes

This act of the story is made up three simple scenes which represent core conflicts for you to pursue here, at the end. These specific scenes might not occur as written — the actions of the coterie in Act Two are impossible for us to predict and, thus, to react to — but they help you conceptualize ways to dramatize this story's big questions.

It's likely that the neither the players nor their characters will take action to make these scenes happen. (If they do, take advantage of it.) You'll have to pull some strings.

Here's the rundown on the core framework of this act's scenes:

Brought In: This is the scene in which you put the climactic choice before the players: Accept punishment or risk wrath.

Only you can gauge just what it will take for you to get your troupe to meet with Sol or Cicero if they expect to be threatened or harmed. They might need to be enticed in with amnesty, lured in by material rewards, or escorted (or dragged) in by however many ghouls it takes to make the point. This is an area where you may have to be a bit heavy handed. It's crass, but if you have to, speak to the players directly about the importance of confronting this final choice. Their Requiems aren't at stake in this scene, and you can tell them that, but they'll be given a choice that might have fatal repercussions.

Sometimes players must be given choices their characters can never have, for the sake of the story. The characters might not have good reason to meet with Sol or Cicero, but the players do: They should want to see how things turn out. Otherwise, you may have to waste time strong-arming the characters, and that's seldom good for fun.

Punishment: If the characters accept punishment, no matter how genuine their remorse or how empty the gesture, the Killer (and perhaps others) is required to swear to a mystical contract, called a Blood Oath, to which he will bound for however long it pleases the vampire he deals with, Sol or Cicero.

The dramatic choice here is whether the coterie lets him suffer alone or shows him their support, though it will damage their reputations. The way the characters conduct themselves in this scene determines whether any surviving cohorts of the Victim (Sash, Val, Calla) are satisfied, or if they still come for revenge.

Revenge: If the characters do not accept punishment, or do not honor it, and the Victim's cohorts are still in play, the coterie faces a less forgiving consequence: revenge.

After the Climax

If the scenes of the second act rise to a climactic level of dramatic tension, it can seem difficult to find the energy to power these final scenes. That's okay. If the characters come to these scenes exhausted, that's thematically appropriate. If the players come to these scenes exhausted, consider playing out Act Three as a kind of sequel chapter in which these consequences surface after the coterie feels things have settled down.

Use dramatic tools like music, or imagery that "rhymes" with the character's histories to infuse these scenes with a pathos greater than violence.

Scene: Brought In

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ••••

Overview: Despite its name, this scene covers the awkward and tense meeting between the coterie and Sol or Cicero, depending on who they ultimately answer to — or who they conspire with — whether the coterie is brought in or comes in on its own.

The characters might reach this scene by agreeing to a meeting to discuss reparations for the Victim's destruction, by coming to either Sol or Cicero in search of a deal to protect the coterie from the other local vassal, or by being dragged in at the hands of Cicero's Crew or thuggish ghouls.

The point of this scene is for the characters to make a choice between "Punishment" and "Revenge." The choice is presented to them by either Cicero or Sol, both of which have the juice to bring in the Notary (p. 57) or push the characters' crimes further up the food chain to more dangerous vampires who have less to gain by squeezing the coterie. (This overshadowing threat is the role of Lord X in this story.)

Just what kind of deal the characters can make varies depending on what they've done and who knows what. We can't explore every possible option here, so you have to play Sol and Cicero the way that'll best make the story conclude dramatically. Fortunately, you can find a certain foothold in the fact that Sol and Cicero both want things, and those things determine what sort of deals they're willing to work out.

Description: This scene is expected to unfold on either Cicero's or Sol's turf. But you have alternatives. If the only way to get the coterie into this scene without brow-beating them is to have them meet with the right vampire in a neutral location, do it. Here are two quick sketches of Sol's and Cicero's settings:

- [Sol] *In the back of the storefront, downstairs where you might expect a basement apartment, Sol sits behind a big bland desk in a wood-paneled room with deep, tired carpet the color of blood. The place is spare. The only thing to look at is Sol and his suit and his hair and his folded hands that say, "Let's get to work."*

- [Cicero] *In the heart of his gray brownstone, Cicero lurks in a room with no windows. Where they should be are large scenic paintings, like you*

might find in a European palace, but faded and reassembled from cut segments. Deep brown hardwoods and gilded fixtures feel like the last century, and pair nicely with Cicero's black-and-white, angular suit.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Present a dilemma of political tactics and morality. The characters can bargain with Sol or Cicero to protect themselves from more trouble, but are they willing to let one of these minor lords benefit from the Victim's death? If the Killer is truly sorry, how much is he willing to trade or compromise in penance?

The heart of this scene is the choice between the two archetypal options that end this story: punishment or revenge. Here's how each lord sees the situation, and what he wants:

Cicero

Keep Val loyal and complacent by appeasing the grief of his coterie-mates, Sash and Calla. Appease them with a public show of binding the Killer to an Oath of Blood Knives and then beating him before an audience of Kindred. That beating can be real and brutal, or it can be just enough to convince Sash and Calla. If strongly manipulated, Cicero is even willing to let the coterie confront Sash and Calla, provided promises to destroy them (thus Cicero becomes the only remaining influence on Val.) Cicero doesn't want to look weak in the domain, but he can blame Sash and Calla's destruction on their own zeal.

Sol

Secure a teacher of Auspex. Avenge harm done to the Eye. Get at least a symbolic penance for the Killer's crime by getting a Blood Oath from him. (Secretly, lure Sash and Calla to his side by giving them ghouls to beat down the Killer in "Revenge" after the Blood Oath is sworn.)

Character Goals: Make a deal to bring all this trouble to an end, and maybe get off easy for stepping up.

Negotiating
Action: If you need to resolve some specific details of their deals, like payments of service, see "Cutting a Deal" (WoD, p. 84).

Obstacles/Penalties: Lord's Status, physical evidence, city law texts or expertise (+1 to +3), Connections, nothing to offer (-5)

Aids/Bonuses: Character's Status, favors owed (+1 to +3), blackmail (+1 to +5), solemn pledge (an exceptional success on a Manipulation + Persuasion roll grants a +1 bonus on Cutting a Deal)

Consequences: Characters may be able to negotiate for time to think things over, and they may use that time to visit the other lord and look for a counter-offer.

Scene: Punishment

MENTAL • PHYSICAL ... SOCIAL ...

Overview: This scene is an archetype for one of two major possible endings to the story. In this scene, the coterie accepts punishment for the Killer's actions, either as part of a deal they've made with Cicero or Sol, or because they are unable to escape it. This punishment by a gesture for the sake of a lord saving face or the appeasement of a grieving survivor, or it may be a genuine act of penance and chastisement.

What sets this scene apart from "Revenge" is its formality and official air. Punishment is doled out through the status of a lordly vampire and denotes the customary and legal end of the matter. This scene is about culpability, "Revenge" is about wrath.

Description: The punished character is leashed to a ring in the floor of a barren chamber — a cellar, empty warehouse or abandoned building — and the audience is gathered in a circle around him. This audience should be made up of any Storyteller characters you like, whether they're part of this kit or drawn from your ongoing chronicle. Presumably the rest of the coterie is in attendance, too.

The place is cold, like the cracked concrete floor is giving of a chill wind. It smells like mold and rain and sweat. Loose vents and ductwork rattle somewhere in the walls from a wind pushing in from outside. [Cicero/Sol]'s ghouls stand around [the punished character] like guards protecting a museum piece or a safe. One of them cradles a [weapon], crusted with blood, in his arms. He has the flushed red hue of a body gorged on Blood.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: One key challenge here is put before the character being punished: Can he truly, physically endure the punishment for his crime? What if they let Sash do the punishing?

A second choice is put before the rest of the coterie: personal responsibility or loyalty? Will the coterie stand by while one of their own is beaten and humiliated before the Kindred of the Domain? Will they accept the shame on their coterie that comes with that, or will they take action to protect some of their dignity and reputation?

Character Goals: Endure torture or defend one of their own.

Enduring the Punishment

This action dramatizes not the Blood Oath which the Killer (or a selfless cohort) must swear (See "The Blood Oath," p. 57), but the beating he must take before an audience to demonstrate his intent to honor the Oath.

Dice Pool: Resolve + Stamina – damage suffered each turn (for the subject) vs. Strength + Weaponry + weapon (for the punisher ghoul). The punished character cannot apply Defense if he wants to appear sincere.

Action: Extended and contested. The punished character must have no fewer than five successes less than the punisher's accrued successes or he cries out in pain and potentially breaks down (if he fails a subsequent Resolve + Composure roll), whether that means tears, cursing, choosing to apply his Defense, or frenzy is up to you and the player to work out. The punisher stops when you decide the scene has reached its climax, but shouldn't go beyond the point where his attacks are causing aggravated damage.

The punished character is most likely restrained at the wrists, and possibly the neck, by leather straps (Durability 1, Structure 3).

Obstacles/Penalties: Vengeful punisher (+1 to +3), hostile audience (–1 to –3), victim suffers alone (–3 to –5), weapon type (+1 to +4)

Aids/Bonuses: Genuine remorse (+2), Virtue: Justice (+1), Virtue: Fortitude (+1), coterie commiserates with tears or an emotional dialogue before the punishment (+3 to +5)

Gamaradie

Does the rest of the coterie let their cohort suffer alone? Did they help him cover up the crime? Have they lied for him? Aren't they complicit on some level, too?

The particular actions the coterie might undertake in support of their comrade are open to their imaginations. Here, though, are some possible approaches and their consequences — plus the consequence of doing nothing.

Speak Out: Presence + Empathy. The characters, regardless of how emotional or mortal it makes them seem to the other Damned, help the punished character endure his suffering by talking him through it. Maybe a character crouches down next to him, hold his face in her hands, and speaks with a degree of humanity that reveals a new side to that character — this act is about the coterie as much as the Killer. Successes on this action add bonus dice to the punished, like Teamwork.

Step Up: The character steps up to accept the same punishment, attempting the “Enduring the Punishment” action just like her comrade. This may seem foolhardy and emotional to others, but it is a profound gesture to the rest of the coterie — and may demonstrate that they share a bond that makes them look formidable to other vampires.

An End to This: The character calls an end to the punishment, potentially screwing their deal with Cicero or Sol and drawing the wrath of Sash in “Revenge.” The ghouls don’t fight to keep the punishment going. Rather, their master says, “You’re forfeiting my forgiveness with this. You know you’ll take punishment, now or later.”



THE OATH OF BLOOD KNIVES

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Dominate — subject’s Resolve

Cost: 1 Vitae, supplied by the subject swearing the Oath

Action: Instant

The Blood Oaths of the Invictus are mystically binding vows between one vampire and another. Mechanically, they operate similarly to Devotions. A Blood Oath requires two parties: the one taking the vow (the subject) and the one to whom the vow is sworn (the beneficiary). A third participant may also be involved, in the event that neither of the essential participants actually know the mystic secrets of the Oath being sworn. This third party is called a Notary, and her only job in the invocation of the Oath is application of the supernatural secrets involved. That is, in this case, it’s the Notary’s dice pool that’s used to activate the Oath between the subject and the beneficiary.

The Oath of Blood Knives requires the subject to promise not to take the action specified in the text of the Oath. The action to be forbidden is chosen by the beneficiary. In this case, the Killer (or the character taking the rap for him) is the subject and either Cicero or Sol is likely to be the beneficiary. The Oath forbids the subject to hurt Sash (and any other parties named in the text of the Oath).

If the subject violates the Oath, his body punishes itself by splitting open along the arms, legs, chest and face as if it were being slashed by knives. The Vitae in his body comes out as jagged, glassy blades the color of blood. He suffers one point of lethal damage equal to the successes on the activation roll, regardless of armor or Defense, and loses an equal amount of Vitae. Do not reveal the successes scored on the activation roll unless the Oath is violated.

— *The Oath of Blood Knives appears in the covenant book, The Invictus (WW25121)*



Consequences: If the characters come to the aid of their comrade, it may be an act of absolution worthy of consideration in the Aftermath of this story. If they abandon him, it may strain the characters’ trust. Give the punished character the equivalent of a new Flaw: Betrayed. He gains experience whenever he fails to participate in teamwork or refuses the aid of his coterie-mates. Don’t let this linger, though — this is a new story thread to be resolved. How do the characters rebuild their trust for one another?

Whatever actions they take, they’ve made a profound show of their character in front of other Kindred. Word spreads. Opinions change. Their actions may enable characters to purchase Status they otherwise couldn’t, or it may create temporary +3 or –3 Social modifiers with Kindred who respect or deride their actions.



THE NOTARY

The Notary is an archetypal non-combatant character who comes into play only if you use the Oath of Blood Knives in the story, and only if you need her to activate the power. The assumption is that she is an Invictus Mekhet, an acquaintance of either Cicero or Sol, who normally resides elsewhere in the city and has little reason to visit the Domain until invited to fulfill her covenant duty as Notary. (Sol, remember, used to be a member of the Invictus, and may still have connections with them.) They call her, simply, the Notary.

Naturally, you can combine the role of the Notary with that of some other Storyteller character already in place in your chronicle.

Description: *Part sorceress and part aristocrat, the Notary’s couture red pull-over cloak and elaborate, fortune-teller-looking necklaces would make her seem like a New Age poseur if not for the elegant black business suit revealed when she throws the cloak over one shoulder. It’s her weathered, serious face that makes all the rest of it seem measured and true. Her face suggests a Russian grandmother, but her poise suggests a rich matron.*

She nods and talks through the process with a practiced recitation. The Oath itself comes out of a stiff leather sheath under her arm. “The text will drink in your Blood,” she says. “You will sign your own name, in your own hand, with your own Vitae, and the Oath shall keep and remember it until our host, the beneficiary, chooses to release you.

Ability

Invoke the Oath of Blood Knives — (10 dice) The Notary’s job in the Invictus is to preside over Oaths with discretion and poise. She enables the First Estate to keep Kindred in line, Invictus or not, without having to expose the secret of the Oath to outsiders. At your discretion, she can spend a Willpower point on the activation roll, bringing the total to a formidable 13 dice.



Blood Red and Ash Gray

Punishment

Scene: Revenge

Tactics

MENTAL • PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL •••

Overview: This scene is an archetype for one of two major possible endings to the story. In this scene, the coterie falls into an attack of vengeance — most likely begun by Sash, but not necessarily. This is the messy ending, where the circle of violence comes back around, where hate and hurt and broken hearts leave the wrong souls dead and the wrong bodies ruined on the street.

What sets this scene apart from “Punishment” is its raw violence and nastiness. Revenge comes with teeth and guns, regardless of politics and station. This scene is about closure, while “Punishment” is about compromise.

It’s simple: If things have been left unresolved for any of Cicero’s Crew, or even for Sol, a final strike is prepared against the coterie. This is a brutal, violent ambush by prepared enemies who want nothing but to hurt the characters.

You have to determine if there’s a lingering need for vengeance on someone’s behalf, or if the story call’s for action to the extent that you have to impose vengeance on a Storyteller character. Here’s a rundown on their motives:

Motives

Obviously, Sash wants the characters to hurt like she does. To appease her and keep Val loyal, Cicero sends ghouls with her. To buy her loyalty, and access to Calla, Sol sends ghouls with her. Unless Cicero or Sol has been humiliated or blackmailed by the coterie, she doesn’t have the go-ahead to destroy any of them, and without that go-ahead she’s not willing to make the same mistakes the characters did and kill them.

The rest of the crew comes out in support of Sash.

Joe Coat may side with Sash out of a simple sense of power — no one should be destroying vampires in the Domain without being hurt themselves. He might also be sent by Sol to make sure things don’t get out of hand. He’s the toughest of the Storyteller characters.

The avengers use whatever method is available to them — the Eye, ghouls, Joe Coat — to identify a place where the characters can reasonably be expected to show up. If the Eye has completed his investigation, he should know someplace to find the coterie. The avengers then prepare their ambush, either by hiding (if the site is remote or empty) or by posing among the ambient folk (if the site is public, like a club where “Face to Face” unfolded). They strive to get the drop on the coterie.

If a character has taken the Oath of Blood Knives, the attackers focus on him. They hold off other characters with words or force. “Let this one show me he’s sorry or take his chances with me like a grown-up, or we can all get bloody tonight.” The idea here, of course, is to present the punished character with the decision of hurting Sash or not and risking the damage from the Oath. If the Oath included multiple prohibited targets, the punished character may not be able to fight back at all without risking serious harm.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Conjure a desperate and bloody scene of passionate and fearsome violence. Give voice and action to a broken heart, in Sash, or to the shame and regret that come with failing one’s cohorts, in the case of Val and Calla.

This is a climactic, emotional fight. What’s at stake may be hearts, torpor or Requiems. Storyteller characters should cry out and threaten on behalf of the hearts they’re fighting for. This fight should be cathartic for the Storyteller characters and for the players.

How far will the characters go in this fight? Will they kill again? Will they throw away whatever humanity they may have salvaged before in this violent match, or will they accept a degree of physical defeat for some slight spiritual victory?

Character Goals: Survive an ambush and decide how far to push the fight against their foes.

Obstacles/Penalties: Characters are outnumbered or surprised, bad lighting (–1 to –3), thumping bass or roaring traffic (–1 to –5), hateful onlookers (+1 to +3), crowbars and axes (+1 to +3)

Assemble a group of attackers that matches the threat you want to pose, using the Storyteller characters presented earlier in this kit.

Aids/Bonuses: Antagonists are outnumbered or surprised, characters are well armed

Aftermath

The consequences of this story may ripple through the rest of the chronicle. Do the character's actions in this story determine their reputations throughout the city? What allegiances have they made or broken, and with what kinds of monsters?

Ultimately, you have to measure the potential ramifications of this story by comparing the personal investment your players seemed to have in it against the nature of their success or failure in the tale. If the players were seriously invested in the story, but the consequences for their characters' mistakes would kill the joy of the chronicle for a while, that's a good reason to go easy on them. If the characters threaded the needle and achieved powerful new allies and reputations while protecting their Humanity and Requiems, but the players were never really engaged by the tale, don't drag out the repercussions for dramaturgical reasons. It's not worth boring the players.

Rewards

Characters may be rewarded with access to new Merits, like Resources (if Sol is paying them for the secrets of Auspex) or Status (if they've made a good show of their political muster) or Contacts (if their investigations exposed them to well connected Storyteller characters) or anything else that will help this story plug into the next, or help your players connect their characters to the game world.

And, of course, there are the valuable favors owed and secrets learned that cannot be measured with game traits, but which the players can use to shape their coterie's future.

Morality

The moral consequences of this story can be complicated. If the characters continued to kill and sin their way through the tale, then this has become a story of their descent into callous inhumanity after the Beast pulled just one of them to the brink. Can they really blame the Beast, then, for the monsters they are? Or would they be just as inhumane if they were still alive?

In a colder, more earthly way, the characters may have materially benefitted from the crime of the Killer's Beast. Turning a senseless death into something profitable is immoral in its own way. Do they become part of a profitable arrangement with Sol, or destroy Cicero's Crew on his behalf? If so, present the players with this idea: The Beast killed Hooper, but the characters killed him again and again.

Do the characters who succeed on their degeneration rolls have to roll again if they attempt to profit from that same sin? You're within your rights to ask the question and make the call.

Alternately, the characters may have rediscovered a part of their human selves that they had thought dead. If the players made choices to protect their Humanity and limit the suffering caused by the monster in the Killer's corpse, this has become a story of humanity reborn out of suffering and sin. The Requiem is a strange, illogical experience, in which losing one's self to the wicked Beast within can reveal the delicate fiber of the Man underneath. There is hope beneath all that blood.

Regaining Morality

The big questions asked in this story should be your guide for determining whether characters have earned the privilege of restoring a dot of Humanity. Intent has a lot to do with it. If the characters spared Sash greater hurt, but only so they could get off easy, that's not enough.

It's possible that a character who degenerated during this story will qualify for a restored dot of Humanity at the end of it, by your reckoning. That's fine, but be careful that you don't undermine the whole character arc traveled in this tale. An act is not erased because a trace of Humanity is regained. The memory of it cannot be shaken. If the character finds a part of her former, human self in her actions after death, then she has rediscovered the part of her that is emotionally and psychologically affected by mortal feelings. She may not be absolved — she may just taste her guilt all the more clearly.

Experience

Experience rewards for this story are based more on the active engagement of the characters in the story, and less on some measure of success or failure. The characters risk their Humanity, reputations and Requiems herein, but failing at those risks shouldn't penalize the players. The characters can still learn something. The players can tell a great story about defeat and suffering.

In addition to the experience rewards suggested in the rulebook:

1 experience point if the characters discover histories, motives or relationships of the characters in the Domain and use them to their advantage through roleplaying, rather than dice pools alone.

1 experience point if the characters find Sash and Hooper's secret haven or puzzle out what Hooper's and Sol's business was.

1 experience point if the characters come the punished character's aid.

SCENE: *Crime Scene*

MENTAL ●●●
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Bloody filth (-3 to -5)

"Someone's coming!" (-3)

Each person that comes into physical contact with the body contributes a cumulative -1 modifier to the investigation

HELP

Knife or scalpel and the willingness to use it (+2)

Move the body (-2 TN to find pendant)

Evidence: Army Jacket
Small brass key
Black serpentine tattoos (+3)
Pendant (+5)

STs Establish the dilemma: Who is the victim? What happened? What'll it cost?

PCs Collect clues from the crime scene.

SCENE: *The Evidence*

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

Problem witness (-2, TN 3 successes)

Surveillance (-2 to -4)

Highly visible (-2)

Gruesome Complications: The body comes apart, characters get stained with blood, a trail of gore is left behind, etc. (-2 to -4)

Talkative accessories

HELP

Teamwork (WoD p. 134)

Garbage bag (+2), Axe (+3)

Contacts (-2 to -5)

Allies

Bribe (+1 to +3)

STs Create an aura of pressing paranoia and increasing suspense.

PCs Clean up the crime scene, control the evidence, protect the Masquerade.

SCENE: *Investigating*

MENTAL ●●●
PHYSICAL ●
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Talkative subjects eat up time (-1 to -3)

Foreign language neighborhood (-4)

Characters have a fearsome reputation (-1 to -4)

Intimidation (+3 to the Eye in "Investigated")

No useful Contacts (-3)

HELP

Characters are local (add Status)

Barfly Merit (+1 or +2)

Contacts

Character has a Specialty in common with subject (+1)

STs Steadily reveal new information and clues from a variety of colorful sources.

PCs Gain enough information to get ahead without getting caught.

SCENE: *Investigated* (all modifiers affect the Eye's rolls)

MENTAL ●●●
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Characters beat the Eye in the contested action (-5)

Characters use intermediaries in "Investigating" (-2)

Characters are often seen in the Domain (-1 to -3)

Accessories are successfully quieted

Characters hide evidence from the Eye

HELP

Characters abandon the crime scene (+5)

Characters are sloppy (+1 to +3)

Characters are not often seen in the Domain (+2 to +3)

The Eye has Contacts in common with the coterie (+1 to +3)

Characters use Intimidation in "Investigating" (+3)

STs Establish the Eye as a lurking antagonist. Determine when or if the coterie is caught.

PCs Avoid being found out by the Eye.

SCENE: *Flashback*

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

Frenzy (3 successes)

Shame (-1 to -5)

HELP

Auspex (+1)

Dominate ●● instruction to confront the flashback (+2 to +5)

Counseling: Manipulation + Empathy (Teamwork, max +5, WoD p. 134)

Meditation (WoD p. 51, +1)

STs Creep out the players and present a choice between truth and comfort.

PCs Gain vital information into the truth of the Killer's night of frenzy.

SCENE: *Face to Face*

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

Sash cries (-2 to -5)

Calla is ominous (-2 to -3)

Val is too friendly (-2)

Character asks too many questions (-2)

HELP

Distraction in the area (+2)

Physical evidence supporting an alibi, likely false (+3)

Character feels genuine sympathy or remorse (+1 to +5)

STs Provoke guilt and/or fear from a moving encounter with the Victim's coterie.

PCs Get through the encounter without breaking.

SCENE: *Interviewed*

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Characters are surprised to see the Eye (-1 to -4)

The Eye has physical evidence (+1 to +5)

Isolated setting, interrogation room (-1 to -3)

Interview takes place near the crime scene (-1 to -3)

HELP

Characters have the "home court advantage" (+1 to +3)

Characters are expecting the Eye (+2)

Physical evidence supporting an alibi, likely false (+2)

Teamwork (WoD p. 134, max +3)

STs Create unbearable suspense through a tense confrontation of wits.

PCs Get through a meeting with the Eye without giving themselves away.

SCENE: *Revelation*

MENTAL ●●●
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Frenzy (3 successes)

Killer feels no remorse (-2)

Fail the degeneration roll (-3)

HELP

Willpower (+3)

Killer feels genuine remorse (+1 to +3)

Succeed on the degeneration roll (+3)

STs Reveal the Victim's identity and the truth about that night with wonder and humanity.

PCs Finally choose between damning truth and protective ignorance.

SCENE: *Confrontation*

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Characters are outnumbered

Characters are surprised

Hostile environment: bad light (-1 to -3),
loud (-1 to -5), hateful bystanders (+1
to +5)

Killer feels genuine remorse (-1 to -3)

HELP

Antagonists are outnumbered

Characters are prepared

Friendly bystanders (+1 to +5)

STs

Create an emotionally raw atmosphere that scares and compels.

PCs

Choose between defense and surrender.

SCENE: *Brought In*

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●
SOCIAL ●●●●

HINDRANCES

Status

Physical evidence (+1 to +5)

Kindred law texts or expertise (+1 to +3)

Nothing to trade (-5)

HELP

Status

Favors owed that can be transferred to
the other party (+1 to +3)

Blackmail (+1 to +5)

Solemn pledge (+1)

STs

Present a dilemma of political and moral tactics.

PCs

Make a deal to bring all this trouble to an end.

SCENE: *Punishment*

MENTAL ●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Vengeful punisher (+1 to +3)

Hostile audience (-1 to -3)

Punished suffers alone (-3 to -5)

HELP

Commiseration (+1 to +3)

Genuine remorse (+2 to +5)

Coterie takes action to
support the punished character

STs

Raise the question of personal responsibility versus loyalty.

PCs

Take their licks or defend their own.

SCENE: *Revenge*

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●●●
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Outnumbered

Surprise

Hostile environment: bad light (-1 to -3),
loud (-1 to -5), hateful bystanders (+1
to +5)

HELP

Outnumbered

Prepared

STs

Create a desperate and bloody scene of nasty violence.

PCs

Endure an ambush and decide how far to push the fight.