

UP IR GAUNT



PROTOCOL
game series twenty-one



credits

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Upir Gaunt is Game 21 in the *Protocol* game series.
Inspired by GMZero.

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upir gaunt

Upir Gaunt is a story roleplaying game about vampires — no, not the sparkly kind — and the emptiness of the modern world. After ages of slumber, a small cadre of vampires wake into a world of technology and splendor, unaware of what has happened to the world, but hungry nonetheless. *Upir Gaunt* places vampires at the crossroads where they are nothing more than anachronistic voyeurs in a world where humanity is so banal and listless that the “food is bland.” Will they work with one another to survive, or turn on one another for shallow power?

Each game in the Protocol series is zero-prep for 3 or more players. The game length is exponentially long, so games with more players take more time to complete. The Protocol Series requires a deck of poker cards as well as tokens to track drama points.

This series presumes some understanding of GMless game protocol: scene-framing, shared authority, and so on. If you’ve never played a GMless game, try one of the GMZero games such as *Dying Memoryes*, or *George’s Children*. A free pdf of game advice — GMZero — is available for download at drivethrurpg.com.

INTRODUCTION

Upir Gaunt is the twenty-first game utilizing the Protocol game mechanic. Light and quick, the system gives players everything they need to start playing immediately, doing away with over-explanation and getting right to the tools.

In *Upir Gaunt*, players take on the roles of directors outside the action and characters inside the action, using the ebb and flow of four different scene-framing styles to tell meaningful stories about characters in crisis. Specifically, they are vampires awakening from years of slumber into a strange and alien modern world.

UNLIFE

Upir Gaunt has slightly different world building from other protocols. Firstly, players **must** decide how long they have been sleeping and how long the story will last (see page 4). Most importantly, because of the nature of the world-building questions, *Upir Gaunt* offers a greater degree of replayability than other protocols.



getting started

Each character is a vampire, waking into the modern world after years of slumber. The modern world, filled with all its distractions and immediate satisfactions are alien to the hungering beasts who have but a single need: to feed. But the modern world is cold and indifferent, almost dead. The characters need names, roles, motivations, and relationships, as well as an understanding of the carnival. Once each player has completed the following steps, you are ready.

- Name your character
- Select one role for your character — this has no mechanical benefit
- Determine a character's motivation by drawing a card
- Determine a relationship between two characters by drawing a card
- Determine elements about the game world

DECK SHUFFLING

A standard deck of cards is shuffled at the beginning of the game and again (only) if the deck runs out of cards. Used cards are discarded. Do not return Motivations or Relationships to the deck. The same goes for Scenes and Locations during play.

The use of jokers is optional.

DRAMA POINTS

Each player starts the game with one drama point and only gains additional points during interludes and interrogations. See page 6.

ROLES

Roles provide flavor and context, but no mechanical benefit.

- **Beast.** Giving way to the animal inside, nothing remains of your former *human* self.
- **Beguiler.** There's nothing as seductive as power... or its promise.
- **Controller.** Everything and *everyone* in its place.
- **Doomsayer.** Some vampires can see into the pitch-black future.
- **Fiend.** You are possessed by something dark and otherworldly.
- **Guardian.** Even vampires have a code and that code must be guarded.
- **Maggot.** Slang term for the lowest among you.
- **Manipulator.** Work is for those too foolish to command minions.
- **Scavenger.** Scavengers can feed on anything.
- **Shadow.** What form does the shadow take?
- **Troll.** One among you stalks the night like no other.

MOTIVATIONS

Motivations are determined by drawing one random poker card from the deck for each character. The motivation descriptions are vague — specificity is your job. For instance, the ♠10 is a motivation of family, impulsively. The player may define this motivation as doing whatever it takes to protect her family.

A list of motivations is on page 5.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are determined by choosing (any) two characters and drawing one random poker card from the deck. The pair of characters share this relationship. The relationship descriptions are vague. Specificity is your job. For instance, the ♣10 is a relationship of burdensome trust. The players sharing this relationship may define it as an ongoing issue of trust between two brothers who have lied to each other since childhood.

A list of relationships is on page 5.

WORLD BUILDING

Each player selects one ingredient from the list below. If you are playing a 3-player game, then each player selects two. Now is a good time to determine how long you've each slumbered.

- How closely do vampires resemble humans?
- Why aren't the humans afraid? What is?
- Where did you slumber? In what great city did you wake?
- Who are your new minions/thralls? Where did they come from?
- Why did you slumber in the first place? How much of your memory is intact? What do vampires dream of when they sleep?
- What is the only escape from unlife? Where does this all end?
- Describe one unique grotesque feature of each vampire.
- Describe two vampire weaknesses and two strengths.
- Name and describe another cadre of rival vampires.
- Name and describe someone (or something) that hunts you.

Note: Players must decide how long the story will go on. One week? One month? One year? Decades? Establish this before the opening vignette. When the game ends, it just ends. There is still a finale, but the game is not running toward a conclusion like other protocol games. This is purposeful...

Note: There are special relationship rules for Upir Gaunt. Players may at any time spend one drama point to establish a new relationship between two characters without a relationship OR spend one drama point to change their character's pre-existing relationship.

motivations

SUIT

- ♣ Scrupulously
- ♦ Vehemently
- ♥ Complacently
- ♠ Impulsively

VALUE

- A Inertia
- 2 Hate
- 3 Pride
- 4 Power
- 5 Survival
- 6 Respect
- 7 Fresh Start
- 8 Hunger
- 9 Distance/Time
- 10 Family
- J Retribution
- Q Lust
- K Reward
- Joker

Draw two and combine the results

“Burdensome purpose you say? Immortality may be just that.
But the unlife is purposeless burden.”

relationships

SUIT

- ♣ Burden
- ♦ Complex
- ♥ Fortune
- ♠ Ominous

VALUE

- A Perpetuity
- 2 Languid
- 3 Loss/Reconciliation
- 4 Codependent
- 5 Predictable
- 6 Sycophantic
- 7 Long-Term
- 8 Contemptuous
- 9 Obsessive
- 10 Trust
- J Rivalry
- Q Lust
- K Brothers-in-Arms
- Joker

Draw again, adding another character to the Relationship

We had slumbered too long. Everything had changed. The world we awoke to was alien – an abnormal study in Darwinism, but without tooth or claw... or merit. Everything just a bland form of food. And us, the ultimate feeders.



game play

While creating a story of their characters' lives as reawakened vampires, the players take turns directing scenes. Although this document provides the tools for framing the action, map-making and location naming are left to the players. A chart of scenes is on page 8.

Each turn the active player (director) draws two cards, which determine the scene type — vignette, interrogation, interlude, or ensemble — as well as the location. The scene's type (suit) and atmosphere (value) are determined by the first card, while the location is determined by the second card. *For instance, the director draws a ♦6 and a ♣7 indicating an interrogation (♦) about a challenge/duel at a secret (♣) old brick building.*

THE OPENING SCENE

The opening scene of the game is always a vignette at a private gathering. The vignette focus is either Hunger or Minions. Determine randomly which player narrates this vignette, but do not draw any cards. Afterwards, take turns until every player has directed four scenes.

VIGNETTES (CLUBS ♣)

Vignettes involve no actual dialog, merely setting the atmosphere for the story. The director determines the location from the card drawn and narrates a brief scene. A vignette shouldn't take more than a minute or two to narrate.

The director draws a ♣10 for scene — Vignette about Safety in Numbers — and a ♦Q — Near Dusk/Dawn Night Club. "The evening was winding down and when the doors of the night club opened, it was clear that we'd all overstayed our welcome. The sun would be up in less than an hour. We'd best find a place to sleep... and fast."

ADVICE

Keep your vignettes short and simple. Narrate enough information to set the tone, but don't overdo it by dragging the action on too long. Concise sentences are a writer's best friend.

INTERROGATIONS (DIAMONDS ♦)

Interrogations involve the director asking questions to one character. The director selects a player and steals one drama point from him. Then the director asks five questions — in or out of character — which must be answered by that player in character.

If the interrogation is in character, the director may ask the questions from the point of view of an NPC or his own character. This process should feel organic. If the interrogation is out of character, the director asks the questions in an abstract fashion, as though going down a list. The questions can be anything fitting the theme.

The director draws a ♦4 for scene — Interrogation about Innocent Lives — and a ♠7 — Under Scrutiny at an Old Brick Building. The director decides that Sebastian has been cornered by a rival vampire and his retinue. They've been watching him for some time and they know he's been feeding on innocent people where he shouldn't be. They also know they can't kill him just yet, but they can force him to answer some questions about his comrades.

ADVICE

Ask leading questions. Avoid yes/no questions, or questions that can be reduced to short answers. What and why questions are great. Did or can questions are not. "Why are you waiting for reinforcements?"

NPCS

The director may add one NPC to an interlude or interrogation, but the characters remain the focus of the scene. Vignettes do not have dialogue, but any number of NPCs may color the story background. Ensembles may have NPCs, but they are controlled/run by the director. Other players may introduce NPCs by spending one drama point.

In *Upir Gaunt*, scenes are about the disconnect of "inhuman beings" attempting to integrate into an unnatural time in human history. When you are the director, make the most of your scenes by having the vampires deal with things that keep them off balance.



INTERLUDES (HEARTS ♥)

Interludes involve two (and only two) characters with a pre-existing relationship. Neither of these characters needs to be the director's character. The director determines the location and sets the scene based on the cards drawn. The scene runs as long as the director likes, without being self-indulgent, calling "scene" when the characters have said or done enough. An interlude involves only one location. Should the characters leave the location, the scene ends.

All players **not** involved in the scene gain one drama point at the end of the interlude.

The director has drawn the ♥5 for scene — Interlude about a Display of Power — and the ♣8 for location — a (In) Secret Chain Coffee House. The director decides that Tomas and Claire are meeting in private at a Starbucks to discuss a recent problem with another vampire. It seems that Sebastian has recently drawn attention to himself with obvious displays of power in front of humans and this could have lasting repercussions for the group.

ADVICE

Interludes are mostly about the drama between two characters. While the interlude can be used to advance the plot, this is secondary to the interpersonal actions and reactions of the characters. An alternative example of the scene above could be the pair leaving a coffee shop on the edge of town where they've just fed (viciously) on everyone inside.

RESOLVING CONFLICT

In the Protocol Game Series, whenever two or more characters reach a moment of unresolvable conflict one of the following things happens:

- In an interlude, the director decides who wins the conflict, narrates the conclusion, and ends the scene.
- In an ensemble, the scene ends, which leaves the conflict dangling.
- Should the players wish to override any of these rules, they must spend one drama point, or in the case of a tie, more drama points than anyone else. The winner narrates the conclusion.
- Should a scene end unresolved, this creates a cliffhanger effect. Players may wish to resolve this in the following scene. But this isn't always necessary. Use your best judgement. Sometimes the best things are left unsaid.

Vignettes and interrogations have no conflict.

ENSEMBLES (SPADES ♠)

Ensembles involve all of the characters. Like an interlude, the director determines the plot of the scene, as well as the location. The director may preempt the scene as much as he likes, but once the ensemble starts, the players should let things develop organically. The director still has the right to call "scene" at any moment, but any player may override the director by spending one drama point to end a scene early, or to extend a scene longer.

The director has drawn the ♠3 for scene — Ensemble about the Unexplained — and the ♥6 for location — With Minions at a Dead Person's House. The director decides the group is gathering to discuss strange events taking place in the city. Vampires have reported seeing mirrored shapes and impossible silhouettes on the edge of town. To protect themselves, everyone has brought their minions with them, who must wait in the front room of someone's home, while the vampires talk at the back of the house.

ADVICE

Ensembles involve everyone and should be allowed to run their course. But not too long. Eventually the characters will start spewing every kind of theory and idea, which slows play and distracts from the story.

Let everyone get a say, but once you resolve the scene's primary focus, it's time to end things. Don't forget, if there's conflict, the scene ends on its own, unless someone spends one Drama Point.

YIELDING TWILIGHT

Players take turns directing scenes. The order is not important. Players may decide to take turns in a random order, clockwise order, or even bid to be the next director. Just make sure everyone is involved and no one directs two times in a row.

The players may also decide to have the game end only after all of the face cards have been revealed (during character creation and game play) for a longer game, or all the aces are revealed for a shorter game.

Once the characters approach the end of their "established length of time," each player narrates his character's involvement in the finale. For each drama point a player still possesses, he narrates (in turn) a vignette about their vampiric fate and how the vampires continue to live among human cattle or fade back into twilight. Unlike other protocols, once the drama points are spent, there are no more questions to answer.



scenes

SUIT

- ♣ Vignette
- ♦ Interrogation
- ♥ Interlude
- ♠ Ensemble

VALUE

- A Status/Powerlessness
- 2 'Modern Lives'
- 3 The Unexplained
- 4 Innocent Lives
- 5 Display of Power
- 6 Challenge/Duel
- 7 Hunger/Minions
- 8 Banality/Confusion
- 9 Human Cattle
- 10 Safety in Numbers
- J Chaos
- Q Internal Conflict
- K External Conflict
- Joker
- Monologue

MONOLOGUE

Monologues are (optional) solo scenes where the director's character (or an NPC) delivers a single speech that cannot be interrupted. The director decides who else is at the location. The director gains one drama point.

locations

SUIT

- ♣ (In) Secret
- ♦ Near Dusk/Dawn
- ♥ With Escorts/Minions
- ♠ Under Scrutiny

VALUE

- A Asylum/Graveyard
- 2 Minion's Apartment
- 3 Industrial Park
- 4 Abandoned School
- 5 Church/Medical
- 6 Dead Person's House
- 7 Old Brick Building
- 8 Chain Coffee House
- 9 Under the Bridge
- 10 Gas Station/Stolen Car
- J Slums
- Q Entertainment Venue/Night Club
- K Big Box Store/Fast Food
- Joker
- Shipping Container

पिशाच



Drama points

Drama points are used to control the narration and finale. In addition, players may use drama points in the follow ways.

- The director may **spend one drama point** to discard a scene/ location card and draw a new one.
- During an interrogation, the player being interrogated may **spend one drama point** to avoid answering one question.
- If a scene ends with unresolved conflict, any player may **spend one drama point** to shift the conflict to an NPC who has already made an appearance in the story, or **spend two drama points** to shift the conflict to a new NPC.

optional rules

- If the same suit is drawn three times in a row for a scene or location, discard the card and draw a new one until a new suit appears.
- At the beginning of the game, shuffle the deck and remove 10 cards at random. Do not look at them. Remove them from play and never shuffle them back into the deck.
- Should a player ever run out of drama points, the director may give him one of his, regardless of the scene type.
- On page 10 is a list of advanced roles and backgrounds. Neither is necessary to play the game, but each adds additional color and flavor. No character has more than one. When using backgrounds, these are selected before roles. When using advanced roles, these replace standard roles.
- Once per game, the players may decide to **award one drama point** to a director who has framed a particularly good scene.
- Select a permanent director who does not play a character, but instead runs the game like a traditional RPG. Cards are still drawn for scenes. The game lasts for a number of scenes equal to four times the number of players, or as long as the director chooses.

overview

CREATE CHARACTERS

- Shuffle a deck of poker cards
- Name characters
- Determine backgrounds (optional)
- Select roles
- Determine motivations
- Determine relationships
- Give each player one drama point

OPENING SCENE

- Vignette (Hunger or Minions)

SCENES

- Take turns directing scenes
- Draw two cards: one scene type, one location
- Gain drama points during interrogations and other players' interludes

YIELDING TWILIGHT

- Take turns narrating vignettes about the finale

END GAME

- There is no end game. Upir Gaunt ends in Twilight.

*backgrounds***SUIT**

- ♣ Outcast/Convict
- ♦ Working Class
- ♥ Military
- ♠ Noble

VALUE

- A Shiftless
- 2 Abused
- 3 Recluse
- 4 Overshadowed
- 5 Large Family
- 6 Jilted/Scorned
- 7 Well-Known
- 8 Sycophant/Bully
- 9 Regarded/Respected
- 10 Talented
- J Strong-Arm
- Q Nepotism
- K Butcher
- Joker
- Scholar

We could sense the end of time coming toward us. Shifting the landscape. The rules had changed. The food was no longer afraid of us. It felt nothing. It was as though an invisible hand was playing chess on an unending board of bleak and meaningless squares.

*advanced roles***SUIT**

- ♣ Loner/Orphan
- ♦ Condemned
- ♥ The Stained
- ♠ Fiend

VALUE

- A Beast
- 2 Beguiler
- 3 Controller
- 4 Doomsayer
- 5 Eyeless
- 6 Guardian
- 7 Hunter
- 8 Maggot
- 9 Manipulator
- 10 Scavenger
- J Shadow
- Q Troll
- K Warden
- Joker
- Ancient One

I cannot speak for the others, but I welcome the return to slumber. I shall find a hole deep enough to bury all my regrets and when I wake in another 100 years, I hope nothing is left but rats and malformed ideas to feed upon. And I will gladly end them all.

character names

Agnes	Alexsi
Astra	August
Báló	Belmont
Bennett	Bianca
Byron	Cadwallon
Calypso	Ceva
Crowley	Danielle
Devries	Drake
Druid	The Elder
Endymion	Enid
Faith	Fey
Flaubert	Francis
Gertrude	Guy
Hera	January
Juliette	Kali
Karl	Keats
Lana	Lang
Lillith	Lincoln
Magnus	Marianna
Marlow	Michèle
Moll	Nicholai
Octavius	Orlando
Pandora	Piotr
Prudence	Rama
Raven	Rousseau
Rowan	Ruthven
Samson	The Saxon
Sheridan	Sterling
Thora	Ulysses
Vera	Vladimir
Wolfgar	Zofia

location names

All-Night Towing
 Benedict Station
 Club 9/r
 Counselor's Bluff
 Deckart's Wall
 Dryfus Bench
 East Church Hill
 Eagle Point
 The Fens
 Freeman Tower
 Goldman's Jewelers
 The Gomorrah Grounds
 Grommet's Salvage Yard
 Halycon County Zoo
 Hoyt Plaza
 Indigo Mall
 Laketown Printing and Paper Supply
 Museum of Natural Science Annex
 Nevil's Run
 Old Mission Inn and Suites
 Peregrine Books
 The Princeton House
 Regent College
 The Rosewood House
 Sloane's Bar and Grill
 South Bishop Estates
 Traveler's Row
 Tuesday's Diner
 Union Way
 Viceroy's Castle
 Waterloo Square

scenes

VIGNETTES (CLUBS ♣)

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INTERROGATIONS (DIAMONDS ♦)

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All players **not** involved in the scene gain one drama point at the end of the interlude.

ENSEMBLES (SPADES ♠)

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NAME/ROLE

BACKGROUND

MOTIVATION

RELATIONSHIP

NOTES

SCENES

DRAMA POINTS

Spend one to end or extend an ensemble

Spend one to resolve conflict

Spend one to shift the conflict to an existing NPC

Spend two to shift the conflict to a new NPC

Spend one (during an Interrogation) to avoid answering a question

Spend during final narration

UP IR
GAUNT
CHARACTER SHEET

HELPER MONKEY

Diana Kwalkoski Stoll

REGULAR BACKERS

Catherine

Dale Murchie

Daniel Boles

Ed Pegg

Fernando

Hana Kucharova

James Wood

José Luis Porfirio

Julian G Hicks

Keith Brake

Stras Acimovic

IRREGULAR SUPPORTERS

Alejandro Albert Garcia

Alex W

anderland

Andrew Wells

Ben Woerner

Benjamin Tham

Bernard Gravel

Black-Thing

BlackWyrM Publishing

Brett Easterbrook

C P

Caoimhe Ora Snow

Charley Brandum

Chris Carlson

Chris Schoenthal

Chris Shorb

Christian Nord

Clayton Falconpunch

Daniel C

David Margowsky

David McGuire

David Terhune

Derek Guder

Descendingform

Diana Stoll

DivNull Productions

Ed Possing

Felix Girke

FelTK

Filthy Monkey

flashbytes

George Panopoulos

George VanMeter

George Vasilakos

Glazius

Glen Conolly

Greg Chapin

Happion Laboratories

irriion

Jack Gulick

Jake McGrath

James Glover

James Stuart

Johan Kristian Milde

John A W Phillips

John Diffley

Judd M. Goswick

Kairam Ahmed Hamdan

Ketwyld

Khyron

Lars Erik Larsen

Laura Scott

Leslie Weatherstone

Lin Liren

Malk

Marc Majcher

Marcus Johnson

Mark Kilfoil

Mark Nau

Martijn Tolsma

Martin Blake

Michael Bergh Hansen

Michael Leader

Michael McNeal

Michael Wight

Morten Berg

Natalya Alyssa Faden

Nate Miller

Nathan Hillen

Nathan Lax

Nathanael Cole

Nathaniel Brengle

Nils Kullberg

Owlglass

Pablo Martinez

Paco Garcia Jaen

Pete

Philip Espi

Philip Reed

Richard Carter

Robert Carnel

Robert Mull

Robert Posada

Ross Isaacs

Ruth Phillips

Sophia Brandt

Scott Jamieson

Sean Cameron Crane

sehmerus

Seth Harris

Seth Johnson

Shane Hensley

Solid Art Labs

Stephen Kilpatrick

Steve Bean

Steve Dulson

Steven Lord

Steven Watkins

Stew Wilson

Svend Andersen

T. Anthony Moore

Teppo Pennanen

Tijn Rams

Tim Clouse

Timothy Hidalgo

Tobie Abad

Tom Pleasant

Tomer Gurantz

Trevor Smith

Tristan Zimmerman

Vic Smith

Volker Jacobsen



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game series