

The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a gothic city street. Three vampires are depicted in the foreground, looking upwards with expressions of awe or longing. They have pale skin, dark hair, and are wearing dark, leather-like clothing. Their bodies are adorned with intricate, glowing tattoos. Swirling orange and red energy lines or magical auras surround them, adding a sense of mysticism and power. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues, greys, and reds, with the glowing elements providing a stark contrast.

Requiem Chronicle's Guide

the World of Darkness

A SOURCEBOOK FOR
Vampire
THE ETERNALS

Rain
Children

Greg Stolze

Emilio gnawed at his fingernail, the same damn finger, the left ring finger that no longer carried a wedding ring. Every night, he bit it. Sometimes he worried at it, gnawing until the white edge came off in a strip, peeling back to the cuticle and needing to be chomped, leaving a tiny flap that would catch on loose threads and draw his thumb to fidget. Or he could peel it and then pull, hard, painfully tearing it out where the nerves were. Or if he was disciplined he would file that excess length down, or trim it with clippers. It didn't matter. Every night, when Emilio awoke, that half-broken length of left ring-fingernail would be back, the same, restored like his hair and his immortal flesh.

Some nights, he even managed to leave it alone. Not very often though. Emilio was restless. He was not the type to let things go.

"No, not 'Brainchildren,' 'Rain Children'. As in, water that falls from the sky. Yes. Thank you."

He was sitting on a hotel room bed, with the curtains drawn and the lights off. To Emilio's eyes, plenty of light was seeping through the curtains, crawling under the crack of the door, urine-yellow streetlight glow was plenty for him to dial by. He was in Portland and he didn't like it, but he'd tracked the book to the coast and now, maybe, to this library...

"You have? Splendid, that's... now, this next question is a little, erm, queer. Odd, I mean. Is it Monastic House Press? I see, good. Can you tell if it's first edition or second edition, is that...? Well, the author made some changes, some fairly *significant* changes, between them. Hm? Oh, I'll wait. I'm happy to."

Emilio had read three versions of *Rain Children*, he'd done it even before he died, but he could never have guessed how important it would become to him.

It wasn't a terribly popular book. The style was peculiar, inasmuch as the author, Harriet Becker, had recorded strangers on pay phones and busses and in restaurants, she had assembled the dialogue out of transcribed phrases. It read oddly on the page: Living people don't talk like fictional ones. That was only the beginning of the oddness that was *Rain Children*.

"Both editions? Really, that's... mm hm? Well, which one's on the...?"

Emilio bit his lip, and then bit his finger.

"Checked out. Well, I'll... yeah, thanks. Thanks anyway."

He hung up, and sat for just a moment in the darkness that to him, was not dark. He was steeling himself for a trip to the stacks.

† † † † †

The computers baffled Emilio. He'd gone to the shelf in hopes that perhaps the first edition was there, that there'd been a mistake, but of course there was no mistake, of course it was gone. He'd then positioned himself with a magazine and a chair, watching the front desk. He'd expected a card system, files of patrons, like

he'd known in childhood but instead there were these bulky white boxes with typewriters attached, making blinking green letters on TV screens.

He narrowed his eyes.

To Emilio, the moderate fluorescents in the drop ceiling were bright as a summer noon. Every edge of every page in every book stacked half a room away was visible, a line as thin as a thread. Every speck of lint on every sleeve, every fleck of dandruff on every shoulder was, to him, as obvious as a boulder. He looked for something reflective behind the librarians, a book with a plastic dustcover... no, too cloudy. There was no window behind them, but a framed picture... yes, he could see the screen reflected there and read the strange strings of meaningless letters they typed to make authors appear, titles, call codes...

Ciphers and gibberish. He folded his magazine and approached. As he did, he listened. It was essential to talk to someone different, someone who wasn't answering the phone... yes, he hadn't spoken to either of these ladies. It must have been someone in Reference.

He waited politely and introduced himself and, when she drew back and looked uncertain, he tried not to lean in and focus on the pulsing vein in her neck, full and ripe, beating like a drum, as if he could hear it, the throb of life within her rich and...

He didn't. He was here for something else. He asked about the book, politely, and as she looked it up he stared into her glasses, stared without seeming to stare, reading the name, the address, the person who had the first edition of *Rain Children* checked out and overdue by several months.

Emilio didn't say thank you or even end the conversation. Too few hours in the night. He just turned and left once he had what he wanted.

† † † † †

Monastic House had printed only five hundred copies of the first edition of *Rain Children*, the hardback. The paperback second edition, which had (among other changes) deleted a scene in the fifth chapter in which the heroine was raped, an event that was never referred to in the rest of the book, that edition had been a print run of two thousand. When Rebel Rouser Press had bought the rights, their paperback, which had the rape scene back in but other material changed to reflect it, was printed in a 10,000 copy run. It sold poorly.

Emilio was looking for one of the Monastic hardbacks. As he'd suspected, the library patron was a dealer who'd stolen it to sell. He got into the bookstore, and read her records. The buyer had ordered it through the mail and had it delivered to Tempe, Arizona.

Emilio didn't dare kill the bookseller after making a scene in the library, so he killed a man who lived two doors down.

It took him a year to get to Arizona, and that's where he discovered that the purchaser was, like him, a vampire.

1996

Emilio - now known as "Leo Taylor," a shy and minor part of the Tempe Kindred scene, woke up and thought, *Tonight's the night*. He grinned, and got up out of his box in the pet-store basement. He said a few kind words to the rattler that slept out its days on his cold chest, gave it a little kiss, then stood and stretched.

He looked at his left ring finger for a moment, and wondered where his wedding ring was now. "Until death do us part." His grin became a smirk. "Sure." He bit the nail clean across, in a single practiced movement.

The pet store was two blocks from 2200 Flatbrush Avenue, the home of Byron Bass, the vampire who had, eleven years previous, bought that first edition Monastic copy of *Rain Children*. Leo happened to know it was signed by the author, too. He'd done plenty of research, years of it, and he could tell you more than anyone living about the fate of each of those five hundred hardback books. (Eighty-seven: Destroyed. Three hundred and thirty: In private collections or European libraries. Eighty-two: Unaccounted for, but sold in the United States. One: On the bookshelves of Byron Bass.)

Tonight was the night Leo would steal it, using abilities that he had been scrupulously careful, for the eight years he'd been in Tempe, to conceal.

He went up the steps into the stink and chatter of the closed store, pattering about as kittens mewled and dogs woke up to bark, monkeys and lizards and even the fish moving to the corners of cages and aquariums to get away from him until he turned those undead eyes on them, muttered soothing nonsense, calmed them. Then he flared his eyes and moved his blood and began.

He emerged from the store's back and immediately jumped up to the top of the garbage dumpster, springing across a short alley to another building's wall, clinging with the effortless ease of a squirrel. He scrambled to the top in moments and scampered across the roof, his muscles twitching and bouncing with unaccustomed freedom and vitality, the urge to move to spring and grasp and climb and fly nearly overwhelming but matched by his more personal drive to *get the book*. Rooftops blurred beneath him as he made his way and he was midair, a twenty-foot leap in the dark when he heard...

"What the...? Didja see that?"

"What?"

"Something up there!"

"The streetlight?"

He felt a lurch of fear, wondering if two dense yokels were going to spoil everything but he couldn't allow himself to stop, not even to slow, not even to worry about it, he was going, he was *moving*, he was *getting the book*. A leap from roof to tree, easily clotheslining the palm trunk and sliding down, a quick scuttle through the dry grass to Bass's fence. It was wrought iron and pointed on top, but he got between the bars with ease. Then a bolt to the house, and up it.

Byron Bass, known as 'Judex Bass' to his colleagues, had a fairly secure home. There were decorative (but heavy) iron frameworks over the windows. Not too many cameras or motion detectors - they were unreliable against Kindred. His protections ran more towards tripwired flame-throwers. Not real napalm or anything, just a sudden flare of ignited propane at chest height. They wouldn't catch a house on fire (at least, not *this* house, not in the hallways designed to be trapped) but more than enough to scare the fight out of most vampires.

Leo was not most vampires. He avoided the triggers he could and, in one case, simply steeled himself and ducked under the flames.

He'd gotten to the library and was dismantling a little wax-and-hair figurine on a red twine noose (he wasn't sure what it did but theorized it would make the skin and meat slough off his bones, as if he'd been boiled at high temperature for a day or two) when he heard footsteps behind him. Footsteps and Byron Bass' impeccably in-tune humming.

For a moment, he couldn't believe it, but while he wasn't believing it, he nonetheless hoisted himself - silently! - to the top of a bookshelf and tried to be motionless and small.

Byron Bass should have been judging disputes among his Invictus cronies. Every other Tuesday since Leo had come to Tempe, Bass had been out of his haven, doing just that. Yet in he walked, wearing an outdated smoking jacket and... yes... *fuzzy slippers*.

Leo was forced to conclude he'd picked the one night when no one was making a stink.

Bass entered and unlocked his shelves, looking through the books and Leo had a moment of thinking he'd get away with it before the other vampire paused.

Then he sniffed.

Vampires don't have to sniff, don't have to smell, don't have to breathe unless they want to. But Bass sniffed and then turned around and then Leo bolted for the door, leaving the book, just trying to *get the hell out*.

He made it down the hall to the first floor before overlooking a traps. As he reeled back from the sudden rush of light and heat, he heard a bang and felt a sledgehammer impact on his back.

Then he opened his eyes and was back in the pet store.

Bill Bass irritably waved pistol-smoke out of his face and looked down at a dead capuchin monkey. "What the holy heck?" he mumbled.

Leo looked at the hole in him, mimicking the monkey's dying wound. Animal possession wouldn't work again. He'd have to try something else.

Even though the left finger was bitten to the nail bed, he nibbled at it anyhow.

2004

Leo looked at Bass and said, "Make me an offer."

Bass rubbed his chin. "Your haven," he said. "Another copy - signed, of course. You leave Tempe, forever." He paused.

"Is that all?"

"Not even close. A two-drink Vinculum."

"One."

"So you're not willing to give away the store. One then."

Leo said nothing. Bass continued. "That ghoul of yours, Melissa."

"She's not a ghoul, but I'll give her to you. And?"

"And an explanation."

"My haven, another signed first printing copy of *Rain Children*, banishment, one drink, Melissa. And an explanation." He put out his hand. "Deal."

Bass took it. "So start explaining. I must say, I am dying to know what the hidden formula or secret message or, or magical revelation is in that crazy darn book."

Leo looked around. The others stood and left so it was just the two of them. For a while, Leo was silent.

"You know about the visions," he said.

"I know some vampires see visions," Bass replied.

"It doesn't always... show you what you want to see. I learned the trick when I was just starting out. Something to give me an edge. I was new, I was being a monster. You know."

Bass smiled.

"Then I learned more. How to make objects give up their stories. That was when I was older. When I was trying to stop being a monster."

Bass' smile began to fade.

"One night, just from being curious, I read my wife's wedding ring. My dead wife."

"Bad idea?"

"Not at all." Leo looked down at his left finger. It was perfectly manicured. It had been perfectly manicured since 2002. "It helped me remember. But there wasn't all of her. I didn't know how to get all of her. And the parts that weren't on the ring were fading out, like we do in pictures and mirrors."

Bass wasn't smiling at all, now.

"Then I had a vision. Not of the past, or what was in front of me. Sometimes they come, unannounced. Sometimes you just know. I knew I needed her book. Her favorite book."

Bass slowly reached down into the satchel by his side, past a wax-and-hair figurine, past a \$350 fighting knife, and produced a worn copy of *Rain Children*. He opened it and read the inscription.

"For Rachel, good luck with the poetry, enjoy! Harriet Becker."

"I never read any of Rachel's poems. She burned them when she was nineteen. But with that book, I can get them. I can get her." He started to reach across the table.

Bass pulled the volume back. "Sorry," he said. "Demand just went up."

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city street grid, viewed from a high angle. The streets are straight and intersect at right angles, creating a grid pattern. In the lower center of the image, a small car is visible on one of the streets. The overall tone is gritty and urban.

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Special Thanks

Phillipe has gone off to be all Canadian and stuff. He was an angel on our shoulder, way outnumbered by the other side. We wish him the best. Also, we wish him to have a comfortable couch and food for us.



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PRINTED IN CHINA.



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Table of Contents



<i>Prologue</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Chapter One: Designing a Chronicle</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Chapter Two: Chronicles</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Chapter Three: Antagonists</i>	<i>168</i>

Introduction

How to Use This Book

This book contains a lot of material for you to explore. Each of the following articles covers a different way of playing **Vampire**, and some of them outright contradict each other's advice. This isn't a book you read cover to cover and then file away. This is a book you take out whenever you're starting a new chronicle — or whenever your chronicle takes an unexpected turn — and page through to reinvigorate and inspire yourself.

Articles

This book contains 17 articles, each describing a different way to look at **Vampire: The Requiem**. Some of these articles change foundational elements of the game — removing Skills or clans — while others simply examine how to put an operatic or political spin on the drama. Every one of these articles is meant as an optional source of inspiration, to help Storytellers and players get the most out of their **Vampire** chronicles.

These articles are more than just advice. Each article contains optional new rules or specific tricks and exercises Storytellers can use to alter the feel and focus of their chronicles. With this book, you have the tools you need to hotwire the game and take it where you want to go.

Chronicle Templates

A *chronicle template* examines a potential chronicle idea with a level of detail that's only possible by example. Presented in a format similar to that of clans and bloodlines, these templates are ready-to-use chronicle seeds for Storytellers to flesh out and explore on their own. Unlike the articles that inspired these templates, these templates sacrifice breadth for color. Each imagines what *might* be going on in a particular, distinctive chronicle.

Don't mistake these templates for official information about the World of Darkness. Similar to the chronicles you play at home, these are "What If" creations. Remember that these templates are meant to inspire Storytellers (and save you some time), restrict you.

Many of these chronicle templates also show how the ideas from multiple articles can be combined in new ways

to create distinctive chronicles. What if the characters are the only vampires in a city consumed by a mortal civil war? What if the characters are spies from another city sent to infiltrate the highest ranks of power in this domain, to sabotage its politics from within? Chronicle templates provide a format you can use to organize ideas when you're designing your own chronicle.

What's Inside

The articles in this book cover a lot of ground. Ideally, you'll browse through this book, dipping in when new ideas catch your eye. To help you scout out those ideas, here's a rundown of what's inside.

After the **Prologue** that opens this book and the **Introduction**, here, you find **Chapter One: Designing a Chronicle**. This simple article builds on the Storytelling advice in **Vampire: The Requiem** to prepare you for the task of designing your own chronicle.

Chapter Two: Chronicles is filled to the brim with bloody articles. Each is a self-contained look at one type of chronicle you might play out in the World of Darkness, using the rules and central themes of **Vampire**. Here's what's what:

Clanless chronicles examine what the Requiem is like if the Blood of the Damned isn't forked into the five lineages of the clans. Inside you'll find character creation rules for playing **Vampire sans** clans.

A **Vampire Familia** chronicle presumes that all of the players' characters come from the same Kindred sire, grandsire or extended family, while providing guidelines for building vampire family trees and creating sibling vampires.

Expand the idea of family into a **Generational** chronicle, in which players take control of multiple decades' worth of related Kindred, and find out how the Damned inherit from the generations that came before them.

Find out how to make a character's first nights as a vampire frightening and new, even for long-time players, in chronicles of **Becoming**.

Alternately, explore the value of a **Transcendence** chronicle, in which the characters are working toward an escape from the Requiem.



A **Vampire Kings** chronicle examines undeath at the top, among Kindred who are masters of vast tracts of mortal lives.

Operatic chronicles are larger than life and louder than death. This article helps you exaggerate any series of stories into a grandiose tale, whether set on the street or in the palace.

A **Monster Garage** chronicle strips characters down to their most basic, brutal forms and lets them loose in a World of Darkness where Vice is more important than Skill. This is a whole new way to see the game.

War Stories highlight the terrible intersection of action and horror. This article helps you create a backdrop of chaos and violence that changes the way every character's Requiem unfolds.

Procedural chronicles focus on order in Storytelling, even when the world is in chaos. Turn your chronicle into a highly ritualized, episodic drama experience with the guidelines in this article.

An **Isolation** chronicle is based on the premise that the players' characters are the only vampires in the domain. This changes the whole dynamic of play, giving the players an incredible degree of freedom and their characters no margin for error.

A **Bottle** chronicle, on the other hand, forces the characters into a confined area for the duration of the series, where their instincts and conflicts have no means

to vent, like a pressure-cooker full of blood. Think of this as Oz with vampires.

The Other wonders how Kindred would find eternity if the Beast weren't a ferocious, ravenous devourer but, instead, an insidious and devious schemer.

In contrast, a **Hunter's Hunted** chronicle casts the Kindred in the role of the prey, reversing their relationship with mortals, if only for a few bloody nights.

Solo chronicles, played out with a Storyteller and a single player, offer rich opportunities for horror roleplaying, but these chronicles can also fill the spare weeks when other players are absent.

A **Political** chronicle doesn't just concern itself with the personal power-plays of the Danse Macabre. This chronicle type examines issues and the large-scale consequences that come when monsters in power make difficult choices.

All Kindred are plunged into a secret world after the Embrace. An **Espionage** chronicle plunges them into another layer of secrecy and asks how far a character can stray from his true identity before it's not really his identity anymore.

Chapter Three: Antagonists presents a step-by-step for designing antagonists suited to bringing your new chronicle to life. Inside, you'll also find a fresh collection of ready-to-use enemies, allies and strangers for characters to fight, aid and encounter in any chronicle.



Chapter One: Designing a Chronicle

“You taught me that this is the way things are.

That every Requiem is the same
and that I should accept the night that’s been laid out for me.

I’m not going to do that.

Not anymore.

I’m going to make things be the way I want them to be,
because the night is what I make it.

You could stop me, but you won’t
and I doubt you know how.”

— Found letter, signed “Your childe, J.A.”

What A Chronicle Is

On one level, a chronicle is just the collection of stories you tell, one after the other, until you decide you're finished. On another level, a chronicle is a story in its own right, a creative structure inside of which Storytellers and players examine exciting ideas and imagine dramatic adventures. The chronicle is the architecture your stories inhabit, like rooms in a house. A well-built, beautifully designed house draws people in, inspiring them to explore from room to room. A well-built chronicle compels players to get involved and keep coming back. It's a place that players are excited to visit.

First, understand that a chronicle is complex. As a collection of stories, you can't really get a good look at a chronicle until it has enough stories to collect and compare. By that time it might have a momentum all its own. You'll see a lot of (sometimes seemingly contradictory) metaphors in here about just what a chronicle is. No one of them is exactly right for all chronicles, but as you come out the other side of your first chronicle, you'll understand.

A chronicle is not just a narrative structure, but an element of gameplay. Storytelling games are a medium all their own and they have their own strengths and needs. The same story can be told through different mediums, but it can't be told successfully by trying to defy the medium. The same story performed on Broadway or written in a novel looks and feels different. It may even unfold differently. A story originally told on paper must be adapted for performance in a different medium — look at the differences between the graphic novel and the film versions of *Road to Perdition*.

The chronicle is a unique part of the medium of roleplaying or storytelling games. A close analogy is television, where a series of episodes creates a series. Television episodes and series are a great metaphor for understanding chronicle design, and you'll see that metaphor a lot in the following pages, but don't confuse the metaphor for the matter. A television series has special needs — commercial breaks, running times, budgets, broadcast regulations — that alter the way its stories are told, and it's the same with roleplaying chronicles.

A television writer or a novelist might take advantage of a character's abilities to advance the story, but the Storyteller needs to enable the *players* to take advantage of their characters abilities, to advance the story. Television is a visual medium, roleplaying games are more theatrical. A television episode needs to break four or five times for commercials, and those breaks must be punctuated by moments of suspense that entice the viewer to wait through the break, while a game story might need an action scene or a dose of the supernatural every hour or so to keep certain players enticed. Other differences abound.

A game chronicle's needs come from the circumstances of its form. In a roleplaying game, players fill the role of the main characters and the audience at the same time, so their interest in the story is vital. If an audience member is left wanting for a few minutes, a television story continues to unfold without him, but if a player in your chronicle loses interest, the story and eventually the chronicle can fall apart. A television series may need to run for a set number of episodes, while a game chronicle may only be able to last the length of the players' summer vacation or fall semester.

A chronicle's strengths come from the flexibility of its form. Great Storytellers use descriptions drawn from all five senses, like written fiction, to convey a complex and viscerally frightening world. Chronicles can take advantage of settings familiar to the players — the local city, most often — to synchronize the players' imaginations. The interactive and unpredictable narrative of a roleplaying game creates suspense for everyone involved. Likewise, every player knows the audience (the other players) well, so scares and jokes are more likely to hit their mark. Game chronicles can be personally tailored and seasoned to taste. Despite potential months of planning, a game chronicle can turn on a dime to accommodate sudden changes to player expectations and circumstances.

So many of any chronicle's strengths and needs come from the specific strengths and needs of the players, including the Storyteller, that are involved. As you play through more stories and chronicles, you'll come to identify more of the strengths and limits of the roleplaying medium. What's essential is this: Never forget the medium you're working in. Some Storytellers smother their chronicles by trying to force rules of television structure or comic-book pacing onto them. It can be fun to imagine your chronicle as a television series or a novel but don't get carried away with that — don't try to please some imaginary studio audience. The audience that matters sits down to play with you.

Tonight you're building a great roleplaying game chronicle. Never forget the medium you're working in.



EVERYTHING YOU KNOW

This book builds on the storytelling ideas and advice in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and **Vampire: The Requiem**, but it also touches on some other narrative concepts that are too complex to be explored here in much detail. Whole books have been written about theme and mood in any one storytelling medium. This book doesn't till that ground again, it just walks you through it and gives you a fat bunch of crops to plant, if you like. Put another way, this chapter is designed just to get you started on your own storytelling game chronicles, not to explore the deep ramifications of tragic dramaturgy in theater

or film. If you want to read more about the subjects touched on herein, search for books on any of the key ideas mentioned in this chapter, from story arcs to anagnorisis.

Remember that storytelling is a skill, which means you can get better at it. If this book is everything you know about storytelling, you can play exciting, satisfying **Vampire** chronicles worthy of the time you spend on them. If you dig deeper and read more, you might create surprising, compelling stories worth remembering and retelling later on.



The Two Chronicles

No plan survives contact with the enemy and no roleplaying story escapes change at the hands of the players. Every game chronicle, like every roleplaying game story, is actually two chronicles: the one you plan out, research in earnest, lovingly design and plan with all the detail and depth of a full-length novel, and the one that unfolds when all that preparation is put to use in play. This is not a drawback of the medium, just a fact of it.

New Storytellers often feel like the time they spend preparing is wasted when players just won't cooperate and stick to the atmosphere of the chronicle that's been designed for them. More experienced Storytellers continue to feel that way, but also know better. Despite how it feels, the chronicle you've designed isn't being ruined or replaced by the events that unfold at the game table, they're being adapted and utilized by the other creators of the chronicle — the players. All your notes and plans aren't a script, and they're not guidelines for what *should* happen. Rather, they're resources for you — and, to a certain extent, the players — to use during the improvisational storytelling that goes on during actual play.

If you feel like you had some gem of an idea for a scene or an exchange of dialogue or whatever, and you really don't think you'll be able to find a place for it later on, share it with the players at the end of the session as an example of what might have been. Call it a deleted scene or an alternate take, if you like, but if it's worth telling, tell it. Don't get frustrated because dice pools and improvising players didn't fatefully synchronize and unlock the tumblers of your chronicle exactly as you had designed.

The *purpose* of the chronicle is to provide a place in which to play, so let your players play. They have a right to affect the course of the chronicle, and you'll all enjoy yourselves more if you play without straightjackets. A chronicle that bends and twists and gets away from the Storyteller now and again is alive, and that's what you want.

All of the effort you put into designing your chronicle is sure to be valuable, if you keep this in mind: When you plan a chronicle or a story for play, you're not preparing it for an audience, you're preparing yourself for a performance.

How Long Is A Chronicle?

What's the right length for a chronicle? That depends on what you want the chronicle to do. Though the **World of Darkness Rulebook** describes chronicles as "sagas" and uses that fantasy-favorite word, "epic," to describe them, a chronicle doesn't have to be a long or epic saga. A trilogy of small, personal stories featuring nothing more than a pair of vampires stranded in a rural English manor house over three Christmases can be a complete chronicle. A short collection of episodic tales about a single New York summer can be a complete chronicle. Three standalone stories from three different perspectives about a single, horrific encounter between vampires and mortals in the desert outside of Los Angeles could even be a chronicle.

Some chronicles are huge and slow moving, like ocean liners packed with back-stabbing families of internecine undead. Others are lean and agile, steaming off the starting line like blood-spattered dragsters. One chronicle is small and deep, like a flooded mineshaft, plumbing into the dark pits of characters who drink like monsters but feel like people. Another is as long and flat as a highway at night, populated with characters that close in on, navigate around and leave behind obstacles steered by shadowy strangers who come on at every ramp, whose yellow fangs are only glimpsed in the instrument glow coming off their dashboards.

Not every television series runs until it's canceled. Not every chronicle needs to be an open-ended foray into an infinite night. A high-concept idea like "Little Tyrants" (p. 151) can be a thrilling experiment, but for some troupes it's more of a shot than a sipping drink. A premise doesn't have to be able to support a complete, seven-year network television series' worth of stories to be viable for a chronicle. It only has to be enough to slake your thirst for the idea, however long or short.

A chronicle should never drag, not when its creators and its audience are the same people. If you find that you're holding back on rewarding scenes or stories in an effort to maintain mystery or suspense, be sure that you're not holding back too much. A chronicle doesn't have to be epic to be meaningful or spectacular or unforgettable, and making your chronicle longer doesn't make it epic. Decide early on if you and your players will be more satisfied with an incomplete epic or a smaller saga with a strong ending.

Aspects of a Chronicle

Like a story, a chronicle can be described and defined by the various aspects that give it its character. Some of these aspects, like theme and mood, are also a part of the stories that make up the chronicle. Other aspects, like a motif, only really take on significance when they can be repeated, contrasted and developed over the course of several stories.





All of the following aspects go a long way to determining the feel and identity of your chronicle. By synchronizing or harmonizing aspects with one another, you can create a richly resonant series of stories. For example, matching religious motifs, settings and characters, such as Sanctified Priests and Catholic jargon, with themes of faith and hope and a mood of solemn, ominous fear, you can create a deeply symbolic chronicle that feels something like *The Exorcist*. Or, you can set your religious themes and moods against a backdrop of corporate glass and moneyed culture to give your stories about a faith the complexity that comes from contrast, like in *The Third Miracle*.

Careful changes to these aspects over the course of the chronicle help convey the passage of time and the impact that each story is having on the larger drama. Individual, discordant stories can riff on the themes or motifs you establish early on, or the aspects of the whole chronicle might be permanently transformed by some success or failure on the characters' part. Control these aspects and you control your chronicle.

Remixing Your Chronicle

Think of every part of the chronicle as a dial or a slider on a mixing board, like DJs and engineers use to control the sound at a club or on a recording. If one setting were right for each one of those dials, there'd be no board. If every aspect of a chronicle — from the narrative aspects below, to the unique game aspects like characters and Disciplines — interacted in predictable, regular ways, you might need only one dial. Fortunately, that's not how it is.

The same song can sound radically different with a different audio mix, and more than one of those mixes might be great for different audiences. It's the same way with a **Vampire** chronicle. For *this* chronicle, your group may want to turn up the familial aspects of Kindred society. For *this* chronicle, you may want to dial down the ramifications of Predator's Taint. For this series of stories you want to make blood a rarer commodity, or turn down the number of vampires, or throw the characters' self-identity into doubt or play without clans at all. You'll see specific ways to mix some of those chronicle ideas throughout this book.

The controls are yours. Crank up what you want, turn off what you don't. Make your chronicle into a violent, careless romp full of pounding bass and shrieking gunshots or play it on subtle strings with a small tangle of voices and intrigue. Every Requiem is different, play this one any way you want.

Stories

The chronicle is the forest. The stories are the trees. Even if your plan for the chronicle exists on paper or in a hard drive, the chronicle itself doesn't exist, in a

way, until it sees play. But you don't play through a chronicle, you play through the stories that make up the chronicle. The structure and pacing of a story, and the elements that make it up, are discussed to varying extents in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and **Vampire: The Requiem**, and this section assumes you've read those books.

Many of the following aspects of a chronicle are also aspects of the stories that make up the chronicle. Fundamentally, chronicles and stories are made of the same stuff. The stories that make up the chronicle should grow from these following aspects, however, since they're specific implementations of the ideas that define the chronicle. When you're considering the following parts of your chronicle, think about how these aspects can be brought out in the stories you tell. Each story should be, literally, a variation on the chronicle's themes. If the next story in your chronicle breaks from the usual mood, be sure you understand why it does — and why it should.

Stories are the front lines of drama, the place where the players actually interact with all the narrative ideas and dramatic techniques you've been thinking about. What happens in these stories determines what your chronicle's themes and moods really are. If you intend for your chronicle to be about the erosion of sanity by violence, but your stories ultimately involve empty, meaningless violence without consequences to the characters' mindsets, then your theme is just talk. Your design for the chronicle is a plan for what it should be, but stories determine what your chronicle is.

Keep one eye on the big picture even while you're in the great, improvisational moments of gameplay. Otherwise you're building a house despite the blueprints.

The Premise

Before anything else, your chronicle needs a premise. What's the setup? What's the gist of the chronicle? Don't overwrite at this stage. Don't think about the course of the stories, just about the ground they'll grow from.

A premise isn't a summary and it's not a synopsis. The premise is something like the short description of a new television series you might find in an entertainment magazine, but it's not like the back-cover text of a novel, which often reveals the course of the story through the first act and into the second. You can't do that, because you don't know for sure yet how the chronicle will unfold. Like a television show before it's aired, it hasn't happened yet and most of it hasn't been written yet.

Narrative Premises

Every chronicle must have a narrative premise, even if that premise is simply the root, implied premise of **Vampire** — that the characters are new vampires in a perilous World of Darkness. Just as each

of the different police dramas on television has a slightly different premise, so can you create a wide array of unique premises under the umbrella of **Vampire: The Requiem**. Where is the chronicle set, who is it about and what, very generally, do the characters do in it?

Give thought to locations and how they interact with your theme and mood at this stage. As an example, think of the complex and often nasty television series, *The Shield*, which might be described this way:

Hard-working beat cops and detectives struggle with violence and corruption on the street and in the department while operating out of a renovated church they call "the Barn." They're responsible for the protection of the L.A. district of Farmington, where honest folk from a half-dozen countries live afraid and angry in chain-link suburbs and barrios swarming with rival ethnic gangs and employees of the resident drug lords. The road to justice is twisted.

That last bit is, arguably, the theme of the show (as taken off the DVD packaging), tossed in there to highlight the substance underlying the premise.

Be vivid and specific. Your premise should get the players excited to play and keep you interested even after months of gameplay. Here are a few chronicle premises to get you thinking. This book is packed full of others — every chronicle template is a lush, detailed premise.

- Torpor draws near for the Prince of the city. Before he lays down for the deathsleep, he enlists a young coterie to help prepare the city for his absence. At the same time, he shows them what the city used to be like, in decades past, as he revisits his aged and dying mortal family, one at a time.

- Vampires have been vanishing for weeks. The city's Kindred population is half what it used to be. Something — VII? Mortals? Mages or Lupines? — is waging a secret war against the Damned, and winning. In the industrial outskirts of Seattle, the remaining Kindred are holing up, huddling together and planning a strategy: Let them come.

- A handful of new vampires, sent into a crumbling and rotten neighborhood of the city, are tasked by the Prince to "plant new crops" — turn the neighborhood into a tract of land where kine will come and Kindred can feed.

Think about defining the climactic conditions for the chronicle at the beginning, so you and your players will be able to sense when the end is drawing near, and play accordingly. For example, the premises above each suggest their own climaxes: when the Prince finally enters torpor (or is prevented from doing so), when the hidden enemy is exposed and confronted (for good or for ill), when the new neighborhood is put to the test (and judged a success or a failure by the Prince).

Mechanical Premises

Every chronicle also needs a premise in game mechanics. This is often much easier to manage — most

chronicles use the default mechanics of the game. Still, at this stage the Storyteller might select bloodlines to emphasize or exclude, select a few house rules to try out or make some decisions about suitable Merits for the players' characters.

The vampires' starting ages have an effect on the mechanical premise. If all the characters are given Blood Potency 4 at the start of play, that changes how those characters will interact with the rules, in addition to the setting. The mechanical premise can be much more complicated, however. In this book, you'll find examples of heavily modified systems for playing chronicles without clans, for example. You'll even find house rules for tracking a character's slipping sense of self-identity using a chart similar to Morality.

Don't be shy about experimenting with game rules. The Storytelling system is easy to tweak and adjust, and as long as your house rules satisfy you and the players, they're working.

Theme

Vampire has its themes, and **Vampire** stories have their own themes. Between them is the theme of the chronicle. A chronicle's theme must be rich enough that several stories can explore it without exhausting it. Deciding just how big a theme needs to be is tricky, and different Storytellers use different methods successfully, but in truth no theme is so small that only a single story can be told about it. As a guideline, if your theme is so restrictive that it seems to apply precisely to the specific story you're telling (e.g., the theme "paying back Bishop Birch is painful, immoral work"), it's probably not a theme. More likely, it's simply the subject of your story.

A theme must have meaning outside of any one story. Themes that are bigger than the subjects of your stories, bigger than the chronicle itself, are more likely to invite debate and serious thought and, thereby, involve your players emotionally in the plight of their characters. Look for themes that could be explored with mortal characters (or werewolves or mages) and then let the presence of vampires in these tales throw those themes into contrast.

One way to make a theme large enough to support a whole chronicle is to phrase it as a question that can't be answered with just a "yes" or "no." The more personal the answer to that question is, the better. For example, the theme "faith can justify evil deeds" is a nice, broad theme, but it's too easy to agree with or refute right away. You want your theme to be compelling enough that you and the players can explore possible arguments for and against it throughout several stories. Rephrase that theme as a question — "Can faith justify evil deeds?" — and it becomes more compelling.

The best questions for this exercise provoke an answer like, "Sometimes." Individual stories can then reexamine that larger question by asking variations on the question, such as "Can faith justify *this* murder?" or "Can faith justify evil deeds in the eyes of your loved ones?" or "Can faith wash away the guilt of one's evil deeds?"

For more about suitable themes for a **Vampire** chronicle, look at "Themes" on p. 206-207 of **Vampire: The Requiem**, and notice how many questions are asked by the examples there.

Mood

A prevailing mood is important to creating a sense of continuity and atmosphere in a chronicle, but it isn't absolutely necessary for a successful chronicle. As long as your stories have strongly defined and well-set moods, your chronicle will, too. That said, deciding on a mood for your chronicle can be a great benefit.

Mood gives a chronicle character and helps make a disjointed collection of episodic stories feel like part of a larger whole. A chronicle in which one story is woe-filled and full of dread, and the next is a light-hearted but spooky romp, feels like an anthology of smaller stories. A chronicle in which almost every story shares an aura of eerie isolation or the pressing urgency of pursuit, feels more like different chapters in the same novel.

Provided you have one strong mood you want to maintain from story to story, adding other moods to the mix for this story or that is easy and valuable, giving the chronicle a fresh feel without losing its identity. The best moods are either an integral part of the chronicle's premise or a stark and meaningful contrast to its themes. If the characters are the only Kindred in a small, remote city in the Rocky Mountains, a mood of isolation or even claustrophobia is a solid, obvious fit to reinforce the premise. On the other hand, if the characters are exorcists working for the Lancea Sanctum and the mood is meant to be mundane and businesslike, a kind of intuitive irony is created that makes the bizarre practices of Sanctified exorcism seem more commonplace and earthly — and therefore closer, more realistic and more frightening.

When in doubt, start with the core moods of **Vampire** and the World of Darkness — dread, woe, doubt — and let the first story or two help you discover the mood that you feel is right. Pay attention to how you're seeing the World of Darkness in the moment of play, think about how you're portraying it to the players, and that's the mood of the chronicle. This method may not have the artistic integrity of a carefully selected mood based on literary symbolism and your creative intent, but it has the benefit of being genuine, organic and something that you already know how to convey.

Motif

A motif is, plainly put, a recurring image, sound or other descriptive element that appears in the chronicle time and again, through multiple locations and stories and situations. Sometimes, even situations themselves are seen as a motif. The imagery and bureaucracy of the FBI is one motif of *The X-Files*, but the recurring situation of Mulder and Scully prowling in the dark at the end of dull white flashlight beams might be seen as a motif, too.

Recurring characters and locations help a chronicle feel like it's set in a living, persistent world, as described in numerous other *World of Darkness* books. Motifs work in a similar way, making the chronicle feel like a persistent, enduring narrative to the players. In general, while the actual examples of a motif may be present with the characters in the game world, motifs are often only meaningful for players. The presence of astrological symbols and imagery might have a great impact on a player's appreciation for the Storyteller's vivid descriptions of the game world, but to his character those astrological signs are just neon signs and restaurant placemats, coincidences without meaning.

Strictly speaking, a motif doesn't necessarily involve symbolism. A police motif might just be a way for you to underscore the chronicle's themes of justice and intrusion or a means of maintaining the mood of stories involving corrupt cops and missing persons abducted by the Damned. On the other hand, a motif that does symbolize some aspect of story, theme or mood adds depth to the narrative of the chronicle and can help keep players attentive to details and immersed in the game.

But in the *World of Darkness*, with its atmosphere of threatening symbolism (p. 23, **World of Darkness Rulebook**), is a motif really just a storytelling tool, or is it part of a pattern that reveals some part of the world's occulted truth?

Story Arc

A chronicle can have an arc, just like a story. In most ways, a chronicle's story arc functions in the same way as a story's arc, but unfolds more slowly, over the course of many stories. Presumably, from reading **Vampire: The Requiem** and being exposed to stories your whole life, you have a good idea how a story arc works.

A chronicle's arc affects every character, and possibly the whole city, changing it from the status quo in the beginning to a new condition in the end. Exaggerated examples might be of a city that begins the chronicle devoid of Kindred, but ends up teeming with them. Alternately, a city might go from being a centuries-old Invictus-driven society to a strict, fascist Carthian regime.

The trick with a chronicle's arc is that, although you should consider it, you can't actually know what it'll be without robbing the players of their ability to determine the course of events. Maybe the fate of the city isn't at stake, or maybe the sweeping changes to society and history are just a backdrop to the characters' story, but the chronicle must be about the players' characters if you want them to feel like an important part of it.

Look at Steven Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* — the story arc of the invasion, which ends well for humanity but is still a brutal loss, isn't quite the same as the arc of the main characters, which finds them safely home with the whole family intact. At its heart, *War of the Worlds* isn't about an alien invasion, it's about a family journeying through an alien invasion to save itself. If it were a chronicle, the family's arc would be the chronicle's.

To be prepared, you actually have to design several arcs for your chronicle. At a minimum, you need two: one for success and one for failure. Thus, if the characters succeed, a new city is home to the Damned, but if they fail, Kindred society fails to take root. Until one condition or the other is met, the story arc isn't complete.

Think about all of the different arcs you can draw from the chronicle's starting point at the premise. Be as clear as possible for yourself. If the players know what the end condition is for the chronicle, they'll be more likely to aim for it and stay (at least a little) closer to the arcs you've prepared for.

Dramatic Conventions

Dramatic conventions are simply the methods and practices of storytelling recognized by both the Storyteller and the players. In theater and film, these are aspects of the medium or the genre that might seem illogical or odd under other circumstances, but are taken (and given) for granted for the sake of the story. Dramatic conventions outside of the narrative include things like lights dimming before a performance, to cue the audience to be quiet, or things like *Law & Order*'s black-screen transitions, which might be jarring if not used regularly on the show.

Deciding on a few dramatic conventions for the chronicle helps everything run smoothly. Some of these conventions should be shared with the players frankly, at the beginning of play. For example, when the Storyteller raises his hand, he's asking everyone to be quiet; or when he points at his eye, he's asking a player to silently show the number of dice in his Wits + Composure dice pool.

Other dramatic conventions are subtler, and part of the fun comes from identifying them. Perhaps the Storyteller always plays a Mozart CD when the

characters meet with the Ordo Dracul, for example. The first few times, the Storyteller plays a piece while describing the nearly black hardwood walls of the chapter house and the coppery stink in the air. Eventually, the players catch on, realizing that Mozart equals the Order, and understand that when the Storyteller plays Mozart, the action is “cutting to” the chapter house. This is a great tool for the later stages of the chronicle, when the story and the characters are probably moving more quickly.

Requiem For A Chronicle

The course of a chronicle can't be mapped at the outset. Who knows where your players will take the action, what choices their characters will make or what real-life circumstances will change the time you have to play, or with whom? Still, the general flow of a chronicle that's allowed to run from conception to conclusion can be anticipated.

The course of a chronicle isn't unlike that of a story, except a chronicle might require many stories (or just one) to complete even a single phase of its development from beginning to end. A chronicle isn't a precision instrument. You may intend for the players to discover the secret nemesis that's been manipulating their enemies in the chronicle's fifth story, but they might puzzle it out in the third or fourth. Don't force it. The point is, in the first phase of the chronicle, they don't know who the real enemy is, but in the second phase they do. If they know now, then the chronicle's got at least its nose into the second phase.

Understanding the lifecycle of a chronicle as much about recognizing these acts when they occur naturally as it is about making them happen on cue. A satisfying chronicle has a beginning, a middle and an end, just like a story, even if you can't make out the borders between them until they're behind you. If, after a particularly effective story, you're driving home or putting your books away and you realize that your chronicle has just moved from the second act to the third, think about how that effects the stories you tell next and the atmosphere you create in the next one. You may be able to backpedal a bit in the next story, but throwing a story into reverse isn't usually a good idea, so why do it with something as big as a chronicle?

Take advantage of the organic development of your chronicle and put it to work for you. Use the atmosphere of imminent danger or the suddenly reinvigorated motivation of the characters or the momentum of a downhill rush to the finish to your advantage. Stall or waver and you dispel the potential energy you've built up by design or by happenstance. That's always a letdown.

The Backstory

The backstory is everything that happened before you started play. This is the city's history, the characters' history and any other background trivia or details that are relevant to the premise or the themes of the chronicle.

A good, rich backstory is like a brimming field of ripe ideas, but don't confuse it with the story itself. Characters' actions may seem more meaningful or dramatic in the context of your chronicle's backstory, but they shouldn't be hindered by it. This is the risk that often comes with chronicles set in the past — don't confuse history with backstory. History is *our* backstory, it's always backstory. What lies ahead of the characters should be a mutable future that they change and mold through their own actions. That's part of the fun of a roleplaying game.

If you've run a **Vampires** chronicle before, you might find it interesting to use a previous chronicle as the backstory for your new one. Perhaps the same players are now portraying new characters in the city that was shaken to its streets by the last chronicle. This can be especially fascinating if you play multiple World of Darkness games and the previous chronicle played using **Werewolf: The Forsaken** or **Mage: The Awakening**.

The Beginning

The first phase of a chronicle is like the first act of a story. This is when everyone gets used to their characters and the environment. Stories in this phase might be standalone episodes stemming directly from the chronicle's core premise. A first act of a chronicle about Hounds, for example, might involve stories in which the characters simply go out, arrest or punish a vampire wrongdoer, and then return their havens.

The beginning of a chronicle doesn't need to be long. Once the players have settled into their characters, and you've set up most of the recurring Storyteller characters and locations you want to use later on, the first act can end. The end of the first act doesn't mean the end of episodic, procedural stories, though. Those can continue throughout the chronicle.

Though you can't mandate exactly how the chronicle will unfold, you can identify early on the milestones you'll use to determine the transition from one act to the next. In the case of the Hounds chronicle, the first act might end when the characters discover that the crimes against the Masquerade they've been combating haven't been random...

The Turning Point

The second act of the chronicle is often the longest, but not necessarily the most complex. In the

second act, characters discover what's really going on behind and below the chronicle's premise. A new layer of conflicts and goals and questions opens up to be explored. Often, this is when the players have the most freedom. They explore the game world, collecting information, choosing their friends and enemies and arranging the pieces introduced in the first act to be ready for the third.

If the second act begins when the characters have peeled back a layer of the chronicle's mysteries and revealed a new layer of conflicts and actions, what happens if the chronicle has multiple layers to peel back and be revealed? The second act continues. Arguably, a chronicle might have multiple "second acts." A story can have several turning points and a chronicle can have even more.

As with the first act, decide what the threshold is for the transition into the third act. Using the Hounds chronicle as an example, the second act might end when the characters are finally able to confront the Prince about the truth of his betrayal, or simply when they choose to do so. When the setting has been chosen and everyone's in place, ready to make the final, fateful cuts, speeches or escapes that'll determine the outcome of the chronicle, the second act is over.

It's time to finish it.

The End

A chronicle's third act is often the shortest. Once the players know what they want to do, they make it happen. Now that they know the Regent of Druid Hill is the one who burned their havens, they take him down. Now that the Prince has pardoned them of their crimes, they bring the real perpetrators to him. Now that the characters understand the motives of the shadowy monsters destroying the city's Kindred, they either fight or flee the city.

Remember that an ending doesn't have to be long or absolutely definitive. Not every character needs to be destroyed or liberated or redeemed or solved like a puzzle. It's more important that the ending be the result of choices made by the players and their characters. An ending should reveal the consequences of those choices, good or bad, success or failure. However glorious or woeful, successful or tragic the ending may be, let it be what the characters have wrought.

The most important thing is that you respect the ending, let it do its thing, let it be an answer to the core questions of the chronicle. Let it be the characters' — and the players' — answers.





Chapter Two: Chronicles

"Nothing just is.

Everything is decided by someone
— someone with power and a plan —
or it's just given up by suckers like you,
who don't decide and so just suffer under the plan
whining about things is."

—Angelica Holm, Myrmidon

Becoming a Vampire

Vampires are monsters. They feed on blood, are prone to reckless and irrational rage and fear and cannot stand the life-giving touch of the Sun's rays. Most of all, though, the shared source of a vampire's monstrosity is not the Beast, but the Man. Men who sit in comfortable offices and sign papers that ruin or end so many lives that they become statistics are true monsters. The urges that come from the vampiric state are small, and they tend to keep these monsters small. The more of a moral monster the vampire becomes, the closer he drives himself to a solitary state of bestial fury. Perhaps the Kindred of Lancea Sanctum truly have divine insight in their belief that vampirism is a curse to show humanity the fear of monsters; those humans who become vampires are certainly forced face-to-face with the darkness in their own souls.

Vampires pass on their curse rarely, and for their own reasons. Some never do it, some do it often. None do it randomly. When you run a **Vampire** chronicle, you and your players must find as many reasons for the Embrace as there are player characters. Who was Embraced by whom and why will have a tremendous impact on the course of the chronicle. It is always worth running a prelude — or having background story written — on this topic.

New vampires experience the world in ways they never have before. Strange blood courses through them in new ways, and their dead flesh gains new resilience and new weakness. The strange powers of Disciplines may come naturally, or may be difficult processes of learning gained in bits and pieces from a sire who may or may not care about her childe's welfare. An intoxicating and lethal environment, the society of the Damned is fraught with evil and danger that is much closer to the surface than in mortal society.

The default character creation rules have players start with neonates, vampires sired only recently, generally at the bottom of the totem pole. Whether used as a prelude for individual characters or an introductory story for the whole group, this chapter will tell you how to start even earlier than that. This is the character's first vampire story ever: the one in which the character actually becomes a vampire. The story starts with the reasons for the character's Embrace, and continues throughout the rest of her Requiem.

This Side of Eternity

Start the characters as mortals. If the characters already knew each other in life, this can be a group activity; otherwise, run individual preludes. The first chapter of each character's first story should be the story

of the character's Embrace. You have two important decisions to make at this point: who had what reason to Embrace the character and how the characters will meet and get to know each other.

The reasons to Embrace someone, from the vampire's perspective, are discussed in **Vampire: The Requiem** at several points, but you need to decide which reasons are applicable based on the characters you need to turn into vampires. Since vampires are called the Damned for a reason, one of the best ways to lure them into this state is through their Vices. Of course, freedom of choice isn't necessary for the characters to become vampires, so, if the characters cannot be lured, they can always be forced. Most Kindred are likely to choose childer who resemble themselves in Virtues, Vices or both, particularly Vices.

The scene of the Embrace can be played out many ways. It could be a steamy seduction, a violent attack or an intimate moment of truth. Whatever the events, though, the actual scene should always end up feeling *wrong*. The Embrace is a means to pass on a curse, and, ultimately, brings only an eternity of suffering. The seduction should take the character further than she is comfortable (and as close to uncomfortable as you are able to go for the player), then plunge her over the edge into undeath. The attack should be more than an assault — it should be an utter violation, worse than a rape — as the character's life is literally ripped away and replaced with a painful mockery. The moment of truth turns out to be a lie, as the initial grips of hunger for blood strangle thought from the character's mind, and she attacks the one who hurt her so, out of rage and need — then regrets killing her old friend later, when she regains her senses. In all cases, despite the euphoric feeling of the kiss, the Vitae is dripping into the character's mouth wrenches her violently back into her body, scarring her soul painfully and forever.

Remember to have your players roll for hunger frenzy immediately after the Embrace, since most sires don't give enough Vitae to their childe to prevent frenzy. If you want to especially reinforce the curse up front, you can require the expenditure of a temporary Willpower point to even make the roll; otherwise, declare automatic frenzy. Also, remember that the character has just taken levels of lethal damage equal to her Health. One or more of the first Vitae fed to the character will be spent to heal some of this damage so she may wake as an undead; in fact, all of the Vitae will probably be spent reflexively for this purpose. This compounds the problem of initial hunger frenzy. You can feel free to rule that, since the damage was blood loss, the damage goes away

upon transition to the vampiric state, if you don't want to give your players too many problems at once.

After the initial surge of hunger, the new Beast will reflexively cringe away from the character's sire. The sire need not check for it, but the neonate must immediately roll to resist the Predator's Taint. Only one success is required, and a willing convert will probably get a +2 bonus for having expected to meet another vampire or even a +3 for knowing there would be grave consequences for frenzying on his sire. Were the character unwilling or unaware, though, he may even receive the -2 penalty for encountering a vampire perceived as an intruder or unexpected threat. Storytellers who want their player characters to be afraid of their sires may feel free to require more successes on the roll to resist Röttschreck.

To Rule in Hell

Though the Embrace is a thing of hunger, fear and pain, the power of the Blood soon ameliorates the wounds of the newly created undead. As you bring your young coterie together, start to show the characters the good things about being a vampire. Make sure someone gets shot, so they can see themselves take only bashing damage, then watch as, with minor concentration, the damage mends itself instantly. Give them chances to try out Discipline powers, and emphasize the blissful euphoria they receive when giving mortals the Kiss. Try out some of the rules below, to make the newly acquired curse seem not so bad for a while.

The first time a neonate Kisses someone when not in frenzy, let the character regain a point of temporary Willpower from the rush of euphoria. If the act also fulfills his Vice, give him two.

The first time a Discipline is used, roll five dice, and if all come up successes, add them to the level of the Discipline the character is activating for a scene. A young Ventruë's command accidentally starts Conditioning the target, or a young Mekhet accidentally projects her enhanced senses out of her body or a young Daeva simply gets more than expected out of his supernatural strength and speed.

The first time Vitae is spent to heal or to increase physical dice pools, increase the effectiveness a little. One Vitae heals four bashing or two lethal, or adds +4 to a physical dice pool.

Before the young vampires have settled into their Requiem, the characters may find it easier to stay awake during the day. Allow vampires less than a week dead to stay awake all day with the expenditure of a Willpower point and a single success on a Humanity roll.

Of course, the characters should never ride too high. There should also be constant reminders of the huge drawbacks of their new cursed state. For each of the

good "first time" rules you use from above, pick a "first time" drawback to use from below here.

Young vampires are not yet used to their nocturnal schedule. Require a Wits + Composure roll to notice when it's getting close to morning, or the character fails to notice until he starts to burn. Alternately, a neonate might find it difficult to wake from his first daysleep, and you could require the character to spend a point of Willpower to wake, lest he sleeps through the night and the next day as well.

The first time a neonate Kisses someone when not in frenzy, the vampire may be overwhelmed by the pleasure of the experience, and neglect to stop. Roll Resolve + Composure, requiring a number of successes equal to the number of Vitae less than maximum the character has in her pool right now. This is not an extended roll. If the roll fails, then the character drinks her victim dry without realizing it.

Disciplines don't come naturally. The power of the Blood is in its curse, and the characters must trick and cajole their vampiric natures into serving their wills to use that power for their own. Require the characters to seek training from their sires or other more experienced vampires before gaining their initial Discipline dots; even once the characters have received the training (one whole night per dot or one week per dot, in the case of any kind of blood sorcery or the Coils of the Dragon), require the expenditure of an additional point of Willpower each time a Discipline is used for the first time.

The control of Vitae is an unnatural act of will, requiring a kind of concentration that mortals know naught of. Neonates must be constantly on guard, lest their Vitae be used up without their noticing until it's too late. Each time a character takes a physical action, make him roll Resolve + Composure or else automatically spend a Vitae to increase its dice pool. Each time a character is wounded, require the expenditure of a point of Willpower if he doesn't want to heal the wound completely immediately.

There are other firsts to deal with when becoming a vampire as well: the first time the characters realize they'll never have to use the bathroom again, for example, or the first time they go outside in the snow and don't feel cold. Keep a list of these firsts, whichever ones feel important to you, and check them off as each player's character experiences them.



GHOULS WHO BECOME VAMPIRES

Sometimes, a mortal becomes a ghoul before becoming a vampire. The Ordo Dracul is known to practice this, initiating protégés into the mysteries of the blood step by step. Ghouls becoming vampires is never common by any means, but does happen.

If it does happen, it should be noted that submitting to the humiliating addiction of being a





ghoul reduces a character's Morality by one. Also, any Disciplines received free by becoming a ghoul count against the character's starting Discipline dots as a vampire. A starting vampire never gets more than three free dots of Disciplines total, even if some of them were received early as a ghoul. However, the character is also free from the initial uncertainties that other newly created vampires have, having had some time to adjust to the idea of vampiric existence and the powers of the Blood.

For full information on ghouls, pick up a copy of **Ghouls**. That book gives you all the rules and information you need for your players to portray ghoul characters. Of course, after reading about some of the horrible things ghouls go through, the players may not want to.



Joining the Danse Macabre

Now that the characters are vampires, there's not much they can do about it. Few characters will have the will to actually let the sun burn them to ash, and just as few will have the follow-through to pursue Golconda or some other form of transcendence of vampirism. If your group has exceptions to the first rule, well, they'll just need new characters to keep playing. Assuming the normal case, your characters will continue to be vampires, and will have to interact with other vampires, whether the characters like it or not. There are only so many good feeding spots in a city, and travel between cities is nigh-impossible for neonates.

In these early days of their Requiems, it is easy to bring the player characters together as a coterie. Friends their own age, in vampire terms, will be more attractive than manipulative elders, and to be alone in Kindred society is to be someone else's victim. A young coterie can be formed based on mutual needs for feeding territory and security, then grow into something more as the story progresses.

What more the coterie grows into depends on your desires and your group's desires, but it must grow into something. The Danse Macabre is there for a reason: it helps distract vampires from their bestial nature. Much like human society, vampire society lets the undead believe they are more than mere animals. If your players refuse to join the game, they should fall prey to the reality it denies; they should start degenerating into beasts.

Characters whose only motivations are to continue their existences should be subject to hunger frenzy whenever they feed, with only one success required to resist. Feeding should also be treated as a sin more harshly than usual, according to the following chart:

Humanity	Threshold Sin	Dice Rolled
7	Drinking from a vessel who thinks he knows what he is doing	Roll 4 dice

6	Drinking from a vessel by deceit (e.g., pretending to seduce her)	Roll 3 dice
5	Drinking from a vessel by force, without killing	Roll 3 dice
4	Killing a vessel while in frenzy	Roll 3 dice
3	Killing a vessel while not in frenzy	Roll 2 dice
2	Killing vessels repeatedly while not in frenzy	Roll 2 dice

Without any existence besides that of a monster feeding on the blood of former kin, there is nothing but despair and degeneration. Once the characters find some appropriate pursuits to occupy their Requiem, these harsh rules can be waived — unless, of course, that activity is a quest for transcendence that requires similarly high standards.

Give the players plenty of chances to get interested in alternatives to simply feeding and existing. Have various covenants extend the characters invitations to join. Involve them in plots by their sires as they are introduced to the other Kindred of the city. Make the characters happy, or angry or let them fall in love. Then, if they run away from all of that, remind them of the bleak existence they truly must hide from.

Lingering Regrets

Time to fast forward. What the characters do with the rest of their Requiem is not the purview of this chapter. Your chronicle may take the characters in any number of directions, showing them strange, wonderful and terrible things beyond the mortal ken. There are a few final things to take note of, though.

The circumstances of each character's Embrace should continue to haunt her no matter how long she exists. If she was seduced into her Embrace, every seduction she carries out or is subject to should have overtones of that time. One who was forced violently into the Embrace should feel its resonance in every fight she ever gets into. She who thought she entered into the Embrace knowingly and willingly should have second thoughts about anything she is sure of, and have trouble trusting people

ever again. These resonant events should especially be played to the hilt if one of your players decides his character will Embrace a child of his own.

Having played out the transition from life into undeath, you and your players will have a keener appreciation for the change the characters have experienced. As the chronicle goes on, you can make reference to this in many ways. Places the characters visited in life will seem less vibrant — is it simply the lack of sunlight, or is their sense of color lessened? Perhaps they simply cannot feel the same way about the colors anymore. Is this senseless malaise the characters feel prone to a product of living in constant darkness, or a natural part of the state of vampirism? Is there any way to tell the difference? Little reminders sprinkled in with descriptions as the chronicle goes on can keep the players aware of how life used to be, and keep the characters aware that they are cursed.

Something you can keep in reserve for quite some time is a character's first experience of torpor. Most characters won't get this beaten up or this hungry for a long time, anyway, so, even to a relatively experienced Kindred, torpor can come as a shock. In the fevered dreams of the death-sleep, replay the character's Embrace and, perhaps, portions of his mortal or undead life. Involve the other players in these scenes as well, having them play distorted versions of their characters based on the sleeping character's perceptions of them. After this, your players should realize why most vampires awaken from torpor different people than they entered it.

Another thing you can keep with you throughout the characters' whole Requiem is the checklist of things they haven't done yet. Keep track of whether a particular fine point of Kindred etiquette has ever been explained to a character who thinks he's experienced, for instance, then use it to pull a fast one on him later. Even when the characters are elders, the characters won't have seen and done everything in the world. After all, if they had, there would be no point in playing them anymore. The feeling of initiation into dark mysteries can be continued like this long after the Embrace is gone. After all, all vampires were mortal once, and all elders were neonates once. It's good to remind them of that from time to time.

Damnation

Without knowledge, without warning,
Drive we to no lands of morning;
Far ahead no signals homing
Hail our nightward bark.
Hopeless, helpless, weird, outdriven,
Fateless, friendless, dread, unshriven,

For some race-doom unforgiven,
Drive we to the dark.

— "The Dread Voyage" by William Wilfred Campbell

A Damnation chronicle is about the Kindred's inevitable slide into a living hell, focusing on **Vampire's** elements of corruption, loss of humanity and the fall from

grace. This type of chronicle strips down the issues of survival and politics and replaces them with a world in which power comes from evil acts and in which the only choices (or at least the only obvious choices) are to reign in hell or die screaming. All **Vampire** games deal with Damnation to one degree or another, but, in this chronicle, that personal hell is moved from being one element among many to the central defining theme of the game.

In order for a Damnation chronicle to work, the Storyteller and the players must all be willing to get into the implications of power and evil, to play a hard game in which there is little or nothing to distract from personal horror. For that reason, it is often easiest to play such chronicles as shorter-run games in which the issues are quickly brought out and confronted. However, a sufficiently dedicated group could make the game last a long time, drawing out the slow inevitability of the fall as their characters wither away to moral nothingness. In either case, the Storyteller is going to need to make the characters tempted by Damnation and to remove distractions from the characters' paths. That starts at the very beginning of the story, when the characters become vampires.

The Fall

The Damned may try to deny the justice of their state, to claim they do not know why they are being punished, but the truth is that they do. There is nothing random about the vampire who is chosen to be Damned: it is a punishment that is meted out to those that deserve it. In order to reinforce this idea, the Storyteller can do away with the concept of the sire. Damned vampires are not chosen by another fallible being to be brought into the Danse Macabre: Damned vampires are chosen by something else, something that judged them and found them wanting. They have sinned, and now they must face their own personal hell for it.

The sin

Characters in a Damnation chronicle are Damned for a reason; they did something that cannot be forgiven. It is important that each character have a reason for his or her Damnation, be the reason a single heinous act or a sequence of behavior that turned him or her out from humanity. This sin should be something specific and something heinous enough that it justifies the character being Damned to living death for its commission. However, the chronicle also works best when the sin is something that is almost understandable: something that anyone could have been pushed to if the situation were right. It is easy to make psychotic characters who deserve their Damnation, but such characters don't give much in the way of dramatic tension. The real gut-punching force of the sin should be that it Damned someone who was otherwise not a bad person, making a character who has strong positive qualities, someone who is still human despite the fact that God has turned His face from him or her.

The easiest way to do this is to look at the character's Vice and Virtue together and decide from them what kind of sin the character could have committed that would have had the very hand of Heaven turn against him or her. The most meaningful moments of drama are often born when the best and worst impulses of a character collide; the commission of the sin should be a moment that will forever influence the character's Requiem.

Example: Gary is creating Michael, his character for a Damnation chronicle. He has already decided that Michael's Vice is Wrath and his Virtue Justice, as Gary wants to model the character after the Archangel in a fallen and mortal form. His sin is easy enough to decide: he killed someone. Darrin, the Storyteller, tells him that isn't enough, why did this particular murder get the attention of God? Gary decides that Michael's murder was a sin against his own family: when Michael found out that his brother was molesting their little sister, he killed his whole family.

Darrin thinks that this is closer, but that it doesn't show any Justice and may be too much to let Michael be human despite his Damnation. Gary thinks about this a while, and finally decides that Michael had come back from the military, and found out that, while he was gone, his brother had been molesting their little sister while his mother had turned a blind eye, unable to cope with the knowledge of what was happening. In rage, Michael killed his brother, and then killed his mother as well for allowing it to happen. Darrin agrees that acting as judge, jury, and executioner while committing matricide and fratricide is sufficient and that the conflict between rage and justice makes for a good sin.

The character's sin not only causes his or her fall, but is the thing most likely to send the character farther down the dark spiral if he or she ever repeats the sin. While characters will face all of the normal checks against their Humanity during the course of the chronicle, any check that directly relates to the sin is much harder. Whenever the character commits an action that would normally cause a roll for Humanity loss that the group feels is thematically or literally linked with the character's sin, only one dice is rolled to resist the loss. In addition, the character rolls one fewer dice than normal to resist gaining a derangement. A character's sin is directly tied to his or her Damnation, and so repetition of the sin is much more likely to strip the remaining shreds of humanity from the character. He or she knows that the sin was wrong — the character was Damned for it — so choosing to do it again is to deliberately turn away from God and humanity, to drive oneself further into the pit.

Example: During the game, one of Michael's allies betrays him, with the possible compliance of a ghoul that Michael had found himself emotionally attracted to. Michael kills both of them in a rage, one for betrayal and the other for doing nothing to stop it. Everyone at the table agrees that this is close enough to be considered a repetition of his original sin, and so Gary only gets to roll one dice to keep from losing

Humanity. He rolls a 5, and loses a point of Humanity, dropping to 6. He then rolls only three dice to resist gaining a derangement, and fails. Gary and Darrin talk it over and decide that Michael is starting to move toward megalomania, and so the character picks up Narcissism to represent the fact that he's starting to believe that he is worthy to judge the lives of those around him.

The Agent

In a normal **Vampire** game, the characters can often claim some degree of innocence in their state; they were, after all, chosen by a sire and may not deserve the punishment of undeath. In the Damnation chronicle, however, the characters are not sired — they are Damned. The questions the Storyteller and the group have to answer are: Who Damned the characters? How obvious was it? And what does that say about their state?

There are many possible answers to these questions, and the Storyteller should think hard about the answers and what they mean to the game. The following is a short list of possibilities and some of their implications, but the list is far from all-inclusive, and should be seen as a starting point only:

God: The Judeo-Christian-Muslim God Damned the characters by His own mouth and by His own hand. This could be anything from a Damnation that came from a dream or vision while the character slept to a direct face-to-face confrontation with the Creator in which the character was struck with the fires of Heaven and reduced to his or her current undead state. This choice allows for heavy usage of Christian motifs of damnation, which are culturally resonant to many **Vampire** players, and leaves no doubt in the minds of the characters that they are Damned by a force that has the right to Damn them. How they deal with that knowledge is obviously up to them: whether they try to repent or whether they curse God and do not die, whether they choose to work as agents to prevent the Damnation of others or whether they try to bring low all that God has created — all become viable, thematically powerful options. After all, the characters know for a fact that it was He who created them.

The Devil: Along the same axis but at the opposite pole from God, in this setup, the characters were not Damned by God but claimed by the Devil. They have, by their wickedness, put themselves under the power of evil, and their chosen torment is to live in the world as beasts and monsters. As with the God option, this allows for good use of traditional Christian motifs of damnation, but with a darker twist. In this option, the characters do not know how God feels about them, only that they have lost their claim to salvation and life. They may accept their new owner or fight against him, and the Storyteller will have to decide how active a part the Devil plays in the nightly unlife of the characters.

A Pagan Deity: One of the powers of the world has Damned the characters. This option opens up a large number of possibilities that the above options do not, but (for many groups) at the cost of an easily identifiable central motif of Damnation. Something larger than human and with the right of life and death and Damnation has judged the characters, and let them know it directly. What this means can vary a lot from character to character, and possibly even more from god to god. If Lugh, Lord of the Sun, has Damned the characters because he can no longer stand to see their wicked faces, it will give a much different feel to the chronicle than if Kali, Goddess of Destruction, has chosen the characters to walk the path into oblivion because they were so suited to do her work.

A Messenger: It could be that the characters were Damned and given the news by a messenger: anything from an angel with a flaming sword to a kind local priest who sadly explains the situation. This setup allows the Storyteller to play with many of the same themes as in the variants above, but with added uncertainty. Can the characters believe the old man? Do angels really mean that God is behind the Damnation? Using a messenger as a plot device also allows for more subtlety than the above variants, especially if the messenger is more subtle than a bolt of fire from Heaven. Dreams and visions can also fill in this role, giving the characters only fleeting glimpses of the truth, leaving them with the sense that there is more reason for their punishment than the option below, but far less than any of the options above.

The World/Karma/Unknown: In this variant, the characters went to sleep one night and dreamt all night of their sins and the pain that they had caused the world. There is no presence of gods or demons in the dream, just of other humans suffering and the world being made darker from what the characters had done. When they woke up, at sundown the next day, they were vampires and knew in their hearts that they had been Damned. In this option, the characters will know that they were chosen for their sins, but not by whom, or how or even really why. The characters will be alone in a universe that has morally judged them in an absolute sense without giving them any way to judge themselves. This variant has the most potential for existentialism and exploration of the difficulties of morality, as players and their characters try to figure out what they believe about the state of Damnation without the influence of supreme powers.

Requiem of the Damned

Once the characters have sinned and fallen, they are Damned, they are vampires. However, they may not reside in exactly the same world that vampires in other games do. To follow the theme of Damnation, Storytellers may wish to make further changes to the world.

Clans and Covenants

Without sires to bind their childer, and depending on the agent of the fall, the existing covenants of **Vampire** may need to be changed or eliminated. Storytellers should look at the Clanless (p. 35), Isolated (p. 124) and Bottle (p. 117) chronicle articles for a variety of ideas on how to deal with clans and covenants under situations where there aren't many vampires or those institutions are unimportant.

If the Storyteller wishes to keep covenants as a more active part of the game, then some work will need to be done in order to keep them working properly. A large part of this will come from looking at the agent of Damnation the Storyteller chose and how that compares with the existing covenants. If God and/or the Devil were the agent, for example, then the Lancea Sanctum would probably have a vastly increased role in the game — and may be the only functional covenant in most cities. In the same setup, the Circle of the Crone would probably be nearly denuded, or simply removed completely, as this covenant does not fit the tone and theme of the game nearly so well. On the other hand, the Pagan God agent option may cause the opposite reaction, removing the Judeo-Christian-based covenants. The Invictus make a good neutral covenant in any city — this covenant just shifts its emphasis from lineage to simple power. In that way, the Invictus can be an important part of the game's theme, as discussed below in "To Reign in Hell."

Similarly, without sires, clans can either be removed or appended to be something different. Rather than lineages of blood, the clans could become lineages of sin, with those who fell from certain types of sin becoming members of different clans. In this setup, the Daeva could be those who fell from sins of vanity, gluttony or lust. The Gangrel, from sins that reduced those to animalistic states or denied civilization, law and order. The Mekhet, from sins of knowledge and Faustian deals. The Nosferatu, from sins of turning their backs on humanity and refusing to be part of the human community. And Ventrue, from sins of pride, power and domination.

The Cross

Depending on the agents of Damnation, vampires in a Damnation chronicle may be susceptible to symbols of holy power or the faith of devout believers in a more immediate way than the characters are in a standard chronicle. Storytellers can set the level of this susceptibility as high or low as they wish to, depending on how strongly the Storytellers want to reinforce the fact that the Damned are the enemies of God, servants of the Devil or judged by gods and goddesses.

At one end, vampires may not be able to stand the presence of holy symbols well at all, being sent into a fear frenzy by the sight of a holy symbol or if forced onto

sacred ground. Simply seeing a cross (for example) may be a 3 dice Fear Frenzy, while trying to enter a cathedral full of praying priests may force a 10 dice Frenzy.

Another, less overwhelming option, is to allow vampires to be driven off using the system for exorcising ghosts (see p. 214 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Simply replace the ghost's Power + Resistance with the vampire's Composure + Resolve for the contest. If the vampire loses, the character is not destroyed, but is forced to flee the vicinity — possibly in fear frenzy. (Of course, particularly ruthless Storytellers could have characters with a very high Morality destroy vampires by using this technique, but the Characters should have a chance to flee first.)

The Road to Hell

Once everything has been set up, it is time to get down to the nitty-gritty of playing the nightly Damnation of the characters, and making a fun and interesting game out of it. A group that will have fun sitting about and moaning over the horrid state of their characters' souls is an unusual one, and the Storyteller needs to be able to push at the characters, to make them either try to save themselves or be dragged farther down the road of Damnation.

Stories of Damnation dovetail well with stories of Transcendence (p. 132), and many of the techniques described in that chapter can be used to create a powerful chronicle in which the characters are caught between Hell and Heaven and must make the ultimate choice. However, whether played straight or with a transcendence combination, there must be something to make the Character be tempted by the Damnation angle. If the choice is between a miserable unlife full of pain and fear and a wonderful real life full of joy, well then, there isn't much of a choice at all.

To Reign in Hell

The saying "It is better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" may be the most famous statement of Damnation in the English language. Storytellers should make this the watchword for temptation, the funnel to bring the characters down the dark path. While the pain and horror of Damnation must remain real, so must the idea of the rewards that remain ever out of the characters' grasp but well within their field of vision. Storytellers should let them see power, pleasure, control, pride and wealth, and make them think that all those are right there for the taking, if only the characters are willing to betray one more principle, lose one little bit more of their humanity. Keep them reaching, just like Sisyphus, and keep them hungry.

Ash in Your Mouth

Of course, Sisyphus didn't have a choice and characters do. Players are the kind of smart people who figure

out when they are having bait dangled always out of their characters' reach, and will eventually give up when they know they cannot have something. The solution to this is easy: every once in a while, just before the players are going to give up, give the characters what they thought they wanted.

There are many horrible things about being a vampire, but there are many tempting things as well. These tempting things are the goads that the Storyteller can use to drive characters on toward Damnation and pain. More powerful disciplines always hold a certain allure, as they allow characters to impose their wills upon the world more efficiently. In an Invictus-style city, Regency, control over territory, pride of place, the fear of one's peers, freedom of action and the choice rewards of the mortal world (beautiful and desirable vessels, strong ghouls, important contacts) can all tempt anyone. When characters go after these temptations, make the characters hurt others to get the temptations. Make the characters sacrifice their Humanity in order to gain their desires. If a character wants a particular ghoul, for example, make the way to having the ghoul be by killing the ghoul's lover and destroying the body. If the character wants to break an enemy's will, don't have the get into an epic face-off, just let the character know that if he tortures the enemy's mortal brother to death, slowly and with his own hand, the enemy will break. Then, when the character has made the choice, when the character has paid the price, give the character what he or she wanted.

Let the reward taste so sweet. Only after the characters have had their moments of glory, let the characters find out that the treasures weren't worth the quests. It's the inverse of a Grail quest: those who don't get to the end are still noble, while those who find the cup discover that it contains a bitter draught. The beautiful vassal doesn't retain her beauty once the character starts feeding from her, the loyal ghoul is actually only semi-competent and sniveling, the Rack gets the characters all the blood they want, but is full of evil people who prey on the characters' sin — drawing them all the more speedily toward hell.

And then, just when the pain is starting to become bad enough that the characters are starting to consider that they may have made the wrong choices, put bigger rewards in front of them: better, shinier prizes that will surely, most certainly, and without a doubt pay off this time. Then start over again.

Humanity, Blood Potency and the Beast

Blood Potency is no longer a sign associated with the strength of the vampires' blood or the length of their lives; Blood Potency is a living measure of how far down the path of Damnation the characters have walked. The higher the Blood Potency, the further from grace the character is. To symbolize this mechanically, Storytellers can utilize



a new rule wherein a character's Blood Potency + Humanity + 1 can never total more than 10. This represents the link between Humanity and the possibility of salvation and its opposition to the Damnation of Blood Potency. In order to gain power, a character must lose something of his or her humanity, must walk farther away from the human he or she once was and closer to the monster he or she is becoming.

A character cannot just choose to lose Humanity. She must do it "on stage" by doing something that furthers her Damnation. The player must *choose* to have his character commit an action that drags him farther away from everything good and noble if he wants the character to increase his power.

Example: Michael is at Blood Potency 2 and Humanity 7, having taken steps down the road of Damnation but not yet surrendered his remaining humanity. Now Gary wants to raise Michael's Blood Potency to 3, but, in order to do, so he must first lose a point of Humanity. (Blood Potency 3 + Humanity 7 + 1 = 11, so Humanity must drop.) Gary sets it up so that Michael ends up in a situation in which his ally and a ghoul betray him, letting Michael repeat his original sin in order to drop his Humanity to 6. He fails the roll, gains a derangement and is able to increase his Blood Potency to 3 as he slowly loses more of his humanity.

Storytellers may also want to change the nature of the Beast and what it represents, as well as what happens to a character who goes into frenzy. One option is that rather than just being a mindless animal, the Beast could become that which drives the character toward deeper Damnation — his personal devil that wants him to destroy himself. The Other Beast chronicle (p. 59) has more information about ways to do this, which can be applied to this chronicle by simply remembering that the Beast wants the character to gain power and lose humanity. In this option, going into frenzy or any situation in which the Beast is in control, can result in Humanity loss. The Storyteller may even want to make Humanity loss easier if the character chooses to Ride the Wave, as that means the character accepts the Devil in exchange for power. In such a case, simply have the characters roll one fewer dice in order to resist losing Humanity (or half, rounded down, if the character gives in to the Beast in a particularly Damning way).

A second option is to have the Beast still be the mad animal voice in the character's stomach, but not have frenzy result in Humanity loss. In this situation, the character, and player, must make the choice to do something terrible in order to further the slide away from Humanity. One cannot be Damned for what one cannot control, says this option, and so, it is only when you have a choice that you slide deeper into the pit. Riding the Wave could still result in Humanity loss, as it is something chosen, but actions taken in an involuntary frenzy will not. Of course, a character can still lose Humanity for the callous disregard of putting

herself into a position in which she is likely to frenzy. In that situation, what the characters do in frenzy isn't what Damns them, caring enough about others and deliberately putting them in positions in which they could be hurt or killed does. Generally, this would be a Morality 4 sin, though, in some circumstances, Morality could drop lower, and could well be related to a character's original sin; in which case, such an action can always make the character lose Humanity.

Pacing

While one can play a slowly grinding chronicle of Damnation, in which the characters slowly grind themselves to nothing, playing a shorter, more intense chronicle in which the characters move quickly toward their fate rather than slowly and by inches can be equally rewarding. In such a game, the Storyteller should let the characters gain power more quickly than normal, giving them rewards of larger experience point amounts, free dots in Blood Potency and political clout that players in traditional chronicles have to strive for over months of play.

The key to this possibility of faster advancement is, of course, faster Damnation. All the players need to do in order to raise their Blood Potency is to lose another point of Humanity. All they have to do in order to gain more status is lose another mortal contact. The key to making this type of game work is to keep the pressure up, and never let the characters rest easy. Rather than slowly building up the pain and difficulty of betrayal from below, have it happen the session after a character takes over a domain. Push things fast and hard, and see what choices the characters make in response to the world always hurting them. This kind of chronicle isn't about the power the characters have; this kind of chronicle is about the choices they make. So Storytellers should give them the power, give them the ability to make choices and then push them until they start to tear themselves apart.

Judgment Day

Whether slow or fast, the Damnation chronicle will eventually come to a head. Characters will either grow tired of chasing after things they realize will never make them happy or will chase so many temptations down that they will be teetering on the fine edge of Humanity 1. Some characters may want to find a balance and stay Damned but powerful; other characters may hurl themselves off the edge, and a few may even want to find redemption. What that end will be should be decided by the players' choices, but there are several typical endings that the group can strive for.

Out of the Night That Covers Me

In this climax, one or more characters figure out a way to finally balance themselves and their Beast, coming to some kind of peace with the fact that they are Damned.

Storytellers should make this achievement as difficult as possible, as peace is one thing that does not belong in a Damned soul. But it may be possible for a character to create a balance anyway. If, after everything that can be done, the character has neither gained nor lost Humanity in several major challenges, and, if the player agrees that the character has gained his balance, then it may be time to wrap that character's story up.

The prototypical ending of this kind of story is the character as a Satanic figure from Milton, grand and glorious and Damned forever to rule over creatures forever less than she is. The character could become Prince, for example, and spend the rest of his unlife watching the squabbling of the Damned and doomed creatures beneath him. Done right, this can be a satisfying end. This conclusion can also be a doorway into another type of chronicle, such as the super political or social junky chronicles. And, who knows, maybe during the course of those chronicles the characters will discover that they aren't really as at peace as they thought, and will have to deal with their Damnation yet again.

Out of the Pit

In this ending, the characters decide that they wish to claw their way out of the hole of Damnation and find their humanity again. When the game reaches this level, it makes sense to switch completely over to the Transcendence chronicle and see if the Damned have what it takes to reach heaven.

The other option in this ending is that a character will deliberately chose Final Death, either in suicide or by finding a noble last stand, and will try to escape Damnation that way. In that case, the Storyteller and players should talk about what they think about the character's death, and whether or not it did let the character escape Damnation through sacrifice or whether this type of death just Damned the character to a dif-

ferent hell — perhaps coming back as a ghost or as a vampire, or becoming a soul writhing forever in Hell.

Dust and Ashes

Less happy than either of the above options, but sometimes even more satisfying, is an ending in which a character succumbs to either the most bestial aspects of her Damnation or receives a much-deserved Final Death. Like the fall of the House of Usher, this kind of ending can give a character who has made the wrong choices a towering and satisfying ending in which all of the character's sins come back to him, overwhelm him and end him. Characters who go out this way should have a last chance to be tragic and terrible and say something about the world in the way that they finally succumb to their inevitable fate.

In ancient Hindu cosmology, it is said that the world goes through four ages, four epochs in which the karma of the world changes radically. The ages share their names with the results of throws in traditional Indian dice games, from best to worst. At the top, the best throw and highest age is the Krita Yug: the age of perfection. At the bottom is the age in which this game takes place: the Kali Yug, the lowest throw, the worst of luck, in which the world goes through an epoch of strife, hate and Damnation before finally gutted and blown out like a candle.

In this game, the characters are Damned by a divine roll of the dice. As the world ticks out its final hours, the characters have been given over to the Devil after a bet with God. Rather than drag them down to Hell, Satan has left them on Earth to spread destruction and mayhem, either tempting them on with their lusts or convincing them that they are doing righteous things for God (or Kali, or Allah or whomever the characters will believe in). Satan will push the characters to make the world more wicked, more full of pain, while they drive themselves toward Damnation, all the while offering them power, pleasure and salvation.

Kali Yug

Unbeknownst to any besides God, the characters become the ticking clock counting down the world's ending: as their Humanity drops, the world gets worse and worse; if they destroy themselves through sin, the world will follow after. But what can work for evil can work for stasis, and if they can find their way to stasis, the world will crawl along in its wickedness for ages more. God, however, has cast the dice for the Krita Yug, and if the characters can buck all the odds, discover from their hearts that wickedness only breeds wickedness and find salvation, so, too, will the world.

Theme: The twin themes of this chronicle are the semi-paradoxical "you can't control what fate gives you"

and "we make the world we live in." The characters will not have any choice in their Damnation; they were given over to the devil despite anything they did. Much of the chronicle will follow that sense of random fate as well, as the characters and those around them are confronted by choices they never wanted, destroyed and saved seemingly at random. However, in the end, the choices the characters make with what they are given will determine the course of the whole world. They don't get to choose their tools, but, despite that, they will be the ones who chose their result — for good or ill.

Mood: Madness, wickedness and perverse hope dominate the mood of Kali Yug. The characters are Damned



for no good reason, the world is drowning itself in evil and the characters are driving it deeper. And yet, there is a spark of hope in the human heart that will not be drowned out. This is a chronicle in which it would be fitting for a man to make a smart remark or one-liner just before he shoots his whole family in the head, turning the gun on himself only to have it jam at the last minute, sparing him to live with what he has done.

Atmosphere: The world is already only a single step away from Hell. Everything everywhere is filthy, rotting and falling apart. Think of the best and worst very near-future distopias of film and literature, and add an atmosphere of the carnival. There are areas not filled with visible signs of the end of times, of course, but they are full of people whose souls are even more twisted than the hulks of the worst areas. But, even then, here and there, a place of true beauty and a soul of true purity can still be found.

Setting: This chronicle needs to be set in a large city, a place where masses of humanity crush together. While any large city will do, it is best to use a city that is highly symbolic of part of humanity's triumphs and follies: Rome, New Delhi, New York, London and so on. When the characters walk the streets of the city, they should feel that they are walking the ruined remains of history, with buildings that once centered empires now starting to sag and collapse into the madness growing around them.

The abandoned shells of monolithic churches or temples, the burnt-out remains of massive condo-complexes gutted by arson and the rusted, twisted steel hulks of century-old amusement parks should dominate the locations. Characters shouldn't meet their contacts at the local bar; they should meet them at the orgy being held in the ruins of Tomorrow Land. Fights should happen on the spires of ancient churches or on the 40th floor of a building whose floor is starting to give out, threatening to kill all of the combatants randomly. Meetings with the Devil, or times when there are opportunities for shocking Humanity loss, should happen in contrastingly normal or cultured places: a brightly-lit public bathroom, the balcony above an opera being performed for the remaining rich, in the middle of a reclaimed playground filled with happily playing children.

The one thing that should remain constant is that the characters have no place that is constant. Havens will be raided or discovered by enemies, places of safety will vanish in a riot, monuments will topple and the characters will have to always be on the move, trying to find somewhere to fit in, to feel safe, to feel normal. Only if they start to regain Humanity and move the world away from destruction can they do so, and, if that does happen, they will start to build bases of security and beauty.

Character Creation: Characters in this chronicle should be new vampires, who gained their vampiric state when their souls were given over to the Devil. The characters

should not, however, know how or why this happened, as the Devil will try to trick them and lead them on, and their quest to find the truth of their condition is one of the axis upon which the game rests. Other than that, however, any types of characters with any mix of abilities should be able to play in this chronicle, as the emphasis is less on what the characters can do and more on what they choose. The Devil will make sure that everyone has a chance to flex their muscles and show off how much they can destroy people physically, socially and mentally.

Antagonists: The primary antagonist is the characters themselves. The manifest face of this inner conflict is, of course, the Devil. Cultists, murderers, maniacs and corporate tycoons will all make a showing, challenging and threatening the characters' bodies, resources and minds — but the one it will always come back to is Lucifer. He will be the characters' friend in the beginning, beguiling and tempting them, taking on fair forms to promise them salvation if only they kill this person, or destroy that thing or prove their worth by becoming more powerful than the other mad and evil things in the city. And, obviously, Lucifer cannot be killed, or

even touched, except through the characters regaining their Humanity and returning to the light. In which case, Lucifer will become increasingly frantic, then threatening and finally begging.

Story Concepts: An introduction in which the characters find themselves Damned and try to figure out why, while being drawn together and pushed by dreams and visions from the devil, a strike against one of the richest men in the city, who has been using his wealth to undermine social programs in the inner city — resulting in his death and/or the death of his innocent children, torturing Ordo Dracul vampires, possibly staking them out in indirect sunlight, for information about what has happened to them, having mortal families brutally killed to send a message, and trying to find out who did it to get bloody vengeance, trying to follow a human path when the Devil sends his other followers to tempt and hurt the characters until they strike back, a final story in which the characters have to face a great challenge while giving up the powers that would let them beat it, having to go on faith rather than force to overcome the darkness.

The Clanless

We fought for hours. Days, even.

"We need another clan!"

"But six is an even number. It just feels wrong."

"Players want more options."

"But what archetype haven't we covered with the five clans we've already established?"

"It just feels like we should try to turn over a few more stones."

"We've already proposed a few outside ideas, but we never really like them when we examine them more thoroughly."

Around the rough and rugged rock, the ragged rascals ran. When we had finished running, we had five clans set aside. They fit conceptually. They were iconic. They lent themselves to a good spread of shared Disciplines, and they all had their own unique powers as well.

You can't argue the contrary, though: clans among vampires are a distinctly White Wolf phenomenon. Clans carry baggage; they suggest certain setting contrivances even if the Storyteller wants to diverge from the comfortable assumptions of setting.

Maybe you want a more literary **Vampire** experience. Maybe you want certain familiar elements, but want other aspects of the **Vampire** world turned on their ears. Maybe you're sick of lazy players defining themselves in terms of clan. Whatever your motivation, let's talk about excising clans from the **Vampire** experience.

Setting Considerations

When diverging from the common rules established by the published rulebook, certain aspects of the assumed **Vampire** setting and society will change.

The Sire-Child Relationship

If the presence of clans vanishes, the relationship between sires and their childer typically makes a move toward one of two ends of the spectrum of importance. Clan archetype vanishes along with the clans themselves, as the character no longer falls in with a setting-based designation of vampires. The Embrace either becomes paramount in the Kindred's Requiem or pales to insignificance.

Any answer you immediately envision probably doesn't apply unilaterally in the World of Darkness. If you and your sire are strangers or estranged, that has no bearing on a fellow Kindred who's as thick as thieves with her sire. Unless the Storyteller chooses to introduce a mechanical or setting-based degree of active antagonism between sires and childer, it's up to each individual Kindred.

Fire and Forget

For some Kindred, the act of siring a childer carries no concurrent responsibility. Vampires sire out of some inward urge to procreate, a quasi-holy drive (in whatever

religious context they fathom) to perpetuate the Curse, in bursts of willful passion or in momentary fits of uncharacteristic compassion.

Bear in mind that Embraces of this ilk *simply must* have some sort of motivator. Even with clans removed, the Embrace still costs the sire one Willpower. No vampire in the world is going to invest a point of Willpower to Embrace “. . . Uh, just some guy. He seemed pretty cool at the time.” While the sire’s might want to conduct an experiment, to see if the erstwhile mortal has what it takes to survive as a vampire, what makes the mortal so interesting as to justify the Willpower cost? Are vampires like certain natural predators that gestate young but then turn those offspring loose to survive on their own? Do vampires feel an innate urge to create childer, only to suffer a queer anti-afterglow in seeing what they’ve made? Are vampires inherently perverse, seeking only to inflict as much misery on the world as possible? Or are their drives infinite and personal? Whatever the answer, characters should have a reason for why they no longer relate to their sires and why the sires bothered with them in the first place. As such, the sire acquires a greater modicum of import than in the standard game’s use of clans. If the sire is no longer a part of the character’s Requiem, *why?*

Also critical to understanding the “why?” of the relationship is the inherent nature of Vitae. Characters who Embrace are subject to “Blood Ties,” p. 162 of **Vampire**. When we designed the game, we introduced this concept as a double-edged sword. Given how blood ties work, the Embrace is an act of trust — and what’s in shorter supply among Kindred than trust?

Examples of “fire and forget” Embraces might include the following:

- A female vampire who feels echoes of her own maternal instinct in life.
- A zealous vampire who wishes to pass on God’s inscrutable purpose through his own evil will.
- A vampire in a torrid affair with a mortal lover who Embraces his paramour only to find the Curse cools his passion — or arouses his ire via the Predator’s Taint.
- A Kindred who witnesses a scene of tragedy (of her own doing or otherwise) who Embraces the victim in hopes of “saving” him from death or another grim fate. This compassion wavers shortly after the Kindred realizes she’s just brought another predator into the night with whom she’ll have to share the finite resources of domain and discreet prey.

Examples of complications in “fire and forget” Embrace relationships might include the following:

- The disappearance or death of the sire. Is the childer to blame?
- Roleplaying opportunities that arise when sire and childer meet in Elysium or at other Kindred functions.

- Feelings of entitlement or abandonment on the part of a childer left to fend for herself.

- A sense of resentment in a childer whose sire takes the role of Mentor to another, unrelated Kindred.

Bonds of Blood

It’s more likely, in the context of both the story and the setting, that very close bonds form between sire and childer when a chronicle removes clan from the character equation. Vampire fiction is almost by its very nature introspective, as the Damned ponder why undeath has been visited upon them. What sort of monster would inflict such a curse on another? Do the sins of the sire weigh upon the shoulders of the childer? Did the childer somehow deserve this fate, or is she the victim of blind circumstance or even the obsessions of another?

Entertainment in the vampire genre is rife with these sorts of exploratory relationships. Consider how Lestat relates to Louis, how Louis relates to Claudia, and how Claudia relates to Madeleine in *Interview With the Vampire*. The wild vampires of *Near Dark* kick ass, slit throats and guzzle blood — until Mae makes a distorted act of what vampires interpret as love and turns Caleb into one of the undead. Dracula holds the “reward” of vampirism over Renfield’s head in Bram Stoker’s seminal novel.

In situations like this, the sire becomes a tremendously important supporting character — assuming he’s not one of the other players’ characters. Even if the sire is dead or otherwise absent, the terms of the childer’s Embrace continue to have repercussions throughout the story. Is the childer the result of an unsanctioned but loving Embrace? Is the childer a reviled punishment forced upon the sire in order to teach him responsibility? Is the childer an “adopted” ward? Does the childer have connections to the city hierarchy that others liken to being born with a silver spoon in her mouth? Does the childer hate his sire? Love her? Is that emotion reciprocated? Is the childer a functionary or lackey? A mortal relative or lover brought into the Requiem? Did the mortal relative or lover come willingly? Did her sire misrepresent Damnation to her?

Obviously, the genesis and details of these relationships are infinite. Storytellers will find a veritable goldmine of story hooks among them, and even more so where all of the members of the coterie’s sires overlap with one another. Players will find a bottomless well of characterization information; the more realized the character, the better experience a player will have portraying him.

Examples of “bonds of blood” Embraces might include the following:

- A deranged Kindred who considers his childer to be his legitimate mortal progeny.
- A vampiric “muse” who Embraces an artistically inclined individual in order to preserve his talents forever.

- A Kindred lorekeeper who seeks to leave a legacy after she sinks into torpor and selects her childe-to-be for the role, whether that childe agrees or not.
- A high-ranking domain official who secretly observes the family drama of her mortal relatives who still dwell in the city, and slowly accepts the idea of making one of her relatives her protégé.
- Your character concept.

Examples of complications in “bonds of blood” Embrace relationships might include the following:

- The sire and childe grow to hate one another, but it's too late for the sire to negate her decision by any method short of murder.
- The sire or childe is driven mad by the Embrace and his insane actions reflect very poorly on his counterpart.
- The sire is an esteemed member of Kindred society and the childe feels that she owes him a sinecure or an equal measure of prestige.
- The bizarre, dysfunctional arrangement that occurs when the sire is the mortal offspring of the person he makes his childe.
- Your character's inherent story hooks.

Clan Culture Vanishes

Saying that is obvious, but the idea bears a bit of investigation. Character creation in the standard **Requiem** game has two axes: clan and covenant. That which is forced upon a Kindred and that which the Kindred chooses.

Naturally, this is true of all Kindred whether or not you use clans, but the identity becomes far stronger when clans don't define an aspect of the Kindred's state. In removing clan from the equation, that which is forced upon the Kindred vanishes on one defined level but intensifies in a broader scale. Individual vampires no longer share a divisive commonality with a select group of Kindred, but instead share the weight of Damnation with all others of their kind.

Without clans, vampires have little to unite them outside ideologies. Certainly, the Kindred are all vampires, but something so fundamental doesn't always serve as the cultural glue outsiders might expect. After all, humans haven't achieved a unilateral peace in thousands of years of history, so why would the Kindred — monsters, parasites, predators — be able to transcend the limits of their natures?

Prisci

In the context of a given domain, Prisci change radically as an idea, assuming they don't vanish entirely.

If Prisci remain, the title becomes significantly more honorific. The Prisci aren't the eldest Kindred of a given clan: they're simply the eldest Kindred among local vampires, period. This has the potential to make them far more sinister. Lacking all pretense of commonality with

young Kindred, the Prisci become a shadowy, bloodthirsty cabal of horrifically annuated elders. Who knows what their alien minds conceive? Who knows what cannibalistic tastes their potent Blood inflicts upon them? Indeed, nothing prevents such Prisci from viewing young Kindred as vessels on which to slake their rarefied thirsts.

Even if the Prisci aren't so old as to require the Vitae of lesser Kindred to satisfy their hungers, that doesn't necessarily align the Prisci's interests with those of other Kindred. Without clans, vampires have no like-blooded and (arguably) sympathetic elders to offer the younger ones advice or to ostensibly represent their interests among the political minefields of the Damned.

If Prisci vanish entirely, other positions increase in relevance and influence. The title of Primogen becomes most notably improved. With no distinction of “elder of a certain faction,” society becomes more malleable to those who are selected to advise a Prince. As if Kindred society couldn't become any more vicious — removing Prisci can create literal banana republics in which the Prince and his cronies have no Devil's advocates, no social system of checks and balances to keep their schemes under scrutiny.

Covenant Acquires Gravity

Social distinctions a Kindred electively chooses become paramount in a chronicle that eliminates clan as a factor. While character concepts certainly rely on much more than clan to shape them, clan does serve as an iconic determinant of a Kindred's role. If a character doesn't belong to “the bestial Kindred” or “the sensual Damned,” other descriptors must fill the void. (If you were sitting around the designers' table with us now, we'd be asking you, “What does your vampire do?”)

Mechanical Concerns

Concomitant with setting changes, mechanical changes will affect the elimination of clans as well.

Clan Weaknesses

The simplest method for handling weaknesses when removing clans from the game is to eliminate them entirely.

That said, it's certainly not the most flavorful option. If vampires have no weaknesses, describing the state of vampirism as a Curse becomes very difficult to justify. True, your Kindred will still suffer under the effects of fire, starvation, sunlight and the wiles of the Beast, but all that does is homogenize the troubles faced by the Damned. Removing weaknesses removes a valuable setting element and a dynamic mechanical element all at once: if you can't strike at an enemy by using his weaknesses against him — and if you don't spend a lot of time and effort skulking about to find what those weaknesses are in the first place — then bringing that enemy low will seem more rote than passionate or clever.

To that end, consider keeping weaknesses, but divorcing them from the concept of clan.

Drop clans but pick a clan weakness when your character acquires the vampire template. This is a good system that allows you to employ the play-balanced weaknesses already in *Vampire* while still maintaining customizability of characters and the vagaries of the Curse. Either you acquire your sire's weakness — in which case, whence came the weaknesses to begin with? A valuable mystery for a chronicle — or you acquire a random — or chosen — weakness upon the Embrace, regardless of your sire's declivities. This latter challenges the consistency of the setting somewhat, as using a random weakness suggests that the mysterious power behind vampires is utterly arbitrary, but for stories that don't focus on what vampire *are*, a random weakness works well enough.

Take a bloodline weakness. This is similar to taking a clan weakness, as described above, but offers far more versatility, and will continue to do so as more bloodlines see print in books or approval in individual chronicles. Remember, however, that some of these weaknesses will need toned down or re-balanced, as many of them augment an existing clan weakness or increase the severity of it. In standard, with-clans *Vampire*, this is done to balance the unique access to the bloodline Discipline, but if you don't use bloodlines, these "heightened" weaknesses might be a bit much.

Create a unique weakness for each Kindred. This is a lot of work, and not a solution to be undertaken

lightly, but obviously makes for unique vampires. The most difficult aspect of this solution is play balance. If one character's weakness is "may never learn Dominate" and another character's weakness is "feeding on vessels causes them double damage," well, things are going to go a bit awry in your chronicle.

Apply a new and universal bane to Kindred. Folklore is rife with vampiric weaknesses (see the sidebar below). Who's to say these aren't true, and that the ones in the core *Vampire* book aren't myth? Sunlight, for example, only caused vampires to burst into flame at the point Hollywood started making dramatic features about them. Watch F.N. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, for example, or Werner Herzog's, and you'll see vampires sent into a torpid state by sunlight, not ignited by it. Dracula walked about by day as recently as the Coppola film, and all it took to protect a vampire from sun was sunscreen (ugh) in *Blade*. Tweaking these banes are just the tip of the iceberg — what of old myths regarding garlic, running water, introduction to one's home or fear of holy symbols? And who's to say you have to remain traditional? Perhaps vampires are active only during certain seasons, or react violently to the presence of certain chemicals?



DESIGNING NEW WEAKNESSES

By all means, do it. You're probably already used to thinking in those terms if you've worked with bloodlines at all. The keys to designing an effective



weakness are twofold: make sure the weakness is vampiric and make sure the weakness balances well against other weaknesses.

Keeping the weakness vampiric is a matter of theme. Folklore can provide a great deal of guidance here, as can the overarching theme of the Storyteller's chronicle. Good ideas to use as the basis of weaknesses are blood (obviously), relations with others (Kindred or mortal) and the vampire's understanding of himself. Poor ideas to use as the basis of weaknesses include things that aren't really weaknesses ("My character boils people's blood when he feeds from them!") and things unrelated to being a supernatural creature.

When considering balance, bear frequency and severity in mind, and keep them as consistent as you can with other vampires. The clan weaknesses in the core rulebook provide a good foundation for this. Go ahead and commit yourself to the idea that you and the Storyteller may have to tinker with your new weakness during the chronicle. After all, modifying a weakness during a story is better, even if it breaks suspension of disbelief for a bit, rather than continuing on with an incongruously damning or insignificant weakness.

Tweaking weaknesses is fun and rewarding, and, if done effectively, can even accentuate the overriding foreignness of the larger World of Darkness. If no one can remember a character's name after parting company with her, say, it always rains in a character's proximity or certain words in the character's native language cease to exist in conversation with her, people may really react to her strangely, even if they're oblivious to the fact that she's a vampire.



Inheriting Disciplines

Disciplines, particularly those that are the bailiwick of one clan only, do much to cement that clan's niche in Kindred society. If clans don't exist, however, each individual makes his own niche. How, then, do you accommodate the role of Disciplines in defining the Kindred's capabilities?

No experience point break. Vampires are just vampires, with no inherent inclinations toward any one set of supernatural characteristics. All Disciplines cost 7 x the new dots the character wishes to achieve. From a character perspective, this keeps all players on an even keel. From a Storyteller perspective, without a cost break, characters' power levels will increase comparatively slowly. While this is fine for a deliberately low-powered chronicle, many players like to see their characters achieve greater capability quickly, at least within a certain realm.

Physical Discipline experience point break. All vampires have inherent access to those Disciplines that augment their physical capabilities. Vigor, Resilience and Celerity all cost 5 x the new dots, while other Disciplines cost 7 x the new dots. This gives a reliable backstory — vampires in this design are inherently more

physically able than other denizens of the World of Darkness — but it comes at the expense of encouraging the characters to spend their resources on one thing, which can result in characters with little difference from one another.

Discipline lotto. Randomly decide which Disciplines will grant the character the experience point break. How? Who knows? Roll dice. Put Discipline names in a hat. Use a computer-generated randomizer. At face value, this can harm a chronicle a bit, as silly or super-heroic combinations may arise or a character might be screwed with a comparatively specialized set of Disciplines while another gains a potluck set. Enterprising Storytellers might use this method effectively in a chronicle that focuses upon cruel fate and the objective capriciousness of an uncaring cosmos. Weighty stuff and hard to handle, yes, but such tales can certainly make for existential horror.

Discipline buffet. The player chooses three Disciplines during character creation for which his character will enjoy the experience point break over the course of the chronicle. This requires a degree of maturity not found in all players, but, hey, it's your story. If the players can handle it, or if you prefer character roles that play to specific archetypes and "your character is in the limelight when situation X happens," this may be the best choice for your chronicle. A similar method is to assign the same three Disciplines possessed at the point-break cost by the sire. This requires a little extra background creation, but it's worth it if it builds in story hooks and lets players know more about their characters via their sires.

Point break across the board. Instead of assigning three Disciplines to receive a cost break, simply splitting the difference between clan Discipline costs and out-of-clan Discipline costs may be wisest. That is, simply stipulate that all Disciplines cost 6 x the new dots. This allows characters to achieve Discipline levels somewhat faster than not having any clan Disciplines at a reduced rate, but not so quickly that the story becomes an arms race or a super-powered slugfest. No justification is even necessary when speaking in setting terms; that's just how quickly vampires learn.

Template Free Dot

Again, because clans represent certain archetypes of vampires, they receive a free dot in one of a pair of Attributes based on their clan during normal character generation or the addition of the vampire template. In removing clans, the way players allocate that free dot must also change.

No free dot. Oh, how the players will howl. This choice makes sense, however, for Storytellers who want to focus on the personal nature of the Curse. This largely makes



vampires — as represented by the template, anyway — quite similar to normal mortals. Where they diverge comes mainly in the acquisition of their blood dependency, the presence of the Beast and the various banes of undead existence. Of course, Disciplines still come with the Kindred state, but that comes as cold comfort when the Storyteller actively chooses to grant players' characters *less* than is normally recommended by the rules.

Spend as thou wilt. This method represents the Embrace honing some specific aspect of the character's aptitudes or personality. Storytellers who choose this method should expect the free dot pick to probably go toward bringing some Attribute up to ●●●●●, given that the free dot is a good way to cheat the double cost for ●●●●● Attributes during character creation. On the other hand, that's not necessarily a bad thing. If spending this way allows the player to achieve the archetype or concept she truly desires, her stock in the character will increase for it.

Only one category may be increased with a free dot. Just as granting a cost break to physical Disciplines, specifying that the vampires' free dot must go into their physical Attributes suggests that vampires become peak physical specimens, suited to the hunt and predation. Restricting the free dot to social Attributes suggests that vampires possess supernal force of personality, seductiveness or cool in the face of adversity. (As well, vampires are designed inherently on our end to be the “social” creatures, with werewolves as the “physical” creatures and mages as the “mental” character type.) Less thematic is the restriction of the free dot to mental Attributes, but it's not wholly out of place, especially if the Storyteller wishes to create a story arc representing vampires as more erudite or even inhumanly intelligent. Consider, also, moving the dot restriction to Power, Finesse or Resistance Traits. Power implies that vampires are more forceful than mortals. Finesse suggests they are more graceful. Resistance makes vampires more capable of withstanding opposition. All of these are fine thematic implementations of the free dot restriction.

Bloodlines

Bloodlines are one of the key portions of **Vampire**, so we discuss them as a separate topic rather than including them in the mechanical considerations, above. Think long and hard about what you decide to do with bloodlines. Their existence is a manner by which **Vampire** players can affect the setting and system, subtly but directly.

At the base level, bloodlines require clans to exist. After all, if Kindred don't inherit any supernatural traits outside the standard curses of vampirism, where would bloodlines originate? Taking that into consideration will alter the environment of the story, but not necessarily result in a story paradox.

Storytellers, be sure to consider other mechanical details when you think about how to treat bloodlines in your chronicle. For example, if you've made adjustments to how Kindred acquire Disciplines, you'll need to balance those decisions with the benefits conferred by bloodline membership.

Relax Bloodline Restrictions

With this as the solution, the absence of clan is a minor concern. Indeed, bloodlines would replace clans. Clan culture vanishes, but a broader and more localized panoply of bloodline cultures replaces it.

Implementing this interpretation of bloodlines effectively makes every vampire a member of a bloodline. The childe is innately a member of the sire's bloodline — that's the meaning of the word, after all.

Mechanically, the Storyteller will want to make a few adjustments. The Blood Potency restrictions should change: most of them should vanish entirely. New Kindred are automatically a member of their sires' bloodlines immediately upon the Embrace. With clan gone, joining another bloodline of the same clan becomes impossible, so the concept and practice of the Avus becomes obsolete.

The final Blood Potency restriction, the one governing the creation of new bloodlines, should probably remain, but with a careful consideration for its parameters. Storytellers should decide how profligate they want bloodlines to be. Relaxing restrictions already suggests that “many bloodlines” is going to be the *de facto* situation. Keeping the Blood Potency requirement at 6 for the creation of new bloodlines keeps the power of such refinement predominantly in the hands of elders — and peripherally in the hands of diablerists (who might start their own bloodline-cults). Dropping the Blood Potency requirement to 5 makes the creation of bloodlines attainable without some of the harsher penalties of such perspicacious blood, which will result in bloodlines being far more common. Dropping the requirement to 3 will make bloodlines exceedingly common, but such a cosmopolitan society of Kindred will certainly acquire its own unique interactions and codes of behavior — so much the better for building a unique chronicle! Setting the Blood Potency requirement even higher than 6 consolidates the power of creating bloodlines in the hands of a hoary, alien few, which isn't a far cry from clans as they currently exist anyway (with the possible exception of knowing who those bloodline progenitors are and potentially having them active within the context of the chronicle).

In chronicles with many or common bloodlines, what does the existence of those bloodlines mean to Kindred society? Do bloodlines take the place of clan in larger Kindred culture? For example, might a domain have a Morbus Priscus instead of a Mekhet Priscus? If so, does every bloodline have prestigious positions of this ilk?

Storytellers should also ask themselves where bloodlines come from and keep the answers in the backs of their minds. Even if the answer never surfaces in the chronicle, even if the answer is “They have a mysterious and unknown origin, like clans in the standard **Vampire** game,” some thought on the subject should occur. It’s better to have some answer in place than to be caught flat-footed with the matter by an inquisitive player or anthropologically minded character.

Slide the Scale

In this situation, not every Kindred belongs to a bloodline, but the option is available. Storytellers can enforce this by keeping the Blood Potency requirement for adopting a bloodline at 2.

This effectively forms a vampiric “proving ground,” typically occupied by young Kindred who have yet to fully manifest the full range of their Vitae’s characteristics.

The sociological impact of this sort of situation is vast. While the proving ground may include predominantly young vampires, it will almost certainly include truculent or insurgent vampires of advanced years as well. If a vampire never chooses to take her sire’s bloodline, well, the sire can’t (easily) force her, can he? This distinction might ride very closely with political affiliation, with members of the unaligned being mostly those who have never claimed their blood heritage. It might evolve in parallel with the unbound, the latter remaining a political distinction with those who haven’t adopted a bloodline becoming a social half-caste or even being pariahs if they consciously choose to remain outside the bloodline system. And what of those Kindred who hold off on adopting their sires’ bloodlines in hopes of one night creating their own? If they abstain from

their sires’ bloodlines, such childer will probably be seen as vain or headstrong. Storytellers may choose, in this situation, to allow characters of Blood Potency 6 or higher to create a new bloodline *even if they previously belonged to different ones* in order to keep the opportunity open to players and to keep the setting from growing stagnant at some point in its history.

Bloodlines in this environment are almost certainly fewer in total than in chronicles that relax the requirements entirely, but that doesn’t necessarily make bloodlines any less common. In this sense, they become a bit like clans, in that (almost) all Kindred will belong to one of a seemingly finite number, especially from the perspective of a single domain.

Throw Them Out

We include this as a final option, but do not encourage it as a casual choice. The creation of bloodlines allows players to make their own mark on the chronicle, and removing this aspect of the core game mechanics may leave players feeling a bit disempowered. If you do choose to drop bloodlines, be sure to focus on another aspect of the setting that excites the players. In this way, you take players’ tastes into account even if you don’t use the traditional setting and systems for doing so.

On the other hand, there’s certainly something to be said for a wide world of Kindred with nothing in common outside a shared set of supernatural banes and a thirst for fresh human Vitae. This is a good choice for a troupe of very advanced players, those who take great pains to create vibrant characters without needing too many game systems to enforce differences between them. In these cases, the world truly is every vampire for herself, and the characters’ commitment to each other in their coterie may be all they have to depend on in the society of the Damned.

Vampire Familia

Blood calls out to blood. One of the strongest themes in vampire stories is the nature of family. In standard **Vampire: The Requiem** games, this is already embedded in the relationship between sire and childe, but fascinating and complex chronicles can be woven by stringing the bonds of family much tighter. Family chronicles are games in which all the Kindred stem from a single progenitor. This has the obvious effect of strengthening relationships among the group of characters, and may also heighten character conflicts, as family can often get under each other’s skin better than anyone.

Families can be just as violent, conflicted and Machiavellian as any other group, but the negative emotions are softened with intimate bonds, compassionate

feelings and shared histories. Although some families seem to get along perfectly, and draw strength and support from each other and are wondrously happy — these white-picket suburbanites do not make for compelling drama. Families make better stories when they are about conflicting agendas, shared tragedy, remembered embarrassment and petty schemes. This bittersweet symbiosis of love and hate is what makes powerful family stories so engaging.

The Patron

Perhaps the most important Storyteller character of a Vampire Familia chronicle is the patriarch or matriarch, herein simply called the “patron” (pronounced like the

French *le patron*, pä-trMn' or PAH-trone). In many ways, he is the original note of your chronicle, and his presence must be felt to resonate through the entire story.

The patron should likely embody the theme of the chronicle, and may have the most prominent Virtue and Vice that you wish to use to illuminate the story. He must also play at least one of the following roles (and may play different roles to different player characters):

The Mentor

Obviously the patron chose to sire the player characters for a reason. Now that he has loosed them into the night, he may feel he needs to guide and instruct them on Kindred existence. He may enjoy playing the part of teacher, or may simply regard it as an obligation. Every sire will have a different teaching style, from gentle instructing to teaching by example to throwing the fledgling out of the nest.

A mentor may have Embraced his progeny for many reasons, but quite often the emotions of love, compassion or preservation are prominent. Mentors often want what is best for their childer, although childer often eventually go off on their own or even rebel. When this happens, the mentor's role in their existences often lessens; alternatively, if the separation is more of a schism, the mentor may change to a different role.

Example: Tymen "Dust Devil" Vandross, a Mekhet Dragon, is a respected statesman amongst the Kindred of the city. He is known to pick and choose his progeny with utmost care, often after studying them for months or years. Once he Embraces a mortal, he then stays with her for several years, before moving on to another subject. He takes on the broken, the cast-offs and the troubled, and claims to give them a second chance. Although they have been outcasts at some stage of their existence, all are well trained in Kindred mores before being sent out into the night. Furthermore, it is said he still keeps in touch with all of them, even his first childe, continuing to guide them along a path toward ultimate redemption and transcendence.

The Antagonist

Some patrons play more of an antagonistic role toward their childer. This does not necessarily make the patron the characters' enemy — at least not their most overt enemy — but it does mean that he will regularly interfere in their goals. An antagonistic patron usually has more particular reasons for Embracing his progeny, such as a specific agenda. His role will be more of a manipulator and director than a mentor or a lover, although there may be overlap.

While many patrons are dominating personalities with far-reaching schemes, the antagonist patron need not always have a planned goal with the Embrace of every childe. It is her nature, however, not to simply let the childe grow and leave the fold without interference. Some antagonist sires will be overly dominating,

like a controlling den mother. Others may step back and test their progeny from a distance, orchestrating obstacles, challenges and complications in their childer's Requiems. Finally, some patrons will mean well but do not realize how they ensnare their childer in intricate plots that risk collapsing like a house of cards.

Example: Prudence Zenobia Harriman, but call her Grandma, loves her childer and her grandchilder mercilessly. She knows what is best for them, and will ensure that they fulfill their maximum potential in Kindred society. Her love and aspirations are honest enough, but she will happily break a childe down, physically, mentally and spiritually, in order to rebuild him stronger. She is like a surgeon, slicing away to the bone with her razor-sharp machinations. If an outsider threatens one of her boys or girls, Grandma will unleash the fury of the entire family upon the threat, destroying him or her with fang and fire. Simultaneously, she will not tolerate dissent from her brood. Childish rebellion is accepted for a small time, but then her progeny will fall in line, one way or another.

The Romance

Vampires are naturally seductive and sexual beings. Presumably, many sire/childe relationships are built on feelings of intimacy. The Embrace may be given as a gift of love or lust, and it is natural to build upon this passion to create a romantic relationship.

Mortals who are part of normative, modern society limit themselves to a single mate. No matter that Hollywood parades success as infinite money and a limitless supply of sexual partners, a sign of maturity is a professional job and a stable partner (and only in some parts of the world can that partner be of either gender). Kindred culture is not so narrow-minded.

A romantic engagement between sire and childe, therefore, can explore new ground. An Embraced mortal thrust into this heady world will often be overcome with conflicting emotions of power, disgust, elation and melancholy — it is not surprising that many newly Embraced fall in love with their sires. Yet this sense of love is often more fluid than the limited mortal definition, for the physical intimacy of the Embrace blurs the line of gender, age, class and even identity. Finally, while mortal romances are often limited to a single pairing, many Kindred's sense of hedonism and longevity allow them to strike up romantic relations with multiple partners. Of course, some Kindred still fall prey to envy and jealousy, but vampire families in which some or all of the childer are in love with their sire are not uncommon.

Example: Lucifer Hades is a Daeva who has made the big time. A blend of hard rock and American Idol, he is a "triple threat" — killer looks, sharp as a nine-inch nail and gifted with a voice like honey and smoke. It is no surprise that his band, the Black Doves, are his childer and his lovers. The three girls and two boys in the group are all perfect 10s,



and all madly in love with their patron. This does not stop petty jealousies and outlandish tantrums from shaking the band every few weeks. Only the persuasive dominance of Lucifer keeps them in line, and under his spell.

The Enemy

The patron can often be a powerful, dominant figure. A mentor can lead his childer only so far — one night they may wish to leave his path. An antagonist can intentionally or unintentionally drive his childer away. Even eternal romance can sour, crossing the hair's breadth from love to hate. It is not so strange to consider a sire as the enemy.

The role of enemy can come from several reasons. An Embraced mortal may hate her new existence, seeing it as a loathsome curse and wanting nothing to do with her sire. A childe may “grow up” faster than the elder vampire realizes, and wish to strike out on his own; if the sire takes this as an insult, bad blood may arise. The sire might have planned an odious fate for his childe, Embracing her for a twisted plot; when she learns of it, it is natural for her to break away. The roles of the sire may also change: from a mentor who has lost the ability to reach his students (and now they want nothing to do with him) to an antagonist who pushes his progeny too far (until they draw a line in the sand) to a romantic partner who has turned spiteful and hateful.

Having one's sire as one's enemy is a dangerous situation, indeed, although it makes for great drama. Having one's sire as one's enemy, however, does limit, the top-down power structure (and struggle) in Vampire Familia chronicles. This may mean little to a game in which the family uses the complex family tree: the original progenitor is the enemy, but there are still numerous sire/childer relationships to explore beneath the founding grandsire or great-grandsire patron.

Enemy patrons work less well in simple family tree games, because these kinds of patrons cut off one critical resource from the player characters. Furthermore, for neonate characters, there must be some believable reason why the enemy patron does not simply kill them all. With experienced elder vampires, there is at least a chance that the patron cannot take them all on at once. Still, within some form of parental dominance, one pillar of the Vampire Familia chronicle is missing.

An enemy should be a true threat to the character (and if the sire is an enemy, he normally opposes all of the player characters, though this is not always the case in complex family structure). The enemy patron should have a fleshed-out purpose (real or imagined) that requires hurting or destroying the character(s).

When Brand brought you the Kiss of the Embrace, he seemed charming and beautiful, offering a world full of promise. He taught you and trained you and loved you. Then, you went to

war at his urging. The family survived, but Brand did not, seemingly destroyed in the final battle. And yet — and yet — he haunts your nightmares, speaking as if from deep beneath the earth. What were once soothing words now sound as gibbering laughter and lunatic whispers. Did you turn on him, or is it your fear that he will imagine so? In your dreams he awakens, hungry and betrayed. How dare you have prospered while he withered? How dare you enjoy the night while his companions were insects and worms? He made you, and when he awakes, his thirst may destroy you.

Power Level of Patrons

The power level of patrons should fluctuate based on the role the patrons will take in the game.

Average-Powered Patrons

If the player characters are supposed to follow in the patron's footsteps, and eventually surpass her or challenge her as equals, she should be built on 1.5x more experience points. This is a good level for patrons who fill the guise of romantic partner or mentor. It is probably a little too low for antagonists and enemies, though if you want to keep the game more grounded, this might be a good value.

High-Powered Patrons

If the patron is to be significantly more powerful, but not completely out of the league of the entire coterie, he should be built on twice or three times as many experience points. This gives the patron a much broader depth of personal power (such as Disciplines and Skills) and Resources. Yet over time, or with an excellent plan, the characters can challenge the patron and succeed. This is a good level for most antagonists and enemies, especially if the chronicle is to be of average or greater length. This level can also work with mentors and romantic partners; however, they tend to become larger-than-life when compared to the player characters, and the players may wonder why the Storyteller characters don't intervene more often to solve the characters' problems.

Exalted Patrons

Exalted patrons are built on at least four or five times the experience points, and, in fact, should probably not need actual character sheets. Rather, these are iconic characters who should drift in and out of the player characters' existences, stirring things up and then vanishing back into the shadows. An exalted patron can't normally be fought in a one-on-one battle (or even a coterie-on-sire fight in most cases). This is not to say an exalted patron can't be thwarted — because that's exactly what the player characters will try to do in regard to an antagonist or enemy patron. They should be able to corrupt her minions, destroy her resources and upset her plans, but actually meting out the patron's Final Death should only be possible as the climactic endgame accomplishment of the whole chronicle.

Types of Vampire Families

There are several different ways you can design a Vampire Familia chronicle, depending on how many options you want to provide the players with and the focus of your chronicle. The spine of a Vampire Familia story requires all of the players' characters to be from the same "family." This may mean a single progenitor, or it may mean a more complex, multi-generational tree of linkages.

Simple family tree: All characters are sired by a single progenitor: the patron.

Complex family tree: There are multiple immediate progenitors, but all lead back to a single origin figure: the patron. One character's sire might be the childe of the patron, for example, while another's sire might be a grandchilde of the patron.

Simple Family Tree

In a simple family tree structure, the characters all have the same sire. This keeps the relations streamlined, of course, and works well for smaller groups of players. All of the characters are vampiric siblings, essentially brothers and sisters.

The patron is a dominant figure in all of the characters' existences, although he may have a different relationship with each character. One childe may be favored, one may be spoiled, one may be pushed in a certain direction and so forth. Looking at the possible roles the patron may play, he may be one childe's mentor, another's romantic partner and, simultaneously, the antagonist of both (although you should be careful not to muddy his goals and motivations too much).

By defining the patron's motivation and connections to his childer (such as why he Embraced each one), your chronicle will develop organic plot threads that will allow you to weave a tighter story.

In this style of Vampire Familia game, player characters tend to have a great deal of freedom, because there are a limited number of family members looking over their shoulders. Characters have a strong relationship (good or ill) with their patron, and often with each other, as they are all direct siblings.

Siblings

You should encourage shared experiences and strong emotions. Although vampire childer do not "grow up together" the way mortal children do, if they received the Embrace within a short time span of each other, they may well have learned the night's lessons with, and from, each other.

Eldest to Youngest

It normally costs a Kindred a dot of Willpower to Embrace a childe. While this restriction may be waived for the patron if you, the Storyteller, wish, it still seems

unlikely that a vampire can rush out and Embrace a half-dozen mortals in a single night or single week. It is far more likely that the sire will search out various potential childer as months and years turn, slowly bringing them the Requiem one at a time.

Kindred siblings who are Embraced within months, or even a year or two of each other, may not have much difference in their power level, but one option for mature groups is to allow a differentiation based on age. This rewards older vampires for having been around that much longer; the drawback is primarily a roleplaying one, in which the eldest childer are responsible for teaching their younger siblings, and are likely to have more responsibilities and less freedom if and when something goes wrong in any given night of the Requiem. These elder childer can be represented simply by trading one dot of Humanity for five experience points, as explained on p. 93 of **Vampire: The Requiem**, or the Storyteller might grant a few experience points in exchange for a written character history detailing the elder childer's years before the arrival of her sibling.

As an exception, sometimes there may be a compelling reason to Embrace a pair of characters at the same time. For example, perhaps they were both in a terrible car crash, or they violated the Masquerade and the vampire did not think they could otherwise be spared from a gruesome fate. The considerable personal and emotional investment required to Embrace multiple childer in a single night is more than most vampires could bear and should certainly become a major part of the relationship between sire and childer, possibly imposing a sense of debt or entitlement onto a once-happy rapport.

Each rank of age should grant the character five bonus experience points. This is in addition to any other bonus experience points gained through the challenges of age (see p. 92 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

For example, if Tymen "Dust Devil" Vandross sires four childer over the course of a decade, it could be done this way:

Character	Years of Requiem	Experience Points
Erik "Viking," the eldest	10 years	15
Adam "Angel of Music," the second son	7 years	10
Mark "Too Tall," the third son	5 years	5
Andy "Young Lobo," the fourth son	1 year	0

If additional players join the chronicle once it has begun, fitting them into the existing hierarchy shouldn't be too hard, due to the artificial genealogy of the Embrace. For example, perhaps Tymen made two other

childer between Adam and Mark, but hid those childer away. Karen "White" and Karen "Black" were half-sisters, cousins of the Vandross family. The girls hunted Tymen down, believing him to be an urban legend of the family. When they discovered his secret, he could not kill his kin or simply let them live — instead, he Embraced them and hid them away to keep them safe. Now, when the new players join the game, they create Karen "White" and Karen "Black" as having dwelled as undead for three years; they could receive 10 bonus experience points (akin to seven years of the Requiem), or five experience points (for more like five years) or simply three experience points, to be more balanced.

Complex Family Tree

A complex family tree takes more work to set up, because this kind of tree involves the creation of a selection of integral Storyteller characters, rather than just the dominant patron. By "complex," we mean at least two generations (obviously the tree could be extended to three or four generations, but this tends to overly diffuse the relations and create too many branches; you want all the Storyteller characters to be distinct and notable, not cluttered and interchangeable).

The first generation is the patron, defined as powerfully and critically as mentioned before. The second generation are the patron's immediate childer. The number of players you have will help determine the number of "elder vampires" that you need to create, but it should be about the same as the number of characters. Then each of these elder vampires sires one childe (more or less), and you have created your family tree.

This method allows the players to design characters who are closer in "age" and in power level (see "Eldest to Youngest,"). This method also creates a distinct sire for each character, giving each character a unique relationship. The elders jockey for position amongst themselves, while currying favor with their patron, using their childer to their advantage, and subtly manipulating their siblings' childer against them. This immediately jumpstarts a number of chronicle threads, and while these may not be the main plot of the chronicle, they help infuse each character's subplot with vitality.

As an alternative idea for veteran roleplayers, they might create and play the parts of the patron's first generation, and work with you to design their own childer. In this manner, the players take on the roles of the elders, and you turn their childer into Storyteller characters.



FRIEND OF THE FAMILY

Of course, having an outsider under the umbrella of the family is sometimes useful. Normally, this is an "adopted" soul or a close friend of the family. More rarely, the outsider is a

trusted servant or mercenary specialist. (It is sometimes just too hard to work them into family-driven plots.)

There is nothing wrong with having a friend of the family as a player character, although allowing too many diffuses the notion of the Vampire Familia. You should have a maximum of about one friend for every two family members in the chronicle. For example, in a game with six players, as long as at least four were childer of the patron, another two could be friends.

Friends can be as close as kin, in some cases; although, when dramatically appropriate, remember that the character is not, in fact, of the same blood. If overused, however, this technique may splinter the group as the friend is driven away, feeling betrayed.

Friends can also be trusted advisors or counselors, such as a Mafia family's *consigliere*; the friend can also be romantic or political, such as a *realpolitik* "marriage" to another family, an "adopted" ward (childe of another family) or even the patron's mistress. What is important to remember is that the bond between the friend and at least one (if not more) of the family must be almost unbreakable. The friend must be accepted into the family, and should also have a rich history with the family, reinforcing that bond.

Note: If mixing various World of Darkness games, you might allow a friend to be a mage or a werewolf, although this type of hybrid chronicle should be handled very carefully. As with any friend, the reasons for this outsider being accepted into the family must be compelling and believable to the players in your group, or else the chronicle may splinter.



Friend of Family Roles	Bonus Experience Points
Consigliere (normally to the patron)	15
Mistress (normally of the patron)	5
"Adopted" childe	based on relative age
Betrothed	+5/-5 (more powerful/less powerful family)

Nature of the Vampire Family

One of the key decisions you have to make for a Vampire Familia chronicle is how close are you going to hew to the traditional World of Darkness? There's nothing wrong with running a Vampire Familia story set within it, almost as a template superimposed upon Vampire: The Requiem. Certain clans or bloodlines are perfect for such a story, such as the Oberloch bloodline from Bloodlines: The Hidden. Other options exist, however.

Traditional World of Darkness

In traditional form, the rest of the World of Darkness operates more or less as described. Your group, however,

is one large brood of inter-connected Kindred who are bound by ties of kinship. The group should all be designed around one specific type of vampire. For example, if the family is a particular bloodline, it could be a unique race of vampires. If using a traditional clan, you need to decide whether this family embodies the clan completely or whether the family just happens to be one large grouping of that clan. In other words, if the Vampire Familia is Nosferatu, are all of the Nosferatu part of this one family or are there other branches of Nosferatu out in the depths of night? The former option requires more substantial changes to the World of Darkness, while the latter means the characters are not unique.

You should shortlist a number of acceptable clans and bloodlines, and let the players debate which one to use as the foundation for their family. This gives you some focus for the chronicle, but also lets the players shape the nature of the game they will be playing.

Character Creation Option: As all characters will be of the same clan, an optional rule to allow for greater diversity is to do away with the "primary," "secondary" and "tertiary" allotments of Attribute dots. Instead, every character has one free dot in each Attribute (as normal) and then a pool of 12 additional dots to allocate as she wishes. The normal rule for a fifth dot costing two dots remains the same. This allows for greater diversity among Attributes at the expense of balance within individual characters. If you use this option, expect exaggerated characters with highly specialized (some say "min-maxed") traits.

War of the Families

Another way to spin the vampire clans is to make each one a much more limited and distinct family. In this form, the player characters (and related Storyteller characters) make up one family, all patterned after a specific clan or bloodline. Any vampire of that type is related, and there should be very few outside of the immediate circle. (A few long lost relatives are reasonable; dozens, let alone hundreds of "cousins" scattered through America, Europe and Asia are problematic.)

This style is reminiscent of "noble house" stories, in which privileged nobility use their supreme resources and powers to maneuver for position in the great game of kings, or Princes and Lords as it were. There is still room for a Prince and his court of Sheriff and Hound and Primogen, but the Priscus is no longer just an individual but representative of an entire clan-family. Conversely, these rigid forms can be ignored and a new power structure created, wherein the heads of the families are closer in power level and influence, and there is no absolute ruler; now, the various patrons are vying for control over urban resources.

Due to the modern setting of **Vampire: The Requiem**, a "war of the families" will likely unfold like a Mafia or inner-city turf war rather than a medieval crusade, if only

because that's what's more familiar to modern vampires (and modern players). At the same time, because vampires aren't limited to the mortal realm, and have memories going back scores of decades or hundreds of years, the Kindred may still cling to certain traditions that facilitate the dramatization of your stories, such as Elysium. While some customs of war may be simplistic, tribal and violently Darwinian, others may yet be elegant and gallant and cunningly civilized.

In a "war of the families," you need to flesh out several key families to compete with the player characters. You also need to figure out what territory or resources are contested, whether there is any neutral ground or parties, what traditions are observed by all families and so on. Alliances can be forged by "marrying" a member from another clan (they are taken into the family) or taking a rival's child as hostage or ward. Battles can be fought to control the mayor's office, the Rack or the financial district. Partnerships and betrayals can occur within the family, as members struggle to control the clan, their mortal resources and their own ambition.

Characters should be created as with a "Traditional World of Darkness" game, as described above.

First Family

A very different chronicle can be set with the idea that there is but one family of vampires, and it is the group of player characters plus their patron. If the number of vampires in the world is going to be cut so drastically, making this a complex family structure is best, with a number of elders in key positions scattered throughout the city or even the globe.

A "first family" game sets up the vampires as one large ruling house. External threats (a werewolf invasion, mages unleashing chaos upon the world, mortals encroaching on vampire territory) are common threats, but internal structure power plays are a necessity. Some characters may be naively optimistic and believe that the family should never be torn by infighting and backbiting; others need some action, no matter what, even if it is only attempting to gain the upper hand with his or her siblings.

Character Creation Options: For a first family game, players can design characters modeled after one clan or bloodline, as in a "Traditional World of Darkness" game. Another option, however, is to treat the various clans and bloodlines as essentially unique character templates. Vampires are thus each unique and special, and the Curse manifests differently for each Embrace. Kindred thus display a wide range of Disciplines and weaknesses, with occasional overlap, even when they all share a common lineage.

Under this option, what is important are the clan's favored Attributes, clan Disciplines, weaknesses, and sometimes appearance and haven. Organization, background and stereotypes are largely ignored, because there is no "clan."

Example: Troy is making a character for a first family game, under the matriarchy of Grandma Harriman. Troy makes Jonah Dylan (J.D.) Harriman, based on the Ventrue clan, ignoring ignores the Ventrue history and the role of covenants for this chronicle. Troy looks to the clan's "appearance" and "haven" entries for inspiration. The clan tradition of claiming sanctuary no longer really applies, although Troy could talk to the Storyteller and the other players about incorporating this Trait into an aspect of his character. (In other words, J.D.'ll offer sanctuary to any of his siblings who ask, and expects the same right in return — though he would never ask it.)

The clan background may or may not apply, depending on the personality of the patron. In this particular chronicle, the clan background does not apply directly because Grandma Harriman only chooses childer from the Harriman family. For example, the suggestions of crime boss or millionaire entrepreneur don't make sense for the Harriman family; on the other hand, Jonah Dylan could have joined the military and been honorably discharged as a decorated officer, which is another Ventrue option. The details described under "Character Creation" are still good direction. He uses the Ventrue favored Attributes, clan Disciplines and weakness as usual. Finally, he can use the clan's "organization" and "concepts" entries as broad suggestions, but should not feel bound by them.



MIXING CHRONICLES

You may also wish to blend the ideas from a Vampire Familia chronicle with other ideas. Some suggestions include the following:

- **Vampire Kings:** A "first family" chronicle, in which the Kindred family completely rules the city (or even various adjacent townships). This is a chronicle of high power and politics.
- **Clanless:** The immediate family is all that counts. The characters are family, and everyone else is not, whether they share the same Disciplines or not.
- **War Stories:** A "war of the families" game, in which clans wage bloody war over turf, fight a generational blood feud or stage a coup to overthrow the ruling family.
- **Hunter's Hunted:** Can the family form ranks and protect itself when the killings begin?
- **Mortals-into-Vampires:** The family expands. Who does it select, and why? Does it stay within a mortal bloodline or expand to a select few?



Family Laws

Kindred families may operate differently from the traditional clan method, mainly because the family is a small, tight-knit group, under the heavy hand of the patron.

My Roof, My Rule

The patron is supreme. He has final say on all family matters. Many patrons will not micromanage — they



assign duties, offices and so on, and expect their will be done. The patron often gifts territory and resources to favored childer, making them compete for his attention. For all important family matters, they will be involved.

Tradition of Masquerade

Most Vampire Familia chronicles still observe the Masquerade. Failure to do so tends to drive family lines into extinction.

Tradition of Progeny

The patron is the direct line to *all* progeny. She may not Embrace every vampire in the family, but the patron is the one who commands, accepts or rejects notions to grant the Kiss. Many patrons have strict rules for who is worthy enough to join their families; the Embrace is not something given lightly. Should vampires foolishly Embrace mortals without permission, many patrons will have the childer destroyed.

Tradition of Amaranth

Vampire families uphold this tradition absolutely and without hesitation, in most cases. The notion of diablerie is complete anathema, utterly abhorrent to them, at least as long as it pertains to the family members. Outsiders (such as in a “war of the families” game) might not be so lucky. Certain families might reinforce their power in a cannibalist war, where nothing is too evil to unleash upon their loathsome foes.

Blood Cries Out to Blood

In **Vampire: The Requiem** (p. 162–163) there are special rules for “Blood Ties,” “The Taste of Family” and “Blood Sympathy.” These optional rules complement and replace those, as appropriate.

Blood Ties (Option)

To enhance the role of the patron, and to reinforce the notion that all blood flows from him, the patron gains

an additional +2 blood-tie bonus. Furthermore, any character within one “step” of each other (i.e., sire/childe) gains a further +1 blood-tie bonus (+3 dice, total).

Taste of Family (Option)

Kindred within a family should not necessarily risk blood addiction with each other (unless it is a depraved, debauched family, in which case it may be a desired element). A vampire can smell a sample of blood and determine if it is a relative’s with an Intelligence + Survival roll. One success confirms if it is kin. Two successes will indicate whether it’s from another family (if the character is family with that family). Three successes will indicate if the family is older or younger (i.e., more or less powerful) than the character.

If the vampire tastes the blood, he can automatically determine if it’s kin (but risks blood addiction). With one success, he knows if the target is older or younger, and with two successes, he knows exactly who the target is (assuming they have met).

Blood Sympathy (Option)

Blood sympathy is an excellent tool for Vampire Familia chronicles. While it should not be overused, it should not be forgotten when the family is separated and under great turmoil. The distance limitation of 50 miles should be lifted in these chronicles.

Instead of a “general notion,” however, you may wish to paint a vivid vision or dream for the vampire to experience, that metaphorically reveals the other character’s situation. For example, rather than saying Troy’s character, JD is feeling frenzy, describe it in striking images to Paul’s character, Solomon: “You are being stalked through the concrete jungle. The air blows strong, reeking of salt and fish. As the enemy eyes light up around you, it’s as if the sea begins to boil — you wake up with the dying of the day, your brother’s name upon your lips.”

Two Households

The D’Arcy family legacy spreads out from its home, the magnificent castle of Casa Loma that looms over Toronto, to dominate the Danse Macabre. Sir Henry D’Arcy, born in Upper Canada in 1859 to British parents, military hero of the Queen’s Own Rifles, a businessman with a Midas touch, built his own castle in 1911.

As soon as the castle was completed in 1914, a curse seemed to fall upon the family. First, his wife, Lady Mary D’Arcy, fell victim to a wasting disease, which confined her to a wheelchair. Then, D’Arcy’s fortunes began to collapse. He went further into debt to expand his holdings, and new investments failed to turn profit.

A popular myth of the era suggested that D’Arcy’s earlier successes were achieved through a deal of a nefarious sort, and that it was time for his backers to collect their due. Another story relates how D’Arcy’s architect, E.J. Lannark, moved in with his anemic son shortly after the castle’s completion, and that Mary contracted the son’s illness.

Sir Henry appeared to lose everything. He sold the estate, and the family moved to their farm in 1924. Shortly after, Mary died. Casa Loma sat vacant, and was taken over by the city in 1933 in lieu of back taxes. It was to be reopened as a tourist attraction in the late 1930s, but in

the year of Sir Henry's death a distant relative, Benedict D'Arcy, swept in and bought it back into the family.

The true history of the family is known only to its members. Benedict not only restored the family's fortune, but returned Sir Henry and Mary to Casa Loma. Reportedly dead, they continued to exist as Kindred. When the time was right, and the next generation was prepared to take over the family interests, Sir Henry Embraced Benedict.

Since then the D'Arcys continue to subtly influence the city. The first family of vampires stays closeted, but their presence reverberates through the highest echelons of power — at least in the center and west of the city.

To the east, and south, immigrants are making waves. Every night through the downtown core and along the harbor front, a swarm of homeless emerge from the city's crevices. Dark-haired and dark-skinned Roma, driven from war-torn former Yugoslavia, have settled here. They compete with Toronto's already established underworld for begging territory, the drug flow and the flesh trade.

The core of the Roma is a circle of Eastern European Kindred who fled to Toronto as cargo on a transport ship. In life, they faced discrimination and forced displacement, and thus, in undeath, they stick tightly together, treating everyone else as outsider. At the center of the circle is Ajsha Lazic.

Ajsha Lazic is a recognized feature of the Toronto nightlife. She can be found in one of several favorite spots, begging behind a hand-lettered cardboard sign, "Please Help I Am Very Ill And Cannot Work I Will Pray For You I Love You." Her dress is shabby, and she lies on the pavement in front of her sign, shivering and shaking in uncontrollable spasms. She is known as the "Shaking Lady."

Ajsha does suffer from spasms, but she is also far from destitute. She is *dai* and *puridai* (mother and grandmother) to the Roma, who call themselves Family Lazic. All actions come from *Baba Lazic*, and she gives tacit approval or objection to all activities.

The Lazic Kindred are all Roma, at least a little bit. As long as there is some proof that Roma blood flows within a woman's veins, she may be considered for the Embrace. *Baba Lazic* is fairly free in granting permission to create progeny, but is mercenary in her orders to her little soldiers. Boys and men, especially, are sent off to wage war, and to keep the family safe.

Theme: The chief theme is "the politics of nobility," despite the trappings. In broader terms, this can be played out as "order versus chaos." Alternatively, it can be a game of distorted mirrors.

Although the two families appear very different on the surface, they are more alike than each cares to think. Both have strict rules of acceptance for their members. Both want to exert control over their home. Both think themselves superior and utterly different from the other. The D'Arcys are concerned with

proper form, maintaining the Masquerade at all costs and an infernal right to rule based on their bloodline. The Lazics also believe in a purity of blood, but they accept anyone with a drop of Romany blood as one of their own. They are willing to break any rules, regardless of potential upset, to secure their position.

Mood: A D'Arcy chronicle should be very proper. The family takes itself seriously, only Embracing direct descendants when they are "of age." This limits the family's numbers, but also guarantees that each Kindred is Embraced in the prime of his or her life. They have history entrenched within the foundations of the city streets, and their money and blood has made Toronto the metropolis it is tonight.

A Lazic chronicle should be about fighting for territory and struggling to make a new home, despite an unwelcoming frontier. Their past is even grander than the D'Arcys, but, as nomads with no monuments or great heroes, it is easy to forget that history is written by the victors.

Atmosphere: Noble houses and political warfare. Each family is wrought with its own schemes and plotting, and the intersection of the two clashing cultures makes for a city chessboard driven by the engine of *realpolitik*.

Each side should feel relatively safe on their home ground, and extremely vulnerable when in enemy territory. Treaties and terrorism should both be likely on any given night. In a more "cold war" scenario, hostages might be taken or exchange or "marriages" even brokered between the houses.

A D'Arcy chronicle should be about beautiful people with every advantage, observing proper form and elaborate courting and business rituals. Trappings of wealth and luxury should abound. D'Arcy/D'Arcy conflicts are settled with wit, grace and style.

A Lazic chronicle should be about the street trash, clawing for every inch of pavement, about rejects and the outcast and about the blood bonds that runs far below the surface. Internal Lazic conflicts are settled with fang and claw.

Setting: Toronto — the center of the universe, as far as those that live there are concerned, and so, too, is it for those whose Requiems spiral endlessly through its streets. The entire city is a playground — or battleground — for the Kindred. Places of note include:

Casa Loma — The house on the hill and home to the D'Arcy clan. This medieval-style castle has beautifully decorated suites with rare art, secret passages, towers and an 800-foot underground tunnel that connects to the stables. The five-acre gardens are well kept and closed off by high walls. All members of the D'Arcy clan are welcome here, any night of the year.

Casa Loma looms directly over Forest Hill and Rosedale, some of the oldest and wealthiest regions.



Trendy boutiques, multi-million dollar estates and a proper pedigree still mark these neighborhoods.

From Casa Loma, D'Arcys rule the sections of Toronto known as York, North York and Etobicoke. The Lazics have spread from the eastern suburb of Scarborough into East York. Both sides wrestle with the prosperous and vibrant Old Toronto — or downtown districts.

Further stakes are driven into Yorkville, the elite's heart of the city that carries with it the gilded cage of Elysium. Originally the tradition was meant only for the D'Arcys, so a region would be safe from their internal squabbles. But the Lazics have taken note that the D'Arcys are more willing to talk, or at least more reluctant to fight hereabouts.

Lake Ontario — The Lazics do not control territory so much as roam through different regions on any given night. They do tend to stay to the east and south, and often loiter around Harbourfront, the Beaches and other lakeside neighborhoods.

PATH — The city's downtown underground walkway, which links 20 miles of shopping, 20 parking garages, five subway stations, six major hotels, more than 50 office towers and a railway terminal. This walkway system keeps its many pedestrian users safe from rain, cold, heat and sun.

Character Creation: Two Houses is a straight-up Vampire Familia chronicle. Players should either be from House D'Arcy or from Family Lazic. They can be of any level of age or experience.

Vampires of D'Arcy should all be Ventrue. All of the clans' Disciplines and weaknesses still hold, although they are the only vampires that they know of — except for the Lazics, of course.

Additionally, the patron of the family is still Sir Henry. His childer should be the sires of the characters, unless you are playing an "elders" game, in which case the characters should all be direct childer of Sir Henry. The D'Arcys allow their moral offspring to grow and mature, and when the time is right they are Embraced, and their living children left to grow and mature . . .

Vampires of Lazic should all be Nosferatu. All of the clans' Disciplines and weaknesses still hold (the Lazic/Nosferatu repulsion is most often a physical deformity). The Lazics may have stories of other Kindred, but never met any until they crossed paths with the D'Arcys. *Baba Lazic's* first circle of childer should be all female. Further generations may Embrace males, but all Lazics must have at least a trace of Roma blood.

Antagonists: Either the Lazics or the D'Arcys will be the chief antagonists, and, in many chronicles, members of both families will be opposed to the characters.

Sir Henry is a domineering and proud master vampire. His first childer were his wife, Mary (still confined to a wheelchair) and his nephew, Benjamin. When

Benjamin's natural children wed and had their own children, they were Embraced. All D'Arcys are given the chance to mature, marry and have the next generation of children. Inevitably, many are later Embraced.

Sir Henry manipulates his childer with a deft touch, maneuvering them to test their mettle, and to amuse himself. He believes, however, that only he should have the power to bestow or end the Requiem (or give the order to do so). Thus, conflicts between his childer must never be to Final Death. These Lazic intruders, however, are anathema to him, and a threat which must be destroyed (or in a more subtle game, must be co-opted from within).

Ajsha Lazic has led her people from a ravaged homeland to a new, fecund territory. With all the world to choose from, her decision to settle in Toronto, home to another vampire clan, must be based on a special reason. Or perhaps she's just an agent of chaos, whose existence is to upset the status quo, whether Kindred or kine.

Baba Lazic is the center of her family's Danse Macabre, but she gives them a free reign. They know when to

ask her permission, and fear her punishment should they screw up. Her elder childer know she sacrifices the youngest pawns to her advantage — this not only strikes terror in her enemies, but also keeps her brood in line.

The Lazics see the D'Arcys as fat, inbred and lazy. Not only is the city big enough to share, but, in truth, these elitist jackasses need to be torn down from their lofty heights. When the first Lazics drifted through the city, the D'Arcys met them with anger and violence — something the Lazics, having long been driven from their homes, can never forget.

Story Concepts: The two families are at war, and you are on the front lines. The elder D'Arcys maneuver and manipulate for Sir Henry's favor, and for prime hunting grounds; not only do they have to contest with their siblings, but now must contend with this alien threat. Your elders are manipulating you in their war (either inter-familia or with the enemy family). You are forced to work with members from the other family, against a common obstacle. You are forced to marry into the other family in order to bridge a peace.

Generational

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

—Malachi 4: 6

"He was more my father than the man who birthed my flesh, father of my blood and immortality. That is why I had to suck the Damnation from his heart, to bring it into myself and make our blood truly one: fathers and children must turn to each other."

—Imram Khan, infamous Daeva diablerist

The story of an individual vampire is wrapped up in his flesh, but the story of vampires is the story of blood legacy. The curse is passed from sire to childe from before any can remember, and the family lines of vampires have formed the clans, the bloodlines and the power structures that rule the modern nights. Groups playing a Generational chronicle tell part of this greater story, not just the exploits of a single vampire, but the history of generations of vampires that have shaped the night.

In many ways, a Generational chronicle can overlap with a Vampire Familia chronicle (p. 41), but the difference is that in a Generational chronicle players do not necessarily play members of the same family, or the same generation. Instead, each player is able to play out the story of a family line of vampires, starting with an elder and working down through years and generations as the toll of madness, hunters and the Danse

Macabre removes the older members of the family from play. Of course, it is possible to play both styles together, and adventurous groups could work together to create an epic story that focuses solely on a single multi-generation family of vampires.

Types of Generational Stories

There is no one way to run a Generational chronicle. The possibilities opened by moving the focus of a game from a single protagonist to a family line are enormous and open to a multitude of approaches. Some of the most common ways to approach such a game, and their strengths and limitations, are listed below. However, Storytellers should use these as a spur to their own creativity, as these suggestions are only a very short segment of a very long list of what is possible.

Linear Descent

In the Linear Descent chronicle, each player plays one character at a time, building that character's story and fortune just as the player would a normal character and then moving downwards through generations as characters are removed from play or have finished their stories. Over the course of a chronicle, the player will have the chance to play out the direct line of descent of the player's original character, building up a Generational epic in a straightforward manner.

The line of character descent in this type of Generational chronicle is simple. When a character is done in play, the player moves to the eldest unliving progeny of that character. If the character had no progeny (because someone wasn't paying attention), then the player takes over the next-oldest childe of the first character's sire (the vampiric sibling). If the character has no living vampiric siblings, and no progeny, then it's time to make a new character and start over — the family line has died out. Some Storytellers may allow a player to go backwards, playing an older sire if one is still alive, but this is at the Storytellers' discretion.

Many forces can cause a player to move to another character. If a character becomes unplayable in the long term due to debilitating madness, torpor, Final Death or similar problems, then the player can immediately move to the next character in line. If a character is getting to the point at which the player and Storyteller feel that the character's story has been told and the character will no longer be interesting to play, the player should negotiate with the Storyteller to have the character's story wrapped up in one to three sessions, after which point the player can move to the next character in line. The key here is that the player must work it out with the Storyteller, so the Storyteller has time to prepare for the switch and so that players don't randomly hop from one character to another. (If you want that, see "Troupe Style" and "Character Tree" below.)

In this type of Generational game, it is very important that every character be given a chance to create progeny. Usually, players will want to arrange for this fairly early on in the characters' stories, and certainly before the characters get into danger of going into torpor or being killed. Storytellers may want to put some stress and conflict around the issue of creating progeny, highlighting the difficulty of doing so and the need that even vampires feel to be able to continue the line of their blood, but, in the end, the issue should be played for the drama of the story and not to stop characters from being able to create progeny, as that would be defeating the purpose of the chronicle.

This type of game allows for a great deal of focus on individual characters and has the strength of combining well with traditional play styles. Each player will only be playing one character at a time, and the lines of who are characters and who are Storyteller characters are clearly drawn: the character currently controlled by the player is a character, the rest of the family are all Storyteller characters. This also lets the Storyteller focus on one character per player at a time, building well-tailored adventures without having to worry about which of many different possible characters will be involved. At the same time, many groups can get over the hurdles that many games face, such as the devastation of character death, difficulties around character torpor and the tendency to keep playing a character

despite the fact that everything cool about that character has already been exploited.

The main weaknesses of this style of game is that it tells only a very limited part of the story of the Generational family — focusing on a medieval-style "heir to the throne" story that ignores the power struggles between siblings and, often, that between childe and sire as well.

The Generational Tree

A slightly looser setup for a Generational game involves each player having a "generational tree" of characters that are all effectively playable. The player can choose any of the members of the generational tree to play as her primary character, but only one at a time. This tree is based around a multi-generational vampire family, starting with the eldest playable vampire character and going through that character's childe and their childe until the maximum number of characters is reached. Generally, the limit for viable-character characters on the tree should be from three to six, depending on how many characters the Storyteller feels she can keep up with. Storytellers who are willing to let players have large trees can make the childe of childe available to the tree as well, but this can get out of control quickly and result in dozens of playable characters per player.

Note that the actual generational tree can be larger than the pool of characters available to the player. Normally, Storytellers will want to keep these extra family members reserved as Storyteller characters, which keeps the character pool under control and allows the Storyteller to have Storyteller character family members to use in stories involving conflict within the family. If characters are permanently removed from play (Final Death, a century-long torpor, etc.), then the Storyteller should let the player choose one of those characters to add to his tree over the course of a few games.

In this setup, a player should decide which of his available characters the player wants to play in a session in time for the Storyteller to prep for that session. For many groups, that means that each player should decide what character she wants to play in the next session at the end of the current one. Storytellers can also assign players one of their characters for a session, starting them off in a game with a given character so that a specific story can be told. In that session, the chosen character becomes the player's active character for the game, unless something happens to remove the character from play. If that happens, then the player can ask the Storyteller to bring in one of her other viable characters, letting the player finish the game with a different character. Storytellers should usually try to get the new character into the game within a few scenes, keeping everyone involved in the action. It shouldn't be too hard to figure out a reason for the new character to come into play, as the character has good reasons (positive and negative) to be involved in the family's business.

Storytellers may wish to assign experience points only to the active characters in a game, as they are the ones currently getting hard life experience to grow from. However, there are two alternatives for handling experience points in this setup. First, the Storyteller can give the player a pool of experience points that the player can assign to any character on the tree as the player sees fit so long as the player justifies it. Perhaps, for example, one of the other characters on the tree was dealing with the Prince while the characters on stage were dealing with VII. The other way is to assume that the characters on stage get the experience points the Storyteller assigns, and, in addition, the player has half that amount to give to other characters on the tree to assign to represent experiences the character had off screen. Both of these latter methods also work well if the players are keeping character (or generational family!) diaries to show what the family as a whole is doing while the attention is on one individual.

This type of Generational game is very good at telling stories of families that have a core group that works together well and has an “us against the world” attitude. This game can also handle problems within the family by having the character members stir up strife and trouble. A lot of focus can be on different generations of each player’s family at one time. A Generational game also is a very good setup for games with high mortality rates, as players will always have other, linked, characters to play if their primary characters are killed or put into torpor as well as making sure that players will have a wide variety of characters to play, keeping them from getting bored or frustrated when one character gets stuck or they feel the need for a temporary change.

The biggest weakness of this style of play is the number of potential characters the Storyteller has to track. Even with only three or four characters per player tree, a Storyteller could easily end up with 20 potential characters to keep tabs on and generate plot for. That is why it is so important for Storytellers and players to communicate clearly (and early on) about which characters are going to get played in which sessions, so that the Storyteller can keep track and keep the game moving well. These games can also lack the single protagonist focus of more traditional games, which can be frustrating for some players.

The Generational Troupe

Combining a Generational troupe and Vampire Familia chronicle can make a game of startling dynamism. In this sort of game, the focus of the generational struggle is localized more fully within the multi-generation family, with the family becoming the world for all the characters. In this type of game, players do not have a single character, or a tree of characters, to play. Instead, players share control of the family as a whole, taking various aspects into their control and playing them through the course of the chronicle.

A typical setup for such a game would be to have each player make one elder character each, possibly at Vampire Kings (p. 66) levels of power. That elder character is each player’s biggest trump character; the player can only have one at a time and if the character is lost, the character has to be replaced by another member of the family — possibly resulting in significant loss of power to the family. In addition to the elder character, each player controls a small handful (say two to four) of younger vampires, neonates and ancillae who are the childer of the elder the player controls. These younger vampires are used as their operational characters — carrying out the wills of the elders while keeping the elders at a safe distance from the world. Finally, everyone in the group shares control of the families “resource” characters — the ghouls, Retainers and so on that serve the family loyally. By using these resource characters, the players can always have characters present in each others’ scenes, allowing the vampire characters to have goals and missions of their own without locking other players out of the scenes.

The strength and weakness of this style of play is that it will drastically alter the way that players and Storytellers approach play. Adventures, stories and plot hooks for single characters will be a much smaller part of the game: the story will focus on things that effect the generational family as a whole. This is an excellent way to model either generations working together against the world to build power, if all the players have their characters work together, or the way that they tear each other down, if the players decide on an adversarial game. These games can show the clawing for power better than many others, showing all the aspects of generations manipulating each other, building power bases and then turning on each other to devour the whole. Long-term games with this setup can truly take advantage of the generational aspects, as elders die or go into torpor to be replaced by the ancillae who are replaced by the neonates and so on, until the generations either build up a political legacy that will endure forever during the Damned nights, or destroy themselves completely.

Inheritance

Characters in Generational chronicles often have more than just their personal resources at their disposal, they have the family behind them — or at least part of the family. Whether this is power and money inherited from a dead sire or the increased pull of being part of a large vampiric family with a powerful living sire, these characters may have access to resources beyond normal starting characters. For the purposes of this section, these additional resources are known as “inheritance,” whether they’re actually being “inherited” or not.

The following guidelines can help Storytellers decide how they want to deal with the inheritance of Merits between generations. In general, Mental and Physical

Merits will not inherit, and only the listed Social Merits inherit. There may be exceptions to these rules, especially if a bloodline is involved, but most of a vampire's inheritance is a matter of social power and prestige, not genetic inheritance. These are guidelines, not hard rules, and Storytellers should feel free to adjust them to fit with what makes sense in their chronicles. Also, Storytellers should feel free to make the inheritance of power a setup for conflict, as the character has to fight for what he feels should be his. This could be as little as some simple rolls as the player describes what she does to keep the power in the family or as much as a whole story about the fight to keep the family's money in the family's pocket.

Allies

The nature of an ally determines how well it passes between generations. The childer of sires that have allies due to personal friendship and charisma may have a difficult time keeping their hold over them when the sire is absent or without the sire's explicit permission. On the other hand, allies that are tied to the power of the family or have historic ties or that the childer have been in contact and dealings with under the sire's authority probably inherits well. In general, an Ally loses one to two dots when inherited, as the Ally needs to be convinced that the new members of the family are worthy of the legacy of their sires or that they are legitimately acting in the name of the sire. If this results in

the alliance being reduced to zero dots, the Storyteller may give the character a chance to prove to her Ally that she is worthy, or may simply have the Ally remove himself from contact. It is also possible for an ally of a powerful sire to become a Mentor for an inheriting childer.

Contacts

Contacts work much the same way that allies do: childer who have been using their sire's network of contacts may be able to inherit at full value, while those who did not know their sire's contacts do not inherit at all. Most of the time, Contacts will drop by a dot or two when they are inherited as old contacts drop out, are lost in the shuffle or decide they do not like the new character.

Haven

Havens can pass from one generation to another with no loss of dots. Of course, if the sire met Final Death in the haven or the site was discovered by enemies, these events reduce the dots. In most cases, however, the only likely complications of inheriting a haven are the childer of the sire having to share it. While the sire lives, they are assumed to rule the roost (though this is not always the fact in reality), but, without a sire to mediate and control, a group of childer can tear a haven apart very quickly.

Herd

Some herds can be inherited when a sire is gone, though with a loss of dots if the herd was centered



strictly on the sire (e.g., set up as a blood cult worshipping him) rather than simply tapped by the sire, as the herd loses members who were dedicated solely to the sire and not what he did for them. The problem may arise of multiple childer sharing a herd, a feat of trust nearly impossible for many vampires to perform. Unless the family is exceptionally tight or ruled with an iron hand, the herd should be split up among the childer rather than kept as a shared pool. While a sire is alive, she may grant childer temporary access to her herd, but the Merit dots are not generally shared; the childer is simply allowed access to what the sire controls.

Mentor

Often a childer's Mentor is his sire, and, in that case, an absent sire not only doesn't give him a Mentor to inherit, she takes away the Mentor he did have. However, some sires may have powerful Mentors that continue to look over the whole family line, guiding the line rather than just an individual. Or it could be that one of the sire's Allies becomes a Mentor to the childer when the sire is absent. If characters have a Mentor to inherit, they should usually get it at full dots from the sire, though they may transfer inherited dots from Ally to Mentor (or vice versa) with Storyteller approval. (So it can be beneficial to transfer a big Ally to a Mentor role, as it keeps the number of dots high, where leaving them in an Ally position could reduce the level of the Merit.)

Resources

As with a herd, access to the Resources of a surviving sire is something often granted to childer as a favor, not as shared dots. Some sires do allow a certain amount of Resource sharing, however, to enable their childer to make their own plays to increase the family's power. In the case of a sire leaving, unless the sire specifically sets it up otherwise, childer can be assumed to inherit all of their sire's Resources dots. Of course, that doesn't mean the childer won't fight over the Resources or that rival claimants won't come crawling out of the woodwork for a piece of the prize. The struggle to keep money in the family (and with the "right" member of the family) is grist for the plot mill, and Storytellers are encouraged to use it to give the new generation some tough challenges.

Retainers

This Merit is best decided on an individual basis. Each Retainer's reason for service and relation to the family will play a large part in determining whether the Retainer works with the childer. Retainers tend to be an all-or-nothing deal. Either the childer gets the Retainer at full dots or doesn't get it at all. The one exception is that, as with Allies, it is possible that some Retainers of a sire could become Mentors of the childer, possibly at a different dot value.

Status

Most of the time, Status in mortal organizations cannot be inherited. Status among the Kindred is a

different matter, however. City Status tends to be the least inheritable, as it is very dependant upon personal worth and responsibility. A sire with a very high City Status may be able to pass a dot along to his offspring if he has involved them in city affairs, but more than that is unlikely to inherit. Covenant Status is moderately inheritable, as childer with sires who had strong reputations in a covenant can play upon their elders' respect and known devotion to the politics of the covenant to assure others of their own right of place and strength of belief. In general, about half of a sire's Covenant Status is inheritable by her childer, though doing so may require public demonstrations of loyalty to the covenant to assure everyone that the childer honestly follow in the sire's footsteps. Clan Status varies in inheritability from clan to clan. Some Ventrue societies are founded on the privilege of blood, and so their Status inherits well, with perhaps a dot of loss to represent a difference in personal prestige. Other clans inherit at a slightly lower rate, gaining half of their sire's Status at first — though they may have opportunities to rise more quickly due to the fame of their sire.

Example: Ferdinand Alanso has gone into torpor, and his childer Marissa has started taking over his position and gaining control of his resources. Both characters are played by Nicole, who sits down with her Storyteller to work out which parts of Ferdinand's empire will fall into Marissa's hands. Ferdinand had two Allies, at •• and ••••, Contacts at ••••, a Haven at •••••, a Herd at •••, Resources at ••••, two Retainer ghouls at ••• each and Status at City •••, Clan •••• and Covenant (Invictus) ••••.

The Storyteller asks Nicole what Marissa is doing about the Allies, one a human businessman and the other the city's Mekhet, and she says that she is sending them both presents and setting up meetings to make assurances that their business will continue undiminished. The Storyteller lets Nicole make a roll for this (Manipulation + Socialize), and she rolls well for the businessman but not the Mekhet. The Storyteller decides the two-point Ally stays with no change, but that the Mekhet are unimpressed and her Ally dots with them drop to one. Nicole then argues that she should get to keep all of Ferdinand's Contacts, as they were set up to run anonymously anyway. The Storyteller agrees, and Marissa gets all four dots of Contacts. The Haven also stays with her, as she was living there anyway. The herd, however, was a group of prostitutes that were particularly dedicated to Ferdinand, and so Marissa only gets to keep one dot of herd as the girls won't stay with her the way they would with him.

The Storyteller asks Nicole how she deals with the ghouls, and she replies that Marissa bullies them into staying loyal to her, promising them that her blood is as potent as Ferdinand's. The Storyteller has Nicole roll Marissa's Presence + Intimidate and she gets 3 successes, and keeps both ghouls. The Storyteller then rules that Ferdinand's Status in the city does not inherit to her, as it is a largely Daeva city and Ferdinand's Status was due to long service. However, his Clan Status inherits undiminished, as it is known that

Marissa is his favorite child. To see how well she inherits Ferdinand's Covenant Status, the Storyteller sets up a scene in which Marissa meets with the Invictus Prince, with the amount she inherits depending on the resolution of the scene.

Generational Stories

Once the type of Generational setup has been chosen, Storytellers can start the process of running chronicles spanning generations of vampires, making epic stories about the rise and fall of dynasties. The advice in the sections on Vampire Kings (p. 66), Vampire Families chronicles (p. 41) and Operatic games (p. 86) is all invaluable to this type of game, and Storytellers should integrate their favorite parts of those games into their Generational chronicles. In addition to the techniques discussed in those sections, there are several others specific to this type of game that Storytellers should consider.

Antagonists

A Generational chronicle can result in some very powerful player characters, who have the backing of whole families and generations and the ability to inherit significant power as the generations turn. (A fifth-generation Ventrue, for example, almost certainly has massive amounts of Contacts, Resources and Status just from inheritance.) The players may also be more aggressive in a Generational game, as they know that, even if their current characters fall, the players have the other members of their dynasty to fall back on. As a result of these issues, the antagonists in a Generational game need some special consideration.

All the typical foes of a vampire game will still work in a Generational game, they will just often form a smaller part than normal. Even a well-organized group of mortal hunters, for example, will all have died of old age before a vampire generation passes, and even VII doesn't normally have the resources to take on generations of vampires — much less generations in multiple families of vampires! For that reason, most directly confrontational antagonists and single antagonists are best used as acute problems, enemies for a short number of adventures that form part of the history of the generational dynasties without defining them.

One of the best places for long-lasting antagonists for character dynasties and generational families is other dynastic families of vampires. Every advantage the characters have the other families will have as well: numbers, backing, strength of Blood and so forth. Storytellers should look at the history of great dynasties in conflict, such as the English War of the Roses or the conflicts between the railroad barons of the American West. In these conflicts individual loves and hates come and go, but the clash between dynasties and generations lasts and grows and feeds upon itself. Make rival dynasties that the characters can fight, can hate, and cannot get rid of.

The other prime source for antagonists in a Generational chronicle is the family itself. In linear or tree-based Generational games, there will always be Storyteller characters in each family who do not have the best interests of their siblings at heart (which is fitting, as the characters probably don't have their siblings' best interests at heart either). These vipers in the nest can be the most subtle and deadly enemies any character can face, as they can remain close to the character, camouflaged and protected by the very forces the character has to protect himself, constantly causing strife and betrayal. In troupe-based games, this activity can become a main focus of the game, as each character's elders scheme against the others while the ancillae try to pull down the elders and replace them. Toss in threats from the outside world that force the characters to all temporarily work together, and there is instant potential for a spectacular chronicle.

The Passage of Time

Vampires are effectively immortal, and life in the Danse Macabre can move very, very slowly. Because of that, it is suggested that Storytellers alter the flow of time in a Generation game so that time passes more quickly. A common trope from the famous *Pendragon* RPG is to have a year pass between each story or game session, with the downtime in-between filled with the humdrum daily politics of the eternal night. This can quickly change the feel of the game, letting more time pass as the characters risk their unlives only occasionally rather than nightly, and in which plots can hatch over years and decades rather than in the rush of a game in which stories happen weekly. Storytellers can also allow characters to train and improve during this downtime, perhaps getting half the experience points they received from their last story as a bonus to represent activities taken between sessions. Storytellers can also have time pass more quickly between sessions when major stories have started or ended: after all, a decade is little enough to many vampires, so passing over 10 years of boredom can give more of a sense of scope to a game. (And, in that case, the Storyteller may want to give a bigger experience points bonus for downtime, such as double a normal story award for each decade.)

In addition to time passing between sessions, the amount of time that passes during a story or game session can be changed as well. Game sessions might cover the events of months or years as generational politics slowly play out. A challenge between two family of Ventrue over control of a bank, for example, could be handled as an extended contest between the elders of the family, with each roll eating up a month of time as they subtly push their mortal pieces back and forth against each other.

Storytellers using this technique can also telescope and zoom in on time, changing the pacing to fit the events. In the example of the Ventrue above, one of

the elders may decide to send a group of his childer out on a mission in which they break into the bank's vault to place incriminating evidence there while the enemy sends his ghouls and hellhounds to stop them. At that point, the game would go from months to frantic seconds as the opposing forces pound at each other. Once the life and death is over, however, the action can move back to months of politics passing.

The final consideration for the passage of time is when the Storyteller wants to start the Generational game. If a Generational game starts in the modern nights and passes months in game time between sessions, the characters can easily end up in the future. This can make for an interesting mode of play, especially if the characters focus on their inability to deal with the future changes in the world. However, many

groups may be uncomfortable with such sci-fi speculation in their gothic horror.

For those groups that wish it, Generational games can make a solid foundation for a historical game. Starting with vampire elders during the nights of the antediluvian American South, or in the steam- and fog-filled streets of Victorian London and following the journeys of generations to the modern nights can add spice and direction to a Generational game. Storytellers are encouraged to use history to punctuate such games. What does the Great Depression, for example, do to the dynasty of stock-trading Ventrue? Or the great westward movement of population in 1950s America to a dynasty whose elders are stuck in New York and whose neonates all want to move to Las Vegas or San Francisco? The possibilities of such games are endless.

The Rise and Fall of House Urzica

Alexandru Urzica had a vision when he came into the American colony of Transylvania (which would soon become Kentucky) in 1775, a vision of a dynasty of his own that would rule over the wilderness the way that the Ventrue lords of Europe ruled over their domains. In the land of opportunity, he built a great house and a dynasty to fill it, embracing the most hard and hardy explorers, horse rustlers and whiskey-runners of the Cumberland and Appalachian mountains. With these childer he grew powerful and wealthy, and, to show his might, had the kine ship a castle from Romania brick by brick, reconstructing it on a lonely and remote hill at the foot of the Cumberlands. This was the House of Urzica, home of the most powerful Gangrel dynasty in America.

It was Prohibition that started the war. Under cover of mortal law enforcement, the Ventrue lineage of Andolfus started cracking down on the horses, booze and criminal rackets that Urzica's fortunes depended upon, peeling away layer after layer of resources, respect and protection, and taking them for their own. What the Lords did not count on was the fury of Urzica's brood, who came out of their hills and woods and, with fire and fury, found the Lords in their comfortable houses. Blood begat blood and violence begat violence, and the war between Urzica and Andolfus lasted for more than 75 years, resulting in blood and flame from Chicago to Atlanta.

Now the war is almost over. Andolfus' lineage is weak and doddering, their seats of power in Memphis, Chicago and Richmond usurped by other Ventrue lineages. The House of Urzica is in ruins, the generations of his childer devolving into mad things that run in the mountains and have no thought but to kill and drink hot blood. But even now, with the whole world coming down around them, the two lineages will not let go of

the death grip they hold each other in. Someone will win the war soon, and then both houses will die.

Theme: The Rise and Fall of the House of Urzica is about decay: the loss of power, the negation of vision and the death of morality. The House of Urzica starts out as a great dynasty, as does Andolfus' lineage, but as the chronicle wears on they both lose sight of everything that once made them great and drive themselves and each other into a death spiral that will take everything they once had away from them. Of course, this brings in plenty of room for secondary themes of vengeance, devolution and fear.

Mood: Two houses, both alike in majesty, are ripping each other limb from limb and then savaging the corpse. Brutality, animalistic aggression and a savage resilience in clinging to an unlife that most wouldn't consider living are all important to this chronicle. At first, these traits allow Urzica to carve an empire out of the wilderness, and, later, the same traits bring it all crashing down.

Atmosphere: Somber, gray skies over wild hills thick with twisted trees, stunted in growth clash with towering cities in which it is always pouring rain down the pitted sides of brick and concrete skyscrapers. Early in the chronicle, these seem like obstacles to be overcome, a challenge from which opportunity can be won, but as the chronicle draws on, they become more looming, more oppressive. Everything in the game should feel something like a growing nightmare that mixes elements of a hillbilly family feud and the most brutal gangster epics.

Setting: The setting is split between a core location and several general areas. The single most important location is the actual House of Urzica: a looming, Gothic castle brought stone by stone from the old country. Settled high in the Cumberland hills, facing out



over a steep cliff into a thundering river gorge that always fills the grounds with mist and fog, the gray bulk looms threateningly, alien to the land and the people who live in it. Early in the chronicle, the castle's menace is of applied power, later turning to the menace of the entropic slide into madness and oblivion that waits for the whole lineage.

Outside of the house itself, the majority of the action will take place in the country of the Cumberland and Appalachian mountains, the rolling hills of the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, and the dark and towering cities where lurk the lineage of Andolfus. The Cumberland area, which in reality is quite lovely, in this setting becomes a dark place full of twisted trees and endless tiny hamlets that don't connect to any major roads, filled with the kinds of characters who should be playing dueling banjos. The cities are alien, threatening entities in which no trace of nature remains. Everything everywhere is concrete and brick, rising up in the towering style of late '20s Midwestern city architecture. Alleys, loading docks, clogged drainage ditches and booze-cans filled with surly men with guns make up the stock locations for the cities, the places where the Ventrue and Gangrel clash over money and power.

Character Creation: All of the player characters in the chronicle should be descendants of Urzica and part of his dynasty. It is recommended that they be made with the Generational Troupe guidelines, with each player having one character who is an elder, a childe of Urzica built as a vampire king (p. 66) and several other characters split

among ancillae and neonates. Urzica's dynasty also has a large number of ghouls and contacts through the criminal and backwoods cultures of the area, and these can be used as jointly controlled group characters or purchased with Merit points to belong to a specific character.

Because all of the characters will be Gangrel children of a single founder, each elder and his line should have their own focus and strength to bring to the House. The primary areas of interest are smuggling, booze, raising and rustling horses, carrying on the war with the Lords and laundering money and keeping the mortal legal system at a distance. Each elder should control one or two of those areas. In addition, it is possible that different elders would found their own bloodlines within the dynasty. For example, if the group has access to **Bloodlines: The Hidden**, the Oberlochs bloodline would work well as part of the setting with some minor modifications. Not all members of the House would have to be part of the bloodline, but all the descendants of one elder should be.

Antagonists: Werewolves, clans of angry mortals with torches, shamans from the indigenous tribes and mortal authorities can all make good temporary threats in this chronicle. Whatever the main threat, the lasting thorn, which cannot be plucked from the characters' side, is Andolfus' lineage. This group of Ventrue has powerful political connections in the corrupt city and state police forces, a small legion of ghouls with tommy guns early on and SMGs in the modern era, and at least as many vampires as the characters have plus two. They're led by the

extremely potent Gerald of Whitetower, a Ventrue lord who claims to have fought in the English Civil War at the side of Cromwell, whose tactics the Ventrue emulates. Late in the chronicle, the Andofians are joined by another threat: Urzica himself, who loses the last of his humanity, and goes into a state of utter animalist madness.

Story Concepts: The chronicle can be divided into three rough phases, all with their own challenges. Early on, the chronicle focuses on carving an empire out of the wilderness, faced by hostile settlers, hostile natives, hostile Lupines and the dangers of a vampire trying to live in the wilds well away from any bastion of civilization. Fights with Lupines, gaining control of local settlers, taking over moonshine operations and similar events all make for good stories.

The second phase of the chronicle starts when the lineage of Andolfus strikes in the early 20th century. Storytellers can play stories up to that point, or play until the founding and then have an extended downtime to advance

the plot into the last century. At this point, the stories of the chronicle become about surviving Ventrue attacks, defending resources and trying to strike back against the aggressors, as well as elders jockeying for position within the house as Urzica seems ready to go into torpor. Bootlegging, having running fights with gangsters using tommy guns, busting up police barricades and leading the locals in civil unrests against Ventrue-controlled banks and businesses all make good stories during this stage.

The final phase of the chronicle moves into the near-modern era with both houses on their last legs. Resources should be cut down, allies murdered off and Retainers tracked down and killed by hired mortal assassins. At this point in the chronicle, stories center around three things: killing the last of the Lords, surviving Urzica's madness and trying to find a place in the world as the remains of the house's power come tumbling down under a combined assault of Lupines, new Ventrue and Gangrel families and the mortal power structure.

The Other

Underlying **Vampire: The Requiem** are the rumbling lusts of the Beast. Despite the suavity of any character's political maneuvers, a set of urges beneath the surface would disgust a jackal and give pause to a hungry shark. The Beast is inchoate, incomprehensible, insensate to reason — it's a force that makes mockery of anything Kindred try to accomplish through logic, or cooperation or moderation.

What if the Beast weren't there?

What if, instead of the rude promptings of a raw but unsophisticated animal, there was something icily rational, possessed of the same urges but pursuing them with a temperate disdain for the ethics and morality of humankind? What if there were a passenger in your skull — articulate, intelligent, inescapably reasonable and desiring nothing more than to feed off humankind forever?

What if, instead of the Beast, Kindred faced the Other?

What the Other Is

Upon Embrace, every neonate Kindred develops a second voice, privy to every idea that enters her mind and able to speak in her very thoughts. The Other sometimes acts sympathetic, sometimes takes an antagonistic stance immediately and sometimes is aloof and gnomish. It encourages its "host" — the original personality possessed by the vampire when alive — to feed, to kill and to survive. The Other's priorities are pure Freudian id, in that the Other seeks complete satiety at all times and personal safety, as far as is consistent with perpetual feeding.

Anything that does not contribute to consumption and self-protection is questioned, criticized and ridiculed.

The Other is relentless in pointing out the flaws of its host's friends, save when they are targets for its thirst or useful to protect it. It is similarly ruthless with anything the host believes in, takes hope from or loves — beyond a safe haven and the next meal.

The Other knows everything the host knows — and perhaps a bit more. It can provide instruction in all the physical Disciplines and in the host Kindred's clan Disciplines. The Other may also tease its host with cryptic hints about the vampire race's history, purpose and ultimate source. The Other can teach, but at a price. Always, a terrible price.

Furthermore, the Other may just be lying. All Others are utterly inscrutable liars and sociopathically capable of telling their hosts what they want to hear in order to erode their Humanity.

That is the unspoken third goal of every Other: to reduce its host's Humanity to the point that the Other can take over completely, casting aside the scruples and human softness of its once-living jailer like so much soiled toilet tissue.

The Advantages

The Beast is a neat idea and provides some juicy roleplaying fodder, but the Other offers different and equally interesting alternatives.

First off, some Storytellers may find a setting with the Other more intriguing or simply plays to their

strengths. To persuade a player that his character is at risk of being subsumed by the Beast, the Storyteller needs strong descriptive instincts, so that she can create a vivid impression of an immaterial emotional battle. The calm Other doesn't operate that way but through dialogue. If you prefer dialogue to description, you may find the Other a better way to make your point.

Secondly, the Other allows the Storyteller more finesse and precision when presenting the vampire condition to the players. The Other whispering in the character's mind, "Wouldn't it be easier to just kill him and stick the body in the trunk? I can show you how to hide it so the cops will never know. Lots of people go missing every year. You think anyone's going to care? It'll be a week before it gets past the point of his boss thinking he's on a bender . . ." is more direct. Suggesting bad impulses is one thing. Presenting someone with a manageable, bullet-point plan for evil is something else again.

Additionally, the Other's self-preservation urges give the Storyteller an option when players are about to chart a disastrous course without packing the Common Sense Merit. The Other is a perpetual critic, so mocking a dumb plan that could leave them all in ashes is hardly out of place for the Other. If they don't listen, they can't say they weren't warned. If they do listen, then it's established that sometimes that evil counselor has their best interests at heart . . .

Beyond the practical benefits of playing to dialogue strengths and permitting more direct input from the Storyteller, using the Other alters the game on a thematic level. Kindred saddled with the Beast always have an excuse. "I didn't *mean* to kill her, but the Beast, man, I just got carried away!" With the Other, there's a different kind of pressure. Now, instead of pressure to strike a balance with ghastly urges, there is the pressure to defend and explain your own decisions. Instead of "a Beast I am lest a Beast I become," the dilemma is now answering the Other's hectoring query, "I suppose you have a *better* idea?" all night, every night.

Instead of operating at an emotional level, this takes the game to a more cerebral level. Characters can't just do what they feel. They no longer lead unexamined lives: not only are they unalive, they're constantly under scrutiny. Justifying their actions becomes a much higher priority — unless they succumb to the Other's nihilistic rationales and leak out all their Humanity.

The thematic changes benefit players as well. Some players are less skilled at *Grand Guignol* dramatic posturing. Arguing though — that may be more familiar and comfortable than portraying angst or horror or intense regret. Instead of concentrating on the literary elements of describing the character's remorse or unease, the player can engage the theatrical angle of portraying emotion through speech.

A good horror game pushes the players' comfort zones, but this should be done with the game's content, not

the tools of play. For some players, the Other is a more transparent and natural-feeling way of engaging with what it really *means* to be a blood-drinking monster. The easier it is to engage, the deeper players can get into the dilemma. It's that simple.

How To Do It

To use the Other in your chronicle, all you have to do is periodically insert a comment into the character's brain on behalf of its wormy skullmate. You lean over to the player and say, "Your Other speaks up, whispering, 'This is stupid. They're going to pick a fight with those Invictus guys, and for what? Over a point of honor? Screw it.'"

It's not hard to do the Other, but it is easy to overdo. Kindred constantly feel the urges of the Beast, but the Beast is not constantly the focus of the game. Similarly, though the Other comments often, most comments can be taken for granted. You only need to vocalize what the Other is saying when it's trying to make a particular point or is in an intense conflict with the host.

In this vein, it's a good idea to only really have the Other badgering one or two characters per scene. Make sure the other players understand that their Others are piping up periodically, but a constant repetition of Other insults and criticisms would get boring — for them and for you. As a rule, the Other only needs to speak up when (1) it has a strong objection to what's going on, (2) it's going to say something that's unexpected or (3) there's meaningful and significant development of plot or character to be explored through the dialogue.

Some conversations with the Other can be kept secret, through passing notes. This can create tension when a flurry of notes indicates an internal struggle (which the characters perceive as an uncanny silence with moving lips and twitching expressions) to which the players are not privy.

Alternately, groups with a lot of trust can keep the dialogues open. This can be very entertaining. It's fun for the player whose character is defending himself, and the other players get the passive pleasure of seeing that character develop — possibly in ways that a cagey vampire wouldn't reveal through open action. As long as the group is able to keep players' knowledge and goals separate from characters', this can work fine. Just make sure that the dialogues are quick and punchy, and that everyone who enjoys debating with their personal devil gets a chance to do it.

What's in It for the Characters

The Other should tempt, and there's no force behind temptation without something the characters *want*. The Other can offer any or all of the following:

- Discipline instruction. The Other can explain all the physical Disciplines and all of a vampire's clan Disciplines. Learning a new Discipline still costs experience

points, but, through a bargain with the Other, the Kindred doesn't have to trust a mentor who is, by definition, a self-interested predator with its own agenda.

- **Aid** in tough times. This is described in full on p. 63 under "Riding the Wave." When in great danger, the Kindred can temporarily surrender to the Other in return for the dubious "benefits" of Imprisonment.

- **Advice.** The eternally calm Other may notice clues the character missed or think through puzzles that leave its emotionally distracted host baffled. The price for these "hints" is likely to be very high, however, if the character is pursuing something the Other regards as foolishness.

- **Wisdom.** Which is, of course, actually any plausible lie that the Other can invent to advance its agenda. Others can't mystically communicate with one another, they don't have any greater insight into the Kindred condition than their host (unless you, as Storyteller, decide they do . . .) and they're no more privy to dank ancient secrets than anyone else. But they understand their hosts intimately, they know what their hosts want to hear and they've often got a good sense of how much their hosts trust them and how much reverse psychology the Others can apply.

That last one deserves particular attention. Neonate Kindred are often desperate for answers about the meaning of their condition, and Others who play their cards close to the vest can offer answers — often answers heavily tailored to their individual host, and intended solely to get their hosts on board with the Other's program of constant feeding, safety and isolation from the Danse Macabre.

Virtues and Vices get heavy play in these myths. Some examples for each Virtue and Vice follow.

Justice: Vampires serve to redress the wrongs of humanity. The wealthy majority is willfully ignorant of the sufferings of the most miserable few, and only violence is sufficient to snap them out of their TV-sport ute-stock option daze. We're the wake-up call.

Faith: We were created by God as His inscrutable agents. Think about a time traveler, who could send someone back to kill Hitler back when he was still a penniless artist. To a contemporaneous observer, that would look blackly evil, but what a greater evil it would avert! This is our role, and alas we must pursue it blindly.

Charity: The great tragedy of the Kindred condition is that this curse intensifies over time. Your hunger, regrettably, will only grow. When that happens, the only solution is to create a new vampire, thereby halving your hunger at the cost of instilling it in someone else. Try not to be angry at your sire. She knew her limits. She was about to lose it. She had to curse someone, and she knew you had the inner strength to fight the curse and limit your harm . . .

Temperance: The cosmos is laden with challenges of balance, and the Kindred condition a bigger challenge than most. Yes, you are cursed with need and

weakness, and the temptation to do terrible things is strong. But if you can place your hunger and vulnerability in check, you can use your extended span of years to do great things as well. You just have to stay safe and keep your hunger from overwhelming you.

Fortitude: You feel the evil within you and believe that self-destruction would end it. No. If you destroy yourself, you *free* it. Vampires are the cages of bloodlust, and when these frail human bodies break, that bloodlust seeps out, immaterial, able to infect and incite normal people. You think it's hellish to have a lot of vampires? Look at places without enough — Berlin during the Nazi years, Serbia, the Congo . . . Chicken out if you want, I can't stop you. But understand you're doing the world no favor if you do.

Hope: The Devil put this wretched curse of vampirism upon the world, but the Lord has given us the tools to turn that curse around. It's a long, hard path, but I can guide you out of this hell of suffering and blood into a blessed state called Golconda. The first step is to learn to keep yourself safe. The second is to keep away from other vampires — they'll just betray and confuse you . . .

Prudence: When do you think it's easier to think clearly, when you're hungry or when you're full? Mmmm. And do you suppose you'll be able to contain your problems if you're in constant danger of discovery? Maybe not? I don't think so either. So first off, let's get you somewhere safe, your own place, where we can really discuss things . . .

As for the more negative personality traits, they're even easier to use . . .

Wrath: All the evil in the world is yours to punish. This is your role in the divine scheme — to judge and execute. You face a smorgasbord of selfish delicacies. Dig in.

Envy: Normal people, human people, are trapped in systems of injustice with only a few short years in which to try to keep themselves alive and comfortable. They can never really change things, make them just, bring down the fat cats. That's what *we're* for. We've got the span of centuries to break the oppressor's rod, and the power and appetites for it.

Gluttony: You have pierced the first veil of a cosmic illusion, rising above the unenlightened and casting off the shackles of age. In time, with my guidance, your every limit will fall, leaving you as the god you once were and could become again. The first stage is to understand that everything in the world is you, but that your rightful sovereignty was taken. Now, you're waking up and gradually regaining the ability to steal back your true power from the drones who surround you. Only you are truly real. The rest of them are powerless until you free them by reclaiming your vital essence . . .

Greed: There is a limited amount of life-energy in the cosmos, and we have arisen to redress the great imbalance. Currently, it's spread too thin, which is why there's overpopulation, famine, war and all the rest of it. By gathering

this essence, or “Vitae” into ourselves, we correct the flow and allow it to purify itself. It looks nasty in the micro-scale, but think big. You’ve got eternity, after all.

Lust: Being a vampire is as natural as being a hummingbird. If a flower could think, it might resent the bee that steals its nectar, but that same bee pollinates the flower. In the same way, by feeding on humankind we transmit minute traces of pathogens, strengthening their immune systems. Nature evolves us to take pleasure in what’s good for us, right? That’s why feeding — and being fed on — feel so good. It’s nature’s reward. You don’t want to be unnatural, do you?

Pride: This fate would not have found you were it not your destiny. Only a few from each generation are chosen to shoulder this burden, and also to enjoy the power and privilege of immortality. You are set apart from living humankind, but you are also set above. Harm them or not as you choose, but understand that it is *your* choice, deeded to you by God.

Sloth: You exist apart from humanity, culled out by your fear of fire, for a reason. You are meant to be above, aloof, disengaged. Otherwise, your power and hunger would lead to tragedy. Therefore, you are best served by keeping back, not getting involved, feeding when and where it won’t cause comment and otherwise staying isolated. That keeps them safe from you and you safe from them.

Keep in mind that these sorts of ploys aren’t just for creation lies. At all times, the Other tries to capitalize on these elements of the character’s personality, in order to manipulate the host.



LIES MY OTHER TOLD ME

At various times, a crafty Other might try any of the following “creation myths” on a gullible host.

- “I’m the spirit of the original Wandering Jew, cursed for mocking Christ while he carried the cross. That’s why my blood of death and addiction is a parody of Christ’s blood of life and release. You heard ‘em talking about Longinus? Sounds like he’s in the same boat.”

- “I am the Crone, Kali Yuga, the Magna Mater, Atropos the severer of lives — I am all these, and those blind hypocrites in the Circle refuse to admit it. Instead of looking within themselves for answers, they look anywhere else in a search for myths, philosophies, ecstasies that only serve to occlude what they claim to illumine.”

- “In every soul there is a despised and rejected element. That’s me. I’m you. I’m just the parts of you that you don’t want to acknowledge — the hungry part, the selfish part, the part that keeps you safe. Usually, those functions have biological support — endocrine reactions, hard-wired panic in the brain, adrenaline and all that. But you’re a corpse now. The biological survival instinct is gone, just like your ability to reproduce or store fat for winter. Instead, you get me. Or rather, you get yourself, freed.”

- “While you bear a heavy curse, it’s not without relief. Though burdened by hunger and the fear of fire, you have been blessed with me, your angel guide, to help you seek a better path through your many years.”



What's in It for the Other

The Other has its needs and the character is standing in the way. To pursue those goals, both short and long term, the Other is willing to bargain. The heading above catalogues what the Other can offer the Kindred. Here’s a laundry list of some simple things it might ask in return.

- **Willpower.** The Other may simply ask the character to listen to it, without interruption or argument, for half an hour, and then not discuss its position afterwards. You don’t need to go through a half-hour monologue with the player, just give an outline of practical selfish nihilism, perhaps describing how washed-out and depressed it leaves the character feeling. In game terms, she just lost a Willpower point. This doesn’t directly strengthen the Other, but it makes the character less likely to resist Imprisonment.

- **Freedom.** The Other may bargain for 12 hours in control of the body. (Twelve *waking* hours, of course.) The character is agreeing to become Imprisoned, without the escape valve offered by Riding the Wave. What the Other does with this liberty depends on circumstances. If the Other thinks good behavior will yield future jaunts, the predator behaves selfishly and practically, but goes out of its way to spare mortals and not antagonize other Kindred. If the Other thinks this is its one and only chance, the Other goes for broke, alienating any friends or allies who might be distracting the character from more important matters of feeding and becoming a hermit.

- **Chores.** If unable to get control of the body, the Other might settle for promises to behave in a more circumspect fashion, shore up the haven and remain lipping-full with blood. Typically, the Other won’t come across with any reward until such promises are fulfilled.

Altered Mechanics

Kindred governed by the Beast have a limited set of circumstances that drive their better natures under its brute directness. Those same circumstances can cause Other-ridden Kindred to cave in to their alien tormentor. But although the same stimuli (wrath, terror or starvation) provoke the Other, the reactions of the Other are very different from those of the Beast.

Vampires who fall to the Beast often enter fugue states in which they don’t remember their actions. It’s different when the Other takes over. When that occurs, Kindred see and experience what their bodies are doing, but are unable to feel any emotional reaction or exercise any control over the actions taken by the Other. It’s been compared to being outside your body and watching, numbed,

as someone else does things with it. For the few who've experienced both, it's quite similar to the dissociation experienced by schizophrenics during the traumas that activate their condition. Vampires call it "Imprisonment."

Predator's Taint: There is no longer any Predator's Taint. Vampires recognize one another, and the Other dislikes other vampires, but not to the point of starting meaningless fights.

General Systems for Imprisonment: These replace the systems for frenzy found on pp. 178–179 of **Vampire: The Requiem**.

The Other's Imprisonment of a vampire's identity has the following effects:

- The vampire ignores wound penalties to dice pools, until the wounds put the vampire in torpor.
- No derangements penalize the Other.
- The Other ignores Vinculums, though, if the host is addicted to Vitae, that problem remains.
- The Other cannot spend Willpower. The imprisoned host may spend a Willpower point to briefly alter the Other's behavior, as can be done with the Beast. See pp. 180–181 of **Vampire: The Requiem**.
- The vampire operates in all ways as if her Composure and Resolve have risen to 6.
- The vampire's aura vanishes. There are simply no colors there to be seen.

Resisting Imprisonment: Imprisonment is resisted exactly like Frenzy. It's the same extended roll, the same use of Willpower, the same Resolve + Composure pool, the same number of successes needed and the same situational modifiers. The only differences are what happens when the character fails, and that, in this case, she's got the vocalizations of the Other nagging in her mind's ear. (Note to Storytellers: There's no need to impose additional penalties to concentration due to the Other's silent verbal abuse. It's just as bad, in its own way, as the imposed emotions of the Beast. But no worse.)

When resistance fails, the Other takes charge, typically for a scene or two.

Anger Prison: When something has so provoked the Kindred that his human self's rational responses are exhausted, the Other takes over. Its reaction depends entirely on the nature of the enraging stimulus. If it's human (i.e., "food") and there's no overwhelming risk of injury, the Other kills and eats it. Problem solved. It doesn't matter whether the human in question was an early-teen Peeping Tom, the Kindred's mortal mother with her intrusive questions or a friend's cocky ghoul. The Other kills, feeds and returns control to its host — probably with some cleanup suggestions.

Snapping with anger at something that's not food usually prompts the Other to leave, if that's an option. The Other does what's required. If a group of Acolytes are torturing a member of the Lancea Sanctum, trying to get

him to reveal the location of his beloved mentor, they might well attempt to get his Other to Imprison him. The Other doesn't give a crap about the mentor and cheerfully sells his ass out for a ticket out of a sticky situation.

Anger at immaterial circumstances — coming home and finding one's haven destroyed, for example — simply prompts a calm and measured response from the Other. It goes and finds somewhere to sleep out the day, usually with the brutal efficiency that characterizes Other behavior.

Fear Prison: As with anger, the Other takes over and attempts to calmly extricate itself from the fiery predicament in question — even if that means leaving friends or trusted comrades in the lurch. In cases in which the Man was overestimating the danger, the Other may well take advantage of its temporary liberty to feed in its preferred amoral matter. If the Other isn't hungry and doesn't have direct peril to distract it, look out. The Other is quite likely to set about sabotaging any endeavors of which it disapproves or regards as a waste of effort (meaning, anything that distracts from a Requiem of safe satiety). This often includes derailing attempts to gain Merits such as Status, Mentor, Allies or Contacts.

Hunger Prison: Here's where the Other really shines. In a Wassail, the Other's reaction is perfectly predictable. The Other calculates who, among those nearest, can most safely be overpowered and sucked. Then it attacks without warning or mercy. It's not dumb enough to go after a weak mortal who has 10 bodyguards when there's a less weak (but solo) Kindred nearby — unless the Other has got Nightmare or some other Discipline with which to scatter the protectors. Best of all, the Other likes to feed from best friends. It almost universally kills them, even if it can sate itself and leave them alive. After all, if those friends are mortals, they've just become a liability (or, from the Other's perspective, an even *bigger* liability than "friends" are already). If they're Kindred, the last thing the Other wants is to compete with a Vinculum for influence over the host.

Riding the Wave: There are many times when a host and an Other are in full accord about the right action to take. After all, "don't die" and "get food" are high priorities for every sensible Kindred. When a character wants to get her Other's assistance during a time of great hunger or danger, the character can attempt an alliance. (The Other cannot be harnessed to attack one's enemies unless they pose an immediate and unmistakable threat. Without those qualities, there's just no motivation for the Other to help.) Allying with the Other works such as "Riding the Wave," as described on p. 181 of **Vampire: The Requiem**. The character spends Willpower and rolls Resolve + Composure in an attempt to bind the Other to her goals for a short period. If she succeeds, she can end the Imprisonment when she chooses. Others under this sort of compulsion usually play it fairly straight: they know they've got nothing to gain by being



contentious, since the hosts can snap out of it when they want. The Others, therefore, cooperate as much as is congruent with feeding and safety. That said, if the Other thinks there's a chance for more Imprisonment checks, it may balk or start actions that force the host to terminate the Imprisonment while the problem is still imminent. That way the Other gets a better chance of taking control against the host's will and having greater freedom to improve its situation.

Humanity 0: When Humanity bottoms out, the Other wins. The Kindred goes from being semi-human to being an utterly emotionless engine of consumption. The slang name given to such creatures is "snowman." If armed with Dominate or Majesty, the Other may let vessels live simply because it's safer and less hassle that way. If not, well, there are more where they came from. Otherwise, the fully-actualized snowman Other typically stalks and kills a human every three or four nights to keep the gas tank full and spends the rest of the time improving its haven and concealing its crimes. Young snowmen have zero interest in other Kindred, unless those Kindred are horning in on their turf. When that happens, the snowman's usual reaction is to try and negotiate with the Kindred and get him to back off. This often works, since the snowman has a pretty good insight into the Kindred's Other and can play to its urges. If that fails, the snowman most often nods regretfully, backs off and either diablerizes the intruder as soon as is reasonably possible or moves away entirely with no regrets. The path chosen depends solely on risk assessment. Snowmen, like Others, have no pride. They have only hunger and the urge to continue.

Snowmen refrain from the Danse Macabre and would therefore seem to be good neighbors — indeed, many Kindred prefer to deal with young snowmen because they're not at all hard to figure out. But, eventually, young snowmen turn into old snowmen and, as anyone with sufficient Blood Potency, they need provender you can't abduct from any old run-down bus station. They need Kindred prey and, given their absolute ruthlessness, their sociopathic lack of anything to threaten or blackmail them with and their resistance to non-lethal Disciplines (Resolve and Composure at 6, remember?) they can be a significant problem indeed.

What It Means

Horror often confronts us with issues of control. In **Vampire: The Requiem**, the contrast between what characters can and cannot control is often significant. While they may have Disciplines that allow them to be irresponsible slavers ruling adoring mortal herds, they are themselves subject to the whims of political superiors or elders who are increasingly alien.

Being helpless is frightening. That's what the Beast is all about — a set of repulsive animal desires that rise up and overwhelm you despite your most fervent wishes and efforts.

On the other hand, **Vampire** is a game of personal horror. It's about being horrified by what your character does and the choices she makes. The other side of that coin is: having power can be frightening. The only thing worse than doing something awful that's not really your fault, is doing something awful that is your fault.

The Beast is brutish and shocking. The Other is insidious and corrupting. That's the difference.

What It Means for the Characters

Characters in a chronicle with Others are less likely to go completely berserk, break Masquerade, and be targeted for destruction because they lack self-control. That's the good news. The bad news is that if they lack self-control, the Other is going to take over and pursue their most selfish interests in the most horrifying of ways. That's the bad news.

The Other wants to survive and feed, and, to that extent, it's the characters' ally. But it wants the characters to be utterly self-sufficient and relentlessly practical, which means that it attacks (overtly or subtly) anything the characters seek that is more noble or worthy than a full belly and a safe haven. To the Other, knowledge is pointless, friendship is a liability, art has no meaning, self-esteem is just vanity, faith is self-delusion and hope is absurd.

Characters fight the Beast because its urges are ultimately destructive, and because any but the stupidest Kindred can see how the Beast is bad for them. With the Other, that's just not so. A lazy Kindred can listen to his Other and get *help* with staying hidden, staying safe and staying inert. He just can't ever accomplish anything.

The price is existential suicide. All the Other takes is everything that makes him himself.

What It Means for the Setting

The Masquerade is more solid, for one thing. Instead of having the Beast urging every pinhead neonate to do the stupid thing at every opportunity, they're instead being urged to do the smart (albeit self-centered) thing. Kindred who snap don't go out in blazes of crimson glory; they quietly settle down to become cozy neighborhood murderers with all the imagination of a Stalinist bureaucrat.

Because the repercussions of Kindred snapping the leash are so much less severe, the Danse Macabre is far less concerned with control and surveillance. Also, the constant counterpoint of the Other has, over the years, sapped much of the covenants' will to struggle with one another, even over points of ideology. Social score counts much more, because struggles don't have the Beast fueling the fire — they have the Other pissing on it.

All this aligns to encourage an active chronicle, rather than a reactive one. In a standard game, waking up a

lazy player is possible, by threatening her with inter- or intra-covenant rivals, a Beast freakout or mortal hunters. Now, only that last one remains, and while witchfinders can make a good counterpoint to the main plot, because they play up the helpfulness of the Other's selfishness, the primary goals of the chronicle should be player-defined. With the Beast, there's never a dull moment. The Other demands a bit more of players, is a bit more challenging, but thereby can be more fulfilling.

What It Means for the Chronicle

Characters faced with an Other have to set meaningful goals and pursue them. If they value nothing beyond their own survival, the Other has almost won — and the game is going to get very boring. For the device of the Other to contribute to the chronicle, the characters must be pursuing something meaningful, despite the practical but soul-deadening advice of their permanent, full-time critic. The question the Other poses is, "Beyond survival, what's it all about?" The answer the Other offers is, "Nothing." It's the characters' job to give the lie to that.

The pressure of the Other is to quit, give up and settle for mere comfort. Characters who are unwilling to do that should believe in something. It could be a religion, a political cause or their quest for Golconda. They could seek meaning through art, through some sort of campaign for social justice (either within or outside the Danse Macabre) or simply through the love and companionship of friends or family.

The Other mocks those things. The job of the Storyteller is to endanger them, forcing the characters to either defend their principles and beliefs, or admit that the Other is right. Every time the characters stick to their path, the Storyteller has to raise the stakes, push the envelope and make the conflict more intense. If they've defended their family when it's in danger from the outside, what happens when there are internal problems, even an insoluble one like a divorce or a cousin who beats his wife? If they're cleaning up their shitty neighborhood by kicking out all the drug dealers, what do they do when a developer wants to buy up half the houses and raze them for luxury condos — something great for half the neighborhood and lousy for the rest?

The climax of a chronicle of this type is when you give the characters a truly pernicious dilemma — one in which the only clear options are to surrender their beliefs or to defend them through cruelty, murder or some other moral atrocity. If they do it, they've paid a terrible price for their beliefs, and even the Other despises them for it. If they give in, the Other wins.

If they can think of a third option, they're geniuses. That's fine, but make them earn it. If they're going to win, and win *clean*, they'd better play the hell out of the game. When the Other is riding shotgun, anything you have to settle for should feel like a loss.

"Princes and governments are far more dangerous than other elements within society."

—Niccolo Machiavelli

The default way to run almost any roleplaying game, Storytelling games included, is to start the player characters off on the bottom rung of power. The character creation rules for **Vampire: The Requiem** give only a few basic powers and a small selection of Traits, reflecting inexperienced, newly created vampires. Because of this common beginning to most chronicles, most Storytellers find the idea of more powerful characters a daunting prospect. What, after all, can challenge Kindred with the entire city at their beck and call? By the time most characters reach the point of being this powerful, most Storytellers are ready to end the chronicle, if for no other reason than they cannot think of challenges appropriate for such powerful characters.

It is time for this to change. Here, you will find an alternative starting point. Player characters should be the most important people in your chronicle anyway, so why not make them the most important in the city? Why not even several cities? A chronicle of vampire kings lets you do things easily that you'd have trouble with in other types of chronicles. Powerful Kindred can distance themselves from the petty struggles with Humanity and the Beast by taking a hands-off approach to their Requiems, and minor issues like feeding fall into the background. The question a Prince should be asking is not "will I feed tonight?" but "whom do I feel like feeding from?" Even clan or covenant rivalries are less important than before, since the characters are at this point the only powers to be reckoned with in the area. These potentates will have to deal with each other one way or another, and it is usually in everyone's best interests to keep the peace — or at least to leave the physical fighting to subordinates.

Playing the elders, the Prince and other rulers of a city, allows players to experience the same events from a different perspective. This sort of chronicle makes a refreshingly different backdrop against which to stage many plots your group has played before, and make them new all over again. Now, instead of being the hapless neonates who are stalked by vampire-hunters and begging their elders for help, the players are the ones who are begged for help. The players are the ones who move other Kindred around like pawns in the Danse Macabre. This sort of chronicle can see characters who soar above commonplace problems still brought low in their quest to transcend the curses that plague all their kind. Not only that, but there are unique

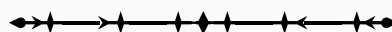
challenges faced only by old and powerful Kindred, when the very things that give them power become their deadly weaknesses.



THE LONG WAY

Elder Kindred get that way by living through many events, and gaining power and prestige. Any chronicle can turn into a chronicle of elders if the characters simply amass a large amount of experience and influence during the course of play.

If you don't want to start players with elder characters, then simply skip over the following section. The rest of this article will be useful to you whether the characters start as the powers in town or end up that way through gaining experience the long way during the course of play.



Character Creation

The simplest method of creating elder Kindred is to give out a large sum of experience points at character creation. Three hundred points should be sufficient, as this is the highest amount listed in **Vampire: The Requiem** as appropriate for "elders and other linchpins of undead society." Don't be afraid to give your players more, though, for truly ancient vampires. Remember that no matter how powerful the characters are, they are very vulnerable if they take on the world alone. As many as three to five experience points per year of activity prior to the chronicle's start would be appropriate. Alternately, presented below are a set number of extra dots of each kind of Trait, allowing the creation of varying ages of elder vampires with less effort involved.

At this point, it's important to decide how powerful the characters should be in order to dominate the setting you want for your story. If this means that they should be 100-year-dead kingpins with a mostly social network, and powers out of the book to back it up, great, go with it. If creating thousands-of-years-old monsters whose powers cannot be directly opposed more suits your vision, that's great, too. The process of creating these characters should look very much like the process of creating a "normal" **Vampire** character; the only real difference lies in what options are open to you.

Step One: Character Concept

While there is more to a good concept for an elder Kindred than taking any old character concept and adding 1,000 years to it, that is the rough sketch of

what must be done here. Actually, it is better to look at things in the opposite order: first decide how old your characters will be as a group, then let each player think how the centuries have molded her character. Who each vampire was in life is still very important, due to the tendency of the undead not to change. Mannerisms and habits from before a character's Embrace will certainly carry on down the years. Some background research on the historical place and period of each character's origin may help add some flavor; an online search should be sufficient. Remember to think about social class and occupation as well as time period and location, since even if all the characters come from England in the 1500s, the merchant, farmer and noble will each have had different lives.

It's also a good idea to think about where the characters' Requiems have taken them since their Embraces, and what this would mean for their learning and development. A vampire who has lived in many different cities might have learned several languages, while one who has lived in the same place for a long time may have a truly impressive haven. Clan and covenant will be important shaping factors as well in this sort of character concept. Each clan's selection of Disciplines will offer characters easier access to certain powers, and each covenant offers a different road to power, with different reasons for valuing the power once gained.

Step Two: Add Vampire Template

Due to the long time characters in this sort of chronicle will have spent as vampires, this step needs to come before all the other system steps. The only difference at this step is in determining Blood Potency, which is now dependent on the age of vampires you have decided on in your chronicle. For every 50 years of age, an additional point of Blood Potency is gained, as the normal rules state. However, characters whose players do not have some kind of explanation of how their characters consistently obtain the especially potent blood they would need at Blood Potency of 7 or higher should only go up to 6, reflecting the fact that since vampires with Blood that potent must either find a way to feed from other vampires or go into torpor from lack of Vitae. Even a character with high Humanity will end up having many periods of torpor punctuated by short nights of activity without a consistent source of sufficiently potent Vitae. Herd is a meaningless Merit to characters of such potency, unless they possess the second tier of the Coil of Blood. Childer bought as Retainers might suffice for an explanation, for example, but do not forget the complications of Vinculum; the price of being an elder is steep. This determination of Blood Potency should be the same whether using the experience point method or the quick creation method.

Groups who choose the quick creation method should choose extra Discipline dots at this stage. Two

Discipline dots per extra dot of Blood Potency is recommended. The normal limit that at least two dots must be put into the vampire's clan Disciplines still applies; half of the extra dots at this step are limited in the same way. Thus, a 200-years-dead Gangrel would start with Blood Potency 5 and 11 Discipline dots. Six of these dots must go into Animalism, Protean and/or Resilience. The other five may be allocated to any other non-clan-specific Disciplines, including Covenant-specific abilities such as Cruac, Theban Sorcery or the Coils of the Dragon. Obtaining clan-specific Disciplines that are from some other clan or bloodline may be possible, with Storyteller approval. The first dot does not take up any of the character's allocations, but it does cost a point of Humanity and gives the character a derangement. This counts against the limit on the number of times the character may reduce his Humanity at character creation. This limit is usually 2, but Storytellers who allow this at all may wish to allow elder Kindred to start with even lower scores. Humanity 3 is probably the lowest playable value, however. In addition to this, characters with Blood Potency of a sufficiently high value have the option of reducing their permanent Willpower to join (or create) a bloodline. Characters who do this may buy dots of that bloodline's Discipline with their extra starting allocations as if it were a clan Discipline. Disciplines may be purchased up to the Blood Potency limit, but powers above level 5 should be individually designed. Rarely do any two Kindred of such extreme power display exactly the same abilities, particularly if one is not the other's pupil.

Step Three: Select Attributes

In the quick creation method, elder vampires receive three extra Attribute dots per extra point of Blood Potency. These may be allocated to whatever Attributes the players desire. Increasing an Attribute above 5 costs two dots for each dot, just as increasing it to 5 would. Attributes may be raised as high as Blood Potency allows.

Step Four: Select Skills

The quick creation method affords characters three more Skill dots per extra point in Blood Potency. The rules for allocating them are the same as for allocating Attributes, but with the word "Skill" substituted.

Step Five: Select Skill Specialties

One additional Skill Specialty is available for each additional dot of Blood Potency in the quick elder creation method. These may be placed in any Skills the character has dots in.

Step Six: Select Merits

The quick creation method allots players four extra Merit dots per extra dot of Blood Potency. Whether experience points are handed out or the quick creation

method is used, however, Merits are the most important Traits for elder Kindred. Status makes a vampire into a Prince. Allies give a Prince supporters to call on. Contacts allow a Prince to stay informed of any developments in his domain, allowing him to react to them appropriately. The list of important Merits goes on and on. Below, three of these important Social Merits receive updates, expansions on their roles in a chronicle of Princes.

Allies

You can't be Prince without powerful friends. Making allies among the covenants and even the unbound Kindred of a city is a necessary step toward ruling that city. Friends in high places can be kingmakers for a would-be Prince, helping to arrange the right oaths or votes and helping dispose of inconvenient opposition. Once you are Prince, the friends who got you there can help you stay there. So long as you keep them happy, it's in their best interests to see you continue to be Prince. A large number of happy friends reduces the number of potential enemies among the other powerful Kindred, and ensures that the Prince will have someone to turn to in the event of the inevitable betrayal every Prince is eventually sure to suffer.



NEW MERIT: FRIEND

The Allies Merit from **World of Darkness Rulebook** represents influence in groups. While this is a valuable Trait for a Prince to have, sometimes it's necessary to have individual allies who are more potent by themselves. The Retainer Merit can represent these potent allies if they are subordinate to the character. Likewise, Mentor can represent individual allies to whom the vampire owes favors or allegiance. However, this new Friend Merit is intended to represent allied peers, individuals who have independent power and are neither beholden to the character with this Merit nor owed any allegiance by her.

Similar to Haven, there are multiple aspects of this Merit: allocate dots purchased to Power and Trust. Power represents the friend's level of skill and influence; one dot is significantly less powerful than the character, three dots is about the same level of power and five dots means a friend who is significantly more powerful. Trust is an indicator of the depth of the friendship; dots in Trust are added as bonus dice to any roll to convince the friend represented by this Merit to do something for the character.



Resources

Money makes the world go 'round, and this is no less true if you happen to be undead. Besides, how could a powerful vampire expect to travel to meet important acquaintances in different cities with a car that has less than two bedrooms? (Fun fact: Over 200,000 motor homes that

fit this description are sold every year in America.) Money is a very tangible sort of power that anyone can amass, given time and effort. Money also has a tendency to consume a person's whole attention, making the acquisition of money more important in a person's life than using that money for anything. For Kindred, though, a mortal lifetime spent gathering funds may provide a diversion for a while, but they will likely tire of it eventually. When they do, of course, all that wealth becomes a wonderful tool for other pursuits of power.

Unlike Attributes, Disciplines and Skills, Merits are limited in dot ratings not by Blood Potency but by the ratings given for them in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. However, the limit set for Resources does not allow for the kind of wealth that the truly powerful individuals of our modern world possess. The new rules presented here allow Resources to go up to 10 dots, representing the phenomenal wealth of incredibly powerful Kindred, or even mortals like Bill Gates. A certain amount of business savvy is necessary to maintain wealth of this caliber, however. A character may have no more dots in Resources than his Intelligence + Academics or Politics or some other key Skill relevant to the character. Once that key Skill is selected for the Merit, however, the Skill cannot be changed unless the Merit is purchased again.

Thinking of Resources above ••••• in terms of dollar amounts is pretty pointless. With millions, billions and trillions of dollars in the making, how much money people think you have is more important than how much you might actually have. This is especially true since most of the money is not anything physical but rather computer representations of numbers. Savvy persons of great wealth protect their money by investing it in companies, commodities and other things that are harder to alter than computer data. However, the value of gold is no longer the constant it once was, and even the value of oil is not reliable all the time. What affects the rest of us as a five-cent change in gas prices could change a wealthy Kindred's holdings in value by millions of dollars. Regardless, having more wealth than Resources ••••• means that, in common terms, any purchase is trivial. Characters with six or more dots in Resources can simply do anything they want that money can do. Buy a company and institute a new hiring/firing policy? Sure. Buy military-grade weapons? Heck, why not buy the contractor that makes them! Of course, some people aren't willing to sell some things at any price, so, at the Storyteller's discretion, being able to buy certain things may require some legwork. No matter the amount, however, a simple purchase cannot put a dent in a multi-billionaire's fortune; the purchased item will be worth whatever was spent for it.

The level of Resources above ••••• only becomes an issue when two or more monumentally wealthy characters are trying to oppose each other in some endeavor. In

this case, whatever the project may be, the two financial titans bid against each other. The pool for bidding starts at one with a Resources of ●●●●●, and increases by one for each dot above that. The person who opposes the initial move makes the first bid, and the contributors continue to make bids until someone chickens out. Multiple tycoons can pool their Resources to make a larger bid together than they could separately. After the bidding ends, the winner loses all of what she bid. If the last point in the pool was bid, this means that the character is now destitute, but will regain one dot of Resources per month until reaching four, unless other circumstances intervene. The loser keeps almost all his money, losing only one dot, and may easily be the winner next time.

Example: *Sared, an Iraqi Kindred with powerful influence in the oil business, and Hammersmith, a British vampire with a fortune in manufacturing, are trying to create a private military force for a risky Invictus venture. Grossenstern, a hideously wealthy member of the Ordo Dracul, does not want to see their plan come to fruition, because it would deny him a potent place of mystic power. Sared and Hammersmith have Resources ●●●●● and ●●●●● ●●, respectively, while Grossenstern has ●●●●● ●●●●●. If Grossenstern pushes the price up as high as possible, Sared and Hammersmith will both have to wipe themselves out in order to push their project through. The Dragon, meanwhile, will retain most of his great wealth, and, by biding his time, could then easily regain his prize.*

This is the real factor keeping players from making monumentally huge purchases such as, say, all of New

England. These things are no doubt already owned by large tycoons, who may be both unwilling to sell and willing to pit their financial might against the players' desired actions. For story breaking items such as nuclear weapons, ridiculous land purchases and the like, take a careful look at who would stand in the way, even if the characters have the money.

Status

To be Prince of a city, you must have Status ●●●●● with the Kindred of that city. However, it is possible to have Status ●●●●● in a city and not be Prince. It is possible to have ●●●●● in Status in the city, a covenant and perhaps even other organizations as well, and still not be Prince. But it is impossible to be Prince without that one Status ●●●●●. Status is the position a group affords you in its hierarchy, which makes Status the single most important factor in playing a powerful character. You may be only 20 years dead, but the 1,500-year-old elder answers to you in your city (at least in theory) if you are Prince. Even if Prince only in name, that name carries weight for somebody. Status ●●●●● is the maximum rank in any given organization, but a character can hold ranks in multiple organizations at once, so long as the character fulfills his or her duties to all of them, and they are not mutually exclusive (like the covenants).

Mechanically speaking, Status gives characters access to the wealth and power of an organization, as well as to secrets it holds. Each dot of Status may be added to one of the following other Merits per scene to help



on a single action: Allies (with the organization the character has Status in), Contacts (in fields related to the organization's interests), Retainer (a subordinate with lower Status who will help the character) and Resources (organizational funds; must use five dots of Status to add 1 dot to Resources above •••••).

Step Seven: Determine Advantages

Nothing new here, except perhaps some exceptionally high values to deal with. See p. 34 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Step Eight: Spark of Unlige

Before telling a story about the kings of vampirekind, you must realize that they are essentially just like the kings of men. A character with the Merits described above would be a powerful leader in any society in the world, whether mortal or undead. Each player must determine what makes her character unique from all the other powerful vampires out there. The Traits themselves will tell the basics of a story: Jean-Claude, the Mekhet with several dots of Nightmare, probably built his power based on a fearsome reputation. Such a character might hold his sway through fear, both Nightmare-induced and simple paranoia about what he might know. A Prince may rule through fear, the respect of his peers and subjects or by cunning bribery, giving the right people the things they want. In all cases, the Prince only has power so long as his people are willing to give it to him. Princely characters will be enriched by considering how they managed to convince their subjects to do that.

These considerations are the real gold mine for Storytellers. More than enough material for an entire chronicle can be found in the rise of the player characters to their current lofty positions. Between the enemies they have made and the motivations of those who they call friends, the stage should be set already for a grand epic drama. Consider the way that the characters have gained their power, and the way that they use it. Then read the "Designing Antagonists" article in this book, and put it all together.

Themes and Variations

So, you've chosen to tell a story with the kingpins of undead society as main characters. The next step is to figure out what to do with them. The conflicts faced by Princes and other potentates are far different from the difficulties of common vampires. While a normal coterie might face a single strange vampire entering their territory, the leaders of a city wouldn't worry about single strangers entering their domains. Princes would have underlings to deal with such things, and only if the strangers posed significant threats would the leaders have to worry. The scale of the group's problems will be citywide at least, if not greater. There are two

basic options of scale, in fact: citywide or spanning several cities. If all the characters are all powerful vampires in one city, then that is the appropriate scale. If they are based in various cities, the problems must be broad enough to involve all the characters.

Creating problems for a single city's powerful Kindred is easy enough. They are naturally congregated in one place, after all. However, a close alliance among characters is more important than close being in physical proximity. That way, even if some are in Chicago and some in San Diego, what affects one of them affects all of them. With modern telecommunications technology, distance is barely a factor in communication. In fact, a character in California might hear about a mark on a significant ally's reputation or damage to her holdings before the ally did herself. Since most of the actions in this kind of chronicle will be taken by proxy, the actual location of the characters rarely matters. Handling such proxy actions is a delicate process, but, with practice, this can turn from a difficulty to be overcome into a handy Storytelling tool and familiar plot device.

Henchmen, Flunkies, Lackeys and Other Proxies

The rich and powerful have many people serving them. In the case of rich and powerful vampires, these servants happen to run along the lines of vampires of lesser status, ghouls and others bound by Vinculums (or the Dominate power Conditioning, for those to whom it is available). Make no mistake: mortal CEOs and senators would gladly use such methods of ensuring obedience and loyalty if they had them available. Brainwashing on a similar level to Conditioning is used in some branches of secret government agencies through entirely mundane means, though the side effects of the drugs involved is physically more debilitating than the Discipline ability. The motivation to have servants, and to bind them to loyalty by any means necessary, is completely understandable and human. The condition of being a vampire merely accentuates and amplifies the motivation. This motivation is fear: humans and vampires alike fear being alone as much as they desire it, and they fear anyone else holding power over them. The best way to ensure that no one can have power over you is to hold power over everyone else yourself.

A powerful Kindred is one who can tell others of his kind what to do. Having five dots of Vigor to physically force compliance is paltry compared to the influence granted by five dots of Status. Five dots of Status makes a vampire into a Prince, and if someone makes an enemy of the Prince, that vampire may find himself exiled on pain of Final Death. In that case, almost every single other vampire in the city will try to kill (or have subordinates of their own try to kill) the offending character on sight. That is the kind of power that players in a

chronicle like this must learn to wield, and the Storyteller likewise must learn what conflicts are appropriate for characters with this kind of power, and how to tell a story about it. In most chronicles, a rumor about a suspicious happening will prompt the player characters to go check things out themselves. The powerful characters in a chronicle of Princes are more likely to send a trusted underling to look into things. This can sometimes seem like a problem. What if the situation to be checked out is dangerous? A situation designed to lure a normal group of characters into a trap they would have to fight their way out of against impossible odds is more likely to simply result in the deaths of a few extras in this sort of chronicle. Enough about the problems, though: on to the technique of action by proxy.

Have each player detail the personalities of any important subordinates. Generally, this should include all servants purchased with the Retainer Merit (of which all the players should probably have several), as well as any Friends willing to run errands for the character and important subordinate members of organizations with whom the characters have Allies or Status. Players should be prepared to play these characters for short scenes, whenever the story dictates the necessity. This should not happen all the time, of course, since the elders are the main characters of the chronicle, but one or two scenes per chapter that utilize these secondary characters would be fine. These characters should be used to bring a little bit of action into a chronicle that would otherwise be almost entirely discussion and decision-making from afar. The initial discovery of a dangerous pack of Lupines, bent on eliminating vampires from the city's Rack, which they now consider "their territory" would be a good scene to play out, for example. Similarly, the final battle that sees that pack's alpha killed and the rest of its members scattered to the winds would also be satisfying to play. In general, that is the criteria: if it would be satisfying to see a scene played out, and/or it would advance the story in an important way to see it so, then do it even if the scene requires using the alternate characters.

A King's Barden

To design challenges for Princes, the scale may be different, but the idea is the same. The three principles presented in the "Designing Antagonists" article hold true for creating conflicts of any kind, on any scale. The whole group must be *engaged*, *united* and *challenged* by any conflict introduced to the story. Each of these goals can be accomplished by targeting certain arenas of the characters' interests and influences.

Old and powerful vampires have far more to be worried about than younger, weaker ones. A lone neonate has only himself to worry about. If he joins a coterie, the tight-knit group will all be worrying about each other, but this is balanced by their reduced need to worry about themselves

because of teamwork. His sire's sire, who is maneuvering to be the next Prince, however, worries about all those neonates, because they are part of his power structure. The web of power supporting an elder will survive the removal of a few strands if the network is well constructed, but each strand taken individually is weak. Each strand is another vampire or perhaps a ghoul, possibly even a mortal servant or ally. Elder vampires spend an inordinate amount of effort keeping track of all their vast assets, making sure they grow out of fear that they might shrink.

The beginning of engaging and challenging a group of elder Kindred is to snip a few strings of their web. A subordinate starting to send in strange reports is cause for concern when the elders hold council. If lesser underlings start disappearing, or being attacked, the situation is serious. Trusted, close underlings such as personal ghouls or childer starting to act strangely, or coming under attack, is the ultimate slap in the face. A favorite ghoul or childer is a vulnerable spot for an elder. Whether the ghouls and childer are viewed as useful tools, or as close loved ones, even an attack on the elder's own person is likely to arouse less ire than something involving her closest allies. Attacking or subverting vulnerable allies makes the elder feel helpless, despite her great power. Helplessness and vulnerability are two things that elder vampires cannot tolerate. Once they begin to get flustered, challenging them will be even easier. Anger frenzies can cause damage to valuable items in the characters' havens, perhaps even causing the characters to harm their own servants.

Once the characters' attention has been drawn by a problem, the problem must be made challenging in some way. There are many, many ways to do this, despite the immense power the characters wield. Below are some suggestions, but overall, take note: the most important thing is to not use any one device too often. This will both annoy the players and reduce the effectiveness and plausibility of the device.

The Small Problem: Large groups of people, even and especially if those people are vampires, are unwieldy. A small group of people, or an individual, can harass large organizations for quite some time before the organization can track them down and surround them for the kill. Thus, a few skilled and well-connected people, whether they be a rival coterie, a group of vampire-hunters, a Lupine pack or something else entirely can pose a significant problem. The key is to keep the exact source of the disturbances unclear for some time, and make it difficult to track down the perpetrators even after they have been identified. Watch a few cop shows to get some ideas on hiding evidence and some spy movies for ways to disguise identity. For the vampire-hunter angle, check out the "Hunter's Hunted" article (p. 110), and the "Preying Kine chronicle" template (p. 116). The "Designing Antagonists" article also offers excellent advice for crafting these small groups.

The Large Problem: A city divided along covenant lines means constant trouble for the leaders of both sides. Their subordinates might get into fights, whether encouraged to do so or not. Order in the city is threatened, and so is the Masquerade. The organizational conflict might be along other lines as well. The conflict might be mortal versus Kindred, Kindred versus werewolf or any combination under the sun. Perhaps two sides unrelated to the characters' power structures are fighting, and the characters' subordinates are caught in the middle. In any of these cases, the conflict is a challenge for the characters. A conflict going poorly is definitely a bad thing; some might see it as an opportunity to advance their agendas, however, in which case the challenge is to pull this off without too much loss. For more suggestions about running a chronicle in a war zone, see p. 101.

The Even Older Problem: The characters are the oldest and most powerful in their own cities, but what happens when something truly ancient and powerful wakes up? What if Dracula, or Longinus or one of their childer wakes up and starts making waves? Perhaps a particularly powerful Lupine pack surfaces, or a truly ancient vampire from many thousands of years ago wakes up. A being so powerful it could do almost whatever it wants is the kind of challenge that a group of elders would have to take on themselves, a concept most of them would find more than a little unsettling.

The Insidious Problem: Betrayal from within is crippling to any organization. Perhaps an ambitious subordinate subverts the elders' power structure to ensure his own rise to power, or maybe a rival seduces a trusted ally to her side. Traitors can move about freely within the organization they intend to betray, arranging things for quite some time before they reveal themselves by striking. When the strike does come, it is always devastating, not least in the psychological impact. This, by definition, is the attack for which any character is least prepared: the one that comes from someone he or she trusts the most. Ironically, the best rulers are the ones who treat their subordinates with the most trust, and, thus, these rulers are the ones most vulnerable to this sort of problem.

The Elusive Problem: Some problems cannot be confronted directly. Often this results from misdeeds on the part of the player characters: perhaps the source of their troubles holds a secret that they don't want to come out, and if they move against him, he has made sure it will be released to exactly the people the characters don't want to know about it even if he is dead. Similarly, the characters might owe him a favor for something big, which he calls in to make them back off. It is also possible that the source of the problem is well liked by the community, whether it be the undead community or the mortal community, and simply killing him off would create too much of a fuss. In extremely unpleasant cases, the source of the problem is someone the characters care about, and do not wish to move against for personal reasons.

Their Problem: If the characters are tyrannical in their rule, they create their own problems. Those who serve the characters will be angered by the mistreatment, and even if they do not rebel (which childer and other subservient vampires are quite likely to do), they may act indirectly to set the characters up for their enemies. Be alert for any actions the players take that could make them enemies, because the more enemies a person has, the more likely some of them will put aside their differences and conspire against their common foe. Even characters who take good and moral actions can make enemies doing so; as they say, "no good deed goes unpunished." The evil, corrupt vampires out there will probably not appreciate the meddling of these do-gooders, and will seek to destroy them.

Your Problem: Because the scale of this kind of chronicle is different, it may be difficult to figure out when to say yes and when to say no. It is very tempting to overuse many of the same cliché tricks we see overdone in movies: common security forces are useless, only the main characters ever get anything done, etc. It's also very tempting to just trump the character's powers and influence at every turn. After all, if a player decides to subject all her character's subordinates to *Vinculum* and *Conditioning*, that would eliminate any story potential in their betraying her, right? Well, yes, but it also limits the number of subordinates she can effectively keep, and reduces the creativity and initiative her subjects can show in carrying out her orders. Lack of free will leads to ineffective servants. That is how to balance your yes and your no: always try to say some of both. Let your players know of the drawbacks and practical concerns that come up for any action they take; if you didn't want them to do it, make these negatives particularly heavy. Of course, players of characters with the *Common Sense Merit* will automatically get warnings of these drawbacks ahead of time, as will anybody who specifically stops and takes the time to consider the matter. This should be encouraged; contemplation and discussion of courses of action is an appropriate mood for this kind of chronicle.

Final Word: Experience for Elders

To get any more powerful when your primary abilities are already at high levels requires a lot of time as well as monumental amounts of experience points. Therefore, the small experience point awards at the end of every chapter won't be very satisfying to your players. Not to mention the fact that you may have legitimate concerns as a Storyteller about already-powerful characters constantly growing more powerful throughout your stories. To solve both of these problems at once, **Vampire** characters with over 300 experience points and/or *Blood Potency* higher than ●●●● should receive experience points only at the end of every story. The amount should depend on how

well the characters did during this portion of their Requiems, as well as how long the story took to complete. Multiply the number of available experience points for the seven possible awards listed in the **World**

of **Darkness Rulebook** by the number of chapters it took to complete the story, then decide how many of the available points in each area the players have earned by their performances.

The Political, The Personal

“Politics” is a word that describes the web of changing, shifting and evolving relationships between people, also connoting the way those relationships are framed by issues and ideas larger than any of the individuals. To belong to a group of any kind — of Kindred or of kine — almost invariably captures one in such a web, since even the antisocial make a political statement by removing themselves from society.

To say that Kindred are political is obvious, akin to pointing out sky above and ground below. With overlapping and intertwined organizations of clan, covenant, domain and coterie — their myriad goals often at odds with each other — the society of vampires could be no other way.

Many traditional chronicles address “traditional” vampire politics to a greater or lesser degree within the larger context of **Vampire: The Requiem**’s central theme of personal horror. It’s also exciting, though, to consider focusing a chronicle entirely on political questions and pursuits: to locate personal horror within the larger world of vampiric issues and policy-makers, rather than the other way around. This article examines that proposition and gives specific ideas and strategies for making it work.

Making Politics Exciting

If a character striving in the face of adversity is the atomic unit of drama, it’s easy to understand why most people think real-world politics is dull: it’s about nebulous concepts that float in a hazy communal head-space to eventually end in subtlety, compromise or deadlock. It’s practically anti-drama.

But to make drama from politics is simple. All you need to do is make the political into the personal. Consider *Julius Caesar*, at one level a political story about whether power ought to be concentrated in the person of the Roman emperor. But the reason *Julius Caesar* is compelling drama isn’t because that’s an interesting political question. It’s because the question is couched in the human terms of whether a gang of conspirators will overthrow their ruler and whether they’ll survive the aftermath. It’s even more interesting drama because of the personal relationship between Brutus and Caesar.

The key to the compelling Political chronicle, then, is to locate political issues and concepts within specific characters. Characters can take action, characters can

strive, characters can succeed or fail — characters can be *roleplayed*. Issues and ideas in the abstract can’t do any of these things. The larger political motivations of the story’s characters provide impetus, sure, and political issues provide a framework for the drama, but if you’re making a gripping story, the importance of issues runs a distant second to the importance of people.

Every chronicle already has characters, you might object. Surely every chronicle isn’t Political. And that’s true. Part of the distinction of a Political chronicle is that political issues and ideas provide the framework for dramatic striving. More on this later.

Political Actors

The first step in understanding and crafting the Political chronicle is to get a sense of the kinds of characters for whom the political is deeply personal. This is important both as you develop the antagonists for your chronicle and as you guide the chronicle’s players in figuring out what kinds of characters to create.

The most obvious types of political characters are those driven absolutely by ideology and believe in some moral, ethic or credo so completely that it dominates their egos entirely and its ends motivate their every action. Such characters turn the enemies of that ideology into absolute villains and labor tirelessly in service of the philosophy’s aims, with any means justifying the ends. You’ve seen these people on television: they blow up abortion clinics and lie down in front of tanks.

But there are many character types other than ideologues who are interesting actors within the ideological framework of the Political chronicle. Though they believe less fearsomely in whatever concept or ideal, their personalities and motivations make their involvement in Political stories dramatic.

Characters who crave personal power are often drawn to politics because it’s the realm in which a lion’s share of society’s powerful are anointed, something that’s no less true among the Kindred than among mortals. The pursuit of an issue is much less important to such characters than the light in which the pursuit casts them.

Characters driven by the need to impress others also chase politics because it’s the realm in which big decisions are made. Success in the political realm, such a character believes, is a sure sign to a parent, sibling or mentor

that the character really counts. As with the political actor who craves power, ideology is negotiable to these characters; they're in it for a different reason. (Of course, many of these characters — and power-hungry types, as well — never admit to themselves or anyone else that they're in the game for the “wrong” reasons. To do so would undermine their aims, perhaps fatally.)

Characters whose personalities dictate they must win at all costs are also interesting and dramatic in the Political game. Though their original reasons for political involvement are diverse, once they become embroiled in the political world they find that they can't walk away from any issue or confrontation because to do so would be to lose, and such characters hate losing — even appearing to have lost — more than anything else. Antagonists such as these are thwarted at the characters' peril; the antagonists will stop at nothing to turn the tables back around. Even if it takes them centuries.

Characters who feel they must sacrifice themselves for some higher cause in order for their unives to have value are among those with the greatest potential for accomplishment — or danger — in a Political chronicle. Such characters can be found on any side of any issue, and are so dramatic because, for them, there's no sacrifice too great. Even Final Death validates these characters, and validation is what they crave above all else.

This list does not by any means exhaust the roster of personalities driven into and within political arenas. Nearly any dramatic motivation — from greed to piety — can have political relevance when it's part of a character who's located in a political framework. When creating antagonists, rule nothing out and everything in, but always consider where the character's personal motivations intersect with the political world to find the dramatic potential.

The nature of Kindred organizations — clans and covenants, mostly — are also useful in considering the dramatic political motivations of characters in your chronicle. The Invictus have an obvious political agenda, as does the Carthian Movement. But always keep this in mind: membership in one of these groups does much less to make a political character dramatically interesting than a compelling personality type such as the ones explored above. Happily, these are not at odds with each other. A character's affiliations are most likely to provide ideology and direction, and her personality the individual motivation to makes the stories gripping.

In addition to questions of personality and motivation in Political chronicles, the basic truth of character power level is that politics is most interesting when those involved have the practical capability to see their agendas done. (Not that those will necessarily succeed. But the potential must be there.) For that reason, to create a serious Political chronicle, you must very seriously consider having the players create advanced characters off the bat. Although there's something satisfying about following neonates all the way through

a political career, the period of their ascendance can be — well — long and boring. You don't want to create a stunningly interesting political landscape and then endure three years of real-time gameplay as the characters become powerful enough to be relevant within it. Thus, the “movers-and-shakers” experience level for starting characters (120 extra experience points at character creation) is entirely appropriate. If you want your chronicle to have the sense that the characters are just coming into their own, the “up-and-comers” level (75 experience points) is made for precisely that purpose. For true halls-of-power stuff, there's no reason not to begin the characters as “elders and other linchpins” (180–300+ experience points). In short, don't deprive yourself of the Political chronicle you've imagined to satisfy some game designer who set an arbitrary bar about characters' “starting power level.” As political battles are ultimately battles of ideas — not quantified by stats or dots — the number of experience points available to starting characters isn't nearly as important here as it is in a chronicle style in which the characters fight literal battles against (im)mortal threats. (But if you are still bothered by giving away so many points to starting characters “free,” expand character preludes to include pivotal moments of their political unives and put the characters in actual peril of political life-and-death at those moments. Use those outcomes to help define the chronicle's initial state. That gives you all the benefits of a “rise-to-power” backstory without all of the heavy lifting.)

One final note on character creation: coteries with shared political goals are practically a necessity for a Political chronicle to work. Force your players to agree on a common thrust for their political agendas (or impose one on them, saying “in this chronicle, you all believe deeply in or work for the ends of so-and-so”) even before they conceive character concepts. The peril of failing to have a coherent coterie is that the characters will spend all their time plotting and scheming against each other, leaving you running a series of parallel solo chronicles. While that's obviously dramatic, it also wastes everyone's time. You'll spend entire game sessions off in another room with different solo players in turn (because no one will want the other players to hear his plots and schemes), and all of the players except the one you're dealing with at any given moment will spend a lot of time stacking their dice on top of each other, waiting for their turn to have your attention.

The Political Stage

Just as you must have the right kind of characters to tell a Political story, you must have the right the right realm and framework to make a Political chronicle thrive. Without them, your chronicle — like a plant deprived of water — will wind up limp, ugly and eventually dead.

The easy part of the equation is the physical realm of the Political chronicle, which is practically dictated by the nature of the Kindred. The size and nature of the physical surroundings must meet only a few criteria:

It must not be so small that one vampire can personally and physically enforce his will without the assistance of others. If the area is that small, there's little to no room for politics. A single household is not a useful realm for most Political chronicles.

It should not be so large that the players' suspension of disbelief falls apart at the idea that they could play politically important roles within the surroundings. If the area is that large, players won't know where to start or what to do. Thus, a nation is almost certainly too large a practical realm for most Political chronicles.

It must not be so geographically constrictive that the actors can't retreat from the general political fray in order to both feel physically safe and to interact privately (and secretly) with the other Political actors. If the area is that small, there's no release valve to keep violence from breaking out of disagreement, and it's too difficult to orchestrate the individual discussions from which politics are forged. Thus, a single compound is not a good setting choice.

Finally, it must not be so geographically open that the actors can go indefinitely to their own corners and ignore each other for all time. If the area is that large, there's no need for politics. Thus, a wide-open wilderness is not a practical option for your Political chronicle.

Although not the only conceivable setting for a Political chronicle, a city is very nearly ideal: not too small in vampire population or too large. Not so small that the Kindred must be stacked on top of each other, but not so large that they can afford to ignore each other. You might try another setting for novelty (or just to be ornery), but, unless you have a strong feeling that some other course is right for you, limit your Political chronicle to a particular city.

Geographical questions put aside, the Political stage also consists of cultural elements: the laws, customs and traditions within which the Political actors will operate. Here, Political drama thrives on ambiguity. Where the rules of society are indefinite, vague or in flux, there is room for discussion and change, and where that room exists, there's the potential for political drama. In a political system in which the Prince rules with an iron fist in all things and the Traditions are followed always and everywhere without question, there's no room for political maneuvering and no real room for a Political chronicle. If the characters are fighting against an establishment like that, the deck will be stacked so high against them that they'll have to go outside the bounds of politics to succeed. (While that might be dramatically interesting, it's more insurgent than political). But even locating the characters on the inside of a functioning dictatorship won't work; the weight of their authority will make the struggle too easy. It's also important to note that the extreme opposite of the iron fist scenario — where no one has any authority over anyone and the rules are so laxly enforced or poorly

regarded that no one bothers to follow them — is equally useless for Political drama. The political strivings in such a climate ultimately amount to wrestling against Jell-O. All this is simply to say that without legal (or customary, or traditional) ambiguity, your chronicle simply won't work as a Political one.

In addition to ambiguity, your Political stage must also have the potential for change inherent within it. Even if the potential is simply for a different equilibrium of ambiguity, if there's no possibility for meaningful change, there's no point in the characters striving for it — and they'll catch on.

But don't despair. Keep in mind that the Kindred Traditions themselves are so frequently violated — and the necessity for violation is so well understood in vampire society — that they themselves are utterly fertile ground. No vampire is to create a childe, per the Second Tradition, but it's clear that all the city's Kindred were created somehow, so what's really acceptable, and what's not? Similar potential exists for nearly every vampiric tradition, custom and law, so mine them deeply.

The DLY Political Terrarium

From reading to this point you're probably starting to get some general ideas: some interesting characters, the reasons they might be involved in the Political game, some issues and ideals that might be in play in the Political chronicle you're thinking about starting. You understand that rules are important, but that ambiguity in the rules is also necessary.

In others words, at this point, you've got fluffy vapors.

So go get some paper. (Do it! Read no further until you have a piece of paper!) At the top, write the name of some political issue that you think will be active in your chronicle. These could be Kindred-specific, such as "Violation of the Second Tradition," or more traditionally political, such as "Police Abuse of Power." This is the issue that will define the web of relationships you're about to diagram.

Next, draw a series of boxes on the paper. Each one is a Political actor. Write their names in the boxes. (Don't agonize about the names now. You can change Prince John Johnson's name to something more interesting later.) Then write the nature of each character's motivation with regard to this particular issue in the box below the name. Remember that the character's motivation to act on this issue might have nothing to do with the issue itself; motivation comes from the character's personality type. If the actor isn't motivated by ideology — or isn't motivated by ideology on this particular topic — decide what does motivate her.

After you've got some boxes, connect them with arrows. Label each arrow with the active things that the characters from whom the arrows are sprouting would like to do to or for the characters at the other end, with regard to this issue.

Write down things like “Wants to thwart” or “Wants to ally with.” For characters who don’t know much about each other (or are completely unaware of each other), write what would happen if they learned more. “Would plot his demise if he knew how many childer he had created,” for example. The more active these things are, the more active the politics in your chronicle will be. If you invent boring, passive relationships, you’ll wind up with a boring, passive chronicle. So look over your chart. If you see lots of things like “Wants to maintain alliance with” and “Wants to know more about” *cross them out and think of something more interesting and active.*

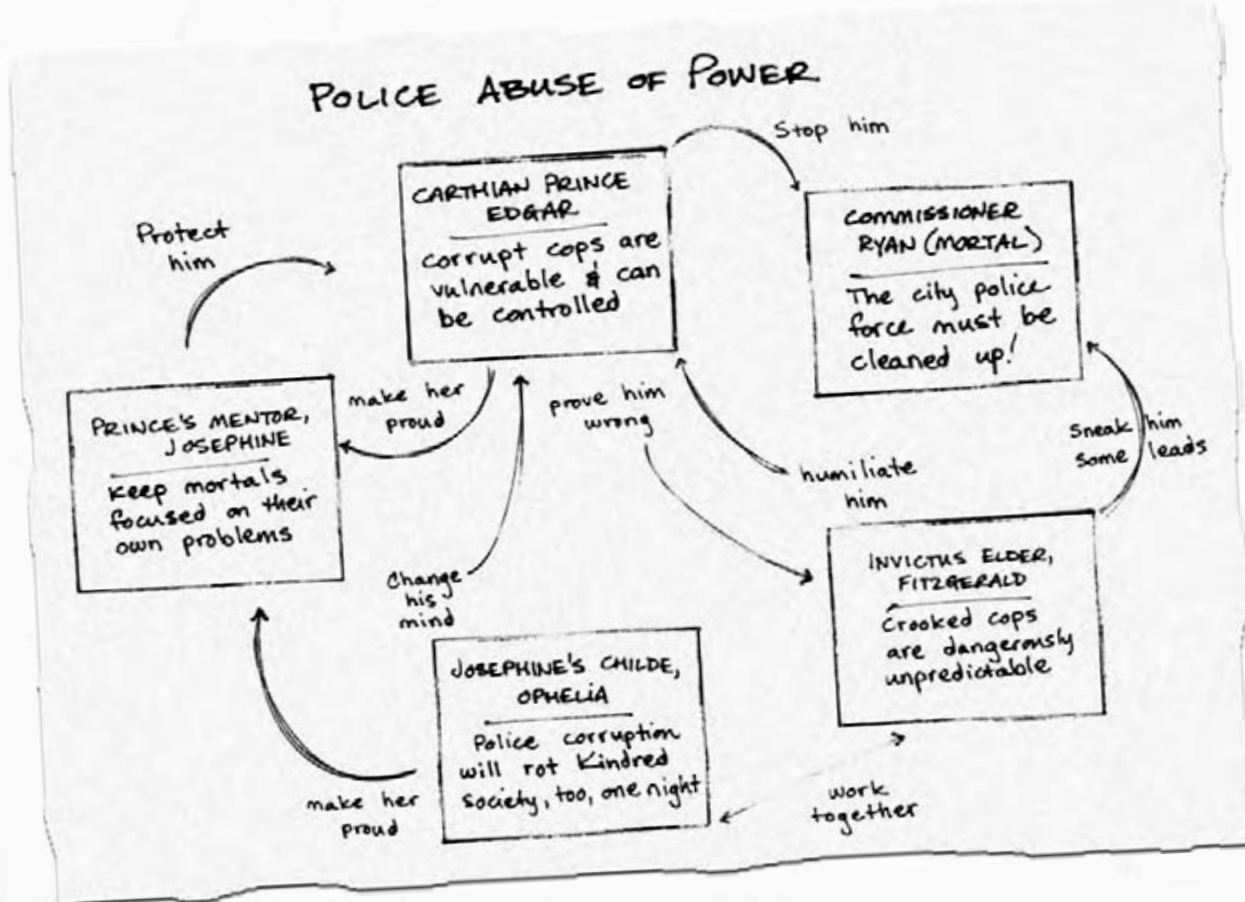
As soon as you can — as soon as the players start to give you an idea of their character concepts — make sure to draw in boxes for the player characters. Although their motivations with relation to the other actors in your chronicle will be their own to define, you must define the arrows that point in, toward them. These incoming arrows will be the source of many — if not most, or all — of the adventures that make up your chronicle. Make sure the motivations are interesting and active. You should be writing down things like “Desperate to convert them to his way of thinking,” “Needs their help” and “Despises their ideological stance.”

As you oversee the character creation process and place characters in the web, keep the Social Merits Allies, Contacts, Mentor and Status in mind. Encourage the players to choose these Merits — they are especially

worthwhile in a Political chronicle — and make sure you reflect these Merits’ effects in the relationships you map. It’s not fair if a player selects for his character an Ally who you then decide is working against him. If you see that the character’s motivations clearly differ on the majority of issues you’ve defined as important in your chronicle you can either encourage the player to choose a different Ally or — better yet — figure out why the characters are connected despite their disparate ideals.

How’s it coming? You probably don’t have enough boxes for really great political drama, but you’re going to take care of that in two of the following ways:

First, draw more boxes and put Political actors from outside Kindred society in them. Such characters will add a great deal of texture to your Political chronicle. Although these people might be political in the true sense of politics — they might include the city’s major, district attorney or chief of police — don’t limit yourself. They could as easily be business owners, religious leaders and rich dilettantes with some unusual interest or stake in the issue. Add mortals even if the issue is one that seems Kindred-only, involving relationships between covenants or violations of vampiric customs, for example. Mortals may not know precisely what they’re dealing with on these topics, but a city councilman doesn’t have to know from the Lancea Sanctum to be positive he wants to put a stop to the activities of the reprobates who’ve been gathering at



midnight near the churches in his community, freedom of religion be damned.

Second, create constellations of smaller boxes around the major actors. These are their lieutenants, henchmen and lackeys. Give some of them agendas of their own with relation to the issue. Perhaps their own ideology doesn't mesh with their patron's or maybe they're motivated very strongly by ideology on this issue, which puts them at odds with their patron's more Machiavellian interest.

Is your piece of paper crammed full of boxes and arrows? Great! Get another piece of paper, write a different issue at the top and trace all the boxes from the first sheet onto this one. The names will be the same, but many or most of the characters will get new motivations to describe their relationship to this page's issue. For example, a Prince whose primary motivation with regard to business development in the city's downtown area — where many Kindred make their sanctums — might be entirely pragmatic, but his stance on violations of the Second Tradition could simultaneously be utterly ideological, based on his unshakeable belief that the greatest evil a vampire can do is to damn another mortal.

Once you've got all the actors in place on the second sheet, draw the arrows unique to this issue. Keep in mind that the motivations of other issues may still affect the relationships on this sheet. Mortal enemies in one arena are unlikely to find themselves strong allies in another area. (Though, on the other hand, one of the most interesting things about Political chronicles are the strange bedfellows.) If you add new actors to this sheet — and you probably will — you should also backtrack to previous issues to make sure you're not overlooking any possibilities there.

Once you've done this kind of mapping for somewhere between two and five different issues, you'll have enough dramatic grist to perpetuate the action of a Political chronicle pretty much indefinitely.

Grafting Political Gameplay

Sad but true: all the driven characters, knotty issues and fascinating ambitions in the world won't make for a dramatic Political chronicle if all the scenes are boring. And because the Political chronicle's action mostly consists of people talking to each other, you'll be constantly treading perilous ground. Because talk — if it doesn't contain conflict — is really, really boring.

Every time you plan a Political adventure, and every time you plan a scene, you've got to know three things above anything else: *Who* wants *what* and *why* they're going to have trouble getting it. These are pretty easy questions to answer in lots of other chronicles. *Somebody* wants to *kill Someone Else*, and it's hard because *Someone Else* has five dots of *Whatever*. But in a Political chronicle, these three elements are harder to nail down. Luckily, you've got a tool to help you identify these elements.

In a Political chronicle, “who” comes from your web. (You made a web, right?) “What” comes from their motivations on some issue. (See how much work you've already done by writing out all that stuff?) Finally, “why they're going to have trouble” comes from all of the antagonistic arrows pointing at them. (Man, you'd be nowhere without that web. Pat yourself on the back for taking the time to make it!)

Some combinations of who, what and why they'll have trouble will contain enough drama for only a scene or two, while others will exude enough possibilities for adventure after adventure. In both cases, though — scene or scenario — there are two important staging issues to consider: when the action begins and when it ends.

To stave off talking-head tedium, you have to focus every scene and scenario tight enough to fry ants on the meat of the “having trouble” part of the equation. Kick off the action too early, and you wind up televising football players driving to the stadium. Not interesting. Overstay your welcome, and those same players are getting their sore muscles iced afterwards. It's no good. What the sports-fan craves is to see the conflict, the game.

In a Political chronicle, the equivalent of the football game is the conversation in which the people who want different things try to bend each other. It's the part when they threaten, reason and beg. Focus each scene and adventure in your Political chronicle on that part, not on what comes before, and definitely not on what comes right after. Arrive late, leave early. Let the bus ride there and the post-coital cigarette takes place off-screen.



PREPARATION AND AFTERMATH

Advanced Political Storytellers themselves can use scenes of preparation and aftermath, before and after scenes of conflict, to project the dramatic excitement into a longer timeframe than the action itself could sustain. The peril — as always, and it's very real — is boredom. Do it wrong, and you wind up in endless scenes of transition from City Park A to Nightclub B and pointless jawing between characters who are already in agreement. Do it right, though, and you work your players into a fever of anticipation as an appetizer and keep the excitement going all the way through whiskey and cigars in the study. Again, for advanced Storytellers only.



Cheap Psychological Tricks

There's a cheap psychological trick you can use on your players to make what are essentially conversations between people seem more dramatic: apply unrelated movement, action or time pressure.

Movement suggests that the parties are going somewhere while they talk. The players are constantly distracted from



the conversation by changes in their surroundings; they have to pay that more much attention to getting their point across or resisting their counterpart's agenda, and the distractions serve to make them sweat. Unrelated action is similar; it suggests some activity taking place in parallel with the dialog, anything from a game of chess to a gunfight. Unrelated action that puts the parties to the scene in conflict with each other is the best kind, because the extraneous conflict can be used to dramatically reflect the real tension. Finally, time pressure compels the characters to do their convincing not only in the most compelling way possible, but within the time available to them.

Imagine a pair of characters who must persuade a powerful Primogen to stop putting political pressure on one of their allies, even though Primogen and Ally are at odds. The persuading would be difficult enough in a vacuum. But you could apply additional pressure in the form of movement by setting the scene during the Primogen's nightly walking survey of the mean streets of his domain. You could apply extraneous action by setting the scene at a poker game attended by a whole table of elder Kindred — the only time the Primogen is willing to spare for the characters. Finally, you could apply time pressure by making the characters wait until uncomfortably close to dawn before the Primogen will see them. You can even gang these strategies up. Imagine a scene in which the characters finally manage to get the

Primogen's attention while he's making his way from the back room to the front door of a packed nightclub (motion), just after a bar fight erupts (action), on the way to the limousine waiting to convey the Primogen back to his lair (time pressure).

Moving Action Off-Screen

In order to focus your Political chronicle on politics, move as much non-political action as you can off-screen. Once some dramatic question has been decided, don't dwell on implementation. The reason is simple: movers-and-shakers don't do dirty work, they make decisions and leave the heavy lifting to their lackeys. Even if something goes wrong in the execution (as it often should, to keep everyone on their toes), the focus in a Political chronicle should be on how the curveball becomes a political question rather than a logistical one.

This approach might catch your players by surprise if they're used to chronicles in which characters spend substantial game time trolling back alleys for food. Go ahead and shock them the first few times by turning their dialog straight into action while they're paying attention to something else. For example: The characters off-handedly mention to someone powerful the way such-and-such neonate has been flouting his power and jeopardizing the Masquerade. They think little of it — it was just talk — until another of the city's Kindred mentions that the young rabble-rouser was left chained in front of



a window the morning after the conversation and burned to ash. They'll get the point pretty quickly: in a Political chronicle there's no such thing as "just talk," because talking about things makes things happen. (Shake the players up even more by having the deceased neonate's sire come after them in the political realm, even before they've heard about the young vampire's fate. That action and consequence — surprise!)

If the players try to drag all kinds of non-political action back on-screen by taking care of business themselves, you have two options. First, you can simply allow it. Maybe they're more interested in a hybrid Political chronicle. But, assuming you want to keep the emphasis where you intended it to be, you can apply pressure inside the game as the characters' political counterparts begin to treat them as operatives rather than decision makers. The Primogen don't negotiate with their own lackeys, so why should such powerful vampires negotiate with the lackeys of others?

The off-screen implications of political agreements — or disagreements — don't have to be limited in scope. Often, they shouldn't be. The nature of a policy is that it applies across the board; policy-making Kindred who manage to convince the right people to adopt their agenda should see it play out widely. If everyone agrees there needs to be a crackdown in the Rack to protect all the Kindred of the city, the characters should see the fallout among the beat cops who find their patrol areas shifting because of pressure from the mayor's office, among young Kindred who're suddenly being beaten within an inch of their unives for sloppy feeding habits that went without comment the week before and among yuppies who begin to rediscover areas of downtown they once thought were too dangerous to visit after dark.

Moving action off-screen frequently demands that you answer, all by yourself, the practical question of what happens. Powerful Kindred may agree that a certain rabble-rouser must be run to ground, but without playing out that scene — which probably won't involve any of the characters — how do you determine whether the object

of the hunt was caught or managed to escape? There's no point in playing out turn-by-turn conflict between different Storyteller characters. Reduce these conflicts to a single contested action using the most generally appropriate Traits and Skills on each side. Roll the dice behind the curtain and then spend your time determining the political fallout that will hit the characters in the aftermath.

The World of Politics of Darkness

As a closing thought, it pays to note that **Vampire: The Requiem** doesn't stop being a game of personal horror when the focus falls on politics. The question becomes how "Beast I am lest Beast I become" plays out across the webs of your Political chronicle.

The short, easy answer to that question is that horrible trade-offs are simply writ larger. A single vampire's dark bargain to feed on an innocent to stave off frenzy for another night might be reflected on a larger scale in an entire Kindred community's decision to sacrifice the city's homeless to avoid attacks on the monied, crimes against whom the police would have to investigate.

To stay on thematic point, then, push "lesser evil" trade-offs to the fore for every issue in your political web. What horrible things must the characters accept in order to do the greater good for some larger group? And how can you make them agonize for making these decisions?

Finally, although optimism and happy endings don't have much place in the World of Darkness, the Political chronicle is one place where they can sometimes be part of the mix, especially when they're bittersweet, with character Kindred stewing personally in Damnation while watching some good they've done play out in the happiness or good fortune of mortals. Perhaps, in your chronicle, the route to Golconda lies not in acute asceticism or consuming bizarre potions but in doing some great but ultimately vicarious social good that only the undead can achieve. If social elevation or enlightenment were the answer to transcendence's riddles, that would certainly explain why no Kindred have discovered it yet.

Procedural

The squad walked up the weed-covered slope to the small wooded area south of the Rogers Center. Yellow crime scene tape had been draped between the thin trunks of young Chinese sumac trees. Uniformed officers milled around, nursing thermoses of coffee. Braithwaite, the kine homicide detective, pointed out the corpse. It lay in a fetal position, its ankle securely chained to a tree trunk. Its flesh was charred nearly to the bone. I snapped on the gloves, knelt down and pushed back its upper lip. Fangs.

"Soon as we found this," said Braithwaite, "we figured we'd better call you guys."

Procedural chronicles follow tightly-knit teams of highly skilled individuals as they go about their professional problem-solving duties. These chronicles are highly episodic, favoring discrete, resolvable dilemmas over long-running storylines. Plot takes precedence over characterization. Procedural chronicles revel in formula, celebrate competence and fetishize technique. Much of the pleasure of a Procedural chronicle comes from the unlikely juxtaposition of a comfortable, familiar pop-culture format with the psychological horror of the **Vampire: The Requiem** setting.



Know Your Form

The procedural has a long pedigree in the history of popular culture. The procedural's celebration of the professional ethos can be found in the taciturn, male-bonding movies of directing icon Howard Hawks, such as the 1939 aviation drama *Only Angels Have Wings*. Writers such as Joseph Wambaugh and Ed McBain developed the form into a crime fiction staple. Now the mystery shelves of any bookstore are filled with series starring coroners, psychologists and profilers. Series television latched onto the procedural early, notably with Jack Webb's *Dragnet*, famous for its deadpan attention to documentary detail. As of this writing, the procedural rules American network television, with hydra-headed franchises *CSI* and *Law and Order* slaking an apparently bottomless thirst for intriguing, self-contained problem-solving stories.

The procedural has expanded from its precinct house roots to encompass the medical drama (*House*), occult mystery (*The X-Files*), espionage (*MI-5*) and various permutations thereof (*Alias*). The nearly infinite portability of the procedural's basic structure makes the procedural a natural for your use in a convention-bending **Vampire** chronicle.

Appeal

Procedural chronicles offer a tailor-made solution for groups suffering from revolving door attendance. The

logistical realities of convening a gaming group have sunk many a complex, character-driven chronicle. If few of your players can be depended to make it to any given session, a plot-driven chronicle keeps the story rolling no matter who shows up. Even last-minute cancellations are easily accommodated when the problem of the week can be addressed by any combination of dedicated but more or less interchangeable squad members.

The procedural expresses an essentially optimistic ideology that posits a world where all problems can be solved through a combination of smarts, dogged legwork and technical know-how. For this reason, a Procedural campaign provides an entry point to **Vampire: The Requiem** for players who are intrigued by the setting but require a glimmer of hope amid the soul-eroding horror.

The form's emphasis on teamwork can help move a group torn by inter-player conflict back into a zone of trust and mutuality, by ensuring that all of the characters share the same goal. The Procedural chronicle's relative de-emphasis of characterization, its forward motion and the concreteness of its objectives can all soothe a group in need of a breather.

Drawbacks

Players committed to psychological exploration, or those who enjoy ongoing narratives that unfold on an epic scale, may respond skeptically to your plans for a

Procedural chronicle. Although the Procedural needn't jettison the game's central theme of struggle with the Beast within, on the surface, this type of chronicle may appear to follow the dreaded "occult superhero" model. To run a Procedural chronicle for players sharing these concerns, be sure to serve up scenes of personal drama and spiritual unease amid the problem solving.

Choosing a Sub-Genre

Step one in creating a Procedural chronicle is to select your sub-genre. Choose the broad profession shared by your protagonists and the types of problems they'll be solving.

The most obvious choice is the granddaddy of them all, the **police procedural**. Here, the characters are a squad investigating crimes against a Kindred community, from murder to Masquerade violations. This genre is so omnipresent that even players who don't watch cop shows will know the formula and will be able to replicate it in a **Vampire** context. The investigation of a crime is among the simplest, strongest and most accessible story hooks available to any Storyteller. You'll find inspiration close at hand, from the TV dial to the crime pages of your local newspaper. The police procedural meshes readily with the Kindred world. Vampire society operates according to strict rules, and is thrown into disorder when those rules are violated. Its Princes and Primogen comprise an authority structure for the characters to report to. The shadow society of the Kindred resembles the criminal underworld we know from cop shows. Both genres share a gritty urban environment and a concentration on extreme and shocking behavior.

Another accessible possibility is the **military procedural**, in which the protagonists belong to a commando team. Each week they tackle a new military assignment. They may be called on to raid enemy strongholds, commit acts of sabotage, rescue hostages or capture enemy personnel. Each episode begins with a briefing in which the characters are given an assignment. A phase of reconnaissance and additional intelligence gathering then ensues. Complications can keep the planning phase uncertain: the targets may become aware of the team and strike back. Finally the operation unfolds, and the professionalism and poise of the commandos are put to the test. Possible targets can include not only fellow Kindred but also Lupines, mages and exceptionally well organized and equipped hunters. The team may report to a consistent authority, whether that be a local authority like a Prince or Primogen or the hierarchy of a covenant. The team could be mercenaries, delivering their martial services to a different client each week. To overlap the military procedural with the "War Stories chronicle" (see p. 101), make the group rootless or disenfranchised warriors stuck in a war zone and looking for the fight that will buy them a ticket out. Unlike most other procedurals,

the military procedural demands violent conflict at the climax of each episode, which will appeal heavily to groups who crave non-stop action. The undead twist on the genre lies in the need to stage successful military raids while maintaining the Masquerade.

The **heist procedural** is tricky to sustain, and may best suited as a brief change-of-pace chronicle. The protagonists are a group of high-end thieves. Each episode's problem is a MacGuffin, a valuable object kept protected behind a battery of security measures. The team members scout their target, engaging in impersonations and surveillance, to find out what they're up against. Then, consulting their floor plans and model vaults, they must rehearse and finally execute their scheme. Television heist procedurals tend to get cancelled quickly, perhaps due to the difficulty of differentiating one mission from the next. For inspiration, you may find it easier to look to movies, such as *Ocean's Eleven*, *Rififi*, *Heist*, *The Score* or *Le Cercle Rouge*.

Even more exotic is the **treasure procedural**, in which the team specializes in researching, locating and extracting archaeological items of interest to Kindred occultists. Per the military procedural, team members can answer to a single patron or operate as freelancers. Obstacles to success include rival treasure hunters, traps and supernatural creatures immured for centuries in their dusty crypts. The TV show *Relic Hunter* provides a model for this type of chronicle. Its pulpy origins imply a lighter tone than even other procedural types; you may need to keep your imagination for gore and grue on overdrive in order to preserve the horror element of the game.

Vampiric resistance to toxins and disease poses a serious obstacle to a **medical procedural**, a new variation as seen in the TV series *House, M.D.* Translation of this genre into **Vampire** terms is left as an exercise for the ambitious Storyteller.

Translating to The World of Darkness

Step two is to make a satisfying blend of the source genre and the **Vampire** setting. Do this by posing questions to yourself. From the answers you get, you can begin to build the basic premises of your chronicle. Salient questions include the following:

Why would such a team exist among the Kindred?

How would its practices differ from its human equivalent?

How do the team members relate to the Kindred power structure? Are they a part of it, or do they undermine it?

How do they connect to kine power structures? Have the Kindred infiltrated the kine, do the Kindred give the kine a wide berth or are the kine simply irrelevant?

What special challenges do Kindred operatives of this type face? Do team members have access to spe-

cial methods or techniques that help them overcome these disadvantages?

Are there Discipline abilities that make this pursuit easier to perform? (For example, aura reading is a handy trick when interviewing witnesses in a criminal investigation.) If so, have countermeasures been developed to thwart them?

Take notes or simply think your way through the translation, as desired. If working out every permutation of the translation seems daunting, rest easy: at your first session, your players will ask questions that will help you to flesh out the details. Often, the players' questions imply solutions better than those you'd reach on your own.

You'll find yourself adding details, even adjusting the default **Vampire** mythos, as your chronicle develops. For example, a police procedural may force you to expand on the brief list of ways in which vampires can meet Final Death, and to allow their corpses to remain somewhat intact after they meet it.

Designing a Support Structure

Most procedurals posit a group of top professionals working with the very best resources available. Part of the enjoyment of watching them is in seeing cutting-edge techniques or the ingenious use of shiny gadgets. A few, like the superb HBO police procedural *The Wire*, portray a more realistic world, where the cops are ordinary people just doing a job and the availability of equipment, personnel and other resources is subject to the vagaries of seamy political back-scratching.

Decide how well supported you want the team to be. For a traditional procedural, create a deep-pocketed patron organization capable of supplying all plausibly required equipment as a matter of course. Apply common sense, according to the genre. A police squad won't be able to requisition an Apache helicopter, but a well-supported commando group will.

To put the characters in the employ of a single patron who dispenses assignments may seem like an infringement on the characters' freedom. Many players may not care about this at all, reveling in the simplicity that comes from a steady stream of clear objectives.

Other players may prefer to act as freelancers, switching clients from one assignment to the next. Choice of genre may affect this decision. The same player group that enjoys the easy authority of a Kindred police badge may prefer to go mercenary in a commando chronicle. Freedom has its price: for freelancers, the acquisition of gear might comprise a minor element of each episode.

Teams working for established authorities get the support they need between scenes — unless you want to insert a level of internal politicking, as seen in *The Wire*.

When the premise of the chronicle includes a single patron, create one or more supporting characters to act

as contacts. The main contact supplies the team with its objective, and remains available throughout the episode to offer encouragement, scoldings and additional information, as momentum requires. In some episodes, the initial briefing may be supplied by another supporting character, for example, a police sergeant at a crime scene.

Social Merits

Depending on the depth of resources available to the team, you may wish to restrict certain Social Merits during character creation. These restrictions won't seem punitive, because in many cases you'll be allowing the characters extensive free benefits that would normally be quite expensive to buy with creation or experience points.

Players needn't buy the Allies Merit to establish a relationship to their patron organization. That comes free with the chronicle concept. Scrutinize other proposed Allies for fidelity to the genre, remembering that the conventions may be more forgiving after translation to the **Requiem** setting. A sympathetic lead character in a mundane police procedural wouldn't have ties to the underworld, but a Kindred enforcer policing his own community for his Prince could easily maintain alliances to organized crime figures. However, an alliance with his patron's Kindred enemies would call for some serious explaining.

If the team works for a well-resourced organization, many types of Contacts become superfluous. No need to put a Computer expert on one's character sheet; there's one on the payroll already. The Mentor may likewise be redundant, her role taken by the team's primary contact.

Keep an eye on Fame, to avoid absurd results. Procedurals strive to maintain an illusion of plausibility. A rock star who is also a member of a heist team may stretch that too far.

Discourage Retainers. The team does things; it does not have things done for them. When the group works for an organization, its functionaries may perform uninteresting background tasks between scenes.

One or two dots of Status within one's patron organization come free; players may not buy additional Status to outrank their teammates. You may allow them to purchase Status in other organizations, so long as their primary loyalty remains with their patron.

Decide if the team's organization would logically provide it a free Haven. Commandos would surely sleep in a fortified barracks, for example.

Distinctively Interchangeable

Some procedural shows feature a team of extremely competent individuals supporting a staggeringly competent main character. Other shows allow all members of the main cast their moments to shine.

For roleplaying purposes, you'll want to adopt the latter model. Every member of the team should be very good at its core skills: Investigation and Science for a police chronicle, Firearms and Brawl for a commando game. The goal is to create a cast of characters who are distinctive yet interchangeable. No matter who shows up for any given session, the team will have the Skills to advance the plot. Any player who does show up will have a shot at solving the problem of the hour, which calls for a narrower Skill set than a standard chronicle.

Many players will have been so thoroughly trained to balance out abilities within a group that you'll need to repeatedly prod them to build the necessary degree of overlap into their characters.

This request may go against the grain for some players, who have been taught to place a high value on character uniqueness. To compensate for this, and to underscore the Procedural's theme of extreme competence, each character gains two sub-Specialties, as explained below.

Sub-Specialties

A sub-Specialty is an add-on to an existing Skill, preferably a core Skill shared by nearly every other character in the group. A sub-Specialty is a particular, highly specific use of the given Skill at which the character (barring extraordinary opposition) automatically scores a success, no roll required. If desired, the player may still roll, hoping for an extraordinary success. A failure on this optional roll does not invalidate the automatic success.

Sub-Specialties are negotiated with the Storyteller. The ideal sub-Specialty situation crops up once every episode or so. A sub-Specialty likely to come into play more often than that is too broad. Storytellers should take mercy and also reject proposed sub-Specialties that are unlikely to ever occur.

Sub-Specialties may not relate only to actions wholly resolvable with a single skill roll. Combat actions may not, for example, have sub-Specialties attached to them.

Sub-Specialties are self-defined by the players, and should consist of a single short sentence. Players having difficulty inventing sub-Specialties will find it easier if they begin the sentence with the phrase "*I always succeed when I . . .*"

Examples of appropriate sub-Specialties:

I always succeed when I . . .

- . . . run down a perp. (Athletics)
- . . . translate an inscription found in an ancient tomb. (Academics)
- . . . erase traces of my infiltration into a computer system. (Computer)
- . . . search for latent fingerprints. (Investigation)
- . . . determine a corpse's time of death. (Medicine)
- . . . try to figure out what a bureaucratic functionary really wants. (Politics)

- . . . build a jury-rigged transmitter. (Science)
- . . . look for infrared beams. (Larceny)
- . . . walk silently across a forest floor. (Stealth)

When an automatic success would either bring the current episode to a quick and anti-climactic conclusion or fatally strain the plausibility of the story, Storytellers may decide the attempt to use the sub-Specialty faces extraordinary opposition. They should do so for no other reason, and only when it really matters. At all other times, Storytellers should err on the side of generosity, allowing the players to participate in the Procedural's veneration of competence.

In the case of extraordinary opposition, the Storyteller applies whatever negative modifiers pertain to the attempt. The player rolls as per usual, but is credited with one free success.

Sub-Specialties in Other Chronicle Types

Sub-Specialties may suit other chronicles whose concepts require that all characters draw from a narrow Skill set. Storytellers may wish to allow them in games, such as *Vampire Kings*, in which the characters should seem especially masterful.

Choosing Your Continuity Level

Before introducing your new chronicle to your players, decide how much continuity and character development you intend to allow. Popular procedural dramas answer this question in varying ways. *Law and Order*, the purest of the procedurals, reveals as little as it can about the protagonists' lives when they aren't working cases. *NYPD Blue* cared more about its character arcs than its middlingly difficult mysteries, often creating conflicts between the protagonists' work and home lives. When *CSI*'s creative team gave its lead character an ongoing hearing problem, viewers rebelled, and the story arc was de-emphasized. In the hoary days before *Hill Street Blues*, lead characters remained static, iconic figures. Instead of changing over time, the Columbos, Kojaks, Angels and A-Teamers continually reinforced a simple, iconic persona.

Continuity level is a matter of both taste and convenience. Many players seek out **Vampire: The Requiem** in order to explore character and will be chafe at your chronicle's restrictions if you remove it entirely. Other players may find it refreshing to stick to just the facts, ma'am.

The logistical advantage of a purely episodic approach dissipates as you devote more time to the characters' personal lives. If your group has attendance issues, take care to wall off character arcs from the problem-solving elements of your adventures. The group should be able to continue the current case or mission no matter who shows up at any given session. Avoid cases that tie into one character's backstory or relationships with supporting characters.

When briefing your players on your chronicle concept, let them know how much or how little character development they ought to expect. If you plan to skimp on character, ask players to create simple, bold characters with backgrounds that can be summed up in 25 words or fewer. If you intend to devote a good chunk of time to the protagonists' private lives, request the traditional array of thorny internal conflicts and detailed histories, liberally salted with plot hooks.

Commendations

In a typical **Vampire** chronicle, the Vices assist in the generation of character arcs, by rewarding players for interestingly risky character behavior. If you plan to run a pure Procedural with little emphasis on the protagonist's personal lives, Vices may become disruptive to play. Risky choices will distract from or actively obstruct mission fulfillment, undermining the form's theme of romanticized competence.

If you choose to run a strict Procedural, the Willpower benefit of exercising one's Vice is replaced by the Commendation. All other rules effects of Vices remain in force.

Characters receive a Commendation, and 1 Willpower point, by achieving a breakthrough in the case or mission.

A Storyteller can establish Commendation-worthy actions as she designs an episode, by breaking the mission into stages. Any successful action that moves the story from one stage to the next warrants a Commendation. You can also award Commendations on the fly, whenever a contribution to the case seems inventive, entertaining or otherwise remarkable. Choices that move a stalled session forward are especially worthy of Commendations.

Players may receive multiple Commendations in one session, but may not get them consecutively. Spotlight-craving players must, therefore, cede the floor to others before becoming eligible for more.

Creating Episodes

Procedural episodes, whatever the genre, should consist of a simple basic premise, which is then subjected to one or more twists that complicate the tasks of the protagonists, maintaining interest and building suspense.

On the surface, an episode of a procedural may seem complicated compared to other dramas. In standard dramatic construction, every scene must relate to a single driving narrative, at least on a thematic level. Procedurals are allowed to be messy, in order to foster an illusion of realism. Investigators pursue false leads. Random chance can throw a monkey wrench into a military mission. The doctors nearly kill their patient three times before finally making the correct diagnosis.

As Storyteller, you don't need to supply this confusion and messiness; the players will do it for you. Even

a very simple mystery can take a long chunk of gaming time to resolve. Players aren't seasoned investigators. They're receiving all of their information verbally, and can easily miss key points. There's no editor to snip out the boring bits of plodding legwork. A lead that might be dispensed with in a few minutes of television drama may take an hour to play out.

Building Blocks

The core building blocks of any episode are the objective, the twist, the Kindred touch and the backgrounder. Connect these elements by creating a throughline and breaking it into stages.

Objective

The objective lays out your protagonists' goal. When they achieve it, the episode is over, and they can forget it and move on to another one. Express your objective as a clear, punchy, action-oriented sentence, written as an imperative.

Examples:

- Find the killer.
- Stop the Masquerade violation.
- Rescue the Duke's daughter.
- Destroy the ammo dump.
- Recover the ankh.
- Steal the painting.

Twist

The overarching lesson of the procedural is that nothing is ever as it seems. One or more twists always arises to surprise the audience and test the mettle of the team members, making it harder for them to complete the objective.

Examples:

- Joaquin killed the professor, but he was tricked into doing it by the real culprit, the professor's protégé.
- The violator has been acting unconsciously, falling into a trance-like state caused by a peculiar derangement.
- The Duke's daughter has been programmed to attempt suicide in the event of a rescue attempt.
- The ammo dump has been moved to a safer location.
- The ankh houses a powerful entity, which will possess anyone who comes into contact with it.
- The painting has been booby-trapped by a vengeful collector hoping to attract and capture a rival team of cat burglars.

The Kindred Touch

Your players are expecting not only a procedural game but a **Vampire** chronicle. Ensure that every episode ties intrinsically to the **Requiem** setting. If your chapter could just as easily be an installment of *Without a Trace*

or *Crossing Jordan*, except that its protagonists stop to drink blood every so often, it's time to rethink. The Kindred Touch is the element that could only appear in a **Vampire** story. Sum the element up in a quick sentence. Once you've made sure that the Kindred Touch is present, you can move on to flesh out your episode.

Examples:

- The professor was executed by being trapped out in the sun.
- Masquerade violations are intrinsic to the Kindred mythos.
- The Duke's daughter has been kidnapped by a rival, to prevent the Duke from Embracing her.
- The force maintaining the ammo dump plans to start a war with the Lupines.
- The ankh offers insights into Kindred origins.
- The painting becomes more beautiful as blood is fed to it.

Backgrounder

The backgrounder goes into more detail, explaining why the objective matters and exactly how the twist works, by setting out the information the team will need to gather to achieve success and detailing the supporting characters involved in the case. If the protagonists are unraveling a past event, the backgrounder specifies the chronology they'll be working to reconstruct. If they're staging a raid or incursion, set out the tactical obstacles to their goal. Logic matters in a Procedural, so check the underpinnings of the plot to make sure they make sense. Supply character statistics as needed.

Throughline

The throughline is the flipside of the backgrounder. The throughline sets out one possible course by which the protagonists can achieve their objective, which can be as brief as a few point-form sentences or a diagram leading from one clue or location to the next. By creating a throughline, you'll ensure that all of the dots can be connected by the team.

On your list or diagram, highlight each separate element as a stage of the investigation/mission. Players who move the story to a new stage may be eligible for Commendations (see above.)

Self-Containment

Procedurals are self-contained. All loose ends are wrapped up when the objective is achieved. Villains do not recur. Some walk-on characters, such as office functionaries, coroners, arms suppliers or legal contacts, may reappear from time to time, but remain in the background.

Adherence to this rule keeps the game accessible to players who pop in and out, or even to guest appearances by visiting friends.

Team members never have to hunker down against an ever-increasing roster of enemies.

Like most rules, self-containment gives power to those who break it. If you maintain a long-running Procedural and then toss in a sequel to a memorable past episode, a standard Storytelling trick suddenly becomes fresh and surprising. The longer you wait to defy the conventions you've established, the stronger the effect.

Running Episodes

The chief challenge in running a Procedural episode is in fostering forward momentum. Investigative sequences are particularly prone to bogging down and should be carefully monitored for signs of frustration or mental fatigue.

Delicate Intervention

Don't be afraid to subtly steer your players. Few will boast extensive backgrounds in criminology, commando tactics or other relevant professions. Unlike the characters in televised dramas, your players won't be bolstered by a script concocted with the help of consultants in those fields. To replicate the form's brisk pacing and aura of competence, you may need to nudge the game along with hints and suggestions. Storytellers needn't sit back passively as the players lose themselves in possibilities. Remind them of the obvious facts they're forgetting. Urge them to look for the next step. Supply knowledge of techniques that would be second nature to their characters.

In the investigative phase of a game, players often make the rookie error of stopping to speculate about every conceivable possibility, instead of forging on to collect information. Remind them that investigation is about eliminating possibilities. When in doubt, pound the pavement.

Narrative Flexibility

Your throughline and set of stages establishes only one possible roadmap for the story. In action-oriented episodes, the roadmap will probably forecast the sequence of events with reasonable accuracy. Investigative sequences rarely follow a predictable order. You can never be sure which leads will jump out at the players and which will lay fallow until later. Don't worry if the sequence of events they create departs from the roadmap. You may need to temporize a bit, so that they encounter the main premise before they learn about the twist.

The best way to do this is to leave open the exact ways in which investigators can discover the necessary clues and move from stage to stage in your throughline. Allow any credible-seeming investigative avenue to lead to the next nugget of information.

In the early days of roleplaying design, adventures often rested progress through the narrative on a single roll of a specific Skill. Others have learned from that mistake, so you don't have to.

The Pleasures of Formula

Critics hate formula, but the enduring popularity of the procedural shows that audience members derive profound satisfaction from formula. Certain procedurals unfold with a clockwork regularity: each *Law and Order* episode begins with the discovery of a crime by a random witness and hands off the case from cops to prosecutors at the half-hour mark. The repetition of a formula offers viewers the comfort of ritual, and allows an access point into the story. To creators, formulas offer the challenge to creativity and a readymade structure on which to hang their narratives. Events seem more surprising when they unfold within the familiar framework of a set formula.

Roleplaying sessions are difficult to structure. Player choices take precedence over an arbitrary timetable. You can still evoke a sense of formula, reminding your group of the procedural paradigm, by kicking off each episode in a ritualized manner. You could even pick a theme song to play each week at the opening of play, signaling the shift from chat mode to game time.

Possible ritualized teaser openings:

Pierced by the Duke's lances, his sweet face battered and bruised, his doublet torn, Furioso staggered down the staircase toward me. Beams of searing sunlight shot into the room, through gaps in the heavy drapery. "Repair to your haven!" the Duke screamed at me, hot tears welling in his eyes. But it was too late for all of us. I ran to Furioso; he collapsed into my waiting arms. My unbeating heart swelled as we touched for the last time. I seized the drapes, pulling them open. And then, together, we burned.

An Operatic chronicle employs the time-honored structure of classic melodrama, as immortalized in grand opera, to create passionate, self-contained sagas of love and doom.

Target Audience

Operatic chronicles will appeal to groups with an across-the-board taste for character and storyline, and especially to players interested in experimenting with the boundaries between game and narrative. An Operatic chronicle best suits extroverted players who aren't shy about emotional exploration, at least when it pertains to their fictional creations.

Operatic chronicles unfold as a series of short stories with fixed endings and are well suited to convention games, assuming that your players know what they're getting into. Operatic chronicles work well when the play group will be together for only a brief period. Operatic

- Two or more characters engage in banter before the call comes.
- A feature character is interrupted during colorful, personality-reinforced leisure activity.
- The squad appears at the crime scene.
- At a briefing, video screens show surveillance tape of this week's takedown target.

Respect the Ending

The definite endings of Procedural episodes may occur in odd places in a session. Allow endings to occur naturally, no matter where they fall in the course of the session. When you're two thirds of the way through a session and you see an ending looming, throwing in some additional plot complications to extend play for another hour or so may be tempting. Count on this trick to backfire on you. One extra complication can collapse a Procedural plot, robbing it of its desirable neatness. Just as often, an extra complication can send the group off on a time-wasting goose chase, spilling over into the next session, and leaving you with the same problem once again. Let endings fall where they may, hand out experience points and always be ready to at least bluff your way through a new beginning.

Operatic

short stories make good "bumpers" between other, longer chronicles or as fill-in interludes when a quorum of players fails to show for your regular, ongoing chronicle.

Drawbacks

The extreme story focus and experimental structure of the Operatic chronicle is unlikely to win converts among hardcore combat enthusiasts, puzzle-solvers or political empire builders. Here, players win by losing. Top marks go to those who most movingly convey their characters toward pre-ordained disaster. Players who insist on always coming out ahead even in the doom-laden World of Darkness are advised to steer clear of the operatic style.

Points of Reference

When talking about the tone of a film or other dramatic work as operatic, we're describing a style of wild, over-the-top emotion. The prevailing aesthetic of our time encourages a restrained, naturalistic tone. Many critics use the word *melodramatic*, which ought to be a neutral description of a particular style, as a self-evident insult. When we do see works working at an operatic emotional pitch, such as David Lynch's film *Wild At Heart*, they tend to be leavened with liberal quanti-

ties of irony. To treat melodrama seriously is to journey back to an earlier aesthetic.

A Quick History

Turbulent, stylized emotion survives in high culture on the opera stage. The style of interest to us here is that of the 19th century grand opera. Not all operas contain the thematic and tonal elements referenced by the critical adjective “operatic.” The form’s roots as a form begin during the late Renaissance, starting out fanciful and airy during the Baroque period and winding up cerebral and conceptual from the beginning of the last century onwards.

Due to the sophistication and accessibility of composers such as Verdi, Wagner and Puccini, the grand opera style happens to be the one that remains the most popular with opera enthusiasts today. Even devoted aficionados may adopt a knowing, ironic attitude toward its naked, outsized emotional displays — although this is what attracts them to the material in the first place.

When these works were first presented, though, they weren’t seen as stylized or less than sincere. Melodramatic conventions inform the literary sensibilities of popular writers such as Walter Scott, Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy. Melodramas, so named because live music was played under the acting, just like the score of a movie today, ruled the theatrical stage.

Opera librettos were often adapted from melodramas, or from novels that drew on their conventions. Original works for the opera stage employed the same standard elements. Adaptations of earlier works, such as Verdi’s Shakespearean works, added melodramatic qualities to them.

In other words, to call something “operatic” sounds cool and culturally pedigreed, but to label it as “melodramatic” is to tar it as lame and contemptible, even though these two terms carry essentially the same meaning. This ingrained prejudice of connotation will hold true even for your players: if you tell them they’re playing an Operatic chronicle, you’ll get more serious, sincere responses from them than if you call it a “Melodramatic” chronicle, in which case they’ll ham it up mercilessly.

Passion Versus Responsibility

The difference between melodramatic storytelling and the restrained dramatic mode that dominates today springs from social change. Melodramatic stories derive their cathartic misery and suffering from the social constraints of the day. Their plots send their characters on a course toward destruction by pitting their personal desires against their social obligations. Their characters are rebels against an oppressive social order, valuing love and loyalty over duty and propriety. They are crushed by their headlong pursuit of passion, but their audiences, constrained by similar societal codes, can vicariously enjoy their moment of rebellion, weep piteously at their destruction and end the

evening by nodding their heads in acceptance at the inevitable restoration of social norms.

Examples

In Bizet’s *Carmen*, a soldier, Don José, falls under the spell of a tempestuous gypsy, Carmen, who works in a cigarette factory, prompting him to assault Zuniga, an officer who makes a pass at her. Don José’s life of order and duty destroyed, he deserts from the army, only to be jilted by Carmen, who leaves him for Escamillo, a toreador. Don José stabs Carmen to death and collapses sobbing by her corpse.

In Verdi’s *La Traviata*, adapted from Dumas’ *La Dame aux camélias*, earnest young aristocrat Alfred Germont declares his undying love for consumptive courtesan Violetta, who, in a famous aria, declares her dedication to the principles of freedom and pleasure. They set up housekeeping together, but his father Giorgio denounces her, demanding that Alfred and Violetta sever their liaison. Duty and social convention demand it: if their scandalous relationship continues, Alfred’s sister will lose the opportunity to marry a nobleman. Violetta, seeing the destruction their passion will wreak, complies, deserting Alfred. He pursues her, disgracing her. Only when tuberculosis places Violetta on her death bed does Alfred learn the selfless reason for her departure. The lovers are briefly reunited before she dies.

In Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, based on Walter Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Lucia, sister to Lord Ashton, loves his sworn enemy, Edgardo. Ashton, determined to separate them, forges a letter from Edgardo, disclaiming his love for her. Lucia, following her duty to her family, quickly marries a noble suitor chosen for her by Ashton. Edgardo appears, swears vengeance and departs, cursing the Lammermoor clan. Lucia goes mad, slays her husband, swoons and dies of extreme emotional distress. Upon discovering her fate, Edgardo fatally stabs himself.

Isolde, one of the title characters of Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*, loves the knight Tristan, but has been betrothed to King Mark. Tristan loves her, but his sense of honor prevents him from showing it, so he treats her coldly. Bitterly resenting her uncontrollable feelings for him, and regretting her decision to spare his life after he killed her previous love, she orders a servant to prepare a poison, which the pair will drink together. The servant brews a love potion instead, intensifying their passion. Following her duty, she marries Mark, but continues to love Tristan. Discovering Tristan and Isolde engaged in a fervent declaration of love, Mark challenges Tristan to a duel. Tristan does not defend himself from Mark’s blows and is badly wounded. The lovers are briefly reunited; Tristan dies in Isolde’s arms. Mark arrives, prepared to forgive the lovers and to step aside, but it’s too late. Isolde drops dead onto Tristan’s body.

For more examples, consult a compendium of opera plots. You can often pick these up inexpensively at a used book stores.

Vampire: The Opera

Melodramatic opera plots seem less than contemporary to Western audiences, because we have demolished most of the social constraints, such as female virtue, obedience to elder family members, arranged marriage and restrictive class obligations that drive these opera plots. Even our televised soap operas, the main surviving source of histrionic emotional storytelling, barely reflect the old strictures of the form.

(Tellingly, traditional melodrama is still wildly popular in much of Asia, where the “suffering woman” movie remains a pop culture staple, and traditional social obligations have yet to fully succumb to modernity’s onslaught.)

However, vampire society is not contemporary. It still models itself on the old aristocracy, with Princes, Lords and Dukes overseeing a population who dare not violate their edicts. Vampire society is laden with rules that spell death if you break them. Vampire society can easily place characters on collision courses between their passions and their responsibilities.

Starting Play

Convene your group, warning them in advance that you’ll be hitting them with an experimental chronicle style. Tell them to avoid preconceived notions about the characters they want to play.

Start the first session by explaining the concept of the Operatic chronicle. Explain that, in this game, success is measured by entertainment value and the adroitness with which the players maneuver the lead characters toward their inevitable, cathartic destruction. Present the players with the other basic concepts of the chronicle. Finally, read them (or better yet, summarize in your own words) the sample opera plots given above. For an extra shot of atmosphere, borrow some opera DVDs from your local public library and roll a few climactic highlights for your group.

Handing Out Roles

When your players all seem to have a handle on the basic conventions, assign roles. The basic roles are as follows:

Protagonist

The Protagonist is the main character, through whose point of view the story unfolds. The distinction between Protagonist and Lover (below) can be tricky. Sometimes the Lover, the object of desire, is the more vivid character, but the less exciting Protagonist is the character we relate to. For example, Don José is the viewpoint character in *Carmen*; the events that happen to

him drive the story, and we suffer along with him when Carmen dumps him for the bullfighter. Usually, though, opera protagonists are women: Violetta occupies the center of attention in *La Traviata*, while the other characters woo and entreat her. She makes the decisions that move the story onward. It doesn’t really matter if your Protagonist winds up less active than the Lover, so don’t worry too much about the difference.

The Lover

The Lover is the Protagonist’s partner. If they can be together, they can be happy for all eternity. But, of course, the forces of social constraint will conspire to keep them fatally apart.

Alazon

The Alazon is the primary oppositional force to the happiness of the two lead characters. Often a father figure in opera, in this case he (or she) is more likely to be a metaphorical parent, an authority figure with a good reason to force either the Lover or Protagonist to obey social convention, and the ability to make good on his threats. Lord Ashton and Giorgio Germont are both Alazon figures.

The Rival

The Rival also seeks the affections of one of the two lead characters. Often this character’s liaison with the lead would be more socially acceptable than the doomed affair they instead pursue. The Rival offers the widest range of variation of any character type. The player can portray the Rival as anything from a reasonably sympathetic sufferer of love’s caprice to a complete frothing monster.

Retainer

The Retainer is a servant, usually of the female lead, who acts as a confidant and facilitator. Though she might advise her mistress to follow convention and avoid the catastrophic results of unbridled passion, she ultimately works to bring the doomed lovers together. She may transmit messages, arrange trysts, abet escapes, take part in deceptions (sometimes posing as her mistress) and otherwise act to subvert the lead’s lack of freedom. In a Kindred context, the Retainer may be a ghoul, an inferior in a covenant, a blood-slave or simply a friend of the Protagonist.

Mischief-Maker

The Mischief-Maker is a peripheral figure who stirs the pot, ensuring that doom comes to the tragic lovers. He may be literally malicious or a righteous upholder of social norms. The Mischief-Maker may set out to cause disaster for the doomed pair or could facilitate it quite by accident, while pursuing his own perfectly rational, sympathetic goals. In many cases, he is an agent or ally of the Alazon, who might perform his duties with gleeful enthusiasm or woeful reluctance. He is not necessarily present in all melodramatic stories.



Compensating for Player Numbers

Every operatic story needs the two leads and an Alazon. In a pinch, if you have only three players, the other roles can be taken by the Storyteller. If you have more than five players, add additional Retainers and Mischief-Makers as needed. For example, both the male and female leads can be served by Retainers.

Variations and Combinations

Character types can be combined or omitted, as they often are in the source material. There is no true Alazon in *Carmen*; instead, you get two suitors, one of whom, Zuniga, is an authority figure, but who disappears from the storyline halfway through. King Mark from *Tristan and Isolde* is both Alazon and suitor.

By setting operatic stories in a contemporary setting, you allow new variations that would never appear in a 19th-century melodrama. A love triangle might consist of two active women fighting for the affections of a passive man. The configuration of romantic triangles changes even more if you add gay or bisexual characters to the equation.

Fleshing Out the Roles

After handing out the roles, you then ask questions of the players, which will establish the basic situation and flesh out the characters' basic concepts.

This set of questions goes to the Protagonist's player: *Who are you, and what duty, obligation or convention of Kindred society most defines your identity? Given that duty or obligation, who would be the most disastrous sort of person for you to fall in love with?*

Ask follow-up questions as needed to make clear the reasons for the disastrousness of the choice. Then direct a question to the Lover:

What is it that makes you exactly the sort of person [Protagonist's character] should never fall in love with?

Follow up with any questions needed to establish a basic concept for the Lover.

Your next set of questions goes to the Alazon:

To which of the leads are you connected, and in what way? When you discover their relationship, you will do everything you can to uphold the Protagonist's defining social obligation, and to part the two lovers. What obligation of your own compels you to do this?

Now flesh out the Rival. If this is your first operatic story, start with a male Rival for the female lead's affections. (Feel free to vary the pattern after your players are familiar with the structure and looking to shake it up.)

While a relationship between [Protagonist] and [Lover] is doomed, your marriage or liaison to [female lead] would allow her to lead a safe, stable, if not necessarily rapturous, existence. Who are you, and why is that?

Next up is the Retainer (or retainers). Pick which of the two leads has a Retainer. You can switch things up for later installments, but start with the female lead, or the socially weaker of the romantic pair.

You are the devoted confidant and helper of [the chosen lead] and want only the best for [him/her]. What is the exact nature of your relationship to [him/her]?

Finally, create concepts for the Mischief-Makers:

You have your own reasons for keeping the lovers apart. What are they, and how do they define your identity?

Example of Start-Up

You're embarking on your first operatic story, for a group of five players. You decide that Alice and Boris, your strongest roleplayers, will take the roles of Protagonist and Lover. You assign the role of Alazon to Sun-hwa, and give Mitch the Rival role. Glenna will be the Retainer; Cary, the Mischief-Maker.

Alice answers your questions to the Protagonist as follows:

"I am Hecuba, raised as a mortal child, then Embraced at age 18, to serve as priestess for a particularly strict and zealous Circle of the Crone cabal. I am intended to one day become Hierophant; to love anyone outside my covenant would mean turning my back on everything I was ever meant to be."

Boris picks this up in his answers as the Lover:

"I am Stewart Arkel, an undercover agent sent by the Lancea Sanctum to penetrate and destroy this cell of filthy snake-worshippers, before they can infect the domain with their corruption. For Hecuba to fall in love with me would be to enter into a liaison with her worst enemy."

Sun-hwa answers the Alazon's questions:

"I am Koumasa, the current Hierophant. It was I who stole Hecuba as an infant, raised her to adulthood and Embraced her, all to mold her into the perfect herald of the Crone. I will destroy anyone who threatens to move her from the destiny I've chosen for her — especially a lover who hails from the hated Lancea Sanctum."

Now it's Mitch's turn, as the Rival:

"I am Degei, captain of Koumasa's guards. I vigilantly protect the cabal from its enemies. When not on duty, I zealously flagellate myself, seeking enlightenment through tribulation. The sole pleasure I imagine for myself is my wedding night. When the time is right, Koumasa has promised me the hand of Hecuba, the future Hierophant of my cult."

Glenna answers the Retainer's questions:

"Naturally, the Hierophant couldn't raise Hecuba personally, so she turned to me, the lowly Amalia, to be her nurse. Although I respect Koumasa and still believe in the tenets of the Crone, my greatest attachment has been to the dear child Hecuba, who is more my daughter than the Hierophant's. I want Hecuba to be safe, and would do anything to protect her."

Finally Cary establishes his role as Mischief-Maker:

"I'm Albert Maclean, another secret agent for the Lancea Sanctum, posing, unbeknownst to Stewart, as a recent convert to the Circle of the Crone. Stewart is the golden boy of the local

Sanctum leader, but I was sent by his second-in-command, who suspects him of moral weakness. My stock with the Sanctum hierarchy will rise if something happens to Stewart. If I find out that he's consorting with Hecuba, I'll create a situation in which he has to choose between her and his allegiance to the covenant."

Character Creation

Because these characters may be used for only a few sessions, to lavish many hours of loving character creation on them would be wasteful of your players' time and energy. Careful construction of maximized characters isn't an issue in a game in which the players will often be rooting for their characters to fail. An absolute balance between player characters isn't necessarily desirable either; it usually makes sense for the Alazon to have much better game statistics than the doomed lovers. Retainers should be lowlier than their masters, and so on.

This method sacrifices the usual game balance concerns in favor of speed. Don't let your players agonize over their choices or spend long periods flipping through rulebooks shopping for the absolute best abilities. Remind them that these are short-term characters. If players are still dithering after about 20 minutes, step in to finish the job yourself.

Allow the players to quickly fill out their character sheets by following these formulae, depending on character type. In each case, this method assumes that the characters already start with one dot in each Attribute. Players do not purchase Social Merits; instead, when they're done, you hand out Social Merits for free, as needed, to match the character concepts already established during Start-Up. The players pick Clan and Covenant, if not already implied by the answers they gave to your questions. Figured statistics like Health and Willpower are determined as usual.

Protagonist: Divide 13 dots among Attributes; no Attribute may exceed 4 dots. Skills: choose 2 Skills at 4 dots, 3 skills at 3 dots, 2 skills at 2 dots and 3 skills at 1 dot. Spend 7 Merit points; no Merit may exceed 4 dots. Divide 6 dots among Disciplines.

Lover: Divide 14 dots among Attributes; no Attribute may exceed 4 dots. Skills: choose 2 Skills at 4 dots, 3 skills at 3 dots, 3 skills at 2 dots and 3 skills at 1 dot. Spend 7 Merit points; no Merit may exceed 4 dots. Divide 5 dots among Disciplines.

Alazon: Divide 18 dots among Attributes. Skills: choose 4 Skills at 4 dots, 4 skills at 3 dots, 4 skills at 2 dots and 4 skills at 1 dot. Distribute 10 Merit points. Divide 8 dots among Disciplines.

Suitor: Divide 15 dots among Attributes; no Attribute may exceed 4 dots. Skills: choose 3 Skills at 4 dots, 3 skills at 3 dots, 2 skills at 2 dots and 3 skills at 1 dot. Spend 8 Merit points; no Merit may exceed 4 dots. Divide 7 dots among Disciplines. If, at end of process, the Suitor is not

the superior of either lead in Strength + Weaponry, add sufficient dots in Weaponry to make him so.

Retainer: Divide 12 dots among Attributes; no Attribute may exceed 4 dots. Skills: choose 1 Skill at 4 dots, 3 skills at 3 dots, 2 skills at 2 dots and 3 skills at 1 dot. Spend 6 Merit points; no Merit may exceed 4 dots. Divide 3 dots among Disciplines. (Adjust as necessary for ghoul or other kine retainers.)

Mischief-Maker: Divide 12 dots among Attributes; no Attribute may exceed 4 dots. Skills: choose 2 Skills at 4 dots, 3 skills at 3 dots, 2 skills at 2 dots and 3 skills at 1 dot. Spend 8 Merit points; no Merit may exceed 4 dots. Divide 5 dots among Disciplines. If, at end of process, the Mischief-Maker is not the superior of either lead in Dexterity + Firearms, add sufficient dots in Firearms to make him so.

Running the Game

An Operatic game is the opposite of a Procedural (p. 79). There, the players and characters share the same interests as they pursue a mystery or action-oriented goal. Emotional motivation takes a backseat to problem solving. Here, the players derive entertainment from bringing about the ruin of the characters they identify with. The characters act to realize goals arising from their feelings, without an external problem to drive the plot. Players become explicitly collaborative with you in weaving the narrative.

To keep the story running without external motivation requires an unusual degree of Storyteller orchestration.

Scenes

To orchestrate a character-driven game, break it down into scenes.

You can jot down notes ahead of time on which scenes are likely to occur, but you'll have to improvise as the story unfolds in unexpected ways, as it always will. Be ready to incorporate player requests and decisions in your scene creation. Although the tragic ending of your Operatic story is a foregone conclusion, the players shouldn't feel that they're being dragged through a script, but that they're helping to make a story that unfolds in front of them.

A scene consists of a **situation** and an **intention** for each character.

The situation provides a context in which one or more characters in the scene interact. For example:

The lovers meet for the first time.

Don Inigo demands the return of his ring.

Violetta promises to renounce her love for Alfred.

Albert plants a clue implicating Stewart as a spy.

Amalia poses as Hecuba at the ceremony, hoping to permit her escape.

An intention tells involved players what their characters are meant to accomplish in the scene. Communicate via secret note. Intentions should arise from the roles the players have been assigned, and the concepts they presented

during set-up. For example, in a scene in which the lovers meet for the first time, you may give Hecuba the intention "conceal your growing love from Stewart" and Stewart the intention "gain her trust, to better infiltrate the sect." As this comes perilously near to directing the players, always be ready to modify an intention in private discussion with a player, to bring it closer to her vision of the character.

In scenes of emotional release, such as one in which the players leap into one another's arms and declare love eternal, both participants in a scene can share compatible intentions. Because they have no room to develop after the characters realize that their intentions are in harmony, these scenes should be both rare and short.

Most interesting scenes will pit players with contradictory intentions against one another. Even the two leads should operate at cross-purposes much of the time: one will be repressing her feelings as the other increases his ardor, and so on. Examples of opposed intentions include:

"Expose his secret" vs. "Convince him you've nothing to hide"

"Demand he renounce his love" vs. "Appeal to his buried sympathies."

"Tempt him to a duel" vs. "Obey your promise of peace"

Accolades

At the end of each scene, the involved players read out their intentions to the entire group. The Storyteller and uninvolved players vote together to choose the player who pursued her intention most entertainingly. A player can win a scene in which his character failed to achieve his intention.

The winner of each scene is awarded an Accolade point. Keep track of Accolade scores for each player as the chapter continues.

Structure

The story breaks into three acts.

Act One: Introductions

Scenes in Act One establish the situations, the characters, their goals and their relationships to each other. Create scenes to achieve the following:

Establish the Lovers

Establish the Alazon

Establish the Suitor

Establish the Retainer

Establish the Mischief-Maker

Act Two: Complications

In Act Two, the situations are developed. Complications arise; some can be overcome, bringing fleeting happiness. Most worsen the situation for our doomed lovers. Conflicts between characters worsen. Positions are hardened. Surprising reversals occur. Suspense is created. Perhaps our heroes can be happy after all!

Act Three: Cathartic Destruction

Ultimately, though, the resolutions of all these scenes contrive toward romantic horror and Final Death. Act Three moves the characters toward their ultimate collisions. Bodies hit the floor. The living lament the fallen. Villains are brought to belated justice or suffer the pangs of remorse, tormented by the knowledge that their actions can't be undone.

Curtain Call

When the fates of the characters are definitively wrapped up, check the Accolade totals for the various players. The player with the highest score stands to receive an ovation from everyone else.

Contrivance Toward Disaster

In a standard game, players want their characters to succeed when they roll. In many instances, they will want to succeed during Operatic chronicles, as well. However, in other circumstances, the fulfillment of their dramatically appropriate dooms requires that they fail their rolls.

When a player wants to fail, she should lobby the Storyteller for additional negative modifiers. The better she explains the forces hindering her attempt, the more penalties the Storyteller should assess. Be particularly generous when the reasons for possible failure relate to a disturbed emotional state brought about by the character's pursuit of her passions, or the thwarting thereof.

Climactic Fatality

The proper ending of any operatic saga brings about the cathartic annihilation of the main characters. Here, the extreme resilience of vampiric physiology, an important asset in a standard chronicle, becomes a hindrance. A mere lapse into torpor simply won't do the trick. While the leads can always schedule their last, fatal tryst for the moments before sunrise, mutual immolation will get old fast if it concludes every single story. To supply needed variation, you'll need to permit your characters additional routes to Final Death.

Blood Suicide

A Kindred can always bring about his own permanent demise via an act of supreme will. The Kindred must be

in a state of extreme emotional distress when he attempts to bring about the *blotfreitod*, or blood suicide. After enduring a self-inflicted wound, the would-be suicide rolls Composure + Resolve + all remaining Willpower (which is automatically spent on the attempt.) On one or more success, all remaining Vitae in his system immediately gushes from the wound. He suffers one point of aggravated damage per turn until Final Death occurs. In most cases, this will give him time for final passionate utterances before finally expiring.

Death By Distress

It is also possible to die spontaneously from the shock of extreme distress. In classic melodramas, only women are prone to death from disappointment, heartbreak or insanity. In the case of Kindred, Storytellers may choose to extend this to both genders, or restrict it only to characters whose behavior is especially constrained by custom. In a city whose social dynamics are subject to the iron rule of the matriarchal Circle of the Crone, it might be that only lowly men can die of distress.

Only the player can request a roll to see if her character dies of distress. The Storyteller allows it only if the Kindred has reached a nadir of horror and disappointment — if there's still room for the situation to deteriorate, death by distress cannot occur. The character must also have spent all of her Willpower. If a roll is deemed appropriate, the player rolls Composure + Resolve – Stamina. On one or more success, the character, after a final sorrowful utterance, appears to go into torpor, but has in fact suffered Final Death. Unlike a sufferer of aggravated damage, the victim's corpse remains intact forever. If anything, it acquires a pale, serene beauty greater than the victim ever possessed in life or undeath. The body remains supple and does not decompose or mummify. No knife can cut it; no bullet can pierce it. Only extraordinary damage, such as a multi-megaton blast, can destroy the creature's sad remains.

The Rep Company

The dramatic challenges of one operatic story lead naturally to another. A keen group will be anxious to iron out the seams between game and improvised story.

As a reward for skillful play, the recipient of the ovation at game's end is given the privilege of handing out the roles for the next chapter.

Espionage

Any chronicle that involves high-stakes secrecy and high-pressure task completion can be classified as an "Espionage Chronicle": spying on an enemy, rooting out

a hidden traitor, conducting a secret vendetta, conspiring to assassinate a powerful elder, engaging in a long-term con, locating and intercepting an enemy attack or

going underground to escape the law are all story goals that fall within the range of this style of game. An Espionage chronicle is an exciting option for play in **Vampire: The Requiem**, and one that lends itself well to the territorial, politically charged atmosphere of the setting.

Getting the Job Done

First and foremost: to make an Espionage chronicle work, you need to select a directed task (or mission) for the characters. The best way to plan is to begin with one that's as clear-cut as possible, with simple requirements for success. "Intercept an enemy attack," for example, is a very basic scenario: either the characters succeed and stop the attack, or they fail to prevent it.

Once a task is chosen, it can be complicated to increase the difficulty and ensure that the players stay interested. Try to build up twists that demand the contribution of every character in the group to ensure that nobody feels redundant and encourage dynamic team play. Try, also, to make sure that the complications help to add unexpected twists to the action.

Some complications that work well for physical characters: the task targets a physically powerful antagonist, the task is sheltered in a well-defended, extremely secure structure, the task involves an extended chase or the task involves some kind of death-defying stunt.

Some complications that work well for social characters: the task takes place during a high-profile public event, the task involves undercover work, the task involves tricking allies or befriending potential enemies or the task involves an extremely charming antagonist.

Some complications that work well for mental characters: the task involves investigating and reconstructing a scene, the task involves cracking coded messages, the antagonist operates in a language foreign to the setting or the task demands specialized use of Mental Disciplines (such as Auspex or Dominate).

And complications that work for everybody, serving to raise the stakes of the game rather than involve characters: a time limit, an antagonist with friendly personal connections to one or more of the characters, a personal threat to one or more of the characters or a morally questionable task.

Example: The Storyteller is creating a new Espionage chronicle for two of his players. They've created John the Daeva and Mary the Ventrue. John is primarily a physical character, while Mary is stronger in social interaction.

The Storyteller decides to run an "eliminate the traitor" story. Knowing the strengths of the two player characters, he adds the following twists: the antagonist will be physically powerful, and getting close enough to eliminate him will require undercover work. To turn the heat up just a bit more, he adds a time limit: if the traitor isn't stopped within two months of game time, he will frame a friend of John's for his own crimes, causing her Final Death.

Pressure-Cooker Chronicles

Keeping characters nervous means keeping players involved. There are a few tricks that help ensure that the tension ratchets up over the course of a chronicle, but one that seems to work very efficiently is something called "sweating the players." The technique is simple: to make sure the players are focusing on the pressure their characters are feeling, the Storyteller sets up a series of rolls that represent whether or not the characters are able to stay sharp. Set on a track of increasing difficulty (represented by increased penalties to the roll), these "sweat" rolls won't determine whether or not the characters are capable of a task, but rather whether or not they're capable of stepping up to the plate before the task even begins. Always tell the players how many rolls are involved and how the penalties are going to apply before the sweating begins. It will invoke tension immediately, but set out clear boundaries so that the players know you aren't just arbitrarily increasing their difficulties.

The players ought to be caught up in the suspense of the task, eager to get from one roll to the next. To play this tool to the limit, it's best for the Storyteller to pause between each roll, taking the time to describe the scene in atmospheric detail.

Example: John the Daeva and Mary the Ventrue are walking Harold the Nosferatu into a trap. John and Mary have been masquerading as his allies for a while now, and the time has come to sacrifice him for their mission. John and Mary both have decent Humanity scores; this is the first time they've ever done anything like this.

As the trio walk down a hallway toward the pre-arranged ambush, the Storyteller tells John and Mary's players that they are going to have to make four Resolve + Composure rolls each. The first will have no penalty, the second will have a -1 penalty, the third will have a -1 penalty and the fourth will have a -2 penalty. The penalties, he explains, will represent the rising feelings of guilt and fear they are both experiencing. If they fail a roll, their characters will hesitate, and may tip Harold off.

Between each roll, to maximize effect, the Storyteller describes the echo of their footsteps in the empty hallway, the buzzing of the fluorescent lights overhead, and the strange way Harold keeps twitching his eyes to the left — a habitual tic, but it's making John and Mary nervous . . .

One thing to keep an eye on: sweating the players may provide for realism, but if you do it too often you may end up angering the players in your game. Remember, this is supposed to apply to high-pressure tasks only, not average, everyday chores. Overwhelming nerves make sense under the threat of Final Death, but a character who has trouble gathering up the courage to just walk down the street on an average night is crippled.

Compelling Motive

In any high-risk, high-pressure story, involving characters involve who are extremely motivated is critically

important. Considering the relatively torturous conditions of Espionage-style chronicles, the only way to keep things believable is to make sure the characters don't have the option to quit. Rather than being heavy-handed, pay close attention to the characters and their personal motives (the Virtue/Vice combination works wonders for this), and ensure that the compelling forces in the story apply logically to the characters.

There's an old rumored KGB recruitment acronym that applies perfectly to Storytelling motive in this type of chronicle: MICE. This acronym is used to describe the four principal draws in employing new agents: Money, Ideology, Compromise and Excitement. All of these would apply to a character in Requiem equally well. If you can get characters entangled in at least one of these motives (more is better), they'll throw themselves at the challenge, at least until they encounter discouragement more powerful than the compelling force. Of course, in a game of Requiem, you might want to add VID to the acronym: Vinculum, Inner Conflict and Disciplines.

Although fear is a great motive (and works very well in any Requiem game), it really shouldn't be the sole driving force in an Espionage story. Fear untempered by personal goals can just paralyze or discourage player characters (and, by extension, players).

Example: *The Storyteller wants to make sure that John the Daeva and Mary the Mekhet each have strong personal reasons for betraying Harold. John's Virtue/Vice combination is Charity/Wrath, while Mary's is Prudence/Greed. Both are eager, idealistic young members of the Carthian Movement, and they are bound to one another by the Vinculum. The Storyteller decides that they are approached by an older, more experienced member, who appeals to their ideology, painting Harold as a traitor and a spy (angering John, who feels personally threatened). To sweeten the deal, the Carthian offers them a fairly populous little feeding ground if they get the job done (piquing Mary's interest, because she's always wanted territory of her own). Both characters have their own reasons to get into this mission, and both are further compelled by the Vinculum they share. It's not likely that either of them is going to walk away unless things get really, really rough.*

Characters Under Cover

Deception and impersonation are mainstays of the Espionage chronicle, and creating a false front for characters within the context of the story can be great fun for the players. Playing a character under cover is also a great way to explore the themes of humanity, vice and identity in **Vampire: The Requiem**.

If it's going to play a powerful part in the chronicle (and help maximize the thrill of the game), A cover story should never be effortless in application if it's going to play a powerful part in the chronicle (and help maximize the thrill of the game). Remember that the lies a character tells are a trap as well as a shield: once she establishes who she's supposed to be, she can easily

be presented with situations that threaten the image — and if she tells enough lies, she may begin to get confused. Occasionally telling players to roll Intelligence + Subterfuge in order to keep a story straight (or to remember who is supposed to believe what) is a great way to make it clear that dishonesty can be hard work.

But when things get really confusing, there's another tool that may be useful: a "blurring scale." Think of it as a rating, similar to the character's Humanity, but scaling from "True Self" to "False Self," in which where the True Self is at one end and the False Self is at the other. As the Storyteller, you can draw up a "hierarchy of personality sins" that reflect what it would take for a character to cross the gulf from his true nature to the one he is only pretending at. These need not be actual sins — they should just represent actions that are alien to the True Self. The scale might look something like this:

Identity	Threshold Behavior	Dice Rolled
10: True Self	"big talk"	Roll 5 dice
9	"passive participation (e.g., watching, but not doing)"	Roll 5 dice
8	"simulation"	Roll 4 dice
7	"forced participation"	Roll 4 dice
6	"half-hearted participation"	Roll 3 dice
5: Blurred Self	"full participation"	Roll 3 dice
4	"eager participation"	Roll 2 dice
3	"sought-out participation"	Roll 2 dice
2	"total immersion"	Roll 1 die
1: False Self	-	-

The Identity score of a character may be used as a limit on the number of dice that character may roll in social situations relevant to his true identity. This can reflect how difficult returning to one's former life can be, especially if a character goes too far in the name of accomplishing his goals. Playing out this reintegration (and "redemption" on the scale of Identity, wherein the characters learn to trust their friends and refrain from guarding themselves over-much) can form the basis for a whole new story.

When a character crosses one of the lines drawn up on this chart (as determined by the Storyteller), the character makes a blurring roll. The player may not spend Willpower to gain a +3 modifier on the roll. Just as with Humanity and degeneration rolls, no roll is necessary if the current Identity score of the character is at or lower than the "threshold behavior" rating.

Dramatic Failure: Not possible. At no point is a chance roll made.

Failure: The character's concept of self slips one notch toward the false front, and he becomes both a little less true to himself and a little less capable of relating to his true life. He loses one dot on the Identity scale.

Success: The character does not confuse who he is pretending to be with who he actually is. His Identity score stays the same.

Exceptional Success: The character has such a keen understanding of the necessary evils of his position that he is bolstered by the disgust he feels with his false front. His Identity score remains the same, and he gains a point of Willpower (which cannot exceed his Willpower dots).

Example: To get in good with Harold, Mary the Ventrue had to tell a few lies. She started out by telling him that she's got a criminal history (like his — mostly assault and battery charges), hates all authority figures and, just to give it a little kick, she ended up confiding that she was a junkie in life, and still likes to feed from users. In actuality, she's a rather peaceful, respectful individual who's never done a hard drug in her life (or unlfe).

Mary starts out with an Identity score of 10. Early in the story, she arranges a simulated street fight with an accomplice to help bolster her cover identity. "Simulated violence" is rated 8 on the Identity scale, so Mary's player makes a blurring roll with four dice. She rolls a 6, 8, 8, 2, for two successes. Her identity is secure.

Later on, she gets herself into unexpected trouble. Harold eggs a couple of bar patrons into a fight, expecting Mary to back him up. When the fight begins, she reluctantly joins in. The Storyteller decides that this is "half-hearted participation" (nobody held a gun to her head), so Mary's player now makes a blurring roll with only three dice. She rolls a 1, 5, 3, and fails, so her Identity score drops by one.

By the end of the mission, Mary's made a lot of questionable decisions. Her Identity score stands at 5. She goes back to her normal existence, but the Storyteller imposes a 5 dice maximum on all Social rolls with her former friends until she can straighten her head out and figure out how to return to her True Self.

Make It Make Sense

There is one common problem in running any Requiem story involving a valuable secret: supernatural awareness. When Auspex, Dominate, Majesty and Nightmare are in play, how can anybody manage to keep anything under wraps? An entire chronicle can be blown to pieces, as far as suspension of disbelief is concerned, if characters are risking Final Death to investigate a hidden spy when any capable telepath could identify the culprit with ease.

The answer to this problem is simple. Pick out all the characters who could discover the truth with relatively little effort, and give them a reason not to. The five quick-and-dirty explanations that are readily applicable to most characters are: a) they are complicit, b) they already know and don't care, c) they already know and have a reason not to reveal their knowledge, d) they don't want to take a risk, and would rather somebody else sticks his neck out or e) they don't want to know. Choosing one of these for each potentially troublesome character goes a long way toward keeping the story on the rails and can provide a lot of additional sub-plot ideas for the chronicle. The key here is to plan in advance, scribbling down a

quick note (even if it's just the letter, a–e, next to each capable character's name on a scrap sheet).

The Payoff

The end of a successful Espionage story (or chronicle) is an unusual one, since most secret work goes unacknowledged in the public arena. Accomplishments may be monumental, but the characters involved will rarely earn Status for their good works (they may, in fact, be reviled — especially if their cover story is troublesome enough or if they become confused enough about their identities to make a return to social life difficult). How then, does a good Storyteller ensure that the players are satisfied with the outcome?

Remember the acronym for character motive? MICE-VID. If the characters' desires or needs to satisfy one or more of the motives represented are fulfilled, they will experience a rewarding personal payoff. All you, as the Storyteller, need to do is keep in mind the characters' basic motives, and you can make sure that nobody walks away from the game dissatisfied.

Example: The mission is over, and it's a success. Harold has been neutralized. To ensure that the players are satisfied, the Storyteller consults his notes about their characters' motives: John is motivated by ideology, Mary by money and both are motivated by the Vinculum. The Storyteller runs a couple of epilogue scenes: First, revealing that Harold was, in fact, a traitor, and that he was in the process of setting up an innocent member of the Carthian Movement. Second, a scene with the duo's pleased superior, as he hands over the small feeding ground he promised them. Mary gets what she wants, John gets what he wants and both characters are doubly happy because the Vinculum bond remains unbroken and they are both safe.

What happens when a story goes wrong, and the characters fail? Can a Storyteller still run through a satisfying payoff? Yes. Refer, once again, to the motive acronym, and create a situation that gives the characters something relatively rewarding, while helping to build on those same motives for future story opportunities.

Example: Mary's confused identity has led her to lose sight of the mission and inadvertently help Harold escape. John and Mary are left to explain their failure to the Carthians. The Storyteller doesn't want the players thinking of the story as a total loss, though, so he makes sure to run a couple of follow-up scenes. First, he has John discover irrefutable evidence that Harold was, in fact, a traitor, and that he was in the process of setting up an innocent member of the Carthian Movement — a plan that he had to abandon because of John and Mary's interference. Second, Mary finds a cache of valuables that Harold had to ditch in order to escape. It's not quite the outright victory they'd hoped for, but John's got the proof he needs to keep the chase up, and Mary's reaped enough from the mission to make catching Harold worth her while. The chronicle's not over, and Harold's still out there somewhere.

You'll find, actually, that the only way you won't be able to set up a satisfying conclusion is if the story goes so far off the rails that there's no way to continue. If the characters are still alive and the players are still engaged, you can always turn a loss into a lead-in to another chapter of the chronicle.

Sample Scene: Setting Up the Patsy

Dice pool: Composure + Larceny versus Wits + Investigation + Auspex (total of 9)

Action: Multiple contested. This is a "sweat" scenario: there are five rolls to be made, growing progressively more difficult (see below). The first two are made with a +2 modifier for the players involved. The third gets a +1 modifier for the players. The fourth is unmodified, and the fifth subtracts a -2 modifier from the players' roll. If any of the characters involved have Touch of Shadow (Obfuscate •), a further modifier may come into play.

This is a "secret vendetta" scenario, complicated by a public setting, a very tight time limit and a twist on undercover work.

Here's the scene: An assassination attempt is set to take place during an Elysium gathering. Certain powers in the city have decided to undermine the confidence of the Mekhet Sheriff, a vigilant (and too-honest) vampire by the name of Deane. To that end, his childe, Wren, has been mesmerized to carry out a violent attack bearing the

weapon of Deane's known enemies. It doesn't matter if Wren succeeds or not, just that he appears on the scene with the specific weapon required (a rather elaborate ritual sword) and makes the attempt. The problem is this: Deane's been getting more and more paranoid lately, and he's recently stopped letting Wren out of his sight. Nobody's been able to pass the blade to Wren, and the night of the gathering has arrived.

The player characters have been entrusted with the task. Each has managed to pass through security with a small piece of the weapon (or, if there are fewer than five characters, some have more than one piece), and they must assemble it during a ceremony honoring the Prince and pass it off to Wren. It is critical that all of the characters participate in this scene, if possible, because it will help to confuse application of The Spirit's Touch to the weapon after the fact. They've been assured that Wren won't remember who gave him the blade, so all they have to do is keep their cool and make sure it gets to him.

Each time one of the player characters puts two pieces together and passes the assembled part off, Deane will have a chance to spot them. As they get closer to their goal, the sword gets larger and easier to spot — hence the growing difficulty mentioned above. The players may choose who makes the roll — the "passer" or the "receiver" (except for the final roll, which must be made by one of the players). Note, however, that the roll isn't about whether



or not the characters are physically able to assemble the pieces and hide the pass. Instead, it represents how capable they are of controlling themselves *while* making the pass, ensuring that they aren't spotted. Deane doesn't know what he's looking for, so he's just scanning the crowd for nervous or unusual behavior. Putting the sword together is easy. Remaining calm while putting it together in a high-pressure, high-visibility situation is difficult.

If a character passing or receiving the blade has Touch of Shadow (Obfuscate •), he may attempt to activate the power (by making an Obfuscate roll) before the exchange. If he succeeds, he may add a +2 modifier to the "pass roll" above.

The choice to set this task up as a "sweat scenario" — a series of progressively harder rolls — is a simple tool meant to ratchet the tension higher and higher as the scene moves ahead. As the Storyteller, it's your task to make this series of rolls as exciting as possible. Don't just let them follow one after the other; take the time to describe each successful pass, giving the players a moment to suspect they've failed before realizing they've succeeded at each step (assuming they do). Mention the hawk-like gaze of the Sheriff as he scans the crowd back and forth during the ceremony. If you like, make the players who aren't involved in the current step of the task roll straight Composure for their characters, and describe the stress reactions their characters experience if the roll fails: trembling, nervous laughter, etc. This roll won't have an effect on the basic task, but will help to keep everyone involved and focused. Detail the progress of the weapon and how it changes from relatively innocuous metal pieces to an obvious sword. Make it clear that the characters are aware of what they're trying to set in motion. Let them be conflicted about it. Let the ones who have a high Humanity rating consider the implications, or the ones with low Composure ratings get more and more anxious. Play it to the hilt.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Two of the characters (the two involved in the current pass-receive step — or, if it's the final roll, one character and Wren) behave nervously enough that they're both spotted in the act. In this event, Deane will call out a coded signal to three of his Hounds, and they will quickly and quietly move in, grabbing their targets with the intent to drag them away. Deane himself will misinterpret the characters' intent and move to shield the Prince. The other Kindred in the room will immediately look away, knowing full well that something serious is going on and doing their best to avoid association with the exposed criminals. The characters are faced with a whole host of new problems: whether or not to fight the Hounds (which would certainly serve as an admission of guilt), how to prepare themselves for the inevitable accusations of conspiracy and subsequent interrogations and what to do about the failed setup. It's a bad deal all around.

Be sure to describe the sudden hush that falls over the hall, the rustling of the Hounds' clothes as they move and the look of mixed rage and fear on the Sheriff's face.

Failure: A failed roll represents that a character involved just can't bring himself to make the pass. If he's the "passer," he just holds on to the current assembly and hides it, unable to overcome his fear of capture. If he's the "receiver," he refuses to take the weapon, keeping his hands folded in his lap, deep in his pockets or whatever else is appropriate. The "passer" is forced to conceal the weapon or risk exposure. Either way, nobody's been caught, but the weapon doesn't make it to Wren. The mission is a failure, but at least it hasn't been blown wide open. At the Storyteller's option, the Player involved may be able to try again — but the difficulty should increase, and there should be a limited number of attempts. This is, after all, a time-sensitive task. Sooner or later, the ceremony will end.

Success: Each success represents cool (or at least cool enough) heads prevailing, and a successful pass to the next stage of assembly. Deane misses the actual move, and the characters are free to make the next one. If the final roll succeeds, the characters get to sit back and watch the rest of the show, relieved of their burden and free from blame. A tension relieving scene should follow: describe Wren's high-pitched war cry as he rushes forward, verging on frenzy and utterly surprising everyone in the hall. Deane will snap out of it quickly enough and move to protect the Prince before realizing the attack is directed at him. Wren will manage to injure (but not kill) his sire, and the ensuing confusion should provide more than enough cover for the player characters to breathe a big sigh of relief.

Exceptional Success: Not only are the characters involved in the pass calm enough to escape notice, but they actually manage to misdirect Deane, represented by a +1 bonus on the next roll. If an exceptional success is rolled for the final step, Deane may actually believe that he saw somebody else hand Wren the blade before the attack, providing the characters with an extra layer of cover.

Equipment: There really isn't much the player characters can take advantage of in this environment. They're sitting on chairs in the middle of a few dozen seated Kindred. Any equipment that could provide a bonus to actually hiding the sword may or may not have any effect on the characters' confidence in themselves — and that's what this scenario really depends on.

Penalties: Things are already problematic enough here. Just as there aren't a lot of factors that the player characters can capitalize on, there also aren't a lot of environmental difficulties piled onto the task at hand. If you think the characters are going to succeed a little too easily, just remember: it's all in the flavor of the scene. Factors altering the difficulty of the task aren't as important as your descriptive narration, aimed at making the players *feel* the suspense no matter how capable their characters are.

A Cuckoo in the Nest

Ah, the perils of a promising career. Before long, any group of neonates with potential has to face the inevitable “enemy from within”: envious competitors arising in their own covenant. If they’re lucky, the enemy is overt and incompetent, just providing them with another chance to make themselves look good.

If they’re not, the enemy is subtle, careful and intelligent. She remains hidden, bolstering her attempts to outperform the neonates with a chronicle designed to destroy their reputations and eliminate their favor. She is a cuckoo, an unknown adversary, dwelling among the innocents and plotting the moment she can give his competition a final push that sends them tumbling from the nest . . .

This chronicle ought to start immediately following a public success on the characters’ part, demonstrating their newfound status as “up-and-comers” in the covenant of their choice. A celebration in Elysium might be appropriate, featuring a short speech delivered by a vampire luminary extolling the virtues of the characters. The celebration can be quieter — possibly just a small gathering of like-minded Kindred who come together to acknowledge the characters’ past and (likely) future successes. This scene should involve several Kindred, allowing the undeclared foe of the characters to hide herself among the genuine well-wishers in the crowd.

Over the course of the story, the characters will find themselves victims of subtle sabotage. Their standing will gradually erode as failures and insults are attributed unfairly to them. Just as they begin to realize that their enemy is concealing herself among their so-called friends, they’ll take the blame for a great injustice. Can they escape the frame, or will their promising future evaporate? Can they expose the antagonist, revealing her treachery, or will they be forced to watch her “heroically” put an end to their careers?

The satisfying end to this chronicle involves the destruction, whether political or actual, of the adversary. Ideally, the characters are vindicated — but that need not be the case. They may be brought low, turning the focus of the story from investigation to vengeance. Either way, the chronicle comes to a close when the characters make the enemy pay for her assault.

While the focus of this plot is political, much of the action takes place on the streets of your preferred domain. The tone is one of increasing desperation and distrust, where nothing is exactly as it seems.

Theme: This chronicle is all about trust and suspicion: the player characters are forced into a situation in which they have to be very, very careful about where to place their trust, but they must also avoid the abyss of blanket

paranoia. Honor, pride, courage and ruthlessness are all “flavor themes” that can help shape the basic story here, and will likely be brought into play by the actions of the characters. Put simply, the chronicle poses these questions: How far will your characters go to defend their integrity? Will they stoop to an enemy’s level in order to combat crass tactics? Will they rise to the occasion, proving that they are above suspicion with elegant and clever maneuvering? Or will they fall, learning a valuable and hard lesson about the Danse Macabre on the way down?

Mood: Creeping doom. The plot involves a silent attack that builds over time, drawing the characters nearer and nearer to a social precipice. A sense of hidden danger should permeate the chronicle from the very first session, growing more and more intense as events unfold. Depending on character action, the mood could easily drift toward desperate violence or even vengeful passion. So long as the sense of a powerful, high-stakes threat never vanishes (even when the enemy is unmasked), the chronicle should work.

Atmosphere: Alfred Hitchcock is a great reference for setting up the atmosphere — watch a film like *Psycho* or *Vertigo* for excellent pointers about keeping the pressure on without giving away the identity of the enemy. One narrative element that works really well for this kind of story (and is used to devastating effect in *Vertigo*) is the “mundane threat” — the scene that appears normal to all of the innocent bystanders in the story but is fraught with significance for the characters at its center. A completely ordinary garden full of wandering tourists can become a scene of powerful suspense if only the characters understand the significance of a mutilated hedge sculpture. The welcome sight of an ally’s car can quickly become a terrifying hint at betrayal if it keeps showing up in the wrong place at the wrong time . . .

Language also goes a long way toward underlining the sensation of creeping doom. Make sure to emphasize the shadows in describing seemingly innocuous locations. Point out faces in crowds, describing how they seem to be glancing straight at the characters and then quickly looking away (when in fact, they may be checking out a nearby clock or doing something equally banal). Turn nooks and alleys into potential hiding spots for enemies, whether or not anybody is in them. Always take pains to convey how unsafe the characters *could* be, even if they are perfectly secure.

Setting: This chronicle works best in a busy, well-populated city (although that city could be anywhere in the world — New York, Las Vegas, Bogotá, Hong Kong, or Mumbai would all be equally effective) where crowds of innocents can easily conceal a ruthless foe.

Much of the physical action is likely to take place on the streets and in public areas — a square or market, outside a busy theatre or in a crowded shopping mall. The more intense investigative play is going to unfold in the Kindred halls of power — an Elysium in a marbled ballroom, the opulent haven of a trusted ally or a quiet penthouse apartment overlooking the bustle of the city. What's critical is that *no place feels completely safe*. The quiet calm of the Kindred retreats should seem tenuous as the actions of the characters' enemies threaten to push them out into the pell-mell crowds outside. Walled-off and defended as they might be, these havens and halls are the home of the characters' true adversaries. To retreat to them is to walk in the company of hidden assassins.

Remember that presenting the characters with a mass of strangers is crucial to the theme of trust and suspicion, as is seeding those crowds with familiar faces — which can lead to a shift on their scale of trustworthiness, depending on whether or not the characters are expecting to see them there.

Character Creation: This chronicle works best with a group of three to five established neonate vampires who are all members of the same covenant. The reason they should be established (as opposed to brand-new) is that they ought to have been accepted by their covenant

and afforded *some* status (likely one dot) so as to make sure they have something to lose with respect to social standing. They also ought to have some familiarity with the other members of their covenant so that they can have a stable of allies (or apparent allies) to turn to when things get rough. The chronicle could work with more powerful characters, but one of its strengths comes from a lack of sure footing, and the plot becomes less and less logical as the characters' resources, status and influence increase. Keeping them within the same covenant simplifies both the setting and the stakes: the characters will get along much better if they all stand to share a common loss, and it helps reduce the number of non-player characters who will have involved interactions with them.

If the characters are being created specifically for this chronicle, you should encourage the players to spend a lot of time building strong relationships among their characters, because trust is so essential to the story (and a lack of trust between the characters could threaten to break it down). Make sure that they are at least capable enough in the social arena to survive in Elysium pressure situations, and motivated, willing members of a social order. If your players want to make mean-spirited thugs who don't care about anyone else's opinion, this is not the right chronicle for them. A group of ea-



ger devotees in the Lancea Sanctum would be much more appropriate, as would a coterie of ladder-climbing Invictus Kindred, a studious assembly of the Ordo Dracul, a fervent troupe in the Circle of the Crone or a passionate young club of Carthians.

Do not allow the players to make characters who are already chafing at the rules and traditions of their covenant unless they have a very good reason to stay in place; this story should not provide an excuse for them to simply flee the organization, because that would defuse the political tension (and turn it into an entirely different plot — one of fugitives on the run).

Let the players familiarize themselves with the setting before the chronicle begins. A prelude establishing the relatively carefree unives their characters lead (well — relative to what's about to happen to them) can go a long way toward ratcheting up the tension later on in the plot, and it will give you, as the Storyteller, an opportunity to walk them through some of the settings that will host the major scenes of the story to come.

Antagonists: There are three antagonist categories to deal with here: the “cuckoo,” hidden among the Kindred of the characters’ covenant and moving the story forward, the justice-seeking members of the covenant who threaten the characters’ with judgment and the incidental enemies the characters may or may not earn themselves over the course of the story.

The cuckoo is a subtle, experienced political player, and ought to be intelligent enough to keep his (or her) motives hidden, careful enough to build and maintain a strong reputation of his (or her) own, quick-witted enough to improvise, if necessary, and just prideful enough to assume that he (or she) has the upper hand all along — even when he (or she) doesn’t. A lot of satisfaction in this plot comes from trying to figure out who the enemy is, and then working to turn the tables on him. Achieving this goal will be most gratifying for your players if the antagonist doesn’t expect a reversal to be possible, and gets flustered (thus making mistakes) if it starts to happen. Ideally, the cuckoo should take great pains to appear to be an upstanding member of the covenant, but should not have significantly more status than the characters at the center of the story. If, for example, the chronicle is played with characters in the Lancea Sanctum, the cuckoo could be a well-respected but shy priest, frightened that the characters will outshine him by presenting a more appealing face to the local Sanctified Kindred and edge him out of the running for promotion. He would be mentally powerful, while socially less than adequate, letting carefully set plans paint a damning picture of the player characters and allowing the fervor of other locals to get the job done for him in the political arena.

The justice-seekers are a strange sort of antagonist: they should be pure in motive, actually seeking to better the

covenant and repair the damage done by the cuckoo. At the start of the chronicle, they’ll believe that the player characters *might be* the hidden villain of the story, and will work to expose and prosecute them if they are. Typically, a powerful character will fill this role: a Jux, a Myrmidon or whatever is appropriate for the covenant in question, along with his servants, ghouls and other allies. They will provide most of the physical challenges to the player characters, working to obstruct or detain them while the characters struggle to uncover the real threat. As the story rolls on, these antagonists may become convinced of the characters’ guilt or innocence, depending on how things play out. If they begin to believe that the characters are innocent, they may well be transformed into powerful allies. A fanatic Hound, utterly devoted to her duty, would make an excellent antagonist of this stripe. Gruff, straightforward, and dedicated to exposing the enemies of the covenant and the city, she would dog the characters’ every step, standing ready to take them prisoner when they slip up.

Third, and potentially most troublesome (in terms of story flow), are the enemies that the characters make for themselves. Every vampire they accuse unjustly, every potential ally they treat with mistrust and every friend they fail to protect from the actual enemy may turn on them over the course of the story. This is a difficult category of antagonists, because the Storyteller needs to keep a tight rein on them in order to ensure that the story doesn’t lose focus. Never let one of the most powerful Kindred in the city fall into this category, because that could end the game right away. If the Prince, for example, were to be truly insulted by the characters’ actions, she could just have them killed or chased out of the city. It’s best to prepare a list of characters in advance, choosing a small number who are more sensitive than others and are likely to bear a grudge (or act on one). So long as the characters don’t go too far over the edge, they’re not likely to offend *too* many of the dangerous ones. Some examples of potential enemies of this type are: a character’s sibling, overreacting to a rebuke, a social confederate who is edged out of the characters’ trust and plots spiteful revenge or a desperate, haggard ghoul who is ejected from service and suffers an addiction to his former master’s Vitae.

Story Concepts: Locate a valuable stolen artifact and ensure that it is returned safely before you are punished for its loss, quash a slanderous series of rumors and prove that you didn’t start them even as the victim challenges one of your coterie to a duel of honor, survive a stampede of panicked mortals at the site of a terrible accident and then assemble a defense when you are framed for causing the calamity, attend the funeral for a murdered rival and then face the Sheriff’s accusations that your coterie conspired to destroy her

War Stories

War is — no, I'm not going to drag out that old cliché, apt as it may be. What I was going to say was, war is change. War is dynamic. War is — opportunity.

It seems to be encoded into the genetic structure of the kine, and likely, still in us, despite the Embrace. A war-torn region is within an event horizon — once inside, you find a land of terror and excitement, where all the rules are turned upside down.

In the early 21st century, large-scale wars have largely become a thing of the past. Most Kindred presented in **Vampire: The Requiem** inhabit modern, Western metropolises, in relatively safe, urban and sometimes urbane environments. Yet war-torn regions blossom around the globe. What would it be like to dwell under a night sky lit with anti-aircraft fire?

Types of War Stories

There are four rough categories of war stories: hot war, cold war, underworld war and global war (which will only be briefly discussed).

Global War

The name “War Stories” brings to mind drama set against the backdrop of a major war, such as either of the World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, etc., but this is a difficult type of setting to utilize in most chronicles. Although these wars are grand in scope, in most cases, you will refine your focus to a narrow theatre of operations — perhaps the Battle of Stalingrad or the Battle for the A Shau Valley (Hamburger Hill). Alternatively, if the player characters are vampire spies (see the Espionage chronicle), they could be inserted as special operatives in many different locations or, if playing a Vampire Kings chronicle, their actions could spread across the world from their centers of power.

Global wars are fought between countless mortals, and encompass both short-term tactical gains and long-term winning strategies. Kindred are often swept up because the frontlines are so sweeping that there is no escape. Entire countries or continents may be plunged into turmoil, and Kindred must learn to survive the upset to the status quo. Rarely are these wars driven by Kindred Princes, but, in a case of Vampire Kings, this may actually be the case.

Hot War

Hot war denotes regular turmoil and danger, and the constant threat of military actions. The region is rife with two (or more) active forces who are competing for resources and attempting to wipe each other out. With modern armies, this may involve aerial bombing

or artillery shelling, open firefights between large divisions of soldiers, displaced civilian populations, active mining of strategic areas and so on. Hot wars may be civil wars or involve an intervening army (whether “occupiers” or “liberators”) on a foreign soil.

Cold War

Cold war suggests a tense, volatile situation that can explode at any moment, but superficially is stable. These are often regions where an outside force (such as NATO) has imposed a strong presence to keep local warlords quiet, such as peacekeepers left to monitor a region recently under the throes of civil war.

Underworld War

An underworld war may be either a hot war or a cold war, but is unique in that it normally involves a very small segment of the population in an otherwise stable environment. Examples are bloody Mafia family battles against local law enforcement or violent biker gang wars to control turf. In **Vampire: The Requiem**, the noir aspects allow even Western cities to rot from internal corruption, allowing such outbursts of terror. There are normally two distinct spheres of an underworld war: the forces involved in the conflict and the “civilians” who try to live their normal lives apart from the warfare.

Themes of War Stories

War Stories chronicles are by nature tales of stress, action and chaos. Of course, the Storyteller may shift the tone from bleak misery to wide-screen adventure, but the style presented here suggests highlighting the horror, shock and fatigue of warfare, contrasted with isolated moments of laughter, love or joy.

Nature of the Characters and Chronicle

The Storyteller needs to decide what kind of conflict will serve as the backdrop to the chronicle. Will it be a hot war, cold war, underworld war or a global war? This decision will tie directly into what kinds of characters the players design, and what kinds of plots best befit the chronicle.

Not only is the category of conflict important, but perhaps more significant is the type of conflict: Who are the various forces involved, and how are the player characters tied in? Is the battleground fought over by rival groups of mortals, where Kindred watch and take

cover from the sidelines? Is it a war fought by various sides of Kindred, who manipulate mortal pawns into laying waste to their adversaries? Or is it the most terrifying fight of all, in which the Masquerade has been ripped away and mortals load up to fight Kindred?

Setting the Chronicle

Any of the four categories of war or three types of conflict can be placed nearly anywhere in the world. As **Vampire: The Requiem** is essentially a modern game, choosing a destabilized period and region from the 1930s onward makes sense. Pre-1930, you have to do far more research and planning to sell the players on the verisimilitude of the chronicle. Many players will be most comfortable with a War Stories chronicle set closer to today, but, of course, the era of World War II is so large in our collective consciousness that it is ideal for a global or hot war game.

For most players and Storytellers, the best locations for a War Stories chronicle are South America, Europe and North America. Hot wars are infrequent in the first two settings, but spread rapidly when ignited. The Balkans and the former Soviet republics, for example, and many of the dictatorships of Central and South America, are rife with military actions, paramilitary groups, atrocities, disappearances and political instability.

North America, on the other hand, is likely most familiar to the majority of players. While a hot war would require a massive historical shift, an underworld war is very plausible in the World of Darkness, especially in the burned-out inner cores of cities like Gary, Indiana; Detroit, Michigan or Los Angeles, California.

Compared to the continents mentioned above, Asia and Africa make less ideal settings for such chronicles — largely because, like shifting the setting too many years in the past, the setting becomes too exotic and unfamiliar to the players. Of course, with proper research, there's no reason not to embroil eastern Kindred in 'Nam or Korea or design a Kindred versus Kindred chronicle with Carthians battling Acolytes to control the Afghanistan-Pakistan opium routes. Africa, also, is a land with a modern history of human-orchestrated atrocities — how much more beyond the pale would things be if vampires were involved?

Vampire Character Options

The three different options for combatants will shape the choices available to the players when first creating their characters. Characters should be designed as usual using the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and **Vampire: The Requiem**, although the location may restrict certain clans, bloodlines or covenants.

Mortal versus Mortal

In this scenario, the backdrop of war — whether a hot war, cold war or underworld war — is a bloody fight between several factions of mortals. The Kindred may

solely be bystanders, watching from the night, or may be manipulating one or more sides for their own agenda. With this option, normally all clans and covenants are allowed as character options.

Example 1: 1992, South Central Los Angeles, the concrete jungle becomes a war zone between the Crips and the Bloods. An army of Crip soldiers, a gang army, first routs a contingent of LAPD officers. The Crip gang then plaster nearby cars with rocks, bottles and trash, and pull civilians from their cars. Finally, the Crips march down Florence and Normandie, out of their homes and towards the enemy, burning the city as they march.

Your coterie is caught between the two sides. Do you reach out to other Kindred and shatter the feeble human forces, or will that result in greater retribution? Do you take advantage of the chaos, feeding indiscriminately, or do you sweat the safety of your haven? Where were you when LA burned?

Example 2: 2005, New York. The Chinese triad, Ghost Shadows, has spilled all over Lower East Side, directly threatening to swallow Little Italy. The Genovese family is suddenly striking back, waging a firefight throughout the city's streets in an attempt to wrest back control of the prostitution, racketeering and drug trade.

Little do the mortals know, however, that the Ghost Shadows are actually run by a trio of Hong Kong Ventrue, attempting to reshape the political landscape. The Genovese are ruled by a small clan of Mekhet, who brook no interference. They plan to not only beat back these Asian invaders, but to destroy them utterly. Both sides keep their activities shadowed, however, and only strike through their human proxies. To move openly is to risk the wrath of the Prince, and the interference of his constables.

Kindred versus Kindred

This option pits several factions of vampires against each other in terrible conflict. These divisions can be made along covenant or clan lines, but you will have to carefully lay out the acceptable character options to your players. In a gritty civil war, the dividing lines might be even more sinister, with one side backing the Prince and the other the Primogen, child battling sire and Daeva fighting Daeva.

Example 1: Richler the Good, the strong Prince was just assassinated, and a vampire war has broken out throughout Toronto. The destroyed Prince's Sheriff, a powerful Gangrel, has attempted a rebellion, and murdered the Daeva Priscus and Whip. Meanwhile, Richler's two Primogen have declared war on the Sheriff while simultaneously bisecting the city along Yonge Street. To the east, the Daeva Primogen, who wants nothing so much as vengeance on the Sheriff, rules; meanwhile, the Ventrue Primogen has taken hold of the west, and some suspect threatens to swallow the entire city if the Daeva and Gangrel do not stop their bloodletting.

Example 2: Ottawa is ruled by a weak, but long-established Prince. The sister of a Harpy has accused the young coterie of the Harpy's diablerie. The members of the coterie know they have been framed, but the Prince is all too

happy to declare a blood hunt upon them without the bother of a trial. The coterie must decide whether to flee the city or stand and fight, and, in the aftermath, perhaps prove their innocence. Of course, if they win, it may no longer matter to any except to them.

Kindred versus Mortal

Similar to the first style, this option normally allows any clan or covenant choice for the player characters. Of course, depending on whether this is a relatively simple matter of vampires warring with hunters or a total war between mortals and bloodsucking fiends, various options may be restricted. While Kindred versus hunters is perhaps the most obvious choice, surprising your players with new reasons for the two sides to go to war can be more satisfying.

Example 1: The players, a coterie of *Nosferatu*, can trace their extended (mortal) family to a region of the former Yugoslavia. Historically, their blood has always dwelt there, and had considerable wealth and property in the country. With the recent Balkan wars, however, the surviving family members have been displaced and impoverished. Now, the new ruling majority occupies the homelands. It is up to the player characters to consider retaking their ancestral lands, revenging themselves upon a strong mortal presence and possibly restoring their mortal relatives to prosperity. Or simply reclaiming the lands for themselves.

Example 2: A Vampire King rules from a small island nation near the border of a superpower. Although the island nation appears weak on the global scope, the vampire's age and powers allow him to make far greater waves than most would suspect. His domain is governed by a puppet dictator whom the vampire controls utterly, and the island nation's laws and customs feed back into the vampire's power base. The vampire and his minions are free to indulge themselves to their heart's content — until the superpower notices them. Perhaps the island's ideology is anathema to the superpower, or the island has significant untapped resources that the superpower wishes to develop. The superpower comes into conflict with the island politically and economically, to begin with. If the Vampire King continues to resist, and goes so far as to push back at the superpower using his myriad powers to frighten off the giant, might the superpower deploy troops and attempt to assassinate the leaders? Or perhaps the superpower will arm local dissidents and urge them to stage a coup d'état?

Requiem During Wartime

Existence for a vampire who dwells within a theatre of war can be very different from that of one who inhabits a safe, urban setting. The following section discusses ways of turning standard elements sideways, and illuminating them in the stark light of war. Also included are a list of war-specific themes with ideas of how to integrate them into your chronicle.

Feeding

The chaos of war can turn cities, countries or even continents into sprawling, free-for-all killing fields. In a hot war, people vanish into the night due to indiscriminate bombardment or death squads. Furthermore, mortals may lose contact with each other when one is displaced from home, seriously injured and transported away for treatment, jailed in overflowing prisons or concentration camps or murdered and buried in a mass grave. In such a destabilized region, who will notice a few more vanishings on any particular night?

Conversely, in a cold war, where tensions are high and everyone is on the lookout for the next attack or incident, hunting may be more difficult — especially when the region is policed by heavily armed soldiers, and the population is under a strict curfew. In these situations, Kindred may wish to be more careful and rely more on subterfuge.

Indiscriminate feeding is normally a physical action (such as Strength + Stealth). While the mechanics for feeding don't change in a War Stories chronicle, here is a list of alternate suggested modifiers.

Feeding Modifiers During War

Modifier	Situation
+5	Hot war. Situation is in total chaos. Vessels are in abundance, and the social system is completely broken down. Vampires can kill without fear of notice.
+3	Hot war. Situation is messy. Although not necessarily compliant, wounded and weak victims are commonly found.
+1	Hot war. Civilians are hard to find due to being scattered and homes abandoned. Military patrols are regular and heavy, although military personnel may be becoming lax due to lack of targets.
-1	Cold war. Region is relatively stable and secure. Most civilians go about their daily business, and try to ignore the checkpoints and armored vehicles.
-3	Cold war. Region is superficially stable, but essentially a powder keg ready to explode at any provocation. Military and police presence is high. Civilians travel in groups, and most obey curfews.

Note: In an underworld war, the availability of vessels, and the care that must be taken to preserve the Masquerade, may change within the scope of several city blocks. In more realistic scenarios, finding a vessel is not necessarily easier, but the vampire may kill the vessel with much lower risk of being discovered.

Blood Supply

As mentioned under "Feeding," in a chaotic situation, the blood supply is potentially more plentiful. The



Storyteller should freely adjust the feeding situation to reflect the political/security climate of the chronicle.

In many war-torn regions, animal life is overabundant: packs of wild dogs roam, cats wander the streets at night (keeping the Kindred company), rats may spawn unchecked and other scavengers and carrion eaters penetrate deep into the urban sprawl. Of course, in a city under siege, when mortals are starving, animals becomes noticeably rare. Similarly, a city that is fire-bombed will be bereft of both mortal and animal life.

Kindred who are used to quenching their thirst on stored plasma will likely have to return to a fresh source, as casualties drain hospital supplies and lower blood reserves.

Resources

War-torn regions may be lucrative to those who have a fix on resources and supplies, and sparse and impoverished for everyone else. Even Kindred who do not have dots in the Merit Resources can temporarily boost their cash flow by looting an abandoned house, selling weapons on the black market or scavenging the corpses for watches and gold teeth.

At the same time, if a region has been the center of fighting for a long period of time, many luxury, or even basic items, may be nearly impossible to acquire, no matter how much cash one has.

Storytellers should not make Resource redundant or useless, but should also remember that war often means a time of scarcity. Justifying the highest levels of Resources is much harder, unless one is directly connected to the ruling party.

Havens

Kindred in a cold war who have a secure haven will not have to fear much more than in a normal chronicle. In fact, regular military patrols may add to the safety, for anyone who breaks curfew or is seen as suspicious may draw investigation from heavily armed soldiers.

In a hot war, however, the situation may be radically different. How safe does a vampire feel sleeping through the day when the surrounding city is being bombed, or if armies are staging house-to-house warfare through his neighborhood? Storytellers should never arbitrarily incinerate a character without giving him or her a chance (or at least a clear warning), but Storytellers can use some of these ideas to ratchet up the pressure in a game.

Bombardments

Modern warfare tends to rely heavily on aerial bombardment. Militaries that are not superpowers may instead shell a region with artillery. The net effective is the same, although certain cutting-edge weapons are arguably more precise.

- Characters should always have some warning of a bombardment attack. This could be an air raid siren or advance knowledge of a particular target. Or they



witness a nearby strike and can deduce that they should seek cover immediately.

- Characters caught in an attack may be subject to an indirect hit (the building they are in collapses, the weapon's shockwave strikes them and so on) or a direct hit. Indirect hits normally do bashing damage. If using the Explosives rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** (see pp. 178–179), most characters cannot survive a direct hit from a High Explosive.

Mines

War-zones are often surrounded by minefields. In the modern era, there has been a significant outcry against the use of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. Although the Ottawa Treaty of 1998 prohibits the production, stockpiling, transfer or use of anti-personnel mines, the treaty does not cover anti-tank mines. In addition, the biggest mine suppliers (Russia, China, India, Pakistan and the United States) have not signed the treaty.

Mines are an environmental hazard, and many Disciplines may allow a vampire to avoid them completely. If a character enters a mined area, however, and triggers the weapon, the Storyteller should use Concussion or Shredding Explosives, from the **World of Darkness**, although mines are not normally thrown.

Snipers

Armies have long championed the role of the sniper. In modern regional conflicts, such as the Balkans, snipers are feared for indiscriminately targeting civilians as well as military personnel — and there's no reason the Kindred would necessarily be safe, either. Snipers regularly target key avenues for traffic (either vehicle or foot). Many Kindred may be able to avoid snipers by using less-traveled paths, such as rooftops or sewers.

Unlike Bombardment attacks, most vampires don't have to worry about Final Death from firearms. Still, a well-placed sniper's bullet — particularly something as large as a .50-caliber anti-aircraft round — might do lethal damage simply by blasting away enough tissue.

Stretched Taut

One of the key elements of a War Story is that the characters are under tremendous pressure due to the chaos, death and violence that they are immersed in. While many vampires have done terrible things, there is still a difference between being the neighborhood monster and dwelling under constant risk of discovery and indiscriminate attacks with powerful armaments and tearing away the traditions of civil society. To reflect some of the pressure the characters may be under, there are several devices to enhance the tension.

Pressure Cooker

Storytellers may wish to use the “Pressure Cooker” idea described in the Espionage chronicle article (p. 93).

- “Sweating the Players”: Turn a simple action into an extended roll, with increasing difficulties.

Shell Shock

When harmed by mundane weapons, Kindred are normally more prone to anger frenzies than fear frenzies. However, when the weapons are high-powered, explosions are close by or risk of discovery suddenly very real, characters should test for fear frenzy.

High-powered weapons used nearby	1 success
Enter a minefield	2 successes
Targeted by high-powered weapon (sniper shot)	3 successes
Close proximity to incendiary weapons (incendiary grenade)	4 successes
Indirectly targeted by heavy weapon (tank gun)	5 successes
Directly targeted by heavy weapon (artillery strike)	7 successes
Heavy cover	+3 dice
Knowledge of opponent's position	+1
Attacks from all sides	+1 die
Previously injured (lethal damage)	–3 dice

Horrors of War

Vampire: The Requiem is a game of modern, personal horror — it's also about being the monsters, and deciding whether to do terrible things (and exist with those choices) or resist the urges to do terrible things (and exist with those choices, instead). War Stories chronicles complicate this matter, because human history of war is littered with atrocities. How do you judge a monster in war-time? International conventions and treaties attempt to map out acceptable and unacceptable behavior in military actions, but those concepts are too abstract to be particularly useful to a Storyteller on the ground. Of course, depending on how harsh your World of Darkness already is, you may not find the horrors of war beyond the pale.

Remember: Despite knowing we are playing in the World of Darkness, some scenes, actions and themes are potentially too grim and haunting for players. War Stories are excellent for showing the Beast that lies in the breast of mortals as a counterpoint to the nightly torment of the Kindred. Yet, as undead, players may feel they need to be the meanest sons of bitches in the world. You should not make players feel they have to outdo the cruelty that humans do to each other in war.

To properly set the tone of a War Stories chronicle, consider incorporating some of the following elements.

Biological and Chemical Weapons Experiments

Perhaps best documented in World War II, armies have rounded up prisoners and used them as guinea pigs in

biological and chemical experiments. Scientists with no moral compulsions about designing such terrible weapons (such as pathogenic and chemical arms) “logically” conclude that the effects must be tested on human subjects.

Such death laboratories require physicians, microbiologists, veterinarians, zoologists and plant biologists as well as guards, administrators, etc.

Clinical tests are performed on prisoners of war, interned in camps or prisons.

Field tests may involve distributing the deadly agents in food, lacing water (wells or reservoirs), injecting viruses into unsuspecting populations who believe the inoculations to be preventative, spraying various weapons on villages, towns, livestock and so on.

Since the 1970s, developments in production, storage and weaponization of certain bacteria, viruses and toxins has become much easier.

Note: Kindred are rarely if ever affected by biological or chemical weapons, but they can become plague-dogs if exposed.

Child Soldiers

While militaries have historically used children as messengers, porters and servants, increasingly, children are being drafted into active service. Although international treaties attempt to restrict the age of enlistment to 15, the reality is that, in certain areas of the world, armies need all the able fighters they can arm.

In regions such as the Middle East and the Balkans, it is not uncommon for a younger brother to follow in the footsteps of an older brother who dies for a cause. In many African countries, especially those torn by internal conflicts, approximately half the population may be under 15.

Although a child is normally no threat to a vampire, how will your players react when they witness a swarm of 10 and 11 year olds armed with machetes, fishing harpoons and kitchen utensils?



SAMPLE SCENE:

FACING DOWN DONALD DUCK

Dice pool: Strength (or Presence) + Intimidation opposed by target's Strength (or Presence) + Intimidation

Action: Multiple contested. This is a “sweating the players” scenario, in which the rolls get progressively more difficult as the character attempts to intimidate a child soldier, who is backed up by his companions. There are three rolls to be made, with a +1 modifier for the player's first roll, an unmodified second roll and a -1 modifier on the third roll.

Here's the scene: The character needs to cross a checkpoint manned by a number of young soldiers. Reports claim that a cease fire is in effect, but everyone knows that the slightest provocation will have guns firing again.

The character sees a group of eight young boys, the eldest no more than 13, playing a game of soccer in front of a machine gun nest that overlooks the road. Bayoneted rifles lie haphazardly at hand, propped up against a chain link fence topped with razor wire.

As you get closer, a small, dark-skinned boy wearing flip flops and a faded Donald Duck T-shirt stops short. His foot is on the ball: you realize they are playing with a human skull.

“Donald Duck,” as his friends call him stares you down, while his companions drift toward the rifles.

The stare-down is an opposed roll, using the character's Intimidation Skill plus the higher of her Strength or Presence Attribute.



Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Donald Duck and his companions see you as a big threat, and all rush to attack. At least one of the soldiers goes for the machine gun nest.

Failure: Donald Duck barks at you to “get the hell out of here.” He is reinforced by his buddies snatching up their rifles and aiming them at you.

Success: Donald Duck holds your gaze for a very, very long moment — then finally releases a deep breath. He jerks his head at you, motioning for you to cross the checkpoint. When you step forward, his buddies tense, but no one breaks rank.

Exceptional Success: Donald Duck stares you dead in the eye — finally, he breaks into a smile. Laughing, he runs up and checks you out, and skips along with you. His buddies fall amongst you, and clear the checkpoint for you to pass through. They laugh and banter, and ask for chocolates and cigarettes.

Collective Punishment

Certain regimes punish an entire family for the actions of one. Israel, for example, is known to destroy a family's house for the crimes of one child. Collective punishment may also take the form of reprisal killings — such as executing an entire village — to suppress resistance.

Concentration Camps

Concentration camps are encampments wherein civilian, and sometimes military, prisoners are herded and kept under guard. Often, these camps are a precursor to forced mass deportations or ethnic (genocidal) cleansing. Starvation, sexual assault, torture, and execution abuses are rampant in the camps.

Although it is unlikely a concentration camp could hold a Kindred in captivity, if the character has many ties among mortals, he might end up in such a grim location.

Death Squads

Death squads are often groups of former police or military personnel who are deputized by the army to do

dirty work for pay. This theoretically gives the government a screen of “plausible deniability,” but few courts in the world would buy it as a legitimate defense. Of course, such forces rarely expect to be tried for their activities. Death squads are renowned for scare tactics, kidnappings, “disappearances” and executions.

One example of such a terror group in El Salvador would leave a *mano blanco*, or white handprint, on a victim’s door.

A well-trained death squad could be as threatening to a Kindred as any group of hunters. Similarly, a vampire lord might have her own death squad (perhaps ghouls), used to terrorize the local population and bring vessels who are then “disappeared” (secretly imprisoned and/or killed).

Safety Zones

Safety zones are “off-limits” areas that are not to be targeted by any military force. Safety zones may be known as “protected areas,” “safe havens,” “secure humanitarian areas” or “security corridors.” They are large regions, up to the size of a village or town in some cases, but unless an outside force provides military protection, they become a paper shield.

Safety zones are often also areas of Elysium for Kindred. Even during the horror of war, the laws forbidding hunting in Elysium are maintained. Of course, as NATO troops are needed to ensure safety of civilians and cul-

tural heritage spots, Elysium must be enforced by Kindred with power. If you are an enemy of the Prince, do not expect him to necessarily respect his own edicts.

Passion for War

War Stories provide a different type of environment to use as the backdrop for your chronicle. One last key point to consider is why the characters care about the war. Obviously, if they simply dwell in a region that explodes into a bloodbath, they care because they want to keep their skins and defend their turf. Yet if the characters don’t care who wins, then both sides may become faceless random encounters. One possibility is to run a prelude in which the characters were aligned with one particular side; then, after their Embrace, while they are fascinated to learn about their new nightlife they are also still concerned about the cause they left behind, and their friends and family who are still dying for their people.

War Stories chronicles are probably too intense to span too long a period of game time. It’s difficult to maintain that pressure without giving way to stress (or turning the horror into comedy). For mini-arc campaigns, or other limited sessions, War Stories chronicles can open up new ways to look at the World of Darkness.

War Stories: Mexican Snow

Tijuana, a city of sun, tourism, and culture — and when the day dies, it becomes a haven for violence, theft, prostitution, all fuelled by the drug trade. In short, a perfect lair for Kindred. The drug lords of Latin America present an usual partnership for modern Kindred, one which they might find richly rewarding.

Los Hermanos Aztlán run the Aztlán cartel, a powerful Mexico-based gang that dominates the underworld and spans the American border. The heads of the cartel are fabulously wealthy, and use those resources to fuel a campaign of relentless violence against their enemies, whether rival gangs, local police, federal judges or international trafficking investigators. Los Hermanos Aztlán are also vampires.

Mexican Snow can involve your players as part of the Aztlán cartel. As enforcers for the brothers, the characters can be well-entrenched in an unlife of luxury and opportunity. The constant turmoil surrounding this lifestyle cloaks them in a fog of war, where the actions of the Beast thunder over the horizon. This is not to suggest the characters have no Humanity or are immune from descent into madness. In truth, the constant temptation to give into excess tests their mettle to a greater degree than those who dwell in the soft First World.

Tijuana is a border town, a so-called free zone, showcasing the American/Mexican divide. By day, Tijuana is a tourism resort, by night, a death trap. As home to the corrupt and criminal, the town unfailingly draws law enforcement and government officials toward it. In the World of Darkness, Tijuana is also a bridge between Kindred and kine, between the tradition-heavy First World and the tattered mask that barely hides the bestial Third World. Vampires are masters of this domain, where they can act with almost-limitless impunity.

A Latin American drug war provides numerous angles for potential chronicles. Mexican Snow is set in the War Stories motif, but can easily be modified to fit a Vampire Kings or Vampire Familia mold.

The easiest point of attack is to make the players part of the cartel, doing their elders bidding. As vampires, the characters shouldn’t have to worry about the minutia, but should rather be used as the dynamic resources they are. In other words, they are not smuggling in a balloon of heroin, but attempting to wipe out a rival narcotics king. This becomes a special operations type of game, probably described as a “hot war”.

If the cartel war is an extended conflict, it is probably an “underworld war”. In this scenario, the characters are trying

to destabilize the enemy over a period of time, rather than storming his bunker and wiping him out. In either of these scenarios, the characters probably have similar resources (weapons, money, peons, etc.) as their foe, who may or may not be able to cope with the vampires' Vitae-fuelled powers. The "end" of the chronicle can be charted when the rival is literally or figuratively destroyed. After having secured the power base, the characters may become involved in a new chronicle that deals with grander themes.

A hot war or "cold war" can also unfold, if Tijuana is suddenly the target of the combined American and Mexican militaries. If troops are on the ground, the borders are closed and the air force is strafing coca fields, the existence of even Vampire Kings becomes dangerous. This would obviously radically change the geopolitical landscape of the region, but might be prompted by a particularly heinous crime. In this case, the chronicle ends when the players either find some way to re-establish the old status quo, or else escape to set themselves up in a foreign locale.

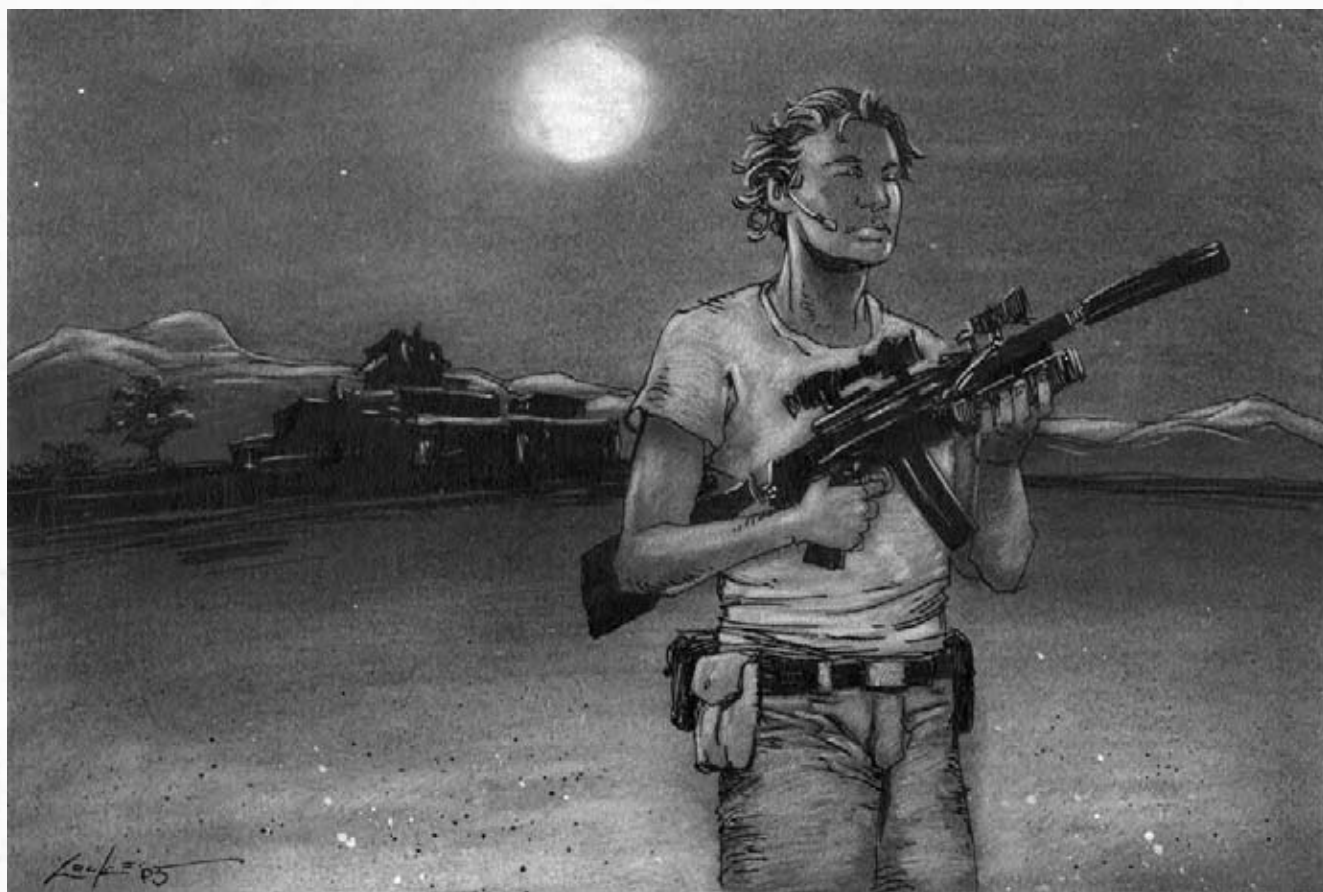
Finally, vampires on the path toward transcendence or otherwise driven by a sense of nobility might wander down here as anti-heroes, or altruistic mercenaries. With both mortal and Kindred monsters so prolific, a noble vampire could do the world a lot of good by cleansing the region through violence.

Theme: The chief theme is the chaos of war. This may take shape as "Man versus the Beast," where the

characters' mettle is tested by the horror of war. How hard is it to resist the Beast when the situation seems to give the Beast free reign? Of course, vampires who act more noble than the monstrous mortal drug lords shine in contrast. A subtheme is, power to what end? Power can get you money and women, but what then, when the Danse Macabre stretches out endlessly? What will the characters do to achieve success, and how then will they measure it against the history of their kind?

Mood: Emergence of monsters. The lure of such wealth, built on the ravages of often innocent people, draws out the Beast in the hearts of Kindred and kine alike. While the Masquerade is still in effect, when mortal butchers travel like emperors, who'll notice an affectation such as blood drinking? The vampires are given permission to indulge their appetites for blood-letting, and the *potential* for sudden, horrific violence should lurk around every corner. As a hot war, the mood is survival and adrenaline-fuelled adventures. As an underworld war, the mood is about crushing the enemy, psychologically and physically. As a cold war, the mood sharply contrasts the First World and Third World by sitting on the border of each.

Atmosphere: Border cultures create contrast. Tijuana should always be seen as an intersection of First World tourists in a Third World playground. The wealth of the drug lords is sharply juxtaposed against the poverty



of the local populace. Similarly, the freedoms and powers of the Kindred should be made clear, elevating them high above the kine.

Another contrast is the divide between urban and rural. The drug lords will exist in the finest of luxuries, whether penthouse apartments in modern skyscrapers or barricade country estates patrolled by high-security teams. Their product is harvested by the rural peasants — at the mercy of the elite, the government, the military — often with no options but to cultivate these crops.

This border is a place without boundaries — national, legal or moral. Drug barons and their paramilitary empires generate stories of extremes: violence, abuse, exploitation and desperation. Drug lords often rise to the top by being more brutal than any of their rivals, leading to a war of escalation between their enemies and them. The Beast that dwells within all men's hearts, whether Kindred or kine, should be ever present, if just beneath the surface. Bring this forth with stories of "Colombian neckties" (cutting a victim's throat, then pulling his tongue through the gaping hole), suffocation with a clear plastic bag while a fat man (seemingly always called El Gordo) sits on his chest or *carne asada* (barbecue) — in which bodies are disposed of by being tossed on a bed of burning tires. Thugs and soldiers celebrate these atrocities with cocaine and tequila. Drug mules turn to the trade to help their starving children, then get hooked on the junk and leave their kids to wither. Once you have the power, anything goes, and greed is seen as a virtue.

Setting: Tijuana, Mexico, straddles the US border. The city is bustling with tourists, locals, businessmen and homeless. The Aztlan cartel has properties in the city, but Los Hermanos Aztlan plan most of their policies from a fortified ranch, two hours out of the city. The ranch is guarded by armored vehicles, and soldiers armed with the most modern of American-made heavy weapons. The ranch also has a security center equipped with state of the art surveillance equipment that rivals most governments.

Missions would require dealings with other drug lords in suitably secure and oft-times remote fortresses. Should the characters have to deal with American military (a dangerous gamble at the best of times), they may clash in the middle of the night in coca fields or surrounding peasant villages.

Character Creation: Many different character types work for this chronicle. Characters can be neonates, just learning the ropes of this trade, or they can be experienced Kindred who are key agents for the cartel. Each of the Hermanos Aztlan should be from different clans; you may wish to limit the characters to creating childer of one of the brothers. On the other hand, there's no reason that their status can't seduce other vampire to their cause.

A variety of Skills and Resources work well with this chronicle, but characters should be designed to fit into the

underworld. Brooding loners (unless Special Forces-trained), angsty artists and delicate wallflowers will not find they have much to do. The players should know where the game takes place, and that they are agents of a powerful drug cartel. This is not a game that focuses on the politics of the Danse Macabre. Although there may well be other vampires with whom the characters must contend, the traditional roles of Prince, Sheriff and the covenants likely do not fit here.

Antagonists: This chronicle has several archetypal antagonists.

Rival drug lords: Presumably other key figures in the drug trade are vampires or have vampire agents. It's a lucrative market, and the volatility of the situation leads to frequent underworld wars and shake-ups to the status quo.

Government military: Both the American and Mexican governments may be turned loose upon the cartel. The former in a vain attempt to control the flow of drugs into the United States, while the latter are trying to wrest control of their country back from the warlords. Military groups are well funded, well staffed and well equipped. Local forces are more prone to corruption, although bribable Americans and honest Mexicans are key character types.

Los Hermanos Aztlan: Not antagonists in the traditional sense, the brothers who run the cartel will inevitably create conflict for the characters. Whether the brothers are testing the characters' loyalty, punishing them for failure or just fucking with their heads, los Hermanos should be a source of criticism and chastisement, tempered with the brothers rewarding good service, and lauding excellent accomplishments.

Fernando Aztlan is the face of the cartel. A beautiful Daeva, he dresses in white suits and snakeskin boots. Fernando focuses on making each night more debauched than the previous one, an endless string of midnight orgies and insane parties.

Felix Aztlan is not a true brother to Fernando, but, somewhere in their bloody past, they became closer than siblings. Felix is a hideous Nosferatu, a sharp contrast to his brother's outward looks. Felix looks like a burn victim swaddled in heavy scarves, despite the heat. Felix is the strategic brains of the cartel, but also prone to outbursts of passionate violence and butchery.

Story Concepts: You are the childer of Los Hermanos Aztlan. Therefore, the brothers' will is your purpose in undeath. Or else you have been invited into the cartel, having proven your bestial nature. Disrupt a rival's operation (burn his fields, blow up his airplanes, bury his peasants in a shallow grave). Invade a rival's bunker and cement control of the trade. Deal with human interference: terrify local politicians, buy off military commanders, butcher enemy soldiers. You are *mortal* DEA agents who infiltrate the cartel as double agents; when discovered, you are Embraced and sent to wreck vengeance on your old controllers.

Hunter's Hunted

Three Kindred destroyed in the last two weeks, all burned in their havens. Politically, there was nothing to connect them. They did, however, all hunt at Stone Rain. We think there's a vampire-hunter in the city.

You hunt at Stone Rain, don't you?

Vampires are hunters, the ultimate predators. This does not, however, make them immune from being hunted themselves, and a chronicle in which the Kindred are the prey can be an exciting change of pace. This chronicle concept is also one that works extremely well as a relatively short arc in a longer chronicle, forcing the characters out of their routine and shaking things up in the Danse Macabre.

A chronicle in which the characters are hunted is not one in which they simply face foes who want to kill them. Prey need to fear confrontation with the predator, because they are sure that they will lose. Similarly, the predator must not be able to easily force confrontation. A Hunters Hunted chronicle will likely involve very little actual violence, possibly restricting it solely to the climax.

The characters need to genuinely fear for their existence, and the tension works best if the players also know that there is a genuine risk of destruction. Thus, before starting such an arc you should ensure that the players are willing to have their characters destroyed by the hunter if they fail to escape. Conversely, it would be horribly anti-climactic for a player character to be destroyed in a minor encounter, so you should ensure that Final Death can come only at the hands of the hunter.

The mood of such a chronicle should be tense fear; the characters can never be sure that the hunter is not around, cannot be sure that they will wake up the next evening. This tension might be punctuated with acute fear when the hunter actually appears, but this must be infrequent; if the characters get away from the hunter lots of times, they will stop being afraid. The rest of this section discusses concrete ways to build this mood and shape the chronicle.

The Hunter

The first task in designing this sort of chronicle is to design the hunter. There are several possibilities, with different strengths and weaknesses.

Humans

Human hunters are the classic trope. Human hunters also serve to make the Masquerade an important theme of the chronicle, by providing a concrete example of what

would happen if the Masquerade failed. Similarly, truly remorseless hunters might make the characters wonder who the monsters really are. Consider hunters who are willing to seal a nightclub and burn it down with hundreds of humans inside in order to be sure of killing the vampire the hunters know is present.

Thematically, human hunters are probably the best option. However, the problem is that they are generally weaker than vampires, and thus not a viable threat.

If the player characters are fairly young vampires, this lack of threat can be solved by using experienced and knowledgeable humans. Knowledgeable humans can hunt during the daytime, use fire as a weapon and arrange "environmental health inspections" to force a vampire out of secure havens. Indeed, a very experienced human hunter could have a very good chance of defeating a young vampire in a straight fight.

For older vampires, this becomes less plausible. Vampires are more powerful than humans, by design, which is why the classic "humans hunted by vampires" plot works so well. Humans can still be used, however, if they know what they are up against, and thus avoid direct confrontation while trying to inspire paranoia in their target, waiting for a mistake. In this case, the unknown (see below) becomes very important.

Finally, a well-organized, skilled and well-supplied group of humans can be significantly stronger than an individual vampire, even quite an old one. If the police force establishes a special SWAT team to hunt vampires, for example, all Kindred have reason to be afraid.

Other Vampires

Other vampires also make good hunters. Vampires are natural predators, vampires with a high Blood Potency need to feed on other vampires, diablerie is a constant temptation and vampires with low Humanity become nothing more than predatory Beasts.

Relative power is not a problem here, as the hunting vampire can simply be older, with a higher Blood Potency, than the player characters. However, some of the thematic resonance is lost, and the Masquerade is unimportant. A low-Humanity vampire can serve as a warning of what the characters might become, and a serial diablerist can be a simple threat, with no complex thematic overtones. Sometimes, after all, that is all that you want.

Another advantage of this option is that it is probably the easiest to handle. You know what vampires can do, setting the relative power level is quite easy and vampires are designed to be hunters.

Other Supernatural Forces

A final possibility is that the hunter is a supernatural force other than a vampire. Werewolves and mages are possibilities, but so are other strange creatures.

This option has two advantages. First, the players and characters have no idea what the hunter is capable of, and that breeds fear (see “The Unknown,” below). Second, you can design the hunter to fit that role perfectly.

A good hunter must have a reason to stalk the characters, rather than simply walking up to them and picking a fight. This can be as simple as a love for the thrill of the hunt. The hunters might deliberately limit themselves as a test, to see whether they can succeed without using a particular power. This can, however, seem rather strained if the characters find out.

Better is to give the hunter a weakness that means he has to be somewhat subtle. Consider a human hunting deer. The deer is not threat to the human, but a person cannot keep up with a fleeing deer. Similarly, a supernatural threat that cannot leave a certain area needs to be sure that its prey cannot flee out of that area before the supernatural hunter strikes.

An alternative is a hunter that is offensively very strong, but defensively extremely weak. Such a hunter needs to get into a position where it is sure of taking the vampire down with a single blow.

As a final suggestion, the hunter might be very vulnerable to a particular ability, and need to weaken the prey first. It is best if this is something depending on Vitae or Willpower, so that that the hunter can try to force the vampire into using up a limited supply before striking.



ALTERNATIVE HUNTERS

A different possibility is a situation wherein the characters could kill the hunter in a straight fight, but do not want to. The hunter, however, definitely wants to kill them.

The hunter might be a human friend, relative or lover, determined to free the vampire from the curse of undeath. Alternatively, the hunter could be a former vampiric ally who has degenerated into a Beast, but whom the characters still hope to redeem.

For a different approach, the hunters might be largely ineffectual, but have currently skeptical friends who would make much *better* hunters if they felt the need to avenge their friends' deaths.

These options change the tone of the chronicle substantially, as the characters are no longer in genuine fear for their existences. Many of the other options discussed in this section still apply, however.



The Prey

Once the hunter has been chosen, you must choose the prey. Obviously, the prey includes the player characters.

The question is whether they are being specifically targeted or whether the hunter is after all vampires.

The former case is more personal, and more likely to drive other Kindred away, as they seek to avoid becoming involved. Such a scenario does, however, put limits on the use of the destruction of other Kindred as a motivating device.

The latter case is perhaps simpler, and better suited to chronicles emphasizing the importance of the Masquerade. This scenario also has a tendency to push Kindred to working together to deal with the threat. This needs to be handled carefully, so that the player characters are not upstaged by elder Kindred. Of course, if the player characters are the elder Kindred, they may find the inhabitants of their city looking to them to deal with the menace.

Getting Started

Starting a Hunters Hunted chronicle is a little tricky. The characters must realize that there is a threat, to them personally, from the hunters, but must not confront them immediately, or the chronicle will be over before it starts.

A good option is to have the hunters destroy a Kindred with some link to the player characters. This proves that the hunters are a real threat, while creating some space between them and the player characters.

There are several ways to make it clear to the players that their characters are in the firing line. One is to have the hunters destroy several Kindred, linked by something that also links them to the player characters. They might, for example, hunt in the same areas, or nest in the same area or all have been at a particular event.

A more dramatic possibility is to have the first victim phone the characters asking for help against the hunter, be destroyed before she can hang up and then have the hunter come on the line and tell the characters that they're next. Depending on your group, this may count as “over-dramatic.”

The most direct option is to have the characters notice that they are being stalked, soon after hearing about the destruction of another vampire. This is particularly suitable if you plan on a short chronicle or chronicle arc, because the characters get right into the heart of the action.

These are merely examples. Another possibility would be for the Prince to tell the characters to investigate the destruction of a vampire. Their investigations alert the hunter, and soon the characters find that they have become the prey.

It is also possible to start the chronicle with an attack on the player characters, as long as the attack fails, looks like it could have succeeded and does not allow the characters to immediately fight the hunter. For example, a hunter might narrowly miss the heart of a sleeping character with a stake, and flee before the character can properly respond.



The problem with this is that the hunters start off with a failure, which tends to undermine the impression of competence. The greater the part played by sheer dumb luck in the Kindred's survival, the better. If the players and characters feel that they can't expect to be that lucky twice, the atmosphere will be preserved.

As an example, the hunter uses a crossbow to stake a character in a dangerous area of town. As the hunter is moving in to finish the vampire off, two warring gangs start a shooting match, filling the air with bullets. The hunter has to run for cover, and the stake is dislodged from the vampire in the chaos, allowing him to flee.

The key point, then, is that the opening should convince the characters that there is a dangerous hunter after their unives.

The Unknown

Very little is more frightening than the unknown. The player characters should thus have as little information as possible about the force hunting them. It might be a kid with a sharpened chair leg and a lot of luck, but if the characters do not know that they will still run away.

There should, however, be hints that the characters, and players, can use to build a picture of a truly terrifying opponent. At the very least, the characters need to know that there is something out there, and that it is hunting them. That, by itself, inspires some fear, since the assumption is that something would only hunt you if it felt it could succeed.

Having the hunter succeed against other targets is one possibility. It proves that the hunter is effective without giving too much away. There needs to be something to tie the destructions together, which provides more opportunities for misdirection.

If four Kindred are found destroyed after being ripped forcibly limb from limb, the rumors that spread will be of a creature with incredible strength. The real hunter, however, could be a human with a stake, a winch and a decent grasp of psychology.

Similarly, a knowledgeable human hunter could try to give the impression that he is a supernatural creature formed of living flame, capable of taking human form. Some training as a stuntman would be useful for this, of course.

Accidental impressions are also important. A hunter who gets lucky with earlier victims is a classic example of this. Similarly, a hunter who just happens to like the nightclub where the characters feed might give the impression of having been stalking them for weeks, when in fact the hunt has only just begun. These incidents need to be kept rare, however, because players are likely to want an explanation at some point.

However, as long as the characters are not able to perform a thorough examination of their hunter, they will naturally tend to fill in gaps with fearful imaginings.

To a certain extent, this aspect takes care of itself as long as you are careful to preserve some unknowns.

Tension

Neither the players nor their characters should be able to relax at all while they are being hunted. However, the hunters must not be around all the time, or the chronicle will end very quickly. This section discusses ways to build tension when the hunters are absent.

The simplest way is to call for Perception rolls at random points in a scene, and then tell the players "No, it was nothing." Even more sneaky, wait until one character is doing something a bit different from the others, such as looking round a club while the others haggle for information, and have that one player make a Perception roll and notice nothing. This shouldn't be over-used; no more than once per scene, and in no more than half of the scenes in a session.

Another option is to call for Perception rolls, and if the players succeed, draw their attention to vulnerabilities. For example, tell them that a park is overlooked by lots of apartments, any one of which could hide a sniper, or that the crowds on the dance floor give them no clear route to the exits from the night club. After you call for this a few times, the characters are likely to start looking for themselves, with players calling for Perception rolls, and generally acting paranoid. Which is exactly what you want.

If the hunters are showing interest in other Kindred, the characters are likely to hear stories about the hunters whenever they meet with other vampires. If the hunters are known to be stalking these characters, they are likely to find that other Kindred do not want to be in their company, for fear of drawing unwanted attention. Increasing isolation helps to increase paranoia.

You should also aim for the hunters to quickly come to dominate the chronicle. Thus, even when they aren't present, the characters are trying to find out about them or working out defenses against them. You can drive this by pointing out weaknesses in the characters' havens, pushing them to look for alternative havens or security systems.

The goal is to have the players and characters constantly thinking about how to deal with the hunters and constantly worrying about whether they are about to be attacked or are being watched. It is essential to this that the characters are, sometimes, being watched, and become aware of it.

Encounters

The hunters must appear in the chronicle, partly because otherwise the characters will conclude that they do not really exist. However, there can only really be one, or at most two, full-contact encounters; a foe you fight, inconclusively, on multiple occasions is not really a hunter.



Glimpses

Glimpses are the most tenuous kind of encounter. The characters become aware of the presence of the hunter, and probably vice versa, but contact is broken off before anything further happens. Glimpses help to build paranoia, while increasing the characters' confidence that something really is after them, and so they should be used quite a lot.

In fact, glimpses are only really over-used if the justification for why an encounter is only a glimpse becomes strained. Eventually, any glimpse falls into this category, as the characters wonder why the hunter isn't doing anything more active. There is quite a bit of time before that happens, however, and the Storyteller should take advantage of that.

There are two aspects to consider: the timing of glimpses and the nature of glimpses.

Timing is important, because it has a strong influence on the level of tension. As glimpses become more frequent, the level of tension rises, until either something more definite happens or, for no apparent reason, the glimpses suddenly become rare again.

Both results can be very effective, but the number of times you can use either without undermining the mood of the chronicle is very limited. Definite encounters have to be limited, and if tension repeatedly builds without any result, that technique ceases to have any effect. Definite encounters are discussed in more detail below, but reasons for a sudden reduction also deserve some attention.

First, the player characters might have succeeded in throwing the hunters off the scent. This means that the characters must have done something with that intention, and you judged it to be effective. This is easily the best reason, as the players will be perfectly happy with it. It can even be repeated a couple of times, with the players needing to be more ingenious every time.

Second, something might have temporarily incapacitated the hunters. This could be a literal injury, for example, falling from a roof while spying on the characters, or something else, such as family members coming to visit from out of town. The hunters could also have transferred their attention to another Kindred, in which case the lull is likely to end with that vampire's destruction.

The characters may learn the reason, so it should be chosen to reinforce the particular theme of the chronicle. Hunting another Kindred reinforces concern for the Masquerade, while stopping because the in-laws are visiting emphasizes the humanity of the hunters and thus raises questions about who the monsters really are.

The nature of glimpses should also be varied. The simplest is the literal glimpse. The characters catch sight of their hunter at a distance, but the hunter vanishes

before they can turn the tables or the characters run away before the hunter can close.

Another possibility is finding evidence that the hunter has been there, but has moved on. Dropped cigarette wrappers, a characteristic graffito doodled on a wall, even fingerprints: all these are possibilities. Finding them just outside the character's haven should provoke a particularly strong reaction.

The third main set of possibilities are reports from others. A contact says that someone was asking about them, handing out descriptions, or an acquaintance asks if they know someone with a particular sort of car, because there was one parked outside their haven yesterday.

Direct glimpses are the hardest to manage, because they have the potential to turn into a direct confrontation. Thus, using the latter two indirect glimpses to build tension is good. If these are the only types of glimpses you use, they can give the characters the impression that everyone but them can see the hunter, which increases the element of the unknown and thus the element of paranoia.

Neutral Ground

Neutral-ground encounters are ones in which the hunters and the hunted can interact, even talk, but can do nothing else. These encounters should be used very sparingly, probably no more than once in a chronicle, and need to be carefully set up, but they can be extremely effective.

The first requirement is that the circumstances must rule out any interaction other than conversation, on the part of the player characters as well as on the part of the hunters. This will vary, depending on the abilities of the characters. Vampires with Dominate, for example, can usually do more than talk if they can talk. If the hunter is immune to Dominate for some reason, that isn't a problem, but it does need to be considered in advance.

Neutral ground can be the result of a physical barrier. The characters might find themselves separated by a river in flood, able to shout across the water but unable to cross fast enough to catch the other. If darkness and fog make missile attacks fruitless, this could rule out pretty much any other activity. Other kinds of distance can also have the effect; the two groups might be on the roofs of adjacent skyscrapers, for example.

Another possibility is a situation that makes any violent action suicidal. If, for example, the police have descended in force to hunt for terrorists, the characters and the hunters might be kept in one place, surrounded by dozens of armed officers looking for trouble. Anything other than conversation would be suicidal, so the characters and hunters must talk. Afterward, the police take the hunters off for further questioning, putting them beyond the reach of the characters (or vice versa).

If you do run a neutral-ground encounter, make sure that the hunter has something to say. This should very clearly point up the major themes of the chronicle: perhaps the hunter threatens to expose all vampires or recounts the fate of a loved one who was targeted and destroyed by a vampire.

Of course, if the hunter is a bestial vampire with little in the way of reason left, such encounters are inappropriate.

The Chase

The chase is a full-blown encounter that does not quite become a climax, because the player characters get away. You can probably do this once, maybe twice, before the characters will decide that either they can always get away or that they might as well stand and fight.

There are two ways to go into these kind of encounter. One is with the thought that the chase might become the climactic showdown. In this case, no special preparation is needed; if the player characters run, and get away, the scene becomes a chase. The other is with no intention that this be the climax; that needs a little more preparation.

First, you need to be sure that the player characters will run. That means that they need to be scared of the hunter.

Second, you need to be fairly sure that they will get away, which means that a clear escape route needs to

be available. This also encourages the characters to run, since it is clear that they can.

Counter-Operations

The player characters do not need to be passive throughout the hunt, and, indeed, it is probably better if they are not. They can try to find out more about the hunters, learn their weaknesses and try to set ambushes for them, or plan to stop them in other ways.

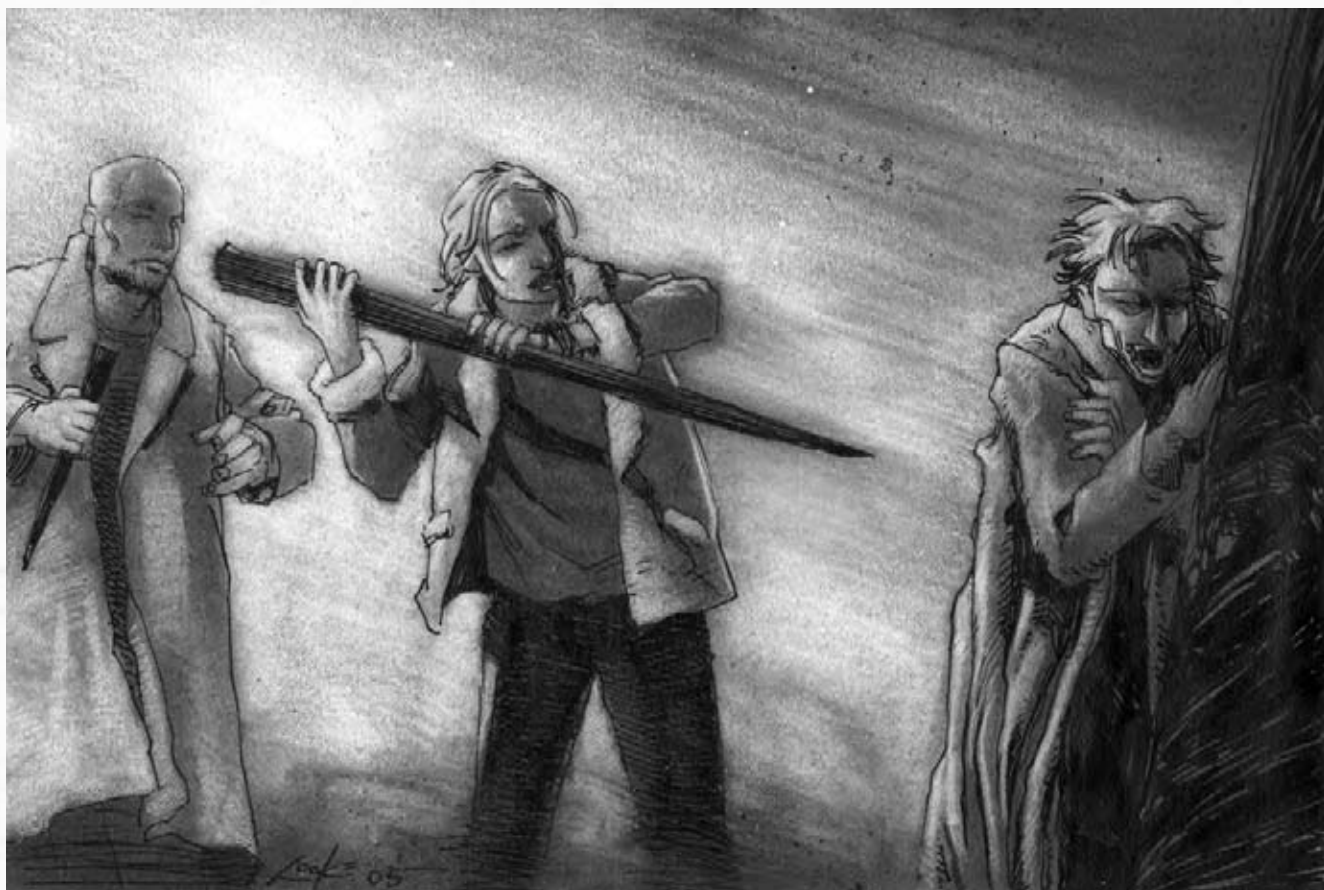
This should be largely up to the players. The Storyteller simply needs to know enough about the hunters to be able to say what happens in the case of certain types of investigation and to have an idea of the ways in which the hunters could be neutralized. If the players are engrossed in having their characters try to neutralize the hunters, the chronicle is going well. Just keep the pressure on, so that the characters never forget that they are being hunted.

Hunting the Hunters

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Investigation + Equipment

Action: Instant.

The hunters used a specialized piece of mountaineering equipment to get into the haven of one of the characters, and the equipment was left behind when they were disturbed. It is new, and there are only a few places in the city that sell this equipment, giving the



characters a chance to learn something about the identity of their hunters. The characters look up the locations of mountaineering supply shops, visit them asking about people who have bought such things recently and gather the information. This is clearly Investigation, but based on talking to people, and thus Manipulation rather than Wits. Equipment is mostly a way of accounting for the cover story they come up with.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The characters learn nothing, but the hunters hear that they are asking at mountaineering shops, and set up an ambush for them at the next one. Final Death is a real possibility.

Failure: None of the shopkeepers are willing to tell the characters anything of interest.

Success: The characters find the appropriate shop, and learn something useful (appearance, possibly club membership or something similar) about the purchaser, giving them a solid lead.

Exceptional Success: The characters get a name and address for the purchaser. A *real* name and address.

Equipment: “This item was used in a crime, and we’re looking for the perpetrators.” +1 if used straight, +3 if backed up with convincing police ID. “We are reviewing these items for a magazine, and would like to get in touch with anyone who’s bought them recently.” +1 to 3, depending on how well detailed the story is.

Penalties: –1 to 3 if the characters have no story at all, or are obviously intimidating. –1 for characters obviously completely ignorant of mountaineering.

The Climax

A Hunters Hunted chronicle has a natural climax, a final showdown between the hunters and the player characters. You should do all in your power to avoid this showdown becoming an anti-climax.

The most obvious climax is a final fight between the two sides. This should be staged in an exciting location, and somewhere where outside forces will not interfere. The characters either kill the hunter, or die in the attempt.

You might also be able to manage a climax in which the hunters and the hunted are reconciled. This would need setting up through the earlier parts of the chronicle, and the players need to be interested in such a resolution. If the reconciliation fails, of course, you’re back to the violent climax, with the added poignancy of an attempt at peace.

Global Structure

The above elements can be built into a number of chronicle types or chronicle arcs. All are naturally limited in scope, because they all tend to a climax, but they can vary in length.

The shortest, with a single hunter, could be as short as a single story, with the elements above defining scenes. A slightly longer arc might have three stories. In the first, the characters realize that they are being hunted and that the hunter is too strong for them, and manage to get away. In the second, they find a way to defeat the hunter, all the while avoiding being caught. In the third, they manage to apply their discovery, leading to a final climax.

A longer chronicle is easiest if it involves a group of hunters working together. The first stories deal with a fairly inexperienced part of the group, and the characters win. Follow-up stories involve learning the true extent of the group, and various approaches to weakening it. If those are successful, the climax can involve the group’s final defeat.

In either case, however, the chronicle or the arc should be conceived as a closed unit. If characters are always actively hunted, that becomes part of the background of the chronicle rather than the main focus.

The Kindred of the city, used to treating the humans as mere cattle, are running scared. Vampire hunters have started destroying the city’s residents, and age and power are not protection. The Prince still rules, but a high-ranking member of his court met Final Death in the flames of his haven.

The hunters are secretive, and none of Kindred’s contacts know anything. On the other side, the hunters seem to know far more than they should. City events and ordinances are interfering with the use of the Rack and parts of Elysium. Furthermore, reports from surviving ghouls and Retainers suggest that the hunters know far more than they should; fear frenzies have been used to drive Kindred to killing grounds, and many attacks have taken place during the day.

The Prince vacillates between finding someone to blame for the clear breach of the Masquerade that must have taken place, saving himself and finding something to do to remove the threat.

And then the player characters are targeted. Minor things happen at first: interference with their feeding, curious officials turning up at the haven at inconvenient times, a noticeable fall in the number of vessels in their hunting grounds. But then there is an actual attack, survived by pure luck, and the characters find that all other Kindred draw away from them, afraid of joining them as the next targets.

Hunted, the characters search desperately for the information they need to turn the tables on their hunters, all the time taking care not to expose themselves, even for a moment — for a moment is all that the hunters need.

Preying Kine

Finally, the characters face the hunters, and either kill them or are destroyed themselves. Unlike some chronicles, it is very obvious when this one is over.

Theme: There are two linked themes running through this chronicle. One is that, no matter how powerful you are, you are always vulnerable to some threat or other. The other is the importance of the Masquerade; the hunters are effective because of what they know more than because of personal ability. If many humans had this sort of knowledge, the Kindred would be doomed.

Mood: Tension and fear dominate the mood. Outright paranoia is also a possibility, with the characters mistrusting every human being they meet. The characters should never feel safe. Kindred are used to being the predators, so it is vital to the mood that they feel like prey.

Atmosphere: The environment should seem full of possible threats. When describing a scene, mention places where a sniper could be hiding, good spots for ambushes or the absence of a clear escape route. The actions of unimportant characters should also seem suspicious. A police officer might look at the characters rather hard, and

be radioing in to the station when they look back. A newspaper seller might look at them twice, and then pull out his cell phone. A group of youths could apparently take one look at the characters and scatter. Most of the time, if the characters follow up, the events should have nothing to do with them, and they just make trouble for themselves.

Allies should gradually pull back from the characters, trying not to give the hunters any reason to pick new targets. Clues should be ambiguous and threatening, suggesting that pure luck or some desire to play with them was all that saved them from the hunters' wrath.

Setting: This chronicle can be set in any city, but three types of location are particularly important.

First, places where the characters do not, and cannot, feel safe. This includes anywhere with no cover in the hour or so before dawn: a large parking lot or a glassed-in room at the top of a skyscraper, for example. Other possibilities include factories or power plants with a lot of fire or places full of armed, dangerous people who would be hostile if they knew what the characters were, such as a police station.



Second, places where the characters have to go, whether they like it or not. Primarily, this means hunting grounds, but also includes places to meet contacts with vital information or places that the Prince tells them to go. The characters should feel that they face danger simply by leaving their home bases.

Finally, places where the characters ought to feel safe. Their havens are the most obvious choice, but the city's Elysium should also be used in this context. As the chronicle progresses, even these areas should come to feel unsafe, leaving the characters nowhere to run or hide.

Character Creation: This chronicle works for any group of vampires who have good reason to trust one another. Given the level of paranoia that should build up, characters who suspect one another are likely to, at the very least, split up, which would make the game difficult to run. In addition, the players should be willing for their characters to die at the climax of the chronicle, if they fail. They need not know why they risk death, but they must be prepared to do so. Most players will very quickly work out that this agreement means that the hunters can kill their characters, which helps the mood of fear.

Antagonists: The leader of the hunters, a woman who was a vessel of a vampire for a long time. In that time, she learned a lot about the Kindred, and after she got lucky and killed the vampire who was preying on her, she turned her attention, and her knowledge, to destroying all the vampires in the city. Her main advantage is that her knowledge of the vampiric state is roughly equivalent to someone who has read **Vampire: The Requiem**, and she is smart enough to use that knowledge. However, she should also be able to handle herself in a fight.

A surveillance specialist, expert in gathering information from a lot of sources. While the leader knows

about vampires in general, this character is responsible for gathering information about the player characters in particular. Characters emphasizing electronic information gathering are very different from those concentrating on getting information out of people face-to-face, so this character can be played different ways, or even split, to best oppose the player characters.

A politician, of sorts. This may be an actual politician, in the city government, but could also be a high-ranking police officer or even a well-connected businessman or activist. This character cannot just go around telling everyone that there are vampires, without losing credibility, but can arrange mundane events to cause problems. For example, the nightclub where the characters feed could be closed due to "health and safety problems" or inspectors might condemn the building housing a character's haven. At the climax, the police could even put out an APB on the characters, greatly restricting their freedom of movement.

A combat character. There needs to be one hunter who can stand up to the characters one-on-one. This role could be combined with any of the others, because it should not come up much until the end of the chronicle.

Story Concepts: Investigate the destruction of an allied Kindred, burned in his haven; face a series of delays, apparently random and individually unthreatening, that leave the characters trapped outside, far from home, and short of Vitae as dawn approaches; wake up as the flames start to lick round the door of your haven, and escape from being trapped between fire and the sun; turn the tables, finding out who is behind the harassment, exposing the politician's manipulations, discrediting him; draw the hunters into a final confrontation on somewhat favorable ground, finally defeating them in a climactic showdown

Bottle Chronicle

Through drizzling sleet, we scrambled across the moor, wielding pickaxes and carrying shields salvaged from the ship's hold. There it was, near the Pond of Ghosts — a shiny new supply case, dropped on our cold island by our tormentors, our benefactors: Those Above. Pox and Shinbone scuttled toward the case, as a battle cry tore itself from my shrunk, thirsty throat. The B-Side Tribe had seen it fall, too, and was coming at us from the opposite ridge.

A bottle chronicle traps the characters in a tightly constrained environment, pitting them against equally desperate competitors in a constant struggle for scarce resources.

Advantages

A bottle chronicle appeals strongly to players who value resource management, tactics, exploration and a clear focus on victory conditions. This type of chronicle examines the nature of the Beast through a gritty, survivalist viewpoint, and will be most enjoyed by players who thrive under constant pressure.

This chronicle type may be for you if your available preparation time is front-loaded. After an initial preparation phase that may require a heavier-than-normal time investment, a bottle chronicle becomes self-sustaining.



Players drive the agenda almost entirely. Once you've got it rolling, all you have to do is manage antagonist actions and reactions and occasionally shake up the closed system.

Drawbacks

This chronicle type may not appeal to players seeking power fantasy, highly developed storylines or fashionable adventures in elegant locales. Easily discouraged players may react poorly to the relentless pressure facing their characters. In a bottle chronicle, the protagonists are never truly safe, and an enemy raid can occur at any time.

The chronicle's emphasis on resources and tactics introduces the expectation that game rules will be tightly adhered to. Storytellers who tend to fudge and handwave their way through rules issues will need to review the books and be prepared to rule in a consistent, predictable manner.

Starting Questions

Start your bottle chronicle by creating a premise that establishes a closed environment and accounts for the protagonists' entrapment in it. Your premise should explicitly or implicitly answer the following questions:

Why are the protagonists trapped?

Where are they trapped?

If they are prisoners, who are their captors?

Do they know who their captors are?

What prevents their escape?

What are the environment's primary resources?

Who are the characters' primary competitors?

Does the environment itself pose additional dangers to the protagonists?

Does the environment offer uncontrolled territory for the competitors to explore and expand into?

The most obvious premises are as follows:

Kindred in Prison

The protagonists are inmates in a prison populated by Kindred. The characters may be the captives of a Kindred authority, jailed for crimes against their community. In an alternate setting, where humankind has discovered and overthrown the Kindred, the characters might be the prisoners of their former prey. In either case, sophisticated high-security measures, engineered to counter the extraordinary abilities of the inmates, keep them firmly penned in.

A facility run by Kindred may provide a prey population in the form of kine prisoners. These hapless second-class

inmates may be random individuals who've been seized opportunistically by the organization running the institution. The kine may be hunters and others unfortunate enough to stumble on to the secrets of the Masquerade. Either way, they're the prison's primary resource. The protagonists battle with rival gangs to control the greatest possible number of mortal inmates.

Castaways

The protagonists are the survivors of a jet crash or shipwreck, stuck together on a remote island, forgotten plateau or other inaccessible locale. Perhaps they've been castaways for a while, long enough for the single vampire in the group to Embrace a number of fellow survivors, only to see them split off into rival tribes. Alternately, the cast of characters might consist of a several dozen vampires who were making a rare and perilous attempt at long-distance travel when the ship or plane was lost.

The disaster may have been an accident, or an act of sabotage aimed at gathering a pack of Kindred and letting them loose in a contained environment.

The environment's vampires maintain herds consisting either of mortal castaways or tribesmen native to the area. The Kindred struggle to enlarge their herds by capturing wild humans and by raiding rival encampments.

The entire map of the area may be known to the protagonists as play begins. The area may include a vast No Man's Land or a thin border between territories. There could be large unexplored regions that the characters can scour for new resources.

The area ought to serve up a wide selection of physical dangers, from natural hazards to dangerous animals.

Due to the difficulty of introducing new competitors and player characters to replace those who go into long-term torpor or suffer Final Death, castaway chronicles are difficult to run for a prolonged period. One crash landing seems perfectly plausible. Throw in too many subsequent arrivals and, before you know it, you have *Gilligan's Island* on your hands. To some extent, the warring vampire tribes can bolster their numbers by Embracing select members of their prey population — provided the Kindred can maintain the balance between the eater and the eaten.

If you find yourself in the middle of a castaway chronicle and want to keep it going by periodically introducing new characters to the mix, you can always reveal that an unseen hand arranged for the original disasters and is keeping the island or plateau stocked with fresh guinea pigs, as in the premise immediately below.

Rats in a Maze

Here the protagonists and their competitors have been captured by powerful beings and placed in an unconventional, prison-like environment. The characters might be imprisoned as an act of vengeance, as part of a sadistic experiment or simply for the entertainment of a viewing

audience. (If the characters are the unwilling stars of a cruel underground reality show, its producers have presumably created a technology allowing them to capture Kindred on videotape or some other recording medium.)

The characters' weird prison might be an elaborate physical installation or of supernatural origin. Maybe the prison is a pocket dimension woven into existence by mortal mages or even an incredibly vivid virtual reality networked into the minds of torpid vampires. The protagonists may be able to escape their prison, concluding the chronicle, by discovering the true nature of their exotic confinement.

An unconventional prison may shift its features and boundaries over time. The prison might consist of a series of heavily trapped rooms, as in the 1997 movie *Cube*. The prison needn't look like a prison at all: it could as easily take the form of an alien outdoor environment. Either way, the prison's operators are able to add hazards and challenges to their creation as whim demands. The prison can expand as the characters explore or suddenly yank away their safe zones.

Additional Twists

You could begin a bottle chronicle in what seems to be a conventional prison or isolated locale, only to later allow your players to discover that they're really in a virtual or supernatural environment.

Bottle chronicles needn't pit vampire against vampire. Their competitors for resources might be Lupines, mortal mages or a numerically superior force of humans.

A prison chronicle can occur in the natural environment of an island, plateau or even an expanse of veldt or jungle sealed off as a prison camp. In the case of an alternate setting with mortal captors, an encampment of this sort might be a sort of nature preserve containing the last few vampires to survive a worldwide pogrom.

The Environment

Bottle chronicles are defined by the relationship between their environments and the characters struggling for supremacy over them.

Prison Maps

For a prison game, map out a complete environment before play begins. If you start the chronicle with all of the player characters as new inmates, you may can reveal your map a section at a time, as they orient themselves in the facility. If you skip that step, start play by providing a complete map to the players. Restricted areas of the prison should appear on your map but not on theirs. These areas can be filled in if the protagonists gain access to them.

For obvious reasons, complete floor plans of modern prison facilities aren't readily available, so your map for a prison chronicle will end up being slightly fanciful. Maps of historical prisons can be found online; these

can be used as the basis for a converted facility. A prison for vampires will require certain alterations. Human jailers might create a prison with well-covered windows that can be unshuttered at the turn of a switch, and then force their captives onto a diurnal schedule. In the event of an uprising, the entire Kindred population can be incinerated on the issuance of a simple command.

Unlike other bottle chronicles, the characters here lack full freedom of movement through their environment. Decide which areas the prisoners are allowed in, at which times and under which restrictions. The battle for resources occurs mostly in common areas, with the occasional excursion into restricted areas allowed by bought-off guards.

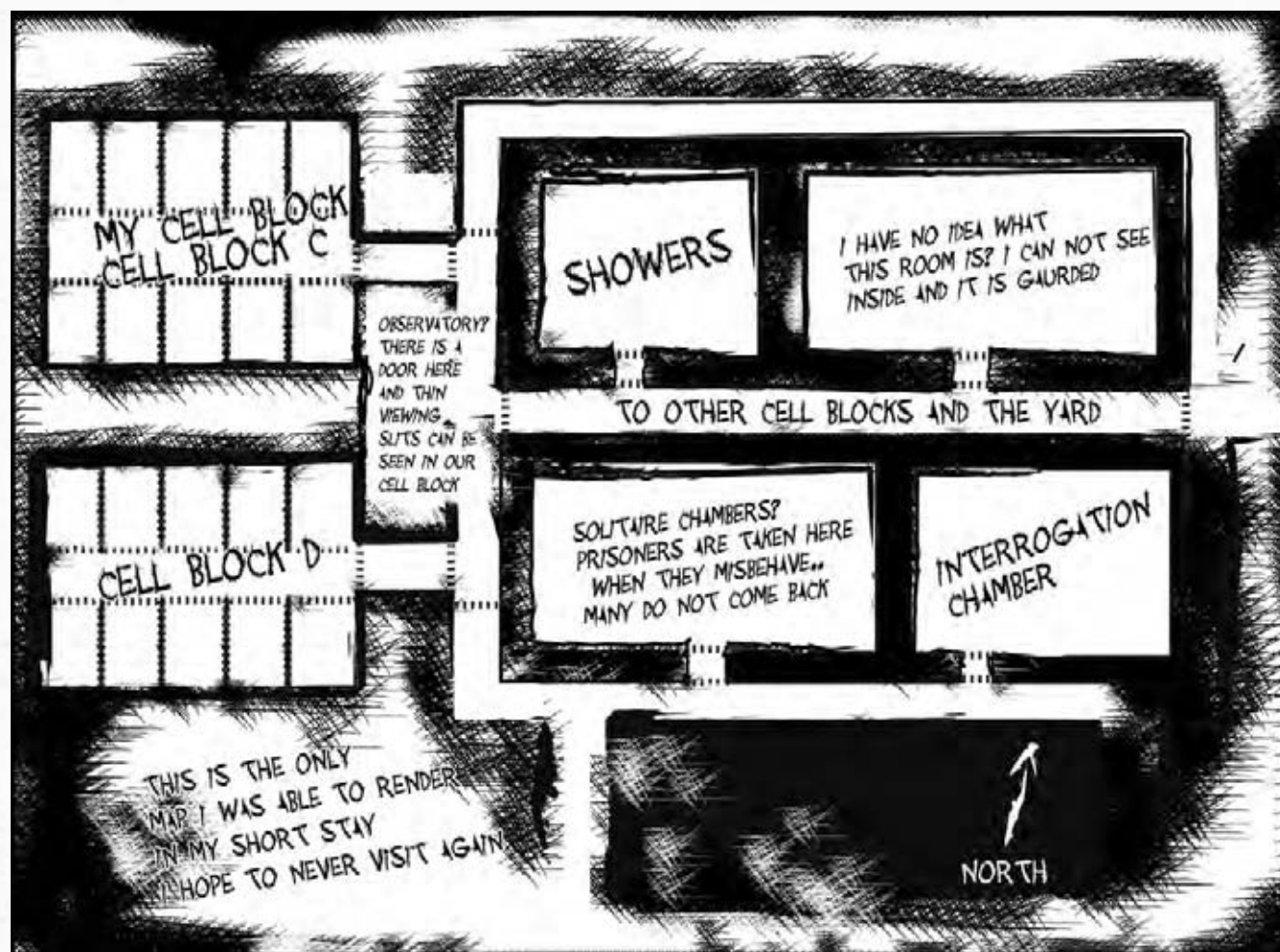
Include the following basic areas: cellblocks (including special blocks for solitary and protective custody), common areas, exercise rooms, prison yard (safe only at night, of course), visiting areas (may be largely disused, depending on the regime running the prison), offices, lockers, staff and equipment rooms for prison personnel, chapel, library, cafeteria (if kine are present), hospital facilities, assembly room. Characterize the premise behind your vampire prison by physical spaces underlining its mission. For example, a human prison might attempt to rehabilitate its prisoners through bizarre therapy; if that's the case, large sections of the facility will be given over to treatment rooms.

Getaway Maps

Maps become even more important in chronicles in which the bottled characters enjoy relative freedom of movement. Where a chapter of a typical game session might begin with a recap of the chronicle's past events, here the players should start by looking at the map (and their resource totals; see below), and deciding what they want to do next: to reconnoiter, raid, fortify or forage. Emphasize this by making a display-sized map and giving it pride of place in your gaming room. Alternately, print up updated maps each week and hand them out as part of your pre-game ritual.

To create a natural environment, start with a topographical map of a real island, then enlarge it and add dramatic and dangerous areas, translating it from mundane reality to the bigger, grimmer dimensions of the World of Darkness. Maps from war games or levels from certain computer games may also offer tactically rich landscapes ripe for adaptation.

Caves are a must; the vampires need havens to survive the days. Naturally, these havens will be coveted pieces of territory, fiercely fought for. A variety of elevations will add tactical interest to turf battles. Create strategic points, like watch points, trails through



impassable terrain and beaches where useful junk washes up, that the competitors will want to battle over.

If the castaways are newly arrived, reveal the map slowly as they explore the area. Unmapped areas will motivate them to get out of their caves in search of undiscovered advantages over their rivals.

Unconventional Environments

Even a changing environment of supernatural origin should be mapped in detail and shown to the players, so they can plot out their raids and exploratory activities. As bizarre and shifting as an environment of supernatural origin might be, it should also feel like a suitably gritty and concrete backdrop to a desperate struggle for survival.

Like the castaway option, a current map should always be on display or available as a handout, and should serve as the spur to action whenever the group finds itself without an obvious next move.

Competitors

No group of antagonists will be more important in this chronicle than those directly competing with the player characters for resources.

How Many Gangs?

Decide whether the protagonists will be battling only one group of competitors or several.

A straight match-up between two competing groups provides the nastiest, shortest and most brutal of the possible bottle chronicles. Two groups reduce the struggle to its barest bones. Direct attacks on the enemy group, especially when its members are down, become the wisest strategy for long-term victory. Diplomacy is reduced to the negotiation of temporary truces.

Three groups of competitors add a level of politics to the mix. All-out war between two groups becomes a chancy proposition, encouraging the uninvolved third party to swoop down after the battle to claim the spoils from a weakened victor. A level of individual politics appears, too, as it becomes possible for the player characters to recruit side-switchers from either of the other camps.

Four groups add complexity tending toward stability; now there are so many competitors ready to pounce on a weakened group that any sort of interesting risk-taking becomes a liability. Groups tend to hunker down and wait for others to make big mistakes. Four or more rival tribes work best if you want a slower, more deliberate struggle that leaves time for character development. This choice can also work if the competition is being manipulated by shadowy overlords — they can introduce sudden opportunities and other changes to the environment, favoring sudden, bold action.

Are There Sidelines?

Decide also if every vampire in the environment is a competitor, or if some exist passively on the sidelines, depending on the current victor for their sustenance. This is the likely model in a conventional prison environment, where many inmates keep their heads down, stay out of the gang wars and feed from smuggled blood. They'll fight when pressed, but will otherwise seek noncombatant status. Some may be recruited from the sidelines to replace gang losses. Conversely, wounded or demoralized competitors may slink down to the status of sideliners. The greater the population of vampires in the environment, the larger the chance that some of them will attempt to exist in the margins between competing groups.

Relative Strength

Now decide whether all contending groups start the chronicle in a state of rough parity, or the protagonists are underdogs entering a system in which others have already established advantages. (An advanced twist on the bottle chronicle could start the protagonists as vulnerable, complacent top dogs about to see their superior position eroded by aggressive newcomers, but this probably works better as a thought experiment than an actual game.)

If parity pertains, design antagonists with 15% more experience points than you allow the players when designing their characters. This bonus helps to cancel the advantage the players will enjoy during play: each will be able to devote full concentration to the actions and abilities of a single character, while you'll be forced to cleverly run multiple enemies. Allow the players to believe that their enemies were built on the same point bases as their own characters.

If the players are taking on established enemies, build them with 20–50% more experience points. You want superior foes, not gut-crunching über-vamps who will crush them on contact.

Resources

For any bottle chronicle, start by identifying the resources you want to track. These boil down into two categories: Vitae and things that help the group acquire more Vitae.

Vitae Total

Throughout each session, keep track of and display the group's current Vitae total. This is the number of points of Vitae the group can freely feed on without killing any of the vessels the group controls. Every point of Vitae group members consume reduces this total.

A vessel is considered to be under the group's control if the vessel is in the group's captivity or safely within the group's territory. In recognition of the hazards of blood

addiction, the Vitae of group members or other allied Kindred do not add to the total. Banks of stored blood count. The Vitae of animals counts only if the majority of the group have sufficiently low Blood Potency to derive sustenance from it. However, animals are also a rich source of nutrition to one's herd, so the group will be forced to balance immediate desire for animal hemoglobin against long-term need to keep the higher-quality human blood flowing.

Vitae Availability

As the game begins, determine the availability of Vitae in the environment. Start by deciding how many Kindred occupy the environment. To keep Vitae a scarce commodity, choose the number of available vessels according to the size of the Kindred population. Start with an available human population of 5 to 6 kine per Kindred. For a situation of extreme scarcity, make it 3.5 mortals per vampire.

Hunting, Ranching and Raiding

Express the difficulty of harvesting blood from the environment's wild animal population (if any) as a relationship between time and yield. For example, your environment might allow the harvesting of 1 to 2 Vitae per night of hunting activity. As the chronicle continues, your characters may attempt to increase this yield through farming activities or by increasing the efficiency of their hunting techniques. Success will breed challenges to this increased yield. Uncontrolled hunting will depress the animal population, leading to diminishing returns or even a complete local extinction of the best quality game animals. This could, in turn, have disastrous consequences for the area's vessel population. The actions of rival vampires will also affect Vitae availability from animals. Their own harvesting efforts may step up as the protagonists' more efficient methods seize a greater share of available game. Efforts at domestication may yield a more consistent yield, but carry their own risks. It's easier to raid animals carefully raised by one's enemies than it is to ranch that same quantity of domesticated blood oneself.

Blood Behind Bars

In a human-run penitentiary, Vitae becomes a controlled substance. A subsistence-level quantity, perhaps 1 per Kindred per night, is doled out by prison authorities to keep the inmates from lapsing into torpor. (Incidentally, to maintain your premise, you'll need to explain why the jailers don't want their prisoners to go torpid. Maybe the jailers are readying the prisoners for trial, experimenting on them or attempting to cure them. Perhaps civil libertarians have convinced society that it's cruel and unusual to force vampires into torpor.)

In the real world, even high-security facilities are awash in controlled substances, usually smuggled in with the aid of corrupt corrections officers. In a prison for vampires,

stored blood, as unsatisfying as it is, will become the primary underworld currency. In human-run facilities, stored blood may be virtually the only source of Vitae. To win the resource war, the protagonists will have to create or take over smuggling networks, fighting both established rivals and similarly ambitious up-and-comers. Fresh blood smuggled into the prison will maintain Vitae totals. Work out the economics of blood smuggling. For an illicit system to work, inmate traffickers must have access to enough cash to bribe officials, and customers must be able to afford to illicitly purchase the blood bags they sell. Most likely, the inmates' allies and relatives on the outside are still permitted to maintain contact with them, and can slip them the currency they need to survive.

Even in a prison without human inmates, incarcerated vampires may enjoy some access to blood groupies, anxious to be fed upon. Guards and other officials may succumb to the temptation. Blood dolls may seek employment in prisons. Conjugal visits could provide occasions for Vitae extraction.

In short, create a flawed system, in which blood can flow through the cracks. Nothing could be more realistic than an institution whose actual practices appear absurd and contradictory. Compromises arising from competing self-interests can twist any human structure, no matter what its original intent.

Care Packages

Exotic prisons will almost always include vessels for the inmates to fight over. These vessels may be replenished or taken away at their shadowy masters' whims. Stored blood may also be provided. It may be supplied easily, or placed as a lure to force the prisoners to attempt entertainingly dangerous activities.

The stranger the prison, the wilder the possibilities. The hydraulic systems of scythe-armed robots might pulse with fresh arterial Vitae. Bizarre creatures engineered by magic or alien science may pump blood as rich as any human's — possibly with hair-raising side effects.

Jailers

Certain chronicle concepts call for the creation of characters who maintain the environment but do not compete with the protagonists for resources. For want of a catch-all term we'll call them jailers.

If your bottle is a prison, the term is literal. Guards should have the ability to contain prisoners under normal circumstances, but not so much power that the charges are unable to jockey for power within the prison population or engage in Vitae smuggling.

Some guards will be poorly paid functionaries. Special units should be made up of robust characters capable of putting down the toughest Kindred in the joint. You may wish to create technological equalizers to make credible

the human dominance over their former predators. The humans may be equipped with Taser-like guns that disrupt the vampiric nervous system or tranquilizer darts that sedate their victims into immediate mini-torpor.

In a reality-inspired prison environment, jailers, from top administrators to lowly greenhorns, can become corrupted or otherwise manipulated into granting advantages to one gang over another. When creating these jailers, know what they want: money, career advancement, gratification of sadistic urges, and so on. By learning what motivates them, the protagonists can figure out how to negotiate successfully with the jailers.

Guardians of exotic “rats in a maze” concepts may, when the guardians show their faces at all, boast even more outlandish abilities to keep frenzied vamps in line. Maintain a sense of mystery about these guardians: the less the players learn about the guardians’ abilities, the more disturbing they’ll seem. Their inscrutable motivations make negotiation with them impossible. Create a puzzle around them, one that can lead the protagonists toward escape if they correctly assemble the pieces.

Character Creation

The truly horrific way to run a bottle chronicle is to spring it on your players unannounced. Have them create seasoned characters without restriction. Then, at the first session, narrate the circumstances of their capture or marooning, and watch as they review their character sheets and undergo the same appalled realization as their characters: so many of the Skills and Merits they expected to depend on have now been rendered completely useless.

This move might sound tempting, but it’s extremely risky in all but the most enthusiastically horror-loving gaming groups. The players may have signed up for a horror game, but they’ve also carefully squeezed and calibrated their points, and are expecting to realize certain fantasies of mastery and competence as they struggle with their inner Beasts. Unless the players completely trust that any shock or setback you mete out to them will eventually pay off in grim enjoyment, you should take the safe route and let them know in advance what they’ll be getting into, allowing them to design characters accordingly.

Even players who trust you to deliver the goods may become disgruntled when they see that their socially wired characters have spent most of their build points for nothing, leaving those players who concentrated on combat and Disciplines with much more effective characters.

(In an alternate version of the setting where humans have penetrated the Masquerade and are warehousing vampires in internment camps, characters would be at least somewhat prepared for their fate. You could ask the players to build characters with a certain number of experience points to reflect their choices prior to the pogrom, then inform the players of the setting change and give them additional points they’d have collected afterwards.)

Whether you intend to warn your players or not, the following Social Merits confer no benefit in the typical bottle chronicle: Allies, Barfly, Contacts, Fame, Haven, Herd, Mentor, Resources, Retainer and Status.

You might allow the use of certain Social Merits in a prison chronicle; a character might have Allies in a widespread prison gang or a Mentor who happens to be incarcerated in the same institution.

Running the Game

After you introduce your closed system to the players, running a bottle chronicle is largely a matter of reaction. Ask the players what they want to do next. You are creating a circumstance for them to explore and attempt to dominate. Concentrate on making the situation seem real and challenging. Ignore the usual story-driven concerns of pacing and structure. Don’t contrive events for a big climax at the end of an evening or steer the group toward particular revelations or narrative lines. Let the players take the lead. Allow their competitors to react logically to their gambits. Pull no punches when they leave themselves vulnerable to attack. Don’t feel guilty about keeping the pressure on. There are three to eight players, and only one of you.

Keeping Score

Keep the group’s changing Vitae total in front of them at all times. Use a whiteboard, blackboard or video projector to keep the number looming over your players’ heads. Maintain focus on the number by looking at it when you’re talking. Make a big deal about altering the number whenever it changes. Adopt a two-color scheme to mark the players’ relative progress: green when they’re increasing the total, red when they’re losing blood faster than they’re acquiring it.

You may also want to keep track of other secondary factors, adding to the pressure to keep the numbers up. You can track number of vessels, alliances with other groups, size of animal herds, amounts of stored food for your vessels, weapon stockpiles or the area under the group’s control. As the chronicle goes on, you may find that your group is especially interested in tracking certain secondary commodities, and not so much in others. Emphasize what the group cares about. To the limited degree that your choices drive a bottle chronicle, make these resources the center of contention.

Resource Morale

Dwindling resources breed desperation. Desperation emboldens the Beast. Growing resources trigger an instinctive sense of well-being, keeping the Beast at bay.

To model this, keep track of the group’s Resource Morale. There are three states of Resource morale: Desperate, Maintaining and Confident. The drawbacks of being Desperate are of greater impact than the benefits of being Confident.

Note the group's Vitae total at the end of each session. If the total has dropped by more than 20% over the past three sessions, the group is Desperate. If the total has risen by more than 20% over the last three sessions, the group is Confident. If neither pertains, the group is Maintaining.

Members of Desperate groups suffer a -1 modifier on all Composure-based rolls. Even worse, they have difficulty regaining Willpower. Whenever a character would otherwise regain a Willpower point, the player must succeed at a Composure roll, or fail to regain the point. When regaining multiple points at once, the player rolls for each point separately.

Characters who are Confident gain a +1 on all Composure-based rolls. Being Confident grants no particular advantage when regaining Willpower.

(On the same board that you use to remind players of the current resource status, note in large letters their current state of Resource Morale.)

Events

Although the players should largely drive the agenda, the environment should seem to have its own reality independent of their choices. Unpredictable events, from the trivial to the titanic, can suddenly open up both opportunities and vulnerabilities for the protagonists in their ongoing scramble for resources. Create a list of possible events for your setting. Introduce some of them at random, deciding in advance of a session what will happen. You can trigger the event when the players seem in need of a prodding or during a lull in the action. You can even choose a time during the evening when the event will occur, regardless of what else is happening in the story. Maintain your own sense of surprise by setting out chances that certain events will occur at a particular time. Then roll a die to see if they're triggered or not. Better yet, ask a player to roll, reinforcing the idea that the players are operating in a simulated environment, in which their survival hangs on forces both impersonal and arbitrary.

Sample events might include the following:

The appearance of a cooler of stored blood in a visible but inaccessible locale. (Any)

A deadly fight breaks out within one's vessels, which must be broken up before too much precious blood is spilled. (Any)

A strange creature is sighted in the far distance. (Castaway, Exotic)

The arrival of a new alpha prisoner. (Prison)

A violent storm lashes the environment. (Castaway, Exotic)

An earthquake shakes the prison. (Prison)

Blight strikes the food stores your vessels depend on. (Castaway, Exotic)

Nights grow unnaturally shorter. (Exotic)

The group's most reliably bribed guard is transferred to another unit. (Prison)

A vessel escapes. (Any)

Fire breaks out. (Any)

Hidden documents are found, revealing a possible way out. (Any)

Enemy actions should never occur randomly. Play them aggressively and intelligently, making only moves that could help the characters gain Vitae or other advantages at the expense of their enemies.

New Opponents

As previously mentioned, castaway chronicles make it a challenge to replace destroyed enemies while maintaining the players' suspension of disbelief. The best way to do replace destroyed enemies is to hint that they have reserve forces currently in torpor. Torpid enemies can awaken to thicken depleted ranks as needed. To be fair, however, if you do use this device, you should allow the players the chance to locate and destroy torpid foes before they awaken. Note though that their competitors will take all available measures to prevent this from happening.

In a prison environment, new enemies can be incarcerated at any time. Exotic captors can dump new competitors into the game whenever it needs perking up.

New Protagonists

To accommodate the introduction of new players into a castaway chronicle in progress, or the replacement of slain characters, establish the existence of possibly friendly torpid vampires. Perhaps some of the group's allies were thrown into torpor during the accident that stranded them in the environment. Maybe the group comes upon a cache of coffins from a previous wreck.

New player characters can be added to prisons or exotic confinements just as new opponents would be.

Isolated

The loneliness, night-to-night realities of the curse of vampirism and horrifying dissolution of the Kindred can be compelling themes for a Requiem game. If you want to make sure the players' attention is fixed firmly on these topics, it might be helpful to strip away a lot of the "ex-

ternal clutter" of vampire existence: territorial competition, covenant politics and the complex emotional interplay of the undead. Removing the player characters from Kindred society will do the trick. Without recourse to Kindred Storyteller characters, player characters are

forced to rely on themselves for drama. Such is the path taken in an “Isolated Kindred” Storytelling style.

Rare and Subtle Creatures

A few basic features are unique to the Isolated Kindred chronicle, and each is strong enough to provide the foundation for a game on its own. The key is to pick the feature (or features) that apply to the style of chronicle you are hoping to run.

For a more cerebral, visceral feel, you may wish to focus on the fact that the characters must discover the nature of their curse on their own; nobody is around to ease them into the unlives of vampires. This style of play lends itself very well to a small group, when you can give enough play time to the horrifying, unexpected features of Kindred existence: feeding, frenzy and Discipline mishaps.

An action-oriented game style will likely arise if you spotlight the vampiric urge to claim territory. As the characters stake out their feeding grounds, they can play out the inevitable clashes with the mortal populace and an exploration of the Masquerade from a perspective of hard-learned necessity, not tradition. Vitae may flow in abundance, but caution is crucial to the perpetuation of the hunt.

If you’d like to take the opportunity to plumb the depths of emotion in an Isolated Kindred chronicle, you may wish to bring the loneliness of the Kindred to the fore, running the characters through a quest for companionship — a search that can lead them from place to place in hopes of encountering their own kind — or, perhaps, to the ill-advised embrace of a new, surrogate “family” of vampires.

There’s one catch to this setup: all three of these ideas lend themselves to fairly open-ended stories, so you’ll need to put a clear set of “completion parameters” in place before play begins. A simple either-or statement will do: *Either* the characters will fully accept their curse, learning to hunt for sustenance *or* they will refuse to drink blood, slipping one-by-one into torpor, for example. *Either* the characters will eliminate any threats to the Masquerade in their home territory *or* they will succumb to mortal resistance. *Either* the characters will survive the journey to a populous city and introduce themselves to the Kindred there *or* they will give up the search, settling down in a domain of their own.

This statement should help keep the basic conflict of the chronicle in your mind throughout play, providing a marker that you can use to direct the story and judge whether things are going off track. If, for instance, it looks as though neither of the end-conditions is going to apply, you may need to prod the characters (by judicious use of Storyteller character interaction, dream sequences, flashbacks or any of the many Storytelling tools at your disposal). It is possible that the story will divert toward a resolution that satisfies neither of your pre-set conditions but still seems interesting. In that case, it’s safe to go forward *if you can still set clear parameters* for a satisfying ending to the story.

When your statement is made, you can plan for a satisfying conclusion on either side of the completion parameter. Even if the characters fail to accomplish their original goal, they can find resolution in a manner that pleases the players involved, so long as you plan ahead and fit the ending to the style of the troupe.

You won’t need to add too many complications to a story idea in the Isolated Kindred chronicle. Things are already going to be challenging enough for most characters, because the support structure of experienced vampires is completely absent. It’s better to simplify the plot, allowing the characters involved to set events in motion for themselves — they are, after all, unrestricted by society, and will feel more so if you allow them to direct themselves more freely.

Finding Purpose

Running a **Vampire** game without the backdrop of Kindred society can be difficult, because the characters won’t be distracted by so many of the petty dealings and details that more populous settings provide. To compensate, you’re going to have to make sure that the characters have a driving purpose that keeps them in play, giving them a compelling reason to move from one scene to the next. It’s not really enough to say, “Here you are. The town’s all yours. What do you do now?”

This is what it really comes down to: the characters need to *care* about the other inhabitants of the setting. If you can establish that, then any of the motivations that would dominate a vampire-rich chronicle will be able to play just as sharply here — the Storyteller character interactions will simply be transferred from fellow Kindred to emotionally significant mortals.

That’s not to say that the mortals need to be friends, relatives or even acquaintances of the characters — the mortals just have to inspire an emotional response. To guarantee that they do, you need only refer to the characters’ Virtue/Vice combinations and make sure that the locals push all the right buttons. Prudent or Temperate Kindred may be concerned if their quiet little hometown is won over by the charismatic, libidinous influence of a visiting stranger — especially if the Kindred admire the mortals as they currently live. Lustful or Gluttonous Kindred, of course, would be equally interested in the same events for different reasons.

Untethered in the World of Darkness

Without a vampire society to interact with, characters are left without laws or rules to guide their actions. Traditions aren’t enforced (and, if you like, aren’t even in play at all), territory is unbounded and politics are nonexistent. The great freedom this affords the characters is tempered by an absence of experience: there is nobody to learn from.

Representing the development of vampiric abilities (including both Vitae expenditure and Discipline use)

can be difficult without an “instructor” character. It may be simple to just let the characters guess instinctively at their capabilities, but there is another, more dramatic approach, called “Surging.” The technique turns learning supernatural abilities into a central feature of play, as well as highlighting each character’s conflict with the Beast. This technique is especially effective when employed with new or inexperienced player troupes who don’t know the rules of the game very well, allowing you to demonstrate their characters’ capabilities several times before they take them over, inspiring and instructing them along the way.

When a character begins play as a vampire, you should note the Disciplines she possesses, keeping a tally for yourself. Make a note called “Vitae,” too — this will come into play later. Next to each note, put 15 dots. At dramatically appropriate times during play, you can opt to activate one of the Discipline’s levels, representing an instinctive surge of power, and then allow the player involved to make a Surge Control roll (Stamina, Resolve or Composure + the appropriate attribute for the power — for example, Celerity would involve a Stamina + Dexterity roll, whereas Majesty • would involve a Composure + Presence roll) to see if the character can manage it, choosing to shut it off or direct it in the preferred way. Outside of these involuntary surges, the character should not be allowed to use the listed powers. The involuntary surges should be accompanied by the appropriate expenditure for the power’s cost, be it Willpower or Vitae.

The “Surge” can also be used to represent Vitae expenditure: a sudden, involuntary use of Vitae increases a character’s strength at a certain time or rapidly heals a wound. Once again, in this case, a Surge Control roll should be made (Stamina + Resolve), allowing the character to attempt to understand the expenditure so that he may learn to initiate, halt or otherwise control it at will.

Every time the player involved succeeds at a Surge Control roll, mark the number of successes in the dots you placed next to the Discipline or Vitae rating you noted earlier. Once the player has achieved all 15 successes, the player may draw on the power any time she wishes, activating it as normal in the future.

Example: Bob the Mekhet and Jenny the Nosferatu are brand-new characters in an Isolated Kindred setting. The Storyteller lists “Auspex 1, Obfuscate 1, Obfuscate 2 and Vitae” for Bob and “Obfuscate 1, Obfuscate 2, Obfuscate 3 and Vitae” for Jenny, placing 15 dots next to each item in both lists.

Early in play, Bob and Jenny are hiding from the police. Jenny suddenly vanishes, completely unconsciously. She’s aware that something’s happening to her, but she has no idea how it happened. The Storyteller has Jenny’s player make a Surge Control roll: Resolve + Intelligence (a total of 6 dice for her). She rolls three successes, so the Storyteller fills in three of the 15 dots next to her “Obfuscate 3” entry. She is beginning to have an inkling of the workings of the power, but can’t yet take conscious control of it. She needs 12 more

successes to reach a working knowledge of the power permanently (and stop it from happening randomly).

Later on, Bob is injured in a fall, taking four levels of bashing damage. The Storyteller decides that Bob’s wounds will fully heal, spending the necessary Vitae automatically. Bob’s player makes a Surge Control roll: Resolve + Stamina (a total of 7 dice for him). He rolls six successes, so the Storyteller fills in six of the 15 dots next to Bob’s “Vitae” entry. He needs nine more to take control of his Vitae expenditure (and decide when it does or doesn’t happen).

Surge Control rolling can become very dramatic if narrated for maximum effect. The Storyteller may choose to describe the rush of Vitae draining away automatically as the character struggles to take command of the response or the unplanned activation of a Discipline despite the internal battle to keep it from happening.

As an option, Surging can be used on rare occasions to give a character a hint at powers she may yet possess, even if it’s not possible to gain control of them just yet. This would represent powers that will be available to the character some time in the future, but have not yet been purchased with experience.

Example: Bob only has Auspex •, but the Storyteller decides that it would be appropriate to hint at the potential his future holds for him. At a quiet moment in the game, Bob suddenly experiences a momentary flash of perception, seeing Jenny’s aura for just a moment. The Storyteller describes his brief awareness of her general emotional state in the colors he sees around her, and asks Bob’s player to make a Surge Control roll of Resolve + Intelligence. The successes Bob garners here will not go toward the 15 required to gain control of the power (because Bob’s player has not purchased it with experience), but it does justify his development of Auspex in the future.

It is also possible to convey experience and wisdom to the characters from older Kindred without actually bringing them directly into play. A twist on the blood sympathy rules (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 163) can allow for a kind of “racial recall” — a “Blood Memory.”

At times during a chronicle (whether quiet, between-scene moments or right in the middle of a stressful scene), the Storyteller may choose to give a character a spontaneous, unexpected chance to dredge useful information from the experience of her absent Kindred relatives through the sympathetic ties of Vitae. At those times, the player rolls the character’s Wits + Occult. The number of successes tells how relevant the information gleaned from the burst of inherited memory. Active Spirit’s Touch (Auspex •••) while in contact with the possessions of the blood relative adds two dice to this roll.

Dramatic Failure: Players cannot dramatically fail a roll for blood memory.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The character experiences a vivid flash of memory, experiencing a few short moments through the eyes of her sire (or grandsire). The memory imparts

some useful information to the character (allowing a +1 bonus on a relevant roll in the current scene or opening up a path of learning that might normally require outside instruction). All but this information and vague details about the scene will fade from her memory within moments, like a dream upon waking.

Exceptional Success: The character fully relives a short scene, perceiving it with all of her senses from the perspective of her sire (or grandsire). She even “hears” the surface thoughts of her blood relation as they occurred at the time, retaining her memory of them when the flash of insight passes. The memory experienced imparts extremely useful information (allowing a +3 bonus on a single relevant roll in the current scene or opening up a path of learning that would be impossible without outside instruction).

At the Storyteller’s discretion, it may be possible, but extremely difficult, to force this supernatural recall. With the expenditure of a point of Willpower (which does not add a bonus to the Wits + Occult roll), the player can make the roll with a –5 difficulty. If the roll fails, the character may not attempt to access the blood memory for the remainder of the night.

Example: Bob the Mekhet is trapped in a locked wooden shed. He looks around, realizing that there are small gaps in the slats on the side of the shed, and that he is likely to burn if he remains within when the sun rises. He slaps the walls with his palms, wishing he had the muscle to get through them. As the pangs of fear begin to grow, threatening frenzy, the Storyteller has his player first roll Wits + Occult (a total of 4 dice for her). He rolls two successes.

Suddenly, he experiences a flash of foreign memory: his sire, a shadowy Mekhet woman, shackled to a wall. With a surge of unnatural strength, she kicks the anchor stone free from the wall, snapping her restraints free.

A vital insight remains with him even as the vision fades: seemingly out of the blue, he learns to expend Vitae to enhance his strength, and kicks a hole in the wall with his bare feet.

Intensified Focus

Since there is nobody to guide the characters in an Isolated Kindred chronicle, nobody to tell them what is proper and what is normal, the focus of the story will remain on the characters themselves and the unlives they choose to carve out. They are likely to be the most powerful influences in the setting, and may face little resistance — especially if they are careful enough to remain unseen and unknown.

Take advantage of the opportunity this provides. Be sure to highlight the power these Kindred have over their surroundings, even if they are only neonates. If the characters go on a feeding spree, terrorizing the mortals who dwell nearby, then take the time to describe how the Kindred’s actions change the behavior of the local populace. If the Kindred choose to protect a specific location, ensuring

that no violence comes there, what kind of effect does that have on the place itself?

This way, the setting can become a reflection of the characters’ souls. Without the contribution of other vampires, the characters can be made to understand just how much of an impact they have, and they will be unable to deny that the effects they see are results of their own behavior. There is simply no one else to blame when the World of Darkness comes to the setting — the characters themselves will have brought it.

Don’t worry if the characters initially react to this awareness by taking things a little too far — trying to set up a kingdom for themselves or indulging their less prudent impulses. As soon as they start behaving like gods (or gods-to-be), certain themes of Requiem come rocketing to the fore: the struggle between Man and Beast, the eternal tug-of-war between Virtue and Vice and the heady temptations of ill-gotten power. What’s important is that the setting provides a chance for the characters involved to recognize and confront their own weaknesses. They’re going to have to take a couple of steps down the blind alley of bad choices before they can redeem themselves. Let it happen for a while, and then start showing them the results.

Escaping Solitude

Eventually, the characters in an Isolated Kindred chronicle are going to find a way to relieve the loneliness of their existence. In most cases, their attempts will become the focus of the plot, and their resolution can bring the chronicle to a close.

There are five ways that the characters can break away from the loneliness of Isolated Kindred:

They find other vampires: By leaving their home domain and embarking on a quest, the characters may seek out (and eventually find) foreign Kindred to commiserate with over the long nights of undeath. Depending on how long you want the search to go on, you can make the world more or less vampire-infested, and you can decide where and how the infestation has spread. The World of Darkness as presented posits that there are vampires all around the world, moving among the mortals in every sizable city. You need not adhere to that notion, though — the search could take the characters around the world, following an elusive trail as they hunt their own kind. The resolution of this search in the former case will bring the chronicle to a close, segueing into one in which the characters find themselves integrated into vampire society, while the latter allows for a continuance of the plot as is, adding only a few Storyteller character Kindred to the mix.

Other vampires find them: This scenario reverses the previous case. The characters remain in their home domain and foreign Kindred come to them. Depending on the attitude of the characters (and the intent of the visiting vampires), this



encounter can resolve in a few ways. The two groups may compete for control of the domain, or they may band together into a cohesive group. If you choose, the newcomers may bring the established mores and traditions of Kindred society with them, or they may be forlorn seekers, just like the chronicle's main characters. The chronicle can be brought to a close (leading into a new one) if vampire society is transmitted to (and accepted within) the domain, or the chronicle can just continue as is, complicated by the addition of the new Storyteller characters.

They create other vampires: An excellent story point for an Isolated Kindred chronicle. Whether out of desperation, boredom or ignorance, a character Embraces a mortal, bringing him into the "family." This story turns into one of the blind leading the blind, as guideless characters must take responsibility for the new vampire, teaching him what little they know. Creation of new Kindred is not likely to bring the chronicle to a close in itself, but the relationship with the childe may resolve in a manner that ends the story: with the Final Death of the childe, with a conciliation between the childe and sire (a "happily ever after" scenario) or with the separation of sire and childe.

They reveal themselves to compassionate mortals: Much of the tension of a Masquerade-heavy chronicle can be momentarily relieved when the characters confide in mortals who have reason (or the inclination) to take pity on the Kindred. The mortals, then, become allies (either with or without the pressure of the *Vinculum*) and the vampires continue, bolstered by their new companions. Mortals can help the characters settle into a domain (another "happily ever after option"), or they can simply increase the scope of the story, potentially raising the stakes of the conflict.

They die or enter torpor: Always an option. The Final Deaths of the characters may not be very satisfying for the player troupe (unless long planned, giving them plenty of opportunity for melodrama on the way out), but torpor can be a convenient and powerful tool for ending an Isolated Kindred chronicle and pave the way for another one. Heavily injured (or pushed to the brink of depression), the characters enter a long sleep, bringing their solitary existence to a close. Decades (or centuries?) later, they awake, finding themselves rising into a changed domain — perhaps one that's got new vampire masters.

Sample Scene: Jackknifing Away From the Sun

Dice pool: Dexterity + Athletics (+Celerity)

Action: Extended. This scene represents a struggle to stay alive in confusing circumstances. Each character involved will have to get 10 successes to get to safety, taking aggravated damage each round as the character goes. This is a potentially deadly, difficult sequence that could be used as the exciting beginning of an Isolated Kindred chronicle.

Here's the scene: for whatever reason you choose, the characters are taking the terrible risk of air travel. Each

is stored in a light-tight container in the plane's hold (to avoid the possibility of a sunlit passenger cabin). Unfortunately, the worst has happened — some kind of fault has caused the plane to come apart in mid-flight, spilling its contents over a lake just minutes before sundown.

The boxes the characters are hiding in will each smash open on impact with the surface. While none of the characters will take damage from the hit (for simplicity's sake, we'll say that the contents of the boxes cushion them), they're going to have to dodge the sun's rays. The only real option they have is to dive into the water and try and swim around and through the shafts of light that poke through the holes in the debris that's rained down all around them and now floats on the surface. Any character who remains above the water (for whatever reason) will take three aggravated wounds per round from direct exposure to the sun and will risk being struck by falling debris — so the characters had best get under as quick as they can.

For each character, the challenge is thus: avoid the shafts of sunlight long enough to dive into the dark, deep murk of the lake. Each must roll Dexterity + Athletics (+ Celerity, if the character chooses to activate it) every round, trying to get a total of 10 successes. Once they do so, they'll be safe. Until then — it's a bad, bad situation. The beams are appearing, moving and disappearing, apparently randomly, because the wreckage on the surface is being jostled by the waves up above. It's almost impossible to tell where they'll go next. All the characters can do is dodge the beams when they move and hope to get deep enough in time.

Note: As mentioned, this is a potentially deadly scene. If you don't want the characters to die before they get a chance to get back on dry land, you'll have to keep an eye on the amount of damage each of them is taking. Prepare yourself to narrate the fortunate intervention of a large chunk of debris or a sudden down-current that draws the character to safety at the verge of Final Death.

This scene is meant to underscore one of the common themes of *Isolated Kindred* chronicles: sometimes, survival can depend entirely on your own abilities. Social complications have a tendency to vanish in life-or-death situations. None of the characters is close enough to one another to offer a helping hand (and none of them has time to swim sideways for long), so each is going to have to rely on his own skill and good fortune to make it out of the lake alive.

The sun will set immediately after each character either achieves 10 successes or finds safety in a Storyteller-contrived intervention, ending the scene.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: For a brief moment, the character has actually dodged *into* a shaft of direct sunlight. He takes three points of aggravated damage as his skin sears before he has a chance to kick out of the way.

Failure: The character finds himself in a patch of exposed water, suffering the effects of filtered or reflected sunlight. He takes two points of aggravated damage.

Success: The character manages to avoid the sunlight for now, briefly dodging under a rolling scrap of debris or diving a few feet deeper into the water. If this success brings him up to the required 10, he manages to get down past the filtered sunlight to the dark, cool waters of the lake's muddy bottom.

Exceptional Success: The character escapes the sunlight for now, making considerable headway in his desperate attempt to get to safety. If this roll brings him up to the required 10 successes, he makes his final escape to the murk below, where he can safely await the sunset.

Equipment: This is a real “less is more” scenario. There's not a lot of equipment that could help the characters here. If they manage to grab anything out of their containers that provides coverage without adding buoyancy, they could use it to help protect themselves. A wool blanket, for instance, if the character spends a round wrapping it completely around himself, would downgrade the sunlight's intensity one level, so that it does two aggravated levels of damage on a dramatic failure and one level on a simple failure. However, since the characters are looking for maximum mobility here, any equipment would threaten to encumber them (see “Penalties,” below).

Penalties: Almost everything the characters can get their hands on will threaten to weigh them down, making it harder to dodge the sun. It's true, they might sink faster if they grab hold of a tumbling piece of the fuselage, but they'll lose control over the direction of their descent and might get taken for a ride right through the sun's rays. Judge the bulkiness of anything the characters try to grab hold of, and assign it a penalty value between -1 (for small, relatively insignificant items: a carry-on bag, a waterlogged blanket, etc) and -5 (for truly uncontrollable pieces: a shattered jet engine housing, a struggling mortal, etc.).

Flee From the Monster

A number of siblings dwell in a rural town, isolated from the world of Kindred. As far as these siblings know, there are no other vampires in the world. In fact, for the purposes of this chronicle, they may be right. Their unives are relatively

undisturbed: together, they rule a patch of territory, relying on one another to maintain secrecy and stay sane.

Their sire is long gone. A creature of pain and regret, he created each one of the characters in turn and then

disappeared one night. None of the characters know what happened to him, and none have been able to find any evidence of his passage.

In fact, he gave himself over to sleep. Overwhelmed with guilt and sadness, he has spent years dreaming of his own sins and the potential crimes of his childer. The last shreds of his Humanity have thinned in his torpor. He may have gone into sleep frustrated and passive, but he now arises angry and active, vowing to destroy all the evil he's created. He has gone thoroughly insane.

His return is heralded by the destruction of the characters' eldest sibling. Panicked, they flee into the night as their sire screams a bloody oath, his terrible voice shaking the ground beneath their feet. They outnumber him. They have learned many powers and tricks while he rested. Still, they are driven by their fear, and he seems stronger than ever.

Thus begins this chronicle: a harrowing chase through a rural setting. Everywhere the characters go, death follows, and every mortal who crosses their path is marked for death. Over the course of the story, the characters must face a number of decisions that will test their Humanity and their courage again and again. Eventually, they will have to put an end to the bloodshed and face their incredibly powerful, mindlessly brutal maker in a fight to the finish.

The end to the chronicle requires the destruction of the antagonist. It may well cost a number of the

characters' unlives as well, but the story will remain satisfying if the characters choose to face Final Death willingly, making the decision to sacrifice themselves if necessary. It is not possible to end the chronicle without a confrontation — either the players must plan to turn and hold their ground or the Storyteller must eventually force the confrontation upon them. The former is, of course, preferable, but the latter may be necessary if the characters begin to lose too much of their own Humanity in the struggle to survive.

The focus of this plot is physical. There is little in the way of social maneuvering, and there is no political Kindred interaction.

Theme: The struggle of Man versus Beast is the chief focus of this chronicle. All political and social distractions are discarded as the characters become fugitives in a world without fellow Kindred to rely upon. The characters become the representatives of the Man within the vampire, while their insane sire embodies the Beast, beating a path of rage and bloody madness towards them. The chronicle has a simple thematic center: the characters can run from the Beast for a time, but eventually they're going to have to confront it. The tone of the chronicle's end will depend on whether or not they have the wherewithal to defeat the enemy without allowing themselves to imitate it.

Mood: Frantic, fast-paced and frightening. The characters are the targets of a bloody pursuit, and should never



get much of a chance to rest before the enemy threatens to overtake them. Every feature of the landscape should convey a sense of time running out: trees rapidly losing their leaves to the chill autumn winds and abandoned buildings falling swiftly into disrepair and collapse might help to set the scene. Everything passes in a blur when savage death snaps at the characters' heels. Never let them forget that they are chased, and never let them see anything that's managed to survive the erosion of time.

Atmosphere: Films such as *Alien* or *The Fugitive* set great examples for the atmosphere of this story: an electric, adrenaline-soaked, inescapable pursuit. The characters are free to come up with plans and stratagems, so long as they stay on the move until the climactic confrontation with the threat that follows them. You'll find that a sense of attrition really helps move a story like this along, so it would be useful to construct a number of doomed allies for the characters to run with. As the chronicle progresses, some or all of the allies can fall victim to the insane antagonist, demonstrating the deadly seriousness of the characters' predicament.

To help hammer home the point of the chronicle in an atmospheric way, you may choose to have the chase loop back on itself at some point, allowing the characters to see the effect their pursuer has on the territory he passes through. Take the opportunity to describe the path of destruction he cuts as he moves, making it clear that the characters aren't just running for their lives: they're leading the enemy toward innocents as they go. Description of a once-idyllic farm or campsite that's been torn apart by the fury of the Beast will go a long way toward emphasizing both the violence of the pursuit and the duty of the characters to confront the enemy and put an end to the conflict.

Setting: This chronicle should begin in a relatively isolated setting: a small town or resort. The setting will go wherever the characters run, so be prepared to take it anywhere they want to go — but do your best to avoid any big cities. Present the characters with a number of feeding opportunities along the way: filling stations, campsites, farmhouses and small rural communities. The characters should feel as though they're the only vampires in the world, and lots of open, empty spaces will help to underscore that notion.

It's important that the characters become somewhat familiar or emotionally involved with the mortal populace wherever the Kindred go — even if it's just in a cursory fashion — because they're going to have to realize the damage done to those people when their sire passes through, and it's going to have to affect them.

Character Creation: This is a chronicle made for a single-clan group of three to five neonate vampires. Since this is an Isolated Kindred chronicle, the choice of covenant is irrelevant. There is no support structure to turn to, so it's best to just ignore the question of covenant membership at character creation. Ask your players

which clan they'd like their characters to belong to; this story works just as well with any of the five choices.

The characters in the coterie (and any allies you choose to make for the game) should be reasonably familiar with one another and, ideally, relatively friendly. They are all siblings, and they all know and fear their sire. As far as they know, he has disappeared, and they are the only vampires left in the world. It's a good idea, then, to play out a fairly detailed prologue, allowing them to bond and enjoy some preliminary interaction before the action really begins.

You can actually make the characters as powerful as you like, so long as you keep this in mind: their sire should be strong enough that they're all going to have to work together if they want to bring him down in a fight. The tougher you let the characters get, the more you'll need to scale their sire up as well, and you don't want things to get ludicrous.

The players should know in advance that this is a physically demanding chronicle, and it's advisable for their characters to be skilled enough to take care of themselves. They don't all have to be athletes and soldiers, but it helps if they've each got at least a little bit of Survival and some kind of combat ability. Mental abilities will prove useful in avoiding contact with mortals, should the characters choose to do so.

Do not allow the players to create characters who are extremely low in Humanity or otherwise unlikely to be horrified by the violence of their sire. The tone of the game will be set completely off-kilter if the characters don't think that killing a few mortals is such a big deal.

Let the players familiarize themselves with the setting before play begins. Lay out a sizable map of the area, hinting that they may stray "a little" from home base. That way, when their characters hit the road, the players will have an idea of a direction for them to head off in.

Antagonists: There are two types of antagonists for the characters to face off against here: their single-minded, murderous sire and every unsuspecting mortal who might obstruct or otherwise hamper their flight.

Example: *The characters' sire is a mad, bloodthirsty Beast of a creature, a vampire who has lost all but the thinnest shred of his Humanity. He operates on instinct, maintaining only one purpose: obliterate all traces of his curse from the Earth. To that end, he intends to kill the characters and follow them into Final Death. He is not subtle, he is not clever. He is a relentless, dogged crusader, chasing his targets down and feeding on anything he can along the way. Fearing and hating the influence of his own blood, he will seek to destroy every mortal who has interacted with his childer, ensuring that none of them carry the Vitae of his line. There is no negotiating with him, and there is no distracting him (unless he's hungry enough). All the characters can do is run until they gather up the strength and the will to destroy him, and then turn to face his wrath. Attendant to his extremely low Humanity, the sire is deranged: he is a Megalomaniac, Fixated on the destruction of his brood.*

On the other hand, the mortals in this story shouldn't just sit in the background. Some may be attracted to the characters, providing them with potential ties that tempt them to slow down, while others will be more aggressive, impeding their flight or even trying to arrest or hurt them (if they come to believe that the characters are responsible for the violence of their sire — a likely possibility). These mortals are all potential victims for the main antagonist in the story, and the characters are going to have to avoid harming them if they don't want to lose their own Humanity and start behaving like their enemy.

As soon as the characters realize that their sire is visiting his rage on the innocents they leave behind, they will

begin to understand that every new person they meet is marked by their passage. Mortals will become antagonists just by virtue of their curiosity; those characters interested in maintaining their Humanity will have to fight not to keep company with any people at all, if possible.

Story Concepts: Commandeer a van and put as much distance between yourself and your sire before he figures out how to follow, survive on the slopes of a mountain range, climbing away from the mortal populace while your sire closes in on you, stay ahead of the police after a narrow escape from a motel leaves all of the mortal guests dead, find the Vitae to stay alive in the deep forest, avoiding all mortal contact for as long as possible while you plan your final battle with your mad sire

Transcendence

I have an east-facing window in my haven, with a heavy metal shutter I have to hold open. Every morning, I watch until the horizon glows. Often, I watch until it starts to burn.

One day, I will see the sunrise again.

The Transcendence chronicle is about stopping being vampires without facing Final Death. The simplest form is the quest to become human once more, but a search for a state such as Golconda that takes a vampire beyond his condition also counts. Indeed, the whole purpose of the Ordo Dracul could be said to be the search for transcendence.

If **Vampire: The Requiem** is about the personal horror of being a monster, this is the chronicle about stopping being a monster. Therefore, a Transcendence chronicle, in its purest form, is not about getting new powers; it is about becoming free from the monstrous urges that control the Kindred. In the case of vampires who become human again, this means sacrificing all the power of their undead state.

Thus, there are two equally important aspects to a chronicle of this sort. You must, of course, provide a path to transcendence that feels convincing, rather than simply involving killing the monsters in the way. But first, you must make the players and the characters *want* to give up their power.

Making Them Want It

You can make the players, as well as the characters, want to transcend their monstrous state by emphasizing the drawbacks to being a vampire. These are real enough; vampires cannot go out in daylight, are subject to the Beast and must feed off humans to survive. In a standard chronicle, these issues provide occasional plot elements. In a Transcendence chronicle, they should be much more strongly emphasized, making the undead state into a true curse.

Feeding

Vampires drink the blood of humans. This is what defines the Kindred, and is the aspect that should get the most emphasis in a Transcendence chronicle. However, even in this sort of chronicle, you cannot play out every single Embrace; there is still the quest for transcendence to follow. That said, feeding should never be casual.

The most basic requirement is that player characters should never be allowed to gain truly consenting vessels. Feeding should always be exploitative at the least, and typically violently enforced. Taking blood should always be wrong.

Further, vessels should be personalized. They may not have names, if the vampire doesn't care to learn such things, but vessels should never be abstract individuals. Even if you use the abstracted feeding system on p. 164 of **Vampire: The Requiem**, you should describe the vessel and the process of feeding. The players should always know that their characters are feeding on human beings. (Unless, of course, the characters are feeding on animals instead — see below.)

In addition, feeding should be played out in full from time to time. Since feeding will normally involve just one player and the Storyteller, it should be kept fairly brief. If you rotate through the player characters, spending 20 minutes of a four-hour session on playing out a hunt is probably reasonable; the other players are watching, so try to emphasize the horror.

You can further emphasize the humanity of vessels by letting the players see their vessels' lives. This requires players who are willing to co-operate to a certain extent, because they will see things that their characters do not know. This works best with a hunt that's being played out. In the previous session, you spend a couple of minutes describing

a scene from the vessel's life. Earlier in the session with the hunt, you do so again. After the hunt, you describe the aftermath, maybe only in the next session.

For example, suppose you have a character who feeds by picking up young women in night clubs, and drinking blood under the cover of seduction. One session, you spend two or three minutes on a college student working all night to get a paper on economics finished and handed in, and then collapsing into bed, successful. The next session, you spend a little time on her talking to her parents on the phone, saying that she finished the paper and is planning to go out to party. Then you do the hunt. Afterward, you might mention her illness, and her regrets over doing something stupid or possibly describe her funeral, with distraught friends and family, if she died.

If you want the characters to know this, you can rule that, while feeding, a vampire catches glimpses of the vessel's life, and that this often repeats once after feeding. Thus, the character who actually feeds on the vessel does see the scenes that you play out, although not necessarily at the point where you play them out.

You should also be strict with possible Humanity loss for hunting vampires. You need to be careful with this if you are going to require high Humanity for transcendence (see below); that drinking someone's blood is an inhuman sin should be emphasized. The following table is a suggestion for a suitable hierarchy of sins.

Humanity	Threshold Sin	Dice Rolled
7	Drinking from a vessel who thinks she knows what she is doing	Roll 4 dice
6	Drinking from a vessel by deceit (e.g., pretending to seduce him)	Roll 3 dice
5	Drinking from a vessel by force, without killing	Roll 3 dice
4	Killing a vessel while in frenzy	Roll 3 dice
3	Killing a vessel while not in frenzy	Roll 2 dice
2	Killing vessels repeatedly while not in frenzy	Roll 2 dice

The normal effects of lost Humanity should also be enforced (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and **Vampire: The Requiem**). Using this table will make vampires with a Humanity over 5 very rare indeed.

Characters in such a chronicle may choose to hunt animals. This is a good result for the chronicle, but must not become a perfect solution to the problem. Enforce the lower amount of Vitae in animal vessels, and don't let the vampires gain access to an effectively unlimited number of animals. Again, play the hunt out occasionally, but, unless you want to get into arguments about the ethics of meat-eating, it is probably best to emphasize practical problems, rather than trying to generate ethical ones.

It is also possible to change the rules of the game a bit to give hunting even more of an impact.

The simplest change is to *always* require a roll to avoid hunger frenzy when feeding, even if the vampire is not hungry, and ruling that the vampire kills the vessel if he fails to control the Beast. A good difficulty for the roll is a number of successes equal to 11 – Humanity to stay in control. Even the most saintly vampire has a chance to lose it. The normal penalties for being hungry (–1) and starving (–2) apply.

Another simple change is to make it impossible for vampires to gain Vitae unless they drink directly from living, human vessels, which prevents the vampires from avoiding the curse and increases the risks associated with hunger frenzy. A more radical change is to forbid vampires from gaining Vitae if they do not kill their victims. Obviously, this changes the feel of the game and the world substantially, but does emphasize the monstrosity of vampires.

Frenzy

Hunger frenzies fall under Feeding, but anger and fear frenzies should also be emphasized in this sort of chronicle. Both types of frenzy can seriously hinder a vampire, and both can drive her to immoral acts.

Thus, the rules for resisting frenzy should be strictly enforced. Do not overlook trivial encounters with fire or sunlight, and do not allow the vampire to simply overlook minor annoyances. The number of required successes may be low, but rolling repeatedly all-but-guarantees eventual failure.

Similarly, the vampire's lack of control during frenzy should be enforced, and frenzying monsters should generally commit monstrous deeds. For anger frenzy, this is fairly easy to manage, and people should die. For fear frenzy, the vampire may leave people in the lurch, or casually kill people who get in his way. In addition, the result of the frenzy should be bad, in practical terms, for the character. Failing a frenzy roll should always be entirely negative.

It is also possible to change the rules to make frenzy more likely. Raising the number of required successes is possible, but the current rules use the full range, so it is probably best to make other changes.

First, you can forbid vampires from spending Willpower on frenzy rolls. This makes them a bit more helpless, but also makes the quest for transcendence that much harder.

An alternative is to rule that a vampire can roll no more dice than her Humanity score when resisting frenzy. This makes the downward spiral potentially sharper, and emphasizes the benefits of high Humanity, while not penalizing characters who have made progress toward transcendence.

Finally, you can require frenzy rolls more often. For anger frenzies, require rolls, with only one success required, if people fail to show proper respect or for the normal frustrations of life. Thus, you can require a roll if the vampire just misses a bus or if the little old lady in the shop in front of him is counting out her pennies to pay.

One possibility that requires very careful thought is increasing the effects of the Predator's Taint. Instead of Predator's Taint applying only the first time one vampire sees another, have it apply the first time *in a night*. This modification pretty much destroys the possibility of vampiric society, and is likely to tear character groups apart, as the characters tear each other apart. Thus, it is probably only appropriate in a one-on-one chronicle emphasizing isolation.

In such a case, you might also require a roll to resist hunger frenzy when the character encounters a human being for the first time in a night.

Daytime

There is nothing unethical about being nocturnal, but the ability to go out during the day is something that vampires should miss in this kind of chronicle.

Stories can include activities that really need to be done during the day. Strictly enforce Humanity rolls, the cap on all dice pools and the need to roll for fear frenzy every time the vampires see daylight. There is a very good chance that the characters will not be able to complete their tasks, and thus face problems.

For the more subtle side, have the characters dream of the beauty of sunset or remember picnics, hiking or even ogling people sunbathing. Include photographs of sunlit scenes in stories, and have the characters see daytime activities on television. Do not let the players forget that their characters are excluded from half of time.

This is a good place to make the rules more strict, because chronicles can still function if the characters cannot operate during the daytime at all. Indeed, that is a possible change; all vampires sleep within a few moments of sunset. They can make a Humanity roll, staying awake for one turn per success, but they can only make one roll, and so 10 turns is the absolute limit.

These rules can make it all-but-impossible for vampires to be active during the day. To give this fact added weight, design stories that make characters wish that they could act during daylight. Other options can be mixed and matched, including the following:

- Every roll of Humanity to stay awake costs the vampire one Vitae.
- Five successes on the extended roll lets the vampire stay awake for one scene, not the whole day. Getting back to your haven from somewhere else during the day time is, of course, a scene.
- Five successes on the extended roll lets the vampire stay awake all day, but she must spend a Vitae at the beginning of every new scene.
- Once a vampire goes to sleep, nothing but sunset can wake him.
- A sleeping vampire must spend a Vitae to make a Wits roll to notice a disturbance, as well as a Vitae to wake up.

- A vampire must spend a point of Willpower to try to stay awake.
- A vampire must spend a point of Willpower for every Humanity roll made to try to stay awake.
- A vampire must spend a point of Willpower per scene to remain active during the day.
- A vampire cannot spend Willpower on normal actions during the day.

The Quest

The negative aspects of the Requiem described above are not stories, but problems that arise during the course of stories. The quest, on the other hand, consists of the stories that arise as the vampires search for transcendence. If the problems make transcendence desirable, the quest has to make it seem appropriate.

This means that the quest must be appropriate to the kind of transcendence sought. A quest in which the aim is to stop being a monster will be different from one in which the aim is to become a monster without limits. However, the quest should never be a simple matter of collecting items until you have the full set for transcendence. Transcendence should always be a more spiritual sort of prize.

This section gives concrete suggestions for a quest aiming at becoming human again. This is not the only possible way to return to the human condition, and a different aim will require different details, but working by analogy from one set of examples is as easy as making purely general guidelines specific.

Learning how to embark on the quest should take some stories itself. However, those are standard investigation stories; once the quest starts, the nature of the stories changes.

Preparation

Before beginning the quest for mortality, the vampire must cleanse his soul of sin. In rule terms, the character must have and maintain a Humanity of at least 8. If it drops below that level, the vampire must start the quest over from the beginning. In addition, gaining Willpower by indulging your Vice forces you to start over, even if you do not lose Humanity.

If you are using the scale of crimes for feeding given above, a vampire with Humanity 8 feeding from a human risks Humanity loss even if the vessel gives fully informed consent. Thus, vampires on the quest should feed from animals, and expect to have little spare Vitae for powering Disciplines and the like.

If you have also ruled that vampires can only feed from humans, the quest becomes even harder. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it should remain possible. Thus, a vampire feeding *purely to survive* should get +3 dice to the degeneration roll. If the vampire has used Vitae for

nothing beyond waking up in the evening, feeding counts as pure survival. If any Vitae has been used to power Disciplines, it does not, and the bonus does not apply. Thus, a vampire following the path under these conditions is effectively forbidden from using Vitae for anything beyond maintaining undeath.

Crimes committed while in frenzy can also cause Humanity loss, and characters should get no special allowances. Thus, vampires following the quest would be wise to maintain a normal Humanity of 9 or 10, so that they have a chance to repent and atone for their sins before they fall from the path altogether.

Of course, characters do not know what their current Humanity scores are. Characters do, however, know when they have committed sins and failed degeneration rolls, and, thus, that they need to atone for that sin.

In the initial preparation, things need to be tailored somewhat to the vampire in question. First, consult with the player to choose a representative crime, committed as a vampire, for each of dot of Humanity the character has lost below 7. Thus, a character with a Humanity of 5 needs two crimes, one for Humanity 5 and one for Humanity 6. These should be actual things that the character did. The sins that caused the degeneration are obvious candidates, but if the character did something more notable, even if the degeneration roll was a success, that could be a better choice.

The vampire must then atone for each of those crimes. This might involve compensating the victims, stopping something similar happening again or carrying out acts of virtue that symbolically balance the sin in question. Each act of atonement should be a story, and a story that grants enough experience points to raise Humanity by one point. This means that, by the time the character is atoning to reach Humanity 7, the story needs to have at least five chapters.

If a coterie are seeking transcendence as a group, at least some of the crimes should be ones that the coterie have in common, and that they can atone for as a group. If some members have lower Humanity than the others, they will need to atone for more. However, helping your friends atone and redeem themselves is a very appropriate activity for vampires seeking redemption, although not one that permits them to raise their Humanity to 8.

Finally, the vampire should perform some notably virtuous act, allowing her to raise her Humanity to 8. Again, this should require a fairly long story, at least half a dozen sessions, so that the player can gather the requisite number of experience points. This virtuous act should express the character's Virtue in some way. Many players are likely to want to perform a second such act, gaining a Humanity of 9, and this should express their characters' Virtues in a different way.

If the vampires have fairly low Humanity before starting on the path to redemption, preparation for the quest

could take more than a score of sessions. This is not, necessarily, a problem, as even during preparation the vampires are struggling with their corrupt natures, striving to do good and generally focusing on transcendence. However, you may want to move through the stages of the chronicle more quickly.

One possibility is to specify that a given story will, if successfully completed, grant the atoning character a point of Humanity, but no experience points. Assisting characters get experience points as normal. In that case, individual tales of atonement can be reduced in length, to maybe two or three sessions each, without assisting characters gaining huge amounts of experience. Transcendence should, however, take time; this chronicle type is not really suited to a mini-chronicle lasting only half a dozen sessions or so.



FAST REDEMPTION

A mini-chronicle with the avowed aim of returning to humanity, and then stopping, is a good concept. However, it isn't suited to this style of redemption.

One possibility is that vampires can return to humanity if they kill their sires. This is a common motif, and very well suited to a short chronicle.

Another possibility is a simple ritual that the vampire can perform to become human. The chronicle then revolves around learning the ritual and gathering the necessary ingredients.

A final possibility is that the vampire needs the "anti-Embrace." The vampire must find a human who loves and accepts him, despite his being a vampire. Then, together with that human, the vampire must starve himself. Once he falls into torpor, the human places a little of his blood on the vampire's lips, and monster becomes human once more. This chronicle would work best as a one-on-one, and would be concerned with resisting frenzy.



Course of the Quest

Vampires are lone individuals who prey on humans. The quest for transcendence involves becoming members of a community who support humans.

The vampire must choose a group of humans who do not currently know her, and who are in need of some sort of help. This help should be of a practical kind; helping rich and greedy corporate executives to see the error of their ways does not count. Similarly, the help must be moral in itself; you cannot redeem yourself by helping a gang of criminals to take over a city.

The vampire must then help the group of humans, gain their acceptance and trust, so that the members will willingly perform the final ritual. The quest has two parts, which could, in theory, be performed





separately. However, they tend to reinforce each other, and are best performed together.

The vampire must perform seven virtuous acts, each exemplifying one of the seven Virtues given in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. Each of these acts should constitute a story, and each act must benefit the chosen group. Characters gain normal experience for these stories, but saving the points against possible losses of Humanity is probably a good idea.

Charity is the easiest Virtue to create a story for, since that Virtue is purely about helping others. Fortitude and Justice should also present few problems. Fortitude is often needed in helping people, particularly if doing something dangerous they dare not do themselves. Similarly, dealing with someone oppressing a group exemplifies Justice.

The other Virtues are best exemplified by inspiring them in the group in question. For Hope, that is an essential part of the Virtue anyway, and Faith, Prudence and Temperance are a little too internal to drive a story unless someone else is involved.

The second part of the quest involves gaining the genuine trust, acceptance and love of the group. This must be unforced, won by the character's words and actions, and based on full knowledge of what the character is and the crimes in her past.

The character need not start out by coming out as a vampire seeking to become human again. As a strategy, that is likely to fail, as the group starts by recoiling in horror and determining to hunt the monster down. However, at some point they must learn the whole truth, and decide to help the vampire anyway.

The revelation, and the group's reaction to it, should be played out. Rather than a single story, it should be threaded through other stories, as the people first recoil somewhat from the monster, and then are won back by her words and continuing good actions. Of course, success shouldn't be automatic; the vampire must actually be played in a way that restores trust.

Once the vampire has performed the seven acts, the final ritual can be performed at any time.

The vampire stands in an open area, facing east as the sun begins to rise. The humans gather around, touching the creature's body, but not blocking the sunlight.

The vampire must remain in place, overcoming the fear frenzy and remaining awake. The damage from sunlight, however, is taken by the humans offering their support. As the sun clears the horizon, the vampire becomes human once more.

It takes 40 turns for the sun to rise. For the first 20 turns, it does one point of damage per turn. For the next 10, it does two per turn. For the final 10, it does three, for a total of 70 points of damage. The humans take these points as aggravated damage.

However, the points are divided as evenly as possible between the supporting humans. Twelve average people would survive the experience, although they would need extensive treatment afterward. In addition, they feel the pain of burning, and must endure it without letting go of the vampire.

The key requirement is that the human supporters must agree to take part in the ritual in full knowledge of what will happen to them. It isn't possible for more than 20 people to touch one vampire without blocking the sun, so each participant will take a significant amount of damage.

There are no rolls for deciding when people are willing to burn for the vampire, but, if a monster can truly win their trust, they will do it. It is, of course, essential that there are enough of them to ensure that none actually die; the vampire cannot accept that sort of sacrifice.

If a coterie is pursuing this path as a group, the coterie members can perform the acts of virtue together and win trust collectively, but they must perform the final ritual one by one. Vampires who have become human may support their friends in their rituals.



REWARDS OF VIRTUE

As written, the vampire gains no intermediate benefits from the quest; virtue is its own reward. Some Storytellers might prefer to have players see some progress along the way, particularly if the chronicle is running for a long time.

In this case, every virtuous act completed could grant +1 die on all rolls to resist frenzy, possibly taking the number of dice available well over ten.



What Now?

The vampires have succeeded. They are vampires no longer. What now?

One possibility is ending the chronicle. This is, after all, an obvious, and deeply satisfactory, conclusion.

However, after playing through such a significant series of events, the players may be very attached to their characters, and want to continue. If they do so, the chronicle will change completely.

If the vampires became human, they are now humans in the World of Darkness. As a matter of simple courtesy, you should avoid having them be Embraced again, but, beyond that, they can do anything. They will not revert to being vampires if their Humanity drops, after all.

If they have become vampires without the normal limitations, you have a very different sort of game on your hands, something closely resembling a superhero game. This may not be a bad thing, as it would mean a major change of pace for the chronicle, which helps to keep things fresh.

The players might even want to play in another Transcendence chronicle, aiming to transcend their new state — but that would be a whole new topic.

Solo

Nothing's more personal than solitude. It follows that in a game of gothic horror — horror at one's own actions and thoughts — very little could be more appropriate than solitary play. This article explores the Solo chronicle as an alternate mode of play in **Vampire: The Requiem** for precisely one player and one Storyteller.

Understand this: the Solo chronicle is not a flavor of chronicle, it's a *style of play*. Although there are features of the solo mode of play that lend themselves to particular chronicle styles and not to others, this discussion of solo play is primarily about the dynamics between the people sitting at the game table, and only afterwards — and tangentially — an exploration of the game world.

Some of you are already flipping ahead, thinking to yourself that solo play is about the most worthless concept ever. But even if you're mostly interested in the social element of roleplaying, or you've simply got too many friends to seriously consider a Solo chronicle, you may still want to read the "One Versus Many" section. It takes a look at a lot of assumptions about group play you may

never have considered before. Thinking about those ideas — even if not with the idea of launching a Solo chronicle — will inform you as a Storyteller, which can only improve your game, no matter how many players are in it.

Before jumping into the meat, two important notes: First, although the Storyteller is sometimes said to be playing **Vampire: The Requiem**, "player" and "players" for our purposes refer only to gamers who are not the Storyteller. Second, Solo chronicles as defined herein are those with one player and one Storyteller. Here, *solo* does not ever refer to the truly solitary gaming experience you'd find in a choose-your-own adventure or to sitting alone in a room making up horror tales about some alter-ego.

One Versus Many

Group play is such the default mode of roleplaying in the World of Darkness that the distinct advantages and disadvantages to the "group" mode as opposed to the "solo" mode are easily overlooked as is that these advantages

and disadvantages are precisely that — the merits and flaws of a particular mode of play — rather than inevitable characteristics of roleplaying itself.

A number of the characteristics of traditional group play are dissected below. In each case, the sometimes-subtle implication of the group mode is discussed first. Then the idea is turned around and examined from the solo perspective. This is a somewhat theoretical overview, but it's short and crucial if you're going to run a Solo chronicle.

The most important but easily overlooked implication of roleplaying is that there is a certain class of person in the world — the player character — who is special. Although the characters in the setting have no basis to realize or understand that some of the people in the world are blessed with this extra-special protagonist status, the practical differences between players' characters and everybody else are profound, and subtler than roleplayers give them credit for. Consider some of the unwritten assumptions about player characters you may have even though they're not explicit rules of the game:

- Characters won't die without screwing up spectacularly, or having spectacularly bad luck. And, even then, they'll get the benefit of opportunities to change their mind ("Are you sure you want to do that?") or reap the life-saving benefits of easily camouflaged tactical "miscalculations" of the antagonists threatening them.

- Characters won't betray each other, at least not about anything that's really important. Not only do players typically share a "we're in this together" mentality, there's a practical dimension: once the betrayal is discovered, the well's poisoned. In less mature players, this can spell the end of play for one, if not both.

- Characters will get a fair shake from the world. They'll be matched against antagonists appropriate to their power level, won't be denied rewards they earned fair and square and won't be arbitrarily hosed by fate (at least, not without some dramatic point to it, coupled with a way to dig their way back out of hose-age).

Here's why it's especially important to be aware of these factors when there's only one player in your chronicle: in solo play, the assumptions that can be made about characters because they're characters can only be made about one character, that lone protagonist. And from *that* player's perspective, there isn't anyone else who's insured against arbitrary death and dismemberment, there isn't anyone else who's automatically trustworthy because he's got that special-but-indescribable player-character smell and there isn't anyone else who's going to get a fair shake because that's simply how it's done in the game.

(As an aside, one thing to realize about solo play is that it actually strengthens the "probably won't die" assumption that's usually made about characters. A solo character's Final Death amounts to lights-out for the entire chronicle, whereas, in a group game, the remaining characters provide continuity for the introduction of new characters.)

The second basic assumption about the group mode of play is that the characters' collective dramatic needs overshadow and overrule the personal stories of the group's individual members, if they conflict. There's the general concept that the group collectively has some dramatic motivation, and that the chronicle's narrative will go in that direction even when it doesn't align perfectly with the members' individual personalities. Some of the most horrible cognitive dissonance in roleplaying comes about when poorly conceived characters continue, session after session, to do things that don't make any sense for them individually because the invisible bonds of character-hood link them to the group's shared goals. In the Solo chronicle, this problem is no problem, and the narrative can turn on a dime without worry that a 180-degree redirection will leave others in the cold. A solo character's side story or subplot can be explored fully rather than abbreviated; he can arbitrarily break any alliance, travel to another city at a whim, be so affected by a failure that he gives up prior goals — temporarily or permanently — to do something entirely different with his unlife.

A third, often unrecognized facet of group play is that multiple minds usually weed out — or at least temper — outrageously stupid ideas before they come into contact with the enemy. Whether the truly bad idea is a combat tactic or a political strategy, with several heads to analyze it, it's much less likely to be attempted and thereby derail the story. The solo player has no brain trust to consult, a very real danger to the chronicle.

A rather obvious aspect of the group mode that's traditionally overlooked as inevitable is that a group of players must split the Storyteller's attention. It is simply true that lots of gameplay requires Storyteller adjudication — from interacting with Storyteller characters to rolling dice to resolve action — and likewise true that not everything the Storyteller does will apply equally to every player, or even be known to every player. This truth means that, to a greater or lesser extent, players will have downtime during which they'll have to do nothing at all, have to amuse themselves by doing what they can in the game without the Storyteller's attention or — much, much worse — have to do something entirely unrelated to the game. Obviously, one of the most compelling advantages of the Solo chronicle is that it eliminates this problem entirely; the single player always has the Storyteller's undivided attention.

Also inherent to the group mode is that members of the group who are physically present are privy to discussions between the Storyteller and the other players. Although truly secret interactions can move to the next room or pass through notes, less "highly classified" information freely passes though the air to be heard by all the players. And, although any given piece of this class of "player knowledge" rarely has the capacity to alter the storyline in and of itself, the knowledge's aggregation

can absolutely change the story over time, even for players who are utterly scrupulous. In the Solo chronicle, the player can't learn things from the Storyteller's discussions with other players; there aren't any.

The final unspoken facet of the gaming group is logistical in the real-world sense: it's hard to bring people together to play a game, especially for the period of time an RPG demands, with the level of attention an RPG demands, over and over again on a recurring basis as an ongoing chronicle demands. This is more true as players get older and more embroiled in their professional and family lives. Solo play is a two-pronged antidote. The obvious half of the equation is that it's easier for two people to get together than it is for four, or six or more. But complementing that is the shorter real-time duration of solo games: since the Storyteller's time isn't split among players, more meaningful gaming happens faster. "Easier to arrange" and "less time needed" opens up all kinds of opportunities to play **Vampire**. While scheduling a group game for a one-hour block of time because that's all the Storyteller can spare in a given week is pointless, a solo player can actually accomplish something meaningful in that amount of time. Two people might play a Solo chronicle as they carpool in the morning, over lunch each day or every night before bed, in the case of roommates or spouses.

Running the Game

The sections that follow are practical advice for Solo chronicle Storytellers, focusing on setting up the chronicle, keeping it constrained and applicable to the solo mode and finding the most personal horror that you can.

Setup

When setting up any new chronicle, many Storytellers get input from the players on how they'd like it to be — what kinds of stories interest them, what kinds of characters they'd like to play. Although the Storyteller usually has some ideas of his own, the players' needs usually (and rightly) play a role in determining which antagonists get an early fleshing out and which wait until some later point in the chronicle's development.

At a Solo chronicle's inception, this type of input from the player is *crucial*, since that player alone will make the moment-to-moment decisions about what parts of your world you'll have to describe, which antagonists you'll have to roleplay and what's going to happen next. Unforeseen directions in a group chronicle are tempered by what interests the group as a whole. It's difficult for one player among many to shanghai the whole story and send it in an unexpected direction. But, in the Solo chronicle, the solo player is the group.

In addition to finding out as much as you can about the nature of the character the player intends to play (and, as always, limiting character elements that don't fit with your

own vision), you should get explicit — written, preferably, for later reference — information from the player about:

- What, specifically or generally, does the *character* hope to accomplish in her unlife? Specific ideas might include things like "Find my uncle, whose disappearance when I was a teen I now suspect was due to his Embrace," while general ideas would be more along the lines of "Become a political power in the city." Collect at least three ideas like this, at least one each of specific and general, so you have the opportunity to inject variety into the chronicle's storylines when one goes stale.

- What, specifically or generally, does the *player* hope to experience with her character or see her character grow into? These might be opportunities that are unknown or unconsidered by the character at the start of the chronicle, but represent Storytelling opportunities or narrative devices the player's really interested in. "I'd like my character to discover that she has some unique role to play in Kindred society," for example, or "I'd like to play a character who has some huge, transformative secret in her background that she doesn't even know."

Don't misunderstand the purpose of getting these ideas from the player; you're not a short order cook assembling a made-to-order chronicle like it's a breakfast platter. You can-should-*must* provide the driving creative vision for the chronicle, and certainly shouldn't simply implement the player's requests at 1:1 without putting your own spin on them. The point of paying such close attention to what your player wants is that, in the Solo chronicle, your story has only one "consumer," and you'd be a fool not to find out exactly what he's looking for and do your best to satisfy.

If your solo player is new to you — you've never played **Vampire: The Requiem** or any other Storytelling game with him before — you might also want to ask something like:

- What style of game play do you most want to see from this chronicle? What portion of each game session do you see yourself spending interacting with other characters in the world? In solving puzzles? In combat and action?

Chronicle content aside, there's very little that's more frustrating than playing the wrong style of game. And again, while there's no one holding a gun to your head to meet the player's expectations exactly, and while this is certainly a question you could ask at the start of a group chronicle, knowing the answer in a Solo chronicle is crucial.

When you sit down to plan the Solo chronicle, mapping the landscape and building the major non-player characters, keep this in mind: the player is solitary, but his character shouldn't be. Populate the solo character's world with opportunities for strong relationships and alliances. Although the concept of the coterie is largely driven by the need to bind divergent player characters together, there's also no reason that a solo character can't also be part of a coterie. In fact, the solo character is in a

unique position to roleplay in such a context because the others in the coterie don't have that subtle character aura that prevents betrayal and the full range of other interactions that can boil inside the group. The Solo chronicle is the prime opportunity to roleplay the destruction of a coterie, the eventual fate of nearly all such groupings in the immortal World of Darkness.

Even if the solo vampire is not part of a formal coterie, he must have allies within the world, as well as antagonists and — unless your player specifically asked for a chronicle of wall-to-wall back-stabbing Machiavellianism — at least one confidant he can trust, if not in all things, then at least most of the time. A vampire's sire is in a unique position within the constellation of Kindred to play this role, but a confidant could be anyone, perhaps even a mortal. The confidant, whatever her identity and relationship to the character, serves a practical as well as narrative purpose in the story, because you can speak through her as a voice of reason to the player in cases where he's gotten the completely wrong idea about something and seems determined to embark on a suicidal course of action. Although you shouldn't do this often — it's a narrative kludge, after all — it's almost certain to be a tool you'll need at some point in the developing chronicle.

The Character Stands Alone

When your lone player builds her solo character, you should try to be present to answer questions about the world, head off bad assumptions and serve as a check against on bad decisions. Although the player might come to the table with a core concept and relatively detailed thoughts about her background, you should do what you can to convince the player to put off making mechanical choices until the two of you can sit down together. That's because there's one big potential pitfall in Solo chronicle character creation — over-specialization — that can really cramp the whole chronicle.

Many players, especially roleplaying veterans, like to create specialist characters who do one thing — stealth, combat or intrigue, for example — very well, to the exclusion of even rudimentary capabilities in other areas. The specialist approach won't work in the Solo chronicle for the simple reason that the character doesn't have a group of specialists in other areas to rely on to fill in the gaps. And if something goes wrong — well, a single character's Final Death is pretty much the end of the Solo chronicle. Thus, you should take an active role in convincing the player — at character creation — that “self-reliant” must be her character-creation watchword.

Now, don't come out of the gate frothing and sounding like you want to take charge of the whole character creation process. That's annoying, and it's going to make the player think twice about starting a new chronicle in which his only company is a control freak. But if you notice the player neglecting vital survival Skills in

favor of outside Specialty in a particular area, nudge gently. Point out that even a combat-heavy chronicle is going to require a character who can find things out, and even a social character is going to need to survive a little blunt trauma from time to time.

That's the theory, here's the practice: As the character takes shape, continuously scan the Skills, Merits and Disciplines as they go down on the character sheet. As you do, encourage — or even require — that the character have basic competence each of the following areas.

Fighting: Whether it's Brawl, Firearms or Weaponry, the character should have a journeyman's proficiency at mixing it up, if only to defend himself. Firearms is a poor lone choice of the three; it leaves the character up shit creek in a close combat ambush. And be very wary if your player tries to convince you that some other ability — Dominate, say, or Obfuscate — obviates the need to fight. Situations in which the substitute won't work will come up, and they won't be cases where the worst-case scenario is embarrassment.

Finding Things Out: Even the most violent chronicle also involves finding things out, if only to identify the next victim. Make sure the character has at least one way — and preferably more than one way — of proactive investigation. Otherwise, you're going to be stuck, session after session, trying to figure out how to give the player some crucial piece of information to advance a stalled plot in the face of the character's obviously blown roll to find that clue, track down that academic reference or beat that sullen informant's confession out of him. Academics, Empathy and Investigation are excellent capabilities to develop. Auspex has obvious uses, and the Arcane Sight devotion is an obvious all-purpose investigation technique. Make sure the character's go-to “figure it out” skill is relevant to your chronicle. All the book-learnin' in the world won't help in a political chronicle focused on relationships.

Surviving: The Common Sense and Danger Sense Merits are dual Swiss Army knives of survival for the solo character. They're head-and-shoulders above the brute force methods of survival (Resilience, say) because they step up to the plate before the hurting starts. Each Merit allows you to actively alert the player to almost any miscalculation or impending doom without resorting to an in-game mouthpiece. They stand in brilliantly for the *de facto* common sense provided by out-of-character discussion among the player group and the *de facto* danger sense that comes along with a crew of characters who watch your back. You'd be within your rights to require the player to buy one of the two. (On the other hand, no one likes requirements. You could go for the carrot instead of the stick by reducing the Solo-chronicle cost of Common Sense to •• and Danger Sense to •. You could even give the player his choice of the pair for free. In the end, it

helps you almost as much as it helps him.) With or without Common Sense or Danger Sense, other capabilities that foster survivability in characters are Survival (obviously), Streetwise, the aforementioned Resilience Discipline and the Iron Stamina Merit. Iron Stamina's utility is subtle but real: the death spiral of fatigue and injury penalties is something a lone character won't have handy allies to help him escape.

Friends: As much as the character should be self-reliant, she's not going to be able to do *everything* herself. And although she can cultivate helpful relationships through gameplay, those are a difficult substitute for the guaranteed and tailored assistance that can come from Allies, Contacts, Mentors or Retainers. What's more, if these characters contribute their counsel as well as their Skills to the player's cause, they can also serve as a check against wildly improbable plans the player falls in love with. ("Master Wayne, are you sure it's a good idea to . . .") Note that to live up to the solo character's need for self-reliance, such Storyteller characters should actually fill some hole in the character's capabilities. A combat monster's violent friends may be fun, but their Skills are redundant with the character's own abilities, and won't make up for the character's investigative shortcomings. Pairings such as a bodyguard Retainer for a socialite character or a Mentor who knows many Kindred for a newly Embraced character, make much more sense. Finally, keep in mind that over-powerful Mentors pose the danger that the character will over-rely on their capabilities. For this reason, modestly powerful (• to •••) Mentors are the wisest course.

Being self-reliant isn't easy, as the list of "requirements" above goes to show. For this reason, you may want to consider starting a new solo character at the "up-and-comer" or "established kindred" level of additional, starting experience points. Even a lesser bonus — say 10–15 additional points — helps the player feel like she's not both on her own and underpowered in the face of the challenge.



CONCEPT BUFFET

If you don't have any ideas of your own about the general content and thrust of a Solo chronicle, here are some quickie concepts to get you started.

Re-Awakened: The character is newly re-awakened from torpor in a strange, new environment. This could feature a modern setting (the character was Embraced at some point in history) or a futuristic one (he was Embraced in the real-world present day, and the game takes place down the road).

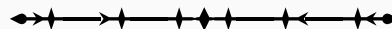
Lead-In: More a style of play than a style of chronicle, this is a Solo chronicle that — either known to the player or not — will lead into a traditional multi-player chronicle, sort of like a very long prelude. You could even run several simultaneous

lead-in Solo chronicles to bring a group together. If, for example, a dump truck full of free time has recently made a delivery at your house.

Exile: The character is a political exile. As a practical matter, she must find a new place where she can hunt and find reliable safety from the sun. There might be a parallel thematic narrative about the search for a place where the character vampire fits in.

Traveling: Most vampires remain in one city for decades or centuries at a time because of the difficulties of travel, difficulties multiplied for groups of Kindred. If you've been itching to play a chronicle that moves around a lot, the Solo chronicle is your best opportunity.

"The Specialist": A variation on the traveling chronicle, chronicles built on this concept provide a unique impetus for travel: the character is a vampire with a unique specialty or deep knowledge in some particular subject, and he travels frequently to solve some particular brand of sticky problem for other Kindred — usually others in his covenant — around the globe.



The Solo Sandbox

Another Solo chronicle challenge — that again stems from the player's ability to change narrative direction on a dime — is that preparing for all the things your player might try in a given session can be difficult. Because you can only do so much preparation, but also, because some level of preparation is necessary to run a credible game, you need to be able to confine your planning to some bounded physical (a neighborhood, for example) or conceptual (the realm of Kindred politics, for example) area.

One strategy that can help is to define a "sandbox" in the world that's bounded by a collection of in-game pressures. Generally speaking, you can apply narrative pressure that's physical (an actual barrier) or psychological (a force that works on the character's thoughts or emotions), and that pushes (from outside the sandbox) or pulls (from within it). Physical pressures are actual corporeal barriers to travel. (Or, conceivably, in the World of Darkness, non-corporeal barriers to travel.) Psychological pressure, conversely, works on what the character wants or needs in order to corral him. Pushing forces make the areas outside the sandbox inhospitable, while pulling forces make the sandbox itself attractive or indispensable.

Any given sandbox pressure is either physical or psychological, *and* either pushing or pulling. And one pressure isn't enough. To create a strong sandbox, you'll need to create a variety of forces that all work together to keep the character where you want him. For example, to keep a character in a particular city, you might choose as your setting a city in the middle of the desert with intermittent or unreliable long distance transit (physical, pushing), place within that setting a Storyteller





character with a crucial relationship to the character (psychological, pulling) and decide that the character is afflicted with agoraphobia (psychological, pushing).

It bears mentioning that — although this isn't an elegant solution — you can also simply request the player's help in keeping gameplay confined to one area. You just level with her and say, "Let's keep things in Hollywood for now, all right? I don't have the Kindred in Long Beach figured out yet."

Advanced Storytellers can also use the pressure concept to move their Solo chronicles *between* sandboxes, as the chronicle progresses. Rather than simply opening up the entire world to further adventure, creature pressure that channels the action to the new locale, then confines it there afterwards.

One final caveat about corralling the game: don't be annoying. It's one thing to try to limit the area you have to detail, but it's quite another to railroad the character, and make the player feel like he's not making any choices. Part of the attraction of the Solo chronicle — from the player's perspective — is that a Solo chronicle is wide open, that he can (theoretically) do whatever he wants. Don't destroy that arbitrarily.

From time to time, despite your best efforts, the character will escape into some area of the world that you haven't detailed. If that possibility worries you, create an "in case of emergencies" plan and file it in the back of your mind or chronicle notebook. That plan is a scene — or even a whole scenario — that's related to your chronicle but can be inserted anywhere, anytime. The easiest such plans take the general narrative form of "two guys with guns bash down your door." Those are easy because they're conveniently portable, because the attackers' motivations — and who sent them — don't have to be figured out until after the fight's over and because combat takes up a lot of game time compared to narrative interaction. Even if your plan doesn't actually serve to get the character back where she belongs, that's OK — its chief purpose is to stall for time. You use it to run out the clock on the current session of play, and then regroup before the next session by fleshing out the new area or cobbling together a strategy for getting the action back where you want it.

A second strategy for the same problem is to just level with the player and call the session. That gives you some downtime to figure out what's what in the new area. Like the "pretty-please" method of fencing in the sandbox, this version doesn't make you look like a genius Storyteller, but sometimes it's the only option you have.

Your Own Personal Horror

Making with the gothic scary is one of the biggest challenges any Storyteller faces because it requires well-crafted characters, a good game plan, Storytelling discipline and the cooperation of the players. The advantage

of the Solo chronicle is that most of those things get easier when there's only one person's story to deal with.

First, the basics: solo **Vampire** isn't any different from group **Vampire**, theme-wise. Solo **Vampire** is personal, gothic horror — horror at one's own deeds and self, being inhumane to avoid inhumanity. And your strategy for horrifying your player boils down to a single watchword: "consequences." You're going to need awful, shitty consequences on both sides of the aisle: consequences for action and consequences for inaction.

The basic advantage of the Solo chronicle is that you can tailor both the consequences, and the decisions (or indecision) that bring them about, specifically to the character's background and psychology. But the really huge advantage of the Solo chronicle is that you can also tailor the consequences to the *player's* state of mind.

To take advantage of your player in this way, you need to do reconnaissance. Talk to your player's spouse and friends to find out what really disturbs him. Keep your ears open when he's talking in social situations outside the game; people reveal what makes them uncomfortable by the stories they choose to tell about what happened to them at work and school, by what they gloss over, by which news stories fascinate them and which ones make them get up to turn off the TV. If you're playing the game with a good friend, you probably come to the game table with wheelbarrows full of grist for the mill.

The point isn't to identify worms, blood or clowns as the scariest thing to confront the player's character with in the game. (It's a cheap psychological trick you should use, but it's not the point.) The point is to identify the interpersonal situations that really create psychological dissonance in the player and work them into the decisions the player has to make in the world.

Your player's darkest moments in life came after personal betrayal by a lover? You need themes of betrayal inside the game. Make the character choose between betraying or being betrayed, between betraying or killing, between being subjugated or betrayed.

Your player has the tendency to go with the flow in real life, subsuming what she wants to what her boss/spouse/friend/child wants? You need situations in which there are a host of different — and exclusive — "flows" to go with, where the character can only please one of the clamoring voices and where everybody who isn't satisfied is going to be really, really mad.

Your player's an abrasive jerk in real life? You need situations where that's going to bite him in the ass, where the only success comes from being polite and subservient, where there are grim consequences for pissing off the wrong guy.

You get the idea. The Solo chronicle gives you a single target. Use that to your advantage.

Keep in mind that where a group of players can prevent each other from going too far in service of some obsession,

vice or passion, there's no such breaking force in the Solo chronicle. In fact, you can use your character's confidant to *encourage* her to go too far. No one's going to get hurt in real life — the characters in the game are figments of your imagination — but the way going too far in the game makes your player feel later? The way it makes her think about her actual life? *That's* personal horror.

A word of warning: it's possible that the player on the other side of the table isn't up for being personally horrified in his own real-world mind. If you're worried that might be the case, or that it might become the case, start off the chronicle — or even each session — with a really blunt statement that when the player stops having fun, he should tell you, and you'll stop. And then stop if that happens. If this sounds like the kiddie approach to you, take comfort in the fact that such a warning actually primes the pump for a willing player; it's a "Big Horror Ahead" road sign that gets the player in the right frame of mind.

Unique Opportunities

The Solo chronicle offers some unique opportunities to pull out all the stops with two types of mechanics that don't work nearly so well in group settings.

The first is the chance to put Merits such as Status and characteristics such as Humanity to real use. Status (either accumulated through play or arising from the Merit) can be difficult in a group context because the group has such a normalizing effect on its members. Either an upward outlier tends to be dragged down in the eyes of society by less blue-blooded compatriots or lowly outliers get a free ride on the coattails of their esteemed fellows. A solo character's rank and standing, on the other hand, are all her own; there's no limit to how high she can fly or how low she can sink. Humanity poses a similar challenge in group play. Although the mechanics are more formalized, there's still behavioral normalization that occurs so the players can be together. As with Status, the solo player can achieve any height — or depth — of Humanity without concern for how it will affect the group.

The second unique opportunity is to put to good use abilities that drastically change one character's perception. Aura Perception is no longer an annoyance because every visual description in the game must be given twice, once for normal vision and once for the single player who can see auras. Instead, this ability becomes a unique lens through which the entire chronicle is seen. Twilight Projection is no longer a side event that must be rushed through before the rest of the players get bored. Each foray into the character's ghost body can last as long as it needs to, even for entire sessions of play.

Also consider the potential for drastic perception changes arising from the abilities of others. In a group setting, a single character under some Dominate effect discovers quickly, from simply being privy to the

conversations between the Storyteller and the other players, that his perception of the world is not right. Similarly, characters under the influence of the Vinculum hear clues all around the game table that their perceptions of the character who holds them in thrall are all wrong. A solo player, on the other hand, might be very, very surprised to discover that his good friend — whom you've roleplayed in earnest as a good friend for session after session — has held him under some manner of supernatural sway the entire time and that his perception of even the most basic physical interactions was totally wrong.

None of this is to say that in order to do a Solo chronicle right you've got to add Status, extreme high or low Humanity, Aura Perception or mental domination to the stew. But if any of those abilities — or something similar — interests you, the solo campaign is definitely the time to try it out.

All the Practical Stuff

Some final nuts and bolts: What does it take to run a Solo chronicle from an entirely practical, outside-the-game perspective?

First and foremost, it requires an elevated level of seriousness about playing. A whole group can ignore one player who's joking around or paying more attention to the television than the game. But when the entire complement of players — i.e., just the one — goes mentally AWOL the game can't move forward.

Luckily, the power of one individual to dramatically affect the level of seriousness in a solo game also gives rise to the problem's solution. As Storyteller, you can usually restore gravity back simply by being serious yourself. If your jokester player's audience evaporates, she's likely to settle into the game you both want to play; problem solved. (If you're not in the mood to be serious about the game,

on the other hand, it's probably time to give up for the nonce. No game session — group or otherwise — can have much luck surviving a disinterested Storyteller.)

Second, the Solo chronicle requires that Storyteller and player both be interested in the game. Sound obvious? Maybe, but lots of players get involved in gaming groups for social reasons. They don't have anything against the game (usually), but the social group is the main attraction for them and the game itself takes a backseat. Group games survive these players because there are others in the group for whom the play's the thing.

To put it bluntly, the social motivation won't fly in a Solo chronicle. Roleplaying simply requires too much preparation, and too much effort. If you or the player you've got in mind are looking primarily to get into each others' pants, go see movies or take up the tango. It's a lot less work. Don't take the wrong lesson from this admonition. Play the game with someone you like, have a social life with them, fall in love and make babies if you're up for that. But if you're going to play **Vampire** together, play **Vampire** together. Using the game as a pretext for something else will only wreck the game.

In addition to being interested in the game, you should make sure you have — or cultivate — a healthy personal relationship with your solo player. If your chronicle is any good, the player's going to be feeling his character's isolation and horror, and he's going to be aware you're the architect of that. As long as you're both mentally healthy, and everyone realizes it's just a game, all will go well and you'll both have a good time. If the two of you are on shaky ground, though, you could wind up wrecking a friendship because in-game stuff bleeds out into the real world. This won't happen often, but you should think about it at some point, if only to assure yourself it's not a problem.

Monster Garage

This system is not about creating unique, rich characters with detailed backgrounds and personalities. This is the roleplaying equivalent of turning cars into hot rods. The guts have been removed; the body's been chopped, torched and lowered close to the ground. The vehicle is flashy and over the top and barely street-legal. We're looking for speed and power, a raw lethality that shows what vampires really are when you rip off the masks they wear. Vampires are monsters. Let's treat them that way.

The Tear-Down I: Attributes

The first step of the tear-down is to condense the Attributes from three groups of three to a single group of three. The Storyteller System categorizes these Attributes

as either focused on Mental, Physical and Social aptitude. Were we aiming for a simulation of character aptitudes, this would be fine the way it is. But if we abstract these Attributes and move them away from simulation and toward a more story-oriented model, the results might prove interesting. Luckily, the World of Darkness book shows us exactly how to do this.

The three Attribute groups (Mental, Physical, Social) are categorized by their usage: Power, Finesse and Resistance. By using these instead of the standard Attributes, we shift the focus from *what* the character can do to *how* the character does it. And because each of these Attributes encompass a particular style of problem-solving, it's less artificial than the standard divides

of “strong but weak-minded” or “smart but clumsy.” Using this method, a character can be strong, intelligent and intimidating, but limited in other ways.

Power reflects direct action; an application of force (be it strength, intellect or raw charisma) used to surmount an obstacle. Power-oriented characters solve problems by crashing into them. They tend to be unsubtle and direct when dealing with conflict and their actions may be seen as brash.

Finesse describes a quick and agile character, in thought and in deed. These are sly, tricky individuals who are adept at subterfuge and stealth and prefer to go around obstacles rather than through them. Because they’re constantly trying to figure out “the angle,” some may think these characters flighty or indecisive.

Resistance is a good choice for tough, stoic characters who react to their environment and whatever is thrown their way. Calm hearts, patience and endurance are their best qualities. These characters tend toward fatalist “come what may” attitudes and can be quite stubborn.

Remember that these three Attributes aren’t meant to model real-world character traits. A high Power character might be able to lift 400 pounds but that doesn’t mean he’s a genius (so you can still play the strong but dumb guy). The Attribute reflects the character’s ability to affect changes in the story rather than act as some benchmark.

Players should rate their Attributes at 4/3/2. Unlike in the normal game, Attributes cannot be raised with experience points (though the other Traits may be increased).

Each of the clans has a favored Attribute, either due to the sire’s criteria for potential progeny or perhaps owing to some transforming power of the sire’s Vitae.

Clan Favored Attribute

Daeva	Finesse
Gangrel	Resistance
Mekhet	Power or Finesse
Nosferatu	Power or Resistance
Ventrue	Power or Resistance

This system does change some of the game mechanics. Health, for example, is equal to Resistance + Size. Defense and Initiative just use the Finesse attribute. Speed is equal to Power + Finesse + the character’s species factor.

The Tear-Down II: Abilities

The next step is to remove Abilities from the game. Abilities are a thorny issue because they’re meant to do several things:

- They give each character the chance to be really good at something, and that tends to be what that character is about. Occupational titles such as the Soldier, the Doctor, the Hacker, the Artist.
- They establish a level of reality to the game. If someone can do something in real life, that should be represented in the game, right?

- They provide formulas for the game’s system. Attribute + Ability + Discipline (or whatever). A character weak on an Attribute can compensate with a high level of expertise in Ability.

Although this is fine (and perfectly reasonable) for normal play, exploring both the character and the game from another angle is interesting. In this type of game, vampires are more or less the same. There’s no stand-out quality, no sense of niche protection. They’re not defined by their skills or professions; they’re defined by fatal character flaws called Vices, the same Vices used in the normal game. In this conception of **Vampire: The Requiem**, the characters accomplish their goals through passion, violence, fear and madness. The characters are not human, and, in casting off their humanity, they’ve become something *other*.

Does this mean that a former Navy SEAL and a former child actor both have the same level of combat training? Well, no. But this doesn’t mean that one has more control over events in the story. Picture a fight scene with each of those characters using this system. Are they equals in experience or ability? No. The SEAL knows all about tactics and has trained in hand-to-hand and armed combat. He’s a calm, cool professional. The actor doesn’t fight like that. His movements are awkward and chaotic. He jumps in using fists, feet and teeth. It’s savage and wild and awful to watch. Before the Embrace, these people were very different creatures. But the Beast is a great equalizer. They’re vampires now, killers.

This game is about casting off the shackles of what you once were and embracing the evil within. Sin is strength, and, in a world of blood and darkness, strength is all that matters.

Virtue and Vice

Vampires despise weakness. Like any predator, the vampire knows that the weak link breaks the chain. Weakness puts everyone at risk, makes everyone a target. Because of this, weakness is hunted out with a peculiar kind of fervor, as if its scent were even more alluring than blood’s.

Human beings admire virtues. In the mind of the vampire, “virtue” is just another word for weakness. Concepts such as faith, fortitude and hope are cloudy at best, ideas suited for those short-lived mortals. Temperance and prudence have no place in the passionate world of the vampire. The remaining mortal virtues (charity and justice) are crutches for the weak. The concept is simple: you’re the Beast, or you’re meat for the Beast.

On the other side of the coin are the vices that plague humanity (hardly sins in the eyes of the vampire, a creature born of hate and hunger). These vices aren’t things to be denied, these are qualities to be embraced and exalted. It all comes down to the pursuit of power.

The purpose of vice in the game is to spotlight the total immorality of the vampire. The Beast is a creature of fear, desire and rage, and these emotions are constantly fed and reinforced by the seven vices.

Vices are also used to determine the character's Social Merits (see below).

Gluttony

Gluttony is defined as eating and drinking in excess. But how can this be a bad thing — and what exactly is excess? The blood is life, not just mere food. The color, the smell, the taste of blood is better than anything else in the world. Why show restraint when caught in the rapture of the Kiss? A Glutton may develop a taste for specific blood types; some Gluttons become true connoisseurs of Vitae and devote their time to seeking out exotic flavors from the likes of elder vampires and other supernatural beings.

Gluttony is used whenever the Kindred is feeding or when using any ability related to the properties of blood, Kindred or kine. (Gluttony replaces the Occult skill when making such rolls.) This Vice is also used for blood magic of Crúac.

Lust

Lust is the desire to possess things (and yes, people are just things with pulses). Lust is not necessarily motivated by sex, but I have yet to meet Kindred worth

his salt who can say no to a pretty face. Hedonistic vampires often feed off a select group of mortals or stalk a particular one — feeding off the human's lifeblood until the poor thing dries up and withers away. Blood addiction is a good way to guarantee the cooperation of a vessel (though addiction can cut both ways).

Lust is used whenever the vampire must carouse with potential sexual partners (or victims) or when pursuing an object of obsession. Crimes of passion can make use of the Lust Trait, as can the various abilities within the Auspex discipline. And, because Lust isn't limited to sexual obsession, any kind of intense want can benefit from this Vice.

Envy

Envy is the desire for what others lust after, what their avarice compels them to collect. Envy is an honorable emotion because it makes vampires realize what's truly important to them, especially when it's taken away. And if such a thing can be taken so easily, they didn't deserve it in the first place. Jealous Kindred are known to compete for mortal and vampire minions and political power, and wars have been fought over the ownership of favored ghoul.

Envy is most often used to replace the Larceny Skill when stealing or spying. But Envy can also be used in physical conflict (grabbing an item from its owner) or in social situations (invoking the green-eyed monster



to convince someone to help you screw over a rival). Envy also works well with the powers of Dominate.

Pride

The sin of Pride is hardly a sin. Pride is simply recognition of your own divinity, a kind of self-awareness that drives the rich and powerful and cows the poor and weak. Those with no sense of their own worth call Pride arrogance. Those who see call Pride confidence. Pridful vampires often seek to create progeny as a way of ensuring that their superior blood is passed on.

Add your Pride rating to rolls when resisting the urge to flee from Röttschreck or when using the powers of Majesty to impress or influence. Pride can also be used for displays of superiority (such as when performing, engaging in contests or showing off one's intellect or sense of style).

Wrath

Wrath is a primal form of self-expression. Violence is a creative thing; killing is an art. And, like art, wrath is fueled by emotion and passion, tapping into primordial instincts, bypassing reason and lashing out cobra-quick against anyone foolish enough to tempt it. "Turn the other cheek" is a philosophy for the timid. "Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord" is much more fulfilling. Wrathful vampires often have dark pasts marked with episodes of diablerie.

Add your Wrath rating to actions in which you seek destruction or vengeance. Wrathful characters break down doors and smash windows. They don't pick locks or fast-talk night clerks. Wrath can also be used with less physical actions such as searching a room (leaving it a shambles) or intimidating a bouncer (using direct threats). Use Wrath to summon forth the Beast within when using Animalism.

Greed

Greed is simply the desire for *more*. A little bit is never enough, more is always better. More money, more fame, more love, more power. Always, more power. Greed is a manifestation of fear, specifically the fear of losing things (and not just material things but also youth, beauty, power and immortality). Greedy vampires can be so consumed by avarice that their havens are more likely to resemble cluttered curio shops or warehouses than stately museums.

Greed is the quest that can never be fulfilled, the itch that can never be scratched. Use Greed whenever a character's drive to achieve urges the character on, be it to maintain status, wealth or some other resource, when put in jeopardy.

Sloth

This leaves Sloth, the seventh sin, the dirty little secret. The other Vices are easy to reconcile. They

symbolize strength in thought and in deed. But despite Sloth's lack of glamour, this Vice is a laudable goal. Revel in Sloth! It allows the mighty to rest on their laurels and enjoy the fruits of their labors. Sloth isn't just laziness; it's resistance to change. Unlike mortals, the Kindred value tradition, ritual and stability. When one's life can stretch out across millennia, sometimes the old ways are the best. Slothful vampires tend toward anachronistic clothing and customs, their memories clouded by the passage of time.

Add your Sloth rating to actions in which your lack of ambition could help you to achieve a goal without doing much work. Avoid danger and confrontation by skulking in the shadows (using stealth or some form of Obfuscation) or weaseling your way out of a fistfight. Sloth can also be used to "infect" others with laziness. A vampire squaring off against another could use Sloth to avoid frenzy (because it's just not worth the energy).

Assigning Vice

Your character's clan determines the favored Vice, the one Trait common to all members of the same blood. This favored Vice starts at a rating of one dot.

Clan Favored Vice

Daeva	Lust
Gangrel	Wrath
Mekhet	Envy
Nosferatu	Sloth
Ventrue	Pride

Characters have 14 additional dots to distribute to Vices, though it costs two dots to purchase the maximum rating of five dots. Characters can only have one zero-rated Vice; the rest must possess one or more dots. Vices can be increased using experience points in the same system for raising an Ability score. Zero-dot Vices can never be raised.

Vampires without any dots in a Vice are peculiar in that the absence of a Vice does not mean the vampires are virtuous. In fact, their energy is often directed in pursuit of their stronger Vices. Kindred with a high Lust rating but no Wrath blur the distinction between sex and violence, pain and pleasure. A Slothful vampire without Pride might revel in her own self-disgust, living in filth and decrepitude.

Normally, a Vice's rating is added to Attribute dice pools when that Vice is applicable. But if a character is faced with the choice of indulging in a Vice or not, the Storyteller can call for a Vice roll. The Vice's rating in die is rolled by the player; if any of the dice result in successes, the character must give in to his primal urges.

If a situation calls for a dice roll when no Vice is relevant, simply make a decision based on the circumstances and the vampire's capabilities. If the action is not done out of hunger, pain, fear or rage, it's probably not that important.

Assigning Virtue

Virtues differ from Vices in that they don't have ratings. Either the vampire has a Virtue or she doesn't. Choose one of the seven Virtues that your character still possesses. This lone Virtue enables the character to resist the Beast by spending a point of Willpower.

A Kindred's Virtue can be a source of strength. Any time the Virtue is relevant to a die roll, the player may add between 1 and 5 bonus dice. Because use of Virtues is an appeal to the vampire's former life as a human being, Virtues cannot be used to augment a roll involving the use of a Discipline.

But be warned, the Virtue is also the vampire's fatal Flaw; a weakness that must be kept hidden lest the other Kindred find ways to exploit it (or seeing the vampire as impure, might plot his destruction). The vampire must immediately make a Vice roll and score a number of successes equal to the bonus dice gained from the Virtue. Failure means that a point of Weakness is gained.

Weakness

The Weakness Trait is unique to this vision of the game and serves as a kind of reverse Humanity. Weakness represents a measure of a Kindred's failings and is used instead of Blood Potency when two vampires set eyes on one another. The vampire with a higher Weakness must test for Röttschreck, the other vampire must test for frenzy. Note that unless a vampire's aura is seen using Auspex, the exact measure of a vampire's Weakness is unknown to the characters. (The Storyteller should keep tabs on the Weakness ratings of all the characters.)

Weakness is gained through the use of Virtues, as explained above. A vampire who reaches a Weakness rating of 10 is out of the game. The vampire, overcome with the horror of what he has become, is now a target for destruction. Many times, the vampire will turn on the other Kindred (or commit suicide as a pyrrhic attempt at redemption). Other vampires cannot tolerate the fallen vampire's presence and fly into frenzy when that vampire is near. Perhaps the vampire simply stops feeding and falls into torpor. Whatever the cause, the vampire's fall should factor into the story, even if the "plot" must be put on hold.

Starting vampire characters have a Weakness of 1 because they possess a single Virtue.

Willpower

Willpower is calculated by adding together the character's Resistance plus her highest-rated Vice. When a character indulges in a Vice for the sheer pleasure of it, grant the player a Willpower point. When the character performs an act in accordance with his Virtue, grant the player a Willpower point.

Merits

The only Merits used in this chronicle are the Social Merits and these arise from your Vices. Like other parts of this system, these Merits are abstractions and are meant to evoke drama rather than realism.

Each character has a starting rating in the following Merits equal to the Vice linked to that Merit.

Wealth = Greed, Possessions = Envy

Your character's resources are determined by her Greed and Envy ratings. Wealth represents financial planning, investment portfolios and cash. Possessions are all the tangible assets your character owns (houses, cars and luxury items). The Possessions Merit also functions as the Haven Merit from the **Requiem** rules.

The problem with Wealth is that wealthy vampires are paranoid about losing that wealth due to competitors or bad management (being wealthy is different from being rich in that it's hard to spend wealth but it's easy to lose it). Vampires with high ratings in the Possessions Trait usually have extended lines of credit and surround themselves with expensive toys in order to one-up their rivals.

Wealth and Possessions use the same rules as the Social Merit called Resources (see p. 115 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) and the special Haven Merit (see p. 100 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Herd = Gluttony

"Herd" is a vulgar expression used to describe your character's food supply. A character with a large herd has access to numerous victims or has a small number that are readily available at all hours. A vampire with a high Herd rating is like a mortal with a pantry stocked with steaks and sides of beef. Feeding becomes less of a survival trait and more of a time-killer; these Kindred (especially those with a high Sloth rating) tend toward a bloated and corpulent appearance.

Herd adds to any hunting rolls when the character's supply is involved. If Herd represents a group of blood dolls that haunt a local nightspot, you can only use the Herd rating when you're hunting at that particular club.

Sexuality = Lust

Vampires are sexual predators as well as murderers. The Kiss is an act of violence and sensuality. A vampire with a high sex appeal turns heads when she enters the room. Reason is bypassed and animal instinct takes control — men want to be with her, women want to destroy her (of course, maybe that's because the women want her too). Love and romance are not part of any of this. The vampire's sexuality is a weapon used to attract prey and to intimidate competition. Sexual-

ity can be also be dangerous if it attracts the wrong kind of attention

Sexuality uses the same rules as the Social Merit called Striking Looks (see p. 117 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Status = Pride

A prideful vampire feeds on status and recognition as if they were more precious than Vitae. High Status vampires are seen as influential and powerful not just by their peers, but also (and even more importantly) by the mortal world. The air of confidence that such a creature exudes can also serve to undo him if a more powerful vampire crosses his path. "Pride goeth before a fall," and all of that.

Status in this instance refers to the character's influence in the city at large rather than within a specific group. If you wish to increase your Status with a specific group, you may add one die when dealing with that group but subtract one die when dealing with all others.

Retainers = Sloth

Butlers, chauffeurs and majordomos are all examples of Retainers, as are pushers, bodyguards and call girls. They do the vampire's dirty work and wait on him hand and foot. Retainer also measures the number of servants as well as their abilities; the higher a Kindred's Sloth, the greater the size of his or her retinue of sycophants and yes-men. Slothful vampires rarely keep more than a few Retainers for any length of time. Too much reliance on others can prove hazardous when those others turn traitorous.

Blood Potency = Wrath

Wrathful vampires are fueled as much by the Vitae in their veins as the rage in their hearts. A vampire with a high rating in this Merit has engaged in diablerie at least one, perhaps several times. For such vampires, their self-hatred is projected onto other Kindred and it's all too easy for Wrathful vampires to lose control.

Characters without any dots in Wrath receive Blood Potency • but lose one dot from one other Merit.

Disciplines

Let's get one thing straight: vampires don't have magical powers (immortality notwithstanding). But they are stronger, faster, tougher and more charismatic than any mortal human. The Disciplines in this type of game have been altered in a few ways, both to work with the Vices system and to jettison the obvious supernatural elements (such as shape-shifting, psychic powers or sorcery).

Celerity, Resilience and Vigor operate in the same way they're presented in **Vampire: The Requiem**. The other Disciplines used in this game affect dice pools directly: Attribute + Vice + Discipline. It doesn't get much simpler than that.

Animalism

This Discipline does not confer the ability to communicate with animals. Rather, this is the ability to place the Beast (one's own, another vampire's or a lower creature) into a desired state of mind (fear, rage or submission). Animalism can be used on human beings, but only those suffering from shock or some kind of derangement.

Intimidating or enraging a creature requires a Power + Wrath + Animalism action. Soothing a frightened creature's nerves (or calming a frenzied vampire) requires a Finesse + Animalism roll. (Note that, in this instance, Vices are not used, though the sole Virtue of Charity may be used in some situations, at the Storyteller's call.)

Roll Resistance + Sloth + Animalism to resist frenzy or Röttschreck, or Resistance + Wrath + Animalism if you want to resist being talked down from frenzy or Röttschreck.

Auspex

Auspex is a toned-down version from the one presented in **Vampire: The Requiem**. It's used to heighten physical sensation and sharpen the senses, including the vampire's intuition. Because this Discipline is so intimately tied to the senses, the vampire's Lust rating adds to rolls when using Auspex.

Roll Finesse + Lust + Auspex to pick up sensory cues or to represent a "sixth sense" alerting the vampire of subtle changes in her environment. Roll Power + Lust + Auspex if the vampire is actively using the Discipline (to pierce the cover of darkness while hunting or to uncover a skulking Nosferatu). Should the vampire be exposed to sudden or extreme sources of light, smell, or sound while using Auspex in an active manner, she must make a resistance roll to shut out the flood of sensory input. Failure means the character is disoriented and unaware of her surroundings until the following turn.

Auspex can also be used to infect a mortal with lust by allowing the human to feed on the vampire's Vitae. Have the vampire make a Lust + Auspex roll when a human feeds on her blood. For every success, reduce the mortal's Resistance by one, should the mortal resist blood addiction. This effect cannot be used against other vampires.

Dominate

This Discipline is not a form of mind control, though Dominate is used in a similar manner. The vampire's superior will is strong enough to supplant that of a mortal, and a single whispered word stings like the crack of a whip. Dominate is unusual because it feeds on the Vices of others in order to function. What Vice to use depends on the situation; Lust can be used to manipulate a human attracted to the character. A money-grubbing human can be bribed, or you could just appeal to his Greed. Want a rival's luxury car to be vandalized? Just find someone oozing with Wrath and say the word.

After rolling Finesse + Envy + Dominate to discern a victim's fatal flaw, add any successes as bonus dice when using Dominate against that person. As this process can take a while to perform (through observation, casual conversation, etc.), a harried vampire can simply choose a victim's Vice and add that to a Power + Dominate die roll.

If the victim fails to resist Dominate, he must follow the vampire's commands to the best of his ability (barring obvious physical or legal repercussions). To affect another vampire, the dominator's Blood Potency must be at least equal to that of the intended target.

Majesty

While Auspex is a direct link to the Beast and Dominate is a means of verbal persuasion, Majesty revolves around the vampire's sense of self and his ability to influence others through sheer personal magnetism. This Discipline can even be used to sway entire groups of mortals. (Vampires are blasé creatures, having seen it all and done it all, and are thus unimpressed by Majesty — for the most part. See below.)

Roll Power + Pride + Majesty to affect a human within visual range (if the victim can make out the vampire's features well enough to describe her, then that's close enough). Success means that the mortal is either drawn toward or scared away from the vampire (the vampire's choice, of course). Roll Finesse + Pride + Majesty to cause a mortal to fall in love with you or to be utterly cowed by your presence. Roll Resistance + Pride + Majesty against any mortal or Kindred who dares attack or defy the majestic vampire. As in **Requiem**, trying to use Majesty against more than one individual is progressively more difficult.

Other Kindred may be affected by Majesty if they allow themselves to get too emotionally involved with the character. A vampire may use Majesty against any vampire who has displayed physical affection or aggression toward him. This includes the sharing of Vitae, sexual relations or outright violence. (This means that all Kindred are subject to the rules of Majesty when attacking a vampire with that Discipline.)

Obfuscate

Obfuscate is a combination of subterfuge, stealth and sleight of hand, and most often used to avoid attention or to slip away into the shadows. Obfuscate is also used when concealing one's true intentions — the perfect Discipline for liars, spies and thieves.

Obfuscate is most often used in contested actions against those attempting to sense the character's actions or motives. This is not an overtly supernatural ability. It's more of a knack for being overlooked or underestimated. Roll Resistance + Sloth + Obfuscate when trying to hide (yourself, your emotions or something else)

or when trying to avoid attention (such as when being chased into a crowded subway car).

Obfuscate can also be used to forge signatures, tell convincing lies or to palm small objects. This is also a contested action, but one based upon a Finesse + Greed + Obfuscate roll.

Playing the Game

These alternate rules are a radical departure from traditional **Vampire: The Requiem** (and possibly traditional roleplaying as well). One potential source of confusion is in the paring down of the Storyteller System into something barely recognizable. Thinking about roleplaying in a different light helps in order to make sense of this game.

It's traditional to look down on rules-heavy play or frequent die rolls, as if that somehow means that you're not really roleplaying. How many times have you heard the following? "It was a great game — we hardly touched the dice!"

To some, the rules, the dice, they're all important to the game. Now, in some games, infrequent dice rolls help to speed up the game and immerse the players in the story — one without the suspender-snapping use of initiative systems and 10-sided dice. This is fine if you're interested in immersing yourself in a story, but there are other ways to tell stories.

The "core story" of this chronicle (*this* chronicle) is this: a group of evil people who come together in the pursuit of their Vices eventually prey on one another when those Vices start to conflict with one another. The Old Man adds a wrinkle, as does the prospect of mortal "hunters" out for vengeance and the ever-looming spectre of self-destruction. But, at its heart, this game is about bad things happening to bad, bad people — and secretly reveling in watching your character go down in flames.

And this is fun, right?

Well, it might not be your cup of tea, but it sure gets right to the point. No bones about it, the vampires of this setting are villains with a capital V. They pursue goals that are (at best) unsavory to use and (at worst) abhorrent. The key in playing this game is to break out of your "I am my character/my character is me" mentality and realize that being the bad guy is fun, even as you watch that character spiral down into chaos, death and confusion. But just because some people are evil doesn't mean that they can't be interesting or attractive or funny. Look at any good movie villain, and you'll see something that captures your attention (whether it's his good looks, charming personality or extreme bad-ass-ness).

Here are some additional rules — social rules as it were — for you to toy with:

Rule #1: "Step away from the character and no one gets hurt."

Characters are just that: characters. Fictional entities created by real people in order to tell a story, relate

an idea or express an emotion. Vampires aren't real — you and the other players are! So don't fall back on that hoard old excuse of "But that's what my character would do." Nobody wants to hear that shit.

Rule #2: Take the Storyteller Out of the Story

The standard rules don't apply, why should the social rules? The "Storyteller" is there to work with the players, not to rule down from on high. The player characters are the stars of this story. Have the players create the plot based upon how they want the game to be run. Do they want to spotlight a particular player character? Do it. Do they want the session to be split up into several sections, each focusing on a different Vice? Do it. Do they want to follow a Storyteller character around as he comes into contact with the Little Tyrants of the city? Make it happen — or help it happen.

Rule #3: Forever Is a Long Time . . .

Just because vampires live forever doesn't mean that your chronicle has to last that long. Structure your games like a three-act play. Say what needs to be said, then get done with it. Want to keep things punchy? Limit each session to a couple of hours of intense action. Once you're familiar with the stripped down system there shouldn't be many problems when rolling the dice. Want to get really crazy? Have entire actions or conflicts hinge on a single roll of the dice. Sure, if it's a foreign vampire or some über-Storyteller character, then feel free to break things down.

But if a player is trying to rip out the throat of some nightclub bouncer, just roll once and be done with it.

Or better still, only roll when it's interesting to do so. Is that muscle-bound moron in the black tank top and gold chain really going to pose much threat to some 100-year-old bloodsucker? If not, don't let the dice come to his rescue.

Rule #4: The dice are your friends.

As stated earlier, some conventional wisdom claims that rolling dice is the opposite of roleplaying, that the two concepts are somehow antithetical to one another. Bullshit! Every roll of the dice is going to involve powerful emotions and unwholesome desires: lust, envy, wrath — the whole gamut of human sin. How can this not contribute to roleplaying? If a player wishes to do something in the game that has nothing to do with a Vice, then just make it happen (or not happen). Vice drives this game, not necessarily in a realistic manner but in a dramatic manner. And good stories are always about drama — conflict and desire, love and hate, sex and death.

Don't ignore the system. Use it. Create your own bells and whistles to add to the mood of the game. Like the Weakness system? Want to make Virtues more important (for that "last stab at redemption" story)? Once you start playing the game, you'll see what you like and what you don't like, what you want to focus on and what you want to shy away from. This is where playing the game meets designing the game. The advice is this: go for it.

Little Tyrants

The Old Man is bored again. They say he never sleeps, even when the sun rises and others of his kind flee to their havens. They say he's a demon. They say all kinds of mad things.

He watches over the city, his own private chessboard. Unseen fingers move the pieces, and he responds with cunning and savagery. He never leaves the table. Minions care to his every need, more out of fear than love, for his wrath is terrible.

But on some nights, he creates more like himself; evil things with their dark natures worn under human faces. He creates them because he loves himself so much, almost as much as he hates himself.

The Old Man opens the heavy curtains and beckons for you all to gaze upon the skyline. He says to you, "Everything you could ever want. Everything you could ever need. It's all here, yours for the taking. Claim what you wish and do with it what you will. But remember: Strength rules the night forever, while Weakness greets the dawn but once."

Theme: Everyone has a price, but price doesn't matter. The meek will most assuredly not inherit the earth. Whoever has the most toys, wins. Vampires (like the rich and powerful), live at a whole different level when it comes to morality and law. What do vampires really have to fear?

Who do they really have to answer to? And what happens when they themselves realize that the answer is?

Vampires are creatures of the moment, of passion. All else is meaningless. The future is irrelevant because yes, they will live to see it all. The waiting game might be the hardest one to play, but it's still just a game. The past is a crutch that mortals use to limp on across the years, strung out on the narcotic high of memory.

Immortality means never having to say you're sorry.

Mood: The mood of this chronicle is one of casual violence, no-strings-attached sexual dalliances and an excess of indulgences. Imagine you could have everything but still wanted more? What would that do to a person? Now strip away everything of true importance. Factor in the hunger and rage of the Beast. Remove the limitations of mortality. Despite all this, the characters aren't going to get away unscathed. Eventually, it's all going to come crashing down around them. The purpose of this chronicle is to be there when it happens.

Atmosphere: Scenes should be liberally dosed with scenes of unimaginable beauty and sensuality, coupled

with scenes of unspeakable depravity and despair. You don't have to write splatterpunk into your game (although that kind of excess is entirely appropriate, it might turn off your more sensitive players), but you shouldn't skimp on the details. If the players (and yourself) are feeling a bit uncomfortable, then you're doing it right.

Setting: This is not the World of Darkness as you know it. Humanity is not a commodity in dwindling supply. People are flawed, but good. The world is not falling apart. At worst, life is in danger of becoming predictable, bland, over-m merchandized, boring. The streets are clean, the trains run on time. Now enter the characters, a coterie of vicious, cold-blooded narcissistic bloodsuckers, Enron with even sharper fangs.

The decade doesn't really matter, so long as it's modern. The 1980s are good, for a variety of reasons. Cold war paranoia creeps in around the edges of the American Dream. "Greed is good," says Gordon Gecko, AIDS is still that "gay disease" and cocaine is the new heroin. The music is overplayed AOR garbage, post-disco, post-punk rock. Death rock has yet to become hopelessly self-referential, and heavy metal is still the tool of the Devil. New Wave bands prance and preen in gravity-defying hairdos on MTV, and rap music hasn't lost its shine.

Perhaps the best reason to play in this decade is the level of available technology: cell phones are the size of shoeboxes and Google is just a really big number. Need to call a cab at two in the morning? Use a payphone.

The player characters should have their own personalized settings — not just simple havens but actual environments where they can plot and scheme and feed and act out their twisted fantasies. Trendy nightclubs are typical arenas for this kind of blood sport, but there's always the possibility of slumming it for the night at some seedy dive bar, away from the glitz and drama of the downtown scene. The more broken street lamps line the road, the less people seem to notice some stretch limousine out for a cruise.

The well-heeled Kindred may live in luxury penthouse apartments hundreds of feet above the rabble, but their shady activities warrant the occasional room at some residence hotel in the Tenderloin. That boho studio loft in the arts district is fine for party guests (and at \$5,000 a month, it better be) but there's nothing like taking that special someone (or someones) out on the water in the yacht. The cabin is sound-proofed and sun-proofed for added comfort and security — and let's face it, the water is so cold this time of year that you're sure to have a captive audience.



Character Creation: Characters in this chronicle are meant to be created using the alternate rules, but that's not a requirement if you prefer to stick with what you know.

Dilettantes, high society trash, soulless executives and steroid-enhanced power brokers are very appropriate. The characters should be people who were vampires well before they were Embraced: people with some kind of addiction, a healthy dose of paranoia and a casual attitude toward other peoples' misery. The Embrace doesn't change them as much as "evolve them" to a higher state of being. "Feeding off humanity" is no longer just a metaphor; it's the literal truth. Take a look at the list of minor derangements on p. 97 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. Suspicion, narcissism, inferiority complexes and fixations are all par for the course with this crowd, as are drugs and booze, insane workout schedules, nightclub-crawling and hobnobbing, spa treatments — life in the way-too-fast lane.

Remember that, despite vampires' human origins, these creatures are no longer human beings. Some might argue they were never really human to begin with. Whatever skills or talents they had in life don't matter. The will to exist long after death is all that matters. There is nothing else for them.

Antagonists: The Old Man is more of a MacGuffin than an antagonist, but that doesn't mean he's entirely out of the picture. Just the opposite! The Old Man is a device that can be used to establish the mood of a scene, to inspire some kind of emotion (pick one: dread, fear, disgust, did we mention dread?) and to get information to the players without requiring the presence of the characters. I'm talking about cross-cutting and out-of-character knowledge.

There's an old adage, coined by Alfred Hitchcock. Paraphrased, it's "Surprise is good, Suspense is better." Surprise is when nothing particularly interesting or exciting is going on, then WHAM!, a pie in the kisser (or something else). But too many surprises, shockers and twist endings can have a detrimental effect on the chronicle. For one thing, if the players suspect a surprise, then it ain't a surprise. If the surprises are too frequent, they can batter your group into a state where they no longer care ("Because, hey, the Storyteller is just going to throw some other crazy thing at us."). Suspense is the opposite of surprise. Suspense is the calm before the storm. To crib a phrase from Hitch again, it's the bomb under the chair versus the inevitable explosion.

If one of the characters gets into trouble with the law, cut to the Old Man on the phone, chatting with the police commissioner as if they're old pals. Does the character know about these behind-the-scenes deals? No, but the player does — and that's called dramatic irony. That's suspense. You can apply the cross-cutting technique to other situations as well. The drunk club

kid in the bathroom doing blow, with no idea that he has about five minutes left to live before some pale folks take him for his first and last ride in a limo. Some treacherous ghoul going to ground, unaware that the Kindred are waiting for him at the bus depot. You're writing this sucker as you play it — you don't need to rely on luck or coincidence. If you want something to happen, make it happen. If the players want something to happen, it's your job to act upon that.

Humans make great antagonists in this kind of story, but not for the reasons you'd expect (i.e., no vampire-hunters, please). Vampire chronicles are about the victims as much as the victimizers. And even though leaving the humans drugged, dead or Dominated makes more sense, some player is going to want a pet. The mortal becomes either a ghoul, a blood junkie or (worse) a Significant Other. Not only does this create tension for the player, it puts the entire populace at risk. "She sleeps in your apartment?" is what they'll ask. And the response is always along the lines of, "No, she's cool — she doesn't even suspect" (Famous last words. Nice to meet you, Yoko.)

Remember the vultures, hyenas and jackals milling about the carcass? A Kindred without power, without resources, is just as dangerous as one with a few dots in Blood Potency. Strong Kindred play it safe because they've got more to lose. Some cast-off wannabe in sunglasses and an off-the-rack designer jacket doesn't have that problem. The only way to go is up, and the only way up is through you. Stay away from established Kindred from the various covenants. Too many vampires in the city can upset the balance and make the players seem less important than they are. Also, additional vampires with their own power bases can make them into potential allies, which ruins the focus of the chronicle.

But casting aside the Old Man, the mortals and the young Turks of Kindred society, the best antagonists in this chronicle are the other players. Because, in any group of predators, there can only be one at the top.

Story Concepts: The stories in this type of chronicle should center on the un-lifestyles of the dead and beautiful, but never forgetting what the characters truly are: vicious predators with inhuman appetites and more power than they can ever hope to control. Think of the city as some vast savannah. Resources are scarce and only the strong or clever can eke out an existence. The animals gather at watering holes (in our case, the bars and nightclubs that serve to lubricate social networks). Vampires are the lions, stalking prey from some rocky bluff. The humans are herd animals: dumb, but easily spooked and dangerous when encountered in large numbers. Weaker vampires (and the ghouls, blood dolls and miscellaneous hangers-on that constantly surround vampires) are like the carrion

feeders, watching from a safe distance and then moving in to clean up the scraps. This is the mental image that you should convey to your players. Vampires are savage predators in a savage land. This chronicle is not about fairness, it's not about good or evil, it's about hunger, sex and death.

Some may wish to supplant the Old Man as the lord of the city. His blood is sure to be most potent, and, as he's said himself, "If you're not strong enough to keep something, you don't deserve it." Others may wish to

spread their influence to other cities — all-out war with the covenants is not an option but perhaps a foothold can be established by someone cunning and fearless. An invading force could make for interesting developments; but pity a gang of Belial's Brood when they meet the Little Tyrants of this city. If you want to run an action-packed game, pit the players against the members of VII. (Surely the Kindred deserve to meet Final Death, and a coterie from VII would be more than happy to oblige.)

Claustrophobia

For the Damned sinners of this mortal world, there is a new Hell, and it is Prairie Plains Mall.

All the characters in this chronicle are banished by the Prince for crimes against the Masquerade, for contravening covenant law or just for pissing him off. Hounds and ghouls watch the place, Sheriff Sohlberg drops by to check in on the inmates and they're not permitted to even go in the parking lot on pain of Final Death. Scrupulous observation of the Traditions is expected, but, other than that, the mall belongs to the inmates.

Can a group of Kindred survive in an enclosed space, even if it's full of victims and consumer goods? Is escape a possibility? If it is, is it worth it?

This chronicle can go in one of two directions: either the characters become each other's antagonists or they might join together and try to escape. Either way works.

Theme: The characters can hang together or hang separately. Your job with this chronicle is to maintain a balance between the factors that unify the characters (their predicament, primarily) and the factors that drive the characters apart. If they are reeling headlong into open hatred too quickly, give them a challenge that will overwhelm any individual (or small clique, if they form tribes). If the characters are being too cozy, circumstances conspire to make them compete. The characters should be able to escape (and therefore bring the chronicle to a triumphant conclusion) but doing so should require sacrifices — quite possibly unfair ones. By the same token, failure should be just as much of an option. If the characters schism into a Masquerade-jeopardizing battle, the Prince makes good on his threat to behead them all. Give them their final speeches and end the chronicle as a tragedy.

Mood: Go for plasticky fake and unfulfilling. The characters' only real pleasure is feeding, but even that is cramped, rushed and frequently interrupted. This chronicle may benefit from a raised emphasis on the practicalities of the hunt — who, where and how are important in an enclosed space full of cameras and security personnel. Even characters with

social Disciplines are going to need to exercise full circumspection, and those characters who feed by violence need every ounce of care to avoid a murder investigation (and the wrath of their jailer).

The Sheriff pretends to be sympathetic and doles out measured rewards (a visit from an outsider or a Vitae Reliquary for an addict, say) in return for snitching and other "good behavior," but the payoffs should always be less than expected. That guest might be watched and have a very limited time, or the Reliquary might be small.

Atmosphere: Superficially alluring but numbingly repetitive and, as the title says, claustrophobic. The characters can phone out, but, every time they do, they hear a suspicious 'click' on the line. Other Kindred can't enter without permission, and few are willing to try sneaking in. Even mortal acquaintances are unreliable — investigation indicates that the Sheriff exerts subtle pressure on any human that might be getting emotionally close to a prisoner. This is all done in the name of the Masquerade, of course, and can be eased off for those who cooperate.

Setting: The mall does a great job of overstuffing the characters with anything they don't really need. The bookstore only carries bestsellers and self-help books. The music store is all pop (or rap, or whatever modern music the characters like least.) There are 10,000 televisions and the programming sucks. Shoppers are transitory, employees are perfunctory or dazed (unless the characters make a strong effort to make friends, in which case the employees are vapid, dull or self-absorbed).

Any consumer item that distracts, bemuses or gratifies sloth is easy to find. Anything that genuinely stimulates, informs or consoles requires intense effort.

Character Creation: Many groups have no problem with being told that conflicts between characters are expected and to build accordingly. Some groups go into conflict rapidly. Some groups incline toward cooperation.

Cooperation isn't a problem until it renders the challenge of the setting meaningless. It's possible to encour-

age competition right from character generation by installing an auction system. The currency the players bid with is their starting points in Attributes, Skills and Merits. One Attribute dot is equal to three Skill dots and six Merit dots. Players can bid up to two Attribute dots (or the equivalent) on each of the following four choices.

First is choice of clan. All the characters should have different clans. (This chronicle doesn't really work with more than five characters.) Whoever bids highest gets to choose his clan first, and the second highest goes after. Those who don't bid get assigned a clan by the Storyteller, or pick from the remains at random.

Second is choice of covenant. Again, different covenants are preferable (though there can be some overlap if you think a particular combination is going to leech the fun out for a player or players. Just make sure characters in the same covenant belong to different parties or factions within it.) Non-bidders get pot luck.

Third is choice of crime. The available crimes are

- **Diablerist.** Diablerists start with +1 Blood Potency, an extra Skill dot and an extra Discipline dot. (Neither of those bonus dots can raise the Skill or Discipline above 3.) They also start with -1 Humanity, a raging case of blood addiction and a two-drink Vinculum to the Sheriff.

- **Masquerade Failure.** Characters who frayed the edges of the Masquerade can't have Clan or Covenant Status above 1. They do get a free Specialty for Brawl or Weaponry, however.

- **Cowardice.** There are no particular penalties for failing to carry out a needful mission for the Prince. But all the other characters know you can't be relied on when the pressure starts.

- **Embraced Without Permission.** Characters who performed a clandestine Embrace start with one less Willpower dot, but get a free Retainer at the four-dot level. This is the childe, of course.

- **Annoyed the Prince.** There are no bonuses or penalties for doing something this dumb, other than being chucked in the mall and told to stay put.

The other prisoners know which characters chickened out of their duty or who broke Masquerade. The other types of crimes probably didn't gather citywide attention.

Antagonists: The Sheriff is the prime antagonist. The Prince is too distant and has better things to do than look for a parking spot and check in on his "mallifactors." That hasn't stopped him from using Dominate on them, extensively. At the beginning of the game, secretly roll one die to determine. The result is the number of successes the Prince rolled when giving the command "Remain in the mall until I release you," after winning the contested roll. Roll one die for the number of extra successes he got for his efforts to make the characters forget. Until they try to



step out the doors, they have no idea they've been Dominated.

Sheriff Sohlberg is a Daeva with a heavy emphasis on the Physical Disciplines. He's got enough Majesty to coax out unwilling confessions, however, and plies it at every reasonable opportunity. This is subtle at first but, if the characters figure out what he's doing, he drops the pretense and just does it openly. He has no particular percentage in cruelty to his charges, but, as a Daeva of many years, he's got a firm idea that people can't be trusted to resist temptation without extremely powerful consequences. If he can figure out characters' Vices and Virtues, he plays to them while trying to cozen them into behaving themselves (and betraying any escape plans or other secrets that their fellow convicts might connive.) He stops by once or twice a week.

There are a couple of Hounds around the mall at every hour of the night, partnered up and working in shifts. They're all good at their jobs and varied enough in their abilities that they have no glaring weaknesses (but, by the same token, no overwhelming strengths). If all the characters can unify to jump the Hounds simultaneously, the characters should be able to prevail, though, individually, the Hound guardians should be as tough as the most pugnacious character.

The Hounds and Sheriff aren't the only measures in place. Someone's placed a creepy little homunculus at the mall — a sort of pigeon-rat thing with grimy, feathery fur that flits around the shadows of the ceilings and scuttles in the corners of the food court. The homunculus follows

the characters and marks them out. Discovering this vile little freak should be a significant accomplishment. Killing can be another, unless the characters use the homunculus for disinformation.

Story Concepts: The most immediate stories to tell are about the challenges of feeding discreetly at the mall, which establishes and maintains tension between the characters. Questions over the crimes committed can also spur suspicion (since no one wants to be locked up with a diablerist or Vitae addict).

Escape plans are another issue. The Hounds on the outside have to be fought, along with any ghouls they've got planted around, and don't forget the mall police. They're only mortals, but they're a factor. Debugging the characters' own minds to beat the Dominate suggestions is another problem, especially if none of them know Dominate. Creating a real fire to flee would deal with the compulsion, since it won't make them stay in certain doom. The problem is that, then they have a fire.

It's not just a matter of getting to the parking lot and stealing a car, of course. While the mortal cops are slowing the characters down, Sohlberg and his cavalry are on the way. Unless the characters have got a plan for getting away, and not just out, the ending is going to be very Butch and Sundance.

Or the characters can go the easy way — maybe. While they're planning, Sohlberg might approach them and feel them out about helping him assassinate the Prince. Is it a real coup, or some kind of psychological game? Only the Sheriff knows for sure.

Dracula, Prince of Paris

This is a sprawling, power-drenched chronicle that takes characters from the most ignorant Becoming Vampires beginnings (see p. 24) through a cruel claw to becoming Vampire Kings (p. 66) and then, perhaps, beyond. There are elements of the Political chronicle model and Vampire Familia chronicle as well.

The setting is Paris, the immortal City of Lights. The central figure is Dracula, the immortal Prince of Vampires.

Once, Dracula ruled. He then passed into torpor. He has emerged weak, confused, needy and vulnerable. He's in no condition to regain his praxis and is, in fact, easy pickings for any of his rivals who've survived into the modern day as he has.

Vlad needs to stay concealed. He needs a crash course in the 21st century. He needs protection, and he needs to get up to speed on the current Paris court. He needs someone he can trust, a group whose loyalties (or dependencies) are unquestioned.

He wants fresh blood. This is the role of the characters.

Dracula Embraces them, one by one, and nurtures them through their introduction to Kindred society. In all things, he calculates with care, protecting his precious childer and helping them to find positions of authority and power. All along he remains concealed, working through his proxies, until they're strong enough that he can reveal himself, tear down the current power structure and replace it with his sole reign.

What Dracula knows and the characters do not is that his offspring are particularly cursed — that, in addition to the normal curses of the Kindred, the characters are doomed to degenerate, body and spirit, into ever-more bestial shape and behavior. By the time that becomes a problem, however, he's in the driver's seat and has no further need for them. In his plan, the neonates self-destruct just as they get the potential to become troublesome. It's tidy, albeit ruthless.

(What Dracula knows and *no one* else does is a Coil that lets him Embrace without losing permanent Willpower. He will not teach it to anyone else: the vision he related in *Rites of the Dragon* was real, and Dracula would rather re-enter torpor than actualize a world in which Kindred overwhelm humankind.)

The lines of the story are as follows: Dracula awakens and Embraces the characters. The beginning of the arc is his tutoring them in the art of vampirism, while they educate him on the modern day. This part of the chronicle deals with a lot of internal conflicts — the trials of coming to grips with being undead. At the same time, Dracula is established as a character both fearsome and seductive, powerful but unpredictable, reasonable but archaic and alien.

When the characters are ready, the conflicts turn outward. Dracula sends the characters off to join the Danse Macabre in Paris, and his behind-the-scenes guidance rapidly embroils them in the worst (and best) of it. The characters need to balance his advice against their own instincts (and both he and they should be wrong some of the time) while striving for authority and respect among the night's aristocracy.

This arc climaxes when Dracula reveals himself and challenges the Prince for praxis. If the characters have played well and continue to play well, they can help Dracula take over. If they fail, he fails (or abandons them to their tragic fate), and the chronicle ends with the delicious destruction of all the evil into which the characters have been seduced.

If they succeed, a second arc begins.

At first, this is a political arc in which they are Dracula's trusted advisors and the powers behind the throne. But as the plot develops, Dracula systematically freezes them out in order to cozy up to other, more-established power-brokers. At the same time, his long-concealed monstrosity has a chance to flourish. Where before he seduced the characters with sophistry and reason, he can now set those tools aside. He no longer needs to justify anything. He has the power to be a terror-mongering tyrant, with his pose of moral and spiritual questing revealed as a too-effective mask.

Just as the characters are reeling from the realization that their mentor and patron is a sadist, egoist and sociopath, they should find out he Embraced them knowing that they'd eventually degenerate into homely *draugr*.

Now the game becomes "get Dracula."

Theme: This one's about trust and abuse of power. Vlad is extremely careful to earn the trust of the characters early on. Everything he tells them about the Kindred condition holds up, and his advice is usually excellent. When his failures or miscalculations should serve as a reminder that he's imperfect and needs the characters — needs them desperately, just as they need him. He's a good judge of values and motives, able to tell the characters exactly what they want to hear. The clincher is that, at the beginning

he seems sincere about needing them because he is, because his need for them is genuine. It's only after he's regained the title of Prince that he throws them away, along with the encumbering pretense of being a decent being. There are *his* issues with trust and abuse.

The characters, however, almost certainly mirror his wrongdoing. Below, it's explained that most of the characters are singled out by an acquaintance for a Requiem, possibly even a friend. In the intricacies of the French court, opportunities for betrayal should abound, and should pay off (especially with Dracula in the wings to talk the characters through). At the same time, the characters should be pressured to bond to one another. Dracula emphasizes this, and so do their experiences with antagonists outside their circle. The characters should understand how essential it is to have people they can trust, because, without aid, they can't accomplish anything. But you also need plots that show how trust betrayed is far more dangerous than trust never given. It's a hard balancing act, which is why it's the chronicle's key.

Mood: This chronicle is big, big, big. The characters don't have to put up with the usual neonate bullshit for long because they're getting private lessons from Vlad the Impaler. The characters are living the Kindred experience with the volume cranked to 10 and the knob broken off. "Normal" Kindred develop new powers. Dracula's childer progress at a greater speed, courtesy of their master's expertise and possession of Wyrms' Nests. Normal Kindred have to make tough ethical choices as they adapt to their new state. Dracula's childer get to do the same with the Impaler as stage mom, pushing them against the establishment.

Atmosphere: This chronicle should swing dizzily between arrogance and terrifying humility. The characters are important mortals, experts in their field, used to respect — until they get turned into newbie vampires. As vampires they're weak among their kind — except that they've got a serious contender for "Best Vampire Ever" coaching them. They soon outstrip other neonates, even ancillae who were once contemptuous of them — but then have to deal with challenging the entrenched elders, and eventually their mentor himself.

This see-saw effect should play out with Humanity as well. Drive it home to them that the weak, stupid, poor or incompetent vampires they've so handily surpassed at court and at learning Disciplines are far more callous and brutal — and thereby able to casually cope with feed scenes and other horrors that shake and startle the recently-mortal characters. Who's the real vampire? The character who is more powerful? Or a weak vampire who has the stones (or low Humanity, if you prefer to see it that way) to feed as Kindred ought?

Setting: Paris! Home of Sacré Coeur and the catacombs, now shockingly modernized (to Dracula's eyes) with the addition of the Eiffel Tower. There are charm-

ing sidewalk cafes full of victims and history, tree-lined boulevards where collegiate intellectuals scoff at the notion of “un-dead,” twisting and cobble-lined streets where the newsvendors and traffic police are far less likely to dismiss superstition. Don’t forget the miles of tunnels in Paris’ famous Art Deco subway, the Métro. (In 2004, Paris police found an off-grid movie theater, complete with bar, hidden in the catacombs beneath the city.)

The great variation of the city can emphasize the chronicle’s whipsaw mood swings. The characters can meet other Kindred in the Louvre after hours, casually strolling past the guards and contemplating the world’s art treasures before a trip to the Gucci store, but Paris is also home to grimy porn stores, squats full of indigent addicts or immigrants and ramshackle tenements that house all the people who clean and manage the City of Lights.

Character Creation: The players should build their mortals with the 75 or 100 bonus points given to experienced characters, as described on p. 35 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. The characters should also be purpose-built in a string, to fulfill Dracula’s goals of protection, education and power.

Thus, the first session involves the Embrace of a character who is strong and tough and who knows his way around Paris — a cab driver, a bicycle messenger or a police officer. The other characters are going about their

mortal lives while Dracula and his new offspring decide on the next target for acquisition.

That second Embrace is someone with money, a defensible home and an education — someone whom the first character knew and could point out as “a worldly person.” That’s the second session, while the other characters continue with their mortal plots. Session three is the third Embrace, of someone who possesses social influence or political connections, who was picked out by #2, #1 or by both together.

This means that the players don’t have to build characters who *all* know each other, but they should know a couple of other characters. It isn’t necessary for the characters to all be friends — it may not even be a good idea. Characters who are the sort to immediately be appalled by transforming into night-dwelling monsters aren’t going to want to impose that fate on their *buddies*. On the other hand, characters who are taught by Dracula that they are now immortal, preserved from the ravages of age and raised up above the lot of mortal puniness — they just might see it as a benefit to share.

The Storyteller does, of course, have to decide for her own chronicle the thorny question of what clan Dracula is. All the characters are in that clan, of course. Storytellers should feel free to pick any clan they want, using the criteria of “which flaws and Disciplines best fit this chronicle”? Alternately, Storytellers may just



skip clan altogether when it comes to the Impaler and his kin (see “Clanless Chronicles,” p. 35).

Antagonists: Initially, the antagonists should be about 50% unworthy opponents, mooks that the characters can overcome even with mediocre rolls. Another 35% are more serious, equal to the characters. The rest of the initial opposition outclass the characters handily, requiring all of them to gang up in order to have an even chance.

As the chronicle progresses, that ratio should slide and keep sliding, even as the characters gain power. By the time they’re trying to put Dracula on the throne, they should face 50% equal opposition and 50% superior opposition. While Dracula is presumably out in the open at that time, don’t use him as a *deus ex machina* to get the characters out of trouble. He must be as embattled as they are, to show that he’s vulnerable.

If they succeed at placing Dracula in power, their reputations should grow to the point that lesser specimens don’t challenge them. In the final act, anyone inferior to them should offer fealty, flee or avoid them in the first place. Any conflict the characters enter at that point is against and equal — or, in the case of Vlad, a definite superior.

One option to use with Dracula is the “Ultimate Mentor” technique. You only stat Dracula up partially, giving him skills, stats and basic Disciplines appropriate to his advanced age. Additionally, any time the characters ask him to teach them any level they can access, of any Discipline, he knows it and can explain

it so expertly that its experience points cost multipliers drop by one. In-clan Disciplines cost 4 x new levels and others cost 6 x new levels. It’s a hell of a bargain — but it means that the characters are going to pay heavily to get any Discipline Dracula does not already know.

Story Concepts: During their rise to power, the characters have the option to put their enemies to Final Death (or even use diablerie — Dracula’s cool with it as long as they don’t go overboard). If the characters go this route, it should be somewhat easier. However, if they opt for less extreme alternatives such as staking, torpor or exile, they can possibly use their onetime-foes against Dracula when they turn against him. With suitable persuasion, of course.

In passing, the characters hear about an artifact or ritual that strikes through lineage. If they pursue and acquire it, they find that they can seriously weaken elders if they use this MacGuffin on the elders’ childer. Using it on a sire can often kill a childe outright. When they shift into the “Dracula showdown” plot, someone might point out that they, as Dracula’s get, make the Impaler extremely vulnerable to this weapon. As long as the characters are willing to face Final Death to get their revenge on the Impaler.

Mortal friends, family and associates are good touchstones for a chronicle this fast-moving. As the characters rise to power, encounters with old pals (or rivals) can remind the characters just how much they’ve changed since Dracula killed them.

Requiem in Paradise

There are many reasons for the Kindred to avoid the Hawaiian islands.

The most obvious is Hawaii’s reputation for sun. It’s an equatorial region that gets more than its fair share of daylight and, as creatures of darkness, there’s an instinctive avoidance.

Along with sun come images of fun and beachside cavorting and *tans*, none of which are easily managed by the Damned. The Masquerade is an urgent necessity, and how does a night creature manage to remain inconspicuous in a culture that glorifies daylight sport?

Then there’s the whole volcano angle. If fire from the sky doesn’t get you, fire from the ground just might.

On top of all that, just exactly how are vampires supposed to get there? For many Kindred, the only prospect more alarming than a long plane flight is a long journey by boat.

But, once upon a time, a vampire was exiled to Hawaii. Bound to the islands by some truly awesome Dominate,

she can’t leave, and after a few decades of being the only vampire around, she didn’t want to.

After a few decades more, she began to feel isolated, and performed the Embrace, figuring that a “son” and “daughter” would assuage her loneliness. Thirty years after that, her get felt the same urge.

All told, there are now perhaps seven to 10 of the Kindred in the entire state of a million plus mortal souls. These Damned consist of the progenitor, her two children — and the players’ coterie (if the players don’t opt to take one of the progenitor’s offspring as a character).

“Requiem in Paradise” incorporates elements of the Vampire Familia model and the Bottle chronicle from. The main thrust of the chronicle is how the characters deal with their condition but how they deal with each other is also important. The tiny Kindred society of Hawaii has no one but each other to lean on, no one else who understands them — which means that they can hate and strive with one another in a way they can’t with mortals.



Theme: This is a chronicle about liberty and constraint. The characters have a degree of freedom that mainland Kindred would envy. There are no calls to war for clan or covenant, because there are no covenants and only one clan. The characters don't have to cope with a Prince or a Sheriff or a passel of subinfeudated authorities. There are only the characters.

At the same time, they're burdened by the dangers of their position and the stark difficulties of getting anywhere else. There's no conspiracy of powerful and connected elders with favors to dispense and a duty to clean up the Masquerade goofs of their neonates. The characters know *everyone*, which means that family tiffs get intense very quickly and are hard to avoid without abandoning the group altogether (and thereby letting one's rival repeat *her* story of the schism). As for settling scores with Final Death or diablerie, that means keeping a secret from one's only peers, *forever*, or facing their fear and hatred for just as long.

The tensions between doing whatever the hell the characters want, and needing to maintain secrecy and remain undiscovered, are what drive this chronicle. These tensions pressure the Kindred's tiny family/community. Ultimately, the chronicle hinges on those issues. Is personal freedom more important than personal safety? What's the balance? What do you do when people you rely on disagree with you? Is it worth compromising your beliefs (or desires) for the group? Without the group, is the Requiem even tolerable? Can such a small, hothouse society survive the inevitable conflicts and resentments arising from compromise?

Mood: Envy, wistfulness and self-indulgence. The characters are exiles in paradise who can't partake of the same joys as their prey. On the other hand, the joys the characters do have are surpassing, if perverse. They have a chance to make Requiems in their own image, which can lead to great pride and self-certainty. That's the indulgence. On the other hand, the character have got no one to blame but themselves if it all backfires, with very little guidance about how to be a vampire forever. That provides the wistfulness.

Atmosphere: Emphasizing the natural lushness of Hawaii, along with the health and happiness and welfare of the Kindred's most likely prey, reinforces notions of freedom and confinement. Liberty is called to mind because the prey are people with the money to do what they want, no illness or misfortune in their way, many of them on vacation and living it up. But this contrasts with the Kindred who can't go out and soak up the rays, even as they easily take advantage of the humans they envy.

Play up contrasts — the salt-perfumed air of the beach, the laughter of revelers just out of sight, the taut perfection of a young Ohioan teen's tanned neck as the vampire leans close to feed. Details of innocent sensuality should contrast with the cold predation of the Kindred, which can be represented by enclosed spaces and actual physical

chill. Try to arrange it so that Kindred meet mortals in warm, open places infused with charming music and lush tropical flowers. Having a food motif helps, too — mortals in this chronicle should always be eating or talking about this new seafood place they want to try or this terrific sushi joint they just left.

On the other hand, Kindred should meet one another in someplace dim, close, impersonal and unusually cold. For instance, a chance meeting might take place in an elevator, which the Kindred stop between floors to conduct their business in private. An arranged appointment might be in a meat locker, or a characterless motel room with powerful air conditioning on or at the walk-in freezer of some vampire's restaurant.

Setting: The progenitor has an opulent suite of rooms hidden in the basement of a major resort hotel, so that she can emerge at nightfall to prey on the guests. Her haven reflects her experience and history (which are up to the Storyteller) and should create a subtle warning about the dangers of being alone for too long — show the characters how weird she *used* to be and how much more stable she is now, and they might draw their own conclusions about the desirability of Embracing someone for perspective.

Other Kindred own restaurants (with that walk-in freezer as a “safe” area free of mortal surveillance) or have nondescript offices in the buildings that house many bland and excessively air-conditioned government bureaus.

Character Creation: One tricky element of this template is that *every vampire in Hawaii shares the same clan*. So make sure that your group understands this before they come up with characters, and make sure they get a clan they can all stand to play. It could work for you to just tell them “You’re all Ventrue. There it is,” if they’re tolerant, but they might get into it more if they have input. Some clans are more suited for this chronicle than others.

Daeva are a good choice because their Disciplines fit nicely with the elements of glamour, beauty and physical good times. Just as importantly, their flaw of borderline sociopathy encourages players to intrigue against one another, which is a key source of friction in this setting.

Gangrel, on the other hand, require a bit more work. While their attunement with nature can synch them with the beauty of the islands (and provide contrast with the built-up areas), Gangrel are a clan optimized for lone operations. That goes against the chronicle's grain, which is to put the family together and let them feud. Good character concepts always trump clan tendencies, but it's an issue to consider. Furthermore, possessing Fortitude makes them far less likely to fear the sun.

Mekhet, on the other hand, fear the sun plenty, and with good reason. Their clan flaw is a great fit. Obfuscate helps contrast the covert nature of Kindred with

the friendly openness that a tourist area must project. The biggest problem may be Auspex, which can be something of a secret-spoiler and cut the tension and confusion essential to an intrigue chronicle. This can be dealt with by simply adding more layers of intrigue, or by the Storyteller being aware that Auspex is going to bring things to light. This doesn't mean the Storyteller should take extra measures to keep things hidden. It means the Storyteller should accept that things pop up, and at the worst possible time, and with the most hysterical possible outcome.

Conflict is not a problem if you're prepared for it — an aphorism that could serve as the Nosferatu motto. Nosferatu work well in “Dead Meat” because they aren't immune to their own flaw, which amps up the likelihood of family conflict. This is especially poignant if some of them are hideous, and surrounded by beautiful people. Their Disciplines fit fairly well, with Nightmare perhaps being a “forbidden topic” that the matriarch wants to keep all to herself. After all, Nightmare is a far bigger threat to the Masquerade than even Potency, and also provides her an ace in the hole to keep the kids in line.

If all the characters are Ventrue, she could take the same tack with Dominate, but, realistically, your players are probably going to want to learn it. If they're all Lords, she might keep Animalism proprietary (simply because it doesn't fit in particularly well with the chronicle's goals) or Resilience (since it lowers the threat of sunlight). Neither of these Disciplines are deal-breakers, however, and the clan flaw is likely to produce meaty conflicts indeed — especially if the progenitor is the one who's showing signs of madness. Or especially if she neglected to explain the concept of a “clan flaw” to her string of offspring.

Once the clan's chosen, encourage players to make characters who would logically be Embraced. If you're a shark, adding another shark to a small tank isn't something you do lightly, so you make damn sure that the gains outweigh the risks. Characters need to have a lot to offer the family, both practically and emotionally, before they get Embraced.

Antagonists: Most of the antagonists in this chronicle should be internal. Before you even start, make sure the players are OK with the idea that they're competing or conflicting with one another. These aren't battles to Final Death: the society is too small to have redundant members. Now and then, a mortal hunter should crop up, or even some kind of supernatural threat if you wish, just to ensure that the players understand how the family has to cling together against external challenges. Those moments of uncomfortable instant unity should show the cost of internal bickering, giving the grievances of the characters against one another cost and weight. Everyone drops their problems when the cops sniff

around, but, once the police are distracted or stymied, the issues seethe up again — compounded by the issue of “who screwed up and tipped off the cops?”

Story Concepts: One of the elder Kindred (or the progenitor) takes a real shine to one of the neonates, causing envy among everyone else. One of the older vampires thinks one of his “siblings” made a huge mistake in choosing to Embrace one of the characters, and takes it out on the neonate rather than the sire. If the

neonate in both the aforementioned scenarios is the same, the triangle of conflict gets even more pointed, as the progenitor and one of her children conflict over the beloved/despised grandchilde. An unknown neonate gets spotted in downtown Honolulu and flees before being interrogated. Has a new vampire made the arduous trek across the sea? Or did someone Embrace and try to keep his new companion a secret? Either way, trouble’s brewing.

Violence

The life of a vampire’s mortal thrall is one of brief and perverse thrills, punctuated by uncertainty, fear, doubt — and often emotional manipulation, imperious demands, slavish addiction and madness. Ghouls and blood dolls deserve to be pitied.

Except in those circumstances when they deserve to be envied.

Certainly, the pawns of the Damned are wretched creatures in a free and peaceful society. But human history has many counter-examples. In Afghanistan during the 1990s, a trucker favored the Taliban, even though they forbade him from enjoying something as simple as music, because with the Taliban in power there was a chance he could drive between cities without being hijacked and beaten. Without them, such violence was a certainty.

The typical Kindred are callous and selfish and cruel, but one trait they lack is “cavalier about food supply.” Kindred protect their meal tickets, especially against mortal threats that are likely to be regarded with contempt.

Living with the abuses of a hungry corpse may seem positively attractive, when the alternative is dying from the abuses of the Gestapo in 1940, or the Khmer Rouge in 1976 or the Bosnian Serbs in 1994.

The central question of this chronicle is, are Kindred the lesser evil in Colombia between 1948 and 1958? It’s a period of Colombian history known simply as “La Violencia.”

It starts with a bang in the capital city of Bogotá. Tensions are already high between the political Liberals and Conservatives when, in the midst of a Pan-American Conference, a very popular Liberal presidential candidate named Jorge Gaitan is assassinated. Seething resentments explode into riots and looting. This, the “Bogotazo” is the kickoff for La Violencia.

The president, Mariano Opsina Pérez, responds with repression, banning public meetings and beginning a purge of Liberals from high government posts.

Some order returns to Bogotá, but the anarchy spreads throughout most of the country. Beginning as simple

political loathing, as the anarchy grows, it enfolds banditry, family vendettas and class-based opportunism in the countryside. Eventually, the rule of law simply fails. Petty resentments escalate to confrontation, confrontation becomes murder and murder provokes reprisal until revenge (or the avoidance of it) is the primary preoccupation of an entire lawless culture.

Laureano Eleuterio Gómez, a hardcore Conservative, takes power in 1950 and systematically removes all Liberals from power, right down to the level of police commissioners, which only radicalizes his opposition from the left and undermines his support from the moderate right. This culminates in a 1953 political coup that puts General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in the driver’s seat until 1957. While originally hailed as a liberator, Pinilla’s attempts to restore order and bridge the gap between Liberal and Conservative only alienate his Conservative support. After falling back on the same kind of brutal repression that characterized Gómez, Pinilla is ousted by a military junta backed by both sides. In 1958, the Liberals and Conservatives agree to abide by a set of conventions, and democracy is restored to Colombia.

The new government in 1958 is called the National Front and is led by Alberto Lleras Camargo, who gradually stabilizes the country.

(Well, it’s “stabilized” in that widespread torture-murders begin to be punished by official trials, and eventually peter out. This “stability” remains until Pablo Escobar arrives on the scene, and the FARC communist guerrillas get in bed with the narco-terror criminal underground. But, in 1958, the country takes a breather.)

Between 1948 and 1958, over 200,000 people are murdered in Colombia.

It’s a crisis, but for Kindred it’s an opportunity. If they want, they can clique up and get a political license for their own bloodthirsty urges. But it can also be a moral opportunity, if they rise above the partisan clash and try to restore some kind of tranquility, or protect deserving innocents — or maybe just keep their promises

to desperate blood dolls. Can circumstances make Kindred into heroes? And if so — what do they do when circumstances change?

That, after all, is the arc of the chronicle. The chronicle should start about the same time as the Violence, but end a few years later. Here's the difference: in 1954, the Masquerade fails — or, at least it does in the city where the characters are doing their thing — and conditions are so crazy and shitty that *no one even notices*.

That is, during the Violence in the Andes, people accept that vampires exist and can even give names, descriptions and street addresses. But while a few intrepid witch-hunters try to burn out the undead, Kindred are really no more likely to be targeted by firebombs than Liberals or Conservatives.

After normalization, people suppress their memories of vampires, or don't talk about them because it's too painful or tell themselves that they weren't *undead monsters*, just freaky guys who drank blood and stayed out of the sunlight. Hell, given a milieu in which cutting someone's penis off and hanging it through his own slit throat becomes one gang's standard operating procedure, blood drinking seems pretty tame. Some people keep their mouths shut because they worry that vampires are still around, unlike many of the local political leaders. A few stay quiet because everyone else is and they don't want to look crazy. Some — possibly a sizeable number, depending on the characters' actions — stay quiet out of gratitude.

Understand that while you, the Storyteller, know that the Masquerade sweeps back in when people start acting more like people and less like piranhas, your players do not. You can bait them and switch them. They can start out thinking this is a game about maintaining the Masquerade during civil unrest, only to have their efforts fail, and the situation be so abominable that people think "vampires in our midst are the least of our problems" (or, more likely, "vampires in our midst explain a lot, now let's kill the vampires on the other side!")

This works best as a short-duration chronicle. Start it with the Bogotazo and skip two years forward between each session until around 1960. There's no reason to warn your players about this sort of thing — and, as a bonus, if they wind up in torpor, you don't need to pull your punches as much.

Theme: It's all down to right and wrong. Are they absolutes, or do they lie along a gray sliding scale? Kindred knowingly cause harm to others in order to survive. That's evil, but they have no choice. Humans can get along just fine without doing murder, but during the Violence many do commit murder. Furthermore, many who murder during The Violence would argue that a straight-up bullet to the head is less evil than the sort of elaborate rapes and signature tortures that become semiotic currency during the upheaval.

Are Kindred who adjust their predation to protect those they deem deserving less evil, or even "good"?

Mood: Each session should feel like you've yanked the rug out from under the characters, dropping them into a new level of human viciousness. Each time they should feel "this is the worst," only to have it get worse still. They can react to this succession of nadirs. The characters, who are experienced with resisting bloodlust, seem to be the only ones who can stand against the tide. The question is, do they? And if so, how?

Atmosphere: The key to this chronicle is to start out with something that looks kind of bad, but also kind of charming. The characters aren't rich, and they don't have a world-class city to call home, but they're the only Kindred in a fairly big city like Manizales or Ibagué. They can start out ruefully contemplating their backward domain, a city where people still raise chickens in backyard coops and sleep on the tar roofs of apartment buildings when it's hot. Paris, it ain't.

As La Violencia progresses, degrade everything. The rundown neighborhood bar where locals drank warm beer and bitched about there being no work becomes a beer-less shack where people sit and express their anger about the evil bastards responsible. Then, a few years later, it's bullet-pocked, and the people there just sit quietly, drinking whatever they can lay hands on. A few years after that, the bar has lost power and the people gather there by candlelight. Eventually, the owner can't pay off one side or the other and gets pipe-bombed.

The beginning is characterized by rumbling cars that backfire but still get people to work. By the end, the cars are tireless hulks rusting in the street. At the beginning, people wear patched clothes and shoes with holes. By the end, the people are in rags and barefoot. The only thing that gets more prominent as time passes is the prevalence of firearms. (Handguns and rifles though — it's still the 1940s, so the cold war hasn't had a chance to pump developing nations full of automatic weapons.)

Setting: The setting is a city in the Andes, but a larger sense, the setting is a mythic Colombia.

This description of Colombia and an evil period in its history is vague. It's deliberately vague, like the setting of a western or a Regency romance novel. You could certainly do meticulous research and learn a lot about Colombia and Ibagué and make one type of strong chronicle out of detail and realism. But it's equally possible to be vague and impressionistic, and to use Colombia in 1948 as a stand-in for any period of human history when the rule of law has collapsed and humankind's uglier impulses fuse into the mob. You can make up the names of streets and citizens because the core of the game is the human element, and the inhuman one.

Give a few details — the mist on the soaring mountains, the majestic waterfalls, the lush fields in the



valleys between cities — and worry about characterization more than culture.

Character Creation: As with any chronicle that touches on the War Stories concept, characters need to be able to dish it out and need to be able to take it. In this setting, Social Disciplines, Merits and Skills may not be necessary or even desirable. A vampire who vows to keep the bandits from torching your house and mutilating your nine year old, and who has the Nightmare chops to keep the promise, is probably more alluring to blood donors than the most svelte and debonair Daeva. When a bunch of social outcasts suddenly have People suddenly begging for their help and even leadership, that can throw the topsy-turvy mortal framework into stark relief.

Antagonists: At the beginning, you want to establish strong living characters — some allies, some antagonists-to-the-death (whom no one believes) and some pains in the ass who don't warrant murderous reprisals. Try to subtly work political tensions into this, but give the characters the idea that they can ignore the puny human Conservative versus Liberal crap in favor of worrying about whether the Princes of Bogotá, Cali or Medellín are going to try to muscle the characters again this year.

When the Bogotazo erupts, it should be an ugly surprise, and it should be an uglier one when their own city follows suit.

Skip forward in time liberally to cover the progress of the Violence. Every year, it should get worse. The chickens get eaten, because the unrest is disrupting the usual flow of goods into the city. After one year, a vicious gang of creeps is running around armed and threatening. Let your players think these jerks are the characters' major antagonists. The next year, someone they thought was a decent, stabilizing influence is acting just as bad.

The wretchedness of the situation gives you lots of chances for changeups. Some basically decent people turn coward when things get dicey. Some go worse. By the same token, the worst of times brings out the best in some people. This chronicle gives you a chance to change up mortal characters drastically, and, in the process allow the vampires a chance to figure out how they really feel, and why. Examples follow.

Story Concepts: At the beginning, the Kindred are harassed by an aging priest who knows about vampires but who is so strident and self-righteous that everyone just laughs at him. He's no physical challenge, and having him around actually improves the Masquerade because he makes the idea of vampire-hunting ridiculous. What do the characters do in 1950 when the priest (a Liberal) comes to them and offers to sell his soul for the power to protect his church?

In 1948, one of the characters' allies is a cynical and jaded Conservative businessman. Do they fight for him when an agrarian mob tries to burn and loot his house, or

do they help him afterwards or do they leave him to his own devices? If they help him, how do they react when he responds to his losses (and even stalwart Kindred are unlikely to completely protect his property from a torch-bearing riot) by becoming murderously vengeful? If he was abandoned, he might well turn his anger towards the patrons who failed him, after getting his revenge elsewhere.

A young reporter is an ally to one Kindred and pursuing stories that tread on the toes of another (without understanding the nature of either). In the beginning, the reporter is a bone of contention between the two, creating some interesting intra-character conflict. When La Violencia starts, she's the first one to be grabbed off the streets and raped. The reactions of the Kindred determine whether she recovers from this assault and is able to serve as a stabilizing force, or whether she succumbs to despair and eventual suicide or whether she goes radical and becomes as vicious as her attackers.

What the story shows as years go by is that the people in this time and place can't be relied upon to calm the catastrophe. Do the Kindred try and step in to resolve things? There are three ways this can go, and each way should form the climax of the chronicle.

One, the characters can take the totally high road of using Majesty, money and might to defend the helpless, uplift the unjustly robbed and bring peace by threat of reprisal to those who hit first. If the characters go this way, it's a high-action campaign as everyone eventually takes

their crack at the undead interlopers. Throughout, the temptation to play dirty to make things easy should be present, and the price of resisting that temptation higher.

Two, the characters might go dirty from the word "go" and just terrorize and feed on anyone who draws a gun or a knife. This can work, but it needs to be stressed that the people being violent were *normal* when times were normal and that, while killing them calms things down, it doesn't restore normality. It just makes everyone frightened, dispirited and lifeless. There are some action scenes of attempted counterstrikes against the Kindred, but the big question here is: are the characters willing to break the people's spirit to break the cycle of violence?

Three, the characters may just give up and hunker down. This is the most selfish (and therefore vampiric) tactic. If they prioritize survival above all else, test that by removing "all else." Their allies are endangered, and, if the Kindred won't take risks to protect them, they die. The Kindred's assets are looted if they don't stand up for their allies. The Kindred's herd, in particular, is vulnerable, and havens only slightly less so. The key with this option is to display (subtly or overtly, as needed) that the Kindred aren't being singled out for any particular punishment. *Everyone* is losing friends, property and security. Run the chronicle as simple survival tragedy and, if the characters make it through to 1960, they can start over with the question "was surviving worth it?" hanging over their heads, unanswered.

Rights of the Dead

Vampires aren't the only undead creatures in the **World of Darkness**. Sometimes, through magical intent or major mistake, the dead walk the earth as zombies, as presented in **Antagonists**, or the Burakumin bloodline. If these walking corpses were to infest a city as we see them do in many B-grade horror films, the effect on the vampiric population would be profoundly unpleasant. Vampires would not again rise as zombies, and could destroy the zombies easily if attacked at night, but the Kindred's sleeping forms by day would provide a meal of flesh just as any mortals' would. The vampires would also risk starvation if the infestation became serious enough to remove mortals from the vampires' reach.

If you have **Antagonists**, you can use the statistics given in that book to create your zombie infestation. If not, the basic zombie statistics for Getsumeï can be used, with one modification: anyone killed by the zombies will rise as one themselves. Their creator is an old and powerful member of the bloodline, who has developed this unique ability for his creations. He has worked with the dead for centuries, and unbalancing his mind somewhat. He

has tired of the machinations and manipulations of both Kindred and mortals, and decided that it would be best to bring them all under his power as mindless undead slaves. His advanced powers allow him to subsist on the souls of those he turns into zombies rather than blood, so he intends to simply spread his influence and starve the other vampires out of his city.

The direct threat of such a zombie incursion is obvious. However, even if the characters survive the holocaust, there will be far-reaching repercussions. When the zombie menace reaches epidemic proportions, mortal authorities will have to intervene. At every step along the way, this will be a disastrous breach of the Masquerade. Ultimately, it could become an irreparable one, if the authorities discover the true source of the zombie infection. This will be a chronicle of long-term survival, requiring characters not only to weather the siege of walking dead, but to race the police and possibly military to the source of the problem. It will be a chronicle of limited resources, in which the characters must weigh their options and priorities, and it will be a

desperate situation that tests their moral fiber, perhaps hastening their degeneration into mindless Beasts.

The social structures of the city's Kindred will be threatened gravely by this emergency. Each covenant will move to protect its own, and the Prince will be hardpressed to keep any semblance of order in the general chaos. If the players' characters are adept at social maneuvering, they may be able to help salvage something or to use the chaos to advance their own positions in the city.

Theme: Response to disaster is the core of this chronicle. Survival is a theme present at all points along the way in different forms as well, brought on directly and indirectly by the disaster itself. The danger of the zombie attack should be great, and take the characters by surprise, to keep them on the run. They should be reacting on instinct until the danger passes, then, as they begin to relax, face another danger from the government investigation. The only opportunities to easily escape the danger should come at the price of betraying friends or other morally unpleasant choices, forcing the characters to choose whether it's worth surviving at such a high cost.

Mood: Sudden, constant, inescapable threat. *Blade II* provides a vampiric version of this mood, both with the strange pseudo-vampire creatures and the plot against Blade. *Night of the Living Dead* and its sequels, as the classic zombie films, paint the picture of survival needed very well. The characters should feel like the power structures they have relied on to keep them safe are useless and crumbling, that they are caught in the tide of something unimaginably horrible.

Atmosphere: Claustrophobia. The events of this chronicle should close in on the players like a vise, not letting them breathe, and so should your descriptions. Alleys should be narrow, with dead ends too high to climb. Tall buildings should crowd out the sky, and normal ones, such as houses, should seem insignificant and flimsy. There should quickly be nobody in the characters' world who is not a zombie unless they take some pains to seek such people out. Zombies will be plentiful, while allies and vessels quickly disappear.

Setting: This chronicle can be set in any city, so long as it is a big enough place for an elder vampire to disappear. Isolation in the middle of nowhere and isolation in the middle of a city each carry their own flavors of desperation. A large city is the recommended setting, though, because there the collapse of Kindred society around their ears in the crisis is added to the characters' horror. In a smaller community, there isn't as much society to disintegrate. Similarly, in a town of only 2,000 people, you can only have that many zombies. For some characters, simply destroying all the zombies might be a possible option in that case. A city of millions provides for effectively limitless hordes, meaning the characters will surely tire and be overwhelmed eventually.



Character Creation: This chronicle may be run with characters of any experience level, since the epidemic sweeping the city will affect all levels of society, undead and mortal alike. Neonates won't have a prayer of defeating the Burakumin master of the zombies, unless they come up with a truly ingenious plan. Vampires of greater age and connection may be able to lead a coalition to deal with the problem, or even take the master on as a coterie. The key to this flexibility is that, once started, there is no one piece that can solve the puzzle. The zombie horde quickly grows too large to be easily dealt with, and destroying their master won't stop the problem from spreading. Besides that, the investigations conducted by the mortal authorities after the fact could find a great deal about the origins of the zombies, including possibly the existence of vampires. This is a danger even if the master is destroyed; forensics is an amazing science, and background checks might track the owner of the facility the zombies came from all the way back to his origins. If the characters cannot obfuscate the investigation somehow, that "might be" will come to be.

A variety of talents would be useful in this chronicle, so any character concept is welcome. More survival and combat-oriented characters will find their usefulness early on, as hordes of undead descend on the city. Characters of a more social mien will be needed to hold others together. Scholarly types will find their knowledge useful in evading government investigations and discovering the cause of the outbreak. In addition, having an eclectic group of characters is entirely appropriate for this chronicle. The normal run of mistrust and disinterest in each other is something that the characters will have to overcome when trapped together in a dangerous situation, or else they will die.

Antagonists: The antagonists come in five flavors in this chronicle:

Fellow Kindred: Since most have been reduced to craven beasts fleeing for their lives, getting help from any other vampires takes work. If the characters impede their flight or encroach upon hiding places, some of these others, even former allies, might become actively hostile to remove the perceived threats to their existence.

Mortal Civilians: When present, these present the problem of the Masquerade. When not present, they

present the problem of no food sources. Even more fragile than fellow vampires, if any of these mortals are seen, they are likely to be running screaming through the streets in the initial panic of the zombie invasion.

Mortal Authorities: A solution to the zombie problem, yet an inquisitive danger to all the secrets of vampire-kind, particularly their existence. The dangerous scrutiny intensifies the consequences of any actions the characters take to survive, whether immoral or illegal, possibly leading FBI bloodhounds to the doorsteps of their havens.

Zombies: Removers of food sources, and implacable hounds of all the city's Kindred. The zombies have been instructed to feed on vampire flesh first, to remove their master's territorial rivals from the city so the power of the Vitae they consume can be transmitted back to their master. A single zombie is probably no match for a character who is skilled in combat, but a horde of zombies will get lucky eventually. The zombies have millions of chances to get lucky, while the characters only have to be unlucky once to be out of the game.

The Burakumin Master: This elder is rational, but not very full of foresight, and he has become fixated on his zombies as the only possible solution to his problems with other people. He is not an utter Beast, but he is certainly a monster. Extremely charitable and persistent characters might be able to convince him to stop his fruitless enterprise, but this is unlikely to happen before it is too late. Even if the Master could be swayed, his minions will already have done the damage. His resources, however, could be quite helpful in hiding from police investigations. Certainly, the characters will have a difficult time tracking him down themselves, even if they possess significant resources.

Story Concepts: Hunker down in someone's ultra-secure haven until the storm passes, then weather the military and FBI with well-placed bribes and highly paid lawyers; fight off the zombies while tracking them to their source, confront the zombie master in a dramatic fashion, then hide out from the aftermath with mortal authorities trying to destroy the important evidence; organize the covenants into a coalition to keep the city's Kindred safe, find the zombie master to reason with him and orchestrate a grand-scale cover-up of the events afterwards



Chapter Three: Antagonists

"You choose friends.
You make enemies."

—Invictus proverb

It can be said, in all seriousness, that antagonism is the glue that binds a good **Requiem** chronicle together — so long as the antagonism comes from outside the character group. A good antagonist (not necessarily an “enemy”) presents the characters with motive force, interesting obstacles and an overriding goal. To the Storyteller, antagonists are an indispensable tool for underscoring the themes of a chronicle, tying together set-pieces and keeping the chronicle on track. There is nothing else that can do all of this at once, all the while playing second fiddle to the stars of the show, the characters.

A good antagonist should *challenge*, *unite* and *engage* every character in the game. This is the antagonist’s threefold purpose in play, and should always be in the fore of your thoughts when designing, playing and (ultimately) abandoning the antagonist. Each step is as important as the others. Without careful design, the antagonist won’t hold up during play. Without a faithfully rendered end, the credibility of the antagonist is lost and the players are unsatisfied.

Following is a step-by-step guide to creating compelling, enjoyable antagonists for your game.

Step One: Antagonist Concept

Since it’s most likely that the antagonist(s) provide the driving force behind your chronicle, it’s best to start with this question, “What do I want the antagonist to *try to do*?” This is his first dimension, the simplest part of his construction. If his planned actions suit the theme and mood of the chronicle, you’re on the right path. If not, it’s best to stop right here and re-think the purpose of the character. *Your antagonist is an expression of the theme of your chronicle, brought to life.* He isn’t necessarily the characters’ enemy — a rival, competitor and misguided or obstructive friend are all potential antagonists as well.

Keep it simple. “The antagonist will try to destroy the Prince and take his place” or “The antagonist will try to win the heart of one of the characters” are perfectly workable beginnings — and that’s all you’re looking for at first.

When you’ve got a basic objective you’re satisfied with, try making a list of four or five adjectives or adverbs that relate to the theme of your chronicle, and write them out as well. This helps you put a spin on the antagonist’s desires and keep everything in line with your intent.

Don’t worry about whether you need more than one antagonist at this point. Don’t name the one you’re working on yet, and don’t worry about his Attributes, Skills or other details. You’ll be filling in the blanks at a later stage in design.

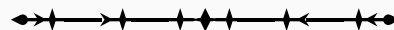
Before you go any further, it’s a good idea to consider the player characters in your chronicle. Have they already been created? If so, move on to the next step. If not, it’s probably best to wait until they have before going ahead.



MAJOR AND MINOR ANTAGONISTS

Throughout the creation text, two types of antagonists are mentioned: “major” and “minor” ones. Typically, major antagonists are the nemeses of the characters in your chronicle, driving the action and fulfilling the three purposes mentioned at the beginning of this article. A minor antagonist is a “filler,” a thug or flunky designed to perform a single task in the story. A minor antagonist shouldn’t really provide the challenge that a major one does — her purpose is different.

The threefold purpose of a minor antagonist is to *occupy*, *energize* and *encourage* the characters. Typically, these functions are performed by providing minor obstacles, reinforcing the characters’ motivation (typically by offending their sensibilities and providing them the opportunity to satisfy their virtue) and crumbling before the characters’ superior talents, respectively.



Step Two: Match the Antagonist to the Characters

Now it’s time to create a skeletal structure for the antagonist(s). The best way to begin this step is to take a good look at the player characters in your chronicle: how many there are, and how varied their skills, interests and backgrounds are.

Remember, the antagonist must *challenge*, *unite* and *engage* every character in the game. To those ends, you’re going to want to make sure that the antagonist is up to the task. First, ask yourself, “Who should the antagonist be?” A single individual? A partnership? An organized group? Should they be Kindred, or something else?

To help answer this question, consider the following: to **challenge** the characters, you’re going to have to create somebody who can survive battling all of them and still believably lose to them at the end of the story. In many cases, no single antagonist is able to do the job alone unless you restrict the characters’ options. Consider again the theme of your story and the descriptive words you put next to the antagonist’s goal. Do they suit a single antagonist with restricted modes of battle, or do they suit a number of less-powerful foes with greater freedom of approach for the characters?

A good rule of thumb with regard to challenge: pick a couple of abilities that each character has focused on, and mirror them in the antagonists. Begin to sketch out the points on the antagonists’ sheets so that the antagonist is between one and three dots higher than the opposing character on the relevant Attribute + Skill combo (if possible). This ensures that going head-to-head with the antagonist is difficult, but not impossible — and with



the expenditure of a Willpower point, the character can equal or surpass the antagonist.

Now have a look at the list of skills you've written out. If it seems silly for one antagonist to have all of these Abilities at the levels you've chosen, it's probably a good idea to split them among a number of foes, rather than just keeping one.

To **unite** the characters, the antagonist must provide a threat that every character has a reason to defuse. This is not automatic, and if missed, can cause the character party to scatter and unravel the plot. Here's where you have to make sure that the antagonist(s) push the right buttons on every one of the characters. If they're a tight-knit group with similar desires, it's not hard to do this with a single antagonist. If they're all over the board, you may have to create a group of foes just to keep everyone working toward the same goal.

To **engage** the characters, you need to make sure that everyone has something to do. If the party is very focused, with all members possessing similar skills, then a single, powerful antagonist may suffice — so long as he is too strong to be neutralized by any one of the characters without the help of the others. If their skills are more diverse, it might do to have more than one antagonist, ensuring that the characters must bring their different talents to bear in order to handle all of the problems presented to them.

Engaging the characters can also be accomplished by making sure they are able, on some level, to identify with the antagonist. The rule here is *similarity*: antagonists who are either compatriots or competitors, sharing similar basic Virtues, Vices or backgrounds are likely to put a sympathetic spin into the mix.

If you decide to have more than one antagonist, you're going to have to give them a structure. Are they equal partners? Do they have a hierarchy? Do they operate completely independently of one another, or are they united in their efforts?

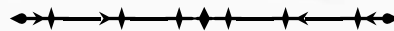


KINDRED OR OUTSIDER?

It's natural and logical for most antagonists in a **Requiem** chronicle to be vampires. They are, after all, territorial predators dwelling in close proximity to the player characters, often dealing with them in the social milieu. But Kindred aren't the only creatures likely to compete with (or obstruct) the characters — there are mortals, ghosts, werewolves, mages — all sorts of potential troublemakers. So when is it appropriate to create a "foreign" antagonist?

That's up to you. So long as the antagonist satisfies all of the requirements discussed here, she can be anything you want. If she fits in with the theme and setting of your chronicle, she's not a wrong choice. If you think a werewolf or a ghost would stand a better chance of keeping the players interested, use one. Just remember: it's easiest to make either a vampire or mortal

sympathetic to the characters — they are the former, and they once were the latter. If you go with anything more exotic, you're going to have to work harder to make the antagonist engaging.



Step Three: Flesh the Antagonist Out

You may wish to flesh out the rest of the antagonist's Attributes and Skills at this point. It's not always necessary, but every major one should have as close to a full sheet as possible, if only to provide you with more potential Storytelling tools. Is it important to know that Villain A happens to speak three languages or that Ally B is an excellent driver but a terrible shot? Not necessarily, but it doesn't hurt. Besides, these little details add a touch of realism to any scene that involves the antagonist.

Don't give into the temptation to make the antagonist flawlessly powerful. Remember: she isn't the star of the story, the characters are. If she's going to oppose them, she's *built to fail*. The players aren't going to like it if the story leads all the way up to a crushing defeat at the hands of an unbeatable foe — if you build things right, they're going to be working hard to find a way to come out on top, and if that happens, they deserve to win. Build a few serious weaknesses into the antagonist at this point. You may choose to add a derangement to her, punching a hole in her capacity for rational thought — but relying on insanity can become cliché, and tends to damage an antagonist's credibility. Better, usually, to choose to make her incapable of certain tasks by manipulation of her point spread. Anything will do, so long as it provides the characters with the opening they'll need without completely crippling the antagonist.

One last note about challenges: minor antagonists can be added into the mix at any time to help fill the gaps that the major ones can't cover, and to make sure that things don't get monotonous — you don't, after all, want the player characters to be fighting the same vampire again and again, only to watch him escape so that they can do battle once more in the future. Better to present them with ghouls, flunkies, mortals and other less-skilled "secondaries" to dispatch when they need to, all the while drawing the characters to a climactic battle with the real competition.

Step Four: Antagonist Psychology

Now you know what the antagonist intends to do, what makes them a good match for the player characters, and what the antagonist's strengths and weaknesses are. It's time to move on to the crucial fourth step: *motive*. Any antagonist, no matter what role he plays in the story: dire foe, annoying troublemaker, simple distraction or friendly competitor, must always have a *reason* for what he's doing. If the character is to remain an authentic and compelling force in the story, you must consider his perspective on the events of the chronicle (and



his own motivation). An antagonist should rarely, if ever, consider himself in the wrong, so it is up to you, as the Storyteller, to justify his choices for her. In so doing, you cast him more believably in the setting and you give him a strong reason to keep the story moving forward.

The first hints at a motive are already in place: the antagonist's Virtue and Vice. Beyond that, you should consider the themes of the story. Ideally, the antagonist's position should serve to illustrate your chosen themes. Return to the theme you wrote earlier and see how it can apply to the personalities you're building.

Try to keep the motives internal and specific to the character — it's likely that any sane antagonist in your story is more concerned with herself than with anybody else, so it wouldn't be realistic to hang her motive on somebody else. For instance, "Villain A is a fanatic and hates anyone who questions her faith" works better than "Villain A hates the player characters."

Once the antagonist's basic motive is in place, you can expand upon it to explain all of her attitudes, including her style of action, what she likes and dislikes and how she's likely to react to interference. Bring the four or five descriptive words you wrote at the start of antagonist creation back into play here — if you can fit them into this expansion, all the better.

Step Five: Quirks and Hooks

At this point, you should have a strong foundation for a believable antagonist (or group of antagonists). Now, it's time to work out the superficial details: appearance, habits, quirks — as you would with any character — and embed the antagonist in the setting, giving him a history, tying him to blood relations, choosing a covenant (if the antagonist is Kindred) and so on.

This step provides one more opportunity to revisit the three purposes of each antagonist with regard to the characters. Are there any details you can add here that help satisfy these needs even more powerfully? Could a choice with regard to the antagonist's background play a role here? Could her clan or covenant membership be relevant? Would blood ties to one or more of the other characters in the chronicle be useful?

When detailing a major antagonist's background, it's useful to use the same question list that's recommended for player character creation (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 96). Some subjects are already covered here, but many of the answers you come up with add valuable realism to your antagonist.

Step Six: Build Contingencies into the Antagonist

Once in play, the antagonist can pose a serious problem in any chronicle. If properly designed, she'll be challenging enough that the players realize that losing

is a possibility, and work hard to defeat her. But what happens if things just don't go well for the players? Mistakes can be made, opportunities go unnoticed and dice rolls can be unlucky. You can't just hand victory to the characters when they don't deserve it — they'll be just as disappointed as you are.

There is still an option. Early on, before play begins, you can design contingencies into your antagonist: mistakes that he might make at a crucial moment, allowing a believable second chance for the characters. These "contingency plans" typically arise from the weaknesses you've already designed into your antagonist. Is he lazy? Then he might have overlooked a critical detail when forming his plans. Is he vain? Then he might spend a little too long gloating, giving the characters enough time to rally and try again.

Be sure you have this plan ready in advance. If you struggle to come up with additional weaknesses on the spot, players are sure to realize when you are softening the antagonist up for them and feel like failures. Better to run the mistakes your antagonist makes smoothly, letting the players know that the contingency was part of the story all along, and that they're doing fine.

If the players encounter the first contingency and are still unable or unwilling to defeat the antagonist, don't panic. You're just going to have to run the chronicle a little longer. Once again, preparing for the possibility at the design stage ensures that everything runs smoothly if this comes up. This is your second contingency: souring an antagonist's victory. Ask yourself, is there anything about the antagonist that might render his victory untenable? Is there anything that would turn it into another impetus for the characters, bringing them back from the brink and putting them on the road to reversing their defeat?

If both contingencies are used, the characters have three chances to defeat any antagonist. Not bad, considering that the antagonist should only really have once chance at victory per chronicle. Best of all, these contingencies are hidden, but already comfortably in place. If run smoothly, they seem to have been part of the story all along.

Step Seven: Plan for the Antagonist's Failure

When the chronicle comes to a close, the characters (hopefully) stand victorious, having overcome all obstacles, pushed aside distractions and neutralized the ultimate threat presented by the antagonists. At that very moment, your antagonist has one last job to do. She must hammer home the part of the theme that she embodies, dramatically underscoring the mood of the chronicle as she abandons the battle (in death, surrender or escape).

Ask yourself, how can you use the impending collapse of your antagonist to full effect? Is it appropriate

Antagonist Design Worksheet

Chronicle Name: _____ Theme: _____

Mood: _____ Player Characters: _____

Antagonist Objective: _____ Thematic Descriptors: _____

Player Character Attribute + Skill Highlights
(2 per Player Character):

Unifying Trait(s): _____

Virtue: _____ Vice: _____

Engaging Trait(s): _____ Weakness(es): _____

Basic Motive: _____

Style of Action: _____

Likes: _____ Dislikes: _____

Reaction to interference: _____ Quick Description: _____

Quirks: _____

Contingency One: _____ Contingency Two: _____

Final Message:

Notes:

for her to make a final statement? Will she remain forever a victim of her weaknesses, or is it possible for her to reconcile with the characters? Is she likely to plan to leave something behind if she dies? These questions are best asked and answered in the design stage, just as all of the other features of the antagonist. The responses need not be etched in stone, but it's a good idea to keep them in mind well before the climax of your chronicle approaches.

Consider, also, that the antagonist's defeat may well lead into rich story material for future chronicles. Make a couple of notes about this as well — if the players really like the antagonist, you can always refer to what's happened in this story when building the next one. Even if the antagonist is destroyed, there must be someone she can inspire to follow in her footsteps.

Above all, though, you must make sure that the antagonist's collapse is satisfying to the players in your game. If victory is what they've earned, victory is what they should get. You might get attached to the antagonist, but you should never make the mistake of valuing her more highly than any of the characters. Be prepared to lose her, and be prepared to make it entertaining when you do.

Example of Antagonist Design

Graham is planning to run a chronicle for **Vampire**. He has decided to focus on a theme of “sin and temptation”, and the mood he's looking for is one of “decadence.” There are three player characters already in play from a previous chronicle: Andy, a Daeva swordsman, James, a Mekhet investigator, and Deb, a Daeva socialite. Their Virtue/Vice combinations are Prudence/Wrath, Charity/Sloth and Fortitude/Pride, respectively. The three of them are a tight-knit coterie of Invictus neonates.

Step One: Antagonist Concept

Graham enters all of this information at the top of his Antagonist Design Worksheet so that he'll be able to refer to it easily. The last story he took the characters through was one of bloody conflict between covenants, and he's decided that he doesn't want to repeat himself. To reflect this, he creates a non-violent objective for his new antagonist: “to tempt the characters into depraved self-indulgence.” He picks “shameful, insidious, hypnotic” and “desperate” as his thematic descriptors.

Step Two: Match the Antagonist to the Characters

He examines the players' character sheets and picks out their special talents, making a note of them. Andy's a very physical character, and his most concentrated skills are Brawl and Weaponry. He also has Vigor, so his dice pool totals are: Strength + Brawl + Vigor = 9 and Strength + Weaponry + Vigor = 10. James' most

concentrated skills provide the following: Intelligence + Investigation + Auspex = 9 and Intelligence + Streetwise = 8. Deb's provide: Presence + Socialize + Majesty = 11 and Manipulation + Subterfuge = 8.

Graham would rather not make a single antagonist who can match all three characters in their varied abilities, so he decides to create two. Antagonist A, the leader, provides the primary challenge for James and Deb, while the Antagonist B, a subordinate, provides the primary challenge for Andy.

Since the character group is a tight-knit coterie, unifying them isn't too much of an issue. To ensure that they're all engaged, though, he looks to the characters' Virtues and Vices. He decides to draw from those the characters have, giving Antagonist A Prudence/Sloth and Antagonist B Charity/Pride. That way, Andy and James can both sympathize with Antagonist A, while James and Deb should both be able to sympathize with Antagonist B. He also makes both antagonists members of Invictus, so the characters won't just be able to ignore them or dispatch them too easily.

Step Three: Flesh the Antagonist Out

Time to assign weaknesses. Graham looks over the information that's already laid out and decides that Antagonist A is physically weak (because he's Slothful), making a note that none of his Physical Attributes will be above 2 points. If he's caught alone in a threatening situation, he's likely to crumble — but he'll do everything he can to keep that from happening. In fact, he's apt to make mistakes when he fears physical harm. Antagonist B, meanwhile, suffers from low self-confidence (because she's Proud), and will react violently if humiliated.

Graham writes up full character sheets for both Antagonist A and Antagonist B, naming them Jeremiah and Siobhan, respectively. Graham makes them both Ventrue, helping to further unify the characters against the antagonists (because none of the characters are Ventrue). Jeremiah is built with a few more points than any of the characters have, while Siobhan is built with slightly fewer points than the characters have.

Step Four: Antagonist Psychology

Looking over the Virtue/Vice combinations he's picked for the antagonists and referring back to the original goal as well as the theme of the chronicle, Graham makes the following choices: Jeremiah wants to corrupt the characters because he's worried that they're going to accomplish great things, making him look bad for lazing around all the time. Siobhan is a victim of her own Pride, and secretly fears that Andy is a better warrior than she is — so she'll gladly assist in his ruin.

Applying the theme descriptors “shameful, insidious, hypnotic,” and “desperate” to the two villains, Graham

fills in the next section of the sheet for each one of them. Jeremiah is an insidious, charming influence, preferring to manipulate others from afar. He likes luxury and hates Virtuous (“self-important”) Kindred. If anyone interferes with him, he tries to win them over, hoping they’ll sink to his level of shameful excess. Siobhan, on the other hand, is more direct and violent in her methods. She likes glory, and dislikes sloppiness. If anyone interferes with her, her desperate need to prove her strength will overtake her, spurting her on to more and more violent acts.

Step Five: Quirks and Hooks

Graham sketches out a quick description for each of them. He notes that Jeremiah is pale and pudgy and often dressed in fine, custom-tailored silk suits. Graham then notes that Siobhan is scarred and muscular, and that she prefers to wear tight, dark clothes. Graham gives each of them distinctive speech patterns and draws up quick, point-form backgrounds for them, referring to the character creation questions in **Vampire: The Requiem** for some details.

For instance, he places both of their feeding grounds in the industrial district of the city, locating Jeremiah’s haven in lower-class residential neighborhood on the fringes of the district while placing Siobhan’s inside an abandoned factory nearby. Graham decides that Siobhan has a number of mortal allies in a local street gang, and Jeremiah’s got a dedicated ghoul servant (who often hunts for him). Both antagonists are members of the Invictus in good standing, but neither is particularly well-respected. Jeremiah is considered too decadent to earn much power, and Siobhan is widely considered to be too volatile.

With these rough notes, Graham feels comfortable continuing, noting that he’ll have to develop the neighborhood the antagonists dwell and feed in as a setting for the chronicle. He expects that the characters will spend a lot of time there, after all — especially near the climax of the story.

Step Six: Build Contingencies into the Antagonist

There are really two ways the characters can lose to Jeremiah and Siobhan: by giving into Jeremiah’s seduction or by failing to defeat Siobhan if she eventually attacks them. Graham sets the following first contingencies in place: If Jeremiah looks like he’s winning, he’ll relax too early (giving into his Sloth), and begin to ignore the characters before they’ve really made their minds up. They’ll have a chance to see through his enticing lies and rally to resist him. If Siobhan beats the characters, she’ll lose interest in fighting them as soon as she gains the upper hand. She’ll assume they’re weaker than she thought, and will back off, gloating as she goes.

Just to make sure, Graham writes up a second contingency for each. If Jeremiah gets his way, the charac-

ters will become his new best friends, invited to join in his revels — and they’ll have ample opportunity to see just how excessive Jeremiah’s lifestyle is. Sooner or later, their Virtue will rebel against his depredations and they’ll be forced to resist him again. If Siobhan manages to knock all of the characters down, her gloating will actually sicken Jeremiah, and he’ll do what he can to convince them to teach her a lesson.

Graham assigns the same “final message” to both antagonists. Since the story is about sin and temptation, he decides that Jeremiah and Siobhan will crack if they can’t win the characters over, reversing their opinions and beginning to admire them. They’ll see their own Vice-ridden behavior for what it is, finally beginning to regret their actions. Of course, it might be too late for them — but they might get a chance to express their revelation before the story ends.

He doesn’t really need to draw up detailed plans for the minor antagonists he’s set in place: Jeremiah’s ghoul and Siobhan’s allies. Graham decides that they’re far below the characters’ power levels, and should easily fall if they are set in their path as obstructions.

The process is complete. Graham looks over the design worksheet and the two complete character sheets he’s created, making sure he hasn’t missed any details that appeal to him. Jeremiah and Siobhan are ready to be unleashed in the chronicle, wreaking havoc with the characters’ lives and providing a pair of entertaining nemeses for them to face off against.

Normal People

The following antagonists are common people that a vampire might have cause to interact with in his nightly existence. It is worth noting that all of these templates are generic and rather stereotypical, as they represent the most common type of characters they represent. Storytellers who wish to make their characters more individualized should start with one of these templates and then take it through the steps in the first part of this chapter in order to turn the stereotype into a fleshed-out individual.

Scaling Abilities

If the following Abilities are either too powerful or too weak in comparison with the best the characters have to offer, you should adjust them to ensure balance. A good rule of thumb is to match the dice pools up: if the antagonist is a minor threat, his Abilities should be no more than equal to the characters’ best comparison and no less than two dice worse than theirs. If he’s a major threat, his dice pools should be no less than equal to the characters’ best comparison and no more than two dice better. This listing is meant to give an average threat rating to the Obsessed Admirer, and rank the ratings of his best abilities relative to one another.

Non-Combatants *Congregationalist*

Quote: “Through the salvation of our blessed Lord, we will come through this wickedness. I can only pray for you, because you are going to burn in hell.”

Background: Religion is a powerful force in the lives of living and unliving alike. People of all backgrounds, status and levels of education are drawn to churches, hoping that their faith will give them something the rest of the world cannot. How each person, and each congregation, deals with his faith varies widely. Many congregationalists are nice people just trying to lead nice lives, and want to be happy and help others around them be happy — sometimes annoyingly. Others, however, go to extremes of belief that can drive them to castigate, censor and attack those who do not believe as they do. The one thing that congregationalists all have in common is that they are plugged into a community, and when one congregationalist is in trouble, she can count on the help of dozens to hundreds of others.

Description: The stereotype of the good congregationalist is the clean-cut boy or girl next door, with neat hair, good hygiene and freshly pressed pants or a dress. There are more people in the world that don't fit that image than do, however, and it's not uncommon to find jocks for Jesus, jazz musicians for salvation and skaters for the Lord in a church along side the generic and white-shirted.

Storytelling Hints: Most congregationalist have a core doctrine based on their religion, a set of shared beliefs that defines them against the rest of the world. In many cases, these are things such as an emphasis on charity, missionary work or ecstatic communion, but they also include things more dangerous to vampires, such as re-

vealing the sins of the wicked and watching for the works of the Devil. Storytellers should pick a general theme for a given congregation, if not a specific church, and base the teachings and reactions of the Storyteller characters around that belief. In any congregation, there will be people with vastly different degrees of commitment and understanding of doctrine, and so, except in the cases of the most extreme branches, Storytellers should let there be variety in the personalities of members of a congregation. Also, despite the fact that the quote above shows a Christian slant, Storytellers should feel free to use congregations of other faiths as well. Muslim mosques, Jewish temples and even Wiccan circles can all be seen (with varying degrees of accuracy) as a congregation, and have many of the same strengths and abilities that Christian congregations do.

Antagonists: Members of any congregation tend to not be much of a threat as individuals, but their combined resources can make them a dangerous entity. Besides possible connections to vampire-hunters of various types, congregations have a great ability to organize large groups of people to do anything from public works to a good old fashion tar-and-feathering (or burning), depending on the personalities and doctrines involved. Plus, many congregationalists are more willing than normal to believe in the supernatural, as many of them embrace a world view in which evil is a real, tangible force with power in the wicked world. Maintaining the Masquerade, or even personal privacy and safety, in the face of a group willing to believe that a vampire is an agent of evil and able to organize to follow, observe, harass and warn others of the vampire's existence can be a potentially lethal trial.

Allies: While few but the most extreme of congregations would willingly ally with a known vampire, they can nonetheless be useful tools. Able to raise resources, reach into the community, organize blood-drives, offer safe haven and put the heat on other supernatural enemies, a congregation can be a vampire's best friend. There are no few among the Lancea Sanctum, for example, who are all too aware of this, much to the dismay of their enemies.

Abilities:

Organize Congregation (dice pool 6) — From setting up a bake sale with a thousand customers to putting together a homeless shelter to raiding a vampire's haven with fire and prayer, one of the great strengths of the congregation is that they are all in it together, and have a community of mutual assistance and support that can let them call on great resources in times of need.

Recognize “Evil” (dice pool 4) — Well versed in the words of their leaders, their scriptures, and the legends of their church, congregationalists will often see the hand of evil in things that more secular people would write off as coincidence.



Lawyer

Quote: “This property belongs to the MacLoud estate, established in 1822, and is not the holding of any individual. It is under our management, as trustees, and so subject to privilege. You cannot now have, nor will you ever be given, access to the financial records of the estate.”

Background: The legal systems of modern countries form the backbone of their existence, controlling everything from dispensing justice to regulating industry, science, religion and basic human rights. At the heart of the legal system of most First World nations are the lawyers, the experts on law, procedure and jurisprudence who try and defend criminals, deal with tax law, run estates, work to protect the common man, work to exploit the common man and, of course, sue.

Description: Among the professional elite, lawyers dress professionally, act professionally and present themselves well when doing business. Suits, briefcases, conservative but expensive haircuts and cell phones may as well be the official uniform. While they may be as much a slob as anyone at home, even the newest public defender or poorest pro-bono lawyer is able to put on a good face for court.

Storytelling Hints: The stereotypical lawyer is a shark, ready to do anything for a fat paycheck, almost casually thumbing his nose at the law and showing contempt for ideas like justice and legality. While there are many such lawyers, especially in the pool of lawyers vampires are likely to hire or use as Retainers, there are other types as well. Labor lawyers who fight for the little guy against corporations, pro-bono lawyers who try to even the scales and other genuinely good people practice law and try and make the law something to be respected.



Antagonists: Lawyers can obstruct, disrupt and demolish vampiric interests like few others, and often without even realizing what they are doing. Restraining orders, liens against bank accounts, financial audits, subpoenas and similar legal entanglements can be annoying and damaging enough for most people, but, for someone who doesn't officially exist and who can't exactly show up at court to dispute, such legal maneuvers can either force a vampire to abandon a project, interest or area or else have to deal with the attention of the legal system of the mortal establishment — which is far easier said than done.

Allies: In addition to the obvious utility in getting a character out of legal trouble and keeping the police well at bay, lawyers can be invaluable assistants to any vampire. Lawyers commonly manage estates, legal wills, grants and other perpetual funds and so make a perfect screen for vampiric activity. They are also able to cover up traces of things such as people who do not die and yet control the same land and assets for a century or more. Having power of attorney can also make lawyers and extremely good face for dealing with the mortal world, keeping the vampire behind the scenes safely anonymous. Lawyers with the right corporate setup can also be very useful for annoying and damaging vampiric foes — suing and getting legal leans and motions against assets of other vampires who may not have the legal recourse to stop them.

Abilities:

Persuasion (dice pool 7) — It's commonly given advice that one shouldn't cross words with lawyers, as they make their living at being good with language and logic and tricking people into saying what they don't want to. Lawyers are generally very good at metaphorical arm-twisting and setting up negotiations that are very hard to refuse.

Legal Knowledge (dice pool 7) — If anyone can find a way to get the system to work for you, rather than against you, it's a lawyer. Of course, that works in the opposite as well, and lawyers can often find a million ways to make a character the law's bitch.

Publicity Agent/Spin Doctor

Quote: “Calm down. We knew we were going to get some blowback over this, and this isn't nearly as bad as it looks. I know the editor at the Post, and I know his mistress, and I'll have them printing a retraction by tomorrow morning. As for the bastard that leaked this, well once we find him we'll see how he likes being subtly linked to the Rose Red murder trial on national television . . .”

Background: The World of Darkness is media saturated, with millions of newspapers, tens of thousands of magazines and hundreds of channels constantly beaming the lifestyles of the rich, the famous, the infamous and the wicked into the minds of the masses. Anyone can become the subject of media scrutiny, if



something goes particularly wrong or right in her life, and those who get into the cameras quickly learn that they need someone to manage their public presence and image, or else they'll get eaten alive. Publicity Agents and Spin Doctors live in this world, helping their clients and hurting their clients' enemies in the most dangerous arena of all: that of public opinion.

Description: Most image consultants are, obviously, quite conscious of image themselves and dress and act in order to create a total aura of professionalism, competence and whatever individual and eclectic personal mannerisms they think will help them gain clients and keep the media ear turned to where they want it. Often above average in appearance without being overly gorgeous, characters of this type are well groomed and well dressed in the latest fashions and are never, ever caught dead wearing something not appropriate for the situation.

Storytelling Hints: Image is everything, substance is the illusion. Publicity Agents are experts at saying the right thing, using innuendo and misdirection to put attention where they want it and to shift investigations away from where they do not want them. To the public, they often appear as smiling and helpful as possible, but, behind closed doors, they can be ruthless, using webs of contacts, dirty information and favors to keep their lives, and the images of their clients, in order.

Antagonists: Though very few Publicity Agents ever have the clout to threaten the Masquerade (and those that do tend to have unfortunate accidents), an individual Spin Doctor can still make a vampire's individual unlife very uncomfortable. Feeding patterns can be turned into evidence of a serial killer in the press. Friends, allies and ghouls can become figures of public interest, with reporters constantly hanging about and asking annoying questions. Prime areas of the Rack can

become this week's "death alley." And organizations that vampires have interest in can be targeted for smear campaigns, leading to investigations and enquiries by the media and government alike.

Allies: Many Spin Doctors are just as good at keeping their clients out of the press and public attention as they are at getting them into it, and any vampire with connections to the mortal world who may need to occasionally cover up minor breaches in the Masquerade can benefit greatly from their services. Not to mention that a good Spin Doctor can ruin an enemy's life without ever breaching the Masquerade or even letting the enemy know why all of the things they care about have suddenly become a "film at eleven" item.

Abilities:

Craft Press Image (dice pool 7) — When you want to either be in the news as a star, or out of the news entirely, you need a Spin Doctor. By using contacts, by knowing who is who in the media and by crafting public statements and images, these folks specialize in controlling, modifying and limiting the media presence of individuals and organizations.

Who's Who in Media (dice pool 8) — Publicity Agents have to know who else the public eye is fastened on, as well as who it was that put that person on the map. They can get into contact with other publicity people, editors, writers and producers of magazines, newspapers and television shows, and recognize the work of such people.

Social Worker

Quote: "I couldn't gain entry to the house, but I did manage to peek in before they slammed the door in my face. I saw several children, all in various states of distress, and many emaciated women who seemed to lack the will to act to defend themselves. I believe this building may be a center of a charismatic cult, and I recommend that police action be taken immediately."

Background: Even in the World of Darkness, there are public servants who try to look after the common good and make sure that the helpless are not taken advantage of. They are always overworked, underpaid and understaffed, and have more charges on their lists than they can reasonably keep track of. Many are corrupt, burnt out or just incompetent: having seen that they can't really change the world they just stop trying. But now and then, one who really cares will step up, or one who didn't will have a fire lit under them, and a Social Worker who cares can, just sometimes, make a difference — if he doesn't end up fired, beaten or dead first.

Description: Social Workers are trained to go into some of the worst areas in the world and deal with people professionally yet firmly. They dress in conservative, professional manners and tend to avoid the "government agent" stereotypes as strongly as possible —



no black suits, no shades. Despite this, many carry obvious signs of fatigue, distress and emotional scarring on their faces, often having a haunted or burnt look in their eyes that keeps their professional smiles from carrying much in the way of human warmth.

Storytelling Hints: Professional, often to the point of being pointlessly bureaucratic and mechanical, Social Workers live in a world in which if they do nothing a child could end up dead, and if they do something, the child could end up dead anyway and they will be sued, fired and ostracized for being responsible for the death. Thus, even the ones who haven't given up often move slowly and deliberately, covering all of their bases and avoiding extreme actions in order to try and find a moderate course that won't get them or anyone else fired, beaten or killed.

Antagonists: Unless a vampire is very wealthy and feeds only from adults with no concerned families, histories of crime or drug abuse, no children, no elderly parents and doesn't keep his herd controlled or confined in any significant way, there is probably some way that a Social Worker could cause the vampire pain. Runaway blood dolls, ghouls who abuse their spouses, kine who turn out to be underage or elderly, havens that exist in areas of human misery and many more things can bring a slow, patient investigation from a Social Worker: possibly leading to police action, or maybe just leading to the information being sold to the vampire's enemies.

Allies: Social Workers can get information about the herds and havens of many of a vampire's enemies, can disrupt blood supply and control over underlings, and generally cause a pain in the life of those a vampire dislikes. They can also, if they are suitably handled,

arrange for convenient and helpless kine to find their way into a vampire's herd, even arranging for the vampire of one of their retainers to get paid by the state for taking care of their new vessels.

Abilities:

Empathy (dice pool 6) — Social workers deal with liars, cheats and abusers all day every day, and they get very good at fingering the liar and seeing through the shit. They also are generally very good at identifying people in pain and fear, and figuring out the source of that pain and fear, at least they are when they let themselves be open to it.

Persuasion (dice pool 5) — Talking a junkie into starting rehab, or a domestic abuser into getting counseling are not easy things, and yet they are a daily part of a Social Worker's job. Talking people into doing things that are good for them, or convincing them that they should try something they don't see the immediate benefit of, is a necessary skill for a Social Worker.

Scientist

Quote: "What are you saying? If you cut off the stem-cell supply now all of our work will be wasted. We're on the verge of curing a disease that cripples and kills millions of people every year, and you're talking about politics?!"

Background: Scientists work daily to improve life, increase humanities understanding of the universe and make a lot of money. Every field of human life is touched by science, and billions of dollars a year are spent on research and development to help Scientists continue their work. How each and every individual Scientist deals with this is as varied as any human behavior in any endeavor: from greed to visionary zeal, dreams of freedom to lust for control and everything in between. The one thing that most modern Scientists cannot avoid is the business of science: even those working for universities and hospitals have to deal with the endless frustrations of patents, bureaucratic supervision and lack of resources. Between this and their quest for knowledge, Scientists are sometimes forced into places they would not otherwise have tread, including into the darker regions of the World of Darkness.

Description: There are a lot of stereotypes about Scientists, from thick glasses on computer dweebs to white lab coats and face masks to absent-minded professors. While all of these types certainly exist, the only things that really unite Scientists are their education and work. As a result, you can find anyone working in a science lab. In most organizations, professional dress and behavior is standard, but Scientists in the field can look like anyone, anywhere.

Storytelling Hints: Many Scientists have a strong aversion to even the suggestion of the supernatural. They live and work to prove things through logic, reason and experimentation, and so talk of things that go bump in the night is often alien to them. However,



Scientists are also not stupid people, and if the evidence of their own senses mounts up to a certain point they may start to believe, or they may come from a background that mixes science and religion or superstition and not see a divide between the two. A Scientist who does believe in the supernatural can be a terrifying force, bringing knowledge of modern technology, research and patience to bear on a problem.

Antagonists: Do you know how to make napalm in your basement or how to calibrate and setup a system of fiberoptics that disperses natural sunlight throughout the entirety of a building? Many Scientists do, and if they don't, they can find out fairly quickly. What about using thermal scanners to detect body heat? Developing drugs that work only when they are ingested out of the blood of a living carrier? These things are all possible, and all can make Scientists terrifying hunters. But even short of such extremes, a Scientist simply doing research into the sociology of a vampire's neighborhood can cause a lot of problems.

Allies: Scientists can be great allies. Though they are not Q from James Bond, they can help vampires access and understand new technology, and the ways to get around it. They can also make excellent business contacts: for example, many biotech companies and universities need large numbers of organs and fetal material to do experiments on, and acquiring them is not always possible through standard channels. A vampire who helps those organizations get what they need (and where would vampires find dead bodies, organs and blood materials?) may be able to get blood, medical care for ghouls and Retainers, money and access to facilities in exchange.

Abilities:

She Blinded Me With Science (dice pool 6) — All the many forms of science that humanity knows have

specialists who dedicate their lives to increasing their understanding. A Scientist working in his specialty field should have their dice pool raised by 1 to 3 dice. And don't forget about equipment bonuses: modern and high-tech equipment is necessary to most modern sciences.

Obtain Funding/Materials (dice pool 5) — Even with all the money funneled into science there is never enough to go around. By the time the money gets through the bureaucracies, managements, suppliers and regulatory agencies, many Scientists even in large corporations and universities find themselves without enough money to gain the very expensive equipment, sufficient personnel or salaries that they need. Finding ways to get what is needed becomes something of an art of its own, and the most successful Scientists aren't always those that are best at science, but those that are best at bureaucracy.

Telecom Tech

Quote: "I'm sorry about the noise on your line. We've had a number of reports of significant short-circuits on lines in your area and we're checking the capacitance ratings of each terminal individually. You may hear some transmission noise when using the phone over the next two days. Don't worry about it, its normal."

Background: The modern world depends upon telephone communications in order to work, and yet few really understand the deep workings of the phone system. Once the line gets beyond their house or office, few people understand about issues like how switching stations and frames relate, or what a central office does, much less the inner workings of a DMS (a massive circuit switching data system that governs the service features of trunking systems and line presence). This deep and arcane world is the domain of the Telecom Worker, the modern wizard who makes the magic of phones work by plying the 125-year-old phone systems to do the worker's will. Telecom Workers come in many varieties, from the tech who climbs the poles and lays ground wires to the repair operator who takes complaints to the IP analyst who invents new ways for us to stay in constant communication: and all of them know how to make a phone into either a most useful tool or a most potent trap.

Description: Telecom Workers come in all shapes and sizes. Techs tend to be blue-collar types, wearing workmen's clothes and uniforms and carrying tool belts and harnesses to let them climb phone polls and do work on the lines. Operators dress like any office worker, and have the general attitude of low-level office employees everywhere. Analysts and executives work just like management everywhere, and dress sharply and work aggressively in order to further their careers.

Storytelling Hints: Telecom workers are trained to be polite and professional when dealing with the pub-



lic, to instill trust in the system to the masses and to let people know only enough to understand the basics of why there is a problem without causing them to panic. As a result, most tend to keep and even, professional front even when furious (this applies especially to repair clerks and operators, who daily take some of the worst verbal abuse known to humankind) and often use techno-jargon in order to confuse or make it seem like they have given a complete answer when they really have not. While player characters may come face to face with techs in the field, many operators will be only disembodied voices on their phone line, so developing a strong speaking pattern for a recurring Storyteller character is very important.

Antagonists: An angry and determined Telecom Worker can cause more pain than the average person would consider possible. By manipulating the system, someone even at the lower levels of an organization can tap phones, trace calls, set up mailing services that will constantly block and flood phone lines so that no real calls can get through and shut down service. And that's just the beginning; techs with more knowledge can arrange to have all of a vampire's calls forwarded to their worst enemy or set their phone up so it calls 911 anytime they use it, automatically summoning the police to wherever the vampire is. The worst thing is that they can do almost all of these things without ever coming within miles of the vampire's haven, working securely from a corporate office behind layers of corporate security.

Allies: Just as an angry Telecom Worker can be a curse from God, an allied worker can be a blessing from Heaven. They can, if sufficiently motivated, do unto the vampire's enemies all the things listed above. Telecom Workers can also make sure the vampire's line goes untapped, get her access to unlisted and blocked

numbers, free phone service with all the features and so on and so forth.

Abilities:

Phone Wizard (dice pool 6) — Telecom Workers know how to do things with phones that would make the average person blanch, from tapping lines to cutting off service to detecting when someone has tampered with a phone or phone line.

Techno Babble (dice pool 5) — Using a combination of technical jargon, evasion and good old fashioned lying, many Telecom Workers are very skilled at not telling their customers exactly what is going on while making the customer believe they know exactly what is what.

Combatants

Capoeira Squad

Quote: "Dude, you really, really, really chose the wrong crew to screw with"

Background: Capoeira is a Brazilian martial art that was developed by escaped slaves to give themselves a method of self-defense. It was created to be easily disguised as dancing, and to be used while the hands were tied, and, as a result, uses many flowing moves, cart-wheel attacks and flipping kicks. Even more impressive, however, is that capoeira is one of the few martial arts developed specifically to be used as part of a group, and most capoeira artists are trained to fight in groups, using hit-and-fade tactics. Because of capoeira's dance-like fluidity, awesome aerial moves and focus on groups working together, this martial art has become a favorite martial art among many of the hip-hop urban youth of large North American cities. Learning together often forms a bond between these kids, and they grow up



supporting each other and hanging out together, making a band of youth who are a lot more dangerous than they look. Imagine the surprise of a vampire who decides to hunt a young dancer, only find himself facing a half-dozen martial artists.

Description: The inner-city Capoeira Squad is made up of youths between late middle school and college age, most of whom dress and act more like hip-hop dancers or clubbers than martial artists. They practice to music, they dig fashion and they know how to dance and bling in addition to how to fight. Combining a high-degree of athleticism and style, they're awfully easy to mistake for tasty clubber-meat.

Storytelling Hints: Capoeira Squads aren't (usually) gangs or even focused groups. They're people who share a dedication to a martial art and, quite often, a lot of personal friendship and respect. They lack the emphasis on humility, clean-line aesthetics and Asian features of most other popular martial arts, and don't usually present themselves as fighters. They all spar against each other regularly, and in groups, and so they know each others' strengths and weaknesses and work together to compensate for and cover each other. They're not above teaching an attacker a lesson, but aren't interested either in dying or in killing — not unless given extreme provocation, of course.

Antagonists: Vampires who are to brutal in their hunting in the Rack or in inner-city neighborhoods could easily find themselves alone in an alley with a half-dozen kids determined to teach them a lesson. Because they don't stand out from the crowd of clubbers, hip-hop kids, and inner-city youth, Capoeira Squads can make deadly foes, able to strike out of nowhere with sudden and near overwhelming force. It's also common for them to have friends and family in gangs, and so they can call in firepower if things get desperate.

Allies: A vampire who has connections with or hold over a Squad can use them for a variety of tasks from being an unobtrusive and stylish bodyguard to spies who can keep tabs on the word on the street.

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

Skills: Athletics (Acrobatics) 3, Brawl (Capoeira) 4, Crafts 1, Expression (Dance) 3, Occult 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2.

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Style: Kung Fu 4

Willpower: 4

Morality: 7

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Kick	0 (B)	-	-	8
Whirlwind Strike	0 (B)	-	Two attacks	8/7

Armor: Iron Skin (1 vs. unarmed only)

Firefighter/Paramedic

Quote: "We've got a kid on the third floor, probably hiding somewhere. If we don't go in now he's going to die."

Background: Many are drawn to become a Paramedic or Firefighter (in many cities now, all Firefighters are trained Paramedics) in order to help others. While the image of the police has been tarnished with brutality and graft, the Firefighter is still an undimmed hero in the minds of many people, and the call to selfless service is strong in the World of Darkness: people need something to believe in, after all, and need to feel like they can make a difference. Firefighters form strong bonds with each other and with each others' families as well, making each firehouse a community center that reinforces the sense of heroism, place and acceptance.

Description: Firefighters have to meet a minimum height requirement in many departments, and all of them work hard to stay in good shape, leading to most being taller than average and well muscled. The firefighter's work gear is unmistakable, from the bright yellow jacket and helmet to the heavy boots and breathing mask. Out of uniform, they tend to dress down, and, in the firehouse, often wear blue shirts with their department insignia proudly displayed.

Storytelling Hints: Firefighters stick together, working as a team to go into the middle of infernos and toxic hazards where a misstep can mean death. Teams work together well, and many adopt the attitude of "if you go, we go" — never abandoning a teammate even if it means their own



death. Though both Firefighters and Paramedics often are subject to regulations about needing police presence before they go into certain areas, many will follow the call of duty rather than personal safety and go in anyway.

Antagonists: Firefighters can make deadly foes, though it isn't easy to make an enemy of them except for personal reasons. Still, a vampire who were to do something such kill a Firefighter's wife while feeding could find himself in real trouble. Those who know how to put out fires also know how to start them, and if they can convince their firehouse that the character is a murderer and beyond the law, they can have a whole dedicated team ready to back their play. Firefighters also can get a lot of community support, helping them raise resources and bring media attention to areas where they feel there are problems.

Allies: What vampire wouldn't want a professional to help her fireproof her haven, pull her out of blazes and give her connections to communities that let her push things at a grassroots level? While a Firefighter ally lacks the obvious general-purpose power of characters such as Police, Politicians and Lawyers, having a hero whose breed are known for loyalty and honor is something a cunning vampire wouldn't overlook.

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

Skills: Athletics (Climbing or Carrying) 3, Brawl 1, Crafts 1, Drive (Fire Truck or Ambulance) 2, Investigation (Arson) 2, Medicine (First Aid) 3, Streetwise 1, Weaponry (Fire Axe or Crowbar) 1

Merits: Direction Sense, Iron Stamina 2, Strong Back, Strong Lungs

Willpower: 6

Morality: 8

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Fire Axe	3 (L)	3	9 again	8

Armor: Firefighter's jacket (0/1)

Union Picketeer

Quote: "We just want our due, our rights, and we're willing to bleed to get them!"

Background: The history of unions is a history of violence and conflict. People have had to fight, and die, to change the horrible conditions of labor and to get decent wages, benefits and working conditions. This proud and noble tradition also carries with it darker undertones, as many unions have historically been infiltrated by or-



ganized crime and used as fronts for racketeering, protection fronts, money laundering and a source of cheap muscle. The Union Picketeer comes out of this history, combining a proud tradition of civil disobedience and protest and a darker history of violence and crime. The front-liners and diehards of their unions, the Picketers are used to facing intimidation and the use of police and private security force, and have hardened themselves against such tactics. They are tough, they are determined, they know what they want and they are willing to sweat and bleed to get it. Only the foolish underestimate them.

Description: Union Workers and Picketers come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, depending on which union they come from. Members of the teachers' unions, for example, dress just the way any high school teacher would: a bit rumpled, five years out of date and with a semi-academic desperation to their apparel. Members of the longshoreman's union, on the other hand, will often be dressed in the "blue collar mode": in coveralls or flannel shirts with jeans, steel-toed work boots and so on. The one thing that the hardcore Picketers have in common across all unions is a determined look on their face that squares the jaw and gives hardness to the eye.

Storytelling Hints: Union Picketers are people who want something, and want it badly enough to risk their financial security, their families and even their lives and limbs. While not every member of a picket line is willing to end up in jail or the hospital, much less the morgue, many lines will have at least a few such willful folks. They will refer to past strikes, including infamous historical strikes like the Colorado mining strikes in which whole families were slaughtered by the company and the government, and will use such incidents to inflame public opinion. Even when caught doing illegal activities that are obviously in the favor of organized crime and not in the union's interest, many Union Picketers will

fall back to their rhetoric to shield themselves and obfuscate the true purpose. Though they're just average people, they're average people who've faced tough lives and been hardened by them.

Antagonists: Picketers targeting an area or business where a vampire has interests can cause a great deal of trouble. They have the ability to cause work disruptions, expose internal policies, shut down whole city blocks and stir up even the most docile kine into violence that can endanger not just a vampire's influence, but her very unlife. Picketers working with organized crime can cause similar problems, and are often very experienced at monkey-wrenching organizations to cause problems, doing everything from sabotaging machinery to intimidating employees and even attacking those who will not back down. While a single Picketeer is rarely going to be a threat to any vampire, Picketers usually work in large groups. The other place where they become a threat is when they are ghouled by vampire masters working either in the union or organized crime, in which case they can be a very great threat to vampire's lives and operations.

Allies: Union Picketers can make good allies, doing unto a vampire's enemies everything that the antagonist Picketers could do to the vampire. They can also be excellent sources of information about labor, business, shipping and education — having access to other union members who work in every level of most large organizations. Finally, Union Picketers make excellent ghouls: tough, loyal and hard to intimidate.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Crafts 2, Drive (Industrial Equipment) 1, Investigation 1, Persuasion 1, Politics 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1, Weaponry 2

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Allies (Union and/or Organized Crime) 2, Contacts (Unions, Business, Politics) 3, Status (Union or Organized Crime) 1

Willpower: 7

Morality: 7

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Greed

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Beat Down	0 (B)	-	-	6
Bat or Pipe	1 (B)	1	Knockout	6
Knife or Box Cutter	1 (L)	1	-	6
Thrown Brick	1 (B)	1	-	4

Armor: None

Supernaturals

Non-Combatants

The Obsessed Admirer

Quote: “You’re are a fantasy sprung to life — that look in your eyes, the way your hair falls. It’s extraordinary. It’s clear to me: we are destined to be together, to relieve one another of the pain of the Danse. Nothing will stop us from achieving this union.”

Background: This aggravating vampire is convinced that a character is his perfect love, and he’ll do anything to have her (or him, as the case may be). The truth is, the Obsessed Admirer never knew love in life, and has no idea what it actually feels like — he just imagines that choosing someone to love and “convincing” that person to return his affections will solve his problems and give him a reason to stay out of torpor. The target of his affections is nothing more than a notional balm for his long-cultivated loneliness and feelings of inadequacy. Lust is the vice that drives the obsessed admirer, and it’s a lust untempered by any hint of actual tenderness.

Description: The Obsessed Admirer might be the perfect picture of *someone’s* ideal lover: stylish, attractive and all-too-willing to display his riches. There’s just something cold about him, something predatory. He’s a little *too* well put-together, spending hours considering how best to present himself as a match for target of his affections rather than simply appearing as he chooses. He carries himself rather poorly, though — slouching through Elysium gatherings, turning his sullen gaze upon the characters at every chance and whispering overwrought, practiced phrases to them at in-



appropriate moments. His Humanity is low, and the stark pallor of his flesh helps to underscore the mockery of real emotion he represents.

Storytelling Hints: This vampire makes a perfect minor antagonist for almost any chronicle: he's an obstruction, really, a distracting influence who threatens to interfere with any well-laid scheme. When he's involved in a story, players are going to find themselves forced to plan for his interloping and deal with him accordingly. He's not likely to get violent unless things go much too far, so the only real danger he represents is a social one: characters who over-react to him are likely to embarrass themselves, as are ones who tolerate him overmuch.

If the characters form a very tight coterie (and/or there are romantic links between some of them), the Obsessed Admirer can actually become the major antagonist of the chronicle, working to insinuate himself into the group and tear it apart from the inside, hoping to claim his "prize" in the aftermath. The flavor of any story that focuses on this antagonist is likely to be as melodramatic as he is — chest beating, bodice-ripping stuff.

Be careful with this antagonist. Since his strategy is likely to involve attempts to drive a wedge between the characters, you'll have to be careful to make sure that the coterie doesn't actually splinter. A chronicle can run off the rails pretty easily if the characters actually separate and go their own ways. Do whatever it takes to make sure this can't happen early in play: do the groundwork to ensure that every one of the characters has a reason to dislike the Obsessed Admirer before his tomfoolery begins in earnest. Don't overdo it; just make sure that each of them feels at least a little distaste when they encounter the antagonist.

To ensure that the Obsessed Admirer poses enough of a threat, you may choose to bolster him socially, rather than adjusting his stats. Close personal ties with very powerful Kindred can transform him into a much more complicated challenge. He can be the favorite child of the local Bishop, if you like or the beloved sibling of the Prince. His tendency to over-react takes on a whole new dimension if he's got the ear of powerful vampires, or even if he just makes a public declaration of his affections before a supportive Elysium crowd.

Whether he takes a major or minor role in the chronicle, the one rule never to forget with the Obsessed Admirer is this: he ought to over-react to everything. There's nothing that happens that he can't take advantage of, especially if he goes over the top: crying a fount of blood tears in the Elysium, dropping to his knees and threatening suicide out on the street or blowing tens of thousands of dollars on an elaborate gift. Remember: this vampire doesn't understand love. He's trying to simulate it, based on the plentiful (and maudlin) fiction he's subjected himself to over the decades.

Abilities:

Intimidation (dice pool: 7) — This vampire's Beast is always close to the surface, and he has a tendency to get his way by provoking fears. He's got a well-practiced technique: the cold stare, the subtle expression or even a completely unexpected, bestial snarl will push the right people away when he's in a mood.

Persuasion (dice pool: 6) — The Obsessed Admirer is smart enough to understand that he can't get everything just by pushing people around. He's spent a lot of time working on his "gentle persuasion" techniques as well, accumulating a catalog of lies and postures that seem to work on most people. He's not too creative, though, and may get caught using the same line more than once.

Investigation (dice pool: 6) — Once he turns his gaze toward one of the characters, the Obsessed Admirer will embark on a campaign of information-gathering, trying to discover everything he can about his target. He's not terribly subtle about it, but he certainly is dedicated and efficient.

The Swinish Murderer

Quote: "Come on. One at a time or all at once, I don't care. Bring me your blood before I come over there and rip it out of you."

Background: Some vampires spend decades struggling with their Beast, fighting to maintain some semblance of Humanity. Some slip into a slow, inexorable decline, almost failing to notice their dwindling senses of compassion and honor. This brute, however, discarded his Humanity like a pair of dirty jeans in the early nights of his unlife and he's never missed it for a moment. For years now, he's stalked the dark alleys and vacant lots of the city, branding his territory with acts of depraved, outrageous violence. Always



managing to stay just within the bounds of the Tradition of Secrecy, he is a frustrating, grinning affront to dignified Kindred everywhere. It's only his intense, oft-demonstrated loyalty to the Prince that's kept him alive and unhindered. But that can't last forever, can it?

Description: The Swinish Murderer is only concerned with his appearance in so far as it makes him harder to spot when he's headed to (or away from) the scene of one of his ugly amusements. His clothes are usually wrinkled and worn, his hair unkempt and unwashed and his grin unwholesome. There is a touch of stateliness in his posture, but the life of decorum it hints at is long shattered, never to return. He will, maddeningly enough, bother to clean himself up when appearing before the Prince, making it clear that he is perfectly capable of mixing with clean company when he chooses.

Storytelling Hints: The Swinish Murderer is a great antagonist for characters who are having difficulty spurring themselves into action and/or characters who are in need of a common cause. His behavior is so reprehensible, and he takes such pleasure in offending Kindred without significant influence, that it should be hard for them to resist making an enemy of him. He's a deadly physical threat, so fighting him head on won't be a very good idea. Characters who keep their heads around this antagonist will soon realize that he actually presents a political challenge, not just a physical one. If they do go toe-to-toe with him and survive, they'll have to explain themselves to his powerful friends — and there lie the real problems.

This vampire is depraved, smug, aggressive and devilishly well-connected. He treats less-powerful Kindred like dirt and humans like meat. His strategy is very simple: irritate and provoke someone he believes doesn't stand a chance of bringing him down, whip her into such a frenzy of righteous anger that she attacks him and then "defend himself" until she's dead. If his plans are careful enough and the Prince feels he's useful enough, he'll get off scot-free and ready to do it all over again some night.

His weakness lies in his arrogance: the Swinish Murderer will assume that he's got everything sewn up from the moment his plan kicks into action. If the players manage to stay the course and resist his proddings long enough to undermine his political position, he'll suddenly find himself off-balance and incapable of finding safe ground to attack from. Since he doesn't think the characters have a chance, he may not recognize their successful strategies until it's too late.

Abilities:

Weaponry (dice pool: 8) — Killing is what the Swinish Murderer enjoys, and let it never be said that he kills *poorly*. Years (if not decades) of practice have sharpened his fighting chops. But the Murderer never fights simply to win: he always strikes the most painful or most crippling blows he can.

Stealth (dice pool: 7) — This isn't for vampires. The Swinish Murderer could care less if they see him — in fact, he likes it when they do. The Stealthy approach is strictly for the benefit of mortals. They're the ones who never see him coming.

Politics (dice pool: 6) — Long ago, this vampire watched a sibling suffer Final Death for violation of the dictates of the Prince. The Swinish Murderer learned his lesson well, and has made a point of keeping his ear to the ground at all times, making sure to know who's who and what's what in the Kindred halls of power and aligning himself accordingly.

The Venomous Connoisseur

Quote: "Ah yes — yes. Well done, very well done. A Blackmar-Diemar gambit, a simple thing, really, and yet somehow your opponent failed to recognize it. Your skill is matched only by your unnerving calm at the board. I would wonder if you exercised certain charms upon him, hmm? You'll allow me to enter your mind, of course, to discover the truth? Yes."

Background: The Venomous Connoisseur is a consummate perfectionist, drawn to some form of expression or competition and ridiculously well-versed in every permutation of its technique. She is an older vampire, and once an unmatched expert in her field of choice. Time and age have taken their toll, however, and she has fallen into stagnation. She hasn't forgotten anything — quite the reverse, actually — but her flair, her *spark* has left her. She knows absolutely everything about the details of her favored subject, more than any mortal could ever hope to learn in a lifetime — but the pleasure of competition has abandoned her. Now she latches onto promising compatriots and drains their energy for the subject, leaving them just as bored and tired as she is.



Description: As an older, more intellectual antagonist, the Venomous Connoisseur is not likely to pay too much attention to modern fashions, preferring instead to dress in a modest approximation of her last lively years on Earth: the nights that still held some promise of excitement for her. She dresses only in somber colors, semi-consciously mourning the passing of all that was left for her in the way of joy. She may wear a dark, full-coverage dress in pseudo-Victorian style, or she might prefer to clothe herself in muted, slim approximations of 1930s club wear. Her expression is almost permanently soured, a perpetual moue of tired annoyance.

Storytelling Hints: This vampire is an interesting addition to any chronicle that features a very specialized player character. The Venomous Connoisseur poses an intellectual threat to him, no matter what his focus, and she ought to be able to stand her ground (if possible, to overwhelm) the character in his sport of choice — but her perfunctory, bored approach should prove maddening enough to provoke an entire coterie. She won't be concerned with humiliating all of them, but she'll happily grind her "competition" down again and again until he abandons her chosen subject completely or proves himself superior.

As a minor antagonist, she can work as a "spoiler," threatening to ruin any demonstration of talent with a mocking display of her own. She can attempt to blackmail the character she overshadows or she can just interfere with his displays, making it a little more difficult for him to rely upon his favored abilities.

As a major antagonist, though, she really comes into her own. If you put her in a position of political power, the Venomous Connoisseur poses a real problem: can the characters maintain their dedication and (relatively) high spirits in the face of her sidelong assault without endangering their own status in Kindred society? She will claim that she is just trying to "help" the characters if they complain, referring to her interactions with the hapless object of her attention as "instructionals" or "consultation." The Venomous Connoisseur will eventually put everything she has into crushing the characters' spirits if nothing stops her.

This vampire's real weakness lies in her habitual, mechanical attacks. It's likely that the characters aren't the first to suffer from her cold fascination, and former victims can prove to be staunch allies. The Venomous Connoisseur is also quite predictable, and can be rather easily outmaneuvered if she is taken into unfamiliar territory.

Remember also, that you always have one out with the Venomous Connoisseur. Her motives are boredom and regret. If the characters provide her with enough of a challenge, she may actually begin to enjoy herself again. If that happens (and when it happens is really up to you, as the Storyteller), her rancor will turn to sincere appreciation.

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool: 9) — Decades, perhaps even a century, have gone into this vampire's schooling. At first, her learnings were fueled by a tireless hunger for expert knowledge. Later, it became a desperate search for something that would rekindle her interest. Nothing has brought her satisfaction, but the end result is a near-peerless familiarity with the theory of her favored subject and a surplus of attending trivia in related or similar subjects.

Favored Subject (dice pool: 9) — Whatever the Venomous Connoisseur's subject of choice, whether it's a game of skill, a sport or a form of art, she is very nearly as good as anyone can possibly be at it.

Empathy (dice pool: 6) — A practiced and nuanced competitor, the Venomous Connoisseur has learned to read her compatriots' emotional state fairly well, searching out the signs of weakness (or, worse yet, genuine pleasure) in any contest of skill.

Combatants

Descending Sanctified

Quote: "I suppose that is all I should expect from a purposeless wretch like you."

Background: All the covenants claim ancient roots, and the Sanctified take theirs extremely seriously. Their *Testament of Longinus* is well known to many who do not share their faith, due to the Sanctified's extensive efforts at proselytizing. Those who join Lancea Sanctum are seeking meaning, and, in their new faith, they find one that validates their existence and tells them to feed as they must because it is their purpose. Their faith then satisfies their urge for dominance by telling them to bring others to the faith, imposing their will on unbelievers.



Description: The ritual adornments of Lancea Sanctum borrow heavily from Christian symbolism. Outside of the Condescending Sanctified's ritual activities, they dress to impress, much like the Invictus, though usually in a more understated manner. The Condescending Sanctified's dress is reserved but in excellent taste, inviting respect through their simplicity and humility rather than commanding it through a display of wealth.

Storytelling Hints: When addressing the question of morality, the Sanctified bring a twisted version of morals very familiar to our culture into play. As antagonists, they can confuse characters as to whether they are on the right side morally, or annoy them with their constant evangelizing attempts. If they become angry with the characters, the Sanctified's wrath is as terrible as God's Old Testament punishments. If the characters actually respond to the Sanctified's attempts at evangelism, they may be wise spiritual leaders or manipulative elders like any others.

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 4, Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Academics (Religion) 5, Medicine 3, Occult 3, Politics 4, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Sanctified) 2, Resources 3, Status (Sanctified) 3

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 8

Virtue: Chastity

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 8

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 3

Vitae/per turn: 12/1

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Heavy Pistol	3L	3	9

Armor:

Type Rating

Kevlar Vest 1/1

Health: 7

Disciplines: Majesty 5

Conniving Dragon

Quote: "Insult me all you wish. You envy the secrets I keep, and you shall not have them."

Background: The Ordo Dracul is the second-youngest covenant, though the founder they claim is a more popular legend than even Longinus. Claiming descent



from Dracula himself, this secretive group certainly has strange mystic powers to match their claims of ancestry. The Dragons are not aloof from Kindred society and politics as the Circle of the Crone often tends to be, but the Dragons' motives are often obscure. The secrets of the Dragons are more jealously guarded than the sorcery of either the Circle or the Sanctified, which often only makes the Ordo Dracul more desirable to outsiders. This is just the way some Dragons want it, as it causes the order's ranks swell with those who come seeking their Coils.

Description: Dragons dress with personalized style. Each one has unique accoutrements according to her rank in mystical study, and station in the order. Colors and symbols in the Dragon's wardrobe have hidden meanings she carries with her everywhere she goes. To outsiders, they simply seem to dress strangely; the code is complex, and most have no reason to track it.

Storytelling Hints: Dealing with Dragons often seems to give outsiders involved something for nothing. The Dragons ask for the deed to a run-down building in the middle of nowhere in return for supporting a new Prince, for instance, and outsiders have no way of knowing that the building is a mystic Dragon's Nest, or what that means for the Order's magic. Always portray Kindred of the Ordo Dracul as mysterious and intelligent, because secrecy and study are the most important tenets of their order.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 5, Politics 2, Science 3, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Survival 2, Expression 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Ambidextrous, Gunslinger, Contacts 2, Mentor 3, Resources 2

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 7

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Lust

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 5

Vitae/per turn: 14/2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Light Pistols	2L	2	9(8)

Armor:

Type Rating

Kevlar Vest 1/1

Health: 7

Disciplines: Protean 2, Coil of Blood 2, Coil of Banes 1, Coil of the Beast 1

Cryptic Acolyte

Quote: "Don't whine to me about it. You asked for the power, and I gave it to you. Now you're paying the price."

Background: The Circle of the Crone attracts many converts, but keeps few disciples. Their path is a hard and obscure one, eschewed especially by those who know what's involved. Their results are undeniable, however, and for those willing to pay the price, the Circle's blood magic is a powerful reward. This covenant styles itself as the oldest in existence, claiming roots in prehistory. No elders of such ancient stature have stepped forward to back this claim though, at least, not yet.

Description: Acolytes favor special ceremonial garb when they are in their havens, but tend to wear normal clothes the rest of the time. Their rituals and ritual space are very intentionally set apart, creating a feeling of holiness and respect for the special places and garments. When an Acolyte is at work, he is unmistakable; when he is not, he is undetectable.

Storytelling Hints: Acolytes can serve the same purpose in your chronicle as the three witches in *Macbeth*. Acolytes are strange outsiders in vampire society, with abilities few understand but many desire. For a price, Acolytes may be willing to perform a ritual on a non-member's behalf. The anger of the Circle is fearsome to behold when they are crossed, however, so dealing with these vampiric witches can be quite perilous. They can also act as the wise mystics who accept the player characters as disciples, putting them through grueling courses of training before they may achieve the power they desire.



Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 1, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 3, Occult 4, Politics 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 4, Weaponry 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Eidetic Memory, Resources 2, Status (Circle of the Crone) 3

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Greed

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 4

Vitae/per turn: 13/1

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Ritual Dagger	2L	0	6

Armor: None

Health: 8

Disciplines: Cruac 4, Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 3

Domineering Lord

Quote: "This city is mine, whelp. You will do as I say, or die in the sun."

Background: Say "power," and vampires everywhere will think "Invictus." The Lords like it that way, and have taken pains for ages to craft that image. Tonight, they may or may not rule so many cities compared to



other covenants, but they demand respect no matter their domain. Whatever their status among the Kindred of a city, Invictus control vast resources among mortal governments and corporations. As such, the vengeance of an Invictus Prince might have a much longer reach than that from one of another covenant. The Invictus are the strongest proponents of the Traditions, claiming that the Invictus invented these and other aspects of Kindred society. Sometimes, Kindred of the Invictus claim a connection for their covenant and the Traditions to the Camarilla, that first alliance of vampires said to have ruled in the empire of Rome. Few really believe the Invictus, as few believe the claims of any of the covenants about their origins, but this has more to do with the general skepticism bred by vampiric politics than with the actual truth or falsehood of the claims.

Description: The Invictus are invariably rich, and they command respect by dressing to show it. Designer suits in black, gray and white are worn as badges of power. The Lords live in opulent havens, such as sprawling mansions or elite penthouses. Most of the older Invictus are of European descent, but in these younger nights, anyone with business acumen and the will to use it can amass enough funds to gain the respect and power required may join. These new Lords are no less imposing in their dress, however; indeed, they take up the trappings of power very quickly, the better to assert that they, too, are to be respected.

Storytelling Hints: To the Invictus, everything is about power. If they interact with the player characters, it will always be about the exercise of power. The Invictus have no respect for others if they fail to do the same. If your player characters are meek, an encounter with the Invictus will likely end with their agreeing to do what the Invictus want. Otherwise, it may result in

a grand rivalry or partnership. Player characters of the Carthian Movement will quickly be targeted as enemies, and will find the dangers of enemies who are rich and well connected.

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Academics (Business) 5, Investigation 3, Politics 5, Drive 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Resources 5, Retainer (8 dots between two or more individuals), Status (Invictus) 3, Status (Corporate) 4

Clan: Ventrue

Covenant: Invictus

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 7

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Lust

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 4

Vitae/per turn: 13/1

Weapons/Attacks: Servants

Armor: None

Health: 7

Disciplines: Dominate 5

Revolutionary Carthian

Quote: "The revolution isn't coming, old man, it's already right here."

Background: Young iconoclasts arise all the time among Kindred these nights, as modern ideals of freedom and democracy clash with the archaic society of the undead. Those who feel this way typically end up concentrated in the Carthian Movement. The Movement is close-knit, sharing information, assistance and the necessities of undead existence (havens and feeding grounds) with each other. A group of Carthians in a city means trouble for those already in power.

Description: Carthians typically dress in the style of modern rebels. Goth and punk styles are common, as well as grunge, emo and any other rebellious, fringe movement's style. Americans and other English-speaking people are very likely to become Carthians near the beginning of their Requiems, while many elder Carthians are French, Embraced around the time of the French Revolution. Carthians have a lot to say, and their wardrobes are just one more way for them to proclaim their message of revolution.

Storytelling Hints: The Carthian Movement is similar to any revolutionary movement throughout



history: they're mad as hell, and they're not gonna take it any more. The Movement is tolerated only with tension in cities controlled by other covenants, because the Carthians are less subtle than other covenants in their schemes for power. When a group of Carthians gains power in a city, they begin by implementing sweeping changes to the structure and traditions of vampire society. Established Kindred have much to lose, and experienced elders have much to fear from the breakdown of the traditions that preserve their existences. A Carthian in your chronicle could be a threat to the power of other Kindred, or a tempter who brings the player characters over to his cause.

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 2, Computer 3, Politics 3, Brawl 2, Drive 3, Larceny 2, Weaponry 2, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 3

Merits: Allies (Carthians) 4, Contacts 3, Haven 3, Herd 2, Status (Carthians) 2

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Carthian Movement

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 3

Vitae/per turn: 12/1

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Punch	0B	0		4
Stake	1L	1	must target heart	5

Armor: None

Health: 7

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Obfuscate 2

Serial Diablerist

Quote: "You look so ... good ... tonight."

Background: It starts with a single taste. A young vampire is fed his sire's blood to form the Vinculum, but something more takes hold as well: addiction to the Vitae of other Kindred. Then, perhaps prompted by frenzy of one sort or another, he attacks a fellow undead and starts drinking, not stopping with the blood but consuming the soul. The rush of power and pleasure is more addicting than the Vitae itself, and he begins plotting his next kill soon. Perhaps as soon as he is done, or perhaps after he comes to feel that repentance is pointless, unable to stand against the new hunger that has overcome him. Vampires who walk this path become very powerful very quickly, and are a danger to all other Kindred around them due to their combination of instability and power.

Description: These vampires will typically have very low Humanity scores from the effects of their sinful acts, both the diablerie itself and acts brought on by the degeneration it has caused in them. Besides the inherent appearance changes from low Humanity, and the changes diablerie wreaks upon a vampire's aura, these Kindred will look like any others. They will dress to their own tastes, and may come from anywhere.



Storytelling Hints: Antagonists of this type will have a simple, defined goal: find another vampire to diablerize. If your group contains one or more Mekhet characters, you will have to be careful about introducing this threat, because of the ease they would have identifying the Amaranth addict. Fear of the unknown is the most effective weapon for anything hunting the player characters. Even if his ultimate goal is to consume the characters' souls, the Diablerist may act like a friend at first to gain access to his prey. If he gains the group's trust, they may not discover him until it is too late.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Skills: Investigation 1, Politics 2, Brawl 4 (Boxing), Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Weaponry 3 (Stake), Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Danger Sense, Boxing 3, Striking Looks 1

Clan: Daeva

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 2

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Gluttony

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3(4)

Speed: 13

Blood Potency: 5

Vitae/per turn: 14/2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Punch	0B	0	2 attacks	9(8)
Stake	1L	1	must target heart	9

Armor: None

Health: 8

Disciplines: Celerity 3, Majesty 2, Vigor 3, all others at 1

*My story is the same as every vampire's:
blood, pain and the dance.
Only thing that makes me special
is the way I tell it.*

—Rembrandt, The Vampire of Druid Hill

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