

A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE

TATTERED FAÇADE



VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE



THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN

The Kindred present a blank screen to the outside world, the scrim of the Masquerade. But behind it, horrors accumulate — on the streets of their cities, in the halls of their Courts, and in the Blood in their veins.

That horror overflows in predatory killings, in twisted uses for vampiric power and position, and in a million spatters and shards. They slowly shred the façade of the Masquerade, and what we see behind it is a panoply of horror.

Behind the **Tattered Façade** lie many shadows, and all of them conceal darker secrets still, from the Masquerade Machine itself to the worse things waiting for it to fail.

This book details the ecology and deepens the horror of **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

Tattered Façade includes:

- Who's out on the streets after sundown: victims, rivals, innocents, and monsters.
- The rhythms of the city by night and the meaty details of the hunt capped with a creativity-sparking mini-game, Night Maps.
- Cruel new Archetypes for each Clan
- More than 25 tempting new Discipline Powers, Rituals, Ceremonies, and Formulae, new Loresheets, and a bargain with your Beast to master even more Discipline Powers.
- Deepen the horror of your game — from working with the game systems to choosing a shade of darkness: body horror, Gothic horror, folk horror, or even cosmic horror.
- New threats to the Masquerade, and to the Kindred, including the shapeshifting Ghûl and the soulless Baali.

Tattered Façade is a sourcebook for **Vampire: The Masquerade**, a Storytelling Game of Personal and Political Horror.



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Manufacturer: Renegade Games, LLC 153 Sugar Belle Drive Ste B #166, Winter Garden, FL 34787. Importers: Renegade France 52 Avenue Pierre Semard 94200 Ivry sur Seine France. P: +33 (0)1 77 37 60 47. Renegade Games, LLC. Solar House 915 High Road London, London, England N12 8QJ.
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Mature Advisory: contains graphic and written content of a mature nature, including violence, sexual themes, and strong language. Reader discretion is advised.



VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

TATTERED FAÇADE

Nights of Horror Behind the Masquerade

A Sourcebook for
Vampire: The Masquerade



TATTERED FAÇADE

Writers: Emily Cambias, Freja Gyldenstrøm, and Chris Jones with Kenneth Hite, Søren Aske Hjorth, Karim Muammar, Juhana Pettersson, and Kevin Schluter

Developer: Kenneth Hite

Producer: Kevin Schluter

Art Director and Graphic Designer: Sarah Robinson

Cover Artist: Mark Kelly

Interior Artists and Illustrators: Elif Aydin, Nevzat Aydin, Kaitlin Cuthbertson, Felipe Headley Costa, Mark Kelly, Alexander, Nanitchkov, Mollie Penman, and Adam Vick

Copy Editor: Megan Boatright

Cultural Consultant: Helen Gould

Proofreader: Brendan Rabon

Incorporates material from: *Chicago by Night* (2020), *Children of the Blood* (2021), *Damnation City* (2007), and *Winter's Teeth #1* (2020).

WORLD OF DARKNESS BRAND MANAGEMENT

EVP World of Darkness: Marco Behrmann

Head of Creative Management & IP Alignment: Karim Muammar

Art Director: Tomas Arfert

Brand Marketing Manager: Jason Carl

Licensing Manager: Nikola Filipov

Marketing Manager: Viktor Bovallius

Community Developer: Martyna "Outstar" Zych

Community Manager: Debbie Lane

RENEGADE GAME STUDIOS

President & Publisher: Scott Gaeta

Finance Controller: Robyn Gaeta

Vice President of Operations: Leisha Cummins

Vice President Sales: Andrew Lupp

Senior Producer, Board & Card Games: Dan Bojanowski

Producer, RPGs: Kevin Schluter

Associate Producer, Board & Card Games: Kane Klenko

Associate Producer, Heroscape: Lee Houff

Associate Producer, RPGs: Ben Heisler

Director of Visual Design: Anita Osburn

Creative Director, Games: Jeanne Torres

Creative Director, RPGs: Sarah Robinson

Senior Game Designer: Matt Hyra

Game Designers: Alex Davy, Dyllan Fernandez, Dan Blanchett, Christopher Chung, & Sarah Rowan

Lead Developer, World of Darkness: Juhana Pettersson

Playtest Coordinator: Marcus E. Burchers

Marketing Manager: Jordan Gaeta

E-Commerce Manager: Nick Medinger

Event Manager: Sara Erickson

Organized Play Manager: Trevor McGregor

Project Manager: Rachel Del Rio

Customer Service Manager: Jenni Janikowski

Finance Specialist: Madeline Minervini

Creative Production: Noelle Lopez & Gordon Tucker

Customer Service: Bethany Bauthues

Community Coordinator: Anais Morgan

Sales & Marketing Coordinator: Sophia Gambill

Community Specialist: Rina Amaranthine

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Vampire: The Masquerade creators: Mark Rein•Hagen with Justin Achilli, Steven C. Brown, Tom Dowd, Andrew Greenberg, Chris McDonough, Lisa Stevens, Josh Timbrook, and Stewart Wieck.

Vampire: The Masquerade 5th Edition created by Martin Ericsson, Karim Muammar, and Kenneth Hite

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Voices of Fear

I've always been afraid of my family's old farmhouse outside Knoxville, but when my dad died, it fell on me to deal with it. Even though no one had lived there for decades, selling it without going through it felt wrong. I figured the long shadows and moth-eaten, mounted animal heads wouldn't get to me the same now I'm in my 40s. But I'm telling you, the whole time something was watching me. I could just feel it. I almost ripped it the place apart, looking for the squatter or whatever it was—I only found some traces of wild animals: headless mice and bits of straw. I'm still not going back. The goddamn ghosts can keep the family trinkets.

I'm not afraid of rats. Actually, I think they're pretty cute with their little beady eyes and the way their noses wriggle, especially when they're eating. This is what I tell myself over and over again, as I try to rest in my hideout in the abandoned sewers. I can't be among people anymore, so I might as well get used to it, and the rats were here before me. And they're so hungry, the poor things. But why does there have to be so many of them? I let the first few feed, and now I don't feel right saying no to the rest. It's only, they're getting so greedy. I know I can't be killed by knives or bullets. But the more of me they eat, the more I wonder what happens when they reach my heart.

Sometimes I still wake up shaking from tensing my muscles so hard, thinking I'm back in the ravine where my ex-boyfriend buried me alive. Fortunately, looking at the video feed of him usually helps. He barely moves anymore, but it's a comfort to confirm that it's him down there now, not me.

I USED TO LOVE HELPING MY WIFE GETTING READY FOR A NIGHT OUT. PUTTING HER HAIR UP AND FASTENING THE STRING OF PEARLS AROUND HER NECK WAS SUCH AN INTIMATE ACTIVITY. I'M NOT SURE HOW I FEEL DOING IT FOR THIS THING THAT LOOKS LIKE HER. IT'S COLD AND MEAN, AND IT MAKES ALL THE HAIRS OF MY SKIN STAND UP TO TOUCH IT. BUT I'VE MISSED HER SO MUCH. I PROMISED GOD I'D DO ANYTHING TO GET HER BACK AFTER SHE DIED. WHO AM I TO QUESTION THE LORD'S GIFTS?

Voices of Fear

The first time it happened, I was seven. It was like a bubble rising up inside my chest, forcing out the breath. Something was watching me, something assessing me as food or not food. My back went up against the bathroom wall, and I flattened myself until there weren't any gaps between me and solid plaster. I kept my eyes shut-as a kid, I guess I reasoned that whatever was watching would be less threatened if there wasn't a chance of me seeing it back. I must have stayed there for nine, ten minutes before I finally peeled myself off and crept back down the hall.

I started leaving stuff in the bathroom, little gifts to keep the watcher happy. My dad thought it was cute at first, though he started getting weird about it when I kept going through middle school. Mom never said a word. It stopped when I finally moved out of my parents' place. I guess I thought it must have been childhood anxiety, you know? Baby's first panic attacks.

I moved back to take care of mom, before she passed. One day, I was in the bathroom and that fucking tear bubble started floating up in my chest again. I flattened myself against the wall, and this time I kept my eyes open. And a guy was in the room next to me. He slid out of a crack in the wall-or maybe he'd been in the room the whole time, holding really still? He was smiling at me with teeth the wrong size. He leaned in, so close I should have felt his breath on my ear, and said, "Welcome home."

You talked to Baz today? Maybe let him slide into your haven?

nope

Liar. Where is he?

haven't seen him

can we talk about this

hello?

chris i get that you're pissed off at baz but come on

what the fuck are you doing

chris please is this you?? there's like 50 dogs here

Tell me where Baz is

chris i don't know

really

please call them off

Sasha, your devotion to your friends is admirable, and extremely stupid. It has earned you a quarter-mile head start. I hope you think on the merits of self-interest as you run.

I'll be the first to admit I'm not a fan of enclosed spaces. Yet, what use is the Gift if I cannot master my own fears? I've made my den a labyrinth of tunnels, traps, and hidden rooms. I still feel just as claustrophobic, but at least I'm safe from hunters. The walls close in on me, and I can't shake the feeling I'll eventually be sealed in here in the suffocating darkness. But at this point, I'm more afraid of what will happen if I leave.

I've got generalized anxiety, so I usually brush it off when those little pinpricks of fear run down my spine. After all, I get them just from making phone calls. That's why I've been ignoring the unsettling feeling I get sometimes from my new boyfriend. I've been lonely for so long, and I'd hate to lose out on something good. Even if it does make me feel weird how he only wants to meet at night.

The body came into the office as a John Doe. Naked, no personal effects except for a sort of collar around his neck. I cut into the chest... All the organs had been shoved to the side, pruned down like shrubbery to fit snugly around the edges of the rib cage. In the middle was a cavity, made out of lung tissue. There was a fleshy mass resting in it, some kind of teratoma- there was hair sprouting out of it. There was an eyelid. It opened, and there was an eye that swiveled to look at me. I wasn't thinking, I threw it on the floor and stomped on it until it was a red splatter. And then my boss told me to talk to you.

The dream was always the same. A man wearing all yellow, leading her through a palatial hall filled with red flowers. He pointed to a raised dais in the center of the hall, where a massive rosebush grew, branches reaching up to the shadowed ceiling. She reached out a finger to touch one of the roses and flinched back, a thorn scratch across her thumb. And every morning, the red flower next to her pillow and the words "I am coming" written over her bed.

INTRODUCTION

*Webster was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin;
And breastless creatures under ground
Leaned backward with a lipless grin.*

— T.S. ELIOT, “WHISPERS OF IMMORTALITY”

Vampire: The Masquerade is a horror game and this is a book about how to make your chronicle into the disquieting, terror-infused horror experience you want it to be. What are the most stomach-churning themes in the game and how do you bring them out? What does personal and political horror really mean? How can you effectively use horrific setting elements, from the blood feasts of the Sabbat to the quiet betrayals between a vampire and their Touchstone?

This book focuses on the things the Kindred do in the dark, to coin a phrase: stalk and kill, and conceal their depredations from the light. It throws a flickering light on what happens to the bodies, and what further horrors vampires might inflict upon them, completing the cycle of this ecology of predation.

That ecology runs behind and through the Masquerade, the survival imperative that all Kindred must obey in the final analysis. But the façade of the Masquerade grows thin in these nights of omnipresent phone cameras and surveillance bureaucracies and big data. Runs and rips appear in its fabric, clawed not just by the Kindred but by even worse things.

Look, then, behind that tattered façade at the true face of horror — if you wish.

Theme and Mood

The theme of this book is Eliot’s phrase “the skull beneath the skin,” applied to everything in the dark-night world of the Kindred. Everything in **Vampire** is worse and more horrifying than it appears at first; this is a book of second looks.

The mood is horror and darkness, or perhaps a kind of dark chiaroscuro of gray, black, and deepest vantablack. The lights of the city glare or sparkle or gleam in the darkness, but the darkness is not pushed back. The lights go out, eventually. And then you’re alone in the dark. With a vampire.

How to Use This Book

Chapter One: Night and the City sets up our ecology: prey, habitat, hunting, and the rhythms of the night. It builds on the Cities chapter and the Hunting systems in the *Vampire: The Masquerade* corebook, providing more detail on the nightly hunt to avoid turning predation into a routine. You can play Night Maps as a mini-game, either to deepen the players’ connection to their city setting or as a creativity starter when the main story needs to simmer a little more. You can use it on its own, or

pull in any of the many example Sites, Victims, and Omens from the *Storyteller's Toolkit*.

Maintaining the Masquerade is often horrific business, and **Chapter Two: The Masquerade Machine** shows you how the sausage is made. What has to be sacrificed, and by whom, to keep the existence of the Kindred a secret, night after night? And how can you make sure it's not your players' characters? **Chapter Three: The Skull in the Mirror** reveals the unwholesome side of each clan: how it might behave toward its enemies, or how its members might find their own Humanity corroding. The goal is always, however, to inspire players and Storytellers with the clans' horrific potential, not to provide a canonical "this is how the clan falls" road map. Likewise, **Chapter Four: Darkness in the Blood** provides only a few of the ways that the power of Disciplines corrupts the wielder.

Chapter Five: The Darkness Within turns the black light on the player's relationships with the system, offering darker takes on Convictions, Stains, and Compulsions and how to link the mechanical ratchet of the rules to the slow corrosion of the horror story. While the core themes of personal and political horror are important, **Chapter Six: Shades of Darkness** also explores other types of horror in a

Vampire game, such as psychological horror, body horror, Gothic horror, and even cosmic horror and folk horror.

Finally, **Chapter Seven: Night Terrors** adds more monsters to the midnight city: ghosts and ghilān, vile necromancers and enigmatic cryptids, and the twists of the Blood that lead to Baali and Revenants.

Chapter Eight: Storytelling Horror puts it all together, with practical advice to take Storytellers and players step by step as deep into the darkness as they want to go.

If dialing up the Horror in your Horror game isn't for you, the tools provided in **Chapter Six: Shades of Darkness** and **Chapter Eight: Storytelling Horror** help you home in on the specific types of horror your troupe is excited by, including dialing the horror down to use horror as ambiance rather than the focus (see especially the *Minimizing Fear* sidebar on p. 162). Before you dive in the deep end, of course, re-read the Advice for Considerate Play in *Vampire: The Masquerade*, pp. 421–425. We expand on that advice and add some more best practices under *Cemetery Fences*, on p. 157.

Note: the Oblivion Discipline, along with its associated Powers and Ceremonies, is fully described in the *Players Guide*. ■

SPECIFIC CONTENT WARNING

More even than most *Vampire: The Masquerade* books, this sourcebook touches on extreme subjects as possible material for a game of personal horror. Body horror occurs throughout, along with horror-inflected treatments of addiction, child endangerment, insects, serial murder, necrophilia, suicidal ideation, and other forms of mental illness. Before you begin any *Vampire* game or chronicle, make sure your whole troupe is on board with exploring the specific horrors that you intend.



Chapter One

NIGHT AND THE CITY

*... We are not blest
With happiness; that is forbade
Both to the living and the dead.*
—GIACOMO LEOPARDI, “DIALOGUE
OF FEDERICO RUYSCH”

Think of this chapter as a kind of nature documentary, or rather an un-nature documentary. It lays out the ecosystem of the Kindred, as nocturnal predators in a mortal city. Like the predatory ecosystem in the natural world, it includes scavengers, parasites, opportunistic hunters, and symbiotes. Like many ecosystems, toxic elements throw it out of balance.

No nature documentary is complete without a loving camera pan through the environment, showing shelters, gathering places, and hunting grounds, perhaps in time-lapse so we can see the predators begin to come out. This chapter tours the city at night and shows a few hunts in gory detail. It concludes with Night Maps, a sub-system for adding detail to your coterie's city and for jump-starting stories with a tour through its darkest corners.

The Living (For Now)

These are the people you meet after dark, the mortal targets, tools, and terrors who come out into the city streets at night. Use them as something more than prey: as dramatic characters or foils, as Contacts, Touchstones, or other connections on the Relationship Map. You can also adapt them as Backgrounds or even current occupations for Kindred characters.

Blood Blogger

Blood and guts sell, especially in the age of true crime podcasts and murder-obsessed YouTube hosts. The most popular channels have scores of dedicated fans hungry for more, and favored creators perform extravagant acts to keep their audience engaged. Others feed the gory true crime maw out of simple paranoia: they see danger everywhere and consider it their duty to warn the public. Blood Bloggers prove frustratingly hard to shake but thankfully easy to distract or deceive.

Older missing persons cases and cold cases hold particular sway in the community (more opportunity to sensationalize, fewer people to dispute details), with Blood Bloggers squeezing a speculation-laden article or breathless video out

of the most obscure unsolved murders they can find. The unscrupulous or clueless call and write to victims' families to squeeze leads from them; the slightly more scrupled spend hours poring over records and witness statements. Both construct their own theories of suspects and motive from whole cloth.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 4, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Investigation 5, Larceny 5, Performance 5

Equipment: Laptop with stickers of their own show or blog, a podcast microphone, a nice camera

Special: The Blood Blogger is unfortunately part of a very paranoid ecosystem. If they are killed or otherwise removed from public life, two of their fanbase (fellow Blood Bloggers) come looking for them a week or so after their last post. The number of Blood Bloggers on the case can double with each iteration of this cycle.

In Chronicles: Gone and Not Forgotten

For the most part, Blood Bloggers affect Kindred only when a hunt or other vampiric kill is the topic *du jour*. Having several dozen people going over records a Kindred would rather have forgotten should alarm them (*oh my god, someone actually tracked down that park ranger?*), or worse, remind them of the destructive horror of their unlife.

In the rare case a Blood Blogger's article, video, or podcast actually spurs law enforcement to reopen a case, vampires take notice — especially Kindred who fed widely any time before the 1980s (and widespread DNA evidence), as they hear about the FBI (or Second Inquisition hunters) linking up past vampire feasts. It can be especially bad if it's the case of their own murder being re-examined. Seeing their aged mother crying on television all over again or hearing that detectives are interviewing lost friends might spur any Kindred to take drastic action.

Body Snatcher

You're wrong if you think resurrectionists were left behind in the 19th century with experimental anatomists and public anatomy theaters. Where there's a demand, the supply will follow, and there's all sorts of demands on fresh bodies tonight. The Body Snatcher may or may not have a sick fascination with fresh corpses themselves, but their primary purpose is to serve their employer — a Hecata looking for the perfect deceased subject for their necromantic arts, a Graverobber or ghûl (p. 148) hungering for the recently dead, or a Blood Sorcerer or Duskborn alchemist who needs just that special *je-sais-bien-quoi* ingredient for their recipe.

For more ideas on what to use corpses for, see Oblivion Powers and Ceremonies in the *Players Guide* and *Cults of the Blood Gods*.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 4, Social 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 8, Drive 8, Larceny 8

Equipment: Powerful pocket torch, shovel, bone saw, insulated sterile organ transport boxes, burner phone, repair-man van, portable cold storage mortuary box

Special: The Body Snatcher is just one rat out of a nest of several low-life criminals. If they're removed from their post, another arrives within a week to take over.

For a twist, the Body Snatcher can be turned into a fledgling vampire with no understanding of what they are, who knows no better way to feed.

In Chronicles: Experimental Science

The players' coterie discovers the Body Snatcher's work before they find the man himself, as a victim of an awry feeding mysteriously disappears before they can deal with the body. Scared that they've been found out, they eventually realize that a sadistic ancilla has been creating victims of a specific Resonance, working on a recipe for blood that retains its unlife-giving properties longer. The Body Snatcher is the ancilla's agent, tasked with collecting the bodies after death.

Carder

Gone are the good old days the older Kindred talk wistfully about, where you could set up in a new city with just a "found" birth certificate and some cash. Now, any kind of legitimate activity — for a cover story, for Kindred or Duskborn trying to keep on the day-lit side of things, for simple convenience — needs physical *and* digitally traceable identification and registered addresses, not to mention a credit card or two. Luckily, they're not hard to come by, so long as you know a Carder. Carders aren't exactly the most savory contacts in the book. They make their living off scamming little old ladies, skimming card numbers, and stealing dead kids' Social Security numbers. But they're a necessity for the lick ecosystem; two kinds of parasites mutually living off the same animal.

Finding a Carder isn't particularly challenging with Intelligence + Streetwise (Difficulty 3). Finding a *good* Carder is difficult, expensive, and worth it (Difficulty 5). Princes often have their own in-house operation, while Anarchs keep a few Carders on rotation so no one person knows everyone's pseudonym.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Mental 4, Social 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Craft (Forgery) 6, Subterfuge 6, Technology 6

Equipment: Portable printer, a roll of brushes, and pens to make birth certificates on the fly

Special: If players find a Carder, this means (in game mechanical terms) they've managed to connect with someone who can make them a Mask. A mediocre Carder gets them one dot, while a good Carder gets them two. However, unlike what a Cobbler (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 192) creates, this is not a full fake identity — if they lose the ID or it's destroyed, they have to get a new one from the Carder or find someone else to help them out.

In Chronicles: New Phone, Who...?

A Kindred's got their brand-spanking-new identity, courtesy of a Carder. Unfortunately, they quickly

learn their helpful Carder recycled an old identity from someone else. Their mysterious namesake's info resurfacing in the city has sent some very unpleasant people on their trail — people of the shoot-first-look-at-identifying-photo-second variety.

Cleaner

You can get used to just about anything, and the Cleaner's seen their fair share of bloody carnage. Mopping up after a run-of-the-mill disembowelment no longer gives them pause, and they care more about the hassle of getting biohazardous fluids out of the antique parquet floors than about who died. You'd better pay extra if you want it done properly before the owners get home.

Perhaps the Cleaner is a middle-aged low-level fixer for organized crime: a second-generation immigrant and mother of five who was fired from her cleaning job when her kids had too many sick days. Perhaps they're just some guy named Phil who knows too much about chemicals. Or they're part of the professional crew of crime-scene cleaners or biohazard remediation specialists, in the employ of local law enforcement agencies, who go to work wearing hazmat suits with name tags and joke with their colleagues to lighten the mood.

At work, they only ever enter the scene after it's been thoroughly combed through for evidence, but if one's in the pocket of a mobster, vampire, or another kind of murderer, they can make sure there'll be no evidence left for the cops by the time the crime is discovered. Cleaners unsatisfied with their payoff might keep pieces of the scene somewhere on ice — not necessarily for blackmail, but to get some quick cash from a necromancer or sorcerer in the market for bones or viscera.

Cleaners are everywhere in the societies of the night, even if they're seldom noticed. You can't run a city without a few on the take, and more than a few neonates have had to start their service to their sect as Cleaners for carelessly macabre sires.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 4, Social 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 6



Exceptional Dice Pools: Subterfuge 6, Awareness 6, Science 6

Equipment: PPE, cleaning equipment, and fogger machines with industrial-grade disinfectant chemicals (bleach, benzalkonium chloride, and surfactants)

Special: Getting rid of a body takes time. The Cleaner can handle one crime scene per 24 hours, with six hours added per body. Certain Discipline Powers, such as Oblivion's Ashes to Ashes and similar Rituals or Ceremonies, drop this time to minutes. If the murder was particularly messy, the Storyteller may require an appropriate contest between the murderer and the Cleaner for a total cleanup. The Cleaner might miss non-biological evidence if any has been left behind.

In Chronicles: Buried, Dissolved, and Disinfected Evidence

The coterie is looking for something or someone. On their search, they come across a promising lead, but unfortunately it takes them straight to a crime scene that's already been thoroughly cleaned. No

one will tell them what's going on or even confirm a crime took place. But if they can find the Cleaner and convince them to betray their employer, the lies around them begin to unravel.

Crime Scene Reporter/TV Cameraman

The smooth-talking journalist built a successful career by chasing accidents and ambulances and getting to the site of the crime while the victims were still warm. Nowadays, they are just as ruthless as ever, only they wear better clothes and they've been in the industry so long that the network



pays their travel fees. However, they do have a few kids at home to think about, even if they rarely do. The Crime Scene Reporter loves to shock and be shocked, and even if they still pursue any story that promises to buff up their viewer numbers, they've always dreamed of uncovering a real conspiracy — something they can turn into a docuseries and a Pulitzer.

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Mental 5, Social 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics 7, Drive 6, Investigation 8

Equipment: Microphone, notebook, dictaphone, smartphone, lockpicks, beater car

Special: The Crime Scene Reporter usually travels with their co-conspirator and cameraman, and they're in regular contact with the network. Taking them out is something that gets noticed — and fast.

The Crime Scene Reporter doesn't let go once they've got their teeth in something juicy. When on the trail of a vampire or coterie, they discover a detail about one of their Backgrounds once per week (or session, whichever is shorter). The Storyteller rolls a die: on a 0 (10), the reporter discovered the location of their target's haven or a similarly catastrophic truth.

In Chronicles: Mistaken Identity

A series of violent attacks has shaken the city. The players' coterie may be tasked with investigating just who or what is targeting the territory; or they may be the prime suspects, working to clear their own names. Either way, the Crime Scene Reporter can't help but notice their involvement, and now the coterie will have to deal with them as well. Will they be able to turn the reporter into an ally in the investigation, or will they have to deal with them more permanently to protect the Masquerade? Maybe both?

Crime Scene Technician

When the mortal police find a body — particularly a weird body, one where the throat's torn out or

where only pieces remain — they call in the guys in the white boiler suits. It's not the magic technology of TV's *CSI*, but the real deal does some damn impressive work. Every Kindred these days has to consider the amount of physical evidence they leave behind, especially if there's a corpse. Did they wipe down their space? *Really* wipe it down, with bleach? Did they double-check for shoe prints, fingerprints, Alchemy brew vials? If someone logs that shit, the Second Inquisition is one database-sweep away.

Of course, someone always gets sloppy. That's when damage control begins. If a coterie (or a Contact) knows a bribable technician, evidence can sometimes disappear or be corrupted (Manipulation + Persuasion). If they're caught without a pet cop, the next best thing is a good patsy. Sprinkling a mortal's DNA at a crime scene keeps the law's eyes on someone else if it looks believable (Wits + Larceny). And there's always the break-glass-in-case-of-emergency option: break into the server building and delete the evidence.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 5, Social 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Insight 6, Science 8, Technology 7

Equipment: Swabs, clean suit, notebook of observations, long tweezers

Special: A good, bribable tech can be very useful to have on call — knowing what to look for can mean knowing how to hide the same evidence, and they have access to databases of DNA, fingerprints, and more. They can be a one-dot Retainer, helping sweep certain links or physical evidence under the rug, or a one-dot Contact, giving the lowdown on what the forensic science technicians dug up on the latest body.

In Chronicles: Clean Up

One of the coterie, or one of their friends, didn't notice the scratches on their arm until they got back home. That's when they realized their clean-up might have been... lacking. Now it's a race against time to scrub the site completely when they get word the cops have amped up their patrol around the neighborhood the body's been dumped in.

EVIDENCE EVERYWHERE

Forensic science technicians (FSTs, or crime scene technicians, as they're sometimes called) and deputy medical examiners go over a crime scene (especially unusual ones) with a fine-toothed comb. They start by photographing every inch, recording everything from the body's position to the random objects lying around. Then they get in close and start swabbing. Skin cells under a victim's nails, stray hairs clinging to clothing, a dropped cigarette butt; it's all bagged and taken back to the lab to compare against extensive databases of collected DNA evidence.

Non-DNA evidence is just as important — techs collect fingerprints left on corpse flesh, analyze rot patterns, and run victims' blood through toxicology screens to figure out what substances were inside their body when they died. Wounds like bites and slashes are measured carefully to determine the exact length of teeth, claws, or knives. FSTs can even examine the different microbe colonies on a corpse to figure out where and when someone was killed and if their body was moved. It all adds up to a huge, ever-increasing headache to all the Kindred invested in keeping the Masquerade alive.

In general, Storytellers shouldn't focus too intensely on forensic science or get too granular — insisting players detail exactly how they clean up a feed is going to get really boring really fast. But the overarching *threat* to the Masquerade of modern science and its applications can be a potent tool to keep characters on their toes and to introduce new plotlines or Storyteller characters. Second Inquisition investigators (*Second Inquisition*, pp. 23–28) might arrive thanks to a botched feeding, or a Prince might demand a favor in exchange for sending a Cleaner (p. 13) to wipe up a bloodbath.

Death Cultist

The Death Cultist is a mortal follower of a Sabbat cult, as convinced as their masters of their own pathetic inferiority. They long wholeheartedly for a world of eternal night, ruled by the sons

and daughters of Caine. Likely, they are the loyal Retainer of a Sabbat Cainite, serving in the hopes of getting the Embrace when they've done enough dark deeds to prove themselves worthy.

The Death Cultist is tasked with running daytime errands, maintaining the property of their master, and luring home victims to bathe, dress, and scent them for the eventide feeding. They may file their teeth sharp as fangs, bear scarification symbols of their master's Path of Enlightenment, or have purposefully impaired themselves in some way (removed an eye, cut off fingers) to signify their role as a slave — believing that one night, when they're deemed worthy, they'll be made whole.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Mental 4, Social 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Craft (torture instruments) 8, Intimidation 7, Occult (Sabbat lore) 8

Equipment: A selection of serrated knives, branding iron, ritual dagger, incense, perfume with a scent of myrrh and lilacs, a vial of chloroform

Special: Once per week, the Death Cultist can call on their master for aid. If their master judges it worthy, they arrive to help them. If not, they remember their servant's last call before they disappeared — and then the whole Sabbat pack comes to look into things.

In Chronicles: A Hidden Enemy

The Death Cultist can appear as a regular, if unusually worn, mortal at first, spying for their master. Perhaps the players' coterie engages them as a Retainer or Contact, and only finds out the truth once the Death Cultist has already gathered enough intel on them to threaten their safety.

The Death Cultist has zeal, but they've also been promised things that may never happen. If the players' characters can make them see that they're being had, perhaps they can get the Cultist to switch sides, if only long enough to make a difference.

Deletionist

More than a mere Carder, Deletionists are the mortal hackers who can weasel into the big

databases and dust away someone's digital life: records, police reports, photos, even metadata. They know their worth, too. A good Deletionist is expensive, expensive enough that it easily costs several thousands to erase whatever mistakes a young Kindred stumbled into.

They have extensive contacts (friends and enemies alike) within the dark web, and all of them are paranoid to a fault. Despite their expertise, the Deletionist is more likely to use a simple flip phone for all their communications, and they eschew almost all smart devices. They keep meticulous records (and automatic backups) on all their clientele, which makes using Disciplines on any Deletionist slightly riskier than an ordinary hacker — no one wants someone holding that much information on them angry, or worse, scared. Finding a Deletionist is very similar to finding a good Carder (p. 12): Intelligence + Streetwise (Difficulty 5).

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 6, Social 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Persuasion 8, Streetwise 8, Technology 8

Equipment: A good computer setup, burner phones, over-ear headphones with LED lights, and usually a personal server

Special: The Deletionist can type fast, but they're as much at the mercy of outside databases' processing times as the characters. Scrubbing digital evidence takes at least eight hours (a full work day, essentially). The Deletionist cannot remove evidence or data from self-contained devices, like thumb drives.

In Chronicles

Two possible sets of tracks for your troupe to follow before the Deletionist can erase them appear below.

blackmail.exe: The real danger comes after some Kindred's messed up and gotten caught, after he's hired the Deletionist to scrub his mistake. The real danger is now there's someone out there who has an awful lot of material on an awfully big problem, and word's come to the Kindred that his erstwhile savior is looking for a buyer. Unless, of course, the Kindred's coterie can find some way to delete the files. Or the Deletionist.

Ghost in the System: A local Prince's Deletionist completely disappeared herself from the map, and the Prince is white-hot furious at her sudden departure. The coterie is given the unenviable task of combing through the lick-hacker ecosystem to find the missing cog. When they find her, however, she offers a deal like no other — erase them completely, give them all-new identities, and let them run around the world anywhere they like. And, of course, make several permanent enemies as a result.

Graveyard Poet

Those with rarified aesthetic tastes understand that true beauty lies beyond transgression, in the contrast between decay and budding life, between evil and innocence. Death makes living all the more intensely colorful, don't you find? The Graveyard Poet spends many an evening writing in their notebook below the evergreens in the cemetery, reading Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* or Gabrielle Wittkop's *Le Necrophile*, and leafing through controversial photographs by Joel-Peter Witkin. Fascination for the sake of fascination is the ethos of this artist, and real tragedy is either so deeply imbedded in their history it no longer touches them, or it's something they have yet to experience in anything but theory.

They may be an actual poet or prose writer, the lead singer (or eternally frustrated backup singer) of a death metal band, a painter, or even a perfumer.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 4, Social 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Academics (Literature, Art History, etc.) 6, Occult 5, Performance (their chosen art form) 5

Equipment: Gorgeous illegal switchblade, retro camera with a roll of film full of roadkill pictures, notebook, noise-canceling headphones

Special: The Graveyard Poet is a beautiful catastrophe. Roll a die the first time they drink from a vampire. On a 1–5, they become instantly Blood Bonded. On a 6–0 (10), the vampire has gained a new (•) Enemy (stalker) who will do anything to either destroy them or become them.

In Chronicles

A funereal triptych of possibilities unfolds below.

Verses and Vengeance: Just because they're enamored with the dark, doesn't mean they're incapable of love. Perhaps a careless Kindred has feasted on someone the Poet felt protective of, a romantic partner or a younger sibling, and they end up dedicating themselves to hunting down and destroying every vampire they can find. Turns out, even the dead can die, and it's a death most perfect.

A Show to Remember: Discovering that there is such a thing as vampires, the Graveyard Poet makes it their life's goal to capture one and turn it into art. Imagine the sick concerts you could put on if you could flay a man on stage every night! They get their bandmates to help them, and suddenly one of the coterie has five towering death-metalheads on their tail.

Dead Rats on the Doorstep: The Kiss is both the salvation and downfall of the Poet. Having tasted it, they want more. They fall in limerence with the Kindred who fed on them, and thinking that the undead must want more death, they start sending them gifts — dead bats, scented candles, a bloody finger wrapped in wax paper poems, the eyes of their sire. Is this mere mortal obsession, or has some more serious antagonist tuned the Poet into a weapon aimed at the character?

Medical Examiner/Coroner

Even if a corpse isn't necessarily suspicious, if it's in any sort of official morgue, it must have an official cause of death and a death certificate. That's where the Medical Examiner/Coroner comes in. When a new body comes into their care, these trained doctors look closely at their injuries and tissue damage. Like Crime Scene Technicians (p. 14), they gather samples of DNA to identify unknown bodies and any potential attackers. More importantly, though, they perform autopsies and determine *how*, not just where, when, and with whom the person they're examining died. Often they send deputies into the field to interview witnesses and investigate the death site.

Thankfully for the Kindred, and not-so-thankfully for the rest of the city, they're in short supply. Most

big cities have just one or two Medical Examiners, chronically overworked and short-staffed. Since their office holds on to bodies until they've completed the cause of death investigation, they're often at odds with grieving families who need to bury their relatives. In some cities, police departments have cut back on sending bodies with "obvious" causes of death to the Medical Examiner's office, due to long wait times.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 6, Social 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Investigation 6, Medicine 7, Science 8

Equipment: Autopsy lab, obedient crew of deputy Coroners, a backlog of files

Special: The Medical Examiner may be exhausted, but they're good at their job. For each vampire-killed corpse arriving at their office, they discover one bodily trait of the killer — fangs, claws, etc. Law enforcement pays more attention to "crazy stories" of supernatural killers stalking the night.

If the Medical Examiner gets enough of a profile in play, the Storyteller may find this a good time to bring in the Second Inquisition, using the Medical Examiner's notes as the door that lets the inquisitors into the city.

In Chronicles: Cold Case

In a morgue freezer, there's a body. It's been sitting there for weeks, as the Medical Examiner and her deputies work their way through other, more pressing cases.

It's a vampire... in torpor.

Performing an autopsy on it would be a catastrophically bad move for her and all the city's Kindred. (Never mind the unfortunate mortal holding the bone saw if its eyes open.) The vampire needs to be removed from the equation — stolen, awakened, destroyed — to make sure that a clever doctor doesn't open up its chest with a bunch of recording equipment going.

Mortician/Morgue Attendant

Some people think it's peculiarly morbid to choose to work in a morgue, but the pay is good, the work

environment is peaceful, and the clients rarely complain. They might be a serious-faced professional Mortician, specialized in handling the bereaved and putting a perfect face of makeup on Aunt Helen to make her look just like she did when she was still alive. Or they can be a Mortuary Assistant, a fresh-faced youth just out of college, who collects the bodies from the hospital and is still learning the fine art of washing and preparing them. They work alone most of the time, in the solitude of the cool embalming room, and they prefer it that way.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 5, Social 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Craft (funeral cosmetology) 6, Investigation 6, Medicine (mortuary science) 6

Equipment: A fully equipped morgue with stretchers, lifting trolleys, autopsy tables, cleaning solutions, a multitude of scalpels; a transfer van for transporting the dead (it looks like any common sedan from outside)

Special: A fully trained Mortician can be a two- or three-dot Retainer for a vampire, as they can help them with anything from getting rid of a dead body (as talented as the Cleaner is, few things can compete with a real cremation furnace) to covering their dead face with makeup well enough to make them pass as mortal for a night. A Mortuary Assistant counts as a one-dot Contact who can tell you who has died recently and how, or a one-dot Retainer who can help smuggle vampires in body bags across turf boundaries or even between cities.

In Chronicles: Awaiting the Incinerator

A Morgue Attendant has turned vampire hunter after years of noticing strange puncture wounds on the bodies of the dead. They're the kind of shy and withdrawn person few would suspect of anything, and when the players' characters first get in touch with them, they're nothing but a background character. But Kindred are disappearing, and the cold storage in the morgue is where their torpid bodies can be found — at least until the Morgue Attendant has figured out how to destroy them.

Necrophile

There are all sorts: the elderly widower who cannot bear to let go of his wife's cold body and claims just one last caress. The sadist who likes it best when a hookup just *stays still* so he can do what he wants to her. The masturbator, the mutilator, the opportunistic virgin who's never been this close to naked genitals before. Most Necrophiles perhaps merely fantasize about corpse violation without ever acting, but money or opportunity wears down such self-restraint. The Necrophile of means can buy every dish they desire, no matter how cold. And the fledgling in their path may discover that selling their indiscretions is a great way to make some quick cash. Or even selling their own dead flesh, if they're into that.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Mental 4, Social 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

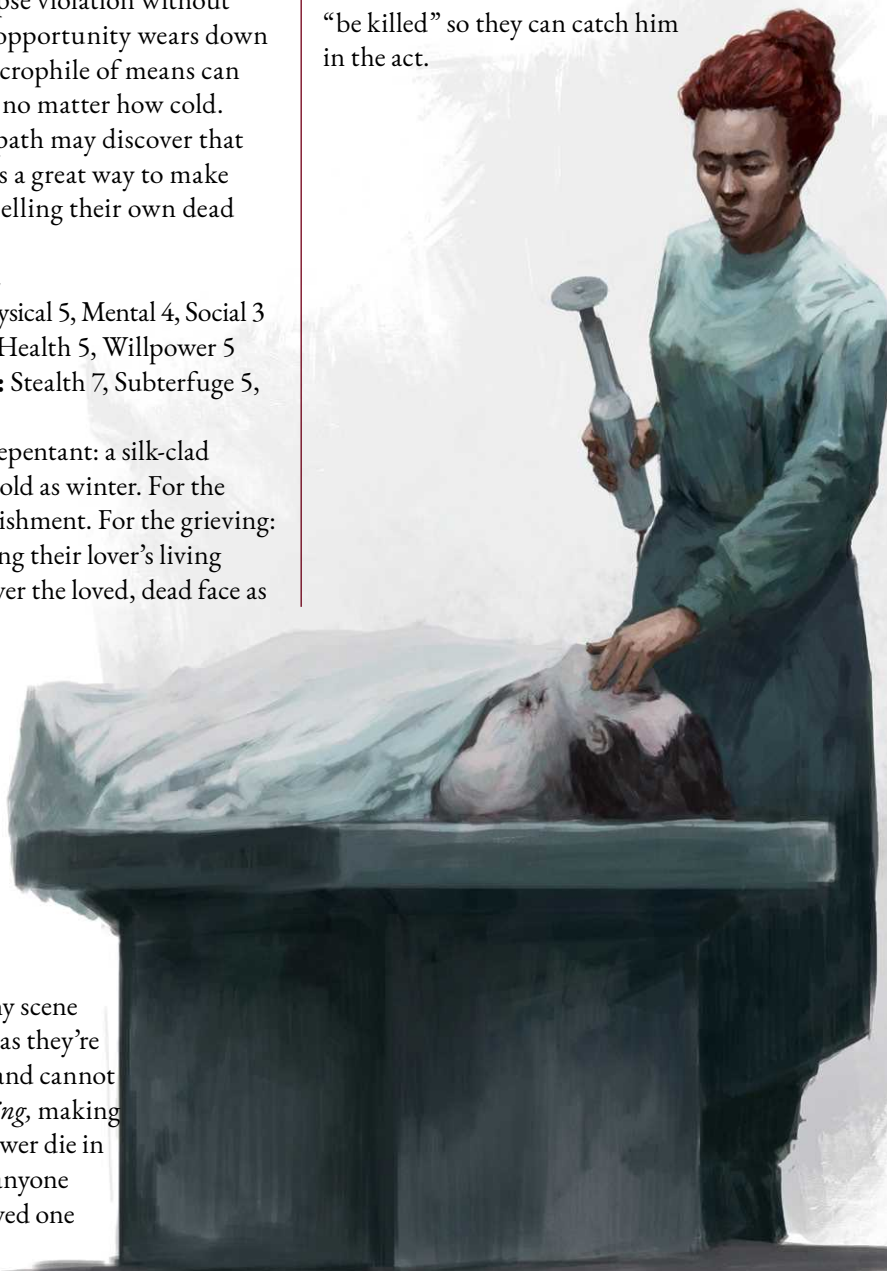
Exceptional Dice Pools: Stealth 7, Subterfuge 5, Survival 6

Equipment: For the unrepentant: a silk-clad king-size bed in a room as cold as winter. For the repentant: tools of self-punishment. For the grieving: the handkerchief still holding their lover's living scent, which they use to cover the loved, dead face as they perform the act.

Special: The Necrophile can be *unrepentant*, making them unusually ruthless. They get a bonus die when performing actions of extreme violence and selfishness. They can be *repentant*, giving them a one-die penalty to all dice pools for the duration of any scene following corpse violation, as they're gripped by extreme shame and cannot focus. Or they can be *grieving*, making them an easy victim (one fewer die in social resistance pools) for anyone promising to bring their loved one back to life.

In Chronicles: The Softest Touch

The players' coterie stumbles upon a series of gruesome murders linked to a wealthy politician who uses their resources to indulge in their necrophiliac fantasies. The Necrophile's activities threaten to draw attention to the city's vampires, forcing them to intervene and deal with the situation. Perhaps the way into the politician's fortress mansion is for one of the coterie members to let themselves "be killed" so they can catch him in the act.



Nightcrawler

Nightcrawlers straddle the line between Blood Bloggers (p. 11) and Crime Scene Reporters (p. 14). Neither a fabulist spinning stories out of nothing nor a reporter wielding network backing, the Nightcrawler finds the goriest news in the messiest way possible. Each harrowing incident they snipe gets a gory picture, a harrowing paragraph, and then it's off to the highest bidder and on to the next one. Nightcrawlers don't care who gets the story — gossip mag, cable news, conspiracy streamer — as long as their banking app goes ding.

The bidding war does mean there's usually a nice cycle to the Nightcrawler-Kindred relationship: Nightcrawler goes out one night, finds evidence of MENACE STALKING STREETS; Masquerade enforcer buys it off them and publishes it (highly redacted) on a backwater "news" blog. Then they nudge the Nightcrawler toward equally unsavory and decidedly non-Kindred crimes. It's useful for enforcers to have several lines in the news stream, and this is one of them.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 3, Social 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Larceny 6, Persuasion 6, Survival 6

Equipment: Camera with long-distance lens, fast car, police scanner

Special: The Nightcrawler is by necessity an unscrupulous, obsessive weirdo. They get a bonus die for actions related to breaking a story, and lose one die for all dice pools related to self-preservation around the story in question.

In Chronicles: A Little Bird Told Me

A local Nightcrawler keeps showing up at Kindred disasters and slipping away with incriminating photos and more. Masquerade enforcers aren't interested in killing him, though. They want to know how he keeps finding vampires in delicate situations. *Then* they want him killed.



Serial Killer

All capable Kindred leaders have eyes on the crime blotter, keeping track of what mortal law enforcement's looking at: bodies, names, missing persons reports. Sometimes they pick up on certain patterns: murders with the same weapon happening around the same general area or spikes in victims with similar backgrounds or jobs. If the data lines up, it points to a Serial Killer.

There's no hard and fast rule, but Serial Killers often fall into two rough categories: "organized" killers who plan their crimes ahead of time and seek out specific victims, and "disorganized" killers who kill impulsively and without a particular victim or outcome in mind. Whichever the case, they usually have troubling incidents in their past — strangling an ex-girlfriend until she passed out, hurting animals, watching snuff films.

Some Kindred find them pitiable but disgusting, like a wasp feeding on picnic leftovers. Others find them downright disturbing or horrifying, a bit too much like looking in a mirror. Still others think of them as a feral dog that can be caught and trained — either the perfect candidate for a ghoul or a mortal tool to be exploited (*how useful, to have a resident patsy for messy kills*). Or, always, a snack.

General Difficulty: 3 / 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 4, Social 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Subterfuge 6, Melee 6, Stealth 7

Equipment: A nondescript car, a sharp knife, a fake ID (possibly obtained from a Carder [p. 12])

Special: As long as a Serial Killer is on law enforcement's radar, the Difficulty of any hunt on that hunting ground goes up by one. A Serial Killer has an Empty Resonance except during the act of hunting and killing, when their blood becomes either Choleric or Sanguine.

In Chronicles: Mad Dog

Sometimes the wolves must defend their territory from the dogs. The Kindred court's been annoyed by a mortal Serial Killer for weeks, and the human's only getting bolder. The city holds its

breath each night, waiting to hear in the morning if another body was found. It's time for this to end. Maybe this is a good expedition to send a hungry moralist on or an opportunity to simply gather any available Gangrel together and say "Hunt."

Down These Dark Streets

Ecosystems need more than predators and prey. The habitat in which they dwell shapes both, offering sustenance and shelter — and a few dangers of its own. The Kindred rapidly learn the nocturnal rhythms of their city as they stalk its streets and sink into its stories. This section begins with those nocturnal rhythms, the flow of human corpuscles through urban arteries as the city settles into the dark again.

Then come the places within, the districts and neighborhoods that stand out in the urban jungle, and the sites where Kindred and kine pass in the night. Consider this stage setting for your nightly play.

The Twelve Hours of the Night

New York may be enshrined as "the city that never sleeps," but no town over 10,000 residents really does, either. There's always garbage to be picked up, food to be prepared, and roads to be patrolled. The nightlife isn't just for partiers and vamps — it's a whole world all on its own. From 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., a flotilla of night-shift workers and night owls takes over the busy work of keeping the lights on (or off).

In the winter, streets clear earlier; in summer, people crowd parks and bandshells until all hours. Holidays crowd or empty streets predictably as well; apply these notes with an eye to your own chronicle calendar. But at the end of the day, anywhere Kindred may find themselves during the night, there's likely a wakeful mortal somewhere nearby. It's worth keeping them in mind.

6 p.m.

- Every restaurant with a dinner menu is open. In summer, diners overflow onto the sidewalk seating; in winter they huddle in cramped entryways waiting for a table.
- Workers headed home jam into public transit. Buskers and panhandlers take advantage of the big crowds in train stations and bus stops to make a few bucks.
- At sunset, Catholic church bells ring for vespers. Mosques call the faithful to prayer.

7 p.m.

- At the hospitals, night nurses and attending doctors arrive for the shift change. The day shift hands over their (often fairly brief) notes before their relief shifts plunge into the careful work of the ICU and the urgent shuffle of ER patients.
- In the old opera house, ushers show guests to their seats below a massive, gilded array of carved oaks and dancing nymphs.
- At the arthouse theater several blocks away, the audience finds a seat on rows of rickety dining-room chairs painted sticky black. Volunteers pass out printer-paper programs.
- The public library closes. A rush of students, librarians, unhoused people, and passersby briefly fills the hallways before leaving the building as silent as the books inside.

8 p.m.

- Music venues open their doors. The show's a bit delayed, of course, but fans already swarm the merch table out front.
- Cleaning staff arrive at office buildings downtown to vacuum lunch crumbs from the floor and mop the bathrooms.
- Homeless shelters open for the night. There's already a line around the block—unhoused people have to stand in line for at least two or three hours to ensure they get a bed.

9 p.m.

- Most shops close, and retail workers pull down the shutters and lock up the cash box in the manager's office.
- Desk workers at big apartment towers and hotels downtown change shift.
- Pilots with late-night flights arrive at their terminals to check the instruments.

10 p.m.

- Sports fans crowd the trains as they travel home from an evening game. They're loud and boisterous—a few fights break out in the subway stations.
- Night classes at the community college let out.
- Custodians push carts loaded with cleaning equipment down the halls of schools and factories. Before the night is over, they'll clean over a hundred toilets and wipe down another hundred tables.

11 p.m.

- In air-blasted, windowless rooms, IT specialists monitor a bank of blinking servers.
- Waiters and hosts leave restaurants. The kitchen staff scrub down stoves and finish their night prep for the following day. The alleyway behind the kitchen door is filled with food scraps and a sloshing grease trap.
- Concert venues close, and ushers bring out the big mop to clean up the inevitable broken glass and crushed cans.

Midnight

- The midnight cop shift change. Most police departments stagger their shift changes, giving individual officers slightly different times to report in. The late-night shift is usually a required part of each cop's schedule: one officer might work two days, one evening, and one graveyard shift in a week, each ten hours per day. A week of entirely night and graveyard shifts means a cop is especially unlucky or actively being punished.
- At the rep movie theater, the midnight horror flick begins.

Districts

Cities comprise districts: neighborhoods, transit or business centers, “Printers’ Row” or “the Garment District” where trades come together. This section builds on and adds specifics to the discussion of districts in *Vampire: The Masquerade* (p. 332).

Districts can be as distinct as characters, from other districts in the city or from the same sort of district in other cities. As such, none of these example districts constitute the final word on what sort of traits a Chinatown or Gallery Circuit must possess. Storytellers should change these values to fit their own city and their own chronicle.

Just as any two people in the same line of work may be different, any two districts may involve different behavior. One Rack might be a sterile playground for suburbanites where the Kindred need to keep each other in line to keep the easy prey coming; another nightclub circuit sprawls on a grimy stretch of broken sidewalks smeared with puke and littered with broken glass, where the Damned can be

caught with their fangs out and pass as freaky gothic punks.

District Systems: Districts should ideally alter the mechanical universe of the game as well as offer story possibilities. Any given district can be a safe house, a danger zone, or a hunting ground. What might matter in the moment is the one extra die you can get on these particular streets.

Every district here has a default Difficulty for hunting tests. The Storyteller always decides whether the value given here applies, or the Chasse value for a specific domain within the district, or whether some other factor overrides them both. Although Chasse never stacks with the Difficulty given here, other district modifiers may well stack with Lien, Portillon, or other domain Traits, at the Storyteller’s discretion.

Likewise, if a coterie has purchased Domain Merits (*Players Guide*, pp. 175–179), the rules for those Merits apply rather than the “free-range” district systems given here. That said, if a district system in this section provides an advantage to the



coterie, they should be able to use it if they have spent points to make their domain more effective.

Airport

Airplanes roar overhead almost constantly in this hub of national and international transit. A forest of blinking lights stretches to the horizon along a massive, artificial plateau under the shadow of the control towers. Outside, the whole place stinks of jet exhaust. Within, the terminals seem reasonably high-tech, although parts of the complex, here and there, look as though they haven't been even cosmetically modernized in decades. If the Second Inquisition has a presence anywhere in the city, they have one here, in an unmarked office somewhere behind the security barriers. For this reason, Princes often keep the airport off limits to hunting.

Thousands of people come and go, speaking a dozen different tongues, too busy to take it all in. Around the airport, bland hotels and downright anonymous motels offer brief respite and ideal killing grounds for those transient strangers. Rental car parks and long-term lots provide plenty of places to hide a package or a corpse.

Hunting Difficulty: 4

Other Systems: Any sudden chase through security begins at Difficulty 4. Larceny tests to smuggle items through security begin at Difficulty 5; it's often easier to bribe airport personnel such as janitors.

Chinatown

Brilliant reds, yellows, and golds abound on the main streets here, coloring the Asian-inspired architecture. On the back streets, however, closely clustered buildings turn inward, creating a distinctly unwelcoming feeling for outsiders. Some men sitting at a card table set up in an alley play mah-jongg, while an old woman stands on her fire escape, taking her laundry off the line.

Hunting Difficulty: 3 (if crowded or neglected) or 4 (if well-lit and well-policed); the community looks out for each other.

Other Systems: Add a die to Investigate and Social pools for characters originally of Chinese extraction. Subtract at least one die from such

pools for outsiders. Also, remove a die from pools to chase, track, or otherwise move through this district for outsiders. Unlicensed butchers may have blood for sale. Alchemists may find scrounging odd ingredients here easier: lower the Difficulty by 1 or 2 to find herbs and other obscure materials.

Corporate Sector

Sleek, modern skyscrapers crowd the skyline here. The streets are kept clean, despite the almost continual bustle of people in the area. Everyone seems to move with purpose and without patience, heading home from work. Even those who are obviously not here on business move in time with this area's hectic pace. A mounted policeman rounds a corner, his horse's hooves striking the pavement with a rhythmic, echoing report.

In the early morning, the cleaners and night staff come off shift, filtering across the wide plazas. The type A strivers coming in early have their eyes on their phones and their noses in their coffee.

Hunting Difficulty: 3 during rush hours; 4 in the dead of night

Other Systems: Except in rush hour, shadowing tests lose one die from the shadower's pool. Quick corporate espionage system: Convert margin on Larceny tests to break in, or Technology tests to hack, a corporate office here into extra dice on Finance tests to undermine that corporation.

Fashion Circuit

The graceful prewar buildings have been aggressively modernized as franchises of the most prestigious and exclusive clothiers. Deliberate cultivation of contemporary high fashion results in beautiful blooms, many of them walking the streets here or drinking insanely overpriced waters and teas in delicate bistros. Fast-walking pedestrians taking calls on their cell phones only narrowly avoid collisions. The beautiful people scrupulously ignore those less aesthetically blessed than themselves.

By night, however, shadows fall and gates lock all across the district. Drug-seekers and drug dealers make assignments near exclusive lofts. The subway runs at night, but the station's not exactly entirely safe for casual visitors.

Hunting Difficulty: 2–4, depending on method and means

Other Systems: The Toreador Clan Bane is extremely unlikely to trigger in this district devoted to personal beauty and architectural restraint. Lower the Difficulty by 1 for Streetwise tests here to score coke, heroin, and designer drugs.

Financial Sector

Skyscrapers shoulder in next to solid piles of Gilded Age granite. Even at this late hour, people in business-formal attire stride the streets, talking into their earpieces, hailing cabs and Ubers, and taking power walks between taking meetings. Banks, holding companies, and other similar businesses are especially prevalent.

Hunting Difficulty: 3 during rush hours; 4 in the dead of night

Other Systems: Except in rush hour, shadowing tests lose one die from the shadower's pool. Add two dice to Social or Finance pools to pick up stock tips, financial scuttlebutt, or other insider info. Computer systems are either ludicrously undefended (millions of customers all need ways in) or seriously firewalled: subtract or add two dice to Technology pools on tests to hack something here. Lower Difficulty by 2 for Streetwise tests here to find a dealer who can score coke in some other district.

Gallery Circuit

This neighborhood winds its way through twisting, tree-lined streets. On the outskirts, staid and aristocratic galleries showcase fine (and expensive) works of art, while the center of the area coexists with a thriving youth culture and consists primarily of less formal galleries, as well as bistros, boutique shops, and a couple of music venues. The distinct populations seem sharply divided, with only the artists readily flowing between the two.

The populace here keeps up on current events and has an eye for detail. Kiosks with flyers proliferate. Posters for local shows and events are plastered on fences and walls. Locals sit out on their stoops, smoking cigarettes and sketching passersby.

Hunting Difficulty: 2 in the core, 3 on the outside

Other Systems: Add a die to pools involving the marks (*Vampire*, p. 322) here; the space somehow nourishes memes. Characters with Craft, who bother to show it, add one die to Social dice pools with locals here. Scroungers find pigments, craft materials, and similar ingredients more easily here: 1 to the Difficulty on such tests.

Gated Community

Well-lit lanes crisscross this pocket of affluence, and the smell of lilacs and pine wafts pleasantly from the immaculately manicured foliage. A pair of security officers rolls past in a sedan, the driver speaking into his radio as he slowly takes a corner. Every elegantly designed home is a sprawling estate (in the suburbs) or a refined graystone (in the city proper), with a state-of-the-art security system. An older gentleman sits on his front porch, smoking a pipe. He smiles a bit and offers a polite nod.

Hunting Difficulty: 5, even if you have a haven here

Other Systems: Minimum Difficulty of 5 to defeat security systems here.

Harbor

Freighters dock here, each one a small galaxy of fixed and blinking lights. Something is always being loaded or offloaded, it seems. The smell of the sea comes across the concrete like a dirty sailor and carries with it the smells of fish and gulls, foodstuffs from around the world, and other, stranger commodities. Dockworkers and crewmen yammer at one another, bantering and cursing, sometimes in English, sometimes not. Just outside a small dive bar, a fistfight breaks out. No one pays it any mind.

In some cities, the harbor sits on a lake or on the riverfront, or there may be an old harbor allowed to rust and a new containerized harbor controlled more like an airport. It lies at the end of a tangle of streets and rails, a labyrinth of shipping containers across one end of the city. At night, it becomes a black nothing where screams go into the dark like a body slipped into the water.

Hunting Difficulty: 4

Other Systems: Difficulties to hide, either yourself or a body, drop by 2 in the Harbor district. Add a die to Social tests to pick up gossip from overseas.

Industrial Works

Dozens of factory buildings, ranging in age from more than a century to less than a decade, stand here. Some have been renovated into housing, craft distilleries, or the occasional nightclub, but most still serve their original purpose. The commotion of heavy machinery resounds faintly in the area, as third-shift workers come and go. Some go about their tasks, while others take smoke breaks and chat in small groups. Trucks idle in lots surrounded by razor wire.

Hunting Difficulty: 4, shading into 3 in the renovated areas

Other Systems: Alchemical scrounging attempts for industrial chemicals and weird, toxic residue take –2 to Difficulty here. Chases past these blank brick and stone walls can end early and disappointingly: the runner adds two dice to their pool if they know the area.

Jewelers' Row

A wide variety of shops line the narrow streets here. Older signs decorously promote jewelers, watchmakers, tobacconists, and camera stores; newer ones boost computer repair shops, Armenian or Persian fast food, and cell phone storefronts. At this time of night, most of the stores sit closed, their façades concealed by rolling steel grating. One or two shops appear to be open, even now, however. Dressed to the nines, people still walk the streets, most of them on their way to restaurants or clubs.

Hunting Difficulty: 3

Other Systems: Closed-circuit cameras bristle from every doorway; attempts to evade them add 2 to Difficulty, but Investigation to find footage from them subtract 1 from the Difficulty. Larceny attempts on local businesses likewise add 2 to the Difficulty; this is not their first night at work.

Latin Quarter

Three-story apartment houses, often with first-floor stores, markets, or restaurants, crowd against one another here. Spanish-language advertisements flash from billboards and bus stops, for alcohol, cigarettes, bank transfer services, and fashion. Pushcarts and kiosks sell food that smells great but certainly hasn't

seen a city inspector. On a second-floor porch, two young women, one of whom holds an infant, are having a quiet but heated argument in Spanish.

In nations with different immigration patterns, this might be the Turkish, Moroccan, Vietnamese, Nigerian, or Hmong Quarter, depending on the city.

Hunting Difficulty: 3; the community tries to protect itself, but with so many new faces coming and going, it's not always easy.

Other Systems: Characters who can't speak Spanish (or the other language of the neighborhood) suffer a two-dice penalty to all Social interaction tests. Botanicas may lower Difficulties for alchemical scrounging.

Little Italy

Everywhere on the outskirts of this neighborhood, where innumerable markets and restaurants jockey for position alongside one another, floats the smell of food, tantalizing passersby and saturating the air here. As one moves inward, modest duplexes and three-story apartment houses are cramped close together, though such serve to make the neighborhood feel connected rather than crowded. The locals seem to have no hesitation about being on the streets at night.

Little Italy is the oldest and most highly regarded of the ethnic neighborhoods in town, and the local police, the criminal element, and the citizenry all value peace and stability.

In some cities, this might be Little Seoul, Little Jamaica, or Little Moscow: the established protection of an ethnic organized crime family or faction provides the key factor differentiating "Little Italy" from the "Latin Quarter."

Hunting Difficulty: 3, but if you didn't achieve a margin of at least 2 somebody noticed and told somebody connected.

Other Systems: If the character is connected (Ally, Contacts, or Influence) with the right organized crime group, they add a die to all Social tests against locals, and two dice to Intimidation and Streetwise. (They add their dots in that Background to pools for Social *contests* against locals — but so do the locals.) Otherwise, they lose a die from all Social and Investigation tests against locals.

Media Sector

Broad, squat structures faced with brick or beige stone squat here, two or three stories at most. Broadcast antennas grow in tangled jungles from every roof, along with satellite dishes and less definable protrusions. Thick tangles of cable hang between many buildings like vines. Small patches of neatly trimmed lawn surface here and there, with more than a few lovely flowerbeds or elegantly sculpted hedges. Even in the middle of the night, these buildings seem well staffed.

Hunting Difficulty: 4

Other Systems: Tests to gather current information in this district add two dice. For relevant information about the past, the Storyteller may add a die. Attempts to cover up a Masquerade breach in this district lose two dice from the relevant pools.

The Rack

Nightclubs line these short blocks, cut by alleys and interspersed with the occasional strip club or full-on music venue. The district feels vaguely seedy, although the neon and eagerness conceal it. Goths and ravers walk side-by-side with Eurotrash, wannabes, and rubes, everybody looking to make a scene or just get laid. Folks steer wide of a splash of vomit on the sidewalk, as a young woman sits, half passed-out, with her back against a wall; her friends try to keep her conscious with ambling conversation, but keep checking their phones.

Hunting Difficulty: 1, though there is a 50/50 chance that the blood will contain an intoxicant. (See *Tainted Blood* in *Vampire*, p. 310).

Other Systems: Streetwise tests to score coke and club drugs subtract 2 from the Difficulty here.

Sewers

The smell hangs everywhere — a malodorous reek that crawls up into the nostrils and dies there. Even unbreathing Kindred can taste the stench on the air. Rats and cockroaches scuttle along in every shadow. Sinkholes and other perils lurk below the filmy surface of the fouled water that flows through the tunnels. Wet stains mark the massive concrete vaults dripping overhead; strange, pale gray moss clings to

some of the seams where one section connects to the next. Odd, distorted noises occasionally echo faintly through the network of tunnels.

To the Nosferatu, the Sewers might be several districts, but to most characters they remain a mysterious realm of their own.

Hunting Difficulty: 5, unless your sewers have tribes of unhoused or mole people in them. However, if the vampire knows the sewer tunnels well, they can emerge unseen in any district in the city with an Intelligence + Survival test (Difficulty equals one plus the number of districts traversed).

Other Systems: Add two dice to pools to summon rats with Animalism — and maybe albino alligators, depending on the chronicle.

Slum

A train rumbles by overhead, dislodging dust and paint and rust. Everything here seems to exist in the shadow of bridges, overpasses, and concrete towers of public housing. The sagging tenements that crowd into the shadows sit partially derelict, or taken over by squatters. Even many of the legally inhabited structures have broken or boarded-up windows.

Only a few stores remain open now, garish neon and blinking fluorescents spilling from their façades. Several pops sound faintly in the distance, followed by the screech of tires on asphalt. A dog starts barking.

Hunting Difficulty: 2

Other Systems: Nobody ever sees anything here; increase the Difficulty by 1 for Investigation and Social tests on locals by apparent outsiders.

Subway

Several layers of different train lines stack one atop another here. Narrow passages and steep escalators open onto wide platforms. Advertisements cover every surface on the walls and even on the trains themselves. The musty odor and sour sweat seem almost pleasant compared to what some of the train cars smell like late at night. People still crowd the bigger stations and platforms until the trains stop running, waiting to get somewhere else in the city.

“The subway” isn’t rightly a district, nor is it a site. But going into the underground definitely feels like entering a new space.

Hunting Difficulty: 3 while the trains run

Other Systems: People evading pursuit take their best shot here: Storytellers may allow characters to substitute Composure, Wits, or Streetwise in dice pools to shake a tail or follow others.

Theater Circuit

A row of aging theaters, some still quite grand and imposing despite their growing decrepitude, spans this broad boulevard, all of them dating from the turn of the previous century. Rather than the top hats and evening gowns that the surroundings seem to demand, however, most passersby wear slightly threadbare or aggressively hipsterish modern fashions. In front of one derelict theater, a shabby-looking vagrant panhandles, singing old show tunes in an incongruously lovely voice. A few used bookstores and newsstands stay open, as well as cheap diners for actors getting out late.

Hunting Difficulty: 2

Other Systems: Theaters are notoriously easy buildings to break into; lower Larceny Difficulties in the area by 1.

Predation Cycles

Hunter and habitat meet, and the game is afoot. For the Kindred, that game is hunting and feeding, the nightly cycle of predation. Kindred hunt for sustenance most nights, but they’re not restricted in *how* they hunt. Each Predator Type represents a method of hunting. Characters are not restricted to one method of feeding. When the players’ characters are in a bind and must hunt in a new way, you’ve got the dice pools for it. Many Duskborn and most newly embraced childer haven’t developed Predator Types yet, but they still need to hunt.

It’s not uncommon for Kindred to hunt for resonance rather than mere sustenance. Thin-blood alchemists may do this more frequently than others, but all Kindred seek out specific resonance when learning and improving their Disciplines. Baggers and Farmers, for example, almost never naturally

come across the right resonance to improve their Disciplines, so they need to experiment with some regularity. When hunting for resonance, you can also use the tables below to create your scene of finding the perfect resonance that’ll help learn or increase a Kindred’s Disciplines.

For each Predator Type, this section provides a system to play out their hunt and its relative success or failure, expanded from the basic version (*Vampire*, p. 306). Although characters with the Herd advantage don’t need to test to feed (up to the level of their advantage), even Cleavers sometimes need to top up off schedule.

This expanded system allows players and Storyteller to “focus in” on a specific hunt without devoting an entire session or chapter to it. At this level of attention, it’s easier to add something to the story or the setting mix: a new nightclub or district of the city, Storyteller character that will recur, or an omen or other foreshadowing element in the scene.

You don’t have to use this system every time, for every feeding of every character. It’s probably simplest to run one hunt each session using this system and resolve the others with the basic version. (If your sessions cover more than one night, you might run one predation cycle per night instead.) You can cycle through the players, with each getting a spotlight hunt in turn. A character whose hunts tie into the main story, or one whose struggle thematically matches the ongoing drama, might get slotted into tonight’s “close-up” in such cases.

You can also use it when inspiration (or the main plotline) is dragging, to spice up a slower section with something interesting. You might run a predation cycle as an invitation to the players to improvise more details about their domain, or as a way to inspire a spin-off story or side quest. If game time is tight, on the other hand, or the main drama has everyone champing at the bit to drive it forward, you can save these “slice of unlife” scenes for next time.

The Hunting Pattern

Each predator's unique hunt has two stages, the *stalk* and the *feed*, each with an Attribute and Skill combination. (The Blood Leech hunt differs in pattern, due to its extraordinary danger.) Remember that any vampire can hunt in any fashion; predator types are habits and instincts, not hard-coded dictates. Players can suggest a different combination while the hunt is ongoing — Storytellers may assent to a clever piece of roleplaying or decide the improvisation introduces a complication.

As a quick reference, all the “default” stalk and feed die pools for each Predator Type appear in Table 32: Predation Cycle Summary p. 48; if characters have a different pool in mind, see if it matches a pre-existing Predator Type. Maybe the Alleycat can become a Trapdoor — for a night at least. If it makes sense, the Storyteller may allow teamwork, with the characters teaming up in twos, or hunting together as a pack. If the whole coterie wants to go on a hunt together, the Storyteller should consider *Hunting as Heist* (*Vampire*, p. 308).

The Stalk

Every stalk begins by finding a hunting ground. This can be as small as a single alley or as large as a neighborhood, a champagne-flutes party or a seedy dive bar — a random table under each Predator Type's profile gives the Storyteller five options to choose from, for easy randomization. Characters make a simple test with the relevant Attribute and Skill against the area Difficulty to see if luck is with them when they search for that golden combination: *lots of people + low surveillance + no nosy neighbors*. Characters with the Prey Exclusion flaw take a +1 Difficulty to this test; Ventrue add their Bane Severity to the Difficulty unless they have carefully seeded or selected the hunting ground.

Failure on the stalk test means the character can't find a good spot with available prey, and their Hunger remains unslaked. A success means the character has made their way to a favorite spot and found it ready for action. A critical win on the stalk test adds one die to the pool on the feed test.

Choosing to succeed at a cost means the hunting ground is ripe with oblivious prey, but the character made an error in their setup — maybe they chose the wrong clothes to go in or a weird angle to set their trap. If this is the case, the listed Feed Penalty (add 1 or 2 to the feed Difficulty) gets added to the feed test.

The Feed

The random table of victims and complications under each Predator Type profile gives a sampling of different blood sources the vampire might encounter (and how they might bite back unexpectedly). In a secure spot with potential prey, the character makes a simple test of the given pool against a victim's Difficulty in order to feed. The result determines how well they manage the juggling act of secrecy, pursuit, and of course, blood-drinking.

A successful feed test means they've brought down or cornered their prey and fed: the victim has been hurt, drained dry, or just feels mildly dozy and anemic. The character has cleaned up their tracks (reasonably) well, enough to prevent instant karma from asserting itself. Reduce the character's Hunger by the amount they chose. On a critical win, the victim has a potentially acute temperament. (Roll a die; on a success, their blood has a dyscrasia; if not, their temperament is intense.) When the character chooses to win at a cost, they feed and reduce their Hunger, but a complication arises. Something went wrong with the feed, the vampire left something behind, the victim bled out and died, someone saw something — whatever the fuckup, it's not discovered or dealt with until the hunt is over. Some possible complications appear in the Feed Table for each Predator Type.

On a total failure, the character only gets the complication and not the feed. They do not reduce their Hunger. On a bestial failure, they've also alerted someone else: the cops, the bouncer, or whoever reviews the security footage a week from now. At the Storyteller's discretion, a messy critical might also alert someone, although the character definitely feeds from the victim.

Alleycat

Alleycats are spoiling for a fight: muggings, street fights, general intimidation. They relish seeing real desperation and fear in their victims' faces, and they want to get some punches in, too. Some of them want to be a rough angel, beating up criminals and low-lives in dark parking lots. Some of them just want to fuck people up.

The Stalk

Wits + Streetwise: Find a good spot to observe and lurk on the rooftops until you can strike, or go somewhere you hear the action is — illegal MMA ring, big gang fight, a rowdy bar.

The Feed

Strength + Brawl: Take down the victim and make them bleed. It's messy, brutal, and quick.

TABLE 1: THE STALK FOR ALLEYCATS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Trashed alley behind a dive bar.	2	+2
3–4	Street corner with a broken lamppost.	2	+2
5–6	Grassy waste under a highway overpass where drug dealers sell.	3	+1
7–8	Parking garage near busy train station.	4	+1
9–0	Rough hangout for locals.	5	+1

TABLE 2: THE FEED FOR ALLEYCATS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	A night-shift worker taking the shortcut home.	Melancholy	2	Turns out she wasn't alone—a protective dog tries to defend his owner.
3–4	Mugger out looking for a score.	Choleric	2	Lots of blood everywhere. Everywhere.
5–6	Gangster patrolling his block in a slow-rolling car.	Choleric	3	You somehow pocketed the victim's phone. Lots of people are calling him, trying to figure out where he is...
7–8	Middle-aged guy with martial arts training, either a fighter by trade or a devoted enthusiast.	Phlegmatic	4	The victim got some good hits in—enough that you were flustered and didn't quite check the area for fallen belongings.
9–0	Hired muscle on a smoke break.	Sanguine	5	A real fight means real injuries. Take two levels of Superficial damage.

Bagger

Baggers eschew the hunt altogether — so much simpler to drink it pre-collected, or from a fresh corpse if bags are in short supply. Some are moralists, intent on feeding in as non-murdery a fashion as possible; others can't be bothered to flail around with a living person.

The blood from blood bags doesn't usually carry Resonance — but if a Bagger can drink it less than 15 minutes after it was drawn, they can capture those last echoes inside the plasma. Storytellers should roll on Table 33: Random Blood (p. 55) if a Bagger manages to snag a really, really fresh bag. Bagged blood has a Fleeting temperament, if any.

The Stalk

Intelligence + Streetwise: Put out your feelers to discover where other Baggers are getting their goods, or figure out where blood seems likely to flow without too many eyes on it.

The Feed

Composure + Larceny: Blood bags don't put up a fight, but the people in charge of them are fairly careful with their security. The test here for Baggers allows them to pay or convince someone to give them access to the blood bags (or the corpse) — or to attempt straight-up thievery.

TABLE 3: THE STALK FOR BAGGERS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Butcher shop. If successful on the Stalk test, test to Feed, but assume you're eating pig blood preserved for sausage, blood pudding, etc.	2	+2
3–4	Blood donation center.	2	+2
5–6	Morgue.	3	+1
7–8	Hospital or doctor's office.	4	+1
9–0	Hematology or anatomy lab in the college.	5	+1

TABLE 4: THE FEED FOR BAGGERS

Roll or Choose	Target	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Bio-waste bin full of used blood bags.	None	2	Someone definitely saw you come out of the room at an odd hour.
3–4	Supply of blood samples in individual tubes.	None	2	Turns out this is another Bagger's closely-guarded spot.
5–6	Fresh(ish) body of an older man.	None	3	You can't lick the wound closed on a dead body, and it's a big bite.
7–8	Blood bags in the storage freezer.	None	4	The walk-in freezer doesn't seal behind you. It's sure to spur an investigation.
9–0	Blood processing vats, where plasma and red blood cells are spun apart.	None	5	More cameras around here than you thought.

Blood Leech

Blood Leeches drink blood from other Kindred. How they come by it is up to them, but it's often considered the most dangerous Predator Type for the hungry Kindred themselves. Feeding from other Kindred smacks of Diablerie, which is forbidden by vampire society. Moreover, feeding from the same Kindred risks the Blood Bond as well (though knowledgeable Blood Leeches have found feeding from less-than-fresh vitae or the Tremere or Duskborn helps avoid the issue). Blood Leeches who don't want to meet their final death at the hands of an angry vampiric victim or the Kindred authorities often bargain for vitae or use their clout to demand a red tax from their Childer, lackeys, or local thin-bloods.

The information below assumes a Blood Leech preying on other Kindred through violence, out of desperation or perhaps glee. For less violent means, the Storyteller may adapt the techniques of the Cleaver (p. 35, Consensualist (p. 36) or Extortionist (p. 37) to a Kindred milieu depending on the Blood Leech's approach.

Violent Blood Leeches often worm their way into the halls of power in the Camarilla or among the Anarchs gaining roles as Sheriffs or their local equivalent. The most coveted position is that of Scourge for Camarilla Domains that distinguish the job of thinning the local thin-blood population. The Storyteller may want to restrain or specifically design the parameters of a Blood Leech hunt, given the enormous potential for blowback from a failed test if violence is necessary. Indeed, depending on the Kindred victim, a failure might result in final death, either immediately in the feed attempt or by Blood Hunt in the ensuing nights. In short, fitting the drama and precarity of a Blood Leech hunt into a two-roll sequence can be challenging for player and Storyteller alike.

The Stalk

One on one is no way to go after a fellow apex predator. Instead, if the Storyteller and player feel it's appropriate, use a hunt to give the Blood Leech a chance to work with one of their coterie members. For the Blood Leech, it's a chance to bond with their

coterie, reduce the splash zone of a hunt, or bargain for their help in exchange for a favor.

Your target might be a nameless fledgling or a specific rival: choose an approach and (ideally) a coterie member to help you out. The Stalk pool Attribute is Wits. The Skill depends on the specific tactic for the hunt: Investigation, Subterfuge, or

TABLE 5: THE STALK FOR BLOOD LEECHES

Roll or Choose	Assist	Difficulty	Feed Penalty	Complication
1–2	<i>Lure:</i> Don't mind me, I'm just walking home all alone late at night...	3	+2	At the worst moment, you encounter someone you know and don't want to see here.
3–4	<i>Muscle:</i> Two against one might not be fair, but it's fast.	3	+2	Attacking other Kindred isn't like jumping punks in back alleys. Take one level of Aggravated damage.
5–6	<i>Wingman:</i> Have you met my friend?	3	+1	Another Kindred thinks you (and just you) are encroaching on his territory.
7–8	<i>Spotter:</i> Look out, you dropped your receipt right next to the body!	4	+1	Tunnel vision means you left something behind: nothing identifying, but personally important.
9–0	<i>Distraction:</i> Hey, over here!	4	+1	Noticed, and possibly picked up or roughed-up, by law enforcement or local gangsters.

Stealth, for example. As with regular teamwork (*Vampire*, p. 122), test the largest pool among the participants, plus a die for each assistant stalker with the relevant Skill.

This approach is far more dangerous than stalking mortal kine. On a critical win, you both get the extra die for the feed conflict test. On a regular win, you can assign the bonus die to either of your pools on that test. If you choose to win at a cost, you take not only the listed Feed Penalty, but also suffer a complication. On a failure, you only suffer the complication and cannot feed from this target tonight. On a total or bestial failure, your target noticed your attempt to attack them. Either break off the hunt unfed at this point with a new enemy, or continue with the feed attempt, increasing the Feed Penalty by another +1.

The Feed

Resolve the feed as a one-roll conflict (*Vampire*, p. 298) using Wits or Strength plus a relevant Discipline pool. You and your coterie-mate each make your own test against a base Difficulty of 2 plus any Feed Penalty.

Modify the Difficulty according to your intent:

- +0 if you intend just a quick bite (slake 1 Hunger) in confusion or combat.
- +2 if you intend to disable or capture your target for a bigger drink or diablerie.

Further modify the Difficulty by the nature of your target:

- +0 if they are weaker than you (higher generation, new-fledged, otherwise at a disadvantage).
- +1 if their Wits or Strength Attribute is higher than yours; +2 if both are higher than yours.
- +1 if they have any Discipline at a higher level than your highest-level Discipline.

If you win, you feed as intended. If either of you fail, the target can identify the failed attacker. If you both fail, your target can also feed on one or both of you, or otherwise exact a penalty. (Work out the specific result with the Storyteller.) As in regular one-roll conflicts, each player character then takes Aggravated damage equal to the difference between their successes and twice the Difficulty. (Lose Health levels from a physical attack; Willpower levels from a scam or deception attack.) This damage cannot be mitigated by armor or supernatural means such as Fortitude.

From these results, and from the Disciplines you and your partner used, describe and roleplay the scene that just happened for (and with) the Storyteller, in directed freeform style (*Vampire*, p. 291).



Cleaver

Cleavers feed on their families and friends. No need to “hunt,” per se — Cleavers dwell among their prey and carefully maintain bonds with them so they’re always close by. Defensive Cleavers sometimes claim they keep their humanity among their humans. Others say it’s like ants raising aphids to drink their nectar.

The Stalk

Charisma + Persuasion: Finding activities to do with partners and friends isn’t hard — but finding activities that give the chance for a little snack means some planned cajoling.

The Feed

Manipulation + Subterfuge: Keeping your friends and family close and trusting. The most important part is covering up your trail so you can feed from them again.

TABLE 6: THE STALK FOR CLEAVERS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Movie night, featuring a long, slow film.	2	+2
3–4	Long walk around the neighborhood with a loved one.	2	+2
5–6	Backyard barbeque or party crowded with your friends.	3	+1
7–8	PTA or alumni event with a mixer afterward.	4	+1
9–0	Crowded get-together of multiple generations of your family.	5	+1

TABLE 7: THE FEED FOR CLEAVERS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Your unsuspecting spouse/partner or hookup.	Sanguine	2	You don’t quite lick the wound clean. The next night they joke about their “vampire hickey.”
3–4	An aging relative.	Phlegmatic	2	Your partner finds a hard-to-explain bloodstain on your clothes.
5–6	Activity buddy (knitting circle, hiking partner, recipe swapper).	Sanguine	3	Activity buddy’s partner notices something going on. You see a text they sent a friend asking about you.
7–8	Close friend from school or work.	Phlegmatic	4	They begin to feel like something’s off. They set up a home camera.
9–0	Your suspicious spouse/partner or hookup.	Melancholy	5	They feel like you’re keeping secrets. Take two levels of Superficial Willpower damage.

Consensualist

Consensualists want their victim to know they're being fed on and to say *yes* to it. Some Kindred compelled to Consensualism possess a sense of ethics. Others let romantic yearning drive them or crave the power-play satisfaction when the other person capitulates.

The Stalk

Manipulation + Persuasion: Your hunting ground is more conceptual than literal. Finding people willing to give you their blood requires investigating many possible routes: impersonating medical workers, confiding in friends, going to very kinky spaces, etc.

The Feed

Composure + Etiquette: Your victims have to feel respected when you're finished, like they knew what they were getting into. If they don't, they don't come back. What that looks like is up to you, whether it's medicine, aftercare, a firm handshake and \$10 gift card for the nearest big box store, or a lovingly homemade dinner.

TABLE 8: THE STALK FOR CONSENSUALISTS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Kink sex club.	2	+1
3–4	Message boards, weird social media, the grimy corners of online.	3	+1
5–6	Home nursing company with low hiring standards.	3	+2
7–8	Fake blood donation truck.	4	+2
9–0	Frank honesty.	5	+2

TABLE 9: THE FEED FOR CONSENSUALISTS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Stranger you won't meet again.	Choleric	2	The wound won't close quite right.
3–4	Patient you provide "home testing" for.	Melancholy	2	They're getting sick and need an actual nurse.
5–6	Old hand at your chosen hunting ground.	Phlegmatic	3	She knows something's kind of off here. She corners you and asks what's up.
7–8	Curious acquaintance.	Sanguine	4	You spot another Kindred, who's not a Consensualist like you.
9–0	Someone you know and care about.	Roll on the Random Blood Table (p. 49)	5	Well. Now they know you're a vampire. Or they think you're a weirdo. Or worse, both.

Extortionist

Extortionists (*Players Guide*, p. 107) relish the power trip, always giving their victims the “choice” to submit to them and be “safe.” Some love the thrill of the shakedown, others get off on being the “neighborhood protector.”

The Stalk

Stamina + Investigation: You have a more defined hunting ground than most, as you rely on old-school Mafia strong-arm tactics. Specific houses, apartments, and businesses across the city make up your metaphorical block, and you patrol it carefully.

The Feed

Strength or Manipulation + Intimidation: Once you’ve chosen which building on your block to hit, it’s time to show your victim how tough you are and extract your price.

TABLE 10: THE STALK FOR EXTORTIONISTS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Housing project.	2	+2
3–4	Illegal gambling establishment.	2	+2
5–6	Family-owned business in a rough part of town.	3	+1
7–8	Bar, probably on the dive-ish side.	4	+1
9–0	New turf! You’ll be shaking down this victim for the first time.	5	+1

TABLE 11: THE FEED FOR EXTORTIONISTS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Terrified older woman who employs you (or wants to employ you) as a “bodyguard” or (if she senses something strange) “spirit guardian.”	Melancholy	2	She demands a demonstration of your abilities.
3–4	Middle-aged bartender struggling with debt.	Choleric	2	You hear someone’s tipped off your Enemy or Stalker to your location.
5–6	Carder (p. 12) in hiding from the Kindred he worked for.	Phlegmatic	3	You accidentally leave behind an object—one a Carder (or a Deletionist, p. 16, if he knows one) can use to find you.
7–8	24-hour store clerk.	Melancholy	4	The store had new security installed.
9–0	Small club owner.	Choleric	5	He sics the bouncer on you. Build as Gangster (<i>Vampire</i> , p. 371).

Farmer

Farmers feed exclusively on animals. Despite removing the human element, this practice ends up being far more difficult than most Kindred expect — if only because the number of prey hunted must necessarily go up. Twelve rats *almost* feels like a full meal.

The Stalk

Resolve + Animal Ken or Science: You must learn the hunting seasons with as much care as any mortal hunter. What animals come to your territory in spring or in winter? Where do they congregate and travel? Which ones square up for a fight when approached, and which run?

The Feed

Composure + Animal Ken: Chasing animals is harder than chasing people in many respects.

Animals can't be manipulated or shamed into sticking around for you to work on them — most untamed creatures (and more than a few tame ones) flee from you, assuming you're trying to hurt them. Which you are.

All animal blood has Animal resonance by default. If the chronicle features a Farmer character, the Storyteller might want to incorporate the optional rules for Animal Humors (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 227). Those optional resonances appear in the Farmer Feed Table in parentheses.

TABLE 12: THE STALK FOR FARMERS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Alley behind a busy restaurant with bursting dumpsters.	2	+1
3–4	Large graveyard with big trees, old stones, and a surprising number of animals.	2	+1
5–6	Botanical garden.	3	+1
7–8	Gardens of one of the big mansions in the old-money district.	4	+2
9–0	Small city zoo.	5	+2

TABLE 13: THE FEED FOR FARMERS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	A nest of rats.	Animal (Melancholy)	2	The rats have just eaten their fill of tasty poison traps. Lose one die from all pools; take 2 levels of Poison damage (<i>Vampire</i> , p. 310).
3–4	Stray cat colony.	Animal (Sanguine)	2	Urban wildlife researchers studying city critters. They definitely spot you.
5–6	Urban trash-can wildlife: raccoons, opossums, and foxes.	Animal (Phlegmatic)	3	Flustered owner looking for their missing pet, demands a phone number from you.
7–8	Large herbivorous or omnivorous animal: deer, pony, pig.	Animal (Phlegmatic)	4	Identifying object falls, unnoticed, into a nearby bush.
9–0	Large carnivorous animal: coyote, big dog, adventurous bear.	Animal (Choleric)	5	The animal fights back. Take two levels of Superficial damage.

Graverobber

Graverobbers (*Players Guide*, p. 108) are compelled by death: new corpses, new grief, new endings. Maybe it's the gothic appeal, maybe it's the idea that you are what you eat. Like Baggers, Graverobbers' preferred meal doesn't usually have any Resonance lingering in it.

The Stalk

Manipulation + Investigation: Finding death is quite easy — social media makes it easy to find people talking about dying relatives in the hospital or funeral announcements. Getting *in* is a little trickier.

The Feed

Resolve + Medicine: Knowing how to get the blood started from a corpse is an art — blood pools in certain places, especially after lying on a morgue slab for a couple of days. For about a week to 10 days after death (until decomposition truly sets in), you can draw blood from the femoral or subclavian veins if you know *how* to cut. For living vessels, it's more about knowing *when* to stop.

TABLE 14: THE STALK FOR GRAVEROBBERS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Funeral home.	2	+1
3–4	Body Snatcher's (p. 12) hangout.	3	+1
5–6	Mausoleum with recent(ish) corpses. The Graveyard Poet (p. 17) may be near.	3	+1
7–8	Morgue. The Mortician/Morgue Attendant (p. 18) is working there.	4	+1
9–0	ICU ward.	5	+2

TABLE 15: THE FEED FOR GRAVEROBBERS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Fresh corpse.	Roll on Random Blood Table on p. 55 if it's that fresh.	2	You can't lick truly dead flesh closed. There's a visible wound.
3–4	Day-old corpse.	None	2	Another Kindred got here first. The body's almost drained: only slakes 1 Hunger.
5–6	Days-old corpse.	None	3	You get a little blood on your fingers during your meal. Enough for one fingerprint.
7–8	Dying person.	Melancholy	4	They awaken and cry out.
9–0	Mourner or exhausted visitor.	Melancholy	5	You've been seen at funerals a lot, and the funeral director found your name.

Grim Reaper

Grim Reapers (*Players Guide*, p. 108) feed on the dying and the ill. They relish the Angel of Death angle, or claim they enjoy the flavor of diseases in their victims’ blood — the rarer the better.

The Stalk

Intelligence + Awareness: Unwell people are most concentrated in hospitals, but it’s very possible to find the sick and ailing scattered across the city — in hospice centers, nursing homes, and private homes. Getting access usually means sneaking in as either a visitor or a staff member, although simple larceny is always an option as well.

The Feed

Intelligence + Stealth or Medicine: Once you find a victim, you must act quickly to feed before EMTs or nurses arrive. Knowing how to handle medical alert equipment so their various alarms don’t blare the moment blood pressure drops is key.

TABLE 16: THE STALK FOR GRIM REAPERS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Assisted living home.	2	+2
3–4	Hospice center.	2	+2
5–6	Emergency room.	3	+2
7–8	Homeless shelter.	4	+1
9–0	Hospital ICU.	5	+1

TABLE 17: THE FEED FOR GRIM REAPERS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Homeless woman with pneumonia.	Phlegmatic	2	You leave behind marks on the victim’s body. If she’s examined by a Crime Scene Technician (p. 14) or a Medical Examiner (p. 17), they’ll know.
3–4	Elderly man with a stroke.	Choleric	2	Grieving family mistakes you for one of the nurses.
5–6	Young person with lung failure.	Melancholy	3	Halfway through the feed, you suck out a huge clot and the patient suddenly starts breathing better.
7–8	Gunshot wound victim.	Choleric	4	Buddies arrive to help out and are surprised to find he has a visitor.
9–0	Long-haul cancer patient.	Melancholy	5	Turns out chemotherapy drugs are really nasty. Subtract two from your Physical dice pool until you reach Hunger 5.

Montero

Monteros (*Players Guide*, p. 108) turn to a trusted group of Retainers to drive prey toward them in the noble tradition of the hunt. Once the Retainers have isolated their prey, the Montero swoops in for the killing (or maiming) blow. They bestow gifts and gratitude upon their Retainers after a successful hunt, especially if their Hunger was fully slaked.

The Stalk

Intelligence + Leadership: Laying the groundwork for your Retainers requires careful planning. This is the most difficult section of your hunt: carefully arranging the chessboard to make sure it's checkmate in two moves.

The Feed

Resolve + Stealth: Once your victim is driven close to your waiting fangs, it's down to you to take the bite. Patience and time are key.

TABLE 18: THE STALK FOR MONTEROS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Music festival in the desert; Retainers bring back guests to the tent.	2	+2
3–4	News team conducting street interviews; Retainers pose as cameramen.	3	+2
5–6	Wellness retreat; Retainers bring guests into the sweat lodge to “cleanse.”	4	+2
7–8	Fancy restaurant; Retainers give solo diners a “tour of the kitchen.”	4	+2
9–0	Protest kettle; Retainers pose as police officers closing in on activists.	5	+2

TABLE 19: THE FEED FOR MONTEROS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Young man looking for adventure.	Sanguine	2	Your hunt veers too close to another Kindred's territory.
3–4	Well-to-do businesswoman.	Phlegmatic	2	Multiple moving pieces means multiple opportunities for failure. One of your Retainers left behind incriminating evidence.
5–6	Upbeat subculture enthusiast (gourmand, techno music fan, goth, etc.).	Sanguine	2	The victim or a companion manages to slip out of the monteria, vanishing like a deer in the mist.
7–8	Incognito local celebrity.	Melancholy	3	You fed too deeply, and their handlers and fans are sure to notice something's up.
9–0	Activist or protester.	Choleric	3	Your victim fights back, focused and intense. Your beaters pay the price. Remove one dot (•) in Retainers for the rest of the session.

Osiris

The Osiris craves the rush of adulation and the roar of the crowd. How wonderful that they can use their abilities to snatch it from thin air! They’re obsessed with celebrity, or maybe they’re desperate for affection (or, probably, both).

The Stalk

Charisma + Performance or Subterfuge: When the Hunger rises in you, so does the inspiration. You funnel it all into a big performance — a concert, a sermon, a speech — to inflame your Herd with excitement and breathe a flush into your cheeks once more.

The Feed

Composure + Intimidation + Fame: Now that your stage is set, you can exert your celebrity on your rapt audience. Luckily, most members of your Herd would kill to have a moment alone with you. You need to balance that adoration carefully — it can sometimes cause trouble in your Herd if you’re perceived as playing favorites too much.

TABLE 20: THE STALK FOR OSIRISES

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Herd member’s living room.	2	+2
3–4	Theater stage.	2	+2
5–6	Concert hall.	3	+1
7–8	VIP area of a club.	4	+1
9–0	Church sanctuary.	4	+1

TABLE 21: THE FEED FOR OSIRISES

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Devoted Herd member.	Sanguine	1	No complications.
3–4	New recruit.	Sanguine	2	Some members of your Herd get jealous. Drop your Herd’s rating by 1, unless it is already at 1.
5–6	Visiting skeptic.	Choleric	3	They couldn’t believe what they saw. They have to see it again. Gain one dot (•) in the Stalker Flaw.
7–8	Interested walk-in.	Melancholy	4	They’re kind of... not into this. Take one level of Superficial Willpower damage.
9–0	Curious journalist. Build them with Crime Scene Reporter (p. 14) or Nightcrawler (p. 20).	Phlegmatic	5	They had a microphone going the whole time. You only discover it when you notice the windscreen fell off. Was it uploading to the cloud... or to another journalist?

Pursuer

Pursuers (*Players Guide*, p. 108) are the persistence hunters, following one victim steadily until they collapse. They love believing they are the apex predators in the city, or just like to sense their victims' hearts fluttering with panic. Their hunts can take place over days, weeks, or just hours. Unlike other Predator Types, Pursuers focus from the beginning on a victim. In their second phase, they chase down their victim, coaxing them into a frenzy of fear or paranoia.

The Stalk

Intelligence + Investigation: Finding a likely target in the vast sea of mortals takes a bit of legwork. Who lives alone, who rarely goes out with friends? Who has a reputation for being paranoid, or a liar?

The Feed

Stamina + Stealth: Pursuing your target quietly—sometimes not too quietly—and keeping them in your sights.

Storytellers and players can roll randomly on the table below to quickly decide how the hunt is conducted; or the Storyteller can ask the player how they plan to carry out their hunt and match the closest Pursuit to their answer.

TABLE 22: THE STALK FOR PURSUERS

Roll or Choose	Target	Resonance	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Middle-aged unmarried factory worker in an industrial district or at the docks.	Melancholy	2	+2
3–4	Small-time drug dealer with a recent ex.	Choleric	2	+2
5–6	Night-shift security guard at the strip mall.	Phlegmatic	3	+2
7–8	High-strung musician trekking across town for practice.	Melancholy	4	+1
9–0	Member of the clergy (<i>Vampire</i> , p. 371).	Sanguine	5	+1

TABLE 23: THE FEED FOR PURSUERS

Roll or Choose	Pursuit	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	<i>The Stalker:</i> You start showing up at their favorite bar, and they glimpse you outside work.	2	Your victim calls in help—either the cops or local gangsters.
3–4	<i>The Ghost:</i> Your victim doesn't know you're there at all, but you know exactly where they are.	2	You leave behind a single identifying piece of physical evidence—hair, a cigarette butt, etc.
5–6	<i>The Monster:</i> You let them spot you places a human couldn't possibly be.	3	The victim puts out an advertisement for an exorcist, and someone answers.
7–8	<i>The Driver:</i> You start subtly pushing them to go where you want, when you want.	4	Puppet-mastering someone else is distracting. Take two levels of Superficial Willpower damage.
9–0	<i>The Gaslighter:</i> You've lived in the same building as them for months! They just hadn't noticed before, right?	5	Someone you know (mortal or Kindred) happens to visit the building, and they see you.

Sandman

Sandmen hunt sleeping victims. They're the cat burglars of the Kindred world — silently in and out, and preferably no one the wiser. The Sandman unlifestyle appeals to the quiet types who prefer not to look their victims in the eye or to the very predatory types who like their prey completely helpless.

The Stalk

Dexterity + Larceny: Everyone sleeps. Every house on every block is potentially a hunting ground. The trick comes in making sure you know how to get *out* once you get *in*.

The Feed

Composure + Stealth: Once you're inside your victim's bedroom, you need to make sure they stay in their deep dreaming state. If all else fails, you can try to pass yourself off as a vivid sleep paralysis demon.

TABLE 24: THE STALK FOR SANDMEN

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Crowded housing project.	2	+2
3–4	College dormitory.	2	+2
5–6	Hospital recovery wing.	3	+1
7–8	Suburban cul-de-sac.	4	+1
9–0	Wealthy neighborhood with exposed verandas.	5	+1

TABLE 25: THE FEED FOR SANDMEN

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Homeless person sleeping outside.	Phlegmatic	2	Someone coming to check on them sees a sign of you.
3–4	Sick child or adult.	Phlegmatic	2	The patient was given a hearty dose of cough medicine—enough to subtract one die from the vampire's Physical dice pool for a scene.
5–6	Couple sleeping together.	Sanguine	3	One of the couple is a Siren (p. 46) who is royally pissed at you. Build as Anarch Revolutionary (<i>Vampire: The Masquerade</i> , p. 374).
7–8	Person suffering from night terrors.	Choleric	4	They attack you in their sleep. You must take the damage to avoid waking them. One level of Superficial damage.
9–0	A chronic insomniac.	Melancholy	5	Insomnia's made them paranoid—they write online about aliens with fangs breaking into their room.

Scene Queen

Scene Queens rule the roost in a particular subculture — whether that's high-society debutante balls or underground noise metal concerts. They take their sustenance from fellow scenesters interested in getting close to them and basking in their glow.

The Stalk

Manipulation + Persuasion: You keep a very close eye on everyone in your particular scene, judging who needs to be taken down a notch and who raised up — all to make sure your grip on the tiller of popularity stays firm.

The Feed

Charisma + Leadership: You present yourself as the ultimate friend, patron, seer, goddess... and for most of your chosen scene, you are. Whatever your victim wants you to give them, you can provide it. As long as they do what you say.

TABLE 26: THE STALK FOR SCENE QUEENS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Afterparty of the afterparty.	2	+2
3–4	Semi-public event: art gallery opening, concert, etc.	2	+2
5–6	Clothes shopping expedition.	3	+1
7–8	Birthday party of fellow scenester (mortal or Kindred).	4	+1
9–0	Meetup of scenesters.	5	+1

TABLE 27: THE FEED FOR SCENE QUEENS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Wannabe desperate for your attention.	Choleric	2	Overenthusiasm is contagious. You drink more than you intended.
3–4	Scene newbie who's heard your name tossed around.	Sanguine	2	They film a video of the evening and make sure to showcase you!
5–6	Old hand in the scene.	Melancholy	3	They have taken drugs that disagree with you. Subtract one from your Mental dice pool for the next two scenes.
7–8	Rival ready to snipe you at the slightest slip.	Choleric	4	They tell everyone who listens that you "did something to them."
9–0	Off-duty cop into the scene (or on-duty cop investigating it). Build as Police Detective (<i>Vampire</i> , p. 371).	Phlegmatic	5	Raising the hackles of local law enforcement is never good.

Siren

Sirens lure their victims with the promise of passion and sexuality. It's a draw for Kindred looking to connect with life even in their undeath, as well as for vampires who like the influence they can exert over others.

The Stalk

Charisma + Subterfuge: The city's not lacking for spaces where people are horny and looking to hook up. Your main concern is not returning to the same spot too many times.

The Feed

Manipulation + Persuasion: You're trying to get someone to come back home with you (or go back to theirs). It's often not very difficult, once the initial attraction's been established.

TABLE 28: THE STALK FOR SIRENS

Roll or Choose	Hunting Ground	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Raucous bar after a sports game or party.	2	+2
3–4	Music festival or rave.	2	+2
5–6	Dating app.	3	+1
7–8	Sex club.	4	+1
9–0	Lonely hearts on the night train.	5	+1

TABLE 29: THE FEED FOR SIRENS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Drunk person looking to get back at their cheating ex.	Choleric	2	Their ex comes looking for them.
3–4	Cheerful dancer looking for a good time.	Sanguine	2	Maybe they're still high, maybe they're freaked out—either way, they make a scene and someone calls the cops.
5–6	Wistful lover hoping to find romance.	Melancholy	3	They believe you fell in love. Gain one dot (•) in the Stalker Flaw.
7–8	Older regular at wherever you find yourself.	Sanguine	4	They say the worst thing they could say to you. Take two levels of Superficial Willpower damage.
9–0	The one that got away.	Phlegmatic	5	They remember you, of course. They remember... something happening. They're trying to figure out what.

Trapdoor

Trapdoors (*Players Guide*, p. 109) make the prey walk into their open mouth. It's all about the delight of a plan well executed, the thrill of being cleverer or faster than the other guy. *Won't you come into my parlor...?*

The Stalk

Manipulation + Persuasion: To pull victims into your hunting ground, you need to lay your lures carefully. Most Trapdoors already have their hunting ground prepared, or perhaps a choice of one or two lurking locations. Their stalk stage consists of luring in prey, not going out to seek it. You need bait along with your hook and line.

The Feed

Charisma or Dexterity + Stealth: Once your prey has stepped into your web, it's time to creep up on them and sink your fangs in.

TABLE 30: THE STALK FOR TRAPDOORS

Roll or Choose	Lure	Difficulty	Feed Penalty
1–2	Pre-existing reputation as haunted or edgy, amped up by rumors or planted stories on social media.	2	+2
3–4	A warm and welcoming light from the window on a cold or rainy night.	2	+1
5–6	Fun! Neon! Loud party sounds!	3	+1
7–8	A roper, someone who gets the wallets and phones of your victims if they lure them in for you.	4	+2
9–0	Pre-existing reputation as safe and boring and open all night, maintained by your extreme caution.	5	+1

TABLE 31: THE FEED FOR TRAPDOORS

Roll or Choose	Victim	Resonance	Difficulty	Complication
1–2	Drunk teenagers.	Sanguine	2	One of them is livestreaming the whole night.
3–4	Artist looking for inspiration.	Melancholy	2	You show up in their art.
5–6	Serial Killer (p. 21).	Choleric or Empty	3	They've come to your lair to either find prey or find a dumping ground. There's a body in their car trunk.
7–8	Urban explorers.	Sanguine	4	They're surprisingly fast and strong, for mortals. Take one level of Superficial damage when one pulls a weapon.
9–0	Heavily armed person checking out the spot thanks to rumored disappearances.	Melancholy	5	They expected something like this. Build them with the Faith Hunter (<i>Vampire</i> , p. 371).

TABLE 32: PREDATION CYCLES SUMMARY

Predator Type	Act of Predation	Target	Stalk Pool	Feed Pool
Alleycat	Physically overpowering an isolated vessel, deserving or not.	Mortal	Wits + Streetwise	Strength + Brawl
Bagger	Locate corpses or medical waste. Finding preserved blood or a corpse.	Bagged Blood	Intelligence + Streetwise	Composure + Larceny
Blood Leech	Cannibalism, bargaining, or extortion: you prey on other Kindred.	Kindred Vitae	Wits + Investigation, Subterfuge, or Stealth	One-Roll Conflict (e.g., Discipline + Brawl)
Cleaver	Grooming and gaslighting. You cultivate vessels, they may eventually become your Herd.	Mortal	Charisma + Persuasion	Manipulation + Subterfuge
Consensualist	Grooming and validating. You cultivate vessels through truth rather than guile.	Mortal	Manipulation + Persuasion	Resolve + Etiquette
Extortionist	Coercion, by threat or implication.	Mortal	Stamina + Investigation	Strength or Manipulation + Intimidation
Farmer	Animal predation. You hunt lesser game.	Animal	Insight + Animal Ken or Science	Composure + Animal Ken
Graverobber	You seek prey among the dying and dead, or their mourners.	Mortal	Manipulation + Investigation	Resolve + Medicine
Grim Reaper	You feed on the diseased and dying.	Mortal	Intelligence + Awareness	Intelligence + Stealth or Medicine
Montero	Coordinated hunt. Your retainers drive your prey to you.	Mortal	Intelligence + Leadership	Resolve + Stealth
Osiris	Fame and grooming. You feed from your cult, your followers, your groupies.	Mortal	Manipulation + Performance or Subterfuge	Intimidation + Fame
Pursuer	You study and stalk a specific vessel, running them down slowly or quickly.	Mortal	Intelligence + Investigation	Stamina + Stealth
Sandman	Breaking and entering. You feed from the sleeping.	Mortal	Dexterity + Larceny	Composure + Stealth
Scene Queen	You feed from your subculture, a piranha fish in a small pond.	Mortal	Manipulation + Persuasion	Charisma + Leadership
Siren	You feed under the guise of sex.	Mortal	Charisma + Subterfuge	Manipulation + Persuasion
Trapdoor	You wait for the prey to enter your trap, or lure them in.	Mortal	Manipulation + Persuasion	Charisma or Dexterity + Stealth

The Hunt For Oblivion

When Kindred hunt for resonance, they seek individuals with a particularly dominant emotional quality. Scholars of Oblivion, particularly common among the Hecata and Lasombra, define certain individuals as *empty of resonance* or *void* — rather than having any dominant (or even noticeable) emotional

trait, they remain preternaturally emotionally detached. Empty resonance occurs most often in the blood of psychopaths, the deeply traumatized, certain suicidal types, and (according to some Hecata) mortals intimately associated over long periods with wraiths or specters. Much to the frustration of those who practice Oblivion, it's not particularly common.

The Random Blood Table on p. 49 adds Empty resonance, replacing the table on p. 228 of the core rulebook. (If no character in your chronicle can use Oblivion, the corebook table still works.)

TABLE 33: RANDOM BLOOD TABLE

Random Temperament	Random Resonance
1–5: Well-balanced, negligible Resonance	1–2: Phlegmatic
6–8: Fleeting	3–4: Melancholy
9: Intense	5–6: Choleric
0: Potentially acute: roll again below: 1–6: Intense, 7–0: Acute	7–8: Sanguine
	9–0: Roll again; on a second 9 or 0, Empty of Resonance

Dyscrasias of Emptiness (Optional Rule)

Technically, there shouldn't be any such thing as a dyscrasia of emptiness: you can't have an acute spike of nothing. However, for story balance purposes, or just as a method of inserting further notes of horror, the Storyteller might want to add something similar to dyscrasias in Empty blood. Some Hecata call these spikes of power *shadow scars*, believing that the mortal's blood has been emptied of resonance by experience across the Veil.

Like other dyscrasias, the Storyteller should tailor the effects of shadow scars to their chronicle. Here are a few horrific shadow scars to use as samples.

Enforced Stoicism: Add two dice to pools to resist Frenzy and remove two dice from pools involving Empathy.

Emptiness: Gain 1 free experience point towards the purchase of Oblivion. This fully consumes the dyscrasia.

Sadistic Glee: Add one die to dice pools to cause harm to others.

Unfeeling: Add one die to any tests to resist being seduced or persuaded.

Morally Numb: Add one die to Remorse tests.

Ditching Emptiness (Optional Rule)

Oblivion, Animalism, and Protean don't follow the same rules as other Disciplines in terms of

Resonance. For some troupes, this creates exciting dynamics for clans specializing in these disciplines. For other troupes, however, these characters feel left out of some of the unusual scenes of predation that the other players' characters experience in favor of trips to the zoo to hunt animals in heat or safaris into lupine territory.

Using alternate Resonances can put these characters on the same playing field as the others.

TABLE 34: ALTERNATE RESONANCES FOR DISCIPLINES

Resonance	Disciplines
Choleric	<i>Animalism</i> , Celerity, Potence
Melancholy	Fortitude, Obfuscate, <i>Oblivion</i>
Phlegmatic	Auspex, Dominate
Sanguine	Blood Sorcery, Presence, <i>Protean</i>

Night Maps

Night Maps is an optional system to assist troupes in creating more fleshed-out domains and cities. The troupe begins by deciding on a district in the chronicle's city, possibly their pre-existing domain. Then each player selects a site tied to their character's Predator Type and adds it to the Relationship Map (*Vampire*, p. 142).

With that preparation done, select a player to lead their Tour: they pick a question about the district, and visit a site to investigate or answer it by interacting with its residents. Once that player has played their vignette, another player leads their own Tour. By the end of the Night Maps session, the whole troupe has a better picture of their chosen district, and the Storyteller has lots of rich details and new supporting characters to introduce into the main chronicle.

The next Night Maps session begins with the district and sites already chosen and mapped. If a new site has become important (or seemed cool or interesting) in the course of regular play, go ahead and add it to the Relationship Map. Or just play out a new Tour or two on the old map, but dig a little deeper on the question this time to build your game environment even more richly.

Decide Your District

Lay out the Relationship Map (or pull it up on the screen) and draw a circle near the center. Either work together as a troupe or through Princely fiat (if the Storyteller has a particular regional hook in mind) to decide the type of district your coterie's domain lies in. If your coterie already has a domain, you may just be deciding which district type best describes it. In general, try to pick a district that aligns with the coterie's vibe — for a crew of hard-scrabble artists and Anarchs, the Latin Quarter (p. 27) or the Harbor (p. 26) might align well with character goals and give players a chance to improvise freely. For a group of Camarilla hard-liners, somewhere like the Media Sector (p. 28) or Financial district (p. 26) provides many opportunities for introducing new characters and allows Storytellers to lean into the themes of the chronicle. Write the name of your district in the circle on the Relationship Map.

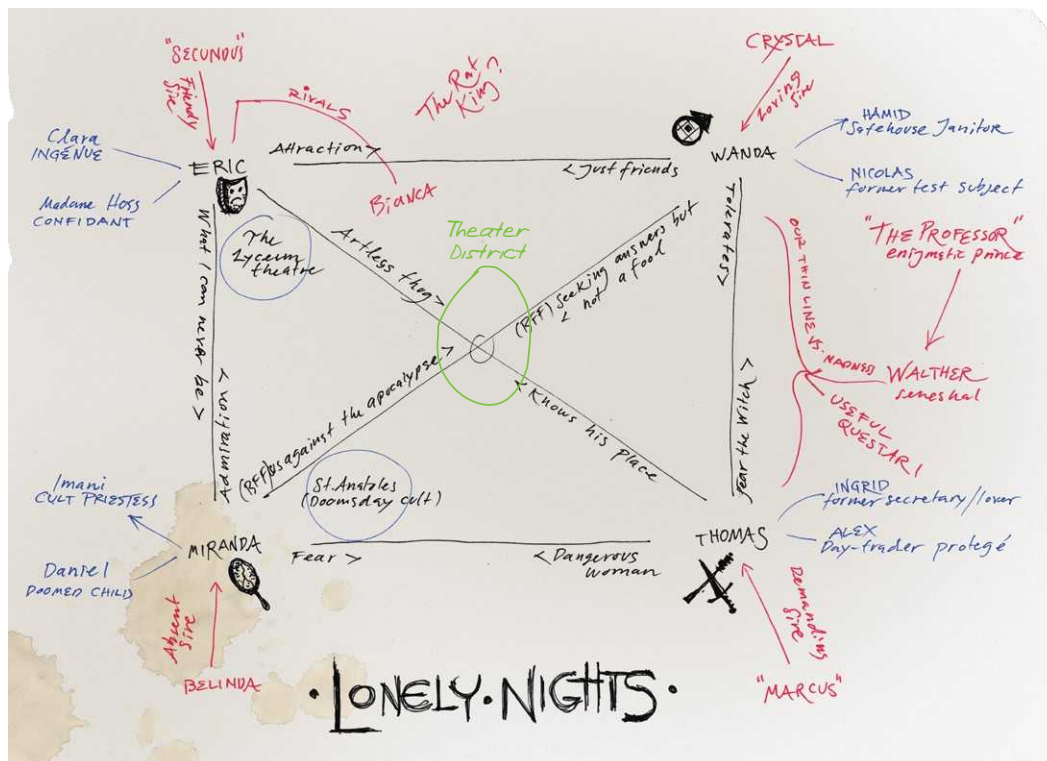
Which District?

With so many choices, picking the district for a first (and sometimes only) domain might seem

intimidating. A quick way to find one that'll fit your needs is to consider the political landscape the coterie finds itself in. Are they Anarchs allied with the city's ruler? If so, the Prince or Anarch Council has probably given them the run of a fitting domain, rich with potential opportunities for feeding. On the other hand, a coterie of Camarilla vampires butting heads with their local Prince or Council is going to get the stick rather than the carrot. If the coterie doesn't have a domain at all, then feel free to pick two or three districts to play in. Using the Lean choices for their allegiance will give a good sense of "hiding out" from the city's Kindred authorities.

Picking Sites

Once the troupe has located their domain within a particular district, the vampires must find their hunting ground inside (legal) or outside (illegal) the domain. Go clockwise from the top left of the relationship map; each player creates or decides on a site connected to the district that complements their character's Predator Type, and writes it onto the map. An Osiris player can create a storefront theater where she performs to adoring fans, while the Farmer



DEFINING YOUR DISTRICT

Depending on your group, you may want to leave specific districts loosely defined as long as you can. On which street, exactly, the Warehouse District begins doesn't matter in play: vampires aren't realtors, and any street might have a warehouse left over from a previous century when the Warehouse District was all the way across town. What matters to the Kindred are domain boundaries, which might be carefully delineated by a perfectionist Tremere Prince or contested in a city run by rival Anarch moots—or both! In short, boundaries exist to drive story, not to bog down play by looking at maps.

That said, if your troupe loves printing out a city map and drawing lines on it, and rolling with the vagaries of actual geography, knock yourselves out. You'll likely find whole new types of district to add to your setting, and your list of sites and hunting grounds is as close as your phone. Just don't get so distracted by the map that you neglect your coterie's territory.

TABLE 35: DISTRICT SELECTION TABLE

	Allies of the Prince or Council	On the outs with the Prince or Council
Anarch	Fat Domain Chinatown, Gallery Circuit, Harbor, Latin Quarter, Little Italy, The Rack, Slum, Subway	Lean Domain Airport, Corporate Sector, Financial Sector, Gated Community
Camarilla	Fat Domain Corporate Sector, Financial Sector, Gated Community, Jewelers' Row, Media Sector, The Rack, Theater Circuit	Lean Domain Harbor, Industrial Works, Latin Quarter, Sewers, Slum, Subway

describes the alley where he can harvest rats freely. Each coterie member should have a site connected to their name and the district circle by the end.

Sites (*Vampire*, p. 333) are landmarks or locations where stories happen: they might be the park around the old Civil War statue, an all-night camera shop, a bar, a police station, or anywhere open or interesting at night. You can extrapolate a site from any of the hunting grounds in the Predation Cycles section (pp. 29–48). For 100 more sample sites, see the *Storyteller's Toolkit* (pp. 23–37).

Try to keep the sites geographically together, giving the characters opportunities to interact with the whole environment. Don't sweat it if that means the Scene Queen's roller rink is next to the Pursuer's occult bookshop is next to the Alleycat's parking garage. Big cities have unusual mashups of buildings in practically every neighborhood. A particularly location-based group, like a Cerberus coterie, should obviously make one of their sites the home of their treasure.

If the coterie previously bought any amount of the Chasse Trait (*Vampire*, p. 195) for their domain, they may be able to say their hunting ground lies within their domain's borders as long as the

number of dots they put into Chasse allows for their particular Predator Type's inclinations. Some, like the Sandman or Alleycat, can easily make their flavor of vampirism work within a one-dot (•) Chasse: the Sandman can lurk on a fire escape waiting for people to start snoring, while the Alleycat might find a shadowy doorway to wait for a potential target to wander by. Others, like the Bagger or Graverobber, need a much larger site like a graveyard or morgue. Larger sites require larger space, at least a two-dot (••) Chasse.

In the (likely) case that a domain's Chasse Trait isn't high enough to allow for the entire coterie to hunt within the safety of their domain—great! Sneaking outside the approved domain for an illegal hunt is exciting and dramatic, and it's a great way for Storytellers to bring in new characters and challenges.

Importantly, a medium or larger site (usually Chasse ••• and up) can support multiple hunting grounds. A university campus has dozens of buildings, from coffee shops to gyms to multiple libraries. Amusement parks have food joints, from kebab stands to full-blown restaurants, even occasionally five-star hotels attached.

TABLE 36: SITES BY CHASSE TABLE

Chasse Trait	Potential Sites within Domain
—	No sites within the domain; all sites on the map are technically illegal to hunt within.
•	One city block or suburban gated community. Large enough to include one or two small sites: e.g., alley, dive bar, lawyer's office, kebab stand.
••	Two to four city blocks. Large enough to include three or four small sites: e.g., animal shelter, bookstore, clinic, laundromat.
•••	Eight blocks with a major street running through the middle. Large enough to support several small sites and/or one medium site: a hospital, a casino, City Hall—buildings that take up several blocks with their footprint.
••••	One neighborhood or a whole defined district. Enough to support a large site with many employees: e.g., an amusement park, university campus, chemical plant, or power plant.
•••••	Multiple neighborhoods; enough to cover essentially every site type.

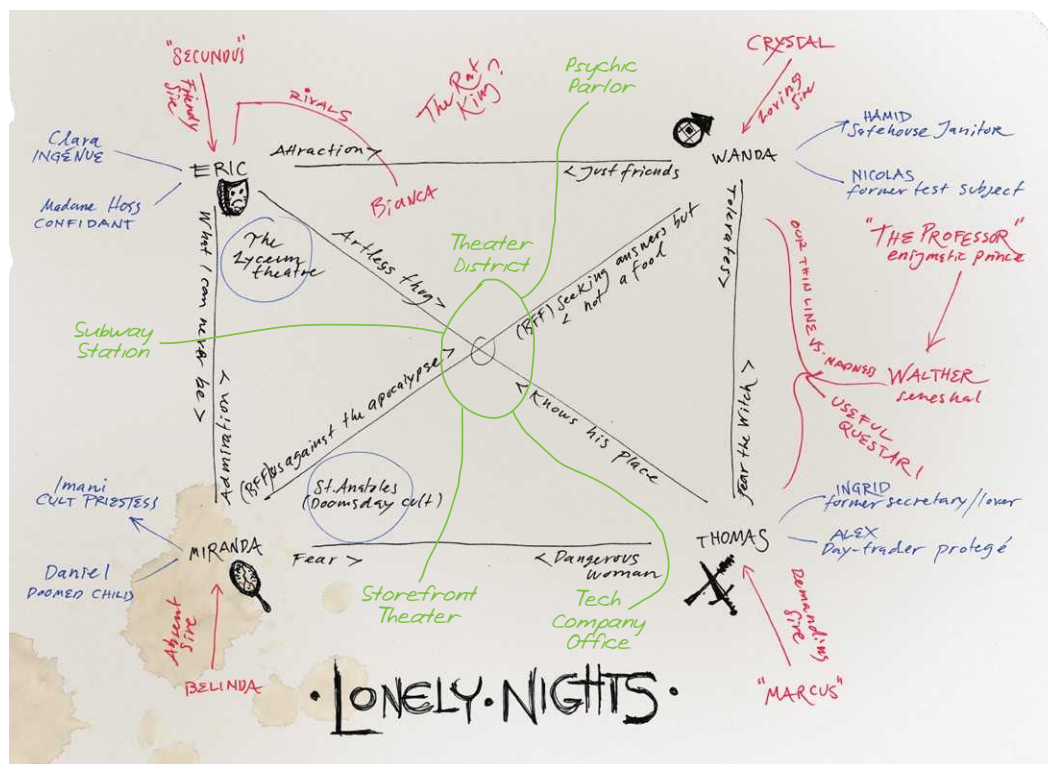
Drawing Connections

Draw a line connecting a coterie's site to them. Treat this like any other relationship line: both sides have an opinion of the other. Does the character think the site has a hidden beauty to it, or do they find visiting it an evil necessity? Does the site regard the vampire as a reliable regular, a strange interloper, a flighty employee?

For each Storyteller character connected to a player's character, draw a line connecting them to a site on the Relationship Map and decide how they're connected to

each other. How does your grad-school friend working the night shift at the clinic feel about it—annoyed, bored, enthusiastic? How does the clinic respond to her—are they looking to fire her? Alarmingly blasé about her concerns? Grateful for her help?

A supporting character doesn't have to connect up to the same site their relevant player wrote on the map — mix and match to the troupe's satisfaction. Feel free to connect multiple characters to the same site, especially if it's a large one. The goal is a web of



connections between the coterie and their supporting cast, not just little clusters at each corner. If you feel like a supporting character should have a different site, add it, but make sure that at least one other player character on the map also connects to that site.

With sites decided, turn players' attention to the older Kindred on the map. Take turns going clockwise again around the players' characters on the Relationship Map and decide which district their respective sires hunt in. Consider again the political angle: is a sire hungry and unhappy in a lean area, or are they living the good unlife in one of the fat domains? It may be useful to draw a quick map showing where the districts are in relation to each other, but don't get too granular and start trying to draw individual streets.

BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

The Night Maps system is designed to produce small, coterie-scale stories. Coterie or characters with bigger appetites for power should buy dots in Influence.

Characters with Influence (*Vampire*, p. 187) can select a region of the city in which they hold the reins; usually, such a region includes more than one District. Such control usually represents a fairly brute-force method of running a town: ward political machines, street gangs, dominant companies, or the like. Players can of course get sneaky and creative on behalf of their characters.

Characters controlling enough districts may wind up wielding Civic-scale dots in Traits for Institutional Conflict (*Camarilla*, p. 192). The Storyteller decides what constitutes sufficient control to add a dot of Prestige or Depth (or rarely Force) to the coterie's arsenal.

The Tour

Tours are short, unconnected vignettes meant to give the whole troupe the opportunity to learn more about their city through play. Going on a Tour resembles entering Memoriam, without the temporal aspect. Each player gets the chance for their character to Tour one of the sites the troupe created around their Relationship Map — any player character can go to any site. As a default, start at the top left of the Map and move through the players' characters around it

clockwise. If a player is tasted up for their Tour, or the ongoing story calls for a focus on (or a cutaway to) a specific character, go with that as the first Tour. However decided, the player who's on deck should think about which site they're most excited to visit. It's very possible to visit the same site twice, especially if it's a large location like a college or city hall.

The Question

To begin a Tour the active player picks a question to answer. These are divided, naturally, into one-, two-, and three-dot categories: Current Events (•), Residents and Groups (••), or Secrets and Lies (•••). During Tours, the troupe should focus on trying to answer the question set at the beginning of the vignette.

Some potential questions for Tours include:

• CURRENT EVENTS

- Why are there fewer people here than usual?
- What event is happening in three days?
- Why is law enforcement showing up?
- Why are people on edge right now?
- How can I get influence over this place?

•• RESIDENTS AND GROUPS

- Who isn't supposed to be here?
- Who is the peacemaker in this place?
- Which two groups are on the verge of conflict?
- Which group is on its back foot?
- Who is the default leader here?

••• SECRETS AND LIES

- Who knows I am connected to the place I want to keep secret?
- What is the secret activity going on here?
- What's in the backroom or basement?
- Why is this the vital to the Prince or Primogen?
- Where are weak spots in the building?

Players whose characters aren't currently Touring play supporting cast members, responding to player character decisions with roleplaying, local drama, and "yes and" improvisation. Prioritize existing Storyteller characters, especially those that have a connection to the site already. When introducing a new supporting character, try to think of ways that they could mesh with a player's character, either complementing or clashing with them. Feel free to draw broad and eclectic characters during a Tour and play against type—it's an opportunity to fill the city with people of all different shapes and sizes. Think of someone who'd be interesting to meet or talk to at the site and bring them into the story.

If a player feels shy about jumping into improvisation without a character sheet, consult the chart of random Residents on p. 55, or the list of 100 Victims (*Storyteller's Toolkit*, pp. 8–21). When a Resident is introduced, tell the troupe what their reputation at the Site is: *Henry Larson, the veterinarian, who everyone knows is a cold and aloof man. Jamie Soo, the grad student, has a reputation as a bleeding heart.*

While the players act out the supporting cast, the Storyteller plays the site itself. Introduce complications with the location—broken equipment at the chemical plant that the workers have to stay late to fix, a snowstorm blowing in, an obviously poor batch being packaged at the drug lab. Bring in Omens (*Storyteller's Toolkit*, pp. 38–39) at the Storyteller's discretion. If it seems like a good place to have an Omen, it probably is!

The Storyteller should make it their goal to keep the action moving, keeping the goal and challenges of the Tour at the forefront of play. These scenes should not be full-length story interludes, unlike undergoing Memoriam. Think of them more like establishing shots in a film, giving players plot hooks to follow and characters to interact with more deeply in the future. An ideal Tour is about five minutes long, maybe a little longer if the players are really feeling it.

The Opposition

The Storyteller should decide an appropriate level of opposition for each Tour, generally one challenge per Question dot. These challenges should ideally be simple tests, or at most One-Roll Conflicts (probably

Social, not Physical) between characters. Try to leave larger conflicts for later; those can boil up into the main story of the night if you like. Letting Residents simmer about threats or insults to them until the players' characters next encounter them helps generate drama and more roleplaying opportunities.

Random Residents

Roll two dice to generate a number between 01 and 100 (two tens). Some of these supporting cast types appear in *Vampire: The Masquerade*, others in *The Living (For Now)* section of this book, as the page numbers indicate. Use the Mortals Templates for quick character creation (*Vampire*, p. 185) if the entry indicates a Weak, Average, or Gifted Mortal, or you need traits for any other Residents you encounter.

Coming Home

When the character has an answer to the Tour question, or when the Storyteller feels that action is flagging, the Storyteller calls the vignette to an end. Make sure the troupe notes down important characters or details around the site; especially any notable complications that the players might have to deal with in the future. The next time the site comes into play, there's a ready-made posse of Storyteller characters ready to inhabit it. Moving to the next Tour can be a completely new event, or it can involve Residents from the last Tour if it makes sense for them to appear. The new lead player can change the question, or decide to take a second (or third, or...) look at it from a slightly different vantage point: the answer to "who started the feud" may be different in the pool hall than it looked from the precinct house!

While one round of Tours should be more than enough to establish Resident characters and plot hooks, the troupe can play multiple rounds of Night Maps and write in several connected sites for each character if they want. When the troupe feels ready to bring their exploration to an end for the time being, ask each player to highlight one thing about another player's site that they're interested in or excited to see play out. This can seed the next Night Maps session, provide a hook for the main chronicle, or both. ■

TABLE 37: RANDOM RESIDENT TABLE

Dice Result	Resident	Traits
01–02	Gangster	Vampire , p. 371
03–04	Restaurant server	Weak Mortal
05–06	Dancer	Average Mortal
07–08	Nanny	Average Mortal
09–10	Grocery store bagger	Average Mortal
11–12	Unhoused person	Average Mortal
13–14	Young couple	Average Mortal
15–16	Veterinarian	Gifted Mortal
17–18	Butcher	Average Mortal
19–20	Teaching assistant	Average Mortal
21–22	Grocer or bodega owner	Average Mortal
23–24	Elderly dog owner	Weak Mortal
25–26	Doctor	Gifted Mortal
27–28	Serial Killer	p. 21
29–30	Union factory worker	Gifted Mortal
31–32	Anarch Revolutionary	Vampire , p. 374
33–34	Police Detective	Vampire , p. 371
35–36	Bartender	Average Mortal
37–38	Grad student	Average Mortal
39–40	Morgue Attendant	p. 18
41–42	Body Snatcher	p. 12
43–44	Carder	p. 12
45–46	Local celebrity	Gifted Mortal
47–48	Mugger	Average Mortal
49–50	Deletionist	p. 16
51–52	Crime Scene Technician	p. 14
53–54	MMA enthusiast	Gifted Mortal
55–56	Lawyer	Average Mortal
57–58	Musician	Average Mortal
59–60	Blood Blogger	p. 11
61–62	Nightcrawler	p. 20
63–64	Small-time drug dealer	Average Mortal
65–66	Ghoul	Vampire , p. 372
67–68	Cleaner	p. 13
69–70	Business owner	Average Mortal
71–72	Clique of teens	Average Mortal
73–74	24-hour store clerk	Weak Mortal
75–76	Crime Scene Reporter	p. 14
77–78	Security guard	Average Mortal
79–80	Long-haul cancer patient	Weak Mortal
81–82	Clergy member	Vampire , p. 371
83–84	Retiree	Gifted Mortal
85–86	Activist	Average Mortal
87–88	Necrophile	p. 19
89–90	Artist	Average Mortal
91–92	Bouncer	Average Mortal
93–94	Nurse	Gifted Mortal
95–96	Elysium Harpy	Vampire , p. 374
97–98	Graveyard Poet	p. 17
99–100	Writer	Average Mortal



Chapter Two

THE MASQUERADE MACHINE

*Everything secret degenerates, even the
administration of justice.*
-LORD ACTON

What keeps Princes, and indeed all vampires capable of remembering the past or imagining the future, awake all day is not so much a nightmare as a vision — a vision of a global populace with internet, industry, and the knowledge that vampires are real and must be defended against. Past killings brought to light, the tales of literal blood baths and drained children confirmed... the Kindred wouldn't last a month. Soon, only the lingering bodies of licks occasionally rising from torpor to be burnt within weeks would remind mortals of the predator they drove to extinction.

Accessories and Associates

The Masquerade must be protected at any cost. The livestock must not smell the charnel house; they must be kept docile in the fields. The Camarilla (and Anarchs, as much as they're loath to admit it) devise a thousand small adjustments, tiny cogs whirring together to keep the great machine of the Masquerade running smoothly night after night. Other factions such as the Ashirra, and the most determinedly Autarkis domains, likewise find the logic of self-preservation irrefutable. Even the Sabbat keep their heads down and fangs hidden, most nights.

The Domain

The first bastion of the Masquerade is its smallest contingencies: local coteries and leaders, scattered around the city like an archipelago. Within their individual domains, these vampires rule the roost. All of them broadly support the Masquerade, although how *strictly* they support it may vary wildly. Tension arises when neighboring domains enforce their Masquerade differently. The coterie in Chinatown overfeeds and scares away any people traveling through at night, and suddenly the coterie in the industrial zone across the train tracks starts going thirsty. Making sure feeds are distributed fairly throughout the city is a delicate process, one that spurs most of the conflict between neighboring domains.

Social-minded (or far-sighted) vampires invested in mediating between factions bridge these islands, along with special coteries usually selected by the city's ruler. Envoy coteries negotiate one-night peace treaties between warring clans when the action's getting a little too hot and the city's mortal law enforcement needs to see nothing for a night. Watchmen patrol the edges of Kindred territory and watch for mortal hunters or Sabbat wanderers — anyone who could damage the machine with their mere presence. Regular coteries and unaffiliated vampires might find themselves carrying urgent messages between territories where the Kindred are a little too visible for comfort. It's not a bad gig — a city's ruler often richly rewards those who support the First Tradition and proactively aid in stabilizing the Masquerade machine.

Coterie and Character

Some Princes, Barons, or hierophants levy a *red tax* upon their vassals, whether in the form of bagged Blood or living vessels. Others leverage their position to require those under their thumb to maintain the Masquerade. Kindred who don't pull their weight may not be welcome for long. Exile might push dead weight onto another Prince or Baron, risks an angry Kindred returning with a grudge later. Blood Hunts make good training for Hounds and good tests of loyalty for everyone else.

When creating your character, consider how your character contributes to the Masquerade machine (or doesn't) and the extent to which they're a tolerated or valued member of their sect or faction because of it. If the entire players' coterie doesn't have a specific job, maybe individual characters do.

Specific clans, in general, don't do these jobs. Some yearn for the past days when clans tended to form tight-knit factions, but clan-as-faction is rare in the modern nights and not the assumption in **Vampire**. In some cases, the extended family that is a clan could be responsible for one or more of these jobs, but it's unlikely to have more than one or two in any given city. Such arrangements often have a history backed up by a large brood of related Kindred (the Prince does maintain the right of Progeny). They



sprawl out from a small coterie that once contained a prominent individual and their childer, but end up with the Tremere doing clean-up — using their grandsire's Rituals — while the city's Malkavians are expected to be able to perform surveillance because one of them did it well 50 years ago.

Terror

You intimidate, blackmail, or otherwise terrorize mortals into silence through Disciplines (such as Dominate or Presence) or Skills (Intimidation). After the initial confrontation, such mortals do require a little regular surveillance and the occasional

appearance to reinforce their silence. Put on the pressure through your own Influence or Allies.

Counterintuitively, some Kindred turn those they've silenced into Backgrounds on the Relationship Map or even Touchstones.

Surveillance

Common Kindred wisdom says it is wise to deal with any local prying eyes before they become too curious. They might be a local barfly, last week's latest snack, prying neighbors, or bureaucrats trying to gentrify the domain. Pruning those branches before they metastasize into threats to the Masquerade is common sense. Through Disciplines (Auspex or Obfuscate), Skills (Investigation, Stealth, or Technology), or Backgrounds (Contacts or Influence) you keep tabs on mortals who tread close to the truth or have fully discovered it. Most nights require you to check up on one or more mortals of interest, particularly their electronic and conventional communications, reporting any concerning developments to others with different specialties.

Birdwatching

If surveillance identifies a security risk with valuable information — a suspected Leopoldite running a food bank, a reporter with a hidden hard drive, a local gun dealer with a list of new clients for silver bullets — someone has to keep them on ice until they can be questioned correctly and completely. This might mean very close surveillance or actual kidnapping and custody. If the captive might know secrets about powerful Kindred, it can take some time to appoint an interrogation committee. Your coterie could spend weeks trying to keep a prisoner both subdued and oblivious. Making matters worse, there may be people desperately looking for the captive. In some cases, those hunting the captive may even be other Kindred.

Execution

Some Kindred don't have the stomach to murder mortals regularly, but it's a useful advantage that the Princes, Barons, and Keepers of the Faith value. Some executioners get their hands dirty (literally) while others scheme to ensure their victims can be adequately put in harm's way: areas prone to violence or even simply traffic accidents. Executioners don't last long without the right Convictions, and the role can often be given to outsiders or those disgraced for their actions. Of course, after their job is done Executioners often pass the torch to those who clean things up, but many executioners are expected to clean up after themselves because the local Court is particularly cruel, the executioner is talented, or the executioner is disgraced.

Exposure

One way of preserving the Masquerade without leaving a trail of bodies is to ruin someone's life and reputation. After all, people are interested in people. Find their dirtiest secret and reveal it, bust up their mortal facade of decency with their depraved hard-drive pornography, sic crusading district attorneys or tabloid vultures on them. If there's not enough dirt on them, shovel it yourself. Framing people for real crimes they didn't commit, tricking them into doing drugs in public, or exposing their chat logs to inquiring minds may be enough to get someone imprisoned, shunned, cancelled, deplatformed, or otherwise out of the picture.

Cleaning

The Kindred constantly sweep aside evidence of their presence, and those engaged in clean-up have a thankless job. Corpses tend to still pile up when the Kindred are involved, and death certificates may need to be doctored or sometimes deleted. Bodies that can't stand even the flimsiest examination need to dissolve quietly in anonymous barrels of acid. Besides disposing of the deceased in flesh and paper, their less organic aspects also need to disappear. To preserve the Masquerade, bank accounts need to close, suicide notes need to turn up on the hard drive, and social media accounts need a quick log-out or a convincing tail-off. To anyone but the most callous Kindred, this is grueling work.

Spin

While the Camarilla eschews technology in general, many see value in its careful use and application. Today's media landscape is loud and abrasive: adding to the noise can do wonders for the Masquerade. Notably with traditional and social media, some Kindred spend their time leveraging dozens of sock-puppet accounts to accuse viral videos of being AI-generated or showing telltale signs of manipulation. While viral videos, images, and posts are of broad concern to the Kindred, it's generally the local news that can be most easily influenced by the small but concerted effort of a coterie or a few isolated Kindred.

Corruption

Some Kindred ensure that mortal institutions are pliable enough to be leveraged when needed. The Kindred don't control the police or the banks or the courts, but they keep tabs on which officers can be bribed, blackmailed, Bood-Bound, Dominated, or seduced into doing what the Kindred need. Heavy-handed manipulation of mortals can thus be concealed behind otherwise normal (if illegal or unethical) actions. A "fixer" coterie leverages its Contacts and Influence across the city's power structure, loading up on Politics and Intimidation as need be.

The City

Individual vampires in their individual domains keep night-to-night activities covered, but the big picture requires a bit more *oomph*. Rulers don't exist simply to give haughty orders or muster Elysia. They occupy the central node in a massive network of carefully balanced arrangements, the eyes watching for stutters among the machine's gears. Someone in the Prince's Court, or the Anarchs' Committee of Safety, runs a network of stringers and rumor-mongers, feeding on a constant stream of true crime reports, gossip, and sensation. A timeserver at every hospital, in every precinct house, on every sanitation shift knows there's a quick twenty in it if they report "the weird stuff" to an anonymized voicemail, or



leave a note about it under the third row of bricks in the wall at the northwest corner of the big cemetery. The ruler's eyes and ears have to be everywhere, alert for wrinkles in the fabric of the Masquerade.

Rulers also have hands... and talons. The Sheriff of a city and their Hounds are perhaps the most visible of the Prince or Baron's city-wide Masquerade assurances. Usually a tested ancilla fighter with a close relationship to the ruler, the Sheriff acts as combination hitman, terrorist, and vigilante. Her chosen attendants, the Hounds, patrol random domains each night and remind local licks that someone's enforcing Kindred law around these parts. (A Sheriff sent after Kindred, especially late-generation or illegally-begotten Kindred, often gains the title Scourge, either officially or unofficially.) A city ruler chooses their Sheriff carefully — their appointment signals allegiance to a particular code as well as political ties.

Anarchs loathe the concept of Sheriff, and even more the status of "Hound." In most Anarch cities,

an avid volunteer group takes the role of Sheriff. Such a "Sweeper" coterie needn't take the formal title of Vehme to perform the same function. The fresh bodies they leave in their wake often require the crew to clean up after themselves as well, though large Courts may assign such duties to a coterie as a form of hazing or punishment. When nomadic coterie, particularly Sabbat packs, disrupt the local hunting grounds and threaten the peace, any local Kindred may find themselves called Hound or Scourge, or doing those jobs, for a few nights.

The city ruler most often assigns their Maréchal coterie to *quietly* take out Kindred whose activities touch on the political sore spots of the Masquerade, especially if the Sheriff is pursuing more visible targets. In general, the ruler of a city deals with a dozen small Masquerade glitches every night. If there's a problem pressing enough for them to actually turn to the Maréchal and say "Take care of this"... someone has *really* fucked up.

If the coterie finds themselves opposed to major Masquerade players like the Sheriff or a Vehme coterie, gameplay might focus more on themes of secrecy and lies. Every session might see the coterie cleaning up messes frantically before the Hounds appear at their doorstep, and building elaborate cover stories and alibis for fellow coterie members. If they're allied with these officials, or perhaps owe someone in the Maréchal coterie a boon, game sessions might focus more on themes like violence, mercy, and guilt as the Sheriff or the Vizier requests the coterie's active participation in the cruelest aspects of the Masquerade.

In Chronicles

You know what they say: if your neighbor has mice, so do you. If your Kindred neighbor risks the Masquerade, you're going to get caught in the breach. Here are a few risks for your coterie to manage.

Father's Wedding

A neighboring domain is ruled by a Kindred patriarch and his Blood cult. Historically, they have been ignored, as the patriarch keeps himself secure through a Life Boon owed by the local Kindred authority. Now his cult has become so prolific that their

beliefs and practices threaten the Masquerade. The patriarch's upcoming wedding to a local news-anchor convert is attracting a lot of media attention, and there is no telling whether the patriarch's intended Embrace of his groom might be caught on a livestream.

Bloody Business

Combine a few too many Ventrue with special dietary needs, new licks and alchemists looking for specific resonances, and an efficient, proactive local Circulatory System boss. Sales go through the roof, and everybody's happy. Sure, there's missing persons posters everywhere, and it's a regular feature on the news, and hunter crews have started filtering into the city or forming spontaneously — but that's not the System's problem. The most powerful Kindred find themselves in debt to their blood dealers, and definitely don't want the System put out of business. The coterie needs to put a spoke in the blood-runners' operations before the whole Masquerade comes apart — but without leaving traces pointing back at themselves.

O Children

Children fall through the cracks of society every day. A derelict industrial park near the coterie's domain now houses a gang of runaways and orphans, keeping

CLOSE TO DISASTER

Through sheer luck and a dogged devotion to the Masquerade, the Kindred have averted countless disasters.

Hurricane Katrina Floods: When the Superdome became a refuge for countless people who couldn't afford to leave the city, the dome then became a nightly hunting ground for ravenous Kindred. Scores of Kindred were embraced during those chaotic nights, and it was only by sheer luck that the Masquerade remained in place.

The Riga Correction: A Riga-based Autarkis collective had named the Masquerade as the greatest curse on the Kindred. For years, the collective had waited for the resolve and resources to bring about their utopia. In a swift move during the 2009 riots, the Collective seized the LTV studios, hoping to transmit their Video Manifesto on Kindred-Mortal Coexistence across the world. At the last minute, the local Gangrel Baron and his enforcers disabled the Riga power grid and cleared out the control room, ending the crisis.

The Broken Concerto: The Embrace of a famous (and famously arrogant) orchestra conductor was risky to begin with, but a powerful Toreador-led coterie managed to keep it under wraps. The first concerto directed by the returning maestro blinded the attending Roses with joy — as hunters entered the concert hall. Only the resentful childe's spiteful mis-arrangement of the next piece averted calamity; the irate Toreador discovered the would-be slayers and took out their artistic frustration upon them.

themselves fed through shoplifting, pickpocketing, and fencing. It wouldn't be a problem, if not for the pair of stray thin-bloods protecting the children. It is only a matter of time before this threatens the Masquerade and, consequently, gets blamed on the coterie.

Lost Snitch

Gabe Paulson has seen too much and was the object of a foolish infatuation. For a decade he's been rewarded by monthly deliveries of vitae to keep him young, pretty, and quiet. But he didn't show up two nights ago for his collection, and one of the coterie's Kindred patrons or other Relationship Map connections needs their help in finding him before they have to call in an executioner and a clean-up crew. A decade ago this would have been an easy clean-up, but Gabe got smart and has been making the sort of high-profile connections that make it hard for him to simply disappear.

Practicalities

No matter their allegiance, every group ends up using a similar set of Skills (both supernatural and otherwise) in their work. For the sloppy feed or inebriated cleanup, Masquerade maintenance usually takes the form of well-deployed Disciplines: a word of Dominate in a witness' ear to remember a different scene, an Obfuscating veil thrown over a transformed Gangrel or Nosferatu, a strongly worded request with Presence to get the hell out of there. *Of course you didn't see that, that's impossible.* Most mortals assume they witnessed a mugging or an assault. They're left shaken and scared of ordinary, un-fanged criminals, just as the Kindred prefer.

Cash in Hand

As with so many things, the great Kindred conspiracy mostly comes down to money. Luckily for them, ruling vampires have plenty of it. Ventrue multiply old-money holdings, employing a network of trade offices, property rights managers, and tech developers to keep the money pumping into Camarilla bank accounts. Anarchs usually insert

themselves into a city's drug trade, siphoning off freshets of untraceable cash for protection even if they don't branch into dealing themselves. If the local Anarch leadership considers itself too good to dirty its talons in such business, a Ministry sect can usually offer their services in that regard — for a small role in urban planning, of course, and a free hand in one or two Skid Row churches.

Bribes are the lifeblood, or at least the great lubricant, of the Masquerade machine. The ruler's fixers and bag-men convince security guards to turn off their cameras for an hour, get morgue attendants to shuffle corpses around to hide the least believable “animal bites,” and remind bent cops not to patrol certain neighborhoods or just do sloppy paperwork. If the cops need a cover story, that's what the extra corpses are for — convenient bullet holes carefully provided, of course. Proactive, pervasive, medium- to low-level bribery often keeps most nights incident-free, officially anyway. Cash comes in handy at higher levels, too. Gifts to the right politician, a promise of campaign funds, and the Kindred can be sure that their properties are skipped over for building inspections and city ordinances.

Media Relations

Modern media relies more on social media than it used to — a blessing and a curse. Making sure there are no witnesses is crucial in the age of streaming video, but at the same time it's easier than ever to fake juicy news stories or spread rumors to distract from an actual Kindred fuckup. Some Kindred work as “vacuums,” buying footage off potential witnesses for a nice lump sum and burying it under exclusive access agreements. Others keep tabs on the ever-shrinking pool of reporters in the city, offering genuine tips to keep them busy investigating corporate malfeasance and environmental disasters while strange murders are rapidly lost in the churn. And of course, cold hard cash can bury a story almost as effectively as any spin doctor.

As swiftly as most Camarilla rulers shut down any Kindred activity they detect online, that works about as well as most attempts to shut things down on the internet. A wide network of hacktivists and

MASQUERADE METAPHORS

The Kindred use subtlety when possible, and not every violation of the Sixth Tradition is called a *breach of the Masquerade*. In modern nights, licks coin new euphemisms constantly, often with subtle differences in meaning specific to current or historical events in the domain.

Ballroom Incident: A highly volatile breach in a public location.

Lickbait: A fabricated breach meant to lure out Kindred.

Botched Facelift: An attempt to fix a situation made it much worse.

Noise Complaint: A common phrase to warn other domains about risks.

Downsized: The purging of multiple assets causing a breach.

Idiot Cousin: A fledgling's family member who is actively searching for the new childer.

Spilled Wine: A messy situation in high society, requiring a lot of subtlety.

Gumshoe Situation: A mortal investigator is close to figuring things out.

Employee Acquisition: The practice of Bonding a witness.

Highly Flammable Real Estate: A compromised haven.

CS majors (often thin-bloods who know how Web shells work) freelance as Masquerade monitors online, trading information about vampiric leaks for crypto or for the Prince's forbearance. Whether it's misdirecting moderators or actually tracking down licks who seem much too comfortable with certain keywords, the online world has its own protectors spanning the planet. Other rulers use tech-savvy ghouls to manufacture debunking videos and takedown posts ahead of time, ready to deploy at a moment's notice.

Cold Tactics

When the carrot doesn't work, switch to the stick. When a detective proves to be depressingly honest or a reporter annoyingly dogged, one of the Sheriff's Hounds pays them a visit. Blackmail and extortion are old games for the Kindred, and they know all the tricks to play. Pictures of the reporter's children inside their classroom keep him looking over his shoulder and away from the evidence. The detective's superiors might dig up and reopen her old disciplinary files; that mysterious pressure can go away with just a little tweak to the case.

If mortal investigators don't seem the type to respond to mob tactics, the Sheriff might recommend "sandblasting": layering Disciplines on a mortal, forcing their mind to retreat until they don't know their own PIN, much less whatever bizarre

tip they were working on. Sandblasted mortals tend to wander into the margins of life, their minds hazy and unfocused. The lucky ones wind up cared for by relatives after their "stroke;" the unlucky ones find shelter as best they can on the city streets.

Of course, sometimes it comes down to the most basic Kindred tool of all: simple murder. If someone has seen too much, knows too much, they cannot be allowed to live. Masquerade fixes like this work fast. The Sheriff and her Hounds don't waste a second once they know a mortal threat is in their vicinity. Most times, the killings are positioned to look like muggings gone wrong or domestic arguments—in some extreme cases, where the apartment needs to be scrubbed completely, the mortal simply "moves out" along with all their belongings. Documents appear not long after showing looming debts or personal troubles. Any Kindred trying to interfere in this process is labeled a threat to the Masquerade and summarily dragged in front of leadership. It takes a quick mind and good diplomacy for the accused to keep their head attached to their body.

The Bloody Arts

The more mystically inclined Kindred may keep their involvement in the machine's upkeep somewhat vague, but their contributions are as important as any Hound's. Redworkers from both Camarilla and Anarch factions turn their studies into extremely effective deterrents for Masquerade breaches. It's



not so much their specific arts that give them the edge as their ability to do them from afar — much more efficient than sending an agent to the breach location, no matter how fast they may be. More difficult, too, for any Hunter investigating to find a trail back to the Kindred. Redworkers are called upon more for specific tricky cases, like when a vampire's gone to ground with a mortal, than for general sticky cleanup jobs.

While they're useful partners to have on hand, redworkers are almost as big a risk to employ as the targets they intercept. Kindred violence may be horrific, but it is at least somewhat legible to mortal eyes — unlike a Blood Sorcery Ritual. Redworkers patching the Masquerade must be careful to keep their work in the shadows, where it won't become an even bigger incident.

In Chronicles

The trouble with getting good at practicalities is that your boss expects you to use them. When your boss

is the vampiric chief of a city, those expectations can be dangerous. Here are a few dangerous assignments your coterie might draw.

Campaign Season

The mayor is aiming for re-election, and if a prominent coterie is to maintain its current stranglehold on the political scene, this re-election needs to be in the bag. However, the years of Kindred backing have eroded the incumbent mayor's sense of consequences. While the mayor enjoys scores of affairs alongside a lavish lifestyle, the prominent coterie has increasing difficulties keeping his scandals from bubbling to the surface. Your coterie bids for the job of public relations manager, in exchange for a piece of the city's pie. When you win the bid, you discover the opposing candidate has backing from an opposing Kindred faction. Your coterie needs to bury witnesses, leverage prestaton, involve allies, and out-manuever the opposition researchers, while feeding the mortal media something — anything — else to chew on.

The Devil's Vault

A local Tremere was the Prince's spymaster, rumored to have a secret vault filled with enough blackmail and bribes to keep most of the city's Kindred in line, even the players' coterie. Last night, said spymaster met their Final Death, leaving the records in the vault unguarded. Revealing the contents of the vault wouldn't just embarrass the Kindred power structure, but could expose every Kindred in the city to Second Inquisition hunters. Not even his apprentices knew its location, so the coterie needs to find and coerce his ghouls to divulge the secret. Unfortunately, he planted his ghouls in well-protected, high-ranking public positions — and they all had a motive to rid themselves of their enslaver.

Party At Your House

Conditions in the city have forced the Court to be creative with the location of Elysium. Each event occurs in a different domain, and, this time, the Keeper informs the coterie that a location in their domain has been selected. They must prepare accordingly. While the coterie stands to gain prestige, boons, and political power, the risks of hosting this many Kindred in one place require extensive preparations. The coterie has to secure the location: time to bribe cops, disable or suborn local surveillance systems, hire guards, and set up protocols for nosy locals — especially ones they want to protect from the Court's official notice.

Cover Stories

Maintaining the Masquerade is the core activity of vampire politicking and the overarching theme of the game. On a personal level, the Masquerade goes beyond just the supernatural. The characters are monsters pretending to be human, but they're also people who have (or used to have) complicated and conflicting lives. Storytellers might tease out reminders of the Masquerade in the characters' interactions with their mortal friends and family. Is the cheerful writer wracked with secret depression and anxiety? Is the lesbian courier keeping her sexuality secret from her parents? Is the attentive bartender a compulsive liar? Most people lead double lives — the Masquerade is a triple or quadruple unlfe for the Kindred within its purview.

Jobs

Within a chronicle, the cogs of the Masquerade machine are all but ensured to jam. Players' characters can encounter this in a variety of ways. They might be given a job fixing feeds gone wrong, figuring out where the loose ends are and tying them off. These cleanup crews are good jobs for fledgling or even younger neonate vampires, giving them the experience of seeing what not to do with a messy feed or a stray witness. Or they might be required to fix their own potential Masquerade

PREDATORS AND MASQUERADES

The preferred style of hunting for each Kindred comes with its own set of risks and shortcomings. With almost any style, a misstep potentially reveals your true nature. Some Kindred feeding methods more likely risk the Masquerade in certain domains. Some Princes' or Barons' local edicts censure or ban certain culinary approaches.

Alleycat and **Sandman** attacks can spark anything from suspicious crime reports to spreading urban legends.

Cleavers suffer outright bans by the Camarilla as a whole, and even Anarchs see many of them as risks.

The Osiris often appears in the public eye, making them among the first to be investigated after incidents.

Consensualists and some **Extortionists** draw lurid attention from mortals who know their targets; letting someone drink your blood seems weird.

Baggers and **Graverobbers** share the risk of procuring their meals from public locations where records are kept.

breach before their elders get wind of their mistake. Different Skill sets within coteries garner different jobs, be it bribing cops, hacking into security footage, or accompanying one of the Sheriff's Hounds to kill a mortal who's poked their nose in too far.

At the troupe level, giving characters various tasks to oil the gears of the Masquerade can easily link them to new supporting characters, locations, and antagonists. From a player perspective, the Masquerade makes for fertile ground to test a character's attachment to mortal ideals and perspectives against their Kindred ambitions or fears. What is it, exactly, that happens in a Kindred's existence to make the older vampires so much more blasé about maiming and murder in the name of the Masquerade? Is it simple habituation? Death of the self by a thousand cuts? Or is there something innate within Cainites that encourages cruelty?

Defying the Masquerade is far more dangerous in the long run than enforcing it, but that doesn't mean it's out of the question — far from it! Player characters may find themselves as a stop along a smuggling route, helping out a Kindred on the run from a Sheriff or Vehme... or even a fugitive mortal fleeing his assassins. After all, a mortal who manages to discover the Kindred is more likely than not to have some Kindred who cares about them in their life.

Family Ties

Given all of this, most Kindred with mortal friends and family — especially Touchstones — do everything they can to keep their new unlife a secret. The moment their brother or grandmother discovers anything to do with vampires, they've painted a target on their back. Players should feel encouraged to come up with increasingly hopeless excuses for their strange behavior — and Storytellers should feel compelled to make the people they care about just as unwilling to be lied to as real close friends would be. Touchstones don't exist in the game just for mechanical bonuses to Humanity; they're the yardstick against which the characters' descent (or not!) into monstrosity is measured.

Families in particular provide an endless supply of negative emotion for a character. Loving families might bring out feelings of guilt and self-loathing, driving their Kindred offspring further toward the Beast. Controlling or abusive mortal relatives might trigger a Frenzy in the Kindred, no matter how much they may try to resist, if they're berated for losing their normal life or falling in with a bad crowd. Family is usually a symbol of stability and a place to return to — Storytellers might use characters' relations to remind them of how different their world is now, or how alienated they are from their past self.

Friends, meanwhile, often seem like a positive force. Players with mortal friends have a different set of worries regarding the Masquerade: their friends might *show up* at half the places they visit. It's not unusual to see people you know at a bar or a coffee shop, after all. When keeping the Masquerade means threatening a valued mortal companion, how do the characters handle it? Do they spirit the mortal away, hoping to hide them until the furor dies down? Do they make them into their blood servant or their ghoul, preferring to curse them rather than watch them be destroyed? Or do they allow the Masquerade to function as it always has? Do they pull the trigger, when the execution order comes down?

Mutually Assured Destruction

At its largest scale, the Masquerade functions as a nuclear deterrent in the war between the Camarilla and the Anarchs. Either side could launch a full-scale attack on the other at any moment, but the threat of the machine breaking down and the conveyor belt of victims grinding to a halt is enough to keep both sides at bay. Unwittingly, the day stabilizes the night and forces the two factions to grudgingly work along parallel lines. Storytellers may want to explore this aspect of the Masquerade at the players' characters' level as well: what prize might be juicy enough for one side to risk fraying the veil? Which powerful players in the chronicle do characters mutually keep secrets from, even to their detriment? Where are the weak points in the

ANCILLA UNMASKINGS

Ancillae have survived wars, plagues, and countless other Kindred. They've outlived all the mortals they knew in life. It doesn't mean they're infallible, as ancillae struggle to keep themselves both contemporary and human:

Not acting amused in public: While it seems alien to smile out of anything but malice, it makes one seem far more human.

Forgetting that cameras are everywhere: And they're all constantly recording, often directly to the cloud.

Casually using slang from decades ago: Words change far more than ancillae ever will.

Being too polite: Most think you're weird; a few call you neurodivergent, a word you haven't gotten used to yet.

Using archaic trinkets: The sentimental keep favored pens, watches, pocket knives, fans, or other identifiable antiques far too long.

Masquerade in Anarch versus Camarilla cities — and how do the two sides exploit those weaknesses?

In Chronicles

Not every mortal problem can be solved by biting down harder. Here the coterie has to manipulate, investigate, and evade the mortal world — because their own world depends on it.

Icarus the Reporter

A group of local ex-reporters has become interested in local discrepancies in the coterie's domain for their blog about city events. They're too close to uncovering the coterie's activities and true nature. So, all five of them must never work in the media again. Even with their newspaper being defunct, the risk of them recognizing the same patterns in new positions is too great. Killing journalists, even independent journalists, tends to bring far too much attention, which means ruining their lives to the point where they abandon their life's work.

Never Let You Go

The destruction of the Sheriff is one thing. A mortal as the main suspect is downright unsettling. As the eager Hounds follow the trail, the coterie discovers the suspect is one of their Relationship-Map connections. Worse, the suspect cannot be found. As the Court calls for blood, the coterie must conduct their own investigation while dodging the Hounds and evading increasingly pointed questions from the Prince. Is their connection guilty? Can the coterie frame someone else for it convincingly? Should they?

Into the Morrow

Final Death by sunrise is the way out for many despondent Kindred. Usually, this act doesn't involve other Kindred, but three neonates saw the sun near a location important to one of the players' characters and it was all over the news. The media attention to the event and the subsequent investigation forces the Coterie to procure the strangely burned remains from the morgue. Preferably before the local coroner can produce a report which could alert the SAD. ■

NEONATE SLIP-UPS

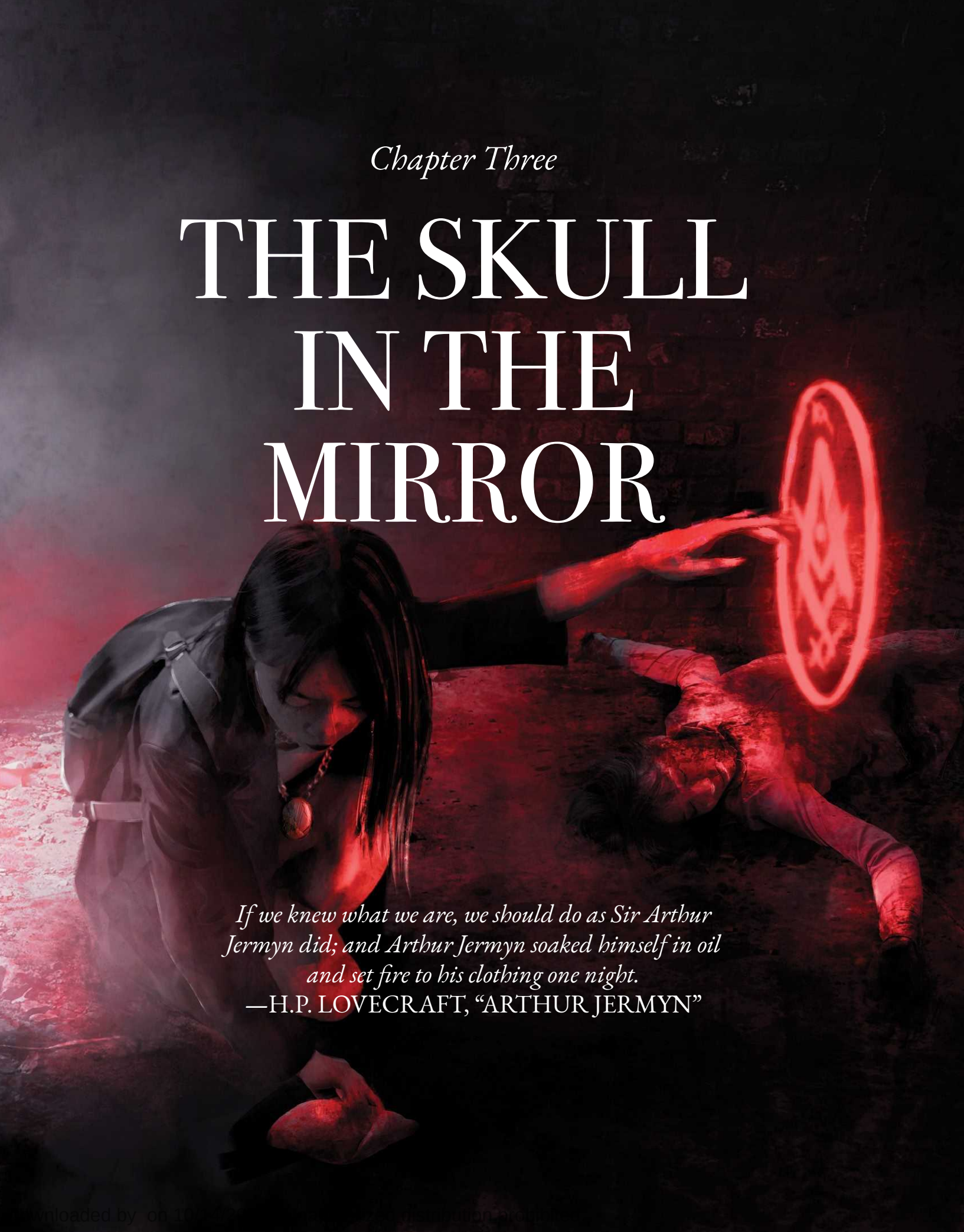
Neonates have been dead for several years, many having left their sire's protection to stand on their own. Their nightly unlife presents a few challenges that could result in basic yet fatal errors.

Forgetting to spend money on heating: That's how hunters or rival Kindred find your haven in the dead of winter. Ditto for AC during the height of the summer.

Not paying any taxes: If you still exist on the books, the IRS wants their pound of flesh.

Failing to reinvent yourself: Looking like an '05 emo kid is one thing, talking like one is another.

Staying in your hometown: "Small town charm" is code for "they're all snooping in your affairs."

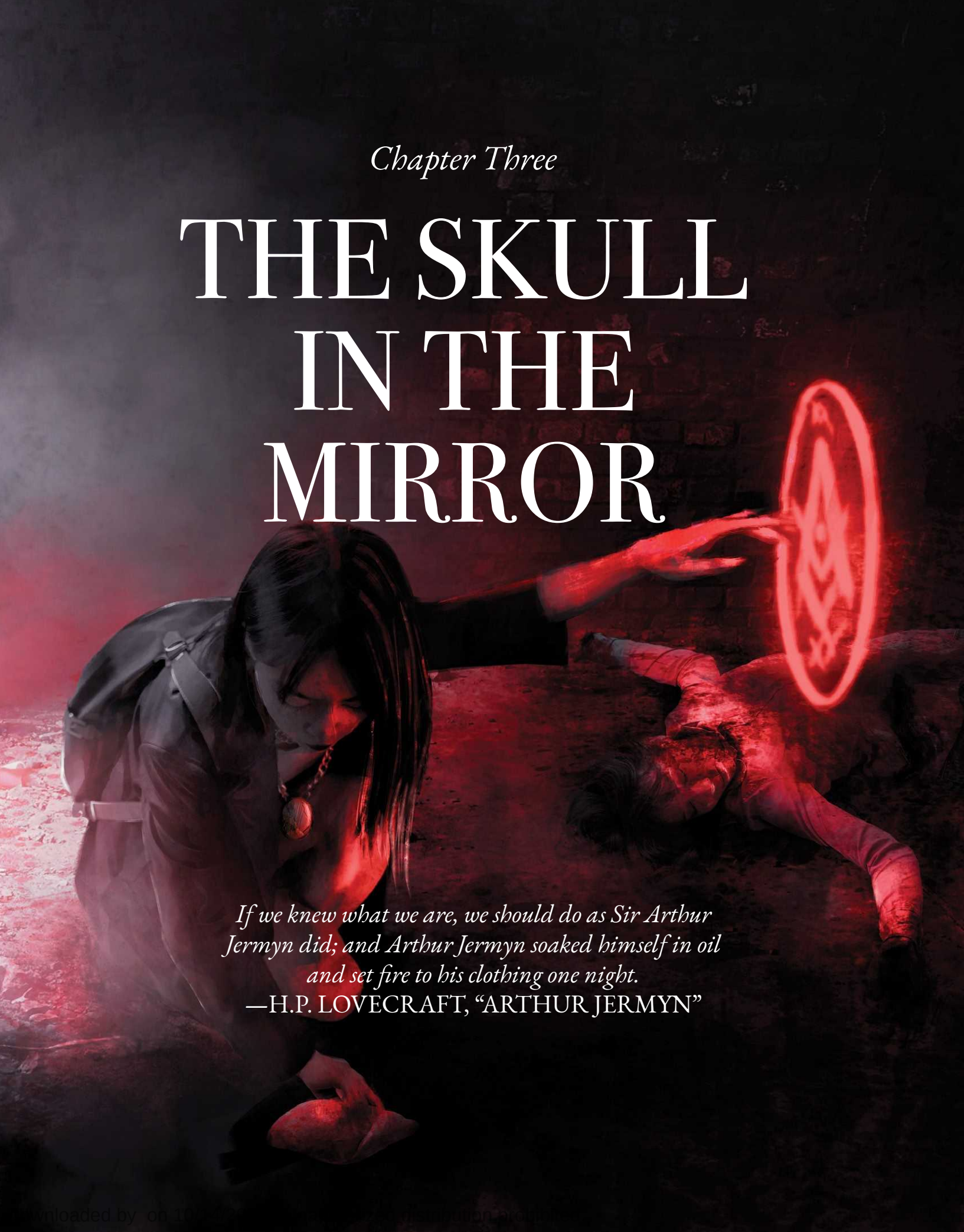


Chapter Three

THE SKULL IN THE MIRROR

If we knew what we are, we should do as Sir Arthur Jermyn did; and Arthur Jermyn soaked himself in oil and set fire to his clothing one night.
—H.P. LOVECRAFT, “ARTHUR JERMYN”

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[illegible]The book cover features a dark, atmospheric illustration. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and a necklace with a circular pendant, is crouching down. She appears to be looking at something on the ground. In the background, a man lies face down on a stone floor, his body illuminated by a strong red light. A glowing red mirror or portal is visible above him, reflecting a skull-like pattern. The overall color palette is dominated by dark tones and a striking red glow.

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This chapter shines a fitful light on the dark shadows of each clan, the clots where their blood curdles. Vampire clans aren't just fonts of power; they're also a haunted house you're forever trapped within. What's the worst thing your Blood has done? What might it make you do?

Each of the Archetypes in this chapter is accompanied by a short paragraph of mechanical advice for building a character as a member of that archetype. These aren't intended as the only way to create the archetype, but merely suggestions of which Attributes and Skills make sense among a character's highest-rated Traits, suggestions for Advantages or Flaws, and obvious choices for Discipline options. The Oblivion Discipline and its Powers and Ceremonies can be found in the *Players Guide*.



Banu Haqim

The Banu Haqim walk among their fellow Kindred and find them wanting. Justice is their watchword, although in truth they are more skilled at punishing transgression than rewarding improvement. As judges and rulers, they control their territories with iron-fisted ruthlessness. As executioners, they swiftly take out “problem elements” within their city. As Blood Sorcerers, they're passionate scholars and experts at extracting order from the seething mass of the Blood.

At their worst, the Banu Haqim embody every stereotype of an authoritarian enforcer squad. They claim a moral code, but fail to follow it — or any code at all — in the long run. In truth, the commandment these Banu Haqim do uphold is simply hierarchy: *we are above them, and therefore they are below us*. They choose their victims more to set an example than to impose consequences. Or simply, for the true basis of vampire morality: Blood, sweet and intoxicating.

The judges are not blind to the hypocrisy within their clan. It's impossible to ignore the casual way

so many Banu Haqim saunter over to a lick they've never met and pronounce judgement in the name of... their code? The Masquerade? The right price? They don't really need a reason, not if it gives them license to dig their fangs into a fellow Kindred's jugular. Of course, this leaves their clan siblings to debate among themselves: cut out the disease and lose their precious order, or allow it to fester and retain their power?

For all of that, though, perhaps the truly worst — or at least the most dangerous — of the Banu Haqim entirely, sincerely believe in the fanatical judgement they impose on those weak enough to fail in their sight.

Banu Haqim Horrors

- Sometimes, when your Blood decrees there is a wrongness in another Kindred, you feel something working through you, something with whims and opinions not your own.
- You slay your fellow Kindred and call it justice. You are too cowardly to execute the same justice against yourself.
- To care for something is to force it into the right shape.
- “Kill them all, God will know his own.”
- You think about Blood whenever you're near another Kindred. For example, when you look in the mirror.

Archetype: The Reformer

The Reformer cannot bear the thought of justice without remorse. What can be accomplished if wrongdoers don't understand what they've done — not just intellectually, but emotionally? If they haven't felt as their victims felt, how can they know they truly, finally deserve their fate? The Reformer constructs intricate ways to extract regret from those they deem particularly in need of confession. Some infiltrate their targets' lives, taking on the role of therapists or confidantes. Others engage in old-fashioned torture. Still others create labyrinths of “penitent reflection” where they imprison their victims, surrounding them with reminders of the rippling effects of their actions.

Mechanical Advice: Reformers need high Manipulation or Resolve, followed by Strength or Wits. Brawl or Melee Skills enable Reformers to confront wrongdoers. Awareness and Investigation help Reformers find wrongdoers, while Intimidation and Insight help draw out confessions. They often have Contacts or Influence with criminals or police. Their Discipline choices may include Cat's Grace, Corrosive Vitae, Silence of Death, and the Clinging of the Insect (Ritual).

In Chronicles

Witchfinder General

An ambitious Banu Haqim Executioner mounts a crusade within her domain. She swiftly hunts down those violating the Traditions in any degree and brings them to (her estimation of) justice. At first, her Prince encouraged her hard-line approach. But as the bodies piled up and the whispers of dissent grew louder, the Prince began looking for avenues to end his errant Executioner's Inquisition-from-within. Unfortunately for him, his debts to her doting sire are too great for him to take direct action against her faction. Now, the Executioner has declared her own, new additions to the Traditions. The Prince needs a way to take her down quickly, either by favor or force, and the players' coterie is his closest weapon to hand.

Judge and Jury

A Kindred lies truly dead. Two Kindred were present at his final death — one his killer, the other a witness. But which is which? Each has committed other crimes, and each is renowned for their skill in misdirection. Each accuses the other of diablerie. The Baron summons a jury to convene, including the players' coterie. The local Banu Haqim are particularly interested, even invested, in the case. They express concern about a potential miscarriage of justice, but seem most eager to drink deep from one of the accused criminals.



Brujah

The Brujah call themselves the Learned Clan — certainly they have more philosophers among their ranks than any other. The Hellenes study, the Rabble smashes, and between them they hope to bring about a better world. Yet for all their learning and experience they cannot find a utopia that will *stick*. Is it human nature bringing corruption and cruelty each time a new regime has time to set? Is it the failures of philosophy that keep their fabled revolution a dream to reach for again and again? Or is it something in the Brujah themselves twisting every noble ideal into one which sends its enemies to the gulag or the chopping block? Some accuse each other of purposefully sabotaging the movement with violence to keep their supply of fresh victims churning. Others claim the bootlickers among them are more than happy to sit back so long as it keeps them and theirs free and safe.

The Brujah are sure their dreams are possible. They know, within the central ventricles of their heart, that if only they can try again — if only they can *make* people listen — they can fix everything. Each of their failures only adds to the rage swelling through their clan at the injustices they each perceive in the world. Every movement needs some anger behind it to stoke the furnace, and the Brujah's nature ensures their anger can't be sated. It's an inferno that grows until it consumes everything around it — including the Brujah themselves.

Brujah Horrors

- The revolution will come, and after it, peace. And then the revolution must begin again, to keep the blood flowing.
- You watch your compatriots closely for any sign they are dangerous to the cause. You know they watch you, too.

- Maybe the wolf in sheep's clothing dreamed they could live among the sheep for a while. Until they got hungry.
- The Frenzy is always just below your skin. When you're trading punches with some shithead: pull his arm off. When you're having a fight with your wife: pull her arm off.

Archetype: Venator

The Rebels need resources. With fewer stockbrokers and ancestral caches than some of their compatriots, Brujah rabble-rousers have to find the cash and connections to fund their battles. The Venator is as likely to spend their nights at the penthouses and glitzy clubs the richest Ventrue attend as talking with a group of Nosferatu in a squat beside the harbor. When they have a goal in mind — particularly in the direction of the cause closest to their heart — they will cross any line they to get one up on their opponents. While the philosophers study and the rioters sharpen their knives, the Venators beg, borrow, steal, and murder to keep the Brujah from burning out.

Mechanical Advice: Venators focus on Social Attributes. They are often equally adept at Intimidation and Persuasion, using Brawl as a closing argument when needed. Often, they have Influence, plenty of Resources and Allies. Their primary discipline is Presence, with Awe and Daunt being central tools, backed by Lethal Body or Rapid Reflexes.

In Chronicles

Fly, Jailbird

A Brujah-led face-off with mortal law enforcement ended in a bloodbath. The frazzled local Brujah leadership and the Prince are in rare agreement that the Brujah in question must be punished. A small tendency of Brujah dissent. They believe their clan siblings were justified and claim the clan leaders are making them patsies for political reasons. They enlist

the players' coterie to help jailbreak their comrades and sneak the accused out of the Prince's domain before they're destroyed or worse.

Blood, Sweat, and Tears

A charismatic young Brujah rises through the ranks in the city's Kindred power structure. Her suggestions are unrelentingly brutal, her tactics callous but brilliant. Even the Ventrue in the Court take her advice on purges and proscriptions. She has every indication of becoming an important player on the scene, a new Robespierre or Beria. Until she disappears. Who's behind her absence? Is she being held captive somewhere by one of the many enemies she has made? By enemies of her coterie? Did she orchestrate her own disappearance for some reason? Was she the victim of an argument with a fellow Brujah that got too heated? Her radicalized companions are looking for answers and look at the players' coterie as potential allies or suspects. Does the coterie even want her found?



Gangrel

The Gangrel take pride in the epithet “wolves.” They see themselves as lone predators, stalking proud and unconquered through the city. They don't tolerate bowing and scraping to their “human side,” trying to keep the bloodlust tethered. They are, in a way, some of the most clear-sighted Kindred — they know how distant they are from mortals. From another angle, it's clear any moments of humanity and kinder impulses are punished by the rest of the clan. The other Kindred may fear their strength, but they pity them more.

The Gangrel claim the Beast as their own, but the animal worship they cultivate within the clan is stunted, half-formed. They're no longer masters of any forest — other beasts lay claim there. They seem to lack the instincts of the real wolves they

model themselves on: not just physical strength and a territorial nature, but gentleness and generosity with their young, and an interest in play. Instead, the Gangrel force their clan ever more into a shape resembling the worst of human and animal combined. Violence, isolationism, disdain, and over-indulgence swirl in a potent mix. Even the creatures they cultivate are not untouched. When two Gangrel trade insults, both had better watch their famulus carefully. If they're not careful, the next night their rival arrives on the scene wearing a new vest made of carefully prepared, very recognizable hide.

Gangrel Horrors

- Your Beast is a rabid predator, killing randomly, leaving limp and uneaten carcasses in its wake.
- You feel the heat of the animal desire to reproduce, dreaming of your childer as an invasive species stripping the city clean of everything but the cockroaches.
- Your clan only smiles back at you when you bare your teeth at them.
- You change your shape and it feels good, more natural than your true form. Or is this your true form? You can't remember how to make some pieces human again when you shift back.
- The Beast is your friend, it tells you. It keeps you safe. It keeps you strong. Close your eyes and let it do as it must.

Archetype: Falconer

The Falconer trains animals for Kindred use. Her dogs are bred for ferocity and intelligence, her titular falcons and owls carefully prepared to spy on rival territories or hunt messenger pigeons; she raises kittens from the bottle to follow commands and enter areas too small for human-sized creatures to scope out. Don't mistake her focus on positive reinforcement for a soft heart or sympathy for nature — this is work, not a collection of pets. The Falconer sees her menagerie as a toolbox, a collection

of objects fit for purpose. She values only her animals' reliability, and she culls failures ruthlessly.

Mechanical Advice: Falconers possess high Resolve, Composure, and Wits. Their best Skill is often Animal Ken, using Awareness, Insight, or even Finance to analyze information they obtain. The Falconer benefits from a large Haven and Status to reflect their usefulness. They favor Discipline Powers like Bond Famulus, Feral Whispers, and Eyes of the Beast.

In Chronicles

Hunter, Hunted

The Gangrel have never cared for the Tradition of Hospitality — they enter cities and leave as they please. One group followed their leader into the domain of a Prince to hunt. This time, the Prince won't stand for it. She puts a high price on their capture and declares open season on the Gangrel posse. Faced with a domain's worth of licks out to claim the prize on their head, the Gangrel close ranks and arm themselves. They'll fight their way back to their territory no matter the cost. Is the players' coterie allied with the cornered vampires, or are they racing to snipe the prize before anyone else?

Tooth and Claw

As much as their elders try to position it as healthy competition, the Gangrel fight amongst themselves more physically — and brutally — than any other clan. One local group takes it to the extreme: A new leader encourages his fellow Gangrel to cull the weak of the pack, devising tests the runts must undergo alone in order to prove their worth. The players' coterie becomes an unwitting participant in these trials when one of the tested Gangrel calls in a favor from them to help complete her task. Afterward they discover their aid has landed both her and them in very hot (and toothy) water indeed.



Hecata

The Hecata are all about family. And family can be the worst thing that ever happened to you. Several of the clan's bloodlines, including the Giovanni, Rossellini, and the Dunsirn, started as mortal lineages, and they remain connected to their living descendants through property, monetary transactions, and even yearly family reunions at their old estates. As long as things go well, and they usually do for the Hecata, it's easy for their living relatives to ignore the beating hearts beneath the floorboards and the femurs in the pantry. But every so often, a relative who has proven themselves worthy receives the reward of the Embrace: in immense pain, they are remade, and when they rise, it's to discover everything they had that was their own has been destroyed, and they'll never get away.

At their most grotesque, the Hecata are walking corpses swathed in shadow. They include necromantic cannibals, who tear the veil between the living and the dead to fill their homes with angry spirits. They make slaves out of corpses and can torture their victims far beyond what they should be able to take, keeping them alive through flayings and dissections. But perhaps the real heart of the matter lies not in what the Hecata can accomplish, but in what they cannot help. For the overbearing elders of the clan tend to feel much more than responsibility for their relatives; they mean to control them, claim them, and keep them close forever. They force their chosen childer into unlife against their will, they change mortal relatives into corpses that serve the family... or into the wraiths who inhabit their Oblivion-enchanted tools.

Hecata Horrors

- Everything you touch tends towards decay.
- You'll never be free of your family. Your family will never be free of you.
- Everything dies yet nothing gets to rest.

- Vengeful spirits, broken and splintered, are watching and waiting.
- To love is to break, reshape, and control.

Archetype: Mother's Boy

Mother will never leave you. Mother has been sitting in her chair, slowly rocking, since 1965, or whenever she was last alive. Her skin is thin and dark, stretched tightly across her bones as she is all but mummified, and she doesn't really speak, but it's okay — you can tell by her expression what she thinks. You've brought home a girl you want her to meet. You just hope she won't scream like the last one. Mother gets agitated when they do.

Mechanical Advice: Mother's Boys benefit from high Composure and Manipulation. Subterfuge is their primary Skill with Occult and Etiquette as close seconds. They often have spacious Havens and perhaps even a Loreshet connected to a Hecata bloodline. Their primary Discipline is Oblivion, employing The Binding Fetter (*Players Guide*, p. 85) and Summon Spirit (Ceremony, *Players Guide*, p. 92)).

In Chronicles

The Recluse

There's a haunted house at the end of the street. It's been boarded up for decades, and the outside is plastered with faded graffiti and warnings about the toxic materials of the walls. Inside sits an old Hecata like a spider in his web, surrounded by the corpses of his victims. He lures them in by playing in the shadows at night, leading them through the woods behind the house till they fall into the well. He's blind as a bat, his eyes useless white orbs, but his mind is always reaching out. Only when he feeds or sleeps is he distracted.

Welcome to the Family

A Relationship Map connection of one of the players' characters has found themselves a new and attractive beau. Postcards and letters from

vacation destinations reveal how happy they are, and perhaps the vampire has little cause for suspicion as their connection mostly focuses on them in their correspondence. However, when a wedding invitation arrives, alarm bells start ringing. They're getting married, and it seems they're marrying into a Hecata family. The players' coterie needs to infiltrate the Hecata-run estate and stop the wedding, or the need to get ready to write some extremely dangerous in-laws onto their Relationship Map.



Lasombra

Kindred call the Lasombra ambitious. The problem is that their ambition leads the Lasombra astray. Some get caught in a web of their own plans, unable to make their next move. Others achieve what they want — admittance to the local Camarilla Court — only to discover they need more. Do they need a title to prove their worth? Some may. Others, consummate grey eminences, fear that a title demonstrates only hollow achievement, shows contemptible satisfaction with the surface of power, not its shadowy essence. They fear unknown foes, and crave them at the same time, to test their true abilities against. Such Lasombra intrigue and conspire by reflex, addicted to having that extra secret edge all to themselves. They lead their Domain into dangerous struggles, to maneuver for ever greater stakes, hiding their hand while wielding their goad. Until eventually, one misstep causes it all to crash down.

Ambition poisons the lineages of sire and childer inside the clan. Lasombra need childer to fulfill their ambitions, just as their descendants must destroy their sires to establish themselves as powers of their own. This dynamic both pulls the clan together and pushes it apart, leaving its members to exist in a state of paranoia even as they rely on those they fear. No wonder so many of them embrace the certitude and bestiality of the Sabbat.

Other Lasombra seek truths outside such nihilistic revelations. Ambition leads some Magisters to deal with the Aapilu (see p. 141), the disembodied intelligences in the outer darkness and their own blood. Others become Shalim cultists (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 93), shattering the minds of their followers to bring an end to their needless suffering, worshiping the void itself. They use the simple tools of murder and torture to build their glorious goals.

Some Lasombra's ambition drives them to wade too deep into the black waters of Oblivion, particularly those descended from Montano (see p. 173). Driven to extremes by their cousins and competitors, they reach deep into the Abyss for playmates and for power. Focused on their ongoing machinations, the shadows they bring forth grow ever more dense and willful. These Keepers no longer control what shape their ambition takes, or their cruelties. Such dark reflections now look out behind the Magister's eyes: a flattened primal shade, the most destructive aspects of their unconscious desires given shadow-self. It eats them up, perhaps without them even knowing, consuming them deep in the darkness they themselves invoked.

Lasombra Horrors

- They call the origins of Oblivion the Abyss and the Labyrinth because you can lose a part of yourself in that dark place. It wanders there still, its screams swallowed by the endless void.
- You cannot trust the shadows.
- You cannot trust yourself. Others do not trust you either, not even when they should.
- Your ambition drives you, but fear paralyzes you. You endlessly scheme for power, but your foes' machinations force you to change your plans before you can strike, an endless frustrated impotence you can never admit.
- Ambition leaves you on unstable ground, teetering on a pile of victims and enemies. Only an iron grasp on power can keep you from tumbling into someone else's pile.

Archetype: The Libertine

What started out as a means to alleviate boredom has become an obsession for the Libertine. Having clawed out a comfortable position in the society of the night for themselves, they now compete with others of their rank for the honor of committing the cruelest, and most clever, crimes. Playing the desperate victim or the handsome stranger, as best befits the situation, they select their mark, toy with their emotions, and torture them to death as artfully as possible.

Mechanical Advice: Libertines need high Manipulation, Wits, and Resolve. They focus on Subterfuge and Politics, with Insight and Etiquette being secondary Skills. Status is their primary background, along with Resources or Retainers. Libertines favor Dominate Powers like Compel and Mesmerize but may also use Shadow Cloak (*Players Guide*, p. 81) and Daunt.

In Chronicles

The Model Member of the Clan

One Lasombra could only join the Camarilla by proving their loyalty and destroying another Sabbat-inclined member of their clan. On the surface, Kindred society recognizes their service: the Prince rewards their loyalty, and even their Primogen has endorsed their actions. Yet the requirement to destroy one of their own Blood has led them down a spiral of paranoia and diablerie. They're afraid other Shadows seek to destroy them to obtain their rightful place in the Camarilla and the only way to forestall this is to strike first, and drain them dry to remove the threat.

The Cult of Shalim

A series of gruesome ritualistic murders leads the players' coterie to a group of Lasombra cultists. They seem peaceful, even kind, as they tell the characters about their beliefs in the sanctity of the void. In the end, it turns out that it was not the Lasombra themselves who committed the murders but the traumatized teenager the coterie had initially been helping. Perhaps the cult drove the teen to do it, but nothing can be proven, and as the coterie watch, they take in another lost and helpless child.

The Maze

In a dream or a Memoriam, or even in a psychotic episode, the Lasombra is pulled into the Labyrinth. It appears to them as an endless maze, suspiciously similar to the halls of their old school, the hospital they spent a spell at, or the sewers they fell into as a child. There are faint sounds of something stirring far away. If they take one wrong turn, they might meet the thing that pulled them in here.



Malkavian

When you walk in waking dreams, you must be careful to remember you are dreaming. Lose your grip, and you may never wake again. Many Lunatics become compulsive seers, visited by visions they can't escape, sometimes taking the form of their very worst fears. Bugs crawl across their skin, fire licks the walls of their underground bunker, the first mortal they ever killed visits them unbidden when they're about get a premonition. Shifting realities plague them, getting worse the hungrier they feel. They have no way to find solid ground and know their fate never includes a climb back to stability.

These Malkavians seek no sympathy. Their misery loves company. One Lunatic becomes a serial killer in the belief that they need fresh mortal entrails for their divinations. Another makes a game out of driving their victims insane with fear, trying to recreate the circumstances of their own fractured past.

Malkavian Horrors

- Your thoughts are not your own.
- The person in the mirror is never who you expect to see.
- You know the terrors that are coming, and you likewise know no one will believe you.

- The madness network — they're listening.
- Everyone says it's only symptoms. Even when it's real.
- The monster can have the mind of a terrified child.

Archetype: The Dreamer

When nothing feels real, your actions don't matter. The Dreamer's senses are so clouded by intrusive premonitions, auditory and visual hallucinations that they've mostly given up on sorting the imagined from the real. They ignore the sound of babies crying because it never stops. They look straight through the sobbing prisoner chained up in their kitchen and the piss that pools beneath them.

Mechanical Advice: Dreamers need Resolve, Wits, and Stamina. Their Skills can be quite diverse, their dreams might give them Insight, Academics, or Performance. The Dreamer could have Allies, Herd, Mawla, Boons earned or City Secrets (*Players Guide*, p. 118) they've seen in dreams. They tend towards Premonition, Sense the Unseen, Daunt, and Chimerstry (*Players Guide*, p.78).

In Chronicles

First, Raise Your Eyes

The players' coterie is approached by a Malkavian connection who wants help to find their mortal relative. They have a few suspects, and as the coterie follow the clues of the case, they slowly uncover what appears to be a gruesome case of kidnapping and torture. It feels like a race against time. Meanwhile, the Malkavian is starting to suffer from visions of what the kidnapper might be doing to their relative. Only, the visions are memories, and the Malkavian did the crime themselves in a dissociative state.

The Sleep Paralysis Victim

A character is suffering from hypnagogic hallucinations. When they're falling asleep, they think someone is watching them. No one's there whenever they get up to check, and eventually the hallucinations stop. What they don't know is that sometimes the

thing in the corner is real — a shadow-clad Oblivion user or a vengeful wraith perhaps — and it's waiting for the perfect time to strike.



The Ministry

The Ministry values questions above all else — questioning society, the Kindred, so-called laws, the concept of sin itself. Their stated goal is to destroy the burden set on vampires by each other. But unlike the Socratic philosopher or even the devil's advocate, Ministry Kindred don't discover peace or answers at the end of their questioning. Instead, they find at the end of that long tunnel the True Beast, the great enemy of the Eternal Struggle: the truth. Kindred are inherently cursed and there is nothing, nothing they might do about it. Each plan, each decision, even the rare altruistic impulse leads inevitably to suffering, dust and ashes, forever. Ministry members who discover this firsthand find it all too easy to slip down the dark rabbit hole of pure nihilism. They wither away, their bodies only sometimes dragging themselves out to feed as their mind spirals around the horrors of eternity.

Better, then, to give others the balm of so-called sin and sensation. The Ministry tends to its flock tenderly, furnishing them with the means to attempt their most destructive goals, keeping them safely hungry and desperate. Their holy mission gives Ministry members themselves something to focus on: finding the small cracks in Kindred society allowing them to coil ever-deeper inside, finding new targets and catering to more despicable temptations.

Ministry Horrors

- Religion promises good deeds are rewarded
Kindred laws promise stability is upheld. Lies: there is only nothingness.
- Someone refuses your wares, so you sneak a little into their drink, just so they know how they could feel.

- Each time you succumb to the temptations you sell, you feel hungrier.
- The best rush comes from someone else desperate for a rush, discovering their crutch broken when they need it most.

Archetype: The Procurer of Pleasures

The Procurer attends every Elysium, moving between clusters with a smile and a card slid into a pocket. Silence and cold stares don't deter him — he knows he'll be met with all the effusion he could wish for if they need him. *When* they need him. If you ask him what he does, he simply tells you he finds things. Anything, if your heart desires it. The rarer or more forbidden the object, the more delighted he is to oblige. He's in the wish-granting business, after all. He makes his clients' wishes come true, again and again, until they wish they'd never met him.

Mechanical Advice: Procurers of Pleasure focus on Manipulation, Wits, and Intelligence. They develop many Skills including Subterfuge, Persuasion, Finance, Larceny and Streetwise. They have criminal or academic Contacts, Resources, Prestation Debts (*Players Guide*, p.121) from powerful Kindred and Retainers. They favor Discipline Powers like Awe, Lingering Kiss, and Cloak of Shadows.

In Chronicles

Salonnières

The players' coterie gets an invitation to a Ministry exhibition. It promises attendees from every stripe of intellectual life. Computer scientists, philosophers, avant-garde alchemists, even reclusive Blood Sorcerers all rub elbows to compare notes on their various projects. The host of these festivities provides everything a lick could want, even vessels on the *really* good drugs. At the acme of the evening, he gathers his guests and announces the final topic of the evening: the merits and shortcomings of them slaying him and drinking him dry.

Needful Things

A high-ranking Kindred traded something to a Ministry member, something he badly wants back. He enlists the players' coterie to retrieve it for him. All they know is it lies somewhere in the massive basement vault of the Ministry vampire in question, surrounded by trophies of past deals struck: incriminating documents, rare books, and strange heirlooms. If they're caught, the Ministry member simply asks if they'll allow her to gift them each something from her collection in exchange for the name of their employer.



Nosferatu

Perhaps it's their bodies undergoing a rapid and final change that leaves most Nosferatu so disturbed by living flesh. They cringe at the thought of mortals' blood coursing through their bodies, bringing about constant change: cell turnover, hair springing up and out, youth developing into old age. Some even find the Blush of Life repulsive. Their allies among the city's other Kindred and mortals don't suspect their careful distance stems not from nervousness but distaste.

Their deep discomfort with physically contacting the mortal world gives Nosferatu ample motivation to practice their skills. Watching the city from afar becomes more an art than a job. They experiment with new methods of observation, extraction, and surveillance. Cockroaches carry tiny cameras on their wings, rats plant microphones the size of a pin, mortal couriers ferry coded messages between checkpoints. For any Kindred willing to pay (whether in cash or in favors), there are eyes everywhere, watching for enemies or prey or secret dealings. If any patron fails to pay the price, they soon find little pieces of evidence around whatever building they call home: Mouse droppings under their chair only, and the glint of a fallen lens.

Scratches on the window latches. A tiny feather, almost invisible against the carpet under the skylight. And of course, the polite letter dropped directly on their pillow detailing the agreed-upon arrangement.

Nosferatu Horrors

- The sour-sweet smell of the sewers hangs in the air of a luxurious kitchen.
- There are eyes outside the window, in-between the slats of the air vents, under the bed, always watching.
- Everywhere you go, the rats and ants and centipedes creep out to bask in your shadow.
- Mortal blood rushes dizzily fast through their veins, carrying with it the mutations and diseases and parasites of organic life. It disgusts you almost as much as you crave it.

Archetype: Embedded

Some Nosferatu practice “embedding,” infiltrating a target’s life so completely they can actually exist vicariously through them. They find an opening—a cellar window, a crack in the foundation, an unfinished wall—and slide their gangly bodies not through but sideways, slipping into the walls of the house itself. The warm insulation and soothing rustle of mice and centipedes makes for a cozy cocoon during the day. And at night, they peer through air ducts and peepholes to watch the residents meander through the rooms in their sweatpants. The Embedded don’t even eat their targets half the time. It’s a different sort of game they play, one of time, imagination, and suspense. What if *they* dwelt in this house? What if *they* stayed up late to write an assignment? What if *they* began to feel the first prickles of paranoia that somehow, someone was watching them?

Mechanical Advice: The Embedded focus on Wits, Dexterity, and Resolve, along with Skills like Larceny, Stealth, Investigation, and Awareness. They have found plenty of City Secrets (*Players Guide*, p. 118), with Resources and a Mawla keeping them safe. They tend to use Sense the Beast, Feral Whispers, Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage, and Heightened Senses. The Protean Power Squirm (p. 105) helps the Embedded literally crawl into walls.

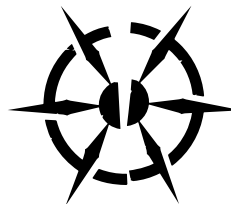
In Chronicles

The Conversation

A small Nosferatu collective bugs the inner sanctum of a Kindred elder at the impetus of her rival—a rival who promptly fails to pay his fees to his erstwhile spymasters. The Nosferatu need a new buyer for their hard-earned recordings, a buyer who can be trusted. They won’t be burned again. This time, they’re enlisting the players’ coterie to act as their agents and find an interested (dependable) client. As they work the job, the coterie begins to notice subtle but unnerving signs they’re being surveilled, too.

Black Eyes

The Nosferatu dreams she is a rat, fur scraping along the greasy side of a subway tunnel, hot blood pumping viscerally through a tiny, pounding heart as she scampers. There is something waiting for her just around the bend of the tracks, *someone* who plucks out her willing eyes and carefully attaches them to the wall. They glitter like black jewels among dozens more like them. All of them are watching, waiting, guarding something hidden beneath an abandoned access hatch. What is it? *Where* is it?



Ravnos

The fire in the Ravnos’ Blood keeps them moving, never sleeping more than a few days in a single bed. Travel light, they say, and indeed most Ravnos have barely a suitcase of belongings. Instead of objects, they collect Masks. They eavesdrop at truck stops and bus stations, recording fellow passengers’ names, histories, tics. They’re identity-theft magpies, collecting everything they need to be a whole new person in the next town. After all, with so many people to be, why stay one person at all? Isn’t it simpler to slip between identities, making yourself into whoever you need to be in the moment? Simpler, too, to give up on pesky convictions—just

show people the reaction they want to see. Some call it psychopathy, but most people prefer to look in the mirror than to look at other faces, whether they admit it or not. When someone feels at home, it's oh-so-easy to push them exactly where you want them.

It's hard for a wandering Ravnos to keep track of vices. Too expensive and difficult to actually develop a drug habit or a gambling problem — instead, find a coterie of local thin-bloods and make them like you until they're so deep into the brews at 5 a.m. that they don't even notice you leave. Or tweak your backstory and manner just so until the cute bartender at the local dive bar gives in and takes you to the casino to blow his whole night's wages.

Ravnos Horrors

- You don't quite remember your middle name now. Your surname is beginning to blur...
- When you sleep, you dream of a woman who takes off her face and leans in to give you a kiss.
- One personality works especially well to influence people — you realize you're mirroring your sire when he Embraced you.
- You haven't seen the sun in years, but it remembers you. It waits to burn away the lies.
- You linger in your victim's house, doing the dishes, pretending it's all yours.

Archetype: Face Shuffler

The Face Shuffler can be whoever you want them to be: the long-dead mortal child of a Toreador ancilla; the distant father to a neonate Malkavian, now miraculously ready to reconnect; the chatty girlfriend a Ravnos travel agent could never quite hook. They could be Darth Vader, if you paid them enough. Face Shufflers study their parts closely, wafting their Disciplines around them like camouflage until their client finally loses himself in the act, allowing the Face Shuffler to draw him into feeling his loved one is truly speaking to him. And if the pain is too great, and the client wounds himself or runs into the night to find a comforting feed? Well, it only makes the trick more compelling.

Mechanical Advice: Face Shufflers should have high Composure, Manipulation, and Wits. Empathy, Subterfuge, Investigation, and Insight tend to be their best Skills. They could have multiple Masks and a dizzying network of Contacts. Discipline Powers often include Cloak of Shadows, Mask of a Thousand Faces, Awe, and Chimerstry (*Players Guide*, p. 76) for new faces.

In Chronicles

Name Game

One of the coterie gets wind someone has stolen their name. Not in the ordinary, freeze-your-credit-card kind of identity theft — they're using it in Kindred spaces. It's a Ravnos courier, who seems surprisingly unfazed by the active and unhappy existence of the name's owner. In fact, all the names they use belong to other Kindred. And their various namesakes all seem to have disappeared or changed their names. The courier isn't staying long, naturally, but for the next few days the coterie glimpses them watching.

Hi It's Me, Back Again

It's a fun backstory for the Ravnos to spin, some sordid tale of a life gone wrong. Until it starts coming true. People they mention start showing up and recognizing them. Pictures appear of them in places they've never been, with friends they've never met. Whoever this person — this thing — is, they're trying to put down roots. Roots which clearly need to be ripped up, when the Ravnos discovers important people from their *real* unlife are starting to forget them.



Salubri

The Salubri rarely find peace with their fellow Kindred. Centuries of rumors and mud-slinging have damaged

their reputation, almost as much as their unerring ability to join whatever local underdog is waging war on their Prince. Their enthusiasm for lost causes is matched only by the intensity of their faith. Although hardly the most outspokenly religious of the Kindred, most Salubri believe redemption and Golconda justify their existence. Saulot achieved messianic status long ago, and his descendants obsess over accumulating enough virtue to follow in his footsteps.

Virtue is a tricky thing to find among vampires, but the Salubri do as they see fit. They peer into histories, finding threads to tug. They remove those unhelpful memories of blood and terror, and wash away the disgust. They probe careful fingers into psyches to discover which minds could be so much better if they were just... *tweaked* a little. Or which should be removed, entirely, lest they corrupt their fellow Kindred further. After a while, Salubri don't think to ask permission — if they ever asked permission in the first place. Aren't they doing something kind for these poor people? Aren't they the descendants of the first Kindred to touch Golconda? Who *wouldn't* want their gentle and insistent help? Not wanting to be helped just shows how badly you need help, after all.

Salubri Horrors

- You lick your Blood from your face as you focus your Disciplines, resisting the urge to sink your teeth into your own wrist.
- You indulge in long fasts, reveling in the pit in your stomach, making yourself feel so clean and controlled.
- Your third eye sees something with claws and teeth coiling around you.
- The longer you run, feed, and perform your good works, the more your thoughts linger on the fact that no one you know has actually achieved Golconda...

Archetype: Eraser

A young Kindred needs help. They trek to the mysterious Salubri's abode, trying desperately to erase the nightmares plaguing them and infiltrating their waking nights. The Salubri is all accommodation.

He's more than happy to Dominate the memories away, soothe the pain with the balm of his arts. It works — for a while. Then his patient stumbles back after a few months, covered in gore, stunned at muscle memories they didn't know they possessed. The Eraser shakes his head fondly and lets his third eye open wide. Time to clean the slate, again.

Mechanical Advice: Erasers focus on Charisma, Resolve, and Composure. Insight, Persuasion, Stealth, Investigation, and Subterfuge are their primary Skills, while Advantages often include Mask, Resources, a Haven doubling as their clinic, and Resources from their clients. Their Discipline choices may include Compel, Mesmerize, Cloud Memory, Heightened Senses, or Panacea (*Players Guide*, p. 70).

In Chronicles

Memory Lane

Certain forms of knowledge come more easily to the Salubri, for better and for worse. One day she freezes, her third eye fixed on a spot somewhere in the middle distance. A vision of her Embrace, her turning — but not as she remembers it. Someone there she doesn't recognize, conferring with her sire; small details she doesn't recall but later confirms as real. Is the vision a real memory, unearthed somehow, or a mindfuck planted in her brain by someone? Is her sire lying to her, and why?

Expiration Date

The Salubri lays hands on their Touchstone and it happens: both of them see their Touchstone's death, laid out before them in horrible detail. The Salubri quickly Dominates the memory away, of course. But tiny reminders keep popping up, and their Touchstone soon has to be Dominated again. For their own good. How accurate is this vision, exactly? And when does Dominating the Touchstone transition from simple memory tweaks to making other, larger changes? *For their own good.*



Toreador

When your greatest moral guideline is beauty for beauty's sake, the descent into degeneracy is easily made. Most Toreador may do what they can to protect their humanity, knowing that the Beast cares little for art, but there are always some who don't know how to quit while they're ahead.

There are Divas who consider murder the finest of the arts, and who see their own Embrace as a sign that they were chosen by the Muses to perfect it. Others see murder as the medium and use blood to paint, make instruments of broken bodies, or cook fine feasts for their mortal dinner guests out of the choicest cuts of former visitors. Such Kindred often succumb quickly to the Beast. Yet, it happens that they sometimes prevail for centuries, having sanctified some last evil as the thing they'll never do—hurt a child, for instance, or turn against their own. Yet again... doesn't true art mean breaking boundaries?

Toreador Horrors

- You can't stop picking at imperfection. You pick, you poke, you cut, you rip, you rend.
- Reflections scream at you when you don't like what you see.
- The patron of the arts becomes a puppeteer to achieve perfection. The artist hasn't slept for days, and they're down to painting with the raw stubs of their own bleeding fingers.
- Romance is fatal attraction, a cycle of sacrifice and Shakespearean tragedy relived so often it's become a grotesque farce. You know it ends with death and poison, yet you can't stop acting.
- You've become a work of art. You're exposed, posed, and admired. You can hear yourself speak but the words are not your own. When you try to scream, only a laugh like silver bells escapes.

Archetype: The Decadent

The Decadent is a glutton for pleasure. They spent their first decades of unlife exploring every avenue of it. But don't you know, the keenest pleasures are felt the first time you experience them? Over time and with many repetitions, even blood orgies grow boring. So now, this Diva spends their nights searching for new impressions and ways to rekindle past enjoyments. Their activities grow increasingly bizarre, and they often end in bitter disappointment. Yet, it's all worth it for the rush that they still sometimes do achieve.

Mechanical Advice: Decadents favor Manipulation, Stamina, and Composure. Their Skills tends to be Persuasion, Awareness, Performance, Etiquette, and Streetwise. They often have large Havens, Resources, Fame among fellow Kindred, Influence, and plenty of Allies and Status. Possible Disciplines include Awe, Lingering Kiss, Cat's Grace, Blink, and Heightened Senses.

In Chronicles

The Captive Muse

An old Diva keeps their thin-blood childe imprisoned under their haven. The Diva is Blood Bound to their prisoner, feeding on their blood every night as they believe they cannot paint without it flowing freshly through their veins. The childe in turn feeds only on what they're given, begging nightly to be allowed to leave. The childe is covered in burn marks, their skin red and blistering. The Diva's favorite motif is his childe's face when the first rays of morning sunlight hit it just right through the bars of their cell.

The Gallery of Living Statues

The players' coterie stumbles upon a gallery of living statues. Some have been surgically modified and posed in dramatic tableaux recalling classical marble statues of antiquity. Others appear whole but are dazed and dreamlike when questioned. One of these statues has some information the coterie

needs. Will they be able to discover which one before the artist comes home, without disturbing any of the art?



Tremere

Before the fall of the Pyramid, most Hermetics were Blood Bonded in strict hierarchies, made to serve their elders without question. Freed, they now seemingly represent a horde of former thralls without masters. But is it so easy to take the master out of the Tremere?

One broken Warlock goes through the motions like a drone, unable to hear his own thoughts for the words of his Regent, which were drilled into him for decades. He wants nothing so much as for someone to give that safety to him again. Another is haunted by the fear that the Bond will one night return, and they'll be forced back into slavery, repeating actions they're still trying to forget. A third brilliant bastard thinks of nothing but their own tireless quest for power, serving Blood Sorcery itself in everything they do, more enslaved to that master than they ever could admit. Either way, Clan Tremere are as apt to produce anxious and trigger-happy messes as Faustian geniuses, neither of which can be trusted not to boil your Blood in your own veins.

Tremere Horrors

- The pursuit of ultimate knowledge blurs the lines between academic curiosity and madness. You're no longer sure where one begins and the other ends.
- You've created a Hemonculus (*Blood Sigils*, p. 68), who is your own smaller copy. It's forced to obey you, but you can tell from its eyes how it hates you.
- You discover more and more terrifying things you can do with your Blood, and yet you keep using it.
- You're constantly afraid someone will try to steal your secrets. It's obsessive and paranoid, but it's probably still true.

Archetype: Apprentice

This Tremere may be free from clan-wide Blood Bonds, but they're still a slave. Indentured to their master in return for specks of sorcerous knowledge, they spend their nights collecting gruesome Ritual ingredients or whatever else needs doing, paying with their backbone and humanity for a chance at greater power. This Kindred often overestimates their own abilities. Hubris has them awakening a sleeping elder, angering spirits they can neither see nor understand, and more. Such trouble can seem all sorts of funny to the coterie, until they need a favor from the Apprentice's master—who generously loans them the Apprentice's services. From up close, frustrated rage and ego seem less humorous and more unsettling.

Mechanical Advice: Apprentices focus on Intelligence, Resolve, and Stamina. Their primary Skills include Occult, Academics, Subterfuge, and Science. They have Contacts among occultists as well as access to a Haven with a Library. Their Discipline choices include Compel, A Taste for Blood, Craft Bloodstone (Ritual), and Ward Against Ghouls (Ritual).

In Chronicles

Something in Here Isn't Right

An elder court-appointed Thaumaturge, increasingly confused, paranoid, and erratic in public, has disappeared, and the Sheriff needs a name that only he knew. The Prince sends the players' coterie to look for him, and his haven is where the search begins. However, there's something markedly unfriendly about that place. It's like the items there want to hurt the coterie. Mirrors fall when they walk past, chairs break and splinter if they sit. The Warlock imbued his home with curses and fled to find a safe place to enter torpor, laying traps against his imagined (and real) enemies all along the path. Can the characters survive the search? Can they convince the sorcerously strong but otherwise decrepit Tremere they come in the Prince's name? Will that actually help, or is the enemy he flees the sovereign they serve?

The Order of the Black Gate

A secret society of Tremere believe they can translate the teachings of medieval Hermetic Alchemy to Blood Sorcery. They call themselves the Black Gate, symbolizing the solar eclipse that putrefies the material, allowing for rebirth — just as they will destroy those who oppose them to bring forth a new era. Their leader searches for the perfect recipe for the Red Elixir, the miracle tincture, which according to legends can transmute metals into gold, raise the dead, make the old young, and perhaps return a vampire to mortal life. A thin-blood alchemist close to the players' coterie has gotten involved with the order. When a player's character hears of it, they're already in trouble. The order will kill, and worse, to protect their secrets.



Tzimisce

Tzimisce possessiveness easily turns excessive. Nobility of mind and manners can mask a sadistic striving for dominance, jealous paranoia, and an all-consuming desire to claim and control. For these Dragons, control means constantly watching over their Domains. Pushing others away. Sealing them off. Till no one is left who could threaten their control. They're left in a wasteland of their own making, isolated and alienated.

No wonder they seek guests, links to the outside world, trophies to display to their peers, proof of their own worth. Of course, only the strongest or luckiest of visitors escape the slow transition from guest to possession. Even other Kindred feel the covetous eye of a Tzimisce host on their backs, and woe betide the younger or weaker vampire sent into the Dragon's lair on another's business. Every cliché of the abusive husband, the torture-prison keeper, the jealous and obsessive collector, waits behind the all-too-malleable façade of the genteel Old Clan. Remember, the Tzimisce can use Dominate to mind-

craft those even temporarily in their power as easily as they use Protean to flesh-craft them.

For other Dragons, their mastery of fleshcrafting reminds other Kindred that their being and will can be stripped away. Their creations mock the idea of a "sanctity of natural form." The fleshcrafter can turn a victim into their own worst fears, fusing arachnophobes together into a flesh spider with countless weeping eyes or forcing a pregnant woman to carry her deformed fetus on the outside of her body. Still worse, constant reshaping severs the Dragon's link to their fundamental self. They cannot tell what's inside them from the wasteland that lies outside. Agoraphobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, body dysmorphia, claustrophobia, and acute sanguinary aversion (fear that your own vitae or the blood you imbibe has been poisoned) fructify in the minds and Blood of the Old Clan like so many tumors.

Tzimisce Horrors

- If it can't have you, no one can.
- You've finally got it all. The entire block is yours. Is your Blood-bound thrall looking at you with envy? Best to kill them now and start patrolling your Domain yourself.
- Another tenant left the building. You could find someone else to pay that rent, it's still at half capacity and the remaining rent will pay the mortgage. Best to crack down on the others for now.
- Your dear old housekeeper has too many fingers. You've given up on counting them.
- Did someone take something from you while you slept? Is an item missing from your hoard, someone missing from your Herd? Better count them again, and mark them to make sure they're counted this time.
- You only rest easy when the ones you care for are completely under your control.

Archetype: The Collector

This Tzimisce deals in antiques and *objets d'art*, or with sufficient wealth simply collects and hoards

them. When not on the hunt for blood, they trace the next piece for their collection. Perhaps they have a weakness for Georgian hairwork jewelry and swear they can only repair their broken pieces by using hair from someone alive in the same period. Perhaps they collect volumes of Noddist lore bound in the authors' skin, or doll-like children they preserve in wax.

Mechanical Advice: Collectors have high Resolve, Manipulation, and Intelligence. Their Skills include Finance, Streetwise, Occult, Academics, and perhaps even Larceny. Their primary Advantages include Resources, Mask, loyal Retainers, and multiple dots in Linguistics. The Collector uses Compel or Mesmerize and Domitor's Favor (*Players Guide*, p.74) to impose their will-backed sensory Powers such as Eyes of the Beast, Heightened Senses, or Sense the Beast.

In Chronicles

The House of Flesh

To be a bride of the master of the house is a fate reserved for the lucky few, but tonight another will arrive. The veiled servants are already drawing her a bath, as her sister-wives lay out her wedding garments in expectation of her happiness. They'll brush her hair when she awakens and hold her tight as they present her to the master. They'll comfort her until she understands, and with time she'll learn to drink what the house offers and nestle thankfully within its wet and veiny crevasses. Then, all rooms and corridors will be hers to enjoy. All, except for the old bedroom where the master's never-beating heart hangs exposed in his brick-and-bones chest cavity, just another feature of the Voivode who long ago became the House of Flesh.

The Amiable Hostess

The amiable hostess exudes old-money charm and perfect elegance. She appears as a potential ally, welcoming the players' coterie into her domain with a promise of mutual benefit. However, she adheres to a moral code the coterie don't immediately grasp, and it's inevitable they offend her. When they do, her smile won't falter. But she starts working against them. They don't realize she's the one causing their troubles.

She wants them to suffer for what they did and takes pleasure in observing their suffering up close, wanting to see if her lesson is teaching them anything at all.

The Demanding Mentor

A fledgling new to the night needs someone to show them the ropes and at first glance, the Tzimisce looks perfect. Terrifying, true, but it means that others won't mess with the fledgling. The trouble is that to the Mentor, their protege is their property and they get jealous of the strangest things. They don't care if the fledgling has romantic dalliances but flies into a rage if the protege mentions having met the Prince. Eventually it becomes clear that the Tzimisce threatens to destroy their ward just to make sure nobody can have them.



Ventruue

No one needs to stretch their imagination particularly far to realize the rotten core of the Ventruue. Perhaps their greatest virtue is they don't really bother to hide their abuses of power — to the Clan of Kings, the smoky back room has as much allure as the respectable board room. Anyone accusing a Ventruue shadow advisor of dirty dealings gets an amused chuckle, a pat on the head, and an insultingly low payoff offer.

The ancestor worship should be no surprise — any clan as obsessed with kingship naturally venerates the actual god-emperors their lineage spawned. Like narcissists staring into a mirror, the Ventruue can't help but gaze adoringly at themselves through history. It only serves to fan the flames of their ambitions: they were kings before there was writing, and they shall rule when the Earth is ashes.

Ventruue Horrors

- A king must give gifts — you carve meat from your blood servants for your guests to feast upon.
- Create a refugee crisis overseas to fill the streets with desperate strangers, inspire a serial killer to

drive tabloid clicks, hollow out a biotech firm to get access to a million stored blood samples: anything to make the line go up.

- You give your victims a choice: their blood or their flesh. You wear a necklace of fingers beneath your collar.
- A heavy crown requires a strong foundation to support. Your childer and vassals bear your weight in addition to the crown's.

Archetype: Headhunter

The Headhunter is charming, connected, and observant. She lingers less in the Kindred Elysia and domains and more in mortal spaces, finding the haunts where late-night deals and political connections are made. She's looking for new blood, literally. She has to be careful, of course. There's a delicate balance to be struck in giving the Ventrue the human capital edge they need, while keeping their Disciplines sharp. The last thing the clan needs is a weak link, or worse, a thin-blood. The Curse of Caine may not be an easy thing to bear, but the Headhunter couldn't care less. She has a quota to fill and a sire to please.

Mechanical Advice: Headhunters have high Charisma, Manipulation, and Wits. Their primary Skills include Awareness, Insight, Leadership, Subterfuge, and Politics or Finance or both. Advantages include Mawla with Resources, Influence, and Status. Their Disciplines might include Sense the Beast, Cloud Memory, Mesmerize, Daunt, or Awe to handle recruits, and Resilience and Toughness for anyone who pushes back against the work-life balance ask.

In Chronicles

Memento

A Ventrue ancilla slips into a state of waking Memoriam. His childer find themselves urgently summoned to discuss ancient deals and political moves long obsolete. What secret or unanswered question lies in their sire's past, buried deep enough that he can't extract himself from his Memoriam? If it can be answered, can they bring him back to the present (and smooth over the ruffled feathers he's caused)?

Particular Palates

The young Ventrue is tasked with delivering the *pièce de résistance* to a gathering of important ancillae. Not flowers, fine wine, or even alchemist brews—this centerpiece is a mortal, raised in isolation as the prize turkey for the host's feasts. The victim is not alone in the great house on the outskirts of town, where she resides. Her siblings live there, too. Each of them is trained in a different art, their lives carefully tuned to imbue their blood with a particular Resonance. One sibling gets the young Ventrue alone and makes an offer: all his blood in exchange for his siblings' freedom.



Caitiff

People aren't made to be alone. You can tell by how fucked up they can become when no community will have them. The trauma of being taught that you're a freak can drive a person to extremes. The weird get weirder. The cruel kid with a penchant for drawing their classmates headless gets confirmation that normies deserve to be without their heads. The Caitiff, too, made so often outcasts by the Kindred that created them, get a choice: become a monster on the margin or a wolf in the fold.

At their lowest, the Caitiff are crazed loners, low-Humanity fiends who feed on the most vulnerable and do the bidding of Sabbat cultists without question, begging at their table for bloody scraps. If they aim a little higher, they become double-dealing spies without loyalty who ingratiate themselves with a court or clan pretending to belong. The best learn to blend in with, and find a place in, all kinds of murderous, inhuman peer groups. What's scarier than a Caitiff with no friends? A Caitiff with lots of friends.

Caitiff Horrors

- "Proper" vampires see you as an ill omen — and you've learned enough divination to recognize the bad mojo around yourself.

- Your survival depends on your ability to pretend to be something you're not, to fit into a society that rejects you.
- Your vitae doesn't work the way it should; your Blood whispers increasingly agitated nonsense.
- You keep souvenirs of all the times you've tried to fit in, of all the Kindred who turned out to be false friends. If this keeps up, you're going to need a bigger bag for all these teeth.
- Why shouldn't you become the monster they fear you to be? Or better yet, a monster they haven't learned to fear yet?

Archetype: The Scapegoat

At some point in their past, this Caitiff was the convenient scapegoat for another Kindred's crime — from diablerie to Black Hand espionage. Already suspect to the community they'd been Embraced into but didn't fit with, the Scapegoat had little hope to be believed. So, they fled. They've relocated several times since, as their reputation catches up with them and more scandals are added to their name. They're able to keep going by having several fake identities and offering their services as a ruthless fixer in the domains they pass through. Perhaps one night they'll clear their name. Perhaps it's far too late.

Mechanical Advice: Scapegoats leverage their high Wits, Resolve, and Dexterity to survive. Their Skills begin with Streetwise, Politics, Stealth, Survival, and Intimidation. The Scapegoat has Contacts in the underworld, some Resources, but also the Mockingbird Advantage (*Players Guide*, p. 126). Their assorted Powers could be Awe, Resilience, Lethal Body, Weight of a Feather, or Daunt.

In Chronicles

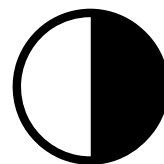
Last One Standing

Places still exist in the world where nature dominates over man, and where a handful of hikers can travel for weeks without running into others. At the edge of the wilderness in just such a place, an old Caitiff works as

a guide and trapper, as he has since 1842. In all those years, he's never met another lick — except his sire, whose bones are dust beneath his cottage. The Caitiff knows he's of the devil, and that he pays for the blood he takes by slaying monsters. Usually, it's mostly been sick bears and rapists. But should he pick up the trail of the players' coterie, he'll thank God for the chance to burn them all to ash — with sunlight, of course, can't risk a fire in this dry countryside.

Monsters of the Midway

To begin with, there was just one vampire kid. The autarkis Ventrue who stalks the amusement park, an outcast themselves, was just trying to get rid of a corpse and hadn't realized they'd made a childe. Now, several feral Caitiffs slowly excavate a warren under the attractions, feeding mostly on possums and lost kids. The clanless pack barely knows the world outside exists, but they know they're very hungry all the time. There's one tunnel entrance to their nest inside the house of mirrors, and another in the dark ride, and so many places to hide and play in the haunted house. Characters sent to bargain (or otherwise deal with) the Ventrue might stumble — literally — on problems they hadn't expected.



Duskborn

In being closest to humanity, the Duskborn constantly face everything they're not. They're only almost mortal in the way a cannibal appears like any other person until you look inside their fridge. Desperation to belong is a great vehicle of horror. Refusing to admit they're dangerous, one Duskborn drains their whole family after prolonged abstinence. Another makes awful bargains for fleeting power and protection, seeking shelter from people who brand and abuse them.

For outsiders, thin-bloods can embody the horror of the enemy within, or just on the edge of a community: the friendly neighbor serial killer, the stranger causing unease that may just be prejudice, the family member who suddenly flips one day

thanks to a secret meth addiction or untreated postpartum psychosis. To be the mortal relations of a thin-blood is to nurture a snake at one's breast. To be a thin-blood is to become the thing you always feared would come for you. Furthermore, for true vampires, the Duskborn can act as an ill omen, a symbol of decline. There are also too many of them now to be ignored, the difference between one potentially rabies-infected rat here and there and a whole army. Do the rats know the Kindred used to destroy them by the dozens only recently? Will they want revenge?

Duskborn Horrors

- The people you want most to protect refuse to give up on you. They'll die unless you can convince them you despise them. Maybe even at your hands.
- You struggle to distinguish genuine feelings from the growing Hunger.
- Your alchemical concoctions have terrifying side effects. You have cancerous internal sores and fruit flies keep trying to lay their eggs inside your mouth.
- Fragments of the Book of Nod claim thin blood as a sign of the end times. You wonder if there's any connection to the globalist chemtrails or to the secret billionaire Mars colony. Oh, those aren't real? That's what they say about vampires, too.
- Other Duskborn act as though you're in this together. A good many of them will still stake you in your sleep and run off with your stash of blood and Ashe if they get the chance. (There are whole cults of thin-bloods now who hunt and destroy true vampires for the high it gives them. See Ashfinders in *Cults of the Blood Gods*, pp. 35–38.)

Archetype: Crash Test Dummy

This Duskborn is determined to test their limits and discover the true extent of their apparent immortality. Perhaps they were created knowing almost nothing about their condition, or they've known all along that they're a vampire who doesn't work the way they should. Whether it's insanity, heroics, or a more-than-usually pronounced death

drive, the Crash Test Dummy laughs in the face of danger and rushes right on in.

Mechanical Advice: Crash Test Dummies survive due to their Stamina, Resolve, and Dexterity. They focus on Drive, Athletics, Technology, Stealth, and Awareness. They have few Backgrounds but their Fame as a daredevil might grow. While some may have Vampire Resilience and a Fortitude Affinity, they are often cursed with Baby Teeth and Unending Hunger. Powers ideally include Resilience.

In Chronicles

The Mortal

Until the '90s, thin-bloods were quietly destroyed when they appeared, which is why most around tonight are so young. But in the back of a warehouse in the harbor district, a wrinkled old squatter lives surrounded by greenery. They can tell Duskborn characters how to regain mortality and will do so in return for a bit of kindness.

Laughing, the old punk can tell them that the trick is to kill your sire. It's what they did, and look at them now, at the end of a long life. Now, twist the knife: the old punk is the sire of a player's character. They are who they'll have to kill.

Once the old punk is dead, twist the knife again. They lied. They never had mortality to begin with but were created when they were already old, a thin-blood like their childe. The rite they revealed doesn't work, though it did give them the true death they longed for.

Failed Experiments

You don't know what to think of the thin-blood alchemist. One moment, they're powerless, another they can walk on water. Their gums and tongue are blue from quicksilver poisoning. You're pretty sure they think they can make the philosopher's stone, or at least a "daylight ring," with your vitae and your fangs. When you wake, they're staring at you, their face hovering right over yours, the first of many jump scares. Maybe you should just destroy them? But then you'll get in trouble and have no one to craft the Formula you need. So it's a race: can you get the brew before the thin-blood tries to gouge your eyes out or you lose your shit and drink them? ■



Chapter Four

DARKNESS IN THE BLOOD

*That City's atmosphere is dark and dense,
Although not many exiles wander there,
With many a potent evil influence,
Each adding poison to the poisoned air;
Infections of unutterable sadness,
Infections of incalculable madness,
Infections of incurable despair.*

—JAMES THOMSON, “THE CITY OF
DREADFUL NIGHT”

Power corrupts, they say, and they seem to be right about that. What if you're already corrupt? What does your power do to you then? New-fledged Kindred might begin terrified at their own unnatural speed or at the blank look in a mortal's eyes when they talk in that certain Voice. But they get over it, they start thinking of their unnatural abilities as a tool or a weapon that they wield, controlled by their will. But their will often falters, splintering in Frenzy or corroding in Hunger. Just another quick tap of the Discipline fixes things... for now. But doesn't that mean the Discipline wields you?

Dark Disciplines

This chapter looks deeper still into your Blood, at what the Disciplines might do, at what you might ask them to do, at what they might lure you into doing. It's power, it's a rush, it's just one more Rouse Check, one more step toward the brink of Hunger, and feeding, and slaking the Beast. It offers new powers, to tempt you.



Animalism

You see Kindred call animals, command them with a wave of their hand, and it turns your stomach. To have that much life at their fingertips is wrong, and it unsettles you how differently the animals act from a Dominated mortal or even a fleshcrafted creature. Is their master letting his mind drift too far into the world of beasts? How much humanity — or worse, control — does he give away to get his animal thralls? The nature of those animals makes you queasy at the best of times. The shining brown gush of cockroaches pouring over the doorstep, the writhing maggots on a corpse, the matted dogs missing eyes and ears... they remind you all too much of your own reality. Pests at best, parasites and perils at worst.

Or maybe you're the sort to whom Animalism comes naturally. Living blood flows freely through the veins of animals. You feel it when you snake your mind in between the lobes of their brains; you can almost imagine that's your heart pounding in your chest and your lungs burning as you run under the street lights. The creatures under your control have such basic needs and desires — eating, hiding, fucking, giving birth, fighting — and all of it so gloriously, messily alive. You even feel when they die, a true death, and it mocks you. After a while, their minds feel easier to understand than humans, no politics or schemes beyond the next meal or a comfortable place to rest. It's easy to forget that another world exists, where tooth and claw rule more in metaphor than in reality. Other Kindred might not understand, but using your Discipline is the closest thing to ecstasy there is.

Level 3

AUGURY

Amalgam: Auspex 1

By feeding its chosen creatures food mixed with a little of its own Blood, the vampire can master the swirling mass within an insect swarm, flock of birds, or school of fish to access the hidden knowledge they gather on their travels. The vampire receives the answer to a single question regarding anyone or anything within its city (or within the beings' range).

Terror swirls inside the many minds suddenly linked and unlinked at once, forced into an alien shape. The vampire experiences this fear, too, and feels at once several dozen creatures' impulse to run to safety. Once the vampire has taken control of the swarm long enough to force an answer from it, the swarm dissipates, the animals too spooked to maintain group cohesion.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Manipulation + Animalism

System: Test Manipulation + Animalism against a Difficulty based on the detail of the question being asked. In general, the Difficulty increases from places (easy), to things (moderate), to people (difficult). Using Augury to ask "Where is Clarice's bar?" would

be a Difficulty 2; asking “Who is Lyle’s secret Blood Bond?” might be a Difficulty 5 or more if the subject in question has taken pains to hide the answer.

The Storyteller answers the vampire’s question by describing the image the flock forms, usually the most direct answer to the question possible. Perhaps it’s the likeness of a person’s face, or a house front, or the briefly animated depiction of someone’s workroom. A critical win reveals something important (regardless of the question directly asked), as the animals sense the changing tides of action and inaction.

This experience terrifies the animals the vampire harnesses, and their terror scars the vampire’s Animalism until it has time to fade. For the rest of the session, any Animalism test the vampire makes involving this Power or living creatures increases in Difficulty by 1 for each use of this Power.

Duration: A few minutes to gather the swarm’s knowledge

AWAKEN THE PARASITE

Vampires are dead, but that doesn’t mean they’re devoid of life. As they rest, bugs rest and nest within them; if they eat, traces of food remain to rot in their gut, and even the blood they consume festers long enough to provide sustenance for more than just the vampire. These parasitic eggs normally remain unhatched and dormant, but once this Power is engaged, they rapidly mature, writhing beneath skin, escaping from eye sockets and orifices, chewing through flesh, and swelling the body to the bursting point. The result is a disgustingly grim reminder of what lives within them.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Resolve + Animalism

System: The vampire Rouses the Blood and spends their action concentrating before testing Resolve + Animalism against the Humanity of their target (mortal targets resist with Stamina + Wits). The victim must be within close proximity to the vampire. Results are based on the margin of the contest, while a critical win also increases a vampire target’s Hunger by one:

- **Basic Win (Margin 0):** The victim reduces Social and Mental dice pools by one die as

maggots burrow and writhe beneath their flesh, causing confusion and headaches to the victim, and nausea among onlookers.

- **Margin 1:** The victim suffers a two-dice penalty on all pools as larvae burst from their flesh in significant numbers. In most cases, Social tests simply fail without needing to roll. At this stage, the Masquerade becomes severely strained, at best.
- **Margin 2+:** Eggs go from larvae to pupae in seconds, and pupating blowflies erupt in a shower of gore; killing mortal victims, while supernatural targets receive a two-dice penalty to pools, 2 unhalved Superficial damage, and find themselves unable to speak as their throats fill with squirming maggots.

If the vampire uses Awaken the Parasite on themselves, perhaps to intimidate or disgust a foe, the vermin burst from their flesh and they suffer a two-dice penalty on any other pools this scene. The target resists with Composure + Resolve. If the vampire wins, the target cringes away, flees, or otherwise loses face; they also lose Willpower equal to the margin.

Duration: One scene



Auspex

The visions come unbidden, always hovering on the edge of your perception. You can’t turn them off, no matter what you try: drugs, blindfolds, feeds, starvation. Everything you do simply changes them, warping their edges into ripples of maybes and maybe-nots. You know every time someone lies to you, even when it’s a kind lie. A lie you’d like to believe. Lies like “I love you,” or “I’ll keep you safe.” Every conversation is reflected into fractals of itself, sentences playing out in front of you in a thousand different tiny iterations, infinite variations of a single word stretching back into infinity. You try to keep your hand on the thread of reality, but

sometimes you pause and turn your head to discover you've been alone this whole time. Or is this another vision...? You need to clear your head. Find a mortal, any mortal will do, and Possess them for a day (yes, day). Use their body as you see fit, until the visions fade to just the corners of your eyes and you can let them crawl back to whatever reality you pulled them from. They all run together, for you.

Or maybe Auspex is a stranger to you. You enter Elysium tonight and see that damn spy, the one whose eyes dart to invisible corners, and you know your thoughts aren't your own. You keep a hold on your tongue, keep the lies only half-truths and evasions, and still it's not enough. They know it all, know where you are and where you're going, know which pebbles you stepped on. When you dream, you see those eyes staring at you from the shadows.

Level 3

HARUSPEX

Amalgam: Oblivion 1

Certain oracles, mystics, and necromancers maintain that in those final, fleeting moments before death claims another soul, the dying consciousness opens up to the secrets of the cosmos and witnesses the infinite. With the proper attunement, a vampire can tug on the frayed edges of this insight before it vanishes into the grave, warping it to their own ends to provide hints to their own future.

Some vampires are content to observe death when it occurs naturally, others develop an unhealthy paranoia when their future's unknown and take matters into their own hands, killing and torturing to maintain a steady flow of insight.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Resolve + Auspex

System: The vampire spends a turn examining the body of the recently dead or dying (they must have died within the scene), during which time they remove and scatter organs, stare into vacant eyes, and otherwise desecrate the corpse. Once complete, they Rouse the Blood and test Resolve + Auspex against Difficulty 3. Characters gain a one-die bonus if they killed the victim themselves,

or two dice if they're killed while undergoing the scrying process (such a torturous death likely grants Stains). If successful, the vampire can reroll every die in any single dice pool before the night's end as the insight prepares them for such an eventuality. On a critical win, they may reroll up to three pools. When a pool is rerolled, the player may choose the most preferable result. This Power only works with mortal victims — vampires and animals provide no spark of insight.

Duration: One night

Level 4

HEART LAID BARE

While not true mind reading, this Power lets a vampire peer into the subconsciousness of a victim to gain a sense of what they desire — or fear — the most. Armed with this knowledge the user gains a powerful leverage on the victim, though the moment they let on that they are aware of an elder's deepest fears, their nights might be numbered.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Intelligence + Auspex vs Composure + Subterfuge

System: The user decides on whether they are looking for fears or desires and then engages the target in conversation for a few minutes before making the Power test. The test is made against Difficulty 0 on unsuspecting mortals, but mortals aware of vampiric abilities — as well as all supernatural creatures — can resist with Composure + Subterfuge. The margin on success determines how much information is gained:

1–2: The user gets a general notion of the victim's fears or desires, such as: "wealth", "sex", "bugs", or "loneliness."

3–5: The sense becomes more specific: "making it on the stock market", "a threesome", "hornets", or "losing my partner"

6+: The user receives a clear picture of the element sought, complete with context or history: "getting away with that NDX Insider deal", "a threesome with Billy and Jeanette", "hornets, ever since I

whacked that nest on a dare in third grade”, or “Warren finding out I lied about Billy and Jeanette.”

Add one success to the result if the object of desire or fear is present, and add another success if the conversation touches upon the topic. (Though the victim can catch on to the intent unless the user wins a Composure + Subterfuge vs Wits + Insight test.)

Duration: —



Blood Sorcery

Blood Sorcery is tortured Hermetic magic, stripped of the spiritual enlightenment that originally lay at its core. It lacks true transcendence, instead drawing power from suffering in the profane exchange of blood. In this, it sets the scene for all manner of dark dealings. Rituals risk failing, driving sorcerers to make still greater sacrifices to ensure success, leading to corruption and sometimes rapid Humanity loss. For as wise mages understand: if it doesn't hurt, it doesn't work.

Thaumaturgy can be addictive, the rush of casting unlike any other feeling. It can also easily take more from the sorcerer than they meant to give. Users obsessed with perfecting their art tend to lose sleep, become paranoid, and let dirt and mold accumulate around them. You can play up this slide into insanity with a heavy dose of magical thinking: to the character who already suspects they're the target of dark powers, everything appears connected. Dark omens appear to them where others see the mundane, and accidents seem anything but accidental.

The target of Blood Sorcery is the victim of the unknown, as much as of specific powers and Rituals. They cannot know the limits of the art of what the Blood Sorcerer has learned. So, their doom can come in any shape, from knives of blood to the unfettering of the Beast within them. They can run, but can they hide when they don't know what to hide from?

Level 1 Power

SHAPE THE SANGUINE SACRAMENT

Ostentatious Tremere use this Power to manipulate blood or vitae into shapes, signs, or images. This may be mere entertainment at Elysium, clever disruption of blood spatter to confuse law enforcement, or the only way to get a ward under a locked door.

Cost: Free (or one Rouse Check if using your own Blood)

Dice Pools: Manipulation + Blood Sorcery

System: The vampire makes a Manipulation + Blood Sorcery test and by concentrating on the image to be formed, sends the blood or vitae flowing into the prescribed pattern or shape. Difficulty varies with the pattern's complexity: from a simple “SOS” (Difficulty 2), to a portrait (Difficulty 4), or topologically complex sorcerous sigil (Difficulty 6). Failure spatters the blood randomly; a critical win not only forms the desired image but also allows the vampire to change its shape freely during the scene.

Duration: For the remainder of the scene or until dispelled by user

Level 4 Powers

FULMINATING VITAE

The vampire draws or drips their Blood into a pint-sized vial or jar, sorcerously energizing it. Sealed into the vial, the vitae simmers and seethes and tries its damndest to free itself. If the container is broken, the Blood explodes outward like shrapnel, cutting into whatever — or whoever — was unlucky enough to be in its splash zone. Left in an unbroken vial for long enough, the liquid of the vitae boils off and leaves a rust-colored residue that cuts like powdered glass.

The nature of Blood is predatory, seeking, and naturally self-destructive. Maybe that's why it can damage Kindred so effectively: any vampires caught in the blast radius of a broken Fulminating Vitae capsule find their wounds far more difficult to close than simple knife or bullet wounds. When Kindred find themselves caught in a tight place, sometimes it's easiest to reach for a knife and their own wrists.

Cost: Two Rouse Checks

Dice Pools: Stamina + Blood Sorcery

System: When the vial is broken — whether that's by a cleverly timed explosive, a well-aimed throw, or an accident — the Fulminating Vitae explodes outward in a radius of approximately 20 feet. It deals Aggravated damage to any Kindred in its path equal to the margin on a Stamina + Blood Sorcery vs Wits + Athletics test. Mortals take only Superficial damage, in part due to the accelerated healing brought on by the Blood mixing with theirs. Inanimate objects are completely unaffected.

Anyone taking damage from this Power also is affected by the vitae as though they tasted it for purposes of learning Disciplines and the Blood Bond.

Duration: The vial remains “armed” until dawn

MARIONETTE

Prerequisite: Shape the Sanguine Sacrament

The sorcerer's mastery over blood has reached the point where they can control and direct it while it still flows in the veins of its owner.

With little more than a glance and a few hand gestures, the vampire pulls pools of gore into humanoid shapes before setting them to task. The living targets of this Power are the most unfortunate, as they find their limbs being painfully pulled this way and that, their bodies lurching forward with no care for safety, and the feeling that their veins are trying to rip themselves from their own skin. Resistance is possible but bloody, agonizing, and temporary.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Manipulation + Blood Sorcery

System: The vampire concentrates for a turn, Rouses the Blood, and makes the activation test. Make tests against spilled blood (or dead bodies) at Difficulty 2, while living creatures can resist with Stamina + Occult (or Fortitude). For each point of margin, the vampire has full control over the blood for one turn and uses Manipulation + Blood Sorcery for all the marionette's physical actions.

Living targets maintain their faculties while being puppeteered and can still speak — although this rarely amounts to more than terrified screams once they realize their body moves seemingly of its own volition. Living targets can force control for a turn;

however, the effort inflicts 1 point of Aggravated damage as their blood shreds their flesh from within. Blood without a body temporarily solidifies and sharpens, and inflicts +2 damage during combat.

During the process, the sorcerer must maintain concentration — simple movement and conversation is fine, but most offensive actions requiring dice pools break the spell and end the power unless the user has a Critical Win on the offensive action's test. Vampires and vitae cannot be puppeteered, only the blood of the living.

Duration: One turn per point of margin

Blood Sorcery Rituals

Level 3 Ritual

GRIM CHRYSALIS

The vampire produces a large quantity of thick, bloody keratin spit, which hardens around them to a protective cocoon. Within the cocoon, healing and transformation significantly accelerate while the shell protects the vampire from damage.

Ingredients: 200g of human hair, a moth or butterfly. Old-school sorcerers insist on death's-head moths and hair from a corpse; younger licks suggest that a store-bought bottle of keratin supplements and any random caterpillar works just as well.

Process: The vampire makes a Rouse Check, ingests and swallows the hair and the moth over a fifteen-minute period. It can form the Grim Chrysalis any time that night, and automatically begins forming it three minutes before sunrise unless it can vomit up the mass with a Resolve + Athletics test (Difficulty 3).

System: The vampire begins drooling its keratin-laced saliva into the air, where it expands and hardens into the Grim Chrysalis. The Ritual test determines whether the cocoon forms entirely or remains incomplete. It only takes three turns to form the cocoon. Inside the cocoon, the vampire can mend all Superficial damage in one night, or 2 Aggravated Health damage; no Rouse Checks are needed for this mending. If the vampire has Vicissitude (*Players*

RITUAL TYPE: AAPILU AWAKENING

Every aapilu (*Blood Sigils*, pp. 128–130) has its own Ritual to summon (or awaken) it, sometimes discoverable through occult research or abstruse magical calculation. To research or derive an aapilu's awakening Ritual requires a good occult library and a hard extended test (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 294). The sorcerer must make one Intelligence + Occult test for every week of research with the Aapilu Level as the Difficulty. When the sorcerer has accumulated a total margin equal to the aapilu's Willpower, they can attempt the summoning.

The level of the Ritual to awaken a specific aapilu is the same as its Aapilu Level.

Ingredients: A pentagram or other sigil inscribed on the floor, a burning brazier, a wooden wand, lit candles at the points of the pentagram, the aapilu's True Name

Process: The sorcerer chants the aapilu's True Name and visualizes the hideous actions they seek to accomplish while draining a Rouse Check's worth of their Blood into the brazier. They then dip the wand into the brazier, drawing symbols into the pentagram in burning Blood while completing the True Name.

System: With a win on the Ritual test, the aapilu appears, open to negotiation: this may take the form of a Social contest, an opening offer, or any other process the Storyteller wishes. Unless offended or angered, the aapilu does not attack the sorcerer.

With a critical win on the Ritual test, the sorcerer binds the aapilu (for the time being) and can make a take-it-or-leave-it offer with no further test needed. Bound aapilum do not attack the sorcerer unless the pentagram breaks. If the sorcerer's Blood Sorcery rating exceeds the bound creature's Aapilu Level, they can also command it to possess a target (present, or through an image, hair, or other magical connection), set something on fire anywhere in the city besides sacred ground, answer an occult question, or perform some other minor service. (One service per dot of Blood Sorcery.) The sorcerer can dismiss a bound aapilu at any time.

On a failure, the aapilu seemingly doesn't manifest. It might have seeped into the world for its own purposes, with its actions magically traceable back to the sorcerer. On a total failure, the aapilu attacks the summoner.

Regardless of the Ritual test outcome, the sorcerer gains one Stain per Aapilu Level sought. All aapilum depart at sunrise except those possessing mortals or animals; these remain until they accomplish their goals or the sorcerer's instructions.

Guide, p. 81), use of this Power within the cocoon requires no test but assumes a number of successes equal to the user's Discipline pool.

The shell of the cocoon is hard as nails yet pliant. It protects the user from sunlight, lets in no air or liquids, and protects the user from fall damage from less than a hundred meters. Breaking it open by force requires inflicting a total of 30 levels of damage with an appropriate tool or weapon, such as an axe. The cocoon also takes damage from fire and acid, smelling like burning hair and giving off a thick black smoke. It takes three turns to destroy a Grim Chrysalis in this way, and the vampire within, floating in a thick blood sludge, may emerge before the damage reaches them.

The process of breaking out of the cocoon can be a disturbing sight. Vampires that have undergone extensive Vicissitude within emerge, shredding their previous form like a molting insect.

Duration: At least one day unless the cocoon is broken earlier. Vampires that remain in the cocoon risk torpor according to the usual starvation rules.

Level 4 Ritual**THE BALM OF BATHORY**

The sorcerer makes a lotion, bath oil, or ointment from the blood of a young mortal to revitalize their own flesh, allowing them to appear decades younger than usual and smoothing out any imperfections.

Ingredients: One cup of vitae from the sorcerer, one pint of blood from a youthful victim (or victims) of clear complexion (the needed amount doubles per brewing, see below), chamomile flowers, and shea butter or sheep's fat; optional essential oils for scent

Process: The sorcerer collects their own Blood and that of their victim in a heat-resistant container, adding the other ingredients while stirring and heating up the mixture. While brewing the mixture, the sorcerer concentrates on how it will perfect their imperfections, making them young and beautiful. Some believe it strengthens the balm if the victim suffers as much as possible when their blood is drawn.

System: Make the Ritual test before taking the mixture off the heat. On a win, the balm emulsifies into a smooth and fragrant blend that can be used directly on the skin or dissolved in bath water. It remains effective for a week past brewing, as long as it's applied regularly. The user gains the temporary effect of the Stunning Advantage (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 179) This effect supersedes any innate Beautiful or Stunning Advantage possessed by the user and is not cumulative with these.

However, the use of the Balm of Bathory can be highly addictive and the amount of mortal blood required doubles per brew. (The eighth brew requires 128 pints, enough blood to fill a small bathtub, but the amount does not increase afterward.) The first batch of the balm has no side effects, but after the second batch, the balm turns toxic on the user's flesh past the first week. They suffer 1 Superficial damage worth of necrotic flesh wounds nightly, affecting any part of their body exposed to the balm, until they either brew another batch or until they go without the balm for one month per batch brewed.



Celerity

Does time love the Kindred or hate them? Certainly it doesn't care to touch their bodies, as much as the Kindred Embraced very young or old might wish it did. You wonder if your speed is a blessing or a curse. You move so swiftly, yet it seems so slow — sometimes you wonder if time has abandoned you in a slow-motion world, leaving you to run

between the seconds of other peoples' lives. The worst of it is when you awaken from slumber or torpor and discover your mind is racing while your body is stuck — watching a single fly land on your finger in torturously slow motion, and your hand moves at a glacial pace to swat it. When blessed minutes and hours come rushing back, you're weak with relief.

You watch Celerity flow through you and your Kindred, and it sends a chill down your spine. It reminds you, all too clearly, that you are not really



human anymore. There's an acceptable speed for mortals—even the fastest athletes in the world can be followed with the naked eye. But you? You're a monster, trapped in time.

Level 3

A THOUSAND CUTS

While the powers of Celerity do not lend themselves to the application of force, the vampire's ungodly speed allows them to land a blinding amount of cuts and slashes. The victim appears as if their body spontaneously erupts in hundreds of wounds, each seemingly insignificant in its own right but excruciating in their increasing volume.

Cost: One Rouse Check

System: The vampire may add their Celerity rating to any single Brawl or Melee attack (not otherwise augmented by a Discipline) made with claws or an edged weapon. For mortal victims, the cuts and slices caused by this flurry of attacks only cause Superficial damage, but automatically inflict enough additional Superficial damage for the victim to be Impaired. (At the Storyteller's discretion, victims are overcome with pain and effectively out of commission.) The attack also splashes blood far and wide, causing vampires at Hunger 3 or more to make Hunger Frenzy tests. Used against Kindred, the attack is relatively harmless, but the scores of vicious yet unbleeding wounds leave the victim a walking Masquerade violation, and might provoke a Fury Frenzy test at the Storyteller's discretion.

Duration: One action



Dominate

Mastering Dominate, no one can resist you or oppose you. Using it is euphoric; it feels like confirming your superiority, something you can easily come to rely on. But that's a slippery slope.

One night, you may realize you cannot know if any of your allies genuinely are on your side. Can you remember who you used it on? Could you even stop if you wanted to, or have you made yourself reliant on slaves who'd turn against you if they could?

Overuse of this Discipline, and the resulting lack of opposition, makes it easy to justify any action. The user may suffer from cognitive dissonance, unable to align their actions with their self-image; they cannot understand why they're losing control of their Beast the tighter the tighter they hold the reins on their Dominated slaves. The energy required to keep control of so many victims can also lead to exhaustion—perhaps the memories they have suppressed in others slip into their own mind instead—as well as a pervasive worry someone will break free. What you do to others, you often fear will be done to you.

On the other end, the victim of Dominate feels incomplete, or they're confronted with actions they have taken but cannot accept or explain. Dehumanized, they can become dependent on the manipulator's will, feeling lost without it. Even long after their violator has been destroyed, the victim may still feel the mental scars of what they were forced to do.

Level 2

THE STOLEN VOICE

Rather than forcing a victim to do something, the vampire forces the victim to say nothing, to bear mute witness to evil. Those so affected find themselves unable to talk, shout, or even scream—any voice they had is stolen from them, leaving them to strain soundlessly into the void, their final words left unheard.

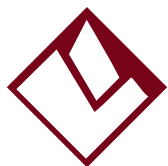
Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Composure + Dominate vs. Resolve + Performance

System: The vampire must be able to make eye contact with the victim. They need no test to activate the Power against mortals; Kindred and other supernatural beings can resist with Resolve + Performance. Anyone affected by this Power finds it impossible to meaningfully communicate—their

voice makes no sound, writing becomes illegible, their gestures or signs shudder spastically, and even banging against walls produces nothing but a dull thud as their limbs fail to exert force.

Duration: One scene



Fortitude

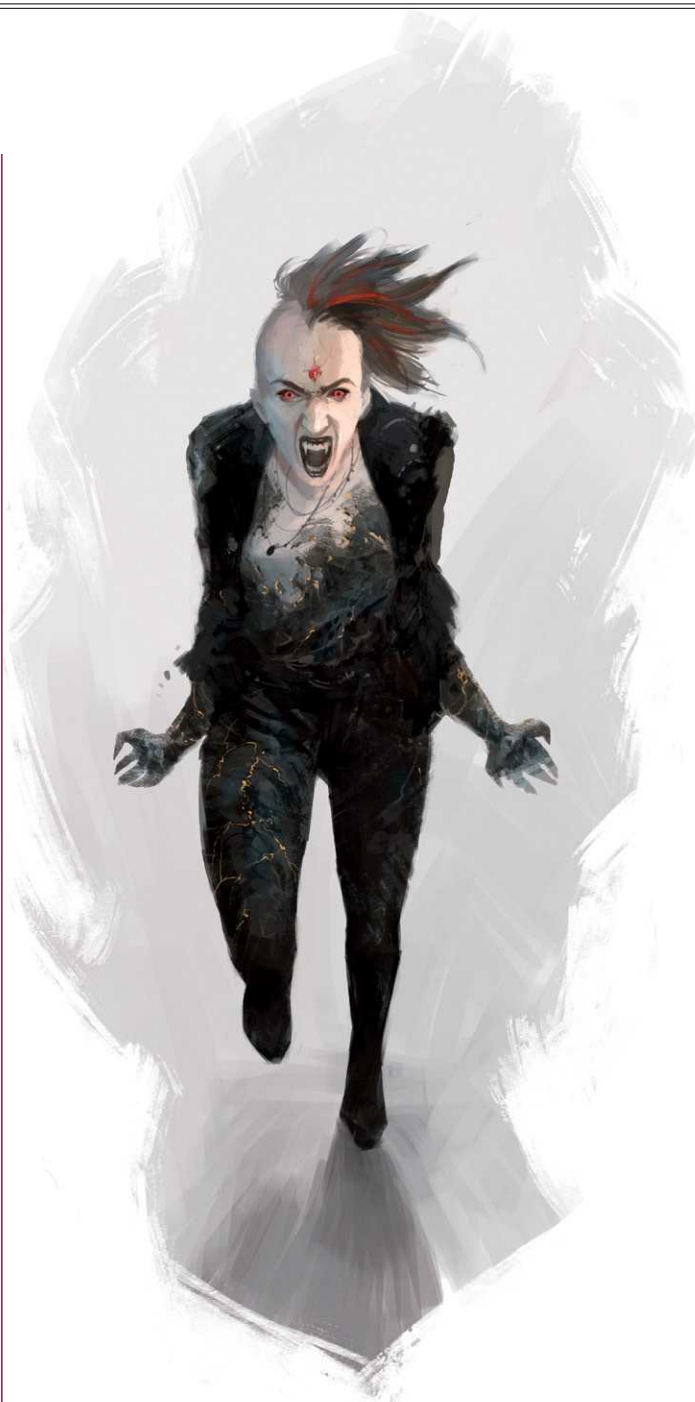
Pain stopped mattering to you, and with it pleasure. All the trappings of physical life — eating, sleeping, wearing clothes, getting nice furniture — ceased to mean a fucking thing. You could, if you wanted, do none of them at all, and they would bring you as much pleasure as they do now. Your skin hardened to supple stone, and your mind followed suit, your brain shielding itself from the outside world in impenetrable caves. Inaction comes easily. The impulse to simply sit, statuesque, and let the world pass around you until you need to feed is very easily indulged. Sometimes you even find you have to push yourself to let your mind be porous — a dash of empathy, or a brief spurt of ingenuity. What does any of it matter when your existence stretches out before you, unending as a mountain?

Or you see your fellow Kindred, skin like leather or bone, and you think that they look more inhuman than you do. Their features are the same, it's true, but there's something distant about them, like looking at a movie screen. They walk under the sun, and you think they don't even enjoy it. You touch them, and you wonder if they even feel it.

Level 3

CALLOUSED SOUL

For many Kindred, the encroachment of the Beast is the biggest existential threat they could face. Nightly existence creates countless moments, threats, and opportunities where they're forced to betray what matters to them. Rather than risk their selfhood



to random degeneration, this Power allows the vampire to preemptively self-inflict a wound upon their Humanity; by doing so, they numb themselves against future atrocities, freeing themselves to do what needs to be done, no matter how despicable.

Cost: Two Stains

Dice Pools: Varies with the atrocity

System: The vampire must carry out a well-planned and premeditated atrocity, thereby suitably numbing their mind for what is to come. The nature of this act

depends on the Chronicle Tenets, but must involve at least three mortal deaths; their revulsion to this horror is such that the vampire gains three Stains (one of which they can mitigate by a Conviction). For the rest of the night, they cannot gain Stains from any future trigger, no matter how severe, and even diablerie has its potential for Humanity loss limited to one point — although if the tests would have the victim assume control, this still happens despite this power.

Duration: One night

Level 5

MEAT SHIELDS

In the company of weak mortals (the sick or dying, children, those physically wounded) the vampire feels its Blood jump and flow energetically, its flesh strengthening by contrast with their inferior vigor. Even a wounded kine has their uses, it seems. Especially a wounded kine.

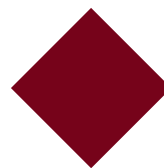
Some Kindred keep sick or wounded blood dolls for the extra rush this Power grants them. They must be careful not to make the ailments so serious as to require Kindred Blood to heal, however — once a mortal has tasted vitae, they can no longer serve as Meat Shields in this way.

Cost: One Rouse Check

System: With this Power active, the vampire temporarily increases their Fortitude by a number of dots equal to half the weak mortals present (rounded down). They can gain up to five extra dots of Fortitude through this method. This increase does not provide any new Powers, but counts for the purpose of dice pools and other effects.

The Storyteller counts all bystanders categorized as Weak Mortals (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 185) toward this power, along with wounded or sick Average Mortals.

Duration: One scene, or when the vampire leaves the presence of the affected mortals — whichever comes first.



Obfuscate

One of the first rules you learned as a vampire is that anyone can be anywhere. There are no empty rooms, no matter how carefully you ward them, and no silent streets without the feeling of eyes on your back. You display studious politeness to everyone you meet, carefully selective in every conversation, in case the person you're talking to is someone else entirely. When you leave a door open, or misplace your notebook, you find yourself prowling the house, looking for slipups. Are you really that careless, or is someone in the room with you right now?

Or, if Obfuscate is your specialty: you slip between rooms like smoke and do as you will. As long as you can keep the fear at bay. An ability that relies on people not reacting to it is tricky, horribly tricky, to gauge. Is that man looking at you or through you? Are you truly as invisible as you ought to be? You creep along walls and slide through shadows when you ought to be confidently striding down the sidewalk, paranoid that at any moment your shroud could slip. And then there's the moment where it all works too well, and no one sees you at all. Your coterie doesn't even glance at you; you're mist in the air or a patch of dark on the sidewalk, and you can't make them look no matter what you try. Your face twists in the mirror into one you don't recognize, and when you change it back, there's something off about your nose and your eyes that you can't get right.

Level 3

GUISE OF THE DEPARTED

Amalgam: Oblivion 1

The user can absorb the spiritual residue of a recently departed mortal, stealing not only their living appearance but also bearing and mannerisms. While under the effect, the user is almost indistinguishable from the deceased, and only those closest to the dead can suspect foul play.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Wits + Obfuscate

System: The user touches a mortal corpse that has been dead for less than a week. The Storyteller then makes a hidden test of Wits + Obfuscate at Difficulty 3. A failure means that the resemblance is less than convincing, and anyone close to the person copied notices something amiss automatically. A win creates a convincing disguise, but the user must win a Manipulation + Performance vs Wits + Insight contest against anyone close to the copied person or they will sense something is wrong.

Sense the Unseen (Auspex 1) can pierce the mask as usual.

Duration: Until dawn

Level 4

SECLUSION

Amalgam: Dominate 1

This ability allows the user to invert the powers of Obfuscate on a subject, making them blind to every person in the vicinity. To the victim, they are alone in the world, as they are unable to see, hear, or feel other people. This perceived isolation is, understandably, tortuous to most subjects, and the use of this power to break someone's mind is as common as its use to — crudely — blind a watcher. Victims are often oblivious to the effect at first, but as their isolation dawns on them, their behavior often becomes increasingly erratic to the point of raving.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Manipulation + Obfuscate vs Resolve + Awareness

System: The user catches the eye of the victim and must then succeed at a Manipulation + Obfuscate vs. Resolve + Awareness test. On a win, the user and everyone near appears to disappear to the victim, and the effect lasts for one scene (or night), plus one for each success in the margin. While under its effect, the victim is unable to perceive any living or unliving person. They will unconsciously avoid them and will be deaf to any sounds made by them. Only if someone attempts to do physical harm to the victim will they be momentarily perceived, as a person

using Unseen Passage would. (See *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 261). Each time this happens, make another Discipline test. If the victim successfully resists, the power's effect breaks prematurely.

Duration: Margin number of scenes or nights, or until broken



Oblivion

The vampire who claims the use of Oblivion doesn't affect them is a liar. Drawn from the void, this Discipline is nothingness incarnate, and death follows in its trail: the one who summons it is the one it touches first.

The avid user of Oblivion bears the mark of death, the edges of their aura withered and faded. They become a beacon to restless wraiths who read that mark as one of guilt. The one who often invites decay into the world finds that biological matter degrades faster around them even when they haven't. The shadowcaster's shadows grow long and greedy, eating at the light.

Overuse of Oblivion invites tragedy as well. The necromancer sees a potential in their art to preserve their mortal relatives, though necromancy can never produce true life. Lulling themselves into a fantasy of mastery over shadows, over death, the vampire becomes numb to the atrocities they commit, the sweet scent of rotting flesh, and the signs of evil playing out around them. The Abyss is no one's friend or slave. While you use it, it eats away at you. In play, this can take the form of the user slowly becoming more alienated from themselves, losing hope, and forgetting bits and pieces of their mortal memories, only noticing when their Touchstone asks.

Meanwhile, fear of the dark is a simple childhood terror. But do such terrors ever truly disappear? Faced with the reality that their most fundamental, if forgotten, fears were always justified, even centuries-old vampires may scream.

NEW ADVANTAGE

• or •• **Mystic of the Void:** Choose one Oblivion Power you do not know with a level equal to or less than your current dots in Oblivion. You count as knowing that Power for the purpose of prerequisites to learning Oblivion Ceremonies. If you later learn a Power chosen for this Merit, you may select a new Power to replace it from among those you do not know.

Hecata and Lasombra characters may select this merit at the two-dot level and choose three Oblivion Powers in lieu of one.

Level 4 Power

PROFANE THE SANCTIFIED

Prerequisite: Aura of Decay (*Players Guide*, p. 88) or Touch of Oblivion (*Players Guide*, p. 89)

The vampire draws on hateful necromantic shades from the Abyss to resist True Faith and wither that which is most holy. As shadows of death stretch out to envelop the sanctified target, the victim begins to deteriorate rapidly. The exposed flesh of a True Faith believer necrotizes; the holy symbol rots, tarnishes, or crumbles at unnatural speed. Holy water turns black as tar.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Resolve + Oblivion vs. Willpower

System: The user must make a contest of Resolve + Oblivion vs. the True Faith holder's Willpower. On a win, the user can direct this Power against their opponent or one of their holy symbols. Used on the symbol, it corrodes it and renders it inert. Used on a believer, it negates their True Faith rating for one turn and causes them to stagger, costing them an action. (The apparent rot and decay does no damage; the shades merely reveal what inevitably must occur.) The vampire can repeat this contest each subsequent turn, without the need for additional Rouse Checks; however, the opponent loses no more actions. Losing the contest ends this power.

If the user has a religious Conviction with this attack, the use of this Power incurs a Stain.



Level 5 Power

THE DARKNESS WITHIN

Kindred philosophers have long contemplated the nature of the split self: the Jungian anima, the vampiric Beast, and what the dead refer to as their shadow. Does this dark half exist in all creatures? Does everyone harbor their own self-destructive mirror of rage and pain? Those skilled in Oblivion feel they've answered this question and have empirical evidence to prove it.

This cruel Power forcibly expels and manifests the negative and violent parts of a person's psyche — they might vomit forth their fears, witness their shadow forcibly peel away, or catch their reflection from the corner of their eye and notice an unexpected bloodlust in their eyes. This evil twin is so consumed with self-loathing that they immediately attack their host, seeking to drag them down to the same endless pit of despair from which they hail.

Cost: Two Rouse Checks

Dice Pools: Manipulation + Oblivion vs. Composure + Resolve

System: The vampire makes a series of beckoning gestures toward their target as the two enter into a contest of Manipulation + Oblivion vs. Composure + Resolve. If the vampire wins, they summon a dark entity from the victim, inflicting one level of Aggravated damage as it separates itself from its host. The victim must be clearly visible to the vampire.

The entity possesses the same Physical Attributes and Skills as its host, no Willpower, six Health levels, and takes damage as a vampire. If its host has supernatural powers that supplement their physical capabilities — such as Disciplines — the doppelganger possesses those (ratings are halved and rounded down, while activation costs consume Health instead). It has one goal — the destruction of its living host — and ignores all other distractions.

Duration: One scene, or until either it or its host are destroyed

Oblivion Ceremonies

Level 3 Ceremonies

CRAFT FLESH GOLEM

This Ceremony allows a vampire to build a flesh golem (p. 146) from corpse parts.

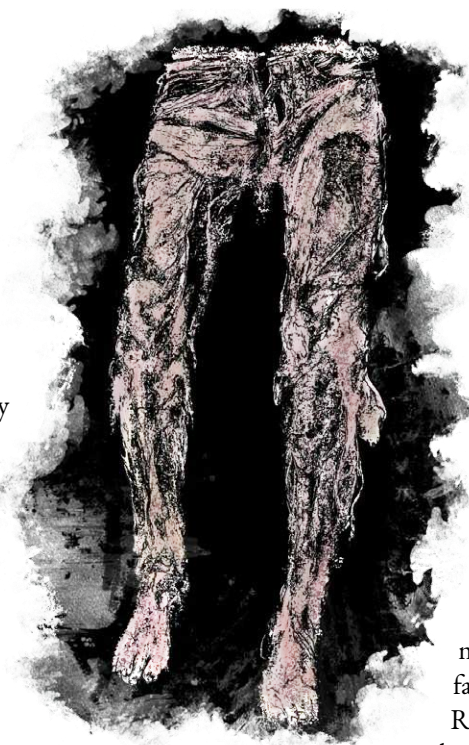
Prerequisites: Aura of Decay (*Players Guide*, p. 88) or Necrotic Plague (*Players Guide*, p. 89)

Ingredients: At least three dismembered adult-sized corpses, embalmed or otherwise relatively free of decay; sea-bed clay and copper dissolved in nitric acid; a brass or platinum burin or other engraving tool

Process: This Ceremony must be carried out in a location with a split or extraordinary thinning in the Veil. The vampire stitches the corpse parts into a single golem,

pouring the acid into the golem's body along the patterns of spine, viscera, and veins. The final step is engraving the word of Power *tzel* in the golem's mouth with the burin, and dripping the vampire's vitae onto the word to control and charge it. This act draws shadows from the Abyss into the golem's body and animates it.

System: The stitched corpse can be assembled manually (with a successful Difficulty 3 Resolve + Medicine or Difficulty 4 Resolve + Crafts test) or with the aid of a successful Difficulty 2 Fleshcrafting (*Players Guide*, p. 82) test while the bodies are alive and then turned into corpses. Make a Ceremony test once the prepared corpse is ready. A failure on either the preparation or ceremony test ruins the body parts and wastes the acid. On a total failure, the shadows break free from the golem and attack the vampire in a three-round contest of Intelligence + Oblivion (they have four dice in their pool), doing Aggravated Willpower damage with their wins. The flesh golem's Strength equals the total margin of success on both the preparation and Ceremony tests. It obeys the orders of its creator until the word in its mouth is destroyed; if its creator enters torpor or otherwise becomes uncommunicative, it follows its last order.



CREATE CORPSE SUIT

Prerequisite: Shadow Perspective (*Players Guide*, p. 89) or Touch of Oblivion (*Players Guide*, p. 89)

Old Icelandic folklore tells of the *nábuxur*, literally “corpse britches,” a pair of pants made from human skin, capable of producing an endless supply of money. Endless money is a tempting idea even to the Kindred, but the real advantage of Oblivion-imbued corpse-skin clothes is how they warn the wearer of incoming danger.

Ingredients: Sufficient skin of a mortal with Melancholy Resonance, fat of a mortal with Phlegmatic Resonance, waxed thread, any decorative elements desired

Process: The vampire calls on the powers of Oblivion and their hands fill with shadows from the Abyss as they cut, treat, and sew their chosen garment. It's considered best to do this work by candlelight. Once sewn, the vampire rubs the garment with the fat while speaking to it as a friend.

System: The more successes the vampire has on the Ceremony test, the nicer the Corpse Suit will look. At the end of the Ceremony, the vampire must convince the now vaguely sentient Corpse Suit that it will be their new closest and most treasured companion, making a test of Manipulation + Persuasion or Subterfuge (depending on sincerity) at Difficulty 2. The Storyteller need not here reveal whether the test has been successful. If the vampire fails to convince the suit, it waits for an opportunity to betray them. When the vampire dons the suit, they gain a Folkloric Bane and Folkloric Block flaw chosen by the Storyteller.

A correctly functioning Corpse Suit attunes to subtle signs of danger and senses all types of curses, wards, and the presence of ill-willed monsters. Noticing when its maker is about to walk into danger, the suit makes their skin prickle as if stuck by many small needles — assuming they're wearing it. A discontented suit occasionally times these warnings to put the wearer at risk. The suit never contains any money except what others place in it.

Duration: The suit lasts forever, re-knitting any damage over the course of a night. It cannot be destroyed except with fire, Blood Sorcery, or Oblivion.

Level 4 Ceremony

BIND TO MORTAL FORM

Prerequisite Power: Necrotic Plague (*Players Guide*, p. 89) or Skuld Fulfilled (*Players Guide*, p. 91)

Necromancers who have mastered this Ceremony can extend a human life past its natural expiration date without making a ghoul out of the mortal. This Ceremony doesn't keep a mortal young, just alive, and they continue to age both physically and mentally.

Ingredients: The chosen mortal, an Oblivion-touched iron chain, a candle made with human tallow, dirt from a fresh grave, a thimble of blood or other body fluids from the mortal

Process: The vampire must be in possession of an iron chain that has been marked by the shades of Oblivion. They can create this themselves using Touch of Oblivion (*Players Guide*, p. 89) on the chain, or use one prepared by someone else or which hails from the Abyss. They begin the Ceremony proper by lighting the candle, which sputters and casts a circle of warm light around the two. The mortal must then swallow the grave dirt. Using a blowtorch or a similar high-power heat source, the vampire proceeds to heat up the chain, using it to brand the mortal. This sucks all the light out of the room, extinguishing the candle. It also traps the spirit of the mortal within their decaying flesh. The vampire then has three nights to deliver the blood or fluids gathered from the mortal to the same grave where they got the dirt.

System: The necromancer tests Resolve + Oblivion (Difficulty 5). Each rolled success adds a decade to the mortal's natural lifespan, but if the test is not an overall win, or if the vampire fails to take the mortal's blood to the grave within the deadline, the mortal ages at twice the speed they would have otherwise aged, as the shadows binding their spirit eat away at their life force.

Bind to Mortal Form can be performed several times on the same mortal; however, the chain loses its power with use. The shadows binding the mortal's lifeforce also grow stronger with each Ceremony. Thus, the Difficulty for the Resolve + Oblivion test increases by 1 with each subsequent casting. A mortal sustained by Oblivion shades eventually grows withdrawn, confused, and fearful of the light.

Level 5 Ceremony

GIFT OF TRUE LIFE

Prerequisite Power: Necrotic Plague (*Players Guide*, p. 89) or Passion Feast (*Players Guide*, p. 88) Also known as the "siphoning gift" by those less in denial, this Ceremony allows a vampire to transfer vitality from one mortal to another, extending one life by shortening the other.

Ingredients: Two willing or unwilling mortals, a length of silk rope

Process: Opening a vein on each mortal's wrist, the vampire presses their wounds together, securing

them with the rope. Holding on to each mortal, the vampire channels shadows from the Abyss to push vitality from one mortal into the other.

System: The vampire makes their Rouse Check as they open the veins and a Ceremony contest of Resolve + Oblivion against the Stamina + Resolve of the mortal being drained as they start channeling the Abyss. A failed Ceremony contest forces the shadows to slink back to where they came from. A win starts the process of pushing vitality from one mortal to another. The results become apparent quickly. For every five minutes of siphoning, the targeted mortal loses 10 years' worth of life they could have lived to the other. When the target has lost their ordained lifespan (traditionally 70 years), they start deteriorating quickly. The effect on the receiving mortal is more subtle. They become the image of health but aren't otherwise immediately affected. Following the Ceremony, they age half as quickly as other mortals until the extra lifespan they have been granted has been spent (at which point, they once again age normally). Diseases develop at half the speed as well. They aren't in any other ways protected from death.

The conversion rate of vitality is 1:1 for mortals who are related or deeply emotionally bonded. Otherwise, the targeted mortal must give a decade for each three years of life received by the other.

The vampire must make a Ceremony test of Resolve + Oblivion at Difficulty 6 to stop the process and cut the bond before the targeted mortal shrivels up like a dried prune and turns to dust. If the vampire cannot stop the Ceremony this way, simply killing the mortal works as well. Regardless of the outcome, the vampire performing this Ceremony most likely gains one or several Stains.

Even more than most, this Ceremony is likely to attract attention from the other side of the Veil.



Potence

You don't know the limits, not really. Is there anything you couldn't destroy with a blow, some artifact you could finally test your true potential

against? Flesh certainly can't stand up to you: you grip too hard and your friend bruises at the touch, you pat your dog and it whimpers and cowers. Every "normal" interaction feels like handling bone china, your fingertips carefully testing how much pressure to exert on the cup before you trust yourself to lift it and drink. You know when the Hunger (or the anger) really takes you, you come back to yourself surrounded by the wreckage of everything you've ever held dear. Or maybe just a mountain of corpses.

Or, if Potence is alien to you: you see your fellow Kindred make the world in their image, and you know there is nothing you can do to stop them. All your Disciplines and arts can only keep you so safe from punches that rip your head off, or rages that destroy whole buildings. Their strength is like the earthquakes they sometimes initiate: monumental, unpredictable, and prone to terrifying aftershocks.

Level 3

EXUBERANCE

The vampiric form is a curious beast, able to support unfathomable levels of strength upon the slightest of frames without demonstrating any strain. Kindred with an understanding of physiology openly wonder how vampires don't tear themselves apart while displaying these unnatural feats of strength. Well, to tell the truth, some do. Kindred with the Power of Exuberance push their bodies past their abnormally high limits, willing to sacrifice their own health to get the edge they need to win the fight. The resulting boost to their strength sees their straining muscles tear chunks from their flesh and splinter bones with the force of the devastating impact.

Cost: Free

System: Whenever using Potence (including pools using half the Potence rating, such as Prowess), the vampire treats their Potence rating as if it were two levels higher — this can take the relative Discipline rating above the normal limit of 5. On any such test, if the vampire rolls a critical (messy or otherwise) or a failure (bestial or otherwise) they sustain 1 Aggravated damage as their own body tears itself apart from the strain.

Duration: Passive



Presence

Presence is a wonderful Discipline. It can make you irresistible and turn you into the star you were always meant to be. It accentuates your natural allure and charisma or makes the already intimidating outright imposing. Presence is also terrible. It enchants people to the point they can't imagine letting you walk out of their lives again. Superstars have bodyguards because people tear their icons apart for a bloody souvenir.

You don't even have to use it very often. All it takes is pushing too hard one time for a target to become so influenced they go from an attentive listener to a desperate attacker. The inexperienced or unlucky can create a cult of followers without meaning to, gaining a herd of people who all have places they should be but can't find a way to leave. To be enchanting is to be pursued, admired, scrutinized, desired, and hated for all that you do not and will not provide.

And at the end of the evening, when you're headed out and put on your party face, like Norma Jean putting on Marilyn Monroe walking down Broadway, and suddenly everybody sees you — is there even a you to see somewhere inside or just this hollow shape others find it possible to love?

Level 3

PASSION LEECH

Amalgam: Auspex 2

The dead experience emotion, passion even, but all too often, these are but a dulled reflection of the feelings experienced by the living. Many Kindred experience the world vicariously through their thralls and Touchstones, but the closest most get to the strong emotions of the living is through Resonance inherited from stolen blood.

This Power allows the vampire to luxuriate in the passions of the living, experiencing true emotion — the good, the bad, and the ugly — and

channeling it into something worthwhile for themselves. While the vampire experiences the highs of human feelings, their victims feel drained, broken, and prone to acts of unpredictable desperation.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Composure + Auspex

System: The vampire must spend a scene in close proximity to a mortal target but needn't directly engage them. (This Power has no effect on Kindred targets, even Humanity 10 Kindred.) After rousing, test Composure + Auspex against Difficulty 3 (Storytellers might lower this in situations where emotions are running high or are deliberately provoked). On a success, the vampire gains all the benefits of Humanity 10 until sunset (although they still gain Stains and roll Remorse at their current Humanity rating). On a critical win, they may also heal a Willpower damage of either type. On a bestial failure or Messy Critical, the surge of emotion is too much to bear, and the vampire suffers a Compulsion. Vampires can only benefit from this euphoric feeling once per night but can keep trying should they fail.

Human targets of this Power lose all trace of Resonance in their blood for three nights, turning it to a fleeting Empty Resonance (p. 48–49). While empty of Resonance, the target can freely indulge their basest desires, descending into psychopathy with no higher nature or positive emotion to push back on these impulses.

Duration: Until sunset for the vampire, three nights for mortal victims

Level 4

INFLAME DESIRE

Amalgam: Obfuscate 1

The vampire can invisibly boost a subject's present desire to the point that they will single-mindedly seek to satisfy it with little thought of their own well-being. Unless the user knows beforehand what the subject wants, the results can be surprising and volatile, but if used judiciously it provides even the worst bargainer the upper hand in any negotiation.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Manipulation + Presence vs Composure + Resolve

System: The user must touch the subject and win a Manipulation + Presence vs Composure + Resolve test for the power to take effect. (At the Storyteller's discretion, mortals are affected with no test necessary.) If affected, the victim is afflicted by the *Need Compulsion* (see below), directed at whatever the target wanted most in the current scene, excluding any desire provoked by supernatural means, such as through other Presence powers, as well as desires unattainable in the current scene. At the Storyteller's discretion, a vampire with Hunger 3 or above gains the *Hunger Compulsion* instead.

If the subject's object of desire is up for bargaining, the user gains a four-dice bonus to any negotiation test.

Compulsion: *Need*

The victim of this compulsion becomes obsessed with satisfying a desire in a scene. This can be anything from possessing something material, satisfying a physical urge, or inflicting harm on someone or something. Any action not taken toward this purpose incurs a two-dice penalty, and a mortal victim must spend a point of Willpower to be able to restrain themselves, should they risk harm. The Compulsion persists until the need is satisfied or the object of desire becomes unattainable.

Duration: One scene



Protean

From minor mutations to utterly grotesque transformations that defy earthly understanding, Protean can enact unparalleled visceral horror. This Discipline, and especially the powers of Vicissitude and Fleshcrafting (*Players Guide*, pp. 81–82), provides the perfect tool for the Storyteller who wants to lean into gore, body horror, and bodily transformation.

Protean can also provide a pathway for the Beast inside. Vampires transforming into animals might return to human form with too much of the animal left within them. Overwhelmed by these instincts,

they begin to view everyone as prey and themselves as feral things to be put down.

The person becomes a monster, or the person becomes pure animal instinct—the drive to hunt and kill. But in Protean lies also the potential to transcend mere flesh. Vampires who lose themselves in the land they've melded with, who seek a sort of peace in the water where they were once drowned, have both a poetry and a danger to them. Invisible and silent, in the rot, the algae, the old, tall trees, or the mist, they wait to pull in the unwary when they attempt to pass them by.

Level 1

SQUIRM

Some Kindred who use Protean turn their flesh and bones rubbery, allowing them to squeeze into impossibly tight places. Some use this Power to hide in walls or block their havens with entrances few can follow through.

Cost: Free or 1 Rouse Check

System: Add the user's Protean rating to any dice pools to wriggle through tight spaces, escape a grapple, or escape any form of restraints. The user can squeeze into tight spaces so long as their head fits into the space as their other bones can dislocate and reconnect with ease.

If the user has about five minutes, they can make a Rouse Check to force their body into an even more pliable state. Their flesh and bones spread and collapse to let them fit through impossibly tight spaces about two inches (or five centimeters) in diameter. If the user is interrupted or forcibly yanked out of such a tight space, they suffer one Aggravated damage to Health.

COMPULSION: UNCONTROLLABLE FLESH CHANGE

The habitual user of Vicissitude (see *Players Guide*, p. 81) and other Powers requiring Vicissitude as a prerequisite may gain the Uncontrollable Flesh Change Compulsion. When affected by this Compulsion, the vampire feels an overwhelming urge to use the aforementioned Powers. They become distracted and perform any other action at a two-dice penalty until they've satisfied the urge.

Level 5

SWARM

Prerequisite: Shapechange

No longer constrained to a singular form by their transformational gifts, the vampire dissolves their body into a mass of insects, reptiles, or other vermin. The resulting swarm is nigh unkillable and can easily overwhelm an enemy. The unstoppable horde bites, scratches, scurries, slithers, flits, worms, and chews its way into every inch of soft tissue, driving many people into fits of terror before they're devoured by the hungry mass.

Cost: Two Rouse Checks

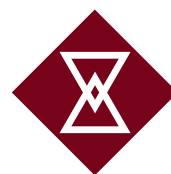
System: The vampire Rouses the Blood and spends a full turn, their body breaking down into a swarm of creatures. The vampire may choose the species, but the creatures must be small, barely bigger than a human hand. Typical choices include bats, crows, rats, mice, cockroaches, spiders, flies, locusts, snakes, and leeches. Once chosen, the species remains constant for all uses of Swarm.

While transformed, the vampire gains all the features of the swarm, including speed and movement abilities, and perceives everything the swarm does (although the mass of input makes it hard to focus on detail without concentrating). Disciplines cannot be used, as the vampire's consciousness is spread too thin.

The swarm can attack a number of individuals equal to the vampire's Blood Potency rating each turn. Swarmed targets receive a two-dice penalty to all tests and sustain 1 damage each turn (Aggravated for mortals, Superficial for supernatural creatures). Conventional attacks aren't enough to meaningfully damage the swarm, but fire and sunlight are still just as deadly, as are area effects. If even a single member of the swarm survives, the vampire can fully regenerate with no ill effects; if none remain, they meet their final death.

Many mortals must make Willpower tests or flee in terror when swarmed. Difficulties start at 3 but may be raised or lowered depending on potential phobias or mental conditioning.

Duration: One scene, or until ended voluntarily



Thin-Blood Alchemy Formulae

Based on unchecked experimentation, pure punk ambition, and a “how bad can it go” attitude, this Discipline is ripe for stories about just how badly it *can* go. Alchemical concoctions can lead to unsettling transformations, invasive parasitic side effects, and altered states that are terrible to endure. And that's when they work as intended. It's not all fun and games being a mad half-vampire scientist. It's also ripping out your fingernails for potions and feeling like an idiot while chewing on highly toxic but delicious-looking laundry pods.

Thin-Blood Alchemy is doubly addictive because not only can it get the Duskborn high in a variety of ways, it's also something they can't just survive without. The night is too full of true vampire terrors for that. Not rarely do fledgling alchemists find themselves in destructive spirals, needing the potions that make them sick to keep up with their enemies, constantly experimenting to improve their situation, only to make it worse.

The potential tongue-in-cheek hilarity of this Discipline can sometimes undermine the sense of horror around the table. When this happens, you can try to shift the mood by focusing on the raw struggle and high stakes around the alchemist. They have to be creative, yes, but they also only have a night to figure their shit out before the big bad comes to skin them alive. However, you can also sometimes use comedy for great effect by twisting it into something terrible. When the thing that just looked silly turns out to be a tragedy, and it takes everyone too long to realize, the laughter takes on a very different tone. There's a reason nobody likes killer clowns.

Level 3 Formulae

BLEED OUT

Hunting down and subduing a victim poses significant risk for the Duskborn, and they take their unlives into their own hands with each hunt they embark upon. This commonly accepted truth ensures the thin-bloods work together wherever possible to keep themselves well-fed.

This Formula was born from the frustration of having to hunt in packs but never having sufficient blood to go around. After the Duskborn feeds this alchemical concoction to their unlucky catch, the victim starts bleeding profusely, until eventually, every organ liquefies to provide sustenance for the horde of hungry predators encircling them as they painfully bleed out every ounce of fluid.

Ingredients: The alchemist's Blood, Melancholic human blood, diuretics, energy drinks, cornflower

Distillation Cost: One Rouse Check

Activation Cost: Free

System: The alchemist vomits the formula into the victim's mouth (Athanor Corporis), forces the victim to drink it from the vessel's mouth (Calcinatio), or forces the victim to drink from the elixir container (Fixatio). Once the victim consumes the formula, the alchemist makes the activation test to determine the results. On a failure, the victim simply dies; their blood feeds one vampire as normal. On a total failure, their blood turns septic and can feed nobody. On a win, victims choke and drown on their own blood over an agonizing hour. This death provides enough blood to feed an entire coterie of Duskborn (and only Duskborn — true vampires can't stomach the blood), reducing everyone's Hunger to zero. Every participant gains at least one Stain from the act. The remains must be properly disposed of, as the resultant sack of skin and bones is bound to rouse suspicion.

SARAIMU

This formula creates a sentient blob of slime to serve the alchemist and the other vampires whose vitae it comes from as a familiar. It must be created using Fixatio; saraimu created using other methods imprint too strongly on their athanor to be useful as servants.

Ingredients: A cup of vitae each from three vampires including the alchemist, baking powder, crushed chalk (optional, for a soft voice), iron nails (for strength), battery acid (for *oomph*)

Activation Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Resolve + Alchemy

System: The alchemist combines the ingredients by heating up the three cups of vitae in the athanor and adding baking powder and chalk. As the mixture bubbles, they stir in the nails, and when they add the battery acid and activate the mixture, it hisses aggressively and comes to something resembling life. The blob familiar is approximately the size of a football. Its personality takes a bit from each of the vampires whose Blood it was made from, and it can speak in simple, fragmented sentences. It probably calls the alchemist mommy or master.

The blob is affectionate but slimy and inherently unstable. It can perform many simple tasks, including spying, fetching things, and tasks around the alchemist's lab. It knows it's incomplete and longs to be back inside the bodies where it came from. It never sleeps and tries to burrow inside its masters while they do, assuming it's not currently out on a mission for them. It has many rows of short, sharp nail-teeth.

Duration: The blob falls apart one to three weeks after it was created. The Storyteller may roll a die to determine the exact time. If its masters die before it does, the saraimu knows enough alchemy to prolong its existence until it can find — and burrow its way into — a new alchemist.

SARAIMU

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 1, Mental 1

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 3

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 4, Stealth 6

Disciplines: Thin-Blood Alchemy 1

Special: Its iron teeth do +1 Aggravated damage. The saraimu takes damage as a Thin-Blood vampire. It heals completely overnight when inside one of its masters.

General Difficulties: 3/1

Level 5 Formula

DA BOMB

This Formula transforms a mortal vessel into a walking time bomb. This murderous concoction spells certain death for whoever drinks it but is just as lethal for those unlucky enough to be caught in the blast radius.

Ingredients: The alchemist's Blood, Sanguine human blood, accelerants, matchstick heads, grains of sand from a sand timer

Cost: One Rouse Check

System: This Formula is very temperamental and only works when imbibed by mortals (or brewed directly in a mortal via *calcinatio*). Once consumed, the potion remains in the drinker's system for a week, during which time the mortal feels nauseous and unwell. The alchemist can activate the Formula at any time by making a Rouse Check, but if not activated while still potent, it passes harmlessly from the drinker's system.

When activated, the victim experiences a turn of panicked awareness, before exploding in a torrent of gore. Those within close range take Aggravated damage equal to twice the victim's Stamina, while those further away halve that. Any vampires caught in the blast must also test for Hunger Frenzy at Difficulty 3.

Duration: One week

Discipline Flaws

Power is a double-edged sword, with the lure of *more* leading the hungry to compromise themselves for that extra edge. Ingrained Discipline Flaws are perfect for these hungry types, offering the means to increase the number of Discipline powers that characters can purchase by trading off this expanded utility against a debilitating drawback. The more you draw on the Blood, the deeper the channels the Blood cuts within you.

New Mythic Flaw:

Ingrained Discipline

To acquire an Ingrained Discipline Flaw, a character should have at least three levels in one Discipline,

and have the Storyteller's consent. These Flaws have no associated dot value.

When a character acquires an Ingrained Discipline Flaw, three ranks' worth of new powers in that Discipline become available to purchase with Experience points. The cost for new powers is calculated as if bought at the appropriate level for the first time. New powers purchased do not affect the overall Discipline rating.

Example: *Veronica, a Ventrue, has four levels of Dominate but has eyes on some of the lower-level powers. She decides to take the Blunt Ingrained Discipline Flaw to pick them up without sacrificing her top spot.*

She can decide to purchase either an additional three level 1 powers at 5 experience each, one level 3 power for 15 experience points, or one level 2 power (10 experience points) and one level 1 power (5 experience points). Her Dominate rating remains at level 4 throughout, but she can still choose to purchase Dominate 5 for 25 experience points at a later date.

Characters are typically limited to Flaws related to their Clan Disciplines (Caitiff experience no such limitation), but Storytellers may waive this restriction if it makes sense for the character. Characters may only take one Ingrained Discipline Flaw.

Ingrained Animalism Flaw: Untamed

Such a tight relationship with the Beast comes at a cost, as it refuses to be leashed. Failing to Ride the Wave during Frenzy inflicts two Stains. Convictions cannot mitigate these Stains.

Ingrained Auspex Flaw: Daymares

While rarely recalling more than an acute sense of terror, the vampire's daylight rest becomes plagued by horrifying visions, causing them to sweat blood. When awakening for the night, make two Rouse Checks instead of the usual one.

Ingrained Blood Sorcery Flaw: Sanguinary Animism

The sorcerer has become so attuned to reading the vagaries of blood that during feeding, the flood of information and voices from the victim cannot be avoided, even persisting beyond the hunt. For any scene following a feeding, the vampire loses two dice from all Social and Mental pools due to the distraction.

Ingrained Celerity Flaw: Breakdown

The vampire's physiology runs at the same pace as the vampire, burning blood and energy at equal volumes. Whenever the vampire fails a Rouse Check when activating a Celerity power, they sustain a point of Aggravated Health damage, and their body withers and ages before their very eyes.

Ingrained Dominate Flaw: Blunt

The strain of enforcing their will upon others erodes something critical in the mind of the dominator, making mundane social interactions fraught. Vampires with this Flaw cannot spend Willpower to reroll a Social test.

Ingrained Fortitude Flaw: Scar Tissue

This Flaw impairs the vampire's ability to maintain the appearance of health following an injury. While rousing the Blood restores Health as normal, the physical appearance of any injuries sustained remains until they rest for the day. This can easily result in Masquerade breaches if not carefully managed.

Ingrained Obfuscate Flaw: Faded

The vampire spends so much time hiding from others that they have begun to forget who they truly are. This lack of conviction weakens their moral fortitude and makes them second-guess decisions. When making Remorse tests, the vampire rolls one fewer die (the one-die minimum still applies).

Ingrained Oblivion Flaw: Monstrous

The forces of Oblivion sap away at the vampire's connection to even their sham life. Treat the vampire's Humanity rating as if it were three levels lower for such things as Blush of Life, Social dice pools, physical appearance, etc. If this takes the rating below one, they gain the Repulsive Flaw — perhaps they appear as a rotting corpse, their shadow constantly taunts them, or reflections reveals only inner darkness. This Flaw does not affect daytime dice pools or how many Remorse dice they roll.

Ingrained Potence Flaw: Killer Instinct

When the blood's up, the echo of the Beast is never far away, and the unholy strength of Potence only serves to feed it. If the character fails a Rouse Check when activating a Potence power, they must immediately test for Fury Frenzy as if physically provoked.

Ingrained Presence Flaw: Egomaniac

Having had others consistently fawn over you has stroked your ego to the point where you can't tolerate a world without you at its center. Whenever a Presence power generates a messy critical or fails to sway your target, you must make a Fury Frenzy test at Difficulty 2.

Ingrained Protean Flaw: Stasis

The vampire's static nature rebels against the forces of change. If the vampire fails a Rouse Check while activating a Protean power, when they revert to their normal form the change is incomplete — dulled and useless claws persist, a foot remains stuck in the soil, or the fleshcrafter finds their skin attached to their subject. Unfinished transformations never provide any benefit. The vampire must remove the affected area (sustaining one Aggravated damage) or wait for it to revert (un)naturally during day-sleep. ■



Chapter Five

THE DARKNESS WITHIN

The true evil has nothing to do with social life or social laws, or if it has, only incidentally and accidentally. It is a lonely passion of the soul — or a passion of the lonely soul — whichever you like. If, by chance, we understand it, and grasp its full significance, then, indeed, it will fill us with horror and with awe.

—ARTHUR MACHEN, “THE WHITE PEOPLE”

A vampire hosts an internal battle at all times between their humanity and the Beast in their Blood. This conflict isn't meant to be solved. It's the heart of the game, both thematically and practically, reflected in the game systems and driving the bulk of the drama. No matter the primary plot, this duality burns underneath, eating away at the vampire characters.

At its nicest, being a vampire is taking the part of a doomed hero in a tragedy: you try to do what you think is right under the circumstances, but your actions inevitably lead to disaster. And so, the spiral into horror starts, repeating over and over. You cannot escape your fate. You can only hope to keep your human side strong enough for long enough that no one you care for will have to witness you devolve into the monster you're destined to become.

This chapter is about using the game systems to highlight the struggle between a vampire character's humanity and the relentless pull of the Blood, amplifying horror at the table.

The Horror of Humanity

No part of a vampire character's humanity is theirs to freely keep. Inhuman sacrifices are required to protect your ability to make human choices, and when you do, they still tend to carry risk, making you vulnerable and loosening your control over the Beast. But failing to protect your humanity accelerates your descent into monstrosity. So, you've no choice. You're locked in the struggle to protect what's left of you, even as the actions you must take to do so eat away at it.

The Tragic Dilemma

Resist the Beast and make it stronger, or give into it now, while you're with people you don't want to hurt? Sometimes, all choices are terrible, but you still have to choose. In a game of **Vampire**, such tragic dilemmas are the baseline from which horror arises, reflecting the cursed condition of the characters. As you use the game systems to build your character or

run your game, think about how they can be used to set up tragic dilemmas and difficult choices.

Here are some variations:

The original tragic dilemma: No matter what you choose, you lose, as both (or all) options are horrifying. In saving one person, you doom another, for instance.

The illusion of choice: Sometimes, it only looks like you have a choice. After you made the hard choice to sacrifice some of your Humanity for the life of a friend, you discovered they were never a friend in the first place.

No choice is still a choice: Hamlet's procrastination is what dooms him and his whole house. Hesitating to choose may just mean the Storyteller chooses for you. Sometimes you lose everything by choosing nothing.

Convictions

Convictions act both as strongly held beliefs the players' characters cling to and as loopholes for players to exploit. They allow a character to violate the Chronicle Tenets with fewer Stains, their primary mechanical function in **Vampire**. When players use their Convictions to avoid Stains, they're doing it right. Their characters' need to feel remorse lessens, and their chance of feeling remorse increases. When a character does feel remorse, this provides the player an opportunity to explore the horror of the character's actions, to inhabit their inner, emotional world.

However, Convictions also serve a dramatic function: they make it clear to players when their characters have begun to either follow their cherished beliefs into doom, or have violated their own sense of self. Even without a mechanical goad, Convictions can still drive the game deeper into horror.

As Storyteller, don't specifically stress-test a player's Convictions. That's what Tenets are for. But as the player makes hard choices, you and they will see their Convictions come into focus: both as dramatic poles and as one more thing that may have to suffer or even die for the vampire to continue their existence.

Upholding (Questionable) Convictions

Maintaining one's Convictions can be as fraught as breaking them. For one, inflexibly adhering to any set of rules, no matter the circumstances, means that sooner or later, they won't fit, and what was right will become wrong. Secondly, Convictions need not be morally sound. They can be humane depending on the context or actively push a character towards inhumane choices even as they strengthen their sense of self. From a player's perspective, the best Convictions are the ones that let the character feel remorse for doing what had to be done.

Outdated Convictions

Convictions that sounded good in 1780, when an ancilla was Embraced, may have shifted their value or their relevance. Such Convictions might drive horror in play with ancillae supporting characters still killing and corrupting in the service of the Hapsburg dynasty or in the name of female purity. Player characters with outdated Convictions may see them conflict ever more with the modern world, forcing decisions between behaving increasingly irrationally or shattering their own Conviction and leaving one less defense against the Beast.

Convenient Convictions

Think about the worst parts of your character's human side and give them Convictions that support those parts. Convictions can underlie fanaticism, hedonism, greed, pride, or any other morally ambiguous character traits and still sound righteous to the person who believes in them. Some morally ambiguous sample Convictions might include:

- Always protect what's yours (jealously).
- Never let others see you as weak.
- Might makes right.
- The weak should be culled (for their own sake).
- Liars must be punished.
- Deviance must be destroyed.
- Take an eye for an eye.

Convictions Gone Awry

We all know that good intentions pave the road to Hell. Well-meaning Convictions can drive the story down that road, often at top speed. Upholding your Convictions could be the wrong choice, or at least could harm the coterie or the Masquerade. A character with the Conviction "Only the guilty should suffer" may choose to protect someone who later becomes a hunter. "Protect the Truth" can lead to divulging dangerous secrets or pointing the finger at your friends for their own wrongdoing. But this is just part of the fun of **Vampire**.

Even when a character can use their good Convictions to justify committing objectively inhumane acts, that doesn't remove the consequences. These malevolent acts can compel vicious reactions like rings spreading in a puddle of water: what they've done may come back to bite them. Both "might makes right" and "always defend the weak" only keep you safe while you're the strongest one around.

Violating Convictions

Betraying your moral code is as easy as having the right excuse: you were forced into it, you were tricked, and you had to make the sacrifice for a greater cause. Do it often enough, and it becomes second nature. Violating a Conviction doesn't need to incur any Stains *per se*, but **Vampire** suggests this as an option (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 172). More importantly, violating a conviction may destroy the Touchstone — metaphorically, at least — and thus the Conviction itself (*Vampire*, p. 240). A Storyteller can let a character violate their Convictions many times before they ever even incur any Stains or lose the Conviction entirely. But that kind of thing can sneak up on you.

The Naughty List

Fastidious Storytellers may track violations of the player characters' Convictions. They may just make tally marks by the character's name in their notes, or use a more systematic three-box tracker, like those for Health or Hunger. A minor violation could mean Superficial damage to the Conviction, while a clear or egregious violation causes Aggravated damage.

Some Storytellers may also keep a list of when and how the character violated their Conviction; this helps craft blowback stories, or at least keeps track of betrayed grudge-holders.

However you track it, let player characters get away with violating their Convictions when it doesn't matter much, but mark it every time it happens. When the circumstances change, and they run out of excuses, let them incur several Stains at once if they still choose the path of hypocrisy, or shatter the Conviction entirely. To dramatize such an event, frame and play out a scene between the character and their Touchstone; if you foreground the Touchstone's shock and feeling of betrayal, the player themselves may realize they have lost their Conviction... and their Touchstone.

When a Conviction Shatters

When a Conviction shatters, it should be a moment of deep despair as the character's beliefs about the world and their own self feel hollow and worthless. For the player, this is the time to question everything, make more bad choices, burn bridges, and smash up support networks that depended on the old Conviction for their strength. The character may either rush into danger or become paralyzed with indecision as they agonizingly reconsider who they are and what they still fight for.

A shattered Conviction removes the functionality of the Touchstone who represents it, even if the Storyteller character survived the betrayal. Only extraordinary sacrifice for the sake of the Conviction can replace or renew that Touchstone connection.

Touchstones

Touchstones aren't just mechanical insurances that keep your Convictions fresh as long as you visit them often enough. They should be genuinely meaningful to the characters in ways that make them vulnerable.

Some ways a Touchstone can harm their character:

A catalyst: A Touchstone can be used to build tension and urgency in a scene, like a ticking clock. Instead of just sitting on their hands, they make decisions and take actions that drive the vampire towards crisis. This can be by simply putting

themselves or the coterie at risk, or it can be by accentuating aspects of the horror of the scene in what they do, driving the vampire towards their Beast.

- You stopped killing your victims when you got together with your mortal girlfriend. But in an argument, she tells you that the only thing she ever loved about you was how easy and fun you were when she first met you. Now that you're sad and tired all the time, she can't stand being around you. "Loosen up," she says. "Be fun again."
- Your Touchstone is terrified. They scream at you and claw at you to get you out of danger, before they rush in themselves.
- You realize your Touchstone has mirrored your descent into monstrosity, echoing your moods and actions with their own. You withdraw in horror as you understand you've been corrupting someone you were only trying to protect.

A complicated influence: A Touchstone can be someone you genuinely care for or respect and still also bring the worst out in you. They might stand for a Conviction you use to harm others, or they might stand for something objectively humane, yet influence you negatively in other ways. A philanthropist can be a reckless adrenaline junkie, and an animal lover might still hate weakness in people.

- Jeremiah doesn't understand what he's asking. To you, he stands justice, and it's reflected in everything he is. Justice delayed is justice denied. But now that his son is in trouble he's asking you to help destroy evidence.

A point of contention: More than one vampire can feel possessive of the same Touchstone.

- Everyone in the scene knows Christina. She throws the best parties at your club every Thursday evening, attracting the 18+ crowd and university students. There's never a shortage of bodies for a quick sip, and the positive vibes are to die for. She brings out the best in you. And now she's doing another gig every Sunday in Anarch territory...

A dilemma machine: A Touchstone represents a Conviction. But that doesn't mean they agree with it or it protects them. Sometimes, protecting your Touchstone means having to violate the very Conviction they represent.

- Kim always stood up for the little guy. He's a grade-A public defender. You can always get a little time with him after the AA meetings on Thursdays. He embodies your belief that suffering is meant for the wicked. But his wife suddenly slapped him with a restraining order for domestic abuse and left with his kids for her mother's...

A victim: A Touchstone is a reasonable potential victim for anyone meaning to harm or threaten the vampire. They can also get into bad company, making the vampire have to choose between risking their own safety and anonymity or saving the Touchstone from their own bad judgment. In terms of the rules, the Kindred don't distinguish between Contacts, Allies, Touchstones, or others on the Relationship Map like **Vampire** players do.

- You watch Jordan two or three times a month, usually when feeding turned violent. She's always gentle with her children. Helped the neighbor bring in the groceries. Cleaned up the needles from the parking lot. It makes you remember what being mortal was like. But now the Sheriff is in her apartment. He must have followed you. Is she his ghoul? Maybe it's just Entrancement? She's in danger, but so are you if you go in there.

Not who they seem: Even a Touchstone can have a secret double life or just lie convincingly about what they believe in and who they are deep down.

- Ahmed has a wife, three little boys, and another child on the way. He's always willing to give you unsolicited parenting advice at the shisha lounge, though he doesn't understand that Gabrielle is your childe rather than your child. What the hell is he doing walking into a gay bathhouse? And one owned by Agapito Giovanni at that...

Ambition and Desire

A character's Ambition and Desire provide them with goals and plenty of reasons for internal struggle and conflict with other characters.

Ambition can be that little spark of hope that keeps a character going. It can also be what gets them into trouble to begin with. Perhaps achieving an Ambition starts the horror story, while it takes

another one to end it. For players wanting to explore a relatively quick path from fledgling to wight, their Ambition could be something that completely contradicts their Convictions. It might horrify them that they want it, but they want it nonetheless.

Being short-lived and temperamental, Desire can allow a character to dive into aspects of a horror story they don't want to spend the entire chronicle on. Perhaps they want to experiment with bravery and impress someone on the Relationship Map, though bravado is usually out of character for them. Storytellers should keep an eye out for Desires that can be used to lure players' characters into interesting traps.

PLAYER AGENCY IN HORROR

Horror thrives when you feel that your options are limited, and players' characters can be trapped, tortured, hunted, and cornered in situations that feel impossible to escape. But for a roleplaying game to work, players still need to have agency. Their decisions need to matter and have real effect on the game world. You can fill it with traps and let the players walk into them. **Vampire** stories in particular thrive when character decisions drive the worst possible outcomes. But the players are still active actors, and everyone at the table co-creates the horror experience. Sometimes, a lucky dice roll means the troupe escapes a situation you'd meant for them to endure. That's okay. Luck has a part in horror too, and knowing the monster is still out there is part of the thrill. After all, it's still coming, and all they did was buy a little time.

Stains: The Threat of Humanity Loss

There's a specific mechanical system for Stains in **Vampire**. Players and Storytellers can lean into that system to spark and drive personal horror roleplaying at the table. Stains are a game mechanic, not something that exists for characters as such. But Kindred can still tell when they have crossed the line.

The Beast stirs: Gaining a Stain means that the Beast in the Blood sleeps uneasily. Intrusive thoughts



and random pangs of Hunger disturb the character. Perhaps their outlook on reality darkens, and for a while they see threats or potential victims everywhere.

Temptations increase: If you're already on your way towards losing your Humanity, what's another sin? Tempt characters to further betray their Convictions and the Chronicle Tenets. It would be so easy.

Show the future: The Storyteller can confront the players' characters with a vision of their future if they pursue the path they're on. Let them run into a wight. Let them see a Storyteller character freak out, in the grasp of a Compulsion that costs them dearly.

Humanity Loss

Actually losing a level of Humanity should affect a character's experience of reality as well as their character sheet.

Let the world darken: Having lower Humanity means seeing the world with more of the Beast's

perspective. You may not care as much about what you see, but weakness and suffering are everywhere, ready to be exploited. Storytellers can describe characters from the Relationship Map as potential victims first, noting their physique and their scent before mentioning who they are. Smells and sensations gain weight in characterizations, while empathic observations dwindle.

Let the world lighten: As the guilt and shame of mortal morality fades, a deceptive sense of ease descends on the Kindred. When Stains accumulate and no remorse is felt, a righteousness can emerge as the character's sense of being a predator, murderer, manipulator, or worse solidifies. Giving in to the Beast can be liberating.

Let others know: The Storyteller characters around the player's character notice that they've changed. Older Kindred stop using kid gloves; younger licks drift away or gather close depending on their own natures. Mortal friends or family might

ask about it, or just start avoiding physical touch, keep their children inside. Some mortals might sense it, and eagerly want to know what's different — and where they can get some for themselves.

With Great Powers

A vampire pays for their Disciplines and other Kindred ability with bits and pieces of their humanity, and when they use them, they should feel the hot breath of damnation at their back. This is especially true for Oblivion, which literally invites the forces of the Abyss into reality. But the powers of the Blood aren't untouched by a vampire's humanity. In fact, making a benevolent choice can sometimes be what drives them to use Disciplines in the most horrific ways.

For example:

- A Hecata matriarch keeps her mortal husband alive as a ghoul decade after decade. She can't bear to Embrace him, but now he's been forced to abandon all his own mortal ties to preserve the Masquerade. He's terrified of anything happening to her. She tells herself it's worth it as long as they can continue to be together.
- The Court's resident Sorcerer keeps his beloved Childer safe through extensive use of Rituals in their shared Haven. But the sheer amount of vitae required to fuel the defensive Rituals has forced him to hunt much more frequently or demand his Childer pay for their safety themselves.
- The domain's Herald frequently uses Daunt to keep nosy mortals away when he meets his Touchstones, but now the neighborhoods'



residents are keenly aware of a monstrous presence. No one is willing to say or do something just yet...

- The Baron's childe uses the Blush of Life to blend in with Mortals at her bar, but doing so has left her very hungry. The next fistfight or broken pint glass might shed enough blood to induce Frenzy.

The Bite of the Beast

The Beast should be always ready to snap at the heels of the characters, rush through their veins, and betray them when it gets the chance. Never let the characters forget it's there for long. But other, worse, older things might be holding the leash of the Beast.

The Hunger of the Ancients

Legends circulate among the Kindred that one night their progenitors will rise to hunt them down and devour them. It's a potent idea and one that thrives as the Gehenna War advances. As monstrous as the individual vampire can become, they all know they'd be nothing against the ancients, who wrestled with the Beast and lost eons ago. The legends describe them as sanguinary gods with nothing left but pure power and drive: better hope the legends lie or that the ancients never waken.

In one way, however, the Antediluvians are never far away. Each true vampire carries the echoes of their clan founder in their vitae, the consciousness of their malicious god continuing to whisper in their veins. The higher their Blood Potency, the more of the progenitor shines through — what they were, what they become, what their bloodline has developed into. These are the voices that the Sabbat drown out through their internal Blood Bonds, allowing the Beast unfiltered access in return.

Play up the threat of the ancients by keeping their nature mysterious and undefined. The struggles a vampire character has with the curses of their bloodline and clan reflect and refract that threat, that of another, entirely inhuman, consciousness which threatens to overshadow theirs the stronger it gets.

Antediluvian Rumors

- The Antediluvians still sleep in the sarcophagi they were once buried in, dreaming sweetly of eating their children.
- They are bodiless vampiric spirits who haunt their descendants through the Blood.
- One met final death in 1999.
- Should they choose to, they could take over the body of any of their children at any given moment.
- They have physical forms still but defy all expectations of what they might look like to such a degree that you'd never realize it if you came upon one.
- They're already awake.
- Should they wake, they'd instantly kill every one of their descendants, as their Blood would rush out of their veins and gather to reform the god it belongs to.

Compulsions

To gain a Compulsion is to become taken over by something overwhelmingly other that wants only one thing. You're somewhere in there, but what you wanted before the Compulsion has dwindled to unimportance. You can't focus, you can't concentrate until you've given into it. And once you've done so, you'll never quite forget that feeling of relief. Compulsions lurk in the Blood, waiting for their chance to take over again.

Make Compulsions worse at lower Humanity:

The more control the Beast has over them, the less ability a character should have to resist their Compulsions when they strike.

Learn to love playing to lose: There's excitement to be found in playing out the downward spiral just as there is in winning. Take advantage of your monstrous moments in the spotlight and appreciate how you can painfully twist the knife of the narrative in others and yourself. Sure, it provides a kick when you defeat your adversary. But there can be catharsis in letting your character really go through the wringer and suffer for their actions.

Make Compulsions meaningful: Compulsions are most impactful when they reflect a character's personal flaws and regrets, reminding them of what they can't escape.

A Compulsion is a weakness: Compulsions make characters lose control. Rolling dice in dangerous situations carries more of a threat when there's a high risk of getting a Compulsion that can make everything go to shit.

New Compulsions

Besides clan-specific Compulsions, the Beast might inflict other desires and debilities on its supposed master. Some Compulsions arise from quirks of a given bloodline or from curses or supernatural effects on the Kindred or their sire. Specific Disciplines or even powers might carry their own Compulsion, as with Protean (Uncontrollable Flesh Change, p. 105) or Inflammation (p. 104). Building a Compulsion tailored to a player's character's specific weaknesses or failures creates possibilities for roleplaying internal conflict. It also means the Compulsion can feel more consequential and have more ongoing impact on a story than simply time in the Beast's penalty box. Here are a few new possibilities, but the Storyteller should take advantage of the opportunity to custom-fit a Kindred for their bespoke psychological straitjacket.

DEPENDENCY

Power begets paranoia, and those with power torment themselves with the thought of losing it. The power inherent in the Blood is hard to deny, and it's easy to fall into the trap of believing oneself above the masses due to the edge Blood brings to almost any situation. The young and insecure are often afflicted so, but clans feeling the need to prove themselves — Nosferatu, Tremere, Gangrel, Ravnos, or Duskborn for example — suffer this Dependency the most.

Characters affected by this Compulsion find themselves unable to risk failure, with even trivial tasks warranting the same rigorous investment. While under the influence of this Compulsion, characters must use a Blood Surge for every action they take until they fail their test or reach Hunger

5 — while the threat of ever-increasing Hunger is barely enough to stop their over-usage, the sting of failure snaps them out of their Blood-borne hypochondria. Ironically, the successes achieved by these rampant Blood Surges only serve to reinforce their dependency on the power of the Blood.

MASOCHISM

It's often the case that the powerful are the architects of their own downfall, as if part of them needs to be brought low and forced to acknowledge their fallibility. Despite its name, this Compulsion isn't concerned with physical pain; no, the Beast has far grander designs than simple mortification of the flesh — it wants to humiliate the vampire, flood their thoughts with the trauma of social obligation, and have them acknowledge how simple unlife could be if they simply embraced the oblivion the Beast offers. These unwanted urges often strike leaders under pressure and clans such as Banu Haqim, Brujah, Lasombra, Toreador, Tzimisce, and especially Ventrue. Many go to extreme lengths to cover up the stench of their failure once it's been witnessed by their "lessers" — an act that only serves to bring them closer to the Beast.

This Compulsion strikes when the Kindred is most exposed, where those they respect (or need to earn the respect of) are present to judge them, when the result of failure would be so dramatic that they couldn't outrun the shame, or when they risk doing irreparable damage to their selfhood or Humanity. The vampire suffers a two-dice penalty on all tests until they purposefully humiliate themselves, cause a far-reaching and monumental failure, gain a Stain, or the scene ends.

OVERKILL

The power coursing through a vampire's veins is insidiously addictive, as with the right combination of Discipline Powers, existence among the mortals becomes pathetically easy. Want to get in somewhere uninvited? Well, Presence, Dominate, or Obfuscate can do the trick. In a fight? Take your pick from Celerity, Fortitude, Potence, Protean... need we go on? Rolling out the Disciplines every time a slight

speed bump occurs becomes devilishly easy for the Kindred, and doubly so for vampires suffering a crisis of confidence!

While under the sway of this Compulsion, the vampire suffers a four-dice penalty on all tests where a Discipline could definitively solve the problem in one fell swoop. This Compulsion cares not for appropriateness, optics, or the Masquerade: it's concerned only with expediency and a show of power. The Compulsion is resolved once they use a Discipline in an egregiously inappropriate manner — Storytellers are encouraged to veto attempts to bypass this Compulsion with trivial uses of Disciplines.

REPETITION

Under especially harrowing or traumatic circumstances, a vampire can pick up this Compulsion to revisit and repeat the thing that happened when they got it. They cannot find rest until they do so and heal no damage in day-sleep, though they also cannot be roused. Unmoving, they lie there thinking of the thing they have to do.

Example: *Losing control, Sasha killed their girlfriend in an act of feeding. Now they have the Compulsion to drain dry women with the same kind of long dark hair.*

Once taken, the Compulsion remains the same for the same character until they find peace with what they did or their story ends. ■



Chapter Six

SHADES OF DARKNESS

*We have seen fair colors
That dwell not in the light—
Intenser gold and iris
Occult and recondite;
We have seen the black suns
Pouring forth the night.*

—CLARK ASHTON SMITH, “NYCTALOPS”



We describe **Vampire: The Masquerade** as “a Storytelling game of personal and political horror.” The vampire of fiction flowered within the tradition of Gothic horror, playing with horrors of mind and meat long before later centuries formalized (and fetishized) “psychological horror” and “body horror.” In this century, the cosmic horror of the 1920s and the folk horror of the 1970s expand in salience against a background of impending ecological apocalypse. Focusing a story, or a chronicle, on a specific type or style of horror can pay great dividends in unity of feeling, reinforced themes and motifs, and player buy-in and immersion. This chapter therefore provides some deep dives into those shades of horror for Storytellers and players interested in deepening a particular hue in their shroud.

Personal Horror

Personal horror hinges on the knowledge that each human being has the capacity to betray the ideals that they supposedly stand for. Just how intensely a person believes in those ideals, and how deeply they betray them, sets the stakes for the outside observer’s sympathies and dread through a narrative. It’s something you see clearly in one of the oldest and most-adapted examples of personal horror: the scares of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) don’t come from Hyde’s rampage around London, gruesome as it is. Instead, it’s initially the kind and generous Jekyll’s purposeful decision to drink his intoxicating serum and transform — followed by his increasingly desperate attempts to keep those transformations suppressed — that makes his torment so dire. The moral injury of self-betrayal is as damaging to Jekyll as the physical effects of his serum.

Of course, much of personal horror deals with the prospect of something trying to force you to betray yourself. Jack Torrance of Stephen King’s *The Shining* (1977) is a recovering alcoholic deeply in denial of the depth of his anger issues. The novel opens with him ashamed of his actions — he broke his son’s arm in a fit of temper. Already suffering the first pangs of personal horror, Torrance still intends to improve himself: he loves his son and badly wants

to heal his troubled marriage. When he moves his family to the terminally haunted Overlook Hotel, the spirits of the place take it upon themselves to destabilize him and drive him to ruin. When Torrance begins to break down and indulge in the hotel’s dark history, is it the building controlling him? Or is Torrance reveling in his unbridled id, using the Overlook as an excuse to disconnect from his moral center?

It’s no accident that both of these examples deal with addiction. Losing control of yourself in the service of a substance is a frightening prospect, especially when the substance is the supernatural. Horror media thus generally treat sobriety as a symbol of virtue and self-actualization, while substance use stands in for self-destruction and moral rot. Jekyll turns to his addictive alter-ego in moments of stress, while Torrance turns to spirits (both kinds) — and both break the promise they made to themselves never to indulge again. Their overwhelming shame at their failures only forces them deeper into the hole of misery... until finally they break and allow themselves to compromise their own ethics and indulge once more, just to get some relief. More than any violence they carry out, it’s their secret shame and self-isolation that truly starts them down the path towards their eventual deaths.

Leashing the Beast

Vampire characters depend on blood to survive, of course. But their own Blood is their true addiction, not whiskey or mysterious serums (although both make their appearances). Each vampire can give in to their darker impulses at a moment’s notice: drink the boy dry, kill the annoying cop, go into a Frenzy. The Beast is the addictive impulse, the overwhelming desire to do what’s easy and fun, not what’s hard and frustrating. The central challenge of every **Vampire** story is, *can you resist?* And beyond that, *can you stave off despair?*

Mechanically, **Vampire** very much wants you to delve into personal horror. Convictions ensure that from the moment you make your characters and dive into your setting, you’re reminded to cling to certain important human values. This

particular word is key: *human* values. Those values corrode with the rest of Kindred humanity. The Kindred are monsters, supernatural parasites feeding off the literal lifeblood of mortals with neither their knowledge nor their consent. Convictions are vampires' desperate attempt to retain whatever is left of their dying humanity and keep the Beast in check.

The Ties That Bind

Each Conviction is attached to a Touchstone who represents something important about the mortal world to their Kindred, a screw holding the rickety framework of a vampire's moral code together. The Touchstone is the vampire's living, breathing reminder that they have this code for a reason: to help someone they care about deeply. Losing either the Conviction or the Touchstone means losing the other. Jack Torrance loves his son; he swears off alcohol because he's afraid he might hurt his only child again. When he does give in to his darker impulses, the cost is his son's utter disillusionment with him as a parent and protector — the end of their relationship in the most permanent way possible. Henry Jekyll allows his close confidant to see Hyde's transformation, and the revelation Jekyll is allowing himself to become a literal murderer in the name of hedonism is enough to drive his confidant to suicide — and Jekyll follows suit not long after.

The Killing Fields

Predator Types fuel another aspect of the horror. The actual act of vampirism is always coercive, violent, or endangering. If the vampire's victim is unaware of its true nature and intentions, there's no way for it to extract its meal without lying, manipulation, or straight-up attacking them. Kindred become pick-up artists, muggers, burglars, and murderers simply in order to eat. Even Cleavers and Farmers lie to their loved ones, and also to themselves, paying the price in denial or Hunger. Any Kindred's mortal loved ones would be horrified to discover their unlifestyle. The mortals they protect would be right to run away, or even try to destroy them if they knew. Deep down, the vampire

knows its very existence violates their claimed human morality, and the only truly ethical act would be to walk into the sunrise.

In Chronicles

Digging into personal horror in chronicles is about creating opportunities for choice. More than a simple choice of action to get a scare (*Do I open the door? Do I put my hand out in the dark?*), these choices must relate to the vampire's relationships, their moral judgements, their ideas of what is right and wrong, and just how far their actions take them in destroying all of these. To that end, chronicles with a focus on or interest in personal horror should be proactive about keeping Touchstones in the spotlight whenever a Conviction is being tested. The mortal world isn't a distant memory for these Kindred — the humans they interact with aren't just blood dolls to be drunk and discarded. When the vampires aren't careful, or when they're just plain unlucky, the consequences of their unlifestyle come back to bite them.

Look What You Made Me Do

You had a blind spot, or maybe a chink in your armor. You slipped up, or you let something slip. Your Touchstone knows something now that could get them killed. You need to take care of that before something happens. You could make sure their memory is wiped — perhaps it's the kindest option, to smooth everything over, gaslight them into oblivion. You might tell them the whole truth, show them your power to terrify them into submission, *make* them listen to you when you tell them "don't touch that." Or... there's always the final option, the Embrace. It might be nice to share this with someone, hard as it is.

From the Mouths of Babes

Someone fucked up, majorly. The coterie fucked up. This time, it's not going to be swept under the rug, and they've used up all their favors. They need to fix this themselves. Now.

There's a person who saw it happen, or a person who knows something integral to the whole matter. The coterie admires her, maybe, or thinks she's worth protecting. She's the kind of high caliber of person they think makes the world a better place, or at least worth existing in.

They've got to interrogate her. Do they use their so-called gifts on her, to find out what she knows, who she told? Do they find some way to terrorize her into running? Poke her brain full of psychic holes so she doesn't remember what her street name is? Or just kill her and be done with it?

Whatever the coterie ends up doing, they'd better do it fast. Their self-preservation is on the line, and they're on the clock.

Just One Night

You're hungry. *Very* hungry. All the fucking time. And every little double sip you take of some random guy's neck just makes you more aware of how empty your belly is. You've heard of people taking a "cheat day" — how much would it hurt to give yourself just one full meal? Find someone no one would miss, and

you could finally let the Hunger die away, enjoy one fucking night without it. It really would be so easy; there's the homeless guy outside the corner store who sometimes shouts at the passerby. You could just pull him away, into the alley. People would probably thank you, if they knew. Wouldn't it be better — for the city, for the real innocent bystanders — if you weren't so goddamn hungry?

Political Horror

Your intentions were good. Perhaps you sought to change the system from the inside. But once you became an insider, the mechanisms of power started to change you in irrevocable ways until you became a caricature of your former self, endlessly compromised by the impossible choices you had to make.

The word *political* refers to the fact that in the World of Darkness, Kindred are not solitary predators. They gather in coterie and hunt in domains controlled by more powerful or influential vampires. A big part of the exploration of the world in **Vampire** has to do with discovering the society of



the undead. Political horror is what happens when you have to interact with a community of monsters. What's more, you're part of it.

Political horror starts to assert itself when the characters start compromising their values for the sake of their position in Kindred society. To get ahead. In fiction, it's a common element in stories about power. Although TV series such as *Succession* (2018–2023) and *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019) are not horror stories per se, they provide powerful examples of the mechanism of political horror.

In both series, the best way to see how the ratchet works is to look at the characters who come into the ecosystem of power from the outside. In *Succession*, Tom Wambsgans is the husband of heir Shiv Roy. At the start of the series, he's not really integrated into the power plays of the Roy family, but during the show's four seasons he becomes increasingly corrupt as he tries to look out for his own interests, sometimes with spectacular results.

In *Game of Thrones*, we meet the corrupt Queen Cersei early on. She's venal, ruthless, and determined to hold onto her position no matter what. As the series goes on, the stories of many of the younger characters resemble possible origin stories for Cersei, demonstrating how a perfectly normal person becomes twisted by having to survive high-stakes political combat. Vampires don't even begin as perfectly normal people.

Storytelling Political Horror

For politics in **Vampire** to mean anything, there needs to be a community of the dead. Complexity is helpful: perhaps the Camarilla and the Anarchs share the city, each with their own domains, at war yet at the same time secretly making personal alliances. Other sects and factions — the Sabbat, Autarkis domains, supposed “neutrals” such as the Circulatory System — add dramatic possibilities and opportunities for corruption and self-deception.

Perhaps counterintuitively, political horror works best when the hammer doesn't hit the players' characters in the face immediately. A slow burn gives the characters time to become invested and get to know their new social environment. For

the Storyteller, it's better to let the characters get comfortable before ramping up the horror.

As with personal horror, political horror internalizes the horror of what we've become. Its external component takes the form of all the other Kindred in the local domain. Thus, the Storyteller can illustrate those consequences with supporting characters' actions or with glimpses of their emotions. The vampires who push the characters to make increasingly depraved choices may themselves wonder whether they've lost their way. Best to exorcise those doubts by doubling down on the player characters!

No Clean Hands In Late-Stage Vampirism

To make political horror work, it's important that the player coterie has a stake in the society of monsters. If the Kindred inhabiting the local Elysium or Anarch hangout appear so vile and untrustworthy that the characters don't want anything to do with them, the horror becomes fully external: us vs. them, not us vs. us.

To forestall that state, it's important to make the characters complicit. Generosity on the part of those in power can be helpful. For example, the Prince decides that they want to use the characters. As a first step, the Prince grants them a domain in the city's Rack, a prime feeding ground.

Now the characters have an incentive to keep connected to the Prince's Court. They want to keep their easy feeding opportunities. Now when the Prince does something horrific, the player characters start rationalizing why they still hold onto their association. A connected Court figure requests their aid, dangling further advancement at the cost of direct involvement. This betrayal of themselves, not necessarily any betrayals by Princes or Barons, lies at the heart of political horror.

In this fashion, one of the core themes in **Vampire**, the personal horror of “beast I am lest beast I become,” colors and taints every interaction with Kindred society. It becomes increasingly difficult or even impossible to hold onto your

principles, because it's not only the Beast inside you that constantly tempts you to let go and indulge. It's also the literally predatory society in which you dwell, punishing you in a thousand small ways for any attempt to be virtuous and do something good.

Because complicity lies at the heart of political horror, the first victims should not be the players' characters. Indeed, it works best if they're on the side of the powerful. They're going to be perfectly fine as some poor shmuck gets their life or unlfe destroyed. The initial lack of pressure on the characters means it's possible for them to accept circumstances that are morally questionable. It's not just the path of least resistance, but the only path to advancement, or simply keeping what they have.

In Chronicles

Stories involving political corruption often start with the carrot not the stick. The characters are offered something that looks good, and once they have it, they need to defend it. In that defense, they become compromised.

This may be something extremely simple and small. For example, the characters go to a vampire party. The host has arranged mortals to be present, captured and terrified, blindfolded and gagged. Drinking from them is polite, especially since the host explains that they'll be disposed of afterwards.

This is pretty depraved but also pretty normal, at least for Kindred. Normalization of the unacceptable is the mechanism that makes a maladjusted society so sick. If all the other guests casually drink from these poor mortals like it's completely ordinary, surely it's okay if you do too? If you abstain, won't you be singled out as weak? Is this so different from the hunting all vampires have to do? Besides, now you don't have to hunt, and that saves some poor bystander from having a terrible experience.

Setting seemingly sensible goals is another way to normalize atrocity. If the goal is to defend the city from the Sabbat, protect the Masquerade, or uphold local law, it doesn't seem particularly evil to work towards it. Maybe it's even a moral good. Unfortunately, all such goals may eventually lead to evil acts.

The Initiation Rite

The Anarchs are known for their close association with the mortal world. Many blend in almost perfectly, and some even manage to have families complete with a spouse and children. It's difficult to imagine a better disguise.

With this in mind, it makes sense for a vampire keen to hold onto their humanity to seek the company of the Anarchs. Surely, they're not as bad as the Camarilla? Crucially, they offer protection: your loved ones are going to be safe and sound as long as you belong.

Unfortunately, there's the small matter of the initiation rite. The Anarchs won't extend their protection until they know they can trust you. All you have to do is deal with a group of hunters seeking to destroy local Kindred. They've all been victims of vampiric predation and seek to destroy the monsters pretending to be human.

Is that so hard to do? The hunters might have a point when they assert that vampires are a curse upon humanity. But if you're a vampire yourself, it's easy to pretend that killing a hunter isn't murder, or at least falls under self-defense.

The Culling

There are too many Kindred in the domain. The Masquerade is endangered because so many vampires need to feed every night. Mistakes are made and mortals take note.

Thus, the Prince decides that there needs to be a culling. It won't be enough to just exile members of the community. That would just mean pushing a potential Masquerade breach somewhere else, and in a connected world, that won't do.

No, the Prince says that six of the youngest and weakest Kindred in the city need to be turned into ashes. Do the players' characters want to be on that list? If not, perhaps they have a few helpful suggestions for who should be exterminated?

It won't be an exciting hunt. No, the poor wretches chosen by the characters are brought to the Elysium and destroyed in full view of everybody as a warning for those thinking of siring unlicensed childer.

As a reward for their loyalty, the players' coterie then gets a license to make a new childer.

You Are the Prince

The players' coterie rules the domain. One of them is the Prince, the others advisors, Primogen, and other court functionaries. Unfortunately, even the powerful have to bow to greater power. A Justicar comes to town, hunting after one of the "great enemies of the Camarilla."

The players' coterie learns that they're suspected of harboring such a villain. To show their loyalty and avoid the wrath of the Justicar, the Prince must uphold the Traditions with no mercy. Do the characters have what it takes to execute some poor Toreador who told his lover about the existence of the Kindred, just to show to the Justicar that they're tough?

Psychological Horror

Are your senses deceiving you? Do you really see that person, hear their voice? Are you really who you think you are? Can you trust the people around you?

Psychological horror deals with the terrors of doubt and paranoia, the creeping fear that you can't rely on yourself or anyone around you, and the dark abyss of depression and self-hatred. Anyone who's ever experienced a delusion or a hallucination knows how deeply disturbing the experience can be: the world that you once firmly understood, that obeys certain rules and expectations, suddenly turns on its end and you revert to being a child, inching toward safety in timidity or lashing out in fury. Calm, clear thought becomes difficult if you can't believe in your surroundings or can't pin down the cause of your sensations. Even if you know intellectually that you're safe, can you be certain where reality ends and unreality begins? And does that boundary stay in one place?

Characters affected by psychological horror desperately seek the truth, looking for any anchor to lash themselves to in a maelstrom of paranoia. In *Perfect Blue* (1997), young pop idol Mima makes a career change and discovers she's being stalked by an irate fan as a result. As alarming as the stalker is, more frightening is the sudden appearance of herself in unwelcome visions, always dressed in her old pop idol clothing. An online blog purporting to

be written by her shares updates exactly matching Mima's personal life. The film role she took on starts to echo through her real life. Mima's afraid of her stalker and the strange visions, but more than anything she's afraid that she's coming unmoored from reality — losing her mind is as great a threat as any physical or moral danger she might find herself in. When she finally discovers the source of her visions, it's as much a relief to her as to the audience to learn what's real and what's not.

When that tension — what's real and what's not — is *never* broken, it's a deeply unsettling experience. Stories like *I Saw the TV Glow* (2024) play this to the hilt, leaving the audience still feeling the dread of uncertainty and doubt even as the credits roll. Owen is a young teen at the beginning of the film, enamored with a television show that supports him through a difficult childhood marked by loneliness and discontent. By the time a runaway childhood friend reappears in his adulthood, Owen's alienation and repression have clearly only gotten worse. When his friend claims Owen is secretly a character from the television show they both adored and urges him to bury himself alive to regain his "real" self, Owen's thrown into a world of mental agony. The only person he feels has ever understood him is asking him to do something that goes against all logic. Is she insane? Is she real? Is any of his life real? What does he lose by *not* following her?

In fiction, it's possible to turn the tables on the audience. Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962) is a masterpiece of unreliable narration: by the end of the novel, it's not the characters mired in doubt about the reality of their world, but the readers. Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) pioneered the unreliable narrator; Robert Chambers' *The King in Yellow* (1895) turned psychological horror into reality horror, his narrators describing impossible, nightmarish worlds true only for themselves... probably. Movies like David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999) and Alejandro Aja's *Haute Tension* (2003) tune the unreliable narrator to political and slasher horror, respectively. While the "unreliable narrator" doesn't translate directly to the tabletop, the "unreliable Storyteller character" should be omnipresent in psychological horror chronicles.

In Chronicles

In other words, psychological horror is a fun series of mindfucks. It's quite easy to pick out the same elements in **Vampire**. Kindred lie on a daily basis, crafting new identities as they're needed and finding ways to hide the evidence of their feeding. In a world of obfuscation and lies, it can become difficult to discern the truth. Storytellers can seed this and play up the paranoia with their troupes: who's lying to you? Someone's trying to fuck with you, no *really*, and they've hidden themselves from you. Control, particularly mental control, is integral to the Masquerade, and vampires who cannot control themselves get destroyed, permanently. Crippling paranoia isn't just a thematic element, it's something that can actively endanger the Masquerade—a very dramatic toy to play with.

Storytellers might experiment with Obfuscate affecting the vampire's identity. Undercover cops experience mental dissonance switching personae; Kindred who pose as mortals switch personae all the time. And inside every Kindred, there's the *other* persona. The Beast laughs at their pain, mocks their efforts to curtail it. It's the infection, the paranoia, and the black hole all at once. It's an invader in their heads, forcing its way into a vampire's mind and reminding it how Hungry it is. The Beast cannot be quieted except by feeding: which would the vampire rather face—the horrible whispers and psychological torture, or the assault and murder?

There's also that rankling little wonder if maybe none of this is happening, if perhaps the Kindred are insane. The world of vampires, ghosts, and werewolves is a terrifying, unnatural place, after all—wouldn't it almost make *more* sense if all this were a dream, or a nightmare, or a play put on by madmen? Is Memoriam real memory or a constructed reality? Dominate and Presence shift mortal realities nightly, perhaps something does the same to the Kindred. Malkavians peer into the unconscious visions far more than any other clan, and among them are a few who've delved far too deep. They emerge ranting about the worlds of dreams and the sleepers who create the universe in their minds. They might be insane, or they might be saner than everyone else.



That's Me in the Corner

You rouse, tired to the bone, and go out one night. You're greeted by people surprised to see you again so soon. You were just here, you learn, during the afternoon, and were so charming, so delightful that they begged you to stay. It's the same story at your other usual haunts. You came in, captivated the whole room for an hour, and left. You sidle around the room, gathering what little information you can about "yourself." Next day, same story.

It doesn't take long for the double to make its mark on the night, as well. As you emerge from slumber, wary of what you might find beyond your haven door, the double seems to always be just ahead of you. Everyone is always pleased to see you again, promising to follow up on a plan you didn't make. It's kind of awesome.

Until personal items begin to go missing. First the toothbrush, then your shoes, then your photographs. And all the doors are as locked and secured as ever. People start ignoring you when you go out at night — a blessing and a curse — but they still talk about you as if you've just stepped out. You start to see yourself across the street, or around the corner, reflected in mirrors and shop windows. Maybe you should look into exorcism, or body disposal... if there's actually something (someone) there to exorcise or execute.

The Assassin Dream

When the dreams begin, they're a night or two of deep slumber, difficult to wake from — two Rouse Checks rather than one, and a lingering sense of *déjà vu*. In them, you're an ordinary mortal, living a modest life and writing about an invisible, secret world in your spare time. And in those dreams someone's trying to kill you.

One night it takes three Rouse Checks to wake, and there's a bruise on your shin you don't remember getting. A bruise, come to think of it, that should be impossible on dead flesh. The dreams are getting more intense, and it seems like you're being pulled further in. Is the waking world real? Is the dreaming world real? Which is which?

Mirror Shards

Something is wrong at the Haven. The coterie know that much. All the taps keep dripping at the same time. There's a ticking sound coming from somewhere. Strangers' mail keeps turning up on the little table.

Then they all start forgetting things. Not just a set of misplaced keys here or someone losing their shoes again, but street numbers, names, whole people and their rank. There's no relaxing before daytime. Instead, all they think about is that damn *dripping*, and that fucking *ticking*, and the piles of mail accumulating everywhere. Someone suggests a carbon monoxide detector. Someone else suggests an exorcism. Whatever the coterie does, they should do it soon. The memory gaps are starting to be noticeable to the other Kindred, and it's only a matter of time before someone takes advantage of them.

Body Horror

Body horror at its simplest can be pure revulsion, the squick of something terrible happening to or around your body. It's the fear of someone or something alienating the most basic part of your identity — your flesh — from you without your consent or input. Even if you're doing it to yourself, if your body changes, will you still be yourself? Are you becoming something unrecognizable? Is it corruption? Self-discovery? Either way, it threatens pain.

We're hard-wired to avoid real pain and bodily harm — just thinking about blood is enough to make some people woozy. It's not just the idea of hurt itself: physiologically, pain is a tool. It exists to tell creatures that something's wrong with their body, something they need to escape and address. The thought of anything seeking us out specifically and only to *hurt* us is especially disturbing when there's no end goal in sight. *Hellraiser* (1987) delivers thrills with the visceral sight of peeled meat and sharp implements buried in skin.

As empathetic creatures, we read other people's suffering as painful even if we aren't experiencing it ourselves. Watching someone seek to inflict extreme pain and hurt on others makes audiences gasp and shrink away, thinking how dreadful it would be to

feel that pain themselves — and the uncomfortable recognition of the desire to inflict that pain. Pure sadism showcases the very worst of a person's humanity, the impulse to hurt and maim for the power trip of it all. *Saw* (2004) is effective for the very reason that it taps into both helplessness and the sadistic impulse. Jigsaw subjects the victims of his traps to horrible tortures and forces them into self-mutilation, all in the name of petty revenge — and they inflict these horrors on *each other*, carrying out the work of their sadistic torturer even as he watches, unmoving, from nearby.

Not My Choice

Of course, sometimes the horror comes from within. The thought of someone changing your own body impinges on the idea of *you* as a self-sufficient, conscious individual. Seth Brundle in *The Fly* (1986) finds himself transforming both bodily and mentally after he accidentally fuses with a housefly during an experiment. Brundle sees isolation and desperation in his future as he becomes more and more fly-like, sprouting hairs, wings, a proboscis... As his condition progresses, he manifests a desire to merge with the most human person he knows, his currently pregnant one-time lover Ronnie. It's the only way he can imagine anybody loving him in his fly-man form, the only hope he can conceive of for even potential future happiness. He has to share his condition with someone else in order to claw back some semblance of humanity. Naturally, Ronnie disagrees, and at the end of the film it's she who pulls the trigger to kill Brundle and retain her bodily autonomy.

The infectious spread of Brundle's body horror is a running theme in the genre. The fungal disease of *The Last of Us* games (2013 and 2020) transforms bodies from the inside out, replacing flesh with mushy growths, overriding minds and piloting living bodies to consume flesh and hunt other human beings. The zombies turn on loved ones and seek to spread their disease as far as possible, using people's bodies as a vector for the fungus' successful growth. All the while, the game implies, the human brains are trapped, conscious, inside their roaming bodies until they finally rot



away. It's no surprise the fear of becoming a zombie is as infectious as the fungus itself, and uninfected, terrified people prove willing to carry out terrible acts themselves. The body horror is just as real for the characters as it is for the audience, and the game's characters prove willing to risk anyone's life to preserve their own bodily autonomy.

On the flip side, *The Thing* (1982) derives its scares from the titular alien's ability to transform into members of the polar team, appearing perfectly normal until threats reveal its true nature. Even after it explodes into threatening gore and fleshy appendages, it's scariest when it looks like a completely innocuous human, able to convince others that its victims are still alive and conscious. In a way, the Thing is as much a betrayer of the victim's inner self as their murderer — the idea of using their image to manipulate others feels like a great desecration. It's the same reason the zombies in *The Last of Us* tug on their loved ones' heartstrings: the body *looks* like their brother, mother, spouse, or friend, and that's who they know them as. The corruption of the victim's inner body reflects their destruction as a person, even as their friends and families still grasp for false solace in their outer form.



Vile Bodies

The Kindred go through a horrifying process as they die and yet do not die, forced to dwell inside a corpse and hunt other humans to provide the battery that keeps their meat suit walking. Some transform even more drastically: Nosferatu faces warp into monstrosity, animalistic features burst from the Gangrel. In many modern films and television, vampires actually transform when they feed, their faces contorting into predatory, animalistic shapes as they indulge their appetites. In *The Lost Boys* (1987) and *Buffy: the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), vampires' foreheads bulge and their eyes shift to yellow when they show their fangs. In *Blade 2* (2002), mouths open into mandible-like structures studded with teeth. Whatever the flavor of vampire, there's something about them when they're in their hunting state that makes mortals afraid and uneasy around them.

Never forget the Kindred are walking corpses. Until the Blush of Life warms their body and puts some color back in their cheeks, they're as cold and dead as any morgue occupant. Cuticles peel back over gray nails and decades-old dirt is embedded in the flesh. Flies buzz around Elysium in little black clouds. The smell of rot clings to a vampire's skin, drawing dogs until they see the smelly dead thing *moving* and withdraw, confused and unnerved. Thin-bloods find themselves forgetting to breathe, then gasping for air after minutes go by without oxygen.

The body horror of Oblivion Ceremonies, Blood Sorcery, or Thin-Blood Alchemy focuses on the organic processes and results, not the intellectual Art. Emphasize the connection forged between the body of the sorcerer and the magical working. Translucent burn pustules filled with lymph pop up along an arm as the blood from inside that arm boils in a cauldron; old wounds reopen after a difficult Ritual, revealing bloodless layers of fat and muscle;

skin sloughs off arms like long gloves after holding an artifact aloft for hours.

Other Disciplines offer other possibilities for body horror, none more than Protean. Beyond shapeshifting, powers like Tzimisce fleshcrafting offer the Storyteller (or the player) an opportunity to blend beauty and body horror in the tradition of *Hellraiser* (1987) or *The Substance* (2024). Fleshcrafting doesn't just represent pain and an unwanted bodily change—it also represents a loss of autonomy by the Tzimisce's victims. To the Dragons, shaping anyone's flesh is an expression of their superiority—and usually their ownership—over them.

Body Horror in Chronicles

Stories and chronicles of slow, stifling suffocation, as much as explosions of viscera, can feed body horror. Storytellers can emphasize the frozen quality of vampires' unives. The stasis of never changing, even when one *wants* to—tattoos fading, wounds disappearing, lasered hair springing back—makes vampires all the more aware of their immortality in death compared to the vibrant, living, changing world of mortals. With bodies that recover from damage in just days, vampires can use their flesh as they please, cutting off chunks and carving out spaces in their abdomen to smuggle goods. And we're back to bloody viscera.

The Writhing

The vampire begins to notice a curious sensation inside its chest—a gentle tickling, almost like someone brushing their fingers randomly across the lining of its stomach. When it next uses the Blush of Life, it coughs up a wad of live maggots onto the floor. There's more where they came from—it can't seem to drive them out when it's not using Blush of Life. And worse, it starts to hear something buzzing in its head, something that almost sounds like words...

The Tell-Tale Heart

A Kindred friend of the coterie goes missing. All that's left behind of her in her apartment is a single

eyeball, carefully severed from the optic nerve. There's not even much blood on the floor.

Their friend, it turns out, has a stalker, a necromancer who's been sending her "poetic" notes about her "precious flesh," half sexually and half scientifically obsessed. It doesn't take much more digging to discover that the necromancer subdued her with magical arts and kidnapped her to harvest her organs for research, cutting them out over and over as they regenerate.

And Things that Crawl

The coterie is invited to the home of a Tzimisce ancilla who's devoted her unlife to the art of fleshcraft. Her estate is filled with what she calls her "menagerie," an array of mortals she's "rewarded" for pleasing her. She has melded her favored ones with animals that represent their various talents: a nightingale-woman with a beautiful singing voice, a monkey-acrobat, a crane-dancer. Her menagerie also holds other exhibits: a lionfish-man who gasps for breath and stabs himself with his own spines, a vulture-woman whose own stomach acid burns her from the inside. Those, the ancilla explains, are the ones who have angered her and deserve punishment. The coterie suspect, and soon discover, that the ancilla is quick to anger.

Gothic Horror

Early Gothic horror was fascinated with the irrational, the grotesque, and the sublime as it rose out of European Dark Romanticism in the latter 1700s. Spearheaded by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), it was made popular by Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Matthew G. Lewis' *The Monk* (1796). It became known for featuring pseudo-medieval isolated settings, unnatural forces of evil, moral (and sexual) depravity, innocent victims, and overall seeking to instill a sense of mystery and terror.

Gothic stories are the domain of the macabre and terrifying, but also of the awe-inspiring. The struggle between intellect and instinct, or Humanity and the Beast, has been a major Gothic theme from the beginning. Often, that struggle is represented as

the return of something repressed, which leads to evil, either because it always was or because it was denied for so long. In Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), this repressed element is a woman buried alive who returns with a vengeance. In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), it's a demonic outsider rejected in status and love who seizes both.

Later 19th-century Gothic works used supernatural forces to represent the repressed, making the vampire, along with pagan gods, ghosts, demons, and devils, a widely used antagonist. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1894), the returning, repressed evil might represent sexuality, disease, foreign influences, or the medieval past, depending on your point of view. Some excellent places to start if you're seeking inspiration from the period are Vernon Lee's *Hauntings* (1890) and J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871), especially if you like female villains. In this century, you can see this pattern in the film *Crimson Peak* (Guillermo del Toro, 2015) and games like *Amnesia: the Dark Descent* (2010).

Gothic horror can take place in any era. Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) takes place in America in the mid-1900s, in a house from the late 1800s. The serialized Netflix adaption (2018) alternates between the 1990s and the 2010s. Both concern being haunted by the past, by the dead, and by surroundings that should be safe but aren't. Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009) is vaguely set in a contemporary era but is all about the pull of suppressed animalistic nature and how, when it resurfaces, it so easily translates to sin. Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* and *Lives of the Mayfair Witches*, written between 1976 and 2018, are steeped in Gothic settings and return to the struggle between intellect and passion, human ideals and inhuman desire, over and over. The same is true for **Vampire** itself. Already a Gothic game, you can still delve deeper, crafting stories where every shadow hides a secret, every desire is a double-edged sword, and every character teeters on the brink of becoming what they fear.

Storytelling Gothic Horror

Freud's essay "The Uncanny" (1919) can provide some pointers for creating that sense of uneasiness that often characterizes Gothic tales. To Freud, the

uncanny frightens but resembles something familiar: a house that looks but doesn't feel like home, or a monster with the face of a loved one. Intimately linked to the repressed, the uncanny resurfaces and frightens us, not because it's so strange but because we recognize it, and part of us understands that it was always there. It's happy childhood memories that suddenly, seen through adult eyes, suggest a horrific truth — a mother distracting her daughter with a toy as she cleans up the father's blood. It creeps up on us and makes comfortable spaces uncomfortable, including the space of your own mind and body.

To achieve a sense of the uncanny, pair the well-known with the sinister and make happy moments have a tinge of madness. Use sceneries that the players know from general real life and make them subtly eerie. Create a sense of constant ambivalence: make quests for answers lead primarily to more questions and friendly strangers seem suspicious, like they know more than they let on. Let reality shift around the coterie, so they dare not trust what they experience. But leave them a few things that feel absolutely safe: an incorruptible Touchstone, a safe Haven. Those things begin to crack or splinter when the coterie thinks the worst is over — ideally because they put too much weight on what they thought was safely invulnerable.

If you've got the uncanny down, you're halfway to narrating like a Gothic horror writer. Add a setting that's both somewhat unknowable and has something grand about it: the players should always feel that there's more to the place than they can fully discover. Draw on symbolism to make the mood even more suggestive: bats becoming disoriented and throwing themselves against brick walls to slide bloodily to the ground, full moons rising over fog-clad moors, terrified animals and terrifying children. A Gothic horror story can be full of twists, but the actors in it almost always know that something terrible is coming. They just don't know exactly what it is or how to stop it.

The Beast in the Castle

Vampire draws on Gothic fiction in innumerable ways. Most importantly, it shares the central conflict between humanity (culture, conscience, intellect)



and the Beast (unrestrained nature, Hunger, raw instinct). Perhaps you're already highlighting this conflict all the time. Characters may have Predator patterns that don't align with their Chronicle Tenets or push themselves so hard, the risk of Frenzy constantly looms over them. The conflict is also reflected in the grander political scale, as the contrast between the unrestrained slaughter of Sabbat Cainites and the constant rationalizations of the Camarilla or the posturing of the Anarchs. Casting a coterie of naive Camarilla fledglings into intricate Black Hand plots creates the same dramatic opportunity as Jonathan Harker navigating Dracula's castle. Will they emerge with their humanity intact or give in to the seductive and twisted nature of unrestrained evil?

Gothic Horror in Chronicles

Besides the basic theme, **Vampire** is full of game mechanics you can use as plot devices to create Gothic ambivalence. Touchstones can become helpless victims or tragic enemies in the making. Well-chosen Convictions can ensure that the characters are placed in moral dilemmas that will be truly horrifying to them. Auspex can reveal ghostly presences and glimpses of terrible truths. Blood Sorcery and Oblivion can provide the perfect frameworks for metaphorical deals with the devil. Dominate can be used to scramble a person's mind and memories. And Memoriam can uncover long-buried secrets the vampire was never meant to recall.

The Sins of the Father

A pack of fledgling vampires has been spotted in a forlorn and impoverished part of the city, behaving with as much grace and discretion as rabid dogs. At first it seems simply that someone is making unlawful Embraces, perhaps one of the Duskborn. But as the coterie look deeper into the situation, it becomes clear that the fledglings have something more disturbing wrong with them than thin blood. In fact, they've been created by a high Blood Potency ancilla, who only recently rose from torpor. The problem is that the ancilla has something deeply wrong with their vitae: it makes their progeny extremely susceptible to Frenzy — frothing at the mouth and with wild eyes, they lose it at the mere smell of mortals.

It won't just be a simple question of taking down the Frenzying childer and their sire, however. For the Blood curse wakes in the majority of those of the bloodline but not every single one. The sire has nothing wrong with them except the mad compulsion to procreate until they make a childer who works right. And unbeknownst to them, they already have — a likable neonate who becomes an ally of the players' coterie early on in the story, and whom they'll have to take down if they want to obliterate the bad blood for good.

The Fall of a Cappadocian House

The coterie is summoned to a decaying mansion owned by a reclusive elder Hecata who appears to suffer from a mysterious illness — a possible Blood Sorcery curse? As the mansion slowly crumbles around them, the coterie discovers not only that the mansion and their host seem to be dissolving at the same rate, but also that the vampire's childer and real-life sister has been entombed within the walls. As their host grows increasingly irate, the coterie finds signs that suggest the whole thing may have been a trap. If they go to wake the sister from torpor, they may find she was never sleeping to begin with but has been awake for all this time, planning her revenge.

The Ghostly Guardian

After a visit to a place one of them remembers from life, the coterie become targets of an angry specter

who does everything in its power to take them down. Initially, they only notice because things appear to move around, but increasingly the strangeness escalates and becomes more sinister. Glass cracks when they get near; weapons misfire when they use them. Eventually, the specter begins to possess the living to attempt to destroy those which it hates so much. Years ago, when they were both alive, one of the players' characters had a lover. That lover died obsessed with the death (actually, the Embrace) of the character, and became a specter. The specter can't recognize the vampire as their former loved one, and blames the vampire for both their deaths.

Folk Horror

The core of folk horror is simple: it's the terror of being isolated and coerced into ritual behavior by a community (usually a rural or pagan one) that stands together against you. Most folk horror protagonists begin walking down the path to doom by allowing the cults encircling them to make decisions they neither understand nor agree to, simply to ensure they're not ostracized or cut off from valuable resources. It's the central theme shared by three well-known pieces of folk horror media: *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973), *Midsommar* (Ari Aster, 2019), and Thomas Tryon's 1973 novel *Harvest Home*. Each runs along very similar lines: An outsider enters a remote community, where they're met with strange behavior from the locals. They slowly discover the locals draw on traditional folklore, practicing magic or occult rituals — rituals that extend to human sacrifice. Finally, the outsider is killed or broken to maintain the cult's practices.

Importantly, all three examples feature outsiders who discover their "outsider" status is no accident. Their respective cults drew them in specifically to involve them in the cult, forcing them to participate against their will. The community builds a terrible dread in the outsider, but they find they can't leave — the cult sabotages their escape routes and gaslights them into a confused retreat. Anyone they express concern to gives them empty platitudes and obvious lies. It's a dynamic that breeds a particular kind of passive paranoia. They're forced to be alone, surrounded by people. It's an old fear for most



people, that in-group versus outsider dynamic, the same dread of focused hurt and loneliness that makes childhood bullying so agonizing.

Far From the Madding Crowd

Folk horror is almost always rural — not just because of the ancient agrarian rituals most folk horror models itself on, but because it's difficult to create a feasible sense of isolation without a physical reflection of the internal conditions. (Suburban cult horrors like *Get Out* (Jordan Peele, 2017) structurally resemble folk horror but take their frisson from a fear of losing your identity to society, rather than from fears of dangerous isolation or the primitive past.) As much potential as cities hold for encountering cultists or unusual religious groups, it's far easier to gather allies, find supplies, and check if you're being lied to when there's a million or so people right outside your door. Not so in a bucolic village or distant homestead. Isolation breeds paranoia and madness — think of the horrific psychological effects of solitary confinement. The troubled family in *The Witch* (Robert Eggers, 2015) is plagued by supernatural threats and personal demons, but their greatest source of trouble is their determination to

stay put on their haunted homestead. Their solitary little house proves to be fertile ground for the Devil to divide and conquer the household, killing each family member before convincing their eldest daughter to contract with him.

City Suckers

The Kindred in **Vampire: The Masquerade** are urban predators. Cities not only make better feeding grounds for monsters who rely on secrecy and anonymity, but also provide more physical spaces to shelter from the sun during the cruel hours of the day. Farmland and small towns belong most securely to mortals, guarded jealously by locals who know each other — and the occasional farmer with a barn load of stakes. In a way, Kindred who accidentally enter a small town protected by hunters re-enact the core folk horror story, down to the ambivalent symbolism of the sun. Meanwhile, cities transform into havens of death and supernatural infection, their modernity aiding and abetting the Kindred's continued existence. Tradition and progress are pitted against each other, much to the detriment of both, but the nature of the Masquerade is such that neither party can ever peacefully encounter the other.

And of course, there's the old foe: in the forests and plains beyond agrarian towns, the werewolves hunt. The "Great Enemy" is well-established in the wild places of the world, and they seek out vampires to destroy. Entering rural spaces isn't just risky from a food and shelter perspective; there's also the very real possibility a lupine scents an unwelcome trespasser and decides to do incredible damage to them.

But bringing folk horror into the city is not an impossible prospect. Ancient religion is not in short supply in any real-life city, let alone in **Vampire**, and it's not difficult for Storytellers to imbue an antagonist with folk horror themes and create isolation through social constraints. It's not going to have that rustic, sun-soaked aesthetic, but folk horror takes in spiration from decidedly non-folk sources. After all, like any genre, folk horror takes inspiration from decidedly non-folk sources. The film *Robin Redbreast* (James MacTaggart, 1970)

shares much the same plot as the occult horror of *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968), although the latter takes place in the center of New York City, while the former sets its scene in rural south England. Both stories deal with a woman whose pregnancy is arranged against her will by the denizens of the community she's come to stay in and her increasing paranoia that her neighbors plan to do something dreadful to her unborn baby. In *Rosemary's Baby*, those neighbors turn out to be a coven of Satanist witches; in *Robin Redbreast* they're a group of pagans who worship Herne the Hunter. It's primarily those touches of paganism and the farmland setting of *Robin Redbreast* that mark it as "folk horror" by comparison.

Vampire stories in rural settings remain possible, if you plot them out a bit. Travel can bring a coterie within spitting distance of a truly small town, and some vampires require itinerant habits. Ravnos must travel to sleep in a different bed each week, and they've forged a culture of wandering as a result. Salubri flee from fellow Kindred and go farther afield than other vampires in pursuit of their goals. Both clans seem likely to have members end up in a location other than a city center. Fugitive, Nomad, and Questari coterie members can all find themselves in eerily welcoming towns in the countryside. And of course, there are always tasks for older established Kindred to send fledgling vampires into the boonies for.

Folk Horror in Chronicles

Whether or not the occult forces being called on are as real as the supernatural creatures populating the World of Darkness depends on the chronicle, but no matter their decision a **Vampire** troupe may find juicy material in the idea of replaying ancient stories unwillingly. Folk horror motifs include some of the Kindred's most dangerous hazards: fire (especially being burned alive), the sun, religious symbols, rituals centered around life and fertility (especially sex, pregnancy, menstruation, and animals). But there's a great deal of blood, too, and murder. If the vampires are the in-group, Storytellers might focus on the temptation to Frenzy during the delirium of a folk ritual; or link betrayed Convictions to their

community cult. If they're the outsiders, Storytellers can let the Kindred experience what it's like to be the *prey*, for once.

The Festival

The coterie encounters a curious mortal: a young Hunter with his face painted red and green, openly picking a fight with them as a mortal against Kindred, claiming to represent "life against death." He fights well enough and manages to cast a ritual component over himself and the coterie members in the process — salt mixed with rosemary and thyme, or candles, or a sprinkle of scented water, or perhaps just blood. He declares himself "Lord of the Hunt," just before the coterie kills him.

Or do they? The coterie starts encountering more Hunters, all wearing green and red clothing. They follow the Kindred, harassing them in subtle ways, contacting their mortal Touchstones and close friends until the coterie has had enough. They discover the Hunters' lair, storm it — only to find the Hunters arrayed with weapons and eager to carry out the final ritual of the festival they've been celebrating for the past few days: burning a vampire in sacrifice to their holy Sun.

The Silent Rite

There's a strange hermitage on the outskirts, an old refurbished church where a community of Farmer vampires have created a homestead to dwell in seclusion, adhering to a vow of silence and neutrality. They raise animals to feed on: goats, rabbits, and pigs. Sure, they have to employ a couple mortal farmhands to patrol during the day, always a little risky, but their unlifestyle seems genuinely calm and untroubled by Frenzy. Are they on the edge of Golconda? Have they truly tamed the Beast?

No. The coterie discovers the hermitage hides a terrible secret. The Kindred inside have a captive vampire, staked through the heart to induce paralysis. They bleed him little by little, feeding off his vitae and using it as a potent supplement for their animal feedings. It's a rite for them, a holy feeding to quiet the Beast. But something's gone wrong, and the staked vampire is dead, as in *Final Death* dead. The hermitage needs a new blood bag,

and they're approaching the edge of Frenzy without one. And unluckily for the coterie, these secluded licks stop at nothing to lure a new source of vitae into their clutches.

Cosmic Horror

Cosmic horror depends on the expanding shock of sheer scope: the horror is larger, older, and more real than the characters expect or can comprehend, much less deal with. The Cthulhu Mythos of H.P. Lovecraft typifies cosmic horror: in his fiction, the horror comes from outside our reality, from distant planets or deep time or alien dimensions. In Laird Barron's "Old Leech" tales, the horror remains immense and cold, but its too-real hostility sometimes burrows its tendrils inside a human being or a society. The fundamental, inevitable truths of the universe — entropy, despair, chaos, malevolence, alienation — often come cloaked behind the names and shapes of gods and titans: Cthulhu, Azathoth, Old Leech. Such cosmic deities don't necessarily sport Cthulhoid tentacles: the Angels of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995–1996) provide superb exemplars of humanly inhuman titans.

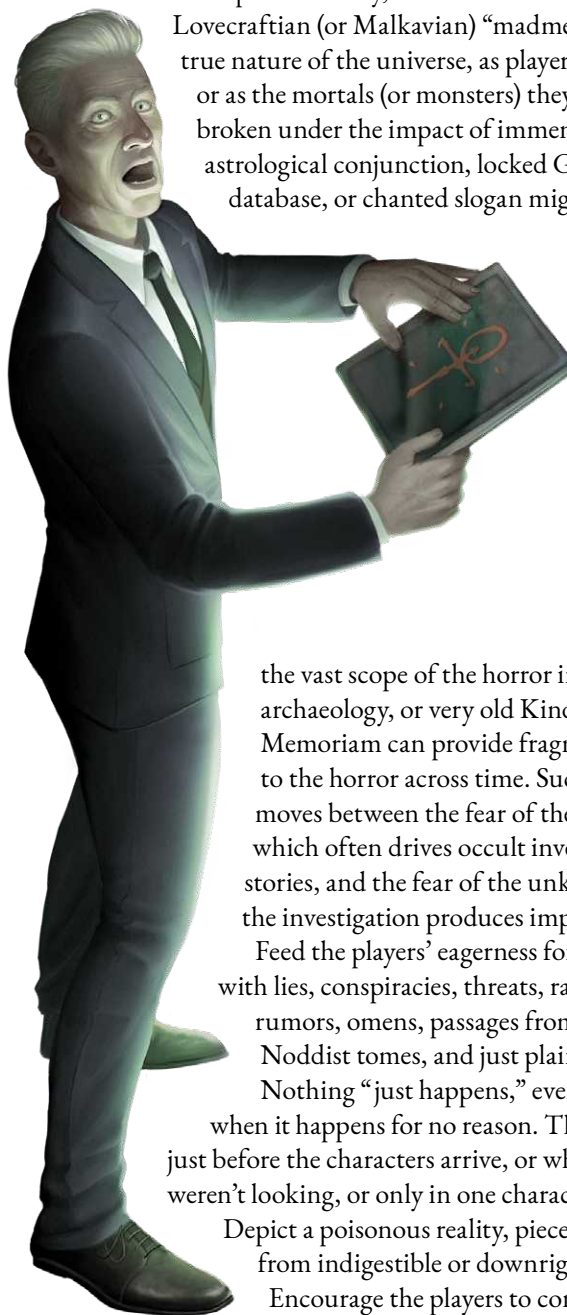
Cosmic horrors can overlap with established religion, as in John Carpenter's *Prince of Darkness* (1980), but often manifest as seemingly bizarre cults, as in Lovecraft or in the film *The Endless* (Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead, 2017). Cosmic horror can start small, as in the manga *Uzumaki* by Junji Ito, or enormous, as in the first half of *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) and the original, apocalyptic *Godzilla* (Ishiro Honda, 1954). For both Lovecraft and for modern cosmicists, science and reason reveal the horror at their limits, rather than saving us from it. Jeff VanderMeer's Southern Reach

novel trilogy (2014) similarly emphasizes the horror of unknowability, although its atmospheric and emotional tone runs closer to alienated ennui than to Lovecraftian paranoia.

Storytelling Cosmic Horror

Cosmic horror games explore the horror of incomprehensibility, at enormous scope.

Lovecraftian (or Malkavian) "madmen" reflect the true nature of the universe, as players' characters or as the mortals (or monsters) they encounter, broken under the impact of immensity. An astrological conjunction, locked Google Maps database, or chanted slogan might hint at



the vast scope of the horror in space; archaeology, or very old Kindred, or Memoriam can provide fragmentary clues to the horror across time. Such a game moves between the fear of the unknown, which often drives occult investigation stories, and the fear of the unknowable, when the investigation produces impossible results.

Feed the players' eagerness for information with lies, conspiracies, threats, rants, occult rumors, omens, passages from forbidden Noddist tomes, and just plain wrongness.

Nothing "just happens," even (or especially) when it happens for no reason. Things happen just before the characters arrive, or when they weren't looking, or only in one character's memory.

Depict a poisonous reality, pieced together from indigestible or downright toxic clues.

Encourage the players to connect isolated

data points, to assemble unfounded truths from incomplete evidence. Let them jump to conclusions; imply horrific intent where a lucid observer would see only tragedy.

Within the game, focus on and reinforce tone and mood. Lovecraft perhaps put it best in *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1934), saying cosmic horror should feature “a profound sense of dread, of contact with unknown spheres and powers, a subtle attitude of awed listening.” The urban lights and shadows of quotidian hunts and havens should feel different when the “wind from Outside” blows through the story.

Eventually, the characters feel different, too. Their Touchstones and other mortal acquaintances barely comprehend the unlife of the Kindred, but cosmically touched (or tainted) Kindred actively unnerve or repel them. Such Kindred become ever more isolated from their fellows, who react with suspicion or opportunistic cruelty to such seeming paranoia. Even mystically minded Kindred reject the notion of cosmic horror as heretical and humbling.

Vast and Unsympathetic

Cosmic horror dwarfs the personal and renders the political ultimately irrelevant. For those reasons, it can be hard to fit the sublime impact of an immense, incomprehensible, uncaring universe into the game world of **Vampire**. One way around this dilemma is to treat the Kindred world as Lovecraft treats the rational-scientific world: as the consensus illusion over reality, shattered by contact with the true Outside. A coterie of vampires in New England encounters blood with a curious, inhuman — almost fishy — taint, opening themselves up to nightmare visions of a primordial alien slumbering beneath the Pacific... and you're off to a rousing game of *Vampire of Cthulhu*.

Many troupes prefer to keep their Cthulhoid peanut butter away from their Kindred chocolate, though. The better way to cosmicize their chronicle is to make that chocolate *really* dark and bitter. **Vampire** has no shortage of immense, slumbering, inhuman monsters — we call them the Antediluvians. Play all those qualities up even as you introduce cults of the Antediluvians every bit as fanatical and twisted as the Sabbat they mirror. Don't let the Sabbat off the hook: Caine and Lilith as

shadowy and horrible progenitor gods can likewise provide cosmic menace as their sheer unknowability to modern Kindred hits home.

It gets worse: Leviathan, embodiment of Oblivion, doesn't even have the glint of humanity that, say, the Tzimisce Antediluvian feigns. Do other Disciplines likewise hint at the fractal surfaces of colossal horrors outside time and space? Is the Blood itself a sentient entity, embracing every one of the Kindred, planning in generations — across millennia — to create a pattern that embraces the earth, raising up a hypergeometric city of Enoch as prison-palace for its slave-hosts? If such an immeasurable entity already dwells inside you, leaches off of you, manipulates you to carry out its plans, suddenly the horror once more turns personal while remaining cosmically inevitable and omnipresent.

In Chronicles

The Storyteller builds cosmic horror chronicles from small epiphanies, each glimpsed almost out of the corner of the characters' eyes in the course of the surface horror story. Omens, dreams, or fragments of vision or intuition manifest alongside the main thread of each story. The characters (and the players) slowly piece together the horrible truth, peeling back a layer of the onion with each penetrated cult, short-circuited ritual, or de-fanged monstrosity. The scope of the chronicle gradually expands, occasionally punctuated by a terrifying realization opening up the true vista of the cosmic entity or implacable doom the coterie (and the city, and perhaps the world) faces.

Keeping the stakes personal — a single Touchstone saved from despair, a hard-fought victory against servitor beasts without and within — keeps the characters (and players) invested when and if their curiosity or dread flags. Each win comes harder, against more inexorable forces, on a larger scale. Self-destruction may seem — or be — the only logical course of action. Perhaps the final confrontation comes as a massive kaiju attack, a vast ceremony, or the total crumbling of a mentor's (or elder's) Humanity.

The Nothing on the Doorstep

The Cult of Shalim has arrived in the coterie's home city. Sunil, a Lasombra on the Prince's watch list for Sabbat tendencies, has seemingly reformed, rising to a position of trust. But Sunil has heard the call of Shalim, encountering Apolleon in the river deeps, where sunlight never reaches. Sunil's advice to "embrace the chaos" and "cull the kine" finds welcoming ears at court. The coterie has likewise noticed the shadows along the riverfront; their Malkavian has perhaps even dreamed of Apolleon themselves. Shalimite nihilism seems indistinguishable from Princely cruelty; how can they demonstrate the presence of the cult in the Court? Does the coterie need to descend into the river's mire to find proof of their allegations, or to bait Apolleon into revealing himself prematurely?

The Dunne Street Glory

A very old, very odd priest in the old — technically deconsecrated — St. Anne's Church on Dunne Street tracked down John Dee's handwritten text on "the most heavenlie conjunction" and subjected LaVenus Hartley, a heroin addict in St. Anne's treatment (or magical culling?) program, to the Enochian rite therein. And the two of them have brought forth a Son, proclaiming him a miraculous Child and re-energizing St. Anne's as a mystical pilgrimage site. Hippies, traders, street people and influencers converge

in ecstasy, rippling with what seems very like True Faith. Old deals collapse, and whole domains become uninhabitable, including the coterie's. The city reels, markets shift, and religious killings replace gang hits. That would be bad enough, but the rumor is that LaVenus also gave birth to a Daughter: immense, brighter than sunlight, her feathers and her gaze slowly piercing the ever-weakening walls of reality on Dunne Street. The coterie needs to find their own copy of Dee's text and determine how to banish what they refuse to believe is an angel before the city — and the world? — burns in the alien light.

Tiamat's Coils

The Veins of the Earth (see *Blood Sigils*, pp. 150, 162–164, 179) shudder and twist beneath the city: a sign of the Gehennical times, or a more ancient apocalypse? Tiamat exhales, horror rising in a miasma from the sewer gratings and waste ground. Malkavians share dreams of Tiamat rising, as Toreador notice mad truths distorting (or emerging from) their pet mortal artists. The Brujah spiral into nihilist splinters, Nosferatu fledglings ambush subway cars, the Ministry awaits a new prophet "from out of Egypt," and the mortal hunters blame the Kindred for the Blood Serpent, masking up for arson and stakings. Are these truly the end times, or has some desperate Tremere solitararchy found a Ritual from before the beginning? ■





Chapter Seven

NIGHT TERRORS

*No fever dream holds monsters so terrible that
some philosopher will not say they exist.*

—MARCUS TERENTIUS VARRO,
EUMENIDES

The Masquerade must sometimes extend to other creatures of darkness, as well. Ennui and the lack of supernatural evidence in the day-to-day have shrunk the ranks of those who put stock in religion and superstition. Were evidence to suddenly arise, mortals would certainly look deeper. There might even be a sudden boost of people wielding True Faith, a headache at the best of times. It's a wise Prince or Baron who attends to the spirits and strange creatures of their city, making sure their disputes and differences don't spill over onto lit streets.

Aapilu

It's not so much Blood sorcerers working ancient rituals to speak to the darkest parts of themselves that threatens the Masquerade: it's rather what those dark reflections ask in return. In Akkadian, *the one who answers* is the *aapilu*, a word related to *abaaalu*, meaning *echo*, or *reflection*. Aapilum (the plural), or abaalum, come from out of the Blood — the sorcerer's Blood, or that of their lineage — in response to the sorcerer's evocation. They manifest in candle flame, drugged haze, echoing laughter, serpentine whisper, shadows, and very old bloodstains. Sometimes they even take physical form, but mostly they just answer the call.

They provide the sorcerer with a service or Gift, usually at some cost. At higher levels, aapilum negotiate the costs with an uncanny inside knowledge of the sorcerer's weaknesses and desires. Aapilum range in power from manifested sins to horrific incarnations. In game terms, from one to five dots of Aapilu Level. They add their Aapilu Level pool to their power, Ritual, or Discipline rolls.

Aapilum are immune to mind control powers. Like vampires, sunlight weakens aapilum: they lose one dot of Aapilu Level in reflected or dim sunlight, and two dots in direct or bright sunlight. Rituals exist to ward against aapilum, but they are mostly in Sumerian. If an aapilu takes physical form, it takes damage as a vampire, not as a mortal, and its talons or fangs do Aggravated damage to Kindred. Some aapilu can set fires by touch, turn meat to rotting dust, attract flies or locusts, or demonstrate other supernatural powers.

Each aapilu requires a specific Aapilu Awakening Ritual (p. 94). For more varieties of aapilum, see *Blood Sigils*, pp. 128–130.

• Lahsu

Taking their name from the Akkadian for “whisper,” the lahsu whispers terrifying secrets to those who summon it. And also to those their summoner targets. Sorcerers summon lahsum to gain knowledge long dead and forgotten, or to extort or otherwise threaten their foes. Lahsum remain invisible or barely visible out of the corner of the eye. Their whispering voices might sound sepulchral, metallic, or raspy.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Mental 5, Social 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Insight (Secret Fear) 6, Intimidation (Veiled Threats) 7, Politics (your clan) 8

Gifts: The lahsu either whispers a secret that someone in the summoner's bloodline once heard or whispers a fearsome secret into the ear of a target. Payment comes due in another scene after the lahsu has whispered. The summoner either suffers a one-die penalty to all pools for one scene as their own terrors boil up unpredictably or forgets something



important during the session. Storytellers should make sure the forgotten fact carries blowback immediately or is the kind of complication that causes real problems later on: “It’s time for you to do what you promised when we were alone in the alley.”

• • • Daeva

Banu Haqim sorcerers most often use this Zoroastrian term for the “dark reflection” or “tempter” *aapilu*. American, especially Latin American, sorcerers increasingly call this entity *el salvaje*, meaning “the wild” or “the savage,” because it appeals to (or indeed embodies) the Beast of the sorcerer. When it appears, it resembles the sorcerer, somehow darker and more attractive in appearance. Who knows better what you need from an *aapilu* than yourself?

General Difficulty: 6 / 4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Mental 8, Social 9

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Subterfuge 11

Disciplines: Summoner’s Disciplines, at 3 and 2 (or equal to the summoner’s level, if higher)

Gifts: The daeva makes the summoner’s unlife better with the standard offerings: treasure, love, and power. In short, the daeva provides dots in useful or desired Backgrounds, e.g., Resources, Allies, Retainers, a nicer Haven, even a Mawla or improved Domain if the price is right. These developments transpire seemingly naturally (albeit with indecent haste) over the course of the session, or as rapidly as the Storyteller can arrange. However, using those dots in the game (mechanically for sure, but ideally also narratively) always incurs at least one Stain.

The payment varies: some daevas just reserve the right to switch a certain number of wins (six or eight) to messy criticals or bestial failures at times of the Storyteller’s choosing (when the character tries to act nobly or in accord with their Humanity, ideally). Other daevas demand the betrayal of a coterie mate or intentional harm (emotional or physical) to a Touchstone. The Storyteller should tailor the specific bargain for both maximum discomfort and temptation for the character.



Baali

Since the earliest days of Sumer, Kindred Blood Sorcerers have tried to recapture the powers of Enoch and their progenitors by summoning, questioning, and communing with the *aapilum* (Akkadian for “the ones who answer”; see *Aapilu*, p. 141), entities latent within the sorcerer’s Blood lineage. When such communion becomes possession, the reflection (*abaalu* in Akkadian) and the original merge. The result is one of the Baali. Some Kindred scholars consider them a type of wight, though one with a seemingly intact intellect. Little remains of the original Kindred, save possibly a tiny, tortured remnant to be worn as a skin-suit by the primordial entity that now occupies their body and their Blood.

Baali have all the abilities and Disciplines of the Kindred they possess, but never suffer Terror or Fury Frenzy or bestial failures, as their Beast has mostly sublimed away or perhaps emulsified within their Blood (they can still suffer from messy criticals and Hunger Frenzy). Their Blood is icy cold, and they must make two Rouse Checks for the Blush of Life. They still suffer from sunlight, but take 1 point less damage from fire, as the deep cold within their Blood damps out the first bloom of heat. Successful use of *Scry the Soul* (Auspex 3) notices something strange about the Baali, but only a critical win on the contest discerns the truth: they are merely the Blood in a husk.

Individual Baali can be as arbitrary and as cruel as individual Kindred, acting to increase their personal or political power. When they use that power — or manipulate those who use power to do so — they tend to use it against Sabbath and Salubri alike. They seem to want Kindred to remain Kindred, even to flourish as Kindred, at the expense of humanity (and Humanity). They involve themselves in arcane matters of Noddist prophecy and Blood Sorcery and avoid raw politics save when one of their own has a chance to rise and steep the city a little more deeply



in blood. Many Baali seem to hold some grudge against the Banu Haqim and Salubri, and show a sadistic glee in harming them. They especially covet the Duskborn, Malkavians, and others who claim to hear the Antediluvians speak — unless their claims prove overly ambitious.

General Difficulty: 6/4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Mental 8, Social 9, Disciplines 9

Secondary Attributes: Health 9, Willpower 9

Exceptional Dice Pools: Insight (Worst Fears) 12, Occult 11, Subterfuge 13

Disciplines: Baali generally have Blood Sorcery 4 or higher, two other Disciplines of the same clan at 2+; Blood Potency 6 or higher. Choose one of the options below that fits the narrative best:

- *Baali Manipulator:* Auspex (Heightened Sense, Premonition, Scry the Soul) 3; Blood Sorcery (A Taste for Blood, Extinguish Vitae, Scorpion's Touch, Theft of Vitae; Rituals: Bloodwalk, Truth in Blood, Firewalker, Eyes of the Nighthawk, The Balm of Bathory) 4; Fortitude (Unswayable Mind) 1; Presence (Awe, Melpominee, Entrancement, Inflammation) 4
- *Baali Sorcerer:* Blood Sorcery (Shape the Sanguine Sacrament, Extinguish Vitae, Scorpion's Touch, Marionette, Cauldron of Blood; Rituals: Clinging of the Insect, Illuminate Trail of Prey, Dagon's Call, Firewalker, Defense of the Sacred Haven, Escape to True Sanctuary, plus all Ward and Warding Circle Rituals) 5; Dominate (Cloud Memory, Dementation) 2; Obfuscate (Silence of Death, Unseen Passage, Guise of the Departed) 3; Oblivion (Oblivion Sight) 1; Protean (Eyes of the Beast) 1
- *Baali Thief:* Animalism (Sense the Beast) 1; Blood Sorcery (Corrosive Vitae, Shape the Sanguine Sacrament, Scorpion's Touch, Marionette; Rituals: Craft Bloodstone, Eyes of Babel, Dagon's Call, Deflection of Wooden Doom, Firewalker) 4; Obfuscate (Silence of Death, Unseen Passage, Ghost in the Machine, Seclusion) 4; Presence (Awe, Daunt, Dread Gaze, Inflammation) 4, Protean (Squirm) 1

Special: A Baali can read a victim testing their Insight pool against a target's Composure +

Subterfuge. For each point of margin, the Baali gains a number of automatic successes to a future dice pool involving Insight, manipulation, subterfuge, or any Discipline against that character.

A Blood Sorcerer who knows the true name of the aapilu originally summoned to become the Baali can create a Ward (Level 3, Warding Circle Level 4) against it. This Ward does not work against any other Baali. If they intone the true name, they can also add two dice to any other Blood Sorcery pool used against that specific Baali.

In Chronicles

- A trio of Baali have come to the city. If the player coterie is occult-minded, they may come up with this idea; if not, a politically powerful Questari coterie brings it to their attention. Don't stop the Baali — for one thing, any that you miss will go to ground immediately. Instead, tag and track them: decipher their purpose and plans by watching them rebuild their conceptual ziggurat, map the Veins of the Earth, or sacrifice victims whose names begin with each letter of the Phoenician alphabet. Perhaps you can decipher the mysterious conspiracy of the Blood, as the Baali carry out pieces of a plan invented before bronze was.
- The players' coterie discovers a Baali with suspicious ease, though they may not even know what a Baali is. "Nimur" offers them something they want: leverage over a foe, secret lore, a chance to silence their Beast for a night or forever. Even if the players' characters wisely reject this offer, does their Mawla? Their sire? Their Baron or Prince? What Nimur wants in return (besides an increasingly dependent recruit) varies depending on the customer: access to powerful furcae or artifacts, overt acts against Humanity (or against humanity), or aggressive moves against a local Sabbat pack.
- Word is out in the city's redworker scene: Maggie Yu has a line on grimoires. She must have found an old library buried with a forgotten occultist or even a sorcerer; these are the real deal. Whoever

assembled this collection really wanted to deal with the aapilum; every one of the grimoires has at least one Aapilu Awakening Ritual (p. 94). Suspicious characters might wonder whether Maggie Yu knows anything about the Baali who showed up in her wake suddenly after she left Cincinnati. And St. Augustine. And Providence.

Cryptids

There are more terrors between heaven and hell than one vampire can ever know. Cryptids are creatures without clear origins, known primarily through the anecdotal stories told about them. For most, the consensus among serious Kindred is that they don't exist. People spread all kinds of stories after all, and for whatever reason, some find it easier to believe Mothman exists than that their neighbor can transform into a giant bat. Of course, you don't have to believe in something to run into it.

Some cryptids are attracted to the domains of vampires as it's easier for them to hide their activities where someone does the work of protecting the Masquerade. Sometimes they have the same prey as the Kindred. And sometimes, the Kindred are their prey.

Cryptids come in countless varieties, but below you'll find two.

The Screecher

Half man, half fetal bat, the screecher is a gaunt humanoid with slick leathery skin that stretches winglike under its arms and between its too-long fingers. Its hollow cheeks and large black eyes give it a starved, alien appearance. Still, it's easily ignored. Dressed in rags, the screecher keeps to the shadows and walks with its back bent, dragging its belongings behind it. People usually assume it's just another unhoused person.

The screecher feeds on fear like a carrion bird feeds on the dead. Kindred who hunt using terror, or are themselves on the run from something terrifying, risk attracting it. When the screecher gets close to a potential target, it emits a high-pitched shriek,



causing disorientation in everyone who hears it. In the chaos, the screecher takes the chance to grab the most frightened target and run away with them. Hiding them in its nest, it consumes them slowly over the next few days and nights. For the taste, it eats them from the feet up.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 5, Social 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Larceny 5, Stealth 6, Brawl (deadlifting) 5, Awareness 6

Special: The screecher's screech does the equivalent of Dread Gaze (Difficulty 5) for two full turns and affects everyone within range. Once it's grabbed its victim, it bites down on any exposed skin, injecting a powerful muscle relaxant that affects the victim for up to four hours, giving the cryptid time to drag them home.

Gutter Gorgon

It doesn't have to be a woman, but in the urban legends surrounding the Gutter Gorgon, it usually is. She haunts nightlife districts where many anonymous faces pass through each night and no

one ever questions when someone goes missing. Her upper body human, her lower reptile, she can dislocate her jaw to swallow people whole. Gutter Gorgons aren't particularly charming, but they can be extremely attractive, and at a certain time of night, it doesn't take much to lure their victims close. Contrary to their reputation, they cannot actually turn people to stone with their eyes, regardless of how piercing and expressive they can be. They're just very fast and strong.

Gutter Gorgons are territorial like vampires and come after them if they encroach upon their territory.

General Difficulty: 5/4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 8, Mental 8, Social 6, Disciplines 8

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics 10, Brawl 9, Stealth 10

Disciplines: Animalism 5 (Sense the Beast, Feral Whispers, Animal Messenger, Plague of Beasts, and Sway the Flock (*Players Guide*, p. 69), Animal Dominion), Auspex 3 (Heightened Senses, Sense the Unseen, Scry the Soul), Celerity 3 (Cat's Grace, Rapid Reflexes, Fleetness), Potence 3 (Lethal Body, Prowess, Brutal Feed, Uncanny Grip)

Special: After feeding, a gutter Gorgon must withdraw to sleep and digest for a week or even up to three weeks depending on the size of their meal.

Cryptids in Chronicles

There's always a benefit to using something new in a horror game: the fear of the unknown. For some players or Storytellers, beings from the wider World of Darkness become fan-service instead of frightening, or worse yet encourage jaded, "seen it all" play that detracts from horror and involvement in general. Cryptid manifestations tell the characters that the world is wrong and tell the players that it's weird.

- Several Kindred go missing from the city overnight. At first, all signs point to a rival city clan, but after the discovery of a massive, dried-up snakeskin from some giant molting reptile, it becomes clear that there's something entirely different going on.

- The players' coterie are challenged to prove their worth at a midnight duel by another coterie. When they show up on the scene, they realize they're not fighting the other vampires. Instead, both teams are about to hunt a monster, with a prize for the cryptid's scalp. Unless it's all a setup?
- Seen just after sunset, the smog patterns above the worst part of the city sometimes look like a gigantic, winged beast — a vulture, perhaps. Vampires who read books like Dunmor's *Cryptis Monstrum* call it the Urbiphage, the City-Eater. Supposedly drawn to a city when too many Kindred gather in it, the Urbiphage always signals some sort of disaster: there are Urbiphage sightings recorded in London in 1666, Chicago in 1871, and Dresden in 1945, for example. The Prince wants these rumors shut down; her rivals and enemies suddenly want more sightings to happen. The players' coterie gets the short end of the stick: investigate those reports, spend far too much time waking up far too early on rooftops, and confirm or disprove the presence of the Urbiphage, once and for all.

Flesh Golem

This hideous eight-foot-tall giant is made up of spare parts from several dismembered corpses held together by taut yellowish skin already coming apart at the seams. It was created using Fleshcrafting and Necromancy in a mock version (p. 101) of an ancient kabbalistic ritual, and it obeys only one master, the one who made it.

Flesh golems are not alive and have nothing left of the original souls that inhabited the corpses they're made of. Instead, they're driven by shadows from the Abyss bound to the golem's body, like jinn inside a bottle. Feeling pain and fear for the first time, the shadows in the golem first thrash to be released, but forced to experience the world through the dulled instincts of the flesh, they grow quiescent. The finished flesh golem has no will but that of its master and acts otherwise on instinct alone.

General Difficulty: 5/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Mental 2, Social 2

Secondary Attributes: Health 10, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 10, Strength 9, Stamina 9, Intimidation 8

Special: Flesh golems cannot be reasoned with, Dominated, or influenced in any other way. They don't get tired and work to fulfill their given tasks without rest, even if their master is no longer alive. Their master must command them verbally and within hearing distance to give them a new task or interrupt an old one. A flesh golem without a task searches for things to kill. Its most basic instinct is to destroy, and it hates everything that's alive, vibrant, and joyful.

Flesh golems are held together by necromancy and will not decay further once made unless they're unmade. Every flesh golem carries a word of power inside its mouth, *tzet*, which means "shadow" in Hebrew. If the word is removed or destroyed, the golem loses its ability to go on as the shadows inside it are freed. Furious, these shadows attack the closest living being for three rounds - using a pool of six dice dealing +1 Superficial damage to Health. The shadows can be banished by bright light. After this, they flee to attack the necromancer who bound them, before they return to the Abyss.

In Chronicles

- The players' characters need to get their hands on a specific lost item: the key to the Prince's private spa, a cursed gemstone inscribed with one of their names that makes them vomit up all blood they drink until destroyed, the burner phone with an incredibly hot and angry ex-girlfriend's phone number. The only tiny issue: the item is hidden inside a flesh golem.
- There are three golems in three locations, each partially covered in tattoos that once ornamented a Blood Sorcerer who made an enemy of the necromancer. Together

the tattoos make a map leading to the sorcerer's secret stash of relics.

- The golem is made out of pieces of a player's character's mortal family. They thought leaving them behind and faking their own death would save them. But here they are. Their sister's eyes, their mother's hair, their father's cyclist legs, their cousin's burly arms still clutching their little brother's toy truck.

Ghost

There are many lingering spirits of the dead beyond implacable spectres. While most are too preoccupied with their own dealings to interact with the Kindred, there are a few that appear more often.

Fury

Some sorcerers bind spirits as guards for precious possessions or places: a medieval whistle, a grave, a necromancer's laboratory. In exchange for the magician's blood and flesh, the fury sleeps within the location or object until intruders awaken it. The circumstances of the disturbance mean nothing to a fury: it has a duty to uphold, and uphold it it must.

A fury's preferred form of retribution isn't simply instant violence. It always gives its victims warning, although what that warning is and how clear it may be depends on the spirit: a dream of its distant



approach, a “lost” item suddenly found posed in a tableau on the table, an animal appearing at the doorstep three nights in a row.

The fury attacks only after it has sent its warning. Typically it utilizes a potent combination of mindfucks and plain physical torture, wearing down its victim until they either limp out the door to return the item to its rightful place or die. Nights forced to pass without sleep, tormenting visions and menacing whispers, wounds opening by themselves—to mortals and Kindred alike, it’s unbearable.

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 5, Social 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee (Thrown Objects) 7, Stealth 8, Intimidation (Torture) 6, Insight (mindfucks) 6

Special: Furies are normally invisible and intangible but can animate objects to attack physically, as well as throw or manipulate things telekinetically. Exorcisms or magic can banish or destroy a fury—unlike a spectre, sorcery cannot usually enslave a fury, as it is already bound.

Skinlock

The skinlock (originally *scinlac*, in Anglo-Saxon) arrives a few days after the funeral, walking in through the front door with tears in their eyes, so terribly glad to see everyone again. Their friends or family are surprised to see them but somehow not shocked—at least, not after the skinlock explains everything to them so clearly. There was an accident, or a mix-up, or something—it doesn’t really matter. What matters is that they’re back. Forever.

It’s a lie, of course, or maybe a delusion. Skinlocks don’t possess living bodies, nor do they make physical forms for themselves. They just look the living people around them in the eyes and convince them their loved one is standing there in the flesh, just as alive as they were during their last conversation, eating dinner or sleeping in their usual bed. Everyone says how glad they are that the skinlock can still be here with them, after that awful

business. It stands icy cold in the corner and agrees with them.

The skinlock refuses to leave its chosen abode, inventing excuses or pretending to have gone out and deluding the mortal residents into “remembering” it leaving and returning. If the skinlock is ever forced to leave its house, it remains invisible to everyone apart from the house’s residents.

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 6, Social 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Etiquette (Normal Life) 7, Subterfuge (Impersonation) 7

Special: The skinlock establishes and maintains itself using powers similar to The Forgetful Mind (Dominate 3) to rewrite memories of events to include it, or to preserve the illusion that grief over a loved one’s death was merely worry in the hospital.

The illusion of life is difficult to see through, even for Kindred eyes; it takes Wits or Resolve + Auspex to see past the ghost’s Subterfuge. On a win, the Kindred sees the telltale sign of the skinlock: their feet. They cannot wear shoes, and their toes are the bluish-pale and rotted extremities of a corpse.

Ghosts in Chronicles

- Some furies are bound against their will. Powerful magicians have a great deal in common with the elder Kindred: they consider their whims to be more pressing than anything else. A player’s character encounters such a fury, which demands not only the return of the stolen amulet but further services: track down the magician who bound it and punish him. The character might try playing both sides against the middle; a lucky Yojimbo option could net them a magician ghoul and a servitor fury! A misstep, of course, could destroy them in a spectral or sorcerous tantrum.
- A Skinlock haunting a Touchstone creates opportunities for tragedy or for endangering the Masquerade, but this one has an offer for a player’s character: leave it intact, leave the Touchstone’s memories altered, and it promises to monitor the Touchstone for the character. The skinlock wants to keep the Touchstone alive

and kind of safe, after all, and it's always there to guard them, something no Kindred can promise. It even offers to help the Touchstone forget their suspicions about the character, if they'd like. It's just like installing a nanny cam! An undead nanny cam with the ability to twist memories.

Ghul

According to old Arabian legends, the first *ghilān* were fallen jinn punished for sharing divine knowledge with humankind. Others claim they were evil people cursed to live as demons. The truth has been lost to time, but the fact remains that the *ghilān* are creatures of extremes: part suffering, part bliss.

Usually, a *ghul* looks like an ordinary, highly attractive, human being. They're epicureans who indulge in every pleasure, and they're often exceptionally generous as well as rapacious. Most importantly, they're corpse eaters. Each night, from midnight until the first rays of sunlight, the *ghul* must feed on dead human flesh. While they eat, their features twist into hideousness, their veins bulge, their eyes protrude, and their lips retract revealing sickly gums and razor-sharp teeth.

Ghilān are attracted to burial sites and battlefields. They can track decaying flesh with great precision and come looking when there's a lot of it in one place, which can be a problem for certain licks.

Ghilān can be seductive and murderous, luring their victims in with sexual favors only to kill them in the midst of passion. Others live normal lives that they steal away from every night. They can shapeshift into the form of the person they've eaten or into the form most desired by their chosen meal for the night. Most *ghilān* can, if pressed, remember taking part in necromantic rituals or living lives of great excess and at some point having their first bite of human flesh.

Ghilān are hard to kill but die at the end of their natural life span. They keep their youthful looks until very late in life.

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Mental 5, Social 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 8, Stealth 7, Persuasion 8, Subterfuge 7

Special: *Ghilān* don't sleep or become tired but can develop hallucinations and a dreamlike attitude. They suffer no ill effects from disease but can spread it. The features of a *ghul* don't change unless they feast, but only imprisonment can keep one from their feeding, and every moment of hunger feels like being stabbed by a thousand scorching knives for them. *Ghilān* don't otherwise feel pain.

When reduced to Health 1, *ghilān* explode into red mist and dissipate, to be reshaped at the location of their last meal. Here they finally sleep, healing at the speed of an ordinary mortal. In this state, they can be burned and die as long as it happens before they're back at full Health.

They cannot be Embraced, and their blood has none of the advantages of normal mortal blood. Drinking from them causes an immediate Hunger Compulsion (see *Vampire*, p. 208) in the drinker.

In Chronicles

- There's a rumor circulating among *ghilān* that a Nosferatu or Hecata created their curse. A small band of *ghilān*, frustrated with their lot in life, have joined together to hunt down and destroy the one responsible — preferably by devouring them one piece at a time.
- An old *ghul* known as Adhara, renowned for her beauty and influence, contacts a player's character with an unusual proposition. She claims to have access to a trove of ancient lore on the undead, including Rituals long thought lost. She'll trade the texts if the character will help her locate and devour the remains of a saint. She believes this will give her the healing powers the saint was supposed to have in life.
- A *ghul* becomes the Touchstone of a player's character, neither knowing what the other is. However, the *ghul* discovers the secret first and makes it their mission to get the vampire to provide them with fresh corpses. That way they'll never have to kill. It's a perfect and elegant solution for the *ghul*, and when other mortals around them start to get suspicious, they simply spew a bunch of lies to convince the vampire those mortals need to die.

Necromancer

Mortal necromancers study death and dying from an academic, occultist angle, fascinated by the uncertainties of the afterlife and the finality of the soul's migration. They're mortal, and they resent it mightily — enough to try to change that. They've developed a grotesque workaround or discovered another source of power: most often, horrific human experimentation or ritual cannibalism, but they might be instructed by a dead magus of actual power or have tapped into the Veins of the Earth. Their fixation on the powers of death makes them of great interest to the Kindred — and interested *in* Kindred, once they know that someone has already solved their greatest riddle.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Mental 5, Social 3, Disciplines 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 10

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 7, Medicine (Pathology) 6, Occult (Necromancy) 7, Subterfuge 8

Disciplines: Blood Sorcery or Oblivion 3. They cannot use Blood Sorcery or Oblivion powers as such; they reproduce them with Rituals. Use these values as a guideline for the level of Rituals or Ceremonies they can approximate, not as an indication of actual Discipline possession. They spend Willpower on these magics (one point per dot or level): second sight, animating corpses, creating wards against ghosts, etc., with a win on an Occult test.

Special: Some necromancers, the *Arteprians* or *Struldbregs*, continue to age (sometimes slowly) but simply cannot die except under very specific, individual circumstances (e.g., they can only die to the sound of crickets at midnight or if their birth-caul is burned). Otherwise they simply awaken (one day per point of Aggravated Health damage taken) after a fatal injury.

Bodyjacks escape death by Possession (similar to the Auspex 5 power, but they test Occult and spend one Willpower per dot of the target's Willpower), skipping into a new body permanently.

Other sorts of necromancers doubtless have their own methods of cheating death or extending life.



In Chronicles

- Necromancers obviously pose a challenge to the city's Gatekeeper coterie. If that's the player coterie, you have an ongoing antagonist, one that is perhaps frustratingly hard to kill for certain, at least in the early stages of the chronicle. Or, what if the player coterie notices the Gatekeepers acting a little strange? Has a necromancer infiltrated their Retainer ranks, made a corrupt bargain with them, or tempted them with some hideous (and hideously powerful) artifact?
- A player's character with Oblivion makes contact with a truly helpful ghost, full of useful information or eagerness to strike some foe. As they become more dependent on such help, it asks for a few favors in return, nothing too dangerous to such a mighty vampire! It's actually in the service of a necromancer, who uses it to spy on the coterie, to gain access to certain Kindred resources, or to set up a truly ambitious experiment on vampiric flesh.
- A player's character's Touchstone is dead, hit by a car in a thoroughly random action in broad daylight. Finding the body proves weirdly difficult; did someone else claim it? A night or so later, a necromancer contacts them: would they like to speak to their dead loved one? Perhaps have them back? It won't cost them much, not at first.

Revenant

Revenants are what you get when generations of ghouls, their genetic material altered by the vitae they ingest, procreate with one another. Eventually, it affects their offspring. Some were bred on purpose like the fine racing pups of Tzimisce sorcerers who wanted a specific type of servant. Others are close relations of Hecata Kindred, waiting for their turn to be Embraced, just another part of their inheritance. Others again simply happened as a result of small-town intermarriages over generations, cousins dating cousins for lack of choice, not realizing that both sides had secrets.

Over the last three decades, occasional rumors have surfaced of one of the Duskborn bearing children. Real, mortal children. Such creatures are functionally equivalent to revenants, and without a powerful source of vitae, they rarely survive adolescence. The term *dhampir* has spread throughout Kindred societies referring to these pitiful revenants, but their existence remains a topic of bitter controversy.

Revenants are born with Blood addiction. It can lie dormant for decades, and for a few it never wakes, their revenant status only theoretical. But for most, it wakes in their early 20s or 30s, similar to other dormant genetic diseases. Once a revenant has awakened, they need to ingest vitae as soon as possible, and then regularly for the rest of their life. When they get what they need, revenants are tough, strong, unnaturally healthy, and age only a quarter as fast as other mortals. Deprived, they deteriorate, and the properties of their blood turn into an aggressive type of blood cancer. Without vitae, revenants live only a few months. Past their natural lifespan of 250–300 years, they also age rapidly.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Mental 5, Social 4, Disciplines 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Firearms (Crossbow) or Melee (Stake) 7, Stealth 7, Occult 8, Subterfuge 7

Disciplines: Two Disciplines at 1

Special: Like other ghouls, revenants are limited to level 1 Discipline powers ordinarily (though they can have up to 5 level 1 powers in each Discipline), and their dots in the Discipline never go above 1. Revenants or ghouls who learn Blood Sorcery or Oblivion can learn level 1 Rituals or Ceremonies. Ghouls and revenants cannot learn Thin-Blood Alchemy, although a revenant child of a Duskborn (if such offspring truly exist) might be able to master only that Discipline at the Storyteller's discretion.

Revenants are susceptible to Frenzy as a result of the shadow of the Beast within their blood. Each revenant bloodline is also affected by 1–3 Compulsions, reflecting their vampiric connection. One of these Compulsions rises to the surface when the revenant is backed into a corner or their Health or Willpower drops down to 2.

In Chronicles

- A degenerate line of European nobles keeps to themselves in their decrepit country manor and never seems to change their ways, no matter how the world changes around them. For hundreds of years, they've been loyal to their Cainite master, treating their wealth and prolonged lifespans as a deal with the devil. Each year they make a human sacrifice, and the master appears to them in person. But this time, the devil didn't show.
- A 19-year-old unawakened revenant has escaped their oppressive family, unaware that the cursed behavior they have observed there may be about

to awaken in their own blood. The players' coterie is tasked with capturing the teenager and taking them back to their parents. Will the 19-year-old be able to convince them not to, or will the coterie perform the duty perfectly, delivering an innocent back into the claws of evil?

- The players' coterie become targets of a traveling family of Hunters who are supernaturally strong and fast. These Hunters have a secret: when they catch a lick, they drink them. As successful hunts are never guaranteed, they keep one starved vampire enslaved inside a sun-proof trunk at all times. When they catch another, they destroy the old one.



KNOWN REVENANT FAMILIES

Most revenant families are not world-spanning conspiracies per se, but large extended families suffering from generational trauma at the hands of their Kindred creators and masters. Stillborn children and even death in childbirth are common, despite access to modern medicine. Their ability to reliably create revenants outside of their inbred bloodlines began failing 50 years ago or more. Families in thrall to Sabbat packs have been forced to adapt to their new conditions as they have been forcibly moved, Embraced, or abandoned. Nonetheless, a few family names are still known today, though mostly among those practicing Protean and Blood Sorcery.

Bratovich: A rural revenant family that served the Tzimisce largely as muscle and famulus breeders. Their hounds are legendary among the Dragons of the Old Clan.

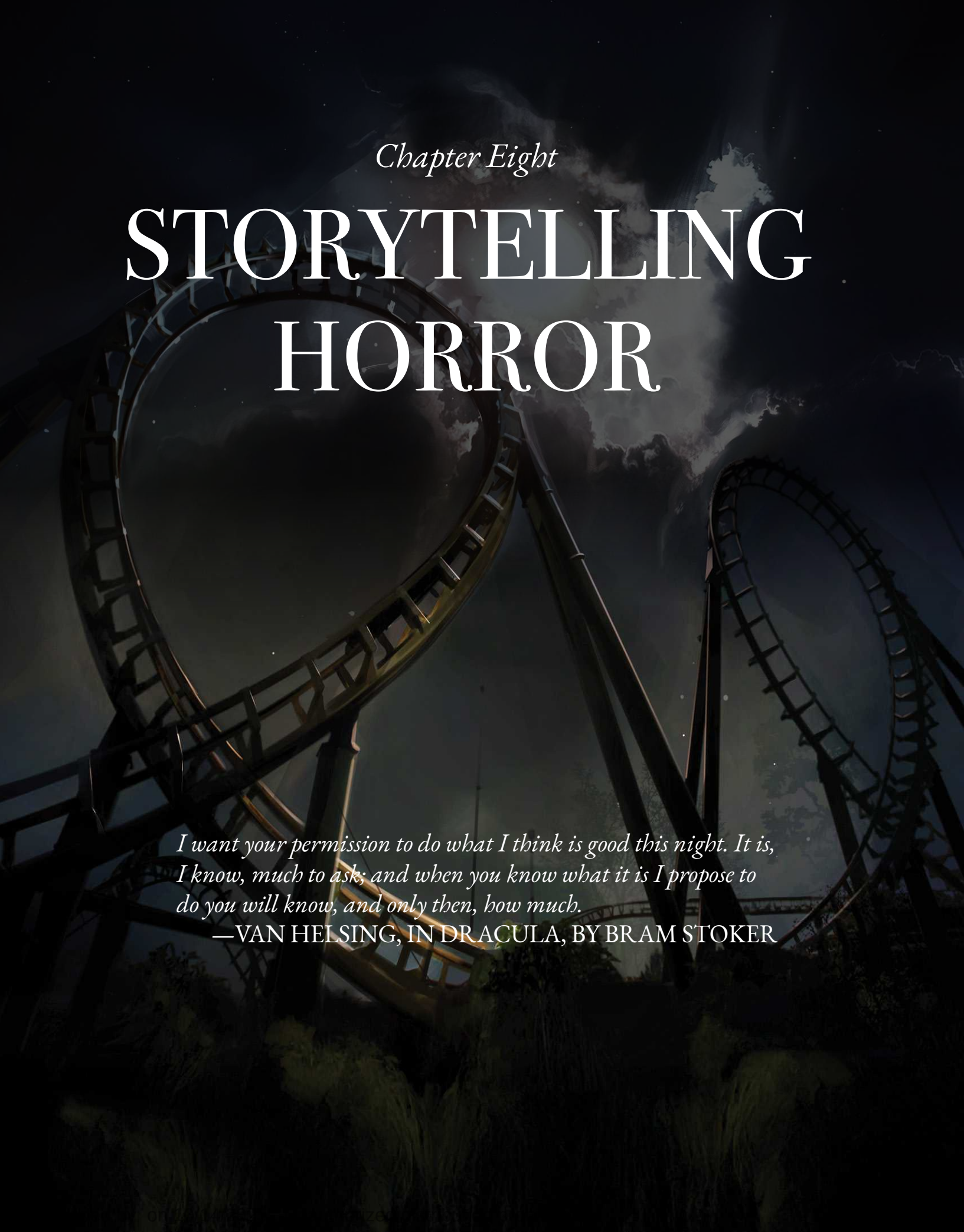
Grimaldi: An urban family that presents a façade of normalcy while surrounded by wealth and privilege. After the fracturing of the Sabbat in their third and fourth civil wars, a few families have broken free of their bonds to the Sabbat and either serve autarkis and Anarch lords; or rumors abound that a few have entered into contracts with some Ventrue and Hecata, exchanging money and access for regular supplies of vitae.

Ducheski: Servants of the Tremere, increasingly fallen on hard times with the collapse of the Tower. See *Chicago by Night*, p. 283.

La Famiglias Giovanni and Rossellini: Centuries of ghouldom had begun to prove fruitful to the old face of the Hecata. Now scattered revenants arise more commonly in these families, but the past decades have seen many of the revenants indebted to the Hecata go unnoticed as information was lost with the beckoning of elders away and the family reunion.

Obertus: Originating as a line of monastics in Constantinople, the few remaining Obertus maintain a scholarly bent as librarians and custodians of the Tzimsice.

Zantosa: Decadent and hedonistic old money, the Zantosa maintain close ties to mortal culture through their extravagance. They helped their old masters in the Sabbat maintain some semblance of the Masquerade but were otherwise often left alone. Rumors abound of some other vital task assigned them centuries ago, but whatever that was might only be known to a few lingering elders among the Sabbat or the Oradea League.



Chapter Eight

STORYTELLING HORROR

*I want your permission to do what I think is good this night. It is,
I know, much to ask; and when you know what it is I propose to
do you will know, and only then, how much.*

—VAN HELSING, IN DRACULA, BY BRAM STOKER

There's something in itself ancient and haunted about telling horror stories. We've been doing it since we were hunters and gatherers, leaning in to whisper our warnings to one another around the fire on dark nights tens of thousands of years ago. Now, as then, we shuffle close together and listen to the Storyteller, eager and a little apprehensive to be terrified.

That's the point of a horror story: to scare, startle, instill suspense, repulse (and at times even delight, to make the contrast of dread more strongly felt). Perhaps a horror story also, on a primal level, alerts and prepares its listeners for what's coming. Horror deals with what hides under the bed or lurks in the alley, but it's as much or more about exploring how we think, feel, and react to what frightens us.

Horror changes. It can be a little thing, easily squelched, or the only thing that matters. Fears shift with time and space. Some basic human fears seem to have been around since the dawn of time: snakes and spiders, of infection, death, and the dark. Others appear as brief historical curiosities, such as the glass delusion that caused certain European nobles in the late Middle Ages to obsess over the idea that they might be made of glass. And fear is personal. It rises from our inner wounds as much as it assaults us from without. In this way, horror is a mirror. It shows us where our limits are, and it doesn't allow us to lie. Without our fear, it reflects nothing except perhaps a frisson of suspense. But when we truly recoil in horror, the mirror shows us our real self.

This chapter emphasizes storytelling **Vampire** with that goal in mind. We focus on games run in a private setting, between friends or people who will likely become friends as they play, but we offer advice and ideas applicable to a series of different environments. Pluck what you can use and adapt it to your exact situation — people's taste in horror differs about as much as Ventrue taste in Blood.

Planning Your Game

Ponder a few central questions as you plan out your horror chronicle or story.

Size of the Troupe: The number of players in the game affects the tone. **Vampire** typically succeeds most reliably with a troupe of three–four players in addition

to the Storyteller. Many troupes prefer the smaller, more intimate size, allowing more spotlight time and story focus on personal stories. On the other hand, a larger number of players makes it easier to pit players' characters and perspectives against one another. Troupe size is hard to adjust once a chronicle has begun.

Length and Frequency of Sessions: The duration of sessions affects everybody's ability to concentrate and focus on the stories you play out together, and frequency of play affects how tension builds and dissipates between sessions. If you want the tension to grow, it can help to meet often, but you can also use tools like cliffhangers (endings with suspense) or in-between-session teasers.

Shorter sessions (two or three hours) can make it easier for the troupe to maintain focus and mood and are more convenient for a weekday evening if members of the troupe follow traditional work hours. Work and life schedules also affect frequency: in general, try to plan sessions as often as regular schedules allow. One game session per week allows a good compromise between intensity and reliable game scheduling. Longer sessions (four or more hours) may require the sacrifice of a weekend, though more game time often equals more depth of play and more fun. Longer sessions can be much harder on the Storyteller, both in terms of preparation before the session and requiring more energy during the session.

The size of the troupe also affects the preferred session length. Smaller troupe size means more spotlight time per person, so three hours of play with three players might be enough, whereas five hours could be far too long for an intense horror game. With a five-player troupe, five-hour sessions may be the right amount given the spotlight time each player gets. Some players don't want or need that much spotlight time; your own troupe reveals its preferences in play. As you continue the chronicle, periodically check in with the players and reflect on the length and frequency of sessions as well as their content.

Location: Your surroundings influence the mood at the table — just like watching a horror movie alone at night vastly differs from watching it with a group of friends in daylight. If you prioritize (at least) unnerving the players, consider drawing inspiration

from your surroundings. A private location might be optimal for themes about what lurks outside, and allows you to customize lighting or music for mood. However, even a crowded convention hall can feel a bit creepier if the game emphasizes the dangers of crowds and open spaces.

Regardless of the space, limit outside distractions to the best of your ability.

Type of Horror You Plan to Tell: Are you going for the gross-out, for tension-building psychological horror, or something else? Chapter Six (see p. 120) of this book provides plenty of suggestions, including some inspirational horror movies and books for a specific feel or theme.

Troupe: Do you have a player group eager to engage in the same type of horror as you? It shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone at session zero that you're about to play with horror. If you're committed to a specific type, this should be clear to everyone from the start as well.

Pre-Play Preparations

Since the success of your horror chronicle or story depends on everyone around the table allowing themselves to be creeped out, it's important to get player buy-in from the get-go and to build a feeling that you're all in this together. Ideally, recruit players who actively want to embark on the type of horror experience that you're planning, but you can also help it along in your pre-play preparations. When you start a chronicle, include a session zero if possible. For one-shot stories, a few short exercises or exchanges can be all you need (and will have time for).

Collaborative Approach

With a collaborative approach to game prep, you sit down together as a troupe to exchange ideas and expectations before creating your characters.

It can take a while and tends to work best where you'll be embarking on a longer chronicle with the same group of people. The Storyteller guides the conversation, giving everyone a chance to inspire and influence the game experience.

Round the Table

As you sit down, start by letting out all the excess energy everyone brings to the table. You can formalize it by giving people 15 minutes to get situated, then go around the table: everyone



(including you) gets to say what's on their mind right now, a kind of first impression of the upcoming chronicle. In the next round, ask the players more specifically what hopes, ideas, and expectations (if any) they have for the game. Note things down that you might want to remember later.

You can vary what questions you ask here. For instance, you can ask everyone to say what horror trope they'd most love to play out, or what movie or book they find especially inspirational.

Collaborative Story Building

This shouldn't be the first time the players hear a rough presentation of the chronicle you plan to run, but it's a great time to reiterate it, leaving it open enough that there's still some space for certain modifications. Take some time to discuss it, brainstorming what kind of characters would fit well within it and reflect the themes the players are excited about. This way, everyone has some ownership of the game from the get-go.

Storyteller-Driven Approach

Where time is scarce, the Storyteller has a very specific experience in mind, or you've recruited from a pool of people who don't know each other well for a one-shot or short chronicle, a more strictly Storyteller-driven approach can be the better choice. Here you should still give everybody time to get comfortable and present themselves, but you can start much more directly with presenting the story concepts and handing out pre-generated characters.

Chronicle Sheets

With a Storyteller-driven chronicle, the Storyteller usually prepares a document or brief synopsis for the game they're about to run. This document helps set expectations about the main plot or setting, which sorts of characters are appropriate, where player input is particularly welcome and where it may not be, and any heavy topics the chronicle may explore. Some topics may even be non-negotiable. This runs the risk of excluding potential players but gets everyone remaining in the troupe literally on the same page.

Short chronicle sheets work better than long ones. This keeps the Storyteller focused in the planning stages, and heads off debates or discussions that would otherwise take up a lot of time. A clear, concise chronicle sheet sent out beforehand helps align the troupe's expectations before anyone gathers around the table to play.

Cemetery Fences

Not every troupe wants or needs to balance horror and comfort the same way, but before embarking on play, consider figuring out your specific troupe's desired balance. You should at least broach the topic, especially in a game involving an active effort to frighten and horrify each other.

Troupes may wish to introduce various tools and mechanics, such as the X-Card or a similar tap-out system, or the more customizable Lines and Veils mechanic (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 423). In the latter case, get everybody's Lines early, so you can avoid bringing them up as examples, but also let your players know they can refine or add to them later. Some people can feel a bit put on the spot when you ask them outright what they want to



avoid; others don't expect their Lines will have any relevance to the game until they come up. You can help communicate what a Line might be by starting with your own. Not being able to think of anything is okay, and no one has to explain why something is a Line or a Veil for them.

It can seem detrimental to horror to draw boundaries around what themes shouldn't come up in play, but a troupe that actively wants to be scared leaves plenty of topics to explore. Subjects so personal they pull us out of the game don't serve the horror story but instead distract from it. Besides, when the Storyteller knows what areas to avoid, they can penetrate more deeply into other horrors. That's true for the whole table. When everyone takes responsibility for using the tools available to them if the horror tends toward trauma, they're also giving one another alibis for going deep into the dark.

Don't forget that in addition to Lines and Veils, troupe members may have areas of interest, such as a specific desire for body horror, gory descriptions, or just a love of suspense. Discussions of Lines and Veils often result in the troupe discovering new areas they can explore.

Practicing De-Escalation Mechanics

Whether you use the X-Card or a different system to calibrate play, it can be daunting to use it first. Get around this by practicing using it before you actually

need it. For instance, you can run a short test scene, in which everyone has to use the mechanic at some point regardless of whether they need it. The goal here is not to push the storytelling so far anyone gets deeply uncomfortable but to normalize using the de-escalation mechanic.

The Horror Map

What about those terrible things the troupe actively wants to encounter and experience in play? Get out a big sheet of paper and have everyone write the most bone-chilling ideas they can come up with on it. Encourage players to write their own fears on the sheet as well as things they've seen in films or read about that horrified them. Have players circle or highlight themes they're particularly curious about, or nervous about but not against exploring. Stay aware of the troupe's boundaries: let players cross out themes that cross their Lines, and put themes that turn up behind Veils in parenthesis or note them clearly.

Once the troupe has drawn their horror map and looked it over, the Storyteller should take a picture of it or otherwise copy it for their chronicle notes. Keep it accessible (if not out on the table all the time, to avoid spoilers) and give players the opportunity to add or cross out more words as the chronicle progresses.

AFTER THE X-CARD

Use of the X-Card signifies that the content that just entered the game should be rolled back. If the person who tapped the card is okay with some of it, they can clarify this; otherwise, the Storyteller should redirect play in a different direction. Sometimes, you can do this by shifting the focus.

For example:

James, the Storyteller, sets the scene of a confrontation with the coterie's enemy. He says, "The Tzimisce comes out, dragging the mangled corpse of a labrador behind them."

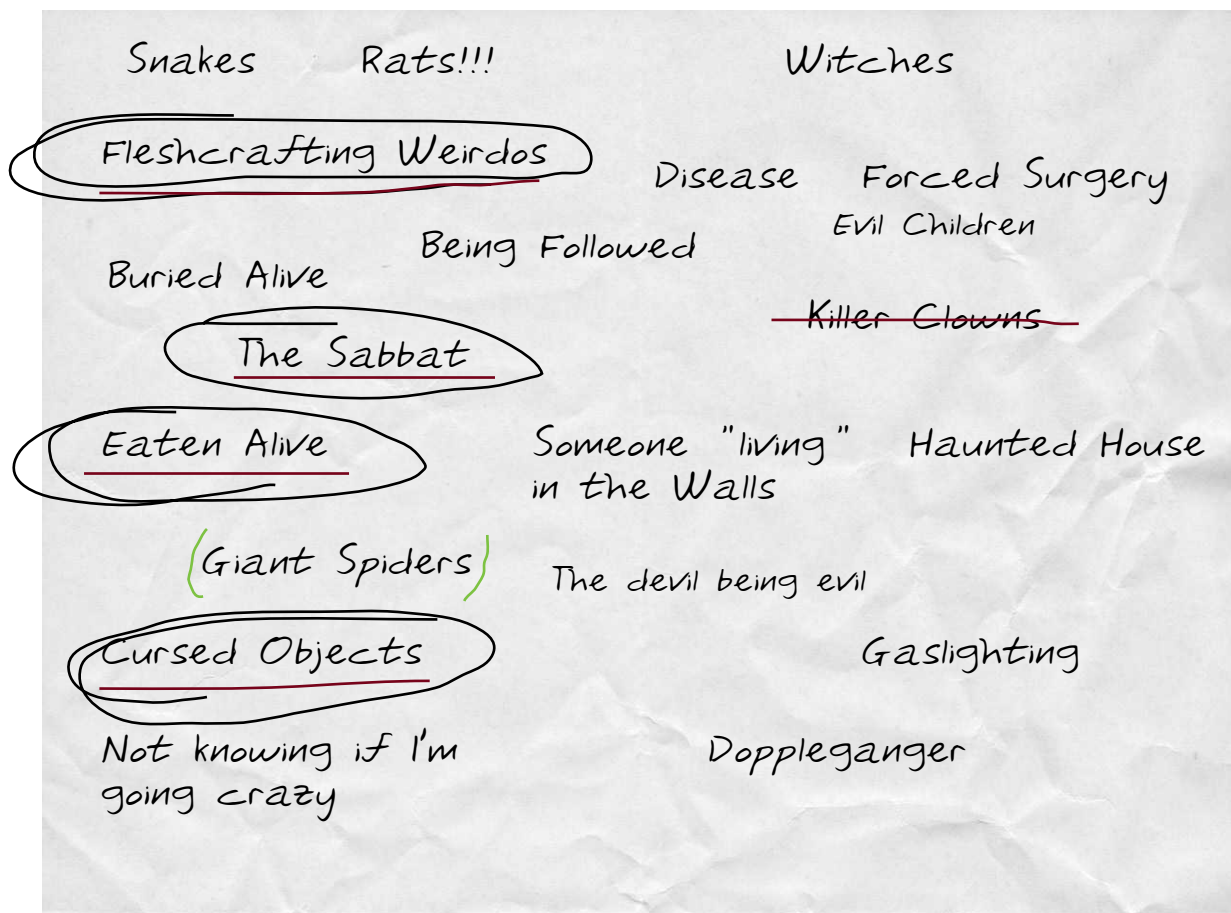
Quickly, one of the players taps the X-card. "Not a dog."

James continues, "On second glance, you realize it's a Gangrel. Not just that, but it's a Gangrel you know."

Other times, it's better to start over.

James repeats himself. He says, "The Tzimisce comes out, dragging the mangled corpse of a Gangrel behind him."

Sometimes using the X-Card disrupts a scene. That's okay. It can be difficult to improvise a different adversary or a new description of an event. The Storyteller or anyone else at the table can always initiate a short break after an X-Card use, meaning five minutes to drink water, clear the mind, or concoct a new game plan as needed. Otherwise, play simply continues.



Built for Grief

As you create fresh characters for the game, take the opportunity to optimize their potential for horror.

Backstory

Seeds of Horror: If a player character's backstory contains some mental wound or a buried fear, make a note or otherwise prepare to use it against them later. Perhaps each one has been through or done something that still haunts their nightmares? In a longer chronicle, such fruitful seeds of horror can drive whole story arcs, as the characters fight to overcome their past hang-ups to deal with their present problems.

Humanity: Happy memories and humane sides provide quick access to the heart of personal horror in **Vampire**. A reminder of their (former) decency right

after giving in to the Beast provides a rich bounty of anxiety, self-loathing, desperation, and other emotions. These give the player some meaty roleplaying opportunities and drive their vampire character to rage against their nature or drink to forget.

Relationships

As you create the Relationship Map, note which Storyteller characters make the players' characters vulnerable — these can make for great victims. If they connect to multiple players' characters, so much the better. Note also which would hurt the most if they were to turn against the characters. There are scores of ways to use characters' Touchstones, Allies, Contacts, Mawali, Stalkers, and the like against them, and having an ancilla Enemy kidnap one is only the most obvious. If a Relationship Map connection links to a character's ability to overcome

their deep-seated fears, what happens to that character if their Touchstone recoils from them? Or betrays them? And what if that Touchstone foolishly gets in the way when the character struggles the hardest to maintain their self-control?

Horror often stabs us the deepest when linked to personal relationships. If you connect the players' characters and the Storyteller characters on the Relationship Map to one another in complex relationships, you get a lot of ammunition to use in the game from the beginning. Go for deep emotional bonds, mutual mistrust, and ties to the characters' pasts that remind them of events they'd rather forget or can never go back to.

Preludes to Fear

You can run a short prelude session as one way to flesh out a character's backstory. Using a minimum of game mechanics, take the characters back to the time before they were afraid of the thing that haunts their nightmares now (whether that is something in themselves or an outside source of fear). Then play out the scene where that fear was established. Perhaps it happened in their mortal life, or perhaps it was a part of their Embrace. If the coterie were together back then, everyone could participate at once. Otherwise, run these preludes individually for each player. Whether the others should be present or not depends on how you firewall revelations and handle character secrets in the game.

Something to Fight For

This is important: Especially in the beginning of the story, the characters should have a sense of control over their situation, somewhere they feel safe, and something they consider worth fighting for. Otherwise, they have nothing to lose, no stake in the setting, and no reason to continue facing their horrors. Time enough once they've firmly embedded themselves in the chronicle to erode their safety and reveal the dark or illusory aspects of their cause.

Darkness Falls: Setting the Mood

Not every Storyteller has complete control over the environment they play in. That said, if you can, try to prime the mood around the table for a shared horror experience.

Dedicate the Space

At the very least, try to dedicate the troupe's play space to the experience by minimizing outside distractions and impressions. For instance, you can:

- Shut the door and ask people not playing not to interrupt the session until you're done.
- Dim the lights and lower the blinds. Mood lighting with candlelight (real or electric) or similar low warm lighting can do a lot to create ambiance.
- Set an expectation of a slower pace around the table. Keep your voice low and steady to signal the serious nature of the game.
- Ask players to shut off and put away phones, to eat food before or after play but not during, or at least to keep snacks unobtrusive.
- Lean into the expectation of suspense and potential horror, and agree with one another that you all want and intend to co-create just such a sensation in play.

Ritualize the Game Session

Not every troupe wants to go full ritual, but every troupe can benefit from remembering that the game occupies a different kind of space and time. Set a mood where the troupe can allow themselves to get scared and where they keep ironic distance to a minimum. Use some or all of these tips as you and your table feel inclined.

- Begin each session with a short exercise (less than five minutes) where everyone gets to say what's on their mind, getting whatever doesn't belong at the table during runtime out of the way. This might include work stress, distracting thoughts, or just a bad joke.

- Ask players to speak primarily in character and to use a specific hand gesture if they change into speaking out-of-character.
- Take short breaks, or get up and do what you need to, but do so in silence. Don't talk to each other out of the game until after the session is over.
- Ask players to avoid talking about the game with one another between, just before, or right after sessions. Only when a session fully ends can you discuss it. This helps keep the air of suspense and mystery going.
- Begin each session with a theme song: a carefully selected piece of music that supports the mood you want to set and the themes of your story. When the song ends, the game begins.
- End each session with a theme song. It can be the same as the beginning theme, or a different one. When the song has ended, the session ends; the overhead lights can go back on, and you can speak as yourselves again.

Build Ambiance

The soundtrack makes the horror movie what it is, and it can do you a lot of favors, too. Industrial dark ambient music, eerie instrumental underscores, or the sounds of a groaning forest or thunder somewhere in the distance can build up the terrifying air castles of your descriptions. Besides your intro and outro tracks, the music you play during game-time should be without lyrics unless it's diegetic — being sung by a Storyteller character or played in the club, for instance. Some Storytellers keep ambient soundtracks running at all times and occasionally overlay some music that supports the specific mood in the scene.

Key Elements of Horror

While fear varies from place to person to subgenre, some key elements across different types of horror work together to maximize dread.

Uncertainty

H.P. Lovecraft wrote: “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.”

Whatever we conjure up in our imagination tends to be more frightening than the real thing, so always keep your players at least a little in the dark. Leave them uncertain what exactly their characters are walking into and avoid naming new monsters until they discover for themselves what they're dealing with.



MINIMIZING FEAR: HORROR AS AESTHETIC

This chapter concerns creating horror that disturbs, but your troupe can have a great time and play a perfectly valid **Vampire** game while investing more in the aesthetics of horror than the effect. You can run a horror chronicle full of events and elements that challenge or even terrify the characters but still entertain the players. Your troupe may embrace splatter that's all about the gross-out but has little of the creeping terror that puts people on the edge of their seats.

Reverse our advice in this chapter to reliably dial down the horror of your narrative: keep the lights on, let the dog in, allow the players to joke around and the characters to stick together, and make sure their Kindred always have a safe haven or at least a reliable ally when they most need one.



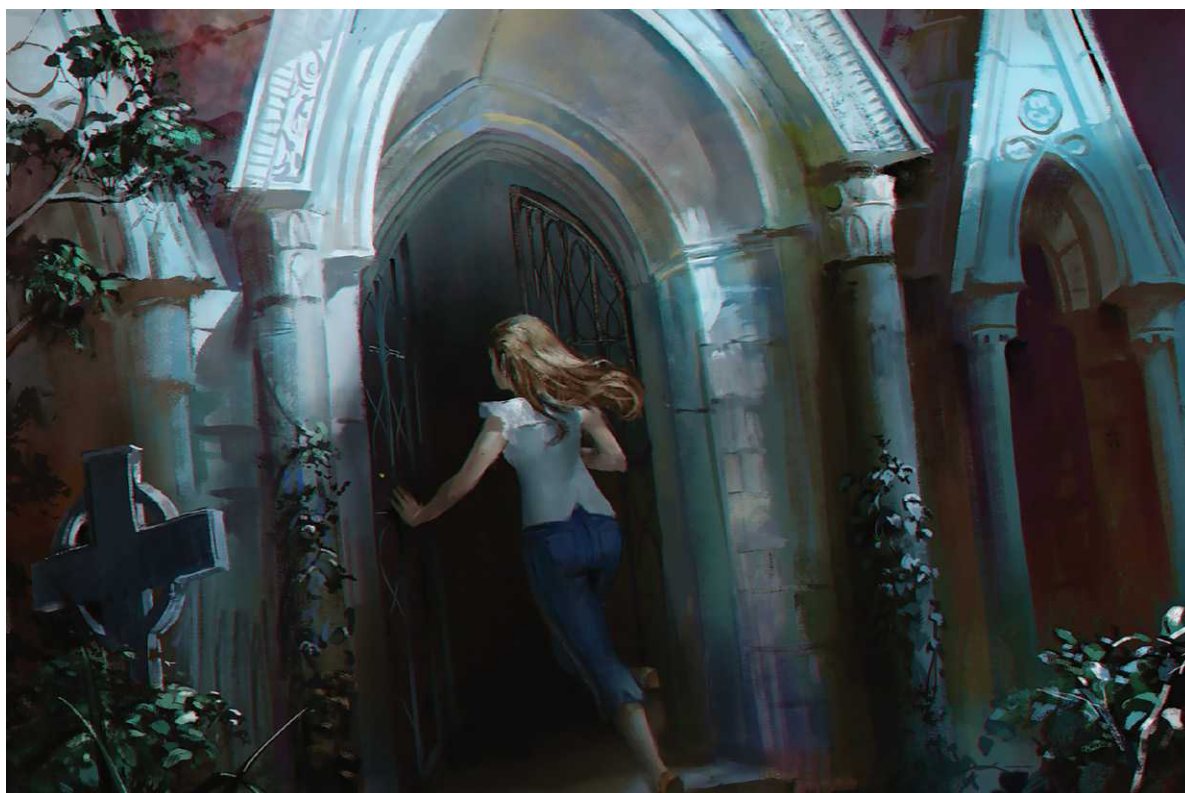
Isolation

Everything bad feels worse when we have to deal with it alone. Isolation generates anxiety, uncertainty, and the feeling of being vulnerable.

Isolate the players' coterie from their allies at times when they desperately need them. Allow them to split up but then show them how dangerous it is to go alone. Remember, isolation isn't necessarily physical; it can also mean standing in the middle of a crowd where everyone is whispering about you, or needing help that no one wants to give even though they could.

The Unnatural

We know what the real world looks like, and how rationality expects it to behave. But when the disturbing or just wholly out of place interrupts the ordinary or the expected, uncertainty arises. Initially, perhaps we simply wave it off, as mortals are wont to do. But eventually, you have to question either your own sanity or what you thought you knew about reality. Psychological horror thrives in this ambivalent space. Even without self-doubt, being up against something you don't understand usually means you have no ready weapons to fight it with, which is a great source of terror.



The Suspense Engine

Perhaps uncertainty alone leads only to curiosity. Being a little vulnerable doesn't have to be a worry if you're not expecting anything particular to happen. But when something strange is definitely happening, you're convinced it's too much for you to deal with, and you've got no way to know what will come next, fear thrives. In this way, uncertainty, isolation (or vulnerability), and the unnatural become an engine of horror that runs itself hotter and hotter. Each element makes the others more threatening, and what they create together is suspense: the anticipation of seeing what happens next.

Supporting Suspense

We attempt to prepare for oncoming threats by imagining what they could be. This adds fuel to the suspense engine, as we scoot further out to the edge of our seats, interpreting every sign of impending

danger in the worst possible light. Ideally, you can support this tendency in your storytelling. Pacing and story structure make good places to start.

Pacing

Pacing refers to the speed at which a story is told. Typical action pacing steadily accelerates from start to end, while dramas run slower with pauses for breath and reflection until a possible frenetic climax. Horror often moves at a slow burn, building tension gradually — perhaps so gradually that the players don't even realize the horror part of the game has already begun. Take your time setting up the plot by feeding the players details that foreshadow danger looming ahead. Give them time to explore and speculate over what they find. And then, when danger does reveal itself, make it much worse than they expected. Let them feel they should have seen it coming — but they didn't.

Switch up the pace by introducing time limits when the coterie needs to solve problems. Perhaps

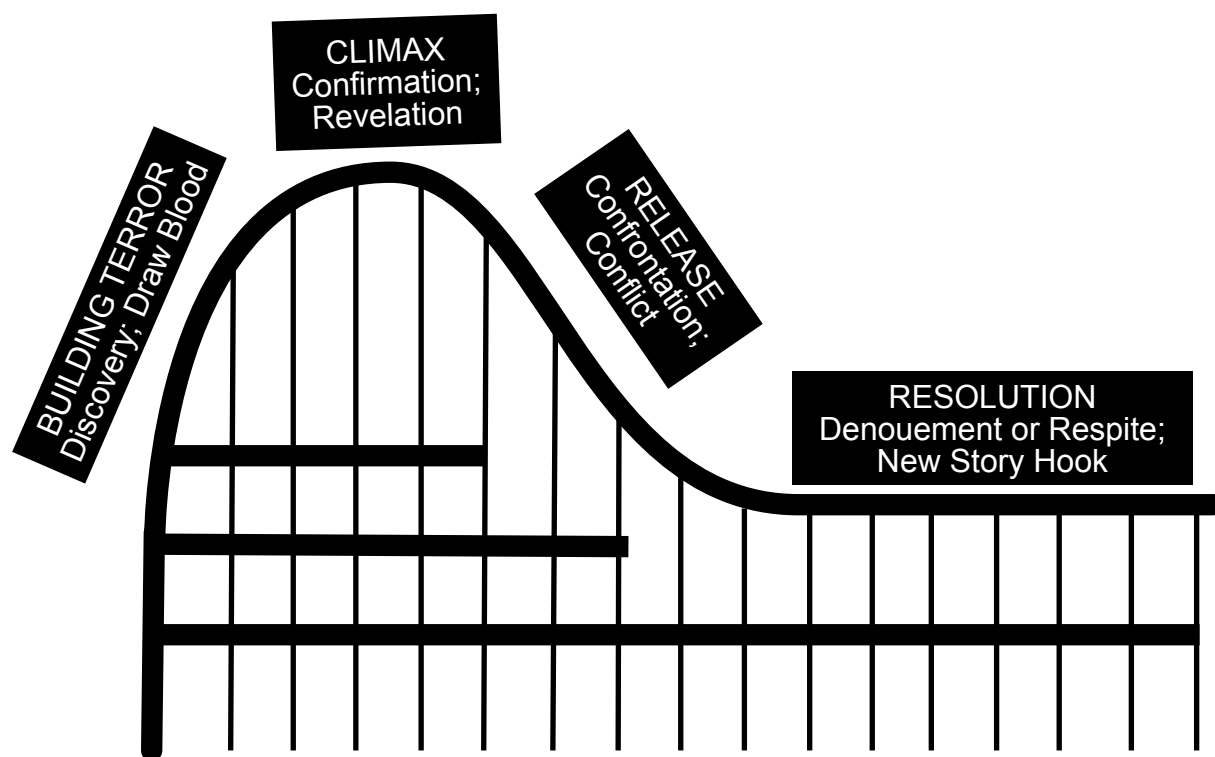
they thought they had weeks to track down the cult, but now the Sheriff has informed them they only have a few nights. Make the nights go by faster than the ones before. Or escalate tension slowly until introducing a jump scare; then break into a fast-paced action sequence. Fuck with a character's sense of reality by making them sleep for two days instead of one after a challenging encounter. Slow the story at high-tension moments by dipping into character Memoriams that work as foreshadowing to suggest what might happen next. Spend time on details that support the mood the troupe intends, and skip over the majority of scenes that don't.

Try to limit time spent in surroundings where the characters feel safe, but you should still include some. The contrast of safety makes horror starker, and taking a chance to get the pulse down can give everyone more energy to focus on the story. Including some safe harbors also gives you the opportunity to destroy them later.

Story Structure

There's more than one way to skin a Caitiff, and you can structure your story how you please. But the rollercoaster story structure has proven reliable in games and movies for decades. It runs from rising tension, or in this case dread, over a horrifying climax to terror and release. Like an actual rollercoaster, it can go up and down many times, but when you add exposition and resolution, it becomes a basic five-act structure.

In exposition, introduce what's at stake and why we should care, and plant a story hook by introducing a question or issue that pushes the players forward. Then, start stacking the challenges against them, salting the story with omens and foreshadowed dangers while hinting at the horror driving events. The rollercoaster slowly clacks up the track as it plateaus. Continue to build tension by leaving the players with more questions than



answers, and then demonstrate the reality of the threat: introduce a consequence no one saw coming, a bad outcome for a beloved supporting character or even one of the coterie, or introduce a twist revealing the situation is potentially even worse than expected. At the top of the coaster's climb, the riders can see the whole park, or the whole city, dizzyingly and unnervingly far below them.

At the story's climax, the characters confront the threat, which releases them from the tension that's been building. The characters rush through or into conflict, spiking adrenaline as they elude or attack the horror. The rollercoaster plummets downward, making everybody scream: overwhelmed, terrified, exhilarated. Repeat this as many times as you like. The final resolution doesn't have to come after release. That finale might be nothing but a brief moment of respite before another story hook — possibly a consequence or chosen path from the previous climax or confrontation — pushes the players up another hill of building terror.

Setting and Story

An eerily empty supermarket with just one old, confused cashier. A small-town chapel where everyone turns around and stares at you, a feverish hunger in their eyes. A dilapidated apartment building with stairs and hallways slightly too narrow and too long for the architecture.

Sometimes you walk into a place that feels all wrong. Your instincts scream for you to turn around and leave. A great horror setting provides that sensation as well. It should add atmosphere and build tension, priming the player for fear. The World of Darkness is full of such places; the Storyteller just needs to choose the right kind of backdrop for the right type of scene. Here are some examples:

- **Psychiatric ward, correctional facility, basement:** Minimalist environments cripple players' choices by providing limited opportunities for action. Something can come and get you, and you can't get out.
- **Carnival, museum, overgrown garden, Gothic mansion:** Overwhelming and symbolically rich environments full of sickening smells, stains, and

arabesque details provide too much of everything. Danger looms but it could come from anywhere.

- **A school, a vacation rental, your grandparents' house:** Ordinary and well-known surroundings provide comfort until something appears to be very, very wrong with them.

Creep the Players Out

In general, when choosing where to set your horror story, remember to take the players into consideration. The players' characters navigate the story, but you get to them indirectly through the players. Incite player paranoia by suggesting danger through the setting, even if none specifically approaches. Some tricks for this include:

- Describe sounds that have no clear source and seem out of place, like a baby crying somewhere or electronics buzzing on and off on their own.
- Use ambivalent language when describing situations and places, as in "the room appears to be empty" instead of "the room is empty."
- Describe some details impressionistically and let the players fill in the blanks in their imagination. Blood dripping from somewhere is creepier than finding the corpse right away.

Settings full of bright lights and witnesses resist such treatment. The Kindred don't fear nightclubs; that's for their mortal prey. To transfer that mortal sense of invisible hunters and sensory overload to vampire characters means shifting up a key: to a crowded Elysium full of possible foes and endless whispered conversations. Who sees your character under those lights? Who watched you talk to that Caitiff or bargain with that Nosferatu?

More Tricks of Narration

Do what you can to support immersion. Limit game mechanical terms in your dialogue, and speak in character whenever possible. Some Storytellers keep track of the player characters' Health, allowing the player to discover in action when their character's body has started to fail them.

Make Storyteller characters add to the feeling of unease. The cab driver is suspicious and hateful. The kiosk owner shuts the door as they arrive. The young night nurse clearly fears the surgeon and won't talk unless he's not around.

Fill the narrative with symbols that reflect the greater themes. In a story about losing your Humanity and becoming beasts, perhaps the city has a problem with vicious wild dogs. They appear in the background often enough but only rarely create direct problems.

Let the players help carry the story. Let them speculate about what hides in the shadows, let them talk about what haunts their characters' thoughts, and let them build up their characters' dreams and ideals, the better to make them choose between those dreams and ideals and salvation later on.

Raising the Stakes

Raise the stakes of the actions the players' coterie takes in the game by making sure that when they fail, bad things happen to them — or to people they care about, rely on or respect, or who symbolize something of importance to them. Turn routine fights into undeath-or-true-death situations by introducing last-minute complications. Constantly put the characters in situations where they aren't in control and weaken them. Limit their resources, make their allies unavailable and their Mawali offended with them, stack bad luck against them, so that they're drained of energy and funds when they have to deal with the real threat. Force them to make hard choices, where all options are bad ones, and they will regret what they did either way.

As Villains

If the theme of your chronicle is that the players' coterie are the real monsters, reveal it in the consequences of their actions. Every time a player character makes a choice, think about who gets affected by it and show them the result. Did they cause a family of four to lose their home? Now, the parents get high on opioids purchased with sexual favors, and their dealer starts pushing the

kids into the blood trade. Keep grinding it in. Make these victims reappear throughout the story and make them actively create new dilemmas for the characters down the road they have to navigate.

Do the players trust you too much and don't take the game world seriously? Try offering them mechanical rewards for doing absolutely atrocious things. "Maybe you'll get 2 more Blood Potency if you drink this children's hospice dry. They're dying anyway." However, the consequences match the crime if the characters go into your trap: These weren't flat two-dimensional Storyteller children. They had real hopes and dreams and teddy bears with nowhere left to go now. There'll be Humanity loss, crying ghost kids, and a furious ancient spectre with a vengeance to deal with.

As Victims

If you want to focus on external horror and the fear of something coming for the characters, you need to make the risk of injury and final death very real. A great way to do this is to seriously injure or allow one of the player characters to suffer final death within the first three sessions. This lets the troupe know they're not wearing plot armor: If they make bad decisions or are unlucky enough, they'll be destroyed.

Two approaches make the dice feel dangerous. In the first, make all Storyteller dice rolls in the open and get good at building enemy dice pools and paring away at player resources through story consequences. Overly strong enemies target the depleted or off-balance coterie, making it unlikely they all survive. In the second, never show your dice results, mentioning numbers and rules as little as possible. This heightens immersion in the story, and consequences feel more sudden. Theoretically, it also allows you to fudge results if you absolutely need to for the integrity of the story, but if you have a threat you don't want the players to be able to defeat through luck, build the threat or the confrontation so they can't. As in the first approach, escaping, much less surviving, such a conflict should feel bloody and desperate, even if the coterie "wins."

Islands of Starlight

Not even a horror story can center fear all the time. Don't forget to include moments of relative safety and hopefulness in your chronicle. Hope can be extinguished and innocence crushed, but only if they existed to begin with. Some Storyteller characters should be genuinely helpful, some places should be safe to lie down for the day, and some character memories and relationships should resist corrosion. At the beginning of the chronicle, let the player characters hold on to something good at least long enough for the players to take notice of it. Let hope glimmer throughout the chronicle in some fashion: hope that they'll be able to fix what they did, fight what is coming, save what they care about, or just do one goddamn thing right before the end.

Dark Heartbeats

Creating the right atmosphere isn't all the job of the Storyteller. The whole troupe must cooperate to evoke horror. The most important thing is that everyone needs to work actively not to disarm the frights by taking the game seriously and immersing themselves in it as much as possible. But there's more players can do to frighten one another. Below you'll find some specific tools.

Fateplay

A LARP and tabletop technique inspired by Greek tragedy and hatched by interaction designer Eirik Fatland in "The Play of Fates," fateplay concerns playing towards a fated act. For instance, an elder Malkavian has prophesied that a member of the coterie will turn against the others when it matters most and told another that they will face their worst fear before they see their childe again. The Storyteller doesn't predefine how these outcomes come to pass, but the players agree to accept that they will inevitably happen and play into them even if their characters are skeptical.

In this way, fateplay can add an air of doom over the whole chronicle and push the characters towards a theme, such as betrayal in the Malkavian prophecy

example. However, the Storyteller still needs to introduce the circumstances to allow these fates to occur. As in Sophocles, tragedy tends to be greatest when a character fulfills their fate in surprising ways and the actions they take to avoid it end up pushing them towards it.

To avoid making the players feel railroaded, introduce the concept of fateplay before the game begins (possibly along with adding "Prophetic Disaster" or "Inevitable Doom" to the Horror Map) and use their own characters' fears and paranoid delusions as material for fates given to them later in the game. Supporting characters can give fates to player characters within the game, or the Storyteller can hand the players red envelopes holding a previous backstory fate and ask them not to share with the others what they've read, to make the rest of the troupe wonder just what they should fear now.

The Hidden Enemy

This can be a fateplay variant or more similar to a game of Dmitry Davidoff's *Werewolf* (the party social game). In hidden enemy play, also called "wolf in the fold" play, the whole troupe knows that one of the player's characters can't be trusted, but no one (except, perhaps, for the untrustworthy one) knows who it is. Vampires with covert or secretive Mawali or other allies may find themselves falling into hidden enemy play organically — which is great!

The Haunted Table

In this narrative technique, every player takes responsibility for reminding the person to their right of things their character is trying to repress. They can act as dark intrusive thoughts, giving voice to guilty conscience or the whispering Beast, or even include things in the setting the Storyteller hasn't mentioned, like a creepy sound somewhere or a stumbling veteran.

As a basis, the player doing the haunting is only allowed to do this once or twice per session when the character they're haunting has their Hunger under control, and if they're at Hunger 0, the haunting voice should shut up completely. When Hunger rises

and things get out of hand for the character, the haunter can escalate. Anything material the haunter adds to the game may stay flavor, or fully enter the story unless the Storyteller dials it back or negates it.

Some examples:

- Helen knows Marc's character, Corey, obsesses about their secret fear that no one likes them. When Marc describes Corey hunting and looking for a mortal to seduce in order to feed, Helen quietly leans in and whispers to Marc, "Don't be so picky. None of them would want you without the hypnosis anyway."
- Helen's character has a secret none of her coterie mates know about: she killed her own mother. Her left-side neighbor does know about it, though, and when Helen's character breaks down after a harrowing encounter with something that was about to destroy her, they give voice to her inner fear, "You should have died."

The fateplay and haunted table techniques especially support psychological and personal horror, as they blur the lines between reality and paranoia or disintegration in the minds of the characters. Hidden enemy play works well for political horror, body horror, or cosmic horror, where fears of betrayal or contamination come to the fore.

Different Fears for Different Tables

Not all tables are the same. Games run at home, among friends, over several sessions provide the primary reference point of this chapter. Such games let players and Storytellers get deep into character and setting, and weave story arcs that pack an emotional punch from the time and effort put into them alone. But these games don't make up the totality of horror games. For one thing, no one says you have to play at home or physically in the same room. Nor does horror depend on playing with people you know before you start. With friends or with strangers, always be ready to adjust your game and storytelling to the circumstances you have to work with. Be aware that certain horror elements and tools lend themselves more easily to some situations than others.

One-Shot Story

A one-shot lets you pull out all the stops and run a game that's simple, deadly, and super satisfying. Where usually you probably want to keep most of the players' characters around for the majority of the story, in a one-shot you can kill them all off one by one. There won't be time to make new characters, though, so do it in the last hour of play. To build further tension, you can create a scenario — a Blood Hunt, a rapidly approaching sunrise, a vengeful hunter squad — that virtually guarantees that some or most of the player characters suffer final death before the game is over. Death of character isn't always fire or sunlight: they may die symbolically by revealing their true monstrosity, become a wight, or simply doom themselves by making choices they cannot come back from even if they don't suffer immediate extinction in the session.

You won't have time for extensive calibration or character creation, so set clear expectations for the general category of content in the story, bring pre-generated characters, and lean on established horror concepts rather than complicated callbacks to character backstory.

For a private one-shot with friends, you can still use ambiance and ritual to set the mood, and you can pre-plan game elements with your players if you want to. The circumstances of a convention one-shot can be harder to control, but the tight schedule and motivated players you can encounter at these types of games give you increased control over the progression of the narrative. Convention and one-shot players expect and appreciate a certain amount of railroading, so you can run almost cinematic sequences of cool, dramatic scenes — allowing you to stack the horror elements within the fiction. Use the time constraints of one-shots to build pressure and feel free to explore heavy themes that would be too much for an ongoing chronicle but feel just threatening enough for a few hours together. Just make sure the players know what they are getting into when they sit down to play.

Private Online Chronicle

While you lose some of the immediacy of the home chronicle when you move it online, there are also upsides. You can chat with players directly if you

want to give them information the rest of the troupe shouldn't have, making it easier to pit characters against each other. It's also much creepier to sit alone in a dark room than in a group.

Most of the suggestions for at home, in-person chronicles apply to private online chronicles. You can stream background music through many different voice chat apps, display pictures or share documents as props, and institute virtual X-Cards.

The role of the Storyteller as authority can shift in private online chronicles. Many people play games online with folks they don't know in person. Folks search for **Vampire** games to participate in, and online troupes may be the easiest or only option. People in these situations often care more about playing the game than about being part of the troupe specifically, at least initially. The Storyteller likewise tends to set up such games with a top-steered approach: they want to play a specific story they have prepared or use certain themes or setting elements. Over time, as players get to know one another and become friends, the techniques a Storyteller might employ online may resemble a traditional home chronicle more and more.

Streamed Chronicle

Inviting an audience to your sessions necessarily changes the game, whether you record for a podcast or stream your game. It's harder to let go and let yourself get scared if you focus on what you sound like. Run a few practice sessions with the troupe that you won't publish or post. That allows you to find your voices and get used to the equipment.

It's also no longer enough to think about the comfort of the players only. You need to think about the audience as well — will they be as comfortable with the same types of content? Do yourself a favor here by being super clear about what kind of chronicle you're running in your communication about it. That helps ensure that everyone listening has made an informed choice — which can also help grow your community of listeners or watchers.

Recorded chronicles flourish in slow-paced story arcs that escalate over many episodes. Being able to devour many episodes in a row, listeners and viewers can be less forgiving than players if you mix up the Storyteller

characters, but they're also great at picking up subtle references to things that happened several sessions back. This makes the form ideal for subtle cerebral horror featuring psychological terror, symbolically loaded content, and implacable enemies that cannot be killed because they're really concepts. You just might want to run a recap sequence for your players every so often.

Endings

A final thought on some ways to end your game.

- **Everybody Dies at the End:** For closure, you can run one additional session, where the players get to be the investigators combing through the scene, their childer meeting to discuss what to do with what they've left behind, or their own older selves musing over what they could've been if it hadn't all gone straight to shit.
- **The Cliffhanger:** At the last moment, a new threat appears, or an old one reappears, leading the characters into the next story.
- **A Glimmer of Hope:** Despite all they've been through and the wretchedness of their world, the characters still get to see a glimmer of hope that some things may just turn out okay.
- **Catharsis:** The characters may not come out okay, but at least they get to give the bad guy everything he deserves in the most violently satisfying manner.
- **Catharsis Canceled:** Having righted the worst wrongs of their world by taking down the bad guy in a hard-fought but satisfying final battle, the characters who make it get one final glimpse of themselves and what they might become in the enemy they have defeated. ■



Appendix

LORESHEETS



Any Loresheet can tune the character or the chronicle to horror, as the past refuses to stay decorously dead. The Flesh-Eaters bloodline (*Players Guide*, p. 225) seems especially appropriate for chronicles about horror, death, and danger to the Masquerade, but any bloodline threatens to upset the careful balance of clan and sect that keeps the Masquerade intact. Consider using such Loresheets as the basis for an outside group of villains, un beholden to the city's power structure and willing to risk the Masquerade to bring it down.

DESCENDANT OF THE ANKOU

(Malkavian Characters Only)

Since the dawn of history, Kindred have broken the edicts to assume the person of gods. The Ankou is likely one of these Kindred or at the very least probably not a Breton psychopomp. But their descendants have become obsessed with death and deriving information from it.

The Ankou was obsessed with death and visions, having settled in what is now northern France. The descendants of the Ankou have a vicious streak, a propensity for spilling blood, and an ability to deal with the death rivaling la Famiglia Giovanni and the Church of Set.



LORE



• **Bleed Them Dry:** You gain three of the following specialties: a **fangs** specialty for Brawl, a **blades** specialty for Melee, a **blood** specialty for Occult, or a **hematology** specialty for Science. These specialties ignore the normal limits for the number of specialties one character can possess, and you benefit from this specialty even if you have no dots in the Skill. Your penchant for bloody work leaves every Haven you occupy with the Creepy Flaw.

•• **Crimson Visionary:** You learn Oblivion at the in-clan rate and do not need to drink the Blood of another Kindred to learn it. When you select Oblivion Powers, however, you must select one that relates to perception or gaining information for your first power (including, but not limited to: The Binding Fetter, Oblivion's Sight, Fatal Prediction, Where the Veil Thins, or Shadow Perspective). You must have two such Powers by the time you select your third Power, and three by the time you select your fifth. Upon learning your first dot of Oblivion, you also gain a one-dot Folkloric Bane or Block Flaw.

••• **Bloody Work:** Add two-die bonus to any Auspex dice pool or Occult dice pools for Rituals or Ceremonies designed to gain information so long as you spill at least two additional Rouse Check's worth of human blood or kill an animal. The spilled blood cannot slake any Hunger. You may still use a Blood Surge on the same test.

•••• **Focus of Clarity:** You have an object that helps you focus on your craft, resisting the pull of the Beast. It must be high quality, antique, or cutting edge. Choose one skill. Once per session when you use that object in conjunction with one chosen Skill, you may change a single 1 or 10 in the results on a Hunger die to a failure (2–5 or blank), potentially avoiding a Messy Critical or Bestial Failure. Should your focus of clarity be lost or destroyed, a suitable replacement cannot be found until the start of the next story.

••••• **The Prophet of Death Reborn:** Your visions have brought you local renown. Local luminaries seek you out for your prophecies, mortal and Kindred alike. At the start of each story, you can temporarily gain two dots of Contacts, Influence, Resources, or a minor Boon from a local Kindred which can be called on once during that story. Work with your Storyteller for any backstory on what prophecies you delivered or specify a more specific payment.

DESCENDANT OF BARON VOLLGIRRE

(Toreador Characters Only)

Baron Philip Vollgirre's influence on Clan Toreador has been understated by most. Cruel and sadistic, he gave in to many of the clan's basest urges for centuries as a literal Baron when he ruled over his Domain in what would become France, much as the Dragons of the Old Clan did in their ancestral homelands. He is known to have studied their fleshcrafting arts as well, passing this unusual mastery to some lines of his own childer. Over the centuries, he has sired and slain dozens of childer, but at least 13 survived beyond his demise.

While no fewer than nine of his childer went on to despise him and join the Sabbat, others of his bloodline flourished among the Camarilla and Anarchs hiding their proclivities among the monsters of those sects. Most have reputations as

hard workers, willing to do whatever must be done to maintain the Masquerade with other Kindred. In private, however, their havens and hunting grounds are littered with the bodies of their victims.



LORE



• **The Seven Arts:** Your curriculum of study has been passed down from Baron Vollgirre's love of the classics. Choose three specialties for the Academics, Crafts, Etiquette, Performance, Persuasion, Science, or Subterfuge skills related to grammar, logic, rhetoric, geometry, mathematics, astronomy, or music. These do not count towards the standard limits for specialties, and you benefit from this specialty even if you have no dots in the skill. You also gain the Disliked Flaw as your erudition begins to set you apart.

•• **Prodigy of Flesh:** Vollgirre's Bood is infused with fleshcrafting. You needn't drink the Blood of any Kindred to learn Protean, pay in-clan costs to learn Protean, and may use Presence in lieu of Dominate or Blood Sorcery when selecting Protean amalgams. When you learn your second dot of Protean, you

must select the Vicissitude Power (*Players Guide*, p. 81), and when you select your fourth dot you must select one Power with Vicissitude (e.g., Fleshcrafting or Horrid Form) as a prerequisite if you don't already know one. Upon learning Vicissitude, you also gain a Dark Secret (•): Vicissitude. Should your abilities to mold flesh become known, your Dark Secret is exchanged for another flaw of the Storyteller's Choosing, such as an Adversary or Infamy.

••• **Sadistic Hunger:** Pain and fear help sustain you. Sadism slakes one additional hunger so long as you deal 3 levels of damage to a vessel's Health or Willpower immediately before or during your feeding. This cannot reduce hunger below your Blood Potency's limit, or below 1 unless you also drain the victim.

•••• **Unusual Connections:** You maintain connections with one of those distrusted by the city. Gain a five-dot Mawla that is a current Sabbat member, another descendant of Vollgirre, or Tzimisce. This connection awakens a yearning in your Blood to be bound, and you gain either the Bondslave, Bond Junkie, or Long Bond flaw, or lose any Bonding Merits you have.

••••• **Voice of Treachery:** Your Blood causes those of similar bloodlines to cower before you and accede to your demands. Once per story, while determining the success in a social dice pool related to intimidation, torture, or influencing Sabbat members, Toreador, Tzimisce, or anyone possessing the Vicissitude power, you may set any one die you just rolled to a 10, even a Hunger die.

DESCENDANT OF MONTANO

(Lasombra Characters Only)

Montano has achieved much for Clan Lasombra, but it is only now that the clan feels comfortable singing his praises. As one of the few who walked with the clan's founder, his conversance with the Abyss is unequaled. It is said it was by his will that Christianity rose to prominence and that his legions of armies shaped the history of Europe itself.

Yet, Montano was always a man of honor. When vampire society split into sects, he refused to abandon the newly born Camarilla. For centuries, he was branded a traitor.

As his progeny, you have felt the sting of his decision and stand to reap its fruits. Whether you served the Camarilla openly or in secret, the clan now looks to you and your ancestor for guidance. You will show them what loyalty truly means.



LORE



• **The Shadow of Yesterday:** Montano remembers nothing about his early days but remembers plenty about his sect and clan. Once per story, you may write a letter to Montano asking for a single piece of information about either the Camarilla or Clan Lasombra. From his distant haven, he will respond either with truth or clues leading to it, with the implication that the journey is its own reward.

•• **Siblings in Darkness:** Montano's deeds brought the clan to its lofty position. The line he has cultivated is one based in the same honor that kept him in the Camarilla. You are afforded a respect even your clanmates in the Sabbat and elsewhere cannot help but acknowledge. Your Status: Lasombra (••) applies to Lasombra across all sects.

••• **Abyssal Apprentice:** Montano cannot teach you everything about the secrets of Oblivion, due to the comparative weakness of your Blood, but you've picked up a few tricks. Once per story, you may use an Oblivion Power you do not already know that is at your current level or lower.

•••• **Word of Mouth:** Inspired by Montano's patience, you held fast to your place in the Camarilla even when the rest of your clan served as leaders in the Sabbat-held domains. As your siblings join the fold, your allies in the Camarilla have not forgotten where you truly stand. Your status among non-Lasombra in the Camarilla is at the same level no matter where you travel in your home country, even if you do not hold any position in the city you currently reside in.

••••• **Purity of Remorse:** Once, Montano murdered his beloved friends and family to save the rest of his village from his sire. Though he cannot remember this, he weeps over it just the same. You hope to mourn for your sins as deeply as he does. Whenever you roll for Remorse, you never roll with fewer than two dice.

LITTLE SIBLINGS

(Bloodline, Hecata Characters Only)

The Rossellini and the Giovanni were once rivals in necromancy. The Rossellini had more talent, but the Giovanni had more ambition. That led to the Giovanni appearing on far more SAD files, and thus disappearing in far more hunter raids, which balances the scales somewhat in these modern nights. The two families have much in common, but differ in their treatment of ghosts. The Giovanni prefer to coax and cajole, with an occasional threat. The Rossellini begin with threats, browbeating, and dominating wraiths into doing their bidding. The Family takes a sadistic glee in using Oblivion.

As a Rossellini, the lands of the dead are your playground. Sure, your enslaved wraiths were human, just like you were, but you conquered death. They are the pitiful remains, doomed to lament what they once had. The least you can do is give purpose to their miserable unlives. One day you'll die and join their sorrowful ranks, but for now, you will show your cousins the true depths of Oblivion.



LORE



• **Grave Attitude:** Your experience commanding wraiths has led you to believe that even Kindred may eventually cross the Shroud. This certainty gives you peace. In any attempt to intimidate or manipulate you, your aggressors always suffer a one-die penalty, which stacks with other penalties.

•• **Ghostly Dominance:** You brook no tolerance for the pleas and threats of the intangible dead. They are your tools. If they don't see it that way, you will remind them. When you damage a wraith's fetter, loved ones, or intangible form, you receive three bonus dice to any tests to command them.

••• **Necromantic Expertise:** Your siblings in the Giovanni see Oblivion as a means to an end. You know Oblivion is more than that. It's a wondrous art, one that rewards those with the patience and ruthlessness to examine its depths. When you perform an Oblivion Ceremony, decrease the Difficulty level by one.

•••• **Stolen Will:** Ghosts are bundles of emotion cased in an intangible shell. While some Hecata slake their Hunger from ghosts, you know a more sustainable use. When you bite into the fetter of a ghost under your command hard enough to damage it or cause it injury, the fetter bleeds raw passions drawn from the ghost's corpus. Consuming this bitter substance heals a level of Aggravated or Superficial Willpower damage.

••••• **Purge:** You shred ephemeral bodies with ease. Any attack made on a ghost always causes Aggravated Health damage, even outside of the lands of the dead. You are also capable of striking them when they are intangible.

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